



CORRECTING LIBERAL DEMOCRACY WITH NEO-COMMUNITARIAN DEMOCRACY: A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR GOVERNANCE

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Abstract:

Liberal democracy has long been regarded as the pinnacle of democratic governance, prioritizing individual rights, free markets, and representative institutions. However, its increasing challenges - including political polarization, disengaged citizenry, and a deepening focus on individualism at the expense of community welfare have raised questions about its long-term viability. A major question that this paper poses to unravel is why has liberal democracy that works in Western Europe failed to work in Africa? The paper, using theoretical analysis combined with comparative conceptual evaluation proposes Neo-Communitarian Democracy as an alternative model to correct the inherent flaws of liberal democracy. Grounded in the principles of civic engagement, social responsibility, and communal governance, Neo-Communitarian Democracy offers a more balanced approach that integrates individual freedoms with collective welfare. This article critically examines liberal democracy's shortcomings and presents a theoretical framework for Neo-Communitarian Democracy, drawing on both historical examples and contemporary case studies.

Keywords: democratic governance; governance, liberal democracy; neo-communitarian democracy; new framework

1. Introduction

Liberal democracy, with its focus on individual rights, personal freedoms, and the rule of law, has been the dominant governance model in many Western societies since the Enlightenment. Grounded in the political theories of philosophers like John Lockeⁱⁱ and John Stuart Millⁱⁱⁱ, liberal democracy is premised on the idea that the legitimacy of government derives from its ability to protect the individual liberties of its citizens. The

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ⁱⁱ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge University Press, 1988)

ⁱⁱⁱ John Stuart Mill. *On Liberty*. London: J.W. Parker and Son, 1859.

historical development of this model has been shaped by an emphasis on electoral competition, representative government, and market-driven economies, which are seen as mechanisms for ensuring freedom and prosperity.

In practice, liberal democracy has made significant contributions to the establishment of political systems where free elections, separation of powers, and constitutional protections ensure citizens' rights^{iv}. Its influence spread globally, shaping governance structures from the post-colonial period in the 20th century to the recent democratization waves in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America^v. For decades, liberal democracy was hailed as a universal model of governance that would ensure both political freedom and economic progress, exemplified by what some have called the "end of history" narrative following the Cold War^{vi}.

However, despite its achievements, liberal democracy has increasingly come under scrutiny, particularly in the face of the complex challenges of the 21st century. Critics argue that its foundational emphasis on individualism undermines social cohesion and community values, leading to fragmented societies that struggle to address collective issues such as inequality, environmental degradation, and civic disengagement^{vii}. The pursuit of individual rights without sufficient regard for the welfare of the larger community has, according to some scholars, contributed to the rise of populism, increasing political polarization, and the erosion of public trust in democratic institutions^{viii}.

The limitations of liberal democracy become particularly apparent when considering its response to global crises like climate change, growing economic inequality, and the disenfranchisement of marginalized communities^{ix}. As wealth disparities widen and political elites become more disconnected from the daily realities of the average citizen, many democratic societies are witnessing declining participation in civic life, reduced faith in democratic processes, and a weakening of social solidarity^x. These challenges raise questions about the sustainability of a model that places individual rights above communal well-being, especially in an era where collective action is increasingly necessary to address issues like pandemics and environmental crises^{xi}.

In light of these concerns, there is a growing recognition that liberal democracy, while still valuable in safeguarding individual freedoms, requires a complementary framework that addresses its deficiencies. This paper argues that **Neo-Communitarian**

^{iv} Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

^v Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

^{vi} Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992)

^{vii} Michael J. Sandel, *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020).

^{viii} Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

^{ix} Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014)

^x Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012).

^{xi} Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

Democracy, a governance model that emphasizes social responsibility, collective well-being, and communal participation alongside individual freedoms, offers a potential corrective to the shortcomings of liberal democracy^{xii}. Neo-Communitarian Democracy seeks to reconcile the need for personal liberties with the equally important need for strong, engaged communities that can work together to solve shared problems^{xiii}. By shifting some focus from individualism to community-centric governance, this model can better equip societies to face the complex, interdependent challenges of the modern world^{xiv}.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The paper explores the best elements of liberal democracy with communitarian values to develop a robust framework for addressing the intertwined political, social, and ecological challenges posed by liberal democracy. Theories that critique or offer alternatives to liberal democracy and those that focus on communitarianism and democratic renewal are considered as listed below, for the critical analysis embarked upon in the paper.

1.1.1 Liberalism and Its Critique

Liberal democracy is rooted in classical liberal thought, which prioritizes individual rights, liberty, and personal autonomy. The political theories of John Locke (natural rights and the social contract)^{xv} and John Stuart Mill (liberty and utilitarianism)^{xvi} underpin this model. Liberal democracy's core values of freedom of expression, electoral competition, and market-based economic policies are lauded for fostering personal choice and limiting governmental overreach^{xvii}. However, libertarianism—a more extreme form of liberalism—exacerbates the focus on individualism, often at the expense of community welfare^{xviii}.

As noted by critics such as Michael Sandel^{xix} and Alasdair MacIntyre^{xx}, this overemphasis on individualism can erode social cohesion. Communitarian theorists argue that individuals do not exist in isolation but are embedded within social and cultural contexts^{xxi}. The hyper-individualism promoted by liberal democracy risks

^{xii} Greta Thunberg, *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* (London: Penguin Books, 2019)

^{xiii} Amitai Etzioni, *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1993).

^{xiv} Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

^{xv} John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)

^{xvi} John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (London: Penguin Books, 1974).

^{xvii} Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

^{xviii} John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971)

^{xix} Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

^{xx} Alasdair MacIntyre. *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1981)

^{xxi} Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers: Volume 1, Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

fragmenting the social fabric, as it places less importance on the common good and collective responsibilities. Thus, liberalism's "thin" version of democracy may fail to address complex societal issues that require collective action^{xxii}.

1.1.2 Communitarianism as a Corrective

Communitarianism, developed by thinkers like Amitai Etzioni^{xxiii} and Charles Taylor^{xxiv}, offers an alternative that emphasizes the role of community, shared values, and civic responsibility. It calls for a balance between rights and responsibilities, arguing that individuals flourish within supportive, interconnected communities. In contrast to liberalism's focus on negative liberty (freedom from interference), communitarianism highlights **positive liberty**—the ability to participate meaningfully in shaping one's community and collective life^{xxv}.

The theory of Neo-Communitarian Democracy emerges from this critique of liberalism, proposing a hybrid model that upholds individual rights but embeds them within a framework of community engagement and collective responsibility. By integrating the communitarian focus on civic duty with liberal democracy's emphasis on personal freedom, Neo-Communitarian Democracy promotes a more **relational** form of governance, where individual and collective well-being are seen as mutually reinforcing rather than competing priorities^{xxvi}.

1.1.3 Deliberative and Participatory Democracy

In addressing the deficits of liberal democracy, deliberative and participatory democracy theories offer valuable insights. Scholars such as Jürgen Habermas^{xxvii} and Carole Pateman^{xxviii} argue for deeper citizen engagement in decision-making processes. These models call for the deliberation of collective issues through dialogue, consensus-building, and active participation rather than mere voting in elections^{xxix}.

Neo-Communitarian Democracy draws from these theories by advocating for systems that encourage greater civic involvement at both local and national levels. This model promotes horizontal forms of governance where power is decentralized, and decision-making occurs through inclusive, participatory processes^{xxx}. The idea is that political

^{xxii} John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

^{xxiii} Amitai Etzioni. *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda*. (New York: Crown, 1993).

^{xxiv} Charles Taylor. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard University Press, (1989).

^{xxv} Nancy Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Verso, 2003).

^{xxvi} Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003)

^{xxvii} Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

^{xxviii} Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

^{xxix} Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

^{xxx} Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

legitimacy arises not just from safeguarding rights but from fostering meaningful participation and fostering community-driven solutions to collective problems^{xxxi}.

1.1.4 Global Challenges and the Need for a New Framework

The failures of liberal democracy to address global crises such as climate change, inequality, and the erosion of social trust suggest a need for models that prioritize collective action and long-term sustainability^{xxxii}. Neo-Communitarian Democracy offers a pathway toward re-embedding democracy within the social and ecological realities of the 21st century. It envisions governance systems that hold individuals accountable to their communities while preserving the freedoms necessary for personal development^{xxxiii}.

In conclusion, Neo-Communitarian Democracy seeks to correct liberal democracy by emphasizing that individual freedoms are best protected when embedded within a strong, engaged community that prioritizes both personal and collective well-being. By blending the best elements of liberal democracy with communitarian values, this model offers a robust framework for addressing the intertwined political, social, and ecological challenges of our time^{xxxiv}.

2. Methodology

The method applied in this paper is a theoretical analysis combined with comparative conceptual evaluation. This approach is focused on evaluating and critiquing existing political theories (liberal democracy) and proposing an alternative model (Neo-Communitarian Democracy) that addresses their shortcomings. The key elements of the applied method include the allowance for the paper to critically examine the foundational ideas of liberal democracy, particularly its focus on individualism, and how this has led to fragmented societies, civic disengagement, and failure to address collective global issues. This approach makes the incorporation of the insights from communitarian and participatory democracy theories to explore the weaknesses of the liberal model and propose solutions. The method effectively compares liberal democracy's principles (e.g., individual rights, electoral competition) with those of Neo-Communitarian Democracy (e.g., collective responsibility, social cohesion) to illustrate the need for a shift toward a more community-centered approach. It also compares how each model responds to contemporary challenges such as climate change, inequality, and social fragmentation, showing how Neo-Communitarian Democracy provides a more comprehensive response.

^{xxxi} Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

^{xxxii} Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

^{xxxiii} Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014).

^{xxxiv} Amitai Etzioni, *From Market to Community: A New Perspective on Capitalism* (New York: University Press, 2017).

The method applies a normative approach, making prescriptive claims about what governance should look like. This includes arguing for the benefits of incorporating collective well-being alongside individual freedoms in political systems.

While the method primarily uses theoretical critique, it also reflects on real-world trends (e.g., the rise of populism, political polarization) to demonstrate the practical limitations of liberal democracy and why a Neo-Communitarian framework would better serve societies in the long run.

This methodology allows the paper to explore both the conceptual limitations of liberal democracy and the potential advantages of adopting Neo-Communitarian Democracy, presenting a robust theoretical framework for governance in the modern era.

2. The Shortcomings of Liberal Democracy

2.1 Overemphasis on Individualism

Liberal democracy's foundation is built on the protection of individual rights, a crucial element in ensuring personal freedom. Rooted in the Enlightenment philosophy of thinkers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Stuart Mill, liberal democracy emphasizes individual autonomy, private property, and the safeguarding of personal liberties against potential encroachments by the state. Locke, in his *Two Treatises of Government*^{xxxv}, argued that the state's primary role is to protect "life, liberty, and property" as natural rights, thereby institutionalizing a governance model that prioritizes individual freedom above all else.

However, the focus on individualism in liberal democratic theory and practice has led to the atomization of society, weakening social ties and neglecting collective responsibilities. As Charles Taylor points out in his work *Sources of the Self*^{xxxvi}, this emphasis on self-determination and individual rights creates a society of isolated, self-interested individuals who may lack the sense of belonging and solidarity required for effective communal governance. Taylor's analysis shows that an over-commitment to autonomy, when disconnected from any sense of collective identity or shared goals, leads to fragmentation within the political community, exacerbating social division.

Michael Sandel, in *Democracy's Discontent*^{xxxvii}, similarly critiques liberal democracy's focus on individualism, arguing that it overlooks the "common good." He notes that the overemphasis on personal rights within liberal frameworks alienates citizens from the deeper civic responsibilities that bind them to one another and to the state. As a result, this emphasis on autonomy undermines civic engagement and erodes the moral fabric that sustains democratic life. The erosion of civic bonds, Sandel argues, leads to societies that are less capable of addressing shared problems such as poverty, inequality, and environmental crises, as individuals become more concerned with protecting their personal interests than contributing to the collective welfare.

^{xxxv} Op cit 14

^{xxxvi} John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (1689).

^{xxxvii} Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (1996).

The atomizing effects of individualism have also been noted by Robert Putnam in his seminal work *Bowling Alone*^{xxxviii}. Putnam highlights how the decline in social capital—the networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate cooperation within communities—has paralleled the rise of neoliberal policies that celebrate market-driven individualism. He argues that as individuals retreat from communal engagement, they become disconnected from the collective processes that underpin democracy, leading to a weakening of civic institutions and a decline in the capacity of democratic systems to function effectively.

This retreat into individualism is exacerbated by the neoliberal economic policies that have become dominant in many liberal democracies. Neoliberalism, as David Harvey argues in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*^{xxxix}, promotes market-based solutions to social and economic issues, further reinforcing the notion of the individual as a rational, self-interested actor operating in a competitive market environment. Neoliberalism's influence has intensified the focus on individual rights and economic freedoms, often at the expense of community cohesion and social welfare. The result has been a society where market logic governs not only economic transactions but also social relationships, deepening social fragmentation.

Beyond the social consequences of individualism, there are significant political ramifications. Wendy Brown, in *Undoing the Demos*^{xl}, critiques how neoliberal individualism has reshaped the very meaning of citizenship in liberal democracies. She argues that the rise of "homo economicus"—the idea that individuals are primarily market actors—has diminished the civic dimensions of democratic participation. Citizens, in this neoliberal framework, are no longer seen as active participants in a democratic polity but as isolated individuals whose primary goal is to maximize their personal utility. This shift undermines democratic processes that rely on collective deliberation and engagement.

The consequences of this hyper-individualism are particularly evident in liberal democracies' inability to address systemic issues like poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. For example, environmental crises such as climate change require collective action and a sense of global responsibility, yet liberal democracies often struggle to galvanize such efforts because of their emphasis on individual rights over collective obligations. Tim Hayward, in *Constitutional Environmental Rights*^{xli}, points out that while liberal democracies enshrine individual property rights, they often fail to recognize the ecological responsibilities that come with these rights, leading to unsustainable practices and environmental degradation. This highlights a critical weakness in liberal democratic frameworks: they are ill-equipped to deal with collective goods like the environment, which require cooperation and long-term planning, both of which are undermined by the short-term, self-interested nature of individualism.

^{xxxviii} Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000).

^{xxxix} David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005)

^{xl} Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (2015).

^{xli} Tim Hayward, *Constitutional Environmental Rights* (2012).

Furthermore, inequality has grown within many liberal democracies as individualism has led to economic systems that prioritize market freedoms over social welfare. As Joseph Stiglitz argues in *The Price of Inequality*^{xlii}, the liberal democratic focus on free markets and individual economic freedom has allowed wealth to concentrate in the hands of a few, exacerbating inequality and undermining social cohesion. The resulting economic disparities contribute to social instability and political polarization, as the gap between the wealthy and the poor widens and middle-class citizens feel increasingly disconnected from the political and economic system.

In summary, the overemphasis on individualism within liberal democracy, while essential for protecting personal freedoms, has contributed to a weakening of social bonds, civic disengagement, and a neglect of collective responsibilities. Scholars such as Taylor, Sandel, and Putnam have illuminated the dangers of this atomization, while Harvey, Brown, and Stiglitz have shown how neoliberal policies that promote individualism further exacerbate these issues. Correcting these imbalances requires rethinking democratic governance in ways that promote both individual rights and collective responsibilities, as proposed by Neo-Communitarian Democracy.

2.2 Political Polarization and Disengagement

Political polarization and disengagement have emerged as significant challenges in many liberal democracies, undermining the stability and legitimacy of democratic institutions. Political polarization refers to the growing ideological divide between political parties, which often translates into deeper social and cultural divides within the electorate. Disengagement, on the other hand, refers to the waning involvement of citizens in political processes, exemplified by declining voter turnout, diminished civic participation, and widespread political apathy. Together, these trends threaten the functioning of liberal democracies, creating a fertile ground for populism, distrust, and instability.

2.3 The Rise of Populism and Erosion of Trust

The rise of populism is one of the clearest indicators of political polarization in liberal democracies. Populist movements often capitalize on growing discontent with established political elites, positioning themselves as the voice of the "real people" against a corrupt, self-serving political class. As Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser note in *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*^{xliii}, populism thrives on polarization, framing political issues in stark, antagonistic terms that pit the people against the elites. This binary rhetoric deepens existing divisions and exacerbates tensions within the democratic polity, making it more difficult to reach consensus or engage in constructive political dialogue.

^{xlii} Joseph Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future* (2012).

^{xliii} Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (2017).

Moreover, populism often leads to an erosion of trust in political institutions. As Jan-Werner Müller argues in *What Is Populism?*^{xliv}, populist leaders often portray institutions such as the judiciary, the media, and legislatures as being part of the corrupt elite, further alienating the public from the very mechanisms designed to ensure accountability and the rule of law. The erosion of trust in these institutions can lead to widespread political cynicism, where citizens no longer believe that democratic processes are capable of addressing their concerns, resulting in disengagement from the political process.

Political trust has been steadily declining in many liberal democracies. In the United States, for example, surveys by the Pew Research Center show a significant drop in trust in government over the past several decades. In the 1960s, more than three-quarters of Americans trusted the federal government to do what was right "most of the time" or "just about always," but by 2020, that number had plummeted to just 20%^{xlvi}. This growing distrust is not limited to the U.S. In European democracies, too, confidence in democratic institutions has been eroding, as indicated by the Eurobarometer surveys^{xlvi}, which reports declining trust in both national governments and the European Union.

2.4 Deepening Divide between Political Elites and Ordinary Citizens

Liberal democracies are increasingly characterized by a growing divide between political elites and ordinary citizens. This elite-citizen gap is not only ideological but also economic and social. Elites, who often benefit from the neoliberal economic policies that dominate many liberal democracies, have been seen as out of touch with the economic hardships and cultural anxieties of large segments of the population. Political scientists like Larry Bartels in *Unequal Democracy*^{xlvi} argue that the policy preferences of political elites, particularly those in affluent circles, tend to diverge significantly from the preferences of ordinary citizens, particularly the working class.

This gap has contributed to a sense of alienation among many voters, who feel that the political system no longer represents their interests. Martin Gilens, in *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*^{xlvi}, provides empirical evidence that policy decisions in liberal democracies are disproportionately influenced by the wealthy, while the preferences of average citizens are often ignored. Such disparities in political influence contribute to disillusionment with democratic governance, fostering feelings of powerlessness and disengagement among ordinary citizens.

Moreover, the professionalization of politics has intensified the divide between elites and the public. As Peter Mair argues in *Ruling the Void*^{xlix}, political parties, once rooted in mass movements and ideologies, have become increasingly detached from their

^{xliv} Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (2016).

^{xlvi} Pew Research Center, "The Trust Deficit: Public Confidence in Government" (2020).

^{xlvi} Eurobarometer, "Trust in National Institutions" (2021).

^{xlvi} Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age* (2008).

^{xlvi} Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America* (2012).

^{xlix} Peter Mair, *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy* (2013)

constituencies. Political elites now operate within a closed circle of professionals, technocrats, and media figures, with little connection to grassroots political engagement. This disconnect contributes to the perception that politicians are more concerned with maintaining power and serving special interests than with addressing the concerns of ordinary citizens.

2.5 Declining Voter Turnout and Political Apathy

Voter turnout, a critical indicator of citizen engagement in liberal democracies, has been steadily declining in many countries. In the United States, for example, voter turnout in presidential elections has fluctuated but remained relatively low by international standards. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, voter turnout in the 2016 presidential election was just 61.4% of the voting-age populationⁱ. In the European Union, voter turnout in European Parliamentary elections hit an all-time low in 2014, with only 42.6% of eligible voters participating, signaling widespread disengagement from the political processⁱⁱ.

The reasons for declining voter turnout and growing political apathy are multifaceted. First, political polarization can discourage participation by making politics appear overly antagonistic and zero-sum. When political discourse is dominated by extreme positions, many voters feel alienated, especially those who do not align with either end of the ideological spectrum. Scholars like Morris Fiorina have argued that this polarization makes the political system seem less responsive to the needs of moderate or centrist voters, further eroding trust in the democratic processⁱⁱⁱ.

Second, the professionalization of politics and the dominance of technocratic governance have contributed to a sense of disempowerment among voters. As Mair points out in *Ruling the Void*, the increasingly managerial nature of politics in liberal democracies has led to a situation where key policy decisions are made by unelected experts and bureaucrats rather than by elected representatives who are accountable to the publicⁱⁱⁱⁱ. This technocratic governance, while efficient in some respects, distances citizens from the political process, making them feel that their vote has little influence on actual policy outcomes.

Third, socioeconomic inequality plays a significant role in voter disengagement. As Arend Lijphart noted in *Patterns of Democracy*, those at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum are far less likely to vote than their wealthier counterparts^{liv}. The poor and marginalized often feel excluded from the political process, perceiving that the system is stacked against them and that their vote will not make a meaningful difference. This is especially true in neoliberal democracies, where market-driven policies have

ⁱ U.S. Census Bureau. "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2016." 2017

ⁱⁱ European Parliament. "European Parliament Election Turnout." 2014

ⁱⁱⁱ Fiorina, Morris P. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. Pearson Longman, 2006

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Mair, Peter. *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy*. Verso Books, 2013

^{liv} Lijphart, Arend. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press, 1999.

disproportionately benefited the wealthy while leaving behind large segments of the population, contributing to feelings of disenfranchisement and political apathy^{lv}.

2.6 The Threat to Democratic Processes

When individuals feel disconnected from both their governments and their communities, the democratic process itself is threatened. As political scientist Benjamin Barber argues in *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, democracy relies on the active participation of citizens, not just in elections but in the day-to-day deliberation and decision-making processes that shape public life. Political disengagement, therefore, poses a direct threat to the health of liberal democracies, as it erodes the legitimacy of democratic institutions and undermines the capacity for collective decision-making^{lvi}.

The growing disillusionment with liberal democratic systems has opened the door for authoritarian and illiberal alternatives. As Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt point out in *How Democracies Die*, democratic backsliding often begins when citizens lose faith in democratic institutions and turn to strongman leaders who promise to bypass the perceived dysfunction of the democratic system^{lvii}. This trend has been observed in countries such as Hungary, Turkey, and Brazil, where populist leaders have consolidated power by appealing to the frustrations of disengaged and polarized electorates, undermining democratic norms in the process^{lviii}.

Ultimately, the growing political polarization and disengagement in liberal democracies threaten not only the stability of these systems but also the very principles of democratic governance. Addressing these issues requires re-engaging citizens in the democratic process and bridging the ideological divides that have polarized societies. Neo-Communitarian Democracy, with its emphasis on collective responsibility, civic engagement, and local governance, offers a potential path forward for reinvigorating democratic participation and reducing polarization^{lix}.

2.7 Market-Centric Governance

Liberal democracy has increasingly come under scrutiny for its reliance on market-driven solutions to address societal challenges. While market economies have spurred wealth creation and innovation, they have also contributed to rising inequality and have often fallen short in providing essential public goods such as education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability. The neoliberal turn in many liberal democracies has reinforced the belief that markets, rather than governments, are better suited to allocate resources efficiently^{lx}. However, this market-centric governance approach undermines

^{lv} Op cit 53

^{lvi} Benjamin Barber. *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984

^{lvii} Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die*. New York: Crown, 2018

^{lviii} *ibid*

^{lix} Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2005

^{lx} *Ibid*

the role of the state in fostering social welfare, equality, and long-term sustainability, leaving many crucial issues unresolved^{lxi}.

2.8 Exacerbation of Inequality

One of the most significant consequences of the market-centric approach is the exacerbation of inequality. Neoliberal economic policies, which promote deregulation, privatization, and the reduction of state intervention, have allowed wealth to concentrate among the elite, widening the gap between rich and poor. Thomas Piketty, in *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, provides extensive empirical evidence showing how market economies, when left unchecked, tend to concentrate capital in the hands of a few, leading to stark economic disparities^{lxii}. Piketty argues that the rate of return on capital outpaces the growth of the economy, meaning that wealth accumulates faster for those who already own capital, while wages for ordinary workers stagnate or even decline in relative terms^{lxiii}.

This dynamic has been exacerbated by the neoliberal policies adopted by many liberal democracies since the 1980s. David Harvey, in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, argues that the neoliberal turn has systematically shifted wealth and power toward the upper classes through tax cuts for the wealthy, deregulation of industries, and the weakening of labor unions^{lxiv}. These policies have disproportionately benefited corporations and high-income individuals while undermining the social safety nets that protect the working class and the poor. As a result, economic inequality has surged, and social mobility has declined, eroding the democratic promise of equal opportunity for all citizens^{lxv}.

Inequality also undermines the functioning of democracy itself. Political scientists like Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page, in their study *Testing Theories of American Politics*, have demonstrated that economic elites and organized business interests have a much greater influence on policy outcomes than average citizens^{lxvi}. This "democratic deficit" occurs because wealthier individuals and corporations have the resources to lobby government officials, fund political campaigns, and shape public discourse, leading to policy outcomes that reflect the preferences of the wealthy rather than the needs of the broader population^{lxvii}. In this way, market-centric governance not only exacerbates economic inequality but also distorts the democratic process by concentrating political power in the hands of a few^{lxviii}.

^{lxi} Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Harvard University Press, 2014

^{lxii} Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Harvard University Press, 2014

^{lxiii} *ibid*

^{lxiv} *ibid*

^{lxv} Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2005

^{lxvi} Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin I. Page. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2014, pp. 564–581

^{lxvii} *ibid*

^{lxviii} *ibid*

2.9 Failure to Address Public Goods

Another major critique of market-centric governance is its failure to adequately address public goods—those resources and services that are essential for the well-being of society but are often underprovided by the market. Education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability are prime examples of public goods that require collective investment and management, yet they have been increasingly subjected to market mechanisms in liberal democracies, with mixed results^{lxix}.

In the realm of education, the rise of privatization and for-profit schooling has raised concerns about access and equity. Henry A. Giroux, in *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education*, critiques how neoliberal policies have commodified education, treating it as a product to be bought and sold rather than a public good necessary for a healthy democracy^{lxx}. Giroux argues that the marketization of education has led to a two-tiered system in which the wealthy have access to high-quality private schools and universities, while public education is chronically underfunded, widening the inequality gap^{lxxi}. This trend has not only worsened social inequality but also weakened the democratic principle of equal opportunity for all citizens^{lxxii}.

Healthcare is another public good that has suffered under market-centric governance. In countries like the United States, the privatization of healthcare and the dominance of profit-driven insurance companies have led to skyrocketing healthcare costs and significant disparities in access to medical services. Paul Starr, in *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*, details how the rise of for-profit healthcare has shifted the focus from patient care to profit maximization, resulting in higher costs and worse outcomes for the poor and uninsured^{lxxiii}. In contrast, countries with more robust public healthcare systems, such as those in Scandinavia, have been more successful in ensuring universal access and better health outcomes, underscoring the limitations of market solutions in addressing healthcare needs^{lxxiv}.

Environmental sustainability is perhaps the most pressing public good that market mechanisms have failed to address adequately. Markets are inherently short-term in their orientation, prioritizing immediate profits over long-term sustainability. The environmental economist Nicholas Stern, in *The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*, argues that climate change represents the greatest market failure in history, as markets have systematically undervalued the costs of environmental degradation and the long-term impacts of global warming^{lxxv}. Neoliberal policies that prioritize deregulation and privatization have further exacerbated this failure by weakening environmental protections and allowing corporations to externalize the environmental

^{lxix} *ibid*

^{lxx} Giroux, Henry A. *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education*. Haymarket Books, 2014

^{lxxi} *ibid*

^{lxxii} *ibid*

^{lxxiii} Starr, Paul. *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*. Basic Books, 1982

^{lxxiv} *ibid*

^{lxxv} Stern, Nicholas. *The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*. Cambridge University Press, 2007

costs of their activities onto society at large. As a result, liberal democracies have struggled to implement effective climate policies, leading to the continued depletion of natural resources and the acceleration of environmental crises.

2.10 Undermining the Role of the State in Social Welfare

The neoliberal emphasis on market solutions has also undermined the role of the state in providing social welfare. In many liberal democracies, neoliberal reforms have led to the retrenchment of the welfare state, with governments cutting back on social services such as unemployment benefits, pensions, and public housing^{lxxvi}. The political economist Gøsta Esping-Andersen, in *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, outlines how different welfare state models have been impacted by neoliberalism, particularly in liberal democracies such as the United States and the United Kingdom, where market-oriented reforms have led to greater inequality and social insecurity^{lxxvii}.

These cutbacks in social welfare have had profound consequences for the most vulnerable members of society. As Judith Butler argues in *Precarious Life*, neoliberal policies have increased social precarity by shifting the risks and burdens of economic instability onto individuals, who are left to navigate a volatile job market and diminishing public safety nets^{lxxviii}. In this context, the state is no longer seen as a guarantor of social welfare and equality but as a facilitator of market efficiency, prioritizing fiscal discipline over the well-being of its citizens^{lxxix}.

The weakening of the welfare state has also contributed to a broader sense of political disenfranchisement. As Wolfgang Streeck points out in *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*, the neoliberal state increasingly prioritizes the demands of global markets and financial institutions over the needs of its citizens, leading to a growing democratic deficit^{lxxx}. This shift has alienated large segments of the population, particularly those who rely on public services, and has contributed to the rise of populist movements that capitalize on the discontent of those who feel abandoned by the state^{lxxxi}.

2.11 The Limits of Market-Centric Governance

Market-centric governance, while successful in generating economic growth and innovation, has proven inadequate in addressing the key challenges of inequality, public goods provision, and social welfare. The neoliberal assumption that markets are more efficient than governments in allocating resources has led to the concentration of wealth and power, the underprovision of essential services like education and healthcare, and the erosion of the state's role in promoting social welfare. Scholars such as Piketty, Harvey, and Streeck have highlighted the dangers of unchecked market power, while

^{lxxvi} Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton University Press, 1990

^{lxxvii} *ibid*

^{lxxviii} Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. Verso, 2004

^{lxxix} *ibid*

^{lxxx} Streeck, Wolfgang. *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*. Verso, 2014

^{lxxxi} *ibid*

critics like Giroux and Butler have underscored the social and political costs of neoliberal reforms^{lxxxii}. To correct these imbalances, liberal democracies must reconsider the role of the state in regulating markets and providing for the collective needs of society, as proposed by Neo-Communitarian Democracy^{lxxxiii}.

3. The Neo-Communitarian Alternative

The limitations of liberal democracy, particularly its overemphasis on individualism and market-centric governance, have spurred interest in alternative models that emphasize community, shared responsibility, and more direct participation in democratic processes. Neo-Communitarian Democracy presents itself as such an alternative, offering a framework that seeks to correct the imbalances inherent in liberal democracy by fostering stronger community ties, civic engagement, and a balance between individual rights and social responsibilities. This model draws heavily from communitarian political theory and offers practical solutions to reinvigorate democratic governance^{lxxxiv}.

3.1 Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility

Neo-Communitarian Democracy advocates for a shift away from the atomized individualism championed by liberal democracies towards a model that emphasizes civic engagement and social responsibility. This framework finds its intellectual foundation in the work of communitarian scholars like Amitai Etzioni, who emphasizes that individuals are fundamentally embedded within their communities and cannot be understood as isolated, autonomous entities. According to Etzioni, “we are not just individuals who happen to live in a society; we are beings who are shaped by our social context and have moral obligations to contribute to the well-being of our community”^{lxxxv}. Communitarianism stresses the social fabric that binds individuals together, highlighting the interdependence between personal freedom and communal welfare^{lxxxvi}.

In contrast to liberal democracy’s focus on safeguarding individual rights, Neo-Communitarian Democracy posits that citizens should take an active role in the collective decision-making processes that affect their communities. Robert Bellah, in *Habits of the Heart*, similarly critiques the liberal emphasis on individual autonomy, arguing that it can erode the sense of civic responsibility necessary for democratic governance. Bellah suggests that “without a strong sense of belonging to a larger community, individuals become less inclined to participate in public life and more concerned with their personal advancement”^{lxxxvii}. Neo-Communitarian Democracy, by encouraging active civic

^{lxxxii} Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Harvard University Press, 2014

^{lxxxiii} Author's own elaboration on Neo-Communitarian Democracy

^{lxxxiv} Etzioni, Amitai. *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda*. Crown Publishers, 1993

^{lxxxv} Ibid

^{lxxxvi} Ibid

^{lxxxvii} Bellah, Robert N., et al. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. University of California Press, 1985

participation, seeks to rebuild this sense of community, promoting collective action to solve shared problems such as environmental degradation, economic inequality, and social justice^{lxxxviii}.

Civic engagement is seen not merely as a political act but as a moral responsibility. By fostering stronger connections between citizens and their communities, Neo-Communitarian Democracy hopes to cultivate a more engaged and socially responsible populace, where individuals are motivated not only by personal gain but by the desire to contribute to the common good. This vision echoes the communitarian ethic of “shared responsibility,” where citizens are encouraged to participate in both political and social processes that enhance the quality of life for all members of society^{lxxxix}.

3.2 Balancing Rights and Responsibilities

Where liberal democracy prioritizes individual rights above all else, Neo-Communitarian Democracy seeks to balance these rights with corresponding responsibilities. Liberal democracy’s focus on rights, while essential in protecting personal freedoms, often neglects the responsibilities that individuals have toward their communities. For Neo-Communitarian theorists, such as Michael Walzer, this imbalance is problematic because it allows individuals to enjoy the benefits of a functioning society without contributing meaningfully to its maintenance. Walzer argues that while rights are important, they must be exercised in ways that do not harm the broader community^{xc}.

Neo-Communitarian Democracy proposes a recalibration of this balance. For example, the right to free speech is a fundamental principle in liberal democracy, but Neo-Communitarian Democracy emphasizes that this right should be exercised with a sense of responsibility toward others. Hate speech, for instance, while protected under liberal notions of free speech, can harm social cohesion and alienate marginalized groups^{xc}. In Neo-Communitarian thought, there is an expectation that individuals will use their rights to contribute positively to society rather than undermine the dignity or safety of others. As Etzioni argues, “rights without responsibilities lead to a culture of entitlement rather than a culture of mutual respect and reciprocity”^{xcii}.

This balancing of rights and responsibilities is particularly relevant in discussions about social media, where the unchecked proliferation of misinformation and hate speech has highlighted the dangers of an unregulated marketplace of ideas. Scholars like Cass Sunstein have pointed out the need for more thoughtful regulation of digital spaces to prevent the erosion of public discourse and the degradation of democratic norms^{xciii}. Neo-Communitarian Democracy’s emphasis on responsible speech and engagement provides

^{lxxxviii} *ibid*

^{lxxxix} Etzioni, Amitai. *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda*. Crown Publishers, 1993

^{xc} Walzer, Michael. *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. Basic Books, 1983

^{xc} *ibid*

^{xcii} Etzioni, Amitai. *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda*. Crown Publishers, 1993.

^{xciii} Sunstein, Cass R. *Republic.com 2.0*. Princeton University Press, 2007

a framework for addressing these challenges, promoting a healthier and more inclusive public sphere^{xciv}.

3.3 Local Governance and Participatory Democracy

A key feature of Neo-Communitarian Democracy is its emphasis on local governance and participatory democracy. One of the main critiques of liberal democracy is that its top-down, representative structures often alienate citizens from the decision-making process, leaving them disconnected from the policies that affect their lives. Political scientist Jane Mansbridge has argued that traditional representative democracy, while necessary, often fails to engage citizens meaningfully in the political process, leading to apathy and disengagement^{xcv}.

Neo-Communitarian Democracy addresses this shortcoming by fostering more direct and participatory forms of governance at the local level. In this model, decision-making is decentralized, allowing citizens to have greater control over the policies that affect their communities. Participatory budgeting, for example, has been successfully implemented in cities like Porto Alegre, Brazil, where citizens have a direct say in how public funds are allocated^{xcvi}. This process not only increases transparency and accountability but also empowers citizens by giving them a tangible role in shaping their communities^{xcvii}.

By emphasizing local governance structures, Neo-Communitarian Democracy encourages citizens to become more invested in their communities and more engaged in the political process. This approach is closely aligned with the work of political theorist Benjamin Barber, who advocated for “strong democracy,” a system in which citizens are actively involved in decision-making rather than passively represented by elected officials. Barber argued that such participation would “create a more engaged and educated citizenry, reduce political polarization, and strengthen democratic institutions”^{xcviii}.

The focus on local governance also addresses the issue of political alienation, a growing problem in many liberal democracies. As political power becomes more centralized and distant, citizens feel increasingly disconnected from the decisions that affect their lives, leading to disengagement and apathy. Neo-Communitarian Democracy, by contrast, brings decision-making closer to the people, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility that can reinvigorate democratic participation^{xcix}.

^{xciv} Mansbridge, Jane. *Beyond Adversary Democracy*. University of Chicago Press, 1983.

^{xcv} *ibid*

^{xcvi} Baiocchi, Gianpaolo. *Radicals in Power: The Workers' Party (PT) and Experiments in Urban Democracy in Brazil*.

^{xcvii} *ibid*.

^{xcviii} Benjamin Barber. *Op cit* 55.

^{xcix} *ibid*

4. Case Studies: Real-World Applications of Communitarian Principles

4.1 Scandinavian Social Democracy

Countries like Denmark, Sweden, and Norway exemplify the integration of social responsibility and civic engagement into democratic governance. The Scandinavian model of social democracy combines individual rights with collective welfare, offering a practical illustration of the balance advocated by Neo-Communitarian Democracy. In these nations, the welfare state is robust, ensuring access to healthcare, education, and social security, while also maintaining high levels of civic participation and social trust. This model promotes equality through progressive taxation and policies that prioritize public goods over market solutions, illustrating the centrality of communal obligations in a healthy democracy^c.

For instance, in Sweden, the concept of "folkhemmet" (the people's home) encapsulates the idea that the state is a caretaker of its citizens, ensuring that no one is left behind economically or socially^{ci}. Political philosopher Gøsta Esping-Andersen has argued that such policies demonstrate how the welfare state can function within a framework that balances individual freedoms with collective responsibilities, making Scandinavian democracies successful models of Neo-Communitarian principles^{cii}. These countries demonstrate how social democracy can blend individual rights with social responsibility, mitigating the risks of political disengagement and fragmentation observed in more individualistic models^{ciii}.

4.2 Mondragon Cooperative, Spain

The Mondragon Cooperative in Spain provides a striking example of how economic democracy can operate within a communitarian framework. As one of the world's largest and most successful worker cooperatives, Mondragon adheres to principles of collective ownership and democratic decision-making. This cooperative network reflects the values of Neo-Communitarian Democracy by promoting economic equality and ensuring that workers have a direct say in the governance of their workplace^{civ}. Mondragon's model operates under a system where workers participate in decision-making processes, share

^c Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. Bengtsson, Mads, and Nils Hertting. "Generalization by Mechanism: Thin Rationality and Ideal-type Analysis in Case Study Research." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 44, no. 5 (2014): 707–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393114531377>.

^{ci} Tilton, Timothy. *The Political Theory of Swedish Social Democracy: Through the Welfare State to Socialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

^{cii} Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Hilson, M. *The Nordic Model: Scandinavia since 1945*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008.

^{ciii} Kangas, Olli, and Jon Palme. "Coming Late – Catching Up: The Formation of a 'Nordic Model'." In *The European Welfare State: The Origins of a Social Order*, edited by J. Alber and N. Gilbert, 220–244. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005. Rothstein, Bo, and Eric M. Uslaner. "All for All: Equality, Corruption, and Social Trust." *World Politics* 58, no. 1 (2005): 41–72. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2006.0022>

^{civ} Whyte, William F., and Kathleen K. Whyte. *Making Mondragon: The Growth and Dynamics of the Worker Cooperative Complex*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 1991.

profits, and have access to education and training. The cooperative's commitment to shared responsibility and democratic engagement provides an alternative to market-driven, profit-maximizing firms^{cv}. Scholar George Lakey notes that the Mondragon Cooperative has demonstrated that large-scale businesses can operate successfully under communitarian principles, where economic and social well-being are intertwined, thus exemplifying how collective ownership can reduce inequality and foster social cohesion^{cvi}.

4.3 Indigenous Governance in New Zealand

The Māori governance model in New Zealand offers an example of indigenous communitarianism that aligns with Neo-Communitarian principles. Central to Māori governance is the concept of *whakapapa*, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals within a community and across generations^{cvi}. This communal approach reflects the principles of Neo-Communitarian Democracy, where decisions are made with consideration of the collective, long-term well-being of the community rather than individual interests. The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840 between Māori tribes and the British Crown, continues to serve as a foundational document for Māori governance, illustrating a commitment to shared responsibility and partnership between the indigenous people and the state^{cvi}. Scholar Margaret Mutu has highlighted that Māori governance models emphasize *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship), an ethic that is deeply rooted in collective responsibility for the environment and future generations, aligning with Neo-Communitarian views on community and environmental stewardship^{cix}.

5. Policy Implications: Integrating Neo-Communitarian Democracy

Integrating Neo-Communitarian Democracy into governance requires a multifaceted approach to address the limitations of liberal democracy. First, it calls for strengthening civic institutions that foster active citizen engagement and social responsibility, as exemplified by Scandinavian countries, which invest in robust public institutions to

^{cv} Kasimir, Sharryn. *The Myth of Mondragon: Cooperatives, Politics, and Working-Class Life in a Basque Town*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996.

^{cvi} Lakey, George. *Viking Economics: How the Scandinavians Got It Right and How We Can, Too*. Brooklyn: Melville House, 2016. Cheney, George. *Values at Work: Employee Participation Meets Market Pressure at Mondragon*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002.

^{cvi} Royal, Te Ahukaramū. "Whakapapa – Genealogy." *Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, 2006. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/whakapapa-genealogy>. Bargh, Maria. *Resistance: An Indigenous Response to Neoliberalism*. Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2007.

^{cvi} Orange, Claudia. *The Treaty of Waitangi*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1987.

^{cix} Mutu, Margaret. "Constitutional Intentions: The Treaty of Waitangi Texts." In *Weeping Waters: The Treaty of Waitangi and Constitutional Change*, edited by M. Mulholland and V. Tawhai, 45–62. Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2010. Durie, Mason. *Te Mana, Te Kāwanatanga: The Politics of Māori Self-Determination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

promote civic trust and community cohesion^{cx}. Strengthening local governance structures, citizen deliberation, and social capital can counteract political apathy and build resilience against polarization^{cxⁱ}. Second, Neo-Communitarian Democracy emphasizes rethinking civic education to cultivate values of shared responsibility and community engagement. Etzioni suggests that civic education should go beyond individual success to instill a sense of collective responsibility, equipping citizens to actively contribute to society^{cxⁱⁱ}. Finally, a rebalancing of the state-market relationship is crucial. Neo-Communitarian Democracy advocates for policies that prioritize social welfare, public goods, and environmental sustainability over individual profit maximization, aligning with scholars like Joseph Stiglitz, who argue for economic policies that promote equity and social justice^{cxⁱⁱⁱ}. This rebalancing could involve stronger public services and regulatory frameworks that ensure markets operate in the public interest, addressing disparities and fostering a fairer, more inclusive society.

5.1 Strengthening Civic Institutions

A key policy implication of Neo-Communitarian Democracy is the need to strengthen civic institutions that promote active participation and social responsibility. This includes enhancing local governance structures, encouraging citizen deliberation, and fostering grassroots initiatives that build social capital. The Nordic model provides a useful example in this regard, as these countries invest heavily in democratic education, political transparency, and participatory institutions that keep citizens engaged^{cx^{iv}}. As Robert Putnam observes in his work *Bowling Alone*, strong civic institutions help to foster trust, cooperation, and active engagement in public life^{cx^v}. By expanding opportunities for citizens to participate in decision-making processes at local levels, Neo-Communitarian Democracy can combat political apathy and reduce polarization^{cx^{vi}}.

5.2 Education for Civic Responsibility

Neo-Communitarian Democracy advocates for a paradigm shift in educational systems. While liberal democracies often focus on preparing individuals for economic productivity, Neo-Communitarian frameworks prioritize civic education that emphasizes social responsibility, community engagement, and collective decision-

^{cx} Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000

^{cxⁱ} Etzioni, Amitai. *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda*. Crown Publishers, 1993.

^{cxⁱⁱ} Etzioni, Amitai. *The Common Good*. Polity Press, 2004

^{cxⁱⁱⁱ} Stiglitz, Joseph E. *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012.

^{cx^{iv}} Hilson, M. *The Nordic Model: Scandinavia since 1945*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008

^{cx^v} Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

^{cx^{vi}} Putnam, Robert D., Robert Leonardi, and Rafaella Y. Nanetti. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

making. As Etzioni argues, “a strong community and a sense of responsibility for others are essential for the functioning of any democracy.”^{cxvii} Educational reforms should therefore encourage students to understand their role within society and the broader community, equipping them with the tools to actively contribute to the common good. Civic education in this model goes beyond the basics of democracy to instill a sense of shared responsibility and collective well-being^{cxviii}.

5.3 Rebalancing Market and State

Another crucial policy shift advocated by Neo-Communitarian Democracy is the rebalancing of the relationship between the market and the state. While markets can drive innovation and wealth creation, they often fail to adequately address issues such as public goods, environmental sustainability, and inequality. As neoliberal economic policies have exacerbated income inequality and social fragmentation, Neo-Communitarian Democracy calls for stronger state intervention to ensure that markets serve the public interest and promote social justice^{cxix}. This rebalancing involves not only regulating markets but also strengthening public services, including healthcare, education, and welfare programs. Scholars like Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen have argued that inclusive economic policies are essential for fostering a more equitable society, one where the state plays an active role in redistributing resources and ensuring that all members of society have access to basic goods and services^{cxx}. Neo-Communitarian Democracy advocates for such an approach, emphasizing the need for policies that prioritize communal welfare over individual profit^{cxxi}.

6. Conclusion: A Path Toward More Inclusive and Responsible Governance

While liberal democracy has been successful in protecting individual rights, its overemphasis on individualism and market-driven governance has contributed to political polarization, social fragmentation, and reduced civic engagement^{cxxii}. Neo-Communitarian Democracy offers a corrective framework that seeks to rebalance individual freedoms with communal responsibilities. By drawing on real-world examples such as the Scandinavian model^{cxxiii} the Mondragon Cooperative,^{cxxiv} and Māori

^{cxvii} Etzioni, Amitai. (1993). *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda*. Crown Publishers, 1993

Haste, Helen. "Constructing the Citizen." *Political Psychology* 25, no. 3 (2004): 413–39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00378.x>.^{cxviii}

^{cxix} Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

^{cxx} Stiglitz, Joseph. *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2012. Amartya Sen. *Development as Freedom*. Knopf, 1999.

^{cxxi} Etzioni, Amitai. *The Common Good*. Polity Press, 2004.

^{cxxii} Michael Sandel. *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.

^{cxxiii} Mary Hilson. *The Nordic Model: Scandinavia since 1945*. Reaktion Books, 2008.

^{cxxiv} Cheney, George. *Values at Work: Employee Participation Meets Market Pressure at Mondragon*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002.

governance^{cxv}, Neo-Communitarian Democracy offers concrete lessons for how societies can reintegrate communal values into their democratic processes.

Furthermore, by proposing policy changes such as strengthening civic institutions^{cxvi}, rethinking civic education^{cxvii}, and rebalancing the relationship between the market and the state^{cxviii}, this model provides a viable path forward for addressing the complex challenges of the 21st century. In a world increasingly defined by global crises such as climate change, inequality, and political polarization, Neo-Communitarian Democracy presents a compelling vision for a more inclusive, participatory, and socially responsible form of governance^{cxix}. This paper integrates theoretical critique, practical case studies, and policy suggestions to demonstrate how Neo-Communitarian Democracy can provide a balanced and responsive framework for addressing the crises in liberal democratic governance. By doing so, it highlights the potential for democratic systems to evolve in ways that uphold both individual rights and collective well-being, addressing some of the most pressing global issues of our time^{cxx}.

Disclosure Statement

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, no aspect of my current personal or professional circumstances places me in the position of having a conflict of interest with this publication. I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, neither I (including any member of my immediate family) nor any individual or entity with whom or with which I have a significant working relationship have (has) received something of value from a commercial party related directly or indirectly to the subject of this publication. The foregoing statements are true without exception.

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^{cxv} Durie, Mason. *Te Mana, Te Kāwanatanga: The Politics of Māori Self-Determination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

^{cxvi} Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

^{cxvii} Etzioni, Amitai. *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1993

^{cxviii} Stiglitz, Joseph E. *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012

^{cxix} Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Knopf, 1999

^{cxx} Etzioni, Amitai. *The Common Good*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004

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