

The background of the slide features a faded, light blue image of classical architectural columns, likely from a government building, positioned on the left side. The rest of the background is a solid light blue color.

Comparative Politics

Understanding different
political systems



Ways to classify states

Democratic or non-democratic?

Also can study a state's internal organization, since democracies vary greatly, as do non-democratic regimes



Democracies

- Tremendous growth in numbers in 20th c. Three waves of growth:
 - End of WWI
 - End of WWII
 - 1970s through 1990s
- Now 121 electoral democracies out of about 190 nation-states & 18 territories, according to Freedom House.



Democracies not uniform

Key Differences:

- * Presidential vs. Parliamentary government
- * Ideologies (classical liberalism vs. democratic socialism)
- * Economic systems (capitalist vs. socialist)
- * Types of rights protected
- * Types of electoral systems



Democracies Share:

- A government based on the decisions of the majority, either directly or indirectly.
- The people and government are connected both thru the process (how decisions are made) and the outcome (what decisions are made).



Ideas of Pericles (495-429 BC)

Characteristics of democracies:

- * Rule by the people
- * Equality under the law
- * Pluralism: respect for diverse viewpoints
- * Idea of a private domain
- * High enough standard of living to secure people's happiness

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People & government connected

- Through free & fair elections
- Through access to government officials
- Through the types of policies enacted.



People & government connected

Democracy means both:

PROCEDURES – how
decisions are made, and

SUBSTANCE – what decisions
are made (that is, a check on
what even a majority can do).



U.S. Framers & Democracy

Fear of majority tyranny led to certain choices to limit democracy:

1. Representative and not direct
2. Constitutional limits on majority choices
 - *Written constitution & rule of law
 - *Civil liberties protected in Bill of Rights
 - *Judicial review of actions of Congress & President



Five Dimensions to Examine

1.) Participation: how people select their government officials & express policy preferences.

- Franchise: who votes?
- Effect: what issues are subject to popular vote?

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Five Dimensions to Examine

1.) Participation: how people select their government officials & express policy preferences.

- On these issues, how does U.S. compare with Germany?



U.S. compared with Switzerland

- Who votes? Expansion of Voting Rights
 - U.S. not fully democratic until 20th century. Women in 1920; African-Americans in 1965; people between 18 & 21 in 1971. No bilingual ballots until 1982.



U.S. compared with USSR

- Who votes? Expansion of Voting Rights
 - Totalitarian Russia? Women in 1917; national minorities in 1917 and 1922.



U.S. voting turnout

- Low turnout of electorate complicates our ability to claim strong participation element.
- Average turnout of 50% in presidential & 40% in midterm.
 - 1996: 49%
 - 2000: 54.3%
 - 2004: 59.6% highest since 1968



U.S. compared with modern Russia

- Effect of voting on important issues
 - U.S. has no national referendum or initiatives
 - RF uses both. Citizens can review statutes & treaties.

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2.) Pluralism

How does government advance tolerance for different ideas? Democracies are composed of people of diverse viewpoints & backgrounds. How are they accommodated? How are their interests represented?

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Religious toleration

In U.S., both Constitution & 1st Amendment's Establishment Clause restrict government involvement in religion. Framers' intended to permit diverse religious views to coexist in a democratic framework.



Religious toleration

In Germany, Basic Law guarantees religious liberty. Government imposes “church tax” to support recognized religions.

Intent is to strengthen civil society. Some faiths not recognized or subsidized (Islam); others refuse state aid (Baptists & Methodists); and others discriminated against (Church of Scientology).

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3.) Developmentalism

How does government ensure people can develop their full potential?

Political socialization: process by which citizens learn basic political values & beliefs, which enables them to act in the political system. Occurs in every political society.

Sources: family, friends, political leaders, schools, interest groups.



U.S. compared with Argentina

- In U.S., explicit socialization through school programs like Character Counts & student dress codes.
- Do they increase democratic awareness?
- Supporters argue they do because they stress positive values & reject gang values.

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4.) Protection

How does a government ensure democratic values are protected? How does it balance the need for liberty with counter pressures for order & security?

Compare U.S. & Britain.

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U.S. and Britain compared

- U.S. has written constitution and Bill of Rights, and judicial review to enforce them.
- Britain has no written constitution or judicial review but has long tradition of rights & legal practices.



Challenges for democracies

- Democracies never guarantee provide absolute protection from government control. No rights are absolute.
- Wartime fears may drive majorities to pass laws that restrict – and even criminalize – unpopular minorities.



U.S. rights during wartime

- Espionage Act of 1917.
- Japanese-Americans' internment during WWII.
- Patriot Act & other post 9/11 antiterrorism measures.

Courts often defer to executive & legislative branches during crises.

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British protections

- Britain relies on long-time practices & norms to protect rights, as well as documents dating to the Magna Carta in 1215.
- Also relies on the House of Commons – the people – to protect rights.

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U.S. and Britain compared

- Does one type of system better protect citizens' rights during national crises, when popular passions and fears tend to drive national policy?

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5.) Performance

How well does government serve its citizens' material needs?

We can compare democracies in terms of socio-economic factors.

Text compares U.S. & India on performance measure.



U.S. compared with India

Factors include technological & industrial development, natural resources, population size & other variables.

Population

U.S.	295,734,134
India	1,080,264,388

U.S. ahead on many measures.



U.S. compared with India

Per capita income

U.S.	\$40,100
India	\$ 3,100

Literacy rate above age 15

U.S.	97%
India	59.5%
Men:	70% & Women: 48%



U.S. compared with India

Infant mortality rate

U.S. 6.5 deaths per 1,000 live births

India 56.3 deaths per 1,000 live births

Life expectancy (at birth)

U.S. 77.7 years

India 64.4 years

Yet India's performance has much improved since 1947.



U.S. compared with India

In fact, other measures show strong performance. For example, India has 2nd fastest growing major economy in the world, faster than U.S.

GDP Growth

U.S.	3.3%
India	8.1%

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U.S. compared with India

Also both countries have significant poor populations. In U.S., top 1% of households own 38% of country's wealth, & top 20% own 83% of wealth.

Population below poverty

U.S. 12%

India 25%

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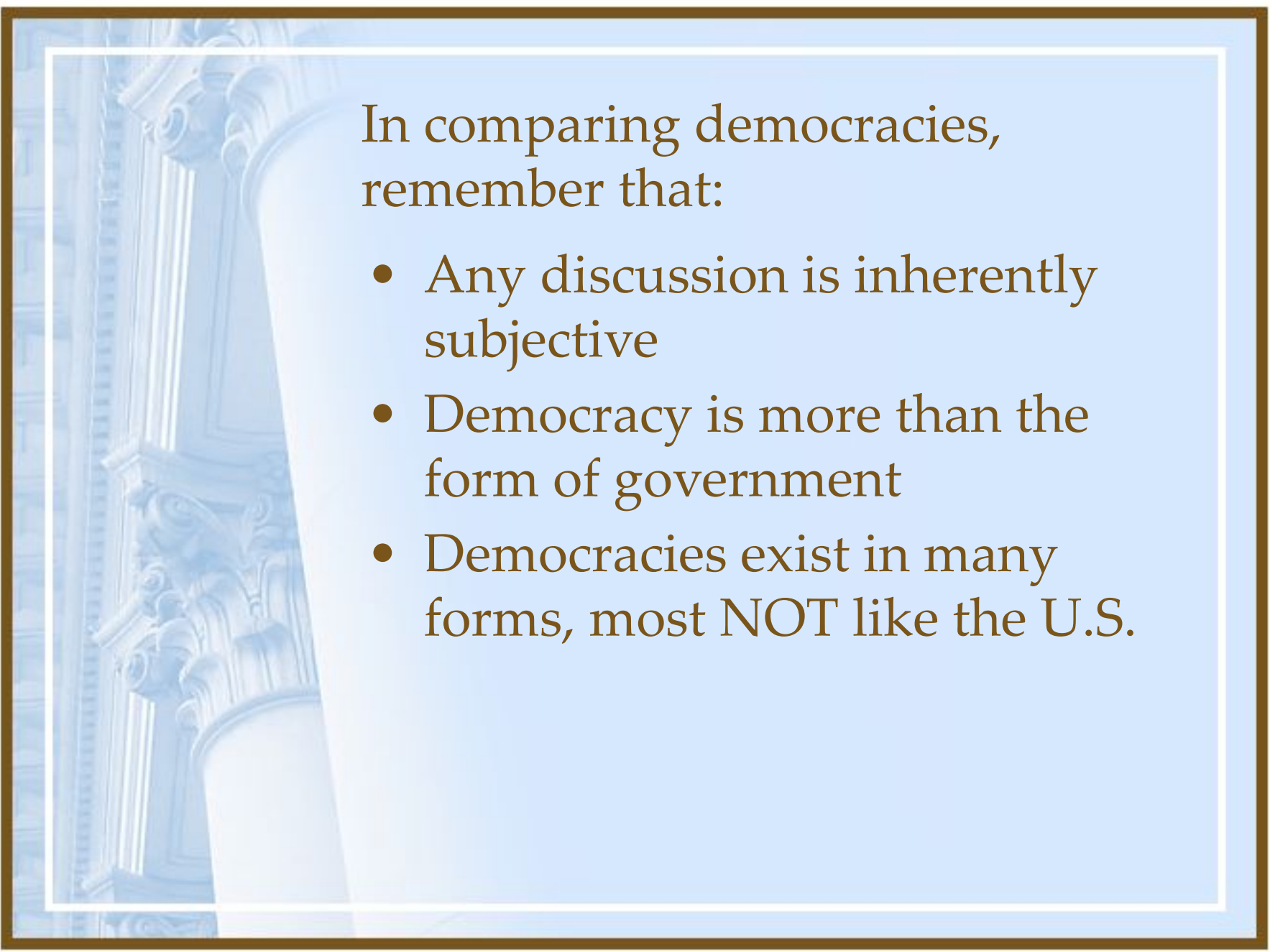
Indian economic changes

- Since independence, a government-centered approach to economic policy (railroads, aviation, energy, etc.).
- Recently, however, some experiments with privatization & foreign investment.
- Also family planning policies to control population growth.

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Why the spread of democracy?

- Fatigue with authoritarian governments
- International pressure favoring democracy
- Changing popular expectations
- Emergence of human rights law

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In comparing democracies,
remember that:

- Any discussion is inherently subjective
- Democracy is more than the form of government
- Democracies exist in many forms, most NOT like the U.S.