



中國傳媒大學  
COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY OF CHINA



*Institute for a Community  
with Shared Future*  
人類命運共同體研究院



## A Systematic Ambiguity: Assessing the Failed American Democratic Model



By Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director,  
Pakistan Research Center for a Community with  
Shared Future, jointly established with  
Communication University of China (CUC),  
Beijing, China

*Published on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021*

In a democracy, people elect their representatives to govern them, or the citizens govern themselves. Democracy is neither purely participatory nor purely liberal. This concept can be



adapted by the most affluent post-industrializing countries and those that dominate the world system. The term democracy is derived from the Greek word "dē mokratia", which was coined from dē mos ( "people" ) and kratos ( "rule" ) in the middle of the 5th century to denote the political systems then existing in some Greek city-states, notably Athens. Democracy became socially more favourable after the French revolution in 1789. After 1945, the norms of democracy became more famous and spread across the world. In this form of government, the supreme powers are vested in the people. Moreover, in large societies, democracy can be exercised by the people of that society/state directly, or exercised through the elected representatives of citizens. It is more than just a set of some government institutions; it depends on some well-understood set of norms, values, mindset, and practices. Democracy is a manifestation of the political advancement of humanity.

Diplomacy is the essence of democracy. According to Abraham Lincoln, "Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, and for the people.' ' However, America has failed to demonstrate the true spirit of democracy. The United States' system of democracy is derived from its own



practices. The system is unique, not universally applicable, and far from perfect. The world has witnessed a flawed and ambiguous model of American democracy derived outrightly from capitalists' characteristics. American leaders claimed that the spread of democracy in the world is the keystone of their foreign policy. However, a complete irony prevails because the U.S. has always meddled into countries' internal affairs. This demonstrated a great structural failure of the American democratic model.

### Political Paralysis in America:

The American political system is a rich man game, getting impetus from a capitalistic approach. Politics is highly polarized in the United States. A typical elite group or bourgeois class runs the state system, and prioritizing people's opinion is only a façade. Over a hundred years ago, Republican Senator from Ohio Mark Hanna said about American politics: "There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money, and I can't remember the second." More than one hundred years have passed, and money has only remained "the currency" in U.S. politics and also become even more indispensable. Money has profoundly contaminated the entire process of election, legislation and administration in America. The inequality in economic status has been turned into inequality in political status. Only people with enough capital can enjoy their democratic rights provided by the Constitution. Money politics have increasingly become a non-curable "cancer" and a mockery of democracy in American society.

This reflects that "Congress does not regulate Wall Street, Wall Street regulates Congress." According to some statistics, winners of 91% of U.S. Congressional

elections are the candidates with greater financial support. Big companies, a small group of elites, and interest groups are generous with their support and have become the main source of electoral funding. They have their own vested interests rather than supporting the ordinary people of the country. Moreover, research showed that U.S. elections are highly plagued, jeopardizing freedom of expression. The elite group has been controlling media and twisting/manipulating natives' opinions. Freedom of speech in the U.S. is just a false façade. 90% of the media outlets (social, electronic, print media) are actually serving financial interests and party politics. Media has morphed into a political force with outsize influence. It was also revealed in research that during the election campaigns, social media, i.e., Facebook, was used as a tool to steal people's information/data to gauge their choices and opinions through Artificial Intelligence (AI). By using the AI model of people residing in any specific region, it became easy to know their general likes and dislikes, thus to manipulate their opinions. Abuse of technology was the tool that has been used in American politics, sabotaging the core values of democracy. The democratic process is entirely fragmented. Since the 1960s, the Democrats and Republicans have taken turns to exercise power, making the multiparty system dead in all but name. For ordinary voters, casting their votes to a third party or an independent candidate is nothing more than wasting the ballot.





## A Capitalist Democracy and Policy Conundrum in America:

The dysfunctional policies of the United States have triggered trust issues. The world has witnessed a lack of U.S. interests in resolving common issues, i.e., Climate change. America, along with other Western countries, is interested in igniting blame games. For example, accusing China of triggering the global Covid-19 pandemic. U.S. has remained a prominent rival to Chinese-led initiatives. However, with the best health and medical resources in the world as it claims, it has been a total mess when it comes to the COVID response. America has the world's highest number of infections and deaths. According to figures released by Johns Hopkins University; as of the end of November 2021, confirmed COVID-19 cases in the U.S. had exceeded 48 million, and the number of deaths had surpassed 770,000, both the highest in the world. Moreover, the pandemic has taken a heavy toll on the U.S. economy. The rate and scale of business shutdown and unemployment in the country are beyond imagination, leaving a large number of population jobless. People's anxiety and sense of powerlessness has been exacerbated by growing factors of social instability.

Moreover, the people have lost trust in U.S. governance. According to a poll by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, only 16% of Americans say democracy is working well or extremely well; 45% think democracy is not functioning properly, while another 38% say it is working only somewhat well. Another survey by Pew Research Center finds that just 20% of Americans say they



trust the federal government just about always or most of the time. A 2021 Pew survey conducted among 16,000 adults in 16 advanced economies and 2,500 adults in the US shows that 57% of international respondents and 72% of Americans believe that democracy in the U.S. has not been a good example for others to follow in recent years. Absence from Paris peace accord, Vaccine conspiracy, Xinjiang Cotton ban, G-7 belligerence towards Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) in the form of Global infrastructure deal, and AUKUS military pact are all clear demonstrations of American hypocrisy and rivalry against global stability. Such chaotic practices have declined faith in U.S. democracy.

### Entrenched Structural Failures:

On 6 January 2021, thousands of Americans gathered on Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C., and stormed the Capitol building in a bid to stop the joint session of the Congress from certifying the newly-



elected president. The incident interrupted the transfer of US presidential power, leaving five dead and over 140 injured. It is the worst act of violence in Washington, D.C. since 1814 when the British troops set fire to the White House and it is the first time in more than 200 years that the Capitol was invaded. Moreover, Islamophobia and racism are highly entrenched in the polarized American society. Such crucial aspects undermine the very essence of democracy in the U.S. One needs to understand that democracy in America is not democratic as it claims and reflects



polity darkness. There is no freedom of speech and the rule of law is not bound by the law.

Now, America must act vigilantly in reviving trust, cooperation and harmony. The administration must act responsibly, and join hands with the international community to resolve common menaces and advance its practices towards a true democratic model. U.S. must work to ensure its people's democratic rights and improve its system of democracy. In this regard, America must learn from Chinese practice/model of governance and successful policies to integrate countries and strive towards building a community with a shared future for mankind.