

CYBER-DEMOCRACY AND ITS IMPACT ON POLITICS

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The introduction of cyber-democracy in the 21st century has changed both national and global politics. Cyber-democracy, with its participatory democratic ideals, has enabled people to monitor, contribute and criticize government actions and other political happenings. Similarly, modern politicians are currently using internet for campaign purposes, which shows how cyber-democracy is rooted in our societies. However, there are lots of controversies surrounding the concept. While some writers argue that cyber-democracy is the core contributor to major political conflicts witnessed in many parts of the world, others are of the view that it has changed modern politics for better. This research evaluates the concept of cyber-democracy and its impacts on national and global politics. This was done based on readily available literature. Challenges facing cyber-democracy in developing countries were analyzed so as to determine its applicability. The study starts with an explanation of cyber democracy and cyber politics and how they differ from the representative democracy that has been practiced in different parts of the world. It then provides an all-inclusive discussion on the emergence of cyber democracy with clear illustration of the factors that led to its emergence. The study then delimits to the challenges facing cyber-democracy in developing countries. Both negative and positive impacts of cyber-democracy to national and global politics were analyzed. The findings from these formed the bases for the conclusion and recommendations proposed by the study.

Keywords: Cyber-democracy, Democracy, Internet media, National politics, Global politics.

Introduction and Background of the Study

In politics, the word democracy is used to refer to the form of governance whereby all the subjects have the opportunity to determine their leaders and the laws that will govern them. This could be at organizational level, national level and even global level. A democratic system forms the ground that allows people to exercise their democratic rights in order to elect leaders that the majority believe will serve and make laws for the good of the people. The idea of democracy in developing countries dates back to the early Twentieth Century when many countries gained independence from their colonizers (Putnam, 1995 p.16). Putnam further points out that before independence in developing countries, policies were made by their colonizers and the locals had no any role in determining the nature of their political systems. It was after independence that the issue of democracy started to gain popularity as the newly established ones fought to have their own leaders and laws that were not affiliated to their colonizers (Lee, 2003 p. 25).

The concept of independence that was established in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries was that of representation. People could elect or nominate representatives who represented them in the Common House where national decisions were made. According to (Lee, 2003 p. 66), in this form of

democracy a common citizen does not have the direct say in the decisions made in the Common House or what is currently referred to as House of Parliament. People rely on their representatives who have the responsibility of making decisions and choices that reflect the needs of those who elected or nominated them. This form of democracy is still popular in modern politics, although it is being integrated with participatory democracy in order to improve democracy in modern political systems (Lee, 2003 p. 71). Lee adds that the famous representative democracy whereby people elected leaders to make decisions and policies on their behalf has been faced with several challenges regardless of the fact that it has been practiced for many years. Research shows that not all the politicians represent the needs of those who elected them. According to researchers, most of the politicians seem to forget the need of those who put them in power once they assume office as representatives of democracy. This has contributed to major conflicts being experienced in some countries after the members of the public realizing that people whom they elected into power have failed to provide them with good leadership democratic leadership to that they were elected. This has been the core reason for conflicts that are happening in some countries currently such as Libya, Syria, Egypt and other parts of the world where those in leadership are forced to step down before their terms are over due to poor performance.

With modern technology, people have come up with new strategies to express their democratic rights other than relying on representative democracy only. This has been possible due to technological advancement that has been witnessed towards the last years of the Twentieth Century (Rosenberg, 2004 p. 143). Use of modern technology to express democratic rights began back in 1970 with the introduction of 'television democracy' that is believed to be the oldest concept of electronic democracy. This form of democracy was developed by Ted Becker who used cable television for political decisions in 1970s (Toffler, 1995p. 76). Tele-democracy aimed at establishing more forms of direct democracy within the American political life. This was more participatory since people were allowed to air their views about the political systems in their countries. Currently, cyber-democracy has over taken tele-democracy and the Internet has become a major tool for expressing democratic rights in many parts of the world, especially in developing countries. Communication gadgets such as computers, Smartphones, cell phones and other online communication channels are used in modern politics to express democratic rights. Presently, there are several internet sites and blogs where people can express their political views freely and participate in the establishment of political democracy of popular choice and criticize political systems both at national and global levels. Political analysts argue that cyber democracy is taking the future of politics since there are some countries where even voting for leaders is done online. In some developed countries such as the USA, presidential aspirants conducted majority of their campaigns through Internet (Lee, 2003 p. 88).

Statement of the Problem

The emergence and use of cyber-democracy has been welcome with mixed reactions. There are those who argue that cyber-democracy has provided solution to the challenges associated with representative democracy that is popular in many countries (Miller, 1996 p. 95). Supporters of cyber-democracy point out that this form of democracy has enabled people to express their democratic opinion without the need for physical representation (Bonchek, 1995 p. 32). For instance, with cyber-democracy, people are able to give their political views online, vote their leaders, criticize the existing political systems and even establish a revolution whereby leaders are forced to step down (Rheingold, 1993 p. 156). On the other hand, researchers and theorists against cyber-democracy argue that this form of democracy has eroded qualities and values associated with representative democracy. Those against cyber-democracy points out that although the concept creates room for participatory democracy, there are no any limitations to those who may take advantage of cyber democracy to disrespect the existing political system and leaders in office, so they believe that cyber democracy is responsible for political revolutions witnessed in several parts of the world recently (Thakur, 2010 p. 188-192).

This study aims to expound on cyber democracy in order to distinguish it from other forms of democracy. It also highlights on the components of cyber-democracy, its availability, and development in various countries. The core aim of the study is to establish a clear understanding of the concept of cyber-democracy and impacts on both national and global politics in the 21st century. This way a solution to the controversy associated with cyber-democracy that will be established thereby determining the future of cyber-democracy.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are classified in two categories to ensure understanding and clarity of the purpose of the study to both the researcher and end users. The objectives also serve as guidelines to ensure that all resources are aimed at achieving the intended purpose. This is to eliminate instances of bias, lack of purpose and inconsistency in the study. In general, the purpose of the study is to establish a clear understanding of cyber-democracy and its impacts on national and global politics. Others are: to define the concept of cyber democracy, its development and acceptance in various countries; to highlight on both advantages and disadvantages associated with cyber-democracy relative to representative democracy; to determine the acceptability and the ability of developing countries to embrace cyber-democracy in their political system, and to shed light on the effectiveness of cyber democracy in relation to infrastructures and technological support being available to back it. Also, to evaluate both positive and negative impacts of cyber-democracy and determine its effectiveness in promoting political democracy in the 21st century, and to make an inclusive conclusion on the way cyber-democracy has affected politicians, political systems and their supporters, especially in developed countries where the new technology infrastructure is relatively scarce.

Research Methods and Scope of the Study

As mentioned in the introduction, this study involves an evaluation of all readily available literature on cyber-democracy and its effects on modern politics. This includes scholarly journals and articles, books, research reports from other researchers and internet sources. The review will involve analysis of the information in favor and those against cyber-democracy in order to understand the concept of cyber democracy, its development and how it has influenced modern politics both at the national and global level. At the end of the evaluation and analysis of points, an all-inclusive conclusion is drawn on the future of cyber-democracy.

Cyber-Democracy: Understanding Democracy and Politics

From political science point of view, democracy refers to the ideal that all people within a specific political system have the ability to determine the laws and leaders that will govern their resources. The political boundaries could be that of a nation, organization, region and even global political bodies whereby people are required to determine the form of administration, which they want. For instance, in a nation that observes a democratic political system, citizens are expected to determine the laws of their nation in both law making process and election of leaders (Snider, 1994 p. 68-72). Generally, democracy is the opposite of dictatorship whereby citizen have no room to determine the kind of leadership and laws they want (Athina, 2000 p. 67).

In the modern world, parliamentary democracy is the most common. This requires the voting public of a nation to participate in elections, whereby they choose political leaders that with policies and manifestoes that meet their needs. The elected politicians participate in law making in a legislative assembly whereby national decisions are made on the basis of majority voting. This is referred to as

direct democracy whereby citizens participate directly in the political process. This form of democracy is gradually gaining momentum in different countries and is being practiced alongside representative democracy.

Research shows that there is no universal definition for the word 'democracy'. However, political theorists point out that democracy is normally founded on the principle of freedom and equality. According to these principles, all the members of a state are equal before the law and have the same rights and capacities in the making of the state laws. The concept of democracy is argued to have formally started in the ancient Greece from where it spread throughout the Roman Empire, to other countries in Europe, North and South America, Asian countries, and, lastly to Africa (Lee, 2003 p 112).

There are several forms of democracy which include representative democracy, deliberate democracy, consensus democracy and participatory democracy among others. It is worth noting that representative democracy is the most common form of democracy and it is the one that was used in the early days of democracy. According to Lee, 2003, in this form of democracy citizens elected few representatives on the basis of majority vote who are given the responsibility of making laws and controlling state resources. This form of democracy embraces both the presidential system and parliamentary systems of government (Cynthia & Leslie, 2011 p. 250).

Another form of democracy is the deliberative democracy which some political theorists refer to as discursive democracy. In this form of democracy, state decisions are normally made through deliberations. This form of democracy constitutes elements of both traditional representative democracy and consensus democracy. The phrase 'deliberative democracy' was first used by Joseph Bessette in 1980. The other form of democracy is the consensus democracy whereby major state decisions are made on the basis of all the opinions of the citizens. In such democracy majority votes do not matter in making state decisions. Citizens are also involved in the establishment of political systems and political agendas. According to political theorists and analysts, it is consensus democracy that has led to the development of cyber democracy through the use of modern information and communication technology (Cynthia & Leslie, 2011 p. 266).

Although the term democracy is used in many fields, ranging from politics, human rights, social practices and civic liberties among others, this study evaluates democracy in relation to politics.

Emergence of Cyber-Democracy

Research shows that democracy is an old concept that has been there since the early days of the ancient Greece kingdoms. However, democracy has undergone several evolutions in order to suit the needs and expectations of the majority and the changes in societies. Lack of reliability and satisfaction by the people with both deliberative and representative democracies are the core factors that give rise to cyber-democracy. However, it is worth noting that technological advancement in the recent past has boosted the development of cyber-democracy (Cynthia & Leslie, 2011 p. 256). Research shows that most politicians seem to forget the need of those who put them in power once they assume office as representatives of democracy. This has contributed to major conflicts experienced in some countries by the publics, on realizing that the people whom they elected into power have failed to provide them with the democratic leadership that they expected. This, also, has been the core reason for conflicts that have happened and are happening in some countries currently such as Libya, Syria, Egypt, and other parts of the world where those in leadership are forced to step down before their terms are over due to poor performance. It's the failure of both representative and deliberative democracy that gave rise to consensus democracy that has given birth to cyber-democracy (Cynthia & Leslie, 2011 p. 256).

Cyber-democracy generally refers to a participatory democracy where people are enabled to participate in the political activities around them through new information technology facilities such as Smartphones, Internet connected computers, cell phones and other modern technology gadgets. Both national and global politics have changed in the 21st century with the introduction of cyber-democracy thereby enabling people to monitor, contribute and criticize government actions and other political happenings. Similarly, modern politicians are currently using the internet for campaign purposes which

shows how cyber-democracy is rooted into our societies. Cyber-democracy as a concept is believed to have developed as a result of the evolution of computer networks. Researchers point out that cyber-democracy began back in the 1970s on the nets such as the Usenet, Bitnet, Internet and EIES, among others. However, it is worth noting that it is the Internet that has really shaped cyber-democracy ideas (Dutton, 1992 p.155).

The concept of cyber-democracy is believed to have been developed from a mixture of two West American cultures. Researchers point out that it is a virtual class working and living between the Silicon Valley and Stanford University that were responsible for it. It is this virtual class that mixed in the cyber-democracy that the dream of true democracy was born. In this context, the idea of cyber-democracy was understood as the direct self-empowerment of citizens, the individual's pursuit of political happiness, dream for a wealthy nation in terms of money and stock. Nevertheless, the initial concept of cyber-democracy was also concerned with the politics of the time, for the American people believed that politics were potential threats to freedom and the ability to maximize wealth (Cynthia & Leslie, 2011 p. 256).

Out of this early American concept of cyber-democracy, two variants were developed which include the conservative or the libertarian and the liberal or the communitarian. The libertarian emphasized on the importance of the free market while the liberal variant was more concerned with community values. It is the Progress and Freedom Foundation (PFF) that is believed to be the first attempt to come up with a political theory based on cyberspace. Newt Gingrich was among the first Congress to come up with an e-mail address that was used to achieve political goals in the US. Later on, Howard Rheingold developed a more user's friendly version of cyber-democracy. According to Rheingold, this was a very brave move in establishing cyber-democracy whereby they are not only to create links with their wealth friendships but also exchanged political ideologies that influence on the American politics (Milbrath, 1965 p. 19). Rheingold is believed to be among the first people to appreciate the idea of cyber-democracy. According to him, unlike Tele - democracy where cable TV was used, cyber-democracy is more interactive (Saldich, 1979 p. 27). He, together with other cyber-democracy advocates, point out that this technology has provided the community with a social capital that they can apply to free use political systems in their countries. According to Rheingold, cyberspace technology has facilitated the creation of virtual communities that have enabled people not only to bring changes in the national and political systems but also to do it in social life, intellectual leverage, and commercial sector among others.

Political analysts from the US argue that the Internet is a very important tool as far as cyber democracy is concerned whereby information can be exchanged freely among individuals, especially in the twenty-first Century (Lee, 2003 p. 79). Advocates of cyber-democracy point out that claims to power by politicians can no longer be validated on the basis of political property of the aspirants, but on the power of information the general public has about those vying for political positions (Ax ford, 1997 p. 199). Therefore, it is important to promote the establishment and development of virtual space whereby democratic organizations can air out their views and criticism against the current political systems. Research also shows that both liberal and conservative proponents of cyber-democracy uniformly support the idea of cyber-democracy and they believe that by well managing, it can determine the future of national and global politics (Lee, 2003 p. 34). Critics of cyber-democracy, however, argue that cyber-democracy is not fully effective since it creates room for centralism between the politicians and communication structures thereby hindering the implementation of democracy (Morino Institute, 1995 p. 12). According to the authors, Francisco James Brook and Ian Boal pointed that shifting from material political sphere of cyber politics is a necessary move, especially in the Twenty- first Century where people are spread to different parts of the world and they need to participate in their local politics too (Ricardo, 2009 p. 45).

Factors that Contributed to Cyber-Democracy

A lot of factors contributed greatly to the establishment and development of cyber-democracy. One of the major factors is technological advancement in the last few decades. Similar to the arguments by lovers of

technology that the world has become small whereby communication from one part of the world to another is possible and fast without the need for actual physical movement, modern technology has made global politics to local politics (Abramson, Arterton & Orren, 1988 p. 23-25). People from different parts of the world are using computer aided networks such as the Internet to exercise their political rights without the need for actual physical movement unlike the past. The level of poverty among nations has decreased when compared with the situation half a century ago. According to a report released by political analysts from Harvard University in 2010, economic prosperity empowers people with the freedom and power to criticize unfair political regimes. Similarly, the concept of cyber-democracy has also resulted from economic prosperity that has taken place in several parts of the world. The research shows that currently, there are incidences of one-party or one-person dictatorship while comparing with the situations 50 years ago when most of the developing countries were struggling for their independence (Bertelsen, 1992 p. 39). During this period, the leadership was based on one goal, to fight for the independence of their countries and other democratic rights. Cases of one party or one person were not major concerns since the agenda was one (Ann & Efthimios, 2009 p. 56). However, this has changed and current leaders no longer give the democratic rights of their supporters the necessary considerations they require. Cases of dictatorships within political systems have become a common phenomenon in many countries and this has led to political revolutions whereby the general public forces those in political offices to step down (Friedland, 1996 p. 53). Economic prosperities among the rising middle class from other parts of the world demand for governments that listen to their voice, power and other economic resources. This has contributed greatly to cyber-democracy where people are using cyberspace to mobilize themselves in order to vote out or demand for the unfair regimes to leave the office, and to fight for their fundamental rights.

Effects of Cyber-Democracy on National Politics

In recent past, we have witnessed several information technology related evolutions which had both positive and native implications to the nations where they took place. A good example of such countries include the USA, Egypt, Libya, Syria, North Korea, South Korea, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Greece, Germany and France among others (Cynthia & Leslie, 2011 p. 201). Generally, democratic and other wealthy countries have shifted to cyberspace as a means of promoting democracy. The introduction of cyber democracy has resulted in several benefits to the national politics of the countries that are using them. A good example is the United States of America, which for the past decades has relied on cyber-democracy as a means of perfecting its national politics. It is the issue of political apathy and under representation of the popular wills that has contributed to the implementation of cyber-democracy in many countries globally. For instance, in the US during the US congressional election, voters' turnout is often less than 50% due to the culture and distribution of the US citizens globally (Barber, 1984). The case of low voters' turnout is a serious problem for the country that advocates democratic political processes. Consequently, countries like US have developed methods that can be used to eliminate political apathy and the most popular means today is the incorporation of cyber-democracy in national politics. This has been achieved by the creation of cyberspaces such as web pages, blogs, and e-government in order to enable citizens participate in national political processes and public policies. On the other hand, citizens and other political activists have created their own Internet pages whereby they can freely exchange ideas on national political processes and public policies. It is worth noting that the general public and other political activists are not only using cyber democracy as a means of understanding their national governance but also as a means of monitoring, benchmarking and criticizing unfair regimes in their countries.

Positive Impacts

The following are the major positive impacts on national politics that are as a result of cyber- democracy.

- Introduction of cyber-democracy has enabled citizens to participate in public policies and political processes, the process that was not possible in a purely representative democracy a few decades ago. For instance, the US has been able to improve its political systems through the use of cyber democracy whereby its citizens can access government services and information from their states through the Internet (Lee, 2003 p. 112). Not only from their states, but from anywhere in the world.
- Another positive impact on national politics is the ability to vote for leaders online. The fact that majority of the people in both developed and developing countries do not reside in their countries or where they registered as voters has been a major reason for low voters' turnout in many countries in the recent past. However, with the introduction of cyber-democracy, this challenge has been overcome since people can now vote from where they are residing without having to travel to their voting centers, all courtesy of the advancement in information technology and cyber-democracy.
- Politicians have also been relieved some of the challenges since they no longer need to move to all parts of their nations in order to communicate their political policies or respond to the voters' questions concerning his/her abilities to represent them. With the introduction of cyber democracy, politicians can now create web pages, blogs, e-mail addresses and other communication channels through which they can reach voters and communicate their policies (Elgin, 1993 p.11).
- Cyber democracy has empowered the majority in every nation with a means through which they can monitor and criticize their government if they fail to meet their expectations. Unlike the purely representative democracy witnessed in the past where people had to wait until when there is another voting period in order to vote in or out, leaders that have failed to represent their democratic rights in the House of Common, cyberspace has made it possible for citizens to monitor and air their views about a bad regime, even while in power. Good examples are Egypt, Libya, Syria, Italy and Greece. In these countries, internet communication among the citizens has played a great role in mobilizing people to revolt against the regimes that failed to meet their national expectations (London, 1994 p. 88).
- Easy and effective governance. With the introduction of e-government, it is now easy for citizens to access administrative services from the comfort of their homes or offices without having to travel to the headquarters. In developed countries, major services can be accessed online whereby citizens can log in and fill forms or send e-mails in order to communicate their issues to the government. It is also possible for citizens to recommend changes in the governance without necessarily having to go to the relevant administrative offices.
- Political analysts point out that national politics have become less complicated with the introduction of Internet aided democracy as long as a country has well established information and communication network.
- Cyber-democracy has publicized parts of the social life in many countries, especially where IT infrastructure is excellent. The fact that social sites such as Facebook and Twitters are used by people to share political issues is evident enough in that cyber democracy has made politics parts of the people's lives. Mobile phones with facilities for accessing the internet are popularly used to access social sites and this means that people can now access political information and national policies from the comfort of their homes.

Negative Impacts

Although the introduction of cyber-democracy is viewed as the solution to democratic challenges facing both developed and developing countries, the concept also has several demerits to national politics that

has made conservative political analysts to consider it as the core contributor to the political revolutions witnessed in various parts of the world. Political theorists against the concept of cyber-democracy point out that majority of the developed countries have well-established political systems and there are high levels of citizens' participation in public policies and political processes unlike in developing countries (Hollander, 1985 p. 24-26). Consequently, it is not clear whether cyber-democracy and other IT enabled political systems have in any way affected the developed countries. Those against the concept of cyber-democracy argue that the newly developed or the developing countries that have achieved democracy recently can only benefit from cyber democracy if they have a strong IT infrastructure. Such countries include South Korea, Egypt, Syria and Libya among others (Cynthia & Leslie, 2011 p. 304).

Political theorists and analyst against the concept of cyber democracy argue that it is too early for developing countries to embrace IT aided political systems and do away with the traditional representative political system and democracy. According to a group of political analysts from Harvard University, developing countries have not established sufficient IT infrastructure nationally and relying on cyber-democracy as a political tool will limit political democracy since only a small portion of the citizens in developing countries have the access to Internet and other computer added communications. The following are the major negative impacts of cyber democracy on national politics:

- Poor participation by citizens in developing countries in public policies and national political processes. Research shows that majority of the developing countries do not have adequate IT infrastructure to support cyber-democracy. Also, over reliance on cyber-democracy by some developing countries results in poor participation by citizens thereby hindering the same democracy that they are supposed to be promoting. For instance, conducting national campaigns and voting through the cyberspace in some developing countries with low IT complaint rate will hinder majority of the citizens from practicing their democratic rights (Dartnell, 2006 p. 43).
- There is an increasing tendency for people to misuse internet usage. Disrespectful and irrelevant messages are communicated through cyberspace to the government and other political leaders by their opposition and their supporters. Political analysts argue that cyber-democracy has been misused in various countries, especially in newly developed countries where there is competition for power and leadership at the national level. Several cases have been reported whereby internet users have sent disrespectful messages to the government or have used government web pages to communicate irrelevant information.
- Cyber-democracy has contributed greatly to political violence witnessed in various parts of the world such as in Italy, Greece, Egypt, Libya and Syria. Although the governments in these countries have failed to address the democratic rights of the majority citizens, violence and destruction of property was not part of the solution. The fact that people could not organize violence openly made it necessary for the perpetrators of these conflicts to rely on internet aided communication to team up people in a public sphere so that they can participate in the violence. This explains why some political analysts opined that the use of internet communication in political activities and processes has empowered political rivals to organize conflicts in their countries even when they are in other countries (Lee, 2003 p. 167).

Impacts of Cyber-Democracy on Global Politics

With the recent globalization and introduction of faster and more convenient communication technologies such as the Internet, the world has become like a small village and an occurrence in one country has a significant effect on other countries (Kole, 1999 p. 99). Global politics have also become part of our national politics because our national policies must be in accordance with the global policies. Generally, there is not much difference between the national politics and global politics in the contemporary world, except that there are different national political systems in some countries due to religious and cultural backgrounds (Dartnell, 2006 p. 48).

Positive Impacts

Research reveals that cyber-democracy has improved on global politics today due to the advancement in communication technology. The following are the major positive impacts of cyber-democracy on global politics according to a report released by political analysts from Harvard University:

- ❖ Cyber democracy has facilitated exchange of political information and knowledge among people from different parts of the world. It is now possible for citizens from countries that have become democratic recently or those that are still under dictatorship to get some ideas on democratic political systems from democratic and developed countries. This exchange of political information has helped in harmonizing political policies and processes on the global level thereby promoting global political harmony (Bimber, 1996 p. 82).
- ❖ It is possible to follow and criticize political processes in other countries from one country through the cyberspace. This enables people to familiarize with the politics of the countries that they are interested in before making decisions for business ventures and other social-economic activities with these countries. This has taken global politics to a different level unlike in the past where the concerns of global politics were left in the hands of politicians and other national leaders (Margolis & Riaño, 2009 p. 153).
- ❖ Cyber-democracy has enabled global organizations in search of change and global relationship to monitor political processes from different parts of the world in order to ensure that democracy is promoted globally. During the period of pure representative democracy, it was not possible to monitor global politics, especially in situations where dictatorial leaders at national level failed to cooperate with the international society (Grossman, 1995 p. 43). For instance, in the case of Libya during the recent violence, it wouldn't have been possible and easy for the international world to follow the undemocratic activities that were taking place within its boundaries if not for cyber-democracy. Opposition groups against dictatorial regimes relied on internet communications to inform the outside world of what was happening in their country thereby enabling the intervention of the outside world. (Arterton, 1987 p. 27).
- ❖ Cyber-democracy has introduced 'decentralization of global politics'. Before the introduction of internet aided communication in politics, it was difficult to ensure that global politics are not centralized at national or regional levels (Ogden, 1994 p. 36). Countries emphasized in their own political systems without much consideration on the consequence of their politics in the international world. Today, cyber-democracy has enabled politicians from different parts of the world to exchange information without necessarily having to hold international meetings to discuss global political issues (Hagen, 1996 p. 98).
- ❖ The concept of cyber-democracy has made global political processes much easier economical unlike the days of tele-democracy and representative politics where a lot of financing was spent in global politics for communication purposes (Kaczmarczyk, 2010). Presently, communication is far much easier through the Internet and, therefore, citizens of all countries can always be informed of all happenings on global politics.

Negative Impacts

According to political analysts and theorists, the concept of cyber democracy does not only have only positive contributions to cyber democracy (Kalathil & Boas, 2003 p. 67). The incorporation of cyber democracy in global politics has also contributed to several challenges that are experienced in many parts of the world. It has been observed that political changes occurred with a faster rate than other social changes such as cultural changes, religious and economic ones (Patterson, 1993 p. 76-77). Therefore, unifications of the global politics that has been established due to cyber-democracy do not reflect the social cultural and economic situations of various countries. Developing countries are currently struggling to implement political processes and public policies practiced by the developed countries. This has

brought political inconsistency and stress. The following are the major negative impacts of cyber-democracy that conservative political analysts feel have hindered the complete practice of democracy in developing countries.

- Cyber- democracy has contributed to the spread of biased or unrealistic political policies from developing countries to the developing nations whereby they are implemented by the locals resulting in political conflicts. For instance, research shows that over 60% of the political information exchanged between individuals in social sites such as Facebook and Twitter is not original and Arterton believes that once it is passed from one person to another, there is loss or addition of false information depending on the understanding of the previous recipient (1987, p. 188).
- Most conflicts happening in most of the countries of the world are the result of integration of cyber-democracy in modern national and global politics. With the introduction of cyber-democracy, countries cannot fully regulate political information access by its citizens. Internet communication has allowed people from countries facing similar political challenges to exchange information thereby entering into political revolutions and conflicts at the same time. This has imposed challenge on global politics thereby making it easy to address global political challenges if they happen at the same time (Poster, 1995 p. 54).
- Lastly, the introduction of online voting, campaign, and meetings to address issues related to global political issues has hindered some of the parties in developing countries from accessing information from internet sites due to lack of adequate communication technology infrastructure.

Conclusion

The research shows that both global and national politics have undergone several evolutions since the ancient days. Initially, the form of democracy that was practiced in all parts of the world was the representative politics whereby the majority elected an individual to represent them in the Common House, currently referred to as Parliament. It is the elected leaders that protected the interests of those who voted in office. However, most elected representatives in the contemporary world do not represent in the interest of their voters and the majority of the citizens as expected (Grewlich, 1999 p. 66). It is the failure of elected leaders and governments to protect their democratic rights that led to the concept of participatory democracy where individuals are able to participate directly in contributing to public policies and political processes. The most recent form of participatory democracy is cyber-democracy where people from the same nation or from different parts of the world can exchange political views (Holmes, 1997 p. 117).

The study further reveals that cyber-democracy has both positive and negative impacts on both national and global politics. Nevertheless, considering the fact that there is advancement in internet communication is to say, it is better for nations to embrace it even in politics but ensuring that it does not contribute to national and global conflict (Graber, 1995 p. 56). It is evident from the study that cyber-democracy has more positive impacts to both national and global politics. The few negative impacts are as result of lack of control and misuse of the cyberspace. With the introduction of cyber-democracy, those in power can no longer go unmonitored and this has improved the situation of national and global politics. According to the study, those against cyber-democracy both at the national level and at the global sphere can be seen as conservatives and enemies of change, and should not just throw the concept in the bin as though it were unworthy, for its merits speak volumes.

Recommendations

In order to take advantage of cyber-democracy at both national and global levels, there is need for governments to ensure that there is adequate and modern information technology infrastructure that can

support fair and equal practice of cyber-democracy. There is also need for both national and international governance to establish systems whereby ethics and regulations of internet communication can be upheld to avoid misuse of the platform and minimize the instances of misleading the general public (Dartnell, 2006 p. 104).

More information technology structures should also be established to guarantee equal platform for political participation by citizenry and reduces instances of disenfranchisement to the minimum.

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