ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Social Media and Democratic Consolidation in the Postmilitarized Nations: A Study of Pakistan, Nigeria and Brazil

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Abstract— Over the past few decades, social media has developed a ubiquitous part of our global world mainly used for commerce, networking, and entertainment. However, over the last few years, there has been a rise in the use of social media in party-political debate and actions, especially in developed democracies and post-militarized countries. Is this to suggest that social media will have an effect on democratic transformation and consolidation in the twenty-first century? This paper aims to address this question by exploring the usage of social media as a potential democratic consolidation instrument in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil. There is no denying that digital technologies and social media networks have dramatically improved human contact in the twenty-first century. Because of the partaking, collaborating, and moneymaking attributes of social media, they have become veritable tools for the strengthening of self-governing principles and processes in terms of knowledge exchange, election tracking, and assessment, reduction of tensions and anxieties related to votes, and maintaining and even implementing transparency and answerability to a wide swath of the population. The paper, on the other hand, acknowledges that while social media has its own set of issues, such as the potential for violence and despoliation, these can be effectively mitigated, if not entirely eliminated, through adequate monitoring and regulatory controls deprived of jeopardizing the independence of speech. It thus contends that, despite the teething problems in each nation, the proper use of social media in fostering and maintaining participatory democracy in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil in the twenty-first century has the potential to deepen and consolidate democracy in the respective countries.

Index Terms— Broadcasting, Social equality, Social networking, Voting, Military dictatorship
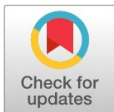
Introduction

Even during the dark days of brutal military dictatorship in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil, the media (print and automated), especially secretly owned media, have always been powerful instruments of sensitization and deployment of people toward democracy (Acheampong & Taden, 2024). However, government coercion and abuse, logistics, limited assets, and their elitist possession and influence limited their reach. However, with the expansion of the message media space due to advanced technology, info sharing and sensitization of persons now have extensive imminence and more proactive event addition (Jennings, Suzuki, & Hubbard, 2021). This is due to their widespread accessibility and affordability, regardless of social standing. Even with the cheapest cell phones, one can access some social media sites for information, education, and entertainment at a reasonable cost (de Zúñiga, Huber, & StrauíŸ, 2018). Fundamentally, the media serves as

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a conduit for information gathering and distribution, as well as social awareness and mobilization. These roles distinguish the media as a key player in the relationship between the government and the ruled, making them essential for good supremacy, democracy excavating, and social growth and advancement in general (Sunstein, 2018).

The rise of modern social media is a big wonder that has changed the way people connect, communicate, and share info all over the world in the twenty-first century. It is significant to emphasize that social media is not a modern phenomenon. Since the dawn of human contact, it has been changing (DeNardis, 2019). Meanwhile, modern types of social media networks such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and internet services emerged in the twenty-first century. Many facets of human communication have been revolutionized as a result of the advent of these emerging types of social media. As a result, social media has become an integral part of people's daily lives all over the world. For example, there were approximately 2.8 billion Facebook users in the world in 2020, and this number is increasingly growing. As a result of this growth, social media platforms have become fantastic tools for engaging with a vast audience (Barros & Michaud, 2020).

The introduction of these digital media outlets has continued to alter how people interact with one another across the globe. Mobile phone usage rates, for example, have prompted a slew of digital media network concepts aimed at linking the information gap between the linked and separated (Dwyer & Molony, 2019). Both cell phones and the internet provide innovative new one-to-one and one-to-many connectivity possibilities. The widely publicized rapid spread of mobile networking and services, as well as various types of public and shared internet access, has allowed an increasing number of people who do not have access to a computer or a fixed link to participate in "the global conversation" (Morshed & Mazumder, 2023).

Since the twenty-first century, the use of modern social media in politics has grown in many parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The importance of social media networks such as SMS on mobile phones, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube in recent years in deepening democratization in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil cannot be overstated. For example, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter were heavily used during the 2018 and 2019 elections in Brazil, Pakistan, and Nigeria, respectively. Though social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are among the most visited websites in Pakistan, these channels have evolved into epicenters of political debate. As a result of the above, social media have emerged as viable tools for conducting election campaigns, electioneering events, political participation, and mobilization in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil, respectively, due to their partaking, interactive, and moneymaking existence.

This study attempts to provide a comprehensive and comparative overview of the role of social media in the merging of democracy in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil, with a focus on their potential and challenges. The research is broken down into seven parts. The first part is an introduction; the second part is a theoretical clarification; the third part is a theoretical framework; the fourth part is a conceptual analysis of the nexus between social media and democracy; the fifth part is a discussion of the effect of social media on democratic consolidation in the three countries; and the sixth part is a discussion of the impact of social media on democratic consolidation in the three countries; The sixth section examines the challenges of using social media to improve democracy in the three countries; the seventh section observes the possible impact of using social media on democratization in the three countries; and the eighth section concludes.

Literature Review

The swift expansion of social media platforms has revolutionized human interaction and information sharing, becoming essential for commerce, networking, and entertainment. In recent years, however, there has been a notable increase in the use of social media for political discourse and activism, especially in established democracies and countries transitioning from military rule. This trend raises a critical question: Can social media facilitate democratic transformation and consolidation in the twenty-first century?

In countries like Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil, social media has emerged as a potential tool for enhancing democratic processes. Digital technologies and social media networks have notably improved human connectivity, enabling knowledge exchange, election tracking, reducing tensions associated with voting, and promoting transparency and accountabilityto a broad audience (Dwyer & Molony, 2019; Kperogi, 2016; Mitchelstein, Matassi, & Boczkowski, 2020). These attributes suggest that social media could play a significant role in strengthening democratic principles and processes.

Despite the potential benefits, the use of social media in political contexts is not without challenges. Issues such as the potential for violence, misinformation, and the erosion of public trust pose significant risks. Sunstein (2018) highlights the dual-edged nature of social media, emphasizing how it can both support and undermine democracy. Misinformation can spread rapidly on social media, leading to misinformed electorates and polarized societies (Netanel, 2023).

In the context of Nigeria, the misuse of social media during elections has sometimes exacerbated tensions and contributed to political violence (Jennings et al., 2021). This is also evident in Pakistan, where unregulated social media use has led to the spread of false information and heightened political instability (Nyabola, 2023). Therefore, while social media has the potential to enhance democratic engagement, its negative impacts cannot be overlooked.

Effective regulatory frameworks and monitoring mechanisms are essential to mitigate the adverse effects of social media on democracy. Jennings et al. (2021) suggest that regulatory measures should aim to balance the need for free speech with the necessity of prevent-

ing harm. This includes combating misinformation and ensuring that social media platforms are not used to incite violence or propagate hate speech.

In Brazil, regulatory efforts have focused on improving digital literacy and creating policies that promote responsible social media use (Mitchelstein et al., 2020). Similarly, in Pakistan, efforts to regulate social media have emphasized the importance of maintaining freedom of expression while addressing the spread of harmful content (Ali, Khan, Ahmed, & Shahzad, 2011).

The literature indicates that social media has a profound impact on democratic processes, offering both opportunities and challenges. In Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil, social media has been a catalyst for political engagement and transparency, contributing to democratic consolidation. However, the potential for misuse and the associated risks necessitate careful regulation and monitoring. By addressing these challenges, social media can be harnessed to further strengthen democratic institutions and processes in the twenty-first century.

Problem statement

The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has transformed human interaction and information dissemination, becoming integral to commerce, networking, and entertainment. However, in recent years, there has been a significant rise in the use of social media for political debate and action, particularly in both developed democracies and post-militarized countries. This phenomenon prompts an important question: Can social media contribute to democratic transformation and consolidation in the twenty-first century?

In countries like Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil, social media has emerged as a potential tool for enhancing democratic processes. Digital technologies and social media networks have notably improved human connectivity, enabling knowledge exchange, election tracking, reducing tensions associated with voting, and promoting transparency and accountability to a broad audience (Dwyer & Molony, 2019; Kperogi, 2016; Mitchelstein et al., 2020). These attributes suggest that social media could play a significant role in strengthening democratic principles and processes.

Despite the potential benefits, the use of social media in political contexts is not without challenges. Issues such as the potential for violence, misinformation, and the erosion of public trust pose significant risks (de Zúñiga et al., 2018; Sunstein, 2018). However, with appropriate monitoring and regulatory controls that do not compromise freedom of speech, these issues can be mitigated (Jennings et al., 2021).

Therefore, this paper seeks to explore the usage of social media as an instrument for democratic consolidation in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil. It contends that, despite existing challenges, the effective utilization of social media can foster participatory democracy and deepen democratic consolidation in these countries (Ali et al., 2011; Mustapha & Omar, 2020). The analysis will focus on how social media can be leveraged to support democratic principles and the necessary regulatory measures to address its associated issues.

Conceptual clarification

The concept of social media

This term does not have a common meaning. Scholars have interpreted the term from various viewpoints. Basically, social media is a term that refers to a variety of methods for interacting and connecting with others. Social media, according to researcher, are "web-based services that allow individuals to create a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system..." social media, according to the Australian Electoral Commission (2011), are "online tools and Web sites that promote many-to-many interactions between users." Facebook and Twitter are two specific examples, but other examples include more local or niche services, as well as more longstanding cooperative environments like web-based forums (Justwan, Baumgaertner, Carlisle, Clark, & Clark, 2018). Kaplan and Haenlein (2014) define social media as internet-based applications built on Web 2.0's technical and ideological foundations. Social media can be used as both a strategy and a platform for broadcasting. The term "social networking" refers to a number of web-based and mobile services that allow users to engage in online discussions, contribute user-generated content, and enter online societies. Blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, Twitter, YouTube, and other internet services are widely associated with social media (Dewing, 2012:1). Flexibility, adaptability, accessibility, and customizability are all rewards of social media technology.

According to Constantinides and Fountain (2008), social media is a mechanism that allows for the efficient generation, distribution, sharing, and editing of informative material, thus promoting the flow of ideas and knowledge. In a nutshell, social media is mainly used to distribute or exchange info with a large spectator through a free-flowing technical mechanism. This makes social interaction, which has been described as a tool and usefulness for communicating with others, easier. People with shared interests associate together and create relationships across communities inside or beyond geopolitical divides, and social networking is an act of engagement. This encapsulates the most common events that take place on social media. The former is the real action that guarantees its importance to humanity and culture, while the latter is the enabling conduit or forum.

The concept of democratic consolidation

The definition of democratic consolidation can be interpreted in a number of ways. Originally, the word "political stabilization" was used to define the task of safeguarding new regimes, spreading their life expectancy beyond the short term, rendering them resilient to the danger of authoritarian reversion, and founding barriers against "reverse waves" of authoritarianism (Schedler, 1998:91). Democratic consolidation is the "only game in town," as it refers to the institutionalization of democracy to the point that it becomes self-sustaining and safe from the threat of authoritarian regression (Linz & Stepan, 1996:15). As a result, for the purposes of this discussion, democratic consolidation is characterized as the prevention of democratic breakdown, destruction, and liberal deepening of democracy. Consolidating democracy, from the standpoint of preventing democratic collapse, implies decreasing the risk of it crumbling to the point that we can be fairly sure that it can thrive in the immediate future.

This "orthodox" interpretation of democratic alliance sees it as a means of government survival. Two positive versions of democracy are discernible from the viewpoint of deepening democracy. While the first optimistic version focuses on completing the political transition from electoral to liberal democracy, the second focuses on the "continuum of democracy," which entails deepening liberal democracy and moving it closer to advanced democracy (Schedler, 1998:99). According to the above concepts, social media, social networking, and democratic consolidation have an organic relationship that, if properly applied, could serve the goals and ambitions of long-term democratic growth.

Theoretical framework

The political transition paradigm

A process of constitutional reform from an authoritarian to a democratic government is referred to as the transition to democracy. According to transition paradigms, democratization occurs in stages, beginning with a crisis in the existing government, which results in the loss of its authority and power. During the subsequent transition period, the authoritarian elite loses political control either through a revolutionary or reformist process ("pacted transition"), as well as free elections and other conditions that allow for the introduction of a democratic structure. The institutionalization of democracy through recurrent elections, a new constitution, and the establishment of a strong political culture are all part of the consolidation process.

These sequential steps are clearly a simplistic model in the sense that democratization is a long and delicate process that can be slowed or reversed at any time. The socioeconomic stratification of society and whether disadvantaged social classes are calling for a shift in the supply of power and financial capital are important factors affecting the initiation, speed, and outcome of a transformation. Controversial groups' ability to question power holders by providing viable political alternatives, mobilizing broad segments of the population, and forming alliances with other opposition groups. The international context and external pressures, as well as the growth of civil society and political culture (Stepan, Linz, & Yadav, 2011).

While a growing number of failed changes and strict backlashes leading to so-called hybrid regimes (i.e., "defective democracy," "electoral authoritarianism") have called into question the validity of the transition paradigm, its postulates provide an essential analytical framework for this study in the sense that the political changes in Latin America and Europe in the 19th century provide an important context for this research. Theoretical generalizations based on various case studies suggest that the media's potential functions and consequences are dependent on media forms and transition stages. Strict governments commonly subject "big" media (press, radio, and television) to varying degrees of state control and restriction. As a result, "small" media (leaflets, cassettes, and CDs) became critical contact outlets for political opponents and dissidents (Stepan & Linz, 2013).

Small print journals for censored prose (samizdat), for example, became a platform for political debate in Eastern Europe. Prior to the Islamic Rebellion of 1979, Khomeini's ideas were disseminated in Iran via audio cassettes. These flexible media open up other scopes for the conversation of news and views in areas where the free distribution of information is limited, allowing the diffusion of new political ideas and social action policies. As a result, alternative media reinforce subaltern groups' capacity to question existing power structures (Stepan & Linz, 2013).

With the loss of authoritarian power, the media has more room to maneuver. These media have the ability to engage more people in current political shifts due to their greater outreach capacities. During the consolidation process of democracy, the role of the media as a source of information and discourse becomes much more important. The media play an important role in strengthening the principles of a democratic political system by debating government policies and addressing underrepresented topics (Stepan et al., 2011).

Given the role that small and flexible media can play in the early stages of party-political change, it's no surprise that the internet has sparked high hopes for its potential influence on strict regimes (regimes) and the development of democratization in post-militarized countries like Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil. The internet allows for near-instantaneous information sharing at a little cost and without the usual walls that limit access to conventional media. The development of digital media over the last era has made it simple to send mails

in a variety of formats (text, sound, and image). Also, operational contact crosses national boundaries, allowing transnational communities to develop around common languages, cultures, or interests. The internet has been regarded as the ideal means of communication for social actions and subaltern collections questioning existing authority structures because of its network-like and non-hierarchical structure. It was intended to eliminate the democratic shortages of corporate-dominated media structures that were distorted by user culture and tangled with influential bests in Western democracies. In post-militarized countries, including Nigeria, Pakistan, and Brazil, the Internet promised to not only dismantle the state's influence over knowledge dissemination but also to provide new contact outlets for marginalized opposition groups and dissidents.

Social media and modern democracy: A conceptual review

Social media has emerged as an influential and effective platform for voter education, political advocacy, and the rapid dissemination of information. An individual without a social media account is considered obsolete in today's society. Social media has become an integral part of our personal and professional lives. A typical smartphone user can't go a day without checking a social media site. As a result, social media can be effectively used to target specific voters, inspire people to exercise their right to vote, and spread awareness. Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are examples of social media networks that help to activate citizens' participation in political life, accelerating the consolidation of democracy (Sahu, 2019).

Governments should use social media to involve countries in decision-making and civil society to involve people in specific issues in a democratic democracy (Barros & Michaud, 2020). Social media, on the other hand, can be used to grow civic engagement by letting people engage with their elected bureaucrats and with one another. The use of social media as an influential platform for social engineering and political campaigning has increased in current ages. Partaking, collaborative, and moneymaking technology is used. As a result, it has become the average choice for political contact and participation. It actively participates in the mobilization of support for candidates as well as the actual voting process. Election violence and political fraud can be avoided by disseminating valuable information to youth via social media in the form of voter education (Sahu, 2019).

In a broader sense, social media is a democratic promoter from the ground up. It gives people a voice by empowering them to take care of their own problems. Furthermore, anyone with access to social media can broadcast any instance of a government entity abusing its authority. Social media bridges the divide between politicians and the general public, allowing democracy to be practiced on a regular basis rather than only during elections (Sahu, 2019). By fostering transparency and responsiveness in daily politics, social media has a huge effect on democracy. As a result, social media as a democratic consolidation tool has a greater effect on the youth cohorts in the sense that it serves as a motivational tool that accelerates the democratic process, as evidenced by the few cases of power abuse recorded via social media in both Nigeria and Pakistan.

To this end, the advent of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter as platforms for political messages has the possibility to broaden citizens' political discussion options (Barros & Michaud, 2020). Social media, along with the mass media and personal networks, form the knowledge environment that forms citizens' political views and behavior. Since mass media, social media, and face-to-face networks are all complementary means of disseminating political content, the issue of whether and how political messages circulate across offline and online social networks becomes crucial. Internet gateways, or more specifically, new media, are viewed as a public domain that facilitates dialogue, interaction, and issue articulation. Social media has changed political communication in a variety of ways, including audience segmentation, weakening conventional media's gatekeeping capability, releasing breaking news, and influencing socioeconomics.

Social media and democracy in Pakistan

Social media is evidently a greater source of empowering citizens in Pakistan as it promotes democracy, freedom of appearance, and greater consciousness about the rights and privileges of the citizens during the political disasters in the country (Ali et al., 2011). Social networking tools have been inducing and changing communication stations in the country by complementing the traditional mass media in offering a cheaper and faster means of political socialization, thereby changing the attitude and conduct of youth. It also spreads consciousness among people by creating different online sheets and accounts for sharing their programs and information via these means.

The potency of social media in democratic consolidation in Pakistan can, therefore, be seen from its impact as the only standing whistleblower among all the democratic institutions in the country (Mangi, Soomro, & Malik, 2018). More so as it becomes the part and tract of the citizen's daily survives. It delivers more option to obtain information about every feature of life including government and politics, where for instance Facebook is playing a very effect impact in political lives of the people by challenging the authoritative pattern of politics and serving as information disseminator and facilitator of political discussion (Ida, Saud, & Mashud, 2020).

However, it is also argued that party-political used their media cells to insult the other political parties. Despite both facts, it is obvious that sixty percent of the voter's audience was recorded in the 2013 overall elections. In this regard, a survey claimed that a common of the

increased numbers belonged to the class that breathed with the social media informs. However, it is pertinent to note that voter turnout is one cause of democracy (Ida et al., 2020).

It is authoritative to note that in Pakistan, social media has a strong impact on democratic consolidation in two ways, namely service delivery and political participation; in terms of the former (i.e., service delivery), it is important to note that Pakistani citizens need information about public service if they are to keep the government accountable for their constitutionally enshrined duties. Access to information about public policies, budget monitoring programs, and attempts to encourage openness are just some of the programs that have concentrated on consolidating democracy by ensuring that people have greater access to information about services or initiatives designed to benefit them.

When people have access to knowledge about government decisions, policymakers have been shown to be more sensitive to citizens ' needs. In explicitly defined media markets, this impact is especially strong, where elected officials appear to behave more in the interests of their constituents, attend more committee hearings, and cast their votes less often according to the platform of their party. By placing concerns that specifically affect the needs of people and public institutions on both public and political agendas, social media will enhance domestic transparency.

Increasingly, other segments of society are also exercising the watchdog function of social media by improved access to information.

Social media's success as a democratic tool is heavily dependent on its ability to scale accountability relationships and transform regional problems into large-scale and sometimes global public discourse. This forces governments to take care of these interests and to respond to them. With regard to public expenditure on education and health, drought prevention and public food distribution and relief expenditure, the relationship between free media and government responsiveness has been illustrated.

As regards the influence of social media on party-political participation in Pakistan, it is imperative to note that the nexus between governance, social media, and interpersonal communication is complex and has been extensively studied over many decades. As showcased by the evidence from the above review, social media had a particularly important role in providing a crucial forum for political discourse and educating the electorate, as well as having an effect on the distribution and responsiveness of government resources in Pakistan.

As indicated by literature, social media has a vital part to play in educating people in a wide range of contexts in Pakistan, such as offering an inclusive and important forum for public dialogue and debate, promoting interpersonal communication, and eventually, policy-making that benefits a greater number of individuals (). The literature has also shown that (though rudimentally) the greater the proportion of uninformed voters in the electorate, the greater the risk that politicians will exploit policies to maximize their chances of being re-elected, even in the long term, such policies are not in the interest of the public. Hence, the presence of social media in Pakistan serves as an important fulcrum for the germination and growth of popular participation. This is even evident from the previous section of this chapter, where the literature on the workability of social media in fostering party-political accountability in both developed and developing countries suggested that individuals who are exposed to and involved in high-quality social media covering political issues are better educated, more civically engaged and more likely to vote.

Social media and democracy in Nigeria

It is unbearable to overstate the importance of social media in the democratization process in terms of improving Nigerian democracy. This positive relationship is investigated here by looking at people's perceptions, values, and behavior in relation to democratic governance. It is critical to highlight that, since the beginning of modern democracy, freedom of appearance and press individuality have been regarded as dangerous and essential conditions for the successful process of a democratic political system. The fall of military governments and the spread of democracy in Nigeria and other parts of the world in the late twentieth and early twenty-first eras, dubbed "the third wave of democratization" by researcher, has piqued scholars' interest in the role of social media in easing democratic change and subsequent democratic merging, especially in Africa (Kperogi, 2016).

There is no rejection of the Internet's capacity to facilitate the formation of a "mass" public view that demands political alteration within democratizing states, mainly when used by governments such as political parties or actions. Other authors, have emphasized the Internet's ability to facilitate democratic change by acting as a mixed media forum (2011). For example, Bratton and colleagues claim that the use of new social media in transforming or developing societies ''enlarges the range of deliberations that people carry in shaping their political and financial attitudes,'' promoting civic citizenship and greater demand for self-governing processes and reforms. One of the most critical roles of these modern social media in democratic association can be seen in the field of electioneering information dissemination (Chinedu-Okeke & Obi, 2016).

In light of the foregoing, it was the anger felt by some Nigerians over the high rate of corruption and ineffectiveness of their governments that led them to form the Nigerian pro-democracy group "Enough is enough" (EIE) in 2010, which is dedicated to promoting good governance and public answerability in the country. The group aims to achieve its aim by assembling young Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 35 who are eligible to vote, with a focus on the use of social media technologies. Several of the group's leaders are among the

country's most well-known social media personalities. In 2011, it organized a major voter schooling and election monitoring campaign called "RSVP," which stands for "Register (to vote), Choose (your candidates), Vote, and Protect" (your vote from fraud). This movement had a strong social media occurrence, and a dedicated Social Media Tracking Center (SMTC) was set up to keep an eye on prominent social media sites for signs of trouble (Mustapha & Omar, 2020).

Modern social media, such as camera-cell/mobile phones, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, among others, play an important role in combining democracy in Nigeria. During the 2011 general election, for example, there were many verified cases of electoral scams and misconduct that led to the detention of some people by security operatives. Although the non-prosecution or lack of hardworking trial of electoral offenders exposed via social media has weakened its influence, there is no doubt that Nigerians' use of new social media is serving as a watchdog in the electioneering process, boosting the drive for greater clearance and checkmating. Indeed, social media has gained international attention as a transformative tool for bringing about significant change. This is particularly true of the Facebook and Twitter networks, which have allowed for unparalleled levels of online communication. Apart from their catalytic involvement in the Arab world's uprisings (Arab Spring), which resulted in the enthronement of democracy in Tunisia and Egypt, they also played a significant role in revealing and spreading knowledge of the government's evil as a result of which their use in Turkey was briefly forbidden (Mustapha & Omar, 2020).

Even now, because of its expository and contagious nature, corrupt and incompetent government officials in Nigeria are becoming wary of social media. This realization has sparked a lot of discussion on social media, particularly among the infants, who see themselves as "victims" of bad governance and corruption. It's no surprise that they're at the forefront of using Twitter and Facebook to share details about corruption and poor governance. Another significant aspect of combining Nigerian democracy with the help of new social media is to defuse tensions and mitigate post-election violence by releasing election results as soon as possible. It has been suggested that the increased obtainability of timely info on new social media on Election Day helped to reduce tensions and post-election activity (Mustapha & Omar, 2020).

As an outcome, with the rise of emerging knowledge, politics has taken on a new measurement in recent years. Sharing info has become instantaneous, vibrant, and detailed (Mustapha & Omar, 2020). For example, while Facebook, the most general of the modern social media, permits activists to send mass messages, upload pictures and videos, and communicate with the public, Twitter is used to send brief and embattled messages to thousands of followers, as well as to interrelate with others. Campaign videos are uploaded to YouTube. The voter now has a competitive voice thanks to these emerging social media outlets. Politicians use social media to cater to citizens; it helps them seem more personable and permits them to stay in contact with their followers at all times. By adding their voices to topics shared on social media platforms, many people have the chance to engage openly and fully in the political debate. As a dialogue avenue and an invaluable help in actualizing public domain media, it thus pushes the limits of participatory democracy. It gives voters a friendlier way to evaluate applicants for political office and promotes accountability in government. These are examples of modern social media's strength (Olanrewaju, 2024).

In order to advance political participation and mobilization, innovative social media networks are also essential resources for sensitization and conscientization. Voter apathy, which was a problem in some parts of the country during the 2015 general elections, was effectively avoided in the 2019 elections thanks to the effective use of new social media channels. Governments at all levels, through their departments and lawmakers, send political messages to citizens' cellphones, urging them to vote in specific ways. The widespread availability of these online devices has a democratizing impact because it allows people to participate fully in the democratic process. The advent of these media outlets has resulted in voters/electorates becoming more than just passive recipients of multimedia messages; they have also become authors of those messages. Because of the positive impact of these new media outlets, Nigerian politicians will take full advantage of this instant mode of communication to reach out to the general public in order to determine the political climate before boarding on a campaign. Social media may be used to gauge a candidate's popularity, especially among young people.

Social media and democracy in Brazil

Brazil is not only Latin America's biggest democracy, but it also has a significant social media presence. Around 140 million of the nation's 212 million people use social media on a daily basis. Facebook is used by almost two-thirds of the population, and Instagram is used by around a third of Brazilians (Mitchelstein et al., 2020). Brazil is also one of the top five nations in terms of Twitter and Youtube user counts, and TikTok contributions are on the rise (Mitchelstein et al., 2020). Elections in Brazil, as in other nations, are heavily affected by what happens in cyberspace. The majority of political candidates are involved on various social media sites. Brazilian public opinion is increasingly influenced by the internet (Matos, 2017).

The 2018 presidential elections in Brazil were marred by disinformation and exacerbated political divisions both online and offline. Waves of Facebook social networking campaigns and mass mailings using encrypted tools like WhatsApp polarized the public. Brazilians soon split into two camps: hardline Bolsonaro supporters and a dispersed disagreement that spanned the middle and left. Like-minded communities are still divided online, but the government's inability to control COVID-19 may have led to the population's migration to the

middle (Mitchelstein et al., 2020).

Politicians organize their digital mobs for electoral gain on social media, which has become the new battleground. During the first round of elections in Rio de Janeiro, incumbent mayor Marcelo Crivella, who is backed by the president, often used social media to threaten his opponents, including former mayor Eduardo Paes. Crivella and Bolsonaro are both skilled at rallying their supporters to their cause: Between October 9 and October 21, there were approximately 3,400 posts on Facebook, in community, and on checked profiles defaming Paes. Over 1 million interactions and 4.2 million views were produced by these posts (Mitchelstein et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, in So Paulo, the campaign of right-wing mayoral candidate Celso Russomano posted a video on WhatsApp falsely accusing left-wing candidate Guilherme Boulos of being responsible for the collapse of an irregularly occupied building many years ago. It didn't seem to be of any assistance to him. Despite Bolsonaro's support, Russomano lost to Boulos in the first round. According to Aos Fatos, out of 44,052 Facebook posts related to municipal elections during the last week of October, 4,675 were deemed "false," with 2,492 of those posts criticizing Boulos (Mitchelstein et al., 2020).

Although digital misinformation is popular, that does not imply it is accepted. The Brazilian government stepped in after allegations of systematic violence on Facebook and WhatsApp during the 2018 presidential elections. In particular, a Brazilian Parliament inquiry committee exposed a so-called "hate cabinet" led by Carlos Bolsonaro. The hate cabinet allegedly oversaw a vast network of false news outlets, right-wing blogs, and social media accounts that actively circulated misinformation and threatened opponents through Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, and WhatsApp, among other platforms.

Left-wing journalists, opposition leaders, outspoken musicians, and independent media outlets critical of Bolsonaro and his inner circle were among the targets of the hate cabinet, as anticipated. The Brazilian Federal Police conducted a concurrent investigation to find out who was behind the planning and funding of protests against the Brazilian Supreme Court. The president's son and a number of close aides to the president have been named as the most likely suspects once again. Investigations are still underway, and some campaign financiers have been confirmed.

The Superior Electoral Court, which introduced a program to combat misinformation in the 2020 election last year, is another significant player. At least 48 public and private agencies, social media sites, and fact-checking organizations are involved in the initiative. The program has the support of Supreme Court Justice Luis Roberto Barroso, who also chairs the Electoral Court. Facebook,

Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and WhatsApp have all agreed to increase direct reporting channels to the TSE, raise consumer awareness of disinformation and misinformation, and boost the digital literacy of electoral justice workers. These same platforms claim to have tightened up on content filtering to combat fake news and misinformation on their platforms.

Although encouraging, these interventions can only serve as the beginning of a comprehensive strategy to combat the digital malfeasance that is weakening democracy worldwide, not just in Brazil. This is due to the fact that digital warfare is shifting to new platforms, especially encrypted ones. Experts now consider another encrypted messaging network Telegram, which has yet to sign any agreement with the Superior Electoral Court, to be one of the key vectors for radical rightwing content in Brazil, after WhatsApp adopted rules restricting the amount of messages that can be bulk-shared. There are also indications that fake news is being tested on video sites like YouTube before spreading further.

Control mechanisms cannot be implemented in pieces: they must address disinformation, terrorist content, and cyberattacks all at once. The majority of voluntary attempts to delete offensive content are made by social media sites, but as the Brazilian case illustrates, there is a possibility that knowledge firms will not do enough, or that some will outright fail to play ball. Similarly, sites outside of the main social networks and messaging applications must be monitored because they can hasten the spread of misinformation. To meet the challenge, policymakers must enact regulations that compel and incentivize cooperation, as well as penalize businesses that refuse to cooperate. Social media platforms will have to upgrade their content removal policies as well. Disappointment to do so is risky not only for this year's elections in Brazil and the United States, but also for democracy worldwide.

Factors restraining the impact of the social media on democratic consolidation in Pakistan, Nigeria and Brazil

Despite the immense potential of social media for democratic consolidation, it is not without its obstacles. Without a question, social networking sites may be used to spread unfiltered/unverified knowledge and rumors that are harmful to democracy. Increased privacy concerns have arisen as a result of the increased usage of social media and other online resources. This is to suggest that the great abilities of the internet and other modern social media channels are followed by monitoring and regulatory challenges. Obviously, if our culture is not to devolve into anarchy, the modern social media need some kind of control (Barros & Michaud, 2020).

Despite its many benefits in promoting politics, democracy, and good governance, social media is still a very volatile forum for trending politics. A viral video of unethical behavior or a lurid sex picture can infect a political campaign or career in a moment, causing it to be terminated prematurely. The anonymity of sources makes strict enforcement, surveillance, and prosecution of illegal acts difficult. As a result, it is a susceptible tool for committing fraud. Piracy is also promoted. This is partially due to the fact that copyright and intelligent

property issues are more nuanced and difficult to identify, and much more so to control online. Similarly, pictures and sounds can be digitally altered, making it impossible to determine what is true and what is not.

As a result, it has become clear that the ability of social media to promote democratic change in the countries under review is limited by a number of factors. To begin with, various aspects of the so-called "digital divide" shape, scale, and composition of online public groups, as well as potential types of usage: not only infrastructural growth and access quality but also education, media literacy, and socioeconomic stratification establish unequal conditions within the population for accessing and using the Internet (Barros & Michaud, 2020).

Second, the nature of online communication has an effect on its political scope. The internet is a "pull medium," meaning that users must constantly search for the content and applications they want. As a result, political knowledge and discussion, as well as other forms of media, compete in an unbalanced manner with entertainment. Furthermore, people are more likely to visit the websites of well-established conventional media, such as newspapers or television stations, because they have more resources to compete with independent online publishers or weblogs (Barros & Michaud, 2020).

Third, in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil, non-democratic elements have established sophisticated monitoring and control systems for online communication. Authorities in these countries successfully block access to unique internet information, as well as track and prosecute dissident online writers, by administering national infrastructure and telecommunication legislation. For example, recent events in Nigeria (such as the ENDSARS protest) have shown how security forces used internet technology to identify demonstrators and resistance networks. Furthermore, in order to expand their cultural influence into cyberspace, political actors in Brazil aggressively create online content (Abbo, Njidda, & Baba, 2020). In Pakistan, for example, not only are all of the country's major state media available online, but the government also organizes bloggers to participate in lengthy online discussions in order to silence dissenting voices.

Pakistan also allows internet users to report websites that they believe are disrespectful to the country's governing norms and values, effectively crowd-sourcing censorship. The Brazilian government uses online forums to absorb criticism that would otherwise find its way into the public eye by other means (DeNardis, 2019; Jam, Singh, Ng, & Aziz, 2018). In the end, these different ways of proactive internet usage help to reinforce the legitimacy of non-democratic practices in these countries.

Finally, non-democratic actors benefit from the internet in addition to authoritarian political actors: militant groups of different orientations, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria and Lashkar in Pakistan, discovered the benefits of online communication long ago, highlighting the fact that the Internet as a whole does not always work in accordance with democratic norms. As a result of these constraints, the use of the Internet for the dissemination of political knowledge and discourse in emerging and transitioning countries is largely restricted to the informed and urban layers of society (DeNardis, 2019). Nonetheless, these knowledge elites are often from the middle classes and can be considered upwardly mobile social groups who are often affected by political exclusion in these countries (Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil). In many of these countries' transition cycles, trained professionals such as journalists, scholars, lawyers, and engineers have been at the forefront of movements challenging existing regimes. These actors are also committed to social transformation and reform in civil society. They control public opinion by raising the consciousness of current grievances and formulating demands for reform.

Potential effects of the social media on democratization in Pakistan, Nigeria and Brazil

In order to assess the capacity and willingness of internet-active social actors to challenge the status quo in the three countries under review, it is important to assess their capability and willingness to challenge the status quo. Following that, it can be investigated whether and how the internet aids these actors' activities. Several possible effects of the Internet on civil society and political challengers' contact and activities in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil will be highlighted in the following sections.

Creation of alternative public spheres: Despite the limiting factors listed above, the advent of news websites and weblogs has resulted in a diversification of the media environment in these countries as they transition from militarized societies to democracy. Journalists who have been barred from publishing, whistleblowers, and civil society activists use the internet to publish facts and views in a variety of ways. In these countries' limited media cultures, social media serves as an outlet for voices that aren't often heard in the mainstream media, forming a subaltern public sphere. They increase transparency in the actions and decisions of the political elite by disseminating suppressed information and political critique, and they promote the formation of alternative political views by disseminating suppressed information and political critique. During times of crisis or increased political tension, these alternate public spheres often grow temporarily through different types of citizen journalism, which involves ordinary citizens collecting and disseminating news and information rather than skilled journalists. This trend was visible during the Nigerian protests of 2020 and the Brazilian presidential election of 2018.

In addition to disseminating information, alternative public spheres on the Internet serve as a forum for debate in these countries. Weblogs, in particular, create discussions that, despite their limited scope, frequently achieve a high level of intensity and quality of deliberation. Although blogs seldom succeed in getting their issues into the mainstream media and serving as "agenda-setters," they do elaborate on the material of other media by functioning as an "echo chamber" (Kanval, Ihsan, Irum, & Ambreen, 2024; Tabor, Jonkman, & Boukes, 2024). Blogs do have some impact on the process of opinion forming because journalists and other opinion leaders participate in

these debates. Popular bloggers/activists with ties to corporate journalism serve as "key nodes," relaying arguments from the grassroots to broader audiences across communication networks.

Finally, there are alternative online news sources. These countries also contribute to the internal democratization of the media landscape, which is seen as a critical component of the overall democratic transformation process. Weblogs and smaller online outlets provide an open training ground for younger journalists looking to develop their reporting and research skills. To a certain extent (DeNardis, 2019). By denouncing and reflecting on the content of the existing media in these countries, online media acts as a counterweight. As is often the case with Sahara stories in Nigeria, mass media respond to the developments of blogging and social media by incorporating these formats into their own websites. This integration of online appliances allows existing media to be more accessible to new ideas and societal changes.

Formation of political culture and collective identities: Another factor to consider when analyzing the role of social media in democratic merging in post-militarized societies such as Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil is the effect of online media on civil society's internal communication. Before they may target broader audiences and the political arena or undertake collective action, social movements often use social media to create a common understanding of their goals and how to accomplish them. The engagement of followers is sustained by a clear group identity, which is based on shared ideas rather than organizational structures. Within civil society, these social actors practice democratic political culture's communicative aspects, such as rational deliberation and tolerance for differing viewpoints, by constantly negotiating identities, reinterpreting norms and values, and developing various forms of solidarity (DeNardis, 2019).

In those countries, social media helps to support and accelerate this process, particularly when other communication channels are blocked. The Brazilian opposition party, for example, has had to withdraw more and more to the Internet in order to continue its operations in the face of intense pressure from the ruling party. When public gatherings were unlikely, as they were during the Covid-19 lockdown in Nigeria, activists such as the "soro" "soke" generation (ENDSARS protesters) used online networking to stay in touch, discuss future actions and the movement's reorientation, and demonstrate solidarity with fellow activists in jail (Abbo et al., 2020).

Networking and Organizing: In order to influence political decision-making, social movements must not only maintain contact among their immediate supporters but also seek out the help of bystanders and other tools. Although the internet's influence on wider audiences in those countries (Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil) is limited due to the aforementioned reasons, it has proved to be a highly effective means of transnational communication. Local activists are normally able to quickly communicate with foreign NGOs and advocacy groups and share their awareness of the situation in their respective countries. They gain access to foreign experience and more clout with policymakers in return. If activists are effective in promoting their cause to the global media and mobilizing public opinion, they may use the "boomerang effect" to put pressure on their own government by bypassing the censored national media (DeNardis, 2019).

In Pakistan, these processes have been observed, especially in the area of human rights advocacy. Transnational civil society actors have a lot of "discursive strength" when it comes to national governments, international organizations, and the global economy (Ida et al., 2020). Other types of internet-based advocacy pool individual contributions and involvement or crowd-source reporting on particular issues. In both Brazil and Pakistan, "networked activism," which combines various forms of political activity and advocacy and is facilitated by the Internet, also allows for both large mobilization and "deep" participation, which is the member's active and substantive involvement in the activities of the respective initiative or campaign (DeNardis, 2019).

Mobilization for Collective Action: The influence of social media on the mobilization of citizens for collective action is not only the most hotly discussed but also the most difficult to demonstrate empirically. Facebook groups and Twitter, on the other hand, played a major role in the EDN SARS social movements in Nigeria by tapping into established grievances about a corrupt and brutal Nigerian police force and connecting them to particular people or causes. As a result, social media aided the creation of open networks of participants without the need for charismatic leaders or central organizations. Although the internet and online media allow for a diversification of knowledge environments in those countries, when that increased information exchange is translated into political action, more forces come into play. Social networking undoubtedly increases the pace and reach of collaborative campaigns by linking physically distant individuals. They can also increase the exposure of even minor demonstrations by transmitting images and information in real-time.

Conclusion

The capacity of new social media channels for the merging of democracy in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil has been identified in the preceding discussion. Despite its drawbacks, the study found that social media can be a powerful tool for political change by socializing people through the political values necessary for democratic nationality and thus promoting long-term democracy. It was claimed that the extensive usage of the Internet for social networking, blogging, video-sharing, and tweeting is linked to participatory democracy. The fact that social media is a supportive avenue for expressing views and opinions and debating political life in those countries means that social media will play an important role in consolidating democracy after decades of military rule in those countries (if conscientiously and patriotically utilized for that purpose). However, in practice, it is important to translate social media "rantings" into concrete, impactful acts that can combat anti-democratic tendencies. Given the rapidly developing synergy between right-wing campaigners/activists, journalists, and the

growing tribe of social media enthusiasts in those countries, this might not take long. To safeguard and stabilize the nascent democracies in the countries under review, a nationalist leader who can mobilize pro-democracy parties and embrace and organize unaffected social media operations to put the government on notice is needed.

Future studies

Future research should focus on several key areas to further understand the role of social media in democratic consolidation in Pakistan, Nigeria, and Brazil. First, empirical studies are needed to quantify the impact of social media on political engagement and democratic participation. These studies should explore how different social media platforms influence political behavior and attitudes, considering variables such as age, education, and socioeconomic status. Second, there is a need for comparative analyses between these countries to identify unique and common factors that facilitate or hinder the democratic potential of social media. Such studies should consider the political, cultural, and historical contexts of each country to provide a nuanced understanding of social media's role in democratic processes. Third, research should investigate the mechanisms through which social media "rantings" can be translated into concrete political actions. This includes exploring successful case studies where social media activism has led to tangible political change, as well as identifying the barriers that prevent online engagement from translating into offline action. Fourth, the potential negative impacts of social media on democracy, such as the spread of misinformation, echo chambers, and political polarization, should be studied in depth. Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing strategies to mitigate their effects and ensure that social media contributes positively to democratic consolidation.

Fifth, future studies should explore the role of leadership in harnessing social media for democratic purposes. Research should examine how nationalist leaders and pro-democracy activists can effectively use social media to mobilize support, organize movements, and hold governments accountable. This includes identifying the skills and strategies necessary for leaders to navigate the complexities of social media landscapes. Lastly, policy-oriented research is needed to develop frameworks for regulating social media in a way that balances free speech with the prevention of harm. This includes studying existing regulatory approaches in different countries, evaluating their effectiveness, and proposing best practices for ensuring that social media supports rather than undermines democratic consolidation. By addressing these areas, future studies can provide valuable insights into how social media can be effectively utilized to strengthen and sustain democracy in Pakistan, Nigeria, Brazil, and other emerging democracies.

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