

Falling Apart: America's Short-Lived Democratic Dynasty

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Abstract

At its founding, America was considered to be the pinnacle of democracy, providing an image that everyone was welcome to the same opportunities, experiences, and voice as those around them. However, with the rise in government corruption and a lack of consideration of the needs of the American people in the lawmaking process, it becomes clear that America's label of a democracy has been tainted and oversimplified. Rather than valuing the principles of equal opportunity and consideration of citizen wellbeing, U.S. officials have oversimplified the standards of a democracy to fit the nation merely on the grounds that there have been few instances of violent injustices against the people, and citizens are a part of the voting process. While America claims to function as a democracy for the people, when analyzing key societal factors including citizen participation, the American education system, and the current state of America's middle class, it becomes clear that citizens have been neglected of the building blocks to participate in this "democracy" to begin with. Economic, educational, and social inequalities continue plague regions of the United States, impacting the nature of policy-making and civic engagement, hindering the nation's strive for democracy. This paper will delve deep into the social, political, and economic implications that arise when United States' institutions fail to take action to address the concerns of *all* of its citizens. Books, articles, journals, expert opinions, and studies provided the information included in this paper.

Falling Apart: America's Short-Lived Democratic Dynasty

Following the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump, individuals both nationally and worldwide took notice to the drastic changes in the social and political landscape of the United States. Whether it be enduring an investigation to evaluate whether claims of collusion with Russia during the election were valid, initiating a trade war with China, or depriving families with basic human rights at the Mexican border, many have begun to question the United States' once prevailing image as the ultimate democracy. Unsurprisingly, according to the 2018 edition of The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, the United States is currently labeled as a "flawed democracy." This ranking is ultimately based on five major categories: electoral process and pluralism, government function, political participation, political culture, and citizens' civil liberties (Germanos, 2019). In an era where Americans have grown increasingly frustrated with the nature of their country's politics, it becomes necessary that we evaluate whether America's soil-- comprised of the participation of its citizens, the strength of its middle class, and its education system-- is sufficiently fertile for democracy to succeed in the 21st century.

Before analyzing whether America's soil is and/or has the potential to become fertile, it is critical to understand how the nation downgraded from the title of a "full democracy" to a "flawed democracy." Countries that fall under the label of a "fully democracy" are ones that allot basic political freedoms and civil liberties to its citizens and are "underpinned by a political culture conducive to the flourishing of democracy." Along with these two factors, the government functions justly and satisfactorily, the media is both diverse and independent, the judiciary is independent and enforces decisions, and there is an effective system of checks and

balances. Meanwhile, “flawed democracies” have free and fair elections, yet fail in terms of their governance and low levels of political participation (Holodny, 2017).

One of the primary reasons for the United States’ new ranking is due to a fall “in popular confidence in the functioning of public institutions, a trend that predated — and aided — the election of Donald Trump” (Karlis, 2018). One of the factors that has contributed to this statement is the shift in the media to a standard where misinformation reigns supreme. A December 2016 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center suggests that 23% of American adults have shared fake news (whether they about it or not) with others (Ordway, 2018). Not only that, but with the passage of a number of policies and governmental actions which a number of people have called out as being only to fulfill Trump’s personal agenda, the idea that the function of a democratic government is for the people has begun to waiver in the minds of the American public. To substantiate this claim, Vavreck notes that in the 1980s, multiple polls conducted by organizations including as CBS, The New York Times, and The Washington Post found that only 29 percent of Americans trusted the government to do the right thing (Vavreck, 2015). The new wave of intense partisan politics is a large reason for this, impacting both voter turnout and policymaking on Capitol Hill.

The education system in America can also be found to blame for the crumbling of America’s democratic soil. In particular, the lack of civic knowledge about social, political, and economic issues has been a constant concern in education throughout the past decade. Unfortunately, it appears that the focus of the American education system has shifted from civic education to job training preparation. As a result, the lack of knowledge about public affairs has made citizens more susceptible to manipulation through political advertising, as well as has allowed for the wealthy to dictate what does and does not happen in the political world.

When evaluating the central question of this research paper, it is important to not only consider the actions of those controlling American politics and society, but also the contributions (or lack thereof) of America's citizens toward sustaining such a political structure. More specifically, if America is to truly look toward reforming its broken democracy, it must look after the needs of the largest portion of American citizens: the middle class. By researching the factors that influence citizens' decline in civic and social participation, the implications of the inadequate education system, and America's transition from a nation that once valued its middle class to one that financially and politically disregards it, both citizens and institutions may be able to alter the U.S. democracy's trajectory.

Citizen Participation

Citizen participation is "a process which provides private individuals an opportunity to influence public decisions and has long been a component of the democratic decision-making process" (Cogan & Sharpe, 1986). When discussing whether citizens play an active role in democracy, it is important to first analyze the political makeup the United States was established under. In fact, Mounk contends that, "the unresponsiveness of America's political system is by design," referring to the pretenses of political organization America was originally founded under. The author continues that, "As Alexander Hamilton and James Madison made clear in the Federalist Papers, the essence of this republic would consist...*" in the total exclusion of the people, in their collective capacity, from any share"* in the government. Instead, popular views would be translated into public policy through the election of representatives "whose wisdom may," in Madison's words, "best discern the true interest of their country." In this light, the United States has always, in some capacity, sought to provide its citizens with only the minimum means of engaging in democratic matters. Along with the establishment of a democratic republic

also came social restrictions which prevented both women and African Americans from voting, limiting their civic engagement opportunities. It was not until the 1900s that reforms including the Nineteenth Amendment and the Voting Rights Act finally enabled minority groups to begin engaging in their political system, enabling a large, new population of people to cast their voices with the government (Mounk, 2018). Despite several pieces of legislation being passed the widens the number of people who *can* vote in the United States, the number of people who actually *do* participate in this civic activity has largely declined over the years. In fact, Reinhold finds that voter turnout in the United States has been steadily declining since the 1960s (Reinhold, 1976). In this light, many Americans are not as inclined to engage with their civic duties because of their nation's precedence of neglecting them the opportunity to. This fact may come as a surprise to many, especially in an era without literacy tests, poll taxes, and other voting impediments; however, there are a number of other reasons for this drop in voter turnout.

One of the primary factors contributing to the decrease in voter turnout has to do with the psychology of individualism amongst American voters. Putnam delves deep into this idea by suggesting that, in recent years, Americans have begun venturing away from collective efforts and activities in favor of solitude, specifically stating that, “Americans have become a nation of couch-potatoes, turning to television for solitary entertainment, leaving bowling leagues, PTA meetings, and the Rotary Club behind” (Valelly, 2001). Putnam's point can be seen as timely especially when evaluating recent research by Hendrix who details that the proportion of Americans who classify themselves as “lonely” has increased from 20% to 40% since the 1980s; “put another way, an isolation of affluence is indelibly marking modern society” (Hendrix, 2018) Not only do people seem to crave a sense of isolation, but the rise in social media has also paved the way for a generation that no longer feels the need to engage with others (Hobson, 2017). In

this light, personal feelings of isolation due to external factors including social media can pave the way for citizens who not only do not engage in active citizen participation, but also do not feel the need to. More specifically, Tocqueville views this new era of isolation as being ominous to the future of America's democracy, warning that "individualism could pull Americans into private concerns and leave us vulnerable to the degradation of public life," warning Americans about the prospects of their society if only personal, private matters are subjects of concern (Democracy in America, 1969). If America seeks to uphold its true image of a democracy, it must look toward reigniting citizens' interest in participating in causes larger than their own concerns.

Putnam furthers his discussion on the disappearance of civic participation by pairing it with analysis on the loss of America's "social capital." The author writes, "By 'social capital,' I mean features of social life--networks, norms, and trust--that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (Putnam, 2001). In this statement, Putnam touches on another factor which has led to citizens' neglect in participating in political matters, the voter alienation theory. Reinhold discusses that the voter alienation theory explains the impact of national events, including the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War on Americans' view of the government. Reinhold continues that, "the electorate is turned off, cynical, distrustful of government, uncertain that their votes make much difference" (Reinhold, 1976). The sense of distrust Americans' have toward their government is further highlighted by the OECD, which finds that only 43% of citizens trust their public administrations. Arbaza also argues that this lack of trust "compromises the willingness of citizens to respond to public policies" (Arzaba, 2018). Americans often look up to and seek to entrust their personal concerns with members of higher power, notably in the realm of politics. However, in a political age where many view the actions

of the Trump administration as only seeking personal benefit or the benefit of the top 1%, this sense of trust has largely been lost. In fact, the Pew Research Center finds that only 17% of Americans report trusting their government to do “what is right just about always” 3% of the time, versus 14% when considering “most of the time” (Public trust in government, 2019)

While national events in the past featuring political figures hiding information from the public has largely contributed to the loss of trust amongst American citizens, the growing divisive nature of American politics has also played a role in furthering distrust. Arazaba explains that “the world is witnessing the erosion good governance and the rise of political extremism, which leads to mistrust from the common citizen” (Arzaba, 2018). With the rise in party politics as opposed to politics intended for the good of the general public, Rogowski even finds that one of the impacts of such rampant polarization is a decrease in voter turnout (LSE, n.d.). Though there are citizens who remain moderate on the range of political views, it is no surprise that those who remain set on either side of the political extreme become reluctant to participate in any way once their political party is no longer leading America’s forefront. Citizens may also be wary about participating because they feel that their concerns will not be addressed in a system that too often depends on extremist political stances to enact change. The aforementioned discussion on the increased sense of loneliness is also aided by the small percentage of citizens who identify themselves as independent of either the Democratic or Republican majority parties. A recent Gallup poll finds that 44% of respondents consider themselves “independents” when labeling themselves within America’s divisive political system (Quinlan, 2019). In the wake of extremist political leadership from presidents like Donald Trump, this percentage is hardly surprising. Unfortunately, however, this large percentage further drives across the point that many Americans feel that current leadership no longer

encompasses their political goals and interests, further retreating them into a party that was once unpopular. Putnam puts it best when he states, “maybe the polity, as it were, has lost interest in the people. It's not that Americans are tuning out. They're being left out” (Valelly, 2001).

Furthering Putnam’s point, it may not be that Americans do not want to participate in American democracy-- it’s that there is no place or leadership for them to do so.

Perhaps one of the largest reasons as to why Americans no longer practice active citizen participation is because of the structures that seek to create advantages and disadvantages for Americans seeking to contribute to the political process. One of these structures is gerrymandering, the process by which politicians manipulate voting district boundaries to favor their party over another (Criss, 2019). In this light, a lack of political participation by citizens is not only a result of divisive party politics, but also a response to the ongoing manipulation of district boundaries by people in positions of power. Moore writes how the process of gerrymandering disproportionately impacts minority voters, a group of American citizens who have been marginalized and silenced on matters of social and political significance for far too long (Moore, 2017). Hayes and McKee further that “redistricting’s negative effects on participation—measured by voter roll-off in U.S. House elections—are generally strongest among African Americans, but that black voters can be mobilized when they are redrawn into a black representative’s congressional district” (Hayes, McKee, n.d). From the Three-Fifths Compromise to lack of voting rights allotted to African Americans to the drastic structural efforts made to manipulate and restrict African American voting rights in the 21st century, aspects of the political system itself ultimately disable individuals from actively participating in civic matters. Other obstacles which make the process of participating in democratic matters also impact the degree to which Americans participate in their political system. For example, Epps-

Johnson notes that “the US is one of the few major democracies in the world that puts the onus of voter registration on the individual voter, instead of the government,” placing the responsibility of registering to vote on the citizens. Not only that, but the rules governing how to vote vary from state to state with pages of guidelines (Epps-Johnson, 2018). By failing to address the obstacles that seek to make voting more difficult and tedious for Americans to engage in, the desire to increase citizen participation through the basic act of voting can never be addressed. In a society where most citizens struggle balancing time for both work and leisure, overcomplicating the process by which individuals can even *register* to vote ultimately deters civic engagement altogether.

Education

Technological innovation and the rise in social media usage has been a major source in connecting Americans to their political system, as well. The Pew Research Center finds that approximately half of Americans have “engaged in some form of political activity on social media in the past year,” with African Americans in particular stating that social media has become an important platform for them to express their political views or involve themselves with issues they feel are important (Anderson, et. al., 2019). Youth in particular have been found to get their political information from social media rather than traditional media outlets, largely because the information is more interactive, visually attractive, and user-centered compared to traditional forms of information. The Pew Research Center substantiates this claim through its finding that people are increasingly posting their views on social and political issues by “sharing news articles, ‘following’ political figures, watching videos connected to politics and ‘tweeting’ about politics” (Rainie, L., et. al., 2016). In this light, social media can be a tool that can not only serve to educate citizens, but bring them together, as well. This can be especially useful for

individuals who feel isolated in terms of their political beliefs in their immediate areas, providing them with an outlet to connect with people similar to them. Social media can also be a source of igniting political interest particularly among the younger generation of American citizens, motivating them to actively participate in their civic duties from an early age.

While platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can be effective means of communicating political knowledge to an audience by more visual, engaging means, problems arise when the information communicated to the public is not accurate. Garrett finds that social media does, in fact, play a role in promoting misperceptions during political campaigns (Garrett, n.d.). One of the greatest examples of this can be seen when analyzing the Facebook ads showcased in the months leading up to the 2016 US Presidential Elections. Kurtzleben writes that, in the months leading up to the election, the top 20 fake news stories had garnered more shares, reactions, and comments on Facebook than the top 20 hard news stories (Kurtzleben, 2018). These fake news sources and advertisements garnered much attention during the 2016 US Presidential Elections, and many believe that they were the primary sources that led to Donald Trump's victory over Hilary Clinton. For example, the infamous "Pizzagate" conspiracy theory that members of the Democratic Party (including Hilary Clinton) were holding an illegal child sex trafficking ring in the basement of a pizza shop ultimately spread due to misinformation on social media (Zadrozny, 2019). Coupled with the intense polarization plaguing the landscape of 21st century American politics, many news outlets and media sources have also turned to misinformation in the form of extremist reporting in order to garner further support and attention from their intended audience. This not only contributes to further division amongst citizens, but also fails to provide them with an accurate understanding of present-day politics. The presence of these fake news sources and extremist pieces also enables for the development of echo-chambers

which easily and effectively enable citizens to remain confined to their personal ideologies and those like-minded with them, depriving them of the civil, bipartisan discourse that they deserve.

Aside from advances in technology, the erosion of the education system itself has also contributed to citizens' lack of knowledge on aspects of American politics. A recent study by the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center found that 53% of Americans incorrectly think that immigrants who are here illegally do not have any rights under the U.S. Constitution, 37% could not name any of the rights guaranteed under the First Amendment, and only 26% can name the three branches of government (Annenberg public policy center, 2019) . Litvinov breaks down for citizens that, while all 50 states require instruction in civics and government, "factual book learning is not reinforced with experience-based learning opportunities like community service, guided debates, critical discussion of current events, and simulations of democratic processes" (Neatoday, 2017) . Even more alarming, a report finds that Americans do not know much about how their state governments work either (McCoy, 2019) . If Americans do not have a firm understanding of the American political system and processes, it becomes even more difficult for active citizen participation and hence a true democracy to take place. Not only that, but if Americans do not have an understanding of their state level of governance, it becomes even more difficult for them to begin engaging on the local political level, let alone begin to participate on a more national, collective scale. The lack of adequate real-world learning allocated to understanding the functions of governance and politics in the United States also only reaffirms the feeling of isolation that so many Americans now tend to crave-- the idea that it is not affecting you directly, you do not care to learn and understand the political matter.

This is further amplified by the education system's failure to prepare students for American democracy through classroom instruction. King acknowledges that schools in the United States are hardly cultivating knowledge regarding democratic practices and beliefs, nor has there been much (if any)/ discussion on how democratic means have been applied to improve the country. The author continues that, "the governing board of the National Assessment for Educational Progress dropped fourth- and 12th-grade civics and American history as a tested subject in order to save money" (King, 2017). If schools are not seeking to provide an adequate understanding of the purpose and importance of a democracy to its students, the pillar by which students may work to become active citizens within that democracy immediately crumbles. Not only that, but only providing a vague understanding of ideas like democracy only seek to further prevent Americans from contributing to political decisions and carrying out the true meaning of democracy.

Not only is the current primary education system failing to adequately educate students on the nature of American government and democracy, but the cost of pursuing a higher education effectively widens the knowledge gap even more. Maldonado writes how student loans now make up the largest chunk of U.S. non-housing debt: "This brings the total cost of attendance to an astronomical total of \$104,480 over four years. The comparable cost for the same four-year degree in 1989 was \$26,902" (Maldonado, 2018). With millions of students across the country unable to afford the unreasonable cost of pursuing a higher education in the hopes of positively contributing to society in the future, what may be most alarming is the \$1.5 trillion in federal student loan debt that shadows behind them (Miller, Campbell, Cohen, & Hancock, n.d.). The privilege of attending college comfortably should be a right afforded to every student in the United States; with the high cost of an education, however, students are only

presented with barriers to leading a contributive role as American citizens. Particularly in the case of low-income students seeking to pursue a higher education, such an educational endeavor should never seem like a predestination for poverty. Without the real-world application and deeper teaching that comes with a college education, students are ill-equipped to effectively contribute to their American democracies.

When schools *do* decide to incorporate education on politics and civics into their curriculum, however, the personal ideologies and opinions of educators too often get in the way of objective teaching. Zimmerman and Robertson write, “Laws, school officials, and community opinion have all conspired to prevent or discourage American teachers from discussing controversial issues in their classrooms” (Zimmerman, 2017). When reflecting on the nature of 21st century social politics, it is imperative that students have the opportunity to engage with and discuss these issues in a safe classroom environment. Amongst these issues is the rise in awareness of police brutality in America, which schools in Edwardsville, Illinois have been instructed to “change the subject” when events such as the police shooting in Ferguson, Missouri arose in class. By not opening the door to discussion on a number of social and political issues on the grounds of potential classroom controversy, schools are ultimately depriving students the diverse discourse necessary to a well-rounded understanding of any given issue. Not only that, but if students are not taught from a young age how to discuss topics which may be controversial, it becomes even more unlikely for them to engage in reasoned, informed discussions on society’s differences as American citizens.

The American Middle Class Economy

The American Dream fosters the idea that with hard work, one can be successful. Author James Truslow Adams is often credited with coining “the American Dream,” writing that it is a

dream “of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement” (The Epic of America, 1931). The American Dream once gave individuals from all across the country the invitation to pursue a new life of hope and prosperity. Unfortunately, many Americans, especially those living in the middle and lower classes, have grown to realize just how tainted this American Dream is; rather than advocating that with hard work one can be successful, it appears that message now is: if you are not successful, it is because you have not worked hard. Moritz-Rabson shares that presently, 39% of Americans say the economy is “not so good” or “poor,” but only 18% have six months of emergency savings in the event of a recession. Though unemployment rates are considered to be at an all-time low and real GDP increased by 3.1% in the first quarter of 2019, many Americans are still concerned about their financial status (Moritz-Rabson, 2019). This may come as a surprise to many as President Trump boasts about “his” thriving American economy, and many of his supporters who echo the same praise; however, Cohen clarifies that it is corporate profits and prices that have been soaring, causing paychecks to lag and wage gains to erode (Cohen, 2018). In favor of a “thriving economy,” many big corporations have chosen to compromise domestic labor for cheaper, foreign labor, an act which has severely hurt the middle class (who primarily take on such jobs). One of the primary means of doing this is via domestic outsourcing. Lee writes that outsourcing plays “a significant role in the nation’s troubling trends of stagnating wages and rising inequality,” impacting the nature of employment for a large portion of the American workforce. With this understanding, the idea that Americans are living in a thriving economy can be seen as a misconstrued statement given that corporations are really benefitting more than the people. Along with outsourcing, factory shifts to technology and automation as well as the deterioration of union jobs have paved the way for the elimination of middle-class

jobs (Rines, 2014). To quantify these impacts, Madland reports that the top one percent share of income rose from 9.12 percent in 1974 to 23.5 percent in 2007, while over this same time period the share of income going to 60 percent of the population, the middle class, fell from 52.2 percent to 46.9 percent (Madland, 2013).

By failing to recognize the economic rights and needs of the American middle class, U.S. leadership is only further encouraging economic inequality, which soon bleeds into fostering political inequality. In fact, a study in 2018 reveals how the wealthy engage in “stealth politics,” quietly seeking to advance unpopular, unequal highly conservative policies. Across the United States, the wealthiest billionaires have continued to make substantial financial contributions to conservative Republican candidates in favor of cutting social security benefits (without ever disclosing any discussion related to social security to the public) (The Economist, 2018). This new political landscape is not uncommon, however; in fact, it is reminiscent of the Gilded Age which was characterized by inequality and government corruption. However, upon citizens recognizing these abuses of power, a series of reforms were put through with the goal of promoting greater political equality and preventing powerful economic interests from blinding government officials (Democracy Journal, 2015). Today, however, it appears that the barrier between market and government has washed away, largely due to the more globalized nature of our economy, as well as the fact that the richest companies in America are trying more and more to distinguish themselves from the average American workforce. However, by remaining blind to the economic needs of the majority middle class, the U.S. government only further allows for corporate titans to influence economic policy which only benefits the top 1% of American citizens. Similarly, as the political clout of the middle-class falters in favor of a more money-

centered political world, the image of an American democracy whereby *every* citizen's concerns are deemed important and accounted for washes away.

It has also been found that economic status greatly influences whether an individual chooses to participate in civic activities, impacting the quality and quantity of American civic engagement. This is particularly noticeable when analyzing those who voted in the 2012 election. It was found that 80.2% of those making \$150,000 had voted, while only 46.9% of those making less than \$10,000 had (McElwee, George, Trickey, Lowry, 2015). This fact not only harms America's quest for a thriving democracy due to a disproportionate decrease in voter turnout amongst lower-income Americans, but also encourages partisan inequality. Thompson finds that Americans who make less than \$70,000 were more likely to vote Democratic than those who make more than \$70,000, who are more likely to vote Republican (Thompson, 2012). Based on this research, it can be deduced that such a partisan divide based on income can contribute to partisan policies which disproportionately favor wealthier Americans, leaving the concerns of lower classes to the backburner. McElwee concludes this analysis by elaborating that numerous studies at the state level have found that upper-class bias in the election system leads to higher levels of income inequality, while higher voter turnout among poorer classes leads to high welfare spending (McElwee, George, Trickey, Lowry, 2015). Given this correlation, it is necessary for the American government to reconsider its approaches when determining a number of socio-economic policies, making sure to account for the concerns of *all* Americans, if it hopes for a democracy to continue on into the future. At the same time, by focusing on policies that work to eliminate economic inequalities amongst the classes, the American landscape may also be able to fix issues related to civic participation.

Conclusion

Despite the pressing social, political, and economic issues underpinning American democracy today, one must not forget the standard of the ideal democracy that the U.S. was once placed at. Ultimately, the problems with America's current democratic structure boil down to an increase in partisan politics and lifestyle, advancements in technology which have enabled government officials to turn a blind eye to the wellbeing of the middle class, and a failure to adequately educate students on their responsibilities as citizens. Hence, addressing the nuances of each of these facets is necessary to restoring the soil of America's once thriving democracy.

Guilfoile and Delander summarize several ways in which America's education can foster an environment where civic literacy thrives, including classroom instruction in civics and government, history, economics, and law; service learning linked to classroom learning; learning through participation in models and simulations of democratic processes; guided classroom discussion of current issues and events, and meaningful participation in school governing bodies. The future of democracy is tied to the quality of our public education system, which is at the root of civic participation and democratic contribution. The American education system must begin to initiate schools that provide the aforementioned learning opportunities, rather than an oversimplified, theoretical approach. Ultimately, the well-being of the American public is best fostered through an informed, engaged group of citizens who understand how the government works and what role they play in its function. In fact, by instilling the importance of contributing to national processes in young people, Guilfoile and Delander further that "these students tend to be more interested in learning how to create change and make effective decisions in their civic work," creating a new group of changemakers (Guilfoile, Delander, 2014). These actions and

teachings are necessary to creating a population that is equipped with both the skills needed to work, and the understandings of effective participation in civic and political life.

It also becomes necessary that certain political processes are simplified to encourage individuals to follow through with the civic duties they have been educated on in the classroom. Hasan outlines a number of strategies and policies the United States should consider implementing if it hopes to see an increase in its voter turnout rates. Rather than advocating to restrict access through voter ID laws, implement shorter registration and early voting periods, and disenfranchise felons, the author advocates that America should consider banning gerrymandering and removing “dark money” from politics. Specifically, Hasan brings up the “Democracy for All Amendment,” which would give the state and federal governments the power to “regulate and set limits on the raising and spending of money by candidates and others to influence elections” (Hasan, & New Statesman, 2018). In terms of voting, America should also consider initiating automatic voter registration like several other countries have, minimizing the amount of time it would take for Americans to participate in the voting process.

The current status of wealthy corporations and individuals dictating politics has hurt all Americans in terms of the policies passed and the concerns focused on on Capitol Hill, but has more deeply impacted middle class Americans, who have been severely disregarded in terms of their social and economic and wellbeing, as well as their contributions to politics. Hence, we must consider the current lifestyle and income of America’s primary workforce when looking to change middle class participation in the democratic process. An increase in social security benefits, the retreat from outsourced labor in favor of American labor, a drastic decrease in the cost of receiving higher education, and affordable health care are all measures that may be taken into consideration by the government. By analyzing the current social, economic, and political

aspects that comprise American society in conjunction with the institutions established to support (or neglect) them, Americans can effectively work to uncloud American democracy both in label and in practice.

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