



Recommendations to the Summit for Democracy



**GLOBAL
DEMOCRACY
COALITION**

PARTNERS



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Cover photo by Gayatri Malhotra

INTRODUCTION

The occasion of Summit for Democracy, organized by the government of the United States on 9 and 10 December 2021 provides a historical window of opportunity for the democracy community worldwide to come together to advance a global conversation on democracy, raise public awareness on the value of democracy, place issues on the public agenda and learn from each other to reinvigorate democratic governance and practices worldwide, across both newer and older democracies.

A global multistakeholder coalition for democracy therefore convened in a virtual forum for 24 hours on 7 December 2021. The purpose of the Global Democracy Coalition Forum was to facilitate a global conversation on democracy, as inputs to the Summit for Democracy. The Forum sought to provide a platform for voices, actors and issues that were not part of the official Summit and were aimed to contribute to broaden and enrich the discussions of the Summit, focusing both on challenges and opportunities for democracy in different contexts and innovative solutions to address these.

The Global Democracy Coalition Forum consisted of 41 webinars organized by 47 democracy organizations from around the world with over 245 experts, democracy activists, political and civil society leaders and multilateral organizations from all regions. The discussions covered everything from elections, women's political participation, disinformation, transnational repression, the state of democracy globally, in the United States, in Africa and in the Pacific, the role of youth, corruption and malign finance, democracy and development, freedom of expression and the role of a free media, among many others.

Recordings from all the webinars can be accessed on the Global Democracy Coalition website as a repository of knowledge resources on democracy. Ideally, the multi-stakeholder coalition will continue to collaborate beyond the 2021 Summit, ahead of the 2022 Summit and beyond, in order to continue placing democracy front and center of the global agenda, learn from each other and share lessons learned and good practices on how to advance, nurture and protect democracy worldwide.

This document provides an overview of the discussions held and of the main recommendations made by Forum participants to the Summit for Democracy.



Cover photo by Dan Dennis

ELECTIONS

Speakers

- Ken Godfrey, EPD
- Tanja Hollstein, WFD
- John Inge Løvdal, Oslo Center
- Domenico Tuccinardi, EDGE
- Mathias Parsbæk Skibdal, DIPD
- Nino Dolidze, ISFED
- Gary Klaukka, Demo Finland
- Michael Lidauer, Election-Watch.EU
- Thijs Berman, NIMD
- Michael Meyer Resende, DRI
- Therese Pearce Laanela, International IDEA
- Irena Hadziabdic, Central Election Commission, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Amber McReynolds, Founding CEO, National Vote at Home Institute
- Avery Davis-Roberts, Democracy Program at the Carter Center
- Zoe Randhawa, Member of Malaysia's Election Commission

For the full list of speakers, visit the [Coalition website](#)



PROTECTING ELECTIONS - HOW KNOWLEDGE, NORMS AND NETWORKS EMPOWER DEMOCRACY'S FUTURE

A fresh report on [Electoral Assistance](#) shows that rapid changes in the global conditions for democracy demand an upgrade and reshaping of the way we support electoral processes abroad and at home.

The webinar panellists described the reality of electoral officials under siege and electoral infrastructures that are not fit for purpose. The politicisation of typically under-the-radar election tasks creates a toxic work environment for electoral officials. Electoral operations face new and accelerated risks of cyberattacks, disinformation operations and extreme weather events. The Covid-19 pandemic exposed structural and legislative weaknesses.

Those who support and administer democratic elections must keep pace with these rapidly evolving risks to prevent the undermining of democratic processes and erosion of democratic institutions. The panel spoke of the urgency to empower frontline officials with professional support structures and opportunities to work with other societal actors to build knowledge, skills, and common ground. Because shared values serve as protection to electoral processes, the panellists emphasised the importance of upgrading normative standards (such as international obligations on elections) and the importance of a unified international voice when standards are breached.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Global Norm Setting.** There is an urgent need to engage multiple stakeholders, such as academic, electoral assistance, observation and electoral management networks, in reviewing and updating normative frameworks for protecting elections against democratic backsliding, natural and man-made crisis, and to cope with the challenges imposed by manipulations with new technologies. Global Forums can create platforms for setting norms and facilitate rapid response when these norms are in jeopardy.
- **Knowledge Networking.** Knowledge flow and professional development opportunities are critical parts of an infrastructure of support to those who work on the front lines of elections. However, opportunities are limited because such initiatives are currently under-resourced. Global, regional and national level professional development and knowledge sharing initiatives can bolster the courage, morale and skillsets needed by election officials and civil society organizations that are at the forefront of democracy.
- **Investment in Electoral Infrastructures.** Renewed investment is needed to ensure that legislative, operational and professional capacity and infrastructure is fit to handle the challenges at play.



ELECTIONS AND THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

This panel brought together perspectives from around the world to discuss approaches to confronting the effects of the world's digital transformation on elections. This includes the roles of organizations such as technology companies, election management bodies, observers, civil society and others, considering specific responses to attacks on elections and the democratic process more broadly. The conversation, including representatives from various perspectives, focused on a discussion of the implications of the transformation and the ways that they have engaged in developing solutions to confronting negative trends and building democratic, open and free political systems and societies online and off, globally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The most important thing is collaboration. Working with local civil society gives election work and outcomes legitimacy.
- Platforms are seeing that disinformation effects their public image and are more helpful now than they have been in the past. Self-regulation by the platforms is important in addition to government regulation. They need clear rules for moderating content, this should be incentivized, and they need to be transparent in these rules.
- Company platforms need to be able to counter disinformation across their platforms if they want to work and engage on these international scales.

TIRED OF ELECTIONS? CREATING MOMENTUM IN THE FACE OF ELECTORAL FATIGUE

As autocratisation has picked up across the world, elections have gained importance as the key avenue for arresting democratic decline in many countries. At the same time, citizens in many places around the world feel that elections are not a mechanism for change, protesting against ballots they feel are unfair or outdated. This discussion between democracy supporters looked at the challenges of supporting elections and how to create momentum for needed electoral reforms. EPD and its Members discussed the global trends that have been seen in terms of election, looking at why elections are still important for democracy support and some challenges that are linked to elections such as lack of trust, technology, youth engagement, and a sometimes narrow and overly technocratic approach to electoral support.

A key point that was stressed was how trust in elections has waned and a global trend of frustration has arisen as people feel elections will not bring about the changes they desire. It was stressed that participatory and inclusive elections remain crucial to strengthening global democracy and the participants raised some key practical suggestions about how elections can be improved, such as focusing on strengthening the electoral environment, taking a process oriented approach and working on the whole electoral cycle, and using experience to advocate for practical, incremental but effective change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Elections remain crucial to democracy support and must be improved to ensure that they are a way to achieve social and political change, rebuilding trust between people and elections.
- Electoral support must not just focus on the technical parts of the elections, it must be broader than just electoral institutions and pay attention to the whole electoral environment, engaging a wider range of stakeholders such as parties, media, civil society, and external actors.
- Electoral assistance must be a process oriented programming not as an event oriented activity, meaning that it must go beyond simply elections and encompass the whole electoral cycle.



Cover photo by Arnaud Jaegers



Cover photo by Filip Mishevski

DISINFORMATION

Speakers

- Bret Schafer, Alliance for Securing Democracy
- Anneli Ahonen, Institute for Strategic Dialogue
- Puma Shen, National Taipei University
- Lee Foster, Alethea Group
- Bruce Sherman, RNW Media
- Susan Abbott, Counterpart International
- Slobodan Blagovcanin, Citizens Against Terrorism
- Marius Dragomir, Central European University
- Jacqueline Lampe, RNW Media
- Vukasin Petrovic, Information Access Fund

For the full list of speakers, visit the [Coalition website](#)

RESPONSES TO FOREIGN INFORMATION OPERATIONS: WHAT'S WORKED, WHAT HASN'T, AND WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING INSTEAD?

The threat and tactics of state-backed information operations have been extensively researched, but this event broadened the discourse by examining tools of resistance to disinformation. Speakers shared insight into tools for combatting state-backed disinformation and analyzed threats and responses within diverse national contexts from Taiwan to Germany and the United States. Focusing on Russia, China, and Iran as the leading perpetrators of information operations, speakers contrasted how democratic nations have responded, or have failed to respond, to specific operations. Speakers discussed the need for consistency and transparency around social-media platform regulations, differing responses to disinformation in social media and traditional media, the efficacy of labelling foreign actors on social media, and the nexus of domestic and foreign disinformation among other pressing topics. The panelists considered the potential for anti-disinformation measures to be warped for undemocratic aims and underscored the need for responses from sectors beyond government. Speakers advocated timely, consistent, and transparent responses to information operations, including: the establishment of channels for rigorous information sharing between platforms and researchers that are not ad hoc and do not rely on personal or financial relationships; and the use of sanctions and cyber-enabled tools to disincentivize and disable information operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- States must work towards deterring Russia/China from conducting disinformation operations by leaning on sanctions and cyber-enabled toolbox to disincentivize and disable operations.
- Social media labelling and content takedowns need to be more consistent, timely, and transparent.
- Media platforms must create open channels of information sharing with researchers that do not rely on personal relationships and ad hoc agreements.



IF FACTS DON'T MATTER, THEN WHAT?

The breakdown in the information order, clearly evident in the ubiquity of mis-, dis-, and mal-information (MDM), is central to the challenges facing democracies. Unfortunately, we find ourselves in a polarized world that necessitates rethinking our assumptions and remedies regarding countering MDM and ultimately mediating differences in democratic societies. While fact checking, pre- and de-bunking, and media literacy training are parts of the solution, new and innovative approaches that reconsider our assumptions concerning the primacy and power of facts might also help. If we are not able to fix our information disorder then how might media help strengthen and sustain democracy? Beyond the variety of institutionalist approaches being considered, ranging from regulatory reforms to fix digital information marketplaces, to research that examines how audiences access and process information, to new youth-driven and -focused outlets that target specific topics to counter MDM, the panelists suggested alternative concepts. These included values-based social impact entertainment and cultural programming, platforms and fora for consensus-seeking discussions rather than moderating the specific content of those discussions, adoption of collaborative media/civil society/government co-governance models to mitigate the destructive impact of information disorder on civil discourse, and building digital communities based on pluralism and trust that support media of difference and serve to ward off MDM.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- With democracy at stake, there is a need to reconsider the conventional delineation between issues-focused civil society and the fetishization of an unachievable perfectly objective media. Deeper collaboration and synergies between media and civil society embracing the higher cause, the promotion of democratic norms and values, would buttress ways to understand, identify and reinforce shared values and spaces for mediating differences.
- A reconsidered research agenda around “countering disinformation” might consider the incentives in the present information and media ecosystem and market that contribute to disinformation and its devastating effects on civil discourse. In particular, taking a critical look at assumptions media providers and journalists make about audience preferences and behavior would be helpful as well as how to address media market failures that reinforce divisiveness, polarization, and the splintering of identities and values. In this regard, disinformation is considered more of a symptom of a larger problem rather than something that can be eradicated on its own.
- Highlight alternative media approaches, particularly in the developing and post-communist world, that have proven successful in helping to mediate differences in society despite widespread MDM, information disorder, and dysfunctional political systems. While we in the West deplore the breakdown of information integrity, others in the world have never known it and yet, or maybe because it was never assumed, have found ways to overcome it. We can and should learn from and support them.



Cover photo by Max Bender

CIVIC SPACE

Speakers

- Gio Kobakhidze, IFES
- Tinatin Maghedani, Gavigudet
- Ehi Idakwo, Accountability Lab
- Susan Abbott, Counterpart International
- Ammar Hamoda, Sudan Bukra
- Maria Baron, Directorio Legislativo
- Dr. Tamar Karaia, Tbilisi State University
- Naomi Hossain, American University
- Matt Schrader, International Republican Institute
- Yaşar Adnan Adanali, Centre for Spatial Justice
- Dr. Greer Burroughs, The College of New Jersey
- Andrew Lavalı, Institute for Governance Reform
- Kristine Berzina, Alliance for Securing Democracy
- Nick Benequista, Center for International Media Assistance
- Craig Hammer, Development Data Group at the World Bank

For the full list of speakers, visit the [Coalition website](#)

CREATING AND MAINTAINING DEMOCRATIC SPACES IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

This webinar brought together activists from Georgia, Sudan and Turkey to discuss how to create and maintain space for civil society and the media in the face of creeping authoritarianism and increased restrictions on freedom of speech. It was organised by the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) and moderated by commentator and analyst Shada Islam.

Ammar Hamoda, from Sudanese satellite TV station *Sudan Bukra*, discussed his experience of covering the recent coup in Sudan, collecting voices and opinions from the ground and broadcasting a side of the country not usually seen in government-controlled media.

Tinatin Maghedani of Gavigudet ('We are suffocating'), an environmentalist group from Georgia, illustrated the challenges of living in Rustavi, one of the most polluted industrial centres in the country, and the organisation's advocacy and awareness-raising work to curb pollution.

Yaşar Adnan Adanalı, from the Centre for Spatial Justice, an inter-disciplinary action research institute in Turkey, highlighted the power differences between local communities and decision-makers when it comes to the development of mega investment projects which can have a negative impact on citizens' lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pro-democracy organisations should join forces and cooperate with like-minded organisations at the local, regional, and global level. Pro-democracy forces around the world should support each other, devoting special attention to those organisations operating in countries where democratic space is shrinking.
- Donors should strive to build more equal relationships with the organisations they support and prioritise core funding over project-based funding. A more flexible and braver donor community, together with relationships based on trust, are vital to foster - and not impose - democracy in more difficult environments.
- Democracy support also means taking care of pro-democracy activists, their well-being and safety. The democracy community cannot put the well-being of democracy at the centre of its activities without paying attention to the well-being of those working on the ground to foster democracy.



CAN SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY REBUILD DEMOCRACY FROM THE GROUND UP?

Dialogue between activists, practitioners, and researchers from around the world, organized by Counterpart International and the Accountability Research Center, American University. Democracy may be in retreat globally, but locally, people are organizing in new ways, greater numbers and with ever more creative strategies. Can social accountability - or citizen-led efforts to hold governments accountable beyond the ballot box - help reverse mass discontent and a loss of political trust? This panel found reasons for optimism based on experience from around the world that sustained efforts by organized citizen groups can help build trust, demystify government, and hold wrongdoing to account. Supporting social accountability initiatives is no quick or easy answer to the democratic deficit. But if led by grassroots actors who are enabled to set the action agenda to fit their contexts, social accountability can help bring democratic practice into everyday life, enacting values and strengthening institutions that guard against disinformation, authoritarianism, and abuses of power.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support social accountability as a direct route to rebuilding democracy from the ground up. Even where civic space is restricted and political opposition constrained, through social accountability, citizens can - and do - gain new capacities and knowledge, relationships and civic muscle through the work of monitoring and holding government accountable.
- Recognize rebuilding democracy needs independent social movements, not donor-dependent projects. Support to social accountability needs to be flexible and long-term, and to ensure local actors and local knowledge set the agenda. It needs to build resilient civil society, able to resist anti-democratic forces and agendas.
- Do no harm. Supporting social accountability movements means abandoning 'one-size-fits-all' solutions in favor of locally-grounded, context-driven actions and agendas. Social accountability initiatives must be determined by those who know and are alert to the risks and possibilities in the political environment.



TURNING THE AUTOCRATIC TIDE THROUGH CIVIC EDUCATION

The net decline of democracy globally over the past decade is a stark reminder for aspiring, young, and mature democracies that democratic advancement is a journey, rather than a destination. It is a reminder that without the hard work of each generation to build and safeguard the principles of self-governance, human rights and dignity, nefarious actors, empowered by new technologies, will continue to chip away at the foundations of our democracies. Responding to this challenge, IFES and the Global Democracy Coalition convened a panel discussion on Turning the Authoritarian Tide through Civic Education with civic education champions from the United States, Ukraine, Georgia, and Bangladesh. Through these discussions, panelists emphasized that education – in particular, civic education – is key to reversing democratic regression and is a driver for more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable democracies. Panelists went on to urge the global community to prioritize active learning and effective civic education at home and abroad, as a core component of turning the authoritarian tide toward sustained democratic progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The international community should prioritize civic education as an essential component for democratic renewal at home and abroad and include this as a prerequisite for promoting democracy and human rights. Conditional foreign policies could be considered by democratic states with an eye to combatting authoritarianism while supporting democratic values
- Nations should promote education that emphasizes exposure to diverse views, followed by learning experiences that emphasize civil discourse, develop informed views, and foster skills to critically analyze information. Importantly, nations should consider “how” students learn in addition to “what” they learn by creating an atmosphere for students to speak up and voice their opinions.
- Democratic values should be institutionalized in schools and universities at home and abroad. Educational institutions and classroom settings should encourage students to cooperate with one another and learn how to solve common problems.



DEMOCRATIC PUSHBACK TO AUTHORITARIAN INFLUENCE: INSIGHTS FROM AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA

IRI’s online discussion on “Democratic Pushback to Authoritarian Influence: Insights from Africa & Latin America” brought together experts from DC with activists in Peru and Ghana to discuss how China and Russia are undermining democracy in both regions, talk about why the issue matters, and to publicly think through ways policymakers and grassroots activists can cooperate and coordinate to push back.

Kristine Berzina of the German Marshall Fund walked audience members and panelists through authoritarian countries’ efforts to push propaganda and undermine genuine discourse on social media platforms, while Isolda Morillo of Peru spoke about the difficulty of elevating critical voices on China in Latin America, and need for journalists like her to work together to hold governments in the region to account. Bright Ackwerh of Ghana closed out presentations by sharing his inspiring art activism. Matt Schrader, advisor for IRI’s Countering Foreign Authoritarian Influence team, provided moderation.

Following panelists’ presentations, discussion among the panelists and with the audience focused on the specific ways governments in both regions – as well as in North America and Europe – could help roll back authoritarianism through greater accountability, and the best ways for like-minded allies of democracy to come together.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- More support from US and like-minded allies for journalism platforms/collectives in Africa and LAC focused on providing fact-based, critical perspectives on PRC engagement in both regions
- Better financial disclosure and transparency by offshore tax havens and major financial institutions in developed countries, to reduce the financial incentive for would-be authoritarians in the region to accept payoffs from the PRC or Russia
- More support for critical scholarship and training on China and CCP influence methods for journalists, researchers, and academics in both regions, to fill a knowledge vacuum on China that is currently being filled primarily by the PRC itself.



Cover photo by Nathaniel Tetteh

CORRUPTION POLITICAL FINANCE

Speakers

- Will Fitzgibbon, ICIJ
- Neil Jeans, Initialism
- Josh Rudolph, Alliance for Securing Democracy
- Anita Ramasastry, UN
- Lakshmi Kumar, Global Financial Integrity
- Gerardo Andrés Hernández Montes, TI Colombia
- Enrique Arturo de Obarrio, REDLAD
- Maira Martini, Transparency International Secretariat
- Serena Lillywhite, Transparency International Australia
- Edson Cortez, Centro de Integridade Publica
- Caroline Goussé, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Dr Ajit Ranade, Founder Member and Trustee of ADR
- Mr Prashant Bhushan, Supreme Court of India
- Yimene Calderón, Ethnic Community Development Organization
- Juanita Olaya, UNCAC Coalition Working Group on Victims of Corruption

For the full list of speakers, visit the [Coalition website](#)

ANTI-CORRUPTION AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE COMMITMENTS IN THE AMERICAS

Fighting corruption is one of the main challenges for democracy in the Americas. Multiple cases of corruption at the national and transnational levels demonstrate the serious impact that it has on institutions, the trust of citizens and the effective enjoyment of human rights. Furthermore, the increasing deterioration of mechanisms of democratic control over the abuse of power has weakened systems of checks and balances, even to the point of configuring state capture schemes.

To address this situation, in 2018 the governments of the region adopted the Lima Commitment "Democratic Governance against Corruption" within the framework of the VIII Summit of the Americas. This instrument incorporated novel and ambitious approaches, and renewed the attention on areas prone to corruption in the region. In the session "Anti-corruption commitments and democratic governance in the Americas: advances and setbacks" organized by Transparency International under the umbrella of the Global Democracy Coalition Forum, the main advances and challenges in the implementation of the Lima Commitment were discussed, emphasizing the financing of political campaigns, international cooperation to prosecute corruption, the effects of corruption on vulnerable groups, and restrictions on civic space.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure there is a real political will aimed at generating concrete changes to fight corruption. No more and new commitments are needed. It would be enough to effectively implement the existing commitments on international legal cooperation
- Corruption is everywhere. Isolated measures are not enough. These problems are linked: political corruption affects the opportunities of vulnerable populations, prevents effective international cooperation, and restricts critical voices. An active citizenry and democratic spaces therefore need to be protected.
- Corruption in the financing of political parties and campaigns is the root cause of much corruption. Governments must demonstrate determined leadership to tackle the current distortions and be willing to change the status quo. Effective enforcement of existing regulations and sanctions are a priority, including when cases of illegal campaign financing are identified, especially the abuse of resources and public goods to favor political interests.
- To combat the transnational nature of corruption, reliable and timely information is required. In particular, the information on beneficial owners of companies can favor faster and more effective investigations, which is why it is necessary to create global level central registries that have this information. It is also strategic to take advantage of existing information from financial intelligence units, and facilitate intergovernmental cooperation for its use.

ENABLERS OF MALIGN FINANCE

The Enablers of Malign Finance Panel discussion was hosted by Josh Rudolph, the Alliance for Securing Democracy's fellow for malign finance, and featured Casey Michel, author of *American Kleptocracy*; Neil Jeans, principal consultant at Initialism; Lakshmi Kumar, policy director for Global Financial Integrity; as well as Sydney Freedberg and Will Fitzgibbon of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. The focus of this panel was the wide range of white-collar professional services providers in Western countries who function as enablers of malign finance by working to help autocrats, oligarchs, and corrupt foreign officials launder their money, purchase property, and otherwise enter Western financial systems. This can include lawyers, accountants, real estate agents, trust and company service providers, PR firms, and others. Panelists discussed recent positive steps—including new initiatives launched this week by the White House and U.S. Treasury Department—and more that should be undertaken during the Summit for Democracy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The White House should vigorously implement the lines of effort outlined in its new U.S. Strategy for Countering Corruption.
- Congress should pass the Enablers Act, ensuring it covers lawyers.
- PM Morrison should enact Tranche Two AML regulations in Australia.

HOW FOREIGN BRIBERY UNDERMINES DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS: WHY MORE ENFORCEMENT IS NEEDED AND VICTIM'S RIGHTS SHOULD BE RECOGNISED

This event focused on the negative impact of foreign bribery on democracy and human rights and the need to remedy the harm to the victims. For too long, the argument for curbing foreign bribery has focused on its distortion of international competitive conditions and on achieving a level playing field for international business. Cross-border bribery does affect competition, but it also harms the economy, state institutions, public services and public health and safety in the countries where the bribes are paid. It is the people of those countries who pay the price when multinational companies use bribery to obtain public contracts and licenses or to escape regulation and taxation of their activities. The damage caused is rarely addressed in foreign bribery enforcement proceedings. The panel presented some of the data on enforcement, examples of the harm caused by foreign corrupt practices and proposals for how the harm to victims should be recognised and compensated in foreign bribery proceedings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Victims should be recognised and compensated in foreign bribery cases. To that end:

- States should better implement existing international frameworks regarding the rights of victims in criminal, civil and administrative proceedings. This includes respecting the rights of victims to be represented as well as strictly enforcing confiscation of the proceeds of bribery and taking into account the rights of victims with respect to the use of the amounts confiscated. It also involves using instruments like the Global Forum on Asset Recovery (GFAR) Principles.
- States should establish civil liability in connection with regulation in the field of human rights due diligence, so that victims can address corruption and human rights harms together in legal proceedings.
- Victims' representatives and advocates should be able to make the case for victims' compensation in the context of non-trial resolutions in foreign bribery cases and should work with willing countries to conduct pilot victims' impact assessments for selected Deferred Prosecution Agreements.

POLITICAL FINANCE REGIME IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND REMEDIES

The webinar organised on December 7, 2021 as part of the Global Coalition for Democracy Forum (GCDF) saw participation of six panelists with diverse backgrounds such as law, journalism, academics, politics, election experts etc from both India and outside. The discussion during the webinar centered around the current political finance regime in India, the rules regulating it, prevailing challenges and the impact of an ineffective regulatory framework. Speakers at the webinar also discussed measures to enhance transparency and accountability in political financing and to restore the health of India's electoral politics. Their presentations were followed by a Question and Answer round. The webinar covered the following focus areas:

- The indomitable role of money power in elections
- Global perspective on political finance regulations
- Increasing opacity in political funding through "Electoral Bonds" in India
- Impact of unlimited and unaccounted corporate donations to political parties on electoral politics
- Absence of limit on political parties' campaign expenditure and its effect on free and fair elections
- Need for serious scrutiny of political parties' finances, donations statements and candidates' affidavits
- Increasing share of political parties' donations from unknown sources

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure transparency in political funding by strict implementation of disclosure norms for public supervision of political finance; scrapping the Electoral Bond Scheme, 2018 that legalized anonymous donations to political parties; and bringing political parties under the Right to Information Act, 2005 to be truly accountable and transparent in their overall functioning. A comprehensive bill regulating political parties, dealing with party constitution, organization, internal elections, candidate selection etc. is the need of the hour.
- At present, there is no cap on the expenditure to be incurred for an election by the political parties. There is a need for having such a cap for level playing field. The fixation of a ceiling on political parties' election expenditure may be undertaken depending on the number of candidates sponsored by them. Additionally, any reform in state funding should be preceded by reforms such as decriminalization of politics, introduction of inner-party democracy, electoral finance reform, transparency and accountability in political funding, cap on corporate donations etc. so as to reduce incentive to raise money and abuse power.
- Replace the First Past the Post (FPTP) system with the modified proportional representation system to reduce the pressure of competitive politics and the compulsion to spend huge sums of money to win elections at all costs. It is suggested that there should be a mandatory criteria of "50% + 1 of the registered votes cast" for winning. In addition, when no candidate gets the required number of votes, there should be a runoff between the top two candidates getting maximum votes. It is worth noting that '50%+1 of the registered votes cast' is a more stringent and ideal requirement in order to ensure appropriate and proper representation.

DRIVING UP GLOBAL AMBITION ON BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP TRANSPARENCY AT THE SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY AND BEYOND

On the sidelines of the Summit for Democracy and the OGP Summit, OGP hosted a high-level roundtable discussion with ministers, civil society, and business leaders on beneficial ownership transparency, co-chaired with the UK Government, with the support of partners, including Open Ownership, The B Team and Transparency International.

To better uphold democracy, we have to tackle corruption. In recent months - another set of data leaks uncovered by investigative journalists like the Pandora Papers - showed how secrecy of who owns and controls companies plays a corrosive role in undermining democracy and facilitating abuse of the financial system.

In recent years, there has been a sustained effort to tackle this problem. Several countries, including those from the OGP Beneficial Ownership Leadership Group, are taking important steps on this front - and many of them are using their OGP action plans to do this. We welcome the emphasis on this in the recently launched Anti-Corruption Strategy by the US, including on effectively collecting BOT information and calling for transparency in real estate transactions.

During this high-level session, many countries shared their progress on implementation of BOT reforms including the US, UK, Latvia, Indonesia, the Slovak Republic, Nigeria, Armenia, Colombia, Ukraine, Panama and North Macedonia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Forge coalitions among countries and across sectors, and show leadership to advance beneficial ownership transparency. The Beneficial Ownership Leadership Group is a strong example of a coalition of this kind. We welcome the participation of more countries in this group to continue to drive up ambition, share learnings and support each other in implementation.
2. Use 2022 as a 'year of action' as in President Biden's words at the Summit for Democracy. This could be an opportunity to link international commitments to country level implementation with champion cohorts in different thematic areas. The Leadership Group is a cohort of countries leading on beneficial ownership reform that can deliver policy impact and raise ambition in the Summit for Democracy efforts.
3. Continue to use OGP action plans to advance the implementation of international commitments around beneficial ownership transparency (including through FATF, G20, and others). OGP will convene meetings like this next year to continue the discussion and create a space for countries to share implementation progress.



Cover photo by Nathaniel Tetteh



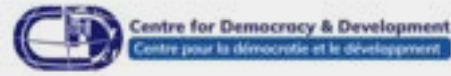
Cover photo by Francesca Di Pasqua

YOUTH

Speakers

- Jagdish Ayer, YouthLead Nepal
- Walter Corzo, YouthLead Guatemala
- Olufunto Akinduro, International IDEA
- Mr. Austin Aigbe, CDD West Africa
- Malik Sakic, EDYN
- Melene Rossouw, Human Rights Activist
- Julian Sastoque, Councilor - Bogotá
- Miao Poya, Councilor - Taipei City
- Maha Tambal, American University
- Winnie Akidi Adile, WEtalk Series Uganda
- Samuel Amofa Asante, YouthLead
- Thomas E. Garrett, Community of Democracies
- Dr. Emmanuel Akwete, Institute for Democratic Governance
- Ms. Nana Afadzinu, West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI)
- Professor Adebayo Olukoshi, Wits University School of Governance

For the full list of speakers, visit the [Coalition website](#)



DEMOCRATIC REVERSAL AND RESTORATION IN WEST AFRICA

The webinar sought to draw global attention to emerging democratic developments in West Africa and the concerns of continued democratic decline in the sub-region. The webinar also explored emerging youth mobilisation as an expression of democratic aspirations and call to defend democracy as enshrined in the ECOWAS Protocol. The panellists identified the following risk factors:

- The weak regulatory frameworks for political parties contribute to flagrant disrespect for the rule of law. Non-institutionalisation of political parties also weakens parliamentary effectiveness.
- ECOWAS' inability to reinvent itself and review its structures and legal instruments in response to emerging realities.
- The deliberate attempts by governments to restrict civic space through legislations that clamp down on the media and civil society.
- The lack of international attention to legal reforms and referendums.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 20 years after the signing of the ECOWAS protocol, the regional body should review its structures to strengthen its political reach and influence in its Member States. Together with the AU, they should:
 - Develop modalities for monitoring and supporting legal reform processes to prevent political hijack of such processes.
 - Develop a methodology for assessing referendums and other political processes and issue holistic reports on democracy assessments as opposed to election observation reports as stand alone.
 - Engage more with civil society and think tanks to promote comparative learning and drive effective citizen mobilisation.
- Countries should undertake reforms to strengthen political party regulatory frameworks. Such reforms should work towards institutionalising parties, to reduce individual influences.



DEMOCRACY'S PROMISE: #SpeakYouthToPower

In collaboration with the National Democratic Institute and the Presidential Precinct, Melene Rossouw moderated a discussion between young democratic activists and elected leaders, Miao Po Ya, Julian Sastoque, Maha Tambal, and Winnie Akidi Adile, on the importance of youth political inclusion and the need for young leaders to assume the mantle as defenders of democracy. On their journey into politics, each panelist was significantly influenced by the rampant exclusion of young people from political participation, complex challenges that disproportionately impact youth, such as economic inequality, and the need to capitalize on the power of social movements in their respective countries. The panelists also discussed the importance of influencing decision-making through both formal and informal pathways, including galvanizing youth support to run for political office or driving change through civil society-led efforts, such as advocacy campaigns. To close the event, the panelists suggested investing in youth inclusion by increasing opportunities for young people to influence decision-making on the local level, such as through elected youth councils, increasing the visibility and decision-making power of young people from diverse identities and backgrounds, protecting freedom of expression as a critical priority and investing in media literacy as a means of combating polarization and building power.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Build greater solidarity across generations. The disaffection of today's youth does not reflect disinterest in politics, but distrust in formal governing institutions and processes that are too often inattentive and unresponsive to the interest of young people. Achieving a more sustainable democratic future requires intergenerational political collaboration so that young and old alike continue to invest in democracy and work together to solve pressing socio-economic problems.
- Recognize that young people are not a monolithic demographic. Youth comprise a diverse mixture of identities and lived experiences that inspire different political ambitions. Meeting youth where they are means taking this diversity into account and being purposeful about inclusion.
- Support emerging forms of informal political action, rather than forcing all young people toward traditional institutions and formal processes. Although institutions, such as political parties and legislative bodies, remain pivotal to a functioning democracy, they struggle to be inclusive and maximize participation. Today's youth are embracing innovative forms of individual and collective action (e.g., social movements, new media, citizen assemblies, mutual aid, or performance art) as more effective means of influencing political outcomes.

YOUTH ASSEMBLY FOR THE SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY

On December 9-10, 2021, President Biden will host the first of two highly anticipated Summits for Democracy to set forth an affirmative agenda for democratic renewal and tackle the most significant threats faced by democracies through collective action. The Summit for Democracy (Summit), in its first event, is expected to bring together leaders from government, civil society, and the private sector to build a shared foundation for global democratic renewal. To these crucial sectors, the Community of Democracies (CoD) recommends the specific engagement of youth, on the margins of the Summit.

Aiming to provide space for the next generation of leaders to contribute to the Summit's discussions and conclusions, the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies, together with its active partner CoD YouthLeads, and European Democracy Youth Network, will convene a Youth Assembly for the Summit for Democracy (Assembly) on the margins of the Summit.

The virtual Youth Assembly for the Summit for Democracy brought together 18- to 35- years old representatives for an online conversation with high-level global representatives, including the Biden Administration and civil society. The Assembly provided democracy leaders an opportunity to deliver their messages to youth and pose questions to young people about their views regarding democracy. A series of interactive discussions focused on the future of values-based multilateralism and present an opportunity for youth to voice their broader set of democracy priorities and to welcome and inform the initial session of the U.S.-led Summit.

GLOBAL STUDENT DEMOCRACY FORUM

Students for Global Democracy Uganda (SGD Uganda) and Young World Federalists (YWF) invite you to the Global Student Democracy Forum.

The Forum was a scenario where young people could contribute to the Summit for Democracy organized by US President Biden. Youth Voices absent from the summit were in a space able to develop policy recommendations to strengthen democracy.



MEDIA AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Speakers

Denise Dora, ARTICLE 19 South America

Marija Ristic, BIRN

Professor Staffan I. Lindberg, V-Dem

Dr. Courtney Radsch, ARTICLE19

Ayman Mhanna, Skeyes

Quinn McKew, ARTICLE 19

Vivian Schiller, Aspen Digital

Nick Benequista, Center for International Media Assistance

Mira Milosevic, Global Forum for Media Development

Shahidul Alam, Drik agency and Pathshala media institute

Guilherme Canela De Souza Godoi, UNESCO

Craig Newmark, Craigslist and Craig Newmark Philanthropies

Sulemana Braimah, West African Media Foundation

Zoe Titus, Namibia Media Trust & chair of GFMD

Justin Williams, UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

For the full list of speakers, visit the [Coalition website](#)

THE PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE MEDIA ASSISTANCE

A vibrant news sector is fundamental to sustainable development and effective governance and is a last line of defence against democratic backsliding. Yet independent media—the kind that provides an essential public service—has been in decline for nearly a decade. A collapse of the traditional journalistic business model, growing political polarization, democratic backsliding, increasing media capture and the added burdens of the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to a “media extinction event”.

Despite these threats, independent media are given low priority in international cooperation. Support to the media sector has stagnated at just 0.3 percent of official development assistance. However, there is growing recognition of the need for established democracies to protect independent journalism globally.

To channel the renewed momentum and commitment among many states to protecting independent media as a cornerstone of democracy support, this webinar discussed the common principles that need to be in place to strengthen international media assistance.

The aim of this webinar was to provide civil society organisations a platform to discuss the key principles that need to be in place to guide donors and funders in their implementation of commitments made to protecting freedom of media and supporting independent journalism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Summit for Democracy and year of action should bolster international commitment to principles for effective support to media development, including protecting media freedom and freedom of expression as pre-conditions for democracy and human rights. Establishing and implementing such principles will be critical to achieving the aims of the Windhoek +30 declaration, Joint Declaration on Challenges to Freedom of Expression in the Next Decade, The International Declaration on Information and Democracy, and the Global Pledge on Media Freedom.
- The international community should seek to integrate support for independent media into international cooperation for development and good governance, recognizing that Agenda 2030 and democratic progress will depend upon a concerted and collaborative response to the fundamental and structural crisis affecting the media sector.
- The international community must commit to supporting a vision for media development that upholds core principles of aid effectiveness. This means supporting media development processes that are locally owned, locally driven, and produce long-term and sustainable changes in the political environment for the media.

CRACKDOWNS AND ATTACKS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AS A PERCURSOR TO AUTHORITARIANISM

What’s the relationship between attacks against journalists, women, LGBTI+ communities and indigenous people and a broader decline in human rights? Can we identify the warning signs in countries that have seen a rapid decline in free expression and increasing threats to democracy, such as in Brazil and Bangladesh? This session will look at the role the media plays in resisting autocracy, and in supporting it, as well as at the dangers of self-censorship. If journalists, activists and human rights experts find themselves monitoring what they say, it means the whole of society needs to regain confidence in the power of communication and the value of debate. The panel will look at the resilient solutions required to support democracies and combat the threats against them, and explain why protecting free expression is so vital to the shaping of better relationships between citizens, their governments, and the information society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prof. Staffan I. Lindberg: Democracy dies with the lies; it is predicated on the ability to hold a factual discussion. Appropriate regulation, of social media in particular, is needed to counterbalance the radical worsening of the information environment.
- Shahidul Alam: Western governments must practice what they preach. If democracy is your main goal, then don't allow yourselves to set it aside when convenient for security or financial gain and trade reasons.
- Denise Dora LLM, MA: Governments need to resist against knee-jerk changes to laws, particularly around information provision and journalism, as we have seen how these laws can be abused to worsen the situation for journalists and rights defenders on the ground.

TECHNOLOGY AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF REGULATION AND RULE OF LAW

Technology is a great enabler of freedom of expression, and yet the dream of social media and digital communications heralding a new era of citizen engagement and democratic promise has been shattered, with a few powerful companies holding a monopoly over our information. This session looks at the crisis of the “information disorder” and its far-reaching impact on all aspects of people’s lives and efforts to build a more equal and just society. What steps are civil society, governments and the tech industry taking to combat disinformation and extremism, rethink liability and accountability and protect freedom of expression? Can self-regulation and a greater sense of responsibility foster a more trustworthy, ethical and safe information ecosystem? The panellists highlight the need for a profound shift in thought and action and argue that governments must stop making political gestures and tackle the root problems. They, along with legislators, companies, and, through engagement with civil society — and society as a whole — must make strong political and financial commitments to ensure the information ecosystem is re-built with a human rights framework at its core, where efforts to reduce harms and foster transparency are balanced with the protection of freedom of expression.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ARTICLE19 welcomes the Global Democracy Coalition Forum's efforts to put the spotlight on democracy at a time when it is under threat. Participants must make meaningful commitments that are backed up by political leadership, funding, and engagement with civil society that will be essential to making this Global Democracy Coalition Forum anything more than window dressing.
- Freedom of Expression and human rights are fundamental to the pursuit and enjoyment of democracy.
- Technology has created enormous new opportunities as well as existential threats to Freedom of Expression, human rights and democracy, so it is imperative that we rely on the rule of law to govern and regulate the information ecosystem.



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THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY

Speakers

Kevin Casas-Zamora, International IDEA

Seema Shah, International IDEA

Johnny Walsh, USAID

Thomas Carothers, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Thinzar Shun Lei Yi, Democracy Activist

Damon Wilson, National Endowment for Democracy

Annika Silva-Leander, International IDEA

Serena Sasingian, The Voice, Inc

Pam Fessler, Former NPR correspondent

Jocelyn Benson, Michigan Secretary of State

David Carroll, Carter Center

Romulo Nayacalevu, MSG Secretariat

Douveri Henao, PNG Business Council

Nate Persily, Professor of Law at Stanford University

For the full list of speakers, visit the [Coalition website](#)



THE GLOBAL STATE OF DEMOCRACY 2021: BUILDING RESILIENCE IN A PANDEMIC ERA

In the session, International IDEA presented the key findings from its most recent Global State of Democracy Report 2021, which was published at the end of November 2021. The 2021 report includes a global report, which analyzes trends, opportunities and challenges to democracy during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 and provides a set of recommendations to address them. It is accompanied by four regional reports that zoom in on developments in Africa and the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Americas, including South, Central and North America. Three thematic reports on lessons learned for electoral processes, the use of emergency powers during the pandemic, and a comparative analysis of pandemic management in different political regimes types, accompany the reports. The reports are underpinned by the Global State of Democracy Indices, a dataset on democratic quality produced by International IDEA, covering 165 countries in the world from 1975 to 2020. It also uses data from IDEA's Covid-19 Global Monitor on democracy and Human Rights, which assesses the democracy and human rights impacts of measures to curb the Covid-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the panel discussed the relevance of the analysis for the democracy community and international democracy assistance programmes, how USAID has been refocusing its programming in the past years to more effectively address the challenges to democracy of the 21st century, many of which are outlined in the report, and ways to support pro-democracy actors in closed and repressive contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Move all countries engaging in the Summit to a more concerted action-oriented global agenda for democracy, shedding old models for democracy strengthening and effectively addressing key pressure points and new challenges in the global democracy landscape through concrete commitments and reforms and increased funding for the implementation of those.
- Bring existing institutions into the 21st century by updating practices in established democracies, building democratic capacity in new democracies, and protecting electoral integrity, fundamental freedoms and rights, and the checks and balances essential to thriving democratic systems. Political institutions, electoral processes, respect for fundamental rights, checks on power, and pathways for participation must be redesigned or amended so that they are citizen and people-centred rather than elite-centred. This is the time to be bold and to disrupt the status quo and those whose interests are tied up in retaining it so that more people and more kinds of people have access to the levers of power at all levels
- Address shortcomings of the international system to more effectively sanction human rights perpetrators (such as repressive regimes), hold them to account and address the impunity for their actions.



THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC 2021

The Covid-19 pandemic placed considerable stress on democracy across the region by requiring inevitable restrictions on movement and—where governments were sensitive to criticism—also restrictions on freedom of expression. Despite these challenges, many countries were able to manage the pandemic while also respecting basic democratic principles and freedoms, even coming up with institutional and electoral innovations. Across the region, the assaults on democratic freedoms intensified popular demands for political reform.

The Melanesia launch of the Report focused on the state of democracy in three Melanesian countries; Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Solomon Islands. How is democracy developed in these three countries over the last decades, and what has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on quality of democracy Melanesia. What are the advances and where are the shortcomings? What can be done in order to safeguard democracy?

The Asia and the Pacific: Old Resilience and New Challenges is part of Global State of Democracy report, published every two years, based on Indices providing information on 116 democratic indicators for 165 countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In Melanesia, we need to future proof but not to iron clad the institutions to be able to respond to future crisis, while safeguarding democracy and civil liberties. We should not let emergency legislation to extend beyond what is necessary.
- We need to be mindful of the tension between the affirmed role of the state and heightened expectations, vs erosion of state capacities and implications thereof. Democracy's capacity to deliver services must be strengthened.
- To engage Melanesian youth as part of the decision-making processes, not only on youth issues, but to bring in the youth perspective onto all issues of governance and rights.





STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S DEMOCRATIC CREDENTIALS

Over the last 10-20 years, democratic backsliding has led the United States to begin to lose credibility as a global champion of democracy. Panelists highlighted the increasing number of threats facing democratic institutions in the United States, agreeing that the largest threats include the decline in public trust and deepening polarization drawing our nation away from bipartisan support. Democracy depends on all actors agreeing on laws, standards, and processes yet each of these are currently being contested and a lack of bipartisan agreement is stalling reform efforts. Mis/disinformation continues to deepen this divide, sowing mistrust amongst voters. In addition, support to local election officials is crucial as the United States has seen a sharp decline in the retention of election workers. At the same time, there is a need for greater transparency and more public understanding of the processes that occur within local election offices. Enhanced voter education and increased transparency will effectively counter the spread of mis/disinformation leading to polarization and distrust and help to build back trust in our democratic institutions and rebuild the United States' credibility as a global champion of democracy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The United States needs to invest in our democracy. Americans have taken election for granted for too long, and like other public goods, they requires support and cultivation. Since voting is a such a fundamental right – one that is essential for the preservation of all other rights -- the US government should greatly increase funding to support improvements in election administration and related processes.
- Just as the United States is encouraging other nations to discuss and analyze their democratic processes, so too should the United States. The Democracy Summit has created a moment to both have important societal discussions and to make meaningful commitments. It will be especially important for the U.S. to use “Year of Action” a to conduct a serious and inclusive self-review of key challenges and needed commitments to improve, i.e.,; where are the key defects in our election system, how do we fall short of international standards, how can we provide greater transparency, and how can we provide greater public information and education on the electoral process.
- Increase platform transparency and accountability, either through legislation and/or reforms and changes implemented by the platforms voluntarily, to provide ways to reduce disinformation in the information ecosphere and increase the accountability for content.





Cover photo by Henry Be

LESSONS LEARNED FOR DEMOCRATIC ASSISTANCE

Speakers

Maiko Ichihara, Hitotsubashi University

Hun Joon Kim, Korea University

Leena Rikilla Tamang, International IDEA

Manpreet Singh Anand, NDI

Liv Kjølseth, Norwegian Afghanistan Committee

Youssof Ghafoorzai, Afghanistan's Ambassador to Norway

James Wasserstrom, Integrity Sanctuary

Yamini Aiyar, Centre for Policy Research

Edna Estifania A. Co, University of the Philippines

I Ketut Putra Erawan, Institute for Peace and Democracy

Yukio Takasu, Special Advisor on Human Security to the UN Secretary General

Kai Eide, Former UN Secretary-General Specialist Representative to Afghanistan

Nargis Nehan, Former Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum in Afghanistan

For the full list of speakers, visit the [Coalition website](#)

AFGHANISTAN - DEMOCRATIZATION AND RESPONSIBLE EXITING

In the Oslo Center's webinar, the panelists discussed the lessons learned, challenges, and opportunities of the democratization efforts in Afghanistan. In the conversations, it was highlighted how the international community in the past focused on a westernized democratic model, rather than building a model that reflected the reality of the society in the country. The necessary approach in Afghanistan, is as for every country, depending on a tailor-made approach, as there is not a recipe for democratic success. The discussions focused further on the international community's role in creating broader collaboration and engagement. This includes a stronger collaboration with pro-democracy forces and civil society in Afghanistan. Through a broader involvement of partners, possibilities for creating a democratic model that reflects Afghanistan open. Further, the international community will stand stronger with a plan and roadmap of the democratization processes. Without a plan, there is no solution. The roadmap creates the opportunities for commitment and foresight to be established which are keys for achieving a sustainable democratic society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Coordination among the international community. It is necessary that this coordination includes close cooperation with intermediaries that have some influence over the Taliban.
- Empowering and including civil society in Afghanistan in the democratization processes. Support constant documenting and monitoring of the situations and continuously provide for close collaboration with the international community.
- Create a plan and a roadmap for a democratic model that reflects the reality of Afghanistan. The international community should stand ready with a solution when undertaking democratic initiatives in order to establish foresight and commitment to good governance and democratization.

ENHANCING DEMOCRATIC PARTNERSHIP IN ASIA

In Asia, the significant backsliding of democracy is notable since 2013; and further deterioration lately in Hong Kong, Myanmar, Afghanistan and the restrictions by COVID-19. Civic space is narrowing and particularly worrisome is press freedom. The fact that only four ASEAN countries are invited to the Summit even in a big tent approach is such a testament. Even those invited countries are facing challenges from social and religious fragmentation, surveillance technology and powerful monopoly. However, democracy is a work in progress and CSO leaders and activists are struggling to safeguard democratic values under the difficult conditions.

No matter how powerful, no single country alone can succeed. We will make it only to promote shared values through democratic partnership both at government and civil society level. Partnership should be promoted not "against-authoritarianism" but rather as "pro-democracy". With non-democratic countries, we should adopt two-pronged approach. We never compromise any attempt to dilute the standards of shared values. We should state a firm position against serious violation of human rights, and demonstrate solidarity with a country which acts courageously. In parallel, we should broaden through dialogue the basis for collaboration. Multilateral approach with non-democracy will be often more effective than bilateral one.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- We should enhance democratic partnership and collaborative framework for cooperation at government and CSO level: Existing regional mechanism could be reviewed to make them more effective and coordinated. Areas for partnership will include promote inclusive development, good governance, social fabric, transparent infrastructure, anti-corruption, digital technology, pandemic, climate change.)
- The vibrant civic space and independent media are indispensable to ensuring transparent and accountable government. Additional mechanism should be developed to extend stronger support to CSOs and independent media in Asia.
- In view of cultural and historical diversity, the importance of the Asian ownership cannot be overemphasized. In this regard, Japan and the ROK can play a leadership role in promoting regional democratic partnership. The regional democracies may commit themselves to strengthen their support to democratization efforts including by CSOs and media.



Cover photo by Ivan Bandura

DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

Speakers

- Tom Wingfield, Abt Associates
- Graeme Ramshaw, Westminster Foundation for Democracy
- Susan Dodsworth, University of Queensland
- Phanindra Adhikary, International IDEA
- Lisbeth Pilegaard, Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy

DOING DEVELOPMENT DEMOCRATICALLY

There is no proof that democracy is incompatible with development. However, the perceived trade-off persists and whilst donor agencies usually have commitments to democracy, their programmes can have an anti-democratic effect. Research has shown that if bureaucrats or politicians acting unilaterally make resource allocation decisions, those resources tend to be captured by the elites.

Meanwhile, development is often equated with visible indicators of change, like infrastructure. Human development – so closely tied with democratic freedoms – can be overlooked. If we want to see sustainable, inclusive development, then democratic institutions are fundamental. Rather than bypassing democratic institutions, donors can support development by working with them – strengthening both development and democracy in the process. Interacting with institutions other than the executive branch of government is part of doing development democratically. Parliaments in many countries have quietly aided the effectiveness of development programs by ensuring that legislation is fit for purpose. Elected officials need to be involved in aid spending decisions and make those decisions in the interests of people. Encouraging formal, inclusive, participatory deliberation is key. But models of democracy cannot be transplanted. In doing development democratically, we need to deeply understand the context as well as the opportunities for locally led success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Rather than bypassing democratic institutions, donors can support development by working with them – strengthening both development and democracy in the process.
- Rather than relying on non-elected officials to direct aid resources effectively, donors can encourage inclusive, participatory deliberative processes that involve elected representatives and civil society more explicitly in decision-making.
- While scrutiny of development aid is and likely to remain high, the democracy support community can find a narrative that places the interests of affected populations at the centre and incentivises a move away from aid practices that contribute to anti-democratic outcomes.



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COUNTERING AUTHORITARIANISM

Speakers

- Ted Piccone, Brookings
- Yana Gorokhovskaia, Freedom House
- Isabel Linzer, Freedom House
- Noura Al-Jizawi, Citizen Lab
- Danilo Türk, President of Slovenia (2007-2012)
- Wai Hnin Pwint Tho, Burmese human rights activist
- Kevin Sheives, International Forum for Democratic Studies
- Jorge Quiroga, President of Bolivia (2001-2002)
- Marcus Michaelsen, Vrije Universiteit Brussels
- Jessica Ludwig, International Forum for Democratic Studies
- Richard Ponzio, Director of Just Security 2020, Stimson Center
- Prof. Thien Nguyen, Vietnam Democracy Center
- Dr. Quoc-Hung Tran, Alliance for Vietnam's Democracy
- Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Leader of Belarusian Democratic Movement

For the full list of speakers, visit the [Coalition website](#)

DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

The session “Democratic Leadership in times of uncertainty” organised by Club de Madrid aimed at raising awareness of the specific regional and national challenges to democracy and amplifying key recommendations and strategies that would contribute positively to the strengthening and consolidation of democracy worldwide. Danilo Türk, former President of Slovenia and Club de Madrid President, delved into the topic of decision-making in the face of uncertainty based on his recent work as Commissioner of the Global Commission on Democracy and Emergencies. Consequently, the panel formed by Berta Valle (Nicaraguan human rights activist), Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya (Leader of Belarusian Democratic Movement), and Wai Hnin Pwint Tho (Burmese human rights activist), advocated for leadership that fosters democratic resilience based on three main pillars: mechanisms for the protection of democracy, building bridges to prevent polarisation and countering authoritarianism. These are particularly timely topics given the democratic backsliding exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This fruitful dialogue allowed to elevate the recommendations resulting from the individual and collective experience and knowledge of the panellists, a former head of State and democratic activists, to international stakeholders in a position to influence political decision-making at the international and national levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Early-warning systems are a critical tool for countering authoritarianism and these will need to be accompanied by decisive and timely actions by intergovernmental organizations, democratic governments and civil society.
- We call on democratic governments and their leaders to reaffirm their determination to protect democratic values and support other democracies in countering authoritarianism by activating existing mechanisms to protect democracy and stopping business relationships with authoritarian regimes, who often seek legitimacy and continuance through these kinds of small concessions.
- Democracies should support high-quality journalism to counter the current business models and establish mechanisms to support segments of the information ecosystem that provide quality information but cannot sustain themselves within the free market. We encourage countries to pledge support for public interest media and set budgetary targets and mechanisms to accomplish this. Established democracies should also support developing public interest media in countries that face economic hardship and cannot finance this type of initiative.

FROM A SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY TO A LEAGUE OF DEMOCRACIES

Democracy is facing multiple challenges, from social media-driven fake news to foreign interference in elections. Ever since the events of 9/11, democracy and human rights have been in retreat across the world according to Freedom House.

At the same time, Western democracies see their power and confidence declining relative to China and other emerging countries. Deep rifts have emerged in the relations between the West and both Russia and China, sometimes reminiscent of the Cold War. Meanwhile, humanity faces the short-term crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic and long-term challenge of climate change.

Against this backdrop several world leaders – including President Biden, Prime Minister Johnson and NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg – have recently voiced support for greater collaboration between the world’s democracies. For some, the emphasis is on repairing democracy internally. For others, it is to tighten the bonds among democracies in order to tackle global challenges and engage China and Russia from a position of strength.

This webinar explored the idea of building on President Biden’s Summit for Democracy to create a permanent forum among the world’s democracies to tackle global challenges.

RESISTING SHARP POWER: STRENGTHENING THE FABRIC OF OPEN SOCIETIES

Authoritarian sharp power seeks to monopolize ideas, suppress alternative narratives, and exploit partner institutions, according to researchers and activists from diverse regions of the world convened by the National Endowment for Democracy's International Forum for Democratic Studies. As illustrated by the recently launched Sharp Power Research Portal at SharpPower.org, Beijing and Moscow are leading the authoritarian manipulation of the global information space, shifting public attitudes in ways that favor their own preferences. The leadership of governments and individual firms and institutions that are typically the targets of sharp power are not always well-equipped to respond.

Strengthening civil society is essential to enhancing democratic resilience to sharp power. Multi-stakeholder approaches among government, civil society, industry, and the public are needed to build democratic unity and accelerate innovative responses. Bringing together experts and activists from different parts of the world can also help bridge gaps between different local level perspectives.

Democracies need to simultaneously refresh and strengthen their own institutions and safeguard them from foreign authoritarian influence. They must prioritize freedom of expression and rights-respecting values while exposing content linked to authoritarian actors' malign influence efforts. Democracies of all stripes are in this high-stakes struggle together.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Democracies must leverage a full-spectrum response to effectively counter authoritarian influence. Governments need to engage and work with civil society, media, the private sector, and other independent civic institutions to build democratic resilience across their own societies.
- Civil society networks that cut across regions, sectors, and areas of specialization can accelerate democratic learning among actors in diverse locales and can implement longer-term strategies to engage and inform policymakers, private sector firms, and technology platforms more effectively.

RESPONDING TO TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

Transnational repression describes efforts by authoritarian governments to reach beyond their own borders to silence dissent among exiles and diaspora communities. The panelists, Isabel Linzer and Yana Gorokhovskaia of Freedom House, Siena Anstis and Noura Al-Jizawi of Citizen Lab, and Marcus Michaelsen of Vrije Universiteit Brussel, discussed the ways in which transnational repression threatens democracies, existing gaps in international and domestic responses, and recommendations for policymakers as well as civil society. The discussion highlighted the spectrum of harms caused by physical and digital transnational repression to activists, whole diaspora communities, and the rule of law. Panelists also noted a lack of common language to describe the problem of transnational repression and the ad hoc nature of efforts to ensure accountability through regulation of technology or sanctions on perpetrators. Recommendations focused on promoting international and domestic forms of accountability, empowering civil society to aid targeted individuals, and spreading awareness of transnational repression among policymakers and law enforcement agencies through training.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen refugee resettlement programs. People are safest from authoritarianism in democratic states with a strong rule of law. Making it possible for people to seek and receive asylum is the key to preventing individuals from continuing to be victimized by autocrats. Increasing settlement quotas, streamlining the asylum process, and reversing the trend temporary protections are crucial in combatting the threat of transnational repression.
- Ensure international and domestic accountability for perpetrators. States should apply consistent, predictable, and targeted sanctions against perpetrators, whether through Global Magnitsky or other authorities. Domestically, criminal laws should be reformed to make prosecutions for malign behavior possible and training for law enforcement should be provided to spread awareness.
- Use international human rights law to guide the export, sale, and use of digital technologies. Democracies should commit to greater transparency in their own dual-use export rules and participate in international efforts to create a regulatory framework for digital technologies that might be used to surveil or censor.

MYANMAR AND CAMBODIA'S DEMOCRACY RECESSION: GLOBAL AND REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Myanmar and Cambodia reflect the worsening state of democracy and human rights in Southeast Asia. Political developments in Myanmar and Cambodia could trigger a broader democratic recession that reaches far beyond the Southeast Asian subregion. Better understanding of these situations is crucial to understanding how democracy can emerge anywhere and everywhere and to understanding how to challenge and overcome the forces of autocracy threatening the safety of the people and the development of the economies of these countries.



DEMOCRACY FOR VIETNAM: OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

By advocating for a multi-party system, tightening the amendment process, and getting approval from the citizens, we ensure that our constitution model, with 3.1 million responses with the approval rate of each article ranging from 87 to 97%, will be practiced rather than just looking good on paper.

Support to democracy and human rights plays a fundamental role in combatting oppression, building democracies, and reducing poverty in all its dimensions. The Vietnam's democracy should be guided by the principles that human rights are universal, interdependent, and indivisible to gain trust and support from overseas and international communities.

About 1.2 million Vietnamese have participated a referendum with 95% of them approved, in favor of taking legal action in international courts against China's aggression in the South China Sea. This demonstrates the fundamental and universal human need for a democratic society in which elected leaders listen and carry out the will of the people.

A democratic Vietnam needs to form alliances with other free and democratic countries to stop the expansion of totalitarianism in Asia and the rest of the world. Building an alliance against China's genocide and other crimes against humanity is a part of the defense of democracy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Direct engagement with Vietnamese people, through civil societies and organizations, as stakeholders and agents of change for a democratic Vietnam.
- Governmental support for freedom of expression through a free and open internet in Vietnam, with a recognition that Vietnam's democracy should be guided by the principles that human rights are universal, interdependent, and indivisible.
- International support for free and fair elections in Vietnam, with the right to run for office and right to nominate candidates with a diversity of ideas and political affiliations.



Cover photo by Joel Muntz

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Speakers

- Maria Miller, MP UK Parliament
- Ellen Pao, Project Include
- Patricia Campos Mello, Folha
- Soraya Chemaly, Author
- Nighat Dad, Digital Rights Foundation
- Katri Viinikka, Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland
- Jennifer Klein, White House Gender Policy Council
- Mimoza Kusari-Lila, Alternativa
- Sophia Fernandes, Westminster Foundation for Democracy
- Siviwe Gwarube, MP Shadow Minister for Health South Africa
- Derek Mitchell, National Democratic Institute
- Jeanine Mabunda Lioko Mudiayi, MP Democratic Republic of Congo

For the full list of speakers, visit the [Coalition website](#)



WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IS ESSENTIAL FOR DEMOCRACY

Research demonstrates that where women take part and thrive in politics, the whole of society benefits. Diverse democratic institutions work better for all citizens. To achieve this, we must work to bring in women in all their diversities into the political space.

To support women leaders to act on their motivations and prepare for political life, policymakers need to provide opportunities for skill development and resources as well as tackle the barriers that hinder women's ability to use these. Parliaments and political parties have a role to play in recruiting and encouraging more women to stand for election.

Cultural change is needed within political institutions so that women want to enter this space and thrive in it. Issues around gender equality should not be side-lined into women-only spaces - they need to be mainstreamed into how policy and laws are made. Role models are needed for women to see politics as a legitimate career path, not to mention education, the sharing of caring responsibilities and action to address violence against women both online and offline.

To support women's candidate selections and election success, we need targeted training that enables women to build up campaigning skills, networks that provide guidance and mentorship, and effective relationships with local parties. Political parties, as gatekeepers to political leadership, need to enable women to rise to senior positions within them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The evidence for Women's political representation and the need for women to be at the decision-making table is clear.
- Political parties need to be part of the solution as gatekeepers into the political space and the culture of political institutions need to change so they are environments where women want to work, succeed and thrive.
- Issues around gender equality should not be side-lined into women-only spaces - they need to be mainstreamed into how policy and laws are made.

THE CHILLING EFFECT: HATE, MISOGYNY AND THE DIGITAL INFORMATION DISORDER

Although the digital space continues to extend the promise of opportunities for expanding the voice and agency of women, girls and marginalized groups, it has fallen short of our ideals. The misogyny that politically-active women face in person has transferred online and the deliberate assault on the political activism of women and girls by authoritarians and those with illiberal tendencies is all-pervasive. These dynamics have a chilling effect on the political ambitions, engagement and empowerment of women and girls. But the need to counter the violence politically-active women face online is also a democratic challenge. The Chilling Effect Panel event brought together global leaders with diverse perspectives for a conversation on solutions to prevent hate and misogyny online undermining democracy's key tenets: equal and active participation, inclusive representation, and experienced accountability, justice and equity. Speakers included, Jennifer Klein, Co-Chair and Executive Director of the White House Gender Policy Council; Soraya Chemaly, Author, USA; Nighat Dad, Executive Director of the Digital Rights Foundation, Pakistan; Patricia Campos Mello, Journalist at Folha, Brazil; Jeanine Mabunda, MP and former Speaker of Parliament in the Democratic Republic of Congo; Mimoza Kusari-Lila, President of Alternativa, Kosovo; and NDI President, Ambassador Derek Mitchell.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Platforms should establish (and pay for) mechanisms that allow for transparent reporting (weekly, monthly, quarterly) of what is actually happening. The harms reported (sex disaggregated); the perpetrators; the decisions for action; the time to action (from report to action).
- Platforms should establish (and pay for) (single/common) escalation hotlines in every national jurisdiction.
- Governments and legislators should ensure that women are equally represented on media regulatory boards.
- All public entities should remove 'comments' capacities on their portals and boards.
- Legislation to ensure that everyone (including elected officials and government ministers) can be prosecuted under the law for hate and misogyny online.



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DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION

Speakers

Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA)
Richard Wike, Pew Research Center
Polly Mackenzie, Demos
Tim Phillips, Beyond Conflict
Antti Pentikäinen, Mary Hoch Foundation/Think Peace
Elizabeth Hume, Alliance for Peacebuilding
Monika Le Roy, Organization of American States
Dr. Gail C. Christopher D.N., N.D., Harvard University
Mary Burton, Council of the University of Cape Town
Dr. Boaz Hameiri, Tel Aviv University
Rupak Chattopadhyay, Forum of Federations
Arthur Benz, Technical University of Darmstadt
Nico Steytler, University of the Western Cape, South Africa
Dr. David Ragland, Truth Telling Project and Grassroots Reparations Campaign

For the full list of speakers, visit the [Coalition website](#)

THE WORLD'S DEMOCRACIES: HOW SATISFIED IS THE CITIZENRY?

Pew Research Center experts James Bell, Richard Wike and Carroll Doherty joined Demos Chief Executive Polly Mackenzie and International IDEA Head of Democracy Assessment Seema Shah to discuss recent public opinion data on attitudes toward democracy. The virtual event showcased findings from the Center's Global and U.S. Politics teams, offering insights into the views of publics in 17 places. The event highlighted survey results related to the following questions: How committed are citizens to democracy? Which democratic principles are held most dear? Are publics optimistic or pessimistic about the functioning of democracies? How appealing are nondemocratic forms of government? And, how confident are citizens in their election and voting systems? The moderated Q&A focused on views of autocracies, the impact of the pandemic on democracy, and whether democracies are working for elites vs. average citizens, among other topics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pew Research Center is nonpartisan and nonadvocacy and does not provide policy recommendations in keeping with our mission. As such, we would not be able to provide recommendations for the report.



DEALING WITH THE PAST: A NECESSARY STEP FOR THE SURVIVAL OF DEMOCRACY

The event convened domestic and international leaders to explore the question of how the U.S. might deal with its past to ensure the survival of its democracy. Panelists explored the relevance of transitional justice processes within established democracies. Barriers identified included toxic polarization, competing historical narratives, dehumanization, and the absence of social trust. Dr. Gail Christopher, architect of the U.S. Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation framework highlighted how policy actions, including reparations, are not sustainable without addressing the falsehood of a hierarchy of human value. Former South African Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner Mary Burton emphasized how social justice must accompany reconciliation. Dr. Boaz Hameiri explained the psychological barriers that may inhibit support for justice-oriented policy change. Esther Anne, Co-Founder of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission, spoke about the importance of centering the individual's story in any formal or informal truth-telling process. And, Dr. David Ragland, Co-Executive Director of the Truth Telling Project addressed the need to change the national narrative in the U.S. by hearing stories directly from people and communities that have experienced police violence. Ultimately, the goal for any justice and truth-telling process is to build a democracy that is just, sustainable, and inclusive.

**This event was co-hosted by Think Peace, Beyond Conflict, Alliance for Peacebuilding, Wabanaki REACH, The Truth Telling Project, and Mary Hoch Foundation.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A collective vision for a more democratic future in any nation, including in the United States, must be grounded in a shared understanding of the past. The Year of Action should include intentional efforts to translate learning from post-conflict transitional justice processes for application in established democracies. This should be complemented by elevating the critical truth telling, healing, and transformation work ongoing at a local level in established democracies.
- The U.S. should lead by example and establish a national commission, representative of diverse stakeholder groups, that leads a national consultative process that engages constituencies at the local, state, and federal levels to discuss views on a formal national effort to deal with the past and the contested histories that continue to feed social discord in the country.

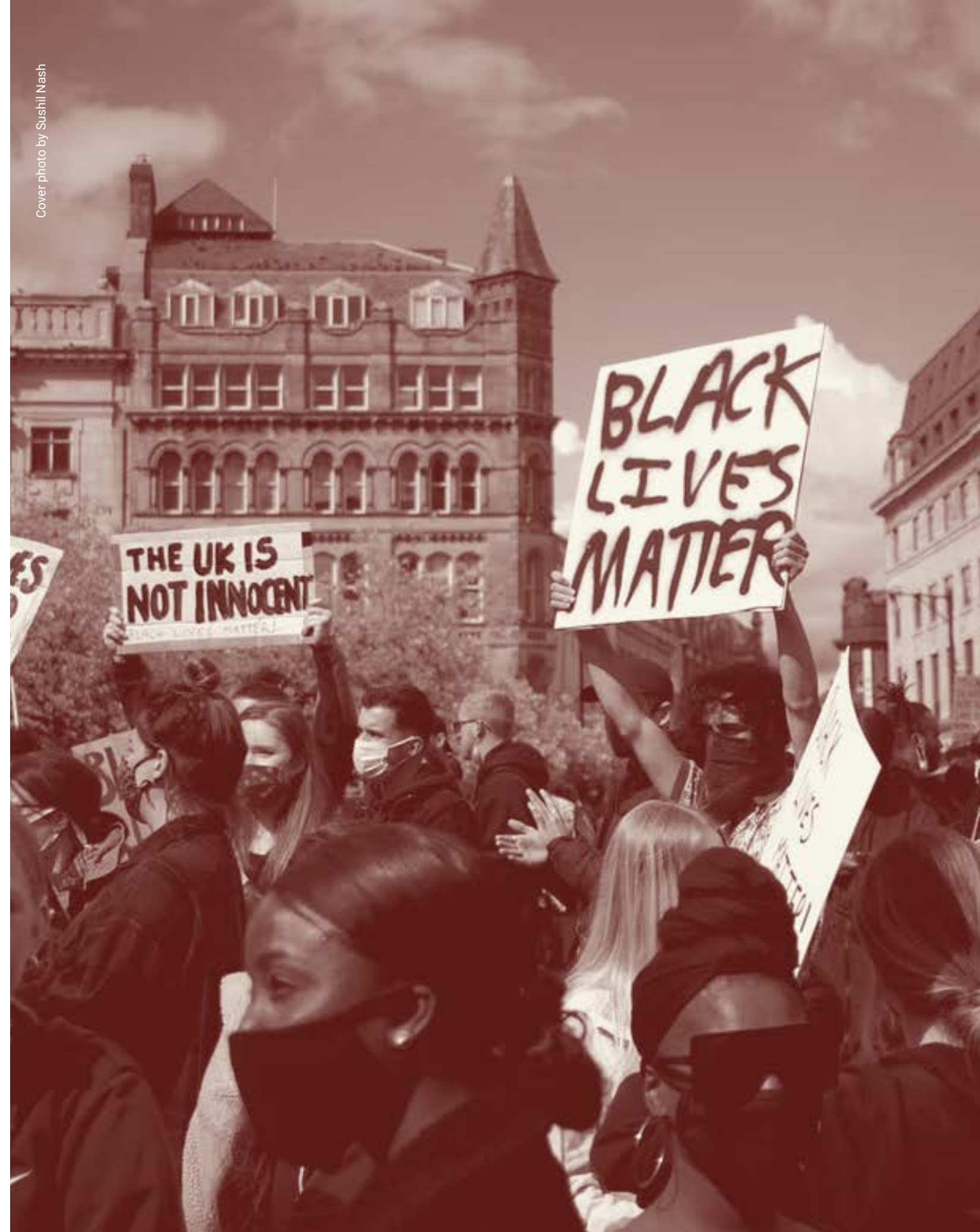
FEDERALISM AND DEMOCRACY: MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF POLITICAL POLARIZATION?

Throughout the webinar, speakers discussed various topics concerning the relationships between federalism, the democratic process, and polarization in both general and context-specific terms. There was broad agreement among all speakers that a relationship exists between federal systems and democratic forms of governance. Importantly, discussions highlighted that this relationship is complex and cannot be considered a given; the ways in which democracy functions between and within national and subnational units is often diverse and, in some cases, contested. It was noted that because the way federal systems are structured affects the functioning of democracy within states, many of the problems federal democracies face internally arise from tensions between differing perceptions of the appropriate balance between shared-rule and self-rule. The structure of relations between units of governance and political parties was also discussed, highlighting that open communication must occur between groups and that they must be united by a common overarching goal and willingness to adapt to change as necessary. Finally, a common thread running throughout the discourse was that federal democratic systems have the capacity to overcome the challenges of political polarization if they are constructed and function in ways that prioritize inclusion, accommodation, and diversity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- At the national level, governments must continually work to manage and accommodate variations in the quality of democracy and representation between subnational units. How this is managed contributes to perceptions of power and inclusion and can determine the overall strength of democracy within a federation.
- Though federal democratic systems are characterized by both shared rule and self-rule, mechanisms of shared rule must be given more attention in order to avoid the consequences of political polarization and resentment between subnational groups.
- To reduce polarization and resentment in federal democracies, communication and intergovernmental relations must continue to be developed in an inclusive and dynamic way designed to prioritize sustained linkages (between different units and levels of governance as well as between political parties) and to permit negotiations concerning power-sharing.

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 16

Speakers

Massimo Tommasoli, International IDEA
Sarah Chamness Long, World Justice Project
Haakon Gjerløw, Peace Research Institute Oslo
Toby Mendel, Centre for Law and Democracy
Miguel Angel Lara Otaola, International IDEA
Ivana Bjelic Vucinic, Global Forum for Media Development

LAUNCH OF THE SDG16 DATA INITIATIVE GLOBAL REPORT 2021: MEASURING PROGRESS ON SDG16+

The Webinar convened by International IDEA as the coordinator of the SDG 16 Data Initiative had the purpose of launching the 2021 Global Report of the Initiative, which include chapters developed by five (5) partners of the initiative. The discussion aimed at presenting an overall analysis of the current state of affairs on the progress of SDG 16+, highlighting the main challenges and opportunities proposed by the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of implementation of key initiatives to measure progress and achieve related indicators.

The consortium presents its fifth annual Global Report, which provides a broad range of stakeholders, including governments, UN officials and civil society, with a resource to help them understand methodologies designed to support the process of measuring progress on SDG 16 targets. It also identifies gaps in both the implementation and monitoring of SDG 16, proposing recommendations to accelerate implementation and ways to measure it, in a context characterized by severe challenges to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to recognize how non-official data supplements official data for SDG 16 and its indicators, in very important ways, including by improving the reliability of the data, increasing the diversity of sources, rendering more profound the assessment of achievements, and improving the methodological soundness of data collection in the first place.
- More muscular efforts by states to prevent official dissemination of disinformation, as well as to produce reliable, trustworthy information as a counter to disinformation, need to be part of the solution. Rebuilding the trust of citizens, which has been badly undermined during the Covid-19 pandemic, is also an important need. States should also make a concerted effort to support the dissemination of reliable information by other actors, including the media.
- Need to look for opportunities to develop our infrastructure for monitoring violence. As governments try to limit independent journalism and freedom of expression, we need alternative ways to discover acts of violence. The pandemic has further exposed this weakness in the infrastructure, as both well-intended and ill-intended governments have obstructed the flow of information.
- Building a healthy data ecosystem is vital for a people-centered and evidence-based approach to delivering on SDG 16. Data are an essential tool for implementing this holistic approach to building back better. Data are vital for ensuring that policies and services appropriately target people's needs and for evaluating the extent to which they have a meaningful impact on people's lives.





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www.globaldemocracycoalition.org

This report was designed and put together by International IDEA staff Amanda Sourek, with support from Elisenda Balleste Buxo, under the supervision of Annika Silva-Leander and support from all the partners of the Global Democracy Coalition Forum.





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