

GOVERNMENT EVOLUTION AND THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL:  
APPLYING PRAGMATISM AS A METHOD FOR SUCCESS

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GOVERNMENT EVOLUTION AND THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL:  
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“Government Evolution and the Democratic Ideal: Applying Pragmatism as a Method for Success”

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**Abstract:**

The purpose of this thesis is to lend a philosophical perspective into the evolution of governments towards a *democratic ideal*. Freedom and equality are the basis of a global progression which desires democratic freedoms in political and civic life. History has witnessed an on-going development of political consciousness which demands government accountability by protecting the natural rights of *life, liberty, and property*. Coupled together, these foundational principles establish the democratic ideal. This ideal is advanced when governments allow for *effective citizen participation*, adherence to the *rule of law*, and the enhancement of *citizen wisdom*. Moreover, the standard for determining the effectiveness of governing regimes is measured through *social, economic, and political* success. All three criteria must be met in order for governments to claim functional success; furthermore, success can only be achieved if governments adapt to their current environments. The means by which governments adapt to their political and social environments is through the use of the *pragmatic method*. Pragmatism utilizes an exhaustive, practical means of evaluating all viable policy options and their potential consequences. Such an evaluation is able to determine which courses of action are best suited for protecting society and striving for the democratic ideal. Pragmatism in conjunction with the democratic ideal creates the *democratic filter* which investigates various plausible ideas in order to develop the most prudent policy options. Two case studies- Russia and the Arab Spring- will examine the barrier political ideologies pose to the democratization of modern-day societies. By limiting rationality and hindering democratic progress, political ideologies persist as a dangerous force to the democratic ideal. Applying the pragmatic method to the democratic filter can overcome this ideological barrier by advocating for a more rational approach to government decision-making. Thus, pragmatism should be used to enable governments to continue evolving towards the democratic ideal.

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## Introduction

Democratic governments have, and will continue to set a precedent for how up-and-coming nations ought to treat themselves, their constituency, and their neighbors in a modern, globalizing world. Moreover, history has mapped out a new direction of geopolitics, one which seeks to embrace democratic ideals. As witnessed by the on-going democratization that had caught wind amid the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many societies around the world are striving to institutionalize the most effective means of protecting natural rights.

As each nation forms, creation of specific political institutions is a natural reaction to the condition(s) which existed prior its formation. Governments and types of governance are created, and therefore evolve. In the state of nature governments did not exist. Social contract theorists suggest the government was created out of necessity for order and justice. John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Hobbes can all agree at some point that there was no “State.” Individual experiences and interactions with one another within the state of nature are what required the need for the State. Political institutions establish arbiters of justice in accordance with the current laws. Whether the society is governed by dictator, a monarch, or a Messianic figure, the need for a governing body is true in any political institution. Created by necessity and demand, the State was propagated as a natural response to the human experience. Anarchy has never successfully prevailed, ultimately proving the existence of the State to be a requirement for progress. Therefore the existence of *a* State is necessary for the protection of rights.

While this paper will concede that no government is perfect, it also disagrees with the adage that the only thing worse than no law is a bad law. Bad laws can be changed, but the absence of law lacks functional value. The existence of the State leaves open the possibility of reformation, whereas nonexistence entails inaction. If there is no government, there is no hope for justice. Human beings have the potential to be very ugly, nasty creatures, and the existence of a State provides an institutional check against this potential.

Democratic principles are the foundation for good governance and *success*. Governments have the potential to be democratic; however they must first overcome the practical barriers to adapting their institutions to the democratic ideal. Combined with an overwhelming shift in public political consciousness as well as an innate desire to be free of oppression, democratic principles have proved to be the best mechanisms for upholding the natural desires to be free, political beings.

The process by which we arrive at our democratic convictions, the sense of an intuitive favoritism towards freedom and political effectuality, is achieved by being practical, rational beings. Decision-making processes should be made in accordance with sufficient examination of logical facts, and the resulting consequences of those facts. States should act pragmatically by considering a variety of potential decisions through examination of their logical consequences. In the case of political institutions, the most effective pragmatic governments are those which continue to adapt to the practical needs of modernizing societies in ways that best foster freedom. Quality of life and the freedom to think and act are best realized in democratic institutions. Thus, while democratic

principles remain constant, pragmatism should be used to enable governments to continue evolving towards the democratic ideal.

We will first discuss the development and evolution of the State. This essay will then define *democratic principles* which are what constitute the democratic ideal. This will be followed by identifying what *success* means in terms of political orders. Next, a case will be made for the pragmatic method, identifying both its definitional components in addition to its application to democracy. Finally, two case studies- Russia and the Arab Spring- will be used to identify the failures of the State which prevent success and incite revolution. These two examples will highlight the practical dilemmas of pragmatism in decision-making.

## I.

### **The Philosophical Roots of Political Societies**

Governments are continuously evolving. Globalization, free trade, multilateral institutions, and modern conceptions of human rights speak to the shift in consciousness which has occurred from past to present. Political philosophy, thought, and ideologies were products of the progression of human consciousness. The basis of this development is grounded in the creation of the State.

Man was born into the state of nature, a condition in which governments had yet to exist; meanwhile mankind was subject to the unchecked vices and desires of his neighbor. Unable to protect and prosper through individual efforts, humankind in the state of nature recognized the need for forming a society bound by laws and moral principles. Social contract theory was intended to prevent one individual from infringing

upon the well-being of another. The State was designed to minimize harm to the individual and maximize the protection of rights.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle notes, “When several villages are united in a single complete community, large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing, the state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life” (Book I, Ch. 2). Thus, the continual evolution of governments is necessary to best maintain a higher quality of life.

### *The Beginnings of Freedom and Equality*

Our thoughts, beliefs, and rational processes are the results of on-going epistemological investigations set into motion at the beginning of individual existence. In terms of general human experience, conceptions of freedom and natural rights are best understood by how they relate to personal experience. Just like any type of epistemological inquiry, true understanding requires individual investigation, thereby establishing the link between general ideas relative to our own experiences. For example, observing others living free while you were imprisoned makes one acutely aware of their lack of freedom. Human beings possess the rational abilities to recognize what freedom is, and when freedom is restricted; this knowledge was yielded by experiences in the state of nature.

Freedom is a basic vehicle for pursuing the good life, consequently qualifying the value of the lives we lead. Intuitively freedom is best realized when each individual within a society has an equal opportunity to translate freedom from mere concept to reality. We then apply the intuitive desire to free in substantive ways- politically and

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<sup>1</sup> John Locke, “The Formation of Society,” *The Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. II

physically. Aristotle recognizes that “man is by nature a political animal,” (Book I, Ch. 1), which is why we seek to define concepts of justice as applied to human experience. We ignore the principle of natural equality when we witness injustice for some and justice for others. As a result, freedom translates to equality. If human beings are born equal, and equal persons desire to be free, then individuals should have an equal opportunity to be free.

True knowledge of freedom is knowledge of causation. We need to understand the formal cause of our preference for freedom, and that causation must be expressed externally to the individual self. One must be able to realize the form in which freedom is actualized. Thus, in order to make freedom meaningful, one must be able to effectually create that which one wills. Only by exercising freedom can an individual understand its value; ultimately this understanding gives freedom tangible and intangible worth.

The State is the political means by which freedom is realized in its truest form. In the state of nature, freedom is broad and unchecked. Absolute freedom is dangerous because it allows for infringement upon another’s freedom. Governments are necessary to keep freedom within reason by quelling the anxieties of unregulated freedom. It is unreasonable if one individual exercises their freedom at the detriment of another’s, consequently asserting inequitable opportunity to act upon one’s free will.

Experiences are at the core of creating reality and a consistent array of experiences provides a means for individuals to conceptualize and advocate for freedom. As William James notes, “So far as reality means experienced reality, both it and the truths men gain about it are everlastingly in process of mutation,” (101). Just as understanding truth comes through an on-going evolutionary process brought about by

real experiences, so does understanding the value of freedom, physically and metaphysically. Experienced reality is a requisite for understanding truth and understanding freedom.

Freedom is often tempered by discussions of equality. Equality is necessary to prevent the assertion of one's will over that of another. A just governing body as arbiter ensures that an individual will be enfranchised relative to his neighbor. Suppose person  $x$  is tall and strong, and not very bright; meanwhile person  $y$  is short, weak, yet extremely intelligent. In the state of nature, person  $x$  possesses a physical advantage over  $y$ , and therefore can potentially assert his will over that of  $y$ . Thus, although both individuals possess natural freedom, one has the ability to actualize that free will while the other one must discover crafty ways of overcoming his physical disadvantage. Rousseau concludes, "...force does not create right, and...we are obliged to obey legitimate powers," (a.q.i Kolak, 620).<sup>2</sup> This is why a mechanism, i.e. a government, is necessary to protect equal opportunity. Equality, therefore, is a pre-requisite to actual claims of freedom rather than mere recognition of its existence.

Socrates claims a natural inequality amongst mankind and designates some who are meant to be "Guardians" or "philosopher kings," while others are limited to being mere subjects due to limited physical or intellectual capability.<sup>3</sup> As a result, both Socrates, and by extension, Plato, contend that some individuals are meant to *govern*; whilst others are simply born to *governed*, thereby having no active political voice in the governance of their community. This is problematic for several reasons. First, degrees of

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<sup>2</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau, "The Right of the Strongest." *The Social Contract*, Ch.III

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Ch. I

intellect do not warrant a differentiation between individual claims of freedom; it does not logically follow that because some individuals are born with more intelligence that they naturally have the right to act upon their political wills more than the supposedly less intelligent. Secondly, an intellectual actor is not the equivalent of a just actor, for highly intelligent individuals could be unjust, or perhaps more oppressive. Finally, if all individuals in society experience the regulatory and provisional mandates of their government, then they should have an equal say in how that government acts. Thus, man was born free, and this freedom ought to be realized equitably. Political equality is the only effective means of protecting rights.

Ultimately, freedom and equality are essential components of any justly governed society. Happiness, prosperity, and progress cannot exist without equitable opportunity to strengthen one's quality of life. Without these guiding beacons of democracy, no society can succeed.

### *Understanding Natural Rights*

Thomas Hobbes states that justice and injustice "relate to men in society, not in solitude," (a.q.i. Kolak, 371).<sup>4</sup> A sense of justice is best understood in a manner inclusive to the greatest number of people. To argue the contrary- that is, justice is for the few - is to limit the qualities of the human experience to the will of a small minority, excluding the majority opinion. This position is not defensible in the state of nature or in modern-day society because values and moral judgments are qualified by their amount of support in society. For example, if a majority of individuals say "we value justice," but a

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, Ch. XIII

minority retorts by claiming “we value injustice,” there is no quantitative reason to prefer the latter. Therefore, preferring justice to injustice has more experiential justifiability.

Justice is best served by protecting natural rights. Natural rights consist of *life*, *liberty*, and *property*. These rights are considered natural because all men possess the desire for their existence; however the manner in which they are upheld depends on socially governing institutions. Although there is some notable difference between Locke and Hobbes regarding the importance of life and liberty, the justification is similar.

All human beings are endowed with life upon birth which gives an inherent equality to that right. By mere virtue of existence in addition to the natural desire to preserve physical well-being, mankind has a tendency to preserve the life they find meaningful. Life becomes valuable the moment an individual recognizes their own mortality. As a result, governments have security forces to protect life from the imposition of external forces. Life has reasons grounded in experience qualifying it as a natural right, for mankind, as a master of himself, values self-preservation (Kolak, 619). The value of self-preservation can consequently be expanded to larger communities as each individual unifies their efforts to preserve life.

The scientific criteria for life are different from the concept of quality of life. Quality of life is contingent upon factors tangential to existence itself, for they depend upon mechanisms which maximize individual well-being when individuals are able to exercise free will and be treated equally within reason. On the other hand, to have a poor quality of life witnesses the minimizing of free will and equality. Therefore, just governments ought to seek to maximize a good quality of life for their constituents.

*Liberty* is the extension of our natural freedom. Although there are various ways in which one can be free, liberty is nonetheless valuable as a natural right for several reasons. Firstly, liberty is what actualizes our freedom, thus expressing our internal desires with our external selves. Hobbes generally defines *liberty* as “the absence of external impediments,” (a.q.i. Kolak, 372). Only by fostering an environment which best protects the liberties of mankind as persons, and mankind as political beings, can governments be deemed just.

Jean Jacques Rousseau argues that if individuals were granted the opportunity to exercise reason in the form of free choice, then their common desire to create a just society will formulate a general consensus as to what is best for humanity.<sup>5</sup> Harmonious societies are formed by the liberty to think and the liberty to act politically. Commonality of interest and commonality of condition are limited when liberty is unjustly restricted. As a result, the state of nature caused mankind to acknowledge the importance of internal and external liberty, as well as the importance of exercising that freedom without infringing upon the liberties of others. The principle of equal treatment and equal opportunity is essential to just governance.

Consent stems directly from free will, and is a pre-requisite for political participation. It is necessary that one consents to the actions of the State to ensure general happiness and prevent revolution. However, if a group feels as if they are unable to consent to how they are governed, that group is more likely to oppose that governing force. Individually asserting oneself over another without consent is coercive. Liberty

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Kolak, *Mayfield Anthology of Western Philosophy*, pp. 618

requires consent, and consent cannot occur as a result of coercive force. Thus, liberty is a natural right because it is how individuals exercise their free will.

Finally, *property* is how we personalize the world around us. Property consists of personal possessions such as food, shelter, and land. Without property, man is subject to impoverishment and oppression. Property claims that which is mine, versus that which is not. These forms of property make life meaningful by fulfilling the tangible demands required to enhance quality of life. If one were left with only the intangible components of life and liberty without physical property, then rights claims are limited to the mind. For example, free trade or the creation of industry is impossible without physical property. Natural resources like water and food are types of property, and these are the basic requirements to sustaining life.

Property, therefore, is the physical onus individuals have invested in their society. Absent property, one is left to their own devices, which is not sustainable. Aristotle continues, “Property, in the sense of bare livelihood, seems to be given by nature herself to all, both when they are first born, and when they grow up,” (Book I, Part VIII). Property is a natural right because it directly affects all aspects of physical existence. Furthermore, property is characteristic of natural human needs, which means property should be accessible to all individuals.

Property is how individuals reap the rewards of their efforts. Commerce, trade, and industry in general are required for economic prosperity. Locke furthers, “The labor of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labor

with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property.”<sup>6</sup>

Individual’s personal property includes the physical goods they produce. Suppose one were work tirelessly to produce a crop, and then that crop was taken by another who had invested no effort to cultivate the food. In this case, an injustice has occurred. The individual who produced the crop was denied the natural right to property, while the individual who invested nothing claimed the fruit of another man’s labor. These sorts of policies violate principles of equality by unreasonably redistributing resources.

Finally, property betters the community. Economic prosperity is not possible without property. Property used to improve the quality of life for one individual or one family positively contributes to the surrounding community in several ways- the original property owner might use their material wealth to stimulate the economy, or perhaps the particular type of industry is necessary to produce goods to be utilized by many, etc. Also, production stimulated by industry is necessary for economies to succeed. Personal and communal well-being is strengthened through the natural right of property. Locke summarizes,

Man being born, as has been proved, with a title to perfect freedom, and an uncontrolled enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of the law of nature, equally with any other man, or number of men in the world, hath by nature a power, not only to preserve his property, that is, his life, liberty and estate, against the injuries and attempts of other men; but to judge of, and punish the breaches of that law in others.<sup>7</sup>

Just governments provide protection of property through the use of laws. Legal accountability protects natural rights through retribution. As a result, the State is the vehicle which makes claims regarding the right to property feasible.

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<sup>6</sup> John Locke, “Of Property,” *The Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. V

<sup>7</sup> John Locke, “Of Political or Civil Society,” *The Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. VII

By addressing mankind's physical and metaphysical needs of freedom, liberty and property, life is improved significantly by adding more meaning to existence. If an individual is imprisoned, lacking both physical freedom and physical property, then their only possessions are their mind and body. This person's quality of life is severely limited. As a result, they have life, but its qualifying features are minimal. Although life is indeed a natural right, it retains little meaning without the protection of liberty and property.

*Life, liberty, and property* must be maximized to their reasonable potential for the greatest number of people to enjoy ultimate happiness. The ability to access these natural rights improves quality of life and finds meaning in existence itself.

### *The Evolution of the Community*

Experiences in the state of nature resulted in two realizations- First, recognition that a type of government (the State) is necessary through the establishment of a common law; the combination of law and governance necessitates a body politic. Second, identify the form the political order must take.

Individuals are what make up a community, thus ascribing functional and philosophical value. Philosophically, the community finds value in the ability for individuals to coalesce interests and actions as extended from the collective ethos. Functionally, individuals are what allow the community to exercise its political and economic interest. Ideally, they ought to not be at the expense of individual well-being.

Philosophically, the importance of the community translates to positive rights, specifically claims regarding the naturally-derived principles of equality and freedom. If the experiences brought about by existence can yield similar recognitions of the

importance of both, then communities can unite towards that common end. This is particularly important to further advance how morality and justice are understood; the continual evolution of thought brought about by the human experience better defines these concepts. Natural freedom and equality, consequently, are categorized in three ways- life, liberty, and property. As noted earlier, these natural rights are extensions of freedom and equality in general, thus applying them more specifically. John Stuart Mill concludes,

Whatever we adopt as the fundamental principle of morality, we require subordinate principles to apply it by; the impossibility of doing without them, being common to all systems, can afford no argument against any one in particular... as if mankind had remained till now, and always must remain, without drawing any general conclusions from the experience of human life, is as high a pitch, I think, as absurdity has ever reached in philosophical controversy... (a.q.i. Kolak, 835).<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the common experiences witnessed within human nature create general conclusions regarding the desirability of specific types of governance. These types of governance are best served when protecting mankind's deepest, most universal philosophical convictions. This is why the whole of human experience has evolved towards a society united in pursuing its interests. The interests of just societies are those which aim to protect natural rights.

Moreover, this process of unification must maximize the interests of its members, which entails protecting individual well-being in as many ways as possible. The community thereby binds mankind together in a united effort to maximize the protection of natural rights by creating a social contract interested in a politically free quality of life, coupled with the security of property. This consensual agreement created a body politic governed by majority opinion. Man, therefore, translates the philosophical importance of

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<sup>8</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*

the community into reality by defining common interests to be upheld for the majority of members in society. Only by doing so can individuals firstly maximize freedom, and secondly fulfill their natural inclination towards political activism.

To address the issue of functionality, let us examine the importance of the community to the individual. The individual should seek to better the community, for this is what best serves individual and community interests. Societies can progress when individuals understand the practical importance of a united community. Communities are necessary to derive common conceptions of common goods; that is to say, communities are what define objectively agreeable values and common ends.

Immanuel Kant explains, “Hence the pure concepts of understanding are those which all perceptions must be subsumed ere they can serve for judgments in experience, in which the synthetical unity of the perceptions is represented as necessary and universally valid,” ( a.q.i. Kolak, 657).<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the whole of our experience combines our natural intuitions as subjectively perceived with the process of reason, consequently fostering the most objectively sensible form of reason via the application of those intuitions to experience. For example, if one were to perceive they were being oppressed, they are experiencing an intuitive response. By applying that sense reasonably to the whole of experience, i.e. recognizing that others subject to similar conditions also claim to be oppressed, or there are preferable conditions to those perceived as oppressive, then that creates a greater understanding of what oppression means universally. This is necessary to sufficiently rationalize potential actions and their consequences in a practical way.

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<sup>9</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Second Part of the Transcendental Problem: How is the Science of Nature Possible?” *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Section 22

Furthermore, communities need unity to flourish and progress. As required by human nature, individual persons collectivized their actions and their philosophies to create general prescriptions for action. A society, or community, entirely comprised of individuals who do not unite in a cohesive effort for the betterment of one another will most certainly fail. The role of the state is to prevent socially disruptive actions which require a common law. This is precisely why anarchy is not a preferred mode of governance; a world of solely individuals and no community will witness some of the greatest atrocities mankind has to offer, for each person will only pursue the interests which best serve them. Thus, communities need a unified collective to succeed and progress.

Thomas Hobbes notes that without a common law and governing force to check the selfish tendencies of man, mankind is then subject to a state of war in which man is pitted against man, all justifying their own free desires. Hobbes continues, "...so the nature of war consists not of actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary," (a.q.i Kolak, 370). The state of nature is not preferable because it allows for physical and psychological warfare. As a result, life absent the social contract between individual and the State has the propensity to allow one individual to deny the natural rights of another, consequently creating social tensions antithetical to progression. The State must exist to prevent these harms, thus fulfilling its functional requirement.

States were created by natural requirement. Not only is the body politic intended to escape the dangers of the state of nature or anarchical societies, but to maintain political order. If a government is to best serve freedom and equality, it must first

prioritize maximizing its constituency's well-being. Mankind was born naturally free and equal; the absence of both is an injustice to human nature. Extending from these natural desires are the rights of life, liberty and property. These three natural rights are requisite to the well-being of individual persons as well as societies in general. As a result, the role of government is to protect these interests. To fulfill this role, individuals collectivized their interests and efforts to form communities, and eventually the State.

The government is the practical mechanism for maximizing protection of rights. Without a just governing body, individuals cannot sufficiently meet their own needs, physically and politically. People seek to exercise their freedoms, and immediately recognize when they are removed. Governments should never seek to oppress, but should always endorse reasonable decision-making; it is by this process that individuals and governments are able to engage in a justified social contract. In what manner should these rights be advanced? It is to this question we now turn.

## II.

### **Foundations of the Democratic Ideal**

Democracy takes many forms. Democracy has made it clear that its underlying principles are what pump blood into the heart of justice. Democracy strives for perfection and continually evolves towards an ideal state. This evolution sometimes comes at a cost when democracy falters, but it is still the ideal form of government. Oligarchic, aristocratic, autocratic, and totalitarian regimes have not been able to effectively meet the natural rights and freedoms aforementioned compared to democratic political orders. The Athenian citizens “were fiercely loyal to the ideal of democracy- free, harmonious, under law, guided by debate among and educated citizenry” (Woodrow, 37). These are the basic ideals valued within democratic institutions.

#### *Continued Evolution of Democracy*

Democracy is an on-going process of perfection in which societies seek to apply the principles of freedom and equality to meet the more specific demands of particular socio-cultural contexts. Essentially, democratic evolution is an extension of how people survive through political adaptation. Governments should similarly adapt, or evolve in a way that best meets the practical demands of those it is intended to serve.

Effective governments make good decisions that benefit the people and strengthen the society as a whole. Democratic evolution in Greek cities, for example, recognized the internal and external advantages of democratic institutions. Internally, democratic reform was seen as the best means of achieving harmony and prosperity within the community. Externally, the path to democracy paved the way for better defense against forces outside

of the community, (Woodrow, 26). Both of these realizations are acknowledged as symptoms of the continual evolution towards the democratic ideal and maintaining stability.

The evolution of the Roman Republic echoed similar results as it continued moving towards a government that allowed for citizens to increase more rights and privileges. Rome eventually failed because it was unable to effectively adapt its political institutions to account for the vast expansion of the Empire, (Dahl, 13). The Romans taught us that representative government is desirable. Despite their faults, the Romans and Athenians alike illustrated the importance of active participation on behalf of the citizenry.

Finally, democratic evolution is necessary to protect natural rights. Aristotle notes, "...sometimes it may be desirable to make changes," (Book II, Ch. 9). Natural rights are intrinsically valuable and the emphasis to protect these rights ought to be common amongst all individuals, regardless of culture or class. Such an aspiration is indeed idealistic. Achieving the democratic ideal creates a paradigm for proper governmental action, a standard which can be referenced to determine the effectiveness of specific regimes. If the government is not making any pro-active efforts to learn from its mistakes or resolve its faults, then that government cannot survive. Conditions change, but natural rights do not; therefore, the progression of democratic institutions should continuously seek to understand and respond to these changing conditions in a manner most consistent with protecting natural rights. These changes should pertain to *how* the government goes about maximizing freedom and equality.

Democracy has not yet been realized in its most ideal form, but it has taken considerable steps to achieve an idealistic state. The fact that the evolution of democracy has continued to favor the inclusion of more persons, i.e. women and slaves, proves that it is still moving forward. As long as the foundations of democracy remain intact, and as long as these remain mechanisms for maximizing principles of freedom and equality, then societies have the opportunity to succeed. As Robert Dahl warrants, “the criteria provide us, though, with standards against which we can compare the achievements and the remaining imperfections of actual political systems and their institutions, and they can guide us towards a solution that would bring us closer to the ideal,” (29). Only by meeting the basic tenants of democracy are societies able to progress.

### *The Roots of Democracy*

All forms of democratic governments should stand upon the foundation of freedom, equality, and natural rights because just governments ought to value what is best for its citizenry. Historically, freedom and liberty have been the seeds that have sprouted democratic movements throughout the ages.

Liberalized societies require an enactment of the majority will. If the minority were to be the primary benefactors of liberty in practice, the majority of persons would be prevented from being able to exercise their own freedoms. Oppression of the majority is never desirable, especially if this oppression is advanced on behalf of the government itself. John Locke’s justifies majority rule by warning that if majority consensus cannot be reached, then the ability to act as one body is diminished, and therefore ability for the

community to pursue its desired ends are undermined.<sup>10</sup> However, a utilitarian foundation does not necessitate minority oppression, for any just society would seek the betterment of all its members. No true advocate of the democratic ideal would argue that minority groups should be ignored or oppressed. The majority consensus represents majority opinion. Moreover, the greatest good for the greatest number of people is best as long as it does not actively remove or quash the rights of the minority.

The second idea is that individuals should be able to exercise. Free will can take a variety of forms such as speech, action, political participation, etc. Acting according to one's will is grounded in the belief that human beings are best suited to govern themselves and is how individuals actualize their free choices, hence the *demos*. Democracy, according to Aristotle, should provide "...men to be ruled by none, if possible, or, if this is impossible, to rule and be ruled in turns; and so it contributes to the freedom based on equality," (Book VI, Ch. 2). Freedom to exercise free choice according to egalitarian principles is the foundation of democracy.

Governments effectively institutionalize democratic principles by seeking understand the fundamental importance of liberty and equality. Democracy grows and blossoms like a tree. The roots of democracy are grounded in freedom and equality. They grow into the base of democratic institutions by protecting the natural rights of life, liberty and property. The trunk of democracy is comprised of *effective political participation*, the *rule of law*, and *citizen wisdom*. These pillars of democratic institutions are necessary to ensure the protection of natural rights. Finally, the branches and leaves

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<sup>10</sup> John Locke, "Of Political or Civil Society," *The Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. VII

are specific characteristics of particular institutions depending upon historical, cultural, and social contexts.

### *Effective Political Participation*

*Demos*, the Greek term for the people, represents the importance of citizen participation. One of the most unique aspects of democracy is the ability citizens have to effect *how* their government operates. Concentration of authority is not sufficient to ensure success in democratic system. If the interests of society are to be protected, then its members must be able to contribute to good policy-making.

Political discourse is essential to any democratic institutions. Free speech, for example, has been prioritized as one of the most effective means of advocating ideas and opinions. This is true for several reasons- First, free speech can exist in a variety of forms, and therefore has the ability to engage the political process in a multiplicity of forums. Additionally, free speech allows individuals to take what they hold to be true internal to themselves, and projects those beliefs in a publicly discursive way. Only by allowing for free speech can government truly understand the interests and opinions of its citizenry.

The intrinsic value of free speech is found in expressing the will of the people in a very direct and powerful fashion. One's ability to use free expression constructively and actively, especially in regards rights claims, strengthens democratic progress. The Civil Rights movement and the transition to desegregation to advances in the Gay Rights movement, for example, portray how freely expressed ideas have proven themselves to be an integral step towards translating public opinion into public policy. Also, the

commitment to free expression in order to prompt social change occurs all of the time whenever people engage in discourse about particular topics, thereby advancing an exchange of ideas necessary to formulate well-grounded policies in accordance with popular support. Thus, the means by which free speech is applied to social movements and ideological shifts highlights the importance of free speech as a springboard to serving the will of the people.

Furthermore, discourse defines truth. Understanding truth is important in democratic governments because justice requires rationality. One cannot be rational without understanding the truth-value of their presuppositions. For example, to claim that solids are the same as gases is an irrational statement because it is derived from false presuppositions; namely that two dissimilar physical states of matter are indeed similar. Discourse verifies and falsifies information by testing truth-claims in the marketplace of ideas. Only by discussing true and false notions are societies able to define a clearer understanding of truth itself. The establishment of normative truths improves decision-making by providing the most sensible information required to making rational political judgments. In the case of societies, understanding truth establishes common beliefs; additionally, common beliefs are pre-requisite to identifying common interests. Governments must foster an environment of truth and rational decision-making in order to maximize its successes.

Political discourse is paramount to ensuring effective participation. If speech is silenced, then opinions of the governed are quashed. Dahl furthers, "...free expression has its own value because it is instrumental to moral autonomy, moral judgment, and the good life," (51). Political discourse is necessary for good decisions-making because it

best represents currently held points of view. The ability to engage in meaningful political discussion is how citizens effectively participate within their governments. Discourse can be by rhetorical or written word. Regardless of its form, discourse is the most readily accessible vehicle for progressive policy-making in representative governments. Elections and voting comes in cycles, but citizens can still actively participate within their government by exercising free speech outside the constraint of voting cycles.

Effective participation must be actualized to maximize political freedom and equality. The inability to practice freedom and equality limits their realistic potential to mere philosophical discussion. A person cannot simply be told they are free or told they are equal; they must *feel* it. Democracy, specifically through effective participation, is how citizens feel the effects of liberty and equality under the law. The old saying “practice what you preach” should not be simply be viewed as a formula for avoiding hypocrisy, but as an indication of the importance of putting words into action. Political participation is the active pursuit of influencing government decision-making in a way that best protects natural rights. Dahl notes that if rights are not effectively available or protected through actual practice, then government claims of being democratic are disingenuous, representing “...merely a façade for nondemocratic rule,” (49). Just governments should allow for participation in practice as well as in speech.

The dilemma arises when attempting to understand the manner in which individuals are to translate “effective participation” into political activism. This concern depends upon each State specifically, for some institutions must be reformed in order to ensure protections, whereas others must be dissolved entirely. Rather than trying to settle

how to institutionalize political participation, it is prudent to warn against the forces that prevent such actions.

Finally, effective participation is upheld through equality in voting. In order to actively participate within the democratic process, citizens must possess the ability to democratically elect political representatives. This means that voting must be accessible to all citizens, counting each vote equally and fairly. Corruptive practices, rigged elections, and unfair campaigns have all disenfranchised voting populations by removing their ability to express their opinions on the ballot.

In representative democracies individuals elect those persons they deem fit to advocate for the interests of the community. Determined by majority opinion, democratically elected officials are the intermediary actors between public opinion and public policy. The role of elected officials is imperative to literally make one's voice count. If citizens are unable to effectively translate their interests into actual policy-making, then the benefits of democracy disappear.

In large-scale democracies accessing governing institutions it is extremely difficult, which is why we elect representatives. The problem arises when some are granted easier access than others, which specifically occurs when elections are not equal. If some votes count more than others, then the stronger vote can always win, consequently ignoring the interests expressed by the losers. The United States attempts to avoid this dilemma through the Electoral College. Additionally, all citizens are subject to the same laws in the same way, so they should have equal ability to affect the source of their subjugation.

Democracy presumes that all individuals, born equally, are capable and qualified to actively participate within the government. Taking this logic further, it seems that the presumption of equality should also be applied to how citizens decide who represents them. Without equality in voting there is a tension between political opinion and the ability to put that opinion into action through the election of representatives. If citizens are unable to directly represent themselves, then they should at least have an equal opportunity to vote for those who can.

Tyrannical governance is one of the biggest dangers to democracies. Tyranny is specifically what democracy seeks to avoid, both in regards to individual persons as well as majority bodies. In either case it is undesirable to limit or prevent political participation in favor of tyrannical forces. Robert Dahl addresses autocracies specifically when he notes the philosophical and practical harms of this oppressive rule. Famine, disease, death, political oppression, and war are all symptoms of autocratic rule; as a result, it best to prefer the democratic alternative because it actively seeks to check abuses to the fundamentals rights and interests of the citizenry through the use of political participation (48). Citizen voice and citizen actions through participation in the political order better prevent abuses of authority by politically engaging the decisions of the governing authority.

Freedom from tyranny is a significant advantage of democracy. Aside from the dangers noted above, tyrannical rule should be avoided to prevent bad decision-making. Tyrants cannot make proper decisions in the interests of the governed either because judgments are negatively affected, or because tyranny tends to severely limit free-flowing information. Judgments are negatively affected because a tyrant rules with his back

against the wall, constantly worried about the potential for revolution. If a tyrant is by definition ruling above the law meanwhile ignoring the cries of the citizenry, then it can be acknowledged that this individual has departed from the common interest. For example, a tyrannical hold on power indicates a fear of losing power, which can then negatively affect decisions. One cannot make rational decisions if their intentions are motivated by fear.

John Locke illustrates, “tyranny is the exercise of power beyond right, which no body can have a right to. And this is making use of the power any one has in his hands, not for the good of those who are under it, but for his own private separate advantage.”<sup>11</sup> First, tyranny creates a distinction between those bound to the rule of law and those above it; equality before the law is required in democratic governments. Second, tyrannical governance is necessarily self-interested, thus cannot serve the common interests which must take priority in just democratic governments.

Tyrants suppress the critics and exclude the dissenters from the political process. This political exclusion undermines effective participation. Freedom and equality cannot exist for a majority of persons under the rule of a tyrant; furthermore, limitations on freedom and equality breed anti-government sentiment. Democratic governments ought to allow for participation of many, not of the few, if they are hope to best serve natural rights. Woodrow clarifies, “One the one hand, freedom protects the people from abuse; on the other, it protects their leaders from the worst kind of bad judgment,” (68). Thus, effective democratic participation is necessary to prevent the abuses of tyrannical forces.

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<sup>11</sup> John Locke, “Of Tyranny”, *The Second Treatise of Government*, Book XVIII

Inclusion is better than exclusion, and democratic institutions are the most inclusive form of government by allowing for effective citizen participation. Participation occurs through free speech, political discourse, and voting, all of which adhere to principles of freedom and equality. Participation best fosters political equality by granting citizens an equal opportunity to effectively express their opinions and ideas regarding government decision-making. *Effective participation* transcends speech by becoming politically active. Voting is the practical mechanism aside from political discourse in which individuals are granted the opportunity to have their interests expressed in public office. Equality in voting is necessary to protect natural rights by allowing citizens to decide how this protection occurs. Participation in the democratic process is necessary to check the dangers of tyranny, whether the tyrannical force is that of one or that of many, for tyranny of the one is the worst form of representation, and “the rule of the majority is unstable, if it forces a powerful minority out of the picture,” (Woodrow, 93). Therefore, effective participation is *how* citizens first activate their political being.

### *Rule of Law*

Laws are necessary to maintain order. The social contract was a mutually agreeable transfer of rights in which individuals recognized the importance of creating a civil society that established laws to better protect natural rights. Laws are necessary to prevent injustice and disorder, which means that individuals must equally abide by the contract. No one is above the law, regardless of status or governing authority. If one were to claim to be above the law, they fall subject to the symptoms of tyranny, and thus are unable to meet the requirements of a democratic system. Consequently, the law must be

equally adhered to by all if it is to remain effective and just. The rule of law applies to governing authorities and individual persons. I will first begin the discussion with governments, and then go on to explain the importance to individuals within society.

First, governments are not above the law. The rule of law applies to everyone, especially in representative governments. Elected officials are not put into office to be transgressors of the legal system, but rather to strengthen and enforce it. If individuals witness their representative authorities superseding legal precedent and constitutional restrictions, then they will lose faith in the system as a whole. A government cannot remain effective, nor can it progress, if it does not operate in legal unity. The point in which governing authorities flirt with transcending the laws put in place by majority consensus is when these authorities begin to look oddly similar to tyrannical governments.

Additionally, the democratic pillar of the rule of the law is also necessary to prevent external opposition. Currently in our continuously globalizing world governments are bound to one another, to some extent, by international codes of conduct. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, established a legal precedent for what sorts of actions it promotes, and those which it opposes. Any action on behalf of a government which directly undermines international law puts that government on the defensive, for it has now digressed from normative standards of conduct. For example, the expansion of the Athenian empire “disregarded the law of nations” by continuing forth with expansion and attack irrespective of how they were viewed by other nations (Woodrow, 124). This ultimately contributed to its downfall. Similar examples are littered about history. Depots, autocratic, and dictators have all been toppled time and

time again as a direct result of trying to operate outside of the rule of law on the world stage. Similar effects happen at the individual level, although obviously at a much smaller scale.

Finally, laws are established for the good of the people, which means that governments operate outside of the law, are violating their functional role. In order for the rule of law to work it must be taken seriously. Citizens will not take the law seriously if they can see that their representative authority is ignoring the rule of law, meanwhile holding the citizens accountable to those very same laws. This lack of government accountability pertaining to the rule of law breeds discontent and plants the seeds of revolution, for citizens will not support a government that cannot be held legally accountable. If governments are established political orders to enforce the laws mandated to protect natural rights, then they must similarly adhere to that enforcement. This is particularly true in the case of governments because they possess the capacity to inflict the most egregious violations of freedom, equality, and natural rights due to their military might. Furthermore, if governments fail to adhere to their own laws, then their citizens will take neither the government nor the laws seriously. If the rule of law is not taken seriously, then laws can have no positive social effect. Thus, governments must act within the rule of law to sustain stable, harmonious societies.

Individuals, too, must adhere to the rule of law. The primary reason is because they consent to the rule of law by entering into the contract. Direct and tacit consent, although different by definition, are similar in their application. By partaking within the political order in addition to reaping the benefits of such order, citizens consent to the governing authority. Consenting to the rule of law means one must respect the rule of law

by not trying to put oneself above it by corrupting the system in a way the unfairly advantages one or few persons to their own benefit (Woodrow 121).

Granted, laws are sometimes unfair, but the democratic process through effective participation seeks to mitigate these harms by continuously building upon old mistakes with new truths. Furthermore, the fairness of law is also accounted for under democratic institutions through the use of constitutions. Constitutions are the written law, the foundations of the limits on political and civil action. Constitutions, however, can be changed or amended to either resolve legal indictment or to meet the demands of a modernizing society. The rule of law is still crucial to ensuring the stable functionality of society.

Individuals who seek to operate outside the auspices of the law create social divisions, especially if they are not held accountable. If one were to break the law, especially under extreme circumstance such as acts of violence, the rule of law should hold them accountable for those actions. However, if it fails to do so, this democratic failure will evoke a reaction within the community arguing against the legitimacy of government as a whole. Legal authority is a point of reference to judging particular actions; if this authority is ignored or circumvented by individual exceptions to the law, the rule itself is viewed as conditional and ineffective. Supposing such a failure were to occur, then the law now has the potential to unfairly hold some accountable, and others not. Woodrow impacts, "...the rule of law is a social good...the harsh consequences of letting a few strong or wealthy men rise above the law...divide[s] the community, which becomes weaker in itself and therefore less able to provide equal protection for all its members," (121). Respecting legal order is necessary for social cohesion.

The rule of law preserves natural equality before the law. In extension of the previous analysis, it appears the rule of law must be applied equally across the board. Discrepancies in degrees of legal accountability by virtue of adherence to the law, or lack thereof, are antithetical to democratic progress. If all citizens are to be treated equally under the law, and governing authorities are merely elected representatives of general citizen populations, then all have a social requirement to uphold the laws. Just as positions of wealth and power do not justify inequality in political participation, they similarly do not justify inequality in respecting the rule of law. Natural equality is thus translated into political equality, and political equality is not limited to active participation alone. If one is to claim they value political equality, they must then accept the consequences of transgressing the rule of law, thereby violating the social contract.

Finally, the rule of law creates good citizens. In a state of anarchy, laws do not exist, and therefore actions go unchecked. Parameters on proper and improper actions are necessary to create understandings of virtue and justice. Failure to respect the natural rights of others creates a false notion of one individual as being better or more important than another. This ought not to be the case, for if all men are created free and equal, they should be treated as such.

Experience with the rule of law contributes to citizen wisdom, both positively and negatively. Positively, individuals can come to understand the importance of egalitarianism or perhaps the social significance of laws in general. By experiencing the effects of the legal order, citizens then begin to understand the values and interests of the society in which it exists. Conversely, the rule of law can allow citizens to recognize those areas of law they find unjust or dissatisfactory. If enough individuals agree upon

similar faults with particular aspects of the rule of law, then they can use to democratic process to amend or eliminate those laws. Experience with the rule of law makes better citizens by highlighting the vices and virtues of law. By allowing for individuals to understand why laws are good, society is strengthened; and if enough citizens decide some laws are bad, then they can coalesce their concerns through political participation. Transcending the rule of law, however, is never a good thing. Aristotle argues, “It has been well said that ‘he who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander’. The two are not the same, but the good citizen ought to be capable of both; he should know how to govern like a freeman, and how to obey like a freeman- these are the virtues of a citizen” (Book III, Ch. 4). Thus, the rule of law seeks to better the well-being of society and its citizens, not worsen it.

The rule of law is good because it strengthens social cohesion and allows for legal accountability. If we trace back our steps to the roots of democracy, freedom and equality, it appears the rule of law is paramount to maximizing both. Freedom is maximized because the rule of law gives citizens legal claim on their political freedoms, thereby allowing them to use democratic legal processes to check egregious violations of those freedoms. Freedom is also maximized because relative to the alternative of anarchy or tyranny, the rule of law under a democratic system focuses upon protecting the greatest number of individuals through the use of legal order. Equality is maximized because all citizens under a democratic political order are viewed equally before the law, regardless of status. By not unfairly advantaging some through a corruption of the legal processes, democratic rule of law grants each citizen similar tools for legal accountability. Finally, the rule of law educates citizens in the virtue and value of legal

order, meanwhile empowering their political wills to address that which it finds damaging to majority interests.

### *Citizen Wisdom*

Enlightened understanding is gained through education and discourse. These best serve democracy by allowing individuals to gain knowledge and then positively contribute to the political process, thereby possessing more enlightened understanding. Citizen wisdom is necessary for social progression because it allows educated and rational decision-making.

Citizen wisdom strengthens society as a whole because it leaves room for more rational, free-thinking political participants. Those who are educated can make better decisions, and these decisions directly translate into public policy. Who we elect, what we advocate, and how we rationalize is reliant upon degrees of education. By ensuring the greatest highest quality education possible, democratic institutions better themselves by empowering the entire political process from the bottom up.

Woodrow tells us that it "...is a natural part of being human to know enough to govern your community," (149). The intimate knowledge citizens have regarding their interests and their communities are created by the combination of life experiences which construct a body of knowledge powerful enough to overwhelm the benefits of any nondemocratic alternatives insofar as representation exists at the core of any democratic government. The democratic pillar of citizen knowledge feeds the roots of freedom and equality by allowing citizens to realize their full intellectual potential in the form of political participation.

Education is how individuals and their governments know what to do. When the United States was deciding whether or not to enter World War II, they first had to discuss the known facts prior to their decision. These facts were gained through educational processes, those of which factored into the decision to enter the war. Absent wisdom on behalf of citizens and government officials alike, the United States would not have been able to make an educated decision. This logic is synonymous with how decisions should be made generally- educated and based on as many facts as possible. Ignorance is not bliss.

Individuals should seek to better their understanding both academically and generally, but they are not self-sufficient, therefore the State has the role of creating the most favorable environment for increasing citizen wisdom. Democratic institutions fulfill this duty because the entire functional basis of democracy is founded upon citizen wisdom, which does not assume ignorance on behalf of its stakeholders to succeed. As a result, the State has an obligation to educate its citizenry sufficiently and equally. By sufficient education, I mean to suggest that education should continue expanding upon existing ideas to create a better understanding of the world itself.

Citizens should not be satisfied with their government's failure to educate the population. Governments that refuse to provide education and information to its citizens are those very governments which tend to act on behalf of their own self-interests rather than the opinions of its citizenry. Socially oppressive governments, for example, severely limit the ability of their citizens to access higher degrees of education. According to social contract theory, the State should advance the interests of its constituency, and those interests are best maintained amongst an educated society because educated societies can

understand, rationalize, and manipulate judgment better than the uninformed. Woodrow furthers, “Citizen wisdom is what citizens in a well-run democracy ought to have. It builds on common human abilities to perceive, reason, and judge, but it requires also healthy traditions and good education for all,” (154). If a government does not maximize citizen’s ability to rationalize, then it is not properly prioritizing its interests. Democratic governments should value increasing citizen knowledge and understanding if they expect to survive.

Citizen wisdom increases quality of life on an individual and community level. Individually, wisdom adds more fruit to the tree of knowledge by allowing people to entertain ideas, thoughts, and desires in a more enlightened fashion than if they lacked access to education. Wisdom is not just academic education, it also encompasses life experiences. Experiences increase knowledge by engaging the individual on a more personal basis, even when that knowledge already exists. For example, if I am aware that summers are warm and water is refreshing because I have read books and seen videos suggesting such, that is not the same as if I *know* summers are warm and water is refreshing by affirming that awareness through actual experience. Experience, therefore, increases knowledge.

Citizens are subject to a variety of experiences which all contribute to the political and individual consciousness. Experience in political participation increases knowledge of the political process, as well as our political convictions. Similarly, life experiences in general build upon the truths we possess prior to those experiences. William James explains, “...the beliefs themselves are part of the sum total of the world’s experience, and become matter, therefore, for the next day’s funding operations,” (101). Political and

personal beliefs are in a constant state of progression and the State has a duty to enhance that progression through education.

Freedom from political oppression, for example, grants one the opportunity to pursue other interests they may find particularly compelling. Not having to withstand the mental and physical torments of oppressive governing regimes means one can dedicate more time to discovering what makes them happy. These individual pursuits can consist of discovering a meaning to life, the significance of particular values, or possibly less prudent concerns. Democratic institutions ought to be interested in the overall well-being of their citizens which includes fostering an environment best suited to understanding personal meaning. Similar to physical well-being, immaterial well-being must also be protected.

Paul Tillich outlines three aspects of what defines well-being: existential, spiritual, and moral. One's existential self refers to their physical existence within the world of experience. The spiritual and moral aspects deal with one's ability to be free of anxieties which develop from feelings of emptiness and meaningless (spiritual), along with guilt and condemnation (moral). The immaterial self, our sense of efficacy, is defined by the degree to which we fill these potential voids.<sup>12</sup> Tillich reminds us that individuals are "...human only by understanding and shaping reality, both his world and himself, according to meanings and values," (50). Thus, personal understanding as understood on the path to enlightenment is affected by how citizens internally define themselves. Meaningless, for example, creates anxieties pertaining to what gives life purpose and significance. The ability to intellectually participate in the democratic

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, Ch. 2

process assists in defining one's political being, thus increasing the quality of the self, and therefore citizenship. Without filling these internal metaphysical voids, individuals are forced to face "The anxiety of emptiness..." which "...drives us to the abyss of meaningless," (48). Just governments should afford their citizens the opportunity to pursue personal meaning as painless and carefree as possible. Knowledge and enlightenment give citizens personal and political meaning.

Citizen wisdom makes good citizens, for education increases the mental capacity to decide between right and wrong choices. While qualifying features of right and wrong are subjectively determined, assessment of right and wrong is derived from more objective processes. Even if one did not possess enough knowledge to make a specific decision, education still contributes to the rationalization of one option versus another. Our process of rationalizing between varieties of potential choices is improved when we possess the necessary logical tools. Thus, increasing citizen wisdom allows citizens to make better choices.

The basic framework of democratic institutions must consist of effective citizen participation, adherence to the rule of law, and citizen wisdom. By no means do I maintain that meeting these tenants of democracy alone is sufficient to ensure a full-functional governing authority. There are many other factors to be considered when institutionalizing actual democracies. This discussion is grounded in a democratic ideal. These ideals are strengthened when individuals are able to take philosophical discussion and put it into effect by actualizing their political wills. There are some democracies which are more successful than others, but survival depends upon striving towards the democratic ideal. The roots of natural freedom and equality stem in many directions

grounded in the fundamental importance of protecting natural rights. The tree of democracy grows when citizens are able to make their opinions effectual, hold themselves and their governments accountable through the rule of law, and increase understanding of the world in which they exist.

### III.

#### Governments and Success

In any form of government there can either be success or failure, either of which can be applied to the State entirely or to specific decisions. Success comes in degrees and can only be measured retrospectively; however, conditions for success can be established preemptively. Governments must be successful in order to claim they are both just and effective. In terms of the State, success is measured by its functionality and allegiance to natural principles of just governance. Success is not simply measured by physical property and economic prosperity; rather, it is measured holistically by considering both the tangible and intangible requirements of the State as established through the social contract. For example, a government cannot claim to be successful in its entirety simply because it enacted one successful economic policy. Moreover, governments must ensure rights protection, security, economic prosperity, and social cohesion. These are the fundamental aspects of properly functioning governments. In order to be successful, States must achieve their *social*, *economic*, and *political* goals.

“Success” is the accomplishment of an aim or purpose; the actualization of an intended or required goal. To claim “I am successful” is not equivocal to “I intended to be successful.” This distinction is intuitive, so there is no need for further discussion regarding general definitions.

More importantly, governments must continuously practice and strive to be successful policy-makers, protectors, and providers. This is the basic role of the State. As noted earlier, there are several requirements of just institutions, most of which pertain to maximizing freedom and equality, and determining the fulfillment of such requirements

necessitates an evaluation of success. Governments, moreover, should be just and effective to be deemed successful.

### *Social Success*

First, governments must achieve its social goals. One of the fundamental aspects of government is upholding the social contract. *Social success* requires fostering cohesion, favoring empowerment of social groups, and preventing social disorder. As basic tenants of good governance, these concepts apply specifically to how society functions and whether or not that functionality favors or disfavors the majority of the population. John Stuart Mill advises us that “the laws and social arrangements should place the happiness or...the interests of every individual as nearly as possible in harmony with the interests of the whole,” (a.q.i. Kolak, 834).<sup>13</sup> Just governments should seek social harmony, for it is the driving force behind social progression.

Social harmony is needed firstly to coalesce interests, and secondly to make those interests effectively represented- both requirements result in success. It is the role of the government to create the best social environment possible to foster this success. As a result, favoritism must be avoided, and principles of equality should always remain at the forefront of political discussion. By treating individuals equally under the law and providing them with equal opportunity to succeed in their own endeavors, the government is effectively fulfilling its civic duties.

Most importantly, governments should seek to better society. Social progression is contingent upon cohesion; it is what ensures happiness for the greatest number of individuals. If a government prevents individuals from unifying common interests, then

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<sup>13</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*

that government undermines the importance of communities in general, for common interests are a pre-requisite to social cohesion. Stemming from social contract theory, we see that individuals bound themselves together within the community for the sake of protecting rights claims. They recognized that as a collective body, social groups can most effectively achieve their ends. This “commonwealth” represents a powerful social effort aimed at maximizing freedom and equality, ultimately increasing quality of life. Locke continues, “Whosoever therefore out of a state of nature unite into a community, must be understood to give up all the power necessary to the ends for which they unite into society to the majority of the community.”<sup>14</sup> The ends are for the interests of society first, and the State second. Therefore, the government has an obligation to create an environment favoring common social interests.

Social movements are one of the best representations of when individuals feel their government is failing them. Social movements, specifically grass-roots movements, indicate the dissatisfaction felt amongst a significant portion of the population; otherwise the movement would never progress beyond its initial stages. *Social movements* are collectivized efforts on behalf of individuals or groups advocating for social change. These movements can be motivated for social and/or political reasons. The moment social movements begin to gain force is the moment in which the governing authority should open its eyes and consider whether or not it is successfully fulfilling its social duties. A just government should not favor a society littered with dissatisfaction and contempt; it should in fact attempt to resolve those concerns. Social movements are a form of political commentary recognizing on-going failure on behalf of the State.

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<sup>14</sup> John Locke, “Of the Beginning of Political Societies,” *The Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. VII

Therefore, governments should not simply ignore the messages proposed by social movements.

Socially successful governments should take social movements seriously by recognizing the grievances being expressed. If those grievances pertain to a majority of the population, then the government has the obligation to act because this is the duty of democratic institutions. If the government ignores the voice of the majority of society, it is no better than forms of tyranny because tyrannical forces tend to be self-interested; therefore majority rule is democratically justifiable and democratically required.

Influential social movements are an effective means of illustrating the general consensus of citizen populations. Consequently, successful governments are those which harbor an environment best suited to allow for grievances to be expressed through legitimate social means.

Social movements should not begin violently; ideally they would not end violently either. It is only in the most extreme cases in which violence of behalf of society against the governing authority. Instances like government crackdowns in Syria, or mass genocide, such as in the case of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, are examples of when government action fails to meet its social requirements. Discourse and dialogue are always preferable; diplomatic solutions should always be step one. “But if a long train of abuses, prevarications, and artifices, all tending the same way, make the design visible to the people, and they cannot but feel what they lie under, and see whither they are going, ‘tis not to be wondered that they should then rouse themselves, and endeavor to put the

rule into such hands which may secure to them the ends for which government was first erected...” (a.q.i. Kolak, 499).<sup>15</sup>

Finally, governments have to duty to prevent social disorder. Social disorder can occur internally or externally. Internally, social disorder comes as a result of disruptive dissenting forces such as domestic terrorists or violence on behalf of the citizenry. Through the rule of law, governments can hold domestic terrorists, for example, legally account. Most instances of social disorder are far less extreme than domestic terrorism. Regardless of what the case may be, the State has a compelling interest to mitigate socially damaging forces.

Governments can also avoid public disorder by avoiding civil war. The causes of civil war can be ideological differences, inequitable treatment before the law, or unaddressed marginalization of particular groups. If a government either allows or contributes the process of pitting groups against one another, they open the door to civil war. Tyranny, for example, uses coercive means of governance which can result in civil uprisings against the State itself. Woodrow continues, “The fear he instills in others is close cousin to the fear he must live with himself, for the violence by which he rules could be easily be turned against him,”(64).If the government is to maintain social order, and consequently domestic stability, then it must avoid incentives to retaliate, either against other citizens or the government.

Governments can avoid public disorder in two ways- they must not incentivize revolt and revolution within its citizens by treating populations unfairly, and they must protect natural rights. Secondly, the State should avoid the symptoms of a tyrant- fear,

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<sup>15</sup> John Locke, “Of the Dissolution of Government,” *The Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. XIX

oppression, and unaccountability- for it is this type of coercive authority that breeds hatred and discontent within its population. If the government fails to maximize freedom and equality by putting the interests of the State before those of the majority of its population, then it fails to succeed in fulfilling its social requirements.

Externally governments prevent public disorder by providing adequate security. The practical means of ensuring security is via military strength. The State should manage its resources in such a way as to allow for sufficient security forces to prevent foreign invasion.

The necessity of sufficient security forces finds countless examples in history. The strongest empires, politically and socially, were also those with strong military forces. The Roman Empire, for example, exercised its political and military might in conjunction with each others, thus building a stronger State. Militaries should be not used in excess. Security forces should not be prone to invading foreigners or violating the sovereignty of other nations without compelling reasons. It is precisely the excessive uses of military might that violate international rule of law and provoke retaliation. Both of these implications undermine social order. A nation amidst the conditions of war is not as stable as one without. War and conflict should be avoided at all costs, for these are a government's most destabilizing forces. Social dissatisfaction, disorder, and disunity are indicators of failure on behalf of the government.

### *Economic Success*

Governments should also achieve their economic goals, economic success is not as always clear. Economies fluctuate, but these fluctuations are indicators of when the

State is not being as effective as would ideally be expected. Only by recognizing economic failures, even in minor cases, can a government understand the aspects upon which it should improve. *Economic success* is maintaining stability of the economy in addition to avoiding destabilizing conditions of recession or depression. If the economy begins to take a turn for the worse, then government experiences failure.

In the case of the Eurozone crisis, some of the world's most powerful nations are being forced to clean up the financial messes of its business partners. Greece, Spain, and France, for example, failed to meet their economic duties and therefore witnessed economic depression.

Unfortunately, the effects of depression are not simply limited to monetary forces, but also have direct social backlash. When individuals can feel the negative effects of receding economies and the loss of revenue, they respond with revolution and societal instability. Aristotle warns us that poverty and ruined fortunes are the birth place of revolution (Book II, Ch.6,7). In the interest of individuals and the State, it is necessary that economic well-being remains intact.

Governments stabilize and improve economic conditions through trade, industry, and commerce. These necessary facets of any functional economy require the exchange of goods and services that produce profit, meanwhile incurring minimal cost. Regulation of resource distribution is also required to stabilize economic conditions. Developing infrastructure, education systems, and military strength, hinge upon the government's ability to properly appropriate its resources. Some of the world's most oppressive regimes are those that inequitably distribute resources amongst its population.

Paul Woodrow argues “justice involves balance;” this is also true when measuring economic success (202). Just, successful governments are those that can effectively balance the economic interests of its citizens. Individuals and groups alike should not be unfairly advantaged in their ability to improve or maintain economic conditions. For example, currently many middle and lower class citizens in the United States are adamantly opposed to tax breaks for the wealthy because they view this as being unfair. These sorts of negative perceptions cause individuals to feel as if they are being treated wrongly. The result of this sentiment is a movement like “Occupy Wall Street” in which individuals are demanding more economic opportunity. As a result, economic success requires balancing the interests of the whole society by attempting to remove these negative perceptions of certain factions of society.

We should take heed to the warnings of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, who explain the importance of balancing virtue by avoiding the dangers of living in excess. Aristotle furthers, “The fact is that the greatest crimes are caused by excess and not necessity. Men do not become tyrants in order that they may not suffer the cold,” (Book II, Ch. 7). States should therefore seek to balance their economic wealth by avoiding the dangers of overindulgence. It is precisely these vices which result in greed, selfishness, and inequality. Economic success requires stability and balance.

Successful economies allow governments to be competitive on the world-stage. Nations with strong natural resource supplies, or strong industrial complexes, are able to enter into the world market by trading these commodities with other nations. Moreover, democratic governments historically have positive economic relationships with one another. For example, the development of NAFTA has continued to solidify a trade

relationship between the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Democracies also incentivize non-democratic governments to act more democratically raising standards of international trade. Once non-democratic governments acknowledge the prosperous nature of strong alliances between stable regimes, they will more of an incentive to model themselves accordingly in order to witness similar successes. These stem from the philosophical goals of democracies which seek to better living and working conditions for many individuals, as well as the practical benefits of engaging international trade.

Aside from building trade partnerships, the ability to participate economically on the international stage establishes a link to building diplomatic relationships. Strengthening diplomacy is particularly important in this continuously globalizing world. Aristotle advises that governments should not forget their neighbors, because the State is to have a political, rather than isolated life (Book II, Ch. 6). By acknowledging the political and economic importance of engaging in international trade, governments possess a greater chance to succeed.

Economic success is key to establishing a higher quality of life. Quality of life is improved through claims to property. For example, the homeless individual's lack of material wealth imposes secondary burdens upon them, such as the difficulties of finding a job or access to food and water. Those with access to material wealth have a comparative advantage to those without because they can buy property, make future investments, and access an objectively higher standard of living.

If a government is to achieve economic success it must avoid instability, capitalize on trade, and appropriate resources for the betterment of society. These are the sorts of measures that maintain the overall support of fair, just regimes. Democratic

institutions best meet these demands. The ability to freely enter markets and establish industry creates strong bonds from business to business and nation to nation.

Furthermore, democratic principles of freedom and equality as supported through the pillars of democracy lay a clear path to balance State and citizen interests when it comes to economic matters.

### *Political Success*

The third prong to government success is political. *Political success* is the ability to put effective policies into action, achieve political equality, and recognize opposing parties. Just democratic institutions should ideally feed the political animal that is embedded within the internal makeup of human nature. Mankind has a desire to be politically expressive, active, and effective. It is the role of the successful government to give citizens as many political tools as possible.

If man is to be treated as politically equal, then this equality must take the form of opportunity. Regimes that disenfranchise or unfairly disadvantage opposition movements are ignoring one of the primary tenants of good governance- effective participation. Participation can only take effect when all members have access to pro-active means of advancing their political wills. This occurs by recognizing the legitimacy of opposing parties.

First, governments must be able to put their policies into action from initial decision-making process to actual signing of legislation. In order to be politically successful, the State must reasonably entertain all viable potential policy options, thus utilizing their discursive and rational processes in order to arrive at the best possible

decision. Democratic institutions encourage debate and discussion because they recognize the political importance of making *just* decisions. Governments unable to keep to their promises are subject to being ousted as this is a direct failure on behalf of the government. Citizens do not simply want *a* government, they want an effective government.

One of the largest barriers to political success is political polarization. This most clearly occurs in the United States when the two political extremes- Democrats and Republicans- are unable to compromise on policy decisions. Because each party is so deeply grounded in its ideological roots, neither is able to effectively make a decision. Citizens elect representatives to make political decisions, but polarization is particularly damaging to the democratic process because it shifts the focus from effective policy-making to concerns regarding party politics. Paul Woodrow explains, "...two-party government collapses into an oscillating tyranny, as each side brings out the worst in the other...the political divide reflects class warfare between the rich and the poor," (65). It is exactly these symptoms occurring in the *status quo* as Republicans and Democrats have at each other's throats while citizens sit helplessly along the sidelines. Partisan politics shifts power back and forth, meanwhile failing to strike the harmonious balance necessary to stabilize society as a whole. Just governments must seek to avoid the dangers of polarization if they are to be successful, for polarization freezes the process entirely. Putting policies into action requires the ability to actually make decisions through the use of good reason.

Next, political equality is requisite to successful governments. Similar to the need for social harmony, political harmony is also desirable in democratic societies. In order

for a government to be truly representative it must allow its citizens to share their opinions without fear of reprisal or repression. Open dialogue and political discourse create a narrative that projects internal beliefs in a way that engages the beliefs of other members of society.

Woodrow defines political harmony as "...adhering to the rule of law, working together for common goals, and accepting differences," (90). All three concepts are pragmatic approaches to just governance by remaining true to principles of freedom and equality. It takes the united efforts of all contributing members of society to strengthen the democratic process in its entirety. The rule of law maintains equality before the law, as well as supporting the pursuit of justice, and both are strengthened with the contribution of common social goals. Common goals, moreover, are the best representations of majority opinion.

These are three components of success- *social, economic, and political*. All three possess their own independent virtues, but it is the combination of all three that realizes their true strength. Democratic institutions, founded upon the aforementioned principles, provide the best environment to allow for success in these three areas of existence. Societies, economies, and political orders are not mutually-exclusive, for they all affect one another in various ways. Just as it takes three lines to construct a triangle, it similarly takes these three components of just governments to achieve success.

## *Two Truths*

First, governments should not contradict their functional purposes. The State was established to be effective, not simply to exist; therefore it must do all in its power to meet practical demands. Social, political, and economic considerations are tantamount to preserving the legitimacy of any governing authority. If political order fails to meet these demands as required through the common demands of their citizens, then it cannot be successful.

According to social contract theory, if States fail to uphold the democratic goals it promises to maintain, then the citizens are justified in dissolving that political order. Locke contends, “The people generally ill treated, and contrary to right, will be ready upon any occasion to ease themselves of a burden that sits heavy upon them,” (a.q.i. Kolak, 499). Freedom and equality can never be actualized in their most extreme form, but that does not mean that the State should not seek to realize their most reasonable potential.

Second, government must adapt to their political environments. Darwin’s idea of the survival of the fittest can be applied to governmental evolution. In order to succeed governments must effectively adapt their policies, decisions, and actions according to what best serves the greatest number of people, thus enabling these governments to thrive in a globalizing political and economic environment. However this adaptation should evolve towards inclusion not marginalization. If a government marginalizes or oppresses more than half of any population, domestic or foreign, it subjects itself to potential failure.

Freedom will never become unimportant under the rule of just governments, and neither will equality. Regardless of culture, background, or upbringing, human needs are human needs. Humans need their natural rights for there are essential demands of human nature. Democratic institutions best adapt themselves to meet these demands.

Determining success is not left at the doors of philosophical discussion, for a true evaluation requires an application to actual experience. One ought not to be overly concerned with how governments claim they will act, but instead with how they *do* act. Without meeting these general requirements, States will not succeed.

## IV.

### A Case for the Pragmatic Method

Being pragmatic is necessary for governments to be successful. Pragmatism is a practical approach to problem-solving via exhaustive efforts at evaluating potential courses of action and the effects which might ensue. Pragmatism "...denotes a commitment to success in practical affairs..." (Talissee and Aikin, 1). Until explicitly defined by Charles S. Pierce, John Dewey, and William James in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this rational method of problem-solving had yet to be formally labeled, although its practical benefits were experienced around the world for many centuries. Equality and democratic inclusion are the keys to success in any democratic system, and pragmatism best achieve these ends.

#### *Defining Pragmatism*

The pragmatic method seeks to "interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences," (James, 26). Ideally no option would be excluded from pragmatic discussion, at least any legitimate option. Suppose a democratic representative has two potential choices- *A*, and *B*. If they choose option *A*, they know of three possible benefits, and two possible disadvantages. If they were to choose option *B*, they are faced with four potential benefits and two possible disadvantages. The pragmatic method would examine the practical differences between both options in order to make the best decision through the process of cost-benefit-analysis, ultimately choosing option *B* because there is a higher likelihood of achieving a desirable end.

Following the pragmatic method means one "...must bring out of each word its practical cash-value, set it at work within the stream of your experience," (James 28). This process of extraction and application is how individuals arrive at the best decisions. Experience creates practical reality and meaning. Pragmatism is more of a methodology rather than an ideology. This is why pragmatism is preferred as a method for decision-making, not a prescription for decisions.

When examining the various main types of Constitutions (i.e. Democracies, Aristocracies, and Oligarchies) Aristotle notes that it is important to embrace the whole of subjects rather than their fragmented parts. Determining the most effective form of government "...has to consider what government is best and of what sort it must be, to be most in accordance with our aspirations, if there were no external impediment, and also what kind of government is adapted to particular states," (Book IV, Ch. 1). Aristotle prescribes the process of political science as being pragmatic in its practice. The pragmatic method at the most reasonable hypothesis with proper consideration of all the available evidence (James, 38); consequently, this holistic consideration of what is *best* compared to the alternatives is how we create the most proper form of government.

This logic applies to decision-making as pragmatism pursues a "...test of probable truth...what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experiences and demands, nothing being omitted," (38). As a consequence, being pragmatic generates the best decisions by equally evaluating the practical effects of all viable options.

The pragmatic method avoids unreasonable decision-making. The whole of human experience contributes to the assimilation of knowledge. *How* we know is created

by personal experience and the experiences of others. Alexis de Tocqueville observed “A multitude of particular facts cannot be seen separately without at last discovering the common tie that connects them...”<sup>16</sup> Societies need to use the pragmatic method to develop the general ideas necessary to form society and to make properly prudent decisions.

Pragmatism is never satisfied with past truths. It utilizes tests and revises them. Pragmatism is a method which utilizes empirical knowledge and is “...guided by the practical intent of overcoming injustice,” (Calder, 59). By taking normative conceptions and combining them with empirical analysis, the pragmatic method offers a means by which true problem-solvers can settle disputes, physical and metaphysical, through the use of logic, experience, and reason. Morton White furthers, “The emphasis is rather on the idea that a whole man will subject a heterogeneous stock of opinions to a test in which conformity to both experience *and* desire is to be taken into account, that he will balance many considerations against each other in an effort to deal with the challenge that has put the old system to a strain,” (119).

Any rational decision should not only understand *what* the decision is, but also *why* the decision is being made. Answering both questions enhances knowledge by adopting a more well-rounded conception of truth. Talisse and Aikin observe, “Knowledge is a success term...on two fronts. First, with knowledge, we have the truth. Second, we, in obtaining that knowledge, have expressed our rationality,” (28). Pragmatism assists in defining truth, more specifically which decisions are best, by through the use of rationality in its most useful form.

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<sup>16</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, “Why the Americans Show More Aptitude and Taste for General Ideas than their Forefathers, the English,” *Democracy in America*, Vol. II, section 1, Ch. 3.

Truths, and ultimately decisions are interdependent because "...thoughts are meaningful in terms of their relation to other thoughts," (29). Each meaningful aspect of individual experiences, according to the pragmatic method, is component parts of the whole of human experience by which individuals rationalize and collectivize their interests.

### *Pragmatism and Democracy*

Pragmatism strengthens the democratic process. Democratic principles are broad enough to be implemented in any non-oppressive society. Freedom and equality are not truths within themselves, but instead gain their significance when applied to agents; moreover, they are points of reference by which governments measure the practical desirability of specific policy options. One does not make the claim "freedom is true," or "equality is true." Rather, a rational person would most likely say "It is true I value freedom because..." or "It is true I value equality because..." Since freedom and equality are not self-referential, they must retain their practical significance by referring to specific actors. Pragmatism bridges the gap between general ideas and their justifications.

The pragmatic method is instrumental to critical decision-making. Similarly, the desirability of democratic freedoms, for example, is grounded in the practical use they have for human beings, for they retain no inherent worth absent the human experience. If one chooses to utilize the pragmatic method, viable options must possess what William James refers to as "positive significance," (26). If plausible options being discussed either contradict or undermine the practical and philosophical importance of democratic principles, then they cannot be viewed as positively significant. Therefore, in democratic

governments, any action or policy decision on behalf of the government cannot oppose or undermine the democratic ideal.

The pragmatic method seems intuitive by nature, but unfortunately is oftentimes ignored by individuals and governments alike. For example, a political leader may choose not to adopt policy *B* not because it is damaging to society or detrimental to the democratic process, but because it conflicts with the ideological convictions of the leader. In a democracy, the best options ought not to be overridden by the personal disagreement on behalf of single representatives. The utilitarian standard upheld in democratic governments values that which serves the best interest of the majority without disenfranchising minority groups by trumping the personal ideological convictions of leaders.

Because pragmatism constantly evaluates the effectiveness of actors and their decisions, it has the best opportunity at ensuring success when applied to the democratic process. This methodology tests the paradigm outlined through the democratic ideal by applying it to specific governmental actions. Thus, the pragmatic method holds governments accountable.

As required both by the social contract and political promises, governments must be genuine in their efforts to better the well-being of their citizens. If a regime, leader, or political order claims “I will achieve *x*,” they must meet the practical burden of putting theoretical discussion into action that moves towards the actualization of *x*. Calder continues, “...to prioritize practice is itself a theoretical commitment, and one which requires theoretical negotiation if it is not to generate problems for itself,” (64). By advocating for these ideas, political institutions take upon themselves a philosophical

commitment to defend their position in the face of opposing criticism. If this commitment is not defensible against practical indictments, then it is not reasonable to prefer it. Next, the pragmatic method commits itself to understand truth to its greatest feasible extent by combining theoretical conceptions with normative practice. Finally, any reasonable action must survive theoretical negotiation. The rational method of debate and justification strengthens the democratic process.

By holding representatives accountable to their populations via the social contract and specific Constitutions, democracy has the ability to refer to the democratic ideal as an instrumental means of preventing future abuses. Effective participation, the rule of law, and citizen wisdom are the quintessence of democratic success because they are the practical instrumental mechanisms by which individuals express and protect their interests. Without these necessary components, democracy cannot survive. “Theories thus become instruments, not answers to enigmas, in which we can rest,” (James, 28). Thus, the pragmatic method provides the necessary tools for government accountability and proper decision-making in democracies.

Human nature dictates that individuals are primarily self-centered. Governments, however, must always prioritize the interests of its majority population in order to fulfill their functional duties. If a governing regime first considers effects to itself and citizenry secondarily, it is not being just. The democratic ideal demands government protection of natural rights and maximization of democratic freedoms.

Pragmatism combines theory and practice by examining the practical consequences of theoretical assumptions. Democratic inclusion is bolstered by combining philosophical justification with practical significance. The democratic presumption is that

freedom and equality are the fundamental principles; additionally, these principles take the form of natural rights. Natural rights transform abstract principles into the reality of the human experience. A democratic government adopts these prescriptions to differentiate between just and unjust decisions. If the decision does not support the original principles in their *real* political form, it should be dismissed. Democracy, thus, bridges the gap between philosophical justification and practical implementation. “Philosophy on a modest scale is something which we cannot escape our entanglement with as we negotiate the political playing out of any given model of democracy,” (Calder, 64). It is imperative to social progression that we encourage philosophical debates to achieve democracy in action. Let us not assume that pragmatists necessarily value practice over theory. Rather, pragmatists seek to put theory into practice.

Democratic governments are best suited for success because they use discourse and debate. By fostering an environment which encourages open dialogue and free discussion, democracies create free-thinking societies capable of utilizing the methodology required by pragmatism. These pragmatic, discursive processes are an exhaustive effort aimed at defining truths which best serve the interests of society. A continuous use of the pragmatic method provides that “...democracy will be valuable...because it delivers things which are conceived as valuable in a prior way,” (Calder, 65). Freedom and democracy are best understood through discourse and debate.

Pragmatism partakes in an epistemic journey aimed at defining the most practically significant truths, ultimately translating those truths into effective decision-making. In the pursuit of truth, a political order that allows for free thinking, free inquiry, and dialogue is best suited to divulging truths. Epistemological undertakings require

logical challenges through discourse and debate. Democratic political orders are the best means of extracting general principles and applying them in meaningful ways. “It follows that one can satisfy one’s [epistemic] commitments *qua* believer only within a political context in which it is possible to be a free enquirer...in order to inquire, there must be norms of equality, free speech, a freedom of information, open debate, protected dissent, access to decision-making institutions, and so on,” (Talissee, 20). Democratic governments are the most compatible political order with the pragmatic method. The ability to think and rationalize freely enables individuals to achieve self-actualization.

The pragmatic method propagates better policy-making. The pragmatic method forces us to question an idea’s “...coherence, its relation to the purported norms of a polity, its deeper case for a revision of our understanding of the relation between individuals and their environments...” (Calder, 64). If the idea or argument can posit a convincing case for revision or abandonment, it has fulfilled its pragmatic burden. Ideas must be justifiably preferable to other viable alternatives before enacting them into actual policy-making. By applying the pragmatic method to the democratic process, governments have greater assurance of enacting the most prudent policy decisions.

The democratic ideal coupled with the pragmatic method works together to create what I refer to as the “democratic filter.” This filter applies the truth-seeking process discussed earlier. A variety of potential policy options stem from any problem. Just governments take these potential options and apply the democratic filter through the pragmatic method. Only certain viable options will remain. From these viable options we once again apply the pragmatic method to test and ultimately determine which option is

best-suited for both citizens and the democratic ideal. *Problem → Democratic*

*Filter → Choice (Truth)*

Democracy is absolute in principle, not in its form. Pragmatism is absolute in its method, not in its truths. These two ideas can work together to better society in all aspects by generating practical approaches to problem-solving. The unhindered application of the pragmatic method is preserved within democratic governments.

### *Ideology as a Road Block to Pragmatism*

Political ideologies are a significant road block to pragmatic decision-making. Ideologies are self-referential insofar as the ideology is oftentimes viewed as *the* truth. Political ideologies become problematic when support or opposition occurs, not by virtue of the objective truths surrounding the idea being discussed, but the relationship that idea has with the ideology. If the potential decision at-hand opposes or undermines an ideology, then it usually is dismissed as unimportant or undesirable.

Political ideologies are grounded in normative assumptions and causal beliefs. Normative assumptions are conceptions of right and wrong, or good and bad. Political ideologies make claims of right and wrong based upon the ideology itself, which operates as the initial premise of any given decision. The democratic ideal, however, makes claims of right and wrong based upon the effect particular actions have in relation to principles of freedom and equality. Both freedom and equality possess an intrinsic value which is difficult to dispute. Political ideologies do not necessarily possess this value. Although ideologies are sometimes compatible with the foundations of democracy, they are not the most conducive to democratic progress.

Political polarization in the United States is a great example of when political ideologies hinder democratic progress. Democrats and Republicans are constantly at war with one another, meanwhile ignoring the wars they should actually be fighting- those of poverty, inequality, and human rights violations. Rather than attempting to decide upon what decision is most prudent they instead bicker about what decisions are most consistent with Democrat or Republican ideals. Candidates are forced to “prove” their value to party allegiances instead of having to prove their inherent worth as candidates regardless of political parties. A pragmatic view of democracy would be more concerned with what is best for the population as whole rather than what is best for their party and its support-base.

Causal beliefs are the motivating factors that cause one to act on behalf of their normative assumptions. Causal beliefs constitute the lens through which we see the world, consequently establishing a cause and effect relationship between beliefs and action. Normative assumptions take actors to the brink of moral judgment, and causal beliefs push actors over the edge. For example, two normative assumptions held by Adolf Hitler were racial purity and a strong sense of anti-Semitism. These two assumptions presumed the moral correctness of both notions. The causal beliefs which pushed Hitler past the brink were the Aryan struggle on the world-stage coupled with the belief that mixing races was morally repugnant. Combining normative assumptions with causal beliefs, Adolf Hitler advanced the Nazi ideology which ultimately resulted in the death of over six million Jews. Ideologies can have a great effect. Furthermore, irrational action can never be causally justified.

Experience shapes perceived reality. These normative assumptions are reinforced or advanced as a result of ideological motivations. The danger is that ideologies have the potential to shape what Mannheim refers to as “false consciousness.” Mannheim explains that it is “not that it [ideologies] cannot grasp an absolute unchanging reality, but rather that it obstructs comprehension of a reality which is the outcome of constant reorganization of the mental processes which make up our world,” (84). As a result, ideologies hinder society’s ability to adapt to current conceptions of truth; ideologies operate in past social and historical contexts. If thought and consciousness continuously change and affect one another, then worldviews should similarly be able to change. Unfortunately ideologies prevent that change; they distort knowledge by failing to account for current realities.

Personal truth is not always similar to objective truth. Political ideologies become dangerous when they address the tension between these two ideas by defending the ideology. Karl Mannheim argues that ideologies mask the factual basis of any given situation in support of an idealistic state of existence. As a result, those acting from the initial premise of any given ideology, either consciously or subconsciously, are unable to effectively act according to what is realistically in the best interest of democratic societies.

Political ideologies are combinations of ideas which outline prescriptions for actions on behalf of the rulers. Political ideologies devise, prescribe, and divide. They devise an understanding of the world within and external to the agent of action. Prescription comes into the picture when normative assumptions and causal belief make ideologically-motivated recommendations regarding literal action. Finally, they divide

communities and nations alike by erecting ideological barriers between believers and objectors.

Actors are unable to act pragmatically if they do not remove ideological barriers to decision-making. If one were given two choices to a single problem, the ideologue would always favor the solution which supports to ideology. For example, crackdowns and violence exhibited towards protestors in Syria are just one example of ideologies interfering with rational decision-making. Bashar al Assad is not killing protestors and innocent bystanders because their message is morally or logically unsound; instead, he is continuing forth with extreme violence to quash dissent against the interests of the Syrian State. The ideologue is bound to certain courses of action or types of decisions which either enhance or protect the ideology itself. As a result, the actor is only capable of choosing from a limited number of options meanwhile excluding the practical significance of other potential objectively-viable options.

Although pragmatism might be perceived as ideology, let us clarify that pragmatism is an ideal *method* of decision-making. Pragmatism is not a decision within itself unlike political ideologies. Similarly, democratic principles are not ideologies, but they are *ideal*. The definitional distinction is necessary to avoid confusion. Ideologies are systems created by combining various ideals, whereas the democratic ideal operates independently as a desirable end by providing a filter for decision-making. Political ideologies subvert the democratic filter by ignoring the pragmatic method.

The difference between the democratic ideal and political ideologies is that principles of freedom and equality are universally applicable, whereas political ideologies tend to be characteristic of specific preferences. Pragmatism, too, is universal in its

method, for it refuses to exclude any serious problem-solver from the discussion. Ideologues, however, might dismiss the critic simply for being a critic. Instead ideologues are self-serving, interested only in what is best for the ideology rather than what is best for the constituency. The emotive and oftentimes irrational nature of political ideologies limit the scope of those who are able to access any sort of political, social, or economic benefits.

The epistemic nature of pragmatism is unique because the pragmatic method can make the best argument to *any* rational actor, whereas political ideologies are specific to certain *types* of actors. Political ideologies are not forced to withstand the stringent tests of rationality employed by the pragmatic method, for ideologies tend to be the beginning premise of any proceeding discussion. As a result, ideologies become the justification. Pragmatism begins by asking, “What are the facts? What are the conditions? What is the context?” Political ideologies are not necessarily concerned with all three questions for ideologies lack similar epistemic demands.

The pragmatic method can overturn or disprove the underlying presumptions of political ideologies, whereas ideologies do not correct themselves. Ideologies reinforce pre-existing beliefs, whereas pragmatism operates with a self-corrective method; William James warns us that “...the greatest enemy to any of our truths may be the rest of our truths. Truths have once for all this desperate instinct of self-preservation and of desire to extinguish whatever contradicts them,” (James a.q.i. Kolak, 943). The danger of political ideologies to democracy lies in their inability to abandon traditional belief systems. Ideologies are not required to be rational, but pragmatism is. If strongly-held ideology conflicts with newly conceived truths, the ideologue will simply tighten their grip.

History has proven that ideologies can eventually become the root-cause of conflict amongst States, such as conflicts arising in defense of ideologies; because States hold their ideologies as truth-claims regarding the nature of existence, they are motivated to adamantly preserve these notions.

Democratic institutions must seek to free themselves from the constraints of ideological barriers to operate effectively. Pragmatism positively contributes to political participation; it strengthens the processes undergone in defense of the rule of law by requiring justification and rationality; finally, pragmatism increases citizen wisdom through its epistemic conquests. Ideologies diminish political participation; ideologies thwart the rule of law by putting the ideologues above the law; finally, they limit citizen wisdom. Ideologies have the propensity to cloud rational decision-making, whereas employing the pragmatic method to best meet the democratic ideal has the propensity to produce quality decisions. It is by this paradigm that democracies are able to effectively adapt their institutions to effectively meet the demands of modern-day societies.

## V.

### Case Studies in Democracy

The 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> has demonstrated an unprecedented increase in the development of democratic governments. The Southern African region, Western Europe, Southeast Asia, South America, and now Northern Africa have either witnessed or are currently witnessing stark democratic reform. Although some governments are more successful than others, their intentions towards democratic reforms are consistent.

Two case studies merit discussion in understanding democracy and pragmatism as a factor of governmental success- democratization in Russia and the democratic revolution of the Arab Spring. Both Russia and Arab Spring highlight the fundamental importance of freedom, equality, and the democratic ideal. In Russia, Vladimir Putin and the Kremlin are on the path to failure due to their inability to keep to their democratic promises following the fall of the U.S.S.R. in 1991. Conversely, the Arab Spring is a unique example of an internal shift in political consciousness in which younger generations have helped to re-conceptualize the Northern African understanding of just governments. The barrier to democratic progress within both studies stems from a long history of ideologically-motivated oppression. Inspired by Western influence and current international norms, both examples represent political, social, and economic demands which parallel the democratic ideal.

#### *Democracy in Russia*

Russia's history of authoritative ideology continues to negatively impact the ongoing attempt at democratization in the country. The inability to adapt current practices

and institutions to meet the requirements of upholding the regime's democratic promises is detrimental to current and future success.

A totalitarian mindset that endorses communal value-systems has resulted in "overmanaged democracy" in Russia. Overmanaged democracy consists of a "highly centralized state authority concentrated in the executive branch..." which possess basic democratic institutions and continues to corrode these institutions by replacing them "...either outside the constitutional framework or in violation of the spirit of the constitution..." (Petrov, Lipman, Hale, 3). Essentially, the democratic experiment which first began in 1991 has struggled with reconciling the differences between a democratic ideal and a long-standing history of concentrated authority. As a result, Russia struggles with satisfying its citizens and continues to undermine its own legitimacy.

Russia's history of authoritative and totalitarian ideology poses a significant threat to future success. Past reliance on the State as a communal provider hinders progression towards the democratic ideal. Democracy is founded upon the citizen's ability to control the government, or at least positively influence government decisions to reflect citizen opinion. The totalitarian mindset, however, creates a worldview which believes "...the highest moral duty of an individual is obedience to the 'party-state' and to its leaders who know the final and absolute truth," (Fedorov, 3). This mindset undermines the pragmatic method because it assumes a conception of truth on behalf of the government which does not necessarily reflect those views held by a majority of Russian society. The Russian government's heavy reliance on their totalitarian mindset represents an ideological worldview which assumes the government *always* knows what is best for its constituency.

The Economist explains that the ideological mindset of Russian officials has “...cultivated the image of Russia as a fortress besieged by foreign enemies...” ( April 2012, 61). This “us versus them” mentality results in the isolation of the Russian government from other nations by reinforcing a deep-rooted paranoia founded on the belief that Russia stands alone. The ideology of the regime which depends on a paternal relationship between citizen and government causes the government to continue believing that it must retain power in order to maintain security and stability. Unfortunately, “...this paradigm largely determines the public perceptions of today’s realities and hinders democratic transformation, because it promotes public passivity and perpetuates a special dominant role for high government officials and top bureaucrats,” (Fedorov, 7-8). If Russia is unable to reverse the paternalistic mindset, then it will not be able to effectively institutionalize democratic reform and establish appropriate standards of justice consistent with the democratic ideal.

Although a traditional totalitarian ideology still greatly affects political and civil life in Russian society, there is hope for democratic reform. Russian leaders at the national level continue to advance the totalitarian mindset, but now they are forced to consider the response on the ground. Fedorov notes, “...unlike the general public, which is gradually freeing itself from ideological perceptions and concepts and leaning instead toward a pragmatic view of reality, the Russian elites display attitudes to democracy and liberalism that are still distorted by traditional illiberal views,” (12). Citizens are no longer latent observers solely dependent on the State for their own well-being; rather, they have come to recognize the sociopolitical importance of activism and participation. These processes are further assisted by holding governments accountable and enhancing

citizen wisdom. Ultimately, using the pragmatic method in reference to the democratic ideal would grant citizens the opportunity to overcome the ideological barrier which continues to suppress a free Russian society.

Russian democracy is a reaction to the perils of Communist Russia and the continuous demand for the integration of democratic principles in Russian society. Individuals have come to understand the political, social, and economic benefits which come along with a functional democratic government. Rather than being solely reliant on the State for livelihood and political action, citizens have acknowledged the desirability of a government from the people. Upon appointment as Prime Minister in 1996, Yevgeny Primakov promised "...his government would be a government of pragmatic professionals with no particular party allegiance..." (Ware, 18). Unfortunately the government has continued to fail to uphold this promise, which has resulted in dissatisfaction with the Kremlin and the Duma.

The ability to participate within the political process is still a new idea to the Russian people, but it is something that citizens have come to embrace. Similar to other large nations, most democratic reform takes place at the local level before the federal level. The Economist notes, "Real politics is spreading to the regional and municipal level," (April 2012, 61). Although this process of democratization has been slow-moving and oftentimes faces ideologically motivated barriers, such as when Boris Yeltsin drafted a constitution in 1993 which expanded presidential power and "...narrowed those of the new bicameral Federal Assembly," (Ware, 8). the fight for democracy continues to carry forward.

Forced to fight political oppression and institutionalized favoritism, Russian citizens are turning to their local government to strengthen voice and participatory influence regarding governmental policy. The Economist continues to explain that localized politics is "...a symptom of people's lack of trust in politicians and parties at the federal level. People are looking not for politicians boasting promises and programs, but for local administrators capable of solving problems," (61). People do not want their government to promise change, they want to witness change. Thus, citizens are using local administrations to bolster effective citizen participation.

Citizens also want more government accountability. One of the current regime's biggest criticisms pertains to institutionalized corruption and a lack of transparency. Both of these complaints encompass many of the problems citizens face when it comes to accessing the benefits of the democratic ideal. In February 2012 Vladimir Putin ironically stated that "Democracy...is the fundamental right of the people to elect their government as well as to continuously influence it and the decision-making process," (October 2012). Currently citizens cannot effectively participate in the way that Putin himself articulated.

Much of the anxiety leading up to the March 2012 elections were concerned with rigged elections which have occurred in the past. As a result, the government spent \$300 million dollars installing webcams and polling surveillance to quell citizen complaints of a lack of transparency. The result of this election, albeit more "transparent" than past elections, simply moved Putin into the Presidential office and established Dmitry Medvedev as Prime Minister.

Furthermore, the Russian government delegitimizes the rule of law either by changing laws or creating them in a way which best serves the interest of the State. Sil

and Chen argue, “Individuals in key positions in federal government bodies are viewed as likely to be corrupt and self-serving...” (353). Declining legitimacy of the regime reflect little trust, growing frustrations, and cognitive dissonance.

The government also subverts the rule of law by dictating law. “Law in the Putin era has increasingly become an instrument by which rulers controlled society instead of a mechanism by which society and state mutually set limits on each other’s behavior,” (Petrov, Lipman, Hale, 7). Thus, there is an extreme lack of government accountability because laws are fashioned to favor the government ideal rather than the democratic ideal. A failure to effectively respond to democratic movements seeking government transparency and state legitimacy has the potential to result in protest.

“Overmanaged democracy thus brings risks for both society and state rulers, shrinking state capacity to produce desirable policy and over the long run making social upheaval more likely,” (25). Since attempting democratic reform after the fall of the Soviet Union the government has continued to adopt policies that favor government interests rather than the social ideal. Without effectively adapting its institutions to the current social context which desires substantial reform to ensure democratic freedom, social unrest and eventually revolution become feasible prospects.

Corruption, rigged elections, indefinite stays in office, and a totalitarian mindset are continuing to decrease government legitimacy. Sil and Chen warn against Putin’s ideological past by recognizing that he fails to identify with “...those who place a higher value on strict democratic procedures, the preservation of individual rights or the cultivation of a more vibrant and assertive civil society,” (362). Current protests and

political activism are clear indicators of the citizen's demand to form an effective civil society founded upon the democratic ideal.

The government's historical totalitarian mindset ignores many of the modern-day demands of Russian society and breaks the democratic promises that have been made. A continued evolution of thought and the development of democratic institutions are necessary to accommodate to the social and political change in Russia. Unfortunately citizens and opposition movements have severely limited participation within the political process because the Kremlin continues to favor the ruling party and creates an illusion of democracy by recognizing that opposing parties exist without granting them a legitimate opportunity to yield large-scale influence. "The Russian case is instructive as to how a creative regime can emasculate the electoral process even while leaving some genuine opposition in the race, allowing the regime to offer policies much closer to its ideal than to society's," (Petrov, Lipman, Hale, 6). The ability to have an effective political opposition in Russia is undermined by the government.

The government also suppresses free-flowing information, thus limiting citizen wisdom. Aside from access to educational institutions, citizens need access to the marketplace of ideas. In order to serve the interests of the ruling party, the regime actively silences opposition voices, whether it is through the control of the media or the outright repression of dissenting opinions. "The assertion of state control has virtually eliminated news competition among the most important media outlets. Nothing that is unexpected or unwanted by the Kremlin can appear in a news broadcast on the three television networks," (14). The government prevents individuals from enhancing citizen wisdom by limiting the type of information access. If media sources and public

information are antithetical to the wishes of the regime, then those voices are silenced. Due to all these social and political failures, continued democratic evolution is required to effectively meet constituent demands for enhancing citizen wisdom.

In an attempt to increase quality of life and effective participation, citizens are taking to the streets in protest demanding action and responsibility. Participation can no longer be quashed because it contradicts the shift in political consciousness which recognizes the value of citizen involvement in political life. The Russian government's political ideology poses a significant roadblock to liberalizing Russian society by attempting to maintain a mindset that citizens ought to be passive subjects rather than active participants.

The government must undertake systematic reform because the "...system is not viable for the long haul. Further down the road, the current Russian system is likely to unravel in an uncontrolled way if the leadership itself fails to transform it," (28). The pragmatic method would suggest that the government abandon its ideological convictions in support of democratic reform which prioritizes the will and well-being of the people. Ideologies thwart reform in favor of traditional methods of getting things done, whereas pragmatism promotes necessary reform by opening governments to new methods of problem-solving. Thus, Russia must seek to rid itself of ideological barriers in favor of a more pragmatic view of reality which upholds the democratic ideal.

### *The Arab Spring*

This past year has witnessed a democratic movement unlike anything else in history. Termed the Arab Spring, it began with the Tunisian revolution and spread across

North Africa. The Arab Spring demonstrates a shift in political consciousness towards a democratic ideal. The countries of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya exemplify the basic democratic demands advocated in the Arab Spring in response to decades of ideologically-motivated oppression.

Similar to the authoritative mindset of the Russian government, ruling parties in all three of these countries advanced an agenda which primarily sought to protect the interests of rulers rather than citizens. Unlike the Russian example, there is limited information regarding post-revolution reform within these countries simply because this movement is still on-going. While all three countries have succeeded in ousting oppressive dictators, the future of the democracy within the region has yet to be seen.

The Arab Spring was a response to decades of human rights violations. Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, former President of Tunisia, maintained a hold on power since 1987. As a result, Tunisian society was subject to political oppression and the silencing of opposition movements. Political imprisonment became a common occurrence under the 23-year rule of Ben Ali. Prime Minister, Hamadi Jebali, was a political prisoner for 14 years, and is now attempting to initiate substantial political, social, and infrastructural reform within the country (Economist 2012). Although he was subject to the atrocious acts of the Tunisian government, Jebali recognized the civic importance of political activism and democratic reform.

In Egypt, former President Hosni Mubarak ruled with strong-armed dictatorship. Elizabeth Dickinson notes, “From police brutality to persecution of minorities, from the arrests of journalists to the suppression of political dissent, Mubarak’s Egypt has been a textbook police state. For 30 years anger and frustration brewed among his subjects,

bottled up and sealed with fear,” (Foreign Policy 2011). Oppressive dictatorship and autocratic governance are antithetical to free, democratic societies. Democracy cannot flourish while governments persecute and employ violence against its citizens.

The Egyptian government has held the attention of human rights activists due to years of torture, violence, and severe misallocation of resources. Dietrich Jung expands, “The economic resources of the Middle East have been used and allocated in unproductive ways. Corruption is not only a means of enrichment for authoritarian regimes and their cronies, it is also developed into a general mechanism that characterizes the distribution of resources in society,” (6). Actions of self-interested regimes have caused disease, death, and mass poverty. As a result, structural reform and infrastructure development are difficult obstacles which must be addressed to ensure success within the region.

Former Libyan President, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, is an excellent example of an ideologue refusing to surrender their hold on power. Despite rampant protests, an impassioned revolutionary movement, and condemnation from the international community, Colonel Gaddafi sought to maintain his leadership and continued to use violence against protestors. In 2010, Libya was ranked second-lowest on the Democracy Index, calculated at 158 points out of a maximum of 167 points; it was second only to Saudi Arabia (EIU, 5). The complete lack of democratic institutions and the presence of continual oppression ultimately resulted in revolution.

United States President Barack Obama condemned regime violence and military force against protestors when he stated, “Muammar Gaddafi has lost the legitimacy to lead and he must leave; those who perpetrate violence against the Libyan people will be

held accountable; and the aspirations of the Libyan people for freedom, democracy and dignity must be met,” (March 2011). Such condemnation acknowledges the lack of justifiability for violence directed towards an oppressed population demanding systematic reform.

The motivations to revolt against oppressive autocrats in the Arab Spring were “...restricted civil liberties, corruption, widening disparities in wealth, lack of dignity, police impunity, and sham elections...”(ACSS, 7-8). Because these problems were felt across the North African region, different populations were able to coalesce a unified effort directed towards establishing a free society. The values of life, liberty, and property are precisely the rights which were continuously denied by the governing regimes of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.

Historically autocratic governments managed to quell political participation. Fear, lack of education, and coercion kept populations from overthrowing these oppressive regimes for several decades. The ACSS report recognizes that unstable autocracies utilized a “...coercive capacity to intimidate the population into compliance and repress any organized effort to challenge regime authority. Without this coercive capacity an autocratic system is unable to sustain its hold on power,” (34). Pre-revolutionary North African regimes forced individuals to act against their own will. Jung furthers, “The current unrest in the Arab world is, therefore, about both economic and political exclusion, as it is about the successful moves towards democracy,” (7). Social, political, and economic success is not viable in an environment characterized by coercion and repression. Moreover, a free society cannot exist by force, for it must be a desired end established by the people through democratic means.

Next, the Arab Spring echoes a global shift towards democratization. The Arab democratic movement is unique because it was not externally imposed upon populations, but rather was internally motivated based upon the experiences these individuals had been subject to. Social life, for example, caused citizens to acknowledge the misuse of government power which further entrenched individuals in their suffering. Much of Arab society recognizes when their internal sense of freedom and natural equality is violated time and time again by their own government. Consequently, “African populations now have higher expectations that government leaders act in a more democratic and accountable manner,” (ACSS, 2). Pragmatism and the democratic ideal ensure government accountability.

The change in political consciousness which opposes corruption and oppression has empowered citizens to use communicative resources such as independent media outlets and social networking websites. A global demand for government accountability and political freedom has created a global narrative which acts upon the practical usefulness of democratic governments.

Through the use of media sources such as Facebook and Twitter revolutionaries and protestors were able to send out information specifying the struggles they were forced to face as a result of government actions. “This multitrack expansion of independent media and information technologies in Africa has created unprecedented opportunities for public dialogue, debate, and empowerment,” (ACSS, 12). Media utilization strengthened the effectiveness of the revolution by creating a common interest, domestically and internationally, in stopping government oppression, thereby granting

citizens the opportunity to establish a government which protects rights and freedoms. Moreover, social media and information technologies increase political discourse.

Modern political thought within each country has been greatly affected by external regional and international forces. Regionally, the movement represents the changing paradigm which once favored a lack of egalitarianism and embraced institutionalized oppression to societies which seek justice, fairness, and equality before the law. When protestors were able to witness revolutionary success in neighboring countries through social media, the disenchanteds were inspired to become politically active, thus initiating a domino effect. The way each dictator fell or was removed, one by one, highlights the similarities between each country's personal paths to democracy. These paths were paved by years of frustration and an unshakable desire for change. The dialogue that exists amongst individuals and between countries has created a regional conception of why a liberalized society has become a desirable end.

Internationally, the influence of globalization has spurred far more than economic allegiances and trade agreements. The United Nations, for example, has played a significant role in the development of a desire for the democratic ideal. Influence from functional democracies and the sharing of personal narratives has removed the ideological veil and exposed many individuals to the prospect of a life without oppression. The Arab Spring has been a movement born by the demand for accountability; these demands were reinforced once protestors recognized that much of the international community supported the people's empowerment rather than the people in power. International support creates a network of democratic thought which continues

to perpetuate the belief that democratic change is possible, and that freedom is not simply a dream.

The Arab Spring is the people's attempt at combating physical and political disenfranchisement through the establishment of legitimate governments. Sil and Chen maintain that "...an exploration of the level and sources of state legitimacy is essentially an analysis of the evolution and structure of state-society relations, with 'society' referring to the range of institutions and social relations constructed by non-state actors," (348). Only by working together with their governments can societies succeed. The evolution of the relationship between society and the state should consist of the institutionalization of checks against natural rights violations; it should establish a system that emboldens citizens' resolve to positively affect the functionality of their government. "It [civil society] facilitates public participation on issues of interest to the general population, allows citizens to take initiative to address local or national challenges rather than passively waiting for government to take action, and fosters independent ideas and solutions that enrich policy debates and contribute better decision-making," (ACSS, 15). By legitimizing the government through social approval, is a nation able to witness political and economic success. Democratic evolution assists in establishing a civil society within these countries.

Legitimate governments are those which allow for a civil society to emerge and further strengthen the democratic process. Legitimacy leads to stability, and stability is requisite to successful nations. Thus, through the Arab Spring, Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya have been able to address the practical concerns of a liberalized society on the path to democracy.

## VI.

### Final Thoughts

Applying the cases of Russia and the Arab Spring to the philosophical foundation of democratic principles and the pragmatic method produces several implications. First, democracy has, and should continue to evolve. This process of government evolution has continued to change throughout time as societies progress towards a democratic ideal. Although freedom and equality may never be realized in their most ideal form, the ideal itself ought to be embraced. The necessity of natural rights protection to ensure a higher quality of life should always be preferred to any non-democratic alternatives.

Democracy is not absolute in its form, only its principles. By using the methodology of pragmatism, democracy has the ability to continue adapting its institutions to address contemporary problems for betterment of society. The on-going fight for democratic freedom is not limited to pure democracies, for there have been several historical examples of successful democratic inclusion in hybrid regimes like the U.K.'s constitutional monarchy or Turkey's democratic transition. For example, "...Turkey has been able to develop a political economy that is fundamental for both its new regional foreign policy and its domestic process of democratic reforms," (Jung, 9). Democratization is possible even in countries with strong cultural and historical ties. Hybrid regimes have faced some difficulties in the past, but on-going democratic evolution has the ability to continue adapting institutions within hybrid regimes to effectively address citizen needs.

In Russia we see an example of a government failing to keep to its democratic promises according to the standards of government success outlined in chapter III.

Politically, Putin and the Kremlin are failing to legitimize opposing parties and grant the opportunity for new political leaders to enact positive democratic reform. They have continued to silence dissenters and condemn political challengers. Government accountability is slim and corruption continues to permeate much of the national government.

Socially the regime is limiting the free-flowing information and unbiased media sources. By continuing to feed citizens Russian propaganda which reinforces a paternal relationship between the people and the state, the governing regime has thwarted the potential of the democratic ideal.

Economically Russia is doing little to ensure futures success. Rather than adapting its economic sector to more realistic standards of international trade, Russia continues to produce military weaponry and engage in trade relationships with oppressive dictators (Herszenhorn, 2012). This sort of economic system is not viable and will pose significant problems to the Russian economy in the future when it attempts to wean off this industry, if it ever decides to do so.

As a result, Russia has put itself on the path to democratic failure. One would hope that another six years in power will cause Putin to reevaluate his governing strategy and enact fundamental structural reform. Also, Russian success is dependent upon ridding itself of the ideological barrier which continues to hinder democratic progress. Unfortunately, "...democracy has acquired a dubious reputation," because Russians are associating the failure of their government with the failure of democracy itself (Lally, Englund, 2011). Without true democratic reform, which abandons the totalitarian ideology, Russians will continue to assume ineffective governance is caused by the

ineffectiveness of democracy. Effectively upholding the democratic ideal, however, can demystify this notion.

Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya face hardship ahead as they attempt to redefine their national identity and establish functional regimes as opposed to the self-interested regimes of their dictators. These countries are currently struggling to resolve the tensions between religious and political identities which permeate the region. Libya's National Transitional Council (NTC), for example, enacted a new law banning political parties based on religious principles to prevent divisions resulting from ideological differences (Al Jazeera, 2012). Even this freshly established transitional government has acknowledged how damaging ideologies can be the democratic process which is why ideologies should defer to the pragmatic method. Pragmatism would allow governments to effectively examine what solutions are most prudent at specific moments in time.

Egypt and Tunisia are also dealing with transitional and interim governments. There is some speculation as to whether or not these democratic revolutions will establish stable institutions, but this should not be an indictment of the movement itself. The pro-democratic movement of the Arab Spring is the first step in the long process of liberalizing Arab societies.

Due to strong Islamic influences and culturally-dependent populations, new regimes in these countries will necessarily be mixed. In the case of Egypt, "The new government and constituent assembly will probably have to be based on a coalition between the Muslim Brotherhood and other political factions," (EIU, 9-10). The future of the democratic experiment in this region has yet to be seen, but at least now freedom has hope.

In the case of Arab Spring we see the creation of democracies rather than on-going failure. Because democratization in the region is still in its beginning stages, the ability to learn from past mistakes is significantly greater. The pro-democratic movement of the Arab Spring illustrates the internal re-conceptualization of how individuals would like to live, politically and socially, as well as how they would like to see their government function. The dynamism of democratic values demonstrates that even amidst cultural conflict, civil war, and government oppression, citizens can at least unite in a common effort in the fight for freedom, equality, and the democratic ideal.

The Arab Spring was a necessary response to decades of social and political oppression by finally standing up against oppressive, autocratic regimes. For example, the initial Egyptian citizen assembly in Tahrir Square was an attempt at peacefully expressing society's grievances. The government responded with violence which then caused these people to fight in defense of their newly devised democratic narrative. This process of transition from peaceful protest to violent revolution demonstrates the pragmatic nature of initiating grass-roots change. Although much structural and systematic reform is still required, Arab societies now possess some of the necessary democratic tools to ensure effective government policy decisions. Any possibility of success in the region is contingent upon the citizen's ability to continue affecting change as well as holding future governments accountable for not upholding the democratic ideal.

Next, there is a shift in global political consciousness favoring the democratic ideal. Successful political, social, and economic institutions create a general framework for functional democratic societies, especially by pragmatically applying solutions to

problems through a democratic filter. This shift of consciousness represents an innate desire to live within a liberalized society which endorses freedom, effective participation, the rule of law, and citizen wisdom establishes an egalitarian sense of justice for its members. The counter-examples to these ideals- oppression, limited participation, injustice, corruption, ignorance- have been demonstrated in many countries; ultimately the international community has moved towards a general consensus that favors the former. Citizens continue to demand education, knowledge, and the access to government. The power of the people has been acknowledged as an effective force to instituting change, even against some of the world's most oppressive dictators.

Life, liberty, and property are the all-encompassing natural rights for enhancing political and civic life. Protected under the umbrella of freedom and equality, democratic government must seek to pragmatically address the concerns of their citizenry by enacting policies aimed at resolving current problems and preventing potential failures. Applying pragmatism to the democratic filter generates a methodology which can appropriately address each problem by examining all potential viable options. Once determining which options are best for society, just governments can become effective policy-makers. "Democracy is not achieved by one-time surges of activity but by the sustained and cohesive political engagement of its citizens," (ACSS, 56). The future of democracy depends on the people's ability to enhance their wisdom, engage in political discourse, and apply that knowledge through the use political participation. Just governments should always defer to the democratic ideal through pragmatism.

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