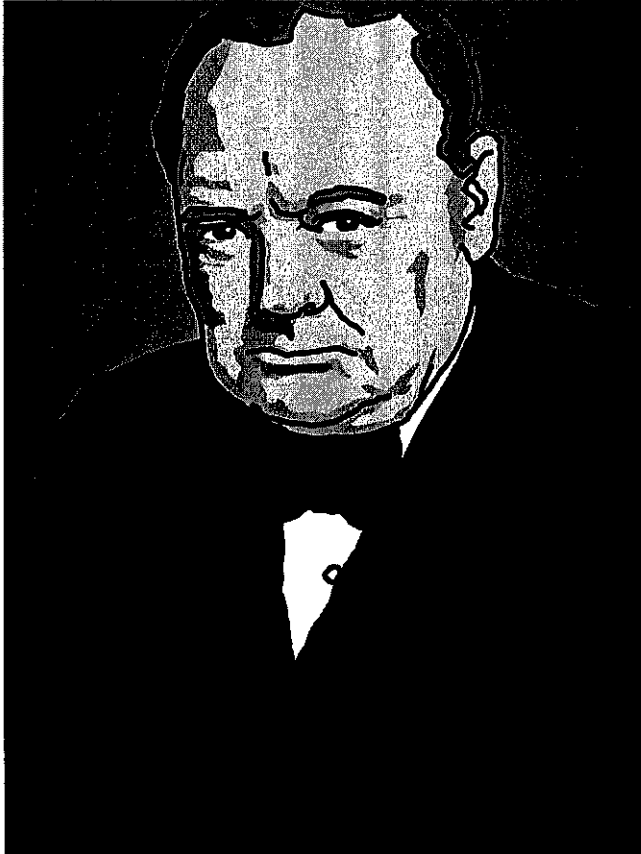


**SOCIAL STUDIES > WORLD HISTORY > DEMOCRACY**  
**QUOTABLES**



“Democracy is a system ensuring that the people are governed no better than they deserve.” –George Bernard Shaw, Irish playwright

“When the people fear the government, there is Tyranny; when the government fears the people, there is Liberty.” –Thomas Jefferson, American statesman

“It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried.”  
–Winston Churchill (pictured), former British prime minister

“Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.”  
–Franklin D. Roosevelt, former U.S. President

“The real difference between democracy and oligarchy is poverty and wealth. Wherever men rule by reason of their wealth, whether they be few of many, that is an oligarchy, and where the poor rule, that is democracy.”

–Aristotle, Greek philosopher

“Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half of the time.” –E.B. White, American writer

# Democracy

*by Anup Shah*

Democracy ("rule by the people" when translated from its Greek meaning) is seen as one of the ultimate ideals that modern civilizations strive to create, or preserve. Democracy as a system of governance is supposed to allow extensive representation and inclusiveness of as many people and views as possible to feed into the functioning of a fair and just society. Democratic principles run in line with the ideals of universal freedoms such as the right to free speech.

Importantly, democracy supposedly serves to check unaccountable power and manipulation by the few at the expense of the many, because fundamentally democracy is seen as a form of governance by the people, for the people. This is often implemented through elected representatives, which therefore requires free, transparent, and fair elections, in order to achieve legitimacy.

The ideals of democracy are so appealing to citizens around the world, that many have sacrificed their livelihoods, even their lives, to fight for it. Indeed, our era of "civilization" is characterized as much by war and conflict as it is by peace and democracy. The twentieth century alone has often been called "the century of war."

In a way, the amount of propaganda and repression some non-democratic states set up against their own people is a testament to the people's desire for more open and democratic forms of government. That is, the more people are perceived to want it, the more extreme a non-democratic state apparatus has to be to hold on to power.

However, even in established democracies, there are pressures that threaten various democratic foundations. A democratic system's openness also allows it to attract those with vested interests to use the democratic process as a means to attain power and influence, even if they do not hold democratic principles dear. This may also signal a weakness in the way some democracies are set up. In principle, there may be various ways to address this, but in reality once power is attained by those who are not genuinely support democracy, rarely is it easily given up.