



TheDaak Review

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Registers of Democracy: Contemporary Perspectives

Democracy occupies a paradoxical place in contemporary political life. It remains the most widely endorsed form of governance, invoked as a moral ideal and political aspiration, even as it is increasingly marked by erosion, contestation, and scepticism. Across regions and regimes, democratic institutions persist alongside deepening inequalities, majoritarian impulses, shrinking civic spaces, and the consolidation of executive power. This thematic call for submissions seeks to examine democracy not as a settled form in crisis, but as a set of evolving *registers*: theoretical, institutional and processual, through which political life is organised and contested.

Classical social contract theories once sought to explain how survival and coexistence could be secured through agreed-upon governing arrangements that regulate relations between individuals, society, and the state. Democracy emerged within this tradition as a particularly compelling answer. Yet democracy has never been a singular or stable model. Its contemporary global prominence is often traced to the end of the Cold War, when liberal democracy was projected as a universal template to be emulated worldwide. This narrative, however, rests on the assumption of a Western origin of democracy and its seamless dissemination elsewhere, an assumption that obscures alternative democratic histories, vernacular practices, and institutional adaptations.

TheDaak Review invites contributions that challenge linear accounts of democracy by foregrounding its diverse genealogies and contextual forms. Rather than asking whether democracy is “failing”, contributors are encouraged to ask: *What forms is democracy taking today? What tensions does it generate? What kinds of political subjects, institutions, and exclusions does it produce?*

A central concern of this theme is the relationship between democracy and the nation. Democratic systems rarely emerge from atomised individuals coming together in abstraction; instead, they are embedded in communities shaped by shared histories, identities, and affective



ties. Does the nation provide the conditions for democratic flourishing, or does democracy itself actively produce nationalist sentiment through practices of inclusion and exclusion? In an era marked by ethnic conflict, border anxieties, and resurgent nationalism, these questions acquire renewed urgency.

Closely tied to this is the problem of *the people*. Democracy's foundational claim, 'rule by the people, of and for the people', rests on an *unstable* category. What is the people? Who counts as the people? How are they constituted, and on what terms are they included or excluded? Contributions may explore how democratic equality sits uneasily with the treatment of minorities, migrants, refugees, and other marginalised groups, especially in a global context shaped by war, climate-induced displacement, and shifting regimes of citizenship.

The dossier also welcomes theoretical engagements with democracy's internal contradictions. Democracy exists across a spectrum, from liberal to radical forms and is often criticised for limitations that appear intrinsic to it: majoritarian dominance, slow decision-making, and the suppression of dissent. How do liberal commitments to individual autonomy intersect or clash with democratic demands for equality? To what extent do democratic systems contain the conditions of their own erosion, coexisting with or enabling authoritarian tendencies?

Beyond theory, questions examining democracy as a lived and institutional practice are crucial. How do democratic norms operate or fail to operate within governments, bureaucracies, courts, political parties, and electoral systems? What roles do corporate power, media ecosystems, and money play in shaping electoral outcomes? How do legal frameworks mediate tensions between procedural legality and substantive justice, particularly in the functioning of the judiciary?

Moments of resistance and protest form another crucial register of democracy. When governing institutions fail to represent popular interests, protests emerge as sites where democratic legitimacy is renegotiated. Whether such movements are accommodated, criminalised, or violently suppressed offers insight into the strength and limits of democratic life.

Finally, the theme reflects on democracy in a rapidly transforming global order. Digital technologies such as online voting, social media campaigning, generative AI, and chatbots are reshaping political participation while introducing new vulnerabilities as well as strengths. Simultaneously, the resurgence of military conflict unsettles liberal assumptions about democratic peace, as established democracies increasingly resort to warfare. Climate change, meanwhile, poses a planetary challenge that demands democratic, consensus-based solutions beyond the nation-state.



Recent scholarship points to democratic erosion through autocratic legalism, populism, neoliberal governance, and majoritarianism. Against this backdrop, TheDaak Review invites essays that critically examine democracy's promises, perils, and possibilities.

Please make your submissions under the following categories on our journal page using the link here. **The deadline for submission is 1st June 2026. This issue is due for publication on 21st July 2026.**

1. Book reviews (not more than 1200 words)
2. Review essays (not more than 2000 words)
3. Commentary/Perspective (not more than 4000 words)
4. Research Essay/Article (not more than 7000 words)

Please note that if you are looking to discuss possible ideas under the current theme or want to discuss your book with our editorial team, you can write to us at editor@thedaak.in

Editorial Team
TheDaak Review