



© 2020 The Author/s

This is an open access text distributed under the CC-BY 3.0 License.

Date of acceptance: January 12, 2020

Date of publication: May 04, 2020

Book review

UDC 343.575(66)

343.9.02:663.9(66)

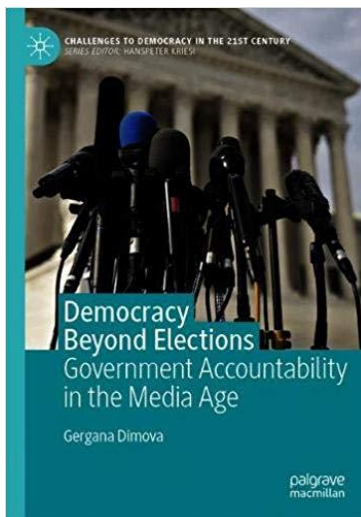
Scan the QR code:



DEMOCRACY BEYOND ELECTIONS: GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE MEDIA AGE¹

Milka Dimitrovska

Institute of Sociological, Political and Juridical Research,
"Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje, North Macedonia
[todorovmia\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:todorovmia[at]gmail.com)



It is a challenge to make a significant conceptual contribution in the vast sea of political science literature, yet the author Gergana Dimova in her newest book 'Democracy beyond Elections: Government Accountability in the Media Age' has managed to provide a new perspective, very apt to the title. This lecturer in politics at the University of Winchester in the United Kingdom has clearly been influenced by her eminent educational background as a Harvard University and University of Cambridge alumna. Published in a perfect moment when the actuality and pressing issues of fake news and hate speech, as well as other forms of political and social behavior manifested through the media pose real threat to democracy, society and even security, the book successfully delivers the dichotomy of such issues and the contrasting situation of manifold accessible data that could foster democratic awareness and action.

¹ Author of the book: Gergana Dimova. Publisher: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020. Website:

<https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9783030252939#aboutBook>



Thus, the author has established excellent analytical and conceptual ground for possible scientifically based government policy making and civic action. Unlike the vast majority of political scientists that tie elections with the core of democracy, the author relies on an alternative path focusing on the qualitative features of political institutional, non-institutional and citizens' functioning between elections while elaborating upon the complex interrelation of media and the great versatility of accountability fora and their social and political significance. The author Gergana Dimova argues the diminished role of elections regarding successfully upholding democratic principles and substance due to elections' conceptual and operational flaws, while simultaneously weighs all types of accountability fora that impact certain democratic trends and outputs and elaborates how various subjects affect political accountability. As well, she reveals precisely how accountability mechanisms in each of the sample case study countries (Russia, Germany and Bulgaria) work by engaging into in-depth analysis.

In addition, she puts into context the inherent features of media as both conductive and inhibiting democratic factor, thus elucidating the complexity of Media Age. Through the prism of media allegations in between elections, the author determines the entanglement of media and accountability, entailing the accountability of an incumbent, his/her policies, cases investigation and adequate sanctions, i.e. types of government's response. By establishing well-crafted terms (including the creation of the new notion of 'accountability turn') which complement existing definitions in the relevant political science literature, the author delivers the understanding of the evolutive character of democracy influenced by new trends and factors and takes optimistic approach regarding the transformative potential of democracy and accountability. Although the writing style is somewhat concentrated and this work requires certain acquaintance of the reader with political science and communicology as a prerequisite for optimally absorbing the book's contents, the author, through impressionable wording and accentuated significant points, manages to uphold expressive clarity and simplicity of the style to the end of making the work comprehensible even for the less advantaged scholars, broader public and professionals in the administrative field as well.

The high quality of the book is ensured by the author's holistic analytical argumentation and sound methodological approach, considering the abundant database of cases of accusation of incumbents, careful selection of representative countries and broad systematically gathered literature under which these cases are subsumed. A few general and several specific theories applied to the analyzed cases and the respective acquired primary data conclude the impression for the book. Summarily, the novelty and added value of the scientific approach lies in the particular sample of countries with certain democratic types, the book's specific juxtaposition of accountability, democracy and media, the vast database that has been analyzed as well as some newly-coined terms and systematization of notions due the generalization and synthetic method, thus comprehensively encircling a highly beneficial piece of political science work. 