



CONCEPTUAL ELUCIDATION OF THE CORE IDEAL ATTRIBUTES OF DEMOCRACY: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract: Democracy has become a wide system of government worldwide, especially in the twentieth century, where technology has been merged into the democratic ethos, promoting electronic voting and campaigns, thereby increasing public participation in government. However, in the developing world, the practical aspect of democracy is far away from its ideal features. In order to reinvestigate what democracy ought to be, this article searched for the key attributes of democracy on the web of science (WoS) database and Google search engine in order to have a wide range of results for the content analysis. These basic attributes of democracy, such as popular sovereignty, equality, freedom, pluralism, legality, and legitimacy were then discussed and analyzed after obtaining their levels in some selected countries. The information from the appropriate global indices for the randomly chosen countries was displayed in chart models. The results showed that democracy is a well-practiced in industrialized countries, but the opposite is true in developing countries. This shows the need to promote and standardize democratic values more globally.

Keywords: Democracy, Sovereignty, Equality, Freedom, Pluralism, Legalism

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1. Introduction

In today's interconnected world, democracy has emerged as the most widely accepted system of governance. Across all continents, almost all countries practice democracy. Historically, democracy is defined as a form of government in which citizens possess equal rights and participate in shaping public policies and programs. The basic meaning of democracy is derived from the Greek word "Demokratia," which means "Demos" People and "Kratos" Government. From Greek, the word democracy has moved to other languages such as Turkish, French, and English, to mention but a few. As such, democracy has evolved into a universally recognized and linguistically embedded political ideal.

From another perspective, democracy derives from the two Greek words 'DEMOS,' which means citizens, and 'KRETIEN,' which means ruling (Manfred, 2001); that is to say, democracy means the rule of the people or government of the people as Abraham Lincoln observes, democracy is the government of the people by the people to the people for the people. The concept of the people indicates that democracy transcends voting and includes several aspects of human life and values, such as equality, justice, transparency, literacy, tolerance, accountability, and social interaction in a society (Campagna and Guevara, 2023).

A basic definition of democracy is a governmental system in which all citizens of a state or polity engage in decision-

making, typically by electing representatives to a parliament or similar institution. Democracy is further defined based on two major concepts: 'People and Rule. By people, democracy is defined as "government by the people; by rule, democracy is defined as the rule of the majority. Democracy is "the government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections." In other words, democracy is the consent of the people.

Historically, democracy was a direct system in which people participate directly in decision-making. This happened in the Athenian democracy, which possessed two primary attributes: the random selection of ordinary citizens to fill the few existing government administrative and judicial offices and a legislative assembly of all Athenian citizens. This type of democracy was led by an Athen philosopher, Cleisthenes, during classical antiquity and was the first democracy in 508-507 BC. Cleisthenes is referred to as "the father of Athenian democracy". Democracy according to his ideology is analyzed to be the freedom of the people. Aristotle further states that the underlying principle of democracy is freedom; in other words, every citizen enjoys equal rights and opportunities. He asserts that freedom has two primary dimensions: being governed and governing in return.

In the deep explanation of democracy, some thinkers



attempt to establish a connection between it and effective government. Some assert that democracy automatically promotes good governance, while others maintain that the two can exist independently. To provide good governance in a democracy, various political scholars have made numerous contributions that gave birth to different thoughts, which include liberals, communists, socialists, conservatives, anarchists, and fascists. As a result of these concepts of emergence democracy has further been defined based on three views: constitutional democracy, social democracy, and liberal democracy. Based on these concepts, democracy is seen as a majority rule, a government that protects the rights of minorities, a system that eradicates social inequality, a method that provides equal opportunity to everyone, and a government that ensures adequate service to the people. Democracy is seen as a basic system of government because it is widely known as a system that protects the rights of individuals. By 1914, in all continents of the world, most countries adopted a democratic system as a form of government: North America, South America, Australia, Asia, and Africa (Appadorai, 2004). Every democratic government aims to ensure justice in the polity, removal of dictatorship and proletarian, social pluralism, maximum political participation, equal citizen's rights, civility, multi-party system, political freedom, a free society, and formation of civil society organizations (Beetham, 2014).

A vital argument on democracy is whether it is a system of government that could be regarded as the best form of government in a society. Several scholars have different opinion and perspectives on whether democracy can be considered a success. According to Diamond (2009), there are some certain dimensions that determine the success or otherwise of democratic government. According to him democracy is defined as a multi-dimensional concept. These dimensions include a freedom system, protecting the rights of minorities, rule of law, decision-making process, independent and impartial system, formation of civil society organizations, and control of corruption. These dimensions form the basis of the meaning of democratic administration.

The above dimensions of democracy, as specified by Diamond (2009), are the bedrock of any democratic society. In other words, in any society where the above dimensions are visible, society is said to practice good governance and vice versa. Diamond (2009) has also given more details to the principles and attributes of democracy that determine the level of the democratic system in any society. Democratic principles are further explained by another scholar named Anyaela; he asserts that democratic principles provide that all citizens are equal before the law and that nobody is above the law. Anyaela has further stated that the basic principle of good governance is the rule of law (Anyaele, 2003). In good governance, the rule of law is of paramount importance; the concept of the rule of law is responsible for determining all activities and services of government; as a

result of this, everyone is below the law; the law is above everyone irrespective of their place or status in life.

In a democratic society, effective governance is characterized by adherence to the rule of law, protection of individual freedoms, equality of all citizens before the law, an independent judiciary, and the absence of bias within the democratic framework; the presence of these elements indicates good governance, and their absence suggests otherwise. Every democratic society must have vital attributes such as free and fair elections (Yusuf, 2009), popular sovereignty, popular participation, equality, and constitutional government (Ka'oje, 2003).

Applying the above principles for a sound democracy to thrive is needed in every society. In the case of most developing countries the absence of these basic principles of democracy has led to bad governance, which contributes to the nations' underdevelopment. In every country where the basic principles/attributes of democracy are absent, the democratic system should be described as being in hanky-panky situations and vice versa. As a result, in every country, for democracy to be sound and strong, these basic features must be adopted and adhered. This article highlights those principles of ideal democracy that promote transparency and accountability and ensure good governance in the polity.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Data Collection

This article is part of a literature review of a Master's thesis that was conducted and submitted to the Department of International Relations, Gazi University. For this reason, we adopt content analysis and literature review as our data collection method to explain and analyze the conceptual framework of democracy and the basic terminologies/principles of democracy, such as popular sovereignty, freedom, equality, justice, legality, and plurality. We adopt the qualitative research methods because it encompasses content analysis and it is essential for understanding the nuances and contexts of democratic traits. Content analysis and other methods can help to understand things better, thereby allowing researchers to examine perspectives, motivations, and values that are crucial for assessing the effectiveness of democratic systems.

After outlining the basic attributes of democracy as outlined by the democratic index, we input each of the features into the Web of Science and Google search engines database to find articles, books, and internet materials written on them. This is to give us a roadmap for deducing the wide range meanings of such terminologies. We also look up the features of such traits of democracy to elaborate on what they ought to be and show differences where necessary from what they are thought to be. We then select some countries across the continents at random in order to determine the level of such element of democracy in these countries in order to have an insight of the level of democratic practice and compliance around the world.

2.2. Analysis of Data

We used the data from the Economist Democracy Index 2024 to ascertain and obtain the data that shows the level of popular sovereignty of the randomly selected countries. Then, we drew a chart to highlight the levels concisely.

We then used a standard measure of Equality- the Gini coefficient (where a lower value means more equality) to determine equality and inequality in the selected countries by presenting the data in a histogram. Realizing the relevance of gender equality in the contemporary political discuss, we use the 2024 data from World Population Review to indicate the level of gender equality through a four-field (quadrant) plot in the selected countries.

We then used the Freedom House 2024 scores (0–100, with higher scores meaning more freedom) to measure the level of freedom in the selected countries. We used the data obtained and constructed an area chart to indicate the level of freedom in those countries.

Political Pluralism and Participation” scores from Electoral Pluralism Index 2024 (0–100, higher is more pluralism) as a reference is used to get the level of political participation/pluralism of the people in the selected countries. The data obtained is used to draw a waterfall chart to indicate the levels of participation more concisely. We finally used a reputable source- the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, to obtain the data for the level of Legality and legitimacy in the selected countries in 2024; we then constructed a bubble chart to present such data.

Analyzing the basic attributes of democracy, we attempt to draw a relationship between the features of democracy in developing countries and the nature of democracy in the developed world. Having observed the striking difference, we recommend the need for standardization of democratic ethos by promoting transparency, equality, freedom, and popular participation in third-world countries.

3. Conceptual Framework and Analysis

3.1. Popular Sovereignty

The first word that comes to mind at the mention of democracy is popular sovereignty; it means that the state's power belongs to the people. According to the theory of popular sovereignty, the people themselves are the ultimate source of political power, serving as both the ruled and the rulers (Espejo, 2014). Generally, popular sovereignty means people, and it states the creation and application of law in a society that should be based on the rule of law. It also expresses the supreme power of the land; in other words, popular sovereignty, or the sovereignty of the people, is the principle that indicates that the authority of the government is created and sustained by the consent of its people through their elected representatives (Rule by the People), who are the source of all political power.

The idea of popular sovereignty means that the people have the power to make laws and rules. Some scholars

contend that although it endorses neo-populist democracy, it more effectively promotes a polycentric, constitutional democracy that empowers individuals collectively (Pettit, 2022). Therefore, popular sovereignty as a concept of democracy is in which the consent of the people is strictly adhered to, so the success or otherwise of a democratic system in a society depends on the idea of whether the consent of the people is adhered to or not. This consent of the people that is popular sovereignty, according to Akyilmaz (1998), can be summarized as follows:

1. Firstly, every citizen should have the right to vote and be voted for, and being able to vote is not a function but a right entitled to.

This rule stresses that everyone is equal in a democracy. It indicates that voting or running for office is not a privilege for a few individuals but the right for all the citizens. It supports the notion that the supreme power belongs to the people. In a democracy, the people provide the government with legitimacy. It also support the freedom of universal adult franchise. For this consent to be valid, all adult citizens must be eligible to vote and run for office. This freedom is very important for democracy, decency, and the law. Denying citizens this right leads to disenfranchisement and injustice. To keep politics fair and open, everyone should be able to vote and run for office. No group is left out or not represented enough. Democracy should be open to everyone without any constraints. This basic right lets people choose their own government and make sure that public life is fair, responsible, and free.

2. The people can vote out any leader and make him accountable during his tenure.

This rule means that citizens should be able to vote out leaders and hold them accountable. This is a key part of democratic governance, although it depends on the sort of democratic system in place. Studies show that the way voting systems are set up has a big impact on how well people can punish incumbents. Elections function as essential instruments for citizens to articulate their views and ensure leaders are held accountable for their actions. The anticipation of future electoral evaluation compels politicians to synchronize their programs with voter inclinations (Stokes, 1997).

3. Every leader represents his people in governance accordingly.

The statement indicates that leaders must be responsible to the public, ensuring that governance corresponds with the citizens' demands and expectations (Habbodin and Firdaus, 2022). It also signifies that there must be responsible leaders capable of effecting significant transformations within the community. Effective leadership is vital in democratic contexts, as it entails the capacity to inspire and motivate individuals toward common objectives, essential for sound governance (Hassall,

2006).

4. Popular sovereignty is based on the people's consent and democratic principles (Akyilmaz, 1998).

Popular sovereignty denotes that the populace constitutes the ultimate authority, with their collective will directing rule (Espejo, 2014). It is a basic principle and one of the bedrocks of democracy rule. Democracy founded on popular sovereignty positions citizens as the paramount authority inside the state, underscoring their consent. This principle emphasizes the significance of active public engagement and discourse to achieve consensus, so guaranteeing a fair and inclusive democratic process (Izzani and Rahmadini, 2024).

The theory of popular sovereignty is stated in the Social Contract of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This prominent political work highlights the ideals of "general will" and further nurtures the idea of popular sovereignty. The central tenet is that legitimacy or rule of law is based on the consent of the governed.

Based on the above explanations, popular sovereignty refers to the people's consent. So, a democratic system should be entirely the government of the people. Every society should allow the participation of the people in governance. By so doing, good governance will emerge. In a society where people come to power without elections, such governance is outside the environment of good governance and should be described as disregarding the concept of popular sovereignty.

In the real world, some notable countries can be termed as sovereign states. The United States, Mexico, and Canada are listed as the countries that have adopted a system of popular sovereignty. In the U.S., people vote for representatives to make decisions for them in Congress. At the state level, however, people vote directly on laws through initiatives or referendums. Canada operates in a similar manner; however, its Parliament has both elected MPs and appointed Senators. Mexico possesses a system

analogous to that of Canada, wherein citizens elect their national leaders and state governors. The governors collaborate with the state legislatures (Sauzet, 2024).

The Economist Democracy Index 2024 shows the level of popular sovereignty in some countries as a bar chart (Figure 1).

According to the chart above, the US, Canada, Norway, and the UK have the highest scores for popular sovereignty. Brazil, Nigeria, and South Africa have lower scores, meaning their people have less power, indicating the need for promoting popularism in such countries. The chart has a 0–10 scale, and the score for each country is clearly shown above in the bar chart (Economistintelligence, 2024).

Despite the high points associated with popular sovereignty, many issues are associated with its focal point- the people. Popular sovereignty poses significant inquiries regarding the definition of "the people" and the collective decision-making mechanisms. It also shows how the legal system and the people's power to change their government structure are at odds with each other (Waltermann, 2019). Moreover, popular sovereignty is limited in the developing world as indicated in the chart above, where elections are more like selections by the powerful in society. Such a situation reveals the issues surrounding the concept of sovereignty, which most scholars, especially critics, describe as unpopular sovereignty.

Unpopular sovereignty denotes the intricacies and contradictions associated with sovereignty, especially when it conflicts with popular will or democratic ideals. This idea is looked at from different historical and theoretical points of view, showing how sovereignty can be seen as not legitimate or not connected to the people. The problem is that legal constitutionalism and deliberative democracy put rights and values ahead of power, making people think sovereignty is "unpopular" (Somek and Wilkinson, 2020).

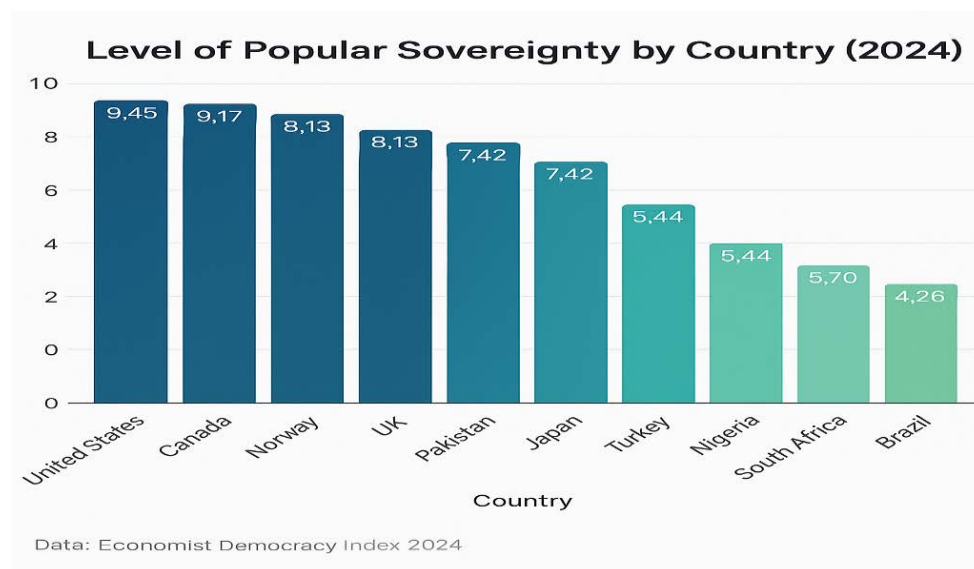


Figure 1. Bar Chart showing the level of popular sovereignty in some selected countries across the continents (constructed by the authors on julius.ai).

Several examples of unpopular sovereignty have occurred worldwide, especially during colonial eras. The case of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) exemplifies an egregious instance of unpopular sovereignty, wherein a white minority government unilaterally proclaimed independence, contravening majority rule and international standards during the decolonization process (White, 2015). The notion of unpopular or limited sovereignty is pertinent in current geopolitical scenarios, exemplified by Ukraine, where colonial legacies and territorial conflicts obfuscate the comprehension of sovereignty (Eppinger, 2022). The notion needs to be uplifted and standardized, especially in developing countries, so that the basic principles of democracy will be ensured and good governance will prevail in third-world countries like in first-world nations.

3.2. Equality

For a vibrant democratic system to exist in any society, equality should be given utmost importance. In general, the concept of equality denotes that all individuals in a society are equal and should be treated equally. There are different kinds of equality in the world: social equality, health equality, economic equality, and gender equality (Nagel, 1978).

Social Equality is a complex idea that includes treating everyone in a society in the same manner, giving everyone the same chances, and giving everyone the same access to resources. Numerous studies have shown that it is important for improving quality of life and community well-being. Social Equality is a state of affairs in which all people within a specific society or isolated group have the same status in certain respects. At the very least, social equality includes equal rights under the law, such as security, voting rights, freedom of speech and assembly, property rights, and access to social goods and services (Babu, 2022). Moreover, it includes health equity, economic equality, and other social securities. It also includes equal opportunities and obligations in any given society. In the contemporary era, the word equality denotes the unimportance of gender differences and completely ignores and condemns racism (Öztekin, 2003) in this approach, the color and gender of individuals are not considered as determining factors of their capacity; that is, everyone is treated equally. In a democracy, equality means protecting the rights of the minority, and the entire society is treated equally without vices.

Health equality signifies having the same opportunity to access health facilities in a given community without bias or prejudice. Health equality means everyone should have the same chance to get health care and reach their best health, regardless of race, income level, or other factors. This idea has become more popular, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which showed that health outcomes were already unequal among marginalized groups. Health equality seeks to eradicate disparities between economically or socially disadvantaged groups and their

more affluent counterparts (Azizoglu and Terzi, 2024).

Economic equality as another kinds of equality offers various advantages for achieving societal and economic opportunities. Economic equality is a complex idea that includes equal rights, chances, and results. It is essential for promoting democracy, social justice, and long-term growth. To achieve economic equality, we must deal with the systemic differences in wealth and income often maintained by long-standing political and economic systems. Economic equality is vital for a robust democracy and social justice since it mitigates market inefficiencies and corrupt political mechanisms that perpetuate privilege and poverty. Post-World War II Japan approach exemplifies how enhancing economic equality may foster social cohesion, maintain democratic stability, and facilitate long-term economic growth (Frederking, 2021). Gender equality, like any other kind of equality, stands for equality in gender. In other words, it campaigns for having equal opportunities in whatever ramifications, irrespective of male or female. Equal economic, social, political, health, and educational chances for both males and females (Sukalova and Ceniga, 2021). In most cases, gender equality becomes relevant when more women are given opportunities in politics and leadership roles, especially in some third-world countries where women are mostly less active in politics. Gender equality is deeply connected to ideas of justice, pluralism, legality, and legitimacy, creating a complicated web of social, political, and legal issues (Belingheri et al., 2021).

Considering that gender equality is a sensitive and one of the widely discuss issues in the twenty-first century, we use the 2025 data of the World Population Review to ascertain and analyze the levels of gender equality in our selected countries (Worldpopulationreview, 2025). Below is a four-field (quadrant) plot visualizing the gender equality levels in the selected countries. The red dashed line marks the median, and the green dash-dot line marks the mean. Countries to the right of these lines have higher gender equality, while those to the left have lower equality.

The chart given in Figure 2 makes it easy to identify which of the chosen countries (like Norway and South Africa) are doing well in terms of gender equality and which (like Pakistan and Nigeria) are not. The GGGI score can be anything from 0 to 1, with a higher value meaning more gender equality. The visualization indicates lower gender equality in the selected developing countries than the selected developed countries. This calls for massive actions to promote more gender equality in developing countries that can be done by collaboration of government and non-government organizations such as civil societies.

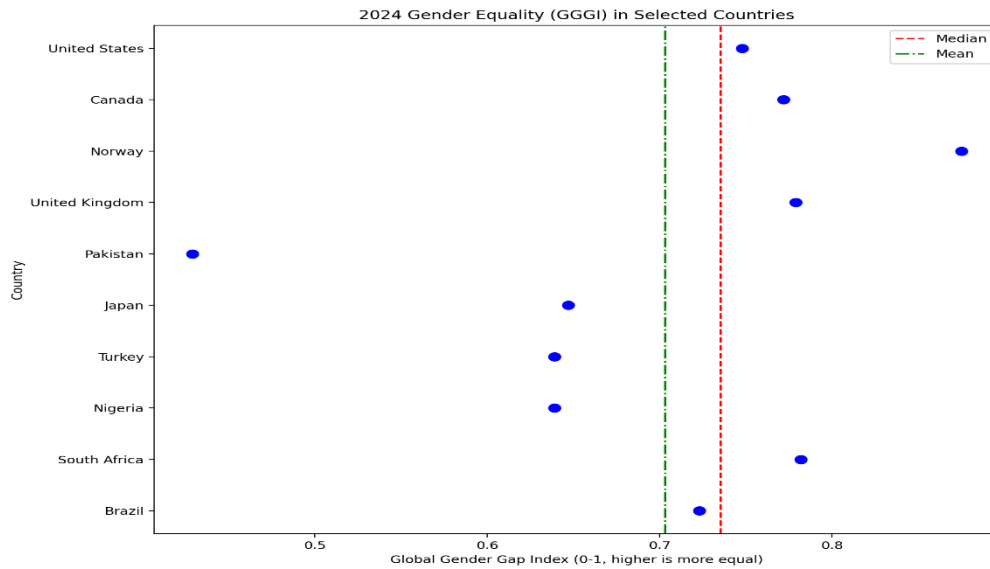


Figure 2. A four-field (quadrant) plot showing the level of gender equality in some selected countries (constructed by the authors on julius.ai).

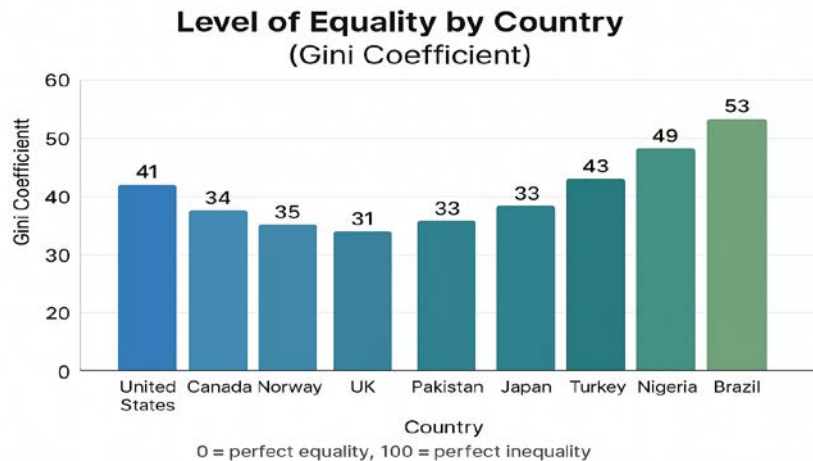


Figure 3. A Histogram showing the level of equality in some selected countries across the continents (constructed by the authors on julius.ai).

In order to determine the level of general quality in the countries selected, we used the Gini Coefficient data, which we transformed into a histogram chart. The histogram shows how equal the United States, Canada, Norway, the UK, Pakistan, Japan, Türkiye, Nigeria, and Brazil are. The Gini coefficient measures equality, with lower values meaning more equality and vice versa.

The Gini coefficients (Figure 3) for Norway and the UK are the lowest, meaning these two countries have the most equality. Brazil and Nigeria have the highest Gini coefficients (Worldbank, 2024), which means they possess the lowest inequality level among the selected countries. Compared to the others, the United States, Türkiye, and South Africa also have much inequality.

From the chart, we can deduce that the world faces some specific inequality issues. If the chart represents the world, the global average level of inequality would be around 40%, which is high. In order to have an equal global society where justice prevails, there is a strong

need for the government and all stakeholders, such as international organizations and civil societies, to work and create policies and programs of inclusivity collaboratively.

3.3. Freedom

In a society with many different groups, freedom means finding a balance between people's rights and the common good, which is often done through the law (Rosenfeld, 2001). The concept is significant in social sciences such as politics, law, and philosophy. It entails the ability of individuals or groups to act, speak, and participate in social settings without undue restraint or obstacles. Equality, and freedom have a strong relationship, although they differ in many ways. The two concepts are all democratic entities. Freedom entails political, societal, individual, and economic freedom; it is an important element of the features of democracy. It has been described as a relationship free from oppression or coercion, the absence of disabling conditions for an

individual and the fulfillment of enabling conditions, or the absence of lived conditions of compulsion, e.g., economic compulsion in a society. Individual freedom entails every citizen having some fundamental right that nobody can infringe. Freedom includes freedom of speech, religion, movement, expression, and association. For governance to be good, all types of freedom should be ensured and protected in a society.

Freedom has two vital dimensions: negative and positive freedoms. While negative freedom entails the absence of external constraints like freedom from censorship, positive freedom means the ability to act upon one's free will, such as freedom to acquire education and the right to gain employment or participate in political processes (Openlearn, 2025).

Freedom is also classified into four kinds: political, civil, economic, and social freedoms. Political freedom indicates the right to participate in political activities; civil freedom encompasses protecting individuals' rights. On the other hand, economic freedom has to do with the capacity to control resources and own property, just as social freedom highlights the ability to associate and participate in society without prejudices or discrimination (Gözler Çamur, 2017).

In order to ascertain the level of freedom around the world, we selected a few countries across continents and accessed their level of freedom from Freedom House. Based on Freedom House scores (0–100, higher is more freedom) (Freedomhouse, 2024), this area chart shows how free the U.S, Canada, Norway, the UK, Pakistan, Japan, Türkiye, Nigeria, South Africa, and Brazil were in 2024:

The chart given in Figure 4 indicates that the US, Canada, Norway, and the UK have the most freedom. The freedom scores for Pakistan, Türkiye, Nigeria, South Africa, and Brazil are lower. The area chart shows the differences in

freedom levels between these countries from those with high level of freedoms to those with low level of freedoms compared to other countries in the chart.

From the chart, we can generally infer that in the least democratic nations, the notion of freedom encounters significant obstacles, including authoritarianism, censorship, discrimination, and poverty, which constrain the liberties of citizens in these regions. This calls for a robust approach, such as forming and or supporting advocacy organizations that would uphold individuals' freedom in society. Lawyer activists can also partner with civil societies to ensure the freedom of the masses.

3.4. Pluralism

Pluralism is a key part of modern societies, where people have different ideas about what makes a good life, what moral rights are, and how society should be run (Pfannkuche, 2016). It is an idea that entails people's participation in a country's governance affairs. It signifies that the power of a state depends on the people in the concept of pluralism. Pluralism as a political philosophy is the recognition and affirmation of diversity within a political body, which permits the peaceful coexistence of different interests, convictions, and lifestyles (Campagna and Guevara, 2023). Pluralism rejects absolute rule, thereby ensuring that the political and cultural rights of the minority should be recognized and protected.

For an effective and sound democratic system, the basic features of pluralism should be efficient in an administration. Such features of pluralism include separation of power between the three organs of government, division of labor, multi-party system, written constitutions, and the existence of bilateral legislature. In other words, it is a concept that accepts and addresses compatible and incompatible elements within various fields (Sauzet, 2024).

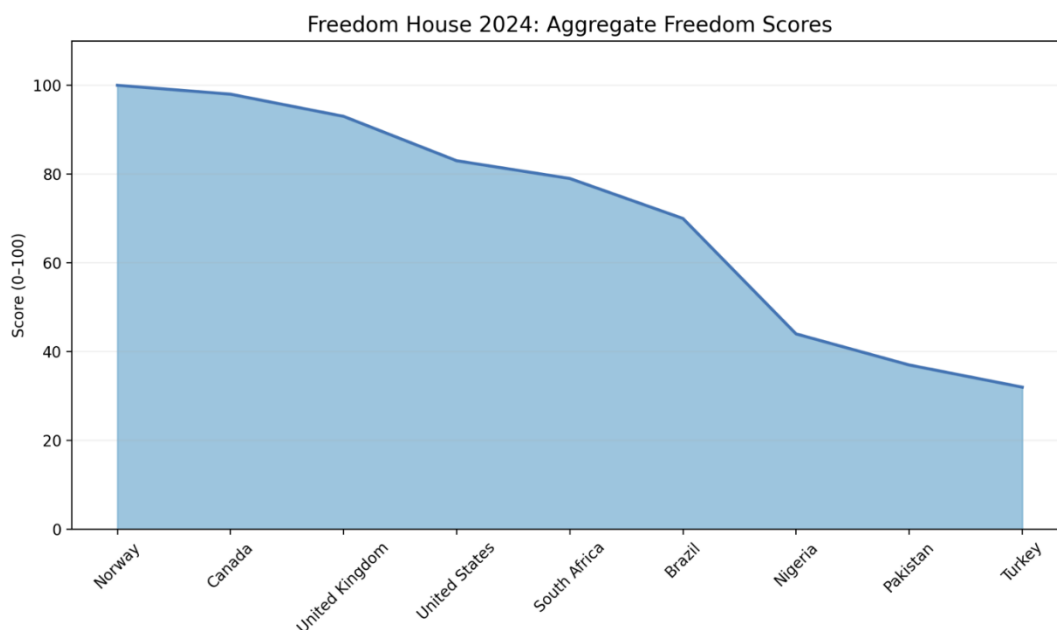


Figure 4. An Area Chart showing the level of freedom in some selected countries across the continents (constructed by the authors on julius.ai).

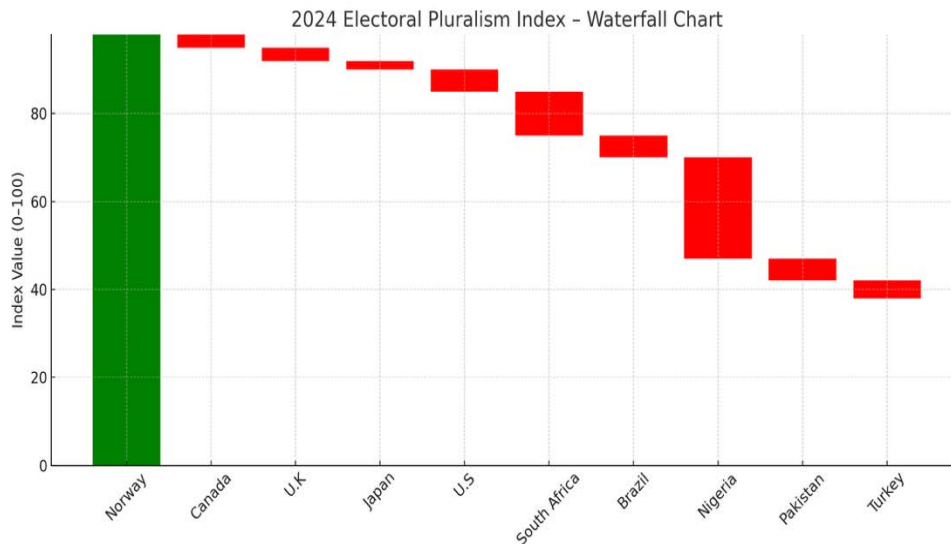


Figure 5. A Waterfall Chart showing the level of pluralism in some selected countries across the continents (constructed by the authors on julius.ai).

Pluralism is divided into three vital types: value pluralism, which entails that values are many and often cannot be compared, value pluralism denotes the acknowledgment that environmental valuation encompasses various, frequently contradictory value systems, as Isaiah Berlin pointed out. This viewpoint is crucial in scenarios such as transitional justice, where diverse cultural values exist simultaneously without a prevailing narrative (Haldemann, 2022); cultural pluralism, which stresses the fact that different cultures can live together, each with its customs and beliefs. This kind of pluralism encourages people from different cultures to integrate and cooperate and does not think that one culture is better than another. Philosophical pluralism investigates the origins and consequences of value diversity, enhancing comprehension of normative disparities and their influence on social agency (Yumatle, 2014).

To be more practical, we use the 2024 Electoral Pluralism Index data across some selected countries and draw a waterfall chart that gives an insight into pluralism worldwide. The waterfall chart shows how pluralistic the US, Canada, Norway, the UK, Pakistan, Japan, Türkiye, Nigeria, South Africa, and Brazil were in 2024. The waterfall chart's Political Pluralism and Participation scores show the 2024 Electoral Pluralism Index across the selected countries. Each bar represents the change from one country to the next, highlighting relative increases (green) and decreases (red).

The chart's (Figure 5) most important points show that Norway, Canada, the UK, and the U.S. have the highest scores for pluralism. Pakistan and Türkiye have the lowest scores for pluralism of all listed countries. The chart has a scale from 0 to 100, and the score for each country is clearly shown above (Ourworlddata, 2024). The chart indicates the descending flow of the level of pluralism in the selected countries, indicating a negative factor relating to the issue of political pluralism worldwide. This calls for

policymakers to promote political pluralism, especially in third-world countries actively.

3.5. Legality and Legitimacy

Legality and legitimacy are connected to the need for tolerance between people with different moral beliefs to live peacefully. Standardization of democracy worldwide has a greater link with the level of legitimacy and the extent to which legal-rational authority is efficient. Every society that acts outside the concept of the rule of law such society is likely to collapse. Generally, Legality can be defined as an act, agreement, or contract consistent with the law or state of being lawful or unlawful in a given jurisdiction. Legality also means following the rules that are already in place. This is important for keeping society orderly and predictable (Archibugi and Croce, 2012). The government acts according to the rule of law, and individuals are protected against undue manipulations and will be prevented from arbitrary behavior (Yilmaz, 1999).

Legitimacy, conversely, is a legal order that includes moral rules that everyone agrees on or that come from a radicalized bargaining process. In order words, it fosters voluntary compliance rather than coercion. Legitimacy is the belief that authority is proper, which can come from legal, moral, or social reasons (Tyler, 2006). Legitimacy can be subdivided into input and output. Input legitimacy is about how authority is gained, while output legitimacy is about the overall results of governance. The functioning nature of authority relates to input legitimacy, and the assessment of the function of authority indicates output legitimacy (Potter, 2008).

It is important to note that though the word legality and legitimacy are used interchangeably, they have some significant differences; for example, while the legitimacy of the state means 'morality,' the legality of the state only means 'legality.' All legitimate decisions cannot be legal and vice versa (Şafak, 2013).

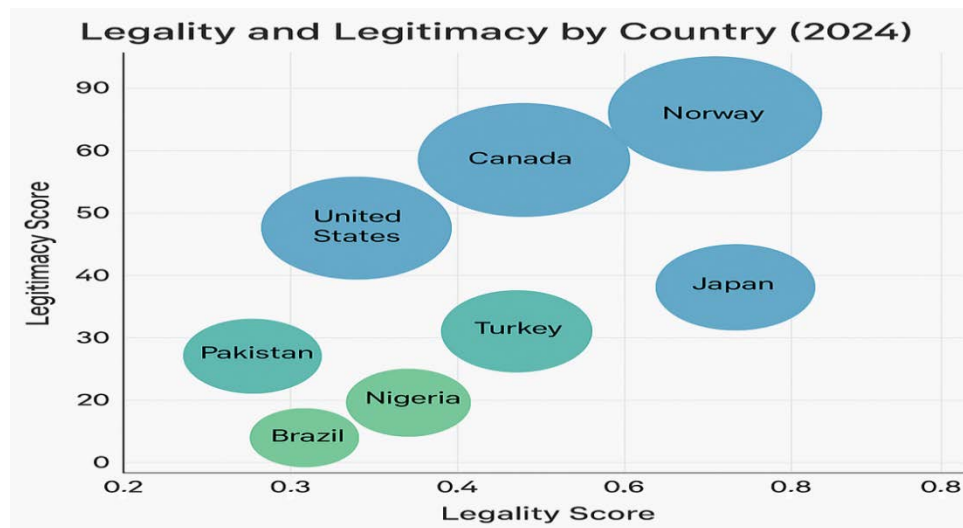


Figure 6. A Bubble Chart showing the level of legality and legitimacy in some selected countries across the continents (constructed by the authors on julius.ai).

In national and international judicial bodies' comments, decisions, and precedents, they see Legality as a priority, not legitimacy.

Countries that rule according to constitutions are more precisely on the track of good governance than those that do otherwise. Those countries with the division of power between the three arms of government- legislature, executive, and judiciary are said to be enjoying more sound democracy than those in which the power of the organs of government is very diffuse and mixed up.

To glance at the nature of legality and legitimacy worldwide, we look at the data from the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index of our selected countries and use the obtained data to draw a bubble chart (WJP, 2024). The bubble chart shows how legal and legitimate things were in 2024 in the U.S., Canada, Norway, Pakistan, Japan, Türkiye, Nigeria and Brazil. Among the countries selected in the top-right (e.g., Norway, Canada) scored highest, while those in the lower-left (e.g., Nigeria, Pakistan, and Brazil) ranked lower.

The bubble chart given in Figure 6 indicates that the X-axis (Legality Score) reflects the rule of law or legal integrity (higher is better). Y-axis (Legitimacy Score) reflects government legitimacy or trust (higher is better). Bubble size represents the overall democracy or governance score. Color: Blue and green tones differentiate the countries. In other words, the charts show that Norway, Canada, and the United States are countries where legitimacy is very high and legality is observed. It also means that Brazil and Nigeria are countries on the chart with the most illegality and non-adherence to the rule of law.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Popular sovereignty, equality, freedom, pluralism, legality, and legitimacy are closely related in political theory and practice. Each one is significant in making democratic societies effective and ensuring communities stable.

These ideas are essential for understanding how constitutional democracies work and what problems they have to deal with. They facilitate our comprehension of governmental operations and their significance, enabling us to examine the regulations that dictate our society and forecast future developments. Societies that adhere strictly to these attributes of democracy will surely have effective and efficient government compared to those that do not. In this article, we analyze these pivotal attributes that guide the practice of democracy and, by implication, good governance in our society. Good governance emerges where popular sovereignty is at its highest peak, equality is ensured, freedom is observed, pluralism is practiced, and above all, there is respect for the rule of law. Popular sovereignty is considered a vital attribute of democracy that needs to be in place to have an efficient government in any country. This concept has to do with the people's consent in the formation and implementation of government; in other words, the power rests on the people, so there is no room for tyranny. Popular sovereignty is essential for effective governance, as it guarantees that citizens are consulted on critical matters, enabling their participation in governance and empowering them to reject unpopular policies.

Equality is another attribute of democracy that promotes good governance and social justice. Equality is a basic but contentious element of justice, with varying viewpoints on its definition and consequences for assessing political institutions, legislation, and social practices. Equality is fundamental to justice discourse, with diverse philosophical viewpoints analyzing its consequences for political structures and societal norms (MacLeod, 2012). A society that provides equal chances regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or social standing will be peaceful and prosperous. This article highlights equality as one of the significant features of democracy that must be in place to have efficient administration in a given society.

Equality must be achieved concurrently with freedom,

which typically denotes the capacity of individuals to act according to their own volition for effective governance. This is because freedom can only be achieved when society has equality. Without equal access to resources, opportunities, and rights, some people or groups may not be able to enjoy their freedom fully. The concept of freedom associated with liberty and pluralism signifies freedom from all forms of discrimination. This relates to pluralism, as a pluralistic society necessitates a balance between individual rights and the collective welfare, typically achieved by legislation.

Pluralism recognizes the coexistence of various groups and viewpoints inside a community; it is not autonomous; it interacts with other elements, such as legality and legitimacy, to thrive. This is because pluralism is not a fixed concept; it necessitates continuous interaction with varied viewpoints in research. Pluralism is more practiced in a legal environment where there is adherence to laws, and everyone is equal before the law. Pluralism also becomes popular in a society where legitimacy involves accepting authority as rightful and becoming the day's order.

In summary, we identified these features as essential components of democracy. Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge their significance in comprehending the functioning of democracy, as they can generate tensions even within democratic contexts. For example, the search for legality may be at odds with the broader idea of legitimacy, especially in international situations where legal norms do not match what people think is right. The balance between freedom and pluralism can also be a source of disagreement, as different groups fight for recognition and power within the legal and political systems. These difficulties show how hard it is to make a fair and peaceful society, calling for more continuous interpretations of the concepts.

Author Contributions

The percentage of the author' contributions is presented below. The author reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

	Y.A.W.
C	100
D	100
S	100
DCP	100
DAI	100
L	100
W	100
CR	100
SR	100
PM	100
FA	100

C=Concept, D= design, S= supervision, DCP= data collection and/or processing, DAI= data analysis and/or interpretation, L= literature search, W= writing, CR= critical review, SR= submission and revision, PM= project management, FA= funding acquisition.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Consideration

Ethics committee approval was not required for this study because of there was no study on animals or humans.

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