

CHAPTER I

Psychology of Democracy

Ashley Weinberg

Democracy is in danger. Consider these questions if you are unsure whether this is the case. Do you trust others? Do you believe others will act on your behalf? Would you take up a cause on others' behalf? These are fundamental questions of democracy and how it is practised across the world. For many, democracy represents political freedom, access to justice and an assumed range of esteemed values, while, for others, it is a political system that, at its basest level, needs to be navigated at all costs to achieve desired goals. For some, democracy represents an impediment to achieving their desired aims. Where there is attraction to power in the minds of those involved, there are clear challenges for democracy and for the populations it purports to represent. The reason such motivations can differ is simple: it is because we are human.

One paradox of democracy appears to lie in how the power it confers is used. If we are interested in the common good, why would a nation claim to have a system that looks like it involves everyone, but teems with examples in which it does not necessarily serve them? This situation results in negative perceptions of politics and elected representatives that undermine belief in democracy, unless democracy is seen to deliver results with which the majority can agree. It has been suggested by the Cambridge University Centre for the Future of Democracy (2020) that there is a 'global democratic recession' (Foa et al., 2020). Perhaps it should come as no surprise that democracy – as a system of government – is facing its greatest challenges and, at the same time, the standing of politicians as assessed by polls and academic studies is invariably low (e.g., Clarke et al., 2016; Hansard Society, 2019; Stoker and Evans, 2016). Furthermore, it has been suggested that the 'third wave of autocratization' in the early part of the twenty-first century, characterised by gradual erosion of democratic functions, is a legitimate cause for concern (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019).

This book explores relevant individual, social and political psychological mechanisms and processes that contribute, not only to our experiences of

democracy, but also to its relative success or failure. At this stage in human evolution, the stakes in forms of government that can deliver our survival could not be higher.

Naturally, the roles and responsibilities of those elected to act on behalf of the population are brought into sharp focus. Yet, the study of those who become elected representatives is relatively scarce, so attitudes tend to rely rather unhelpfully on popular perceptions in which a range of media play an influential role. In considering, 'Of the people, by the people, for the people', this book seeks to analyse the key factors that shape and determine our involvement in the government of our lives and of our communities and nations. Examining democracy, from an emerging awareness of citizenship among young people right through to our involvement with political processes and institutions and to the experience of those serving and leaving political office, the psychology of politics is a window to our future, whoever we are. Seen through the lens of democracy, we ask how bright is that future?

Who Counts?

The survival instincts of humans have not changed in millennia and, in order to guarantee continuing success, we need to co-exist effectively within groups, whether these are the size of family units, communities or entire nations. As political philosophers have acknowledged, such tasks are not only daunting for citizens struggling with the challenges and exigencies of daily life, but also for those who seek and take responsibility for making democratic systems work: 'What we require in a democratic society is enlightened individuals who will be mature and responsible because they reflect upon the issues which face them' (Mill, 1859). Yet, it is at the individual, community and national levels that we take steps to exert some control over our environments, whether at home, at work or in government. Hopefully, this control is expressed in ways that add positively to our own and others' experiences and in so doing lies an important realisation: in a democracy, we are all politicians, whether we like it or not.

So, how could we organise society for the better? Naturally everyone will have a differing view or preference, but it is equally likely that – when it comes to such weighty matters – arrangements do not meet hopes and expectations. People starve, are deprived or neglected, lose their homes, are obliged to yield to mightier forces – and without fair reason in a world supposedly knowing more than before. Yet, while citizens can conceive of the ideal state of affairs for our families and communities, nations struggle

to achieve them. The difficulties in agreeing and implementing measures to combat climate change are a case in point.

Politicians complain of responsibility without real power to effect change, yet people take a stand where they can – unless they feel disinclined by a sense of inevitable failure. So, how would you devise a political system? Would it be one that serves the interests equally of all, or one that tends to favour some over others? Power-holders – as though wearing the ring from Tolkien's tales – know the temptations all too well. As Lord Acton observed in 1887, 'Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. Even the prospect of it can tempt those who seek power towards dubious actions – perhaps to load the dice of the electoral gamble, whether over-spending on a political campaign or manipulating information about promised outcomes or political opponents.

These considerations beg an important question: Can we be dispassionate about democracy or indeed about the exercising of power? Walter Bagehot's *The English Constitution* (1873) considers both colourfully and enthusiastically the definition of one parliamentary system and perhaps herein lies a major dilemma. It is not only knowing what we really want that is important, but how we would know what this resembles? In part, this depends on how our knowledge of our political systems is shaped. Bagehot recognised that, in changing times, the conundrum about the best shape of government faces both those in power 'and... a people neither of whom are guided by a different experience' (p. 6). After all, how can we live outside of the era of our existence to judge what is best? As a species, we often learn through trial and error – of our own or others – but the turn of events decides whether this learning is put into practice.

Consensus and committees that abound in parliaments reasonably give the appearance of scrutinising policies and actions that should promote the common good, arguably much more so where these bodies are purportedly representative of the wider population. However, this itself begs further major questions for democracy. Just how many and how involved are people in democracy and how could everyone be engaged in the ways things are run? For example, where are the voices of those deemed outside the system? As we have seen in climate change protests, many children are keen for and deserving of a voice, the logic and fairness of which few can deny, yet they are without political representation. Similarly, for citizens without a home or regular dwelling, or access to the Internet, there is no clear system for registering to vote and they are frequently denied the franchise. Furthermore, many disenchanted with politics and politicians are overwhelmed by the prospect of getting to grips with such contested

matters or feel disinclined to participate or perceive their part too insignificant – finding themselves instead on the receiving end of a ‘democratic’ deal. For those who hope that political parties will represent and safeguard their interests, there are options to join or facilitate their impact in some way, yet how influential can individuals be? An example of financial political contributions makes for interesting reading. In 2019, the year of the UK’s Brexit General Election, £24.9 million was donated to the Conservative Party from among its fifty largest party donors; this compares to the main opposition Labour Party’s total campaign fund from all donors of just over £5 million (*Sunday Times*, 2020).

Who Has Power in a Democracy?

If politics is about power, then it is naturally about control as well. There are claims that the way democracy works is rooted in manipulation by a privileged minority for their advantage, while others point to the practical challenges in politics of suiting everyone at every turn and to the progress achieved in areas of one policy or another. Whether these are narratives with which one concurs or not, the outcome for democracy is the same: there are seeds of unhappiness in how we feel about it. Hopefully, there are causes for optimism, too, yet uneasy emotions may lead us to become either disenchanted with the system of democracy, distrustful and even angry with the politicians and voters involved or apathetic to hopes we may have previously held about the future. As David Runciman, author of *How Democracy Ends*, suggests, ‘Democracy works best when we take it in turns to complain about the system. . . [but] ecumenical distrust is something new’ (*The Economist*, 2018).

Our efforts to meet or exceed the demands of daily life are shaped by our individual thoughts and behaviours. Yet, the notion of running a country – even though likened by one former prime minister to running a household – is something harder to grasp. The responsibility carried on behalf of millions in order to exercise power should make the process of democracy different from dictatorship, yet there may well be rulers who nevertheless feel it is their destiny to do so and see no need for recourse to their wider country-folk. The wielding of power in such an autocratic manner has gained in pace around the world. Showcasing, garnering and even creating their own popularity and public persona has variously helped leaders in recent times in Russia, China, the United States of America and India in trying to tighten their grip on power. Some observers have harked back to dictators emerging in Germany and Italy in the 1920s and 1930s,

whose use of military might and populist rhetoric was key to their tenure, perhaps after initially using the democratic system to gain office (e.g., Hett, 2018). Scanning across the last 100 years allows us to compare snapshots of leaders' behaviour: from leading a rally chanting against a labelled 'common enemy' to sitting astride their chosen mode of transport – perhaps a motorcycle or armoured vehicle – while accepting the plaudits of cheering crowds. Particular parallels are also evident in steps taken to remove barriers to ruling for life. Not only do these suggest unbridled ambitions to stay atop the political 'greasy pole', but show that public affirmation – either by superficially democratic means or social approval from a political in-group – need only be to 'rubber-stamp' the legitimacy of their leadership. It is in this context that concerns about the viability and survivability of democracy more globally are raised.

Much has been written about the psychological motivations of leaders of all guises in taking power, whether drawing on political legitimacy or none at all. Perhaps just as concerning is how the use or manipulation of a democratic apparatus by an autocrat to gain power may reflect on voters who, initially at least, lend their support, but then find the wheel controlling power pushed beyond their reach. This raises the question of our own psychological needs as electorates. A sense of justice might have us believe it is only a matter of time before dictators fall foul of their own self-belief or delusions and that, at some point, popular uprising – within or from outside their boundaries – consigns them to the history books. However, the notion of ruling without the need to consult meaningfully or to genuinely foster the support of others is a perennial source of fear for the majority and a tempting prospect for the power-hungry, yet it remains a risk in democratic and non-democratic societies. In the fifth century BCE, Athenian safeguards against such abuse of the political system included ostracism for up to ten years! Of course, one difficulty for humankind is the length of time and scale of suffering peoples are forced to endure waiting for abuse by leaders to be exposed or addressed.

So, how can we be sure that democracy is preferable? How can rule for the many be carefully and efficiently realised? First, it requires a shared desire that it should work and, second, a commitment from those holding political office to the welfare of current and future generations, which is hopefully supported by the population. In such a way, history will judge the role of governments in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. Communication between the power-holders and the electorate is key to this understanding and places considerable influence in the hands of the

media and its sponsors and owners. Therefore, overly comfortable relations between politicians and the purveyors of media can create problems of their own.

Whatever one's role in a democratic system – as a voter, party member or political decision-maker – the need for control, the search for the empowerment of oneself or others, the notion of freedom of choice in what happens next and an ongoing commitment to citizenship are characteristics that shape our perception of its relative success or failure. Each of these represents a range of psychological constructs that underpin attitudes towards democratic behaviours in society as well as in exercising political power at a national level. In order to understand what makes democracy tick, we must also examine our own motives, expectations and emotions as individuals.

People as Politicians

Unease with politics is an understandable consequence of decisions being made away from the public eye or beyond the easy influence of our lives as citizens. Yet, we should not lose sight of our own role as politicians in daily life, seeking to influence our immediate environments – families, communities and workplaces – by communicating, persuading and acting to achieve change. This can range from efforts to put food on the table to successfully navigating the worlds of work, study and relationships. In addition, each of us may find ourselves operating along a continuum – whether oriented towards our own needs or, indeed, seeking to represent the needs of those around us. One could argue that this is no different a scenario for professional politicians, yet, whether we see politicians as serving themselves or others, it plays an important role in how they are perceived. Naturally, the transparency of the systems in which we and they operate influences such perspectives and, in part, the openness of political processes to public view is due to the nature of representative democratic systems by which politicians are elected to decide on actions on behalf of the electorate. Attention to such dynamics is bound to inspire a range of emotions.

Democracy means something slightly different to so many, but, on any given day, we are aware of actions that run counter to its prized principles. As basic human rights, we are affronted and distressed by attempts to curb freedoms. In response to a brutal crackdown on civilian protests and the arrests of leaders of the political opposition, marches by huge numbers of an unsettled population, carrying white flags and flowers, echoes the same sentiments across 200 years of history from Peterloo to Belarus. Collective

action and peaceful protest as expressions of democratic principle demonstrate that political awareness is within all of us and the propensity towards emotion over democratic values should come as no surprise.

It is natural that these emotions should have a voice, for, without their expression, resentment simmers and, with their expression, an uneasy legacy lingers. For the dictator, autocrat or unaccountable government official, here is a conundrum: whether to risk the free expression of emotion by public protest or to contend with the consequences if it is ignored or suppressed? In a democracy, there are expectations of greater tolerance of expression of views, as its essence lies with political freedom and chances of progress, which in turn support advances towards equality. The risk for any democratically elected government is that, once elected, should it ignore its electors' wishes, the chances of re-election are reduced; yet, frustratingly for the electorate, this brings no guarantees of a responsive government. In such cases, what public protest against unpopular policies symbolises can be far stronger than one may assume. For what remains are troubling questions: how does a democratically elected government make such gross errors that it is at odds with the people who originally voted for it? 'Events' (as lamented by former UK Prime Minister Harold Macmillan) play their part, of course, but where the gap in mismatched expectations and the trap of undelivered promises exists, the more a gulf in democratic functioning is apparent. The discretion afforded to leaders to make choices may seem politically necessary, but how well does this serve democracy? Democracy may be the game, but politics are the rules by which it is played – as they are in any autocracy or other system of government.

Achieving procedural democracy, by which the rules with which we live are subject to democratic principles, rather than to political manoeuvrings for those in power, is one difference between having a democratic form of government and a fully functioning democracy (Moghaddam, 2018). In considering the psychological factors involved in successful steps towards democracy, Fathali Moghaddam (2016) has charted the roles of first-, second- and third-order change, following on from his modern-day observations of Iran and the United States of America. Respectively, these point first to large-scale political reform, second to institutional structures to support such reform and finally to the development of democratic characteristics at the level of individual cognitive styles and behaviours. Accordingly, he proposes, 'the psychological citizen can become capable of constructively participating in, and supporting, a democracy through acquiring a variety of cognitive and behavioural skills and practices'

(Moghaddam, 2018, p. 26). Such ‘political plasticity’, Moghaddam (2018) argues, is needed to cement in place the values that might guarantee the psychological foundations for ensuring the success of democracy, not necessarily from the viewpoint of only one form is right – but from one that minimises the risks of incumbents of any political shade from perpetrating anti-democratic deeds. Therefore, ‘For democratic actualisation to occur, the democratic citizen must develop the appropriate social skills to implement action based on the following convictions’ (Moghaddam, 2016, p. 50): recognising one’s fallibility, questioning societal assumptions, changing opinions based on evidence, seeking knowledge from a range of sources and understanding and learning from people with other life courses, being open to new experiences and to sharing one’s own with others, being guided by ethical principles and undertaking pursuit of activities ‘of higher value’ while recognising the differing worth of experiences. On reading these, one’s mind may consider with interest our own habits – as well as those of elected and unelected politicians. This is not to say that people are naturally without the capacity to act democratically in everyday life, but, as Helen Haste and colleagues point out later in this volume, the role of educating for citizenship and meaningfully nurturing such values in society is vital for the future survival of democracy.

From Sabres to Umbrellas: The Fortunes of Democracy

Why does the perception of a threat to democracy evoke strong emotion? For many, ignoring the will of the people represents injustice and is reminiscent of wars necessitated by would-be invaders who care little for the right to vote and free speech. Either way, the unwritten message ‘you do not matter’ is a powerful call to arms in both material and metaphorical terms. Perhaps it is a more powerful motivator than any subtext suggesting that ‘you do matter’!?

Of course, as voters we recognise that policies will not suit everyone equally and, in voting for candidates or supporting a proposition at referendum, we are probably aware of wider considerations than a political party or movement with which we may not agree entirely. So, voting often represents a compromise between what we think and what is on offer and, in this way, can be considered an act of reasonableness on our behalf. Not surprisingly, we expect those we support to treat our vote and our faith in them fairly and with respect. Where such a psychological contract goes unrewarded, we are likely to feel aggrieved or worse. It is fair to say that unmet expectations are the enemies of happiness.

The pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in August 2019 transformed from largely peaceful gatherings, objecting to reforms shifting the territory towards compliance with the rest of China's non-democratic government system. Huge crowds faced armed police in demonstrations over the proposal to transport those accused of crimes to China, with accompanying concerns about their legal rights. In other words, what appeared to be at stake were the rights of the individual, not only to vote, but to have a voice enshrined in the administration of the law – an issue that formed a cornerstone of the Magna Carta signed in England almost 800 years previously and that is recognised by those denied fair trial around the world. The symbolic use of umbrellas by pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong to combat the teargas fired by police gave rise to depiction of their action as 'The Umbrella Movement'.

What may not have been apparent to those involved was that, in August 1819 – almost exactly 200 years before the Hong Kong protests, a peaceful demonstration in Manchester, England of 60,000 workers and their families saw calls for political rights and became a symbol of democratic struggle. The marchers, including women wearing white and carrying flowers (also echoed in Belarus in 2020), were met by militia deployed by local magistrates fearful of disorder. Charging through neighbouring streets and into the crowd on horseback with sabres drawn, the soldiers injured over 700 and killed 15 unarmed civilians, including a baby. The bicentenary of what became known as the Peterloo Massacre – so named after the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 and the location in Manchester of St Peter's Fields – was commemorated by a monument, events and marches, in turn characterised by the Brexit-related politics of modern-day Britain. Limited media coverage meant that the significance of the event was less than might have been expected. However, within days, the importance of what had been the largest gathering of UK citizens found resonance with demonstrations for democracy over 5,000 miles away. Not only is democracy a worldwide phenomenon, but so is the struggle to maintain it over time, as well as across the globe.

Similarly, the action of populations taking to the streets is seen across many contexts and countries, voicing concern and protests against threats and destruction of political rights and resources. From the Arab Spring risings of the early 2010s, which sought to overthrow established autocratic regimes, to long-running street battles in Chile in 2019–2020 over proposals to raise transport fares, extreme expressions of emotion about how we are governed and treated as citizens are universally evident. Furthermore, considering the global impact of political emergencies is vital, as these tend not to exist in isolation, but influence events elsewhere,

as evidenced by the figure that 3.5 per cent of the world's population are considered migrants (IOM, 2020). It is salutary that 'voting with one's feet', as a result of conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and central Africa, has fuelled a far-reaching diaspora. Similarly, mass migration from nineteenth-century Russia came in response to pogroms and a Tsar who presided over mass hunger and programmes of persecution. For those seeking refuge or economic stability, the precious commodity of political rights can be hard to maintain or – indeed – regain.

Emotions and the Principles of Democracy

In the context of the evolution of democracy, demonstrations of fear and anxiety and tussles fuelled by the prospect of losing valuable commodities and thereby a measure of control are variously echoed across history. Political resources available to the population are frequently rooted in access to natural and essential resources and, therefore, such capital is a critical issue. Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) describes the negative psychological impact of the threat of losing what one has. It follows that direct links can be observed between perceptions of threat, associated political rhetoric and motivations to seek redress. If the price of negative emotion is undeliberative attitudes in resolving political matters, how far can positive outcomes for democracy be guaranteed? This is not to suggest that negative political change must flow from the experience of negative emotions. The titles of the pamphlets of Thomas Paine, whose words fuelled the zeal of American uprising against British imperial rule and were used to defend revolutionary ideals in France, exemplify the strategy of evoking and harnessing emotion. 'Common sense' (1776) sold 500,000 copies in the United States of America and 'The rights of man' (1792) is thought to have sold 1.5 million copies by the time of Paine's death in 1809 (National Archives, nd). In such ways, concepts of freedom and equality were given a voice and used as rallying cries for major political change across the Atlantic and, over time, in calling for revolution and experimentation in new forms of government. Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto (1848) played a similar role in mid-nineteenth century European revolutions and found various expressions in twentieth-century upheaval across the globe, whether for democracy or against it. However, for continuity and progress of a political system, John Stuart Mill (1859), as noted earlier in this chapter, suggested that reflection more than emotion is a prerequisite for successful practice in a democratic society. So, who was right?

It has been argued that support for Brexit (the UK's withdrawal from the European Union) represented a popular backlash against the system and a clawing back of resources with the slogan 'Take back control'. It produced far more than a war of words in Parliament, but also acts of violence against Members of Parliament (MPs) – including murder – and a General Election that put pro-Brexit politicians (known as 'Brexiters') into a majority government. Amid this, aspersions cast by the prime minister on Parliament and his capacity for provocative comments fanned the flames of discord. While the history of one is not the history of all, such upheaval finds resonance in other countries, including – for example – in the United States of America, where a rise of populism was harnessed by a president uncritically harking back to a so-called 'golden age' and carried significant risks for how democracy was enacted. The advent of a super-ordinate goal – a threat to survival of our species by a virus – certainly provided motivation for all to refocus on a common enemy, for, as history confirms, we do not thrive where division rules.

In recognising that democracy finds expression in a variety of forms, it is important to understand that, however it is manifest, it can in turn influence how we feel about its use and misuse. Accordingly, the role of emotions in narrating the battle for democratic traditions deserves scrutiny, not only for understanding political discourse, but the impact of that discourse on subsequent events. For example, the establishment of the Icelandic parliament (the 'Althing') around 930 CE was notable, not only for what it represented in a proto-democratic form of law-making based on an annual fortnight's gathering of the island's whole community (Byock, 2002), but in the choice of location – on land forfeited following the outlawing of a farmer who had murdered a slave (Bronowski, 1973).

In current times, we are frequently bombarded with information about political events and perspectives likely to arouse a range of accompanying emotions, especially where we perceive criticism of or threats against the political group with which we identify (Huddy, Mason and Aarøe, 2015). It is not surprising that emerging empirical studies shed light on how uncivil verbal attacks against a viewpoint can promote combative partisanship on the part of the listener (Gervais, 2019) and, more widely, the venerated philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2015) has sought to promote understanding of the role of emotions in politics. As the history of democracy necessitates such a focus on relations among and between the rulers and the ruled, traditionally philosophy has promoted values that, in turn, are used to justify that scrutiny and, sometimes, the overthrow of regimes – whether violently or peacefully. These are evident from many

sources: from the premise of Hobbes and Locke that governments should safeguard the welfare of the populace, from Voltaire's elucidation of civil liberties, from Wollstonecraft's calls for rights for men and women and from Rousseau's social contract in which law-making was seen as expressing the people's will. Furthermore, the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill espoused the promotion of the greatest happiness for the greatest number – a concept most apparently resonant with that of democracy.

The Fourth Estate

Casting a retrospective eye over history, it is not fanciful to view the fortunes of democracy as often in flux, whether in conflict within or between parties of rival influence or, indeed, whole populations. One key to the success of this form of government lies with the checks and balances incorporated into the political system or invoked to restore equilibrium and faith in its underlying values. These take a variety of forms and include the notion of a 'free press' or, these days, 'media' – by which political processes and decisions can be scrutinised and relayed to the public – as a cornerstone of democratic functioning. Yet, the last fifty years have seen some of the best and worst fortunes for news reporting. Such a spectrum spans the Watergate revelations of US presidential wrongdoing in the early 1970s to the closure of the 168-year-old UK-based *News of the World* in 2011 following the hacking of a murder victim's phone. It encompasses sacrifices – sometimes by assassination – of reporters' lives in a number of countries worldwide amid regime pressures to advance their own propaganda. As such, the global challenge of political objectivity in search of publicising the 'truth' continues to be played out in public view. 'A check on behalf of the governed and not the governors', a free press was envisioned as giving 'them [the people] full information of their affairs' (Jefferson, 1787). Yet, it is much clearer in modern times that the relationships between media and the people are subject to a range of influences. Not least is the role of those who own and sponsor media outlets, from newspaper proprietors to state outlets and social media entrepreneurs and the algorithms they employ. The potential for cosiness, collaboration and conflicting interests raises questions such as, 'Whose news is this?'

Decisions about which stories to cover and how to cover them are constant in a fast-paced 24/7 media culture with dedicated channels providing rolling news stories and instant commentary. Competition for 'space' is pushed to a premium as complex decisions are reached by unelected individuals about which issues to cover 'in the public interest'. Naturally, journalists work as hard as any occupation to keep audiences

informed and relationships with editors are likely to play a key part, but the premium of accuracy remains a cause for vigilance and, sometimes, concern. Not dissociated from this, the labelling of fake news and 'alternative facts' (as described by a US presidential aide) does not signify the birth of the underlying concept of misleading information. There have always been temptations to use propaganda at many levels in politics, whether considered 'spin' to promote positive perceptions or flagrantly misleading messages to stir more extreme emotions. However, the ubiquity of social media serves to emphasise the impact and impetus of information, as it means anyone can become a news source.

At one time considered a democratising force for the expression of opinion, concerns that the Internet is subject to forces of manipulation have been fuelled by the behaviour of some social media organisations, where user profiling of personalised information for political ends has itself brought reputations into question (e.g. use of citizens' data during the 2015 US presidential election). This offers a worrying insight into the potential for exploitation of information, however, the targeted marketing of social media users is commonplace and also widely seen as an extension to political campaigning processes (Dommett and Temple, 2018). Aside from this, there is widespread disquiet over the potential influence via cyber-espionage of 'unfriendly' governments during democratic electoral campaigns.

As consumers of news, how conscious are we of the processes underlying its production and selection for our consumption, or indeed how comfortable are we with its commodification? Do we worry that what we learn from any medium is 'true' or does a level of scepticism or acceptance guide us? Perhaps more importantly for the processes of democracy, how much does the news we feel more comfortable believing actually influence our own political behaviours and, specifically, determine how we vote? We play more than a passive role in using the news, by processing information in ways shaped by psychological as well as political preferences and we would not easily wish to see ourselves 'tricked'. Arguably, news organisations can take a share in the responsibility for political outcomes, yet, in a democracy, government-sponsored attempts to address potential wrong-doing by the media are rare and, as the UK's Leveson inquiry showed in 2012, also require careful handling for fear of undermining the freedom of the media and this cornerstone of democracy itself.

The Structure of This Book

There is no doubt that ours is a future with challenges – yet, challenges are also the history of our species. Naturally, we need to consider how best to

proceed and certainty is not always plentiful. Systems of government can underpin successful survival on a large scale, however, the search for answers is by its very nature an optimistic goal and the endeavours of those who have been kind enough to contribute to this book demonstrate a wonderful commitment to sharing understanding. Their generosity comes at an important juncture and stands to provide a great service to us all. Faced with our ongoing personal decisions about democracy, whether to engage, stand back or walk away, this book aims to shed light on the hidden political psychological processes and to interrogate a range of issues that characterise democracy and how (well) it works. We hope you will share this enthusiasm!

Psychology of Democracy: Of the People, By the People, For the People is divided into three sections in recognition of three levels of political and psychological experience suggested by theoretical and practical considerations. Established ecological frameworks for contemplating influences upon the lives of individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) have been refined with reference to democracies and clearly indicate the need to understand political experience at a range of levels. Indeed, the structure of this book reflects these levels of consideration proposed by Moghaddam (2018) and explores the psychological conditions and motivations for what he describes as first-, second- and third-order change at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels of our existence. Beginning with the last of these, the book seeks to apply this structured approach to relevant psychological and political factors, using the nomenclature suggested by Abraham Lincoln's oft-quoted Gettysburg address. Organising the content in this way – as outlined below – permits the opportunity to consider political micro-level characteristics of politicians as representatives 'of the people', actions within political meso-level systems enacted 'by the people' and the role of wider macro-level influences of religion, education and media, which set the context 'for the people'.

Of the People

'Of the people' focuses on the psychological characteristics 'of' individuals who serve as politicians and, at the micro-level of individual, cognitive and social functioning, this section considers politicians from each of these perspectives on the human condition.

In seeking to share an empirically-driven knowledge base, this portion of the book examines the roles and influence of a range of psychological factors – in studies with politicians – that shape and impact on all of our

abilities to function. Through focusing on the influence of major personality traits on politicians in their career development, Jo Silvester and Madeleine Wyatt highlight the importance of the role of attributes ascribed to them and, in particular, implications for the emergence of leaders and how personality shapes their success in office, as well as indications for future directions in research. In considering the aspect of personality characterised by basic values, James Weinberg investigates the role of psychological predispositions in the political attitudes held by politicians, examining how far those who run as candidates and become politicians differ in their values from the wider public and how important the public consider these values to be. Turning the focus to what is more clearly visible of politicians at work, Peter Bull and Maurice Waddle review research in which the UK showpiece parliamentary confrontations known as ‘Prime Minister’s Questions’ are analysed for their adversarial nature, use of equivocation in dealing with questions and the impact of this often-lively political interchange on public perceptions of Parliament and politics.

In order to aid our understanding of how politicians think, Peter Suedfeld explores ‘cognitive interactionism’ in which individual capacities to process information, make decisions, adopt perspectives and perceive the social world can vary depending on the political contexts in which these occur; taking into account viewpoints across the political spectrum, positions of relative power as well as the influence of stress. Given the importance of decision-making in politics, Barbara Vis and Sjoerd Stolwijk use data drawn from experiments with politicians and members of the public in the Netherlands to ask whether and how they differ and consider the roles of cognitive shortcuts and political experience in the judgements at which they arrive. In an arena where politicians are less often considered, Ashley Weinberg reflects on the significance and prevalence of politicians’ experiences of psychological ill health, drawing on international studies assessing symptoms and reviewing the potentially damaging impact of sources of pressure on MPs and the functioning of political workplaces.

By the People

If there is a key to answering the big challenges for survival then arguably it lies in the capacity to harness the combined abilities of our species to do so. Government ‘**by**’ systems that comprise people tends to underpin the success of such efforts and, traditionally, democracy has garnered a reputation as a more inclusive – although far from perfect – approach than

alternatives (Flinders, 2016). Nevertheless, the fortunes of democracy are mixed, as research and events have borne out. Despite the increased proportion of the world's nations adopting democratic systems of government over the last thirty years, levels of public distrust with these political processes are high (van Prooijen and van Lange, 2014). Efforts to meet global challenges for survival depend on systems of government and the people within them, whether as citizens, elected politicians or employees of political institutions, yet our understanding of the psychological factors that underpin the functioning of democracy is relatively limited (Conover, Searing and Crewe, 2002). This section of the book considers how democracy operates at the level of institutions and processes charged with maintaining the political system. Tracing the chronology of political involvement that brings voters and politicians into the same arena, 'By the people' examines social and political experiences and behaviours in the democratic process at the meso-level.

This section seeks insights into the psychology of democracy as its biggest stakeholders – the voters and the politicians – contemplate one another around the globe. Beginning with the development of the relationship between would-be voters and political institutions and processes, this section opens with Daniel Miranda, Juan Carlos Castillo, Catalina Miranda and José Conejeros considering whether civic knowledge affects trust in political institutions among school-age students surveyed in Latin America, where positive attitudes towards aspects of authoritarianism suggest concerning trends in advance of reaching voting age. Seeking to capitalise on what appeals to the electorate, perhaps it is not surprising to learn of the assertive styles of communication observed in use by would-be leaders – including the subsequent prime minister – on the campaign trail in India, as the detailed analysis by Rukmini Bhaya Nair reveals politicians' extensive use of linguistic and gestural devices in seeking to influence voters in the world's largest democracy. Yet, how do political tactics such as negative campaigning and false information impact on potential voters in the context of the United States of America? David Redlawsk, Kyle Mattes and Karol Solis Menco simulated a presidential primary election to test the impact of online campaigns and fact-checking – they confirm that negative campaigns grab attention, but, in this study, it was not attention of the desired kind and lying politicians were indeed punished at the virtual ballot box.

This begs the important question, what really happens to us when we vote? Drawing on surveys conducted in the United States of America, South Africa, the UK, France, Germany and Georgia, Sarah Harrison

argues for electoral psychology as representing a major shift from focusing on what political institutions require to what matters to citizens. This necessitates a new understanding of positive and negative emotions as experienced before, during and after voting, as well as of the roles of identity and collective assumptions about other voters in exercising these. Once in office, what can leaders do to safeguard their political futures? The background of selected policy areas of immigration and climate change set the scene for frequent changes in leader in Australia, where attempts to rebuild trust through a triad of integrity, competence and responsiveness are analysed by Joakim Eidenfalk and Stuart Woodcock in case studies of three prime ministers. This brings the section to its natural conclusion: leaving office. The psychological impact of the end of political careers is examined by Jane Roberts, drawing on her in-depth interviews that probe the experience of loss and potential dislocation in UK MPs and council leaders, whether deciding to go or forced by circumstances. Yet, she asks, is democracy too easily discarding the skills of its servants, as well as the need to treat politicians with more compassion and inadvertently obliging political survivors to tighten their grip?

For the People

This section of the book considers social-psychological factors operating ‘for’ all of us, shaping the macro-level contexts within which we live and the degree to which these significantly underpin the relative success or failure of democratic systems.

While humankind faces enormous threats to its existence, clearly there is no democratic mandate for an ongoing age of species extinctions. However, it is widely held that – ultimately – these cataclysmic possibilities are the cumulative result of everyday behaviours of citizens, organisations and nations. This attests to the associated behavioural challenge faced in our daily lives – when the problems are owned by us alone, it can be difficult enough to address, but, when these are global in their impact, it is far harder to envision how we might make the difference and swim against the tide. Democracy faces a similar challenge. ‘How does my vote make any difference?’ is a common question posed at elections. At this level, self-worth and possessing a sense of agency play important roles in our perceptions – perhaps far more so than has been acknowledged. So, what are the factors that shape the psychological backdrop to our political experience?

Understandably, our focus tends to be drawn to issues that define our daily concerns – whether preoccupations with ongoing conflicts or trade,

or personal access to health, social care and education. Yet, the psychological processes that shape our beliefs and feelings about such weighty matters are often hidden from view. 'For the people' assesses wider societal influences on our psychological experiences of politics and democracy in particular.

Beginning with an examination of the links between personality and the moral underpinnings of democracy, Gian Vittorio Caprara highlights the significance of both individual and collective moral responsibility upon citizens living in a democracy and how our relative successes in this endeavour are rooted in relevant values and self-knowledge. Benjamin Bowman, Thalia Magioglou and Helen Haste trace the fortunes of civic engagement in school-age students, drawing on qualitative data from the UK and Greece, recognising the real and potential challenges facing young people and their aspirations in times of dramatic change. The wider societal context is further examined in the four remaining chapters of this section, with consideration of religion and media, as well as prevailing political contexts – both national and group-based – which are not widely considered democratic.

Gizem Arikan and Pazit Ben-Nun Bloom draw on worldwide survey data to focus on the relationship between religious identity and support for democracy, which appears to be influenced, not only by belonging to a religious minority, but by how the minority community is treated by the state, with clear implications for the strength of their religious identity. Media provide another important lens through which we experience politics and major technological advances have reshaped how and where we access political news and information. Sharon Coen and Karl Turgut Maloney Yorganci consider how political knowledge is manifest, as well as ways in which it is developed through interaction with the Internet and traditional news media, proposing a self-regulated learning model that shapes what we view as political knowledge, how it makes us feel and what it means for how we see ourselves.

China, with the world's largest national population, is not generally viewed as a democracy outside of the country. However, democracy is widely considered within China and Yida Zhai uses a social-psychological framework to analyse the impact of economic modernisation and political culture on popular perceptions of democracy and the potential for democratisation. The creation and operation of cultural norms and what implications these have for political reasoning are examined by Roderick Dubrow-Marshall in unpicking radicalised conceptions of democracy, as envisioned by extremist groupings, whether political or not.

What This Book Does

In seeking to further our understanding of the links between psychology and politics, this is the first book written by scientists from many disciplines about the functioning of democracy and the influences upon our experiences of it, based on research findings from around the world. Contributors also include participants of the Psychology of Democracy conferences that began as biannual events at the University of Salford in 2015 – these inspired the book and curiously predated the political phenomena that saw the UK retreat from the European Union and the election of a populist president in the United States of America.

This volume expands its focus to feature new research findings from researchers on the influences of relevant public and political behaviour in North and South America, Asia, Africa and Australia, as well as Europe. In recognition of the many different perspectives and influences involved in the wide-ranging concept of democracy, it is important to consider its worldwide context. As such, *Psychology of Democracy* is unique in providing an empirically informed psychological analysis of our capability to address global political turmoil and change.

The book brings together academics from multi-disciplinary specialities including psychology, political science, communication, sociology, linguistics, education and psychiatry to consider human aspects of democratic government and citizenship. Using empirical data gathered through research using a range of methodological paradigms at international, national and regional levels, these academics aim to address the key questions of how well democracy works and how well it can work, taking into account the psychology of political organisations, political processes, societal influences such as education, religion, culture, media and new technology and the people involved, including politicians, voters and non-voters in democratic and non-democratic contexts.

The Psychology of Politicians (Weinberg, 2012), published by Cambridge University Press, was the first research-based book to examine the hidden processes that influence how politicians behave, showcasing insights from European researchers into their functioning. *Psychology of Democracy* casts the research net globally, shedding new light on how social, cultural and other psychological processes impact on the democratic experiences of those who govern and are governed, as well as examining the factors that shape behaviour in a range of political arenas. As the significance of the motivations and behaviours that characterise systems of government gathers pace, it is becoming more evident that, while the public remains

sceptical of politics, a failure to understand how it operates can impact on us all and on the effective functioning of democracy, whether actualised or not.

Jacob Bronowski helped to summarise this dilemma in *The Ascent of Man* (1973):

If we are anything, we must be a democracy of the intellect. We must not perish by the distance between people and government, between people and power, by which Babylon and Egypt and Rome failed. And that distance can only be conflated, can only be closed, if knowledge sits in the homes and heads of people with no ambition to control others, and not up in the isolated seats of power (p. 435).

Similarly, Rajni Kothari, during his last interview, given in 2012, echoed these sentiments: 'I also suggest that intellectuals must intervene in the political process by linking critical ideas to political ideas. If we close the possibility of criticism, the gap between ideas and processes will increase.' Recognising the role and threat of inequality in our experiences of government, Ruth Bader Ginsburg (2014) went further: 'I think the notion that we have all the democracy that money can buy strays so far from what our democracy is supposed to be.' Taken in the round, the words of such eminent thinkers serve to emphasise the role to be played by the citizenry, including politicians, media and academics, in raising awareness and promoting good practice in government of the people, by the people, for the people.

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