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11-16 minutes

Thing to remember:

In Western countries
constitutional liberalism has led
to democracy, but elsewhere
democracy does not seem to
bring constitutional liberalism.

Illiberalism in International Relations

Let's try to understand the difference

Western (old) democracies	**'New' (illiberal) democracies**
Free and fair elections	Partly free elections
Rule of law	'Creative' law
Separation of powers	Concentration of powers
Protection of basic liberties	Disregard for basic liberties

During the nineties the World witnessed a rapid spread of multiparty elections across south-central Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. But after elections popular leaders like Russia's Boris Yeltsin and Argentina's Carlos Menem bypassed their parliaments and ruled by presidential decree, eroding basic constitutional practices. The Iranian parliament – elected more freely than most in the Middle East -- imposed harsh restrictions on speech, assembly, and even dress, diminished that country's already meager supply of liberty. Ethiopia's elected government turned its security forces on journalists and political opponents, and with this it was doing permanent damage to human rights (as well as human beings).

Ranging from modest offenders like Argentina to near-tyrannies like

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Kazakstan and Belarus, with countries like Romania and Bangladesh in between. Along much of the spectrum, elections are rarely as free and fair as in the West, but they do reflect the reality of popular participation in politics and support for those elected. And the examples are not isolated or atypical.

The countries that lie between confirmed dictatorship and consolidated democracy do better on political liberties than on civil ones

Liberty and democracy

From the time of Herodotus democracy has meant, first and foremost, the rule of the people.

> "Elections, open, free and fair, are the essence of democracy, the inescapable sine qua non. Governments produced by elections may be inefficient, corrupt, shortsighted, irresponsible, dominated by special interests, and incapable of adopting policies demanded by the public good. These qualities make such governments undesirable but they do not make them undemocratic. Democracy is one public virtue, not the only one, and the relation of democracy to other public virtues and vices can only be understood if democracy is clearly distinguished from the other characteristics of political systems."
> Samuel P. Huntington in *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century*.

Is Huntington saying the truth?

Mostly yes:

- Competitive, multiparty elections

- Increased public participation

- Open and fair elections

But let's say more:

- A country must guarantee social, political, economic and religious rights.

After all, Sweden has an economic system that many argue curtails individual property rights, France, Germany and many other countries had a state monopoly on television, and

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England has an established religion. But they are all clearly and identifiably democracies.

A good government is the important quality attribute here.

Constitutional liberalism, on the other hand, is not about the procedures for selecting government, but rather government's goals.

Constitutional liberalism started in Western Europe and United States around the 1800s.
- Defense of the individuals' right to life, property, freedom of religion and speech.
- The states tried to secure these (checks & balances)

+ the separation of church and state.

Many thinkers, like John Milton, the William Blackstone, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Adam Smith, Baron de Montesquieu, John Stuart Mill, and Isaiah Berlin agreed, constitutional liberalism argues that human beings have certain natural rights and that governments must accept a basic law, limiting its own powers, that secures them.

How did the liberal democracies develop?

Basically, it is convergence of two known formats from the past:

illiberal democracy and liberal autocracy.

The "Western model" is best symbolized not by the mass plebiscite but the impartial judge.

Illiberal states

Over time some states moved from autocracy to liberalizing autocracy, and, in some cases, toward liberalizing semi-democracy. Most of such regimes remain only semi-democratic, with one-party or dominant one-party systems that make their elections ratifications of power rather than genuine contests. But these regimes have accorded their citizens a widening sphere of economic, civil, religious, and limited political rights. As in the West, liberalization in these regions has included economic

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liberalization, which is crucial in promoting both growth and liberal democracy. (See Fareed Zakaria)

In Western countries constitutional liberalism has led to democracy, but elsewhere democracy does not seem to bring constitutional liberalism.

What we see in these states:
- Democratically elected regimes, but
- rarely free and fair elections.
- Economic growth.
- Routinely ignoring the constitution.
- Guarantees for social, political, economic and religious rights are second order.
- No checks and balances (limits of power).
- The history of the state could influence the development of democracy (pluralism in society).
- Leaders are mixing the power and sovereignty, and
- leaders are swapping the sovereignty of the people and the leader.
- *More open to wars.* (Note, this not necessarily means that they will involve in war.)

Power is mixed with sovereignty. Mixing sovereignty and power could result in:
- Centralization of authority (real presidentialisation, not by communication),
- Constitutional means,
- Weak constitutional branches,
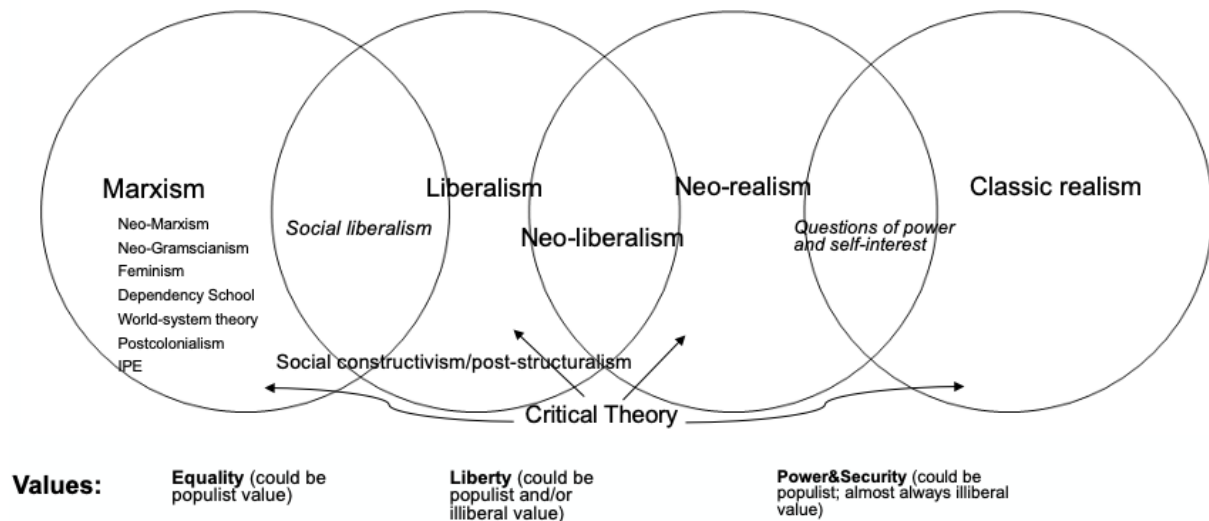- Weak regional and local power,
- Weak businesses and NGOs.

Most known examples for illiberal states in 2010s, beginning of 2020s:
Singapore, Russia, Turkey, China, Philippines, Hungary, Poland…

Fareed Zakaria explains illiberal democracy:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8q1v8ewyyXs

Progress

Questions

1. What are the main (basic) differences between old and illiberal democracies?

2. What happened in the 1990's that brought us illiberal states?

3. What means *liberty* for democracies?

4. How can the concept of 'good government' add value to democracies (or international relations)?

5. Did the 'old' democracies have a phase when they were *illiberal*?

6. Is constitutional liberalism an important prerequisite for (liberal) democracy? Why?

7. How illiberal democracies developed recently?

8. What developments can we see in illiberal states?

9. What can be the result if we Mix sovereignty and power?

10. Could you tell examples for illiberal states?

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