

**Is Democracy, Dictatorship or Benevolent Dictatorship the Most Effective Form of  
Government?**

**January 14, 2024; 3-4 pm**

**Moderator: Kyle Thaller**

**Topic was chosen from five choices provided ahead of time where attendees were given an opportunity to vote, anonymously.**

**Initial Positions Stated by Various Attendees;**

1. Democracy is the best form of government because it protects the rights of minorities and prevents tyranny of majority
  - a. May be slow and less effective than dictatorship, but still accomplishes a lot and is less risky than a dictatorship
  - b. Locke and Hobbes often spoke of whether it was better to have a social contract between a people and the rule as was common in many democracies so as to ensure that the government did not break that social contract thereby protecting the rights of the people
  - c. Hobbes was more on the side of benevolent dictatorship where a strong leader was needed to guide the people from their selfish inhibitions
2. A mix of all three is needed to make an effective government
  - a. Democracy; needs civil liberties
  - b. Dictatorship; needs to get stuff done
  - c. Benevolent dictatorship; needs to have a wise leader

- d. No such thing as a benevolent dictator because you are one or the other
3. Democracy is the most effective form of government
    - a. People tend to be naturally good, rather than bad and as such a democracy can be counted upon to ensure that the peoples will are carried out
    - b. A dictatorship assumes that people are naturally bad and as such a strong leader is needed in order to maintain the security of a state
  4. Benevolent dictator is the most effective form of government
    - a. Democracy is to slow and has too much corruption
    - b. Dictatorship is too fast and many policies and not for the benefit of the common people
    - c. A benevolent dictator allows for the ruler to be wise, and carry out effective policies getting a lot done that benefit the common people
    - d. Occurred with such leaders as Ataturk in Turkey, Lee Kwan Yew in Singapore, and Tito in Yugoslavia

**Responses from Various Attendees included:**

- Benevolent dictator is a shot in the dark as often times the leader is not wise and is very cruel or selfish
- Also how does one determine a benevolent dictator? One man's friend may be another enemy.
- Last, while one dictator might be good, the process of succession is another matter and often times the next dictator is not as enlightened or as wise as the previous one
- It's for this reason that democracy is the most reliable long-term form of government as the ruler can always be voted out of office.

- Benevolent dictator is needed in times of crises and is a necessary evil, but not a sustainable outcome as how does one determine who the next ruler will be and if they will be wise and just?
- Only democracy can ensure that wise rulers are reflective of the peoples will as one can simply vote the ruler out of office.
- Democracy must also have an overall set of ideals to strive for so that armies will be loyal to the state and not anyone one general or leader
- It's for this reason that democracies such as Greece and Rome failed as they did not have this and soldiers were loyal only to those that paid them, which in many cases were general such as Crassus and Caesar allowing dictatorships to rise
- It's for this reason that America is commonly viewed as the model democracy as the Constitution prevents any one leader from gaining too much power and the American military is loyal primarily to the Constitution and not any general
- Benevolent dictators also only arise during times of great crises such as a revolution or an invasion or a war and often times that is when they are most needed and it is their wisdom and benevolence that saves their country, but what happens after they leave office or die? Often times, a new leader emerges that is far less benevolent than their predecessor and will abuse power against the masses or the minorities.

**Key Take Aways:**

- Democracy, dictatorship, and benevolent dictatorship all have their flaws and strengths, but one must realize that aspects of all three are what creates an effective government
- In addition, the greatest short-term government is a benevolent dictatorship as policies are able to be implemented effectively and quick with most of them being for the

common good, but there is no sustainable way of ensuring that the next ruler will be just as benevolent

- It's for this reason that the greatest long-term government is democracy as while it may be slow and some aspects may be corrupt, it ensures that the people always have a say in what happens and prevents dictatorships from abusing human rights and the masses.

**Important Last Comment:**

- This particular forum ended up with all attendees essentially agreeing to a common conclusion. Although interesting, but it is neither intended nor desired (although of course it's always theoretically possible). The purpose for R-GDI is to have dialogue among and concurrent with disagreement in opinions and positions whereby all parties must exercise tact, decorum, and respect for each other's position. Hence, we need to keep this in mind for future topics/forums where there will certainly NOT be universal agreement at the end of the discussion. It's actually OK for us to end the forum not agreeing... but at least we will all better understand the opposing views and positions, and will do so with respect rather than disdain (which is what commonly happens in political discussions, today).