

The Strangulation and Resuscitation of Representative Democracy in the United States

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This paper posits that the global COVID-19 pandemic shock propelled the rational voters to the ballot box in 2020 presidential election to repudiate the 45th President of the United States (POTUS) for mishandling the pandemic and for propagating baseless conspiracy theories and disinformation, thus the resuscitation of representative democracy in the United States. We utilize a composite linear equation to derive the democracy strangulation coefficients and the democracy resuscitation coefficients to highlight the magnitude of the strangulation and the resuscitation. In addition, we derive and compute the democracy resuscitation index from which one can conclude that less than one percent of the net 7,052,770 winning votes barely resuscitated representative democracy in 2020. The strangulation of representative democracy is still ongoing because many aspiring candidates in the Republican Party, running for political offices at different levels, have strategically adopted the democracy strangulation playbook that the 45th President embedded in the Republican Party in order to achieve ochlocratic autocracy if they win and control the three coequal branches of government in 2025.

Keywords: strangulation, resuscitation, representative democracy, ochlocratic autocracy, voters

INTRODUCTION

The general consensus among political scientists and legal pundits is that we are living in an era that would horrify the Founding Fathers of representative democracy in the United States. Legal experts believed that the Founding Fathers provided a Constitution resolute enough to prevent the United States from being governed by demagogues or Machiavellians who can always propagate baseless conspiracy theories and disinformation to feed the passionate mobs in their political parties. On January 6, 2021, the United States almost transitioned from representative democracy to ochlocratic autocracy because the passionate mobs from the Republican Party and 147 Congressional Republicans did not believe in the certification of the results of the 2020 presidential election. In other words, representative democracy in the United States almost ended on January 6, 2021, and is still under strangulation because the 45th President of the United States (POTUS) continued to peddle conspiracy theories and disinformation to the passionate mobs in the Republic Party. These conspiracy theories and disinformation will continue to have lingering effects in different forms across the economic, political, and social institutions in the United States.

This paper complements the studies by Diskin *et al.* (2005) and Levitsky and Ziblatt (2016a, 2016b, 2018), which provided compelling arguments about how strong democracies failed or collapsed around the world. These research scholars argued that democracies do not die at the hands of military generals,

contrary to what many voters tend to believe, but at the hands of political leaders with autocratic impulses who are willing to give a free rein to mob rule. For over the past two centuries, the predominant objective of the United States has been to promote and spread representative democracy around the world. The United States' export of democracy around the world is predicated on the belief that the free press would prevail in informing and educating the general voting public. One can surmise that the Founding Fathers strongly believed that the free press, through the journalists of these newspapers, would promote great ideas and that citizens would take their leisure time to read the complex and challenging political exchanges; and that this would allow reason and rationality to spread across the United States. Contrary to the monopoly of local newspapers that existed in cities and towns for many centuries, nowadays, we live in a digital era with different social media outlets from which voters now consume reckless conspiracy theories and disinformation. It is indisputable that conspiracy theories and disinformation existed in the political landscape for centuries, but had little or no effects then because there were no easy and effective transmission channels until now. In this era of digital technology, the internet and the free social media platforms provide new avenues for the execution and operationalization of conspiracy theories and disinformation with infinite multiplier effects leading to global contagion.

Given the on-going complicity and obsequiousness in the Republican Party, this paper asserts that the 45th POTUS, the Republican Party, and their passionate mobs took the United States' representative democracy to the precipice of strangulation on January 6, 2021. Many political and legislative events after the Capitol Hill insurrection continued to show that Democrats and Republicans now have divergent views of representative democracy in the United States. Therefore, this raises important research questions: Who are the stranglers and who are the resuscitators of representative democracy in the United States? What lessons can political leaders in other western democracies learn from the strangulation and interim resuscitation of representative democracy in the United States? This paper contributes to the literature by using theoretical framework to answer these critical questions in lieu of quantifiable data evidence. Many research scholars and political pundits have identified individual factors that can lead to the eventual demise of democracy, and as a contribution to the theoretical literature, this paper provides the conjunction of causal factors since "no single variable on its own is capable of predicting democracy collapse."

We show that political leaders, such as the 45th POTUS, who peddled outrageous conspiracy theories and disinformation in conjunction with voters who willfully consume these conspiracy theories and disinformation from different social media platforms expedited the strangulation of democracy in the United States. Research scholars and political pundits may be surprised to know that the external global COVID-19 pandemic shock, with its massive spreads and fatalities in the United States relative to other advanced countries, was an instrumental variable in the interim resuscitation of American democracy. The lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic propelled many of the 81,268,924 voters to the ballot box to repudiate the way the 45th POTUS handled the global pandemic. In other words, some of these voters saw the preventable massive spreads and fatalities, due to COVID-19 pandemic, as symptoms of leadership failure, which they could no longer condone. While the pandemic was ravaging across the country, the 45th POTUS used social media platforms to disseminate unsubstantiated conspiracy theories and disinformation, which convinced 74,216,154 voters to vote for him because they strongly believed his false messages that the COVID-19 was plotted and intended to blame his presidency.

Even though the 45th POTUS lost the popular votes by 7,052,770 votes, election data showed that if he had picked up the right mix of 65,012 votes with 10,457 from Arizona, 11,779 from Georgia, 20,682 from Wisconsin, and 22,091 from the Second Congressional District of Nebraska, he would have won the required 270 Electoral College votes outright [see Swasey and Jin (2020)]. Alternatively, if the 45th POTUS had picked up three crucial states: Arizona, Georgia, and Wisconsin, the Electoral College would have been tied at 269 votes per candidate; and then, the House of Representatives would have decided the election since the Republicans won the majority of state delegations in the new 117th Congress, and their choice would have been the 45th POTUS for a second term. In essence, the net combination of 65,012 voters from Arizona, Georgia, Wisconsin, and Nebraska's Second Congressional District resuscitated representative democracy in the United States. The computed

democracy resuscitation index (DRI) actually translated into less than one percent of the net winning votes.

In addition, we argue and conclude that the lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic also compelled voters in the United States and people around the world to see the protests against societal injustices and police brutality in the United States. This may have also convinced and influenced many of the 81,268,924 voters that the country was heading in the wrong direction. Given the robust economic trends in the early first quarter of 2020 and the acquittal of the 45th POTUS from the first impeachment trial, one can easily surmise that the 45th POTUS would have won the 2020 presidential election if the global COVID-19 pandemic had not occurred. More importantly, he would have been emboldened by the Republican Party to subvert and reverse the institutional pillars of representative democracy in order to transition to ochlocratic autocracy.

Furthermore, given the 6-3 Supreme Court ruling on July 1, 2021, many states are now emboldened to enact voters' suppression laws, especially in those battleground states, such as Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin, where the lawmakers can now nullify election results they do not like, the strangulation and ultimate death of representative democracy in the United States is around the corner and may arrive as early as 2022 midterm elections or after the 2024 presidential election. According to research scholars and political pundits, democracy in the United States, in its current form, exists in an extremely toxic politically divided country engulfed in racial hatred along with the normalizations of domestic terrorisms perpetrated by political vigilantes. Prior to 2017, political leaders around the world adored the resilience and stability of American democracy, and for four years, they witnessed how the 45th POTUS used groundless conspiracy theories and disinformation, through social media platforms, to unravel American democracy. Therefore, the important lesson that political leaders in other western democracies learned was that they too could adopt the playbook of the 45th POTUS by using social media platforms to disseminate unfounded conspiracy theories and disinformation in order to achieve the strangulation of their own democratic tenets and norms. Simply put, the United States provided a good signal to western democracies around the world about the fragility of their democracies, which could easily be destroyed by their political leaders in order to achieve ochlocratic autocracy.

To put the arguments in this paper succinctly, we put the determinants of representative democracy in composite functional form because there are no quantifiable data with which one can statistically estimate the four years of strangulation and the ongoing resuscitation of representative democracy in the United States. Therefore, we use the functional equation to derive the *democracy strangulation coefficients* and the *democracy resuscitation coefficients* in order to highlight the magnitude of the strangulation and resuscitation. So far, the conclusion is that American democracy survived the stress test because the global COVID-19 pandemic shock propelled the determined voters to the ballot box to repudiate the 45th POTUS, and that the interim democracy resuscitation coefficients, proxied by the *DRI*, appeared to be barely stronger than the democracy strangulation coefficients. Essentially, democracy experienced four years of structural strangulation under the 45th POTUS, and it may take another four or more years of structural resuscitation. However, the strangulation of representative democracy in the United States is still ongoing because the era of digital technology has bolstered the velocity of conspiracy theories and disinformation with indeterminate lingering effects. Worse, many aspiring candidates, running for political offices at the local, state, and federal levels, have adopted the democracy strangulation playbook, which the 45th POTUS implanted in the Republican Party. Given the overwhelming voter suppression laws already passed by the Republican Party in many "red states" across the country, which the conservative Supreme Court continued to uphold, the nullifications of elections by the lawmakers in these "red states" and the purges of voters from gaining access to the ballot box would occur in 2022, 2024, and beyond.

We organize the rest of this paper as follows. The literature review section provides extant studies on how democracies die around the world. Thereafter, we discuss some of the challenges and the flaws embedded in representative democracy in the United States. Next, we provide the theoretical framework to examine the composite factors that can explain the strangulation and/or resuscitation of representative democracy. Finally, the paper concludes with some political implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The debate about why and how democracies collapse, fail, die, or succeed is ongoing and unsettled because some western democracies, such as that of the United State and some countries in the European Union, are gradually unraveling. In other words, we are in the era of global democracy strangulation contagion. Diskin *et al.* (2005) provided a study of why democracies collapse. They provided the reasons for democratic failure and success by identifying 11 variables (federalism, presidentialism, proportionality, constitutional weakness, cleavages, malfunctioning economy, unfavorable history, fragmentation, polarization, governmental instability, and foreign involvement), which they considered to be highly instrumental in either the collapse/failure or success of democracies. They classified these 11 variables into four major categories, and each variable in each category has its own hypothesis. According to Diskin *et al.* (2005), the first category consists of institutional variables, which includes federalism, presidentialism, proportionality, and constitutional weakness. For example, in the case of presidentialism as one of the four institutional variables, they hypothesized that “presidential or semi-presidential regimes are more prone to democratic collapse than parliamentary ones.”

The second category, which the authors classified as societal variables identified cleavages, malfunctioning economy, and unfavorable history. In the case of malfunctioning economy as one of the three societal variables, they hypothesized that “countries with weak or unstable economies are more prone to democratic collapse than those with stable economies.” This line of argument about the relationship between democracy and economic performance or growth dominated the growth literature in the 1990s and early 2000s [Przeworski *et al.* (1996, 2000)]. The third category, which they classified as the mediating variables included fragmentation, polarization, and governmental instability. In the case of polarization as one of the three mediating variables, Diskin *et al.* (2005) hypothesized that “highly polarized party systems are more prone to democratic collapse than systems with low polarization.” The hypothesis about polarization matches with that of fragmentation, which many political researchers have examined extensively for decades. The fourth category, which they called the extraneous variables, Diskin *et al.* (2005) identified foreign involvement as the single and important variable. The authors argued that foreign involvement “has rarely received any attention in the discussion of democratic stability, but which has proven to be essential,” and they hypothesized that “countries experiencing serious levels of involvement by foreign forces are more prone to democratic collapse than those with low involvement.”

To highlight the significance of these 11 variables, Diskin *et al.* (2005) used a sample of 30 cases of collapsed democracies and 32 cases of stable democracies in which they coded each variable as either positive or negative in their logistic regression to show which variables were more important and the extent to which each variable can predict why democracies collapsed. Diskin *et al.* (2005) found that all the variables, *except* federalism, are statistically significant in predicting the collapse of democracies with the five strongest variables being foreign involvement, unfavorable history, malfunctioning economy, cleavage, and governmental instability. The foreign involvement variable has the highest correlation coefficient and logistic prediction, however, the authors cautioned that no single variable is capable of predicting democratic collapse, and that the key to the demise of a democratic system is a combination of variables from the four categories.

The issue of foreign involvement in democratic stability did not gain much attention because western democracies were the ones involved in influencing the newly emerged and emerging democracies around the world. However, the environment of foreign involvement or influence changed since 2015, and it quickly gained attention during the 2016 presidential election in the United States as its main foreign adversary, Russia, interfered in the election outcomes. Tennis (2020) pointed out that after Russia’s interference in the Brexit referendum and the 2016 United States presidential election, Russia became more emboldened and publicly interfered in the French presidential campaign in 2017.

According to Brooking’s (2021) analysis of the unclassified report on Russian interference in presidential election released by the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), “Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an extensive influence campaign in support of then-candidate Donald Trump, using overt propaganda, hacking, and clandestine social media manipulation to bolster Trump’s chances while

denigrating his opponent, Hillary Clinton.” Furthermore, Brooking (2021) outlined four main areas, which the DNI report addressed. The first area addressed the Russian most significant operations in 2016 that involved the cultivating and harnessing of Trump allies through a third party, Wikileaks, which they used as the avenue to launch malicious information with the aim to steer the political discourse in the United States. In 2020, they adopted the 2016 template “by directly targeting prominent US persons and media conduits, feeding them hacked materials and nudging their actions.”

In addition, Brooking (2021) discussed the second area of the DNI report that addressed Iran’s interference attempts, which grew notably more aggressive during the 2020 presidential election. Initially, it was erroneously misattributed to Russia. With respect to Iran’s interference in the presidential election, the report did conclude that “most of these influence activities were essentially benign, focused on repackaging Iranian state propaganda for foreign audiences rather than attacking elections or undermining rival political systems.” The third issue addressed in the report was China’s determination that direct election interference was not worth the risk because of the concern that such a move would backfire, especially since information conflict escalated over whom to blame for COVID-19 pandemic in the middle of the ongoing tariffs-restricted trade wars between both countries. The fourth and most important issue addressed in the report dealt with the fact that the Trump administration officials misrepresented the nature of influence activities around the 2020 election. This was a manifestation of the baseless conspiracy theories and disinformation intended to mislead the American people. Brooking (2021) concluded that it will be difficult to imagine a future presidential “election that will not be haunted by fears of foreign interference.”

With respect to the institutional variables, which Diskin *et al.* (2005) pointed out, it is important to note that the emphasis on institutional variables or institutional hypothesis is not new with respect to the political debate and its linkage to economic growth over the past four decades. For example, many scholars viewed institutional variables from the dimension of economic growth [Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001)]; and there are many empirical studies over the past two decades that provided evidence in support of the institutions hypothesis [see Knack and Keefer (1995), Przeworski *et al.* (2000), Rodrik *et al.* (2002), Kaufman and Kraay (2002), Acemoglu *et al.* (2005), Rodrik and Wacziarg (2005), Persson and Tabellini (2006)]. From these studies, strong and effective institutions exist in strong democracies; therefore, the collapse of democracies in western countries did not grab much attention until now.

In Levitsky and Ziblatt’s (2018) recent book about how democracies die, they laid out the important roles that the elected autocratic leaders play in the death of democracies in developed and less developed countries. They argued that democracies do not die at the “hands of generals,” but at the hands of elected leaders who subvert the basic process with which they gained political power. They also argued that if “the political parties, organized citizens, democratic norms do not defend the constitutions, or unwritten rules of toleration and restraint, institutions alone are not enough to rein in elected autocrats.” In support of their assertion, Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) cited countries such as Hungary, Venezuela, Ecuador, Georgia, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, Sri Lanka, and many others where their elected would-be autocratic leaders undermined democratic institutions and constitutions. In addition, they argued that other nominally democratic institutions remain in place where people continue to vote in rigged elections.

According to Ziblatt, the most crucial variable in predicting the success of a democratic transition is the self-confidence of the incumbent elites or leaders. If they feel able to compete under democratic conditions, they will accept democracy. If they do not, they will not. Studies by Dorf (2016), Smith (2018), Alberta (2019), Greenberg (2020), and Acemoglu (2020) argued and concluded that American democracy unraveled under President Trump. This assertion is also consistent with and corroborated by Levitsky and Ziblatt’s (2018) recent assertion that “Institutions alone are not enough to rein in elected autocrats” and that the Constitution of the United States is “only a piece of paper,” which “is not self-enforcing.” That is, in well-functioning democracies, such as the United States, the rule of law provides the necessary constitutional guardrails for the three co-equal branches of government.

Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) view the Constitution or the rule of law as not self-enforcing. Simply put, presidential leaderships in collusion with leaders of other co-equal branches matter because they govern these institutions, and they can invoke law and order politics to manipulate both the Constitution and the rule of law for their self-interests at the demise of representative democracy. Given the governance structure

in the United State, any POTUS endowed with democratic ideals would be guided by the rule of law in building and strengthening the institutions rather than invoke law and order to undermine the rule of law in which the goal is to subvert the institutional pillars of American democracy. In some countries where ambitious would-be autocrats ascend to power, their objective is to cause political chaos/violence and intimidation.

According to Smith (2018), would-be autocrats tend to invoke law and order because they are driven by social dominance orientation or authoritarianism. In the process, would-be autocrats use law and order politics to undermine the rule of law, and ultimately subvert the institutional constraints because their aim is to achieve autocratic power or become president-for-life. These reasons are consonant with Levitsky and Ziblatt's (2018) argument that when established parties opportunistically invite "extremists outsiders," such as the 45th POTUS, into their ranks, they imperil democracy in that once a would-be autocrat makes it to power, democracy faces a survival test as autocratic presidential leaders will subvert democratic institutions that would constrain them. In addition, they pointed out that "Without robust norms, constitutional checks and balances do not serve as the bulwarks of democracy we imagine it to be. Instead, institutions become political weapons, wielded forcefully by those who control them against those who do not. This is how elected autocrats subvert democracy – packing and 'weaponizing' the courts and other neutral agencies, buying off the media and private sector (or bullying them into silence), and rewriting the rules of politics to permanently disadvantage their rivals." In a recent study, Owoye (2020) argued and concurred that institutions are not sacrosanct anywhere in the world because the whole world witnessed how political leaders in the United States, such as the 45th POTUS, could subvert and reverse the institutional pillars of representative democracy.

THE CHALLENGES AND FLAWS EMBEDDED IN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Worldwide, political scientists and legal experts now agree that democracy is fragile, regardless of whether it is in the advanced countries or less developed countries. The extent of the fragility of democracy depends on its foundation and the legal guardrails installed to correct its imperfect foundation. Representative democracy in the United States is wrought with many challenges and flaws, which research scholars have discussed hesitantly, but we need to reopen the debate in this era of global democracy strangulation contagion in which some established western democracies are transitioning to ochlocratic autocracy around the world.

It is now obvious that there are many challenges to representative democracy in the United States, and that one of the greatest challenges is the "Electoral College" process, which Article II of the Constitution and the 12th Amendment referred to as the "Number of Electors." In the Constitution, the Number of Electors system was designed as a compromise between the elections of the President by a vote in Congress versus election of the President by a popular vote of all qualified citizens of the United States. According to Article II of the Constitution,

"Each State shall appoint, in a Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector."

Furthermore, the United States National Archives and Record Administration (USNARA) indicated that there have been more than 700 proposals, more than on any other legislative subject, introduced in Congress to reform or eliminate the Electoral College system over the past two centuries. These many proposals are recognitions of the challenges and flaws inherent in the Electoral College system. The major challenge is that such amendment to the Constitution must be proposed by two-thirds majority in both Houses of Congress and must then be ratified by three-fourths of the States. The flaws embedded in the Electoral College system manifested in 1824, 1876, 1888, 2000, and 2016 when it produced five Republican Presidents who did not win the popular votes nationwide, and yet, these presidential candidates won the

presidency through the Electoral College system. Over the years, this system has led to the division of the United States into blue and red states because the overarching strategy of each presidential candidate is to attain the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win the presidency. This explains why presidential candidates are strategic in reaching out to voters in certain states and not in every state because winning the popular votes by millions, which occurred in 2016, does not guarantee the presidency over the Electoral College votes of 270.

The American Bar Association also recognized the flaws and thus criticized the Electoral College system as “archaic” and “ambiguous.” Similarly, legal experts as well as the voting public favored abolishing the Electoral College system even back in the 1980s before it produced two more Republican Presidents who did not win the popular votes in the first two decades of the 21st century: one in 2000 and another one in 2016. The awareness of this particular flaw in representative democracy in the United States raises some conjectural questions. Could the flaws embedded in the Electoral College system in representative democracy have stayed long in the Constitution if the five Presidents produced through the system had been Democrats instead of Republicans? What is the essence of majority rule in democracy if the popular majority votes had been supplanted five times by the Electoral College system since 1824? Would there have been domestic political terrorists insurrection on January 6, 2021 if presidents were simply elected by majority votes and thus no need for certification of Electoral College votes? What happened to the peaceful transfer of power, a well-recognized political norm in the United States, when the 45th POTUS lost the popular majority votes by over 7 million votes and lost the Electoral College by 74 votes, and yet refused to concede to the peaceful transfer of power to the 46th POTUS?

Another challenge to representative democracy is embedded in the legislative processes in both Houses of Congress. The *filibuster* in the Senate and the *disappearing quorum* in the House of Representative have significantly stymied legislations in Congress, thus the ongoing suffocation of democracy. The filibuster was the major legislative tool used in the 1950s by Senators from the Southern States to block the passage of legislations aimed at granting voting rights to minorities. In the 21st century, the filibuster has created extreme *political division* among Democrats and Republicans in Congress and the intense *racial hatred* between members of both political parties and thus culminating in Republicans threatening Democrats in Congress and across the country.

Next, the partisan interpretations of the rule of law by the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) continued to pose big challenges to representative democracy. Many legal scholars and political pundits have documented some of the worst SCOTUS’ decisions since its establishment on September 24, 1789.¹ According to Rosenthal (2015) and Sullivan, Esq (2015), the first among the worst in the 19th century was the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* in 1857 in which the SCOTUS ruled that African Americans, whether free men or slaves, could not be considered as American citizens because they are considered to be the “parable of horrors” that would appear if Dred Scott were recognized as an American citizen. The SCOTUS’ failure to protect civil rights is not new and the continued manifestation in the 21st century should not surprise anyone. Rosenthal (2015) and Sullivan, Esq (2015) also pointed out that in 1883, the SCOTUS struck down the Civil Rights Act of 1875 on the ground that the 13th and 14th Amendments do not allow Congress to prevent non-governmental racial discrimination. Furthermore, SCOTUS’s ruling in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 upheld state segregation laws in what was then known as “separate but equal.”

In the 20th century, many SCOTUS’ decisions were also considered in the worst category when viewed from human and civil rights perspectives. According to Rosenthal (2015) and Sullivan, Esq (2015), in the *Hammer v. Dagenhart* of 1918, the SCOTUS ruled that Congress could not ban child labor in interstate commerce, which meant only states could decide whether children were kept out of mines and factories. In the case of *Korematsu v. United States* in 1944, the SCOTUS upheld the internment of Japanese Americans, premised on the need to protect the United States against internal espionage, and this further confirmed and bolstered racial discrimination. The *Bowers v. Hardwick* case in 1986 was another discriminatory case in which the SCOTUS upheld a discriminatory Georgia sodomy statute that criminalized sexually active gay and lesbian relationships.

Even in the 21st century, SCOTUS' challenge to representative democracy still remains indisputable if viewed objectively. According to many legal scholars, history would record the ruling of the SCOTUS to halt the 2000 presidential election recount in Florida as the partisan judicial incursion into the democratic process of presidential election. Prior to this ruling, some legal experts still subscribed to the myth that the SCOTUS is an independent and impartial arbiter of the rule of law. The SCOTUS based its intervention and ruling with respect to the election recount on the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause in the manual recounts, which the Florida Court ordered in *Bush v. Gore*. Stopping the recount in favor of the 43rd POTUS did immeasurable damage to the democratic process from different dimensions. The 2020 presidential election recount in Arizona in May-June 2021, with the 46th POTUS already in the White House, showed the inherent flaws and hypocrisy in the SCOTUS' decision in 2000. This raises some conjectural questions: Since the SCOTUS stopped the 2000 presidential election recount in Florida, why not stop the election recount in Arizona under the same 14th Amendment's equal protection clause? If the current occupant in the White House were to be a Republican, would the SCOTUS had invoked the same clause if Democrats engaged in fraudulent and dubious election recounts?

Another challenge to representative democracy in the United States is that big corporations and powerful interest groups have enormous influence on politics in the United States. Over the past four decades, the SCOTUS radically expanded the constitutional rights for big corporations, and further emboldened these corporations by the 2010 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* ruling. In a 5-4 decision, the SCOTUS granted corporations' First Amendment rights, which considered and granted corporate political spending as protected speech. Indisputably, big corporations and powerful interest groups have unbridled control over Congressional members of both parties; therefore, this was an impactful decision because it unleashed a wave of consequences on representative democracy in the United States. Most notably, this caused significant erosion in public's trust with respect to the integrity of representative democracy in the United States; and the deluge of big money continued to drown members of Congress from both political parties at the expense of the voters. Simply put, corporations with their huge donations matter more than the ordinary voters.

The SCOTUS also made another significant decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* on June 25, 2013 when it gutted out Section 4(b) of the Civil Rights Act of 1965. Section 4(b) of the Civil Rights Act required certain states and localities with a history of discrimination against minority voters to get preclearance on changes from the federal government before those changes could go into effect. Section 4(b) was considered to be the bedrock of the Voting Rights Act because it was designed to block discriminatory voting policies before they harmed minority voters. According to Ang (2019), in a 5-4 decision, the SCOTUS ruled that Section 4(b) was unconstitutional because "the coverage formula was based on data over 40 years old, making it no longer responsive to current needs and therefore an impermissible burden on the constitutional principles of federalism and equal sovereignty of the states." The SCOTUS's ruling was also based on their opinion that Section 4(b) was a "racial entitlement," that "things have changed dramatically," that the Voting Rights Act has increased registration rates and voter turnout in covered jurisdictions to parity level thus blatantly discriminatory evasions of federal decrees are rare, and that "minority candidates hold office at unprecedented levels."

In another voting rights case, *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee*, the SCOTUS, in a 6-3 decision on July 1, 2021, ruled that Arizona's stricter voting rules do not violate the Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and do not discriminate against minority voters. This overturned an earlier ruling from the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco that ruled the Arizona voting law disproportionately restricts voting access to African Americans, Latino, and Native American voters. According to the studies by White (2016), Rhodes (2017), Newkirk II (2018), Hakim and Wines (2018), Ang (2019), Lockhart (2019), Levine and Rao (2020), Cantori and Pons (2020), and Feder and Miller (2020), the SCOTUS's decisions since 2013 have emboldened many Southern states and other states to implement stricter voting rules aimed at preventing minority voters and that this may have upended representative democracy in the United States.

Finally, what poses the greatest challenge to representative democracy in the United States and other democracies around the world is the utilization of conspiracy theories and disinformation in this era of

digital technology and/or internet where accurate news, partially accurate news or total falsehoods can spread worldwide within minutes of simultaneous postings on different social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Analogous to the 4Ps in the concept of marketing mix, we can also show that there are four key factors that are involved in the spreading of conspiracy theories and disinformation [Gagaridis (2020)]. When we applied this concept to the strangulation of democracy, the first component of the 4Ps consists of the *producers* who propagate conspiracy theories and disinformation nationwide. These producers are generally driven by their political self-interest when the objective is to subvert or destabilize democracies in order to achieve political power. The second is the *product* (false narratives) intended to convince and influence certain segment of the public. The third is the *platforms* (or place) through which conspiracy theories and disinformation can spread to the intended audience. The fourth is the *public* normally targeted because almost half of them tend to be willful consumers of the conspiracy theories and disinformation without verifications based on their political affiliation and ideologies.

Given the fundamental rights of freedom of expression in democratic societies, the key 4Ps necessary and sufficient for dissemination of conspiracy theories and disinformation are difficult to control because of the bidirectional political causal link (*producers* ↔ *product* ↔ *platforms* ↔ *public*), especially the political causal link between the *producers* and the *public*. The inability to break the bidirectional political causal link is further manifested by the provision of Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996. In other words, there are considerable legal qualms, thus, democracies are deeply vulnerable to strangulation or destruction.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STRANGULATION AND RESUSCITATION OF DEMOCRACY

This section concurs with Diskin *et al.* (2005) that “no single variable on its own is capable of predicting democratic collapse...but that the key to the demise of a democratic system is a combination of variables.” Given that democracies rest on three intertwined economic, political, and social institutions, this section provides a different dimension with which to view the combined interactions between different variables that can contribute to the strangulation of democracies. To put the strangulation of democracy in the proper perspective, we express the combined interactions between the determinants in composite functional forms as:

$$DEM = f(CRL.IJE.SC, PL, TPS.DTN, EPS, VP) \quad (1)$$

$$EPS(PL, PL.CO, PL.CTDIS.SMP, PL.FI), \quad (2)$$

and

$$VP(SIP.NLD, PL.IPR, PL.CTDIS, PL.GPS) \quad (3)$$

For equation (1), *DEM* captures representative democracy, *CRL.IJE.SC* is the Constitutional rule of law with impartial judicial interpretation and enforcement (*IJE*) by the Supreme Court (*SC*) without favoring the rich and powerful individuals, *PL* represents political leaders such as the POTUS and members of Congress, *TPS.DTN* represents the conjunction of the two political parties assumed to be embedded with the traditional democratic tenets and norms (*DTN*), *EPS* is the combination of all the economic, political, and social institutions in the United States, and *VP* represents the voting public. It is indisputable that the impartial judicial enforcement is paramount to the stability of representative democracy in the United States. As we pointed out earlier, the SCOTUS gutted the Voting Rights Act in 2013 and in 2021, and this will put representative democracy on precipice of strangulation. It is also important to note that the adherence (or non-adherence) to democratic tenets and norms are essential to the stability (or strangulation /death) of democracy; and that economic, political, and social institutions in all democracies are governed by the constitutional rule of law when enforced by a strong impartial judicial system. For example, the three

co-equal branches (executive, judicial, and legislative) of government are parts and parcel of the political institutions. These three institutions interact to build a strong and stable democracy or facilitate the strangulation/death of democracy.

For equation (2), *CO* represents Congressional oversights, *CTDIS* stands for the combination of conspiracy theories and disinformation, *SMP* captures social media platforms, *FI* represents foreign involvements; therefore, *PL.CO*, *PL.CTDIS.SMP*, and *PL.FI* capture the complex interactions between political leaders, such as the 45th POTUS, who are subject to Congressional oversights, use conspiracy theories and disinformation disseminated through various social media platforms, and invite and welcome foreign involvements in presidential elections. For equation (3), *SIP.NLD* represents societal injustices protests that intensified during the nationwide lockdown (*NLD*), *IPR* captures the incitements of violence at political rallies, *GPS* stands for the global COVID-19 pandemic shock; therefore, *PL.IPR*, *PL.CTDIS*, and *PL.GPS* and represent the conjunction of political leaders who engaged in the incitements of chaos at political rallies, peddled reckless conspiracy theories and disinformation to almost half of the voting public (their targeted consumers for *CTDIS*), and handled the global pandemic shock.

The focus is on the strangulation and the resuscitation of representative democracy with the intent of answering the pertinent research question regarding the stranglers and the rescuers of representative democracy in the United States. To put the answer to the main question succinctly, we substitute equations (2) and (3) into equation (1) and rewrite it in composite nonlinear form as:

$$DEM = (CRL.IJE.SC)^{1-\theta} + (TPS.DTN)^{\alpha-\beta} + (EPS.PL)^{\sigma} + (EPS.PL.CO)^{-\eta} + (EPS.PL.CTDIS.SMP)^{-\Omega} + (EPS.PL.FI)^{-\lambda} + (VP.SIP)^{\tau-\delta} + (VP.PL.IPR)^{\psi-\phi} + (VP.PL.CTDIS)^{\gamma-\varphi} + (VP.PL.GPS)^{\pi-\Phi} \quad (4)$$

Alternatively, we can rewrite equation (4) in linear form as:

$$DEM = 1 - \theta(CRL.IJE.SC) + \alpha - \beta(TPS.DTN) - \sigma(EPS.PL) - \eta(EPS.PL.CO) - \Omega(EPS.PL.CTDIS.SMP) - \lambda(EPS.PL.FI) + \tau - \delta(VP.SIP) + \psi - \phi(VP.PL.IPR) + \gamma - \varphi(VP.PL.CTDIS) + \pi - \Phi(VP.PL.GPS) \quad (5)$$

Equations (4) and (5) show the degree to which democracy can be destroyed or stabilized based on the composite explanatory variables on the right-hand side of both equations. In order to comprehend the magnitude of the strangulation of democracy, we partially differentiate *DEM* with respect to the composite explanatory variables on the right-hand side of equation (5) to yield:

$$\frac{\partial DEM}{\partial SC} = \frac{\partial DEM}{\partial CRL} \cdot \frac{\partial CRL}{\partial IJE} \cdot \frac{\partial IJE}{\partial SC} = 1 - \theta \quad (6)$$

$$\frac{\partial DEM}{\partial DTN} = \frac{\partial DEM}{\partial TPS} \cdot \frac{\partial TPS}{\partial DTN} = \alpha - \beta \quad (7)$$

$$\frac{\partial DEM}{\partial PL} = \frac{\partial DEM}{\partial EPS} \cdot \frac{\partial EPS}{\partial PL} = -\sigma \quad (8)$$

$$\frac{\partial DEM}{\partial CO} = \frac{\partial DEM}{\partial EPS} \cdot \frac{\partial EPS}{\partial PL} \cdot \frac{\partial PL}{\partial CO} = -\eta \quad (9)$$

$$\frac{\partial DEM}{\partial SMP} = \frac{\partial DEM}{\partial EPS} \cdot \frac{\partial EPS}{\partial PL} \cdot \frac{\partial PL}{\partial CTDIS} \cdot \frac{\partial CTDIS}{\partial SMP} = -\Omega \quad (10)$$

$$\frac{\partial DEM}{\partial FI} = \frac{\partial DEM}{\partial EPS} \cdot \frac{\partial EPS}{\partial PL} \cdot \frac{\partial PL}{\partial FI} = -\lambda \quad (11)$$

$$\frac{\partial DEM}{\partial SIP} = \frac{\partial DEM}{\partial VP} \cdot \frac{\partial VP}{\partial SIP} = \tau - \delta \quad (12)$$

$$\frac{\partial DEM}{\partial IPR} = \frac{\partial DEM}{\partial VVP} \cdot \frac{\partial VVP}{\partial PL} \cdot \frac{\partial PL}{\partial IPR} = \psi - \phi \quad (13)$$

$$\frac{\partial DEM}{\partial CTDIS} = \frac{\partial DEM}{\partial VVP} \cdot \frac{\partial VVP}{\partial PL} \cdot \frac{\partial PL}{\partial CTDIS} = \gamma - \varphi \quad (14)$$

and

$$\frac{\partial DEM}{\partial GPS} = \frac{\partial DEM}{\partial VVP} \cdot \frac{\partial VVP}{\partial PL} \cdot \frac{\partial PL}{\partial GPS} = \pi - \Phi \quad (15)$$

For equation (6), we interpret $1-\theta$ as the coefficient showing the impact of the SCOTUS' partial and partisan interpretation of the constitutional rule of law on representative democracy in the United States. Traditionally, the rule of law with impartial judicial enforcement is sacrosanct, that is, $\frac{\partial DEM}{\partial SC} = \frac{\partial DEM}{\partial CRL} \cdot \frac{\partial CRL}{\partial IJE} \cdot \frac{\partial IJE}{\partial SC} = 1$; therefore, $-\theta$ is the degree to which the SCOTUS' worst rulings for almost two centuries undermined the rule of law, especially when interpreted to favor the Republican Party, big corporations, and special interest groups or lobbyists, particularly in 2000, 2010, 2013 and 2021 as we discussed earlier. And for four years, the Department of Justice purposely interpreted the rule of law to exonerate the 45th POTUS and his allies. In essence, these partial partisan interpretations of the rule of law put representative democracy on the pathway to strangulation. For equation (7), $\alpha - \beta$ is the coefficient measuring the effect of the two political parties in the United and their adherence or non-adherence to democratic tenets and norms. In an extremely divided America, α is the coefficient representing the Democratic Party that still believes and adheres to democratic tenets and norms, and $-\beta$ is the coefficient representing the Republican Party's view or non-adherence to democratic tenets and norms. For representative democracy to remain stable, $\alpha - \beta > 0$, and when the Republican Party deviates from all democratic tenets and norms so that they can maintain complete control of power over the three co-equal branches of government, one should expect $\alpha - \beta < 0$; therefore, the strangulation of representative democracy is imminent.

For equations (8)-(11), $-\sigma$, $-\eta$, $-\Omega$, and $-\lambda$ are the coefficients measuring the strangulation of representative democracy when the 45th POTUS subverted the dynamic economic, political, and social institutions of representative democracy ($-\sigma$), refused to comply with Congressional oversights while in office ($-\eta$), used conspiracy theories and disinformation through various social media platforms to disseminate false narratives about his political opponents ($-\Omega$), and openly invited and solicited unprecedented foreign involvements in America's presidential elections ($-\lambda$).

In summary, the coefficient $1 - \theta$ shows the extent to which the rule of law was undermined for the past two decades since the SCOTUS dragged itself into partisan politics; therefore, it can no longer be viewed as an independent and impartial arbiter of the law, especially since it stopped the Florida recount in December 2000, opened the deluge of corporate money into politics in 2010, and gutted Section 4(b) of the Civil Rights Act in 2013 and in 2021. The coefficient $\alpha - \beta$ shows how the Republican Party deviated from the democratic norms by disenfranchising minority voters in order to maintain complete control of power at the demise of representative democracy. More importantly, these four coefficients ($-\sigma$, $-\eta$, $-\Omega$, and $-\lambda$) show that the 45th POTUS with autocratic impulses almost destroyed representative democracy in the United States. Above all, we consider $1 - \theta$, $\alpha - \beta$, $-\sigma$, $-\eta$, $-\Omega$, and $-\lambda$ to be the *democracy strangulation coefficients*; and that the destroyers of representative democracy associated to these coefficients are the SCOTUS (*SC*), weak and enabling Congressional oversights (*CO*) by the Republican Party, the 45th POTUS (*PL*), conspiracy theories and disinformation (*CTDIS*), social media platforms (*SMP*), and foreign involvement (*FI*).

With respect to equations (12)-(15), the coefficients ($\tau - \delta$, $\psi - \phi$, $\gamma - \varphi$, and $\pi - \Phi$) show that voters are divided about the tenets of democracy just as the two political parties are divided in a divided America. For equation (12), the $\tau - \delta$ coefficient shows that democracy is strengthened (τ) when the rational voters engaged in peaceful protests to highlight and call for solutions to the economic and socio-political

inequalities embedded in the system, and that democracy is fragile ($-\delta$) when many voters remain collusively silent despite the glaring inequalities. In addition, the $\psi - \phi$ coefficient in equation (13) also depicts the division of the voting public into two groups. There were those who participated in political rallies where the main political message was about building and strengthening American democracy (ψ). In contrast, there were those who attended political rallies where they were primed to become domestic terrorists insurrectionists ready to subvert democracy ($-\phi$) based on the false premise of “Make America Great Again.” Another important coefficient is $\gamma - \phi$ in equation (14), which shows that the voting public consists of those nonbelievers in conspiracy theories and disinformation who defended democracy (γ) at the ballot boxes, and there were the believers in and consumers of *CTDIS* who were primed by the 45th POTUS to destroy democracy ($-\phi$) at all costs if possible.

Finally, the $\pi - \Phi$ coefficient in equation (15) shows that some voters saw how the 45th POTUS mishandled the global COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the highest fatalities in the world, and this propelled many of these voters to the ballot boxes to repudiate the 45th POTUS in order to defend the sanctity of democracy (π). In contrast, almost half of the voters condoned and idolized how the 45th POTUS mishandled the global COVID-19 pandemic ($-\Phi$) because they bought into the endless false narratives that the pandemic was designed to blame his presidency. Overall, the τ , ψ , γ , and π coefficients show how the overwhelming majority of the rational voters came to resuscitate representative democracy from strangulation, despite the stricter voting laws in many states where the Republican Party controls the legislative bodies. Essentially, the rational voting public prevented representative democracy from strangulation at the ballot box.

One can easily deduce that a variety of economic and socio-political issues propelled unprecedented turnout of voters in the 2020 presidential election. It is impossible to provide numerical data on the extent to which economic-political-social inequalities prompted protests in cities nationwide, which propelled many voters to the ballot box. Given the global health care crisis of 2020 and the damage to the economy (even though the economy was robust in the early part of the first quarter), it was obvious that many voters could no longer condone political leaders such as the 45th POTUS who incited violent domestic insurrections at various political rallies, used conspiracy theories and disinformation to sow extreme political division and racial hatred,² and who failed to control the preventable massive spreads and fatalities due to the global pandemic.

The core argument is that the rational voters resuscitated representative democracy, thus one can interpret these coefficients to be $\tau - \delta > 0$, $\psi - \phi > 0$, $\gamma - \phi > 0$, and $\pi - \Phi > 0$, which actually reflect and/or capture the outcome of the 2020 presidential election. Based on the voting data, we can surmise that $81,268,924 > 74,216,154$ voted to repudiate the 45th POTUS’s handling of the nationwide societal protests against injustices from police brutality, his incitements of political violence and domestic terrorists’ insurrection at political rallies, his solicitations of foreign involvements, his endless use of conspiracy theories and disinformation, and his terrible mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic that claimed the lives of many Americans. These flaws would not have mattered if he had won those critical states; therefore, to understand the magnitude of the resuscitation, we express and compute the actual *democracy resuscitation index (DRI)* as:

$$DRI = \frac{CWV}{NWW} \times 100 \text{ or } DRI = \frac{65,012}{7,052,770} \times 100 = 0.92 \quad (16)$$

where *CWV* captures the critical winning votes (65,012) and *NWV* captures the net winning votes (7,052,770).³ It is important to note from equation (16) that the *DRI* will be 100 if *CWV* equals *NWV*; therefore, the *DRI* being 0.92 implies that less than one percent of *NWV* came from those critical states, thus they can be viewed as the voters who actually resuscitated American democracy in 2020.

If the COVID-19 pandemic had not caused the national and international lockdowns, which forced American voters to see the inhumane police brutality, the national and international protests against societal injustices would not had occurred; and perhaps, the combined 65,012 voters from Arizona, Georgia, Wisconsin, and the Second Congressional District of Nebraska would have voted to re-elect the 45th

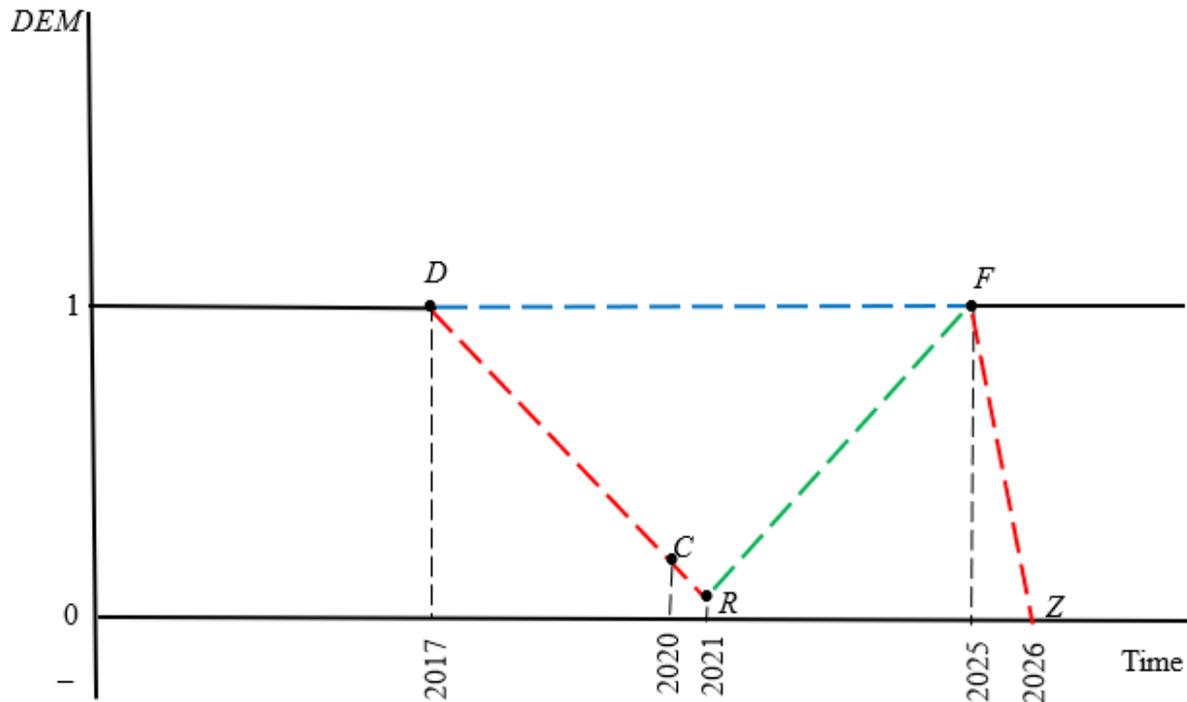
POTUS and thus magnifying the $-\Omega$ coefficient of strangulation of democracy. In other words, if one assumes the absence of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the outcome of the 2020 presidential election would have been different, thus these coefficients could have been $\tau - \delta < 0$, $\psi - \phi < 0$, $\gamma - \varphi < 0$, and $\pi - \Phi < 0$, which means the 46th POTUS would not have been elected because the outcome would have favored (74,216,154 < 81,268,924) the 45th POTUS to serve a second term in the White House. This would have resulted in the transition of representative democracy to apartheid democracy in the United States. Overall, we consider $\tau - \delta$, $\psi - \phi$, $\gamma - \varphi$, and $\pi - \Phi$ to be the general *democracy resuscitation coefficients*.

Figure 1 provides a visual explanation of the strangulation to representative democracy in the United States since 2017 that we laid out and explained by all the equations above. A stable representative democracy is depicted by $DEM = 1$. When the 45th POTUS undermined democracy by subverting the rule of law, he emboldened the Republican Party to jettison the conventional democratic tenets and norms by making voting almost impossible for minorities, subverted the three vital categories of institutions, disregarded Congressional oversights, used unsubstantiated conspiracy theories and disinformation disseminated through social media platforms, and invited and solicited foreign involvements in the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections, the DEM fell between 0 and 1, which we consider to be the democracy strangulation zone that the United States experienced between January 20, 2017 and January 20, 2021 under the 45th POTUS.

The collapse or death of representative democracy would occur whenever DEM enters into the negative zone. In essence, the red dotted line DCR shows the level of strangulation to DEM when it entered the democracy strangulation zone where $0 < DEM \leq 1$ between 2017 and 2021 and headed in the direction of the death zone where $0 \geq DEM < 0$. It could have reached the collapse or death zone had the 45th POTUS won a second term in the 2020 presidential election or had the January 6, 2021 Capitol Hill domestic terrorists insurrectionists succeeded in overturning the election certification. Point C shows that DEM was resuscitated at the ballot box on November 3rd, 2020, and line CR shows the further damage while DEM was in the democracy strangulation zone until January 20th, 2021. The green dotted line RF shows that DEM is currently undergoing interim resuscitation, which may last until the 2024 presidential election and beyond.

The dotted lines DRF show the V-shaped trajectory, which implies that representative democracy in the United States has slipped into the strangulation/death valley in this era of global democracy strangulation contagion. The blue dotted line segment DF shows the *four years of structural break* in the stability of DEM that political pundits would never have predicted because the general assumption is that representative democracy in the United States is sacrosanct until the voters came to the realization of the political shock of the 2016 presidential election; and for four years, they witnessed the gradual strangulation of democracy. Given the intense racial hatred and extreme political division in the United States as manifested by the composition of the 117th Congress, it is difficult to predict whether DEM would regain full stability ($DEM = 1$) between now and 2024 and beyond or whether DEM would return back to the democracy strangulation valley after the 2024 presidential election if the 46th POTUS were to be voted out of office. In other words, the red dotted line FZ shows democracy strangulation could start once again by January 20, 2025, with rapid decline, if any Republican who has copied and mastered the democracy strangulation template embedded in their party wins the presidential election in 2024 as well as both Houses of Congress. Since the past presidential election on November 3rd 2020, all political events continued to reveal the true preference of the Republican Party. Now, it is obvious that many Republicans are ready for the United States to fully transition to ochlocratic autocracy.

FIGURE 1
STRANGULATION AND RESUSCITATION OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY



CONCLUSIONS AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study provides a theoretical framework with which to examine the strangulation and the interim resuscitation of representative democracy in the United States. This paper concurs with research scholars that the rule of law, strong institutions, democracy, and the constitution are not sacrosanct anywhere in the world because there are many power-hungry autocratic leaders who can subvert all democratic tenets and norms as well as the vital institutional pillars of representative democracy. In the past five years, the United States provided a good illustration of the fragility of the rule of law, institutional pillars of democracy, and the Constitution.

We assert that the Supreme Court’s worst rulings since 1857 continued to contribute to undermining the rule of law and destroying democracy as manifested by its incursion into partisan politics in the 2000 presidential election recount in Florida and the interpretation of political donations as free speech protected under the First Amendment, which ultimately opened the floodgates to limitless personal and corporate donations into politics since 2010. Furthermore, the SCOTUS’ gutting of Section 4(b) of the Civil Rights Act in 2013 and then gutting most of what remains of the landmark Voting Rights Act by upholding Arizona voter restriction laws in a 6-3 ruling on July 1, 2021 may have ultimately upended democracy in the United States. Many states are now emboldened to pass stricter voting laws to disenfranchise minority voters who were instrumental in the resuscitation of democracy at the ballot box in November 2020.

We also concur with research scholars who argued that the strong institutions and the Constitution could not restrict the autocratic aspirations of the 45th POTUS during his four-year term in office. Given the complicity and obsequiousness of the Republican Party with the 45th POTUS, many within the party no longer believe in democratic tenets because they welcome foreign involvements in presidential elections. We strongly believe that if the 45th POTUS had won the 2020 presidential election, he would have eviscerated democracy and all the democratic norms. The contention of this paper is that the *global pandemic shock* propelled voters to the ballot box to repudiate the 45th POTUS for the gross mishandling

the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in the massive spreads and preventable fatalities when compared with other advanced countries [Owoye and Onafowora (2021)]. Intuitively, the COVID-19 pandemic compelled voters to resuscitate democracy because the rule of law, Congressional checks and balances, and the vital institutions could not constrain the autocratic aspirations of the 45th POTUS and the Republican Party.

Given the severity of the damage to representative democracy in the United States during the four-year term of the 45th POTUS, we conclude that American democracy survived the stress test, so far. For now, we consider the *democracy resuscitation coefficients* – proxied by the *democratic resuscitation index* and computed to be 0.92 – derived in the theoretical framework to barely outweigh the *democracy strangulation coefficients*. Based on the Capitol Hill domestic political terrorists insurrection of January 6, 2021, which was intended to turn representative democracy into ochlocracy, it is important to point out that democracy in the United States is currently in the political intensive care unit and undergoing interim resuscitation under the 46th POTUS and the extremely polarized 117th Congress. Interpretatively, representative democracy went through four years of agonizing *structural strangulation* of its institutions, which may take four or more years of diligent *structural resuscitation* of the vital institutions to achieve the desired stability ($DEM = 1$ as shown in Figure 1) in representative democracy.

Furthermore, there are many aspiring political candidates who have adopted the democracy strangulation playbook that the 45th POTUS implanted in the Republican Party, which other countries are also adopting as the template for governance. American democracy will return to the democracy strangulation zone in 2025 if voters reject the current 46th POTUS at the ballot box in 2024 and the Republican Party regains control of the White House, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. The Republican Party's voter suppression strategy nationwide is laying down the solid foundation to win the 2024 presidential election. It is obvious that the SCOTUS' decision in 2013 in which it gutted out Section 4(b) of the Civil Rights Act in *Shelby County v. Holder* continued to embolden the Republican Party in this endeavor. The decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* in 2010 opened the floodgate of dark money into politics to nourish the power of the political party that no longer believes in democratic tenets and norms. Ultimately, the Republican Party will succeed with their voter suppression strategy and democracy in America may finally die at the ballot box and thereby usher in ochlocratic autocracy in 2025 and beyond. Worldwide, other western democracies are copying the democracy strangulation template, which the Republican Party has now fully embraced through voter suppression legislations nationwide.

As for the political implications, it is important for Americans to recognize that the January 6, 2021 Capitol Hill insurrection could be construed as one of the manifestations of the challenges and flaws embedded in representative democracy; therefore, the need to realize that history would repeat itself if they continue to ignore and fail to address the major challenges and flaws entrenched in representative democracy. Given that there had been more than 700 proposals, more than on any legislative proposal, introduced in Congress to reform the Electoral College system over the past two centuries, rational Americans need to tackle the issue of Electoral College system that produced five presidents (especially two in first two decades of the 21st century) that lost the direct popular votes. The 45th POTUS lost the direct popular votes by more than 7 million votes in the 2020 presidential election, yet, he was determined to explore the flaws in the Electoral College system through Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Nevada, and Wisconsin in order to nullify the results of the election in his favor. If this had been a simple popular majority democratic election, this would not had been an issue for debate because there would have been no need for any certification of the Electoral College votes; therefore, it would had been impossible to contemplate the Capitol Hill terrorists insurrection or political coup d'état intended to stop the election certification.

More importantly, Americans need to acknowledge the existence of digital technology and the easy access to various social media platforms, which have amplified the velocity of conspiracy theories and disinformation with infinite multiplier effects that are destructive to democracy. For example, conspiracy theories and disinformation have succeeded in convincing nearly half of Americans not to believe in the health risks and the fatalities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the end result is that many of these believers in conspiracy theories and disinformation are now openly defiant of scientific-based medical

guidelines and many are also vaccine-hesitant despite the glaring fatalities due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its Delta and Omicron variants. Essentially, when political leaders, at all levels of government, continue to propagate unsubstantiated conspiracy theories and disinformation to convince half of the voting public not to trust the result of the 2020 presidential election, which is the normal renewal process of democracy every four years, they put representative democracy on the precipice of strangulation in the United States; and this strangulation would be globally contagious. In the end, the nationwide voter suppression laws enacted by Republican lawmakers in many states, which the SCOTUS continues to uphold, will ultimately destroy the representative democracy that we cherish.

ENDNOTES

1. Rosenthal (2015) and Sullivan, Esq (2015) provided more detailed discussions on SCOTUS's rulings that many legal scholars considered to have undermined the rule of law and shredded the Constitution of the United States.
2. For more detail discussions on aggregate demand for hatred and aggregate supply of hatred in the United States, see Owoye and Onafowora (2021).
3. The data used for the computation may vary slightly depending on the source, but the computed *DRI* remains the same regardless of data from Wikipedia at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_United_States_presidential_election and/or CNN at <https://www.cnn.com/election/2020/results/president> for the 2020 presidential election results.

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