

## Original Article

# Democracy in the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities

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### Abstract

Since its origins in ancient Greece, democracy has continuously evolved. Today, however, modern democracies face serious global challenges—rising inequality, mass migration, rapid urbanization, and the transformation of capitalism. These pressures contribute to the erosion of democratic norms, the rise of authoritarianism, populism, disinformation, and weakening media integrity. Despite these obstacles, opportunities for democratic renewal remain. These include civic engagement, youth activism, technological innovations, and stronger international cooperation. This paper explores how tools like social media, e-governance, and cybersecurity influence democratic processes and public trust. Case studies from the U.S., EU, Africa, and Asia reveal varied democratic experiences and lessons. While democracy today is tested by globalization and institutional distrust, it remains the most inclusive and ethical model of governance. Strengthening institutions, improving media literacy, and reforming electoral systems are vital steps to ensure democracy endures and thrives in the 21st century.

**Keyword:** Democracy, 21st Century, Challenges, Opportunities, Political Systems, Technological Innovations, Globalization, Civic Engagement, Authoritarianism, Populism, Disinformation, Economic Inequality, Electoral Processes

### Introduction

Since the days of the ancient Greeks, democracy has continually been re-invented. According to its contemporary procedural definition, it is the system of government in which the people, directly or indirectly, choose the governing authorities. Within this definition, it is unclear what constitutes a people, how they can be expected to speak and to act as one body, and how best this body can be made to decide and to elect. Immense difficulties arise in the application of the theory. In the case of the modern nation state, the number of people is too large for all to gather at one place and exercise governance directly. Recourse has been made to the notion of representations, democratic elections, and the delegation of powers. But the current agitation in the world's democracies against dominating social forces and openly oppressive states raises the question whether this axiomatic conception is adequate even in western contexts (Arnopoulos, 2017). The problems faced by democracies in the 21st century, on the one hand, and various proposals to strengthen it, on the other hand, are discussed.

Some contemporary democracies are just in name. The true essence of democracy is nowhere to be observed (Kiyani, 2013). For the political compulsions of the ruling elite, decisions are taken in parliaments and councils after exhaustive debates and discussions without representing public will, and contrary to the popular manifesto of the ruling party. Politics is a game of consensus where the subservient role of the highest forum has turned the spear-head of hope for an effective opposition into a toy with which orators throw jibes and slogans. Countries where efforts are underway to establish democracy face the hydra-headed problem of satisfying the aspirations of the people, entrusting political power to a chosen elite, greed for power, jealousy and vendetta among the elite, and resistance of the long-established tribal and war lords. The vigilant societal-based perception of democracy as an urgent necessity, having learnt lessons from the costly past, reigns conflict.



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### Historical Context of Democracy

The ancient Greeks remain the founders of democracy, otherwise understood to represent the people's rule. By rationale, modern democracies are of the people's rule over governors, supervisors, and representatives. Nevertheless, liberty was restricted to men achieving citizenship by birth. Among the political machineries were the assembly to meet, propose, debate, and decide by vote; a council to formulate bills to be proposed; a commission to supervise the execution of the bill; courts of justice to judge infractions of the law; and controlled but sufficient wealth to be public property and not own a private fortune enriching a pseudo-aristocracy. In modernity, the question arose as to how govern the large and diverse population and the financial and information powers both national and multi-national wielding quasi-sovereign authority. Thus, to resolve the contradiction between the quantity and quality of democratic participation, a new type of indirect democracy was invented.

Gods were rejected from power, and a politically active portion of the peoples, under conditions of the then developing capitalism foremost industrial, gained liberty with great efforts of all kinds. Representative Democracy was born (Arnopoulos, 2017). The representatives elected in one small constituency for one short term could hardly meet and debate; no days free from harvesting and gardening were free except of the slight hope of fame; it cost more than a fortune for everyone to attend; only the wise could submit and defend proposals; and could they be well assessed very few could pronounce a proper vote. Thus, this substitution of in direct-to-direct democracy was justly invented to meet the requirement of a larger democracy, which looked for an alternative title.

The traditional rule of the people was reinterpreted as rule by their elected representatives, meeting, debating, and deciding in legislative assemblies. The representatives could attend the assembly every day asking for leaves or permission to speak or pass the word for vote. They could introduce proposed measures (Kiyani, 2013). They could transmit the general will of the people to their agents who would promulgate it into laws. The meanings of the democratic notion were supplemented by two more ideals qualifiers: Secularism and Liberalism. By this new, ultimately trivial adjective, secularism, was implied the separation of church and state as well as the division of legislative, executive, and judicial power. By the more recent liberalism were included, as a complimentary and essential supplement, periodic elections, competing parties, individual and collective human rights, including freedom of conscience and of expression.

### Current State of Global Democracies

Overall, democracy has been in a state of consolidation and survival for over three decades now. A large number of countries of Latin America and East European region opted for electoral democracy during the past two decades. Unfortunately, some policies adopted by these new democracies, especially during the 1990s and early

2000s, backfired and generated serious problems. As a result, not only the quality of democracy deteriorated in these countries or group of countries, but many of them also slid into authoritarianism or neo-authoritarianism (Kiyani, 2013). Therefore, democracy is now at a crossroads. Aoki in this volume has rightly suggested three different scenarios regarding the future of democracy at the global level. These are that democracy might expand, stagnate or decline in future. The policy recommendations elaborated in this paper are primarily based on the premise that the number of democracies in the world will not decrease in the coming future. The paper is organized as follows: After discussing the current state of global democracies, an analysis of the reasons for the multiple crises of democracies is taken up. Next, attention is given to some specific policy recommendations to revive, strengthen and reform democracy globally and in specific country contexts. Finally, major conclusions are drawn with some note of caution regarding the implementation of the recommendations suggested.

In spite of the undoubted progress made over the past three decades, with more than 80 countries now classified as electoral democracies, the political domain is dotted with deepening problems that threaten democracy as both a universal and an ideal. These problems are very severe and relatively global in scope: rising inequalities; rising legal and illegal migration; rapid urbanization; and a metamorphosis of capitalism (Diamond, 1997). By now there is a global awareness that democracy is in serious trouble - and not just in the Arab world or a few aberrant cases in Africa, Asia, or Latin America. Since 2008, the political and media spotlight has turned inwards to confront the deeper malaise that is afflicting all democracies. Not only are citizens openly revolting against the democratic order but even new political forces are emerging to strategically oppose it.

### Major Challenges Facing Democracies

When the twenty-first century began, the spread of democracy was far from being one of the world's most formidable problems. On the contrary, the dominant problems of that time involved the vexing challenges that democracies were encountering in many established democracies. These challenges included how to reform institutions and processes of governance, how to protect political systems against the forces of mediocrity, sleaze, manipulation, and could even a democratic government able to learn and change?

But it was, and curiously is, the thought of this far narrower and perhaps less grave set of problems typically in mind when observers slipped into thinking about problems of democracy in the twenty-first century. These less grave problems were hardly thought, on this original formulation, to be threatening the eventual demise of democracy as principles and practice, the ruling out of systemic future democratic developments and changes in hope flourishing democracies and their consolidation. With that understanding, it was thought that defaulting to arbitrary human rule was little conceivable, even in a few more unmanageable thirty or thirty-five years; if by some unfathomable blunder monarchical

absolutism, military dictatorship, or theocratic rule might still combinatorically happen in a few places, the greater question was which of democracy's vices would appear, and what laws or rules of thumb cast over these new creative forms of democracy instability, ineffectiveness, inflexibility, enervation, manipulation or others?

The governing and political questions of democracy were not, and even then perhaps could not have been, switched out in earlier apprehensions of such more serious problems for the persistence of happiness, any more than was "democracy in the nineteenth century." Like human progress in this grand Bugle, the question was whether fifty or a hundred years hence it could be thought that democracy was a workable next form of government. No history or inquiry past much beyond the timeframe of a few decades was relevant or perhaps ever possible. But very clear-and-well defined questions could be raised about the specific happiness of democracy in September 1997 and even with greater precision.

### **Erosion of Democratic Norms**

Drifting Backward In July 1997, Freedom House released its annual survey of global political freedom. Addressing the dramatic worldwide reversal of democratic gains since the early 1990s, the report was surprisingly somber. "In the wake of the exhilarating triumphs of liberty" around 1990, it asserted, "the appetite for democracy within the world's established democracies has dulled." More ominously, "there is reason to fear that democratic development in nation-states may only be a lovely interlude in a century during which human aspirations have been dominated by the centralizing forces of nationhood." Freedom House candidly acknowledged several daunting challenges of democratic governance in the twenty-first century: growing threats from ethnic conflict, international crime, and unaccountable subnational actors; erosion of accepted standards of political accountability proportionality; and frequency standards of political accountability, proportionality, and loss of respect for civil freedoms within even the more mature democracies themselves (Diamond, 1997).

Some of the finest, most inspiring thoughts about the recent transitions and the global future of democracy came from lowly events: from speeches given on the occasion of accepting the first Norman Lear Prize for Political and Civic Engagement by the Committee of the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, and later at the weaker looking digs of the National Center for Freedom, Liberty, and Mutual Respect at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. The speakers have suffered their own losses, facing down malign, anti-democratic forces at home. Professor presented brilliant contributions on threats to democracy from Islam, ethnicity, and the rise of fanaticism, but also the need to adopt a pragmatic and flexible political economic approach to pressure emotionally issues of income and wealth distribution. He emphasised how fortunately the onetime central Soviet bloc did not do worse after liberalization than did Romanov Russia, and that moreover, there are

even slight prospects of "oscillation" back to better days.

Drifting backward, forging ahead, locked in combat, and fighting back, the drastic variety of more than once mandated institutional designs, when juxtaposed against recent grievous bouts of wicked faiths and even failed states, had complicated ramifications and undercurrents. What are the constitutional consequences, for instance, of the compacting "civic" centre of gravity and more violent and terrorist polities of a few states like Iraq and "deviant states" like Sudan? And what of Europe's newly arrived post-communist states pitting birth rates and civil attire against Faiths and Emotions? A few other states in East Timor, Georgia, Madagascar, Haiti, Venezuela, or one of the Southeast Asian bananarchies are wafting down the colourful scale.

### **Rise of Authoritarianism**

The sudden military coups that disrupted democratic electoral processes in Egypt and, more recently, in Bangladesh, the multifaceted efforts of increasingly authoritarian governments to repress dissent and civil society in a first wave of closed semicomplete democracies, the emboldened efforts of authoritarian states to challenge the influence and image of liberal democracies in both established and recently democratized states, the pressure to change conditions at home on big social media platforms, and growing estrangement between, on the one hand, frustrated, alienated, and often youth-dominated populations that feel seen and heard by these social media platforms and, on the other hand, domestic governments and elites, many of which feel threatened by their capacity to engage in and spread both vicious and virtuous political action, are all hallmarks of the new era of democracy in the early decades of the 21st Century (Diamond, 1997). While long-discredited Marxist-Leninist political ideologies and parties are absent even as competing normative forces, be they Islamic fundamentalists or modernizers, contend under a wedge of pragmatically engaged external benevolent hegemons, these categories no longer sufficiently capture the complexity of both old and new and would-be democracies.

The roots of shrinking political space for, and curtailment of democratic practices in, these semi-free or partly free regimes are complex and multifaceted, incentives and constraints shaping their trajectories vary considerably with the better or worse kind of equilibrium they find themselves in. Some regimes enjoy a kind of double immunity that they systematically and dynamically extend to shield against the accountability of their abuse of power. It is becoming apparent that semi-free or partly free Arab Muslim regimes have used an otherwise likely pan-Islamic convergence towards democracy, and Islamic parties and movements have jostled on the global political stage, as a narrative to obscure their failure of responsible democratization. Notwithstanding widely varying grievances experienced, stratified social movements in the Arab world have surfaced in unprecedented number and form to challenge tyranny and embedded hegemony in all its contours, and courageously led a longing struggle to this end, by

expending unprecedented extent and quality of social capital, dating back to national independence.

### **Populism and Nationalism**

At the beginning of the 21st century and before its second decade is completed, the European continent is engulfed in trajectories that strongly call established liberal-democratic practices into question. Consequential elections are taking place or looming in a number of countries where actors are in the running that are populist in nature, and they counter traditional liberal-democratic norms and politics, thereby contributing to the remaking of Europe's (ill)liberal democracies, even in the core states. Populism has comparatively recently become a popular concept in the relevant social-science literatures (Rensmann et al., 2017). Though, it had already been studied by the discipline's Classics and during the liberal democratic interwar decades, new research groups with different traditions and foci, often emphasizing historical and structural rather than ideational variables, have been operationalized in studies on contemporary actors challenging established liberal-democratic politics, such as those in the Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, the United Kingdom, and Poland.

Beyond effort being expended to understand the sociological environmental factor conditions, research is conducted on movements and parties, such as populist parties, in terms of ideology, communication strategies, party organizational structures, and policy positions. Some comparative studies, extending this treatment also to new populist parties in established Western Europe, in terms of behavioral party- and voter-level criteria and performance regarding government participation, as well as public integration of populists and populism. As a budding sub-field of European studies, cross-national surveys focusing on the populist parties' electoral appeal have appeared, shedding light on the well-studied country cases of Hooveresque types such as the front national and the party for freedom in France and the Netherlands, respectively. These studies are relevant to understanding why and how populism emerged and grew in Central and East European liberal democracies. Despite the at times incredulous tone of voice or exotic terminology depicting the 'stunning rise of populism' (or 'the great backlash'), it is emphasized that there is nothing exceptional about this phenomenon.

### **Disinformation and Media Integrity**

In the 21st century, despite being surrounded by extensive liberty and an abundance of information, citizens seem to feel more vulnerable than ever. Information technology seems to have the power to divide groups while fixing them on limited positions, fragmenting interaction and preventing any cross-pollination of ideas. Social networks are defined by the dominance of visual cues and asked to judge pieces of information against mental heuristics that, rather than overseeing accuracy, act as cognitive shortcuts to distant understanding (MASSIMO et al., 2019). The rushed and chaotic production of digital facts creates an overwhelming feeling of non-knowledge, on top of which conquered and rendered visible traces of sentiments appear as autonomous

entities spreading propensities that were deliberately withheld from citizenship. Once perceived as a collective venue, public discourse now appears to represent a collective subconscious, sort of a huge brain erring over ancient prejudices, fears and fantasies. Citizens' amnesia about the pre-digital world has global dimensions: the experience in Europe of partially sovereign nations trying to recover after the Cold War is quite different from that of other regions that directly faced chaotic socio-economic crisis triggered by the collapse of their political order. Conversely, these viewing frames may generate different modes of reactivity: on the side of public figures addressing the implications of social media on news, it probably resonates a different fear of losing the control of "traditional" gatekeeping power.

In the past decades the map of disinformation has changed: strategies have evolved into a more complex ecosystem of diverse actors and differential narratives. Narratives are no longer limited sets of consistent premises that describe the world, they are continuously operated narratives feeding people with true and false information equally charged with emotions. Disinformation strategies have to be understood as coordinated actions where different actors using different channels act in concert to reach the same objective: displacing aspirations with anger born from confusion and despair. In more recent years Europe has faced the resurgence of identitarian ideology. Identitarian narratives are powerful because they claim to tell the truth at a time when each truth seems contingent and negotiable. They become very effective in times of crisis. Political successes for populist movements have come in times of established crisis within European context. This factor has operated with the dynamics of an enlarged Europe.

### **Economic Inequality**

The process of democratization has triggered a relative rise in activities demanding social justice, the regulation of capital and, more generally, a fairer income distribution, although this rise has met with an avalanche of counter-defensive reactions from the elites in control of political power and of states (Soci, 2019). There is growing pressure for more equal wealth and income distribution from below, and on the part of states to counter this pressure with aggressive anti-redistribution policies that have been prevalent since the 1980s. However, these two trends, so inconsistent with one another, have been softening each other's extreme. On the one hand, social actors themselves are forced to moderate their demands for redistribution, at a time when counter-redistribution policies are more aggressive than ever: certainly there have been few attempts on the part of states to increase wealth taxation in the last 30 years. On the other hand, in parallel with them, techno-political control procedures have been made even more intricate, rendering it ever more complicated and costly for social actors to monitor and challenge rich tax evaders. The experience, over the last 30 years of societal life, of this partially quiescent interplay between rising economic

inequalities and a powerful socio-political response from below has implications for the 21st century regarding the renewed anti-democratic onslaughts. While some of these implications seem reasonable, moderation must also be taken into account. In the last few decades, fears of a future inundation of inequalities as a result of globalisation have softened to those regarding rising populism, which is increasingly disdained throughout most of the world. This sheds light on the kaleidoscopic quality of historic developments in the 21st century's first decades and in particular on the dual quality of technological advance. Consequently, in spite of the personal fate the events during the beginning of the 21st century keep prompt and intense social ferment from below yielding only when at the forefront of new-wave protagonists took power. Furthermore, assessment has to rely on the most solid indicators regarding the quality of some future global governing arrangements, possibly based on entirely different states, and the emergence of some conscious global public sphere, possibly devoted to this end, with a great extent of hesitation on this possibility. By contrast, however, for humanity's control or at least management of the devastating effects of the radical and rapid alteration of the material basis of society by means of algorithmics, some profound societal reconstruction would be of utmost urgency.

### Opportunities for Democratic Renewal

Trust in democracy is declining in many new democracies in Eastern Europe, and political support is diminishing. This combination of declining system support and rising political discontent represents a warning sign for the health of the new democracy. The early years of a political regime are not always smooth, and the trajectory of post-communist democratization has been more complicated than had been imagined. While there was a fervent hope that democracies would flourish throughout Central and Eastern Europe, the subsequent development of the new democracies has proved much more challenging than anyone had anticipated.

The economic and political failures in the new democracies and the rise of a new wave of democratization elsewhere might serve as a warning to would-be democrats. In a situation where support for democracy is waning, one possible reaction is to tighten the grip on the established political institutions rather than to permit greater public rectification of them. This, however, is a prescription for political failure and political turmoil. The lesson of the downsides of democracy in the recent past is as sobering as the lesson of the downsides of nondemocracy.

Democratic discontent can also emerge in established democracies with a considerable lag time. Ongoing social and political changes raise questions about the viability of a representative form of politics and the role of elites in democracy. Amidst shifts in party competition and political polarization and fragmentation, political systems are undergoing stress tests that raise doubts as to how effectively they can deliver political representation. Indeed, in established democracies, the rise of dissatisfaction is contributing to calls for democratic renewal,

including through reforms to promote new forms of political representation, innovative ways of engaging citizens in politics, the building of social movements, and emerging civil society initiatives.

### Civic Engagement and Participation

Active citizenship in the 21st century, moving beyond mere voting to encouragement of civic/public interest and culture. This paper considers the concepts of coaching and brokering civil society organisations and effective democracy. It examines the extent to which new information and communication technologies create opportunities for citizens to become more engaged, with a focus on the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in facilitating civic engagement. In this context, it will create a typology of NGOs based on the types of engagement they promote. It then explores the role of NGOs in brokering connections between citizens and decision-makers, advising on the design of engagement activities, and empowering citizens through formal and informal engagement. Finally, the paper examines the implications of new communication technologies for the role of NGOs in democratic processes.

As stated above, there is strong evidence that people increasingly want to engage in issues they believe are important, beyond traditional means such as voting in elections. Well-documented anxieties around accountability in the public and private sectors have been matched by an increasing desire on the part of citizens for information, engagement and clamouring for action. Civic engagement can be defined as sustaining and developing civic practices and culture, and taking an active interest in the area in which citizens live, work or spend leisure. It can take many forms e.g. attending public meetings, online petitions, discussion with local councillors or official complaint, voluntary contribution to public life, writing to newspapers and so on. Political engagement can also include more radical action, such as civil disobedience. There is concern that engagement in large developed societies is in decline. There is a well-documented decline in membership of civic groups etc., despite a change in the nature of civic engagement, such as use of the internet to avoid energetic group-building and face-to-face meetings.

The role of civil society organisations in democracy and development including delivering services in partnership with government 85% of UK citizens report that they feel that they exert little or no influence over national-level decision-making. As a response, there has been the growth of active and engaged citizenship with civil society organisations taking a proactive role to create spaces, opportunities and channels for this engagement. However, there is a danger of civil society organisations being co-opted by governments in this role, enforcing top-down accountability rather than addressing the imbalance of power in favour of the state. It is contended that new communication technologies, whilst enabling citizens to engage in new ways, risk further marginalising inputs, as feedback loops are closed down and their role made decorative rather than substantive in representation and accountability. There needs to be a strong civil society able to

advocate issues, represent aggregate interests and create a voice for the poor and excluded.

### Technological Innovations

Technological innovations in ICT (Information and Communications Technology), have created a sense of boundless prospects for the evolution of democracy. The emergence of Web 2.0 tools allows citizens to have an arbiter role over the political system, the government, the parties, and the media. Not only are they audience but also considered the source of the information itself (Peña-López, 2011). Web 2.0 applications are perceived as democratizing tools with a wealth of potential. As political opportunity structures, they modify heuristics and structural incentives of the actors in the polity within the SNS (Social Network Sites). The political 'take-off' of the Web 2.0 model is analyzed, processes and outcomes are evaluated. Perceived effects on public tenders and relocations, urban growth, and youth employment are surveyed over the two years period. The case of Spain is of primary interest with the hope for a wider and more integrative analysis. It is of key importance to look at the online context of particular case studies in order to assess how digital networks fit into a wider ecologies of participation. The analysis is carried out in two inter-related directions: a horizontal study of citizen-led initiatives for networked democracy and a vertical study of intermediary platforms that broadcast media stimuli. Web 2.0 proliferation is studied and categorization from a structural, functional, and behavioral point of views. Citizenship in the digital age is seen as multi-layered, resulting from altering dialectic between on- and off-line, a blend of individual and collective actions, and shaped by a complex variety of mediations. An analysis of barriers to participation on top of a discussion of the need for a right to disconnect and an e-civics agenda on the part of civil society completes the political opportunity structures approach to democratization in the digital age.

### Youth Activism

As these examples demonstrate, youth activism can take a variety of forms, directed against a multitude of issues. Traditionally, mass mobilizations have involved physical platforms—a park, a plaza, a street. By contrast, much contemporary youth activism is digitally focused. (Newburn, 2015) Social media allows the dissemination of memes at unprecedented speed, and new apps allow different forms of physical mobilization. Broadly, the Internet aids in the collection and amplification of diverse voices and social movements that challenge established narratives of representation. In doing so, it enables many of the practices identified above, whilst simultaneously posing challenges to activist groups and organizations that can be both internal as well as external safeguards against accountability. Digital and non-digital practices are interwoven. In this way, youth activists spread memes and content digitally, but they result in the physical mobilization of protests. Non-digital practices also facilitate digital approaches. For example, through protests in the streets, public spaces were occupied and the live

stream of events was connected to social media platforms to handle the protest globally. Other platforms facilitate kindred gossip circles where images of memes, as well as plans for physical actions, circulate. Spaces such as Discord and encrypted platforms facilitate the internal organization and planning of actions.

### International Cooperation

Historically, globalization has engendered international political systems that have become increasingly significant in the lives of individuals. This development has facilitated citizen activism at the global level. In particular, a robust civil society has arisen that represents an array of interests and perspectives and a relatively new set of political institutions and processes that facilitate participation in global governance. However, criticism of this budding system and its implications for fostering a democratic global order is growing. At the core of this criticism is the notion that governance structures do not conform to widely held depictions of democratic governance. For social movements engaged in global participation, the focus is mainly on content: this system favors the poorly endowed, eviscerating policy aspirations. For elite constituencies involved, the focus is on processes: evolving rules are interpreted as facilitative to the powerful, trumping regulatory constraints and safeguards for the powerless.

Nonetheless, the critique is insufficiently attuned to causes and incentives. Successful processes of governance have been policy agnostic and reformist, facilitated forces pursuing diverse purposes. Reasonable acknowledgement is warranted, yet caution is required in enshrining such a vision of a good governance state that it entails suspending arbitrary violence. Utopias may tempt, but sub-optimal patterns of governance are best. Herein lies the rub: how can a system of either illiberal or undemocratic states perpetuate? These states' systems might be imagined as a game with certain rules. The outcome seems a Pareto-optimal equilibrium in which no state benefits from changing strategy nor no state is forced to play by different rules. However, adopting such a rendition is problematic: modeling such a game is an impossible art; if the world is geo-political and economic equilibria, states are otherwise constrained in behavior.

If states pursue one course of action, choices are not unbounded, albeit the manner of manifestation varies with positionality and debate relative to it. Paradigmatic order, based largely on a foundation of nation states, characterizes international relations, albeit the terms are not settled. One way to think about it is as representatives with a set of pre-specified perquisites distinct from its constitutive/social entities, concerned primarily with obtaining legitimacy, regarded as unwritten rules essential for survival. It is posited that states and by extension enduring larger organizational entities are path dependent, central to the ideal type of democracy. Alternatively, the hopes for the construction of a more democratic order might be thought of a shift in considerations, away

from equality of states, to a pragmatic liberal experimentalism.

### The Role of Technology in Democracy

The 21st Century brought fans of public sphere resurgence new hopes: the rise of Web 2.0 promise more is done by more and more participatory avenues. The mistrust brought about by August 20th, 2001 or September 11th, 2001, however, provoked counter-currents: public sphere scepticism. Recently, a number of critical voices added to extant scepticism: Democratic Robbery, North Banks and North Fans against the 2004 Tsunami, Brandchirusion, Brandfreaks and Pathetic Publics. A first wave of digital democratic critiques such as these were concerned with whether the Internet could lengthen digital democracy's tentacles to new arenas. A second wave of critiques such as Technicity versus Democracy, Accessibility Switch-Around, Space Out of Sight and Individuobsolescence were concerned with whether the waves of hope would remain a display of extraordinary changing, yet transient, splendour.

After the great anxiety of the 1960s had waned, a "blue consciousness" turned its attention to the question of the well-being of the individual and the society as brought under the control of machinery: this society as a whole was reduced to a machine fettered to which individuals would be further dehumanised (K. Kakabadse et al., 2007). The libertarians of de-automation were repaid with wide-sweeping anti-technological critiques: technopessimism, authoritarianism, consumption, commoditisation, virtualisation, disembodiment and compulsion are given as possible outcomes. More recent fame and wealth brought about in still earlier philosophies are also examined and associated with moral debasement and political impoverishment.

Across the epistemic divide lie more optimistic views which link more political and social potentials to fresh public voice and agency vigorously exercised on new venues (Mindus, 2012). In-between, there is a familiar, yet much fettered terrain of e-governance. Composite forces and counter-forces, therefore, are impelling actors to erode or reinforce existing power relations. The situation, however, is still far from conducive to vocalising a nuanced account of the often asymmetrical exchanges, the controversy-ridden terrain on which actors operate and the so far marginalised lacunae needed for the thickening of the democratic public.

### Social Media and Political Discourse

Context matters when regarding media practices and how they relate to politics and power. The media context for understanding how policies affect elites is also understood as context and how this shapes elite perspectives. The posing of political elites is more procedural, motivated out of a sense of interests, incentives, and rewards. The procedural understanding of political elites allows for a nuanced understanding of how broader context too matters with regard to the relative power of political elites, news elites, and everyday people. Probably as a result of longer standing media, this context and urgency are relative. This understanding allows for

speculation about explicit media practices through which political elites operate in the current, broader news context. Domain-related media practices have been relevant ways of posing political elites across media. The current context cultivated a broader difference in domain-related elite practices in doing politics, identity work, and maintaining elite power as block oriented, and retaining status quo, relative to the dynamism and uncertainty of the current news context of social media, a time driven undifferentiated content context, and to some extent, the very limited ability of everyday people in actively posing social elites (Sobieraj et al., 2020).

With the understanding that framing and agenda setting are part of legitimization and authority, it is feasible to speculate about media practices through which social elites negotiate producing and retaining the public's trust and legitimacy under dynamic and contestable media contexts. Different from political elites, media practices have been posed with understanding that the framing of content is still crucial, but also through discourse and semiotics. Drawing on the above literatures, the chosen elite practices are the framing of social causes and those in charge, and interactive talk. These practices speak to how social causes are framed with a limited, passive context. These talk practices speak to how social causes are interacted with the public, for the most, negatively, indifferently, or indirectly as informative. This means to address the framing and interactive talk of everyday people, who, although counter-hegemonic strategies are used, still enjoy little power in posing social causes within the broader context.

### E-Governance and Transparency

Democracies of the globalized world have been striving towards citizen empowerment in the recent decade where e-governance is perceived as a facilitator. Democratic governments feel that being accessible online twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week to citizens not only makes them transparent but also empowers them. The Internet is being widely seen as being able to revolutionize governance because it persuades governments to be more accessible to their citizens. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are seen as essential tools now a days by the most recently government of Cambodia in the areas of economic, social development and poverty alleviation (Fraunholz & Unnithan, 2006).

Civil Society has expected the government to supply information and thereby avail of the right to freely investigate and disseminate information in accordance with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 27 (1) of the Pact on Civil and Political Rights. Democracies feel that this increasing demand and supply of information makes them transparent. However, e-governance is not merely a website and enables citizens to access the government any time.

Through information chains starting from government to citizens, it is perceived that e-governance facilitates citizen's involvement in decision making. E-governance is not merely a website. The government considers it as all media, printed or electronic or audio-visual where the public

is ascribed. In addition, all fixed and portable devices that can bring government information to citizens anywhere and thereby allow citizens to interrogate the government are included in e-governance. Socialization of the government through e-governance is considered to be citizen empowerment. There are also political ramifications of e-governance initiatives in developing or transition democracies once deemed vulnerable to authoritarian temptation.

### **Cybersecurity and Election Integrity**

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the prospect that shady organizations or foreign governments would hack political campaigns to undermine U.S. elections. This focus on political campaign hacking is important, but broadening the concept of election hacking to include voter suppression, election misinformation, and election rigging would lead to an understanding that issues with election integrity are much larger than a few hacked emails.

Broadly defined, election hacking has created vulnerabilities in the bigger picture given that there has been a long-running effort in the U.S. to suppress voters—targeting minorities while closing polling places and creating confusing voting requirements in order to lower turnout. Gangs of bots have flooded social media with incendiary political misinformation while featuring made-up sources and pseudo-referees. Hackable election scoring systems have led to organizations that calculated everyone's score for ideology, race, gender, and opinion in an effort to tilt the election in favor of certain candidates. Although these examples are not commonly found in the discussion on election hacking, it is clear that each one of these vulnerabilities has been suggested, tried, and executed in the past several years despite a lack of attention from policymakers (F Lancelot, 2018).

One of the reasons these vulnerabilities in election integrity were created in the first place is an understanding that political cultures that create transparency, decentralized information sharing, freedom of speech, and corruption-free parties are significant requirements for a powerful cybersecurity strategy. Both local and international cyber bullies have a hefty time exploiting systems where votes are suppressed en masse by not ignoring or by outbidding most voters, or organizations are too busy fighting over turf and pursuing bribes to coordinate an operation. The prevalent understanding that corruption needs a large forum to make meaningful strides against the best actors means that transgressors—both national and transnational—need to manipulate the general populace to create incentives that lead organizations to lessen themselves in the fight. They must manipulate local officials who would otherwise give up their turf in order to create a system where voices are silenced through the suppression of the lower classes (Shackelford et al, 2017).

### **Case Studies**

As has been noted previously, there are and will be many types of democracy. The chances of new democracies flourish depend on the types of democracies considered. Nevertheless, this paper

focuses on two democratic experiences: The first one is the transformation of colonial territories into states, which is a long process that is still ongoing. The second type of democracy is a very new form of governance model that is gaining attraction for municipalities and regional city-communities: direct-democracy via electronic means, a first step on which is a referendum transmitted about specific issues affecting life in the state.

On the one hand, at the colonial era, democracies were instigated due to political factors. A new elite was created calling for a nation-state on the basis of artificial boundaries drawn by colonizers without considering ethnic or cultural factors. The nature of democracy-state versus nation and the type of democracy—either nominal, civil or inclusive are decided by the drafters of the modern democratic system. The former Soviet Empire chosen a civilian system led to invasions of its ex-republics and thus serfdom and ethnic cleansing in the Russian Federal Republic. The Turkish National Movement, on the other hand, has chosen a nation-state model leading to unprecedented regional and local participatory measures worldwide. To compare between these colonial territories adjacently dissolving Multi-National Empires ruled by despots, the experiences of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey are chosen.

Georgia is a good case study for the applicability of transferable political knowledge during the post-Soviet transition. Its priorities, however, have been different from those prioritized by the other transition countries. Unlike these other states, in Georgia the political elite aims heavily to rely on democracy drivers as the best option for changing the country's political condition. Partially for stemming from a strong president's call, partially for its geographical position bordering Middle Eastern theocrats in the south and Russia in the north and partially for Georgian ethnosestate's and culture's respective hegemony in the five principal empires, Georgia turned to democracy from totalitarianism swiftly in the 2000s. However, its evolving democracy got a serious challenge by the civil society. Voting leakage and mass manipulation are claimed during polling days backed by international monitoring organizations' weighty reports, and mass protests erupted in early 2008. The authors consider that throwing a public confidence vote by exposing its keys in advance for consideration and ensuring partial civic engagement to a state-initiated electoral reform would help Georgia re-stabilize its democracy, and the presented recommendations are also applicable for similar tenure candidates.

### **1. Democracy in the United States**

As a form of government, democracy flourished, matured, and was successfully introduced in America long before most countries. Democratic institutions in the U. S. were constructed on a foundation of strong local representation and a government closest to the people, which was at once both more amiable and less vulnerable to the control and manipulation by "outsider" elites. The enthusiasm, vigor, and qualities of local democratic government in the U. S. cannot fail to amaze the visitor from any country colored by the traditions of

aristocracy and privileged classes. There is as great a contrast between local government in America and that in England as between heaven and earth. In New England, and in a less degree in surrounding states, towns are governmentally free, up to a certain point. There is an annual election of officers, and a mass meeting to consider all sorts of matters of municipal concern. It was not veneer and imitation but oak and iron; the government was made for men, and not men for government. Ideal conditions, alas! to-day none here, only shadows and dust. The birth of American democracy was as sudden as it was glorious. It beckoned to that vast panorama of prisons, penitentiaries, and gallows which had scarred and blackened the bright face of the earth.

Chief Justice Chase's famous legal dictum, "The great principles of society and government are interpreted by virtue of the usages and customs of the people," is, however, fully applicable today to the varieties of American democracy. This referendum is one of the latest phases of popular government. It had its origin in America, in the heart of the United States, and on the oare: however much perhaps in New England town meetings do the people manage their own affairs. The pedagogue was more on an iron hand in England than in any other country. What hope for that day when drunkenness will be reckoned such a deadlier sin than with us? In England one is aghast at the low estimate formed of the common people. As a nation "we are all pedagogues, teachers, we have all good things to share with a dear and much-deluded child." Would that my own countrymen had electoral methods less detestable, and more the study of ages to come.

One of the two often apparently conflicting elements in the fundamental political institutions of the United States is the widespread diffusion of political power, which through a myriad of local authorities in general, and through state legislatures in particular, is a marked peculiarity of the American system of government. In the state legislatures there are vast powers for making laws and enforcing them. In general the state governments are republican—that is, conventionally democratic, except that there is in most states some class restriction on the suffrage act, e. g. property qualifications or freeholder restrictions in some states, etc. But the American Federal Government is very unlike anything in Europe; it was a series of three compromises negotiated between about thirty great political tyrants in which the republican State governments were involved.

## 2. European Union Dynamics

As the European Union entered the 21st century, momentum was building for completing the unfinished business of the previous Cold War. Economic integration was to be accompanied by a political dimension, including the expansion of the EU's capacity to act in the world. A new constellation of political actors was forming to accompany the change—most remarkably with national parliaments being assigned a role in the legislation of the Union. The environment was promising. Peace in Europe seemed business as usual. A well-ordered competition among democracies appeared possible.

There was widespread agreement about the common problems to be solved. Supporters for a wider and deeper Europe included established states, a majority of governments in place, and a sizable part of the public.

However, a decade later, the picture has changed dramatically. A series of crises have been shaking the foundations of the Union. Threats to peace have arisen in its neighbourhood. Whether Russia is again the source of instability, a negotiation is attempted to avoid war and to return to peace, is still uncertain. Another decade has passed. The Union has survived, with a heavy price paid in terms of lost prospects for peace in Europe. It will take longer, decades probably, for a more stable new order in Europe, and even then, security cannot be taken for granted. The deeply contested decision to introduce a common currency has divided the Eurozone members and their societies. Fallout of the Great Recession and prolonged austerity led to deep recessions, soaring unemployment in some member states, growing distrust towards Europe, and the rise of radical parties. A battle for a further turn to the left, calling for ending austerity, or for returning to the nation-state and nativism is unfolding, and the prospects are unclear. On scenarios from trends to over commercialization and techno-nationalism, doubts arise whether and how the Union can survive in its traditional understanding, and, if it can, how the Union proposes responses to the challenges with such grave consequences for its existence.

Either way, a decade of turbulence has left a chronic worry, if not perplexity, about the future of the European Union. It is as if a close relative in the family has experienced a change for the worse. Amid worries about its well-being, questions are asked about its mood and nature, what it prefers or needs, how far it can be pushed before the big breakdown, and what changes it can make. To return to equilibrium, the Union has to be in possession of resources and actively bring about responses to the problems it faces in a timely manner.

## 3. Emerging Democracies in Africa

In Africa, the emergence of democratic politics has been viewed as one of the greatest political changes and achievements of the twentieth century. It has been heralded as the "third great wave of democratization" sweeping over the world following the democratic developments in Europe and Latin America (I. E. Ewoh, 2000). But democratization is a complex process that can mean different things/rates for different societies. It is not a one-dimensional or monotonic process and understanding it, particularly developing countries undergoing the transformation from dictated to democratic governance, poses challenges to scholars and practitioners alike. The democratic experience in the continents exceeds two decades, but its understanding is still imprecise primarily because of the implications of social/class struggles and inequalities.

The major democracies worldwide are beset with endemic problems: growing social inequalities, exclusionary economic growth (increasing unemployment, underemployment, and wage

concessions), and lack of political participation. In many societies, the incapacity of the leaders to generate sufficient incomes raises the issues of legitimacy of the regimes, and threatens to undermine democracy. The record of civil society organizations in taming the excesses of regimes, promoting reconciliation, and building post-transition democratic institutions, has been mixed (Lynch & Von Doepp, 2019). In the context of Africa, the discussion will begin with what motivated the call for democracies on the continent, followed by issues which merit consideration in debating the democratic experience. Special attention will be paid to the democratic debates in South Africa as a model of a post-colonial democracy. Reverting to democracy on the continent was partly occasioned by the increasing realization that democracy remained the best challenge to the viability and sustainability of human civilizations.

#### 4. Asia: A Mixed Landscape

Asia has witnessed a remarkable growth of democracy in the last few decades, although not uniformly in all countries. There exist countries that are widely regarded as democracies (such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, India, the Philippines, and Mongolia), hybrids of democracy and dictatorship (including Thailand, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka), and ones that are largely non-democratic (such as China, Vietnam, and Laos). A point often lost in much discourse on Asian democracy is that there is no universal way to promote democracy. Besides western-style liberal democracy, there could be morally legitimate alternatives that are based on a communitarian sense and on a dialogue with transnational civilizational and cultural traditions. Such a cultural tradition can be seen in a number of countries in Asia (especially in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, China, and to a less extent in Thailand and the Philippines) (Han, 2007). Democratic development in Asia is heterogeneous. In the North-Western part of the region, the Arab Spring has resulted in drastic democratization in a number of countries. At the same time, however, wild cards such as the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, September 11 and Wilayat Inghar-Khorasan have all given rise to political difficulties or setbacks of democratization in many countries. In contrast, East Asia has witnessed a steady consolidation of democracy in many countries (Taiwan, South Korea, Philippines) lately, with the notable exception of the pro-Kuomintang administration in Hong Kong.

This pluralism of political outcomes provides a necessary pre-condition for a comparative analysis of patterns and processes of global democratic development. Following the giving of a historically-based definition of democracy, the author examines the general state of democracies in Asia in relation to political participation, representation, state-individual relations, and the development of civil society (Szabó, 2018). Attention is then turned to difficulties of democratization and the particularity of hybrid democratic regimes. The article concludes with a couple of social and political implications. Democratization as a social process of collective decision-making includes the granting of civil,

political, and socio-economic human rights; the establishment of the rule of law; the creation of responsive and responsible democratic institutions along with the proper organization of checks and balances among power centers; and the development of civil society.

#### The Impact of Globalization on Democracy

As noted above, democracy in the 21st century faces a challenge from globalization. Globalization, in its broadest sense, refers to the growing interconnectedness of the world. Economic globalization occurs when the world is joined more closely together by trade in goods and services, and investment capital. Cultural globalization occurs when the cultures of different societies more frequently or deeply interact, thanks to higher levels of travel, immigration, and exchange of media. Political globalization occurs when the world is attached more closely by social movements demanding similar behaviors, reaction by governments against the movements, and growing influence of intergovernmental organizations.

Globalization arguably contributes to democratization in the world. For instance, a higher level of education and income that oftentimes accompanies globalization promotes a social environment conducive to the proliferation of democracy. Democratic world organizations provide financial and technical assistance to newly democratizing countries. Additionally, witnessing the success stories of neighboring democratization may prompt domestic thirsts for democracy. Globalization may also pose threats to democracy. First, highly mobile capital and goods may lead to a regulatory race to the bottom in the protection of welfare rights. Thus, while lower taxes for capital may promote foreign investment and economic growth, tax cuts may produce increased poverty and income inequality even in the long run if welfare states respond with their own lower taxes. Second, more fluid capital may lead domestic governments to accommodate the demands of capital, undermining economic democracy. Producing businesses may learn to take advantage of free capital and corresponding austerity policies, institutionalizing high profit margins and income inequality. Third, while globalization may foster convergence of political institutions, domestic sentiment toward pursuing an individualistic life may result in a zipper marriage, resulting in the disintegration of trust in the electoral process and resulting in a dramatic shrinking of the political arena.

#### Crisis of Trust in Democratic Institutions

For the first time in human history, democracy has become a universally accepted system of government and became a fashionable slogan. For every country, the commitment to the ideals of freedom and democracy was enshrined in its constitution. Leaders, statesmen and representatives of civil societies agreed to practice the principles of democracy; the electorate aspired for democracy and demanded better governance. From the standpoint of political science, democracy has been universally accepted as the best way of governance on earth.

Unfortunately, within such an environment the world seems to be in crisis of democracy. The waves of democratization that began with decolonization have appeared throughout all five continents. This process of democratization has sparked both enthusiasm and confounding reactions since evidently existing democracies have had their share of authoritarian regimes of various types, yet it is interesting to suppose that hardly anybody would advocate the alternative of a dictatorship even in the political landscape of brutality and warlords. Representative governments with the consent of the governed are still the best political system (Noé, 2018).

This is not the first time democracy is in crisis. Apart from universal accreditations and disk-shaped glories of democracy, blame on democracy's failure has been pointed out, citing a myriad of examples. One can hardly keep these accountabilities at bay, for they have hardly touched the essence of democracy. Democracies are still favored in polities with vastly improved representation and accountability of governments. Constitutionally accorded separation of powers, with independence of the judiciary and checks and balances between government bodies, has made it impossible for elected representatives with short terms to act solely on their whims. Unaccountable bureaucracies and immense military power have made chances of military coup extremely slim. Moreover, improvement in the economy and welfare of population is a natural and continuous process in modern democracies with multiple and often changing participants. There are strong motivations to oust (or even attempt to oust) bad leaders, bad policemen and bad judges. With these considerations, democracy is expected to flourish in the near future.

#### **Future of Democracy: Predictions and Scenarios**

The world today appears very different than it did and as it is envisioned to be in 10, 20 or 50 years. In that time, much will change, some of it intended or desired. The desire for security and peace in our lives should occur with a system of social governance ripe with civil liberties equal and inherent to all and an electoral procedure which alleviates and prevents corruption of desire and influence. But this also requires belief among all parties in the correctness and awesomeness of the system, a belief that appears to be waning. Attempts to cook up schemes whereby a top-down technocratic elite make the decisions and an impotent public consisting of some assembled social media hive-mind makes decisions have been exposed as being only ways to keep the reins firmly in the hands of the ruling elite, of a select few with interests.

What darkened perspectives can be construed for democracy? The worst may be the dreams of malign hyper-intelligence, unseen walls of color in all dimensions and whispered knowledge so desired that it creates harmony and applies a gatekeeping equal and greater to that of all stated imaginations. Science fiction depicts both the wondrous and horrific issues of immortal benevolence, selection and sterilization, technological overload by way of which each becomes a slightly different thing in which the pre- and post-mort

interactions are rendered as dissimilar as possible. Massive, invisible walls of secret and steel, Frankenstein or God-like certainty, perfect solipsism, Fire dimensions of Hell across which even mere utterance rends consciousness. But true fear requires action, conceivably by means of culturing machinery, exposing light from inside the skull to render it neutral and benign. Besides, the absence of fears could be even more terribly haunting.

Democracy will remain the final frontier in the everlasting search of the optimal political invention until we can cope up with a radically novel system of social governance. As it makes for populism, pandering, pettiness and delays, so it makes for flexibility and longevity and instability and fragility. And so democracy remains terribly imperfect and with necessarily grave disappointments ahead. But it is nevertheless the most ethical. It affords optimal consideration to the wishes of those which actions of an organisation affect or are to be made with reference to. Hence this is the one point on which moral discourse cannot be meaningless in being one-sided, where contradiction can only arise from the refutation of expectations by the sly or silly. Perceptively arguing for the impossible does not afford upholding a single institution, least of all a democratically flawed executive. There are no aggregative attempts of manipulation corresponding to such thought.

#### **Policy Recommendations**

**Democracy and its Discontents: Why representative democracy is in crisis today and how to respond**

1. Earlier and expanded education, new subjects on citizenship should prepare the population for its role in the political system and ensure understanding of political issues.
2. The principle of candor should be implemented via extensive media coverage of political topics, debates and press conferences.
3. Elections should remain a regular tool to choose political leaders who represent public opinion. The right to vote could nevertheless be subjected to certain conditions to value its importance.
4. The formulated set of recommendations revolves around the strength of both approaches: control of performances in the political system. Not only the politicians' but also citizens' performances could be checked and if necessary sanctioned.
5. None of them can be construed as overregulation; they could easily be amended to leave enough room for free play, spontaneity, and competition.
6. All arguments made are based on the premise that democracy is a good thing and democracies are better than any other form of rule. Hence its desirability seems self-evident. More relevant is what this paper does not address, which are the pros and cons of democracy.
7. The populations of the democracies in focus want to help keep democracy in place. Populations are generally not homogenous, but regions, classes, and groups can be found that would opt for other regimes than representative democracy. However, it is believed that in this context, whoever would challenge democracy would represent a fringe minority. Some might oppose on principle its liberal aspects, but also these are believed to be focusing primarily on specific

grievances rather than democracy or dictatorship as a format of governance.

### 1. Strengthening Democratic Institutions

A necessary starting point for improving democratic institutions is to generate consensus about a set of democracy-quality indices that would be monitored in all democracies, with countries to be classified on a six-color scale from pristine gold to aborted red or brown specimens. Indices would include government accountability—legislative-administrative-institutional transparency (separately and cumulatively), clarity of laws and rules, comprehensiveness and access of information in the public sphere, independent accountability agencies' powers and deployment, the scope of policies subject to state and local government transparency—the extent of electoral opportunities taken by major parties and major candidates.

Democratization is not only a removal of dictatorships but a reshaping of states and institutions. Beyond freedom and civil liberties, democracy needs institutionalized equality of the citizens, individual and collective ways of acting on liberty, regular rules and institutions of contestation and accountability (Diamond, 1997). Trying to extend democracy as American hegemony wanes. The first is to sustain military and financial support for newly democratizing or stable ex-voting from Soviet Union countries. The second is a selective melding in an ideal semi-globalized world after September 11, an intersection of democracy promotion with oil-for-pool accommodation.

### 2. Promoting Media Literacy

Democracy, understood as the commitment and capacity to govern collectively, is challenged by the reality of the 21st century. In vast swaths of the world, there is a resurgence of authoritarianism and illiberalism. In established democracies, increased divisions and polarization around ideas, parties, ideologies, and identities contribute to a significant political dysfunction. Most alarmingly, perhaps, many people are turning away from democracy. This turning away is especially pronounced among young people in both developed and developing countries, and it has the potential to spell disaster for democracy as such.

Even as democracy is being rejected, new opportunities for the practice of democracy are arising. Cheap and ubiquitous communication and computation became available to parties, candidates, and citizens alike well in advance of the widespread availability of broadband internet. These same technological affordances and assets could act as a democratizing force, enabling smaller parties and ordinary voices to overcome the disproportionate political influence of wealth. Of course, pre-existing inequalities in the ownership and control of communication and computation with respect to wealth, class, and education posed challenges to these more hopeful accounts. Consequently, their efficacy in promoting democracy was debated (Stoddard, 2014). In the absence of new rules, regulations, or institutions, however, voters-geeks kept playing.

Some pooled their resources and expertise to fight against bad things: hate speech on comment threads, spam and bots, political misinformation and misinformation about political misinformation. Democracy, it was hoped, could be repaired.

As at the dawn of the internet, there is a belief that diversity and fragmentation cohere, that communities form, that control is better shared than tightly held, that information freely available is better than constrained, and that wisdom would accumulate and be told. There is a belief that post-ideological horizons are nearing and with these the prospect of harmonious democratic reconciliation across deep divides. Perhaps these hopes, rather than the institutions of representative democracy, are waning. In the wake of Cambridge Analytica, the role of algorithms, data mining, and behavioral micro-targeting in elections, the power of big tech to sway public opinion on important political matters in unprecedented and unfathomable ways, and whether social media can moderate political discourse rather than inflame division and factionalism, all are receiving serious attention. But the needs and purposes of media literacy are greater than these new literacies.

### 3. Enhancing Electoral Processes

The challenge for educators in the youth voter registration initiative arises from young people's disengagement from the political process. Their low level of presence on electoral registers is evidence of this lack of interest. Dedicated community educators keen to work with young people to help them understand and engage a range of processes involved, from the implications of 16 being allowed to vote to the importance of ensuring that their names are on the electoral register. Youth organizations have a responsibility to harness their expertise, knowledge and experience to help develop young people's political literacy and understanding of the electoral process. Young people may be aware that they could vote but at each stage of the electoral process they may not know how to go about it. Community educators are therefore in an ideal position to help develop the materials and tools to assist young people to make sense of and engage with this process (Moir, 2010).

It is therefore critical that learning for and about democracy becomes a priority for community educators working with and on behalf of young people. If voting, and registering to vote, is an ultimately meaningless exercise, then why bother? By helping young people engage with and understand the electoral process, community educators can help restore in at least some that sense of civic duty, even if for some it may be fleeting. Reflecting on the low registration rate among young people, this chapter elaborates on a youth voter registration initiative. Following a brief overview of the activities and intended outcomes of the youth voter registration initiative, consideration is given to how it is linked directly to broader discussions on democratic renewal in Scotland, the UK and beyond. Challenges and obstacles faced in delivering the initiative will also be outlined.

## Conclusion

The twentieth century has witnessed several historical developments of great importance. One development was the democratization of much of the world during what has come to be known as the "third wave" of democratization. In an extraordinarily short period of time, many nations moved, or began the process of moving, from dictatorships of the right or the left to an improved level of democratization. In East and Central Europe, the progressive unraveling of the Soviet Empire created opportunities for a remarkable diversity of democratic transitions, popular emulations, and experiments. Revolutionary upheavals, elites' negotiations, and manipulation resulted in an original variety of democratization processes. By the account of political scientists, these processes were studied intensively (Diamond, 1997). In the mid-1990s a second development overtook these watchers of democracy, namely, a deterioration of political regime performance in many of the new democracies, prompting questions about the third wave. An accompanying answer emphasized the multiplicity of democratization paths and outcomes and a normative standard of adequate performance for the new democracies. This standard suggests a minimum requirement for democracy as a political regime, namely, sufficiency in economic and social performance and compliance with nearly all democratic standards established by De Tocqueville, Dahl, and others (Arnopoulos, 2017).

Another development was the rise of computer-related technologies and telecommunications, transforming production, commerce, and social life in fundamental ways. These technologies have made possible a revolutionary acceleration in the pace, scale, scope, and transcendence of interpersonal communication. During a mere decade, the physical world of sense perceptions has been profoundly altered by the continuing emergence of an electronic "virtual reality." These developments prompt the question of whether new social inventions are emerging in this altered reality along with the mutations of social institutions. While several contributing parts of social science have attempted to expound on this question, it has remained vague and largely unexplored in its complexity and magnitude. A major part of its complexity is rooted in the lack of historical precedence for a transformation of contemporary scale and scope. A shorter and clearer time span requires both an analysis of the invented and grounded reality of contemporary life, and a change of references. In a narrower sense, this inquiry explores one such contemporary invention: the possibility of "Tele-democracy." The prospects of democratization at the turn of the century, both on a global scale. Tele-democracy defined as the democratically directed empowerment of the compatriotic conglomerate of computer technology and telecommunications.

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