



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on March 16, 2023

“Age of Democracy” Giving Way to “Age of Political Strongmen”

“Remember Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes exhausts and murders itself. There never was a Democracy Yet, that did not commit suicide. It is in vain to Say that Democracy is less vain, less proud, less selfish, less ambitious or less avaricious than Aristocracy or Monarchy.”

John Adams’ insightful words, representative of how many of the Founding Fathers felt about democracy, are already in the process of being proven true throughout the world. The growing influence of strongmen in various countries is one sign that the brief reign of democracy as the de facto form of government throughout the world is soon to come to an end.



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For decades now we have lived in what the global elites would like to call an “age of democracy.” Everywhere you turn, the Left talks about “protecting our democracy” from “fascism” or “promoting democracy” in other countries. For far too long, the conservative movement has bought into the rhetoric, with many speaking of democracy as something to be desired.

But as most readers here understand, democracy is not synonymous with popular sovereignty or representative government, as many of those who use the word would have us believe. Rather, it is *exclusively* majority rule. While that might sound good at first, the problem with democracy becomes clear when you contrast it with republicanism — which is what the Framers actually employed in the Constitution, not democracy.

The contrast shows what it is that democracy excludes for the sake of majority rule. A republic is rule by law. In the United States, that means the Constitution. And while most republics, including America’s, have mechanisms to ensure that the will of the majority is in most cases expressed, it is not the majority’s whims but the rule of law that is supreme.

Thus, in a republic, the will of the majority is sometimes thwarted if what the majority wants is unconstitutional. The Framers likewise embedded this feature into the federal government to protect *all* Americans’ rights — including the minority’s rights.

But a democracy prioritizes majority will to the exclusion of everything else. If the majority uses its unrestricted power to oppress those in the minority — trampling on due process, ignoring property rights, throwing basic freedoms such as assembly and speech out the window — then all of this is considered a feature, not a bug.

Inevitably, whatever the good intentions of democracies at their outset, they have historically devolved into mechanisms by which the many plundered the few. Often, this comes at the goading of charismatic demagogues.



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When John Adams said that democracies commit suicide, he meant that they cease to become the governments “of the people” they claim to be and instead transform into what they claimed to be against in the beginning: tyrannies.

This is because democracies commit the mistake of every unsuccessful form of government: They fail to take into account human nature.

Like every other utopian enterprise, democracies make the assumption that men are angels. That the people — the majority — are always right.

James Madison, on the other hand, understood the opposite is true. “If men were angels, no government would be necessary,” he wrote in [The Federalist](#), No. 51. The framers understood that human nature, with all its vices, cannot be erased or changed. But within the context of a government, it can be curbed and mitigated — which is what a republic does.

And one important aspect of human nature is the tendency to follow strong leaders. In this era of “democracy” and “equality,” that truth may be unpopular.

But it remains true nonetheless. Most human beings naturally look to charismatic, confident, strong individuals for leadership. Most people would rather not think for themselves. They would rather have the leader do the thinking for them. Most people would rather not have to make difficult decisions or feel the discomfort of moral dilemmas. They would rather let the leader do the hard things for them.

Moreover, people like the paternalistic comfort and security a strong leader seems to bring them.

It’s for this reason that, despite claiming to be governments led by “the people,” democracies throughout history have really always been led by strong leaders. This was the case even in ancient Athens, which many refer to as the birthplace of democracy. Pericles was just one of the many men who were kings in everything but name.

We see how quickly a democracy or other representative government can devolve into a dictatorship. It does not have to take place through a coup d’etat. Both Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler ascended to power through legitimate means.

Currently, we are witnessing an era of high tension in which people want decisive action. Extreme situations are a breeding ground for demagogues and strongmen. As economic crises, war, and polarization grow, expect more such individuals to arrive on the political scene.

Now, a strongman who governs by the force of his charisma and political astuteness does not invariably equate to a dictator. Hungary’s Viktor Orban is an example of a leader who tapped into his people’s desire for swift action and through his adeptness has gotten results.

The line that keeps a strongman from becoming a dictator is found in the institutional republican safeguards that limit man’s inherent desire for greater power — and the people’s inherent desire to give it to him if it means getting the political victories they yearn for.

This is why all of the political changes the Left wants in the name of “more democracy” — abolishing the electoral college, enfranchising noncitizens, eroding states’ rights — are so dangerous.

These “democratic” changes are ostensibly meant to empower the people, but their end result is really to take away the barriers that currently prevent the inevitable magnetic leaders in a society from becoming autocrats.

Thus, the closer we get to “true democracy,” the closer we also get to true tyranny.



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