



The Nine Challenges of Democracy

The more things change,
the more they stay the same.

For 2,500 years, history has watched democracy pop up in a dizzying variety of guises—bold and moderate, bloody and peaceful. In Athens, a deliberative democracy of propertied men ushered in a Golden Age 2,500 years ago. In 18th-century France, an absolutist democracy blazed and died, only to rise again — how many years later? The American democracy can date its birth to July 4, 1776, and has inscribed its first words: “We hold these truths ...” The British version is not so clear-cut, absorbing the lessons of a thousand rebels, visionaries, and reformers over the centuries. In our own lifetimes, we’ve seen the Czech and South African versions infuse new hope and life in the political form.

But no matter the time or place, we recognize the familiar face of democracy by nine common features. In each and every version of the formula, democracy faces nine challenges.



The Nine Challenges of Democracy

1.

To preserve freedom and agree on limits
so that everyone can be free

2.

To encourage and acknowledge responsible citizens

3.

To foster active participation

4.

To make the necessary hard choices

5.

To foster the flow of useful and timely information

6.

To provide opportunity for all

7.

To let each citizen be heard, to find leverage for change

8.

To listen and deliberate with others

9.

To seek common ground