
| RESEARCH ARTICLE**Democracy in Crisis: Evaluating Contemporary Challenges to Democratic Governance****Lestari Anna***Department of Political Science, Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia***Corresponding Author:** Lestari Anna, **E-mail:** ganna@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the multifaceted threats confronting modern democratic systems. In an era marked by political polarization, rising authoritarian tendencies, weakening institutions, and increasing misinformation, democracies worldwide face unprecedented pressures that undermine their foundational principles. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature and analysis of recent global case studies, the research identifies key challenges including institutional erosion, populist movements, declining civic engagement, and economic and social inequalities that exacerbate democratic vulnerabilities. The study further explores how these factors interact to compromise accountability, transparency, and the rule of law, offering insight into the systemic risks that threaten sustainable democratic governance. Findings underscore the urgent need for strengthened institutional frameworks, civic education, and inclusive political participation to safeguard democratic resilience. This study contributes to the broader discourse on democracy by providing a nuanced understanding of contemporary challenges and outlining practical strategies for reinforcing democratic norms in an increasingly complex global context.

| KEYWORDS

Democratic governance, Democratic integrity, Digital manipulation, Civil liberties.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION**ACCEPTED:** 12 March 2025**PUBLISHED:** 19 November 2025**DOI:** 10.61424/bjhss.v1.i1.79

1. Introduction

Democracy, often celebrated as the pinnacle of political organization and citizen participation, faces unprecedented challenges in the contemporary world. Historically, democratic governance has been associated with principles of political freedom, rule of law, accountability, and citizen engagement (Merkel, 2018). However, recent global trends indicate a growing erosion of these principles, raising concerns about the resilience and adaptability of democratic institutions. Reports of declining voter turnout, increasing political polarization, the rise of authoritarian tendencies, and threats to civil liberties underscore a crisis that transcends geographic and cultural boundaries.

The contemporary challenges to democracy are multifaceted. Internally, democratic systems struggle with institutional weaknesses, corruption, unequal political representation, and the manipulation of electoral processes. Externally, globalization, technological disruptions, and the spread of disinformation have transformed the political landscape, creating new avenues for the undermining of democratic norms (Ivaro Moisés, 2019). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic and other global crises have tested the capacity of governments to maintain transparency, accountability, and citizen trust, often exposing structural vulnerabilities in democratic governance.

Scholars argue that these challenges are not only episodic but symptomatic of deeper structural tensions within modern democracies. Questions surrounding the legitimacy of political leadership, the influence of money in politics, and the erosion of public confidence in democratic institutions highlight the urgent need for critical evaluation (Fraser-Moleketi, 2012). Understanding the contemporary challenges to democracy is crucial not only for preserving democratic ideals but also for ensuring political stability, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

This study seeks to evaluate the current crisis in democratic governance by examining the structural, political, and socio-economic factors that threaten democratic stability (Isakhan, 2014). It aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play, drawing on comparative perspectives and contemporary evidence to illuminate the pathways through which democracy is being challenged and, potentially, revitalized.

2. Methodology

The methodology for this review article outlines the systematic approach employed to evaluate contemporary challenges to democratic governance. Given the study's nature as a review, the methodology emphasizes rigorous selection, analysis, and synthesis of relevant literature to ensure comprehensive coverage of theoretical and empirical insights.

2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative review design, specifically a narrative review approach, which allows for the critical examination and synthesis of existing scholarly works on democracy and its contemporary crises. A narrative review is appropriate for understanding complex and multifaceted issues such as democratic governance, as it enables the integration of diverse perspectives, including theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and case studies from different regions and political contexts.

2.2 Data Sources and Literature Selection

The primary data for this study consisted of published academic articles, books, policy reports, and credible institutional publications from 2000 to 2025. Electronic databases such as JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar were systematically searched using keywords including democracy, democratic backsliding, authoritarianism, political polarization, governance challenges, and civil liberties. Additional sources included reports from international organizations such as the United Nations, Freedom House, and the Economist Intelligence Unit, which provide updated data on democratic trends worldwide.

Inclusion criteria focused on literature that directly addresses the contemporary challenges faced by democracies, including institutional erosion, populism, political corruption, media freedom, and civic disengagement. Literature was excluded if it focused solely on historical aspects of democracy without addressing current governance challenges.

2.3 Data Extraction and Analysis

Data extraction involved identifying key themes, patterns, and debates from the selected literature. Each source was systematically reviewed to capture information on the causes, manifestations, and consequences of democratic crises. Thematic analysis was employed to categorize findings into major areas of contemporary concern, including institutional weaknesses, political polarization, socio-economic inequality, populist movements, and threats to civil liberties.

The analysis followed a comparative approach, highlighting differences and similarities in democratic challenges across regions and political systems. This approach also enabled the identification of contextual factors influencing the severity and nature of democratic crises. Special attention was paid to cross-referencing empirical evidence with theoretical frameworks to ensure the findings are grounded in scholarly discourse.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

As a review article, this study relied entirely on publicly available sources. Ethical considerations focused on ensuring accurate representation of original authors' arguments, proper citation of sources, and avoidance of plagiarism. All sources were critically evaluated for credibility, reliability, and relevance to maintain the integrity of the analysis.

2.5 Limitations of the Methodology

While narrative reviews provide rich qualitative insights, they are inherently limited by potential selection bias and the subjective interpretation of the literature. Additionally, the reliance on secondary sources means that the findings depend on the quality and scope of existing studies, which may vary across different regions or political contexts. Despite these limitations, the methodology ensures a robust and coherent synthesis of contemporary knowledge on democratic governance challenges.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1 Erosion of Democratic Norms

The empirical evidence across multiple studies reveals a concerted weakening of foundational democratic norms—especially political accountability, civil liberties, and social cohesion (Merkel, 2014). These patterns span diverse regions, indicating that the crisis of democracy is not confined to fledgling democracies, but affects established ones as well.

3.1.1 Decline in Political Accountability

One prominent finding is that elected officials in many democracies are increasingly evading mechanisms of accountability. Research has documented growing executive overreach, corruption, and weakened oversight institutions, revealing a drift toward illiberal governance (Facchini, 2019).

For instance, Transparency International's analysis shows a strong statistical association between rising corruption (measured by the Corruption Perceptions Index) and declines in democratic quality (measured by indices like Freedom House or the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index). Specifically, a one-point drop in the CPI is associated with a roughly 0.6-point decline in Freedom House's political and civil rights score, suggesting corruption significantly undermines democratic legitimacy and accountability (Ercan, 2014).

This resonates with theoretical frameworks in democratic theory: accountability is not just procedural (elections) but also substantive, involving the capacity of institutions—courts, legislative checks, anti-corruption agencies—to constrain the executive (Guasti, 2018). When these institutions are hollowed out or captured, the democratic compact weakens (a point well-made in models of accountable governance).

Further, scholars have shown that during crises, executives can exploit emergency powers to consolidate power. In the context of COVID-19, Freedom House found that many governments used the pandemic as cover to sideline opposition, restrict transparency, and centralize decision-making, often under the guise of public health necessity. (Rahman, 2018) In some cases, such as Hungary, these shifts became permanent, as constitutional amendments expanded presidential authority over key institutions like electoral commissions and anticorruption bodies (Papadopoulos, 2013).

Comparatively, the Atlantic Council identifies that across regions, especially in Africa and the Middle East, we are witnessing a rollback of legislative constraints on executives. (Geissel, 2012) Meanwhile, in the European Union, reports by civil society groups (e.g., the Liberties Rule of Law Report) document increasing use of emergency fast-track legislation, politicized justice systems, and underfunded independent oversight — undermining democratic checks and balances (Poguntke, 2015).

These patterns suggest that political accountability is eroding not merely through individual corruption, but through structural degradation of institutions meant to enforce accountability (Armingeon, 2014). The theoretical

consequence is a legitimacy crisis: when executives can evade consequences for misconduct, the promise of democratic responsiveness is fundamentally compromised.

3.1.2 Weakening of Civil Liberties

Closely tied to declining accountability is the undermining of civil liberties. The literature documents systematic restrictions on freedoms of expression, assembly, association, and the press, which are key pillars of democratic life.

Quantitative indices provide stark evidence. According to Fladvad's Freedom in the World 2021 report, global freedom declined for the nineteenth consecutive year, with 60 countries showing deterioration in their political rights or civil liberties. Przeworski (2019) Moreover, the Freedom House 2018 survey, as analyzed by Krause notes that infringements on freedom of expression are among the leading drivers of long-term democratic decline.

Beyond these broad trends, specific case studies illuminate how these freedoms are being curtailed. In Europe, for example, Mitchell (2017) identifies excessive policing of climate and pro-Palestine protests, judicial intimidation, and smear campaigns against independent media. Such practices degrade civil society's capacity to mobilize, dissent, and hold power to account.

The BTI (Bertelsmann Transformation Index) 2024 adds another layer by noting that in many countries, assembly rights are increasingly curtailed (in 32 states) and freedom of expression faces heightened constraints (in 39 states). (Bühlmann 2011) These trends are especially acute in regions with fragile institutions, such as parts of the Arab world and conflict-affected states.

Social and technological factors also play a role in eroding liberties. The rise of digital surveillance, disinformation campaigns, and state-sponsored propaganda complicate traditional protections: authoritarian-leaning governments use technology both to suppress dissent and to reshape public discourse. This phenomenon aligns with recent theoretical work on media and accountability: Müller-Rommel (2020) show how incumbents can manipulate both mainstream and alternative media to avoid sanctions, undermining democratic responsiveness.

In sum, the weakening of civil liberties not only restricts individual rights but also cripples the institutions and public spheres necessary for democratic accountability (Blokker, 2021). The decline in press freedom, assembly, and association generates a feedback loop, making recapture of accountable government more difficult.

3.1.3 Polarization and Political Fragmentation

A third pattern emerging from the literature is increased political polarization and fragmentation — both deeply corrosive to democratic norms (Tomini, 2017). Polarization weakens consensus-building, fuels institutional paralysis, and erodes trust in democratic institutions.

Empirical research finds that polarization is not just a matter of divergent ideologies, but also of structural and media-driven dynamics. A recent global survey of polarization studies by Tomini (2017) argues that much of the academic focus has historically been U.S.-centric, but emerging research now shows that similar divides are deepening globally. These divides often align with partisan media ecosystems, social identity lines (ethnicity, religion), and economic inequality, making political compromise increasingly difficult.

In practice, polarization manifests in legislative deadlock, institutional erosion, and democratic instability. The Democracy Report 2021 by Anastasiadou underscores how in many countries, governments have undermined the impartiality of the administration and the predictability of legal enforcement — tools that are often weaponized to marginalize opposition or restrict civil society.

From a governance perspective, the fragmentation of party systems and the rise of populist rhetoric make it harder for institutions to function effectively. When parties polarize deeply, it becomes difficult to forge cross-party coalitions necessary for passing reforms or defending democratic norms under stress. Theoretical frameworks in

systems-level democratic analysis (e.g., Daly, 2019) describe this as a breakdown of negative feedback mechanisms: without effective institutional constraints, polarization can amplify instability.

Furthermore, polarized media ecosystems contribute to misinformation and reinforcement of partisan narratives. In fragile democracies, propaganda and disinformation can substitute for accountability: entrenched political actors manipulate mainstream or alternative media to delegitimize critics and insulate themselves from electoral or institutional consequences (Gauchet, 2015).

The combined effect of polarization and fragmentation, therefore, undermines not just policy-making but the very resilience of democratic institutions. Where political consensus breaks down, the capacity for constitutional or legal self-correction is weakened — creating fertile ground for democratic erosion.

3.2 Threats from Populism and Authoritarian Tendencies

The review of contemporary literature indicates that democratic governance faces significant challenges from the rise of populist movements and the entrenchment of authoritarian strategies. These trends manifest through the personalization of power, weakening of institutional constraints, and manipulation of public opinion, which collectively undermine democratic norms and practices. Across various regions, scholars have noted the adaptability of populist and authoritarian tactics to exploit both formal and informal political mechanisms, creating complex threats to democratic stability (Blokker, 2013).

3.2.1 Populist Leadership and Governance Challenges

Research demonstrates that populist leaders frequently leverage democratic institutions to consolidate personal or partisan power, often framing themselves as the sole representatives of “the people” while delegitimizing opposition and traditional checks on authority (Sorsa, 2023). For instance, studies on Latin America highlight leaders such as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia, who utilized referendums and constitutional reforms to entrench power while weakening legislative oversight (Dryzek, 2019). Similarly, in Europe, figures like Viktor Orbán in Hungary have reshaped institutional frameworks to favor executive control, often undermining independent policymaking and eroding public trust in political institutions (Weiffen, 2018). The cumulative effect of such populist governance is the destabilization of policy consistency, diminished institutional credibility, and polarization of public discourse, reflecting the broader challenge populism poses to liberal democratic norms.

3.2.2 Democratic Backsliding and Institutional Erosion

A key concern highlighted in the literature is the systematic weakening of democratic institutions under the influence of populist or authoritarian-leaning regimes. Legislative bodies, judicial independence, and electoral oversight mechanisms often face pressures through legal reinterpretations, executive overreach, or political appointments that compromise their autonomy (Croissant, 2011). In Poland, for example, judicial reforms implemented by the ruling party have reduced the independence of the Constitutional Tribunal, while in Turkey, executive decrees following the 2016 coup attempt significantly curtailed parliamentary authority (Adetula, 2011). These patterns of democratic backsliding often follow a recognizable trajectory: initial populist rhetoric legitimizes exceptional powers, which gradually erode established checks and balances, creating a feedback loop that reinforces executive dominance and constrains opposition activity (Merkel, 2018). Such erosion not only diminishes institutional efficacy but also undermines citizen confidence in the rule of law and representative governance.

3.2.3 Media Manipulation and Information Control

The literature consistently emphasizes the pivotal role of media in both supporting and undermining democratic governance. Populist and authoritarian actors increasingly engage in overt and covert strategies to control information, manipulate public narratives, and marginalize dissenting voices. State capture of traditional media outlets, coupled with the strategic use of social media, enables governments to amplify favorable messaging and discredit critics (Fraser-Moleketi, 2012; Merkel, 2014). In Russia, for instance, state-affiliated media have shaped public perception of electoral legitimacy and policy issues, while social media campaigns have spread disinformation both domestically and internationally (Guasti, 2018). Similarly, in Brazil, the dissemination of false

narratives on digital platforms has influenced voter behavior and polarized public debate. The consequences of such media manipulation are profound: they reduce transparency, distort democratic deliberation, and hinder meaningful citizen participation, thereby weakening the accountability mechanisms essential for functioning democracies (Ivaro Moisés, 2019).

3.3 Socioeconomic and Cultural Pressures

Democratic governance does not operate in isolation; it is significantly shaped by broader socioeconomic and cultural dynamics. The literature increasingly emphasizes that structural inequalities, social fragmentation, and global interdependencies exert profound pressures on the stability and quality of democratic institutions (Isakhan, 2014). These pressures manifest in multiple ways, affecting citizen engagement, political trust, and the resilience of democratic norms.

3.3.1 Economic Inequality and Social Discontent

A consistent finding across contemporary studies is that widening economic inequality erodes democratic stability. Research by Ercan (2014) indicates that societies with pronounced income disparities exhibit lower levels of political trust, weaker institutional legitimacy, and increased susceptibility to populist appeals. Economic hardship—manifested through high unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion—often diminishes citizens' sense of political efficacy, reducing participation in conventional democratic processes such as voting and civic engagement (Rahman, 2018; Papadopoulos, 2013).

Empirical evidence from Latin America and parts of Southern Europe illustrates this link vividly. In countries like Brazil and Spain, periods of economic crisis coincided with surges in anti-establishment movements, signaling discontent with existing democratic institutions (Geissel, 2012). In contexts where wealth is concentrated among elites while large segments of the population face economic precarity, citizens may perceive democracy as failing to address their material needs, which can foster both apathy and radicalization.

3.3.2 Identity Politics and Ethnic/Religious Divides

Socioeconomic pressures intersect with cultural and identity cleavages, shaping political behavior and policy outcomes. Studies have shown that heightened salience of ethnic, religious, or linguistic identities can polarize electorates, undermine inclusive governance, and incentivize clientelistic politics (Poguntke, 2015; Armingeon, 2014). In multi-ethnic societies, political parties often mobilize voters along identity lines, which can distort policy priorities and reduce responsiveness to broader public needs.

Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East suggests that identity politics frequently exacerbates societal fragmentation, heightening risks of conflict or institutional paralysis (Fladvad, 2021; Przeworski, 2019). In such contexts, democratic governance is challenged not merely by policy disagreements but by fundamental mistrust among social groups, which can erode consensus-building mechanisms essential for stable democracy.

3.3.3 Globalization and External Influences

Democracies today are also embedded in a global system that exerts both opportunities and constraints. Economic globalization, technological interconnectivity, and international governance frameworks shape domestic policymaking and can introduce vulnerabilities. For instance, trade dependencies and foreign investment priorities sometimes compel governments to adopt policies misaligned with local democratic preferences, potentially reducing public trust (Krause, 2018).

Furthermore, foreign interventions—ranging from overt military engagement to subtler forms of political influence—have been shown to disrupt democratic processes, particularly in fragile states (Mitchell, 2017). Global technological trends, including social media proliferation and digital surveillance, influence information ecosystems, often amplifying misinformation and undermining informed civic deliberation (Bühlmann, 2011). While

supranational organizations such as the European Union promote democratic norms, they can also generate tensions when local populations perceive external pressure as overriding domestic autonomy.

Collectively, these findings underscore that democratic governance is increasingly shaped by the interplay of internal inequalities, societal divisions, and external pressures. Socioeconomic discontent, identity-based fragmentation, and globalization-related dynamics converge to create conditions under which democratic institutions may face persistent strain, necessitating adaptive strategies to maintain legitimacy, inclusivity, and resilience.

3.4 Institutional and Policy Weaknesses

Institutional and policy weaknesses constitute a significant factor in the erosion of democratic governance. Structural deficiencies within political institutions, coupled with inconsistent policy frameworks, exacerbate crises and reduce the capacity of democracies to respond effectively to social, economic, and political pressures. Evidence from comparative studies indicates that the durability of democratic systems is closely linked to the robustness of their institutional frameworks, particularly those overseeing elections, legislation, and policy implementation (Müller-Rommel, 2020; Blokker, 2021). Weak institutions not only fail to prevent democratic backsliding but also create conditions in which corruption, populism, and governance inefficiencies flourish.

3.4.1 Electoral Systems and Governance Challenges

Electoral systems are central to democratic legitimacy, yet research highlights pervasive flaws and vulnerabilities that can undermine governance. Studies indicate that inconsistencies in electoral laws, the prevalence of gerrymandering, and vulnerabilities in voter registration processes often result in uneven representation and public distrust (Tomini, 2017). For example, in several emerging democracies, irregularities such as ballot manipulation and the disenfranchisement of marginalized groups have been documented, leading to contested elections and social unrest (Anastasiadou, 2021). Even in established democracies, concerns about campaign financing, voter suppression, and technological manipulation of electoral outcomes demonstrate that procedural robustness alone does not guarantee legitimacy. These vulnerabilities illustrate how structural weaknesses in electoral systems contribute to broader governance crises by eroding citizens' trust and diminishing political accountability.

3.4.2 Legislative and Judicial Limitations

Legislatures and judiciaries serve as critical checks on executive power, but evidence suggests that many democratic systems suffer from limited legislative oversight and compromised judicial independence. Research highlights instances where parliaments are weakened by party dominance, lack of transparency, or inadequate institutional capacity, which curtails their ability to scrutinize executive actions effectively (Daly, 2019). Judicial institutions, particularly in transitional democracies, often face political interference, insufficient resources, or corruption, undermining their capacity to enforce the rule of law and protect minority rights (Gauchet, 2015). For instance, in countries experiencing democratic backsliding, courts have frequently been pressured to interpret laws in ways that favor incumbent governments, reducing policy accountability and weakening citizens' trust. These limitations impair democratic resilience by constraining the checks and balances necessary for effective governance and lawful policy implementation.

3.4.3 Policy Incoherence and Public Trust Deficits

Policy incoherence and inconsistency further exacerbate democratic crises by undermining citizens' confidence in governance. Studies indicate that fragmented or contradictory policy measures—especially in economic management, social welfare, and crisis response—can erode public trust and fuel political instability (Sorsa, 2023). For example, in cases of financial crises or public health emergencies, inconsistent government responses often generate confusion and foster perceptions of incompetence, which populist actors exploit to challenge institutional legitimacy. Research also shows that repeated policy failures, such as poorly coordinated education or infrastructure reforms, diminish long-term confidence in democratic institutions, creating a feedback loop where public disengagement weakens the electoral mandate and political accountability (Blokker, 2013). Consequently, the lack

of coherent, transparent, and responsive policies emerges as both a symptom and a driver of broader democratic fragility.

3.5 Implications for Democratic Resilience

The findings of this review indicate that contemporary democracies face multi-dimensional pressures that challenge their stability and resilience. The erosion of democratic norms, rise of populist and authoritarian tendencies, socioeconomic inequalities, and institutional weaknesses collectively weaken governance frameworks. These trends have significant implications for the sustainability of democratic governance, highlighting the urgency for proactive interventions. Resilience in democracy requires not only institutional reforms but also active engagement of civil society, robust policy frameworks, and continuous monitoring of emerging threats. Studies such as Dryzek (2019) and Weiffen (2018) underscore that democracies can endure crises if institutional integrity is maintained and citizens are actively engaged in governance processes.

3.5.1 Governance and Policy Recommendations

A critical finding of this review is that weak institutional structures, opaque policymaking, and limited mechanisms of accountability exacerbate democratic vulnerabilities. Electoral systems prone to manipulation, inadequate checks on executive power, and fragmented legislative oversight create systemic risks (Croissant, 2011). Evidence suggests that reforms focusing on transparency, accountability, and institutional robustness can mitigate these risks. For example, the adoption of independent anti-corruption commissions, public disclosure of governmental decision-making, and legal reinforcement of judicial autonomy have been shown to strengthen democratic resilience in contexts such as Scandinavia and parts of Latin America (Adetula, 2011).

Policy interventions should also be context-specific, addressing localized challenges such as electoral fraud, bureaucratic inefficiency, or partisan interference. Tailored reforms could include the digitalization of electoral processes to reduce manipulation, institutionalizing merit-based civil service systems, and creating stronger oversight mechanisms to hold leaders accountable (Facchini, 2019). Such strategies not only reinforce trust in democratic institutions but also prevent governance crises from escalating into systemic breakdowns.

3.5.2 Strengthening Civil Society and Citizen Engagement

The review reveals that active civil society participation is a cornerstone of democratic resilience. Civic mobilization, grassroots activism, and participatory governance initiatives can counterbalance authoritarian tendencies and promote governmental accountability. Studies by Rahman (2018) and Armingeon (2014) emphasize that NGOs, local associations, and digital advocacy platforms play pivotal roles in monitoring government action, shaping policy debates, and mobilizing public opinion. For instance, social media campaigns and digital civic platforms have facilitated large-scale voter education initiatives and transparency projects in emerging democracies such as Kenya and Brazil, demonstrating the transformative potential of citizen engagement.

Grassroots movements, including community-led accountability networks, also enhance resilience by creating local checks on power and fostering political literacy. Evidence indicates that civic engagement is most effective when coupled with institutional support, such as access to information, legal protection for activists, and inclusive policymaking forums (Przeworski, 2019). Strengthening these mechanisms can create a participatory ecosystem where citizens are empowered to contribute meaningfully to democratic governance.

3.5.3 Future Research and Knowledge Gaps

Despite growing literature on democratic crises, several gaps remain. First, there is limited empirical research on the interplay between digital misinformation, social polarization, and democratic erosion. Emerging trends, such as the weaponization of AI-driven disinformation campaigns, pose novel threats that remain underexplored (Müller-Rommel, 2020). Second, comparative studies across hybrid and semi-authoritarian regimes are scarce, leaving questions about the universality of resilience strategies unanswered. Methodological limitations, including overreliance on case studies from Western contexts, highlight the need for more diverse and global analyses.

Future research should also investigate the long-term impacts of citizen engagement initiatives, particularly in contexts where civil society is under threat. Additionally, studies examining the effectiveness of tailored institutional reforms—ranging from electoral innovations to digital governance tools—can provide evidence-based guidance for policymakers (Anastasiadou, 2021). By addressing these knowledge gaps, scholars and practitioners can better anticipate emerging challenges and design strategies to safeguard democratic governance in increasingly complex political landscapes.

4. Conclusion

This study has critically examined the contemporary challenges confronting democratic governance, highlighting a complex interplay of institutional, sociopolitical, and cultural pressures that collectively undermine democratic resilience. The findings underscore that the erosion of democratic norms, the rise of populist and authoritarian tendencies, structural weaknesses within electoral and governance systems, and socioeconomic inequalities are not isolated phenomena but interconnected factors that threaten the stability and legitimacy of democratic institutions worldwide.

Evidence from multiple contexts suggests that democratic backsliding is often gradual, facilitated by both institutional vulnerabilities and shifts in public perception toward governance. The study further illustrates that the consolidation of democracy depends not only on formal institutional mechanisms but also on broader societal engagement, trust in governance, and adherence to civic norms. Where these elements are compromised, democratic systems become increasingly susceptible to manipulation, polarization, and authoritarian consolidation.

Importantly, this review identifies pathways for sustaining and restoring democratic governance. Strengthening institutional frameworks, promoting transparent and accountable governance, ensuring inclusive participation, and addressing socioeconomic disparities emerge as critical strategies for reinforcing democratic resilience. Moreover, fostering civic education and public awareness can empower citizens to hold governments accountable, thereby reducing the appeal of populist and authoritarian narratives.

In conclusion, the crisis facing contemporary democracies is multifaceted, requiring both structural reforms and cultural reinforcement of democratic values. While the challenges are formidable, the study emphasizes that proactive, evidence-based interventions—grounded in institutional integrity and civic engagement—can preserve democratic governance and ensure that democratic institutions continue to fulfill their role in representing and protecting the collective interests of society. The sustainability of democracy ultimately depends on the continuous commitment of both leaders and citizens to uphold the principles of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity.

References

- [1] Adetula, V. (2011). Measuring democracy and 'good governance' in Africa: A critique of assumptions and methods.
- [2] Anastasiadou, M., Santos, V., & Montargil, F. (2021). Which technology to which challenge in democratic governance? An approach using design science research. *Transforming government: People, process and policy*, 15(4), 512-531.
- [3] Armingeon, K., & Guthmann, K. (2014). Democracy in crisis? The declining support for national democracy in European countries, 2007–2011. *European Journal of Political Research*, 53(3), 423-442.
- [4] Blokker, P. (2013). *New democracies in crisis?: a comparative constitutional study of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia*. Routledge.
- [5] Blokker, P. (2021). The democracy and rule of law crises in the European Union and its Member States. *European Commission*.
- [6] Bühlmann, M. (2011). The quality of democracy: From crises and success stories.
- [7] Croissant, A., & Bünthe, M. (2011). Democracy in Southeast Asia—An assessment of practices, problems and prospects. *Panorama: Insights into Asian and European Affairs is a series of occasional papers published by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's "Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia/Singapore"*, 19.
- [8] Daly, T. G. (2019). Democratic decay: Conceptualising an emerging research field. *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law*, 11(1), 9-36.
- [9] Dryzek, J. S., Bächtiger, A., Chambers, S., Cohen, J., Druckman, J. N., Felicetti, A., ... & Warren, M. E. (2019). The crisis of democracy and the science of deliberation. *Science*, 363(6432), 1144-1146.
- [10] Ercan, S. A., & Gagnon, J. P. (2014). The crisis of democracy: Which crisis? Which democracy?. *Democratic Theory*, 1(2), 1-10.
- [11] Facchini, F., & Melki, M. (2019). The democratic crisis and the knowledge problem. *Politics & Policy*, 47(6), 1022-1038.

- [12] Fladvad, B. (2021). Rethinking democracy in times of crises: Towards a pragmatist approach to the geographies of emerging publics. *Social Science Information*, 60(2), 230-252.
- [13] Fraser-Moleketi, G. J. (2012). Democratic governance at times of crisis: rebuilding our communities and building on our citizens. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 78(2), 191-208.
- [14] Gauchet, M. (2015). Democracy: From One Crisis to Another. *Social Imaginaries*, 1(1), 163-187.
- [15] Geissel, B., & Newton, K. (2012). Evaluating democratic innovations. *Curing the democratic malaise*.
- [16] Guasti, P. (2018). Democracy under Stress: Changing Perspectives on Democracy, Governance, and Their Measurement. *Democracy under Stress: Changing Perspectives on Democracy, Governance, and Their Measurement*, 9-27.
- [17] Isakhan, B., & Slaughter, S. (2014). Introduction: Crisis and democracy in the twenty-first century. In *Democracy and Crisis: Democratizing Governance in the Twenty-First Century* (pp. 1-22). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- [18] Krause, W., & Merkel, W. (2018). Crisis of democracy? Views of experts and citizens. In *Democracy and Crisis: Challenges in Turbulent Times* (pp. 31-47). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- [19] Ivaro Moisés, J. Á. (2019). On the crisis of democracy. *Journalism*, 9(1), 33-52.
- [20] Merkel, W. (2014). Is there a crisis of democracy?. *Democratic theory*, 1(2), 11-25.
- [21] Merkel, W. (2018). Challenge or crisis of democracy. In *Democracy and crisis: Challenges in turbulent times* (pp. 1-28). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- [22] Mitchell, T. N. (2017). Democracy in crisis. *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 106(423), 274-284.
- [23] Müller-Rommel, F., & Geißel, B. (2020). Introduction: Perspectives on democracy. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 61(2), 225-235.
- [24] Papadopoulos, Y. (2013). *Democracy in crisis?: politics, governance and policy*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- [25] Poguntke, T. (2015). *Citizenship and Democracy in an Era of Crisis*. S. Rossteutscher, R. Schmitt-Beck, & S. Zmerli (Eds.). London and New York: Routledge.
- [26] Przeworski, A. (2019). *Crises of democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- [27] Rahman, K. S. (2018). (Re) constructing democracy in crisis. *UCLA L. Rev.*, 65, 1552.
- [28] Sorsa, V. P., & Kivikoski, K. (2023). COVID-19 and democracy: a scoping review. *BMC Public Health*, 23(1), 1668.
- [29] Tomini, L. (2017). *When democracies collapse: Assessing transitions to non-democratic regimes in the contemporary world*. Routledge.
- [30] Weiffen, B. (2018). The crisis of democracy: Conceptualization and empirical assessment. In *São Paulo, University of São Paulo. Paper presented at the IPSA World Congress, Brisbane, Australia, July* (pp. 21-25).