**What is a liberal democracy?**

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In my book I talk about four conceptual building blocks of liberal democracy: The first is the "republican principle," a phrase that I take from James Madison. What it means is that all legitimate power flows directly or indirectly from the people, or in different terms, "The people are sovereign." There is no legitimacy outside the people.

The second building block of liberal democracy is the rule of the majority as the default setting. It's not necessarily what should govern in *all* cases, but unless there is a good argument to the contrary, majoritarianism is the rule.

The third key concept is constitutionalism…It's a system of rules that are, to use the technical term, "entrenched," that is to say, they have a standing above and beyond ordinary legislation, and it is intentionally harder to modify constitutions although not impossible. Because in effect constitutions are the way that peoples bind themselves against future mistakes…

The final building block of liberal democracy is the idea of rights for individuals and groups that are valid even if they happen to contradict the will of the majority. So you can say that constitutionalism and [individual civil liberties and civil] rights stand against the idea that the majority should rule in all cases.

**Using Galston’s explanation of liberal democracy, please answer the questions below.**

1. What makes a liberal democracy "liberal"?
2. On a scale from 1-10, with 10 being a perfect liberal democracy, how would you rate the United States. Explain your reasoning.
3. Would you add anything to this working definition of liberal democracy?

1. Based upon your understanding of a liberal democracy, how would you define "illiberal democracy"?