

The Democratic Privacy Convergence

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Abstract. This is a proposal for privacy technologies to be used to enable people to work together without their identities being revealed. This will allow a group to coordinate and to promote democratic ideals, human rights and political accountability. In this way, privacy tools are used as a path to a more democratic country, empowering the people to hold their government accountable without risking their lives and thereby allowing people, who previously would not have become involved out of fear of consequences, to participate. A positive effect being a decrease in poverty as democracy grows and spreads, with South Africa identified as a prime candidate.

1. Rights.....	2
2. Problem.....	2
3. Democracy.....	3
4. Political Accountability.....	3
5. Poverty.....	4
6. Education.....	4
7. Technology.....	5
8. Master Rights.....	6
9. Censorship Resistance.....	7
10. Convergence.....	7
11. South Africa.....	8
12. Path to Democracy.....	8
13. Conclusion.....	9
References.....	10
Wiki References.....	11

1. Rights

Throughout history, people have been fighting for the right to be considered equal, where no person is considered to be more important or less important than any other person. [a][1]

One major obstacle to equality for most of human history was the existence of monarchies, where leaders and rulers were chosen by birth. If you were born into a royal family you were afforded more rights than normal people and were able to rule unchallenged. [b][2]

Only by fighting for equal rights, regardless of birth, can we be truly free of oppressive governments.

2. Problem

Most countries in the world define themselves as democratic, but not all people's rights are respected equally in these countries. In some of these countries, the open critique of leaders and government is normal. While in other countries, this will most likely lead to your arrest and sometimes death. [c][d]

When there are no checks on power, and when leaders are not held accountable; such abuse of power leads to great suffering of people living under that rule.

From the "*French Revolution*" to the "*Arab Spring*", the only way to force leaders to respect the people has unfortunately been through protests, which have often resulted in violence. [e][f]

The problem is that a government often has far greater resources at its disposal, thereby creating a high stakes situation. Although many people would like to speak out and oppose their government, they fear persecution.

Oppressive governments can be equated to schoolyard bullies, who through the power of fear rule over the people. This fear experienced by people is often more destructive to human rights than any laws; as a result, people change the way they live. The outcome is the oppression of human rights through a proxy of fear.

How can people, through non-violent means, level the playing field and oppose the government and mitigate the power it believes it has?

3. Democracy

The only form of government where the people hold the power is a democracy. Unfortunately, not all democracies are truly democratic countries, where the people hold the power and the government serves the people.

Democracy is intangible and very fragile. Although we cannot touch it, we can feel when it has disappeared. Just living in a democracy is not good enough. [3]

For a democracy to exist, persist and survive; people need to participate in their democracy to maintain it and to ensure that it survives, actively working to grow and defend it. Complacency and non-participation empower the greedy and the corrupt and inevitably disempowers the people.

Although defenders of democracy are diverse and may vote for a variety of different political parties, they can work together under the common goal of fighting for one another and our rights. People do not need to be from the same political party to work together to defend democracy.

4. Political Accountability

There are two sides to every democracy; the people and the politicians. Often, unknowingly, the reason why democracies fail is that the people allowed democratic accountability to fail.

We need to ask ourselves two poignant questions. Why in some countries is a person in political office not immediately removed from office when caught participating in corrupt activities? Why do these corrupt politicians retain their positions with little or no consequences?

Political accountability is where the people, through the power of their vote, hold politicians and civil servants accountable. [g]

In a democracy, where political accountability is actively practised; political parties remove and discipline people swiftly who are found to behave scandalously, fearing a voter backlash in subsequent elections.

A democracy cannot exist without political accountability. In the absence of political accountability, there are no consequences to corruption or abuse of power. Under these circumstances, governments quickly become corrupt and rotten to its core and in turn abuse the people they govern.

Political accountability means that unquestioning party loyalty should actively be discouraged. If a party does not do what is best for the people, the people need to punish that party by voting for another political party.

5. Poverty

From 1800 to 2000, the world's population went from 1 billion people to 7 billion people. During this time, people living in extreme poverty went from the majority, with 90% of the world living in extreme poverty in 1800, to less than 10% of the world living in extreme poverty in 2000. [4][h]

For the past two thousand years, we have experienced consistent technological improvements and many scientific discoveries. However, these advancements have had little impact on the number of extremely poor people in the world. Extreme poverty remained relatively constant, while monarchies were the dominant form of governance in the world. [5][6][i]

The world's first modern Democracy was formed in the United States with the declaration of independence and signing into law of the "*Bill of Rights*" in 1789. At the same time in 1789, the French Revolution started in France, which resulted in the signing of another equally important document called "*Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*". [j][k]

When we attempt to find a reason for this sudden reduction in poverty, it appears as if the sudden change in how countries function, is strongly correlated with a poverty reduction.

There is little doubt that there is a strong link between poverty and human rights. Thus, it can be concluded that the eradication of poverty can only be achieved through the protection and promotion of human rights.

6. Education

People are born with certain instincts and abilities. Learning to walk and talk are natural skills. A new-born is even able to experience fear and pain. [7]

We are not born to instinctively know how to participate in a democracy. Voting and participating in a democracy is a skill that needs to be taught and learnt. People need to know why they should care and why voting empowers them. They need to learn that their vote contributes to democratic political accountability and a well-functioning democracy.

7. Technology

From the invention of the printing press to the automobile, the invention of new technologies is often disruptive to the current status-quo. Technology can be used for good, but it can also be used for evil. It can be used to empower people or it can be used to oppress people. [1]

Over the last few decades, several technologies have been invented that when used together as a cohesive system and in the correct way; can be used to empower people to speak out against oppressive corrupt governments.

People that previously would have been quiet and would not speak out because of fear, can now voice their dissatisfaction.

These technologies are enabling and empowering technologies, each playing a different role and making specific contributions to the technology ecosystem. Over time, these tools and ecosystem have grown to reach a critical point where the tools are easy enough for most people to learn and to use. Through the use of these technologies, the people of a country can sufficiently mitigate a government's position of power and abuse.

Internet. The internet is one of the most significant inventions of all time and the most empowering to ordinary people. For all of human history, the control of information has been critical when attempting to control and oppress people; from preventing peasants and slaves from learning to read, to the banning and burning of books. The internet changed everything by levelling the playing field. The internet allows anybody to access information, communicate and share ideas. [m]

Open Source Development Model. Human beings love to create things and enjoy creating even more when they can create something together. Together with the internet came Open Source Software; sometimes called Free Software, where the meaning of 'free' means 'freedom'. The development of Open Source software often starts small, as a hobby, however, over time it is often improved to such an extent that it starts to compete and outperform commercial software. Today, many aspects of our lives are run on Open Source software, from our phones to the servers that run the internet. This collaborative process is an example of people working together for the common good and is a model that can be applied to anything to achieve great things. [8]

Private Anonymous Communication. Over time, this exceptional machine in the form of the Internet, together with the Open Source Software Development model, started to create some incredible software focusing on using the internet safely, securely, and most importantly, privately. TLS and GPG allow us to encrypt our communication. TOR, Whonix and I2P allow us to communicate and use the Internet anonymously. Tox and Briar allow us to send messages and share files. Together, these different types of software can be used to communicate, share and collaborate privately and anonymously. [n][o][p][q][9][10][11]

Private Money. One of the most significant software inventions is blockchain and cryptocurrencies. Although many people don't understand these inventions, or where they might lead us; it is clear that they are reshaping our world and our futures. For the first time in modern human history, people can exchange and trade privately using cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin, and if you would like to do it anonymously and securely you can use Monero. [12]

Decentralised Management. When there is a central company or organisation, this becomes a central point of failure. When people want to operate privately and anonymously, there cannot be a central body that controls everything. Monero, the privacy-focused cryptocurrency, faced the problem of centralised control. To solve this problem Monero created a completely decentralised management system, based on a meritocracy where those that do the work make the choices. Some leaders guide the project, but nobody controls or owns the project. Mutual respect and kindness are common, as everybody has a shared common goal. [13]

8. Master Rights

Rights are fundamental to how we treat each other and the society we live in. We all should have the right to life and the right to be treated equally, regardless of our birth. With the abolishment of slavery, the right to be in control of one's own life and bodies was returned to the people.

These rights are vital to us all, but what is often overlooked is that there are key master rights that other rights cannot exist without.

Private Property. The right to private property is the most important master right that most other rights cannot exist without. Without the right to own something and it cannot unreasonably be taken away from you, underpins all other rights. Without private property rights, people become slaves to a government, and all other rights are undermined or called into question, even the right to life.

Privacy. The second master right is the right to privacy and the ability to live one's life without the government watching, recording and classifying your every step and action. How would you behave if your neighbours could watch you while sleeping, be present for your children's conception and birth, look up every financial transaction you have ever made, and the government knew who you voted for? Without the right to privacy, the government can enter your home, search, investigate and spy on you, with or without your knowledge or consent.

Freedom of speech. The third master right is the ability to openly voice opinions and criticisms, without fear of retaliation or censorship. If we can't speak out against and challenge abuses of power when we see it, then the abuse will continue indefinitely. If people are unable to voice an opinion and criticize others, the people are powerless and forced to accept the abuse.

Without the right to private property, the right to privacy and the right to free speech, all other rights are compromised. The right to life, dignity, self-determination and equality no longer apply in the way they were intended.

9. Censorship Resistance

Privacy is an amplifier of other rights. The more your privacy is respected, the stronger your right to free speech, own private property, dignity, freedom of movement, freedom to have your own political or religious views and not be persecuted or discriminated against for those views.

As privacy amplifies people's rights, it also disempowers authoritarian and oppressive governments. The more the privacy of the citizens of a country is respected, the less a government can use and abuse private citizens' information.

Governments exercise control over citizens by attempting to control the flow of information. By controlling what information enters mass media, governments preferred information becomes the only voice of the so-called truth.

Miss-information and propaganda are tools of official state bodies. Threats of violence, death threats and public shaming are unofficial tools used by state-sponsored supporters.

Privacy tools are tools that turn these control mechanisms of government upside down. The more people use privacy tool, the more resistant the people of a country are to any form of censorship and bully tactics.

10. Convergence

As humans, privacy is something we are all drawn to. As people seek greater privacy and autonomy, they discover that what they seek is found in democratic governments with a free market economy. In countries where the right to privacy is respected other rights are often also respected.

Privacy can thus be a vehicle to democracy, where privacy tools and technologies can be used to circumvent a government's position of power, thereby allowing citizens to work together and openly criticize a government without fear.

All the privacy technologies we have at our disposal today took time to invent, develop and mature. Collectively they have recently reached a tipping point where they can be relied upon safely and be used by people who are not necessarily technology enthusiasts.

It is also wise to keep in mind that privacy is not a static goal. It does not mean that once you have reached your goal, you have won. There is a constant arms race between those who attempt to undermine privacy and those who want to improve privacy.

11. South Africa

Many countries call themselves a democracy when they are nothing more than a one-party state machine holding onto power in any way it can. South Africa falls into this category, as the ANC government is the only government that has been elected since 1994.

The longer the ANC is in power, the more corruption grows, leading to bolder and more aggressive oppression of the people's rights through the centralisation of power over time.

South Africa has a reasonably strong constitution and by most accounts a free electoral process. South Africans should then easily be able to decide to choose a different government. Unfortunately, a very large part of the South African voting population is very poor and also not educated in concepts related to democracy and human rights and are easily swayed by promises and one-time hand-outs.

Over time, disillusioned voters have decided to not vote as they see it as pointless, or deliberately spoil their vote out of protest.

In the 2019 general elections, there were 26.7 million registered voters, but only 17.6 million voted. With 9.1 million registered voters that did not vote, making non-voters the second largest voter group after the ANC that had 10 million votes. This excludes the larger group of eligible voters that are not registered to vote. [14]

12. Path to Democracy

In a true and healthy democracy, the people have the power to elect and hold government accountable. In an authoritarian and oppressive government, the state holds the power and actively works to maintain that power.

In an authoritarian lead country, the state is at the heart of the country controlling the people. In a true democracy, the people are at the heart of the country and control the state.

The peaceful transition of a government to a people-centred democracy starts with private individuals working together privately, using privacy tools to ensure each other's safety. When people coordinate privately we don't need to trust each other but we can work together to a common and shared goal.

Poverty, combined with poor voter education, is the single biggest obstacle that stands in the way of achieving true democracy. To achieve a people-centred democracy people need to be educated on what their rights are, the power of their vote and how political accountability works.

We need to work together to help educate the general public on what their rights are and how to hold political parties accountable to the people.

Through an education process, political parties that are openly democratic need to be identified and used to show people what to look for in a political party, regardless of what they stand for or how they promote themselves.

Democracy starts by electing a pro-democratic political party and then being willing to vote for somebody else when they do not perform.

As democracy grows and politicians are held accountable, governments are forced to focus on what is best for the people rather than the consolidation of their own wealth and power. This leads to a reduction in poverty and improvement of living conditions for the people.

13. Conclusion

A multiparty democracy is a worthwhile and achievable goal in many countries, through the grassroots working together of the people, using privacy technologies to safely coordinate and work towards shared goals.

The primary goals are to promote voter education and political accountability. We only need to teach a person once about their rights and the importance of voting. If enough people are convinced, your grassroots students become your biggest promoters, leading to the spread of democracy and a change in government.

South Africa as a country and democracy stands as an example of a democracy ready for change. On the 30th anniversary of the country's democracy, if the people are brave enough to choose a new government, South Africa will enter the next phase of its democracy and move from an immature one-party state to a mature multiparty democracy.

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