



Original Article

Democratic Values in the Era of Digital Technology

Fadatare Vishal Sadhu¹, Dr. Karim Nabi Mulla

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Prof. Dr. N. D. Patil Mahavidyalaya, Malkapur-Perid.

²Department of Political Science, Rajarshi Chattrapati Shahu College, Kolhapur

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Correspondence Address:
Fadatare Vishal Sadhu,
Assistant Professor, Department
of Political Science, Prof. Dr. N.
D. Patil Mahavidyalaya,
Malkapur-Perid.
Email: vishalsf7594@gmail.com

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Abstract

The digital age has had a significant impact on democracy, and as technology continues to develop at an unprecedented rate, this impact will only grow. The advent of digital technology has changed the terrain of democratic systems, offering both chances and difficulties for the maintenance and advancement of democratic ideals. It's critical to comprehend how digital technologies impact the democratic process as the world grows increasingly interconnected. Democracy is impacted by the digital era in both positive and harmful ways. By enabling communication with elected officials and expanding options for political participation through social media and other online platforms, digital technologies have, on the one hand, made it simpler for citizens to take part in democracy. In particular, the protection of free speech, journalistic freedom, and judicial integrity face previously unheard-of difficulties in the digital sphere. Public opinion pressure may threaten judicial independence. Therefore, it's critical to create regulations that take into account both the advantages and disadvantages of using technology for democracy. To a multidisciplinary strategy is needed to protect democratic resilience, involving the corporate sector, governments, and civil society in the creation of policies to tackle these new dangers.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Digital Governance, Digital Democracy

Research Objectives:

- 1) To identify the barriers to digital literacy that prevents marginalized populations from engaging in online political participation.
- 2) To assess how generative AI and deep fakes influence voter perception and the integrity of democratic elections.
- 3) To explore the potential of decentralized social media (e.g., Fed verse) in reducing polarization and fostering healthier civic discourse compared to centralized platforms.
- 4) To develop frameworks for "Democracy by Design" in emerging technologies, ensuring that human rights are embedded in the software development lifecycle.

Research Method:

For this study, descriptive and analytical research methodologies have been used. Information on this subject has been gathered using secondary data collection techniques, such as consulting a variety of reference books and websites.

Introduction

Democracy has undergone a substantial transition with the arrival of the digital era, needing a thorough analysis of the potential and difficulties this change brings. Political investors can take advantage of the fact that we have created weaknesses in liberal democracies in the West and added to the weaknesses that existed in democracies even before information technology. Over the past thirty years, we have foolishly believed that the invisible digital hand will create a good and a digital democracy. It turns out that this was a deadly error. The fact that the early predictions regarding the Internet's enormous democratic potential have never come to pass is another grave error. This has been a driving force behind the current democratic system crises. The quest of truth is under danger, which is the crisis. Our previous truth-tracking organizations are no longer entirely focused on the truth. Influencers and meddlers have undermined independent media, while merchants of doubt have polluted science with oddities and faulty numbers using false hyper partisan narratives, propaganda, deception, and fake news.

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Political trust has been eroded by lobbyists. Trust in the business and financial sectors have been destroyed by profit-maximizing controlling elites. And all of them have benefited from digital technologies. In actuality, the prevalence of trending topics, erratic sentiments, filter bubbles, groupthink, bias, cascades of false information, lack of information and cognitive distortions, interruptions and breakups, both obvious and subtle factual errors, and logic.

The new digital era and democratic frameworks

The set of procedures that result in the creation of standards and their potential to advance the so-called "public interest" are crucial elements of the development of democratic structures in the digital age. In order to guarantee such structures and so advance the public interest, interoperability is crucial curiosity. In fact; interoperability is impossible without shared or uniform standards. This was made clear in the 1960s when manufacturers' use of proprietary protocols prevented computers from communicating with one another. To solve this issue, the ARPANET project was created, which established an open network. Putting an end to the days of closed architectures, which kept users confined to a single system. Digital standards are a combination of political, social, economic, and technical factors.

The Influence of New Technology on Democratic Principles

Around the world, democratic systems have undergone a significant transition with the arrival of the digital age, which has presented both enormous opportunities and difficulties. Given that digital technology continue to develop quickly; they are changing how people participate in political processes, share information, and run democratic institutions. There are several ways in which these technologies could improve democratic participation. They can increase access to political discourse by facilitating communication between citizens and their representatives. Additionally, they can promote diversity via online forums and social media. Emerging digital connectivity has the potential to strengthen historically marginalized perspectives, offering emerging digital connectedness promises to give historically marginalized voices more power, opening up new channels for civic engagement and political engagement. The spread of false information, the rise of echo chambers powered by algorithms and the commercialization of internet platforms all present significant obstacles to the democratic principles of justice, pluralism, and well informed decision making. Additionally, by strengthening pre-existing prejudices and limiting exposure to different viewpoints, these technologies have the potential to widen already existing societal gaps. Given these wider democratic ramifications, a more thorough examination of digital technologies' precise effects on fundamental democratic institutions is necessary.

Three essential foundations are necessary for every democracy to function: an independent court, a free press, and the defence of free expression. These institutions face increasing pressures that could undermine their fundamental functions as democracy struggles with the demands of the digital era. The judges, for instance can be

vulnerable to the sway of public opinion heightened by social media, which might jeopardize its objectivity. Long considered the "fourth estate" in democracies, the free press is increasingly under threat from the spread of misinformation and fake news, which are undermining public confidence and journalistic standards. At the same time, the freedom of speech, which is a cornerstone of in the online sphere, where the need to protect the right to free speech and the need to control dangerous content coexist and democratic discourse is a contentious issue. These organizations confront particular difficulties that need for focused solutions in addition to being impacted by the broader patterns of digital disruption.

A Separate Court of Law

The writers draw attention to how digital technologies have the potential to compromise the judiciary's independence. They also highlight the potential for the impartiality of the judiciary to be jeopardized by the impact of public opinion and the actions of internet influencers. Nonetheless, the application of digital technology in legal Conflicts can provide a risk that needs to be taken into account. It is crucial to make sure that the public does not believe that the legal system does not engage people. An unbiased, equitable, and constitutionally protected system of courts of law with independent, qualified judges is the foundation of a democratic judiciary. Judicial decisions should be based on the facts of each case, including factual evidence, each person's merits and credibility, legal arguments, and pertinent legislation, in order to be considered impartial. When justice is administered, fairness is defined as treating everyone equally. The efficiency, accuracy, and adaptability of AI in many labor-intensive jobs are the main factors driving its increasing use as a tool to assist the legal system's administration of justice. However, there are inherent threats to fairness and transparency when AI is used improperly or even completely replaced by humans.

The Right to Free Expression and the Press

It may seem like society is living in a golden age of free speech since it has never been so simple to communicate an idea with the largest possible audience. However, the ability to restrict information to limit, filter, or block it has never been more accessible through mostly private concentration sites in the digital public domain. In contrast to the early Internet principles of a "free flow of information," its moderation systems today routinely combine human supervision and autonomous detection in opaque ways, sometimes empowering and other times restricting and punishing what can or cannot be expressed. Large platforms are faced with conflicting financial incentives: an underlying Faustian business model that exchanges mostly free services for the monetization of personal user data, and an interest in enforcing online norms of behavior.

Privacy and Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression and privacy are regarded as essential components of democratic societies. International human rights frameworks uphold them as

being crucial to both the wellbeing of public discourse and individual autonomy. However, these ideas face previously unheard-of difficulties in the digital age since the same technology that allow for instantaneous worldwide communication also make it possible for new types of manipulation, censorship, and surveillance. A period of hyper-connectivity has been brought about by the development of digital platforms, social media, and extensive data networks, which allow people to share their opinions on a far larger scale than was previously feasible. However, this increased connectedness has also made it harder to distinguish between privacy and free speech. On the one hand, the digital age has facilitated the democratization of expression, enabling voices that have previously been marginalized to be heard and expanding the public sphere. But as was already mentioned, this greater transparency has also made it easier for hate speech, extremism, and other negative speech to proliferate. Because of this, governments and online platforms have adopted content filtering policies that might unintentionally stifle free speech. In countries with authoritarian regimes, digital tools have been employed as instruments of control to suppress dissent. This has included monitoring and silencing critics through the deployment of surveillance technologies. The issue of how to strike a balance between the right to free speech and the necessity to protect national security has grown more difficult, even in nations with democratic governments. The use of spyware like Pegasus to track journalists and political rivals is an example of this. Therefore, for free speech to occur, privacy-preserving laws and technologies are required.

New threats from the state and restrictions on fundamental rights in the digital age

In the digital age, it is critical to recognize the new dangers posed by government activities that restrict fundamental rights by using digital technologies. Maintaining individual liberty while using technology for the greater good is a delicate balance that calls for the creation of strong ethical standards and legal frameworks. Making sure that governments are held responsible for their use of technology is crucial. This is a crucial step in guaranteeing democracy's on-going protection and the preservation of popular confidence in government. As mentioned in the introduction, political discourse may become fragmented and unstable as a result of the growing usage of social media and dependence on it for news and information about current events. Digital technology has never been more capable of collecting information and tracking citizens' activities in real time, both offline through ubiquitous cameras and other sensors and online by monitoring electronic communications and/or installing cookies and other spyware on computers. Furthermore, new developments in data analytics, such as complex algorithms aided by AI, enable the data to be mined for information more showing a person's preferences and areas of interest, as well as forecasts of their expected future behaviour. This constitutional law approach to limiting state power has proven to be fairly effective in post-World War II Western Europe. However, it reaches its limits when a populist

government gains enough clout and the underlying political environment becomes so sensitive and intolerant that the judiciary's function as a check on the legislative and executive branches is no longer recognized. Judges might face threats and intimidation in such a situation, or the Constitution itself might be changed to lessen the liberties and privileges it formerly upheld.

Conclusion

The emergence of the digital era has presented both opportunities and difficulties for the define of privacy and freedom of speech. Although new technologies have made it possible for more people to express them and have a more varied and inclusive public conversation, they have also opened the door for more censorship, monitoring, and the degradation of individual privacy. As this chapter has shown, governments and businesses can use the very digital tools that empower voices—especially those from marginalized communities to monitor, silence, and manipulate discourse. Delicate balance between preserving free speech and preventing dangerous content is made more difficult by the rise of content filtering techniques, which are frequently opaque and used inconsistently. Furthermore, individual liberty and freedom of speech are seriously threatened by the widespread collection and use of personal data by governmental and non-governmental organizations. People are discouraged from participating in public conversation because they fear being watched, followed, or targeted. Either by removing oneself from the conversation entirely or by self-censoring. This poses a serious threat to the fundamental component of democratic engagement, which is the ability to freely express opinions without worrying about retaliation or interference.

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Conflicts of interest

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