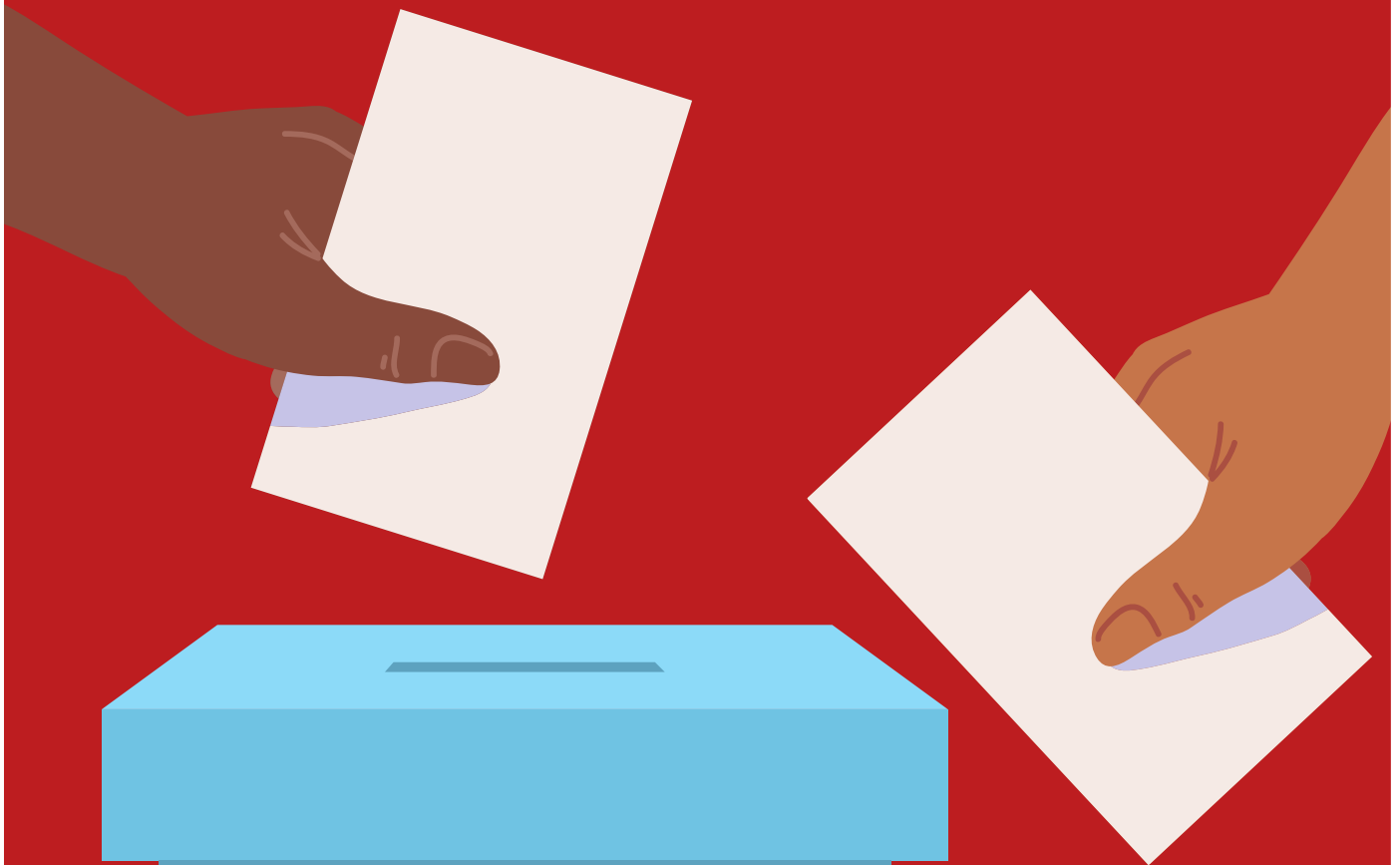


UCC's Political Magazine

# POLITY



**DEFENDING  
DEMOCRACY**

Spring 23'

Polity is a society publication run under the University College Cork Government and Politics Society. Formerly the Government and Politics Review, it was relaunched as a magazine in 2022.

#### **Mission**

The Polity mission is to educate and connect with University College Cork students on political issues ranging from social issues, national issues to international issues.

#### **Vision**

The Polity vision this year is different to the years gone by, the vision is 'Defending Democracy'. At Polity, we want to highlight the importance of defending our democracy from social, national, and international issues. Polity will be the platform to speak about these issues and how they connect to defending, nurturing, and promoting our democracy.

#### **Values**

At polity, we value truth and respect. We value everyone's opinion which is why Polity is a platform for people to express themselves on issues that they are passionate about once those opinions are factual and respectful. **There will be no publication of opinions that are not true or target marginalised people.**



04

08

14

22

37

42

# WELCOME

The People Behind Polity (04)  
A Note From The Editor (05)  
Notes from the Editorial Team (06)  
Welcome from the Government and Politics Society (07)

# NATIONAL

Finish the Fight (08)  
The Presidential Election is Where the Craic is at (12)

# EUROPEAN

The Interview with Roberta Metsola (14)  
Tightening Safeguards in Europe's Democratic Lynchpin (19)

# INTERNATIONAL

2023: The Moment of Truth for Turkish Democracy (22)  
A Dying Democracy (27)  
Neo-Colonialism and Cobalt in the Congo (29)  
Protests, Women's Rights and the Power of Social Media in Iran (32)  
Why Afghanistan Matters (36)

# ACTIVISM

Generation Z and Democracy (37)  
Youth Political Participation (40)

# POETRY

The Puppy (42)  
The Art of War (43)

# THE PEOPLE BEHIND POLITY

## EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor - Luke O'Connell

Deputy Editor - Jack Walsh

Director of Design - Emer Neville

Director of Marketing - Aoibhe O'Brien

## CONTRIBUTORS

Alex O'Connell

Atakan Uzun

Brian O'Kane

Camille Mamadou

Eiméid Edward Moore

Gerald Patrick O'Donovan

Jack Walsh

Julie Cukier

Lorraine Ní Chathasaigh

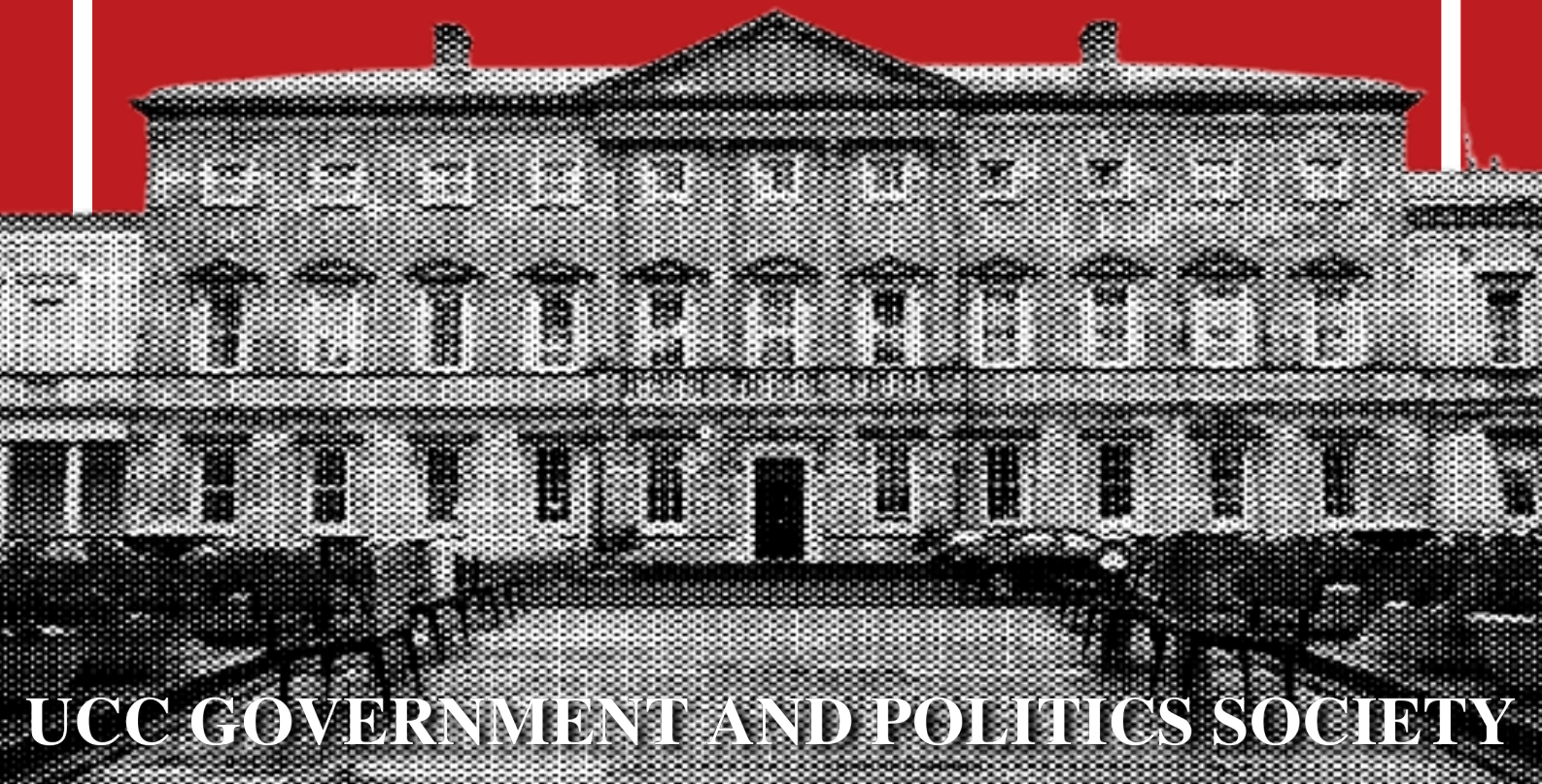
Martha Cashell

Niamh Browne

Zara Stout

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Caia McIlreavy  
@caiadoesfilm



UCC GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS SOCIETY

# A Note From the Editor

The importance of democracy can never be understated. Sometimes, it is something that we take for granted. Watching Barack Obama's interview on the Daily Show with Trevor Noah, he alluded to the importance of defending democracy in the wake of the US midterm elections. Here is where the inspiration for this theme was born. We must do everything we can to protect and defend our democratic institutions and those most vulnerable in society.

There is a notion that the world is always falling apart. However, the notion of not confronting the biggest threats to our way of living is problematic. We must defend our democracy every step of the way. We must nurture and cherish something so rare in the whole existence of humankind. Protecting it means standing up for what is right and choosing love over hate. We must defend minorities, we must never embolden those who spew hate and we must elect those who represent all of us and not the most privileged. The last few years have shown the fragility of democracy. The recent attempt to reject the results of the presidential election in Brazil mirrored that of the United States on January 6th, 2021. In both instances, the right-wing authoritarian candidates were defeated, but their base rejected the result and brought their respective capitals into chaos with their violent assaults on democratic institutions. These ideologies are a threat to our democracy, and the institutions that have been built over time may have defended democracy in those days, but as the threat of right-wing ideology grows, we must reject it at every moment.

Within this publication, you will find amazing articles that cover a whole range of issues. From the articles that speak about Democracy in Turkey, neo-colonialism, and cobalt in the Congo to Women's opposition to the 1937 constitution, you will find something for you. The issues raised are across three sections. There are pieces from a national perspective, an international perspective, and an activist perspective. This is a magazine that is full of insight and brilliant writing. If you're wondering who might be the next president of Ireland, then read Niamh Browne's article. There is some top-class journalism within this magazine and articles like Gerald Patrick O'Donovan's "Tightening Safeguards in Europe's Democratic Lynchpin" showcase that. If you're looking for some poetry then veer toward the end. This is a collaborative effort with amazing contributions from the students of UCC who we hope offer something to everyone.

Working with this team has truly been an honour. Working with like-minded people with a brilliant work ethic has made the experience incredibly enjoyable. The brilliance of our Deputy Editor, Jack has helped bring Polity to a whole new level. With his original thinking and drive, we had the opportunity to report from Leinster House and Áras an Uachtaráin live during the rotation of Taoiseach in December. Jack and our chairperson, Reuban also had the opportunity to interview the EU Parliament President, Roberta Metsola which you can read all about further on in the magazine. Our Director of

Design, Emer has been excellent and her talents are clear in this magazine and on our website too. Emer's originality and professionalism have been hugely important to Polity's success. Our Director of Marketing, Aoibhe has also been a valued team member due to her experience in the Government and Politics Society and her experience on social media and getting the most out of our page. Our chairperson, Reuban has been a huge asset to this process. Reuban's passion and commitment have been a massive help and his willingness to offer himself and provide for the team has been amazing.

I would personally like to thank every single person that has helped Polity along the way. Writers, readers, UCC societies, and the Government and Politics Society, your help and contribution has been amazing, thank you.

**Sincerely,  
Luke O'Connell.  
Editor in Chief, Polity Magazine.**



# Notes

## From the Editorial Team

J  
a  
c  
k  
  
W  
a  
l  
s  
h



### Deputy Editor

Serving as Polity's Deputy Editor this year has been such an immense privilege and joy. Although the team's work is not over just yet, the publication of this first in-print issue marks an important milestone in the team's effort to relaunch the magazine. Already, so much has been accomplished, particularly on the digital side. On the back of this, I hope you will agree that the future of the magazine looks very bright. It's very much onwards and upwards from here. To the rest of the team - Luke O'Connell, Emer Neville, Aoibhe O'Brien, and Reuban Murray - a heartfelt thank you. Working alongside you has been an absolute pleasure. Finally, on this year's theme, democracy is too often taken for granted. It is important that we cherish our own democracy while recognising the need to both protect what we have and make improvements where they are needed. Democracy is a living ideal not one stuck in the past. To survive it must adapt. To defend it, we must ensure it continues to evolve.

### Director of Marketing

It's been incredible working on Polity this year. Social media has played a key role in the Spring 23' edition as we moved from solely a print magazine to a hybrid model. We covered different events across our social media making the magazine more accessible to everyone. Thanks to Luke, Jack and Emer for the work they put in this year, I hope you enjoy reading Polity as much as we enjoyed making it!



A  
o  
i  
b  
h  
e  
  
O  
  
B  
r  
i  
e  
n

### Director of Design

We are so excited to bring you the Spring 23' edition of Polity Magazine and I'm delighted to have been on this year's team as Director of Design. As Polity rebranded from a journal to a magazine, it was important for us to foster our own unique brand. Accessibility was also at the forefront of this publication, and we ensured everything designed met European accessibility standards. Our vision for Polity was a fun, vibrant magazine and I thoroughly hope you enjoy flicking through each page. While you're at it, why not check out [www.politymagazine.com](http://www.politymagazine.com), the very first UCC societies publication website. A massive thank you to Luke, Aoibhe and Jack - it's been a pleasure working with you all! Happy reading.

E  
m  
e  
r  
  
N  
e  
v  
i  
l  
l  
e



# A Message

From the Government and Politics Society

This has been a very special year for the GovPol Society, Critical to this has been the astounding success of our rebranded and revamped Polity Magazine. From covering the changeover of the Taoiseach, or exclusive interviews with Roberta Metsola, Bertie Ahern and David Runciman (to name but a few), to hours of interviews recorded and videos uploaded; the Polity Team have brought together a dynamic set of people to produce a truly inspiring piece of journalism.

Critical to Polity's success has been its pivot and choice to focus on the multi-media aspect of the publication. Opting for rolling articles and digital news with an annual hardcopy issue rather than just one single publication. From these successes - particularly its use of social media and its website - Polity has distinguished itself as unique amongst student publications, in fact I would go so far as to say it is easily one of the the foremost student political publications in Ireland, indeed it is the only one to be featured on google news as a verified Publication.

I eagerly look forward to the work Polity undertakes over the next 12 months, as the local elections, europeans and another generation edge closer to their first ever vote, I have no doubt that Polity will rise to meet that challenge with no small part to the hard work and sturdy foundations laid in place by Luke, Jack, Emer and Aoibhe.

I encourage all readers, especially students, to reach out to the Polity team with enthusiasm and energy; who knows where it may take you - I must confess that the moments that brought me the most joy over these past twelve months as Chair have been my work with Polity. To readers who may not be students, maybe you are a lecturer, a journalist or perhaps one of our interviewees; I implore you to do what you can to make space for student journalism in Ireland, add student publications to your press release lists, include them alongside the other media outlets at events and briefings, if you are a politician or staffer, cut out time to give an interview to student media as well as the national broadsheets. If we actively support student journalism we can nurture and support a strong new generation of journalists across a variety of disciplines to learn, engage and grow. Polity is a shining example of student journalism's ability to perform at the highest levels with professionalism, integrity and passion. Finally if you are a journalist, I implore you to reach out, Polity is always looking to grow its network and we are always appreciative of any advice or support seasoned veterans can offer. I am assured that Polity will continue to help to support and nurture the enthusiasm and dreams of budding student journalists, broadcasters and columnists and maybe even help some to discover passions they didn't know they held.

**Warmly,**  
**Reuban Murray**  
**UCC Government and Political Science Chairperson**



## Finish The Fight

Women's opposition to the 1937 Constitution, and why we must ensure the completion of their campaign

Lorraine Ní Chathasaigh



On the 15th December 2022, the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Gender Equality, chaired by Ivana Bacik, published their final report entitled, “Unfinished Democracy: Achieving Gender Equality.” Described as a “blue-print for achieving a gender-equal Ireland,” it includes a detailed course of action to implement substantial change across society, from the Constitution to norms, stereotypes and education. The report comes a century after the creation of the State, the early years of which saw Irish women experience the abandonment of the modern vision of “equal rights and equal opportunities for all of its citizens”, declared in the 1916 Proclamation. Despite the endowing of women’s franchise in the 1922 Constitution, the opening decade of the Free State saw the slow abrasion of the female position, the erosion of women’s status culminating in Éamonn De Valera’s new constitution in 1937, with controversial articles that firmly reduced Irish women to domesticity.

Women’s organisations including the National University Women Graduates Association, the Irish Women Workers’ Union and the Joint Committee of Women’s Societies and Social Workers, were united in objecting to, and campaigning against, the draft published on 1 May 1937. The lack of inclusion of the phrase “without distinction of sex”, in Articles 9 and 16, which catered for citizenship and franchise, was a point of unease for the women’s groups, as it removed the non-discriminatory guarantee of full citizenship, and endangered women’s recent enfranchisement. On top of this, central issues of dispute for the female campaigners were Articles 40.1, 41.2 and 45.4.2, which when combined, immensely undermined the status of Irish women.



Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Gender Equality, Deputy Ivana Bacik. (Maxwells)

The ambiguous language of Article 40.1, regarding to equality of all citizens before the law, with the second phrase of the original clause denoting that the State would have

**“due regard to individual differences of capacity, physical and moral, and of social function”,**

raised concern due to it’s potential to discriminate against women, with questions arising surrounding what would constitute these “differences of capacity.”

Perhaps the most vexing element, defended by De Valera as a 'tribute' to the work of mothers in the home, was Article 41.2. An immensely paternalistic clause, which remains unamended and present in the Constitution today, the article declares woman – which as noted by historian Gerard Hogan , 'woman' is use of the generic form, to purposely confirm all women - to belong in the home, and references not just her work in the home, but her life. The article is prohibitive of freedom of personal choice to women, restricting them from deciding for themselves whether their place should be in or outside the home.



Taoiseach Eamon de Valera takes the salute on the steps of the government buildings in Dublin, after finalising the new Irish constitution. (Keystone/Getty Images)

It is undeniably sexual stereotyping of the highest degree, with no concern for the duties of men as a fathers. Another demonstration of the discriminatory attitudes towards women, was the original version of Article 45.4.2, that spoke of the “inadequate strength of women”, and promised that they would not have to undertake jobs that would be “unsuited to their sex, age or strength.” Irishwomen were rightly incensed by these articles, and made their opposition immensely clear, with prominent figures such as Gertrude Gaffney, Louie Bennett, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Mary Kettle, unapologetic in their searing critiques of this crusade on women’s freedom.

There was minor success in achieving amendments to Articles 16, and 45.4.2. “Without distinction of sex”, was inserted into Article 16, which concerns the right to vote, while a clause confirming that citizenship could not be denied on the basis of sex, was added to Article 9. The wording of Article 45.4.2 was broadened to include men and women – “The State shall ensure that the strength and health of workers, men and women...shall not be abused...” – and while this was certainly an improvement, the potential to discriminate still lingered in the presence of the promise of people not having to work in jobs “ unsuited to their sex, age or strength.”



Members of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Gender Equality and of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality. (Maxwells)

De Valera utterly refused to make any revisions to Articles 40.1 and and 41.2, denying repeatedly that there was any threat to women’s status, stating in a speech defending the constitution, “...there is little chance of having a home...if there is no woman in it.” Unfortunately, the women’s campaign against the Constitution was unsuccessful both in the Dáil and nationwide, with TDs voting in favour of the draft on the 14 June, before ratification by the people of Ireland on the 1 July 1937.

There can be no doubt in understanding the rationale of women's opposition to the 1937 Constitution. Since the turn of the century Irish women had been fervently fighting, for their own rights and for the country, playing a critical role in the Independence movement. Unquestionably, the assault on their status within the Constitution was rightfully incensing, as Hanna Sheehy Skeffington declared in a 1938 interview, "The women of Ireland did a great deal to further De Valera's cause...who can blame them for feeling...that he has wronged them?". Societal adherence to traditional gender roles and sexual stereotyping reinforced by the amalgamation of Church and State under the first Governments provided activists with an uphill battle, the campaign unfortunately failing to mobilise 'ordinary' women of Ireland, who were acclimatised to the female roles outlined in the Constitution. The challenge posed by the cultural context is evident in considering that of the three female TDs in Dáil Éireann, only one, Brigid Redmond of Fine Gael, advocated in support of the women's organisations, and also in the steadfastness of De Valera's dedication to retention of the offending articles, as historian Margaret Ward puts it, "...in his Ireland, women's primary place was in the home."

Although De Valera's Ireland is now but a memory, **the contentious articles have remained a lingering shadow over Irish women.**

It has taken 85 years, a length of time which has seen the abolition of bans on contraception, divorce and abortion, and significantly the election of not one, but two female presidents, for there to finally be a plan to enact change that will complete the women's campaign of 1937. The Committee report proposes referenda on the wording of Articles 40.1, 41.2 and 41.3.1, where 40.1 would be amended to include the phrase "without distinction of sex" and the second clause would refer to the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Proposed amendment of 41.2 involves the removal of referral to women and their role in the home, and replaces it with the broad recognition of the importance of "care within and outside the home and Family," while changes to 41.3.1 ensures that the concept of this Family is not limited to a martial one.



Hanna Sheehy Skeffington c. 1915 - 1920. (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA)

The report refers to an October 2022 meeting with then -Taoiseach Mícheál Martin, where he confirmed the Government's commitment to the holding of these referenda, but the women of Ireland cannot wait silently in hope of the enactment of this promise. It is up to all of us, men and women, to ensure that these changes happen, to continue to apply pressure and demand that all recommendations of the Gender Equality report come to fruition, as in echo of Mary Robinson, Irish women are no longer rocking the cradle, but rocking the system.

# The Next General Election is Uninteresting, The Presidential Election is Where the Craic is at



By Niamh Browne

Michael D Higgins is a bit of an unproblematic fave. He has two dogs, founded TG4, and writes poetry. Kind of all you want from a presidential figure; charming, stable and unifying. With our next president, however, we may not be as lucky.

The question of the next general is profoundly uninteresting. It's a question of: by what majority will Sinn Féin win? Sinn Féin has been on a bit of a roll lately, with an astonishing win in the Stormont Assembly in 2022. In opinion polls in the Republic, Mary Lou Macdonald is crushing it. Or at the very least, people are unhappy with both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. And when it comes to the electorate, my enemies' enemy is my first preference vote. As it stands, both North and South of the border, things look pretty good for Sinn Féin. Nothing is certain in politics of course, but it seems like Sinn Féin are in a good position coming into the next election. Surely if Mary Lou is Taoiseach in the south, and Michelle O'Neill is head of the assembly in the North- there is one topic on everyone's mind: reunification.

Irish unification seems unthinkable for people of our parents' generation. They remember the fear, the violence and the turbulence of the Troubles. For the generation of Irish voters born after the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, reunification does not seem so treacherous. There is more cultural interest in learning Irish in the North with movements like *Dearg le Fearg*. In the South too there is interest in greater cultural connections with hundreds of thousands of Kneecap fans on this side of the border. Brexit also has served as a catalyst for Republican sentiment in the North. Previously, it was somewhat irrelevant if you were a nationalist or a unionist as long as you were a European citizen. Now though one of your identities affords you the privilege of living and working in 27 different countries, the other, takes you to Terf Island.

Scotland is also unhappy in the Union as the Supreme Court in London has blocked another attempt at an Independence referendum. The question of a United Ireland has also made it to the upper middle-class circle of the Irish Times. It's no longer a radical utopian thought, it is being discussed around the dinner tables at Dublin 4. In a recent article, two major opinion polls were brought up which discussed the opinions of people in both the North and South and their attitudes towards possible reunification. Reunification has to be taken seriously now. A stepping stone of this will be in the hands of the next person who moves into Arás an Uachtarán.



It is not just a question of reunification either, for the first time in recent memory we have seen a rise in mainstream anti-immigration sentiment. Obviously, the question of racism in Ireland is complicated, and I am unqualified to discuss it, but it seems that we are accepting a level of racist rhetoric that is unprecedented in mainstream media.

So who are we going to choose to represent the national spirit? The list of potential candidates out there is like Leonard Cohen's song; long and depressing. Bertie Ahern's name has been thrown around as a potential candidate for 2025. I am almost certain that one of the notorious Burke Family of Castlebar will make an attempt for the office. My money is on Ammi, the lawyer. Surely the Jedward twins will run as one entity. I hope that we will not see the likes of Gemma O'Doherty run on an anti-vax and anti-immigration platform, but it could reflect the national sentiment towards the government. Grace O'Sullivan has recently set up her constituency office in Cork City, potentially a ploy to build up her profile among the various county and city councils she would need for a nomination. Sinn Féin also need to consider this election carefully, they could obtain a trio of the offices; assembly, dáil and the uachtarán. Last time they unsuccessfully ran Liadh ní Riada, who lost to incumbent president Michael D. Higgins and two Dragons from Dragon's Den. Not a glowing record. However, they have successfully moved their image away from a paramilitary party to a serious democratic force. I think part of how they have done this is through high-profile female politicians. It softens their historically violent image. It is difficult to imagine this level of success under the goofy 'I was-never-a-member-of-the-I-R-A' Gerry Adams. Liadh Ní Riada might have more success second time around. Whoever Sinn Féin nominates though, will have to be far removed from the paramilitary connections of their past if they are to have any hope at cross-border consensus.

**It might be two years away, but the presidential election is where all the political meat is at.**

# Polity In Conversation With

*Roberta Metsola*



# The Interview

# Roberta Metsola

When Polity was granted an interview with the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, at the beginning of February, it provided a unique opportunity to get the insight of one of Europe's leading political figures on the subject of democracy. The interview, conducted by Jack Walsh and Reuban Murray, took place on the 3rd of February during the president's official two-day visit to Dublin.

In addition to celebrating Ireland's fifty-years of EU membership, democracy was also a key theme of President Metsola's visit. She devoted a significant part of the speech she gave to a joint sitting of the Houses of the Oireachtas, at which Polity's Deputy Editor was present on the Dáil's Press Gallery for, to the ongoing war in Ukraine and Europe's response to it. It is clear that for her, the Russian invasion poses a threat to the democratic order on which the EU was founded on, and which has been central to its success ever since. In order to protect democracy in Europe and realise the vision of the union we want for the next fifty years - "a Europe of real peace and ..justice" - we must stand with Ukraine. President Metsola declared that democracy and Europe "cannot be taken for granted".



Elsewhere in this issue, the role (or lack thereof) young people play in politics has been discussed. A central aim of President Metsola's term as EP president is to engage with young people and encourage them to become more active in politics. This is central to any democracy which requires active participation. The president spoke, in her interview with the magazine, about the need to see more young people not only vote but put themselves forward as candidates in elections. While they mightn't be successful the first time, she urged them to "take the plunge" because the second time they might. Votes at 16, which already is in place in her home country of Malta, is something she is clearly in favour of.

As someone who has on previous occasions spoken about how choosing a career in politics was one of the best decisions of her life, it came as no surprise when President Metsola told us that "politics is a force for good". Reflecting back on her speech in the Dáil the day before, she recalled that there weren't "enough women" and "not enough young people" present in the chamber.

Again, this lack of adequate representation of women in politics is one area where Ireland has, and continues to, fall short on. How does the president think it can be addressed? She doesn't appear to favour measures, such as gender quotas, noting that she'd prefer to see "people choose for a woman who would get more votes than a man" based on merit rather than finding yourself in a situation as a voter where you "can't vote for anyone but a woman". Getting "them when they're younger" is also vitally important. Noting her own experience of having the older women in her political party help her when she started out, the president said she is now determined to do this for the next generation of young female leaders telling them to "go for it".

Ireland is a democratic country where there are "free and fair elections" the president pointed out, but not every country in the world is so fortunate. Indeed, far too many people don't have the same opportunities to participate in a democratic way of life that can often be taken for granted by those who do. Irish people, and young Irish people in particular, should cherish this and exercise their right to vote. Noting how "too many people have asked me, even on this trip to Ireland" about their vote not counting or expressing the feeling that their voice isn't being heard, President Metsola was adamant that their votes, and voices, do count. The only way to ensure that their voices are heard, and their votes count, is to vote in elections.

The European Union is often accused of suffering from a democratic deficit. This notion was something President Metsola pushed strongly back on, telling Polity that one of the reasons for her visit was "precisely to push back against that criticism". By showing up and talking to citizens, she hoped that the perception of top-down decision making where Brussels dictates and everyone else follows could be changed. Giving the example of how people from all across the EU have "pushed their politicians into doing more" during the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and during the ongoing cost of living crisis, she clearly felt that Brussels does listen. At the same time, there was an acknowledgment that things could be better, specifically in terms of how the perceived democratic deficit could be bridged. Her solutions? Better communication, better visibility of politicians and citizens holding their elected representatives to account. According to her, "we don't do enough of that". And laughing, she said she was telling us - the young people - to do this, not her generation or fellow politicians.

Central to any democratic state and way of life is the rule of law. The rule of law has been a major challenge facing the EU in recent times. For young people, it has been most evident through the rolling back of LGBTQI+ rights in countries such as Hungary where a so-called "anti-LGBTQ+ propaganda" laws have been introduced. President Metsola disagreed that the EU as a whole hasn't done enough to protect LGBTQI+ rights but conceded that while the bloc "might have the best laws on paper", there is still too much intolerance and homophobia.



President Metsola with Taoiseach Leo Varadkar





The president seemed frustrated with how some member states joined the EU promising one set of rights but have ended up not reaching these and in too many instances, falling backwards. The European Parliament has made the rule of law issue “a big flagship programme” and has spoken out against the existence of LGBTQI+ free zones, which should not exist in Europe according to the president.

On the possibility of further European integration which some see as a threat to democracy, President Metsola seems content with the current settlement. She outlined how she has “always believed in decisions being taken at the appropriate levels” with some needing to be done at a European-wide level, such as co-ordinating the Union’s response to the pandemic, while others can be made closer to home, “at a local level”. Member states, she noted, even smaller ones like Ireland and Malta, have the ability to have their voices heard at a European level and “exceptions have been given” to them in certain circumstances. Again, for her, it is evident that any notion of Brussels ruling in a top-down manner with no regard for individual member state preference is a non-starter. Democracy in Europe is not perfect, but as is evident from the interview with President Metsola, she feels it is healthy and up to the task. She is an enthusiastic proponent of the European way of life. A democratic way of life which has, at its heart, the betterment of all its citizens. A democratic life that must be defended.

**You can read the full interview in a Q&A style format on the magazine’s website.**

**PolityMagazine.com**

# European

Word Search



R	M	T	N	E	M	N	R	E	V	O	G
E	U	S	Y	N	O	O	M	R	P	T	U
O	E	E	I	C	E	E	E	R	R	N	Y
P	N	T	T	L	A	U	E	T	I	C	D
A	E	S	E	R	A	R	L	T	R	I	R
R	U	L	V	L	O	R	C	O	M	E	C
L	E	E	I	E	I	P	E	O	I	E	O
I	M	S	T	E	V	C	P	D	M	L	P
A	O	S	C	E	U	E	N	A	E	E	D
M	E	U	E	S	U	R	O	U	R	F	D
E	A	R	R	S	A	R	O	A	O	L	V
N	Y	B	I	E	M	L	O	P	M	C	E
T	P	R	D	C	V	M	M	P	O	E	A
S	T	A	T	E	R	R	M	T	E	L	A

Europe  
Council  
Rapporteur  
Government

State  
MEP  
Directive  
Parliament

Federalism  
Democracy  
Europol  
Brussels



# Tightening Safeguards in Europe's Democratic Lynchpin

by Gerald Patrick O'Donovan

## European Democracy under Threat

At a time when multiple crises are competing for the attention of Europe's leaders, the question of transparency within the European Parliament comes at an inconvenient moment. Yet this issue must be addressed to answer the European Union's critics and vindicate the faith of candidate countries.

Various candidate countries, most notably Ukraine, are currently striving to accede to the EU. The accession criteria include adherence to the rule of law and democracy, principles incompatible with corruption. Ukraine has recently embarked on an anti-corruption campaign to throw off the oligarchic influences it has been saddled with since the fall of the Soviet Union.

The allegations that MEPs and their associates accepted cash from countries such as Morocco and Qatar in exchange for favour within the European Parliament calls into question the adherence of European institutions to the very standards which Ukraine is striving to meet and also those which Poland and Hungary are regularly criticised for failing to maintain. The apparent hypocrisy has been emphasised by far-right politicians from Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of Hungary and Marine Le Pen of France's Rassemblement National.

Enjoying legislative equality with the Council, the directly-elected European Parliament is the crux of the EU's democratic legitimacy. A threat to the Parliament's transparency therefore threatens the European project's democratic lynchpin. If the criticism of Europe's democratic deficit is to be answered, then the EU must overcome this scandal and burnish its democratic credentials and vindicate the efforts of candidate countries.

## The 'Qatargate' Diagnosis: Inadequate Anti-Corruption Safeguards

The series of revelations which have since been dubbed 'Qatargate' began with Belgian federal police raids on 9 December 2022. By December 12, nineteen homes and offices of those associated with the European Parliament had been raided, 1.5 million euro was seized and four individuals were arrested. All four would be charged with participation in a criminal organisation, corruption and money-laundering. These events constitute what Transparency International EU has called the Parliament's "most egregious case of alleged corruption in many years".

'Qatargate' and the associated police investigation are continuing to unfold. One of those originally arrested, Niccolò Figà-Talamanca, has recently been released on order of a Belgian judge. On 10 February 2023 MEP Marc Tarabella was arrested, after his immunity was waived eight days earlier.

Scandals have hit the EU before; in 1999 Jacques Santer's Commission was forced to dramatically resign en masse following a damaging independent report. While the report which heralded the fall of Santer's Commission slammed the commissioners for a lack of responsibility it cleared them of direct involvement in fraud. Today, however, the former vice-chair of the Delegation for Relations with the Arab Peninsula, the former chair of the Delegation for Relations with the Maghreb and a previous chair of the Human Rights Subcommittee are all under the suspicion of prosecutors. Not to mention former Vice-President Eva Kaili, who has loudly defended Qatar in the Parliament and praised improving labour rights when she visited the country after the Parliament's own delegation had its scheduled trip postponed by the Qatari Shura Council.

Qatar and Morocco have rejected accusations of interference in the European Parliament. Two of the suspects, Pier Antonio Panzeri and Niccolò Figà-Talamanca, hold high-ranking positions in NGOs dedicated to the promotion of human rights. These NGOs share the same Brussels address and Panzeri preceded the recently-resigned chair of the Human Rights Subcommittee, Maria Arena, in her role.

These NGOs would be perfectly placed for a government wishing to divert European attention from its human rights record, especially as scrutiny on Qatar increased as the 2023 World Cup approached.

Panzeri is a founder of Fight Impunity. Fight Impunity has been invited to present reports before the Human Rights Subcommittee despite not being registered on the EU Transparency Register, which is an apparent violation of the Parliament's rules.

Figà-Talamanca is the suspended secretary-general of No Peace Without Justice, recently released on order of a Belgian judge. On 10 May 2022, a representative of NGO Droit au Droit who was simultaneously a public affairs coordinator for No Peace Without Justice presented an enormous report before the Human Rights Subcommittee criticising Qatar's regional rivals, a welcome distraction which would not have displeased Doha.



Although it seems that Qatar has made progress on reforming its labour laws, Qatar's hosting of World Cup 2022 necessitated huge construction projects realised by hundreds of thousands of migrant workers prohibited from forming trade unions. Contrary to what Eva Kaili said on the eve of the Parliament's adoption of a resolution concerning the human rights situation in Qatar, holding the country of the highest migrant workers to domestic population ratio in the world accountable is not "discrimination." Acknowledging Qatar's limited reforms does not impute a wilful blindness in other areas and certainly does not excuse corruption.

Notwithstanding parliamentary immunity, Transparency International EU has encouraged examination of all those in EU institutions who have taken "unusually favourable" stances towards Qatar, which would be a worthwhile exercise given the alleged extent of corruption.

## **The Treatment: If there's a Will, there's a Way**

It is self-evident that the Parliament's current anti-corruption measures are insufficient.

Transparency International EU has deplored the Parliament's weak anticorruption safeguards, which rely heavily on self-enforcement. It was, after all, the Belgian police who intervened and not the Parliament's Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members, the independence of which European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly has called to be strengthened.

Parliament President Roberta Metsola has vowed to fight impunity in the Parliament and restore faith in the institution. She unveiled a 14-point reform plan to a closed-doors meeting of the Parliament's Conference of Presidents and has cooperated diligently with the Belgian authorities as the investigation progresses by pursuing procedures to waive the immunity of certain MEPs.

Yet some members of her own European People's Party (EPP) seem more interested in scoring political points than extensive reform of the rules, having one eye on the Parliament's 2024 elections. Additionally, Vice-President Rainer Wieland, an EPP member who is also a member of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs has urged restraint on the introduction of reforms unlikely to prevent a 'Qatargate' in the future.

It is true that lobbying is a normal and healthy part of a functioning democracy. Yet it would be absurd to leave untouched a set of rules which have allegedly allowed a Parliament Vice-President to become something of a champion for the Qatari Ministry of Labour.





# 2023

## The Moment of Truth for Turkish Democracy

by Atakan Uzun

2023 is an important milestone year for Türkiye. Domestically, and nationally, it represents the centenary anniversary of the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, formed in October 1923 after emerging from the defunct Ottoman Empire as a nation state. Politically, it marks two-decades of power under current President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who first came as prime minister at the helm of newly founded, centre-right conservative party, the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in 2003. But, importantly, 2023 is the year in which presidential and parliamentary elections will be held simultaneously to elect the President of Türkiye and 600 parliamentarians in their lower house of parliament, the Grand Assembly of Türkiye in June. The election of the Turkish president will be operated by a two-round voting system, whilst the election of members of the Grand Assembly is set under a party-list proportional representation system with a 10% electoral threshold for each party to be elected.

2023 is the first electoral opportunity for Turkish voters at a national level in this decade to judge the overall performance of the incumbent AKP – MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) government who have been in office together since the June 2018 elections after the ruling AKP were unable to govern alone because they lost their overall majority in the 2018 parliamentary elections. The leading party of the opposition, centre-left party, CHP (Republican People's Party), first founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1919, who eventually went on to become the first President of the Republic of Turkey, will be hoping to lead a six-party nation alliance of parties, including a broad range of centre-right parties, which are the İyi (Good) Party, DP (Democrat Party), and SP (Felicity Party) to end the two-decade rule of Erdogan and the AKP.



Students holding Turkish flags attend a Republic Day parade, in Kırklareli, northwestern Turkey, Oct. 29, 2021. (AA)



People shout slogans and wave Turkish national flags as they have gathered in solidarity night after night since the July 15 coup attempt in central Ankara, Turkey, July 27, 2016. (Reuters/Umit Bektas)

Crucially, whilst voters had the chance to vote in the 2019 Turkish local elections, the upcoming election may signal the moment of truth for Turkish democracy. Recent years have overseen increasing democratic backsliding in Türkiye as Erdogan and the AKP have tightened their grip on power, meaning this election, more than any other election in Turkish political history has a crucial bearing on the political and economic future of the country. This growth in democratic backsliding is most profoundly foreseen since the initiation of an attempted coup in July 2016 whereby a section of the Turkish military attempted to topple Erdogan's government. In response to the coup as ordinary citizens gathered around streets, and aimed to oppose the coup, 241 people were killed and around 2,194 were injured. But the response to the coup by the Erdogan government is where democratic backsliding and autocracy is evident.

The government, who claim that the Gulen movement, associated with exiled religious leader, Fetullah Gulen, residing in the US, was behind attempts to remove Erdogan from power have detained a total number of 319,587 people since the coup, as of November 2022. These figures outlined by Interior Minister, Suleyman Soylu are likely to continue to grow as the months go by, ahead of the June elections. Instead of ending Erdogan's rule, the coup has allowed a purge to be led from government level to political opponents, meaning any sort of political opposition to the AKP-led government is deliberately smeared and accused of support for the July 2016 coup.



Turkish people march at the July 15 Martyrs Bridge on the first anniversary of the defeated coup July 15-16, 2016. (AA)

To a greater extent, the 2019 Istanbul mayoral election illustrated the lengths to which the AKP would go to, in order to strengthen its grip on power at a political level whether this is at the local or national arenas of political office. In this election, political appointees to the Supreme Electoral Council, who are responsible for overseeing all voting procedures, locally and nationally, declared that the mayoral election in Istanbul needed to be re-run, due to voting irregularities raised by the AKP. CHP candidate, Ekrem Imamoglu, who narrowly won the contest against AKP candidate, and former prime minister, Binali Yildirim in March 2019 by 0.2%, increased his vote share in the June 2019 re-run election. Whilst the politically motivated move of the Supreme Electoral Council backfired, its decision taught the world at large, where power was concentrated in Türkiye.



CHP candidate, Ekrem Imamoglu, who narrowly won the contest against AKP candidate, and former prime minister, Binali Yildirim. (AA)

# In order to strengthen its grip on power at a political level

Since then, in the midst of its worst economic crisis in their history, the country has continued a reversal of democratic values. In 2021, the AKP-led government pulled out of the Istanbul Convention, the core agreement for protecting the rights of women and girls, along with people in the LGBT community because it claimed that it “normalises homosexuality” and “threatens family values”. By doing so, it became the first member of the Council of Europe to pull out of an internationally ratified treaty based upon human rights. This move was criticised by a number of human rights groups such as Amnesty International, arguing that it “turned its back on the gold standard for the safety of women and girls”. As a result of such moves, with a global freedom score of 32/100, the Freedom House has classified Türkiye as “not free”. It is also the fourth-highest jailor of journalists with 40 journalists interned as of December 2022, which has doubled compared to the previous year.



The introduction of an executive presidency was the next process of democratic backsliding and occasion in which Erdogan had the legitimacy to further stamp his executive authority. Eventually narrowly passed in a referendum in April 2017, the AKP – MHP government proposed abolishing the prime ministerial office under the existing parliamentary system, where the president, while elected was in a ceremonial role, would now be the most senior head of political office under a presidential system. In tandem with this approved proposed amendment to the Turkish Constitution, 17 other constitutional amendments, including giving the executive (i.e., the AKP government), greater control over judicial appointments were supported in this referendum. However, this referendum result was not without its controversies as the Supreme Electoral Council (YSK) allowed non-stamped ballots to be valid and included in the overall results.

This move was

## heavily criticised

by a number of bodies including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), who declared such a decision by the YSK as illegal. Nevertheless, unsurprisingly, the referendum result was respected, and Erdogan now became the sole holder of senior executive political office in Türkiye, removing support for the very essence of liberal democratic values, especially that of checks and balances, and the separation of powers between the executive and judiciary. But this was only the tip of the iceberg for Erdogan's government to further secure their autocratic power.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addresses members of his ruling Justice and Development Party. (Reuters)

Electoral occasions in the last number of years have illustrated the current government's willingness to maintain and increasingly grow their power by any means, they deem necessary. The most recent presidential and parliamentary elections illustrate this claim. The holding of the June 2018 presidential and parliamentary elections, originally scheduled for November 2019, but held under a state of emergency that was in place since the July 2016 coup, allowed Erdogan to secure another term as president after securing 52.6% of the vote in the first round, compared to 30.6% for his political counterpart in the CHP, Muharrem Ince. Electoral irregularities were evident in these elections as the OSCE found that the AKP utilised proxy voting in the south and southeast areas.



A Turkish flag is pictured on a boat with the Ortakoy Mosque in the background in Istanbul, Turkey on September 5, 2021. (Reuters)

These developments mean that the coming presidential and parliamentary elections are essential for reversing growing autocracy, reviving a falling economy, and re-introducing common values of liberal democracy such as checks and balances by ending collusion between the executive and the judiciary. Indeed, the re-introduction of the prime ministerial office by the CHP-led alliance has been promised through a 'strengthened parliamentary system', meaning it represents a credible alternative to the current government's crackdown on democratic institutions and branches. As a country that borders East and West, the second-largest NATO power, and the 17th biggest country in the world, it has a considerable influence on world affairs, regionally and internationally. While it may not hold the greatest power nor be in a current position to determine the balance of power in the international order,

**these coming elections  
are likely to determine  
Türkiye's future,**

whether this future is in cohesion with support for democracy, and leaving the tainted past few years, behind.

# A DYING DEMOCRACY



By Camille Mamadou

Poland, and Hungary are often accused of being “illiberal democracies,” especially by Western countries through the European Union. And now Israel as well, with the return of Benjamin Netanyahu and his critics accusing him of slowing down justice and going against democratic values. But what does this term, widely used in political science and the media, really mean? Why are some democracies called illiberal?

Illiberal democracy is when a democratically elected government, once in power, seeks to undermine civil liberties. This designation is opposed of the liberal democracy, the ultimate model, the one that has triumphed in the world as prefigured by Francis Fukuyama in 1989. The term is used to describe hybrid regimes: political leaders are democratically elected in multi-party elections - which is a feature of democratic countries - but once elected, they violate fundamental principles such as the independence of the judiciary in Poland or the respect for minorities in Hungary, which adopted a homophobic law in June 2021. Illiberal democracy then seems to be an oxymoron as it seems contradictory that a democracy is not liberal. This kind of regime occupy the space between democratic and authoritarian regimes. However, democratic legitimacy can be seen as bogus because the results are often biased and known even before the elections, thus restricting policy choices. In fact, the main difference between illiberal democracy and liberal democracy is that while the former is committed to reviving an expiring democracy without the means to do so, the latter ratifies its demise and retain only the majority vote. The line between the two is therefore very thin.

Here is a paradox: how can liberal democracies that are supposed to distinguish themselves from illiberal democracy castigate them while being imperfect themselves? Indeed, the annual survey of The Economist about the state of democracy across the world shows that only 21 countries are considered as full democracies in 2021, and countries such as the United States or France, are listed as flawless democracies. The root causes of this “de-democratization” are numerous but among them is the rise of populism across the world, as a symptom of the politic crisis born of a disengagement of the people due to a distrust of institutions and their representatives but also to a disillusionment with the limits imposed on national sovereignty, and thus the powerlessness of politics. There is an erosion of some of the values on which the system is based, and thus a suspicion of the system itself: people chose different options as outsiders, antidemocratic candidates. This resulted in a damaged democratic fabric and the gradual switch to another type of regime. And as a result, democracy is not all the rage

anymore. A vicious circle. But it is hard to blame people when you see the damages caused to democracy in so-called democracies which can sometimes be like the violations in the illiberal democracies. Let's take the example of France.

The tools that were supposed to allow citizens to influence policy no longer work as it is the case with the referendum. In this respect, the example of the referendum of 2005 is a case in point: French people voted no to a referendum on a Constitution for Europe but it was adopted three years later in the Lisbon Treaty. There is also the decrease of the power of Parliament which is supposed to be the expression of popular will, as there are tools that limit its power, including the use of Article 49.3 of the Constitution. This is a political tool to allow the government to pass a law without having to make it voted by Parliament, and which, although being constitutional, question its democratic legitimacy. The recent abusive uses made of it by the current government- 10 uses in a few weeks during the last parliamentary session- constitutes a drift, despite warnings already evoked in 2014 by law professor Guy Carcassonne who already regretted

the banalization of this tool, the use of which was supposed to remain exceptional, which now cuts short debates instead of simply concluding them and which is used by strong governments when it should be a recourse for weak governments. In terms of political participation, even the presidential elections, THE most mobilising election, is now perceived as leading only to one-off alternation, with people voting for one or the other, each time wanting to choose change. This gives the impression that democracy is now conceived at minimum that is political election and the guarantee of individual rights and not a collective ability to genuinely act on political life. And this is not only concerning France, in other European countries, despite their long democratic traditions, the same processes can be observed. For example, in Italy the political crisis caused by the access to power of the extreme right party of Georgia Meloni is seen by some experts as a democratic crisis or at least a democratic deadlock.

So, at a time when democracy is no longer functioning optimally in countries with a democratic tradition, is it not too ambitious or even suicidal to try to infuse democratic principles, sometimes by force and without notable success, in countries already plagued by instability for example in Africa. Even worse, many countries such as United States, France but also Germany and Norway, while criticizing democratic infringements, continue to import their raw materials or even sometimes to help bring to power, a "president" who would be best able to preserve their interests. When will the hypocrisy end? When even China, which is not known to be the most democratic country in the world, describes the state of American democracy as "disastrous", this shows how deep the democratic chasm is. If democratic countries still want to claim to be democratic, they must redouble their efforts to rekindle the fading democratic flame. Urgently.



# Neo-Colonialism and Cobalt in the Congo

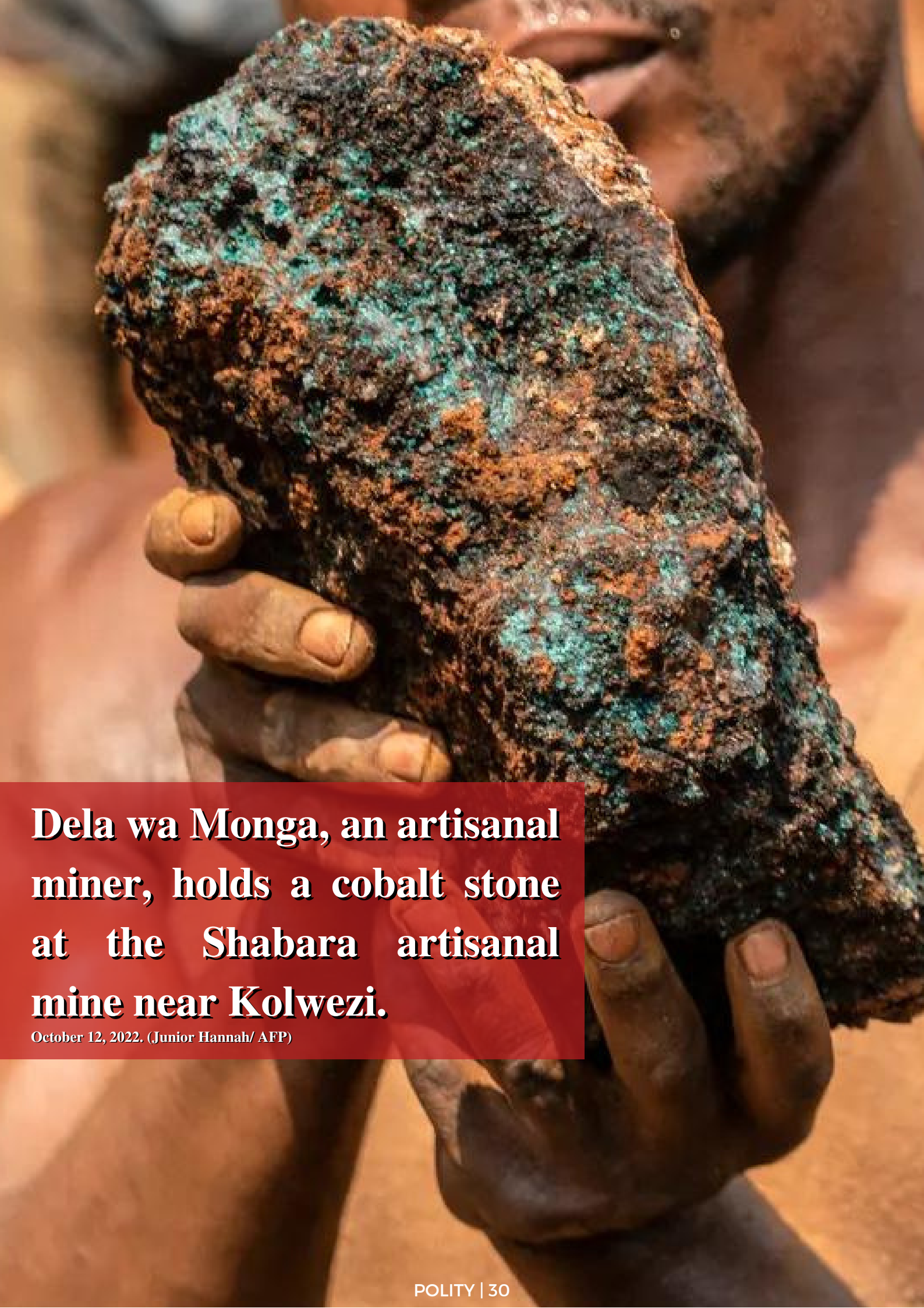
by Eiméid Moore



The Democratic Republic of Congo is located in central Africa and is home to some of the most sought-after materials in today's global economy. It has the world's largest known cobalt, gold, and diamond deposits in the world. In the post-colonial era, many economists predicted rapid economic growth in the country due to the resource richness of the land. However, this has proven not to be the case. The country has in many ways suffered from its resource richness succumbing to the resource curse called "the paradox of plenty." Ever since King Leopold of Belgium declared the Congo his private property to extract rubber. The Congolese have suffered unimaginable horrors to benefit the economies of the western world. Presently, this is occurring through the extraction of cobalt.

**The Congolese have suffered unimaginable horrors to benefit the economies of the western world.**

Cobalt is a vital element in the production of lithium powered batteries which are used in laptops, smartphones, and electric cars. According to figures from 2021, the Democratic Republic of Congo was estimated to produce 60-70% of the world's supply of cobalt. This is the lowest level of the supply chain of some of the world's richest companies such as Apple, Tesla, and Samsung. On the ground, the conditions of the mines are reprehensible. 1/5 of production is through artisanal mining. This is mining done using hands and no machinery. These miners work fourteen hours a day in the baking hot sun earning less than \$10 dollars a day. This can be regarded as a form of neo-slavery. Today, there are between 140,000 to 200,000 artisanal miners working in the Congo. This artisanal mining of cobalt is extremely dangerous as cobalt is a toxic substance. Hard lung disease which is a type of pneumoconiosis is commonplace amongst the workers. Mines often collapse with accidents occurring weekly. Artisanal miners have a death rate of 0.5%. There is a sufficient lack of safety standards evident. The mines themselves are not run by the Government but by foreign companies with fifteen of the nineteen biggest industrial mines being run or financed by the Chinese. The Chinese have shown no inclination to changing the way the mines are being run.



**Dela wa Monga, an artisanal miner, holds a cobalt stone at the Shabara artisanal mine near Kolwezi.**

October 12, 2022. (Junior Hannah/ AFP)

These horrific conditions are amplified by the presence of child miners. Despite a government ban on child mining there is little enforcement at the ground level. UNICEF predicts there are 40,000 children at work in the mines. There is 28.11% child labour amongst the artisanal miners. The security of the mines is run by local militia groups who patrol the mines with AK-47's. They have been known to intimidate journalists to prevent this story from getting out. The local militias also prevent local people from going onto mining territory in the hopes of finding Cobalt. For many this is the sole way to put food on the table. There is also a huge amount of amateur mining taking place by miners known as Creseurs. Creseurs locally source cobalt then sell it into the supply chain through Chinese intermediaries.



King Leopold of Belgium, Royal portrait (Royal portrait, c.1900)



A "creuseur," or digger, descends into a tunnel at the mine in Kawama, Democratic Republic of Congo. (Michael Robinson Chavez/The Washington Post via Getty Images)

The response of Multinationals has been muted. An NGO working on the ground known as PACT have described the help from top tech companies as a "drop in the ocean." Moving forward to the future there does not look like much hope. Recent predictions by the World Economic Forum's global battery alliance, show that the demand for cobalt will increase fourfold by 2030. This means work must be done to attempt to clean up the mining process. This must involve the multinationals that continue to purchase this cobalt. These are some of the richest companies in the world and have the money and political influence to force a change in conditions. This imagery of Africans working in these conditions for the technological improvement of the west will not sit well with liberal western societies. By increasing knowledge on this story, I hope there will be a backlash. The move toward a green future will involve the use of cobalt in electric cars and other technological innovations, preventing climate change must be done in a fair and justifiable way. A Chinese battery maker CATL are developing an EV battery that does not require cobalt or nickel and currently Tesla use non-cobalt batteries in half of their vehicles. A move from cobalt in the future is feasible but a long way off. In the meantime, western societies must attempt to force big tech to change the situation in the Congo. Our society can and should develop without the blood and sweat of African children. Hopefully, our morals will prevent this from occurring in the future.

# Protests, Women's Rights and the power of social media in Iran

❤️ 142 💬 37 👤 27

A few days ago, I spontaneously booked a flight to Scotland. I moved abroad to go to university, I will one day have a job and make my own money, and if I decide not to marry or not to have children, no one has the right to question these choices. Last summer, I spent many evenings in Florence, wearing a summer dress, dancing, and singing in the street, with a group of people I had never met before. If I was a 20-year-old woman in Iran, none of this would be possible. I'd have no right to an education, my father or husband would have to allow me to own a passport, and dancing in public, owning a dog, or wearing a t-shirt would be illegal. In the Islamic Republic, the law clearly states that a woman is worth half as much as a man, and while a man can for example be legally married up to four times, a woman can be publicly stoned to death for infidelity. If she doesn't abide to the strict dress code, she can be imprisoned and tortured, and punishments already fully apply to girls at the age of nine. The Iranian law can even forgive a man for murdering his wife or daughter, if his motifs are deemed reasonable.

On the 13th of September 2022, the 22-years-old Mahsa Amini was arrested by the so-called "Morality Police", for wearing her hijab in an "improper" way. Three days later she was dead. While authorities claimed that she had passed away due to illness, many quickly understood that she had been beaten and tortured to death by the police, which marked the start of the biggest wave of protests Iran has seen in over 40 years. In 1979, the country's monarchy was abolished after the Islamic Revolution, which was initially supported by workers, intellectuals, and students. After Iran had seen a lot of progress in terms of women's rights in the decades before, for example in 1963, when their rights to vote and to be elected to Parliament were established, many thought that, in an Islamic Republic, total equality and freedom would be achieved. However, the population was deceived when, after years of freedom of choice, wearing a hijab in public became mandatory again for women, marking the first set-back in terms of choices concerning women's own bodies and individual expression of religion, and their rights have only been restricted more since then.





Over the last months, protesters in the country have not only been fighting for women's rights, but for the abolishment of the theocratic, totalitarian regime led by the Supreme Leader and maintained by the Guidance patrol ("Morality Police") and the Guardian Council. Although Iran has a president and a Parliament, the Supreme Leader, currently Ali Khamenei, is positioned over these democratic institutions and always has the final say, due to his assigned divine powers. He controls the army and the Guidance patrol, who enforces religious laws through often brutal punishments, and appoints half of Iran's Guidance Council, who overlooks every law that is passed by Parliament and controls its compatibility with the Islamic law. He also appoints the Chief Justice, who in his turn appoints half of the Council. In the end, Ali Khamenei and the Guidance Council influence every decision made in the country, which is why protestors are seeking a complete abolishment of the theocratic system.



Image provided by author



Image provided by author

## to reach a state of more freedom and democracy, awareness of the issue at hand needs to be raised

In order to achieve this, and to reach a state of more freedom and democracy, awareness of the issue at hand needs to be raised, and current protests differ a lot from those in the 1970s, due to people's access to the internet. Like many protests over the past years, the ones in question is also mostly led by Generation Z, a generation who knows its way around Twitter, TikTok and Instagram. Those platforms have been used to gain international awareness and support about the situation in Iran, and to give a voice to those fighting for freedom and democracy. Even after Iranian authorities quickly shut down the internet and many social media platforms have been censored since autumn 2022, protesters have found ways around the state's censorship, for example by using encryption to transfer content to other platforms first. In addition to visibility and support, the internet also allows for people to rally quickly and organise major protests or strikes. Those that are active on social media platforms can also access pictures, videos and articles that originate from liberal democracies, and that promote freedom of choice, opinion, and religion.



Examples of international support that has been given to Iranian women and protestors in general are Joko Winterscheidt and Klaas Heufer-Umlauf, two German moderators with a major influence on people in Germany and other countries. Through games, the two men are competing against the German TV channel ProSieben every Tuesday night. If they win, they acquire 15 minutes of live TV during the next day's prime time on the channel, and over the last years, they have often used that time to raise awareness on social and political issues. On the 26th of October 2022, they used these 15 minutes to interview Azam Jangravi, who fled Iran a few years ago because she protested the compulsory wearing of a hijab in public, and Sarah Ramani, a member of the organisation "The Voice of the Streets". "We can't talk to Europe's governments, but you can", she stated in the interview, pointing out the importance of international awareness (Berliner Morgenpost, 2022). In addition to this, the two moderators gave away their Instagram accounts, which are followed by millions, to the two women, who since then post about the situation people are currently facing in their everyday life in Iran and who point out smaller incidents that aren't covered by official news through these accounts. Nowadays, information that is spread on social media also tends to reach a wider, maybe younger audience than the news on TV or in the newspaper are. And there have been international reactions, for example when the UN removed Iran from its Women's Rights Commission in December 2022. Countries' officials from the UK, the USA and EU countries also openly condemned the measures Iranian authorities are taking against the protests, especially the use of the death penalty, and have sanctioned the country, in a hope that international pressure could ameliorate the situation.

By early January 2023, after less than four months of protests, 19.200 people have been arrested, 516 protestors have been killed, and four Iranians have been executed (Human Rights Activists News Agency). While the Iranian population has limited resources available to make a true change, they are still manifesting, striking, cutting their hair, burning their hijabs, and, most importantly, spreading the information as best as they can, hoping for a strong, international response that could help put an end to the conditions people are facing. From an international point of view and without being in a position of authority, every one of us can help in their own way, by spreading the word and giving a voice to those who need it.



An image of Mahsa Amini from a protest (<https://www.womensvoicesnow.org/mahsa-amini>)



# Why Afghanistan matters

Martha Cashell

As Dr Martin Luther King stated “An injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. The United States withdrawal in Afghanistan has created a new series of problems in the country. With the Taliban taking power in 2021 the regime began restricting rights to women banning them from education and restrictions on freedom of speech. Years of wars waged by external forces in Afghanistan have left the country in the situation it is in today and with no real opposition to the Taliban has decided to make women its public enemy. Women in Afghanistan have taken to the streets of Kabul and other cities to protest the harsh restrictions imposed upon women. “The Taliban could take our pens and books, but they couldn’t stop our minds from thinking” ( Yousafzai 2013)

## **Background to the Kabul airport crisis and Taliban takeover:**

In February 2020 President Trump announced plans to withdraw from Afghanistan within 14 months. Donald Trump negotiated with the Taliban that US forces would withdraw from the country and to free imprisoned Taliban soldiers. Following through with his predecessors promises Biden in his 2020 election campaign promised to withdraw more troops from Afghanistan “My administration strongly supports the diplomatic process that’s underway and to bring an end to this war that is closing out 20 years.” (Biden 2020). After the US withdrawal Taliban forces surrounded the capital Kabul and proclaimed themselves as the new government of Afghanistan. This then led to the Kabul airport crisis as US officials said they were prepared to accept up to 22,000 allies in the weeks after the withdrawal and people scrambling to escape the Taliban. Since then, the Taliban have had no serious opposition to government as they begin to silence all those who criticise them.

What happened in Afghanistan mattered in 2020 and still matters today. The truth is that years of external involvement in Afghanistan has led to the collapse of the economy and infrastructure in the region and without a stable government it has led to chaos. The calamity in Afghanistan is the west’s fault and women are now facing the repercussions.

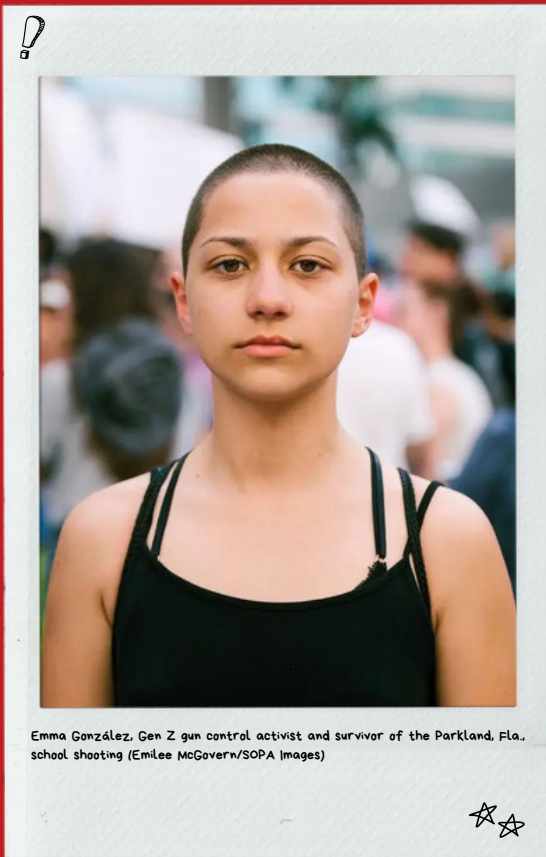
On paper women in Afghanistan are seen to have the same rights as men the constitution of Afghanistan states “Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden the citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law” . (Constitution of Afghanistan 2004). However, this is not the case there is no equal rights for men and women in Afghanistan as since the Taliban took over government institutions it began rolling back on women’s rights and human rights and imposed strict interpretation of Sharia law. Women are now banned from third level education, entering public parks, working or leaving the house without a male chaperone.

## **What can be done?:**

Countries around the world should end diplomatic ties with the Taliban government. The United Nations should try to halt the Taliban’s access to arms which they use as a means to silence opposition. The Taliban have killed Murzal Nabizada former MP on the 15 th of January of this year. “She was killed in darkness but the Taliban build their system of gender apartheid in full daylight” (Neumann 2023). As Malala Yousafzai said “they thought that the bullets would silence us, but they failed and out of that silence came thousands of voices” (Yousafzi 2013) Although women in Afghanistan have been stripped of their rights, they remain strong and persevere.

# GENERATION Z AND DEMOCRACY

In recent years the phrase gen Z has become one of the medias favourite buzz words. Like a bee to a honey pot marketing campaigns have been flooding our social media sources in the hopes of attracting one of the most technological advanced consumer groups of all time. Generation Z refers to those of unborn from the late 1990's to the early 2000's and we are often considered to be the most progressive age group of all time; one need only look at the sheer variety of trends and influencers on TikTok to see that this observation holds merit. It could be argued that at the heart of this generation there is a desire for self-expression which eclipses all else. Whether it is through fashion, makeup or social media our generation is trying to stick out. We are going against the social norms which have governed our country for so long and creating a society which is unlike anything that we have ever seen before. When looking at this newfound love of individualism it must be asked how such a generation mixes with a democratic system that is overall traditional in nature?



Ireland, like many other nations worldwide practices representative democracy. This means that the wider population elects officials to represent and act on their behalf within the government. While this is arguably a perfectly ethical and functional system there is another political layer to be considered and that is of course the role of parties. As Ireland is a multiparty system our government is usually dominated by such political groupings which offer many advantages including governmental organisation. However, as a result of the long histories that the majority of parties have it can lead to many people, especially those in more established generations to cast their votes based on deep rooted party loyalty rather than in response to specific policies and stances on modern issues. While such blind loyalty has provided stability in times where Ireland was still adapting to independence, it might not be as well suited to a generation that craves a more direct form of involvement in all aspects of life including government and politics.

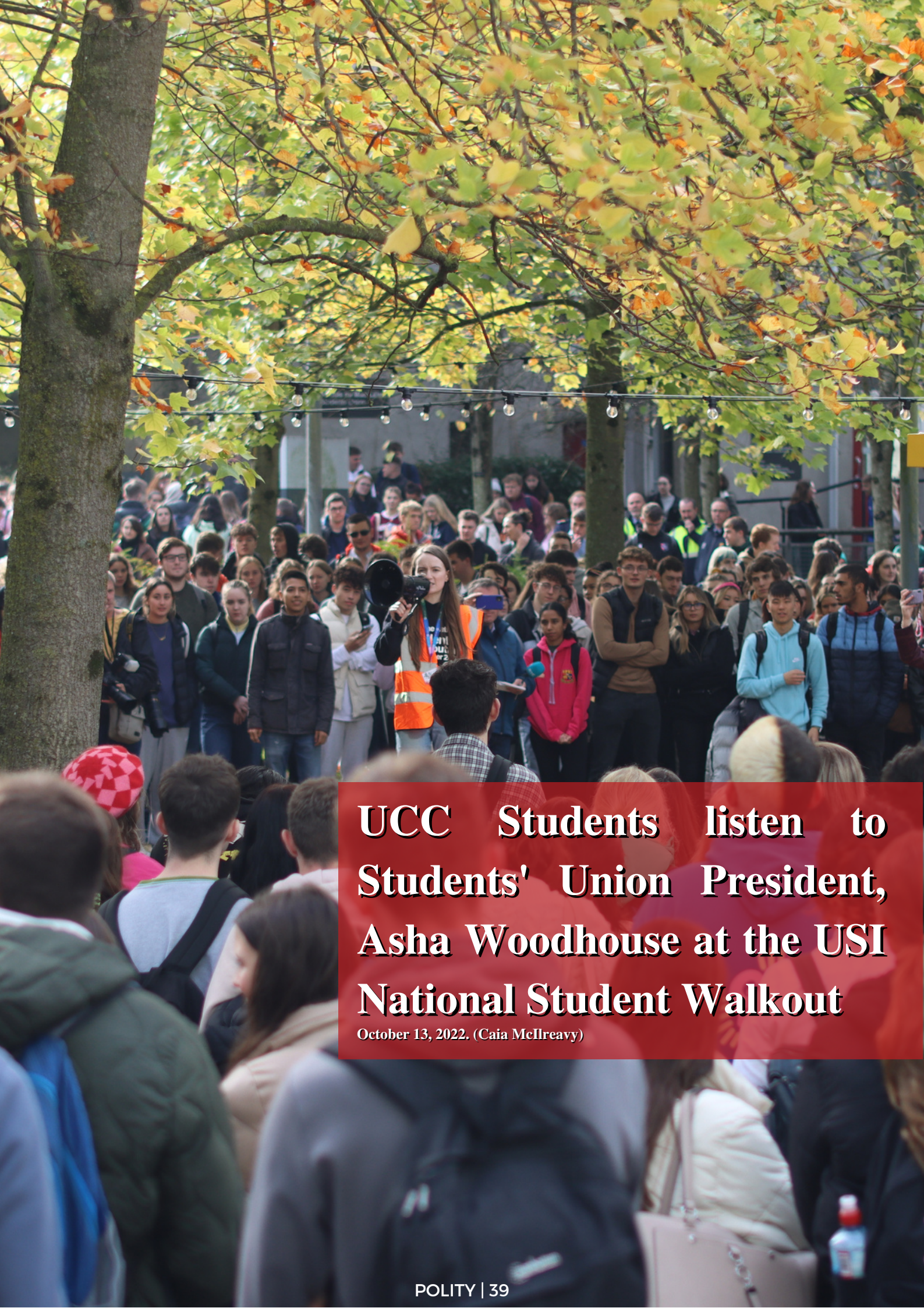
Written by Zara Stout



**UCC Students Union  
Education Officer, Sinéad  
Roche speaking at the USI  
National Student Walkout**

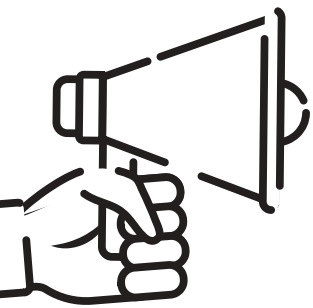
October 13, 2022. (Caia McIlreavy)

WHILE THEY  
SEEK



**UCC Students listen to  
Students' Union President,  
Asha Woodhouse at the USI  
National Student Walkout**

October 13, 2022. (Caia McIlreavy)



# Youth Political Participation

by Alex O'Connell

There is something seriously wrong with our politics. It is not widespread corruption or growing polarization, but our young people. Specifically, the lack of respect the political system has for them. Around two-thirds of 18-24 year olds are considering emigrating in the near future. This is an appalling figure. Despite this, at the most recent general election those who are under 35 were significantly underrepresented in ballots cast while those over 35 were overrepresented. This displays a total disillusionment with the political process, which has occurred because young people no longer believe that traditional politics can address their concerns. While traditional political avenues seem to have been rejected by young people, we see that they have established their own unique forms of political participation. This is an exciting development as it allows them to take a new approach to politics, but it is also a shocking reminder of how much traditional political institutions have failed them.

We cannot continue before we first determine why age would play such an important factor in how we participate and engage with politics in the first place. The idea of separating people into generations based on their age is reductive and tells us little about their interactions with political systems. A much more effective approach is to consider the economic, political, and

socio-economic circumstances that occurred while a person was in their formative years. This would include globalization, neo-liberalism, and the digital age for young people. This is significant as it determines how a person views the world, society, politics, and their place in all of them. As young people begin to consider the political system as broken and ineffective at solving societal problems, they have turned to a form of digital political participation. Social media has made it easier to meet like-minded people which creates online spheres of political participation and organization that previously was monopolized by political parties. This participation consists of discussion, fundraising, information gathering, and socialization. Unfortunately, this political activity goes unacknowledged by traditional political institutions because there is simply no communication network between the online and real-world spaces. This is ultimately a failure of these institutions to adapt to technological developments and this leaves young people even further from any form of change.

The initial disillusionment with traditional political spheres and then the further failure to engage with online spaces has led to the radical development of youth anti-politics. This is the total rejection of political institutions in favor of the digital structures which encourage global



collective action. Examples of this can be found in the “Fridays for Future” climate protests and the “March for Our Lives” pro-gun control movement. This type of anti-politics believes that a withdrawal from the political system damages its legitimacy. They favor a global approach to solving issues through close co-operation between organizations which has been enabled by online political participation. This global nature of this youth anti-politics also lends itself to prioritizing systemic reorganization rather than specific policy goals. This can be seen in the growing calls for a reform of Capitalism in response to the climate emergency. If political institutions hope to regain some trust from young people, then they must learn how to interact with these online spaces and see them as a legitimate form of political participation.

While learning about how young people engage in political action, I have discovered one thing that is certain. It is that politicians and parties do not see it as legitimate or worth paying attention to. This total exclusion of young people from the decision-making leads to a breakdown in trust between youths and the political establishment. This distrust and disillusionment has led to the emergence of an anti-politics which sees a withdrawal of young people from parties, elections, and traditional political organizations. This process delegitimizes these institutions and can cause growing problems the more it is left unchecked. We can see this in Ireland, where a vast majority of young people consider emigration because the Government fails to listen to young voices when it comes to housing or education. Ultimately, I believe that the only way to stop alienating our young people is to reform our political institutions to embrace this new digital and global political

participation. This requires a redistribution of power away from politicians and parties towards collective action. This would see youth organizations not only being listened to, but fully engaged in the decision-making process. We must redefine what politics means if we are to have a well-informed, responsible, and engaged citizenry.



# The Puppy

Be wary of the pups you feed  
Wandering the forest.  
Softened fur may deceive  
Until the wolf is nourished.

Violent creatures can't be chained  
Amidst a blur of anguish.  
Don't lay the blame at the "tamed"  
But rather at the vanquished.

Truer men and better wolves  
Have left blood out to hang.

The bigger the smile,  
The jaw,  
The teeth

Caution.

The sharper the fang.

Brian O'Kane



# The Art of War

Cloud curtains begin their ascent,  
Hoisted by the sun,  
While empty stages emerge from fog,  
Casting daughter and son.  
An orchestra assembles,  
The engines running low,  
While sobbing violins prepare to launch,

Catastrophe on the bow.  
Invaders cross the map again,  
Treading familiar ground,  
Flakes of rubble like gentle rain,  
Cascading to the ground.  
Cymbals crash as scenes unfold,  
The tanks crank and roll,  
Pain permutates the people,  
Muscle memory taking hold.  
Tradition is like a returning train,  
For this generation homeward bound,  
Hurling dust blood stained,  
Carelessly all around.  
Like delving hands into an urn,  
That finally rests in peace,  
Audience draws intake of breath,  
Gripped to their seat.

Lorraine Ní Chathasaigh

Written upon the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Feb'22



UCC's Political Magazine

# POLITY



**FOR MORE**

- ✓ [www.politymagazine.com](http://www.politymagazine.com)
- ✓ [@polityucc](https://twitter.com/polityucc)
- ✓ [@uccgovpolsoc](https://twitter.com/uccgovpolsoc)