Participation and Democracy

George Metakides

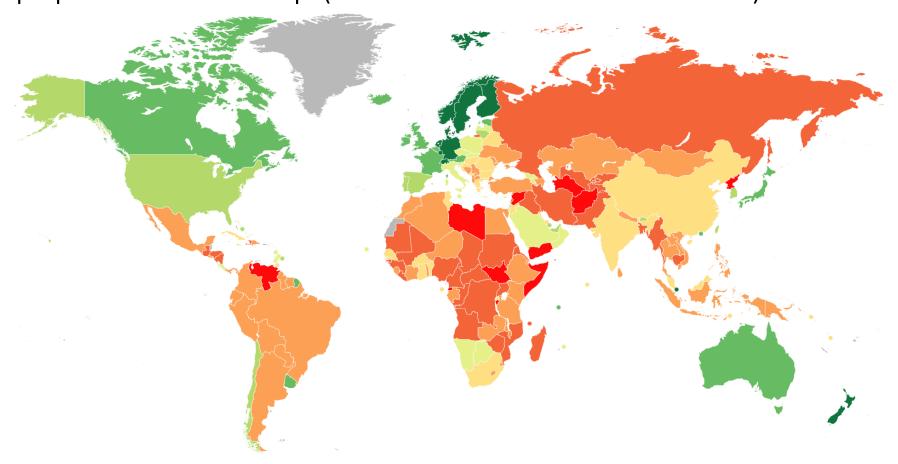
Vienna

September 21 2022

Wherever you look, democracy is "backsliding"

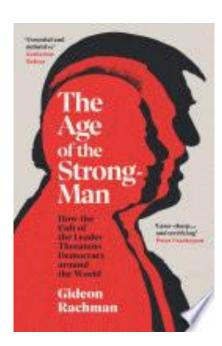
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- https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2022/02/09/a-new-low-for-global-democracy
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- https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/2021-12/human-freedom-index-2021.pdf
- https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpos.2021.687695/full

21 full democracy, 53 incomplete,34 hybrid, 39 authoritarian (*EIU*) 67 democratic, 70 autocratic (*Bertelsman*) 16th straight year of backsliding of democracy worldwide (*Freedom House*) Rise of populism and APEp (*Frontiers in Political Science*)

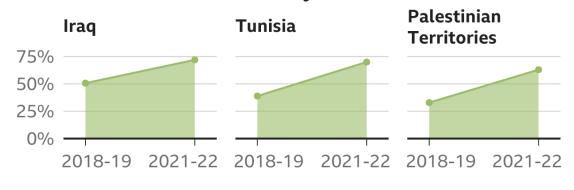


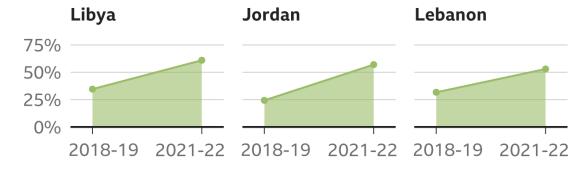
Worldwide polarization, extremism, attraction to "strong" leaders

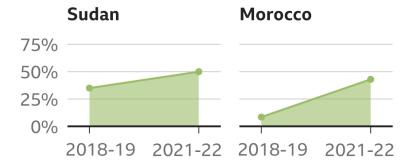




Rise in people who agree the economy is weak under a democracy







Mauritania not surveyed in 2018-19. This question not asked in Egypt in 2021-22

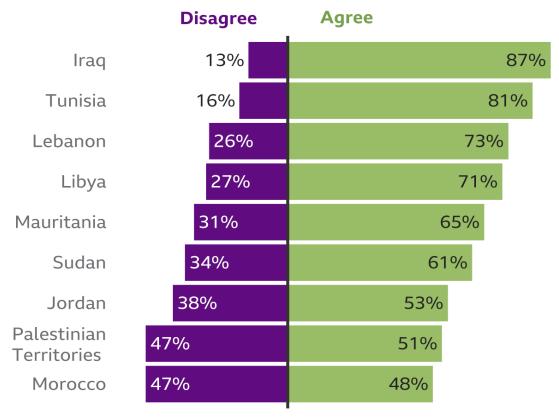
Source: Arab Barometer



Attraction to the "strong leader" concept

Many expressed preference for strong leaders

Responses to the statement 'This country needs a leader who can bend the rules to get things done'



Due to rounding and responses of 'don't know/refuse', combined figures will not necessarily total 100%. This question was not asked in Egypt

Source: Arab Barometer



And closer to home:

- In France 47% agree with (Science Po poll)
- "In a democracy nothing gets done, we need perhaps less democracy and more effectiveness"
- In the US, Germany and Japan an average of 30% would opt for
- " a strong leader who does not have to deal with parliaments and elections" (World Values Survey)
- Young people refrain from politics resulting in a political class that self-recycles (Hofsbaum)

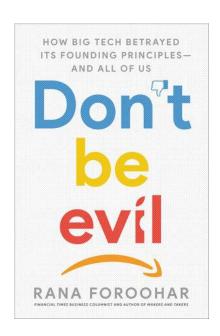
What are the main causes cited?

- Economic inequalities (2008 crisis)
- Globalization effects
- Immigration (2015 crisis)
- Internal degeneration (plutocracy, kleptocracy, constitutional defects)
- The Web and Social media
- Cyberthreats to democratic processes
- Mithridatism (compare reaction to Cambridge Analytica with that to Frances Haugen's Facebook files
- The fallacy of inevitability (that somehow globalization, capitalism and trade will preserve and spread democracy)

Is "digital" eroding democracy? Socialmediocracy?







Don't

The Case Against Big Tech

RANA FOROOHAR



Unprecedented concentration of Power Towards a metaverse dystopia?

- Corporate value power (incl. lobbying)
- Power to influence/manipulate public opinion/elections
- Surveillance power
- Nudging, herding, conditioning (H. Ackerman)
- Predictable humans can be reliably presented with ads they will click on
- Political extremists are more predictable than moderates (Edward Lee)

•

- And as AI capabilities grow:
- People as walking sensor platforms
- Predatory algorithms
- Mass mind control?



Inventor of web calls on governments and firms to safeguard it from abuse and ensure it benefits humanity

Sir <u>Tim Berners-Lee</u> has called for global action to save the web from political manipulation, fake news, privacy violations and other malign forces that threaten to plunge the world into a "digital dystopia" .(November 24 2019)

Democracy in Perspective A brief Historical Parcours



England in 1688



Cambridge Distorical Ossays. flo. f.

THE HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH DEMOCRATIC IDEAS

OF THE

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

-

G. P. GOOCH, M.A.

Cambridge:

AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

1808

Late States reserved

10

Industrial revolution and Enlightenment





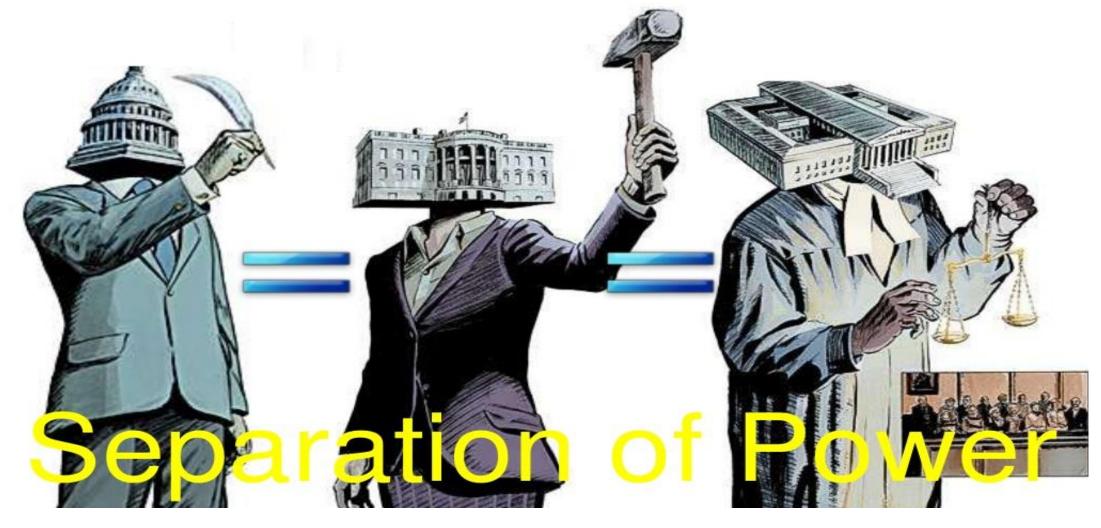






Montesquieu - Power should be divided among three separate branches of government to prevent one person or faction from becoming tyrannical ("Separation of Power")





1789-1989

- The leitmotif during these centuries is the slow, non-linear quest for consensus on what should replace the "Ancien Regime"
- Dragging reform in Britain, France's second Empire, the compromise of the merchant class and the land owning aristocrats in Germany under Bismark, interminant civil war in Spain, the fascist regimes of the 1930s (which prevailed in Europe) and Nazism preceded the post WWII democracies in Western Europe
- A U.S. "Empire by invitation" in post-WWII Europe and a 45-year Cold War
- While in the USSR a political system which according to East Germany's Walter Ulbricht "must look like democracy but with everything under our control" (see also the recent Xi-Putin declaration!)

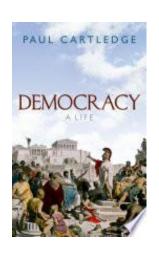
• 1989-2022

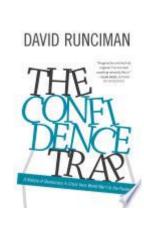
- After Fukuyama's (in) famous "the end of History" which expected the eventual triumph of liberal democracy, it has been backsliding instead
- After 45 years of Cold War, democracy was no longer considered under threat and it started being taken for granted
- It was perceived as a "natural state" to be nurtured and preserved by capitalism and globalization...deterministically and independently of increasing inequality of wealth and decreasing participation
- Simultaneously, in the early nineties, the "blossoming" of the Web brought a euphonic enthusiasm that the Web and digital technologies in general would usher in a cultural renaissance that would reinvent and strengthen democracy with more direct and informed citizen participation, government transparency and so on.
- Alas, this land of milk, honey and digital bliss turned out to be a utopia. There was a weakening of defenses, a "unilateral moral disarmament" (T.Snyder, Yale)

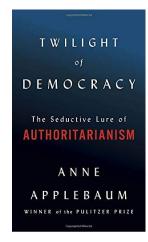
Democracies have always been vulnerable

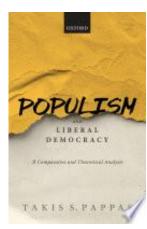
- Democracies have had a rather short life and are not static
- Democracies always nurtured the seeds of their degeneration.
- Their openness can be exploited by demagogues (Louis-Napoleon 1852 self-coup)
- Democracy and liberalism
- Information manipulation is not new but is empowered by digital
- What new is a false sense of security and an underestimation of the accelerator effect of digitization

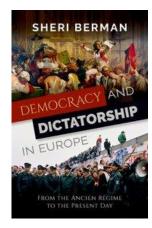
Additional References

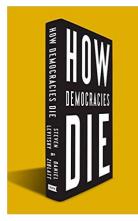


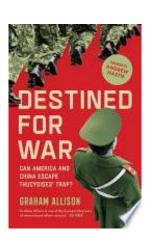


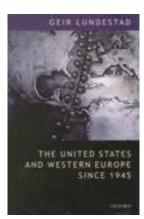








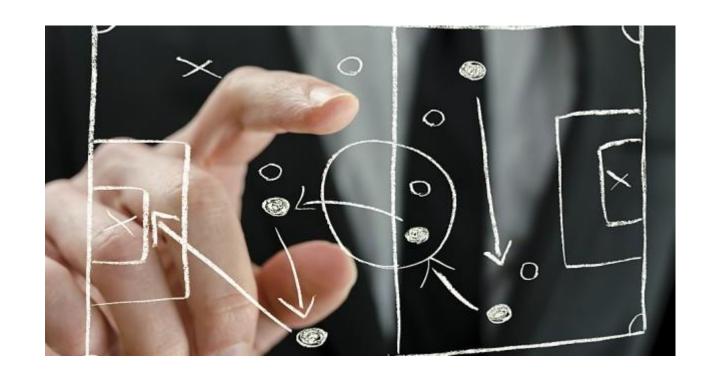




From Democratic Utopia to Authoritarian Dystopia? Are Digital Technologies Responsible? Can they help reverse the current trend?







Guard against the bad, empower the good

Regulatory Framework (The "defense")

- Anti-Trust
- GDPR
- DMA,DSA
- Data Act
- Al Act



Citizen participation in the democratic process

- ✓ Elections
- ✓ Opinion polls / referenda
- ✓ Deliberative democracy/Citizens assemblies

The pandemic acted as "laboratory" in the use of digital technologies for participation in democratic processes (e.g. virtual Town Hall meetings) not as a substitute but as a complement Can digital technologies foster greater transparency and citizen participation?

The limits of referenda as an attempt for "direct democracy"

- Manihaistic by its nature. Unsuitable for complex issues.
- Often simply a protest vote
- Rarely is care taken to properly "educate" the electoral body
- The negative track record of referenda (EU constitution, Brexit, Putin's, Lukashenko's)

What is a Citizens' assembly?

https://citizensassemblies.org/ https://citizens-democracy.ch/examples-of-citizens-assemblies/

➤ People randomly selected to reflect gender, age, education, socioeconomic status.

- ➤ Deliberative body:
- i. Learning
- ii. Discussion,
- iii. Decision
- **≻**Recommendations

Historical Outcome in Ireland



The Taiwan Digital Democracy experiment "Fast, Fair and Fun"

A mix of direct and representative democracy

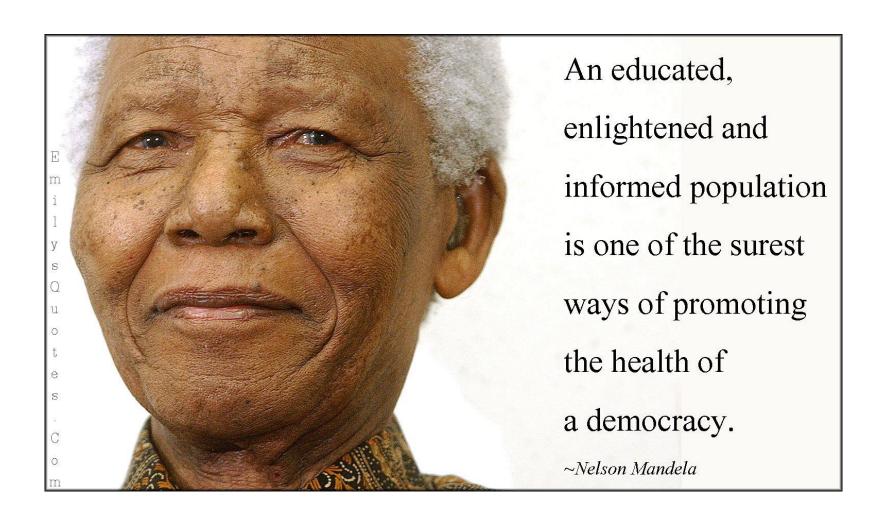


Democracy will neither die or live by Digital In addition to "harnessing" digital:

- Regulating of digital landscape
- Addressing constitutional fault lines gerrymandering, politicized courts, lobbying
- Addressing inequalities of wealth
- Deliberative democracy
- Engagement at local level

EDUCATION!

Education and Digital Humanism



DEMOCRACY MAY NOT EXIST. **BUT WE'LL** MISS IT WHEN IT'S GONE