

# The Future of Liberal Democracy in the U.S.

## Purpose of Unit 6

Units 1-5 explain what we are; our structures and processes; descriptive; political science  
 Unit 6 explores what we could be; what we should be; normative; political philosophy

## Purpose of Session 1

- Do we still want to be a liberal democracy?
- Even if we want to, are we able to? With what characteristics?

## Societal Points of Inflection and Tipping Points

- Examples in U.S. history: tipping points, points of inflections, and some we avoided
- 2024 Presidential election possible outcomes
  - Tipping point, point of inflection, or neither?
  - Your contributions can be crucial; more powerful than you think

## Liberal Democracy

- Nomenclature Problem  
 Liberalism—Democracy—Republic—Constitutional
- Examples:

	<b>Liberalism</b>	<b>Illiberalism</b>
<b>Republic Democracy</b>	Denmark; Norway Israel before 2022 Iowa Caucuses New England Town Meetings	Hungary under Orbán Israel now Mississippi
<b>Autocracy</b>	Singapore Hong Kong under the British The Federal Reserve	Turkey under Erdogan Sparta; Russia Wisconsin

- Reading #1: the defense of and risks to liberal democracy
  - a. The End of History—Fukuyama
  - b. The Narrow Corridor--Acemoglu and Robinson
- Key Tenets
  - Liberalism—specifies the values and ends:
    - Rule of law
    - Protection of inherent liberties and rights
    - Pluralism
    - Limiting and separating political power, through constitutional limits, checks and balances, transparency, accountability, etc.
    - Mixed economy--featuring capitalism, private ownership of property, contracting, corporations; etc.

- Democracy—the process:
  - Sovereignty vested in the people; political equality; majority rule
  - Elections that are free, fair, open, regular, and determinative/binding
  - Peaceful transitions of power; loser doesn't resort to boycotting, violence, etc.

20<sup>th</sup> century was the democratization century

- Key Characteristics
  - Latecomer to the scene; recent invention: 1787
  - No playbook
  - The order in which the state, rule of law, protection of rights, political accountability, etc. develop has major implications
- Major Challenges
  - Balancing act of multiple tradeoffs
  - Narrow corridor
  - The race of Alice and the Red Queen
  - Current era magnifies weaknesses
  - The institutions are weakening, due to polarization, lack of trust and commitment, etc.
  - Losing much of its natural constituency in U.S., Europe, etc.

### **Authoritarianism**

- Nomenclature
  - Autocracy      Oligarchy      Plutocracy
- Initiated by the Leader, the Elite/Advisors, or the Followers
  - Creeping vs. Sudden
  - Populism
- Reading #2: The ongoing transition to forms of authoritarianism
  - a. Authoritarianism—Anne Applebaum
  - b. The Perceived Advantages of and Playbook for Autocrats
- Disadvantages
  - Society is systematically gutted
  - Once you give away the power, how do you get it back
  - Ruling is for the benefit of the ruler(s); not governing for the benefit of citizens
  - Rights and liberties are not defended, but either granted or taken away
  - ...
- Growing Natural Constituency in U.S. (and worldwide)
- Is the 21<sup>st</sup> century going to be the return to authoritarianism?