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**UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRACY**

**BY**

**COLONEL GILBERTO GARCIA GARCIA**  
Mexican Army

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRACY**

by

GILBERTO GARCIA GARCIA  
COL. MEXICAN ARMY

Dr. Donald Schulz  
Project Advisor

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## ABSTRACT

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The world is changing dramatically. Despite this, threats to national and international security continue in various forms: poverty, organized crime, drug use, terrorism, violence, arms trafficking, disease, global warming, and ethnic, religious nationalist, separatist, political and economic conflicts. Nevertheless, democracy is spreading, and today many countries are called democratic.

This paper describes several countries, which are very different because of their history, culture, religion, people, education, and wealth. But these countries also have something in common: They are democratic. In each, however, the democratic system differs significantly from the others. For that reason, I have tried to analyze these differences in order to better understand how democracy functions or is understood in each case.



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# UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRACY

## I. INTRODUCTION.

After the end of the cold war, a new order has emerged in the world. Two of the most important things that have become top issues are Economic Globalization and Democratization. Many people think that democracy is the solution to all the problems that exist in the world, but there are many countries that practice democracy and many others that do not practice it. We all know about different kinds of government systems, for instance monarchist, communist, authoritarian, totalitarian, militarist and others. We can not assume that countries that do not practice democracy are poor or have various internal or external problems. But we can not assume either that democratic countries do not have the same kinds of problems. The objective of this paper is to look at the ways democracy is used, understood and practiced in a few selected countries, and try to draw some conclusions about whether democracy is useful or can be imposed.

## II. WHAT IS DEMOCRACY ?

First of all, it is very important to know how the word democracy is defined and a little bit about its early history.

Democracy is defined in the *Academic American Encyclopedia* as a "Form of government in which a substantial proportion of the citizens directly or indirectly participates in ruling states. It is thus distinct from governments controlled by a particular social class or group or by a single person. In a direct democracy, citizens vote on laws in an assembly, as they did in

the ancient Greek city-state. In an indirect democracy, citizens elect officials to represent them in government. Representation is typical of most modern democracies. Today the essential features of democracy, as understood in the western world, are that citizens be sufficiently free in speech and assembly --for example-- to form competing political parties and that voters be able to choose among the candidates of these parties in regularly held elections.”<sup>1</sup>

*The Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines democracy as “Rule by the people. The term has three basic senses in contemporary usage: first as a form of government in which the right to make political decisions is exercised directly by the whole body of citizens, acting under due procedures of majority rule, usually known as direct democracy. Second as a form of government in which the citizens exercise the same right not in person but through representatives chosen by and responsible to them, known as representative democracy. And the third as a form of government, usually a representative democracy, in which the powers of the majority are exercised within a framework of constitutional restraints, designed to guarantee all citizens the enjoyment of certain individual or collective rights, such as freedom of speech and religion, known as liberal, or constitutional democracy.”<sup>2</sup>

Another definition of democracy is from *The World Book Encyclopedia*: “Democracy is a form of government, a way of life, a goal or ideal, and a political philosophy. The term also refers to a country that has a democratic form of government. The word democracy means rule by the people. United States President Abraham Lincoln described such self-government as government of the people, by the people, for the people. The citizens of a democracy take part in a government either directly or indirectly. In a direct democracy, also called a pure democracy, the people meet in one place to make the laws for the community. Most modern democracy is representative democracy. In large communities --cities, states, provinces or countries-- it is

impossible for all the people to meet as a group. Instead, they elect a certain number of their fellow citizens to represent them in making decisions about laws and other matters. An assembly of representatives may be called a council, a legislature, a parliament, or a congress. Government by the people through their freely elected representatives is sometimes called a republican or a democratic republic.”<sup>3</sup>

Historically democracy comes from the Greek “demos” that means people and “kratos” that means rule. Ancient Greece usually had small city-state democratic self-government, and this was direct. The people discussed and voted on public issues in a general assembly, where most of the population participated. They did not have parliaments, cabinets or civil servants. They had officials that were elected by lot to serve for a period of one year. Slaves and women were excluded from the vote, but in spite of that this first democracy functioned.

But not everyone supported democracy. For instance Plato, one of the greatest thinkers of Athens, condemned it, saying that the people had neither the moral nor the intellectual capacity to govern. Aristotle also thought that persons of education and wealth should have more influence in public affairs, and that the principle of numbers must be recognized if government is to be based on consent. For these views he was considered a pioneer of constitutional democratic and aristocratic governments.

Since the Greeks, there have been many changes in the definition and interpretation of democracy. Some have described it as a government, a system, or a way of life. There are also many classifications of democracy. In the pages that follow, I am going to try to describe in a general way some governments that are classified as democratic. All governments are different, but some have similar characteristics, maybe because some of them have influenced others or

because it was imposed by other countries who conquered them, or because of the mutually supportive relationship that they had between them.

### **III. DEMOCRACY IN GREAT BRITAIN.**

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is comprised of four national units --England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland-- on two main islands, plus surrounding small islands. The population can be considered multiracial, because of the great immigration from the northern part of Africa, the Caribbean and Asian Commonwealth countries.

Britain does not have a formal document as a constitution to define the political system and set forth the rights and duties of citizens. Rather, its "constitutional framework" comes from important legislative statutes such as The Petition of Rights, The Bill of Rights, The Act of Settlement, The Acts of Union with Scotland and Ireland, The Crown Proceedings, The Nationalization Acts and others documents. Some principles were established by common law, based on judicial decisions.

Great Britain is considered a Constitutional Democracy, which evolved out of internal chaos and divisions between contenders for the throne in the fifteenth century. Some authors said that England is an example of a change from a strong monarchy with an important aristocratic class to a political democracy comparable with other democratic systems. It also has a civilian government. For three centuries, the military has been subordinated to the political power. Since 1658, it has not had a military dictator.

The Government is composed of the head of the state, the executive, and the legislative. The head of state is the traditional monarch of the United Kingdom, today represented by Queen Elizabeth II and the royal family, stemming from at least the ninth century. Since 1760, the

monarchy progressively has turned over to the government the hereditary revenues derived from the Crown Lands and other sources and has received in return an annual grant to cover the salaries and expenses of the royal household. The former powers are now in the hands of various individuals and institutions. The monarchy has survived as a constitutional monarch, and reigns with limited influence, participating in a formal way in some executive and legislative activities. It also has a symbolic and ceremonial role in the system. The sovereign must accept the will of the government. The monarch may make known her opinion and can attempt to influence decisions, but the two most important political powers of the sovereign are the choice of the Prime Minister and the choice of dissolving the Parliament.

The executive power is represented by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. As we said before, the Prime Minister is chosen by the monarch, normally from the political party which has an absolute majority, but can be chosen from another party if no single party has a majority. The most important political figure is the Prime Minister, who is comparable in power to a president in other countries. The Prime Minister has the power to appoint members of the government, senior members of the civil service, the chief members of the judiciary, military leaders, and archbishops of the Church of England. He or she is the leader of his or her political party within the parliament and in the country, and must keep it united to maintain its loyalty. But real power it depends on the level of control that he or her has over the party.

The Cabinet is composed of about 20 to 25 ministers designated by the Prime Minister. Normally they belong to the party that controls the majority in the House of Commons, but they can be from another party. The ministers are in charge of the different administrative departments. The Cabinet is also the body concerned with the initiation, control, and implementation of policy and the most important decision making body.

The legislative power is represented by the parliament, which is the supreme legislative body of the kingdom. This body has the authority to pass, change, or repeal any law without being subject to restraint or veto by the courts or any other body. The term of office is fixed at a maximum of five years, but can be less if the monarch decides to dissolve parliament in order to call new elections.

The King or Queen has the formal power to dissolve parliament, but the real decision is made by the Prime Minister, if he thinks it is to his advantage to call elections at that time. The parliament is composed of two chambers, the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The House of Commons is composed of 651 members elected from the territorial constituencies of the country; 524 represent English, 38 Welsh, 72 Scottish and 17 Northern Ireland constituencies. Any person over 21 years of age can be elected, except members of the House of Lords, aliens, clergymen, and felons. There are no property, religious, sexual or education disqualifications. The Commons plays a significant role in the political system. It has legislative supremacy and also authorizes all expenditure and taxation. Also party composition is the basis for the formation of the government. Many members of the House of Commons are in the government. The House of Lords consists of about 1,200 members, all reflecting the nature of their origin with the greater noblemen and higher clergy. Seven hundred sixty are hereditary peers, who inherit or have been appointed to the peerage and who pass on the titles to their heirs. Three hundred sixty are life peers created by law and their title expires at their death. Twelve are created by law, who are appointed to act as judges when the House of Lords acts as a court of law. There are also appointed 26 dignitaries of the Church of England, Archbishops and Bishops. The House of Lords has the function of considering and approving all legislation, and performs a useful role as an organ of review in the revision of legislation, the initiation of non-

controversial legislation, the discussion of important topics and the examination of delegated legislation. The lords can propose amendments to bills and can delay them by vote, but they do not have the power of absolute veto.

Unlike many countries, Britain does not have a system of judicial review, so courts can not declare legislation void.

Some authors say that the British system is an example of a two-party system. The most important parties are the Conservative Party and the Labour Party, which have alternated as the government and the opposition, but there are other parties that have won some seats in the parliament like the Liberal Party, the Nationalist Party, the Communist Party, the Green Party and others.

It is interesting to note that in this democracy, the only governmental body which is subjected to elections by the people is the House of the Commons, and the monarch can dissolve it at any moment. The electoral system for the House is a simple one. There is a single member per district. Each person over the age of 18 has the right to vote. The registration of voters is the responsibility of local authorities, and every year the list of voters is updated.

Any political party can participate in elections, but the majority of seats are won by the main parties.

The United Kingdom has many problems. The main ones are 1. The relationship between the four countries which compose it. 2. The new relationship with the European Union and its implications for national sovereignty; 3. The growth of non-white immigration, which has led to racial tension in some constituencies where the newcomers are in the majority.



#### **IV. DEMOCRACY IN FRANCE.**

France is one of the richest nations in the world. Its population is over 55 million, eight million of whom live in Paris. It has peasant origins, and social class is based to a large extent on occupation, education, and income. Most of the people are Catholics, though a million are Protestants, with some Jewish and Muslims. Lastly, immigration has increased, mainly from North Africa.

French democracy has evolved out of monarchy, aristocracy, and a privileged Roman Catholic Church, as well as the ancient regimes of kings Louis XIV, XV, XVI and XVIII, Charles X and Louis-Philippe I. But the old order has not been destroyed completely, and some defenders of it still remain. There has also been a constitutional monarchy with a Constituent Assembly. There have been two Empires, with Napoleon I and Napoleon III, and many periods of instability, a result of the country's many different republics. The First Republic was installed in 1792, and ended in 1799. The Second Republic was established in 1848, and lasted until 1851. The Third Republic began in 1870, and ended in 1890. The Fourth was born after World War II, and lasted from 1946 to 1958. The last two republics were characterized by great instability.

With the Fifth Republic and the Constitution of 1958, however, France acquired political stability. This last constitution was introduced mainly to strengthen the executive because previous governments were weak and unstable. It is important to note that France has had more than 20 constitutions. The country has always refused to fit within the western (mainly U.S.) political framework. It has been a colonial and imperialist country, but has also been conquered, and has often been on the verge of political catastrophe, with exiled generals threatening invasion. France has also had many border problems with its neighbors, mainly with Germany.

The structure of the French government came from the Constitution of 1958, at the initiation of General Charles de Gaulle. France could be considered a liberal democracy. The executive branch is represented by the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, and the Cabinet. The legislative branch is represented by the Parliament composed of two chambers, the National Assembly and the Senate. The government also has a Constitutional Council that is similar to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The President of the Republic is elected to serve for a period of seven years, and he can be reelected. Some of his most important powers are: Appointment of the Prime Minister and Cabinet ministers; promulgation of laws voted by Parliament without power of veto; chairmanship of the Council of Ministers and the high councils of the armed forces; and ratification of treaties, after parliamentary approval. But the most important and effective power to make governments more stable and modify the conditions of political life is the power to dissolve Parliament. This has been used in 1962, 1968, 1981, and 1988.

The Prime Minister is appointed by the President of the Republic, and leads the government. He has the power to implement laws, and is responsible for national defense. While he retain some powers, like the president, the government legally remains a collective organ, and as a whole is empowered to determine and direct national policy and rule the state. In practice, however, in recent years presidential interventions have increased.

The ministers are appointed by the president, on the proposal of the Prime Minister. They are about 20 in number, and their names change from time to time because of the evolution of the government.

The legislative branch is represented by the Parliament. It is composed of two chambers, the National Assembly and the Senate. The National Assembly is elected for five years by direct

universal suffrage, and can be dissolved by the President. The Senate, also called the Grand Council of French Communes, is elected for nine years, one third of its members retiring every three years. Senators are elected within districts on a two-ballot basis. The Parliament meets during nine months of the year, and in special sessions. The speaker of the National Assembly is elected for five years until the end of the legislature. The speaker of the Senate is elected every three years after each partial election of the Senate. The two most important activities of the Parliament consist in passing laws and controlling the government. The speakers have a great influence on the government; normally they are top politicians. They are assisted by a bureau composed of vice presidents and secretaries drawn from different political parties. In accordance with the Constitution, they are often consulted by the President of the Republic. As was mentioned before, there is no a judicial branch. Instead, there is a body called the Constitutional Council. This organ has the task of controlling the legislation and ensuring that Parliament does not overstep its powers. It has to approve the standing orders of both houses, and also has jurisdiction over referenda and national elections, both presidential and parliamentary.

France has a multiparty system, with only some tendencies towards bringing parties into two broad blocs. The most important political parties are the Gaullist Party, the French Socialist Party, and the Communist Party, which have shared power from time to time. There are others, like a bloc of parties called the Union for the French Democracy and the Ecologist Party and others.

The electoral system is composed of single-member districts. There are two rounds of voting, with the initial elections and the run-off vote taking place on successive Sundays. On the first ballot, only candidates that receive fifty per cent or more of the votes in each constituency are elected. Between the first and the second ballot ( during which the candidate who gets the

most votes is elected, and in which only candidates obtaining more than ten per cent of the vote on the first ballot may run), deals take place and candidates withdraw voluntarily, sometimes in favor of other candidates better placed in the race.

Many authors admire the French political system, perhaps because they think that France has become a country in which political pluralism and the alternation of parties in government has become firmly established. Despite that, as with many other countries, France has had difficulties in solving social problems between the capital and provinces, employers and workers, as well as between the majority and the many minority groups such as immigrants, young people, and deviants.

## V. **DEMOCRACY IN MEXICO.**

The official name of Mexico is the Estados Unidos Mexicanos (Mexican United States). The country covers an area of almost 2 millions sq km, and shares a 3152.2 km border with the United States to the north. Its coastline spans 11,122.5 km.

Mexicans evolved, in part, from the ancient Aztecs, Mayans, and Toltecs, who had some of the most distinctive civilizations in the ancient world. The Aztecs were conquered by the Spanish, and their lands occupied for a period of 3 centuries. After the declaration of independence in 1810, Mexico had to defend itself against powerful foreigners, like the United States and France, losing almost half of its territory. Also, it has had many internal wars, the most important being the Mexican Revolution of 1910, which marked the beginning of the current era of stable development and democracy.

Mexico has a population of about 100 million people, most of whom are a mixture of indigenous and Spanish called "mestizos". Today, about 90 percent of the Mexican people are

mestizos. Less than 10 percent of the populace is indigenous, most of whom live in remote villages, far away from cities. There are also small groups of criollos (descendants of Spaniards born in Mexico), and a few small groups of Anglo-Saxons. More than 95 percent of Mexicans are Catholics, 3 percent are Protestants, and 2 percent belong to other religions or sects.

Mexico is considered a Federal Republic with a representative and a participating democracy. The last Mexican Constitution was written in 1917, and established a federal system and a structure of government that included a separation of powers. It also established and guaranteed the defense of human rights and the principles and goals of public policy.

The government is divided into three branches of power: the executive, the legislative and the judicial. The country is made up of 32 political-administrative entities, with 31 sovereign states and a Federal District, the seat of the executive, which is also where the nation's capital is located. The executive power is represented by the President of the Republic, as head of the government, and the Cabinet. In order to become president, it is necessary to be appointed the candidate of your political party, to participate in national elections against candidates from other parties, and to gain at least 42 percent of the vote in the national election. The President serves a term of six years, and cannot be reelected. It is important to note that from 1934 until the present the constitutional succession has not been broken. Each president has served the full period and yielded his office to an elected successor, despite the many changes that have occurred in the country. The president is in charge of foreign policy, and is the supreme commander of the armed forces.

The Cabinet is composed of ministers chosen by the President of the Republic. Normally these ministers are leading figures of the ruling party. President Ernesto Zedillo, however, appointed a member of the National Action Party as his first Attorney General. Cabinet

members are in charge of the initiation and implementation of policies in the areas assigned to them, The Cabinet is the most important decision making body in the government.

The legislative branch is organized in a National Assembly composed of two chambers, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The Chamber of Deputies has 500 deputies, who serve three years representing the state from which they were elected. The Senate has 160 members, who are elected to serve for six years. The main task of the legislative power is to make or approve laws. A law can be initiated by the executive power, both chambers of Congress, and any of the state congresses. The National Assembly (Congress) has to analyze and approve the annual budget; it must also decide if public servants should be taken to court if they have been accused of crime.

The judiciary power is composed of the Supreme Court of Justice, and below it 6 circuit courts and 46 district courts in the federal system, plus the state court systems. The judiciary normally didn't play a strong role in politics, though there have been many cases in which courts have rendered decisions against the executive branch by granting a writ of "amparo" (That is a judicial order forbidding acts of an administrative officer that assume violate a specific guaranteed right of an individual, or ordering an official to take an affirmative action called for by the exercise of such a right.). Recently, however, reforms have given the judicial branch more independence to punish infractions of the law and the abuse of power. The Supreme Court will decide on the constitutionality of laws and will solve controversial issues involving the different branches of the government.

In Mexico, the President and all members of the Congress are elected. The Mexican people have the right to vote, but it is also compulsory. All citizens from 18 years old and up must register on the electoral list and obtain an electoral card in order to vote. Nobody can vote

without his or her card. States are divided into electoral districts, according to the density of population, and it is there that the ballots are cast.

Mexico has many political parties. These include the Partido Accion Nacional (PAN), the Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD), the Partido del Frente Cardenista de Reconstruccion Nacional (PFCRN), the Partido del Trabajo (PT), the Partido Democrata Mexicano (PDM), the Partido Popular Socialista (PPS), the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), and the Partido Verde Ecologista (PVE). All parties represent the different ideals of the people, but the will of the majority decides who will guide the country. While the PRI has been the dominant party in the political system, always supported by the people, many years ago, but mainly in recent years opposition parties have won many national, state and municipal offices, including 9 syate governorships, the governorship of the Federal District, and a majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies. All this has helped in reinforcing democratic substance to Mexico's democratic forms.

## **VI. DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA.**

Nigeria is an African country with a population of approximately 90 million people, which is expected to triple in the next 30 years. The population is mainly comprised of about 250 ethnic and linguistics groups. However, the three largest groups, comprising about 65 percent of the population, predominate, and they are normally mobilized against each other. While the people of Nigeria practice many traditional religions, the two most important religious groups are the Muslims in the north and the Christians in the south. Nigeria was an English colony from early this century until 1960, a period more characterized by exploitation than development and that has had a serious impact on contemporary Nigeria. One of the most

important natural resources is oil. Petroleum production has increased rapidly, making the country the sixth largest producer in the world and a prominent member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Since 1960 when Nigeria achieved independence, its democratic history has been divided into two periods called republics. The First Republic dated from 1960 to 1966, and the Second Republic from 1979 to 1983. Both between these periods and after them, Nigeria has had military governments.

Between 1967 and 1970, the country was torn by civil war. Three heads of state have been assassinated, and many coups have succeeded. This great instability has seriously affected the development of national institutions. The country has severe economic, ethnic and religious problems. Yet, in spite of all this Nigeria has been one of the most open countries in the region. Press freedoms and civil liberties have been generally respected. The government has alternated between military and civilian governments.

Normally, civilian governments have been organized with a President elected in direct elections for no more than two terms of four years. In addition to winning the highest number of votes, the victor also had to win a quarter of the vote in at least two-thirds of the 19 states. The President served as the head of state, the Chief Executive of the Federation, and the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. He was also responsible for initiating both national and international policies, and held a veto over legislation, similar to the practice in the United States. The President chose a cabinet, composed of a varying number of ministers, who did not have to be in the National Assembly.

The National Assembly (Congress) was composed for two chambers of equal importance, the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate included 5 members for each of the nineteen states, irrespective of the density of populations in a state. The House of



Representatives had one member for each of the 449 electoral districts, which were established on the basis of equal numbers of population. The National Assembly was responsible for approving the legislation, and ratified the presidential nominations to the Supreme Court of Justice, the National Defense Council and the National Security Council.

Nigeria has been a multi-party country, the more important parties being the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), the Nigeria People's Party (NPP), the People's Redemption Party (PRP), the Great Nigeria People's Party (GNP), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and the Nigerian Advance Party (NAP). All these parties came from different ideals, regions, religions, ethnic groups or languages, and some of them are influenced by the military.

Elections in Nigeria have often been invalidated because of protests over allegations of electoral fraud and abuse.

All these problems have led to repeated military intervention in the political process. Most of the time these interventions have been well received by the populace. Typically, the civilian leaders are arrested, political parties are banished, the Constitution is suspended, and an Armed Forces Ruling Council is created. But despite its efforts, the military has not been very successful. It has tried to introduce discipline, moral values, national consciousness, patriotism and honesty, but the situation of the country has not improved.

Nigeria has suffered dramatic political, economic and social changes. It is a country in transition to democracy. It is confronting a great number of problems, and it is going to take a long time to solve them. The most important thing is to unite the Nigerians people and ameliorate the deep divisions that exist in the society. [Note: Elections were held in February 1999, and the new government is scheduled to assume office in May.]

## VII. CONCLUSIONS.

All these governments, and many others, which call themselves democratic, are very different. Perhaps this is because they have different histories, cultures, races, religions, wealth, territory, economic and military power, and many other things. Some of these countries have had other kinds of government than democracy. They have been colonies, kingdoms, aristocracies, dictatorships, etc. Some have had times of prosperity and peace, but for many reasons have had to change their form of government. Now they are trying to reach prosperity through democracy.

As was described at the beginning of this essay, democracy means a government of the people, by the people and for the people. But when it was first adopted many centuries ago, populations were much smaller, and that made it possible for citizens to participate directly in the governing of their states. Now the situation is very different. Both countries and cities are too big, and populations continue to grow, not only in developed countries, but also ( and especially) in poor countries, and that is because of demographic growth and other factors. Today it is difficult for people to participate directly in the governing of countries, states, counties, districts, cities and even villages, and it will be even more difficult in the future. Also it is difficult for the people to choose their rulers because those who govern are often appointed officials without the knowledge of population. Sometimes, too, there is inadequate technology to discern the will of the people, and at other times political leaders have no interest or lack the necessary funding for the electoral process. In addition, people often do not want to participate, and sometimes the system is not open to their input.

In the country descriptions offered above, it is easy to see that in some cases the people do not participate fully in the process of electing all or many of the officials who will govern the country. Yet, many have similar governments. Some are a combination of democracy and aristocracy. Some do not have a constitution --that is, a document where the principles of government and the rights of the people are set forth--. A democracy gives people the right to decide who is going to rule them. But in some countries, which as a matter of tradition keep a King or Queen, this monarch may no longer have many of his former powers. Even so, he or she may sometimes designate the Prime Minister or dissolve the Parliament, and those are very powerful instruments to influence the direction of the government against the will of the people. In these cases, the Prime Minister is the most powerful figure in the government, and he is not elected by the people.

There are some other countries that also have non-elected parliamentary bodies, like the House of the Lords in Great Britain. This is often the product of an aristocratic political system that is ruled or at least greatly influenced by the upper class. Similar idiosyncrasies are found in other countries, giving to democracy some variation of his basis.

Most countries have political parties, representing different principles and calling themselves democrats, conservatives, republicans, revolutionaries, socialists, communists, liberals, and so on. It is supposed that these parties represent the ideals or the will of a part of the people. But in many cases when they win elections and take control of the government, they forget that in pursuing their goals they must not abuse the interests of the people represented by others parties. They must understand that they must not use the state to attack the opposition. And conversely the opposition must help the government guide the country by trying to constructively influence it and improve its performance for the good of the nation. But the

opposition parties must also accept the will of the majority. Everyone must place the well being of the country ahead of their own particular interest. But this is a very hard thing for some people to understand.

There is no single model of democracy. Democratic systems may be similar, but they are not the same. Some countries will never have democracy because their culture do not fix with democracy. In all forms of government, the system is important, but the people who rule must always have the ideal of serving the nation.

In conclusion, democracies are not built in a day. They are the product of a very long process, and require unity, education and an understanding of the people, culture and traditions of the countries in which they are practiced. Not all political cultures are compatible with democracy. The important thing to understand is that democracy cannot be imposed by force. People must want it. The best democracy will be that which respects the will of the people. The government must give to the people what they need: jobs, security, health, education, freedom, etc. But it also must apply the law strictly and fairly. Democracy does not mean the abuse of freedom. People have rights, but they also have obligations. They need to understand that their rights end where the rights of others begin.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Grolier Incorporated. Academic American Encyclopedia. Danbury, Conn.: Grolier Inc., 1996, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica. Britannica Book of the Year. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1997.

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