# Sustainable Democracy in the 21st Century

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**Abstract**

This paper interprets the concept of sustainable democracy in 21st century along with interpreting related definition, challenges and strategies to address the challenges. Likewise, this research helps to understand that sustainable democracy is a governance model that helps to ensure societal wellbeing, promotes inclusivity and safeguards democratic values. It needs participation of citizens, accountability and equitable representation besides, addressing social, economic and environmental issues. Additionally, this paper traced certain challenges related to sustainable democracy including democratic backlashing, political polarization, erosion of democratic institutions, spread of misleading data through technology, climate change and so on. Also, populism and authoritarianism are identified as major threats for democracy that reduce trust on public process and institutions. The research has gathered data using secondary data collection method and interpreted the data using thematic analysis.

Similarly, the research has helped to understand that role of civil societies, democratic institutions and citizens are crucial to address such challenges. Nations like Poland, Hungary and others has issues related to their democracy. However, they have included strategies to address these challenges. Strategies like civic education, rule of law, monitoring medias and addressing social inequalities are done. Global bodies like IDEA, OSCE, EU and others plays important role in adopting sustainable democracy. The research findings also reflect the importance of decentralization, well-structured election process and legislative strength to progress sustainable democracy. Also, empowering civil societies and ensuring participation of informed citizens, democratic values can be preserved. Also, inclusive governance and global collaboration is needed to address interconnected challenges like geopolitical tension and to embrace sustainable democracy. Thus, effort from government and citizens will help to ensure justice and sustainable democracy in 21st century.

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## Introduction to Sustainable Democracy

Sustainable democracy can be defined as the practice of developing and maintaining a governance system that supports democratic values besides adapting to modern day challenges such as disinformation, political polarization, economic inequality, climate change and others, that threatens the stability of democratic system. The term goes beyond the traditional concept of democracy and focuses on inclusivity, resilience and an equitable political system that address current challenges and protects interest and rights of future generations. Likewise, in the 21st century, sustainable democracy needs innovative policies, strong institutions, informed and active citizens which can together address local as well as global challenges. This approach makes sure that democracy is not only functional in the present but also adaptable to changing scenarios (Pickering et al., 2022). Moreover, achieving sustainable democracy needs to balance state power with different societal interests to foster demographic institutions. Such balance nurtures accountability, inclusivity, supports institutions as well as empowers citizens to operate smoothly. Also, the role of political parties, civil societies and governance structure is important to maintain social cohesion.

To support sustainable democracy, it is important to focus on active development of citizens as well as on institution building. Initiatives are needed to reform political systems as well as to democratize the governance process. It needs a wider group of stakeholders including civil society organizations, local government, social movements, electoral institutions, political parties and security forces. Moreover, to advance in social democracy it is important for political forces to reform priorities, strengthen leadership skills within young people and to develop a platform for global dialogue on reforms as well as governance (Pickering et al., 2022). It will help to promote democratic control on the security sector as well as to ensure accountability and engulf trust within state institutions. It is often assumed that democracies possess the capacity to foster basic human freedoms, i.e., certain minimum freedoms relating to those of association, speech, expression and opposition are essential for elections to be meaningful. The checks and balances inherent in a democracy prevent excessive abuse of power and arbitrary oppression while guaranteeing rights and entitlements to citizens and correcting policy errors (Banik, 2022).

Likewise, addressing complex relations between political, social and economic factors, sustainable democracy gives a framework of long-term stability, justice and equity. It highlights the need for integrated effort in different sectors to maintain democratic values, empower citizens and reform governance systems. Such initiatives will help to bring in sustainable democracy and to make inclusive and resilient societies that can meet current as well as future challenges.

## Research background

Sustainable democracy focuses on creating a governance system that maintains democratic principles besides adapting to evolving global issues. However, the rise of nationalism, illiberalism and populism has strained democratic values in the 21st century. It has resulted in democratic laps within both emerging and established democracies. Moreover, issues like declining trust in political parties, politicization of institutions, misuse of technologies and others have increased such challenges. However, irrespective of such challenges, sustainable democracy focuses on developing resilient institutions, making citizens active and to

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implement reforms which can protect individual rights. Also, initiatives like "Sustainable Democracy Roundtable" reflect the need for an integrative approach and collaboration of policy makers, scholars and civic leaders to propose unique solutions and to address such issues (Shorenstein, 2024). Likewise, this research will help to understand different approaches related to sustainable democracy in the 21st century.

**Research Objectives**

*This research has the following objectives-*
- To understand the concept of sustainable democracy in the 21st century.
- To interpret the challenges that current democracy is facing.
- To identify the strategies to address the challenges and to embrace sustainable democracy.

**Research Questions**

- What is the meaning of sustainable democracy in the 21st century?
- What are the challenges to contemporary democracy?
- Which strategies will help to address the challenges?

**Literature Review**

This section will use different secondary sources to collect and review literature related to sustainable democracy in the 21st century.

Gareth Price (2024) has propounded that India is one of the world's most diverse and populated nations, with a revolutionary past and a promising future of endless development, growth, and prosperity. Perhaps the greatest challenge democracy faces in India is the inability to achieve consistent economic growth and eradicate extreme poverty. Additionally, there rose claims of deteriorating civil liberties and institutional autonomy.

Center for South Asia and Global Studies (2023) has stated in their research that the enactment of the religious-centric Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 (CAA), reading down of Article 370 and loss of statehood for Kashmir, frequent invocation of sedition law against political dissenters, and assault on India's free press are some examples which explain the backsliding of Indian democracy.

Thomas Carothers and Benjamin Press (2022) in their paper study the world as it faces a democratic recession. They propound that anti-democratic leaders' motivations and methods reveal valuable insights about different types of backsliding and how international actors should respond. They blame the powerful authoritarian states like Russia and China for anti-democratic influences across the globe.

Phillipa Williams (2021) has talked about the impact of social media, especially WhatsApp on the quality of democracy in India. These platforms are used by various political parties and their supporters to spread their propaganda. In doing so these platforms become inundated with fake news and biased information affecting everyday "political talk" in India. This study helps in understanding the implications for lived democracy. Further it talks about how public digital platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have

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transformed the quality of democratic practices bringing about new forms of expression and encouraging the emergence of computer-aided elections. The paper argues how the digital private sphere helps building civic connections by reconciling the personal and political. It demonstrates the necessity of integrating digital spaces and kinship into geographies of democracy and highlights the situated implications of digital private spaces in contemporary political life.

Thulasi Raj (2021) has stated that transparency and access to information improve public trust and accountability. On the evening of 24 March 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a 21-day national lockdown which was set to begin within four hours. The lockdown was extremely harsh leading to a complete ban on transport including international and domestic travel, closure of schools, non-essential shops and prohibition on assembly and events. This abrupt declaration without any prior notice left a country of around 1.366 billion people in utter confusion and disarray. Shutdown led to a sudden halt in freedom of movement and access to resources. It caused a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups such as students, women, the disabled, the poor and the homeless.

"Since the end of the Cold War, most democratic breakdowns have been caused not by generals and soldiers but by elected governments themselves" – this is a central claim of How Democracies Die, co-authored by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. The recent military coup in Myanmar, along with the 2014 coup in Thailand and the 1999 coup in Pakistan, represents an anomaly in modern times, as coups were more common in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, however, the more widespread phenomenon is what scholars refer to as "democratic backsliding," which describes the gradual decline of democracy, often driven by elected officials through legal means (Varshney, 2021).

Anand Panyarachan (2008) has stated that democracy starts with the wisdom of the voting public however that wisdom is acquired. Democracy requires its citizens to be well-informed of various issues pertaining to their society. Many developing countries struggle to streamline resources to make education more relevant to the tasks of daily lives to divert the attention from memorisation to creativity and independent thinking. The paper further enlists the factors that are essential for the sustainability of democracy namely, elections, political tolerance, the rule of law, freedom of expression, accountability and transparency, decentralization and civil society.

Phillip C. Schmitter and Imco Brouwer (1999) have discussed the protection and promotion of democracy by established democracies. They have stated since there is no apolitical way to democratise there can be no apolitical strategy to promote and protect democracy. Inorder to evaluate the impact of the promotion and protection of democracy requires studies at three levels namely, micro, meso and macro.

Ashutosh Varshney (1998) in his paper has stated that India has baffled theorists of democracy. Democratic theory states that poverty, widespread illiteracy and a deeply hierarchical social structure are unfavourable conditions for the functioning of democracy. Despite the presence of these conditions in Indian society India has maintained its democratic institutions ever since it gained independence in 1947 except for 18 months in 1975-77. The central government has witnessed peaceful transfer of power over those five decades. The press has remained vigorous, free and unafraid to challenge the government. The judiciary maintains institutional autonomy. Election turnout keeps increasing with each passing general election. The author states that the dangers for Indian democracy still persists because of many reasons particularly the lack of trust Indian people have on the political leaders.

## Concept of sustainable democracy

Dimitrova, (2020), mentioned that sustainable democracy focuses on the relationship between citizens, elites and the state. The article mentions that democratic relapsing occurs when elites capture the state due to their personal gain. They capture through their network of political parties. It results in creating a disconnection between the broader society and the government. Under such a scenario, citizens protest to achieve an inclusive democracy. Thus, sustainable democracy needs wider societal mobilization to ensure that governance remains accountable for every citizen. Likewise, the goal of sustainable democracy is to maintain the laws and to address underlying challenges.

Sustainable democracy can be defined as a governance model that ensures long-term preservation of democratic principles, societal well-being as well as inclusivity. It focuses on active participation of citizens, strong democratic institutions and equitable representation that helps to address underlying challenges besides, protecting rights of future generations. Moreover, sustainable democracy needs to balance between state power, eliminating elite dominance as well as to promote accountability via transparent process. Sustainable democracy supports marginalized groups, youth and includes diverse voices. Similarly, the concept of sustainable democracy also identifies the importance of resilience against risks like authoritarianism, populism as well as political polarization (Ouguergouz, 2021). It highlights the importance of human rights, rule of law and social justice to achieve stable governance. Likewise, civil society, government and citizens integrate to adopt evolving economic, social and environmental challenges. Likewise, by nurturing collective responsibility as well as empowering communities, sustainable democracy helps to make progress and prosperity.

## Challenges related to sustainable democracy

International trend of democratic backlash is one of the major threats for sustainable democracy. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance or IDEA has mentioned that the "global democracy index" reflected consistent decline since 2008. Major reasons for such decline are authoritarian regimes and populist leaders. Nations such as Poland and Hungary have been criticized for corroding democratic norms such as suppressing media freedom, discouraging independence of the judiciary system and so on (Kirmani, 2021). On the other hand, nations like the United States have been criticized for including issues like voter suppression, attacks on press and judiciary, condenses election results and others (Kirmani, 2021). Such incidents reflect that strongly democratic nations can also struggle with democratic erosion. This scenario highlights the need to ensure that nations remain transparent and responsive.

Additionally, Khalil et al., (2021), has discussed that democratic institutions like media, judiciary and electoral bodies are crucial to keep any democracy functional. However, in some nations, democratic institutions are under pressure. For example, in countries like India, the judiciary system struggles with intense politicization. Major judicial decisions are influenced by political power and not by legal merit. Such a scenario has declined public trust in the legal system (which is the core of democracy). Moreover, political parties which were traditionally known to work for societal interest have become less functional. Rather, in nations like India, Pakistan and others, politicians are known to use their personal power for their own benefit. They are failing to address diverse needs of the electorate.

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Moreover, the rapid rise of new technologies and social media has generated both opportunities and challenges for democracies. Technologies are used by nations to improve democratic engagement and participation. However, Wilson et al., (2020), has discussed that technologies are also being used to spread misinformation that intensifies polarization as well as manipulate public opinion. For example, currently, politicians are using social media to target voters and to tailor their political advertisements. It often results in spreading false or misleading information. It has resulted in creating political division and making it difficult for people to have a shared understanding of political issues. Furthermore, Artificial Intelligence or (AI) in data manipulation and surveillance raise concern regarding freedom of expression, privacy and integrity of democratic systems.

Also, Queiroz-Stein et al., (2023), has discussed that climate change as well as environmental degradation also challenges sustainable democracy as these issues need urgent as well as collaborative global action. However, climate change reflects limitations of democratic system in addressing long-term global issues. For example, in many cases global leaders (under political pressure of powerful industries) prioritize short-term economic gains more than environmental sustainability. Nations like Brazil believe in climate denialism that restricts preventing climate change. These approaches reduce public trust on democratic processes.

Additionally, Kluknavska et al., (2024), has discussed that political polarization has aroused due to populism. It is another challenge for sustainable democracy. Populist movements gave rise to political debate in various nations. Populism gives voice to marginalized groups on the other hand, it weakens democratic values by spreading fear, attacking vulnerable groups as well as creating "us v/s them" attitude. In nations like Hungary, populist leaders have promoted false information, hampered trust in elections and challenged democratic institutions. As political divisions intensify, it becomes harder for democracies to address challenges. It further pressurizes democracies.

To summarize the challenges, it shall be discussed that sustainable democracy struggles with different challenges including democratic backsliding, negative impact on democratic institutions, on technology, political polarization as well as climate change. Thus, addressing such challenges needs integrated efforts from civil societies, government and citizens to reestablish democratic values as well as to implement a transparent system.

**Strategies to address the challenges**

Different nations and international bodies have embraced different strategies to safeguard their sustainable demographics. For instance, some nations are concerned to reinforce their rule of law and democratic institutions. The European Union (EU) has taken strict steps to make sure that their member states embrace the needed democratic standards. In response to democratic backlash in Poland and Hungary, EU has taken different actions. The EU has suspended funds for Poland and Hungary as well as imposed legal processing against these nations for hampering press freedom as well as disturbing judicial independence. Additionally, EU has used their power of conditionality to associate allocation of recovery funds from Covid19 pandemic with democratic principles specially, independent judiciary and anti-corruption measures. Also, the European Commission suspended €6.3 billion in three Cohesion Policy programs and €21 billion overall, including funding related to unmet "super milestones" and breaches of rule-of-law principles in Hungary (European Commission, 2024). Such action was a part of EU's wider

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strategy to maintain their democratic norms. It ensures that their member states comply with democratic values.

Additionally, within the age of social media, addressing the spread of misinformation has become a major concern for democratic countries. Therefore, nations like the United States and United Kingdom have included strategies to monitor their online platforms and to prevent spreading of misleading information. During the 2020 election in the U.S. efforts were made to spread false information through social media. Therefore, Big organizations like Twitter and Facebook controlled misleading political advertisements specially related to electric integrity. Similarly, Haves, (2023), reported that, UK government proposed an "online safety bill" in 2021 that had the aim to hold tech organizations responsible for spreading harmful contents through their channels. The bill prohibited harmful contents including online abuse, false information and others. Furthermore, the European Commission, (2024), has highlighted that the EU has introduced DSA or the Digital Service Act and DMA or Digital Marketing Act to monitor online platforms so that spreading of harmful contents can be controlled. It made sure that tech giants are accountable for the data they handle and they need to be careful in preventing spread of false data.

Moreover, to make the citizens more active and informed, many nations have invested in "civic education programs". It has encouraged public participation within democratic process. For example, Mishra, (2024), reported that Finland includes one of the strongest civic education systems across the world. They ensure that students or learners are well-informed about democracy and take part in societal movements. Also, the UN Democracy Fund launched the "Global Democratic Governance and Innovation initiative" in 2020 to promote civic education. These initiatives motivated young members as well as marginalized groups to understand their roles in demographic processes and to maintain sustainable democracy.

Furthermore, the International Monetary Fund, (2020), reported that addressing social inequalities is important for sustainable democracy as broader inequality fuels political polarization and populism. Different nations have taken necessary steps to overcome inequalities by including social welfare programs as well as enhancing education. For example, during the Covid19 pandemic, nations like Germany, New Zealand, South Korea and others have included strong social safety nets and gave economic relief to susceptible populations. These approaches not only aimed to address the negative economic impact of the pandemic but also aimed to promote social cohesion as well as to reduce political discontent. For example, under the Biden Administration's American Rescue Plan in the United States includes a direct economic check on citizens with the aim to reduce poverty as well as social unrest (The White House, 2021). This strategy aims to protect citizen's trust on democratic institutions.

Herbert, (2021), discussed that at international level, some bodies like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and or International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) plays an important role in addressing challenges related to sustainable democracy. They put efforts in supporting democratic reforms, monitoring elections and encouraging global corporations to address global challenges like economic inequality and climate change. For example, OSCE actively takes part in monitoring elections of Eastern Europe as well as Central Asia. The body helps to improve transparency during elections in nations like Georgia, Ukraine and others where democratic challenges are noticeable.

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Thus, to summarize it shall be discussed that different nations and agencies are putting effort to address the challenges.

**Methodology**

This section will help to understand the method through which this research has been constructed.

This research is based on *interpretivism research philosophy*. This philosophy believes that reality is socially constructed and is subjective. This philosophy believes that knowledge is subjective and it evolves through contextual understanding and interpretations (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Therefore, this philosophy has helped to interpret the context of sustainable democracy in the 21st century. Likewise, this philosophy has been selected for this research.

Moreover, there are primarily two types of research approaches including deductive and inductive approaches. This research includes an Inductive *approach*. It helps to observe the gathered data and to understand underlying patterns. It ultimately helps to generate a general theory using the research objectives that can be addressed (Haque, 2022). Likewise, this approach has helped to understand certain patterns from the collected literature like Democratic challenges, sustainable democracy and others. Accordingly, it has generated a theory that answers the research question. On the other hand, the Deductive approach includes developing hypothesis and using collected data, the hypothesis is tested to answer the research questions. However, this research does not include any hypothesis thus the deductive method is not suitable.

Moreover, there are different types of research strategy but this research is based on *grounded theory strategy*. This strategy helps to develop a new theory where the theory is grounded in data. This theory helps to answer the research questions. Also, it is suitable with inductive and qualitative methods. Therefore, this strategy has been selected as it has helped to develop a theory that shows how sustainable democracy is positioned in the 21st century based on collected data.

There are different types of research choices like mono-method (that includes either qualitative or quantitative method), mixed method (that includes both the method) and multimethod. However, this research includes *qualitative method and mono-method*. It is based on non-numerical data (Tenny et al., 2022). Such data has helped to interpret huge amount of non-numerical data related to sustainable democracy.

Furthermore, there are two categories of time studies- longitudinal and horizon. This study relies on a longitudinal time horizon and gathered data from a longer time interval. The study has utilized the secondary data from the past 5 years (2019-2024) to analyze the trends of sustainable democracy in the 21st century. Contrarily, a cross-sectional time horizon assists in obtaining data from one point of time. Since it can filter out data sources thus, it has not been chosen for this study. Certain search terms were formulated like "sustainable democracy", "democratic challenges" and others. The primary data sources are as follows.

1.Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (2023)

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2.World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law[2]

3. Annual Reports on Human Rights and Democracy in the World (2020–2023)[3]

4. Global State of Democracy Reports (2021–2024) by International IDEA[4]

Furthermore, the gathered secondary data has been analyzed using *thematic data analysis* [5]method. It helps to interpret the data, identify patterns, select codes and to separate similar codes under different themes (Sovacool et al., 2023). Each theme helps to answer the research questions. Likewise, thematic analysis has helped to understand the concept of sustainable democracy, challenges related to sustainable democracy and strategies to address the challenges.

Additionally, the research has followed research ethics. Every data collected from already published sources has been referenced to respect the original authors. Also, any such information has not been used which can harm any individual. Moreover, plagiarism has been avoided to maintain research integrity.

**Findings and Discussion**

This study has helped to find that democracy has spread globally and it brings in justice, hope for peace and sustainability. Democracy is being propagated in authoritarian nations and the UN has continuously propagated that democracy is part of good governance. Likewise, in 2016, UN SDGs or United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals- SDG 16 (Figure1) focus on the importance of democracy for peace, justice and sustainable societies (Martin, 2023). However, currently the world is struggling with different challenges including regional conflicts, geopolitical tensions as well as rising authoritarianism that has restricted progress of democracy. War and nationalism between and within nations has weakened global unity. Systems that support global cooperation like European integration and multilateral agreements are under threat. However, global corporations are putting efforts to strengthen democracy and to maintain justice.

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Additionally, the research has helped to find that sustainable democracy includes the principle of maintaining a balance between inclusive and participatory governance structure. Its objectives are related to free market of ideas, democratic institutions, civil societies, informed citizens as well as dynamic state-society relationship. Like Poland's democratic path after 2023 shows the strength of democratic institutions when supported by civic activism. Following democratic decline under the PiS government of 2015-2023, featuring contested judicial reforms and media restrictions, Poland's October 2023 elections saw Donald Tusk's coalition come to power. The new administration has focused on rebuilding judicial independence, media pluralism, and improving relations with EU institutions. This shift demonstrates the ability of democracy to correct itself when electoral institutions are still functioning. Poland's experience, though, also underlines how polarization still threatens the sustainability of democracy since large parts of the populace are still divided on democratic ideals and institutional legitimacy. Each of these aspects contribute to the efficacy of sustainable democratic governance.

The research has helped to *find* that establishing strong democratic institutions is important for sustainable democracy. Legislative strengthening, decentralization and well-structured electoral process are crucial components. Legislative strengthening makes sure that different constituency needs are addressed,

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resources are allocated accurately and conflicts are managed effectively. Likewise, it shall be *discussed* that strong legislation ensures balanced power in government branches. Decentralization improves local accountability along with democratic participation. It nurtures governance that aligns with local needs. Additionally, sustainable decentralization needs effective resource allocation to local governments (Pickering et al., 2022). Furthermore, institutionalized electoral process are crucial for transitioning governments as well as to reflect public opinion. Elections needs to coincide with economic, political and environmental resources to ensure sustainable and rational decision making.

The research has also helped *to find* that democracy flourishes on free exchange of information and ideas. "Market of ideas" encourages competition among leaders, policies and parties as well as making sure that citizens can make informed decisions (Millan, 2022). Monopolization of democratic process by a single ideology or party weakens sustainability. Thus, it shall be *discussed* that access to informed voting, access to diverse media, participating in debates and others helps citizens to engage effectively, maintain a democratic process and to prevent failure of democratic process.

In this respect another significant case study has been Finland has become an international leader in the fight against information manipulation because of its whole-of-society approach to digital literacy. Media literacy is taught across the curriculum in Finnish schools, where children learn to critically assess sources, recognize manipulation methods, and be aware of how digital ecosystems operate. This curriculum is supported by cross-sector partnerships between government ministries, media, and civil society to detect and counter disinformation campaigns. Finland's strategy prioritizes developing society's resilience over technical solutions. The nation's high rankings for press freedom and low vulnerability to disinformation campaigns illustrate how investment in citizens' critical thinking capacities enhances democratic sustainability by safeguarding the information environment on which democracy relies.

Also, the research has helped to *find* that educated citizens are the backbone of sustainable democracy. Education empowers people to understand democratic principles and to demand for accountability. Thus, it shall be *discussed* that civic education helps people to understand human rights and to implant democratic values (Khunkhana, 2024). Looking at the metrics of adult literacy[6] and democratic quality[7] together reveals that many countries with very high literacy rates (99%+) also score highly on democratic indices (Nordic countries, Canada, Australia), supporting the correlation. However, exceptions exist, such as Belarus (99.7% literacy but questionable democratic institutions) and Singapore (97% literacy but weak democratic structure).Also, taking part in political demonstrations and other resistance methods helps to address the gap between democratic theory and application.

Moreover, it has been *found* that civil societies that operate between government and individuals play a crucial role in sustainable democracy as they help to promote pluralism, advocate marginalized groups and widen participation. Even when NGOs fail, civil societies and their democratic culture helps to maintain sustainable democracy. The research has also helped to understand that good governance is needed to establish a pleasant "state-society" relation. Governance that is characterized by accountability, transparency and responsiveness ensures stability and legitimacy (Shorenstein, 2024). Respecting the law helps to strengthen trust between citizens and the state, promotes equal resource allocation and reduces conflict. Mechanisms such as public hearing helps to improve conflict resolution, inclusivity and helps to enhance transparency. However, they need to be safeguarded against manipulation by interest groups. Such approaches help to maintain sustainable democracy.

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Therefore, it shall be *discussed* that sustainable democracy needs persistent effort to balance civic participation, governance and resource allocation. It is a shared responsibility of developed as well as developing nations to include resilience, inclusivity and adaptability. Therefore, by promoting pluralism and informed participation and addressing inequality, sustainable democracy is crucial to address societal and environmental challenges.

**Conclusion**

This study has helped to understand that democracy in the current era struggles with political, social and technological changes. It needs strong democratic institutions, inclusivity and civic engagement to address issues related to political polarization, reduced trust on governments and misinformation. Also, the study has helped to understand that democracy can be achieved through transparent processes and active participation. Therefore, it is crucial to empower citizens via equitable policies, education and access to true information. Role of technology shall also be managed to make sure that it supports democratic values. Corruption, violence, and weakened democratic institutions are all alarming signs of democratic erosion, but they are not undefeatable roadblocks. India still has fully functional elections (Jose, 2021). Also, addressing social-economic inequalities is needed to develop a cohesive framework. Thus, civil societies, government and international organizations shall collaborate to protect democratic principles especially in those regions which are struggling with authoritarian pressure and backsliding. Likewise, the research has helped to understand that interplay between global and local dynamics helps to enhance democratic outcomes.

**Limitations**

This research has explored the concept of Sustainable democracy in the 21st century in depth. However, the exploration is generalized. Interpreting sustainable democracy of any particular nation could have helped to interpret the concept and approaches of sustainable democracy from depth. Modern democracies have three interlinked challenges to sustainability. First, technological disruption in the form of AI, algorithmic amplification, and computational propaganda produces information environments in which factual consensus is ever harder to achieve. Second, economic polarization erodes democratic cohesion as perceptions increase that political systems are pro-elite and populist movements build, which commonly target democratic institutions themselves. Third, geopolitical rivalry from authoritarian regimes actively engaged in subverting democratic institutions through both covert and overt actions poses external pressure on democratic sustainability. These are further exacerbated by climate change and migration pressures that challenge democratic systems' ability to sustain long-term thinking and inclusive governance during times of societal stress.

**Future Research**

Evolving challenges related to sustainable democracy gives a strong ground for further research. Researchers can interpret the relation between democratic resilience and technology specially the impact of AI and digital platforms on election process or public trust. Also, comparative research on democratic backsliding in different nations can be researched on to identify patterns as well as preventive measures. Also, research on the role of civic education as well as participatory governance in developing a culture of inclusivity and accountability can be done. Role of the international government on maintaining sustainable democracy can be researched on. Research on policies and movements can be performed that can enhance

sustainable democracy globally. Such research will help to include practical strategies to maintain sustainable democracy.

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