

# Social media has weakened India's democracy. Social movements could be the answer | Rest of World

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Since 2014, social media has become central to how elections and campaigning for state and national elections take place in India. Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp strategies have become key for political parties, which is evidenced by the large amounts of money — about 5 billion Indian rupees (around \$66,000,000) — that was spent on targeted political advertising on digital platforms that year. Several studies have pointed out the impact social media had, particularly on first-time voters, who engaged strongly with this content in the run-up to the 2019 national elections. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, which won the 2014 and 2019 elections, has been repeatedly lauded for its ability to organize and influence discourse in online spaces.

It may seem that social media is a boon for democracies — it enables greater participation and access to information. While this is true, a closer look is warranted. At the heart of democracy is the possibility of exchanging ideas, concerns, and possible solutions. But as several reports have pointed out, social media platforms and the way in which their algorithms are deployed result in the creation of deep echo chambers, where individuals are repeatedly shown similar narratives and content that confirm their preexisting biases.

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