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Chapter XII

Digital Democracy: Democracy in the Light of Information and Communication Technology

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Abstract

The purpose of the chapter is to discuss the effects of information and communication technologies on democracy and focuses on the driving forces, citizen and technology, to understand the effects and future implications. The research is based on literature review and uses informative approach to analyze the existing practices in electronic democracy. It inquires the relationship between the theories in communications and democracy, and analyzes the interaction with the citizens from Athenian and the Orwellian perspectives in Politics. It proposes a framework to identify and analyze the driving forces and the issues related to the digital democracy. The resultant effects are important to study as they play a major role in shaping society and uncovering the issues related to direct democracy through integrated technologies. The future of democracy has privacy, security and legal implications but the enlightened citizens, compatible infrastructure and governance bodies will help in eliminating the drawbacks of direct democracy.

Introduction

Government plays an important role in the development of democracy and spends billions of dollars every year in information and communication technology (ICT). The Federal government alone spends over \$25 billion annually on IT systems and services to decrease the gap between government and citizens (United States General Services Administration, n.d.). In 1993, the White House formed the Information Infrastructure Task Force (IITF) to articulate and implement the Administration's vision for the National Information Infrastructure (NII) (United States Department of Justice Computer Crime and Policy Program, n.d.).

The benefits of the NII claimed by the Center for Civic Networking are to create a smarter country that provides less costly, efficient government; have well-informed citizens that result in eliminating poverty; and promoting life-long learning (The Public's Library and Digital Archive, n.d.). According to the estimation of Computer System Policy project, NII will create as much as \$300 billion annually in new sales across a broad range of industries (The Public's Library and Digital Archive, n.d.). Besides, all these claims and promises, the effects of ICT on politics and democracy are still a question to many experts where the conflict of interest occurs between the two.

This paper analyzes the effect of ICT issues like security and privacy on politics and democracy and predicts the future of democracy in 2008 as by then the ICT will be experimented, used, and experienced in various areas of government bodies and the citizens and the governers bodies will be more aware of the ICT usages and the issues related to the digital democracy. The discussion also includes the concept of tele-democracy and driving forces behind it and anchors examples of the usage of ICT in the public interest and points out the social, privacy and security implications in the present and in the future.

Definition of Tele-Democracy

Experts describe a democracy facilitated by the ICT as "Tele-democracy." Tele-democracy originates a system that takes an initiative to educate citizens by providing an access to databases (Grosswiler, 1998; Schwartz, 1992); promotes discussion and electronic community meetings between advocates or politicians and citizens (Becker, 1993; Betts, 1992; Igbaria, Shayo, Olfman, 1999; Schwartz, 1992). It facilitates electronic voting systems (Betts, 1992; Schwartz, 1992), and directs electronic

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