

The Illusion of Democracy: Data Centers and Corporate Power

News:

The data center backlash is reshaping American politics - one community at a time. ([Source](#))

Comment:

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence and data centers is exposing a deeper crisis within American democracy: that government serves the interests of the wealthy and powerful at the expense of ordinary citizens. Across the country, communities are challenging data center developments, questioning secretive agreements, and confronting elected officials who are more responsive to corporate investors than to the people they “supposedly” represent.

What makes this conflict significant is not simply the construction of large industrial facilities, but rather, the broader question of who truly holds power in a democracy and whose interests government ultimately protects. The data center controversy reveals the distance between *dēmos* (people) and *kratos* (rule). Communities are increasingly confronted with development projects negotiated behind closed doors and sometimes involving nondisclosure agreements signed by public officials. Critical decisions are being made without transparency, citizen participation, or in some cases awareness.

Public distrust is on the rise. It is rooted in a longer history of government betrayal, broken promises, corporate subordination, and policies that have placed economic and political power in the hands of a small group of influential interests. For many citizens, the data center debate is therefore not an isolated dispute, but another chapter in an established pattern of deception. It exposes a structural flaw in which political decisions benefit only the wealthy.

Public distrust toward the U.S. government is shaped by historical experiences in which the people have been deceived over and over again, from 9/11 and the Epstein files to the handling of COVID-19 and the Iran War. This reflects a legacy of betrayal and neglect by the powers that be. The data center debate is an expression of public frustration with corporate influence.

Peoples concerns extend beyond the immediate effects of individual facilities to questions about the direction of technological progress, the distribution of economic power, and whether they really have a say. The growing opposition to data centers should therefore be understood not merely as resistance to technological advancement, but as a distrust of capitalism and the tools of democratic accountability. Citizens are asking whether their voices carry genuine weight when confronted by powerful corporate interests and government officials eager to secure investment.

For us Muslims, Allah (swt) did not leave the responsibility of caring for the affairs of humanity without careful instructions. Decisions impacting the Ummah fall into two categories: those prescribed by Allah (swt), which cannot be debated or dismissed, and to which both the leader and the led must submit equally; and those that can be debated, where accountability is restricted to the human impact alone and not solely based on monetary benefits.

Through the Majlis al-Ummah, the Khalifah (Caliph) is advised on the practical matters of ruling in relation to domestic policy and its opinion in that regard is binding. The sanctity of human life and honor are paramount and are not shaped by corporate interests.

Within Islam, transparency, accountability, Shariah evidence, and the belief that Allah (swt) has made the sole purpose of politics the care of those under one's authority mean that trust will always be at the center of shaping decisions.

The Prophet (saw) said: **«أَلَا كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْنُونٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ فَإِمَامُ الَّذِي عَلَى النَّاسِ رَاعٍ وَهُوَ مَسْنُونٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْنُونٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَوَلَدِهِ وَهِيَ مَسْنُونَةٌ عَنْهُمْ وَعَبْدُ الرَّجُلِ رَاعٍ عَلَى مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ»** “Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock. The ruler is a shepherd and is responsible for his subjects. A man is a shepherd over his family and is responsible for them. A woman is a shepherd over her husband’s household and is responsible for it. Indeed, each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock.”

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