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Changing Dynamics of 'Democracy' in Modern World

Namita Jha

ABSTRACT

This article deals with the changing aspects of democracy in the modern world. It deals with the factors affecting liberal democracy in the present century. In the 21st century, how the socioeconomic factors contributed to participation at the world level are relevant for the development of democracy. Countries that have done good in education in past years have emerged as good democratic countries. Democratic crisis in the present form contributes to the level of inequalities in society which affects the participation of people in choosing their leader. Due to this inequality, the great imbalance has created. Apart from the participation, the contributing factor which affects liberal democracy is the 'Polarization of Politics' and the role of media towards this. Politicians who focus their politics on religion, nationalism, and present their opponents as corrupt and bias have posed as a threat to democracy as their politics based not on the equality and representation of all the people. 'Role of Media' in present democracy poses a threat as genuineness and ability to criticize the government has undermined its role.

INTRODUCTION

Democracy word developed from the Greek word 'Demokratia', 'Demo' mean People and Kratos mean 'rule'. Abraham Lincoln describes democracy as a government by the people, for the people, and of the people. Democracy is a form of government in which people elect their representatives for the rule of law in society as opposed to the communist government and the Monarchy. The judiciary and constitution are an integral part of democracy. In the present time, democracy has been considered as 'liberal' at large. [1] Aristotle's view of politics describes politicians as a practitioner or artisan who is skilled in their particular field. The important task of a politician is as a lawmaker, where he frames the appropriate constitution for the state and involves the law, customs, and institutions to regulate the societies. Aristotle stated that people can achieve happiness by the organisation of people into states with government, which support the idea of common interest. [2] Contemporary studies of non-literature studies, and others evidence of tribal societies suggests the origin of democracy from hunter gatherers from prehistoric times. Settled agriculture communities lead to inequalities of wealth and thereafter in the 6th century BCE, a democratic government was formed in Athens. Democracy in his best form presupposes the education, because it requires the formation of laws and implementation of policies for the welfare of people, related to law and order, economic development and critically evaluate the performance of government by participating in referendums.

In this article, I deal with the changing aspects of democracy as to how it has developed with the passage of time, the challenges it faces in a new era or the 21st century, how these aspects have affected the democracy in the contemporary world. This article deals with the following:

1. Democracy and its development.
2. Challenges in the 21st century.
3. Effect of polarization and media on Democracy.

DEMOCRACY AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Apart from Greek civilization, until 18th-century democracy was not a known concept but gradually developed afterward. Development in ancient Greece describes democracy in the sense of government rule by the people and not by a single ruler. Collective decision making between

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[1] Miller& Fred, *Aristotle's Political Theory*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/aristotle-politics.

[2] Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, (Feburary19, 2019), http://www.britannica.com/topic/democracy.

people who are equal in status or rank that is between all the citizens, selected by vote. However, the concept of democracy in ancient Greece lacks in treating people equals even when they are not equals, thus it led to disorder and instability. It was primarily seen as a mechanism extended to only those who had a stake in the form of property. The development of democracy has many facets as the structure of government in the 16th century in England was Monarch was based on 'Royal Absolutism'. In the 17th Century, 'Puritan Revolution' overthrew the king from his stone, and the 'Bill of rights' was passed and established the right of Parliament in England[3]. Later, many gradual changes and revolution contributed to the development of democracy, which cleared the way for a modern democracy in the form of liberal democracy. In the 20th century, it was developed through many revolutions and ideologies and established the idea for today's democracy.

After, all the development throughout the centuries, the idea of modern democracy was established through economic development, the sovereignty of the state, and the representation of people electing their leader. Besides this, there was a need for a concrete structure for the regulation of society. In order to establish law and order in society, it required some central authority to prevent violence and enact policies for the common welfare of the states. At present, there are two types of countries with democracy in the world, one with Democratic and other with the Democratic Republic. Democracy helps people in both ways to live autonomously and in productive activities of society such as in labor and agriculture. Democracy helps in the economic development of the state, with the right kind of development in the direction of health, education, and sustainable development of citizens of the country.

Education has been relevant for the development of Democracy, it preserves the sustainability as it promotes political participation at the individual level.

Democratic development from 1970 shows that the counties who were educated with an average rate in 1970, they are more democratic in 2015. The data below show the development since 1970.
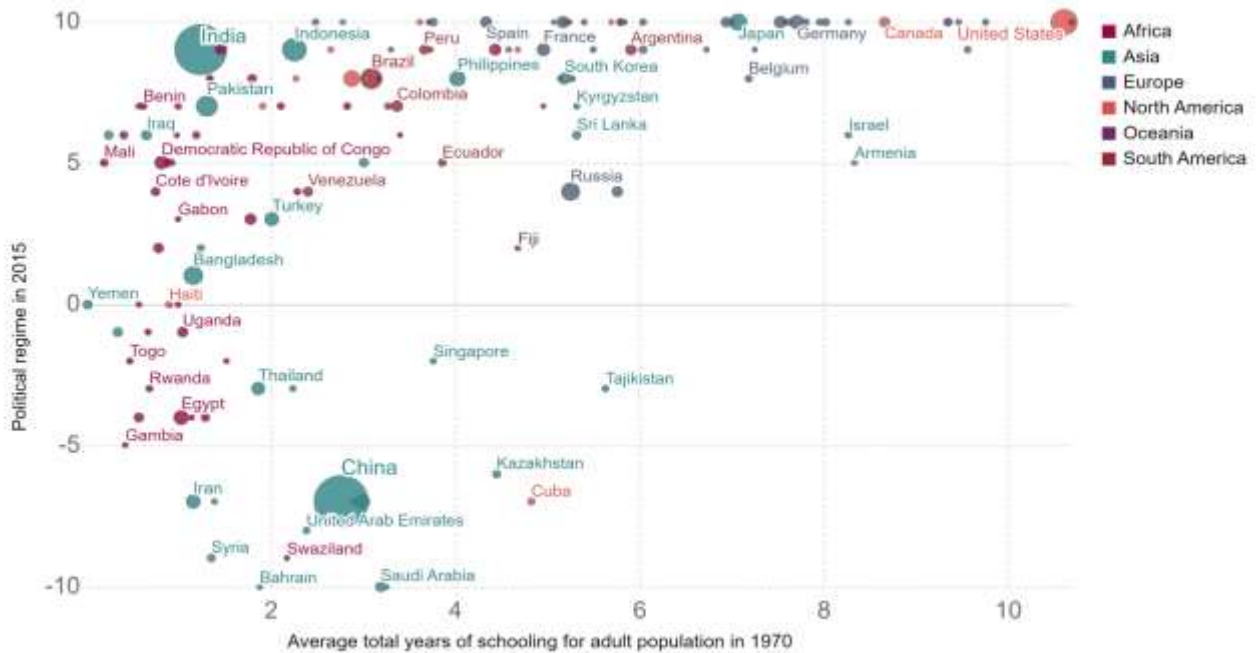
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[3] Donald Shell, The Development of Democracy, 7(4) TRANSFORMATION 20, 20-24 (1990), www.jstor.org/stable/43052327.

Correlation between education in the past and democracy today

Average years of schooling for total population aged 25+ in 1970, and political regime according to the Polity IV assessment (ranging from -10 for 'Fully Autocratic' to +10 for 'Fully Democratic') in 2015

Source: Political Regime (OWID based on Polity IV and Wimmer & Min), Lee-Lee (2016), Barro-Lee (2018) and UNDP, HDR (2018), Population (Gapminder, HYDE(2016) & UN (2019))
OurWorldInData.org/democracy • CC BY

However, in the present, no country can claim the genuineness of democracy, with the passage of time democracy faces some challenges in the modern world even in the 21st century. Development of democracy derived from the 'Normative theory of Democracy', which describes its tenets as follows:

1. All adult members collectively ought to have the status of citizen that there is no political indifference between the citizens,
2. All citizens ought to have all the political rights, equality, and liberty of its citizens, broadly based on the 'Principle of equality and liberty.'
3. Legislation ought to represent the 'Principle of sovereignty'.
4. Legislation ought to reflect the 'Principle of equal weight' which constitutes everyone on equal footing.
5. Lastly, a democratic society which reflects the 'Rule of Law'

CHALLENGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

With the passage of time, every country faces challenges to hold democracy in its truest form. Most countries have challenges in a form of participation at a large level, and some at the level of sovereignty and internal securities. These aspects are important to achieve the well-known

phenomenon of the 'welfare state'. However, in the context of the 21st century, the participation of citizens in politics has been decreasing and more wealthy people are taking place. More wealth, power discourages deserving citizen to participate in politics due to lack of economic stability.

Phil Parvin[4] in *'Democracy Without Participation: A New Politics for a Disengaged Era'* argues that in modern democracy factors contributing to decreasing participation of civil society are socioeconomic inequalities which are the main factors that the public not participating in the election or representation at the political level. Countries, where the socioeconomic inequality lies have less public representation, and the countries which are less in-equal, have a large representation in politics. Broadly speaking, in modern democracy also lacks representation poses a greater concern for further development.

In the 21st century, the challenges also lie ahead in the form of deterioration in many countries as Nationalism, corruption, populism, and decreasing level of trust in politics. However, in India on the democratic level represent the Democratic Republic' following the mixed economy, which means the people select their representative on a higher level by Universal Adult Suffrage or through voting imbalances in society. Policy reforms and auto-communal issues more likely to attract the public rather than economic development issues and religious and caste-based politics equally draw the attention of people.

Apart from this, many facets lie ahead in the form of an issue of polarization of politics and media affected democracy. Politicians can affect and manipulate the citizens with the more issues of religion, communal and other matters which can influence to turn the vote of particular communities towards them. Democracy weakens in its true sense as it is based on the true pillars of sovereignty and constitutionalism, which provides equality to its citizen. In today's politics, democracy in many countries unable to achieve even this goal of democracy.

EFFECT OF POLARIZATION AND MEDIA ON DEMOCRACY

A more recent development in democracy has been affected by the politics of polarization. Recent changes in politics are based on more religious or ethnic-communal issues and posing the opposition as corrupt. A collaborative research[5] project all around the world examined the process of polarized politics in democracies around the world. World leader divides societies into

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[4] Phil Parvin, *Democracy Without Participation: A New Politics for a Disengaged Era,* RES PUBLICA 24, 31-52 (2018).
[5] Jennifer Lynn McCoy, *Extreme political polarization weakens democracy – can the US avoid that fate?*, THE CONVERSATION (October 31, 2018 10.12pm), https://theconversation.com/extreme-political-polarization-weakens-democracy-can-the-us-avoid-that-fate-105540.

'political tribes' and how democracy is harmed by this. 11 countries, including the USA, Venezuela, Turkey, Thailand, and others were included, in which the leader casts their opponents as corrupt or immoral, they create "us" and "them" camps in the society. In each of these dynamics, each of these sees their opponents with increasing distrust and bias. Each views their opponents as a threat to the nation. In the U.S.A. president, Donald Trump poses his external enemy as a threat and criminals and terrorists and often vilifies their internal enemies as corrupt.

India faces somehow the similar pattern as the USA in terms of the polarization of politics. The democratic structure of India has gradually weakened by political interest based on caste-based politics and religion-based politics. Nationalism, colonialism has always been the preference of politicians to lure the vote of the people. Media which is also known as 'Fourth Pillar of Democracy' plays a significant role in displaying the critical side of government as it is always accountable for its failure. Later, Media has somehow hindered from the responsibility of criticism of the government and the kind of news it displays, lacks in terms of responsibility. Media has always been used as a tool of dissent for criticizing the government in the Democratic realm.

The free press is a tool of 'Right to freedom of speech' governed by the equality principle of the constitution. It helps public participation at the level that democracy can work efficiently. But if it lacks genuineness and corrupts and supports a particular individual, it can hinder and poses a great threat to the growth of the Democratic value of the country.

In 2019, India slipped two places from 140 out of 180 in the World press freedom Index[6]. The media has stopped asking hard questions about the government and some simply propagate the polarization of political views on the basis of religion. Moreover, many journalists were charged with defamation for exposing the failures of the government. These studies show the effect of polarization of politics and the effect on the media in terms of liberalization of and crises for democracy.

CONCLUSION

From Ancient Greek civilization to the 21st century, many facets of democracy have developed over these periods. Media have lost their credibility over time and decreasing the level of political

[6] Siddhath Varadarajan, *India's media is failing in its democratic duty*, AL JAZEERA, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/india-media-failing-democratic-duty-200224062258957.html.

participation has affected liberal democracy all over the world. Governing government needs the form of democracy, by which they can equally protect the rights of individuals on which democracy is built. Sovereignty and representation at the highest level can protect the equal rights of citizenship. The high level of scrutiny on media and genuine adoptions of criticism of the government, keeps checking and balances on government. Recent changes such as a radicalization of politics have weakened the politics all over the world. Socioeconomic development is equally important to prevent inequality among the citizens, by which they can participate and take part in representative politics. For the development of 'Modern Democracy', participation, responsible media, and socioeconomic development and equality among the citizens are important factors. More peoples' involvement at the level of participation is needed for the accountability of government. And, the government in Modern Democracy needs to be more focused on social, economic, and legal developments of the country.