

CHAPTER 1

The ‘Democratic Deficit’

In 2024, more than 60 countries held a national election resulting in half of the world’s population – more than four billion people – having a chance to vote to decide the makeup of their government.¹ This included people in 8 of the 10 most populous countries on Earth – India, the USA, Indonesia, Pakistan, Brazil, Bangladesh, Russia, and Mexico. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) called this phenomenon “the 2024 global elections super-cycle”.² This electoral participation and the fact that more than 45% of the world’s population live in some form of democracy³ suggest that democracy is healthy and ascendant.

However, of 200 countries monitored by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) for its 2024 *Democracy Index* only 74 are classified as democracies of which 50 are rated as “flawed democracies”. The EIU reports that only 8% of the global population lives in a “full democracy”.⁴

Over the past decade, a number of political scientists, sociologists, and research institutes have warned of a “democratic deficit”,⁵ a “democratic malaise”,⁶ “democratic distress”,⁷ “democratic backsliding”,⁸ and even a “crisis of democracy”.⁹ *Foreign Affairs* published by the Council on Foreign Relations issued a special report in May/June 2018 under the theme “Is Democracy Dying?” with the answer from a number of contributors in the affirmative.¹⁰

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One needs to be cautious in relation to dire predictions and forecasts because many who 'cry wolf' exaggerate or simply succumb to pessimism. However, the calibre of scholars who sound an alarm at the state of democracy and relevant statistics compels democratic institutions, civil society organizations, and political and social leaders to pay close attention to this issue.

For instance, Professor of Political Science, Aeron Davis, argued in his 2019 book that modern democracies are "in the midst of an existential crisis."¹¹ Some go further to argue that the world is potentially facing "the end of democracy"¹² and a period of *post-democracy*.¹³

The United States of America (USA), long held as the bastion of democracy, has been categorized as a "flawed democracy" every year since 2016.¹⁴

Many democracies are experiencing a "crisis of faith" and are "making clear their frustration with their supposedly representative governments, which ... seem driven by the interest of big business, powerful individuals and wealthy lobby groups."¹⁵

The Open Government Partnership (OGP), an organization of government leaders and civil society advocates from 75 countries and 150 local governments, formed in 2011 to promote a transparent, participatory, inclusive, and accountable government, has warned that democracies are vulnerable to corrupting influences and called for action to "protect our democracies before it is too late".¹⁶

The 2024 *Perceptions of Democracy Survey*, conducted by International IDEA, an intergovernmental organization headquartered in Stockholm, reported that most people around the world lack confidence in the performance of their political institutions and their access to them and less than half of the population in the 19 countries surveyed are satisfied with their government.¹⁷

Sociologist and political scientist Colin Crouch describes *post-democracy* as follows.

*A post-democratic society is one that continues to have and to use all the institutions of democracy, but in which they increasingly become a formal shell. The energy and innovative drive pass away from the democratic arena and into small circles of a politico-economic elite.*¹⁸

Crouch sees a post-democracy as one that has elections and allows freedom of speech and even freedom of assembly, but in which political participation becomes mostly spectatorship with decision-making and power held by political and financial elites. He argues that post-democracy is a withered and emaciated political system that is emerging in place of democracy. For instance, in *Coping with Post-Democracy*, Crouch says:

*While elections certainly exist and can change governments, public electoral debate is a tightly controlled spectacle, managed by rival teams of professionals expert in the techniques of persuasion, and considering a small range of issues selected by those teams. The mass of citizens plays a passive, quiescent, even apathetic part, responding only to the signals given them.*¹⁹

Democracy in the early 21st century in Crouch's view is not unlike pre-democratic societies that were ruled by feudal lords and monarchs. In their place, leaders of global capitalism exert undue influence on political systems and processes, which in turn are shaped to court and support wealthy industrial and business interests rather than representing the interests of citizens – although Crouch sees hope for the survival of democratic politics.

David Runciman is more pessimistic in his 2018 book *How Democracy Ends* and in articles in which he explores various scenarios for the future. Runciman argues that it is a mistake to compare the current “crisis of democracy”²⁰ with the past examples of populism and public distrust of government and look for solutions from the 20th century. He says: “It is likely that democracy will fail in the 21st century in ways that we are not yet familiar with ... we need to consider what it means for democracies to fail forwards, tumbling into an unknown future.”²¹

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) calls for “reinforcing” democracy, which is the theme of its *Reinforcing Democracy Initiative* (RDI) launched in 2022.²² In its *Report on Public Communication: The Global Context and the Way Forward*, the OECD Directorate for Public Governance uses the term “strengthening” democracy more than 20 times.²³ The Pew Research Center uses the term “improving” democracy in a 2024 report.²⁴ A report by the newDemocracy Foundation in Australia presents options for “renewing” democracy.²⁵

Reinforcing and strengthening imply that democracy is in OK shape and that our task is simply to maintain it or bolster it a little. Improving better denotes a need for enhancing democratic systems, but the term does not

adequately acknowledge the perilous state of democracy in some states. Also, improvement is incremental and can be minor. The term renewing goes further suggesting progressive change, but some dictionaries describe renewing as re-establishing and restoring what has gone before. Revitalizing democracy was suggested as part of the sub-title of this analysis but, while some definitions of revitalizing refer to giving new life, others similarly refer to restoring.²⁶ In an age of global connectivity and pervasive social media, there can be no going back to past ways of doing politics or government.

This text uses the term “reviving” democracy because evidence shows that democracy exists in a large number of states but public trust and confidence in democracy are in a withered and emaciated state and that urgent effort is needed to bring democracy back to life in which representation and human *flourishing*²⁷ are achievable for many if not all.

LOSS OF TRUST

A key cause – and arguably also a resulting effect of democratic decline – is the loss of public trust in government and major public institutions. For example, Gallup polls have reported that trust in major US institutions including the Presidency, government, and the courts fell to its lowest level in history in 2022²⁸ and remained there in 2023.²⁹ Only slightly more than a quarter (26%) of US citizens said they trust the Presidency in 2023 and just 8% trust Congress. Following partisan appointments and controversial legal decisions during the Presidency of Donald Trump, only 27% trust the US Supreme Court, and the criminal justice system as a whole is trusted by only 17% of Americans. Media are also highly distrusted with only 18% trusting newspapers and just 14% trusting TV news, according to Gallup polls.³⁰

Internationally, the 2023 *Edelman Trust Barometer*, which received more than 32,000 responses from 28 countries, found that, on average, barely half of the population of the countries surveyed trust government (51%), while 62% trust business and 59% trust non-government organizations (NGOs) on average. In some countries, trust in government is below 50%, such as Germany and Ireland (47%), Italy (46%), Australia (45%), the USA (42%), the UK (37%), Spain (36%), South Korea (34%), and Japan (33%).³¹

Media, which play a key role in informing the public and as a watchdog providing checks and balances in the public sphere, are trusted by only 50% of people globally and in some countries trust in media has crashed to record lows (e.g., 37% in the UK).³²

The 2024 *Edelman Trust Barometer* reported that governments are considered “far less competent and ethical than business”³³ – a troubling finding given that governments develop and implement public policy that affects the lives and livelihoods of every person and organization on the planet. More than 60% of respondents say they “worry” that leaders in government are “purposely trying to mislead people by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations” – and even more express that concern in relation to journalists.³⁴

The second international study of public trust by the OECD released in July 2024 found that, on average, only 30% of people across 30 countries “are confident that their political system allows people to have a say in what the government does”.³⁵ Conducted by the OECD Directorate for Public Governance, the study found that 44% of people have low or no trust in government compared to 39% who have high or moderately high trust. Even more concerning than the fact that 6 out of every 10 people don’t trust their government is the finding that trust levels have decreased by 2% in just two years since the OECD’s first *Survey of Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions* conducted in 2021. Trust in parliaments is lower than average at 37% and trust in political parties is at the bottom of the barrel at 24%. Women trust government and other public institutions less than average (down 5% since 2021) and low socioeconomic status and education levels also account for lower public trust.³⁶

It is useful to be clear on what we mean by public trust. Here we are not talking about trust in a partner, or neighbours, or trust in a brand. In the *Handbook of Social and Political Trust*, Eric Uslaner identifies three types of trust.³⁷ He refers to (1) *particularized trust*, which involves faith in certain people based on affinity – i.e., liking or love; (2) *generalized trust*, also called social trust or “basic trust,”³⁸ which is an open propensity to trust that does not depend on experiences or homophily (e.g., others being like us); and (3) *political trust*, which involves trust in political institutions such as the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary (the three spheres of government). Uslaner also includes “the bureaucracy” (e.g., the Public Service),³⁹ political parties, and the police in discussion of political trust. Thus, the subject of discussion here is political trust. However, it can equally be called public trust because it relates to the public sphere, not the private sphere, and public sector institutions such as government departments, agencies, and public institutions – albeit this analysis distinguishes these from politicians and political parties.

In launching the study, Secretary-General of the OECD, Mathias Cormann, said “building and maintaining trust must remain a priority for

governments around the world.” He added that “citizens seek meaningful inclusive participation in decision making”.⁴⁰ What constitutes ‘meaningful inclusive participation’ is a concept that will be examined in some detail in the following chapters.

In its 2024 Trust Report, the OECD reminded the public sector that “trust in public institutions is the bedrock upon which public officials in democracies rely to govern on a daily basis and make policy choices to tackle pressing challenges.”⁴¹ The report went on to recommend:

*It is the processes underpinning democratic governance that need strengthening to meet people’s increasing expectations: ensuring all people’s voices are heard, strengthening checks and balance among institutions, using better, transparent and verifiable evidence in decision-making, and balancing the interests of a diverse population are the best levers to improve trust, especially in national governments.*⁴²

Specifically, the OECD recommended that governments need to:

1. Engage better with citizens to enhance trust in both local and national government
2. Strengthen capacity to address complex policy challenges, especially at the national government level
3. Support a healthy information ecosystem and invest in evidence-based communication
4. Invest in reliable, responsive, and fair public services, especially to enhance trust in the civil service and local government.⁴³

Mistrust and active distrust of government and institutions are collectively a key cause of *polarization*, according to Samuel Wilson and Scott Ko’s writing in a *Psychology Today* blog post.⁴⁴ They say that polarization in society needs to be reduced to enable people to have constructive and civil debates about the issues on which they disagree. In a recent article in *Frontiers in Psychology*, James Shyan-Tau Wu and colleagues argue that polarization increases cognitive inflexibility, which makes people less capable of updating their beliefs on receipt of new information or looking at issues from a different perspective.⁴⁵

Thus, the loss of public trust not only undermines the role of government and public institutions; it also undermines what we refer to as civil society. In many cases, we don’t trust each other. This reduces shared identity and the potential to come together on shared interests (see Figure 1.1).

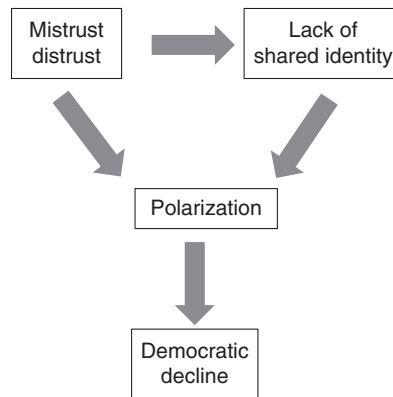


FIGURE 1.1 The relationship between mistrust/distrust, lack of shared identity, polarization, and its impact.

One of the reasons for the decline of trust in governments and many public institutions is blurring of the distinction between political communication and the supposedly independent public communication of the Civil Service, referred to as the Public Service in many countries, which is meant to operate in the public interest irrespective of the political party in power or a particular Minister's *cause célèbre*. This has been extensively identified and criticized in the UK, for example.

In 2003, the UK Government conducted an *Independent Review of Government Communications* chaired by Sir Bob Phillis, with its report, known as the Phillis Review, published in 2004 and adopted in full by the Government. The Phillis Review found that Downing Street – the office of the Prime Minister and, by implication, senior Ministers – had blurred the distinction between the role of civil servants and their ‘special advisers’ (known internally as SPADS). The report of the inquiry recommended a clear distinction between the legitimate but political role of special advisers (a euphemistic name for press secretaries, media advisers, and PR officers) and the role of civil servants, who are employed to act independently in the service of the public.⁴⁶ In addition, relevant to this analysis, is that the report recommended:

- “More direct, unmediated communications [sic] with the public” and
- “Genuine engagement with the public as part of policy formation and delivery, not communication as an afterthought”.⁴⁷

Emeritus Professor Anne Gregory, who reviewed significant changes to UK Government communication in the second decade of the 21st century,⁴⁸

points out that since the 2010 *Constitutional Reform and Governance Act* civil servants are no longer servants of “the Crown”. Instead, they are servants of the state “with the Prime Minister, as minister for the Civil Service, having statutory power rather than prerogative power”.⁴⁹ She sees this as a factor that contributes to politicization of the UK civil service generally and the public communication function specifically.⁵⁰ Gregory says “people have lost faith in politicians because of their actions” and, despite a requirement for separation between politics and the work of the Civil Service, “they are intertwined”, which she describes as “a major threat to democracy”.⁵¹

In a PhD thesis at the London School of Economics and Political Science and in a 2021 book *Government Communications and the Crisis of Trust*,⁵² Dr Ruth Garland documented a long history of political interference and politicization of government communication. Her research supported a call by Lord Butler in the House of Lords in July 2016 for “a clear distinction to be drawn between the political imperative to argue for particular policy actions and the requirement on the part of officials to present evidence” – specifically independent evidence based on research and analysis. Garland went on to state: “The undermining of this distinction is considered by critics to be a root cause of the crisis in public trust and public communication”,⁵³ which she noted, quoting public and political communication scholars Jay Blumler and Stephen Coleman, “is sapping the vitality of democratic political culture”.⁵⁴

THE LOST PUBLIC

Many of these concerns and challenges are not new, it has to be acknowledged. Democracy has been challenged and under threat for some time. Almost 100 years ago John Dewey declared that the public has been eclipsed in democratic decision-making and policy-making.⁵⁵ Dewey agreed with Walter Lippmann’s view expressed in *Public Opinion*⁵⁶ and *The Phantom Public*⁵⁷ that the public and public opinion were of much less influence than that suggested in the democratic mantra of *vox populi* (the voice of the people) as the source of legitimacy and authority in a democratic political system. However, Dewey disagreed with Lippmann’s and Harold Lasswell’s position that this was an acceptable and even inevitable state of affairs and their view that propaganda and leadership by elites were necessary to govern a state.⁵⁸ Lasswell’s studies of propaganda proposed the “management of opinions and attitudes by direct manipulation” and “the control of opinion”.⁵⁹ Lippmann’s near disdain for the generalized public is evident in his statement:

“The public must be put in its place ... so that each of us may live free of the trampling and the roar of a bewildered herd”.⁶⁰

Despite his staunch advocacy for democracy with significant public participation, Dewey acknowledged Lippmann’s conceptualization of the “phantom public” and wrote despondently: “The public seems to be lost; it is certainly bewildered”.⁶¹ Of democratic states, he said: “The public which generated political forms is passing away, but the power and lust of possession remains in the hands of the officers and agencies which the dying public instituted”.⁶² Dewey summarized this in his landmark 1927 book *The Public and Its Problems* as the “eclipse of the public”.⁶³

Dewey described the importance of a vibrant *public sphere* long before Jürgen Habermas popularized the concept, drawing attention to the importance of elected representatives and appointed public officials acting on behalf of citizens and in the public interest. Dewey stated emphatically: “Government is not the state”.⁶⁴ He argued that “the state is the organization of the public effected through officials for the protection of the interests shared by its members”.⁶⁵ Those who Dewey variously referred to as “officers”,⁶⁶ “officials”,⁶⁷ “representatives”,⁶⁸ “agents”,⁶⁹ and “guardians”⁷⁰ should “act in behalf of its interests”, Dewey argued.⁷¹

Significantly, in discussing politics and what is studied today as policy sciences and policy studies, Dewey drew specific attention to public communication saying: “We have the physical tools of communication as never before”. But he added: “The thoughts and aspirations congruous with them” – i.e., true communication for shared meaning-making as discussed in Chapter 5 – “are not common”.⁷² He concluded:

*Without such communication the public will remain shadowy and formless, seeking spasmodically for itself, but seizing and holding its shadow rather than its substance. Till the Great Society⁷³ is converted into a Great Community, the public will remain in eclipse. Communication can alone create a great community.*⁷⁴

Since Dewey’s warning, developed societies have seen massive expansion of communications technologies via the internet and satellites and an escalation of what Dewey called “the machine age”⁷⁵ with developments such as ‘big data’ analysis and artificial intelligence (AI). On that basis, communication with and by the public should have improved.

However, contemporary democracies also have been inundated by the irrepressible tide of neoliberalism – described by *The Guardian* as the idea that ate the world⁷⁶ – and the resulting rampant growth of capitalism,

privatization, politicization, and polarization on many important public issues exacerbated by the “permanent campaign”⁷⁷ conducted by politicians and political parties focused on winning and holding power rather than serving the public interest. Given these factors, along with the collapse of media business models leading to the emaciation of independent journalism⁷⁸ and the resulting *disinfodemic*⁷⁹ and emergence of *post-truth* society,⁸⁰ the eclipse of the public has increased. Are we approaching a total eclipse, an era of political and social black-out, a new Dark Age?

Specifically, research cited in this analysis including an extensive literature review, interviews with senior policy advisers and government communication leaders,⁸¹ and case studies shows the following.

- *Consultation* by governments is dominated by the ‘usual suspects’ (e.g., professional lobby groups, big business, and other power elites) and often involves a failure to analyse and therefore pay attention to the range of submissions received. The result is that the voice of many stakeholders and citizens is routinely ignored.⁸²
- *Engagement* has been identified as “a prototypical buzzword”⁸³ used to refer to superficial actions such as social media follows and likes and clicks on websites rather than meaningful interaction with stakeholders and citizens.
- As a result, *participation* in democratic policy development is reduced to a chimera for many individuals, groups, and communities resulting in under-representation in the least, as well as misrepresentation, exclusion, and marginalization.
- *Public communication* is mostly applied post-policy development to promote and ‘sell’ policies rather than as two-way communication in which stakeholders and citizens can contribute to identification of issues and policy options. Public communication is mostly not integrated into government policy development with policy teams commonly operating in ‘siloes’ remote from functions such as market and social research, customer relations, stakeholder engagement, social media monitoring, and government communication.⁸⁴

The above four concepts – consultation, engagement, participation, and public communication – are core interrelated requirements for democracy, whether mature or emerging. They are essential to create and maintain trust and sustain a fully functioning society. People rarely if ever put their trust in others who do not consult and engage with them to understand their needs, interests, and views; who do not invite and afford some level of participation

in decisions and policies affecting their lives; and who do not communicate with them other than trying to persuade and propagandize them.

In terms of public communication, governments provide *information*, often referred to as public information, which is important in relation to many issues ranging from health services to creating knowledge of the road rules and other laws. Government information is part of creating an informed public. But informing is *one* form of *one-way communication*.

Another key form of public communication and participation in democracies is elections, which many regard as the primary way in which the voice of the people (*vox populi*) is expressed. In some circumstances, it is the only way the voice of the people is expressed and heeded to varying degrees. Elections are another form of *one-way communication* in which people send a message to political parties and governments. However, elections are held only every three to five years in most countries and many are part of what is termed *electoralism* in which a state has the procedural democratic process of elections but no substantive *kratos* (rule) by the *demos* (people) – what Terry Lynn Karl, a professor of political science at Stanford University, called the “fallacy of electoralism”.⁸⁵

Furthermore, governments today are leading users of *behavioural insights* to achieve acceptance and compliance with their policies and decisions. While identification and use of ‘nudges’ of behaviour including cognitive biases and heuristics as well as economic incentives and other influences is justifiable and ethical in some circumstances (e.g., in public health campaigns), behavioural insights can be used for manipulation to achieve ends against the interests of those targeted. Even when applied from a standpoint of *benign paternalism*, the use of behavioural insights entails agenda setting, policy creation, and policy implementation by governments, involving yet more *one-way communication*. (See Chapter 7 for further discussion of behavioural insights.)

These factors are key contributors to a widely identified “crisis of democracy”. Without *two-way communication* as discussed in Chapter 5 through meaningful stakeholder and citizen consultation, engagement, and participation as explored in Chapter 6, already low levels of trust in democratic governments are likely to continue to decline and lead to a further withering of democracy, if not the end of democracy plunging societies into whatever is *post-democracy*.⁸⁶

This analysis seeks to (1) clarify definitions of these practices to dispense with the buzzwords and expose political tokenism that has hollowed them out; (2) identify how they interrelate and complement; and (3) make recommendations on how they can be improved and implemented in ethical and meaningful ways in accordance with open government commitments and the requirements for sustainable and stable democracy.

Reference to 'reviving' democracy in the sub-title of this book is not meant to suggest that there was a golden age of democracy to which we need to return. However, there were times of great hope when expectations were created such as when the 'Founding Fathers' formed the US Constitution and when tyrannical regimes were overthrown and replaced by governments elected by the people, promising to represent and lead for the people. Abraham Lincoln's words set an agenda that those who support and cherish democracy are compelled to follow: "That government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."⁸⁷

Based on literature review across the disciplines of policy sciences, policy studies, public communication, and democratic political science; interviews with senior policy and communication executives in several countries; and case studies, this analysis argues that to redress the "crisis of democracy" identified by many social scientists⁸⁸ and avert the risk of *post-democracy*,⁸⁹ declining trust in government and growing disillusionment and disengagement must be addressed by recalibrating the essential democratic processes of consultation, engagement, participation, and government communication. This must involve:

1. Strengthening processes for meaningful inclusive consultation, engagement, participation, and two-way public communication
2. Integrating these specialist forms of public communication into public policy development cycles and processes.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND LOBBYING

In coming to this challenge, two interrelated fields of communication practice that seek to influence public policy need to be considered in terms of their potential to provide answers and solutions.

Beyond its generic meanings related to news and events of the day (and sometimes liaisons by public figures), *public affairs* is a field of professional practice that some definitions claim to include all public communication with all publics/stakeholders,⁹⁰ but which primarily focusses on communicating with government officials and politicians for the purpose of influencing public policy.⁹¹ The UK and European public affairs networking group, PubAffairs, says:

*Public affairs practitioners engage stakeholders in order to explain organizational policies and views on public policy issues, assisting policy makers and legislators in amending or laying down better policy and legislation.*⁹²

A review of academic literature on public affairs summarizes that public affairs is about why and how “firms participate in the political process” and the strategies and tactics that they employ.⁹³ In *The Handbook of Public Affairs*, a major reference text on the topic, editors Phil Harris and Craig Fleisher say that, spurred by deregulation, privatization, and regulation, “public affairs, and particularly government relations/lobbying, have evolved from a tactic adopted by organizations to amend occasional legislation to become a major international managerial strategy.”⁹⁴

The work of public affairs includes *lobbying*, a term originating in the practice of advocates of various causes meeting politicians in the lobby of the UK Parliament to make their case. Lobbying involves meetings with and presenting information and proposals to elected politicians and their advisers on behalf of various constituents and indirect approaches such as mounting media campaigns on issues of concern.

So, are public affairs and lobbying practices able to redress the democratic deficit and ensure public policy is responsive to the needs of the public? The answer is mostly no for two reasons. A counter view is reported in Chapter 10 (see ‘Citizen, Heal Thyself’).

First, public affairs and lobbying professionals (lobbyists) represent particular interests, often vested interests that do not coincide with and sometimes even run counter to the public interest. Because public affairs and lobbying are generally expensive services provided by specialist consultants and large industry and professional associations, these practices are mostly deployed by or on behalf of major industries, big business, powerful professions, and wealthy individuals. Civil society organizations and major activist groups such as Greenpeace also engage in lobbying, but they are usually out-spent and politically out-manoeuvred, particularly in neoliberal capitalist societies.

The OECD says:

*Although lobbying can be a positive force in democracy, it can also be a mechanism for powerful groups to influence laws and regulations at the expense of the public interest. This may result in undue influence, unfair competition and policy capture, to the detriment of effective policy making.*⁹⁵

Second, public affairs and lobbying as they are typically practiced are not public in any true sense of the term. Public affairs and lobbying are often and even routinely conducted ‘behind closed doors’ such as in private meetings with Members of Congress or Parliament, Senators, and their senior advisers. Reports, proposals, and submissions presented to governments as part of public affairs and lobbying are often not available publicly, thus avoiding

media and public scrutiny. At their worst, public affairs and lobbying include sponsored overseas trips for politicians, dinners at expensive restaurants, and other enticements. Many such activities are illegal in countries such as the USA, but laws can be circumvented by channelling payments and arrangements through research institutes or NGOs and thinly disguising such activities as research or fact-finding.

The Public Affairs Council headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a European head office in Brussels (<https://pac.org>) presents a positive view saying that public affairs involves corporate citizenship, corporate social responsibility, and strategic philanthropy as well as “advocacy”.⁹⁶ In an academic analysis, Scott Davidson has argued for public affairs to be “reformed into being a public service profession ... immersed in civil society’s needs”. However, he notes that such reformation requires further adoption of Habermasian and agonistic principles of democracy as well adherence to codes of conduct by practitioners.⁹⁷

Without such reformation, public affairs activities involve influencing public policy on behalf of particular interests, rather than the public interest. Thus, we need to look further afield to identify ways to revive democracy with more inclusive and equitable consultation, engagement, participation, and public communication.

Some views on lobbying that are counter to traditional organizational and institutional approaches and relevant to this analysis are presented in Chapter 10 (see ‘Citizen, Heal Thyself’).

TYPES OF DEMOCRACY: THE SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

The extent of the perceived deficit in democracy and the need and pathway for reviving democracy depends on what type of democracy one is talking about and what type of democracy a society aspires to. There are many types of democracy in existence around the world and many others are proposed to increase social equity and the legitimacy of governments. The type of democracy in place is the sociopolitical context for determining rights and obligations including who speaks and who listens and the level of input and say that various actors have in public policy development. Types of democracy in which citizens have minimal input include the following.

1. *Elite* democracy, as the name suggests, sees elites governing with limited opportunities for others to participate. Proponents argue that elites are the most equipped to provide leadership (e.g., in terms of education) and that most people do not wish to be actively involved in politics.

2. *Liberal* democracy privileges individual freedom, usually adopting voluntary voting, and operates through leaders and power centres informally identifying and representing the views of citizens based on aggregated public opinion.⁹⁸
3. *Plebiscitary* democracy, which emanates from the liberal theories of Max Weber on plebiscitary leadership,⁹⁹ is a form of liberal democracy in which leaders allegedly reflect the will of the people and rule authoritatively with checks and balances applied only occasionally through elections or referenda.

While liberal and plebiscitary forms of democracy have some degree of pluralism in which power is distributed beyond any one group, the most common form of pluralist democracy worldwide is as follows.

4. *Representative* democracy, also referred to as *electoral democracy* and *indirect democracy* and closely aligned with what Habermas and some others refer to as *republican* democracy, involves political engagement through elected representatives who allegedly speak on behalf of and are accountable to citizens. Despite its widespread adoption, elected representatives in representative democracies are not required to fulfill promises made before their election – and frequently do not. Also, public consultation, stakeholder and citizen engagement, and various forms of citizen participation, while periodically implemented, are mostly not mandated or standardized. Representative democracies are commonly non-inclusive and, in practice, function as an oligarchy not dissimilar to elite democracies.

Types of democracy that envisage a higher level of pluralism facilitated through public consultation, engagement, and participation include the following.

5. *Deliberative* democracy is a normative model in which substantial numbers of citizens deliberate (think deeply about) and rationally debate issues of public concern in concert with policy-makers who allegedly listen and respond.
6. *Monitory* democracy, as described by John Keane,¹⁰⁰ involves Michael Schudson's notion of the "monitorial citizen" using various forms of media to monitor social and political developments and become active when they decide to intervene, supported by thousands of

NGOs that engage in a watchdog role, and advocacy and activist groups acting on behalf of citizens.¹⁰¹

7. *Direct* democracy, or what some such as Nico Carpentier call *participatory* democracy,¹⁰² seeks the direct and frequent involvement of citizens in a range of political activities beyond electing representatives and expressing opinion. These can include citizens' juries, councils, and assemblies, as well as national forums and other opportunities for democratic participation (see Chapter 6 for examples).
8. *Agonistic* democracy, sometimes called radical democracy, has similarities to direct democracy in that it seeks high levels of engagement by citizens, but has other fundamental differences. Drawing on Neo-Marxism and New Left thinking, agonistic/radical democratic theory challenges liberal pluralist models for "ignoring the enormously unequal resources available to different groups in society"¹⁰³ and the focus on consensus and unilateral public opinion, advocating instead an agonistic approach in which citizens and organizations engage in argument and debate on key issues accepting diversity and dissensus.
9. *Dialogic* democracy, proposed by Anthony Giddens, argues that Habermas's deliberative democracy is unrealistic because of its reliance on the "ideal speech situation" and its over-emphasis on *consensus*. Instead, dialogic democracy accepts "the essential contestability of the issues with which we are dealing".¹⁰⁴ Giddens says: "Dialogic democracy presumes only that dialogue in a public space provides a means of living along with the other in a relation of mutual tolerance".¹⁰⁵
10. *Communicative* democracy, proposed by Iris Marion Young, also claims that deliberative democracy is not sufficiently inclusive because its focus on rational forms of communication privileges dominant social groups and excludes others. Young proposes additional modes of political communication, which she refers to as greeting, rhetoric, and narrative to expand the range of voices and include alternative ways of speaking.¹⁰⁶

In reality, progressive representative democracies incorporate elements of deliberative, monitory, and direct democracy and, arguably, some elements of agonistic, dialogic, and communicative democracy such as citizens' juries and assemblies and various other attempts to achieve deliberation in public policy-making and decision-making. This accords with

South African journalism and media scholar Anthea Garman's notion that there is not a single model of democracy, or a perfectly formed stable model of democracy, arguing that "democracies are made and remade", evolving over time.¹⁰⁷

This analysis is aimed at contributing to that making and remaking based on research and analysis that indicate democracies in many so-called democratic countries need to be remade or at least revived.

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