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# Making Democracy more Representative of the People

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*This paper examines the evolving representativeness of democracy through a descriptive analysis of the United States and Ghana, two countries shaped by distinct historical trajectories yet similar democratic tensions between the period 1990 - 2025. In this context, we conceptualize democracy as constituted through the interaction of cultural practices and economic structures. Hence, we move beyond procedural accounts to interrogate how power, wealth, media, and institutional design condition meaningful participation. The U.S. case traces a pattern of democratic expansion followed by a seeming decline and the growing influence of social media and artificial intelligence on political polarization and participation. The Ghanaian case examines democratic consolidation following decades of political instability, highlighting electoral reforms, media liberalization, poverty reduction, and expanded civic engagement, while also identifying enduring challenges. Overall, we demonstrate how cultural arrangements, economic hierarchies, and media ecosystems interact to either enable or constrain democratic representation. Findings from our descriptive case studies suggest that democratic erosion and exclusion are not exceptional failures but predictable outcomes when structural inequalities remain embedded within democratic institution. We conclude by advancing a praxis-oriented approach to democratic renewal that integrates institutional reform, economic redistribution, labor protections, media accountability, and ethical governance of artificial intelligence.*

**Keywords:** *democratic representation, comparative democracy, political economy, wealth and inequality, social media and artificial intelligence, United States, Ghana*

## Introduction

Even where democracy is well established for centuries, in a nation state, its continued existence cannot be guaranteed. This fragility suggests democracy must constantly be critically considered if it is to enable all groups within society have a say in their government. No nation should assume its democratic nature will continue for future generations just because the democratic history has been long. Instead, the question of what can be done to strengthen the democracy needs to be part of a constant societal discourse (EIU, 2024). This essay shines a light on democracy by comparing two case studies: one in Ghana and the other in the United States focusing on the period between 1990-2025. The 1990's was chosen because this is the time when Ghana was making strong moves *to become a democracy* (Consultative Assembly, 1992) while in the US during the 1990's democracy hit a stasis fueled by several legislative moves that weakened this system of representation (Diamond, 2022).

These cases consider how direct cultural influences (e.g., legislative voting acts), and the cultural and economic conditions upon which democracy lies (e.g., the relation

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between race and wealth inequality) influence the representativeness of a democracy. More specifically, these cases consider what groups get access to resources (and those that do not) thereby influencing future opportunities, their knowledge of civics and their ability to think critically about the political information coming from government representatives. Moving further, these cases also inquire into how social media and artificial intelligence (AI) either reinforce or broaden users preconceived biases. With these cultural factors in mind, the cases also focus on the economic sphere beginning with a consideration of the voice of workers (or lack of voice) to shape work conditions and compensation, as well as wealth inequalities that leave the poor in a survival mode thereby depending on politicians to understand and meet their needs. The rich, on the other hand, consistently influence the processes of voting such as who gets to vote as well as getting politicians elected by financing their campaigns.

## Methodology

This case study design, however, is not determined idiosyncratically but rather guided by a conceptual frame that views democracy as more than cultural practices such as voting rights, but also economic factors, such as wealth inequality that set the conditions upon which democratic processes sit. Furthermore, it is assumed that the cultural and economic are woven together such that understanding democracy requires seeing the oneness of culture and the economy (Gitlin, 2023) and this oneness directs and is directed by a set of activist democratic practices. The purpose of these case studies is, in part, to see how context and history influence the type of representative democracy currently found in the US and Ghana. By making this comparison, possibilities and limits in the current construction of democracy can be illuminated. Once these case studies are compared, they are used to inform a discussion on the meaning of democracy, - following which the discussion moves to what can be done to strengthen representative democracies in particular contexts or even globally. Put simply, the essay moves from understanding democracy to thinking about types of activism that can strengthen democracies in these two contexts and beyond.

This activism is not separated from the understanding developed but rather becomes part of a unified whole that is a form of praxis (Korsch, 1970). In this view of praxis, not only is theory (or understanding) needed to direct activism, but activism consistently pushes the boundaries of our understanding or theory. From that purview, the discussion seeks to address two central questions namely:

- What does the comparison of the case studies say about the meaning or boundaries of democracy?
- What does the comparison of the case studies suggest is needed to make society more representative of the people?

The case studies begin by looking at the cultural factors that influence the representativeness of a democracy. These cultural factors are divided into direct factors such as voting rights and the cultural conditions that influence democracy such as the intersections between race, class and schooling. Once these cultural factors are

articulated, the case study moves to the economic conditions that work with or against democratic ambitions such as wealth inequality and unionization. While these factors are separated in this descriptive case study sections, when the paper moves to the discussion the cultural and the economic are woven together to get a holistic view of understanding and strengthening democracy.

## U.S. Case Study
## Cultural Factors

### *Direct Influences*

**Voting Rights legislation:** While our emphasis is on the period between 1990's and 2025 it is essential to note that democracy, in terms of its representativeness, has always been a contested terrain in the United States. Economically powerful groups have long tried to keep the vote out of the hands of the less powerful. For example, in the 1700's many Southern states limited voting to white male landowners (Engerman & Sokoloft, 2005), women did not get the right to vote until the 1920's and even in the mid 60's blacks still had to deal with literacy tests and poll taxes (Keyssar, 2009) until President Johnson passed the Voting Rights Act in the spring of 1965.

In 1990 congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA is a comprehensive civil rights law with significant updates in 2008, that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in various areas of public life, including employment, state and local government services, and public accommodations. The law defines a disability broadly and requires employers and public entities to provide reasonable accommodations, such as accessible features or adjusted work processes, to ensure equal opportunity (Burgdorf, 1991). ADA prohibits discrimination by state and local governments and applies to all aspects of voting, from registration to casting a ballot including making polling places accessible. The ADA also requires that all polling places be physically accessible to individuals with disabilities. This has led to the use of temporary fixes, like portable ramps and cones, or the relocation of sites to ensure voters with mobility impairments can enter, navigate, and exit polling locations.

Following closely afterward, the National Voter Registration Act (VRA) was passed in 1993 (James, 2023) in congress. This act allows citizens to register to vote once they are issued with a drivers' licenses. The law also offers mail-in voting as an alternative although states can approve or reject this approach to voting. Again, these acts tried to increase voting ease and thereby encourage larger numbers of people to vote. The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 continued this trend and set federal standards for voting equipment and election administration. The aim was to modernize voting systems and improve the consistency and security of elections across states.

After a ten-year lull in passed legislation that lasted until 2012 and expanded the representativeness of US democracy, voting rights legislation took a dramatic turn to working against the Voting Rights Act (VRA) established in 1965. In Shelby County v. Holder (2013) the supreme court gutted a key provision of the VRA removing federal oversight of election changes in jurisdictions with a history of voter suppression (Persily

& Mann, 2013) This decision enabled states to pass new restrictive voting laws which has a disproportionate effect on minority [Black] voters.

Shortly before this decision in 2010 the supreme court also acted to make an economic ruling in term of contributions to campaigns—Citizens United (Epstein, 2011). They ruled that corporations and unions have the same first amendment rights as individuals and struck down restrictions on independent political spending. The ruling paved the way for super political action committees (PACS) and a surge in dark money political financing, - raising concerns about the concentration of political power among wealthy donors and special interest groups.

Building on Shelby County, Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee in 2021 the Supreme Court weakened Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, making it more difficult for plaintiffs to sue over discriminatory voting practices. Although two other bills were proposed Freedom to Vote Act (proposed, 2021–2024**)** and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act never passed the congress and therefore had no effect on increasing representative democracy.

Nevertheless, the supreme court made one ruling that greatly expanded the authority of the president and therefore directly limited voting rights. In 2024, the Supreme Court ruled on whether a former president could be prosecuted for official actions taken while in office. In Trump v. US, the Court ruled that a former president has "presumptive immunity" from criminal prosecution for official acts. This immunity is considered absolute for actions that fall under the president's "conclusive and preclusive constitutional authority" (McConnell, 2020)

In sum, while the first twenty years of the established time period the congress acted to expand voting rights, however from 2010 -2025 congress and the supreme court dramatically reversed course to limit representative democracy in the U.S.

## Underlying Cultural/Economic Conditions

**Social Media/AI**: In all contexts democracy requires communication between those in power (representatives) and the people in the country. There is also a need for communication between groups so a common ground of some sort can be established. Discussing social media and AI are both important factors in understanding communication between the people and their representatives as well as between various groups within the society.

In the 1990's USA, the internet existed in a rudimentary force and was not a significant force in American political life. For example, only three million people world-wide had internet access. However, in the 2000's social media gained some traction with platforms like Six Degrees (1997) Friendster (2002) and My Space (2003), although these did not focus on political communication. It was Barack Obama's 2008 grass roots campaign that leaned on social media to get his message out in an efficient way that reached many homes, establishing social media as a platform for political activism.

By 2012 both major parties in the US tried to expand their bases by using social media. Studies showed that social media's effect on voter beliefs in falsehoods was small except with those already in one camp or the other. In 2016, the influence of

social media in politics gained tremendous currency, creating echo chambers by exposing users to content that reinforces their held beliefs thereby deepening ideological divides (Angelova, 2025; Garrett, 2019).

From 2017-2024 algorithms on social media favored inflammatory and divisive language that deepened already existing divides. Since then, AI has increased disinformation campaigns contributing to a decline in public trust. The year 2025 continued the partisan conflict as social media sites took on and endorsed political positions. In sum, social media made it difficult to differentiate misinformation from honest attempts to describe a political position and furthered the divides between groups of partisan political groups. In this way, social media to this point works against representative democracy (Carpenter, 2025).

**Political News Stations:** While social media and AI reinforced biases already present in individual perspectives, cable news stations such as CNN, Fox and MS Now, played a role in furthering divides between ideological groups. They did so by narrowcasting or tailoring content to specific ideological silos. For example, as of May 2025 trust in CNN was 80 percentage points higher among Democrats than Republicans while Fox news was 76 percentage points higher among Republicans. Clearly, these divides work against common ground so necessary for a democracy that depends on the "losers" of the election accept the decision of a majority of voters.

However, it is important to note that Fox commanded 64% of the total cable news audience while CNN and MS Now only commanded between 14-18% of that audience. The Republican silo is bigger than the Democratic silo in terms of the effect of cable news.

Finally, there is also the question of how honest the reporting is on cable news. For example, Fox News is accused of knowingly broadcasting false conspiracy theories about voting machines to retain viewers who were defecting to more conservative outlets. Fox News paid $787.5 million to settle a defamation suit after evidence emerged that hosts and executives privately ridiculed election fraud claims as "crazy" and "absurd" while continuing to air them. Furthermore, former employees have accused the network of operating as a "propaganda machine" for the Trump administration. Documents from 2017 and 2025 suggest instances where the network altered headlines or coverage at the direct request of administration officials. The other two cable networks have had no public accusations of this kind but the main point is that truthful independent reporting is gradually becoming a scarcity (Pew Research Center, 2025; Nielsen Media Research Database, 2025).

## Economic Conditions that Influence Democracy

### *Wealth Inequality*

Although the emphasis of this section is on wealth inequality between racial groups, it is important to go back to the founding of the U.S. The founding fathers (they were all men), were wealthy landholders, merchants or lawyers with significant financial interests, many holding public securities that would benefit from a stable national government. Put, directly they founded the U.S. primarily to benefit

themselves. The most direct way to see this self-interest is that the only people allowed to vote were white land holders. While the vote has expanded dramatically since that time wealth inequality continues to work against the representativeness of our democracy (Keyssar, 2000).

Wealth inequality in the US has significantly increased across various racial groups from 1990 to 2025 with wealth becoming concentrated among the top earners, older generation, and white households, while the bottom half and minority group have seen little improvement (Saez & Zucman, 2016). For the top 1%, their share of total U.S. wealth grew substantially from about 17-23% in 1990 to approximately 26-30.8% by 2022-2024. The share held by the top 10% increased from 56% in 1989 to 60% in 2022.Conversely, the bottom 50% of the population has remained low and even declined slightly in relative terms. It was about 3.5% in 1990 and hit a low of .4% in 2011 and stood at about 2.4-2.5% in 2024. In addition, following the passage of the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" (OBBBA) in July 2025, tax legislation from 2024–2025 has cemented and is projected to increase U.S. wealth inequality. The law permanently extends key provisions from the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) that favor high-income earners and adds new tax breaks, while making cuts to social spending (Jones & Rycroft, 2023).

In summary, the period from 1990 to 2025 has been marked by a significant and persistent increase in wealth inequality driven by rapid asset growth for the wealthiest. This has crated systematic barriers for low-income younger and minority groups and tax breaks for the rich.

## Unionization & Wage Inequality

From 1990-2025, union participation in the US has been declining steadily, directly impacting working conditions and contributing to slower wage growth and increased inequality for the typical worker (Macpherson & Hirsch, 2021; Mishel et al., 2012; Kim, 2025). Union membership has consistently decreased from 1990 to 2025 reaching a historic low of 9.9% in the US workforce in 2024, down from approximately 15.5% in 1990. The data shows that public-sector workers have consistently higher union membership rates than private-sector workers. In 2024 for instance, union membership among public-sector-workers were 32.2% compared to the private sector rate of 5%. The decline in union membership has impacted both union and non-union members as unions traditionally set wages. For example, during this time median weekly wages (adjusted for inflation) were approximately 19% higher in Q1 2025 than in Q1 1985**.** While this includes the latter half of the 1980s, it indicates a multi-decade trend of positive, but slow growth. However, when compared to middle management and executive salaries during this same period, the gap is dramatic with CEO compensation for the 350 largest US firms increasing by hundreds of percentage points in inflation-adjusted terms. One study using the "realized compensation" measure (actual take-home pay from stock sales) notes an increase of over 1,094% since 1978, with a significant portion of that growth occurring in the 1990-2025 period (Lawrence, 2021).

## Ghanaian Case Study
## Cultural and Economic Factors

Ghana is one of few African countries that has gained global acclaim for its stable democracy and commitment to the rule of law over the last 35 years. Like many African countries however, the country was once noted for political instability between the period 1966 – 1981 when military governments were a thing. In this essay, we take a look at some factors that have led to Ghana's democratic renaissance and related issues. Key among these being electoral reforms, voting rights, wealth distribution and liberalization of the media landscape. Following which we discuss some challenges for democratic representation in the country. First, we present a brief overview of Ghana's political terrain before 1990.

### *The Period before 1990: Political Instability, and a Deteriorating Economy*

As the first Sub-Sahara African country to gain independence from colonial rule, Ghana quickly established itself as a beacon of hope for Africa's independence movement (French, 2025; Onyeneho, 2023). Barely a decade after proclaiming the country's independence, Kwame Nkrumah, the country's first native president was overthrown in a military coup d'état (Asante, 2020; Gutteridge, 2023). It was the first of five intermittent coup d'états between the period 1966 and 1981. Two of these (1979 and 1981) had been led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings[1]. Shortly after his second coup d'état, declining economic fortunes forced Rawlings and his Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC[2]) to seek support from Bretton Woods[3] (Harnack et al., 2000). However, such support will only be available on certain conditionalities. Key among these including reforms across Ghana's public institutions and a return to multi-party democracy (Leite et al., 2000).

To make this possible, the country needed a new constitution and to also lift the ban on political activism. The national committee for democracy (NCD) was formed in 1991 (Awal, 2012; Harnack et al., 2000), and was tasked with consolidating upon the positive achievements made in the country's participatory democracy (Gyimah-Boadi, 1991). The processes towards a new constitution were to reflect the values and beliefs of all Ghanaians. Specifically, the "proposals were to be placed before a 260-member Consultative Assembly (CA) made up of 117 representatives from the District and Metropolitan Assemblies, 121 representatives of various 'recognized' public organizations and associations and 22 government appointees" (Gyimah Boadi, 1991).

[1]Military officer from the Ghana Air Forces who ruled the country in 1979 and from 1981 to 2000. For details, see Haynes, J. (2022). *Revolution and Democracy in Ghana: The Politics of Jerry John Rawlings*. Routledge.
[2]Interim government formed by Jerry Rawlings after the 1981 coup d'état.
[3]Referring to the IMF, the World Bank, and other international finance corporations based in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, USA.

*Criminal Libel Law, State Control and a Rigid Media Landscape*

Back then, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) remained solely in charge of radio and tv broadcast (Akrofi-Quarcoo & Gadzekpo, 2020; Osei-Appiah, 2019). Through a collaboration with the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE), GBC provided daily adult education programmes in the respective local languages. Notwithstanding, these were generally perceived as pseudo propaganda programmes for the regime (Akrofi-Quarcoo & Gadzekpo, 2020; Nyarko, 2020). The situation was no different in the print media, most of which had been suppressed by the criminal libel law[4]. These circumstances largely inured to the benefit of the Rawlings regime who easily secured another mandate at the 1992 polls.

*Electoral Reforms and the Democratic Experiment*

Following the 1992 elections, the opposition NPP wrote the '*stolen verdict*[5]*';* a report which chronicles their misgivings about the 1992 presidential elections (Asante & Asare, 2017; Botchway, 2018). For most analysts, this action was the beginning of electoral reforms in Ghana's fourth republic, - largely due to allegations of vote rigging and other electoral malpractices. The corresponding electoral reforms occurred through the enactment of the Public Elections Regulation Act of (1996, CI.15) and several others thereafter (Afari-Gyan, 1996; Debrah, 2015; Van Gyampo, 2017c). Among these reforms were the replacement of the 1992 electoral register and opaque ballot boxes with transparent ones. The reforms also necessitated the involvement of the political parties throughout the electoral processes (Annor, 2011). It also made room for the electoral commission (EC) to provide assistance and logistical support to political parties. Most importantly, it mandated for presidential and parliamentary elections to be held simultaneously on the same day, following which counting of ballots were to begin immediately (Kumah-Abiwu & Darkwa, 2020; Van Gyampo, 2017c). These were the first in a series of intermittent reforms[6] aimed towards ensuring broader representation in Ghana's electoral processes. However, some of these electoral reforms have been contested over its true purpose and intent.

**Voting rights:** For example, article 45(a) of Ghana's constitution mandates the EC to compile and revise the electoral register whenever necessary. Over the last three decades, exercising this constitutional mandate have often been met with fierce resistance from opposition parties. This is largely due to suspicions of the EC conniving with government to infiltrate the electoral roll with unqualified persons or even disenfranchise qualified persons. It is basically an issue about trust and distrust over the neutrality of the EC that goes back to the 1990s. Back then, the allegation was that, the newly formed NDC government would coerce the EC to do its bidding to ensure

[4]With respect to Criminal and Offences Act 1960 (Acts 19 and Act 775). For details see https:// www.commonlii.org/gh/legis/num_act/cc196029115.pdf

[5]For details, see "The stolen verdict : Ghana, November 1992 presidential election : report of the New Patriotic Party. (1993). In. Accra, Ghana :: New Partiotic Party.

[6]Other significant electoral reforms occurred in 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012. For more see, Botchway, T. P., & Kwarteng, A. H. (2018). Electoral reforms and democratic consolidation in Ghana: An analysis of the role of the electoral commission in the fourth republic (1992-2016). *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*, *5*(3), 1-12.

a continued stay in power. More specifically by overlooking electoral infractions such as the registration of underage voters and non-Ghanaians in government stronghold areas. Similar arguments have also made been made by the NDC whenever the NPP came to power. The recent of these counter-accusations occurring through the Let My Vote Count Alliance (LMVCA) in 2012, the petition for the removal of the Electoral Commissioner and her deputies in 2018, petition against the use of Ghana card and passport as the only means of citizenship verification in 2020 and petition for a forensic audit of the voter register in 2024. Among these, the ruling by the Supreme Court to uphold the Ghana card and passport as the sole means of citizenship verification automatically disqualified Ghanaians who did not have any of these documents from exercising their franchise.

*Liberalization/decolonization of the Media Landscape*

Besides electoral reforms, Ghana's decision to liberalize its media landscape is another factor that have helped strengthen democratic participation in the country (Osei-Owusu, 2015; Tettey, 2017; Williams & Kwofie, 2022). As a result, Ghana now boasts of a robust media landscape which has since shifted from the colonial model of radio to a decolonized model of radio (Akrofi-Quarcoo & Gadzekpo, 2020; Mohammed, 2025). These coupled with the repeal of the criminal libel law in 2001 (Act 602) has empowered Ghanaians to participate freely in the civic discourse without fear of being reprimanded. Both sides of the country's political divide have been quick to leverage these in support of their ideologies.

**Political News Stations:** Subsequently, wealthy businessmen affiliated with either side as well as well-known politicians have made significant investments in both radio and television services across the country. For instance, stations like Oman FM and NET2 TV, Wontumi Radio and TV are known pro-NPP platforms whereas stations such as Radio Gold, Radio XYZ, TV XYZ, Power FM are known pro-NDC platforms. Other stations have also alternated between both sides of the divide and have allegedly used their platform as a bargaining chip for negotiating their business interests. Except for the state-owned media and a few others, Ghana's media landscape has reached the extent where it is almost impossible to discern credible news from propaganda.

*Wealth (re)distribution*

Ghana significantly reduced poverty levels over an estimated 50% since the return to democratic governance (Gradín & Schotte, 2020; Osei-Assibey, 2014). These were made possible through the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) and other policy interventions, as well as the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities. This created jobs and spurred growth in the country's services sector, culminating in the attainment of a lower middle-income by 2010. Available data from Worldscorecard (2025) shows that Ghana's GDP per capita increased from a paltry US$1,738 in 1992 to US$8,037 in 2024. In particular, policies such as the free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE[7]), the single spine salary structure, the

[7]Policy that provided free basic education for all children of school going age. See Amedahe, F. K., & Chandramohan, B. (2009). Ghana–Towards FCUBE (Free and Compulsory Universal Basic Education).

free maternal healthcare, national health insurance act, free senior high school (FSHS) and others have been instrumental (Chandramohan & Amedahe, 2009; Darkwa & Acquah, 2022).

**Unionization:** Workers right and welfare are widely respected and upheld in Ghanaian organizations. Mostly, there is the freedom to join any organized labour platform of choice; most of which have umbrella bodies superintending over their nationwide activities. Nonetheless, most if not all of these unionized workers fall under the auspices of the Ghana Trades Union Congress (GTUC) which negotiates annual minimum wage and salary increments on behalf of organized labor. Coupled with a disjointed labor front and allegations of corruption amongst union leaders, these negotiations typically result in no more than 10 - 20% increments, a trend that mostly favors those in the middle to upper income bracket. As at today, minimum wage in Ghana still remains under $2, a little below the global poverty line.

## Challenges for Democracy and Political Representation in Ghana

### *Systemic Inequality*

Certainly, prevailing trends in Ghana have not bridged the gap between the rich and poor as had been envisaged. The situation is attributed to the underlying systemic and structural issues that keep frustrating pro-poor growth and social protection initiatives (Dim & Asomah, 2025; Osei-Assibey, 2014). Most of these issues have long existed before the promulgation of the 1992 Republican constitution. For instance, the country's natural resources and economic opportunities are traditionally concentrated in the south, largely due to a favorable rainfall pattern, mineral rich forests and arable lands as compared to the North. These were instrumental in the colonial regime's decision to move Northerners to farm on cocoa plantations in the south (Kuusaana, 2022; Sutton, 1989). This trend still persists today in the form of seasonal migration, the benefits of which accrues mostly to Southern farmer owners. Naturally, this also created a contemptuous ethno-tribal relationship between the farm owners and labourers. Such complex interactions also manifest through voting patterns and ideological preferences within these areas (Adams & Agomor, 2015).

### *Winner takes all System*

Like many contemporary democracies, Ghana runs an executive presidential system which grants enormous powers to the president and the ruling party. In Ghana's case, the situation has led to a scenario where the country's democratic institutions have been 'rhetorically decentralised' but 'practically recentralised' (Anaafo, 2018). More to do with how the consolidation of power in the Executive branch enables them to control the respective local governance structures through political appointments. Thus far, this has inured to the benefits of Ghana's elites due to instances of clientelism, neopatrimonialism and political patronage (Dim and Asomah, 2025). In particular, the "alternations of power between the two major political parties [i.e., NPP and NDC]

have been historically accompanied by shifts in access to public resources" (Dim and Asomah, 2025, p.6).

*Political Party Financing*

Besides the winner takes all system, the associated high costs of running for electoral office have inadvertently made it a preserve of the rich and affluent in the country, - a trend now commonly referred to as 'money-cracy' [8]. According to the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD, 2021), it costs approximately USD $100 million and USD $700,000 to run an effective presidential and parliamentary campaign respectively as at the 2020 electoral cycle. The insights further show that a large chunk of this money is spent on incentivizing voters to vote in a particular manner (Asante & Oduro, 2016; Asekere et al., 2025). This huge financial requirement inhibits less resourced candidates from going through the preliminary rounds even though they may have the best ideas. Thus, further entrenching the gap between the rich and the poor.

*Free Speech, social media and Algorithms*

In Ghana's case, the liberal media landscape provided a fertile ground for the internet boom and proliferation of social media that occurred from 2010 onwards. Since then, these social media platforms have offered the means for Ghanaians to hold governments accountable without having to go through *'traditional gatekeepers*[9]*'*. That coupled with Ghana's youthful population have made social media the new '*norm*' for political and civic engagement in the country (Dzisah, 2018; Van Gyampo, 2017a). Nevertheless, with such tools also came new challenges that threaten the foundations of Ghana's democracy. These challenges emanating from the underlying mechanisms and excessive freedoms that social media platforms grant its users (Dzisah, 2018; Van Gyampo, 2017b). More specifically, the algorithms that powers these platforms tend to aggregate information into trends without necessarily checking for accuracy. Hence, there is the tendency for an issue to trend although it may not be true. Furthermore, the incentives given to creatives to generate content on these platforms not only projects dominant narratives but could also incite ethno-tribal[10] and political conflicts[11] as has been witnessed in Ghana recently.

*Representation of Ghanaians in the Diaspora*

Besides, representation of Ghanaians in the diaspora also remains an outstanding issue that is yet to be resolved. This category of Ghanaians serves as a major economic

[8]With reference to the use of money and other financial incentives to influence electoral outcomes.
[9]Used with reference to editors and editorial processes required on mainstream media platforms.
[10]Referring to social media tensions between supporters of the Asantehene and Dormaahene respectively. See https://www.myjoyonline.com/urgently-help-resolve-the-asantehene-dormaahene-feud-chieftaincy-minister-to-national-house-of-chiefs/
[11]With reference to political tensions between supporters of the NPP and the NDC. For more, see https://citinewsroom.com/2024/08/asesewa-npp-ndc-supporters-clash-over-branding-of-drip-equipment-several-injured/

backbone for the country through their remittances back home which now exceed foreign direct investments (FDI) in the country. Yet, they are unable to participate in national elections from their respective jurisdictions abroad. To this end, an amendment was made in 2006 through the representation of people abroad law (ROPAL). A law which sought to allow such persons to vote in successive national elections. However, due to the lack of clear-cut procedures, funding and logistical challenges, the bill is yet to see implementation. Thus, begging the question about whether voting rights in Ghana is truly representative of all Ghanaians or just those domiciled in the country.

## Implications of the Case Studies

Having laid out the state of democracy in the United States and Ghana, this section compares the two case studies to see new possibilities for change that makes democracy more representative of the people. By doing so, we also hope to see democracy through a wider lens and not just in procedural terms. We begin with what can be done.

## Democracy, the Constitution and Wealth Inequality

Because the Ghanaian constitution is much more recent as compared to the US constitution this discussion begins with the years both constitutions were written and the key changes that occurred in the years to follow.

The US constitution was written and approved in 1787 whiles the Ghanaian constitution was approved through referendum in 1993. One notable difference between both is that the Ghanaian constitution builds upon three other versions (1957/1960, 1969, 1979) that were abrogated after the intermittent military takeovers. However, just like the US constitution, the Ghanaian constitution does not explicitly mention the clause that "*all men (sic) are created equal*". The absence of such a clause is significant, in that, the constitution is the supreme law of the land, out of which other legal/regulatory frameworks emerge (Wood, 2021). Though the above-mentioned statement is enshrined in the Declaration of Independence document in the US, the document could not be built upon as is true of amendments to the constitution.

In the US case, there were four amendments that spoke to all men are created equal: The 14$^{th}$ in 1868 focuses on equal protection under the law, while the 15$^{th}$ in 1870 liberalized voting rights for all racial categories. Similarly, the 19$^{th}$ in 1920 emphasized that voting rights could not be based on gender categories while the 26$^{th}$ in 1971 set the legal voting age to 18 years old (Vile, 2021). Though these amendments embodied the notion that all men are created equal, in practice the interpretation of what constitutes *equal* was left to the supreme court. For the first 200 years of the US constitution, the supreme court supported legislation that moved toward an inclusive notion of equality, and yet this same supreme court was reluctant to say so explicitly.

In the Ghanaian case, whereas the 1992 Republican constitution does not explicitly mention the equality of men, it hints towards this in articles 1(1), 12(2), 55(2) and (10) respectively. For instance, in article 1(1), the constitution assigns

sovereignty to "the people of Ghana in whose name and for whose welfare the powers of government are to be exercised". However, a closer hint towards the idea of equality is enshrined in article 12(2) which states "[e]very person in Ghana, whatever his race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, religion, creed or gender shall be entitled to the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual contained in this Chapter but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest". This is followed by article 55 (2) and (10) which grants universal adult suffrage and the right to political activism for all Ghanaians. These clauses are not only an amendment of the original constitution promulgated in 1960 but also borrows ideas from those promulgated in the 1969 and 1979 constitutions (Mensah, 2022). For instance, the 1960 constitution did not have any such "clear provisions for fundamental human rights" except for those espoused under "the solemn declaration by the president before the people" (Mensah, 2022, p. 259). On the contrary, the 1969 (article 12) and 1979 (article 19) constitutions of Ghana had similar provisions just as those espoused in article 12 (2) of the current constitution. Thus, unlike the US, it took Ghana less than a decade to amend its original constitution and collectively 30 years after independence to move towards correcting representational injustices in its constitution albeit a lot of grey areas still remain.

With respect to electoral democracy, on that first day of the approved constitution all Ghanaians could vote whereas in the US it took close to 200 years and still voting for everyone was not guaranteed. This conflict about equality and democracy showed up clearly in the dismantling of the John Lewis Voting rights act by the Supreme court and in Trump vs US where the notion that no one is above the law was rebuked by the Supreme court thereby giving a president immunity from almost all prosecution related to their job as president (Delahunty & Yoo, 2024). Unlike the US, the right of all Ghanaians to vote is not a contested issue in Ghana. However, the real issue is about who qualifies as a Ghanaian as well as whether all Ghanaians are equal before the law. The former emerging from the creation of Ghana as a nation state by the colonial regime.

Long before such a creation, families, communities and tribes were living together along the points where modern Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast coalesce. Though the creation of the modern state created artificial boundaries, many of such communities continue to live together through intermarriages, trade, religion and other communal activities. As such, they have legitimate ties to Ghana, some of which qualifies them to Ghanaian citizenship by heritage or residence. In other words, it is possible to be living on the fringes of Togo, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast and still be entitled to Ghanaian citizenship on legal grounds. The same scenario applies to Ghanaians born in the diaspora. Yet, these have been the subject of intense political argumentation and judicial interpretation over the years particularly during electioneering season.

Nonetheless, the major bone of contention is now about the equality of all Ghanaians before the law. For instance, in the recent case of the Republic v. Kwame Baffoe (2025), the judge ruled that "all men are equal, but some are more equal before the law". By inference, the judge was suggesting that the president and other high-ranking officials deserves preferential treatment before the law. Thus, confirming a widely held perception among Ghanaians that elitist groups always have their way with the law (Osae-Kwapong, 2025). Akin to the US scenario, such instances suggest

that, the notion of equality of all men as enshrined in the Ghanaian constitution is just a matter of interpretation, in which the judiciary are the supreme arbiters.

**Rationale for the status quo**

Why have both countries been so reluctant to make an unequivocal statement, a legal statement that all men are created equal? In the US for instance, the situation is partly attributed to the "monied class" that owned the land and eventually the capitalist class that accumulated gaudy sums of money. These people essentially wanted to implement laws that would maintain their privilege and wealth. For example, out of the 55 delegates at the Constitutional Convention, 12 including George Washington, owned and managed large slave-operated plantations, while 6 of them were major land speculators. Another 35 were lawyers who earned money often through dealing with debts and property rights on the frontier which allowed them to accumulate significant wealth. Due to these privileges, they also had access to intimate details about the economic system built on private property right which compensated them both financially and socially. The delegates were interested, at least partially, in maintaining their wealth and social position above others and therefore had questions of where the democracy would lead them.

In the Ghanaian context, the British had administered the then colonial territory through locally trained bureaucrats and other loyalists who later became elites in Ghanaian society. Among these locally trained bureaucrats were children of prominent chiefs, businessmen, cocoa farmers and traders who aligned with the colonial regime to protect their own interests (Bannerman-Wood, 1984; Berman, 1998; Gocking, 2014). This alliance also created a system of political patronage which exists till today and may have manifested in the processes leading to the promulgation of the 1992 Republican constitution. For instance, Gyimah Boadi (1991) mentions that whereas the committee of experts that drafted the 1992 Republican constitution had some political credibility, same cannot be said for members of the NCD and CA. According to him, the latter two had been filled with appendages of the PNDC regime, who for one reason or the other were looking to protect their own interests. This was also a deliberate strategy to safeguard the regime from some sort of national trial as had happened elsewhere (Gyimah-Boadi, 1991). Thus, except for a few differences, the Ghanaian scenario portrays a very similar scenario to the American scenario where patronage and classism may have superseded the broader national interest.

Going back to the US case, the delegates wealth at the 1787 constitutional convention also fundamentally shaped their skepticism toward "pure" democracy. It led them to build a system of checks and balances designed to protect property and prevent "mob rule" (Beard, 1913). Democracy was viewed by these delegates, in part, as an approach to governance that could lead to mob rule. "Mob rule," in turn, could undermine the privileged status of the wealthy delegates because in their thinking, the uneducated masses and the poor might vote to redistribute wealth. As a result, the founders preferred a republic over a democracy. James Madison argued that a republic would dilute the power of the poor and protect the nations "true" interests (Madison, 1787). To insulate the government from popular fluctuations the delegates also built-in filters

into the Constitution (e.g., the Senate was initially chosen by State Legislator's, and the electoral system limited the democratic influence of the popular vote). One limitation of this historical view is that it could be claimed that we are imposing presentist values and conditions to a historical situation that is no longer the case. It appears however, that not much has changed with respect to the importance of wealthy political leaders in the US seeking to protect their wealth and privilege.

In Ghana's instance, wealth may not have directly influenced the drafting of the constitution. However, the need to maintain political power, status and privilege may have played a part in the constitutional development processes. As Gyimah-Boadi (1991) observes, newly emerged elitist groups including some members of the NCD and CA who held lucrative job positions were in favor of a pro-government stance. This stance included a desire for "the PNDC [to] continue in office" as well as denouncing "the evils of multi-party politics" (Gyimah-Boadi, 1991). These privileged few were not only seeking to centralize power in the regime but were also looking to extend the tenure of the regime. Such that it would allow them an opportunity to hold on to their positions and invariably influence the sharing of the national cake. It appears then, that the consultative processes beneath the drafting of the 1992 constitution was just a matter of formality over functionality, one that did not necessarily see all Ghanaians to be of equal stature before the law. In that vein, we may deem Ghana's transition back into democratic governance as a grant by the military regime and not a negotiated outcome by the people (Gyimah-Boadi, 1991). Whichever way it was, Ghanaians were eager to embrace it due to the excesses of a military regime that consistently infringed upon their fundamental human rights.

## Current Influences on Democratic Governance

How have these dynamics shaped democratic governance in both the US and Ghana? Of the 50 Senators in the US senate today, many would be considered in the top 10% of the US population in terms of wealth. In fact, several senators average US$ 3.2 million in wealth which is well above the top 10%. Nearly half of the senators are confirmed millionaires compared to 7-8% of the general population.

Senators also include the ultra-wealthy with net worth exceeding US$ 50 million. It is generally difficult to determine the wealth of congress members because they only report between 1 million and 5 million dollars of wealth. Further, as was true of the founders who had insider knowledge of land on the frontier open for purchase current politicians often have insider knowledge on the equity markets. This became such a concern, for which the Stop Treading on Congressional Knowledge Act (STOCK) was recently enacted. While this may have been well intentioned when you go to the details, the penalty for using insider knowledge to make equity trades is just 200 US dollars. This bill is unlikely to hold anyone accountable and will not serve as a deterrent (U.S. Constitutional Convention, 1787) to using insider knowledge to enhance politician's wealth. Furthermore, with the decline of collective bargaining through the seeming demise of unionization in the US have further heightened the wealth inequality gap between politicians' and those who work blue collar jobs.

Comparing to the US, there is little data to describe the exact wealth being held by Ghana's political class. However, Ghana's political landscape reveals a very interesting pattern about how the democratic process further widens the gap between the rich and poor. Starting from the colonial regime, those who entered the country's bureaucracy later joined the country's political class (Bannerman-Wood, 1984). They became the pioneers of contemporary Ghanaian politics who in turn sought to nurture the next crop of politicians (protégés). With such nurturing came a form of patronage, in which the understudy politicians commonly upheld these pioneers as 'godfathers' (Ameh et al., 2025; Bello et al, 2025). Having a 'political godfather' meant access to a support network and financial resources, both of which are key to electoral outcomes in Ghana. In return, political protégés are required to offer their loyalty and service to these 'godfathers' by protecting their [godfathers] interests wherever possible. Similar to the US, these interests often include the need to gain insidious knowledge about government contracts and key aspects of the economy. In Ghana's case, there are little to no legal clauses that prevent politicians from using such knowledge to enrichen themselves. As such, it is common place for politicians to buy state property or be awarded juicy government contracts. Often, these are the hidden incentives behind the quest to enter parliament or political office in Ghana.

To some extent, these negotiated dynamics may have become necessary due to the huge responsibilities associated with occupying political office in Ghana. In particular, there is a perception amongst the populace that the political class is better off than the ordinary Ghanaian. With such perception comes high expectations, often to foot all manner of bills for constituents even though these may not be constitutionally mandated.

What do these trends mean for democracy? Wealth and status often influence one's views on democracy. However, the fact that politicians from the signing of the constitution to today are far wealthier than most Americans means the US democratic system does not elect politicians in large numbers from the poorer classes. Similar patterns are also observed in Ghana where access to resources and relevant connections are a determining factor in who gets elected and who does not. In Ghana's case, this has partly led to some sort of class struggle between the bourgeois and proletariats as were witnessed during the period of military takeovers. There are signs of such a trend continuing under the fourth Republican dispensation. For instance, from 1992 onwards, political power has alternated only between two political parties (i.e., NPP and NDC). In turn, a few people have dominated these political parties respectively, creating some sort of cabal that determines who gets elected and who does not. Mostly, these dynamics have inured to the benefit of the bourgeois class as compared to the proletariats. Thus, the insights from both the US and Ghanaian scenarios suggests that politicians have divided interests between the notion that all men are created equal, the bedrock of democracy, and the need to make laws that protect their privilege, status and wealth.

In the case of the US, this internal conflict started with the oversights in the constitution and became more pronounced with Citizens United that flooded politics with dirty money of billionaires. This way, from the constitution onward, US law protected capitalism and property rights to ensure that the wealthy 1% remain in a dominant position in the political process (Overtz, 2022). In Ghana's case, whereas article 55 (5) of the 1992 constitution directs for "the internal organisation of political

parties to conform with democratic principles", a lot of grey areas remain about how best to approach or enforce this clause. As a result of this vacuum, there is an influx of money and display of wealth to among other things induce electorates. Unlike the US however, it cannot necessarily be claimed that Ghana's constitution is skewed towards protecting capitalism and property rights. Afterall, it was a pro-socialist regime that led processes for the 1992 Republican constitution. However, if we think in terms of how the regime infiltrated the process with their affiliates, we can make a claim that the constitution was largely drafted to protect the interests of the regime and its cohorts who occupied the upper echelons of Ghanaian society at the time. Like the US, such a hierarchy in Ghana may have compromised the representative nature of democracy itself and has rarely been challenged because it is hidden in a democratic narrative that focused primarily on voting rights.

We now turn attention to social media and artificial intelligence (AI), both of which have shaped political outcomes in recent times and will undoubtedly play a key role in the future of democracy.

## Democracy, Social Media and AI

In both Ghana and the US, social media is gradually undermining the representativeness of democracy through the use of algorithms that creates echo chambers. This not only creates wide divides that are difficult to bridge but diminishes the common ground which is the foundation for a highly functioning democracy. AI, primarily thrives on data, for which reason it prioritizes the past and the "is" over the ought, and what ought to be. The truth, therefore, is in an instrumental form that focuses on the means separated from the ends that direct users to think about what should be (Bucher, 2018). Let's dig a bit deeper into social media and AI with a focus on how social media and AI influence democracy but more importantly what can be done to modify this negative effect on democracy.

Why do the social media companies use algorithms to determine your priorities and then send messages to your profile or places on the site you visit that reinforce your perspectives? The answer is simple. Social media platforms are interested in making profits and doing so means they need to encourage engagement—meaning an increase in the time you scroll through content on your preferred site. The longer you stay active on a site, in turn, the easier it is to match ads to your likes and priorities. While algorithms do personalize your experience on the site, they also produce an echo chamber that is the key for the huge profits these companies—corporations produce (Angelova, 2025). Meta, for example, had a market capitalization on US$1.8 trillion and a profit of US$ 60 billion in 2025. Tik Tok also reached a US$ 33 billion valuations in ad revenue. Clearly, these two companies have extreme amounts of power, and they use it to shape laws and politics which serve their interests. (Sims, 2026; Schultz, 2025).

Meta, for example, has one lobbyist for every six members of congress. Advocacy groups such as Amnesty International argue that social media giants like Tik Tok and Meta manipulate opinions at scale and suppress competition. The latter occurs through lobbying politicians to pass laws in their favor, a situation that threaten human

rights and democratic values. Reports from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in the US also suggest that these social media sites threaten free expression in democratic societies. Social media is frequently criticized for fostering division and extremism through echo chambers (Angelova, 2025). Yet, far less attention is paid to how social media corporations leverage their vast economic power to shape legislation, - weakening data privacy protections, minimizing their tax burdens and safeguarding their own privileges. Thus, economic hierarchies fueled by the reluctance to say anything negative about capitalism allow these companies to work openly against democratic priorities (Magalhães, 2025).

Like many American companies, these social media platforms now have a global reach that allows them to influence decision-making and electoral outcomes in other countries. As evidenced from the Cambridge Analytica incidence (2016), such global reach makes it easy to harvest big data on user behavior and value preferences in these countries. This data is used for training the algorithms and inferring user behavior because AI works through pattern recognition and not understanding. In that vein, AI may be better conceived as a statistical mirror that analyzes what humans have done and replicates those patterns to achieve a goal. It is instructive to note that, AI has no inherent sense of what should be done, neither can it determine if an outcome is good or bad on its own. Any "ought" to be is manually programmed by human engineers using Reinforcement Learning from human Feedback (Google, AI, 2026). This is an avenue that allows for encoding and reinforcing popular beliefs and values into the algorithms. Although, AI may be well suited for efficiently finding answers to technical "how to" questions, its value for democracy is limited because it separates the moral ends from the how to means.

Habermas (1984) refers to this separation as instrumental rationality, a form of technical knowledge that is used to manipulate the environment or other people that are seen as objects to be managed. In contrast, he suggests we engage in communicative rationality that requires humans to debate and agree on norms and values through open uncoerced conversation which links the ought and the how to. According to Habermas, instrumental rationality has colonized the "lifeworld" and therefore stands in the way of a strong democracy that tries to do more than pick a leader and instead is the social practice of communicative rationality. Communicative rationality is how a society thinks out loud to solve its problems fairly. An example might clarify these points. Say, a notable leader stated he wanted to increase the price of homes as opposed to making homes more affordable for first time buyers because this would be a great result for the economy. The means are clear: increase the price of a home. But the ends are not clarified and hide within the term good for the economy without saying who would benefit. However, if one debated the term good for the economy one could consider if it was more important for those who owned a home to make a greater profit or for those who couldn't afford a home to start to build wealth by owning this sort of abode. The leader assumed a good economy should focus on the current homeowners who are rich enough to own a home while ignoring if the non-homeowners need to be supported to have a good economy. If both groups had a say in a future law, guided by this sort of conversation, a debate could occur on who should benefit from the so-called good economy. Through the use of social media and other platforms to influence public opinion, US society has largely lost the will to talk across differences

and argue about values and norms. As a result, instrumental rationality has in fact taken over the lifeworld and therefore threatens democracy.

Compared to the US, Ghana may not have necessarily lost its will to talk across differences or argue about values and norms. For the most part, communicative rationality is present in the country's media. Yet, the rise of social media and AI platforms is gradually shifting this towards those paraded on these platforms. Given Ghana's youthful population, a quarter of whom are active social media users, it is common place for mutual learning to occur between these users and the AI algorithms beneath social media platforms. However, due to the allure of capitalism and a desire for profit, insights from such mutual learning constitutes a rich source of data for the tech companies behind social media. For these companies, data is the new oil because of the enormous power and profits it grants them. This power emerging from the near 'superhuman' ability to know what everybody else is thinking whiles the profit emerges from the financial rewards earned from selling such data. Ghanaian politicians have been quick to discern and leverage these trends strategically. Either through paid or organic self-promotion to gain gravitas or gauge public sentiments on policy. The threat herein is that there is now a section of voters whose thoughts about a particular candidate, policy or the democratic process are easily influenced by the content that they engage with on these platforms. In that sense, these persons may lose the ability to properly evaluate candidates and policies in a manner required for a communicative rationality.

*Social media, AI and Wealth (re)distribution*

How do these algorithms affect wealth distribution in democratic societies? The main strength of AI is the ability to analyze big data in real-time. Seeing this potential, governments and organizations are fast leveraging the technology for analytical workflows. Say a government wants to determine the effects of a policy on various categories of people, it can use AI to run a simulation model to predict the corresponding outcomes. In the housing example for instance, AI can easily predict the effects of rising cost of housing on various groups of people and the broader US or Ghanaian economy in general. However, a major challenge emerges when banks and financial institutions leverage AI in determining who gets access to mortgage facilities or a home ownership loan. Unlike a human analyst, AI does not does not consider the individual circumstances of an applicant. Rather, it recognizes and replicates patterns in its training data. This is problematic because the training datasets frequently contain biases and discriminatory practices. Moreover, over 2.2 billion people worldwide lack access to digital connectivity, and are not represented on social media platforms (Signé, 2023). This means that, their voices, perspectives and aspirations are invisible to these models by default. In the context of the housing for instance, these realities may determine which category of people are selected or not selected by the AI system for a mortgage in the US or a home ownership loan in Ghana. Thus, Whichever way that is, using AI for decision-making could further entrench housing disparities and wealth inequality in democratic society(ies). Then again, what happens to global inequality when governments and international organizations leverage AI for analytics or policy work? We can keep asking these questions on and on.

However, that is not the point of this paper. The point of this paper was to show the state of democracy in two contextually different countries, i.e., the US and Ghana. Insights from both case studies suggest that democracy in its current form maybe limited to some extent; especially in terms of wealth (re)distribution and creating equal opportunities for various categories of people. These occur through cultural and value preferences embedded in institutional mechanisms such as the Constitution, corresponding laws, policies and etc., that determine the pace of democratic societies. However, it appears from both case studies that, these institutional mechanisms are mostly skewed towards preserving elitist interests than the broader national interest. When such a disequilibrium occurs in democratic society(ies), it leads to a growing frustration with the system. As such, there is the tendency to downplay the basic privileges (if any) that comes with democratic societies.

Do these suggest that we give up on democracy and its values? Certainly not. Inspite of its flaws, democracy remains the best option (at least in our opinion) for contemporary societies until otherwise proven. This is due to the fundamental freedoms that it provides for people and businesses to thrive devoid of intimidation. However, it appears that democracy is at a critical juncture due to contemporary challenges such as the AI conundrum that many democratic societies are grappling with. What then maybe the way forward for preserving the dignity of democratic societies?

First, there is the urgent need to rethink the distributive aspects of democracy especially in capitalist societies such as the US, such that the ripple effects of wealth creation may not only accrue to the top 10%. Inter alia, such a rethinking must occur through the institutional mechanisms such as the constitution, corresponding laws and policies that determine the rules of the game. In that regard, countries such as the US may have to learn lessons from Ghana who have recently moved towards reviewing its constitution to reflect changing societal needs. Likewise, nascent democracies like Ghana and others may also learn lessons from the US scenario where a disequilibrium in the country's institutional mechanisms have led to the concentration of wealth among 1% of American citizens. More specifically, by focusing on where and how the US got it wrong in terms of wealth (re)distribution and creating equal opportunities for all. To reduce wealth disparities and systemic inequalities, there is an urgent need for democratic societies such as the US and Ghana to invest in affordable and equitable healthcare services, paying living wages instead of minimum wages as well as other robust social protection mechanisms to provide a better safety net for citizens. For that reason, both the US and Ghana may need to look towards the Nordic democracies such as Denmark, Sweden, Norway and others who have made significant advancements in that regard.

Second, current scenarios across the US and Ghanaian media landscape require an urgent need to (re)think what constitutes free speech and a free press. This is because of how political propaganda have overshadowed substantive content within both countries. As the fourth estate in democratic societies, the role of the media is essentially to keep citizens informed about happenings within society, such that citizens can exercise communicative rationality and contribute to the national discourse. The role of the media therefore is to act as an honest broker of news and other informative content, not about spewing falsehoods and half-truths in the name of political propaganda. Addressing these fundamental concerns have become even

more critical due to the growing lack of censorship and the disruptive potential posed by social media, AI and the underlying algorithms. From all indications, the AI era is upon us now and will be with us until we achieve the singularity where everything will be interconnected. This means that democratic societies such as the US and Ghana must put in the necessary guardrails to protect their citizens from becoming puppets in a global marionette show. These guardrails may include very strict privacy and data protection mechanisms such as promoting digital avenues where there is no monetization of content, data belongs to users, and most importantly the users are creators that create spaces of difference that bring differences between users and helps them discuss ends and its relation to means.

In the interest of preserving the sanctity of democratic societies, we have shared insights from two well-regarded democratic countries, (i.e., Ghana and the US, with similar challenges). We have as well shared some thoughts on what we consider as pathways towards making democratic societies more representative of the collective interest and not just a few. To do so, economic limitations (e.g., wealth inequalities and wage stagnation) as well as cultural limitations (e.g., media and AI and voting rights) need to be woven together, addressed and challenged if democracy is to move forward. We offer this as an open call for others to share lessons from elsewhere as well as offer their thoughts for strengthening democracy in the era of AI and polarization that is upon us.

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