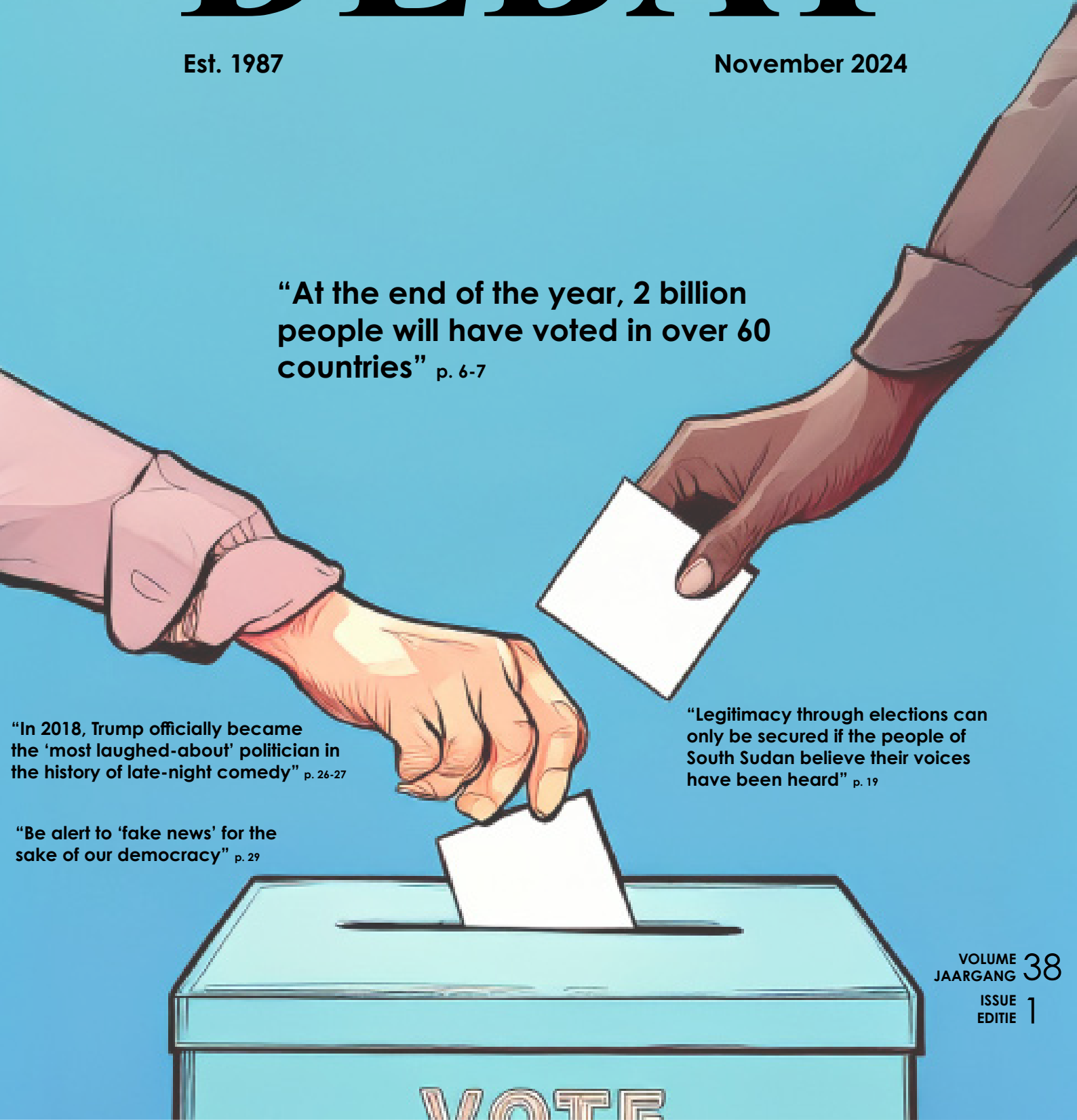


Political Science Magazine
Politologisch Tijdschrift

DEBAT

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November 2024



“At the end of the year, 2 billion people will have voted in over 60 countries” p. 6-7

“In 2018, Trump officially became the ‘most laughed-about’ politician in the history of late-night comedy” p. 26-27

“Legitimacy through elections can only be secured if the people of South Sudan believe their voices have been heard” p. 19

“Be alert to ‘fake news’ for the sake of our democracy” p. 29

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VOTE

Hello everyone and a warm welcome to the first edition of DEBAT 2024-2025. The new year brings a new team of writers, editors and designers - with some familiar faces of course! I think I can speak for everyone when saying how proud we are of this issue, both of the articles received and how well we have worked as a team to produce it.

This issue is centred around the theme of Elections which are no doubt important in any year of politics. 2024 however has seen the biggest ever election in terms of registered voters in the case of India's General Election as well as other notable cases ranging from the UK overturning 14 years of Conservative rule to the Mexican General Election. The articles in this issue cover a wide range of topics relating to elections - what factors can effect election results, how elections are portrayed, how voters act, amongst others.

We hope that you find something here that sparks your interest and prompts you to reflect on how you have participated in elections and what impact they have had. Most of all we hope that you learn something new!

Happy reading and until next time!
Jess, Co-Editor-in-Chief

Hallo allemaal en hartelijk welkom bij de eerste editie van DEBAT 2024-2025. Het nieuwe jaar brengt een nieuw team van schrijvers, redacteuren en ontwerpers - met een aantal bekende gezichten natuurlijk! Ik denk dat ik namens iedereen kan spreken als ik zeg hoe trots we zijn op dit nummer, zowel op de artikelen die we hebben ontvangen als op hoe goed we als team hebben samengewerkt om het te produceren.

Dit nummer draait om het thema verkiezingen, die ongetwijfeld belangrijk zijn in elk politiek jaar. In 2024 vonden echter de grootste verkiezingen ooit plaats in termen van geregistreerde kiezers in het geval van de algemene verkiezingen in India, evenals andere opmerkelijke gevallen, variërend van het Verenigd Koninkrijk dat 14 jaar conservatief bewind ten val bracht tot de algemene verkiezingen in Mexico. De artikelen in dit nummer behandelen een breed scala aan onderwerpen met betrekking tot verkiezingen - welke factoren kunnen de verkiezingsuitslag beïnvloeden, hoe verkiezingen in beeld worden gebracht, hoe kiezers zich gedragen, enzovoort.

We hopen dat je hier iets vindt dat je interesse wekt en je aanzet tot nadenken over hoe je hebt deelgenomen aan verkiezingen en welke impact ze hebben gehad. Bovenal hopen we dat je iets nieuws leert!

Veel leesplezier en tot de volgende keer!
Jess, Co-hoofdredacteur

Editorial | Redactioneel



Colofon | Colophon

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DEBAT

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Why Voter Turnout is Falling: Exploring the Causes and Consequences

By Cosmin Tanasă

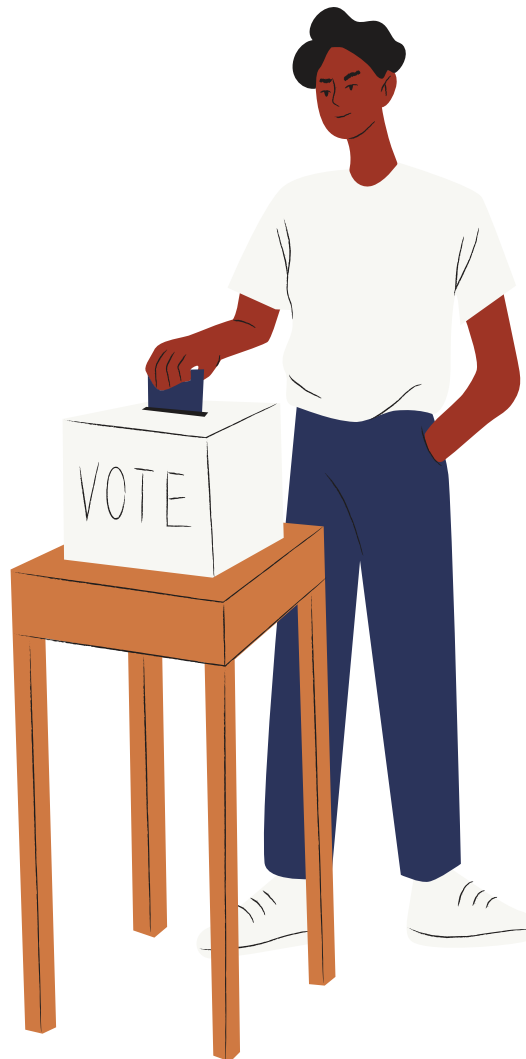
Decreasing voter turnout has occurred among many long-established democratic countries lately. This problem has recently become more apparent, and it is a fact that needs people's attention. From such countries as the United Kingdom, Finland, and the USA that had in the past seen active participation of their citizens in voting, a quite noticeable contrast can be observed. It is of great concern that even under 50% of eligible voters sometimes show up at the election polls. This is a sign that the gap is increasing and thus citizens feel a lack of engagement with their democracies. It should be kept in mind that the trend is not the monopoly of those democratic entities that have been in existence for long periods. We have also experienced similar obstacles bearing on the post-communist states of Eastern Europe such as Romania, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, and Bulgaria. The fact that the problem is rampant shows that the issue is a more general one that affects various democratic systems around the world. The analysis will address two primary causes of declining voter turnout: political disillusionment and systemic barriers. These factors significantly reduce electoral participation across both newly emerging and long-established democracies worldwide.



One of the most significant causes of declining voter turnout is growing political disillusionment, especially in post-communist countries, where the transition to democracy has often been marked by corruption, instability, and unmet expectations. For example, in the 2020 parliamentary elections in Romania, the turnout of the voters was only 31.84%, which is one of the lowest in Romania's recent history. In the same vein, this trend can be observed among many people who are disenchanted with their political systems. Corruption and political leadership's ineffectiveness are considered to be factors in this change. In this case, the audience may choose to abstain from voting. Such a choice can be driven by the fact that the society is displeased with the status quo and its operation or due to hopelessness. This situation was also experienced in the Republic of Moldova in the 2021 presidential elections where only 41.7% went out to vote. The many resulting challenges notwithstanding the highlighted states are more to some post-communist countries withdrawal from politics is a universal practice. Furthermore, for the parliamentary and presidential elections (November - December 2024) only around 13.500 Romanians out of 38.000 Romanians living in the Netherlands registered to vote. As an illustration in France, within the June 2022 legislative elections, the eligible voter participation rate stood at 46.2%, only enhancing the rise of political weariness and boredom among the electorate. Many voters do not see within the available alternatives the ability to meet their needs or hope for less variability in the way people participate.

In addition to political disillusionment, systemic barriers continue to pose challenges for voter participation in many countries. These barriers can include complex voter registration processes, logistical issues, or, in some cases, insufficient access to polling stations. The percentage vot-

er's attendance in 2021 in Bulgaria in parliamentary elections was 40.2%, where there are identified problems with inclusion in restricted areas such as the rural ones which limit the turnout. This is because a good number of voters in such areas face various challenges when trying to use, or even find, a polling station or register into them, thereby manufacturing the fear of not voting. The turnout stood at 46.9% in the last general election for the Croatian parliament in 2020. Figures such as the long distances and the



lack of a sufficient number of polling stations were some of the reasons for low voter turnout in the mentioned area. However, these challenges are not tied up with any specific region. In the United States, for example, the voter ID laws as well as the numerous districts possessing limited electoral locations are the challenges of voting in those areas and this also hinders the improvement of these figures. Many voters participate widely in elections and their respective countries such as the USA due to numerous limitations like inadequate polling areas within their communities. These barriers highlight the need for accessible and transparent electoral systems to ensure broader engagement in the democratic process.

The decline in voter turnout is a growing concern affecting both established and post-communist democracies. This trend is primarily driven by political disillusionment, where citizens feel disconnected from political systems, and systemic barriers such as complex voting processes and limited polling access. Countries like Romania, Bulgaria, the United States, and even France exemplify these challenges, with voters increasingly opting out. To reverse this trend, reforms are needed to restore trust in democratic institutions and make electoral participation more accessible, ensuring that democracies remain truly representative.

2024, The Year of Elections

By Esmée Widdershoven

At the end of the year, roughly 2 billion people will have visited the voting booths in over 60 countries around the world, marking 2024 an historic moment in global politics. With the whole world watching the U.S. and bracing for the potential comeback of President Trump, many elections have already seen substantial changes. “Elections across Europe have seen far-right parties make serious gains; meanwhile, South Korea’s main liberal opposition to the ruling conservative government earned a landslide victory in parliamentary elections; and the British Labour Party decisively defeated the Tories,” says Koh Ewe from TIME magazine.

Important Themes in 2024 Elections

Cost of Living

Worldwide inflation and rising costs have translated into a shift in voters’ behaviour. Polling has shown that cost of living concerns are on the forefront of people’s minds everywhere. Besides mainstream parties suffering losses in the European Parliament election this past June, other continents see similar shifts. In India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s party (Bharatiya Janata Party) has seen a significant fall in support, which can be directly linked back to the country’s price rise of necessities. Africa has also seen similar shifts in voter volatility. According to Reuters’ Mark John and Sumanta Sen “discontent over living standards and unemployment contributed to the ANC’s loss of its majority in South Africa’s election. And worsening poverty is likely to help shape the outcome of Ghana’s December vote to succeed President Nana Akufo-Addo”.

Climate

In July, Earth experienced the hottest day ever recorded. The devastating effects of climate change can only be stopped by politics. It is therefore not surprising that green legislation and climate action plans are an important topic in many elections.

In the Mexican national election Claudia Sheinbaum became president. She has a PhD in Environmental Engineering and is very active in seeking solutions for climate change. This comes after Mexico City made the news in early 2024 that the city’s taps might run dry - although fortunately this did not happen. But two thirds of the country suffers from droughts, and is at risk of running out of water.

During the European parliament elections, climate change did not rank in the top 3 issues. Van Veldhoven, vice president and regional director for WRI Europe says “she expects the Commission will have to navigate a challenging political situation in several individual countries”. Nevertheless, the European Union continues to lead in its efforts to address climate change, making progress toward achieving its environmental goals. And what will happen after the new US president is elected? If Harris wins, she is expect-

ed to continue to build on Biden’s climate plans - the most ambitious ones in US history. However, if Trump wins the opposite will happen. Trump has said multiple times that he does not believe in climate change and has promised “more oil and gas production, repealing environmental regulations and slashing subsidies for renewable energy”.



Migration

Another important electoral theme is migration, a complicated topic that plays a part in politics everywhere, from Latin-American immigrants in the U.S. to labour immigration in south-east Asia. Immigration is a topic that has had a polarising effect on societies in many countries and has contributed to the rise in popularity of far-right parties.

During the EP election “the far-right, with explicit anti-migration agendas were the clear victors in Italy, Austria and France. And registered their best results in Germany and the Netherlands”. After the Taiwanese elections in January, the government revised their immigration policies to benefit visa holders to stay longer, but increased fines for overstay and greater maximum entry ban, to deter illegal work. As South-Korea struggles with a population crisis, there is a need to attract foreigners to fill up the gaps in the workforce. During the last parliamentary election immigration was a big topic. The current government has recently “launched a digital nomad visa for overseas remote workers”, to “attract greater foreign talent and skilled professionals”.

Challenges in today's elections.

The rapid growth of the internet and social media usage has seen major increases in access to information and news. It has given political candidates and parties the opportunity to directly communicate with the people and cater their messages to different demographics. However, “these avenues for democratic discourse are threatened by dis- and mis-information, censorship, surveillance, and hateful speech” say Garrett and James in a journal for electoral studies.

Millions of people who are voting in national elections in 2024 are at risk of shutdowns. “Shutdowns are periods where authorities shut down the internet and critical digital communication platforms during key national events such as elections”. These shutdowns infringe on human rights, as they give regimes power to control the narrative, and undermine the electorate’s ability to make informed decisions by denying them access to polling resources”. Countries where shutdowns have been detected are Azerbaijan, India, Pakistan, and Venezuela.

Russia- Ukraine war

Some elections this year have been foregone conclusions. For example, During the Russian presidential elections in march, it came to no one’s surprise that Vladimir Putin won. This also meant that the planned elections in Ukraine have been postponed indefinitely, since the country is still at war and under martial law. Ukrainian law states that President Zelenskyy will hold power until a new president is elected. This can only happen after the war, as “Presidential and parliamentary elections are currently out of the question. Ukraine’s constitution places a temporary restriction on the former, whereas martial law bans both”. This is to protect the citizens from harm when voting



Upcoming U.S. elections

The whole world has their eyes on the United States as its citizens head to the polls on November 5 to elect a new president. This election will not only have a big impact on U.S. domestic policies, but also influence global politics and international relations. Moreover, it might be one of the biggest tests for the democracy of the country. Trump’s insistence that the 2020 election was stolen from him, even against all evidence and the January 6th insurrection on the capitol are already worrisome. But Trump’s continuous promises of retribution and the threats to jail his political opponents is ominous for a lot of Americans. Even so, the race to the White House is neck-and-neck.

European Parliament elections

Every five years, Europeans go to the polls to elect their representatives for the European Parliament. This past June was no different as millions of European citizens in 27 countries casted their votes. There were some obvious changes in the voting behaviour this year. “The EP elections saw a strong performance by populist right-wing and far-right parties in many EU countries propelled by opposition to green policies, anti-immigration sentiment and economic insecurity”. This does not mean that the far-right now holds all the power and gets to make all the decisions. The centre-right EPP (European People’s Party) holds the most seats in parliament. And while the centre-left Socialists and Democrats (S&D) and the liberal Renew Europe may have lost votes, they still hold 136 and 77 seats respectively. We will see over the next five years how the stronger presence of the far-right will influence the EU’s agenda and legislation.

Venezuela's Failed Path to Democra-

By Pola Michalek

The Barbados agreements, signed in October 2023 by Nicolas Maduro and the Venezuelan opposition party Plataforma Unitaria Democratica signified a promise of free and fair elections that would get the country back on its feet with a democratically elected president. The peaceful event was organized on neutral territory to ensure the democratic takeover. However, the promises made by the government in October quickly turned out to be deceptive.

The main driving force behind the government's agreement to join the talks was the US promise of sanctions removal, which shocked Venezuela's economy. Its worsening conditions were the main reason why people voted against Maduro.

The country, since the politician took over, following the death of Hugo Chavez in 2013, has experienced a massive drop in its GDP per capita, inflation, as well as shortages in vital goods.

The date of elections, chosen in agreement with the Venezuelan constitution, as well as the Barbados agreements, has been set to July 28th by the National Electoral Council (CNE). The CNE in the last few years has been re-staffed entirely to pro-Maduro personnel. The two biggest running candidates were Nicolas Maduro, who, if elected, would be gaining office for a third term, and Edmundo Gonzalez, a candidate of the opposition's party alliance called the Unitary Platform (PUD). His candidacy was not originally planned. The previous candidate, Maria Corina Machado, the leader of the 2024 alliance party has been illegitimately banned from running, making Gonzalez a last-minute replacement. This unplanned change did not affect the leadership of the opposition in the polls. The tallies from weeks before the 28th of July indicate Venezuela's preference for PUD's candidate. Nonetheless, 6 hours after the closing of the polls, The CNE announced Maduro as the winner.

What some significant state leaders claim to be an issue after election day is the fact that the official voting tallies have never been released by the electoral headquarters. Brazil's president, Luiz Inacio Lula de Silva, claimed that an official release of the tallies should take place to resolve the ongoing debates concerning the election's validity. Only after this taking place could the election dispute be settled, he said. Brazil's political leader largely refers to the voting tallies of the opposition, whose results indicate

that their candidate has won, with 6 million Venezuelans casting their vote for him. In comparison, their data shows that around 2.7 million were supposed to vote for Maduro.

The events of the 28th of July and the days following it are still seen as blurry by the majority of independent media sources and international organizations. An EU mission and other organisations have been denied the ability to overwatch the electoral process. The participation of non-biased watchers during the voting period in Venezuelan voting polls, as well as the electoral center headquarters, was mentioned as a focal point of the Barbados Agreement.

Two independent organizations, the United Nations Electoral Technical Team and the Carter Center were allowed to assign around 24 staff members to the voting polls and the electoral center headquarters to oversee the process. The latter organization –the Carter Center – claims the "official" results of elections cannot be considered democratic. With more than 30.000 voting polls in the country, an international group of 24 was allowed to overwatch the process.

The UK, the US, and the EU, as well as other nations, have not recognised the results published by the CNE. Since the announcement of Maduro's victory, many have fled the nation or partaken in protests against the government as a result. The emigration is expected to continue in the coming years of Maduro's term.



Van 'I am optimistic about the capacity of us to come together with a plan' naar 'It's another lie':

Hate Speech tijdens de Amerikaanse verkiezingen



Door Lisa Harmeling

Het eerste debat tussen ex-President Donald Trump en nog zittend Vicepresident Kamala Harris belooft een waar spektakel te worden. Een clash tussen de titanen met als doel het overtuigen van de Amerikaanse kiezer. Een van de weinige dingen die bij iedereen is blijven hangen van dinsdag 10 september is de gedenkwaardige opmerking: 'In springfield, they're eating the dogs. The people that came in. They're eating the cats.'



Memorabel en choquerend

De opmerkelijke quote van Trump kan worden geclassificeerd als 'hate speech'. Hate speech is een vorm van communicatie die impliciet of expliciet een persoon of groep beledigt of in diskrediet brengt op basis van een bepaald kenmerk.

Hate speech is niet nieuw of uniek voor een specifiek land. Overall is negativiteit een grotere rol gaan spelen in verkiezingen, mede dankzij de media die vaak meer aandacht geven aan negatieve en controversiële campagnes. Donald Trump (Republikein), Marine Le Pen (Rassemblement National), Geert Wilders (Partij voor de Vrijheid) en de leider van de FPÖ gebruiken in hun campagnes negatieve retoriek. In Nederland schiet de 'meer of minder' uitspraak van Geert Wilders uit 2014 naar binnen. De opmerking van Trump over huisdieren is dus slechts het topje van de ijsberg, maar laat wel een trend zien in de politieke arena. Persoonlijke aanvallen op de opponent zijn memorabeler dan aanvallen op de inhoud van beleid. 'She's a marxist' is choquerender dan 'Well, bad immigration is the worst thing that can happen to our economy.'

De inzet van persoonlijke aanvallen kan tijdens de campagnes zeer effectief zijn om emoties aan te wakkeren in het electoraat, daarbij is het gebruik van nicknames een behoorlijk doelmatig instrument om de toon te zetten bij een rally of debat. 'Sleepy Joe', 'Crooked Hillary' - Nikki Haley werd afgelopen november bij de voorverkiezingen 'Birdbrain' genoemd. De denigrerende koosnaampjes worden niet alleen gebruikt door Trump, ook Harris en Biden hebben Trump een 'unserious man', 'a loser' en 'a disgrace' genoemd. Het modergooien beperkt zich niet tot een partij of politicus.

De effectiviteit van optimisme

Dat Hate Speech wordt gebruikt in campagnes is te betreuren, ook de voorkeur voor haatzaaiende retoriek in de media lijkt onontkoombaar. Toch is er een lichtpuntje in de negativiteitspiraal te vinden. Positieve verkiezingsboodschappen zorgen bij kiezers voor meer prikkels en enthousiasme om te participeren in rally's en een positieve uitdrukking heeft een mobiliserende werking van de achterban. Er zit een wereld van verschil tussen Biden die in juni 2024 tegen Trump in een verkiezingsdebat zei dat 'every single thing he said is a lie' of Obama die tegen McCain in 2008 zei: 'all right, fair enough. Let's move on.' Obama's 'Hope' boodschap in 2008 met als slogans 'Yes We Can' en 'Change we can believe in' waren doeltreffend. Hij won de verkiezingen en werd 44ste president van de Verenigde Staten.

'I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people. Let us all here assembled constitute ourselves prophets of a new order of competence and of courage.' Zo eindigde Franklin D. Roosevelt zijn speech na zijn nominatie als democratische presidentskandidaat in 1932. Een sprankje optimisme in een donkere periode. Roosevelt zou uiteindelijk 57.4% van de stemmen krijgen. Hate Speech en negativiteit lijken tegenwoordig de overhand te krijgen in het politieke debat. Woorden zijn groffer en uitspraken ruwer, maar het is positiviteit dat het electoraat bijeenbrengt.

The Power of Pop Culture:

How Celebrities and Influencers Shape Political Discourse

By Bartosz Bilski

Taylor Swift endorsing Kamala Harris, Elon Musk joining Donald Trump's rally in Pennsylvania, and Lil Jon performing "Turn Down for What" at the Democratic National Convention illustrate a growing trend: celebrities are becoming increasingly involved in shaping public opinion and mobilising voters during election seasons. Particularly in the United States, celebrities often engage in political activity before the presidential elections.

This is also the case in other countries. For example, during the 2020 Polish presidential elections, rapper Taco Hemingway released the song "Polskie Tango" just before the electoral silence period. In the song, he critiques Polish politics since the 1990s. At the end of the music video, he displays a symbol of eight stars, a widely recognised emblem used by opposition and civil society to express frustration with the ruling Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) party. This performance energised public debate and became one of the most powerful political statements made by a celebrity in Poland.

Celebrities are increasingly using their platforms to influence political narratives and encourage civic participation, from endorsing candidates to performing at political events. This blending of entertainment and politics underscores the power of pop culture in shaping political discussions and

reaching diverse audiences, bringing both positive and negative consequences. The rise of political influencers also highlights the growing impact of social media on political discourse. While political accounts on these platforms can be valuable sources of information, they can also spread disinformation.

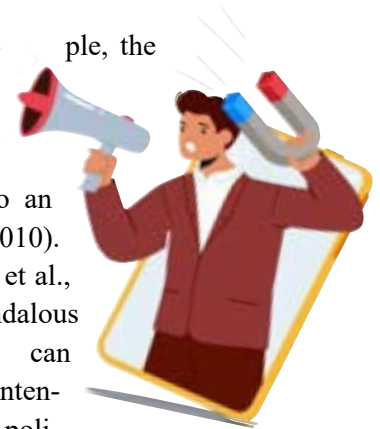
Celebrities

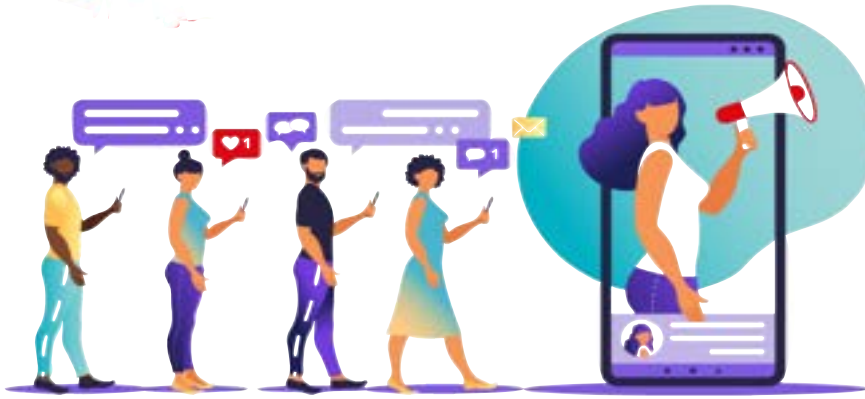
Celebrity endorsements in political campaigns can significantly impact voter intentions, though various factors influence their ef-

fectiveness. For example, the effect of celebrity endorsements is strongly moderated by how important politics are to an individual (Veer et al., 2010). Other scholars (Sikorski et al., 2018) point out that scandalous celebrity endorsements can negatively affect voting intentions. They advise that politicians should not use self-initiated endorsements, but should publicly respond to endorsements initiated by others. Additionally, theories like the Source Credibility Model emphasise that the persuasiveness of a message is tied to the credibility of the source, meaning that a celebrity's perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness all play a role in how their endorsement is received.

In South Africa, celebrity endorsements in political campaigns have been shown to positively influence voters' intentions, with both the credibility of the endorser and the political party contributing to this effect (Um, 2018). Um also found that while celebrity endorsements may not directly affect an individual's voting behaviour, they do positively influence perceptions of how others will vote, especially when the individual identifies with the celebrity. This highlights the role of social influence theory, where people look to others for cues on how to behave, which may explain why celebrity endorsements can have an important impact on voter attitudes. Highly influential people can thus show their audiences how to act or what to think about political topics.

The influence and aim of celebrities in political communication in the Czech Republic have changed. According to Štechová (2015), celebrities have transitioned to becoming supporters, tools of political marketing, or even protestors, with varying degrees of influence on political outcomes. In some cases, celebrities help political parties, amplifying messages and reaching broader audiences, especially through platforms like Instagram and Twitter. They can also use their platform to oppose certain governmental plans. This highlights the role of famous people in shaping political discourse.





Political influencers

With the rise of short-form content, political influencers on social media have gained significant traction. They use their digital presence to promote political causes and social issues (Riedl et al., 2023). These influencers are increasingly shaping the political opinions and actions of youth and young adults, though mainstream media remains the primary source of political information (Peter and Muth, 2018). Following political influencers has been linked to increased internal political efficacy among youth, though this does not necessarily translate into higher political participation (Harff and Schmuck, 2023). While social media can foster a sense of empowerment by making politics feel more accessible, it does not always encourage young people to engage in offline political activities such as voting or attending protests. Political efficacy may rise, but the complexity of translating this belief into real-world action can still be a barrier, especially when the political discourse on social media is often fragmented or simplified.

Social media's open nature allows anyone to post about politics, leading to a shift from media-affiliated influencers to independent social media accounts (Flamino et al., 2021). This decentralisation of political influence has also contributed to the growing polarisation of online political debates, especially on platforms like

X (formerly Twitter). Influencers from across the political spectrum increasingly shape discourse. Because of algorithms, like-minded individuals engage mainly with content that reinforces their existing beliefs. This phenomenon can further radicalise views and deepen societal divides. This was already visible on social media during the

COVID-19 pandemic, where doubting people were fed with disinformation, thus turning them against the health system and precautions.

Highly active social media users believe they have substantial influence within their networks and are more likely to attempt to change others' political attitudes and behaviours (Weeks et al., 2015). These accounts play a dual role, consuming and producing content that often contributes to the political discourse within their communities. Additionally, influencers on social media have been found to boost online political participation and intentions to engage in pro-environmental behaviours, which can lead to increased offline political engagement over time (Deckonink & Schmuck, 2022). For instance, influencers advocating for climate change awareness causes can mobilise their followers to sign petitions, attend virtual protests, or take other forms of political action. Over time, these online behaviours can transition into real-world activism, with youth participating in events like climate strikes. This example shows the power of political influencers in shaping the discourse and stimulating society

The increasing involvement of celebrities and political influencers in shaping electoral outcomes reflects the growing intersection between pop culture, social media, and politics. While celebrity endorsements can change voter intentions, their impact is moderated by factors such as political salience and the nature of the endorsement. Celebrities use their platforms to engage in political activity, highlighting important global issues like climate change. They act for change but can also use their audience to show frustration and anger with political actions. The rise of social media has further increased the role of political influencers, particularly among younger audiences. While stimulating political engagement, these influencers can also contribute to polarisation and the oversimplification of complex political issues. Blending entertainment, social media, and politics presents opportunities and challenges for democratic participation, highlighting the dual-edged nature of celebrity and influencer involvement in political discourse.



Hoe democratisch is de Europese Unie?

Door Inge van Hoek

De Europese Unie is een groot goed. Het zorgt ervoor dat wij als Europa grensoverstijgende problemen kunnen oplossen en het brengt economische voordelen met zich mee. Hoe democratisch is deze unie alleen? Wij kunnen als meerderjarige burgers wel kiezen op wie er in het Europese Parlement komen, maar hoeveel mensen verdiepen zich hier daadwerkelijk in? De kloof tussen het Europese bestuur en het volk is een stuk groter dan tussen de Nederlandse overheid en het volk. Dit valt terug te zien in het feit dat slechts 50% van de Europese bevolking kwam opdagen bij de verkiezingen van 2024. Bij de Nationale verkiezingen kwam 78% van de Nederlandse stemgerechtigden naar de stembus. Als burgers niet betrokken zijn, kunnen we dan wel spreken van een democratie? Mensen onderschatten hoeveel invloed de Europese Unie heeft. Om hier verandering in te brengen is het belangrijk dat er meer aandacht komt voor het belang van de Europese Unie in de media. Jürgen Habermas zou zich hierbij aansluiten: “Hoe meer nationale volkeren gaan beseffen en door de media tot het besef worden gebracht dat de besluiten van de Europese Unie zeer diep ingrijpen in hun dagelijks leven, des te eerder zal hun interesse groeien om ook als Unieburgers gebruik te maken van hun democratische rechten”. Zodra de kloof tussen het volk en de Europese Unie kleiner wordt, wordt de Unie al een stuk democratischer.

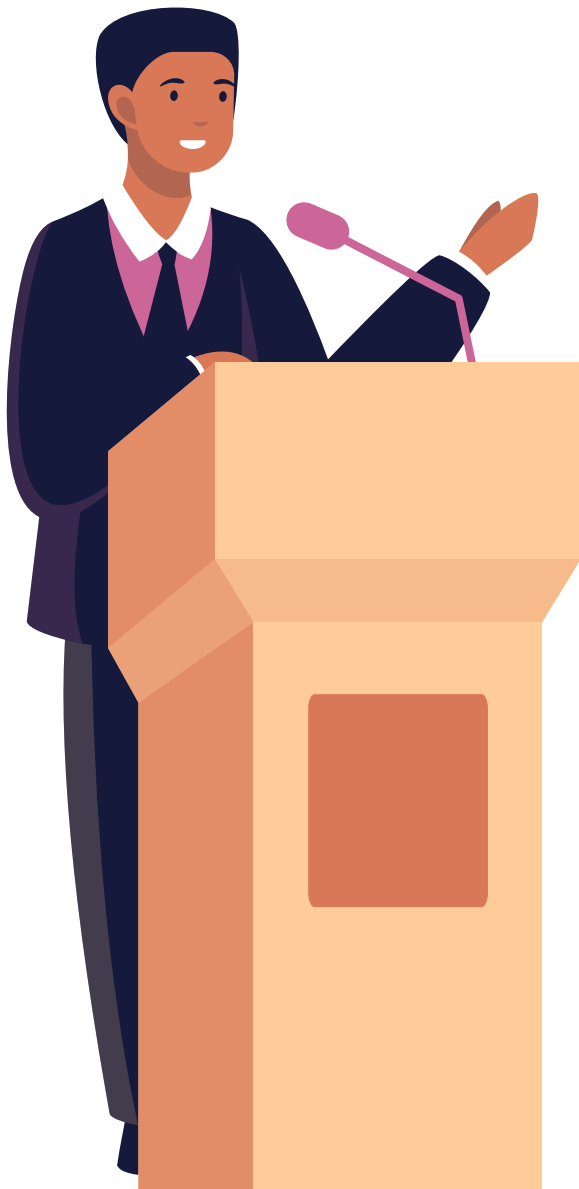
Wat regelmatig naar voren wordt gebracht wanneer het gaat over de Europese democratie is de ‘no-demos these’. Deze stelt dat de Europese Unie nooit democratischer kan worden dan dat deze nu is, aangezien er geen Europees volk is. Er zijn enorm veel verschillende culturen terug te vinden in Europa, waardoor het nooit als één zal voelen. Dat gevoel van één zijn zou moeten leiden tot een gevoel van solidariteit en betrokkenheid: een wil om aan de democratie te participeren. Wat hier kwalijk aan is, is in mijn ogen onduidelijk. Het volk van Nederland bestaat immers ook uit verschillende culturen. Mensen met verschillende religies, verschillende etniciteiten, verschillende dialecten en verschillende normen en

waarden. Voelen wij ons allemaal Nederlanders? Voelen wij ons allemaal verbonden met elkaar? Nee. Dat is ook niet nodig. We mogen allemaal stemmen en daarmee worden we allemaal vertegenwoordigd. De democratie werkt op die manier redelijk en zo werkt het in andere Europese landen ook. We hoeven ons niet één te voelen met iedereen en een volk te zijn. Het is nodig om met zijn allen er voor elkaar te zijn. Om elkaar te ondersteunen waar nodig. Daar zorgt de Europese Unie voor.

Een andere reden die vaak wordt gezien als oorzaak voor de kloof tussen het Europese volk en het Europese Parlement is de zogenoemde taalbarrière. Ondanks dat dit vroeger inderdaad een probleem was, zie ik niet waarom dit in het heden nog bezwaarlijk is. De meeste mensen hebben tegenwoordig een telefoon of een computer, wat erin resulteert dat we binnen een paar seconden een volledige bron kunnen vertalen. Uiteraard is niet iedereen in staat om dit te doen. Sommige ouderen hebben geen mobiele telefoon of begrijpen simpelweg niet hoe ze hier meer mee kunnen doen dan hun kinderen bellen. Ook voor hen is er een eenvoudige oplossing te vinden. De media kunnen namelijk ook in één klap een bron vertalen en deze publiceren. Het is een kleine moeite, die toch zorgt voor een democratischer systeem. We hebben geen gemeenschappelijke taal meer nodig om gemeenschappelijke verkiezingen te kunnen houden, we moeten simpelweg zorgen dat iedereen deze kan begrijpen. Dat is eenvoudig én democratisch. Dan kunnen namelijk alle Europese burgers een overwogen stem uitbrengen.

Als Nederlanders kunnen wij momenteel alleen op Nederlandse politici stemmen. Persoonlijk vind ik dat problematisch. We zijn één unie. Waarom zou ik niet op een Franse politicus mogen stemmen? Als ik zijn standpunten beter vind, vertegenwoordigt hij mij beter dan dat een Nederlandse politicus dat zou doen. Daar gaat het namelijk om. Een democratisch parlement vertegenwoordigt de burgers, of ik op een Nederlander stem of niet. Thierry Baudet is van mening dat er een collectieve identiteit nodig

spreken van een democratie. Echter bestaat Nederland uit 12 verschillende provincies en in elk van deze zijn er weer andere normen en culturen te vinden. Ook binnen die provincies zijn er verschillen. Zelfs binnen steden. In bijvoorbeeld Rotterdam Zuid wordt heel anders geleefd dan in Kralingen Oost, een rijkere buurt in Rotterdam. In Drenthe hebben ze ook andere gewoontes en politieke attitudes dan in Zuid-Holland, maar dat betekent toch niet dat de iemand uit Drenthe niet op iemand uit Zuid-Holland mag stemmen? Het gaat om wie beter bij zijn standpunten past. Niet om wie dezelfde nationaliteit heeft. De Europese Unie zou momenteel gezien kunnen worden als een districtenstelsel, terwijl een democratie het volk moet vertegenwoordigen, niet de landen. Immers verkozen regeringen in de Raad van de



hebben de landen al een vertegenwoordiging van hun Europese Unie en de Europese Raad. We moeten daarom als Europese burgers op alle Europese politici kunnen stemmen. Iedereen in Europa verdient dezelfde politieke rechten. Dat is gelijkheid en eerlijkheid. Dat is democratie.

Ondanks dat we dus de huidige Europese Parlementsverkiezingen democratischer kunnen maken, betekent dat niet dat de hele Unie democratisch is. De Europese Unie kent namelijk meer organen dan alleen het Europese Parlement. Zo worden de leden van de Europese Commissie, ondanks dat deze leden de uitvoerende macht van de Europese Unie vormen, helemaal niet direct door het volk gekozen. De nationale regeringen moeten momenteel een kandidaat voordragen die vervolgens moet worden goedgekeurd door het Europese Parlement. Doordat de Europese Commissie door dit systeem alleen verantwoording hoeft af te leggen aan het Europese Parlement, dat overigens wel direct is verkozen, vergroot dit de kloof tussen de burgers en de Europese Unie. Om dit probleem te verhelpen kunnen ook hiervoor directe verkiezingen worden ingevoerd, dat zal weer zorgen voor een democratischere Europese Unie.

Ofwel, door een aantal aanpassingen aan het systeem kan de democratische legitimiteit van de Europese Unie versterkt worden. We moeten ervoor zorgen dat alle Europese burgers op alle kandidaten voor het Europese Parlement en de Europese Commissie kunnen stemmen en we moeten ervoor zorgen dat er meer aandacht in de media is voor deze processen. Dan pas kunnen we spreken van een daadwerkelijk democratisch Europa.

Electoral Autocracies: How Elections Reinforce Non-Democratic Regimes

By Carlotta Moscarella



Elections are one of the most powerful democratic tools: free and fair elections are, according to many, the foundations of democracy. Not only must elections be free and fair, but also be perceived as such by the electorate. They represent the primary way through which citizens express their will, through which the people -in Greek δῆμος- exercise power -κράτος. Democracy itself has been categorized and conceptualized through elections (electoral democracy). Not surprisingly, V-Dem uses ‘electoral’ as one of five high-level principles of democracy, and Freedom House uses the electoral process as a variable to measure the level of democracy.

What if elections are not free and fair? How come elections often define democracy, however, are also still called and held by not-so-democratic leaders such as Orban and Erdoğan and even by authoritarian rulers such as Putin?

Elections are not exclusively a democratic tool. They can be exploited and used as a means to rise to power. After all, some of the parties that instituted the worst regimes of the 20th century, such as the German Nazis and the Fascists in Italy, first entered the parliament through elections. Additionally, they can be manipulated by those in power, controlled, and used to na-

tionally and internationally legitimize their rule. In the 2024 Russian elections, Putin could claim a majority of 88.48% with a turnout of 77.49%: a maybe somehow suspiciously high support that, nevertheless, on paper represents the legitimization of his regime and the ‘proof’ of his support. Were such elections fraudulent? Most likely so - but this is another story.

In the transitional or hybrid regime of Hungary -classified as partially free- an amendment of the electoral system in May 2024 arguably reinforced the hold on power of Orban, consistently disadvantaging opposition parties through an updated, higher electoral threshold. This shows how the electoral process, when thoughtfully manipulated by those in power, can be instrumental to the authorization of the regime, leading to a greater centralization of power.

Another example of such a process is Turkey, classified as not free by Freedom House and arguably an autocratizing hybrid regime. Turkey has had a presidential system since 2018. In May 2023 Erdoğan won the presidential race with a majority of 52.15%. Despite the perception that such a percentage could indicate a competitive race, the OSCE reported that the AKP party, supporting the elected president, was highly favored in media

coverage. A similar situation exists with regard to the national elections: as noted by the OSCE the AKP party influenced and manipulated the electoral process through political interference, lack of transparency, and restrictions on civil liberties. Therefore, elections helped Erdoğan and the AKP strengthen their grip on the nation. Lastly, in Russia, classified as not free and as a consolidated authoritarian regime, both the presidential and national elections are all but free and fair. This is because of multiple manipulations of the electoral system and process, abuses of incumbency, political violence, vote buying, ballot stuffing, and many more irregularities. In the case of Russia, elections are fraudulent. Putin’s power and the personalistic rule are so consolidated that opposition is non-existent. Therefore in such authoritarian regimes, elections serve more as a way to legitimize the regime nationally and internationally through high levels of turnout and leader support.

To conclude, elections are a double-sided instrument. On the one hand, when they are in fact free and fair, they constitute the par excellence symbol of democracy. On the other hand, when the ‘free and fair’ element is lacking, elections can become a dangerous tool for autocratization.

USA vs. The Green Agenda

By Maria Monti

The future is already here: the extreme heat and rain, seasonal hurricanes and tornadoes, and summer drought turning into winter floods. In a post-COVID-19 era where climate change is once again a hot topic. American people face a choice whose consequences will affect the future of their country and the whole world, as the US is the second largest producer of planet-heating pollution. On the one hand, Donald Trump, the Republican candidate, advocates for deregulation and a return to fossil fuel dominance. On the other hand, Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee, seeks to continue Biden's legacy by focusing on renewable energy improvements and environmental justice.

After years of rallies and ads, it is clear what path Trump will decide to follow if elected again on November 5th, 2024. After Biden's restoration of the Paris Agreements, an international accord focused on combating climate change, he aims to withdraw as he already did during his first mandate in 2016. Furthermore, Trump's policy takes a 180-degree turn from the current incentives on electric vehicles (EV) implemented by the Biden administration, depicting electric cars as a way to give to China the US manufacture, since the Asian country is one of the major producers of EVs. According to a survey made by the centrist group's Third Way and The New Deal his speeches have caught the attention of many, with 44% of the American electorate holding a negative view of electric vehicles.

This approach against EVs is directly linked to his policies in favor of fossil fuel companies. Indeed, Trump solicited 1 billion dollars in campaign donations from oil executives. In exchange, he promised to aggressively dismantle many of the environmental regulations enacted by the Biden administration, including rolling back restrictions on oil drilling, fast-tracking natural gas exports, and eliminating pollution controls.

Contrastingly, Kamala Harris strongly advocates for a greener America, with seven pages of The Democratic Party 2024 program dedicated to environmental issues. Key proposals include following the successes of the Inflation Reduction Act by investing in clean energy technologies, to achieve net-zero emissions in US agriculture by 2050, electrifying the transportation sector, and increasing funding for climate research agencies. Harris advocates for environmental justice to address the impact of climate change on lower-income areas, with programs such as Justice40, which focuses on delivering at least 40% of benefits from climate and environmental programs to disadvantaged communities.

However, many criticized her changing ideas on fracking, a technique used to extract oil and natural gas, which she supported the ban of during Biden's run for the presidency in 2020. In recent interviews, she declared that her administration will not sustain a federal ban on fracking, stating that the US can build a clean energy economy without such a halt.

As the 2024 presidential election looms, US citizens find themselves at a pivotal crossroads. Donald Trump seems ready to sail back to fossil fuels, promising to dismantle the environmental safeguards of the Biden era. In contrast, Kamala Harris is set to plant seeds of renewal, cultivating a greener future rooted in environmental justice and sustainable innovation. The choice before voters will shape the future of America and its role in combating climate change.



Persistent polarization: The unexpected durability of political animosity around US elections

Polarisation has become a permanent feature of the political landscape, with partisan animosity on the rise in the United States (U.S.) since the 1980s. But why? The authors identify several factors, one being the nationalisation of political campaigns: modern political discourse in the U.S. has shifted from local and state issues to national themes, dominating the political discourse and creating a uniform effect across states that lead to consistent patterns of polarisation, further dividing the country. In their research, the authors challenge established views on electoral animosity, revealing that it remains largely unaffected by short-term electoral dynamics. Through their large dataset of 66 000 interviews, the study concludes that partisan animosity in the U.S. seems to be deeply entrenched and resistant to election-related changes. Critiquing past studies, the authors highlight a significant gap in understanding the evolution of partisan animosity. Previous research often examines the effects of elections in isolation - either pre-election or post-election sentiments - neglecting to assess the periods together. Furthermore, much existing data, sourced from national surveys like the ANES and NAES, may be outdated and limited in scope, raising questions about their relevance amid increasing stability in partisanship. This article provides a clear analysis of the stable but exceptionally high partisan animosity in the U.S., illustrated by the 2020 presidential elections and 2022 midterms. One example shows how campaign exposure can have contradictory effects on partisan attitudes, potentially reducing affective polarisation while simultaneously encouraging anti-democratic behaviour. While the authors express cautious optimism in the stability of partisan animosity during election periods, they also state that the absence of a “cool off” in post-election periods is worrying. As political animosity has become a feature of American life, “The implications of such entrenched polarisation could be ominous” (Neil Fasching, 2024). Consequently, if political animosity does not subside after elections, the long-term stability of American democracy could be at risk. Ultimately, this article reveals the limitations of previous studies and underscores the necessity for improved data analysis in political science literature, paving the way for a more informed understanding of polarisation in American politics.

N. Fasching, S. Iyengar, Y. Lelkes, Sean J. Westwood (September 2024)

Migration and sustainable development

According to the International Organization for Migration, the estimated number of international migrants has increased over the past five decades. While political violence is the main driver of refugee movements, environmental factors like climate change and natural disasters are increasingly causing involuntary displacement. Over 25 million people were displaced annually in the last decade due to environmental disasters. This article aims to look at the possible outcomes of immigration today, notably within sustainability science. The World Bank emphasises that migration plays an important role in economic processes. Due to this, there is a growing need for international cooperation to address brain drains, social conflicts, and sustainability goals. According to the authors, understanding the relationship between migration and sustainability “involves an aggregation of impacts on society, economics, and environmental resources across space and time”. Thus, establishing sustainable development requires accounting for how migration can influence the resources upon which future development depends. Consequently, integrating migration into sustainability science requires a shift from viewing migrants as a distinct, vulnerable group to recognizing them as potential catalysts for innovation. Framing migrants as victims of climate change can foster acceptance and support for their integration. The authors add studies indicating that refugee settlements are vulnerable to extreme weather, emphasising the need for resilient planning. By making migration visible in sustainability frameworks, policymakers can create a more inclusive narrative that encapsulates the benefits of migration for sustainable development. Within this article, the authors offer a distinct analysis on how migration can profit sustainability development. Their recommendation of a new comprehensive research agenda allows a fresh view on how migration can positively impact sustainability, potentially affecting policy making.

William Neil Adger, Sonja Fransen, Ricardo Safra de Campos, William C. Clark (January 2024)

Political Science Worldwide

By Chloe Orr

Bibliometric analysis of political science publications: a study on select countries of Asia (1991–2023)

Political science publications are essential in the study of any topic related to political science and international relations. Research in political science benefits individuals and society by analysing political systems, governance, and policymaking. With China on the rise as an emerging potential superpower, the Asian continent is growing in international importance, a fact strongly reflected in such political science literature. J. Saravan proposes an interesting Bibliometric analysis of political science publications on certain countries of Asia, between 1991 and 2023. Within this study, Saravan arrives at the conclusion that his analysis reveals the growing significance of political science research in Asia. From 2007 onward, a steady increase in political science publications was observed. This growth was shaped by multiple factors, like the increasing relevance of political systems and governance in Asia, rising political issues in the region, institutional support for such research, Asia's economic and geopolitical significance prompting international interest, and finally, advances in technology facilitating dissemination of research. This bibliometric analysis not only conveyed the growing importance of political science research in Asia, but also the importance of effective communication through strategic keywords and publication avenues to provide a necessary understanding for future research and policymaking in the region. In terms of political research, it is necessary to keep an open mind and discuss articles that are not solely originated from the Western world. This article helps grasp the rise of Asian political science literature, as well as its growing importance in the world of International Relations and Global Governance.

J. Saravanan (V. Thomas & A. Ashikho) (August 2024)

Foreign Election Interference in Africa's De-Democratization Culture

Out of the 54 countries in the African continent, 12 are currently holding or preparing for elections, 7 of which are presidential, representing a significant quarter of the continent. African elections are of global importance, making it crucial to analyse both national and international election interference these nations encounter. Election interference must be understood in the context of “de-democratization”, a hypothesis describing how politicians undermine constitutions, the rule of law, and democratic systems. Central to this hypothesis is the belief that some politicians have a disdain for democracy, perceiving voters as incapable of choosing ‘appropriate’ candidates. Consequently, politicians feel justified in imposing their preferred candidates through manipulation, vote-buying, intimidation, and other corrupt practices. Ghana exemplifies this phenomenon. During the November 2021 parliamentary elections, both the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) engaged in de-democratizing practices. For instance, the NPP’s “delegate system” facilitated electoral abuses, with one delegate from the Ashanti Region stating that voting was delayed until payments were made, encapsulated in the slogan “no money, no vote”. Ishmael Dilnos Norman also critiques Western literature on African elections, arguing that certain biases propel them to focus on Russian interference, while downplaying or ignoring Western involvement”. He references Joseph Siegle, head of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, who emphasises Africa’s democratic decline to Russia’s influence through “elite capture”, while avoiding the broader context of international influence. While international influence is significant, it is essential to analyse not only Russian involvement but also the roles of Western states and the internal dysfunctions within African states that profoundly affect electoral integrity. The de-democratization hypothesis not only affects the political processes within Africa but also influences global perception of Africa’s democracy. Within Norman’s article, we can dissect the importance of careful examination of political science literature relative to African elections. Analysing international election interference is vital, considering not only Russian influence but also the role of Western states. Finally, understanding internal dysfunctions within African states is essential, as they significantly impact the electoral process.

Ishmael Dilnos Norman (May 2024)

Shaping Sovereignty:

How Independence Referendums and Regional Elections are Influenced by International Law

By Aleksander Leon Chmiel

Since the post-WWII era, elections for sovereignty have become a crucial tool for self-determination, particularly in regions undergoing waves of decolonisation. Nevertheless, in the 21st century, elections and referendums in regions seeking autonomy or independence continue to occur, with international law playing a significant role in shaping their outcomes. Several examples will be discussed to highlight how organised voting is influenced by international institutions like the International Court of Justice, the United Nations, the African Union, and others.



In 2011, a referendum was held in Southern Sudan to determine the independence of what would become the state of South Sudan. The referendum was a result of the 2005 Naivasha Agreement between the Sudanese

central government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. The Sudanese government requested that the United Nations reopen a tender to print ballots for the South's secession referendum. The UN then distributed the voting materials in the region. Voters in Uganda were urged to boycott voter registration for the elections. To address this, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which was managing voter registration for southern Sudanese living abroad, invited a delegation. The delegation included Chuol Wan Luot, Coordinator for Diaspora and International Stakeholders in the Southern Sudan 2011 Elections. This South Sudanese example underlines the role of international law in elections, as the referendum was sanctioned by international agreements and supported by both the United Nations and the African Union (AU). At this time, the right to self-determination was explicitly recognised, given the history of the ethnic civil conflict and the agreements between the parties involved.

Since the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Balkan region has experienced turmoil, marked by numerous disputed territories. One such area is Kosovo, which unilaterally declared independence from Serbia in 2008. Serbia challenged the legality of this declaration and referred the matter to the International Court of Justice, seeking clarification on whether this move violated internation-

al law. An advisory opinion issued by the ICJ stated that "the declaration of independence of Kosovo adopted on 17 February 2008 did not violate international law." The proclamation of independence was reportedly delayed until after the 2008 Serbian presidential election, as Kosovo was a significant issue during the campaign.

After the Parti Québécois (PQ) secured a majority in the National Assembly during the 1976 Quebec provincial election, the party formed a government and held a referendum on independence in 1980. The question posed to Quebec's citizens was whether the province should pursue a mandate to negotiate sovereignty and establish a new political and economic union with Canada. Ultimately, the sovereignty proposal was rejected, with 59.6% of voters opposing it. The court underscored the importance of pursuing independence through democratic processes, stating that the principle of self-determination was not applicable in this context.

In the wake of the Russo-Ukrainian War that began in 2014, Crimea held a referendum, conducted under the supervision of Russian forces, to determine whether it should be integrated into the Russian Federation. Despite an overwhelming 97% of voters supporting "Yes," these results were deemed unlawful and were rejected by Ukraine, the European Union, and the United States. The United Nations General Assembly subsequently passed a resolution affirming Ukraine's territorial integrity. Given the context of external military involvement, the elections in Crimea were viewed critically, leading to the declaration of the results as invalid.

While elections can serve as a vital "expression of the people's sovereignty" and play a significant role in establishing statehood, it is crucial to recognise their potential use as instruments for advancing the agendas of certain regimes. A critical examination of elections as a tool of sovereignty is therefore essential.





The South Sudanese Dream for Elections

By Lisa von Arx

Two weeks ago, on TalkAfrica, political analyst Lorna Merekaje delivered a critical assessment of her government, in her words lingers the disappointment. Like many South Sudanese, the announcement of a further two-year delay to the presidential elections did not come as a surprise to her. The government's statement on the 13th of September to postpone the December elections, citing political unpreparedness, was met with mixed reactions. While institutions like the UN support extending the transitional government to prevent violence, critics fear this move could signal the end of a truly democratic South Sudan.

Merekaje accused President Kiir's government of showing little interest in preparing the nation for elections, claiming they are exploiting their considerable power under the transitional constitution for personal gain. Such a statement could put her at risk of arrest, especially since the parliament recently passed a bill permitting warrantless detention. Concerns over political equality and freedom of speech surrounding the 2024 elections have been mounting in recent months. The UN Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix underscored the importance of public trust in the electoral process, stating, "Legitimacy through elections can only be secured if the people of South Sudan believe their voices have been heard." However, the government sees the high number of IDPs and South Sudanese refugees as a significant obstacle to voter registration, making it challenging to ensure voting rights for all.

Thus far, the government has completed less than 20% of the tasks required to conduct elections, according to international standards set two years ago. In May and August, the UN Security Council urged South Sudan to take more action, but the country's deep financial crisis has been cited as a barrier. The government argues that insufficient funds, compounded by the economic impact of the conflict in neighboring Sudan, make election preparations difficult.

General Lazaro Sua, a key mediator in the still ongoing peace agreement, has expressed doubt that preparations for the 2026 elections will progress unless international financial support is provided, as the Sudanese conflict endangers South Sudan's bare survival. By December, it is expected that the number of people in need of humanitarian aid will rise to 75% of the population. Yet, international reactions remain skeptical. The United States continues to uphold economic sanctions against South Sudan and has withheld aid following the decision to delay the elections once again. In August, the UN advised against holding elections in 2024, citing the fragile political landscape and the risk of violence if the fairness of the elections were questioned. Some experts even warn of a potential relapse into civil war. Despite these warnings, many South Sudanese disagree with the government and UN officials on the election delay. Surveys conducted by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung show that 71% of respondents favour holding elections, even in regions where 55% fear the possibility of violence as a result. Similarly, ISS analyst Moses Chrispus Okello questions whether South Sudan will ever be politically stable enough to hold "perfect" elections, and whether waiting for such conditions simply serves the interests of power-hungry elites.

While the UN prioritizes avoiding flawed elections and appears to support an increasingly authoritarian government under a weak temporary constitution, South Sudanese citizens held high hopes for the elections. However, with over 90 of the original 117 preparatory tasks still incomplete, the likelihood of societal acceptance of any election outcome would have been alarmingly low. Combined with the people's deep desire for change, this frustration risks reopening the unhealed wounds of the civil war, potentially destabilising the country's fragile food security and social order, and endangering the future of the world's youngest nation.

De Nederlandse Loterij: een uitgelezen kans voor beter bestuur?

Door Casijn de Haas

De volksvertegenwoordiging moet een exact portret, in miniatuur, zijn van de gehele bevolking. Het moet denken, voelen, redeneren en handelen zoals zij, schreef founding father John Adams in een pamflet over het opstellen van een democratische grondwet. Dit principe wordt in alle democratieën onderschreven, maar zelden wordt het ook volledig nageleefd. We denken dat verkiezingen hiervoor zorgen, echter is dat maar deels waar.

Voordat kiesgerechtigde Nederlanders hun stem mogen uitbrengen is er al een voorselectie gemaakt door de politieke partijen. De meeste partijen stellen een commissie aan die kandidaten (binnen de partij) beoordeelt en op een voorlopige kandidatenlijst plaatst. Deze lijst wordt vervolgens goedgekeurd door een ledenraadpleging. De overige 97% niet-partijleden van de Nederlanders heeft dus relatief laat in het proces pas inspraak op de verkiezing van Tweede Kamerleden. Uiteindelijk komen er zo'n duizend personen op de kandidatenlijsten waar het volk op mag stemmen. Dertien miljoen verschillende denkbeelden worden gereduceerd tot vijftientig partijprogramma's, waarvan er maar vijftien vertegenwoordigd worden in de Tweede Kamer.

Naast de kwalen die de Eerste Kamer op dit gebied ook vertoont, heeft het andere problemen. Zo is de functie van de Eerste Kamer discutabel. Het mandaat van de Eerste Kamer is namelijk niet verankerd in de grondwet. Hierdoor heeft deze kamer in de geschiedenis meerdere veranderingen kunnen ondergaan. De Eerste Kamer werd in 1815 opgericht. In het begin benoemde de koning de kamerleden. Het was de bedoeling dat hiermee de onstuimigheid van de Tweede Kamer werd beteugeld door de 'neutrale' Eerste Kamer. De neutraliteit werd in die tijd ook al in twijfel getrokken. De Belgen noemden de Eerste Kamer de 'dierentuin van de koning'. Na de grondwetswijziging van 1848 werd de eerste kamer gezien als een 'Chambre de réflexion': een kamer die wetsvoorstellen zou herbeoordelen op kwaliteit. Vanaf dat moment werd de Eerste Kamer indirect verkozen, waardoor het zijn apolitieke karakter verloor.

Tegenwoordig heeft de Eerste Kamer dus een vreemd profiel. Aan de ene kant moet het een objectieve kijk geven op de wetmatigheid van wetsvoorstellen. Aan de andere kant wordt het sterk beïnvloed door politieke visies. Het verzekeren van de verenigbaarheid tussen bestaande en aanstaande wetgeving is overigens een dwaze taak om aan verkozen volksvertegenwoordigers te geven. Slechts iets meer dan een derde van de Eerste Kamerleden heeft een achtergrond in rechten. Het is logischer om een grondwettelijk hof in te stellen zoals voorgesteld door de Staatscommissie parlementair stelsel.

Mijn laatste kritiekpunt op de Eerste Kamer is dat de volksvertegenwoordiging niet erg volks is. Eerder benoemde ik al mankementen van Tweede Kamerverkiezingen. Deze zijn nog ernstiger bij de Eerste Kamerverkiezingen. Eerste Kamerleden worden verkozen door middel van 'getrapte' verkiezingen. De Provinciale Statenleden stemmen op kandidaten die door partijen worden voorgedragen. De afspiegeling van het volk op basis van kenmerken wordt hierdoor slechter. Van de Eerste Kamerleden heeft 86,6% een universitaire studie afgerond, tegenover maar 15% onder de gehele bevolking. Het aantal kamerleden met een migratieachtergrond is lager dan in de samenleving. Ook zijn vrouwen ondervertegenwoordigd in de Eerste Kamer.





Op zichzelf zijn dit geen problemen, ware het niet dat de burger hier zelf nooit op heeft mogen selecteren. Ze hebben immers geen invloed op wie er op de kandidatenlijst komen.

Aan de criteria van Adams wordt dus niet voldaan. Het is onmogelijk dat kamerleden ‘denken, voelen, redeneren en handelen’ zoals de bevolking, als de bevolking daar nooit over heeft kunnen bepalen. Bovendien blijkt uit onderzoek dat rijke en hoogopgeleide burgers inhoudelijk beter vertegenwoordigd worden in beleid dan arme en laagopgeleide burgers. Een hoger inkomen heeft méér invloed op beleid dan stemmen.

Ik hoop nu duidelijk gemaakt te hebben dat de Eerste Kamer in deze hoedanigheid ongewenst is. Dan rest de vraag: hoe lossen we dit op? Een uitweg is het afschaffen van verkiezingen. Partijen kunnen geen hoogopgeleide, witte en mannelijke kandidatenlijst opstellen als er geen verkiezingen gehouden worden. Met deze aanpak wordt ook het dilemma van de politisering opgelost. Een alternatief voor verkiezingen is het verloten van Eerste Kamerzetels. Dit idee is ontleend aan de oude Grieken. De raad van 500 van Athene werd samengesteld door middel van loting.

Implementatie hiervan zal leiden tot depolitisering van de Eerste Kamer. Gelote leden zitten daar immers niet namens een partij en ze zijn niet uit op herverkiezing. Kamerleden halen er ook geen voordeel uit een verhit debat te voeren om stemmen te winnen. Hierdoor is het waarschijnlijk dat er een inhoudelijke discussie zal plaatsvinden, wat zal leiden tot een beter resultaat.

Daarnaast zorgt het voor een betere representatie van de bevolking. Door willekeurige loting is er een grotere variëteit aan personen dat ‘verkozen’ wordt. Er worden vijfenzeventig verschillende standpunten vertegenwoordigd, in plaats van vijftien partijlijnen. Ook zal het een betere afspiegeling van de bevolking opleveren naar kenmerken. Er zullen bakkers, werklozen, economen, sportleraren en misschien ook wel politici in zetelen. De verhouding van kamerleden naar afkomst zal beter zijn en de man/vrouw ratio zal gebalanceerd zijn.

De Griek Sokrates was geen fan van ‘verkiezingen’ door middel van lot. Hij zou verklaard hebben dat het willekeurig benoemen van bijvoorbeeld bouwvakkers ook

onverstandig is. Maar, bij de Grieken was de raad van 500 het wetgevende orgaan. Het lijkt mij ook niet verstandig om willekeurige burgers wetten te laten opstellen. Enige politieke ervaring is gewenst, maar daar hebben wij de gekozen Tweede Kamer voor. De nieuwe Eerste Kamer zal (net als de huidige Eerste Kamer) echter geen initiatiefrecht hebben. Het zal slechts wetten die door de Tweede Kamer zijn goedgekeurd beoordelen. In die zin kan het gezien worden als een volksraadpleging, in miniatuur.

De Tweede Kamer moet ervoor zorgen dat de wetten die ze naar de nieuwe Eerste Kamer doorsturen duidelijk worden geformuleerd, zodat de nieuwe Eerste Kamer er een goed oordeel over kan vellen. In 2012 gaf 28% van de Nederlanders namelijk aan dat ze de politiek te ingewikkeld vinden. Dit is kwalijk, omdat er ook over hén geregeerd wordt. De nieuwe Eerste Kamer vormt dus ook een check op de begrijpbaarheid van wetgeving. Als kamerleden het wetsvoorstel niet begrijpen, zullen ze er waarschijnlijk tegen stemmen.

Loting brengt echter ook moeilijkheden met zich mee. Laat je burgers bijvoorbeeld vrijwillig meedoen aan de loting of verplicht je ze? Beide opties hebben voor- en nadelen. Waarschijnlijk zullen met name welbespraakte mensen met een interesse in politiek zich als vrijwilliger opgeven voor de loting. Dit zal afbreuk doen aan de diversiteit van kamerleden. Maar, burgers verplichten deze taak op zich te



nemen zal bij velen in het verkeerde keelgat schieten. Daarnaast zullen zwijgzamere mensen minder snel hun perspectief geven in een gezelschap van vijfenzeventig personen.

Om de volksvertegenwoordiging een exact portret, in miniatuur, te laten zijn van de bevolking moet er iets veranderen. Het invoeren van loterij lijkt veelbelovend. Het is daarentegen lastig om er een goede uitwerking voor te ontwerpen. Aangezien ook de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen niet feilloos zijn, is er misschien een bredere aanpak nodig. Zodat de overheid niet alleen van en voor, maar ook door het volk wordt.

Social Media in Politics:

Empowering Voters or Spreading Misinformation?

By Nelli Danner



Social media usage affects more and more people today. A study from 2024 showed that about 2/3 of the world’s population uses social media and on average for more than two hours. The number increases when focusing on the younger generation, with 90% of teenagers in the US and 85% of young people in the EU regularly being active.

So what role does Social Media play in political campaigning and elections?

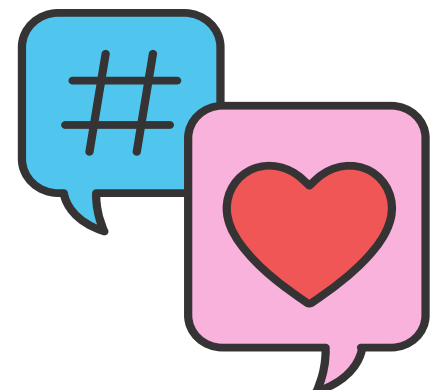
Social media has become a very attractive tool for politicians to use for campaigns and to acquire more votes during elections due to its various benefits. That is because it gives them the ability to connect and engage with a wide range of people in real-time and information becomes available and spreads easily. Social media can also mobilize a part of the population which has not been previously politically active, especially in younger demographics. Even if adolescents are not yet allowed to vote, they can still use the digital space, without being limited by time, geography or age, to participate in political debates. Furthermore, an early confrontation with politics may cause them to use their voice once they have reached voting age. Another benefit is the communal and

peer aspect of social media. Many users follow their friends, family and colleagues on various platforms and studies have found that voting participation increases when individuals receive prompting messages from their peers to vote. A good example for this is the “I voted” hashtag famously used for the US on various platforms. When Facebook users saw an “I voted” button together with a message showing which of their friends had already voted, they were significantly more likely to vote compared to when they only received an informational message.

While Social Media usage for elections has advantages, it also has its risks and downsides. Compared to more “traditional” news delivery systems like newspapers or cable news channels, social media gives users the power to post news without context or fact-checking. This can affect the society’s perception of candidates and their platforms and allows misinformation to spread quickly and easily. Furthermore, when all content on a person’s social media page aligns with their pre-existing beliefs (often the case through algorithms), they will less likely encounter someone in their social circle to challenge those messages and information, leading to misinformation spreading unchecked. Unfortunately, the spread of misinformation even goes as far as antagonistic

state actors using it to influence election outcomes. In the 2016 U.S. elections for example, Russia used tactics like propaganda or bots to disseminate fake news. Approximately 80% of these bots behaved in a Trump-supporting way. This is problematic, as fake news is continuously shared through fake accounts and therefore travels about six times faster through social media than true stories. Hereby quality of the message is not so important as the goal is to drown real news in a constant stream of fake news.

To conclude, Social Media in political campaigning is a double-edged sword, which has to be used attentively. It can engage and recruit voters but also sharpens the spread of misinformation, cutting deeply into the fairness of elections.



Indira Gandhi:

The Iron Lady of India

By Lana Kim Denkes



Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi, India's first and only female Prime Minister to date, remains one of the most influential and polarising figures in Indian politics.

Born on the 19th of November 1917, into a prominent political family in India, Gandhi was the only daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister. Growing up in a politically charged environment, where she witnessed the Indian independence movement and being from a politically active family, laid the groundwork for her future career. Indira Gandhi joined the Indian National Congress Party in 1938. After completing her university education in India and abroad, she became increasingly involved in the party's politics. In 1955, during her father's term as Prime Minister, she became a member of the working committee, solidifying her role within the Congress Party. Elected as party president in 1959, Gandhi entered the Rajya Sabha (upper chamber of Parliament) in 1964 and was appointed Minister of Information and Broadcasting in Lal Bahadur Shastri's government the same year. While she won a seat in the 1967 Lok Sabha (lower chamber), the following years were marked by growing tension between the left and right wings within the party, ultimately resulting in her expulsion in 1969. She sidelined her internal rivals by gathering the majority of the former members around her, forming a new faction known as Congress (R), later referred to as the "New" Congress.

As Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi implemented various social and economic reforms. One of her major achievements was the Green Revolution during the 1960s and '70s which modernised the agricultural sector, transforming the country's approach to food shortages and helping India achieve self-sufficiency. Gandhi became known for the slogan "Garibi Hatao" (Remove Poverty), which was central to her 1971 election campaign aimed at improving the lives of India's poor.

On the global stage, Gandhi became a significant figure during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. Her decision to support the independence movement in Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) against Pakistan, reinforced the road to military victory and the creation of a new country. Nevertheless, her rule was not without controversy. After a period marked by severe economic challenges, political unrest and a court ruling against her election, Gandhi declared a "State of Emergency" in 1975, restricting civil rights and imposing media censorship. During this time, opposition leaders were imprisoned and dissent was silenced. The Emergency lasted until March 1977, after which her party lost the following election. Charged with corruption and abuse of power during the Emergency period, Gandhi was briefly imprisoned in October 1977 and December 1978. In 1978, Gandhi and her supporters split from Congress (R) due to her declining popularity and formed a new faction called Congress (I) Party, with the "I" standing for Indira. When her party regained strength in the January 1980 Lok Sabha elections, many legal cases against her were withdrawn.

In early June 1984, Gandhi ordered Operation Blue Star, storming the Golden Temple in Amritsar to capture Sikh separatists. The offence was a catastrophe; the temple was severely damaged and many lives were lost during the raid which occurred on a Sikh religious holiday. Consequently, the operation led to growing resentment towards her figure among the Sikh community. On the 31st of October, 1984, Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards.

Indira Gandhi, often referred to as the Iron Lady of India by both Indian and international media embodied her firm and decisive leadership. Originally a title for Margaret Thatcher, it aptly reflected Gandhi's authoritative leadership style, marking her as one of the most pivotal and polarising actors in modern Indian history.

De onophoudelijk brandende vlam van een onvoltooide ideeënrevolutie over politiek engagement: de Perzische Constitutionele Revolutie van 1906

Door Sem van der Tang

“Vrouwen, leven, vrijheid,” scandeerden Iraniërs van allerlei achtergronden gedurende de protesten van 2022, ongeacht persoonlijke risico's op arrestatie of verwondingen. Tot op heden leiden dergelijke aanhoudingen bij protesten tot oneerlijke rechtsprocessen en is het schenden van mensenrechten tegen discriminatie de norm in het Iraanse staatsapparaat, welke de vorm van een autoritaire theocratie aanneemt. Grootschalige demonstraties van het maatschappelijk middenveld laten blijken dat de waarden van een significant deel van de Iraanse samenleving niet corresponderen met de opgelegde, vrijheidsbeperkende normen. Veel hervormingsgezinden vinden hun inspiratie in een gebeurtenis van meer dan 100 jaar terug in hun land, dat destijds Perzië werd genoemd: de Constitutionele Revolutie van 1906. Dit jaar signaleerde betreurenswaardig genoeg niet het startschot van een duurzaam, democratisch staatsbestel. Hoe past de politiek liberale ideeën toe in illiberale contexten? Wellicht was deze revolutie geen mislukking, maar juist een ambitieuze belofte die nog tot uiting moet komen.

Een staat zonder overheid en een keizer onder de koningen.

Alvorens de gebeurtenissen van 1906 onder het vergrootglas worden gelegd, nodig ik lezers uit om een korte rondreis door Iran te maken. Langs de zuidkust van de Perzische Golf strekt het Zagrosgebergte zich uit van de Straat van Hormuz tot en met de grens van Turkije en Armenië. Deze natuurlijke barrière vormt bij wijze van spreken een westelijke stadsmuur rond

Perzië. Er is zelfs een ophaalbrug: het stroomgebied van de Shatt Al Arab. In dit gebied, waar de Tigris en de Eufrat samenvloeien, bevindt zich een moeilijk te doorkruisen moeras. Waar het Zagrosgebergte eindigt, begint de Elburz: een hooggebergte dat vanuit Azerbeidzjan rond de Kaspische Zee richting Afghanistan krult. Samen met de oostelijke gebergtes vinden we zodoende de resterende stadsmuren van dit land, wat we inmiddels kunnen beschrijven als Fort Perzië. Belegging stond garant voor veldslagen in zowel de bergen, als in moerasland, als in woestijnen - en zie dat gebied dan maar eens succesvol te bezetten.

De geografie biedt een verklaring voor de rijke geschiedenis van onafhankelijke, traditionele gemeenschappen. Tientallen “stammen”, zoals de Koerden, de Bakhtiari en de Qashqai, leefden ook nog aan het begin van de twintigste eeuw wederzijds geïsoleerd en koesterden elk een unieke, hiërarchische samenlevingsstructuur. De uitvoerende macht, ofwel de toenmalige Kadjaren-dynastie, heerste de facto zonder gecentraliseerde staat. Een belangrijke factor van het landsbestuur was het innen en investeren van belastinggeld - een invloedrijke vaardigheid die exclusief was toebedeeld aan één familie: de Mostowfi's. Dit verschijnsel werd tot en met de jaren '20 in stand gehouden, gezien de Perzische overheid simpelweg niet beschikte over een eigen bureaucratie. De Sjah (keizer) regeerde dankzij systematische manipulatie van sociale kloven tussen gemeenschappen. De Sjah was een king of kings - een Sjah onder de Sjachs.

Toegepaste politicologie en een critical juncture.

De Kadjaarse staatsstructuur kon niet effectief reageren op de ontstane maatschappelijke onrust in het jaar 1906. Tegelijkertijd was er inmiddels een intelligentsia ontstaan: een nieuwe intellectuele klasse die zich liet inspireren door de waarden van de Franse Revolutie en de Verlichting, ten opzichte van absolutisme en religie. Tegelijkertijd leidde imperialisme - vormgegeven door handels- en olieconcessies (in de Perzische volksmond “capitulaties”) - tot onvrede. Door de tekortkoming van een degelijk belastingapparaat kon Perzië het hoge modernisatietempo niet bijbenen. Daarbovenop leed de bevolking onder economische crisis, inflatie en hongersnood door een slechte oogst.

Terwijl religieuze leiders protesteerden tegen Russische en Britse imperialistische invloeden, vonden tientallen stakende koopmannen uit Teheran een toevluchtsoord in het Britse consulaat. Deze groep groeide uiteindelijk uit tot circa 14.000 mensen, onder andere dankzij de studenten van Dar al-Fanon - een instituut waar Perzen toegang hadden tot Westers onderwijs. Het consulaat transformeerde figuurlijk in 's werelds grootste politicologie-college in de geschiedenis. Het centrale thema? Constitutionele monarchie en federalisme. Logischerwijs vormden de Belgische grondwet en de Britse constitutie dus een grote inspiratiebron voor een Perzisch grondwetsvoorstel. Onder hoge maatschappelijke druk schreef

de Sjah op 5 augustus 1906 per decreet verkiezingen uit voor een Majles: een volksvertegenwoordiging.

Één pennenstreek van de Sjah vormde zodoende een critical juncture voor de geschiedenis van de Perzische staatsontwikkeling. De ambities van de gekozen volksvertegenwoordiging - bestaande uit de intelligentsia, religieuze leiders, en traditionele notabelen - ontdekken we in de institutionele indeling van de grondwet. De verkiezingen en het loslaten van censuur zorgden voor een opleving van het maatschappelijk middenveld. Voor het eerst werden klassieke grondrechten voor burgers formeel vastgelegd. De invloed van de Sjah werd meer ceremonieel - en dus kleiner - dankzij een klassieke scheiding der machten.

Het juweel in de kroon van de Perzische constitutie werd de Majles: een democratisch gekozen parlement met onder andere het budgetrecht, initiatiefrecht en het recht van amendement. Echter is nuance op zijn plaats bij de term "democratisch". De verkiezingen vonden indirect plaats en aan vrouwen werd het stemrecht niet verleend, idem voor burgers jonger dan 25 jaar met een bescheiden vermogen. In Perzië gold zodoende een streng censuskiesrecht, vergelijkbaar met Nederland vóór de kiesrechtuitbreidingen. Tevens verschilden de districten in zeer hoge mate in inwoneraantallen, wat zorgde voor sterk disproportionele invloed voor de inwoners van Teheran. Desondanks zorgden de condities in de maatschappij voor een relatief vlotte revolutie.

Een federale, constitutionele monarchie in name only.

Echter veroorzaakten deze omstandigheden ook een relatief snelle afbraak van diezelfde revolutie. Zowel Russische als Britse imperialisten besloten in 1907 om Iran in verschillende invloedssferen op te delen en samen te werken - wat de positie van de ontevreden Sjah ten opzichte van de Majles versterkte. Tegelijkertijd heerste er binnen het parlement enorme verdeeldheid. Pogingen tot progressieve hervormingen van liberale volksvertegenwoordigers leidden ertoe dat de

religieuze leiders toenadering zochten tot de Sjah en fatwa's uitvaardigden tegen verlichtingsideeën.

De Majles zorgde eveneens voor woede bij culturele gemeenschappen door te proberen het belastingsysteem te centraliseren - iets waar het parlement uiteindelijk ook niet in slaagde. Iedereen wilde investeren in modernisering; niemand durfde de belastingen meer te verhogen; en tot slot was het nagenoeg onmogelijk om überhaupt de belastingen te verhogen.

In 1908 achtte de Sjah zichzelf in staat een militaire coup tegen de Majles te leiden, wat uiteindelijk escaleerde tot een burgeroorlog. Hoewel de destijds keizer het land ontvluchtte in 1910, was het te laat om de schade ongedaan te maken. De invloed van overheidsdepartementen reikte nauwelijks buiten Teheran en traditionele en regionale magnaten regeerden vrijwel zelfstandig. Meerdere provincies waren in handen van warlords, daarnaast vierde het zeggenschap van buitenlandse mogendheden hoogtij. Deze instabiele overheid en volatiele politiek maakte Perzië een federatie in name only.

Het jaar 1921 was wederom een critical juncture: Reza Khan - later kroonde hij zichzelf tot Reza Sjah - voerde met een garnizoen Kozakken nogmaals een coup d'état uit, ditmaal met succes. Zijn regeerperiode kenmerkte zich door modernisering, centralisering en uniformisering, maar ook door autocratisering. De invulling van ministersposten en zelfs óók de selectie parlementsleden waren de facto zijn exclusieve bevoegdheid. Het leven van de intelligentsia, religieuze leiders en notabelen was dankzij de welvaart in Perzië - inmiddels omgedoopt tot Iran - wellicht niet nasty of brutish, maar daarentegen kon het dankzij politiek gemotiveerde sluipmoorden wel short zijn. Reza Sjah creëerde een Hobbesiaanse natuurlijke toestand in de bestuurscultuur. Uiteindelijk is de Constitutionele Revolutie wellicht praktisch mislukt, daarentegen is het toch een theoretisch succes. Voor veel Iraniërs heeft er een revolutie in het denken over burgerschap en politiek engagement plaatsgevonden.

The Role of Late-Night TV in the US Presidential Elections

By Mariana Goldsmit Valdespino

One of the most important elections of our time is less than a month away and late-night TV across the United States (US) has definitely tuned in. From Hasan Minhaj's jokes on Biden's age, Jon Stewart's return to the Daily Show desk, and Maya Rudolph's uncanny Kamala Harris impressions, the US major networks have kept people informed and entertained through the whole process. But what exactly is the role late-night TV is playing on the 2024 US elections?

Late-night TV is becoming increasingly political

This election season it seems that every night we hear more political jokes than ever on TV. Yet, this hasn't always been the case. In fact, there was a time where political jokes were a rarity and TV hosts limited their political comments to a couple of jokes on major events. Stephen Fransworth and Robert Lichter conducted a study alongside the Center for Media and Public Affairs at George Mason University in 2018 to look at jokes directed at US presidents, particularly Donald Trump. They focused on the opening monologues for four major late-night hosts: Stephen Colbert (CBS), Trevor Noah (Comedy Central), Jimmy Kimmel (ABC), and Jimmy Fallon (NBC). Fransworth and Lichter found that these four hosts made a total of 3,128 jokes about Donald Trump during his first year as President, with Stephen Colbert alone accounting for 1,151 of these.

This is a massive amount compared to the jokes made about President Obama his first year, 936 jokes, and this number is even lower for their predecessors Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. But is this shift only because Donald Trump is more "laughable" than the other Presidents?

Not exactly. While being interviewed for a CBC produced podcast, comedy reporter Hershhal Pandya commented that the amount and kind of political jokes made is determined by what the audience wants to hear. And seeing how important, controversial and chaotic things have been around the election, and Donald Trump himself, it makes sense people want to talk about it. After all, as Avery Nixon from Montclair State University writes, late-night is a way for American voters to "keep our spirits up and also get our election news effectively". However, Trump's amusing hairstyle, incoherent rally rants, and interesting policy notes definitely increase late-night writers' eagerness to joke about him.

Not only that, but show ratings and demand for more political jokes increased too. This is especially the case for Stephen Colbert, who is perhaps Trump's harshest critic in late-night. When Colbert began escalating his negative commentary on Trump, ratings for his show increased by over 6%, bringing in \$313 million USD in ad money. This can also be seen in the fact that Apple TV even postponed the production for one of their shows for late-night to cover the election. Apple's show *Loot* stars for

mer Saturday Night Live (SNL) cast member Maya Rudolph. Rudolph has been SNL's Kamala Harris since 2019 and when Harris took over the ballot an overwhelming amount of people wanted to see Rudolph graze the stage in a purple suit and full vice-presidential energy once more.

Is it all on Trump?

Most jokes definitely are. In their study Fransworth and Lichter found that in 2018 Trump officially became the "most laughed-about politician in a single year in the history of late-night comedy", and the Trump jokes have only gone up since. During his presidency, his failed attempt to overturn the election in 2020, and what is now his third presidential campaign, comedians have provided ample commentary on Donald Trump's political career. Yet, it is interesting to note that jokes about the former President tend to be more on Trump himself, rather than his policy. In 2018, more than 90% of the jokes the four major hosts made about Trump focused on "personal matters, such as the president's physical appearance, his celebrity status, his bluster, his theoretical inconsistencies, and his chaos-filled administration".



Nonetheless, comedians joke about democrats too. Back when President Biden was still on top of the Democratic ticket, he was a subject to dozens of jokes on his age, balance issues, love for ice cream, early bed-time, and his difficulty getting off-stage. Jokes have kept rolling on Harris and Walz too, though this tend to be more positive. These jokes usually center around the Minnesota governor's extreme "whiteness" and dad-energetic, as well as Kamala Harris' memorable comments, distinctive laugh, and, as SNL's Andy Samberg puts, "little spoon [supporting] husband".



Though most comments made on the shows leave the appearance that all the hosts will be supporting the Harris-Walz campaign, late-night hosts do not just base off their jokes along party-lines. Comedians like Jon Stewart and Colin Jost do not shy away from commenting, and even praising, some of the things Republicans do, such as JD Vance's good debate performance and clear sympathy for Tim Walz's son witnessing a shooting. Additionally, comedians did cut back on anti-Trump jokes following his first assassination attempt in July. In the CBC podcast, comedian Ashley Ray states that this showed comedian's moral stand that violence, even directed at Trump, is wrong. Late-night hosts "try to maintain this dream idea of what America is, and how we're better than violence", Ray said. This

desire to uphold and inform about America's "optimal values" is perhaps most clearly seen in Comedy Central's Daily Show when Jon Stewart hosts. Since his return to hosting the show earlier this year, Stewart has started the habit of cutting the jokes, taking a more serious tone, and reminding his audience that violence and racism should always be unacceptable.

Will late-night TV have a big effect on the election results?

In terms of switching voters' decisions, probably not. Seeing as approval ratings for major shows went up once jokes on Trump started back in 2016, we can assume that the majority of the audience are Democrats. Besides, I don't think it would be very fun to be a MAGA-head and watch a whole hour of demeaning jokes about your "beloved hero" every night. So, it seems unlikely that these jokes really convince any Trump supporter to change their vote. Though of course, unlikely does not mean impossible. Yet, late-night could definitely have an effect in shaping undecided voters. This election year, many young people will be voting for the first time, and many of them are probably looking to get their political news in a more fun and less dishardening way. Thus, late-night shows determine a lot of the information these voters are getting. And, seeing the positive light in which Kamala Harris is usually portrayed by these shows, as well as her recent appearance in CBS' The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, late-night TV presents a great opportunity for the Harris campaign to get in touch with these voters and may help win some of them over.

Finally, jokes tend to get really stuck in Trump's head, making him even more insecure. A starking example of this happened just last week, when 28 days before the election, the Republican candidate was commenting on Jimmy Kimmel rather than pol-

icy issues. Trump complained once again through Truth Social about a joke Kimmel made about him in the Oscars more than seven months ago. Kimmel, of course, took great joy and made further jokes upon learning about this. This incident showed how easily distracted Trump can get by late-night TV. After all, Trump has always been very aware of the important impact that media and celebrities can have, leading to him spending a lot of time commenting on celebrities that stand against him, like Kimmel or Taylor Swift.

While it's hard to say for sure, by informing undecided voters and getting inside Trump's head, it is definitely possible for late-night TV to have an important effect in the 2024 US Presidential Elections. One thing that is certain, is that as the election comes to a close, we will keep laughing at harsh jokes, cheesy puns, and spot-on impressions.

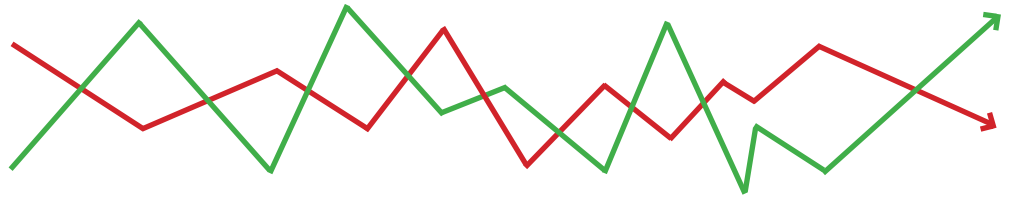


Recommended shows to keep an eye on these elections:

- Saturday Night Live – especially the cold opens and Weekend Update
- The Daily Show
- The Late Show with Stephen Colbert
- Jimmy Kimmel Live
- Late Night with Seth Meyers

How to Convince a Finance Bro to Vote?

By Celia Hiv-



The Urban Dictionary determines multiple characteristics of finance bros: they're obsessed with being rich and only care about money, they're a "douche", they go to the gym and they seem confident when they're actually not. Finance bros don't necessarily work in finance, but we find them mostly in economic sectors. Most importantly, finance bros never work out of passion, but to make money, which they're obsessed with.

sure that their ideas and beliefs are represented.

Secondly, you should explain to them that voting matters and has real-life consequences. Indeed, finance bros like to think that they are more important than they are, believing that they have the most important job in the world even if they just complete Excel sheets all day. Consequently, you should convince them that because their opinion is 'the most important in the world', they should express it by voting.

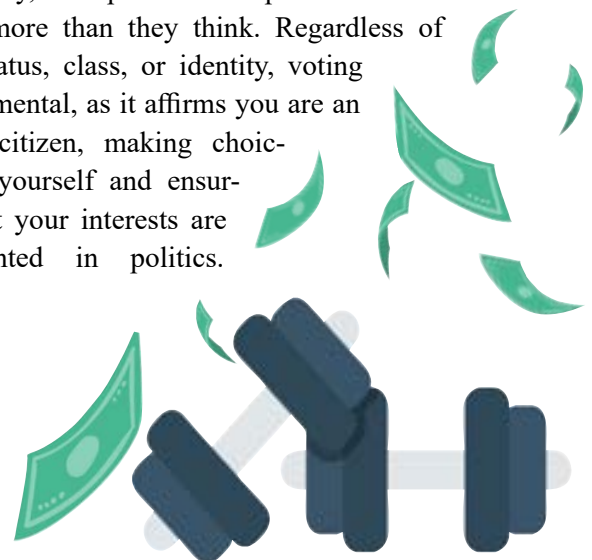
You can also mention that voting means a chance for a better representation of their social class and interests. Finance bros might complain that they are alone against the world, and politics is useless to them as it doesn't help them in any way. If they vote, finance bros will be better represented in the political scene, so their views will be taken into account. This will give finance bros more confidence, as they like hearing people consider them more than anyone.

Overall, convincing finance bros to change their opinion isn't an easy task. It requires resilience and confidence. However, with the right tools and arguments, using the right words and elements to appeal to their egos and sensibilities, this task is achievable. You should not forget to emphasise that voting is important, as they are members of society, and politics and policies affect their lives much more than they think. Regardless of your status, class, or identity, voting is detrimental, as it affirms you are an active citizen, making choices for yourself and ensuring that your interests are represented in politics.

As such, they often wonder: "Why should I vote? Why should I vote if I only care about money and don't want to get involved in politics? As long as I make my money I'm happy", while not understanding the actual impact that politics can have on their money.

We have all encountered a finance bro once in our lives, whether he's a friend, the guy your friend is dating, or even a family member. This article will provide you with a guide on how to explain to them that politics matters and voting is important.

Firstly, you can argue that political institutions determine economic policies in a country, including the taxes that finance bros will have to pay. According to the study made by Oswald and Powdthavee, having money makes people vote right wing rather than left wing. As such, finance bros, as they care about money, will be more likely to agree with right-wing economic arguments or anything that will make them 'keep their money'. You should then suggest that their vote matters, as they can have a say in the economic environment within which they work, and en-



Complottheorieën vernietigen de democratie

Door Marie Spruit



Democraten die onderdeel zijn van een pedofielen-netwerk en Mexicanen die moordenaars en verkrachters over de Amerikaanse grens helpen; het zijn allebei nieuwsberichten uit 2016 en ze kloppen allebei niet. De hoeveelheid misinformatie die wordt verspreid neemt de laatste tijd enorm toe. Het veelvuldige gebruik van sociale media en de algoritmes op het internet zorgen ervoor dat het alsmaar makkelijker wordt om informatie te verspreiden zonder bewijs dat het waar is. Het resultaat hiervan is dat mensen over foutieve kennis beschikken op het gebied van bijvoorbeeld de politiek. In 2016 hebben de Verenigde Staten al gemerkt dat dit een groot gevaar voor de democratie kan zijn.

Volgens Atkinson et al. stonden de Amerikaanse verkiezingen van 2016 in het teken van complottheorieën. Vooral Donald Trump verspreidde veel misinformatie die zijn aanhangers compleet geloofden en meenamen in het uitbrengen van hun stem. In de campagne van 2016 heeft Trump meerdere onwaarheden uitgesproken en deze gingen vaak over dat de politieke elite het belang van de 'gewone' Amerikaan weg-schoof onder dat van migranten. Hij

kwam met absurde verhalen, waarin hij zelfs hoge politici beschuldigde van de moord op John F. Kennedy. Doordat hij vervolgens zei dat dit verhuld werd door de media, was het lastig voor nieuwszenders om de theorieën te ontkrachten. Deze tactiek zorgt ervoor dat veel mensen dan toch de 'buitenstaander' geloven, in dit geval Donald Trump.

Kiezers baseren hun stem op de informatie die ze hebben of verkrijgen over de kandidaten. Vooral aan de rechtse kant van het politieke spectrum hebben complottheorieën een invloed op de uitslag, vanuit deze kant worden de meeste theorieën ook de wereld ingebracht. Nefes en Romero-Reche stellen dat zulke informatie polarisatie bevordert. Dit gebeurt vooral als andere (politieke) figuren als vijand worden neergezet, zoals Donald Trump ook deed in zijn campagne van 2016. Toch gebeurt dit niet alleen ver weg, ook in Europa wordt de migrant steeds vaker als de vijand

geportretteerd. Complottheorieën zullen er dus voor zorgen dat de ideeën van mensen verder uit elkaar gaan liggen en extremer zullen worden, dit noemen we polarisatie.

De democratie draait op de visies van veel verschillende mensen. In een goed democratisch systeem is het volk van een land goed vertegenwoordigd. Een burger kan stemmen op een persoon of partij met wie zijn mening overeenkomt en zo komen er heel wat verschillende meningen in het bestuur van een land terecht. Polarisation zorgt er echter voor dat de meningen van mensen ver uiteenlopen en ze zich niet meer kunnen verplaatsen in de gedachten van een ander. Dit is gevaarlijk en zorgt ervoor dat de gemeenschappelijke grond verdwijnt. Als mensen niet meer makkelijk compromissen kunnen sluiten vanwege hun enorme verdeeldheid, kan dit de ondergang van de democratie betekenen. We hebben in 2021 al politiek geweld gezien in de Verenigde Staten, toen het Capitool bestormd werd. Ook in Nederland moeten we voor deze polarisering uitkijken, aangezien de populistische partijen in de Tweede Kamer ook flink wat polariserende opmerkingen in het rond slingeren.

Toen Donald Trump zijn kiezers in 2016 op het verkeerde been zette door te beweren dat zijn tegenstander onderdeel was van een pedofielen-netwerk, had dit invloed op hun keuze. Deze theorieën wekten woede en zelfs haat op richting de democraten, waardoor de polarisatie groeide. Het middengebied tussen republikeinen en democraten verdwijnt en dit is een groot gevaar voor de democratie. Wees dus alert op 'fake news', in het belang van onze democratie.



Mexico's First Female President: A Cure or a Curse?

By Claudio Alvarez del Castillo



Just a few weeks ago, history was made with the first female president of Mexico taking office on October 1st to lead the country for the next six years. While it might seem like a victory for women in Mexico and around the world to finally have a woman at the forefront of politics—for she vows to protect those in vulnerable positions, safeguard women's rights, and tackle abuse and violence—many have questioned not only the legitimacy of her triumph but also the transparency of her promises and her overall integrity.

To understand what Mexico awaits, it is crucial to reflect on her campaign and her performance in previous political roles, particularly in a country where corruption scandals and influence peddling are commonplace.

Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo was born in 1962 into a middle-class family of Jewish descent in Mexico City. She completed her entire university education at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), where she earned a degree in physics, followed by a master's and PhD in energy engineering. During this time, Sheinbaum claims to have been an active participant in student activism.

Her political journey is closely tied to that of her presidential predecessor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (commonly known as AMLO), who initially appointed her as Mexico City's Secretary of the Environment from 2000 to 2006, during his tenure as the city's governor. This marked the beginning of a decades-long partnership; Sheinbaum supported AMLO in all three of his presidential campaigns—in 2006, 2012 and 2018—the last of which resulted in his victory, and the founding of the left-wing National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) in 2011, currently the party with the largest membership. Sheinbaum also served as mayor of Tlalpan, a borough of Mexico City, from 2015 until her resignation just over two years later to pursue the city's governorship in 2018, which she won with 47% of the vote.

Despite her efforts to improve and expand the city's mobility and public transport systems as governor, her adminis-

tration faced significant criticism. One major controversy was the collapse of the Enrique Rébsamen school following the September 19th, 2017 earthquake, which claimed the lives of 19 children and seven adults. The building had presented structural damage prior to the earthquake and some accused Sheinbaum of ignoring such warnings, allowing the school to continue operating. Another major scandal was the collapse of an elevated track of the city's subway system in 2021, which left 27 casualties and over 80 individuals injured. To date, no one has been held accountable for the tragedy. Regarding crime and security, according to the organisation México Evalúa, 99.1% of crimes in 2022 saw no effective response from authorities. Furthermore, official data indicates that between January 2019 and February 2023, 363 women were murdered for gender-related reasons in Mexico City.

In 2023, Sheinbaum resigned as governor of the country's capital to pursue the presidential holy grail. After winning the party's internal election, she faced off against Xóchitl Gálvez, representing the PAN-PRI-PRD coalition, and the lesser-known Jorge Máynez from the party Movimiento Ciudadano (Citizens' Movement).

The electoral period was marked by an overwhelming sea of propaganda, a fierce rivalry, and dishonesty. Seeing their overly polished faces plastered on every lamppost and hearing their anxious yet composed voices on the radio became the ordinary. A belligerent atmosphere invaded the country with politicians trading accusations and their supporters clashing on social media platforms to defend them. All three candidates were caught spreading misinformation during debates and public appearances but received no consequences. In essence, the atmosphere was turbulent and uncertain.

What truly set this election apart, however, was the widespread violence and influence of organised crime—issues that also defined AMLO's presidency, the bloodiest since the Mexican Revolution.

Nearly 40 candidates were killed, and hundreds more were threatened or forced to abandon their campaigns. On election day, ballot boxes were stolen or set on fire, and reports of shootings and vote-buying surfaced across various states.

In the end, Sheinbaum was declared victorious, securing 59% of the votes, a result many observe with scepticism. Some attribute such success to the excessive publicity, others to the disorganised opposition, as neither Gálvez nor Máynez were considered serious contenders from the outset. Many others point to election fraud, accusing the government of rigging the results, especially given the close ties between the director of the National Electoral Institute (INE) and former President AMLO. Unfortunately, these speculations are likely to remain as such, as it seems unlikely for a thorough investigation to ever take place. Nonetheless, Sheinbaum's party enjoys a deeply loyal following, and there is a possibility that many not only turned out to vote but also rallied others to do the same.

These elections revealed how polarised the population is, the government's leniency towards organised crime, and the fragility of our democracy. These are among the many challenges Sheinbaum will face during her term, alongside the staggering public debt exceeding 852 billion USD, a party riddled with scandals ranging from bribery to cartel connections and sexual abuse allegations, and the gut-wrenching legacy of nearly 200,000 homicides during her predecessor's administration, among many other unresolved issues. Despite this, AMLO and his party have garnered a substantial following over the years, largely due to his political rhetoric and extensive social programs. Throughout his tenure, he antagonised the opposition and discredited journalists who criticised him, while assuring his supporters that the country was undergoing a revolutionary transformation. His various social programmes were perceived by many as "band-aid" solutions designed to win public favour and project him as a populist, empathetic leader.

This explains why many fear Sheinbaum will follow in her predecessor's footsteps, as she cannot virtually separate herself from the ideology and political framework established by AMLO. She owes the support and leverage obtained during the elections to this particular movement; throughout her campaign, she repeatedly pledged to continue AMLO's projects and strategies if elected. She even adopted his expressions in her speeches and frequently praised his achievements, portraying him as a national hero. Nevertheless, some remain hopeful that Sheinbaum will diverge from this movement and forge her own path, prioritising the people, not the party, and finding her own ways to lead without relying on a man who is far from being worthy of admiration.

It is simply a matter of time before we see what direction Sheinbaum's government takes—a path of lies, corruption, and the glorification of mediocrity, or a path where she recognises and embraces the opportunity to lead the nation as a woman. Her extensive political career has equipped her with the necessary skills to govern, and many believe her innate scientific and pragmatic mindset will drive her to rely on data and evidence-based decisions. During the elections, she successfully navigated pressure from the opposition and earned enough support from both the public and the two chambers of Congress to fulfil her promises and launch new projects to improve the country's situation. Yet, a key question remains: Will she allow AMLO to govern from the shadows, or will she stay true to her values as a young activist and guide the nation towards a genuine transformation?

Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo

Born:
June 1962

In office since:
October 2024



SAVE THE DATE

Upcoming SPIL Activities and Holidays

December 2nd

Schoentje zetten
Leiden & The Hague

December 4th

Masters Trivia Night
Leiden

December 5th

Sinterklaas

December 9th

Study Groups
Leiden & The Hague

December 10th

Merch Reveal Borrel
Leiden

December 13th

Purple Friday
Leiden

December 24th

Christmas Eve

December 25th

Christmas Day

December 26th

Boxing Day

December 31st

New Year's Eve

January 1st

New Year's Day

January 6th

Epithany

January 25th - February 1st

Short Trip to Barcelona

