



## **New Threats to Democracy**

**December 5, 2014**

**Australian Catholic University and La Trobe University**

**Melbourne, Australia**

Democracy has acquired an ideological dominance virtually unchallenged by its philosophical rivals. Yet despite this, democracy's place is far from ensured. Market volatility, the rise of the far right, global warming, voter apathy, the withdrawal of the demo from public life, the curtailment of media independence, xenophobia, ethnonationalism, and rising disparities between wealthy and poor are among the pressing issues that undermine the realisation of popular self-government and risk shifting societies closer to authoritarianism. The aim of this workshop is to understand how such issues threaten democracy and to assess the possible routes available for democracies to circumvent them. The workshop is open to a variety of methodological approaches, welcoming papers that are historical, conceptual, normative, comparative and empirical in nature.

Possible core themes of this workshop include: identifying how threats have historically been understood (to better understand any difference that there might be between 'old' and 'new' threats to democracy); gaining insight into what definitions of 'threats to democracy' exist (it is important to know if threats to democracy have been systematically categorized and if they are subject to types of measurement or empirical scrutiny); better understanding how historical and present day democracies have responded to threats (a look at the policy generated from these responses may prove useful in building a threat response tool-kit for states transitioning to democracy, new democracies, or democratic states that might be on the cusp of encountering unexperienced threats); and generating normative arguments for combating the threats to democracy in a systemic way (such wholesale recommendations might prove valuable to states interested in reforming their culture of politics).

Key questions for the workshop include, but are not limited to:

- What is a threat to democracy?
- Can threats to democracy be categorized?
- Are there threats that are common to all democracies?
- Are certain democracies, or certain constitutive elements of democracy, more prone to threat than others?
- Can democracies threaten themselves?
- How does a democracy overcome a threat?
- Is it 'right' or 'just' to be un-democratic (through for example anomie or states of exception) to 'save' democracy?
- Do democracies face constellations of threats?
- Are there 'conscious threats' (that is, purposefully built threats) in play designed solely for the task of weakening democracy?
- What are the very recent/ongoing threats to democracy?
- Can we quantify threats? Perhaps along the lines of 'more damaging and less damaging' in relation to democracy?
- What policy responses, if any, have threats to democracy generated?
- Are there solidarities that can function as a credible means to manage or combat threats?

### *Bursaries*

Four bursaries will be available for exceptional Early Career Researcher (ECR) workshop participants. To be eligible, participants must either be a PhD student or an unwaged ECR with no more than three years post-PhD experience. The bursary will include a return economy airfare from an Australian city and one night accommodation in Melbourne. To be considered for this bursary, please include a CV (no longer than three pages) with your abstract submission.

### *Output (publication)*

Papers presented at the workshop will be considered for publication as a special issue in a leading international journal. In addition to this, papers will form the basis of an edited book on the workshop theme to be published by an academic press of good standing.

*Schedule*

Abstracts are due September 15, 2014.

Full papers are due November 15, 2014.

The workshop will take place December 5, 2014, at Australian Catholic University.

Please send abstracts of not more than 200 words to Dr George Vasilev ([g.vasilev@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:g.vasilev@latrobe.edu.au)) and Dr Jean-Paul Gagnon ([jeanpaul.gagnon@acu.edu.au](mailto:jeanpaul.gagnon@acu.edu.au)) by September 15, 2014.