**RESOLVED: IN A DEMOCRACY, A FREE PRESS OUGHT TO PRIORITIZE OBJECTIVITY OVER ADVOCACY.**

**VALUE:** **DEMOCRACY**

**ROSS ‘98**

**“Democracy is of value because it produces liberty and equality. With dictatorship or other forms of special leadership, a particular person or group has more power than others. By contrast, in democracy everyone is equal. Everyone has the same (political) power. So democracy is egalitarian as compared with other forms of government or decision making.”**

[*Harrison, Ross: Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*](https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/democracy/v-1/sections/what-democracy-is)

1. **Democracy breeds liberty, where citizens in democratic nations lead a higher quality life than citizens in non-democratic nations**

**LYNN-JONES ‘98**

“The first way in which the spread of **democracy enhances the lives of those who live in democracies is by promoting individual liberty,** including freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, and freedom to own private property. **Respect for the liberty of individuals is an inherent feature of democratic politics.** As Samuel Huntington has written, liberty is ‘the peculiar virtue of democracy.’ **A democratic political process based on electoral competition depends on freedom of expression of political views and freedom to make electoral choices. Moreover, governments that are accountable to the public are less likely to deprive their citizens of human rights.** The global spread of democracy is likely to bring greater individual liberty to more and more people. Even imperfect and illiberal democracies tend to offer more liberty than autocracies, and liberal democracies are very likely to promote liberty. Freedom House's 1997 survey of ‘Freedom in the World’ found that 79 out of 118 democracies could be classified as ‘free’ and 39 were ‘partly free’ and, of those, 29 qualified as ‘high partly free.’ In contrast, only 20 of the world's 73 nondemocracies were "partly free" and 53 were ‘not free.’”

[*Lynn-Jones, Sean M.: Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*](https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/why-united-states-should-spread-democracy)

1. **Democracies are less likely to breed violence against their own people, leading to a more pleasurable life for citizens**

**LYNN-JONES ‘98**

“Second, America should spread liberal democracy because the **citizens of liberal democracies are less likely to suffer violent death in civil unrest or at the hands of their governments.** These two findings are supported by many studies, but particularly by the work of R.J. Rummel. Rummel finds that democracies-by which he means **liberal democracies-between 1900 and 1987 saw only 0.14% of their populations (on average) die annually in internal violence. The corresponding figure for authoritarian regimes was 0.59% and for totalitarian regimes 1.48%.** Rummel also finds that citizens of liberal democracies are far less likely to die at the hands of their governments. **Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes have been responsible for the overwhelming majority of genocides and mass murders of civilians in the twentieth century.** The states that have killed millions of their citizens all have been authoritarian or totalitarian: the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, Nazi Germany, Nationalist China, Imperial Japan, and Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. Democracies have virtually never massacred their own citizens on a large scale, although they have killed foreign civilians during wartime. The American and British bombing campaigns against Germany and Japan, U.S. atrocities in Vietnam, massacres of Filipinos during the guerrilla war that followed U.S. colonization of the Philippines after 1898, and French killings of Algerians during the Algerian War are some prominent examples. There are two reasons for the relative absence of civil violence in democracies: (1) Democratic political systems-especially those of liberal democracies constrain the power of governments, reducing their ability to commit mass murders of their own populations. As Rummel concludes, ‘Power kills, absolute power kills absolutely ... The more freely a political elite can control the power of the state apparatus, the more thoroughly it can repress and murder its subjects.’ (2) Democratic polities allow opposition to be expressed openly and have regular processes for the peaceful transfer of power. If all participants in the political process remain committed to democratic principles, critics of the government need not stage violent revolutions and governments will not use violence to repress opponents.”

[*Lynn-Jones, Sean M.: Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*](https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/why-united-states-should-spread-democracy)

**CRITERIA: PRAGMATISM**

**MCDERMID ‘19**

**“Pragmatism is a philosophical movement that includes those who claim that an ideology or proposition is true if it works satisfactorily, that the meaning of a proposition is to be found in the practical consequences of accepting it, and that unpractical ideas are to be rejected.”**

[*Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*](https://iep.utm.edu/pragmati/)

**CONTENTION ONE)**

**By prioritizing objectivity over advocacy, we are threatening democracy. Since objectivity is impossible to accomplish, people in power will decide what should be reported on, leading to corrupt information. Advocacy is imperative in a democracy as it checks our elected leaders**

**WIJNBERG ‘17**

**“If you order journalists to check their moral judgments at the door**, one of two things will happen. Either they’ll have no clue what to report on and go home without a story, or **they’ll figure it out in the only way possible: by letting others decide. In practice, that means becoming a mouthpiece for the establishment.** I talk in depth about objectivity and being a mouthpiece for the establishment in this interview with Esther van Fennema (in Dutch only). – **the people with the power** to **decide what’s important, trivial, good, or bad.** (Or, like the Dutch premier, to define what’s “normal” and what isn’t.)News is one of the most important sources of information in a democratic society. Today more than ever, it determines what we know, understand, and think about the world. It influences our voting behavior and how we see other people, cultures, and countries. Our view of the world is increasingly fueled by half-truths, whole fairytales, and bald-faced lies issuing from the uppermost ranks of global politics, amplified by the loudest yellers in domestic politics, and spread across millions of phones, laptops, and TVs in milliseconds. Today it’s more crucial than ever that journalism stand for something. **We must commit to the values that are essential to a democratic society: to a check on power, to the pursuit of truth, to providing context and perspective. When the president of the United States fabricates the number of attendees at his inauguration and then lashes out at every media organization that presents the evidence to show he’s lying**, it’s not enough to report “Trump accuses media despite ample counterevidence,” as the NOS news did. Or to broadcast some even-handed variant that leaves the public in the lurch: “So-and-so reports X number of people, Trump says there were Y. And now over to Philip with the weather.” Instead, **you need to clearly announce that one of the world’s most powerful politicians is demonstrably lying yet again.**  And you’d better figure out why.  **Meanwhile, you should be keeping track of his actions and not just his words. Otherwise, “not taking a position” means being not only a mouthpiece for power but a conduit for lies.”**

[*Wijnberg, Rob: The Correspondent*](https://thecorrespondent.com/6138/why-objective-journalism-is-a-misleading-and-dangerous-illusion/157316940-eb6c348e)

**CONTENTION TWO)**

**The pretense of objectivity is false and highly dangerous.The reality of it is that in choosing to speak of a topic demonstrates advocacy, it's just not explicitly stated. If people believe in objectivity, then they will be less skeptical and critical of the information, leading to mass misinformation.**

**WIJNBERG ‘17**

**“Describing the world with no idea of what’s good or bad, relevant or trivial, true or false is literally impossible.** Behind every report, every feature, every news item, lies a worldview rooted in assumptions ontological (what’s real?), epistemological (what’s true?), methodological (how do we find out?), and moral (why does it matter?).Or, to put it in Gelauffian terms, all news comes from a position… **Why doesn’t the news ever lead with a delayed train between St. Petersburg and Novosibirsk? Because the editors take the position that a late Russian train doesn’t matter here… The reverse is true too: why does the news open with a Trump tweet, a bombing in Syria, a domestic policy proposal, chaos at a national transportation hub? Because the editors take the position that statements by a US president, wars in the Middle East, our own leaders’ plans, and travel snafus in our own country matter. And why does the news always call bombings by ISIS “terrorist attacks” and those by Western governments “bombardments”? Because the editors take the position that that’s what they are.”**

[*Wijnberg, Rob: The Correspondent*](https://thecorrespondent.com/6138/why-objective-journalism-is-a-misleading-and-dangerous-illusion/157316940-eb6c348e)

**CONTENTION THREE)**

**It's impossible to establish what’s objective as people believe that their own personal notions present the “moral” perspective. If objectivity is defined as supporting a perspective with factual evidence, then no opinion can be declared as objective, due to rampant information offered online that offers facts supporting every belief imaginable. When people are told their views are not objectively true, it causes anger and political extremism, which then they will reject the entire system.**

**ROSS ‘20**

**“Two studies conducted during the 2016 presidential campaign examined the dynamics of the objectivity illusion, the belief that the views of “my side” are objective while the views of the opposing side are the product of bias. In the first,** a three-stage longitudinal study spanning the presidential debates, **supporters of the two candidates exhibited a large and generally symmetrical tendency to rate supporters of the candidate they personally favored as more influenced by appropriate (i.e., “normative”) considerations, and less influenced by various sources of bias than supporters of the opposing candidate.** This study broke new ground by demonstrating that the degree to which partisans displayed the objectivity illusion predicted subsequent bias in their perception of debate performance and polarization in their political attitudes over time, as well as closed-mindedness and antipathy toward political adversaries. These associations, furthermore, remained significant even after controlling for baseline levels of partisanship. A second study conducted 2 d before the election showed similar perceptions of objectivity versus bias in ratings of blog authors favoring the candidate participants personally supported or opposed. These ratings were again associated with polarization and, additionally, with the willingness to characterize supporters of the opposing candidate as evil and likely to commit acts of terrorism. **At a time of particular political division and distrust in America, these findings point to the exacerbating role played by the illusion of objectivity.”**

[*Ross, Lee D.: PNAS*](https://www.pnas.org/doi/abs/10.1073/pnas.1912301117)