

DEMOCRESSAY: AN ESSAY COMPETITION ON DEMOCRACY

2021 THEME

BUILDING

RESILIENT

DEMOCRACIES

2021 THEME: BUILDING RESILIENT DEMOCRACIES

Democracies around the world, old and new, are experiencing the biggest challenges to their relevance and quality since the third wave of democratization in the 70's. Many democracy indices show this phenomenon of democratic recession as what Larry Diamond calls it. In 2020, the Economist Intelligence Unit has recorded the worst ever democracy score index and the pandemic has accelerated this decline. In the same year, the number of free countries reached its lowest level since 15 years of attrition that was seen as a period of global democratic decline according to Freedom House. Meanwhile, V-Dem posted a decrease in global share of democracies from 54% in 2009 to 49% in 2019.

Many democracies in Asia are facing challenges such as military coups, the rise of populist leaders, state capture by political elites, erosion of democratic norms and institutions, social polarization, transnational problems, and many more. These democratic challenges continue to exist because of anti-democratic tendencies of individuals and institutions when democracy threatens their self-interests. Rent-seeking behavior and corruption are perennial. Economic inequality continues to widen and may go against democracy when it results to social exclusion. Identity politics is fueling social polarization. And cross boundary phenomena such as migration, pandemics, climate change, global trade, and interference in elections are threatening democratization in each individual country.

These democratic challenges, most often than not, result to growing disillusionment with and declining trust in democracy. However, despite this democratic crisis, democracy still offers better chances when it comes to achieving freedom, peace, and development. According to Amartya Sen, democracy provides a framework for the equality of individuals' rights, promotes freedom of expression of interests and preferences, and free flow of information. In addition to its intrinsic value, there is an enduring argument to continue strengthening democracies and make them more resilient to current and future crises.

Building resilient democracies is about ensuring democracy, as a political or governance system, to be able to cope, survive, recover, and improve every time it faces complex challenges and crises. Resilient democracy has the following attributes: flexibility which is the ability to absorb shocks and respond to new social demands; recovery which is the ability to overcome these shocks; adaptation which is the ability to change in response to a stress to the system; and innovation which is the ability to improve more efficiently and effectively in addressing the challenges or crises.

2021 THEME: BUILDING RESILIENT DEMOCRACIES

Democressay 2021 with the theme "Building Resilient Democracies" aims to highlight successful initiatives of and proposals from individuals, leaders, civil society, communities, and institutions in ensuring the survival, progress, consolidation and improvement of democracy as a political or governance system in Asia. The essays should address the following guide questions:

1. How can democratic systems address internal threats such as party splits/switching, military coups, authoritarian leaders, corruption and rent seeking behaviors, social polarization and exclusion, fake news, deterioration of trust in political actors and processes, and other threats to democracy?
2. How can democratic systems absorb and address the effects from external challenges such as migration, pandemics, climate change, global trade, and electoral interference?
3. How can we design democracies to become more resilient to current and future crises?



ELIGIBILITY

- This essay competition is intended for those individuals between the age of 15 and 30.
- Participants must be a citizen and resident of any Asian country.
- KAS reserves the sole and absolute discretion to exclude or disqualify any participant/entry from the competition.



AWARD

The prize includes the following:

- Top 3 Best Essays will be awarded with SGD 800.00 each and will be offered a scholarship grant to enroll in the Konrad Adenauer School for Young Politicians (KASYP) & certificate
- In addition to the top 3, up to 7 Best Essays will be awarded with SGD 800.00 each & certificate
- Awarded essays will get a chance to be published by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 01 July 2021 - Call for Entries
- 30 September 2021 - Deadline for Submission (11:59 PM UTC+8)
- October 2021 - Review of Entries
- 30 November 2021 - Announcement of Winners



CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

- Evaluation criteria include: quality of ideas/proposal, structure, critical analysis, coherence of arguments, originality/creativity, style, and use of sources and evidence.
- Please complete the competition form which should be submitted together with your final essay.
- The essays must be written in English and must not be longer than 2,000 words excluding the references and should follow the format:
 - Font style: Arial; Font size: 12 ; Double spacing
 - Paper size: A4 with 1-inch margin on all sides
 - Insert page numbers on the bottom right
 - Only use footnotes for citation. No need to provide list of references.
 - Charts, images, and illustrations should be avoided unless absolutely necessary. Please insert them as Annexes with clear labelling and not as part of the main essay.
- Essays found not observing standards against plagiarism will be automatically disqualified from the competition.
- Only one entry is accepted per participant. In case of multiple submissions, the latest essay received closer to the deadline will be considered the final entry and all earlier submissions will be disregarded.
- Multiple authorship is not allowed.
- All winning essays will become the property of the KAS. KAS reserves the right to use, reproduce, publish, print, edit and distribute these essays and names of winning participant without obtaining further prior permission and payment of any fees or royalty to the respective participants. Where any essay is published by KAS, the participant or author will be credited.
- Employees of KAS and official institutional partners of the Foundation are not eligible to participate.



REVIEW COMMITTEE

Essays will be blind-reviewed by the Review Committee comprised of 3 external and 2 internal reviewers. The jury will complete their selections of finalists by the end of October 2021 and will be announced on November 30, 2021.

The decision of the Review Committee is final and not open for appeal.



STEERING COMMITTEE

This essay competition is organized by the Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. The team is headed by its Director, Mr. Christian Echle with Mr. Rey C. Padit, Programme Manager for this particular project.



DATA AGREEMENT

By participating in this Democressay: An Essay Competition on Democracy, participants hereby accept the above Terms and Conditions, and gives consent to KAS for collecting, using and/or disclosing their personal data to third parties (including any third party located outside of Singapore) for the purposes of processing, handling and managing their participation in this essay competition.



SUBMISSION

Please submit your entries in Microsoft Word document format to:

Rey Uzhmar C. Padit

Programme Manager, Political Co-operation
Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
Email: rey.padit@kas.de