

DEMOCRACY REPORT 2022

Autocratization Changing Nature?



V-Dem is a unique approach to measuring democracy – historical, multidimensional, nuanced, and disaggregated – employing state-of-the-art methodology.

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) produces the largest global dataset on democracy with over 30 million data points for 202 countries from 1789 to 2021. Involving over 3,700 scholars and other country experts, V-Dem measures hundreds of different attributes of democracy. V-Dem enables new ways to study the nature, causes, and consequences of democracy embracing its multiple meanings.

We are very grateful for our funders' support over the years, which has made this venture possible. To learn more about our funders, please visit: <https://v-dem.net/funders.html>.

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect an official position of the V-Dem Project or the V-Dem Steering Committee.

Produced by the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg

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Printing: Stema Specialtryck AB.

Cover photo: Rally at Sophia Square in Kyiv, Ukraine, January 22, 2022, as Russian military invasion seems possible. Photo by Sean Gallup, Getty Images.

Suggested citation: Vanessa A. Boese, Nazifa Alizada, Martin Lundstedt, Kelly Morrison, Natalia Natsika, Yuko Sato, Hugo Tai, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2022. Autocratization Changing Nature? Democracy Report 2022. Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem).

March 2022

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İstanbul Turkey, March 27, 2021. LGBTI+ and women protested the withdrawal of Turkey's Istanbul Convention. Photo: Shutterstock.

Word from the Team

WE ARE PLEASED TO PRESENT the *Democracy Report 2022* from the V-Dem Institute. Our report comes during challenging times as the world is facing a war in Europe, rising tensions in the East Asia-Pacific region, a return of military and other coups, and new heights of polarization across many societies. It is our hope that the *Democracy Report 2022* will contribute to a greater understanding of the global challenges to democracy.

Like many other observers around the world, we are deeply concerned with the decline of democracy over the past decade. This year's *Democracy Report* documents a continuation of that trend during 2021. This intensifying wave of autocratization around the world highlights the need for new initiatives to defend democracy. In 2021, a series of such engagements originated from the highest levels as well as a by a multitude of important grass roots actions around the world.

But engagement to protect and promote democracy must build on science to be effective. Facts must meet misconceptions and lies about the virtues and limitations of democratic and autocratic governance.

That is why we started the *Case for Democracy* with financial support from the European Union. It collates state-of-the-art research on the dividends of democracy for economic and human development, health and socio-economic protections, environmental protection and climate change mitigation, as well as for international and domestic security. You will find a special box with summary of findings in this year's *Democracy Report*. We look forward to carrying on and expanding these efforts in the coming years.

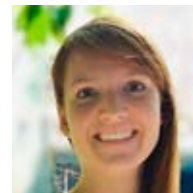
The *Democracy Report 2022* presents findings based on the newest edition of the V-Dem dataset (version 12). The data is the result of a vast international collaboration. We are immensely grateful to the 3,700 country experts without whose contribution V-Dem would not be possible, and to the Country Coordinators, Regional Managers, Project Managers, and Steering Committee Members for their principal roles.

Finally, this is the first *Democracy Report* produced without Anna Lührmann. She joined the Institute as a postdoc in 2015, then became Assistant Professor and Deputy Director. Anna founded the *Democracy Report* and led the work during her tenure. We miss her presence deeply, but we congratulate Germany to have Anna as Minister of State for Europe. Anna, we hope you read this report and feel proud of your legacy.

The V-Dem Institute Team



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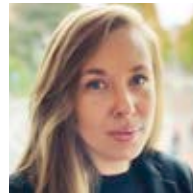
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Executive Summary

DEMOCRACY WORLDWIDE IN 2021

- The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2021 is down to 1989 levels. The last 30 years of democratic advances are now eradicated.
- Dictatorships are on the rise and harbor 70% of the world population – 5.4 billion people.
- There are signals that the nature of autocratization is changing.

Back to 1989 Levels

- Liberal democracies peaked in 2012 with 42 countries and are now down to the lowest levels in over 25 years – 34 nations home to only 13% of the world population.
- The democratic decline is especially evident in Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

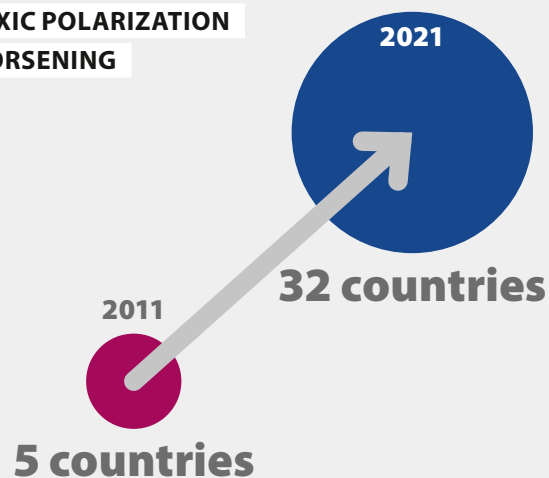
Dictatorships on the Rise

- The increasing number of closed autocracies – up from 25 to 30 countries with 26% of the world population – contributes to the changing nature of autocratization.
- Electoral autocracy remains the most common regime type and harbors 44% of the world's population, or 3.4 billion people.

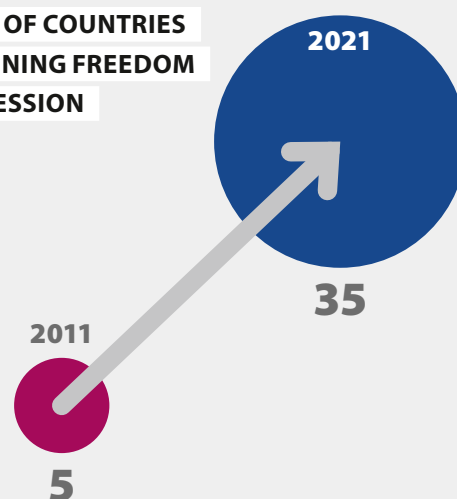
Ten Years Ago – A Different World

- A record of 35 countries suffered significant deteriorations in freedom of expression at the hands of governments – an increase from only 5 countries 10 years ago.
- A signal of toxic polarization, respect for counter-arguments and associated aspects of the deliberative component of democracy got worse in more than 32 countries – another increase from only 5 nations in 2011.

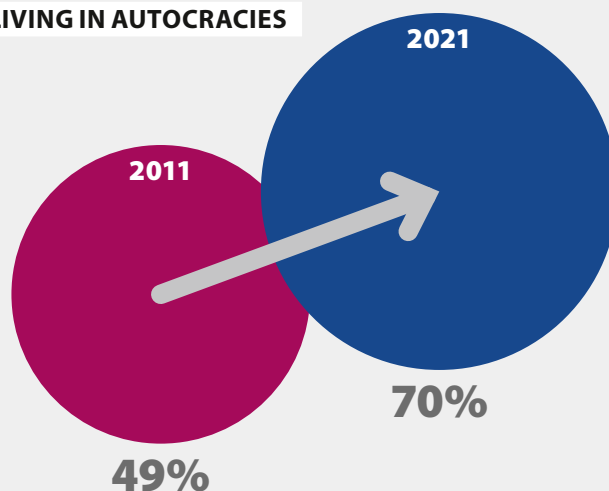
TOXIC POLARIZATION WORSENING



NUMBER OF COUNTRIES THREATENING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



SHARE OF WORLD POPULATION LIVING IN AUTOCRACIES



DEMOCRATIZERS AND AUTOCRATIZERS

- 2021 comes with a record number of nations autocratizing in the last 50 years – 33 countries home to 36% of the world population – 2.8 billion people.
- The EU may be facing its own wave of autocratization – 20% of members are autocratizing.

A Record 33 Countries are Autocratizing

- Democracy broke down in 7 of the top 10 autocratizing countries over the last decade.
- The world has not recorded so few democratizers since 1978 – 15 countries in 2021, with 3% of the world population.

Democratization Across Regions

- Across regions, elections are the aspect of democracy with the highest average improvement among democratizers.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, democratizing countries made the greatest improvements in judicial constraints on the executive – making leaders more accountable than a decade ago.

Autocratization Across Regions

- Repression of civil society worsened in 22 and censorship of media in 21 of the 33 autocratizing countries.
- Leaders in autocratizing countries diminished respect for counterarguments in 19 countries – a signal of the changing nature of autocratization.

The Major Democratizers

- Among the top 10 democratizing countries, 6 transitioned from autocracy and are democracies in 2021.
- But few of the democratizers continue to improve further.

The Major Autocratizers

- Anti-pluralist parties drive autocratization in at least 6 of the top 10 autocratizers – Brazil, Hungary, India, Poland, Serbia, and Turkey
- 6 out of 27 EU member states are now autocratizing. Three EU neighbors to the east are also autocratizing.

Popular Mobilization in (Another) Year of Autocratization

- Popular mobilization continues to stay at low levels. This lack of a pro-democratic mobilization risks allowing autocratization to deepen unchallenged.
- Rising levels of pro-autocracy mobilization may signal that autocratizing leaders are taking bolder actions to demonstrate legitimacy.

AUTOCRATIZATION CHANGING NATURE?

- The “epidemic of coup d’états” in 2021 suggests that bolder actions of autocratization are becoming more common.
- Polarization escalates towards toxic levels in 40 countries.
- Autocratic governments increasingly use misinformation to shape domestic and international opinion in their favor.

A Year of Coups

- The 5 military and 1 self-coup in 2021 set a record for the 21st century in a sharp break from the average of 1.2 coups per year.
- The coups resulted in 4 new closed autocracies – Chad, Guinea, Mali, and Myanmar.

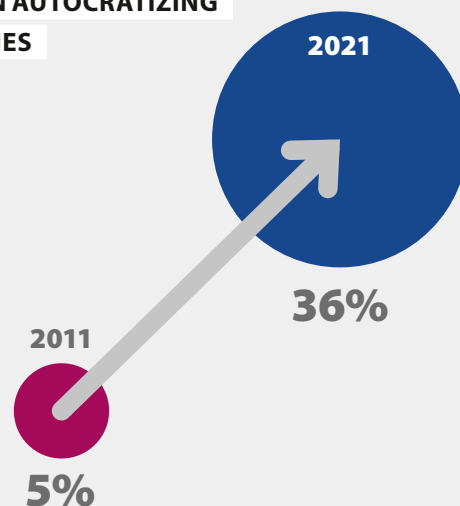
A Wave of Polarization

- Signaling a changing nature of autocratization, polarization is increasing to toxic levels in 40 countries.
- Toxic levels of polarization contribute to electoral victories of anti-pluralist leaders and the empowerment of their autocratic agendas.

Misinformation Multiplying

- Governments increasingly use misinformation to shape domestic and international opinion.
- MENA is the region with the highest – and most increasing – levels of government misinformation.

SHARE OF WORLD POPULATION LIVING IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES





Stop Killing Afghan Protest in London, August 2021.
Photo: Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona, Unsplash

State of the World: Autocratization Changing Nature?

A **WAR BEGAN IN EUROPE.** This war is the doing of the same leader who triggered the third wave of autocratization¹ when he began to derail democracy in Russia 20 years ago. The invasion seems like a definite confirmation of the dangers the world faces as a consequence of autocratization around the world.

On the day we finalize this year's *Democracy Report*, President Putin ordered a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, an independent country led by an elected government. For years, scholars warned that the global wave of autocratization would lead to more wars, both inter-state and civil (see also box on the Case for Democracy at the end of this report). The *Democracy Report 2022* also points to this shift in the *nature* of autocratization. Various pieces of evidence point to leaders becoming bolder and taking more drastic actions, leading to further autocratization.

This *Democracy Report* documents several signs that autocratization is changing nature. With five military coups and one self-coup, 2021 featured an increase in coups unprecedented over the past two decades. These coups contributed to driving the uptick in the number of closed autocracies. They also seem to signal a shift toward emboldened actors, given the previous decline in coups during the 21st century. Polarization and government misinformation are also increasing. These trends are interconnected. Polarized publics are more likely to demonize political opponents and distrust information from diverse sources, and mobilization shifts as a result. The increase in misinformation and polarization further signals what may prove to be a changing nature of autocratization in the world today. We discuss this shift in detail in the third part of the report: "Autocratization Changing Nature?"

Another sign of emboldened political leaders is the increasing number of countries where critical, formal aspects of democracy are eroding. The autonomy of institutions such as Election Management Bodies (EMBs) are now attacked and undermined in many autocratizing countries alongside the judiciary and the legislature. This year's *Democracy Report* documents such changes.

The *Democracy Report 2022* is published along with version 12 of the [V-Dem dataset](#).² The dataset is produced by the worldwide V-Dem collaboration and is based on assessments by over 3,700 experts from more than 180 countries, resulting in over 30 million data points. The *Democracy Report 2022* is authored by a team at the V-Dem Institute, and we alone are accountable for its contents.

The *Democracy Report 2022* analyzes the evidence from three perspectives. The first part examines the state of the world in 2021 based on the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) and the Regimes of the World (RoW) Index. The second part of the report focuses on countries that are in a process of changing. The third part presents data on coups, polarization, and disinformation, all of which signal that the fundamental dynamics of the current wave of autocratization may be changing.

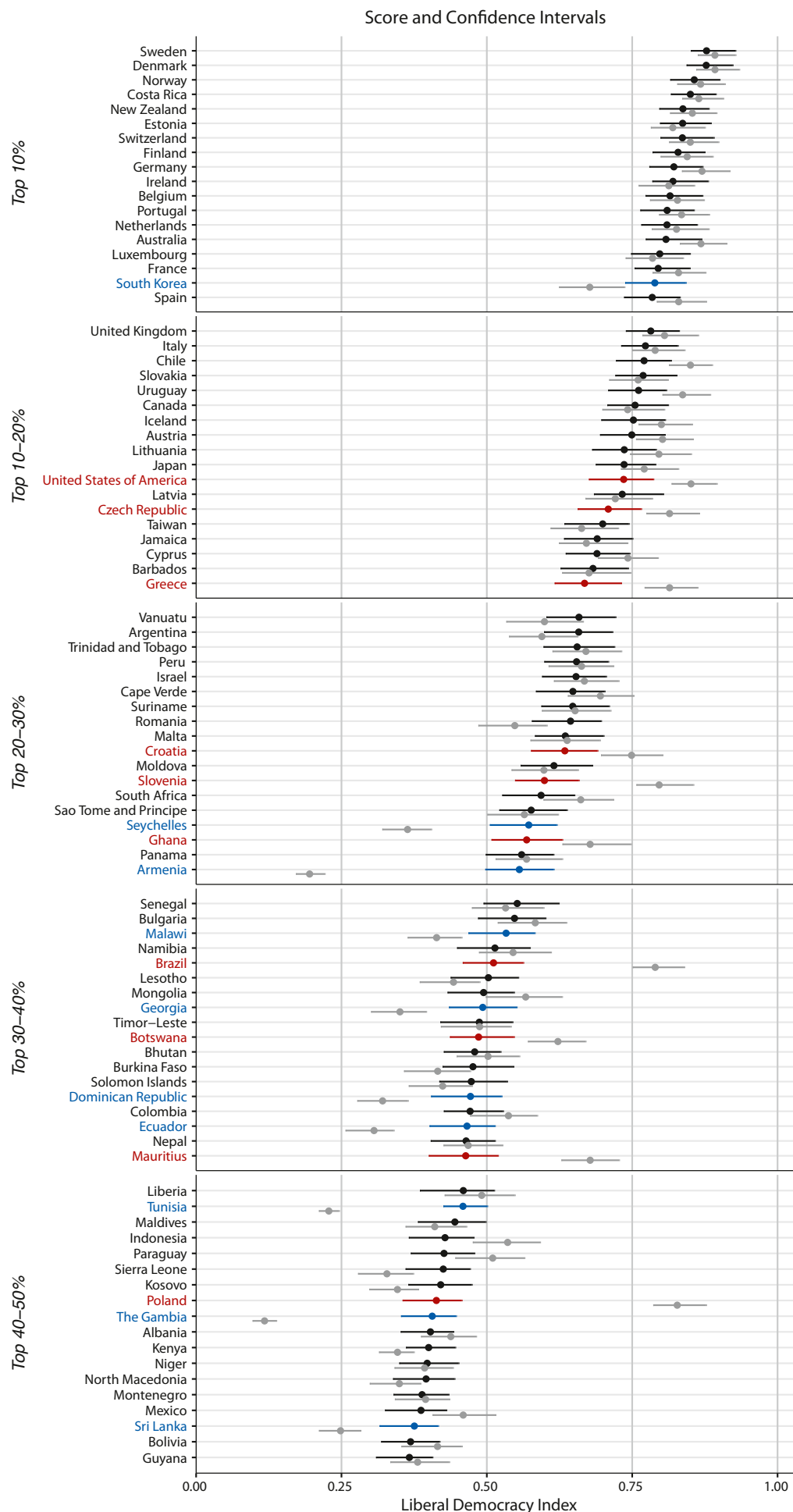
In summary: The worldwide wave of autocratization is deepening, engulfing more countries, and seems to be changing nature.

1 Lührmann A. and Lindberg S.I. 2019. [A Third Wave of Autocratization Is Here](#). *Democratization* 26(7).

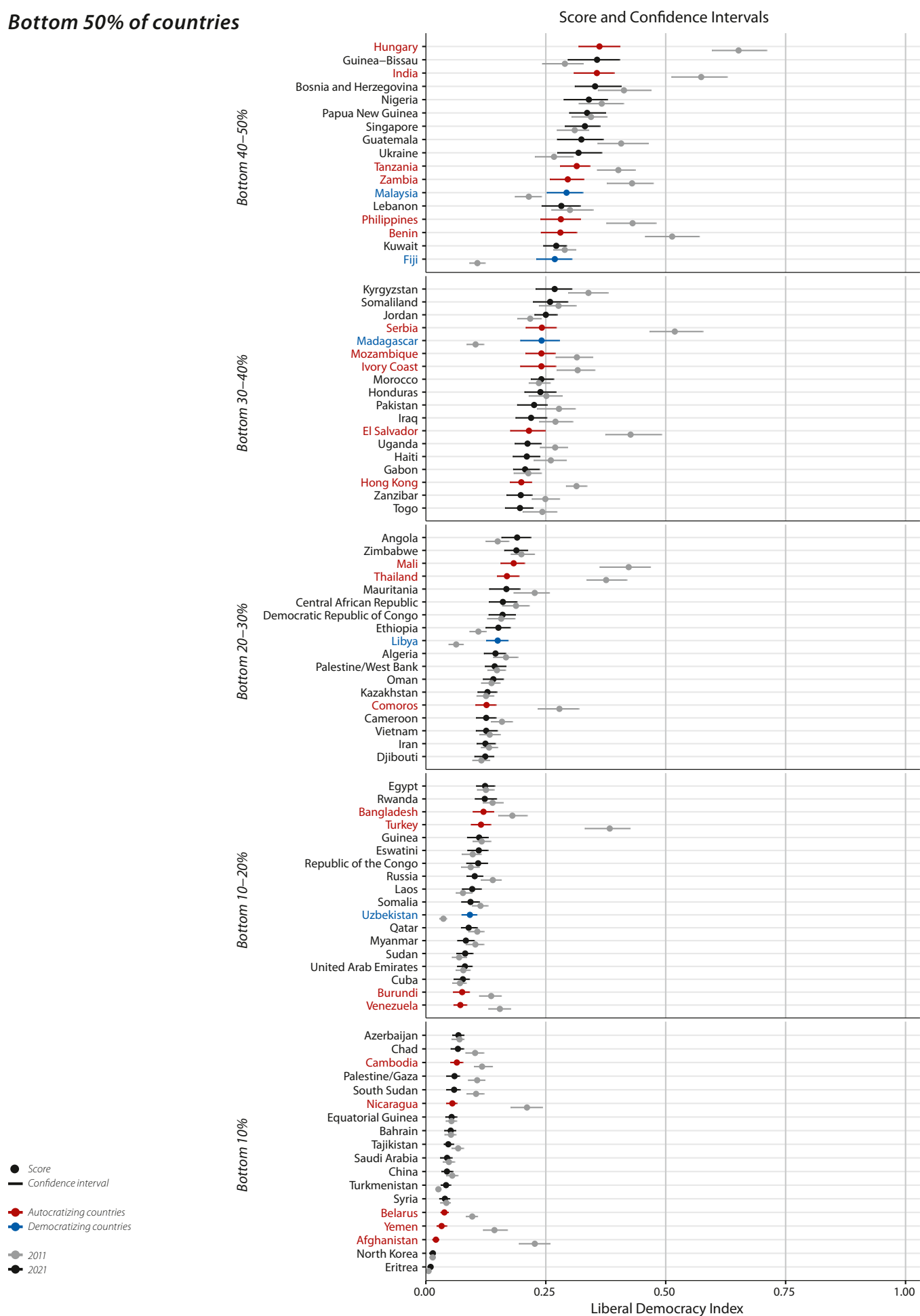
2 The V-Dem Project improves the quality of the released data every year by engaging additional, specialized country experts and further refining the methodology. This process of constant improvement may lead to a correction of scores reported in earlier versions of the dataset and the *Democracy Report*.

FIGURE 1: COUNTRIES BY SCORE ON V-DEM'S LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI), 2011 COMPARED TO 2021**Top 50% of countries**

Figure 1 shows every country's rating on the LDI in 2021 in rank order, as well as the change over the last 10 years. Country names highlighted in blue highlight the 15 countries with significant democratization and red country names reveal which 33 countries have undergone substantial autocratization. Countries are also divided into groups from the top 10 to 50% to the bottom 50 to 10%.



Bottom 50% of countries



Democracy Worldwide in 2021

- The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2021 is down to 1989 levels – the last 30 years of democratic advances are now eradicated.
- The number of liberal democracies is down to 34 in 2021. There have not been so few since 1995 – over 26 years ago.
- Closed autocracies are up from 25 to 30 between 2020–2021. Electoral autocracy remains the most common regime type in the world – 60 countries. Together, autocracies now harbor 70% of the world population – 5.4 billion people.
- A record 35 states suffer from significant deteriorations in freedom of expression at the hands of governments – ten years ago it was only 5.
- Signaling “toxic polarization”, the deliberative aspects worsened substantially in 32 countries – another massive increase from the count of 5 ten years ago.
- Autonomy of electoral management bodies (EMB) was blatantly undermined by governments in 25 countries over the past ten years.

Western Europe, North America, and parts of Latin America, Oceania, and East Asia remain among the most democratic regions of the world. The least democratic areas in the world include the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Central Asia, and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. Countries such as **Afghanistan, Belarus, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Venezuela** are among the most autocratic in the world. The map in Figure 2 shows this state of democracy in 2021 based on the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI).³

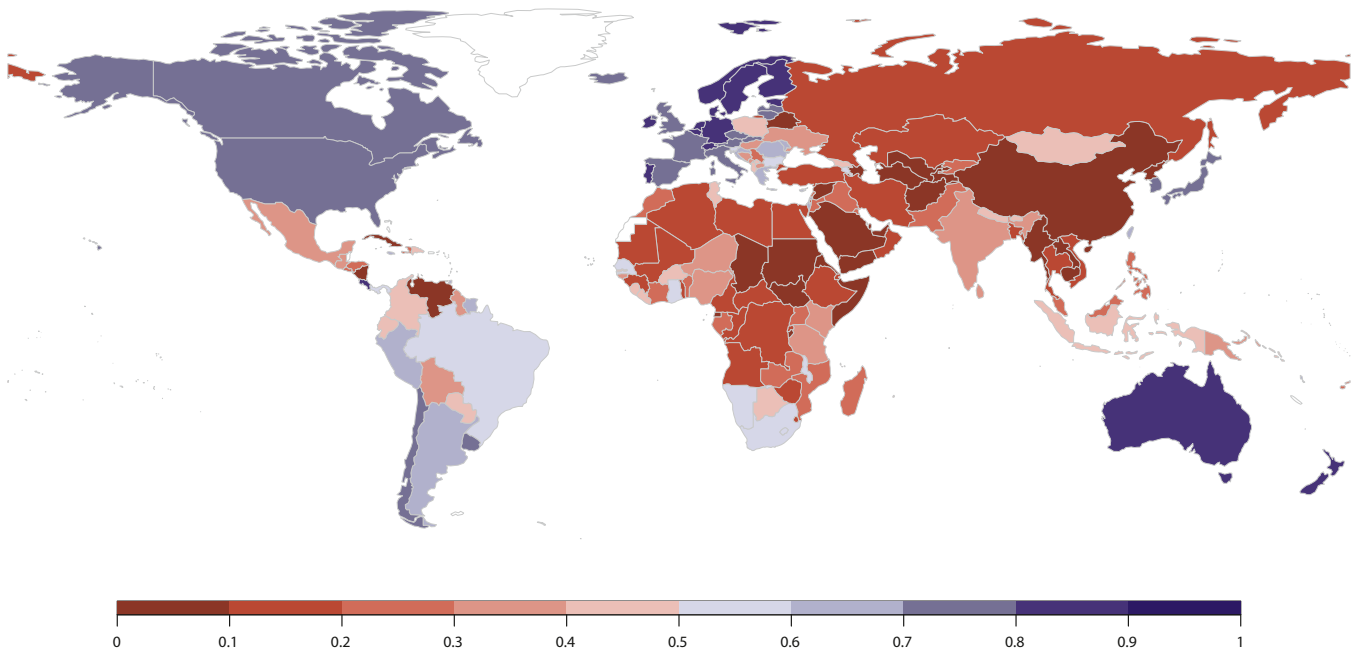
Back to 1989 Levels

- The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2021 is down to levels last registered in 1989. The last 30 years of democratic advances following the end of the Cold War have been eradicated.
- The decline is especially evident in Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2021 is down to a low point not registered since 1989 (Figure 3, red line). From this perspective, the last ten years set the world back 32 years. The far-reaching expansion of rights and freedoms around the world over that period has been eradicated.

Since democracy is *rule by the people* it matters how many people are enjoying democratic rights and freedoms around the world.

FIGURE 2: STATE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IN 2021



³ V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) captures both electoral and liberal aspects of democracy and goes from the lowest (0) to the highest (1) levels of democracy. The electoral component is measured by the Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) that captures the extent to which all elements of Robert Dahl's (1971) famous articulation of "polyarchy" are present, including the quality of elections, individual rights, as well as the media and freedoms of association. The Liberal Component Index (LCI) captures the liberal aspects including checks and balances on the executive arm of government, respect for civil liberties, the rule of law, and the independence of the legislature and the judiciary. Dahl, R.A. 1971. *Polyarchy: participation and opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

The population-weighted measure is arguably therefore a more meaningful measure of the state of democracy worldwide.

Figure 3 captures the rise in democracy around the world, showing the “third wave of democratization” starting in 1974 and peaking after the end of the Cold War. A worldwide steep decline in liberal democracy started around 2011 (right-hand panel). The dramatic decline for people over the past decade is masked when only country-averages are counted, as in the left-hand panel. The red line in that panel shows that by straight country-averages, democracy has reverted only to the 2000-level.

The decline by population-weighted measures is especially evident in Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean, even if the latter remains one of the more democratic regions. In Asia-Pacific, the degree of liberal democracy enjoyed by citizens is down to levels last seen in 1986, some 35 years ago. Average democracy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia has gradually regressed down to a level found in 1991 at the end of the Cold War. Similarly, democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean has now fallen to an average level last seen in the region around 1990.

FIGURE 3: LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX, GLOBAL AND REGIONAL AVERAGES 1971–2021

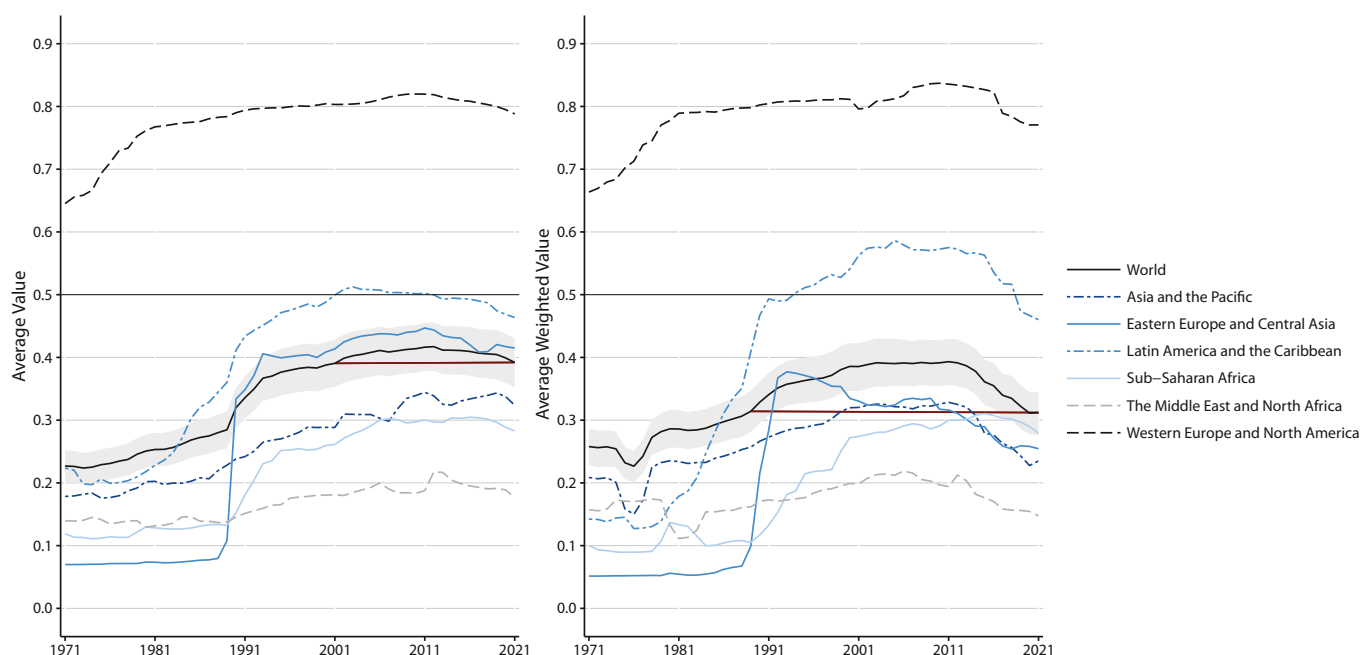


Figure 3 compares the state of the world in 2021 to global and regional trends since 1971. The black lines represent global averages on the LDI with the grey area marking the confidence intervals. The left panel is based on conventional country averages. The right-hand panel instead shows average levels of democracy weighted by population.

Democracy

Since the ancient Greeks first gave us the term *δημοκρατία*, the meaning of “democracy” has evolved considerably. V-Dem seeks to reflect the contemporary varieties of democracy, each encompassing many different attributes. We measure over 450 aspects in the main V-Dem Dataset, and several more in additional datasets associated with V-Dem such as the V-Party and the Episodes of Regime Transformation Dataset. They jointly inform us about the state of political institutions and rights worldwide.

The V-Dem Institute’s *Democracy Report* sheds light on the state of democracy worldwide without losing the eye for key details. Without intent to underrate other varieties of democracy, the report focuses on the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) that combines the electoral “core” institutions with the liberal aspects – executive constraint by the legislature and high courts, and rule of law and individual rights. This measure is among the most sophisticated measures that V-Dem offers.

The Regimes of the World measure is a categorical measure classifying countries into four distinct regimes: the two forms of democracy

(electoral and liberal) and two types of autocracies (electoral and closed). To be considered minimally democratic, i.e. an electoral democracy, a country has to meet sufficiently high levels of free and fair elections as well as universal suffrage, freedom of expression and association. Hence, solely holding elections does not suffice for a country to be considered democratic. Countries in which liberal aspects (executive constraint by the legislature and high courts, rule of law and individual rights) are respected on top of the requirements for electoral democracy, are considered liberal democracies. In electoral autocracies, there are institutions emulating democracy but falling substantially below the threshold for democracy in terms of authenticity or quality. In closed autocracies, an individual or group of people exercise power largely unconstrained by the people.

The *Democracy Report* should serve as an entryway to examine the numerous varieties of democratic attributes available in the V-Dem dataset. Categorizing regimes with the Regimes of the World index inherently reduces the nuance available in the universe of V-Dem indicators. Visit the website and explore the data, for example using online graphing tools: <https://v-dem.net>.

Dictatorships on the Rise

- **Liberal democracies peaked in 2012 with 42 countries. There are only 34 in 2021. There have not been so few liberal democracies in the world since 1995 – over 25 years ago. Only 13% of the world's population live in this least populous regime type.**
- **Dictatorships are on the rise – up from 25 to 30 closed autocracies between 2020 and 2021. This development adds to the picture of a change in the nature of autocratization.**
- **Electoral autocracies is the most common regime type and harbor the largest share of the world population – 44% or 3.4 billion people.**

Most of the analyses in *Democracy Report 2022* focus on gradual changes in the LDI, which is an original index from V-Dem and one of its most nuanced products. This section uses the *Regimes of the World* (RoW) categorization of four distinct regime types (closed autocracies, electoral autocracies, electoral democracies, and liberal democracies,⁴ see Figure 4). This categorization allows for a more compact analysis capturing some additional aspects of the broad global trends.

By the *Regimes of the World* classification, there were 89 democracies and 90 autocracies in the world in 2021.⁵ However, autocratic countries are far more populous. In 2021, 70% of the world population – 5.4 billion people – live in closed or electoral autocracies. A mere 13% of the world's population reside in liberal democracies, and 16% in electoral democracies.

The number of liberal democracies continues to dwindle from the peak at 42 in 2012 down to 34 countries now. Not since 1995 has the world harbored so few liberal democracies. The share of the world population living in liberal democracies also declined in the last decade. Only 13% lived in the least populous regime type at present: liberal democracies.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, there are only two liberal democracies: **Botswana** and **Seychelles**. Likewise, there are only two liberal democracies in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: **Estonia** and **Latvia**. Because of their small populations, these countries barely register in Figure 5, which tracks the population share living in each regime type across regions.

Electoral democracies have increased substantially in number since the end of the 1980s. It remains the second common regime type, amounting to 55 countries in 2021. However, the share of the world's population living in electoral democracies decreased markedly in recent years. A mere 16% of the world's population live in these 55 countries by 2021.

Two countries – **Armenia** and **Bolivia** – made democratic transitions from electoral autocracy to electoral democracy in 2021. But four countries were also downgraded over the last year from liberal democracy to electoral democracy: **Austria**, **Ghana**, **Portugal**, and **Trinidad and Tobago**. For **Austria**, a significant decline on the indicator for transparent laws and predictable enforcement is a decisive change that contributed to Austria falling below the criteria for liberal democracy. The reclassification of **Ghana** is a largely consequence of falling below the RoW threshold for liberal democracy on the level of access to justice for both men and women. Similarly, **Trinidad and Tobago's** transparent laws and

FIGURE 4: NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AND SHARE OF POPULATION, BY REGIME TYPE 1971-2021



Figure 4 plots the number of countries (left-hand panel) and the share of the world's population (right-hand panel), by regime type.

⁴ The typology and indicator are published in Lüthmann et al. 2018. *Regimes of the World (RoW)*. *Politics and Governance* 6(1). It builds on V-Dem data as well as the liberal and electoral democracy indices but is not officially endorsed by the V-Dem Steering Committee and international team.

⁵ Naturally, uncertainty remains about regimes that exhibit similar degrees of authoritarian and democratic traits and thus are close to the threshold between democracy and autocracy. In 2021, such uncertainty applied to 20 countries. Thus, the number of autocracies in the world might range from 80 to 100 countries, with 90 being our best estimate. For more details, refer to the variable `v2x_regime_amb` in the V-Dem dataset, v12.

predictable enforcement, as well as access to justice for women, have declined and fallen below the RoW thresholds for qualifying as a liberal democracy. **Portugal**'s score on access to justice for women declined but is only just below the threshold that the RoW methodology stipulates. **Ghana, Portugal, and Trinidad and Tobago** are all classified in the electoral democracy "upper bound", indicating that their classification by the RoW methodology is somewhat uncertain with Portugal sitting on the fence. The downgrading of these countries, in particular **Portugal**, should therefore be interpreted with caution.

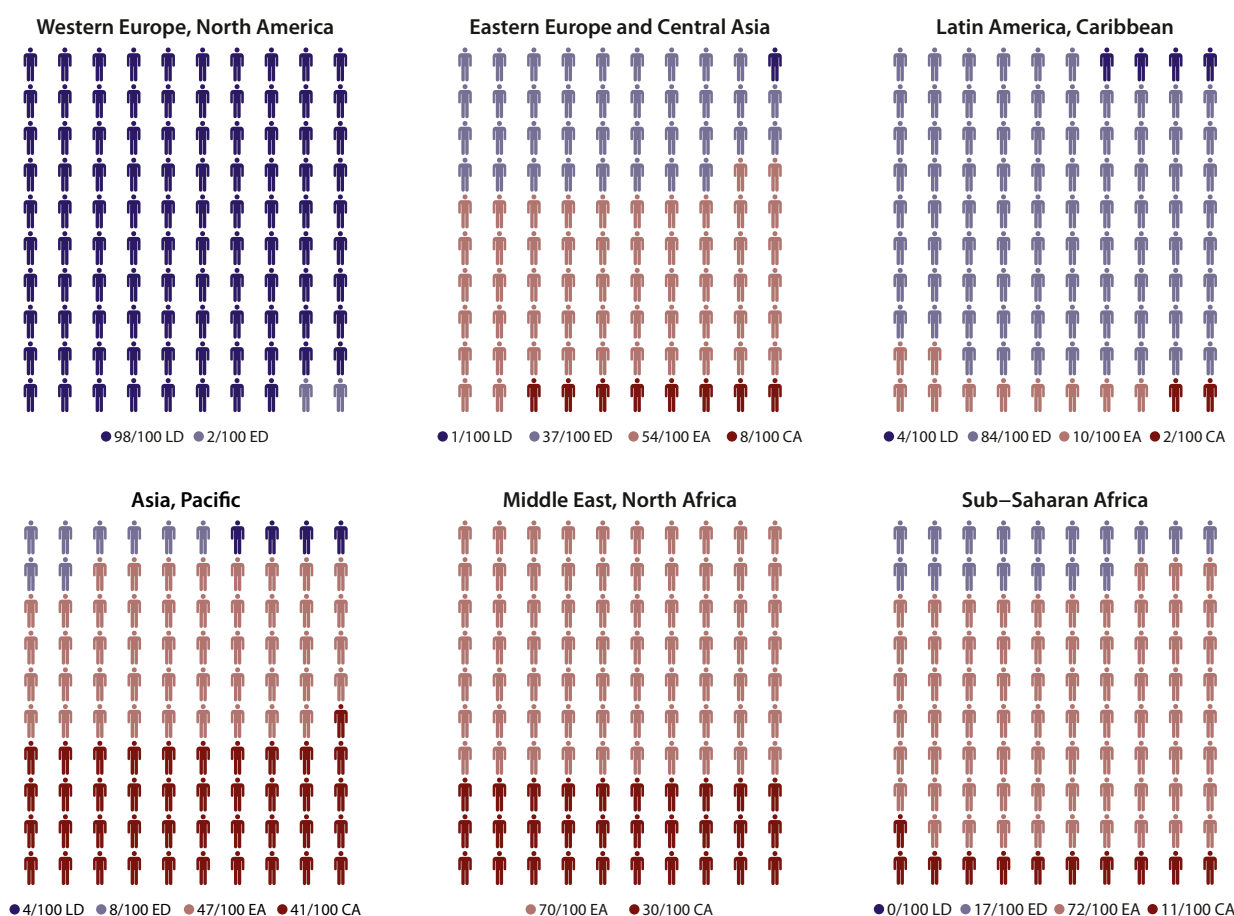
Electoral autocracies⁶ are home to the largest share of the world population following **India**'s downgrade to electoral democracy in 2020. In 2021, 44% of the world's population – 3.4 billion people – live in electoral autocracies. Very large proportions of the world population live in electoral autocracies in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Africa, and Middle East and North Africa (Figure 5). In 2021, countries such as **El Salvador, Nigeria, and Tunisia** turned into electoral autocracies and there are now 60 electoral autocracies, making it the most common regime type.

Notably, closed autocracies are on the rise. This is a new development in the "third wave of autocratization" that is more pronounced in 2021 than in previous years. The number of dictatorships has been dwindling since the 1970s. From a record low of 20 closed autocracies in 2012, there were 30 in 2021. In the last year alone, five countries reverted to closed autocracy.

This increase is one of the signals of the changing nature of autocratization that we discuss further below. It reflects a growing number of coups, including **Chad, Guinea, Mali, Myanmar**, and the Taliban takeover in **Afghanistan**. All of these countries ended the year as closed autocracies. What seems to be emerging is a class of emboldened autocrats that are making the world more autocratic.

Now 26% of the world population – 2 billion people – live in closed autocracies. Asia-Pacific is the region with the largest share of its population living in closed autocracies, largely because of **China**. The MENA region has the second largest share of its population in dictatorships (Figure 5). Table 2 at the end of the report shows current regime types and changes in regime type since last year for all countries.

FIGURE 5: SHARE OF POPULATION IN TYPE OF REGIME, BY REGION



Each "person" represents 1% of population in the region. The colors represent the 4 regime types (Liberal Democracy, Electoral Democracy, Electoral Autocracy, and Closed Autocracy).

⁶ Electoral autocratic regimes hold *de jure* multiparty elections but nevertheless tilt the playing field in the incumbent's favor to the extent that it is no longer a democracy, typically through restricting media freedom and the space for civil society, and by repressing the opposition, see Lüthmann et al. 2018. *Regimes of the World (RoW)*.

Ten Years Ago – A Different World

- A record of 35 countries suffered significant deteriorations in freedom of expression at the hands of governments – an increase from only 5 countries ten years ago.
- A signal of toxic polarization, respect for counter-arguments and associated aspects of the deliberative component of democracy got worse in more than 32 countries – another increase from only 5 nations in 2011.
- Autonomy for the electoral management body (EMB) – a critical precondition for democratic elections – has been severely undermined by governments in 25 countries.

Just ten years ago the world looked very different from today. In 2011, there were more countries improving than declining on every aspect of democracy. By 2021 the world has been turned on its head: there are more countries declining than advancing on nearly all democratic aspects captured by V-Dem measures.

Figure 6 demonstrates these patterns. By 2011, elections, rule of law, freedom of expression, and freedom of association were declining in six or fewer countries but advancing in 10 to 30 countries. That is, they were advancing by two to five times the number of countries that were in decline.

The situation is completely turned around now. There is substantial deterioration in freedom of expression in a record 35 countries this year, while only 10 countries are making advances. That means there are three times more countries declining than advancing. For rule of law, quality of elections, and freedom of

association, the number of countries in decline by 2021 also far outweigh the number making progress.

The picture is similar for the increase in “toxic polarization”, which is discussed more under “Autocratization Changing Nature?” below. Toxic polarization captures declining respect for legitimate opposition, pluralism, and counterarguments measured by the deliberative component.⁷ It is now getting worse in 32 countries. This constitutes a vast change from the count of 5 countries with deteriorating deliberative aspects in 2011. Declines over the last ten years include the United States of America dropping from 0.91 in 2016 to 0.60 in 2020 during the Trump administration. With the succession of the Biden administration, the score improved to 0.78 in 2021.

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

Which aspects of democracy are affected most by the ongoing autocratization trends? Zooming in on the specific indicators of the components of democracy analyzed above, we find the devil is in the details. Increasingly authoritarian moves are visible on a series of critical indicators.

The count of countries with declines is also higher for many individual indicators than for the overall components discussed in the section above. In other words, there are many countries that have begun encroaching on *specific* aspects of freedoms and rights that are not captured by the analysis at aggregate levels.

For example, Figure 7 shows that repression of civil society organizations (CSOs) has worsened substantially in 44 countries over the past ten years, putting it at the very top of the indicators most affected by autocratization. Further, in 37 countries direct

FIGURE 6: DEMOCRATIC ASPECTS IMPROVING AND DECLINING, 2011 VS. 2021.

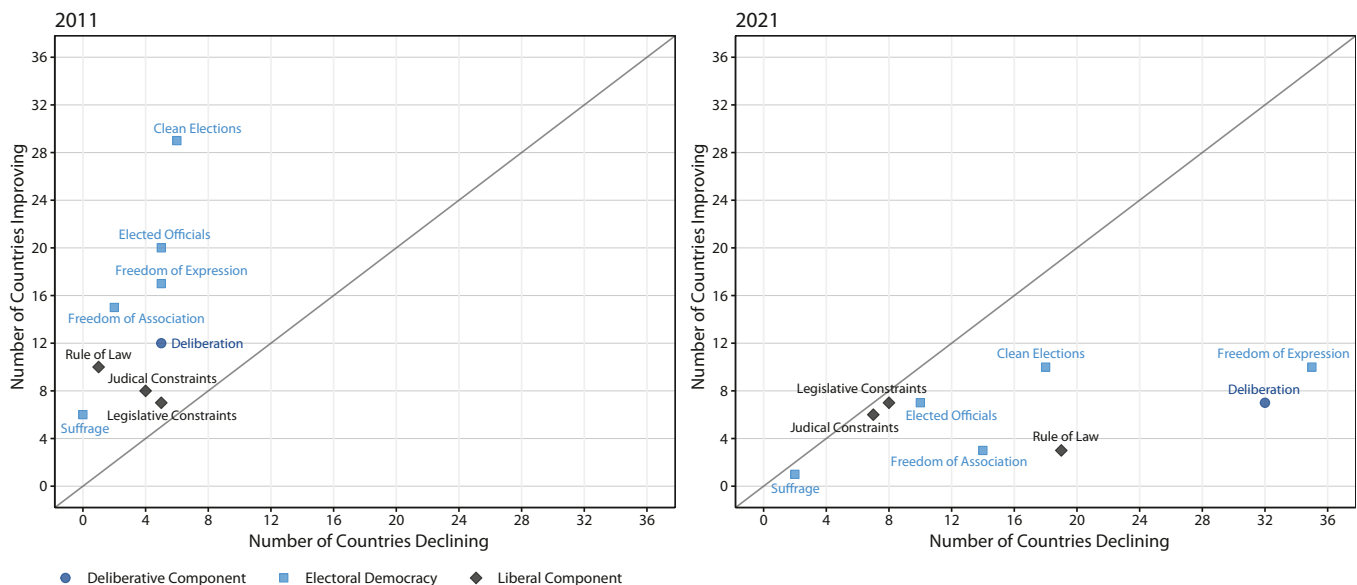
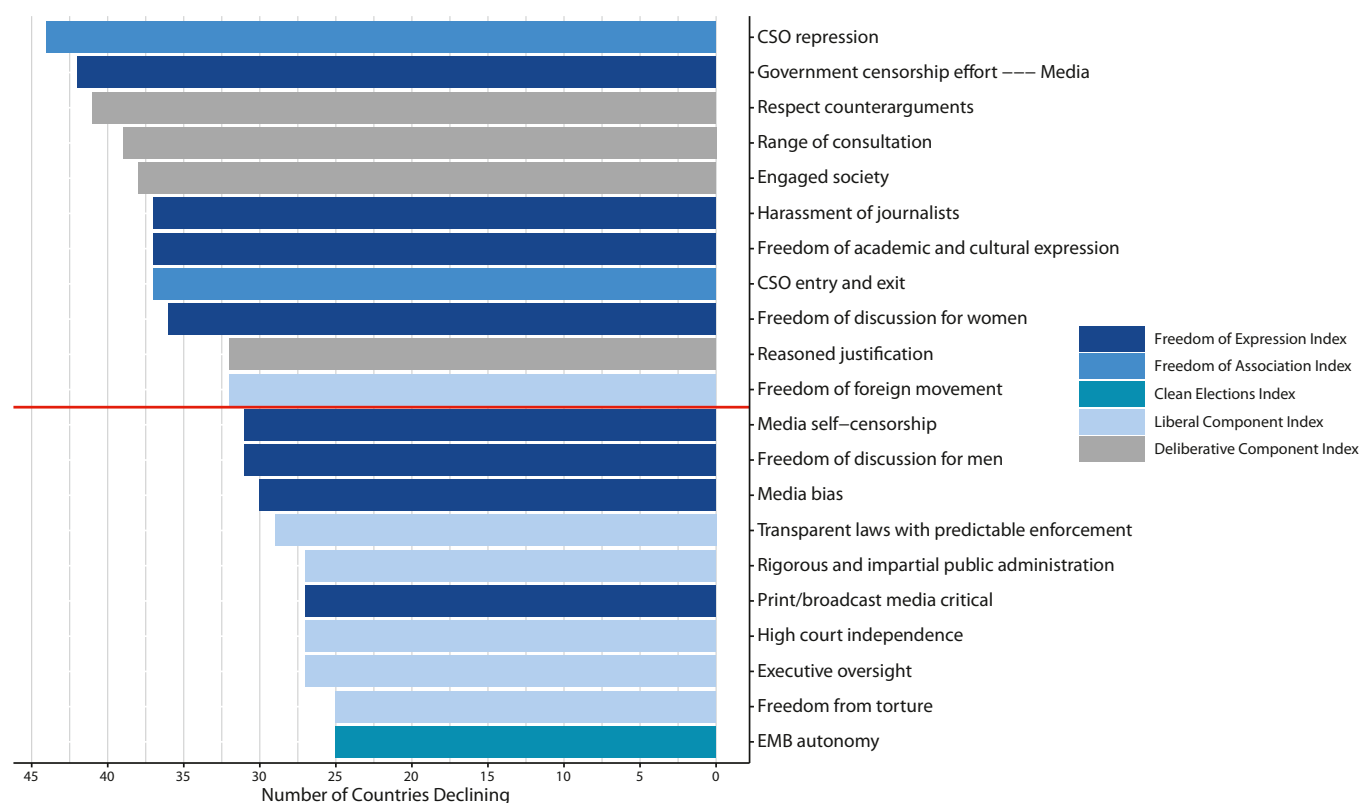


FIGURE 7: TOP-20 DECLINING INDICATORS, 2011–2021



government control over CSO's existence ("entry and exit") moved in an authoritarian direction. These data are evidence of the far-ranging weakening of civil society around the world. Autocrats seem to understand that one of the greatest defenses for democracy is a strong and independent civil society that can mobilize people against the autocratic government (see "Mobilization in Democratizing vs. Autocratizing Countries" below).

Figure 7 details for how many countries the top 20 indicators declined (substantively and significantly) between 2011 and 2021. The findings echo last year's *Democracy Report* that there are intensifying threats to freedom of expression and the media. All those indicators are found on the top 20 on the list with significant deterioration in 25 to 44 countries, and governments' efforts to censor the media is the second from the top.

The presence of six critical indicators of liberal democracy among the top 20 declining indicators is noteworthy – including high court independence and executive oversight. These six have moved in an authoritarian direction in 25 to 32 countries.

Indicators constituting the Clean Elections Index decline in relatively fewer countries. But one should note that the decisive autonomy for the electoral management body (EMB) deteriorates in 25 countries.

PANDEMIC BACKSLIDING?

How much are these trends an effect of the Covid-19 pandemic? Along the lines of the more detailed analysis in last year's *Democracy Report*, we find that the pandemic has had limited direct effects on the global downward trend in democracy. While leaders of some countries take advantage of the pandemic to further consolidate power, autocratization was typically happening already.

However, there have been significant violations of international standards for what governments are allowed to do in response to a pandemic. The final policy brief from the *Pandemic Backsliding* project⁸ shows that 57 countries recorded moderate violations and 44 countries had major violations of international norms. Most of these violations occurred in autocratic countries. For details, see the policy brief.⁹

8 The Pandemic Backsliding project collected detailed, factual data on violations of international norms in response to the pandemic from March 2020 to June 2021. <https://www.v-dem.net/pandem.html>

9 https://www.v-dem.net/media/publications/pb_32.pdf

Democratizers and Autocratizers

- The largest number of nations in 50 years are now autocratizing – 33 countries harboring 2.8 billion people.
- Democracy broke down in 7 of the top 10 autocratizing states over the past decade.
- Anti-pluralist parties drive the autocratization in at least 6 of the top 10 autocratizers – Brazil, Hungary, India, Poland, Serbia, and Turkey.
- The EU may be facing its own wave of autocratization. 6 out of 27 EU member states – more than 20% of the union – are now autocratizing.
- The lack of a pro-democratic mobilization – still at low levels – risks allowing autocratization to deepen unchallenged.

In this part of the *Democracy Report 2022*, we leave the focus on the situation in 2021 and on the state (level of democracy, type of regime, level of mobilization) countries are in. The analyses below instead look at the world from the perspective of the direction in which countries are moving. Are they democratizing or autocratizing, and what aspects of democracy are affected when they change?

A Record 33 Countries are Autocratizing

- There have not been so few democratizers since 1978 – 15 countries in 2021, with 3% of the world population.
- 33 states are autocratizing by 2021. Economically strong and populous, they harbor 36% of the world population.
- Both democratizing and autocratizing nations are found across all regions of the world.

The number of democratizing countries – 15 – is now down to levels last seen in 1978 at the very beginning of the third wave of democratization. These democratizing nations have relatively small populations and host a tiny 3% of the world population.

Figure 8 details the striking patterns of autocratization and democratization.¹⁰ In the left-hand panel, the dashed blue line displays how the number of democratizing countries increased until the peak of 72 in 1999. The dramatic decline started shortly after and continues into 2021.

The red line in Figure 8 illustrates how the number of autocratizing countries declined until the late 1990s and has been increasing since. More countries are autocratizing by 2021 than at any time in the last 50 years – 33 countries.

Autocratizing countries are often economically strong but also populous. They hold 36% of the world population – 2.8 billion people.

FIGURE 8: AUTOCRATIZING VS. DEMOCRATIZING COUNTRIES, 1971–2021

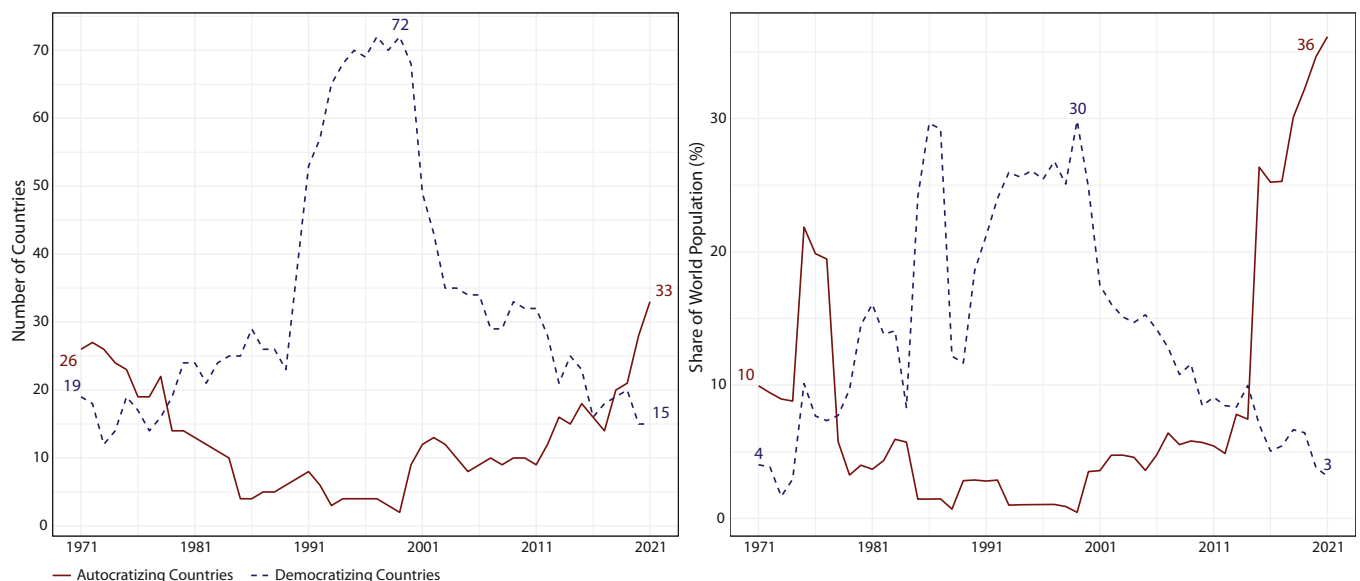


Figure 8 shows patterns of democratization and autocratization over the last 50 years. The left-hand panel displays the number of countries in each category and the right-hand panel shows the share of the world population living in autocratizing or democratizing countries.

¹⁰ The *Democracy Report* uses a simplified metric to capture which countries are autocratizing or democratizing. It measures the difference between the country score on the liberal democracy index (LDI) in 2021 and 2011. A country is autocratizing or democratizing if the difference is statistically significant (the confidence intervals do not overlap) and substantial (the difference is greater than 0.05). The metric builds on the ideas in Lüthmann, A. and S.J. Lindberg. 2019. *A Third Wave of Democratization Is Here*. Democratization 26(7), but is simplified and uses the LDI. For a more recent extension, see the "Episodes of Regime Transformation" project: on Github (<https://github.com/vdeminstitute/ert>); and Maerz, S.F., et al. 2021. *A Framework for Understanding Regime Transformation: Introducing the ERT Dataset*. V-Dem Working Paper No 113.

The autocratizing countries tend to be influential regional and global powers. The group includes major G20 countries such as **Brazil, India, Turkey**, and the **United States of America**, as well as countries such as **Bangladesh, Tanzania, Thailand**, and **The Philippines**. Except for **South Korea**, the countries improving on the LDI were typically less populous and not as influential internationally.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW, BY REGION

The 15 countries democratizing as well as the 32 autocratizing are found across all regions of the world (Figure 9 and 10).

Four countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have made democratic progress: **Madagascar, Malawi, Seychelles**, and **The Gambia**. But more than twice as many – eleven countries in the region – declined compared to 2011: **Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Tanzania**, and **Zambia**.

Four of the advancing countries are in the Asia-Pacific region: **Fiji, Malaysia, South Korea**, and **Sri Lanka**. **South Korea** is a rare example of a country that halted and turned around a period of autocratization. Almost twice as many – seven countries – worsened in Asia-Pacific in the last decade – **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Thailand**, and **The Philippines**.

Three advancing countries are found in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: **Armenia, Georgia**, and **Uzbekistan**. Democratic qualities decayed substantially in more than twice as many – seven – over the last ten years: **Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Serbia**, and **Slovenia**.

In Latin America, two countries have improved: **Dominican Republic** and **Ecuador**. **Ecuador** is another example of a country that managed to turn a process of autocratization around. Again,

major regressions have struck twice as many countries: **Brazil, El Salvador, Nicaragua**, and **Venezuela**.

In the MENA region, **Libya** and **Tunisia** have advanced on the LDI compared to 2011 even if **Libya** is still at an extremely low level and **Tunisia** faced a self-coup in 2021. There are two autocratizers – **Turkey** and **Yemen** – in the region. In **Turkey** the process started in 2006 and is still developing for the worse.

No single country across North America and Western Europe made improvements over the last decade. Meanwhile, two countries in Western Europe and North America that autocratized over the last ten years: **Greece** and the **United States of America**.

Democratization Across Regions

- Across regions, elections are the aspect of democracy with the highest average improvement among democratizers.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, democratizing countries made the greatest improvements in judicial constraints on the executive. Leaders in these countries are in effect now much more accountable to the judiciary than they were a decade ago.

What are the regional patterns that emerge from changes in the countries discussed above? Among the 15 democratizing countries (Figure 11), the quality of elections is the aspect of democracy improving the most across regions except in Latin America and the Caribbean and the MENA region.

In **Armenia, Malaysia**, and **Seychelles** for instance, there was significant improvement in autonomy of electoral management bodies in the last 10 years. In **The Gambia**, there was great improvement across many election indicators, including quality of voter registries, vote buying, and election violence.

FIGURE 9: COUNTRIES DEMOCRATIZING VS. AUTOCRATIZING, 2011–2021

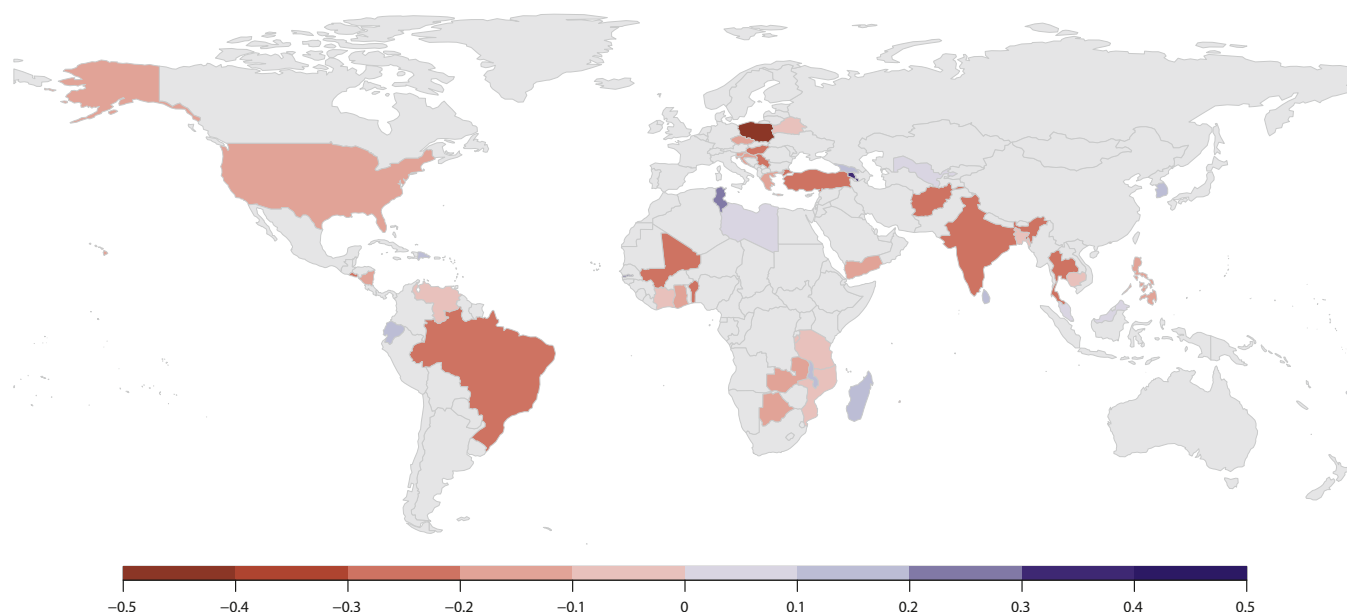


Figure 9 shows where the LDI has improved (blue) or declined (red) substantially and significantly over the past decade. Countries in gray had no substantial and significant change on the LDI during this period.

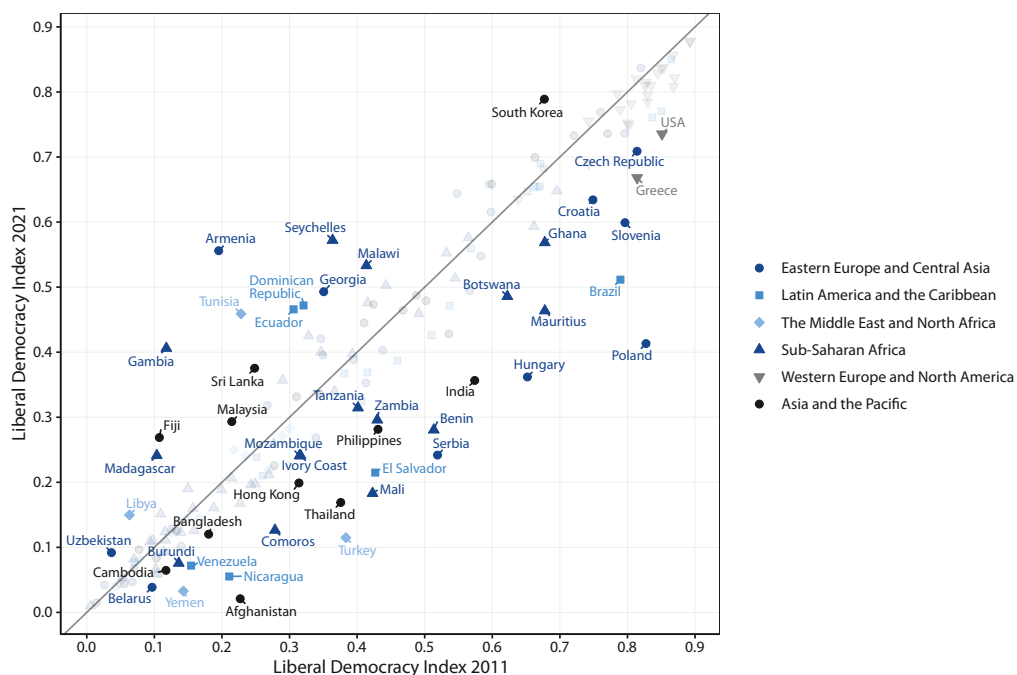
FIGURE 10: ADVANCES VS. DECLINES ON THE LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI), 2011–2021

Figure 10 displays country scores on the liberal democracy index (LDI) in 2011 (x-axis) and 2021 (y-axis). Countries above the diagonal line have become more democratic whereas countries below the diagonal line have become more autocratic. Country names are highlighted if the difference between 2011 to 2021 is significant and substantial.

In Latin America and the Caribbean democratizing countries made the greatest strides in improving judicial constraints. In **Dominican Republic** and **Ecuador**, for instance, there was significant and substantial improvement in government compliance with the high court over the last ten years.

Leaders in the countries making improvements on democracy are in effect now much more accountable to the judiciary than they were a decade ago. The long history of elections with already decent quality in many countries may explain why there is little improvement in the clean elections index, even among countries making improvements on the LDI.

Notably, there was an average decline in legislative constraints on the executive even across the democratizing countries in the MENA region: **Libya** and **Tunisia**.

Autocratization Across Regions

- **Freedom of expression is the aspect of democracy undermined the most in autocratizing countries. Authoritarian-minded leaders are especially prone to harassing and censoring the media – this got worse in 21 of the 33 autocratizing countries.**
- **Repression of civil society increased substantially in 22 autocratizing nations.**
- **Autonomy of electoral management bodies has been undermined by governments in 20 autocratizing states.**
- **Leaders in autocratizing countries also diminished respect for counterarguments in 21 countries – a signal of the changing nature of autocratization.**

A regional breakdown demonstrate that leaders often attack the same aspects of democracy in autocratizing countries: freedom of expression and especially the media (Figure 12).

Across four regions (Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and MENA), freedom of expression and the media was the most common aspect of democracy to decline. While not the most commonly affected aspect in the remaining two regions, free expression was also severely derailed there.

There is also some regional variation in the aspects of democracy most often attacked in autocratizing countries. Freedom of association and attacks on civil society are prominent aspect of autocratization in Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and MENA. For instance, there were significant and substantial increases in government censorship of the media in **Afghanistan**, **Brazil**, and **Hong Kong**.

The critical legislative constraints on the executive were most frequently undermined in two regions: Sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Europe and North America. Two countries in Sub-Saharan Africa – **Benin** and **Comoros** -- ranked highest in terms of decline in legislative constraints over the last ten years. In Europe, **Greece** and **Poland** registered substantial and significant decline in the legislature's propensity to investigate the executive over the last decade.

ZOOMING IN: WHAT AUTOCRATS ATTACK

As discussed above, zooming in on individual indicators reveals important additional details about the process of autocratization. The specific aspect of democracy that political leaders in autocratizing countries most commonly attack is civil society organizations (CSOs). CSO repression is closely followed by increasing censorship of media and harassment of journalists (Figure 13).

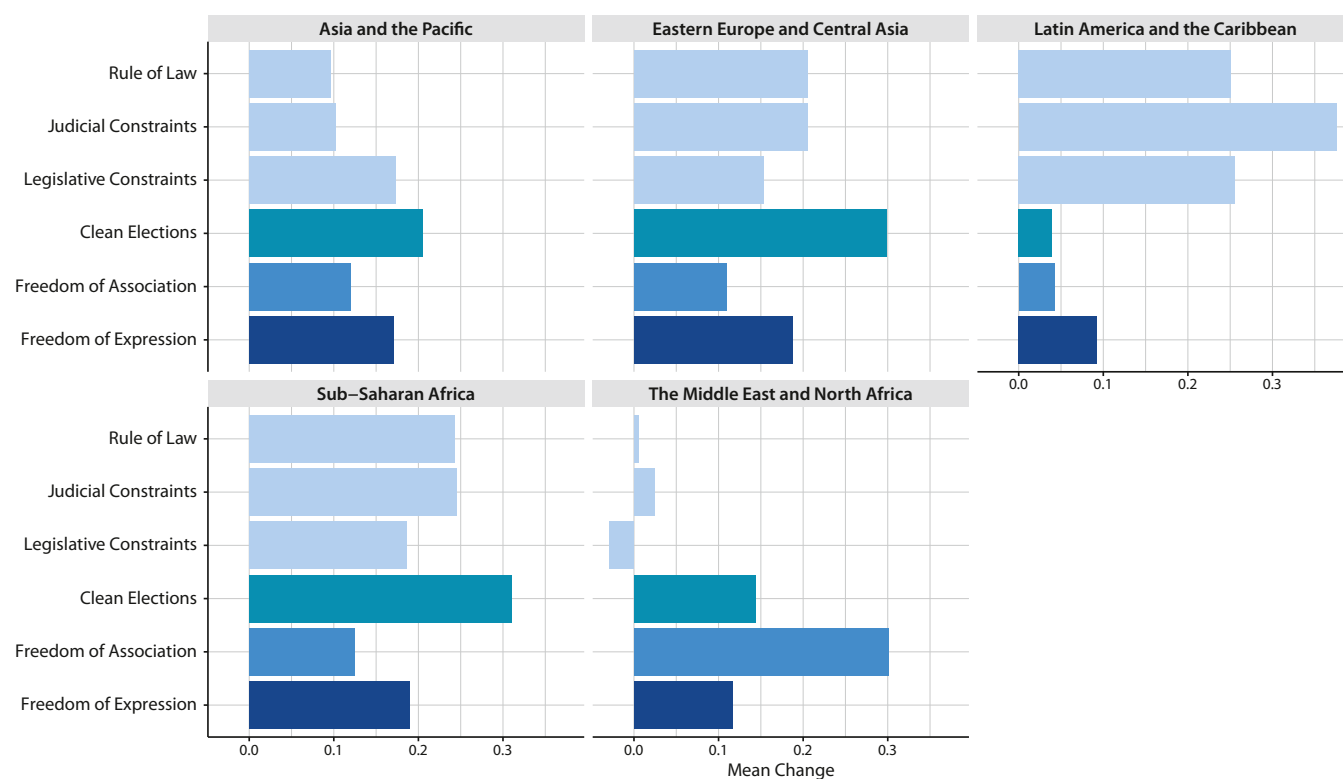
FIGURE 11: CHANGES IN DEMOCRATIZING COUNTRIES, BY REGION

Figure 11 plots average change in democracy components in countries that were democratizing between 2011 and 2021. Democratizing countries are those with significant and substantial improvement on V-Dem's liberal democracy index (LDI) during this 10-year period.

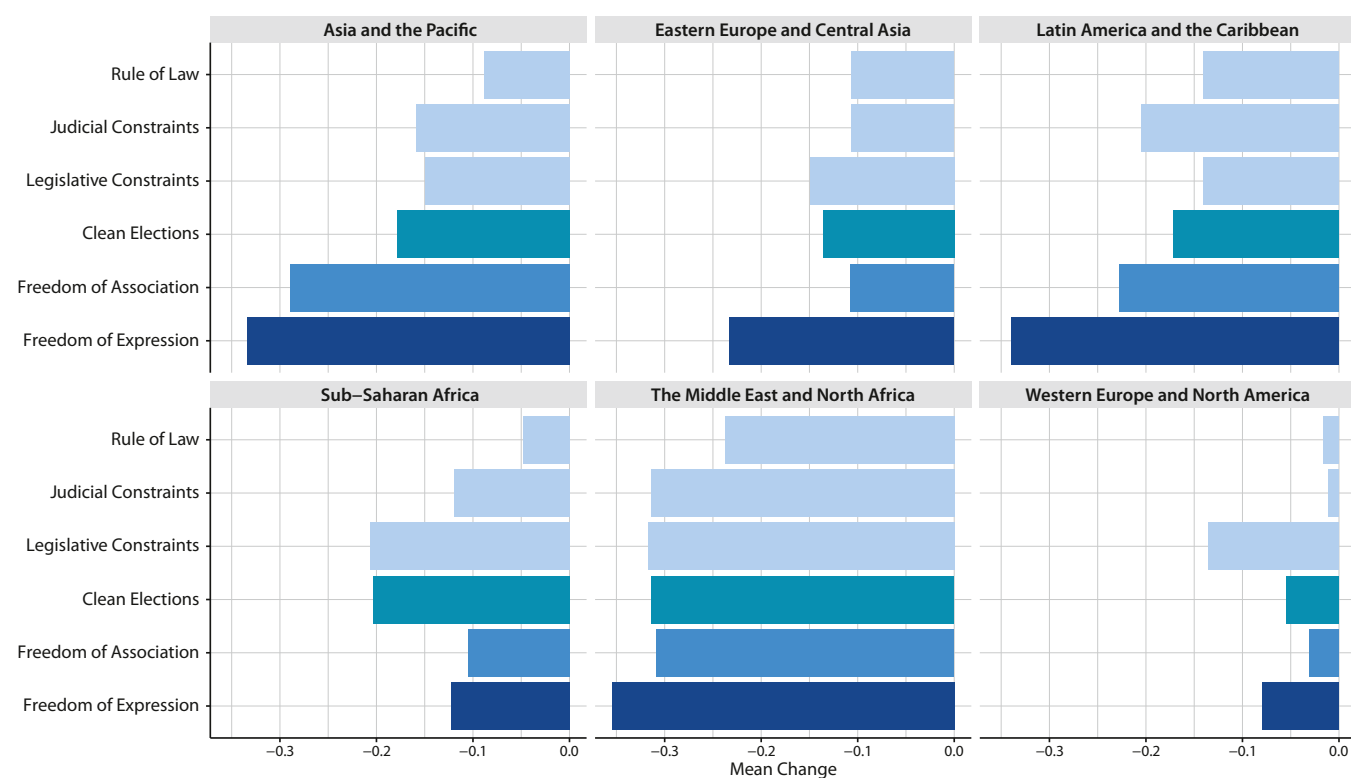
FIGURE 12: DECLINES IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES, BY REGION,

Figure 12 plots average change in democracy components in countries that were autocratizing between 2011 and 2021. Autocratizing countries are those with significant and substantial decline on V-Dem's liberal democracy index (LDI) during this 10-year period.

The countries with the highest increases in repression of civil society (on a 0 to 4 scale) are **Afghanistan** (–2.6), **Hong Kong** (–2.2), and **Nicaragua** (–2.1). Governments in all three countries evidently engage in extensive subjugation of civil society.

Freedom of expression is another area that leaders in autocratizing countries frequently batter. The data show substantial deteriorations in government censorship of the media and harassment of journalists in 21 autocratizing countries. For instance, increased media censorship took place in **Mauritius, Poland, and Slovenia**.

Leaders in autocratizing countries also severely undercut deliberative aspects of democracy. In 19 or more countries, leaders diminished respect for counterarguments, range of consultation, and engagement within society. In **Burundi, El Salvador, and Serbia**, for instance, the range of consultation has significantly declined in the last ten years.

Notably, some formal democratic institutions are relatively free from attacks in autocratizing countries, such as many indicators measuring quality of elections. However, governments diminished the critical autonomy of electoral management bodies in no less than 20 of the 33 autocratizing countries. In **Benin, Ivory Coast, and Nicaragua** governments are responsible for substantial and significant deteriorations in the overall quality of elections.

The Major Democratizers

- Among the top 10 democratizing countries, 6 transitioned from autocracy and are democracies in 2021.
- But few of the democratizers continue to improve further.

Among the top 10 democratizing countries in the last 10 years, seven out of ten were autocracies in 2011. Six out of these ten are democracies in 2021. **Seychelles** transitioned from an electoral democracy to a liberal democracy over the last decade and continues its upward trajectory. **Armenia** and **Sri Lanka** have moved from being electoral autocracies in 2011 to electoral democracies in 2021.

Fiji and **Madagascar** remain autocratic but have improved on the LDI and moved out of the group of closed autocracies. The right-hand panel of Figure 14 displays the trajectories for all top democratizers over the last 10 years.

Notably, few of the top democratizers continue to improve in 2021. Only **Dominican Republic** and **Seychelles** display a substantial upward trajectory in 2021. **Sri Lanka** is on a downward trend. Changes in **Sri Lanka** reflect a move to centralize power under President Rajapaksa and his family members through constitutional amendments removing checks on executive power.¹¹ **Ecuador** held presidential elections in 2021 leading to a transfer of power to the new President Guillermo Lasso. However, the country is still plagued by an economic and public health crisis.¹² **Georgia** is

FIGURE 13: TOP-20 DECLINING INDICATORS, AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES

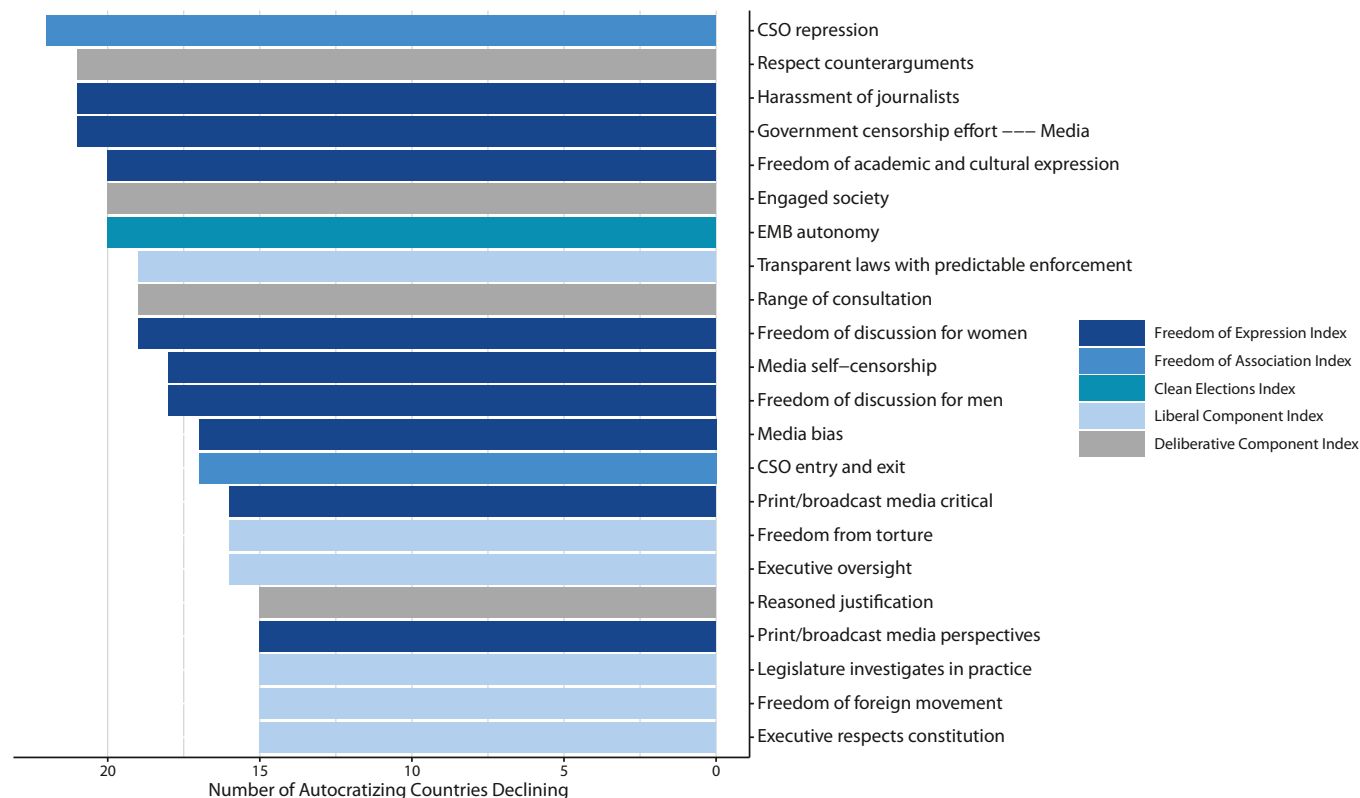


Figure 13 plots the number of autocratizing countries declining significantly and substantially on each democracy indicator. An indicator is declining substantially and significantly if its 2021 value is at least 0.5 points lower than its 2011 value on a scale ranging from 0 to 4 (for most variables) or 0 to 5 (for some variables) and the confidence intervals do not overlap.

¹¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/10/world/asia/sri-lanka-basil-rajapaksa.html>

¹² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-57228324>

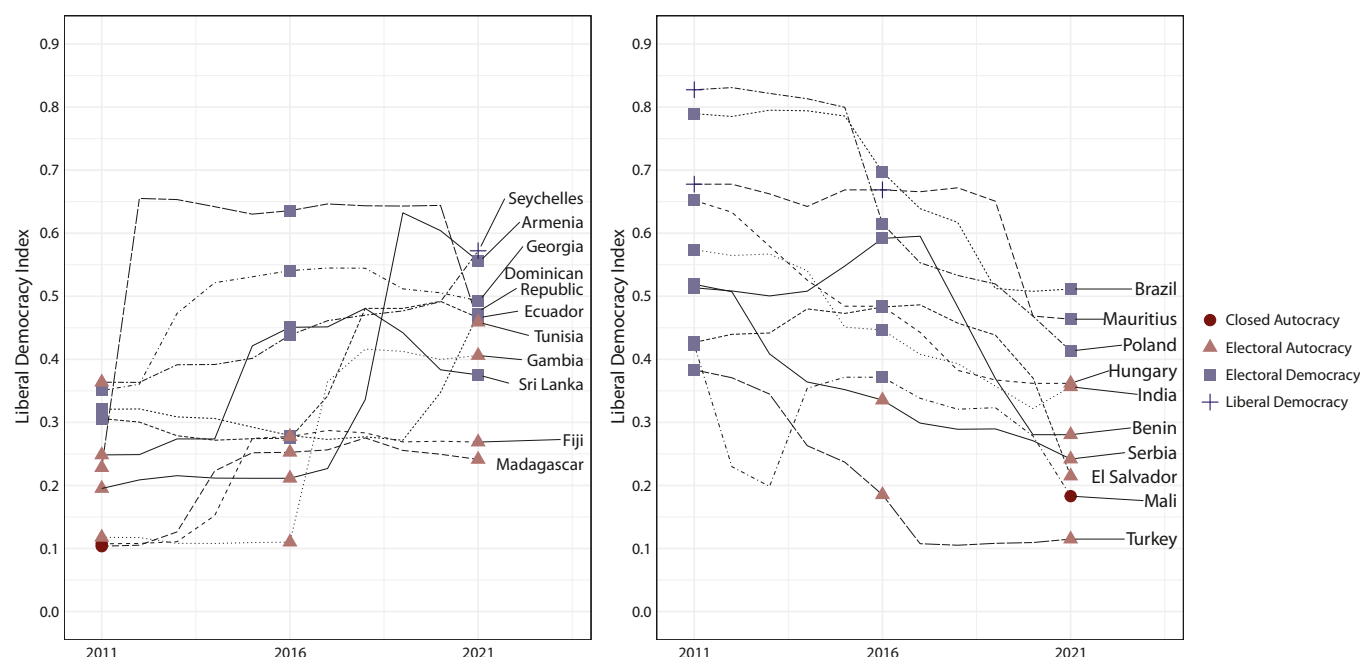
FIGURE 14: TOP 10 DEMOCRATIZING VS. AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES (10-YEAR)

Figure 14 plots values of the liberal democracy index (LDI) for the 10 countries with the highest amount of LDI increase (left panel) and decrease (right panel) in the last 10 years.

suffering from increased levels of political polarization, especially after the heavily contested 2020 elections.¹³ **Tunisia** had a democratic breakdown after the self-coup in 2021 (see box on Tunisia).

Fiji, Madagascar, and The Gambia remained constant on recent LDI scores. Madagascar failed to continue its improvement under controversial President Andry Rajoelina.¹⁴ **Fiji** is facing a political crisis after several opposition figures were arrested in relation to the passing of a controversial new land bill.¹⁵ **The Gambia** held its first democratic election in 2021 after the ousting of the autocratic President Yahya Jammeh in 2016.¹⁶

The Major Autocratizers

- Democracy broke down in 7 of the top 10 autocratizing countries over the past decade.
- Anti-pluralist parties drive autocratization in at least 6 of the top 10 autocratizers – **Brazil, Hungary, India, Poland, Serbia, and Turkey**.
- 6 out of 27 EU members states – more than 20% of the Union – are now autocratizing. Three of EU's neighbors to the east are also autocratizing.
- **Afghanistan, Ivory Coast, Myanmar, Slovenia, and Tunisia** are new top autocratizers emerging in the last three years.

In 2021, two new countries entered the list of top autocratizers compared to the list in last year's *Democracy Report*: **El Salvador** and **Mali**.

Of the top autocratizing countries over the past decade, all countries were democracies ten years ago but only three remain by 2021. The other seven reversed to autocracy (Figure 14). This pattern closely mirrors a recent analysis of all episodes of autocratization starting in democracies over the past century, which found that almost 80% of autocratization episodes lead to breakdown of democracy.¹⁷ Autocratization very rarely stops short of autocracy.

Anti-pluralist parties are driving the autocratization in at least six of the top autocratizers – **Brazil, Hungary, India, Poland, Serbia, and Turkey**.¹⁸ Anti-pluralist parties and their leaders lack commitment to the democratic process, disrespect fundamental minority rights, encourage demonization of political opponents, and accept political violence. These ruling parties tend to be nationalist-reactionary and have used government power to push forward autocratic agendas. In **Poland**, for example, the ruling party has ramped up government control over the judiciary¹⁹ and the media.²⁰ In **Hungary**, Prime Minister Orbán used his control over the media to slander civil society figures and independent media ahead of the 2022 general elections.²¹ These tendencies often coincide with increasing polarization, as the *Democracy Report* discusses in the next section.

13 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54868053>

14 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53756752>

15 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/04/fiji-political-turmoil-everything-you-need-to-know>

16 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59542813>

17 Boese, V. A., et al. 2021. How Democracies Prevail: Democratic Resilience as a Two-Stage Process. *Democratization* 28(5).

18 Lüthmann, A., et al. 2021. Walking the Talk: How to Identify Anti-Pluralist Parties. *V-Dem Working Paper* No.116.

19 <https://apnews.com/article/europe-poland-courts-1fc3c963fa5b62a8f36e4bd7fabb01fa>

20 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/11/polish-government-media-bill-latest-move-silence-critics>

21 <https://www.politico.eu/article/hungary-election-campaign-hit-spying-allegations/>



Yangon, Myanmar. Demonstrators gather during a protest against the military coup in Yangon, Myanmar on March 3, 2021. Photo: Getty Images.

El Salvador, Mali, Poland, and Serbia continue their steep downward trend in 2021. **Mali** had its second coup in less than a year in May 2021.²² In **El Salvador**, President Nayib Bukele and his party have removed constraints on the executive and undermined the judiciary, for example by removing five supreme court judges.²³

Benin, Hungary, and Turkey are not autocratizing at the same pace as in previous years but remain electoral autocracies. **Benin** held presidential elections in 2021 where key opposition figures were either arrested or in exile, leading to re-election of sitting President Patrice Talon.²⁴

Brazil, India, and Mauritius' trajectories have stabilized in recent years, enough to remain electoral democracies or, in **India's** case, an electoral autocracy. In **Brazil**, President Bolsonaro faced push-back from the supreme court on his attempts to discredit the electoral system.²⁵

Zooming In: Last Three Years

Zooming in on the last three years makes it possible to identify the countries that started to change only recently.

Only three out of the top ten democratizers since 2011 are among the top democratizers in the past three years – **Armenia, Dominican Republic, and Seychelles**. The new, more recent democratizers are **Malawi, Maldives, Malta, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine** (Figure 15). In the best-case scenario, this could be the first sign of a reversal of the downward trend for democratization around the world, but this remains to be seen.

In comparison, five of the top 10 autocratizers since 2011 have also been top autocratizers in the last three years. **Benin, El Salvador, Mali, Mauritius, and Poland** qualify as top autocratizers in both the long-term and short-term windows. These are countries where the process of autocratization has both been ongoing for a long while and continues into the present.

Afghanistan, Ivory Coast, Myanmar, Slovenia, and Tunisia are countries that appear only on the list of top autocratizers over the past three years. Conditions in **Ivory Coast** deteriorated after the controversial 2020 presidential election that was characterized by violence, malpractice, and opposition boycotts.²⁶ In **Slovenia**, President Jansa led attacks on the independence of the judiciary and media freedom since his installment in 2018,²⁷ resulting in a downgrading from liberal to electoral democracy in 2020. In this case, the recent developments serve as a warning of possible future declines.

The remaining three are cases of dramatic autocratizing events in 2021. **Myanmar** fell victim to the well-known coup at the start of 2021. **Tunisia** was subject to a self-coup by President Saïd Kaïed in 2021. Democracy in **Afghanistan** plummeted after 2020 due to the Taliban takeover in mid-2021 (see box on Afghanistan for further details).

In Focus: EU and Its Eastern Flank

The EU harbors a few recent democratizers. While not on the list in the ten-year perspective discussed above, **Malta, Romania, and Slovakia** registered significant improvements in the last three

22 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57239805>

23 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/01/el-salvador-legislature-deepens-democratic-backsliding>

24 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-56690689>

25 <https://www.dw.com/en/brazils-bolsonaro-asks-senate-to-impeach-supreme-court-judge/a-58938384>

26 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54778200>

27 <https://www.politico.eu/article/european-parliament-slovenia-janez-jansa/>

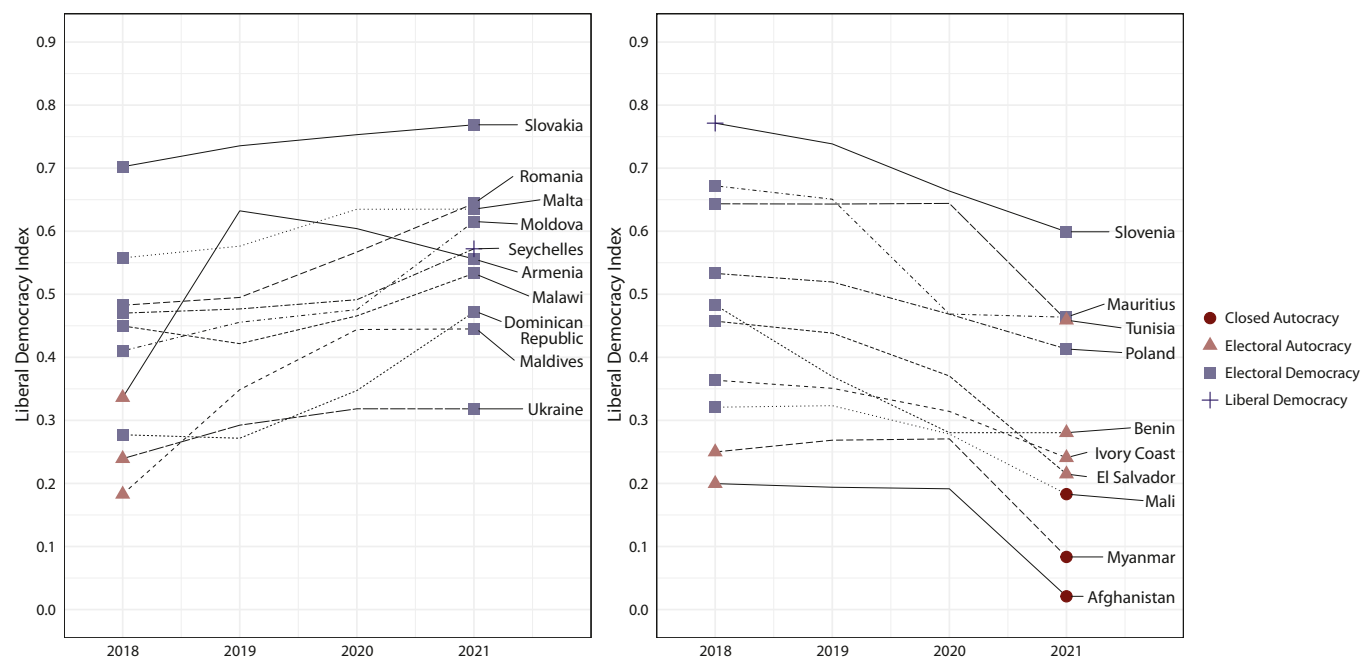
FIGURE 15: TOP 10 DEMOCRATIZING VS. AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES (3-YEAR)

Figure 15 plots values of the liberal democracy index (LDI) for the 10 countries with the highest amount of LDI increase (left panel) and decrease (right panel) in the last 3 years. Markers and color indicate each country's regime type on the Regimes of the World index.

years since 2018. Another two neighbors to the east – **Moldova** and **Ukraine** – are also included among the list of top democratizers from the last three years (Figure 15).

Yet, six of the EU's 27 member states are autocratizing. With more than 20% of EU members autocratizing, the union is starting to face its own wave of autocratization (Figure 16).

Among the union members, **Hungary** and **Poland** are among the top autocratizers in the world over the last decade. **Hungary** turned into an electoral autocracy in 2018. Autocratization is now also affecting **Slovenia**, which is one of the top autocratizers in

the world over the last three years (Figure 15). **Croatia**, **Czech Republic**, and **Greece** are also newly autocratizing countries.

In addition, the EU's neighbors on the eastern flank are becoming increasingly autocratic. Three of them have been autocratizing in the last decade. **Turkey** is still one of the top autocratizers, although it was already classified as an electoral autocracy by 2013. **Serbia** is a top autocratizer. It was downgraded to electoral autocracy in 2014. Already an electoral autocracy, conditions recently worsened further in **Belarus** with the regime ramping up repression after the contested 2020 elections. Figure 16 illustrates these troubling trends in Europe.

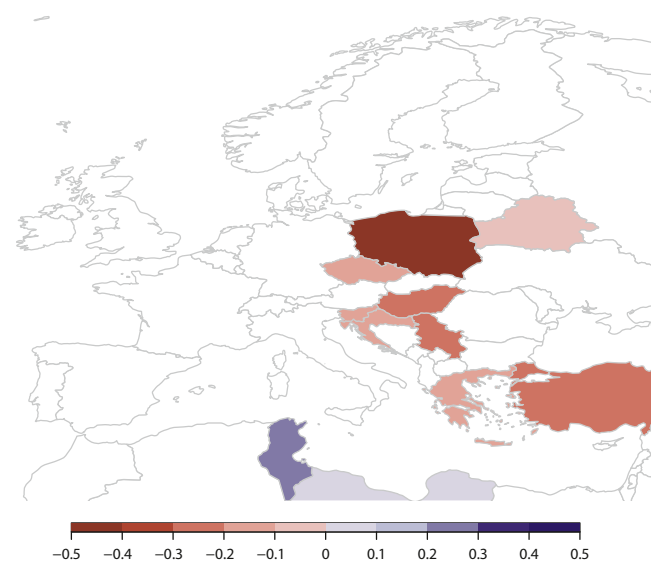
FIGURE 16: AUTOCRATIZATION IN THE EU AND ITS EASTERN NEIGHBORS

Figure 16 shows where the liberal democracy index (LDI) substantially and significantly improved (blue) or declined (red) over the past decade. Countries in gray had no substantial and significant change on the LDI during this period.



Cracow, Poland, October 10, 2021. We stay – the government leaves! People protest against the verdict of the Constitutional Tribunal. Many citizens believe that the verdict is a step towards Polesxit. Photo: Shutterstock

Popular Mobilization in (Another) Year of Autocratization

- Mobilization continues to stay at low levels. This lack of a pro-democratic mobilization risks allowing autocratization to deepen unchallenged.
- Popular mobilization is highest in countries undergoing autocratization, such as El Salvador, Mali, Myanmar, and Serbia.
- Rising pro-autocracy mobilization in autocratizing countries may signal that autocratizing leaders are taking bolder actions to demonstrate legitimacy.

The *Democracy Report 2020* reported that pro-democratic mobilization in reaction to autocratization worldwide reached the highest level in 2019. The Covid-19 pandemic with restrictions on freedom of assembly pushed levels of mass mobilization down in 2020 and 2021 (see Figure 17). Restrictions continue to prevent mobilization as there remained limitations of freedom of assembly and movement in several countries during 2021.

Meanwhile the number of autocratizing countries increased significantly during these last two years. The lack of a corresponding increase in pro-democratic mobilization confronting such a trend risks allowing autocratization to accelerate unchallenged.

FIGURE 17: MOBILIZATION AND AUTOCRATIZATION, 1971–2021

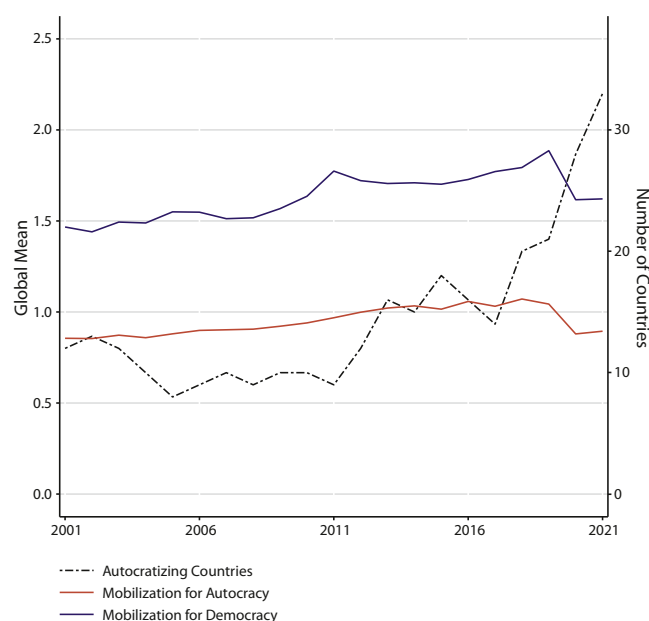


Figure 17 displays the level of mobilization for democracy and autocracy against the backdrop of the number of autocratizing countries in that year.

MOBILIZATION IN DEMOCRATIZING VS. AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES

Despite a significant increase in state-imposed restrictions under the pandemic over the past two years, a number of protests took place. The Covid-19 pandemic led to the emergence of new grievances with accompanying “pandemic protests,” socially distanced protests by health care personnel, anti-lockdown protests, and even riots.²⁸

While pro-democracy mass mobilization in general is low, it is occurring in particular in those countries subject to autocratization and, in those countries typically in favor of democracy (see Figure 18). In **El Salvador**, for example, thousands of demonstrators took the street in San Salvador on October 18, 2021 against President Nayib Bukele’s government. They protested legalization of Bitcoin as well as the government’s attack on judicial independence referring to the legislative vote to remove certain judges.²⁹

In **Slovenia**, several thousand people gathered to demonstrate against the right-wing Prime Minister Janez Jansa on April 27, 2021. The protesters accused Jansa of using the pandemic as a pretext to restrict freedoms, increase police powers, incite hostility to activists and NGOs, and attack journalists.³⁰

Countries with recent military coups have some of the highest levels of pro-democracy mobilization. The military coup in **Myanmar** on February 1, 2021 for example, provoked peaceful pro-democracy mobilization coordinated the Campaign for Civil Disobedience (CDM). The government responded by repressing pro-democratic protesters, and the military and police killed at least 1503 protesters.³¹

Yet, mobilization for autocracy also happens more often in countries undergoing autocratization (see Figure 19). Anti-pluralist and authoritarian leaders seem to be using mass mobilization to promote their anti-democratic agendas. For example, pro-Trump protesters stormed the Capitol, encouraged by the former president of the **United States of America** on the spurious grounds of mass electoral fraud.³² In **Brazil**, President Jair Bolsonaro asked supporters to coordinate rallies on September 7th, 2021 in support of anti-democratic calls, including the removal of all supreme court judges and the specter of a military coup.³³ In **Mali**, thousands of people marched in Bamako in support of the military-dominated transitional government on September 22, 2021.³⁴

These examples suggest that authoritarian-minded leaders are actively mobilizing people to obtain popular support for their anti-democratic agendas and to shore up the legitimacy of their regimes.³⁵

28 Gerbaudo, P. 2020. *The Pandemic Crowd: Protests in the time of COVID-19*. *Journal of International Affairs* 73(2).

29 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/18/thousands-protest-in-el-salvador-against-bukele-government>

30 <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/04/27/slovenian-protesters-rally-against-degradation-of-democracy/>

31 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55902070>

32 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-55640437>

33 <https://theintercept.com/2021/09/05/bolsonaro-september-7-brazil-trump-january-6/>

34 <https://www.africanews.com/2021/09/23/mali-thousands-denounce-france-at-pro-army-rally/>

35 Hellmeier, S., & Weidmann, N. B. 2020. *Pulling the Strings? The Strategic Use of Pro-Government Mobilization in Authoritarian Regimes*. *Comparative Political Studies* 53(1).

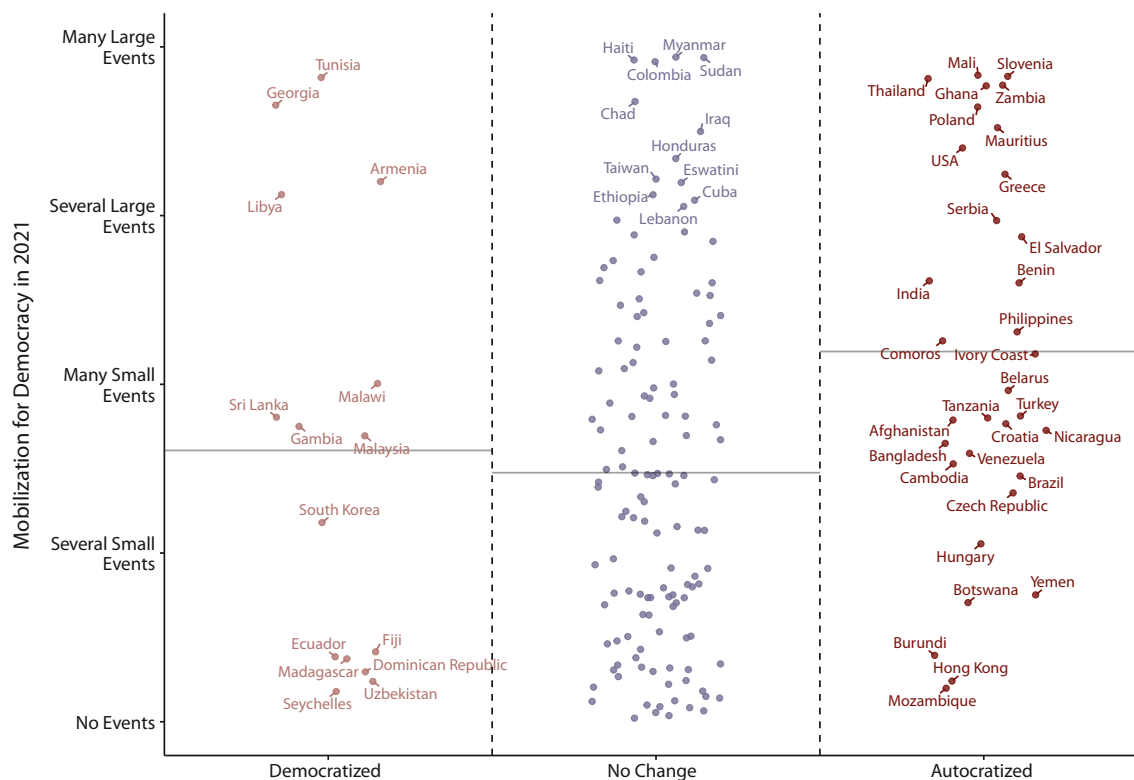
FIGURE 18: MOBILIZATION FOR DEMOCRACY IN 2021

Figure 18 shows the countries in which large-scale pro-democracy protests took place in 2021 and relates that level to whether the country was democratizing, autocratizing, or stable compared to ten years ago based on the LDI. The indicator of mass mobilization for democracy captures the extent to which events with pro-democratic aims have been frequent and large. Gray lines stand for the mean of the level of mobilization in each category.

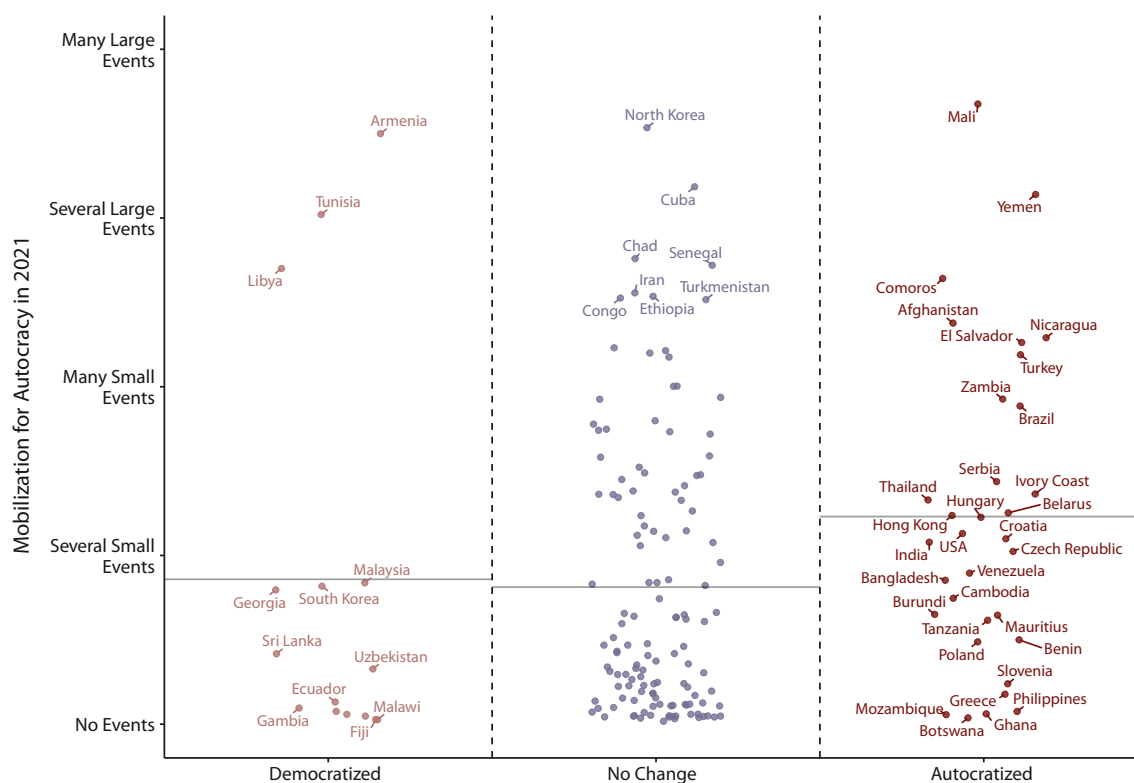
FIGURE 19: MOBILIZATION FOR AUTOCRACY IN 2021

Figure 19 shows the countries in which large-scale pro-autocracy protests took place in 2021 and relates that level to whether the country was democratizing, autocratizing, or stable compared to ten years ago based on the LDI. The indicator of mass mobilization for autocracy captures the extent to which events with pro-autocratic aims have been frequent and large. Gray lines stand for the mean of the level of mobilization in each category.

Taliban Take-Over in Afghanistan

Following the US-Taliban Doha Agreement on February 2020, the Taliban takeover on 15th August 2021 meant a rapid transition to closed autocracy.¹

The media and free press are among the worst affected by new media regulations,² with arbitrary detainment, harassment and torture of journalists.³ Since the takeover, 40% of the Afghan media have shut down and 60% of journalists are unemployed.⁴ Self-censorship, as well as Taliban censorship efforts, are rigid.

Freedom of association is close to eradicated and civil society repression has intensified. Pro-democracy movements are suppressed by kidnapping, beating, threatening, and attacks on protesters.⁵ Criticism of the Taliban or just expression of alternative socio-political and religious views, is strongly prohibited.⁶ All aspects of deliberation have been undermined.

Figure 1 evidences the changes showing the top 20 changing indicators on the LDI and the Deliberative Component Index (DCI) over the past year.

Cutbacks on freedoms and liberties are particularly grave for women. In six months, the Taliban regime dismantled close to all rights Afghan women gained over the past 20 years. For example, the Taliban banned education for girls beyond class 6.⁷ During their rule from 1996 to 2001 they entirely banned women's education.⁸ Over the past twenty years, they attacked girls' schools,⁹ universities,¹⁰ and educational centers¹¹ across the country. In Taliban-controlled areas, girls were barely allowed to attend secondary school "beyond puberty".¹² Promises to re-open girls' schools¹³ now are thus open to doubt.

Figure 2 exposes the massive declines in rights of Afghan women since the Taliban takeover. While rights are in decline for everyone, women's liberties are close to nil. Access to justice for women dropped to the absolute zero point on the V-Dem measure. Afghan female judges, lawyers, and those previously employed in the justice sector are forced into hiding by those they convicted during the former government.¹⁴

In the Republic of Afghanistan, women held 27% of seats in parliament, occupied 20% of the civil servants' positions, ran their own businesses,¹⁵ and many had paid employment. Women are now denied entry to both public and private workplaces,¹⁶ and their property rights are on a new low. Freedom of movement for women is close to the absolute zero-point following mobility restrictions enforced by the Taliban. Unaccompanied Afghan women are harassed on streets or denied public transport,¹⁷ and sports for women is banned.¹⁸

FIGURE 1: DEGREE OF CHANGE ON INDICATORS OF LDI & DCI, AFGHANISTAN, 2020–2021

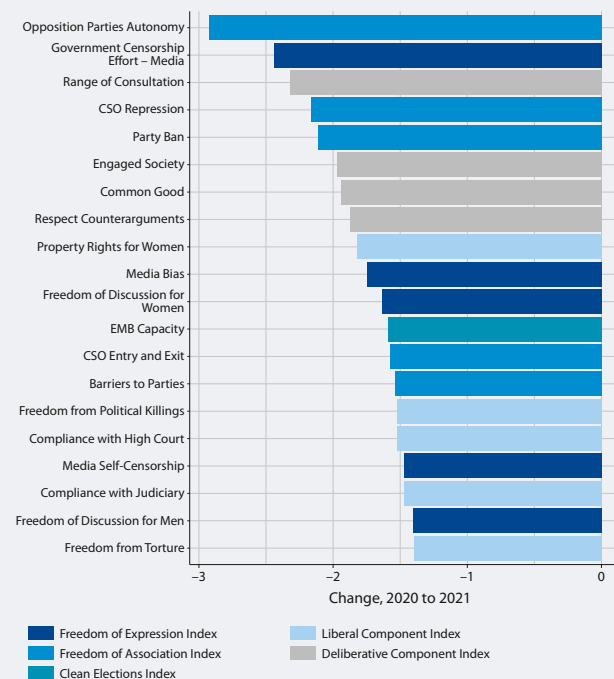
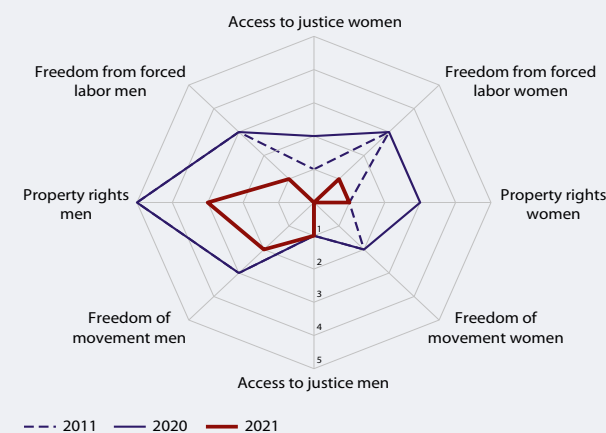


FIGURE 2: INDICATORS BY GENDER, AFGHANISTAN, 2011/2020/2021



1 Murtazashvili, JB. 2022. The Collapse of Afghanistan. *Journal of Democracy* 33(1).

2 <https://rsf.org/en/news/afghanistan-11-journalism-rules-imposed-taliban-open-way-censorship-and-arbitrary-decisions-rsf>

3 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/01/afghanistan-taliban-severely-restrict-media>

4 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/24/afghanistan-media-rsf-survey-taliban-takeover-journalists>

5 <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/afghanistan/broken-promises-civil-society-under-siege-after-100-days-of-taliban>

6 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/06/30/you-have-no-right-complain/education-social-restrictions-and-justice-taliban-held>

7 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/20/world/asia/afghan-girls-schools-taliban.html>

8 https://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/ihavearighttofour_b/casestudy_art26.shtml

9 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-57046527>

10 <https://president.jhu.edu/meet-president-daniels/speeches-articles-and-media/washington-post-op-ed-why-authoritarian-regimes-attack-independent-universities/>

11 <https://www.npr.org/2018/08/15/638953303/bombing-in-kabul-targets-educational-center-kills-dozens-of-young-people?t=1644831949528>

12 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/06/30/you-have-no-right-complain/education-social-restrictions-and-justice-taliban-held>

13 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/11/17/taliban-says-will-open-all-schools-for-girls-across-country>

14 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58709353>

15 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-57767067>

16 <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/08/25/asia/taliban-women-workplaces-afghanistan-intl/index.html>

17 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58437713>

18 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/08/afghan-women-to-be-banned-from-playing-sport-taliban-say>



Kabul, Afghanistan. Thousands of Afghans rush to the Hamid Karzai International Airport as they try to flee the Afghan capital of Kabul, Afghanistan, on August 16, 2021. Photo: Getty Images.

Autocratization Changing Nature?

- The nature of autocratization appears to be changing.
- The “epidemic” of 6 coups in 2021 is a sharp break from the average of 1.2 coups per year since 2000 – suggesting that rash actions are becoming more common in a less democratic world.
- Polarization escalates towards toxic levels in 40 countries – contributing to the changing nature of autocratization.
- Autocratic governments increasingly use misinformation to shape domestic and international opinion in their favor – a signal of emboldened autocrats.
- MENA is the region with the highest – and most increasing – levels of government misinformation.

This *Democracy Report 2022* provides several indications that autocratization processes are departing from incremental changes to more forceful developments. Leaders seem to be taking bolder actions now than in the past.

Beyond the signs discussed in the previous sections, at least three areas signal this changing nature of autocratization. First, five military and one self-coup in 2021 show that autocratization no longer necessarily proceeds at a slow, incremental pace. These coups also illustrate that autocratization is not limited to democracies. Consolidation of power in the hands of a few is also occurring in autocratic countries.

Second, polarization reached unprecedented global levels in 2021. Leaders of 40 countries contributed to sizeable increases in toxic polarization over the past decade. In contrast, polarization declined in only 6 countries. At current levels, polarization and autocratization form a mutually reinforcing, vicious cycle.

Polarization becomes toxic when it reaches extreme levels. Camps of “Us vs. Them” start questioning the moral legitimacy of each other and start treating opposition as an existential threat to a way of life or a nation (also see box on polarization).³⁶ Once political elites and their followers no longer believe that political opponents are legitimate and deserve equal respect, democratic norms and rules can be set aside to “save the nation”. This is a dangerous development.

Third and relatedly, governments are increasingly using misinformation as a tool to manipulate public opinion and their international reputations. Government manipulation of statistics and surging misinformation in digital media also show how political leaders are becoming bolder in furthering autocratization.

A Year of Coups

- The 5 military and 1 self-coup in 2021 set a record for the 21st century in a sharp break from the average of 1.2 coups per year since 2000.
- The coups resulted in 4 new closed autocracies – Chad, Guinea, Mali, and Myanmar.

Coups play a significant role in advancing autocratization in 2021. They represent a break with the established pattern of the third wave of autocratization. The coups thus contribute to what seems to be a change in the nature of autocratization.

The five military and one self-coup in 2021 set a record for the 21st century in a sharp break from the average of 1.2 coups per year since 2000.³⁷ The coups resulted in four new closed autocracies (**Chad, Guinea, Mali, and Myanmar**). They also destroyed all immediate prospects for Sudan to move out of closed autocracy. A self-coup led to the breakdown of democracy in **Tunisia** (see box). UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called this rise an “epidemic of coup d’états”.³⁸

Myanmar was one of the top democratizers in last year’s *Democracy Report*. However, the military seized control on the day the new parliament should have convened after the 2020 elections.³⁹

A Self-Coup in Tunisia

Ten years after a democratic breakthrough, President Saïd Kaïed staged a self-coup in Tunisia. The only country to democratize after the Arab Spring and the top democratizer in the world in last year’s *Democracy Report* is now an electoral autocracy.

Large-scale protests erupted in Tunisia on July 25th, 2021 in response to Covid-19-induced economic and public health problems.¹ President Saïed responded by suspending the government and parliament in violation of the constitutional provisions. The measures were supposed to be temporary but have been extended indefinitely² in a move that observers agree is a coup.³ President Saïed is ruling Tunisia by decree and its score on the LDI plummeted from 0.644 in 2020 to 0.459 in 2021.

There is a plan for a new constitution to be drafted ahead of a referendum to be held in July 2022. President Saïed has also declared that parliamentary elections are scheduled for December 17th, 2022.⁴ It remains to be seen whether these plans will be implemented and return Tunisia to parliamentary and constitutional rule.

1 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/25/tunisia-president-dismisses-prime-minister-after-protests>

2 <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/tunisia-president-extends-suspension-parliament-2021-08-23/>

3 <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/coup-in-tunisia-is-democracy-lost/>

4 <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2021-12-22/tunisia-president-calls-for-abolishing-current-constitution-and-holding-referendum-on-new-constitution-in-2022/>

36 Somer, M. & McCoy, J. 2019. Transformations through Polarizations and Global Threats to Democracy. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681(1).

37 <https://www.arresteddictatorship.com/global-instances-of-coups.html>

38 <https://www.reuters.com/world/an-epidemic-coups-un-chief-laments-urging-security-council-act-2021-10-26/>

39 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55902070>

The coup brought the democratization process to an abrupt end. Myanmar is now classified as a closed autocracy.

Chadian president Idriss Déby was killed by rebels on April 20, 2021. The military suspended parliament and installed Déby's son, Mahamat Déby, as new president. This action violated constitutional provisions.⁴⁰ While Chad was never a democracy, the coup resulted in Chad's downgrade from electoral to closed autocracy.

Mali suffered from two military coups in less than a year. In the second, Vice President Assimi Goïta led the military to oust the sitting president and prime minister on May 24th, 2021 and installed himself as acting president.⁴¹ The two coups marked a fast downfall to closed autocracy given Mali's recent democratic experience.

The military ousted **Guinea's** president, Alpha Condé, on September 5th, 2021. Special Forces Commander Mamady Doumbouya is now acting president.⁴² The coup changed the regime from an electoral to a closed autocracy.

A military coup on October 25th, 2021 removed a short-lived civilian regime in **Sudan**. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan became the de facto leader of the country.⁴³ **Sudan** continues as a closed autocracy. All prospects for democracy are suspended for the time being.

The trend of increasing coups continues in the first months of 2022. The military unseated President Roch Kaboré in **Burkina Faso** on January 23rd, derailing its electoral democracy.⁴⁴ We do not know where these developments will lead. However, it is certain that the coup ended democratic rule in **Burkina Faso**.

A Wave of Polarization

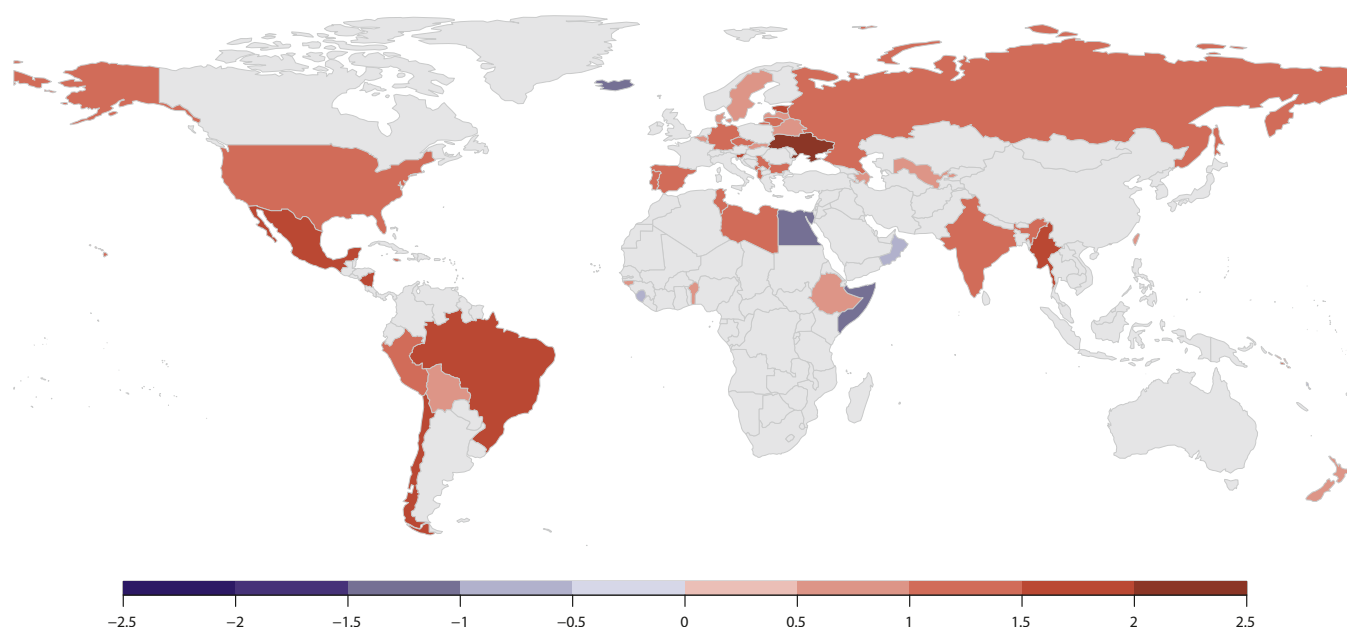
- Signaling a changing nature of autocratization, polarization is increasing to toxic levels in 40 countries.
- Toxic polarization affects all regions and varying countries regardless of size, economic performance, and levels of democracy.
- Toxic polarization and Autocratization mutually reinforce each other.
- Toxic levels of polarization contribute to electoral victories of anti-pluralist leaders and the empowerment of their agendas.

Polarization is a major global trend. It escalated towards toxic levels in 40 countries over the last decade while decreasing in only six. All regions are negatively affected as the world map in Figure 20 demonstrates.

Polarization also affects countries of all regime types, established democracies and autocratizing countries alike. In North America and Western Europe, polarization increased in countries such as **Germany, Portugal, Spain, and the United States of America**. There was also rising polarization in autocratizing countries like **Brazil, India, and Serbia**. In addition, countries that recently experienced political crises, such as **Hong Kong, Myanmar, Tunisia, and Ukraine**, stand out with high levels of polarization.

Figure 21 illustrates the striking escalation and worldwide spread of polarization over the past decade. Most countries are located

FIGURE 20: COUNTRIES WITH CHANGES ON POLITICAL POLARIZATION, 2011–2021



Red marks countries where political polarization increased substantially and significantly over the past ten years. Blue marks countries where the level of polarization decreased. Countries in grey are unchanged.

⁴⁰ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-56830510>

⁴¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57239805>

⁴² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58453778>

⁴³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59045020>

⁴⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-60112043>



A Sudanese demonstrator carrying a national flag walks by roadblocks set up by protesters on a street in the capital Khartoum, on October 26, 2021, to denounce a military coup that overthrew the transition to civilian rule. Photo: Getty Images.

Polarization

Political polarization is a division of society into Us versus Them camps whose members hold negative views of and distrust the other group.¹ When such camps align with mutually exclusive identities and interests, it undermines social cohesion and political stability.² We speak of toxic polarization when levels of polarization are high and widely permeate and shape society.³

We use two measures of polarization: “Polarization of Society” measures the extent to which the differences in opinions result in major clashes of views and polarization and comes from the Digital Society Project. “Political Polarization” measures the extent to which society is polarized into antagonistic, political camps where political differences affect social relationships beyond political discussions. This measure comes from the V-Dem project. In addition, we use “Political Parties Hate Speech” to measure how often major political parties use hate speech as part of their rhetoric. This indicator captures the extent to which political parties’ use of this rhetoric directly affects level of polarization.

- 1 McCoy, J. & Somer, M. 2019. Toward a Theory of Pernicious Polarization and How It Harms Democracies: Comparative Evidence and Possible Remedies. *The ANNALS of the AAPSS* 681(1); Somer, M., McCoy, J. L., and Luke, R. E. 2021. Pernicious Polarization, Autocratization and Opposition Strategies. *Democratization* 28(5).
- 2 Baldassarri, D., & Gelman, A. 2008. Partisans without Constraint: Political Polarization and Trends in American Public Opinion. *American Journal of Sociology* 114(2); McCoy, J., et al. 2018. Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics, and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Politics. *American Behavioral Scientist* 62(1).
- 3 Somer, M., McCoy, J. L., & Luke, R. E. 2021. Pernicious Polarization, Autocratization and Opposition Strategies. *Democratization* 28(5).

above the diagonal, indicating increasing polarization between 2011 and 2021. Polarization increased across all world regions. It affected countries regardless of their size, economic performance, and levels of democracy.

POLARIZATION AND AUTOCRATIZATION ARE MUTUALLY REINFORCING

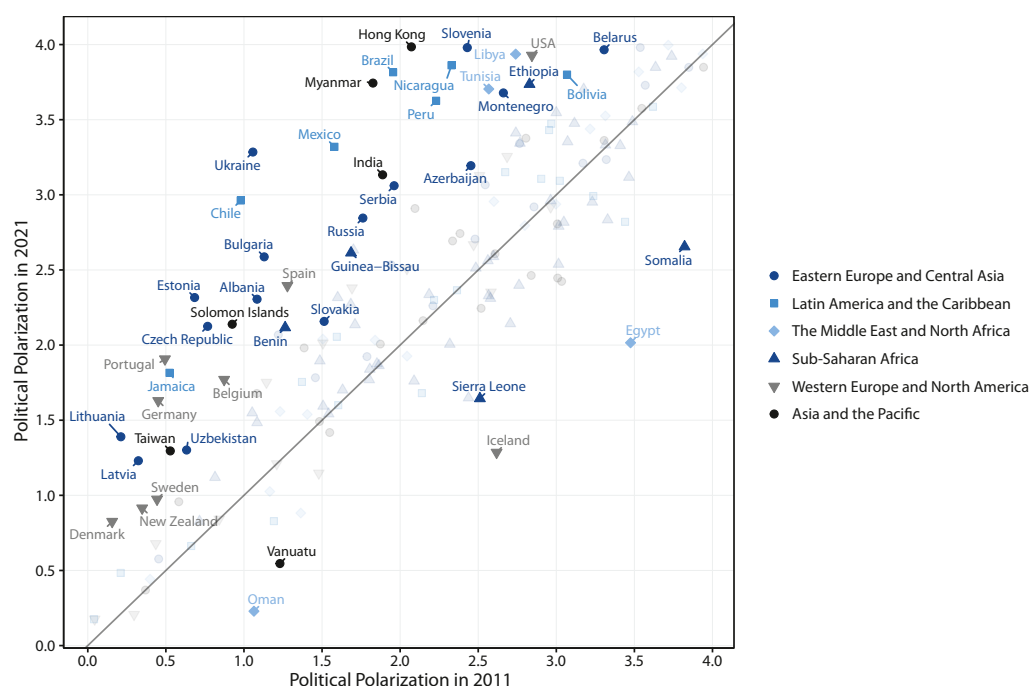
When polarization develops to toxic levels, democracy is typically dismantled, as illustrated in Figure 22. A rise in polarization is followed by a decrease on the LDI in all the top 5 autocratizing countries **Brazil, Hungary, Poland, Serbia, and Turkey**.

The measures of polarization of society, political polarization, and political parties’ use of hate speech tend to systematically rise together to extreme levels. That escalation into toxic polarization is followed by a downturn on the LDI in all cases.

For example, polarization in **Brazil** started rising in 2013 and reached toxic levels with the electoral victory of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro in 2018. Since taking office, Bolsonaro has joined demonstrators calling for military intervention in Brazil’s politics and the closure of Congress and the Supreme Court. Moreover, he has promoted a large-scale militarization of his government and public distrust in the voting system.⁴⁵

In **Hungary**, polarization escalated before 2010 when Prime Minister Viktor Orbán came to power but reached toxic levels after. This polarization paved the way for Fidesz to consolidate its hold on power and to expand its anti-pluralism by derailing checks and balances and press freedom, and by changing electoral rules to their advantage.⁴⁶

FIGURE 21: INCREASING VS. DECREASING POLITICAL POLARIZATION, 2011-2021



Polarization increased in countries above the diagonal line and decreased in countries below it. Countries are labeled if the difference between 2011 and 2021 was statistically significant and substantially meaningful.

45 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/brazil/2021-11-01/democracy-dying-brazil>

46 Vegetti, F. 2019. The Political Nature of Ideological Polarization: The Case of Hungary. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681(1).



Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, June 11, 2021. Protesters protest against the government of President Jair Bolsonaro in the city of Salvador. Photo: Shutterstock.

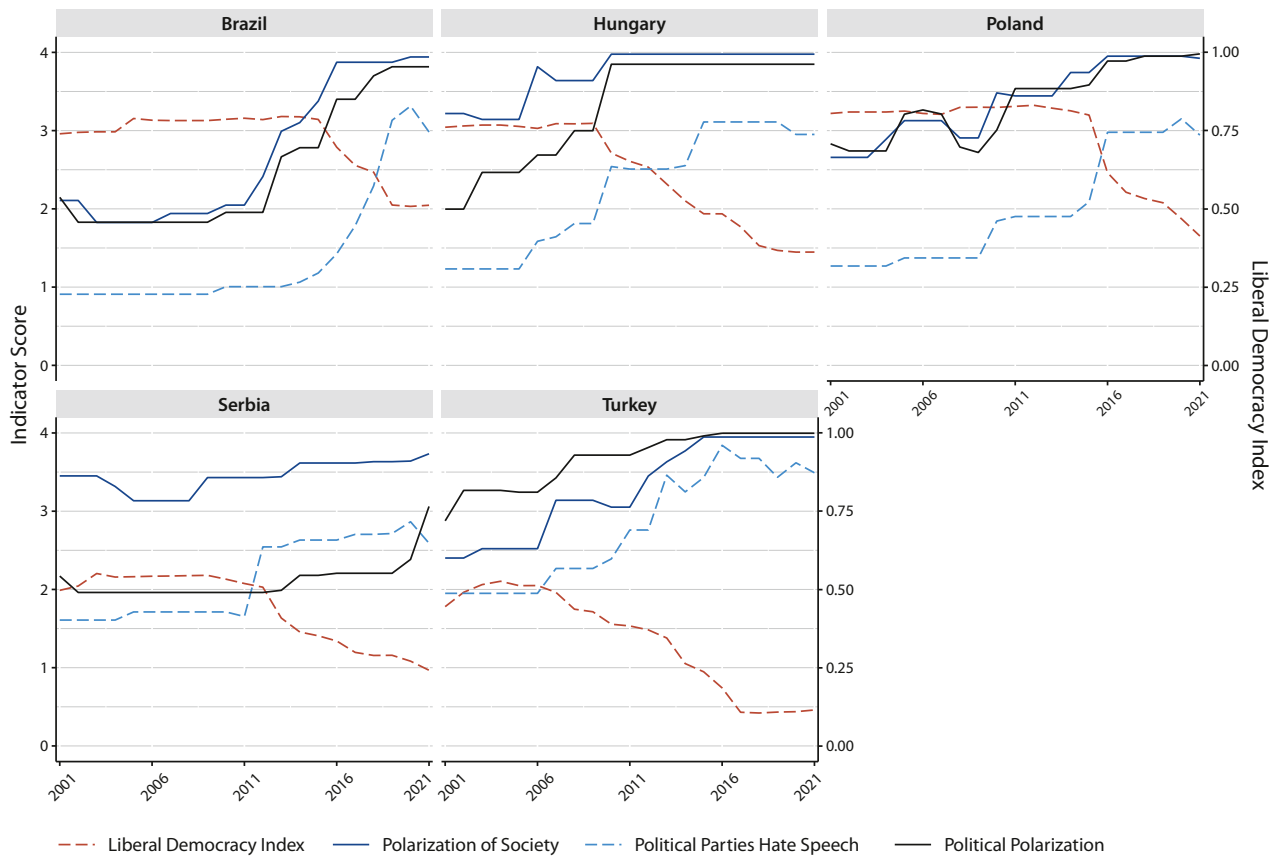
Toxic levels of political polarization developed in **Turkey** after President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the AKP came to power in 2002, arguably following the government's will. It can be argued that toxic polarization functioned as a strategic tool to enable reforms and actions to break down democracy.⁴⁷

Toxic polarization and autocratization tend to be mutually reinforcing. Extreme levels of polarization have detrimental effects on the democratic foundations of society. When polarization becomes toxic, different camps typically start questioning the moral legitimacy of other groups, viewing opposition as existential threats to a way of life or a nation.

Research demonstrates that citizens in highly polarized contexts are often willing to abandon democratic principles if it means that one's own party people is elected and that "the right" decisions are made.⁴⁸ Thus, toxic levels of polarization contribute to electoral victories of anti-pluralist leaders and to empowering their agendas.⁴⁹

When anti-pluralist leaders assume office, their parties are likely to use rhetoric that is intended to insult, offend, or intimidate members of specific groups – usually minorities or political

FIGURE 22: POLARIZATION IN TOP-5 AUTOCRATIZING CASES, 2001–2021



The left y-axis indicates the score for the polarization indicators (Polarization of Society, Political Parties Hate Speech, and Political Polarization). High scores for polarization indicators indicate high levels of polarization. The highest score for Political Parties Hate Speech Indicator represents that the political parties often use hate speech as a part of their rhetoric. Both the scores for the Polarization of Society and the Political Parties Hate Speech Indicators are reversed for the presentation purpose. The right y-axis represents the scale for the LDI (0-1).

47 Somer, M. 2019. Turkey: The Slippery Slope from Reformist to Revolutionary Polarization and Democratic Breakdown. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681(1).

48 Svoblik, M. W. 2019. Polarization versus Democracy. *Journal of Democracy* 30(3); Graham, M. H. & Svoblik, M. W. 2020. Democracy in America? Partisanship, Polarization, and the Robustness of Support for Democracy in the United States. *American Political Science Review* 114(2).

49 Somer, M., et al. 2021. Pernicious Polarization, Autocratization and Opposition Strategies. *Democratization* 28(5).

opponents. This increase in hate speech, in turn, can worsen toxic polarization and thereby create room for further autocratization.

Misinformation Multiplying

- Governments increasingly use misinformation to shape domestic and international opinion.
- There is evidence of government misinformation in the form of manipulation of official statistics.
- Governments multiply their spread of false information to undermine opposition and to feed polarization.
- MENA is the region with the highest – and most increasing – levels of government misinformation.

Evidence shows that autocratic governments spread disinformation to improve their reputation both domestically and internationally.

The amount of data available as well as its transparency and reliability are much lower for autocracies than democracies.⁵⁰ Data related to policy, fiscal decisions, and implementation are substantially more transparent in democracies than in autocracies.⁵¹ Autocracies habitually manipulate data, such as the Covid-19 death statistics and economic growth.⁵² Citizens in autocracies are also forced to rely more on government-controlled information since internet access is also substantially lower in autocracies compared to democracies.⁵³

The Digital Society Project

The Digital Society Project (DSP) addresses questions surrounding interactions between the internet and politics.¹ Created using the V-Dem infrastructure, the DSP dataset covers virtually all countries in the world from 2000 to 2020. It provides a set of 35 indicators covering such topics as online censorship, polarization and politicization of social media, misinformation campaigns, coordinated information operations, and foreign influence in and monitoring of domestic politics.

1 <http://digitalsocietyproject.org>, see also Mechkova, V., et al. 2019. *Measuring Internet Politics: Introducing the Digital Society Project (DSP). Working Paper* (1).

Access to high-quality transparent data is a global common good. The *World Development Report 2021* demonstrates the extent to which data is used to spread misinformation and information today.⁵⁴ It details why reliable data lead to better lives for citizens through better government programs and policies, as well as business decisions.

But it is not only through the spread of false or misleading official statistics that governments spread misinformation domestically as well as abroad. Misinformation is on the rise worldwide (Figure 23).

Governments have continuously expanded their use of digital and social media to spread false information at home since 2000. Recently the uptake is especially pronounced in the Global South, across Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, sub-Saharan

FIGURE 23: GOVERNMENT DISSEMINATION OF FALSE INFORMATION

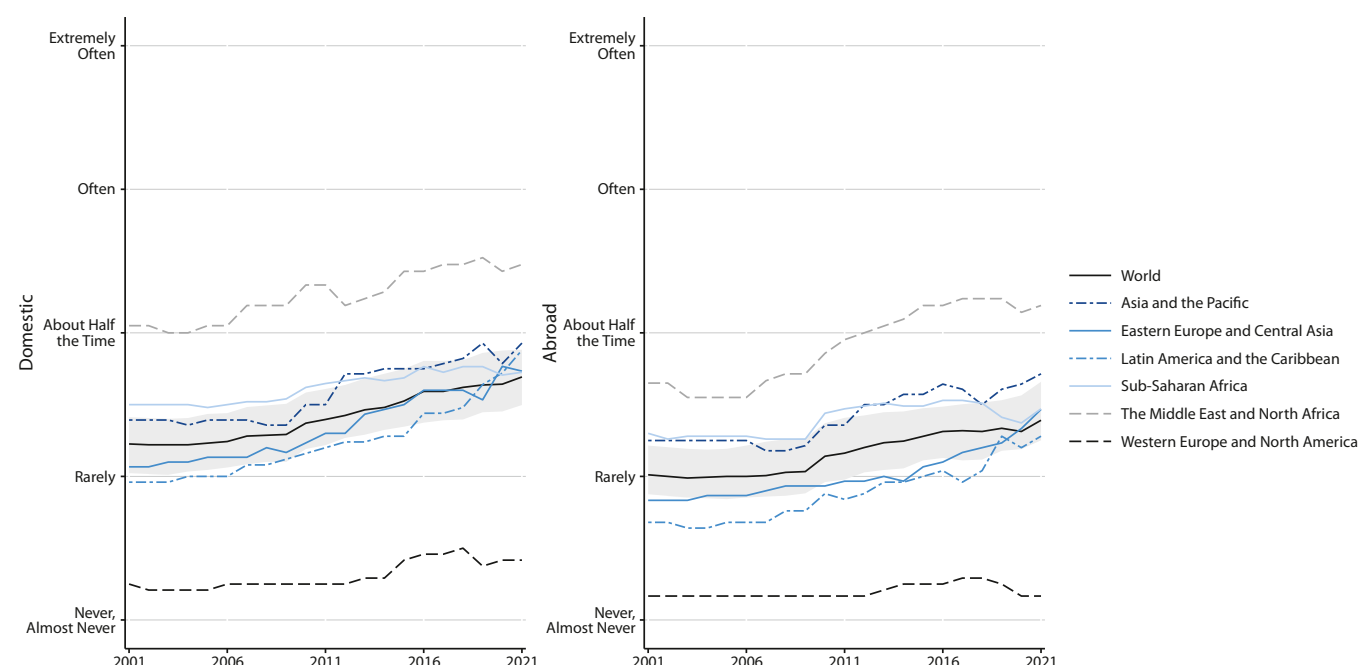


Figure 23 shows two variables from the Digital Society Project that measure how often governments and their agents use social media to disseminate misleading viewpoints or false information to influence their own population (left) as well as citizens of other countries (right). The value shown is the average values of the regions.

50 Hollyer, J. R., et al. 2011. *Democracy and Transparency*. *Journal of Politics* 73(4).

51 Rosendorff, B. P. & J. Dores. 2006. *Transparency and Unfair Eviction in Democracies and Autocracies*. *Swiss Political Science Review* 12(3).

52 Annaka, S. 2021. *Political Regime, Data Transparency, and COVID-19 Death Cases*. *Population Health* 15; Kapoor, M., A. et al. 2020. *Authoritarian Governments Appear to Manipulate COVID Data*. *ArXiv*; Magee, C. S. P. & J. A. Dores. 2015. "Reconsidering Regime Type and Growth: Lies, Dictatorships, and Statistics." *International Studies Quarterly* 59.

53 Weidmann, N. B., et al. 2016. *Digital Discrimination: Political Bias in Internet Service Provision Across Ethnic Groups*. *Science* 353(6304).

54 World Bank. 2021. *World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives*. Washington, DC: World Bank.



Bardo Protest, Tunis Tunisia, 26 July 2021. Photo: Shutterstock.

Africa, and MENA. The latter is the region with the highest levels of government-spread false information.

Even in Western Europe and North America there is a slight increase in domestic government misinformation. These governments almost never used to spread misinformation through digital and social media. The use of misinformation for both domestic and international audiences is most frequent in **Malta**, the **United Kingdom**, and the **United States of America** in 2021.

Around the world, governments also increasingly rely on misinformation to influence citizens of other countries.

Government disinformation through the internet can be used strategically to influence citizens in two ways. Misinformation and fake news regarding political opponents can inflate negative feelings and distrust, or even instigate violence, which in turn aggravates levels of polarization.⁵⁵ This pattern played out during the “Brexit” vote in Great Britain and the 2016 US presidential election, for example.⁵⁶

Second, government misinformation can be used to garner support for politically convenient policy decisions. In the Covid-19 context, fake news was used to justify governments’ Covid responses (or lack thereof) and to muzzle media and political opposition.⁵⁷

In short, government misinformation is multiplying. Access to information and reliable data is a public good. Recent trends endanger democracy by serving anti-pluralist purposes.

55 Osmundsen, M., et al. 2021. *Partisan Polarization is the Primary Psychological Motivation Behind Political Fake News Sharing on Twitter*. *American Political Science Review* 115(3).

56 Rose, J. 2017. *Brexit, Trump, and Post-Truth Politics*. *Public Integrity* 19(6).

57 Hartley, K., & Vu, M. K. 2020. *Fighting Fake News in the COVID-19 Era: Policy Insights from an Equilibrium Model*. *Policy Sciences* 53(4).

United States of America: January 6 and Its Aftermath

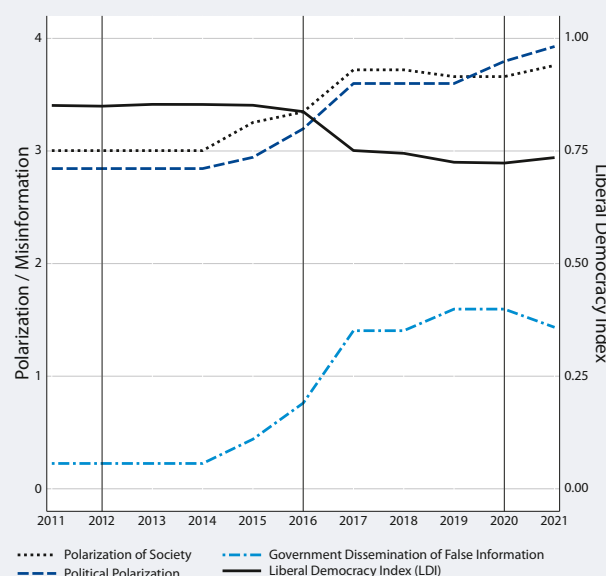
While the United States remains a liberal democracy, V-Dem data shows that it is only a fraction away from losing this status after substantial autocratization. The U.S. LDI score dropped from 0.85 in 2015 to 0.72 in 2020, driven by weakening constraints on the executive under the Trump administration.

Simultaneously, polarization and government misinformation escalated and remain high in 2021 (Figure 1). Political use of social media exacerbates the polarization. Fake news, hate speech, conspiracy theories, and distrust have intensified negative feelings, prejudice, and violence between Republicans and Democrats since the run-up to the 2016 election.¹ Polarization and misinformation culminated in a violent test for U.S. democracy: the storming of the Capitol on January 6th, 2021. President Trump's false claim that he won the 2020 presidential election (the so-called "Big Lie") also helped to instigate the riots.²

Though ultimately unsuccessful, the storming of the Capitol tested the foundations of U.S. democracy after an unprecedented post-election period of lawsuits and pressure from Trump to have the election outcome overturned.³

The events on January 6th did not affect the U.S. LDI score (Figure 1). However, liberal democracy remains significantly lower than before Trump came to power. Government misinformation declined last year but did not return to previous levels. Toxic levels of polarization continue to increase. Democracy survives in the United States, but it remains under threat.

FIGURE 1: POLARIZATION AND AUTOCRATIZATION IN THE U.S.



The left y-axis indicates the score for the indicators (Polarization of Society, Government Misinformation, and Political Polarization). The right y-axis represents the scale for the LDI (0-1). The large scores for polarization indicators indicate the highest levels of polarization. The highest score for "Government Dissemination of False Information Domestic" indicator represents that the political parties often use hate speech as a part of their rhetoric. Both the scores for the Polarization of Society and the Government Misinformation Indicators are reversed for presentation purposes.



Photo: Shutterstock.

1 Grinberg, N., et al. 2019. Fake News on Twitter During the 2016 US Presidential Election. *Science* 363(6425).

2 By the end of 2021, two-thirds of Republicans believe the lie that voter fraud helped President Biden win the 2020 election. <https://apnews.com/article/voter-fraud-election-2020-joe-biden-donald-trump-7fcb6f134e528fee8237c7601db3328f> and <https://www.npr.org/2022/01/03/1069764164/american-democracy-poll-jan-6?t=1645113214224>

3 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/02/trump-georgia-elections-official-brad-raffensperger>

Case for Democracy

With support from the European Union, the V-Dem Institute initiated the “Case for Democracy”. The goals are to:

- Collate the latest, most rigorous scientific evidence on the dividends of democracy in key areas of development;
- Bring together leading scholars with policymakers and practitioners to share and discuss the evidence and facilitate a coherent narrative on why democracy support and protection is important;
- Distribute the evidence on the dividends of democracy widely among democracy support and protection stakeholders around the world.

Below, we highlight key findings compiled over the last year.

Economic Development

Democracy is important for reducing poverty (SDG #1), achieving economic growth (SDG #8), and reducing inequality (SDG #10). Evidence shows that democratization produces 20% higher increase in GDP per capita over 25 years than compared to staying autocratic (Acemoglu et al. 2019). Democracies provide stable and predictable growth, as shown by only 7% of democracies between 1900 and 2009 experiencing negative growth as compared to almost 30% of autocracies (Knutsen 2020). These effects of democracy primarily stem from the vertical accountability mechanisms issued by clean elections and freedom of expression (Boese & Eberhardt 2022).

Education

Democracies are critical for providing education (SDG #4). A recent, encompassing assessment found democracy to increase secondary education enrollment by almost 70% (Acemoglu et al. 2015). Another important study found that democratization leads to increasing education spending with up to 30% (Ansell 2008). Furthermore, the effect of democracy on school attendance has been found to be particularly pronounced in lower-income and rural populations (Harding 2020).

Peace and Human Security

Democracy is crucial for people enjoying good health and well-being (SDG #3) and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG #16). Democracies are much less likely to engage in war and civil war than autocracies, as shown by the fact that after India turned into an electoral autocracy, the statistical odds of a militarized dispute with Pakistan are 3 times higher than 10 years ago (Hegre et al. 2020). Two states located in a region with low levels of democracy are 70% more likely to have a fatal armed conflict than a pair of



Photo: Mithell Luo, Unsplash

states placed in a region with high levels (Altman et al. 2021). However, new and weakly institutionalized democracies are also at high risk of civil war, with high-quality liberal democracies the by far the most peaceful (Gates et al. 2006).

Sustainable Environment and Climate Change Mitigation

Democracy provides the arena for reaching sustainable communities (SDG #11) and climate action (SDG #13). High-quality democracies have almost 20% higher policy commitment to climate change mitigation than closed autocracies like China (Bättig & Bernauer 2009). The difference between high-quality democracy and closed autocracy also equals a difference in the Paris Agreement reduction policy targets of 1.6C (Törstad et al 2020). Democracies also provide the arena for civil society to effectively advocate climate change issues. A 1% increase in civil liberties generates a 0.05% reduction in national CO2 emissions (Pacheco-Vega & Murdie 2020).

Global Health

Democracies provide superior access to and quality of health care, making it essential for global health and well-being (SDG #3). Transitions to democracy increase life expectancy by 3% within 10 years (Bollyky et al. 2019). High-quality democracy leads to 94% lower infant mortality compared to closed autocracies (Wang et

al. 2019). Increased global levels of democracy averted 16 million cardiovascular deaths between 1995 and 2015 (Bollyky et al. 2019). Autocratization directly leads to a decline in life expectancy by 1.3 percentage points and a decrease in health care protection by 9 percentage points (Wigley et al. 2020).

Gender Equality and Empowering Women

Gender equality (SDG #5) is both a dividend of and fundamental aspect to democracy. Democracy leads to higher levels of female political participation and representation (Fallon et al. 2012). Democracy also produces substantial improvements in women's civil liberties (Sundström et al. 2017). Civil liberties, in turn, provide the opportunity for women's movements to effectively promote gender equality (Paxton et al. 2006).

Public Goods and Corruption

Democracy increases public goods provision and can diminish corruption, contributing to achieving affordable and clean energy (SDG #7), reduced inequality (SDG #10), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG #16). High-quality democracies spend 100% more than closed autocracies on social protection policies benefitting the poor (Murshed et al. 2020). Democracy provides an average citizen with an internet connection rate more than 300% higher than autocracies (Weidmann et al. 2016). While low-performing democracies are often plagued by corruption, democracies that develop strong vertical accountability mechanisms diminish corruption (McMann 2020). Finally, democracies produce more transparent and higher-quality data (Annaka 2021).



The program has so far provided output in terms of one conference, a webinar series, eight policy briefing papers, and one conference report. We encourage readers to visit the V-Dem Institute webpage¹ for more in-depth information on the dividends of democracy and the Case for Democracy.

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1 At <https://www.v-dem.net/casefordemocracy.html>

Concept Note

International Scientific Panel on Democracy (ISPD)

Confronted with increasingly overt attacks on democracy, world leaders are aware of the need for a united effort in democracy promotion and protection. For instance, US President Joseph Biden convened a leader's [Democracy Summit in December 2021 to be followed up in Summer 2022](#), and Boris Johnson has proposed a [D10](#) group bringing together the G7 with Australia, India and South Korea. German foreign minister Heiko Maas recently suggested a [Marshall Plan for Democracy](#), and Sweden launched the '[Drive for Democracy](#)' as a foreign policy priority. While these efforts are relevant political reactions to current global autocratization trends, they also need to build on scientific evidence to make a substantial and credible case for democracy.

Therefore, this is the time to build an equivalent of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) for democracy: the **International Scientific Panel on Democracy (ISPD)**.

The ISPD will provide policy makers with *regular scientific assessments on democratic developments, their implications for fact-based dividends (and limitations) of democracy, as well as to put forward scientific guidance on democratic resilience and protection*.

Rationale

The world is facing a wave of autocratization. Powerful autocratic states, former democracies, and political movements within democracies increasingly present ideological challenges to the principles of democratic governance. There is an urgent need for a global coalition to demonstrate and protect the dividends of democracy. At this historical moment, the European Union has a unique position to take the lead, to gather its partners around the globe, and based on hard scientific evidence shape the future of democracy in the world.

A range of academic and think-tank organizations provide assessments of democracy including various aspects such as media and academic freedom, and human rights on a regular basis. There is much consensus between these assessments. Yet, the world lacks a single, coherent, and scientific account of both supply (democratic institutions) and demand (popular support) that the major academic data sources stand behind. This is a source of disunion standing in the way of decisive action on the protection of democracy in the international community. The independent, science-based ISPD Expert Report on Democracy will provide key input for international negotiations as well as work on democracy protection and promotion.

In addition, there is an urgent need to gather the best available science on democracy's dividends across a range of fields related to the Sustainable Development Goals and human development

including human rights, and to conduct additional studies where there are gaps. Finally, the evidence must be brought to bear on policy and programs through guidance from academic on how to interpret and use/not interpret or use, the scientific findings.

Goals

Similar to the IPCC and IPBES, in order to serve the needs of the international community of policy makers, practitioners, and the public, the ISPD will provide the best possible scientific evidence. Therefore, the goals of the ISPD are:

1) Provide a scientific consensus on the state of democratic institutions:

The ISPD will build a scientific consensus to provide an authoritative account of the status and trends in the world for democracy, autocracy, and human rights. For example, details on which countries are worsening or improving on democracy and human rights, and how popular support for democracy and human rights are developing or diminishing. Not all sources will agree on every country's status as a democracy or autocracy but with world-leading academics on the ISPD, the various sources can be used to authoritatively classify the vast majority of countries where sources are close to in the agreement, and then also to identify the countries in the "grey-zone/mixed-status" while taking sources of uncertainty into account. This scientific assessment will come in the form of an annual ISPD Expert Report on Democracy communicating the global expert consensus.

2) Build an evidence base on the dividends (and limitations) of democracy:

The ISPD will build an evidence base to provide the most reliable science on democracy's dividends for outcomes across the sciences, medicine, technology, as well as the social sciences. This will incorporate issues such as human health, economic development, education, empowerment of women and children, climate change, peace and human security, public goods and corruption, information technology and digital communication, and crisis management, including handling of pandemics. An additional, and critical component of the evidence base will be focusing on what one could refer to as the "intrinsic" case for democracy's dividends in terms of ensuring citizens' freedoms and rights, especially human rights. The output will be a series of subcommittee thematic reports and studies that distill and communicate the scientific evidence of the benefits, as well as the limitations of, democratic governance and associated human rights on a range of human and developmental outcomes. Assessing limitations is important also critical for understanding how democracy may need to be strengthened and supported in order for any dividends to be maximized. Following a review of existing evidence, gaps will be filled by original research conducted or commissioned by ISPD subcommittees.

3) Provide global, regional, and country-specific guidance: The ISPD will organize a science-policy interface through consultative meetings policy- and practitioner stakeholders can meet the scientific expertise the ISPD gathers on a thematic or geographic basis to get guidance on how the findings can but also should not be interpreted and used.

Value Added

The ISPD will bring together the leading actors who make assessments of democratic institutions across the world and build one evidence-based consensus based on these multiple sources.

The first value added is that the ISPD will bring about the sort of consensus on the state and trends for democracy and autocracy in the world, that the IPCC did for climate change. The full range of evidence that members offer will be brought to bear on establishing which countries are democracies and autocracies or an uncertain status in between; which countries are in decline or in an episode of democratization; as well as on the state of various democratic rights and institutions in each country of the world.

Second, the ISPD will couple this evidence-base with the demand-side of how people across the world assess democracy, what they want, how support for democracy is changing, and what the relationship is between the developments of institutions, rights, and preferences.

Third, the ISPD will put these findings on trends for supply and demand in light of what the evidence shows on the dividends and limitations of democracy in terms of Agenda 2030 and issues such as human health, economic development, education, empowerment of women and children, climate change, peace and human security, public goods and corruption, crisis management including handling of pandemics, as well as human rights and freedoms. While identifying direct causality is not always possible with 100 percent certainty, the leading expertise from among the best scientists in the world that the ISPD will cast, can identify the most plausible positions and conclusions on both consequences and limitations of democratic governance. Thus, the ISPD can provide evidence on what the trends for democracy and autocracy will mean in terms of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and meeting related global challenges.

Set-up

Given the potential implications of assessing the political institutions of states, it is critical that the ISPD can claim independence from governments and other political actors. Different from the IPCC and the IPBES, therefore, the ISPD should not be organized within the confines of the UN or any other type of intergovernmental body. While it is anticipated that the funding must come

from a global coalition of democratic states, the consortium constituting and organizing the ISPD should accordingly consist of highly reputable academic and policy institutions that can provide and safeguard the legitimacy of the ISPD and its reports. The institutional arrangement can be organized through a trust fund, or similar.

To accomplish its goals, the ISPD will gather the leading expert academic communities, think-tanks, and institutes that take stock of democracy. While, for example, the V-Dem Institute's *Democracy Report* and Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* are by some considered leading sources of factual assessment on democracy there are many specialized sources. These include Susan Hyde and Nikolay Marinov's National Elections across Democracy and Autocracy (NELDA); Article 19's data and report on freedom of expression/media; Bertelsmann Foundation's Transformation Index; the Democracy Barometer by the Center for Democracy Aarau (ZDA) and the Department of Political Science at the University of Zurich; the Polity project at Center for Systemic Peace; Reporters without Borders' World Press Freedom Index; CIVICUS Civil Society Index Project; and the Human Rights Measurement Initiative founded by economists Ann-Marie Brook and Susan Randolph. On the demand-side measuring popular opinions the ISPD will involve the World Values Survey as well as the Global Barometers (Arab-, Afro-, Asia-, Latino-, and Euro-barometers). In addition, the ISPD will draw on prominent scholars of democracy at universities across the world, not the least in the Global South for regional and country-specific expertise.

As members in its subcommittees, the ISPD will also include leading research institutions, centers, and groups across different fields such as political science, sociology, economics, law and human rights, conflict and security, development, global health, medicine, biology/biodiversity, and climate change/climatology to collate, assess, and when necessary, conduct additional studies of democracy's dividends across outcomes critical for the international community.

Supported by the EU (EC/INTPA) as well as by, for example, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with its extensive global network and international standing, the V-Dem Institute is able to bring the leading academic and other authorities on democracy together for this joint mission.

The V-Dem Institute has also (with support from the EC/INTPA) taken the first steps towards gathering the leading scholars providing evidence on democracy's dividends across a range of outcomes. This is done under a program of work titled "The Case for Democracy", which could serve as a model for the second leg of the ISPD and its subcommittees.

Concept Note

Organization

The ISPD will have a slim and decentralized organization to ensure unconstrained output of the highest scientific quality with the minimum bureaucracy. Figure 1 provides a suggested organizational structure.

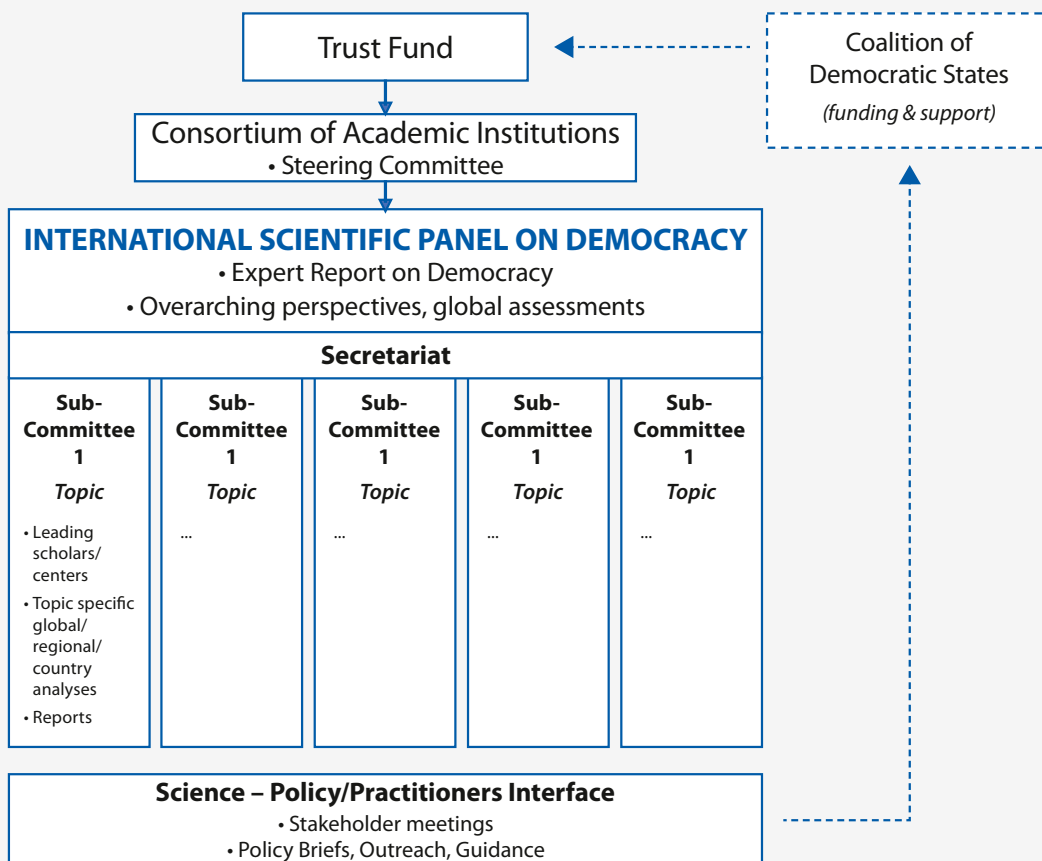
The *coalition of democratic states* provides the core funding to a trust fund (or similar) that is owned by a consortium of academic and other reputable institutions. These institutions are represented in the Steering Committee which appoints members of the ISPD but beyond that has oversight functions only.

The *ISPD* meets twice a year and is tasked with 1) providing a scientific consensus on the state of democratic institutions worldwide in the *Expert Report on Democracy*, and 2) bringing the findings from topic-specific sub-committees together to provide the overall evidence base on the dividends of democracy at a global scale. The members of the ISPD are expected to conduct the equivalent of about three months of fulltime work per year.

The *secretariat* supports the work of both the ISPD and its sub-committees and organizes the interface for science-policy/practitioners. The secretariat is estimated to need at least three to five fulltime officers.

The *sub-committees* meet quarterly and are tasked with identifying and collating the best available, robust scientific evidence on the relationship between democracy/autocracy as well as democratization/autocratization, and the area of its concern (e.g. economic development, human and global health, climate change mitigation, ICT, human rights and freedoms, etc). The recruitment of scholars is critical to the success of the ISPD and its sub-committees. The primary criterion for invitations will be based on publishing robust findings in the most highly regarded international, peer-reviewed scientific journals and publishing houses in respective field. In addition, the ISPD and its sub-committees must reflect a wide variety of expertise from both the North and the Global South, and be well-balanced with regard to gender, race, and ethnicity.

FIGURE 1. ISPD ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Based on the collation of evidence, the sub-committees will identify gaps in the existing evidence-base, and conduct its own, cross-disciplinary studies to fill those gaps with essential knowledge. The work for each individual who are members of a sub-committee is estimated to be between one and two months of fulltime work per year, and each sub-committee needs at least one full-time officer coordinating and supporting the work.

Examples of possible topics for such interdisciplinary sub-committees:

1. **Supply side:** Global/regional institutional trends (democratization / autocratization);
2. **Demand side:** regional surveys including cross-cutting and selected country analysis, which represent trends on popular supports for democracy;
3. **Outcome:** Human development (health, life expectancy, infant mortality, disease control, etc);
4. **Outcome:** Social development (education, cooperation, social protection schemes, empowerment of women and children);
5. **Outcome:** Economic development (income, employment, public goods, corruption);
6. **Outcome:** Climate change mitigation and environment;
7. **Outcome:** Peace and human security;
8. **Outcome:** Innovation, technology, and digital communication.

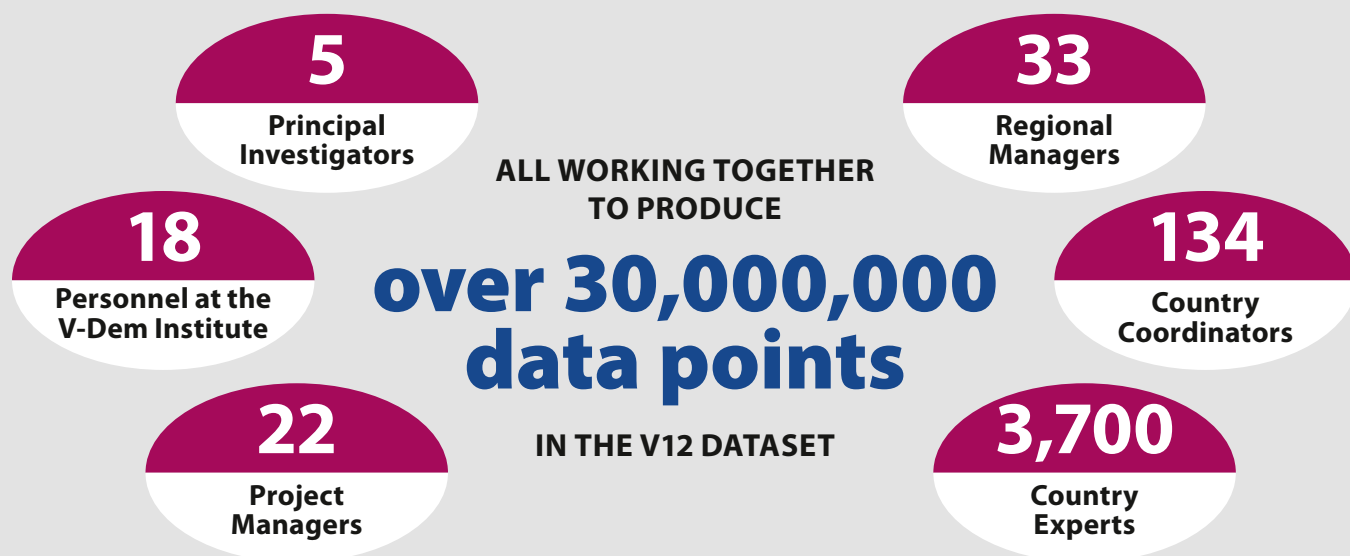
In the *interface for science-policy/practitioners*, stakeholders are invited to provide feedback on findings and, in particular, to discuss of provide guidance on how the findings can be translated and communicated to policy-makers and practitioners. The interface's core activities consist of policy briefs summarizing findings from the sub-committees, and direct workshops/conferences with policy-makers and practitioners.

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V-Dem in Numbers

V-Dem is an international effort comprised of:



WHERE IS V-DEM DATA USED?



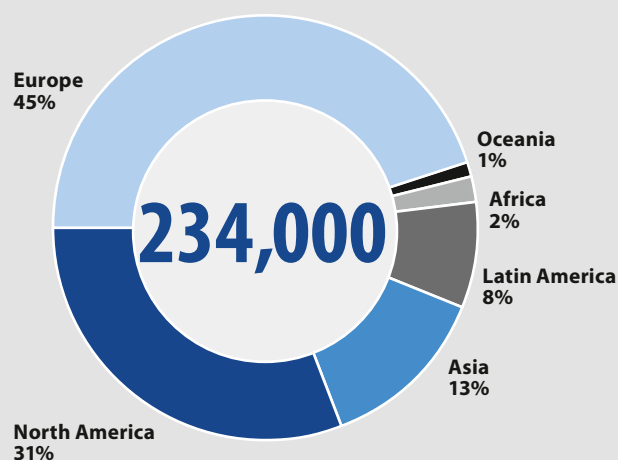
The V-Dem dataset has been downloaded by users **234,000 times** in **186 countries** since 2016.



12 million graphs created using the online tools by users in **182 countries** since 2016.

While the majority of the dataset downloads in 2020 come from Europe and Americas, users from all regions of the world have accessed the data and used the online tools since 2016.

DATASET DOWNLOADS (2016–2021)



V-DEM PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS TO ACADEMIC AND POLICY COMMUNITIES

- ▶ **850+ presentations** across the world by V-Dem scholars since 2007.
- ▶ **100+ visiting scholars** presented at the V-Dem Institute since 2014.



TABLE 1: REGIMES OF THE WORLD, 2011–2021

The countries are sorted by regime type in 2021, and after that in alphabetical order. They are classified based on the Regimes of the World measure. We incorporate V-Dem's confidence estimates in order to account for the uncertainty and potential measurement error due to the nature of the data but also to underline that some countries are placed in the grey zone between regime types. This builds on the regime-classification by Lüthmann et al. (2018). While using V-Dem's data, this measure is not officially endorsed by the Steering Committee of V-Dem (only the main V-Dem democracy indices have such an endorsement).

LD Liberal Democracy
ED Electoral Democracy
EA Electoral Autocracy
CA Closed Autocracy
 – indicates that taking uncertainty into account, the country could belong to the lower category
 + signifies that the country could also belong to the higher category
 ↑ indicates that the country sees a movement upwards from one level to another
 ↓ indicates that the country sees a movement downwards from one level to another

LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES

COUNTRY	2021	CHANGE FROM 2011
Australia	LD	
Barbados	LD–	↑
Belgium	LD	
Bhutan	LD–	↑
Botswana	LD–	
Canada	LD	
Chile	LD–	
Costa Rica	LD	
Cyprus	LD–	
Denmark	LD–	
Estonia	LD	
Finland	LD	
France	LD–	
Germany	LD	
Greece	LD–	
Iceland	LD	
Ireland	LD	
Israel	LD	
Italy	LD–	
Japan	LD	
Latvia	LD	
Luxembourg	LD	
Netherlands	LD	
New Zealand	LD–	
Norway	LD–	
Seychelles	LD	↑
South Korea	LD	
Spain	LD	
Sweden	LD	
Switzerland	LD	
Taiwan	LD	
United Kingdom	LD	
USA	LD	
Uruguay	LD–	

ELECTORAL DEMOCRACIES

COUNTRY	2021	CHANGE FROM 2011
Argentina	ED	
Armenia	ED	↑
Austria	ED	↓
BiH	ED–	
Bolivia	ED–	
Brazil	ED	
Bulgaria	ED	
Burkina Faso	ED	
Cape Verde	ED	
Colombia	ED	
Croatia	ED+	
Czech Republic	ED	↓
Dominican Republic	ED	
Ecuador	ED	
Georgia	ED	
Ghana	ED+	↓
Guatemala	ED–	
Guinea-Bissau	ED–	↑
Guyana	ED–	
Indonesia	ED	
Jamaica	ED	
Kosovo	ED	↑
Lesotho	ED	
Liberia	ED	
Lithuania	ED+	↓
Malawi	ED+	
Maldives	ED	
Malta	ED+	
Mauritius	ED–	↓
Mexico	ED	
Moldova	ED+	
Mongolia	ED	
Namibia	ED+	
Nepal	ED	
Niger	ED–	
North Macedonia	ED	↑
Panama	ED	
Paraguay	ED–	
Peru	ED	
Poland	ED	↓
Portugal	ED+	↓
Romania	ED	
S.Tomé & P.	ED+	
Senegal	ED+	
Sierra Leone	ED–	
Slovakia	ED+	↓
Slovenia	ED	↓
Solomon Islands	ED	
South Africa	ED	↓
Sri Lanka	ED	↑
Suriname	ED	
Timor-Leste	ED	
Trinidad and Tobago	ED+	↓
Ukraine	ED–	↑
Vanuatu	ED+	

ELECTORAL AUTOCRACIES

COUNTRY	2021	CHANGE FROM 2011
Albania	EA+	↓
Algeria	EA	
Angola	EA	
Azerbaijan	EA	
Bangladesh	EA	
Belarus	EA	
Benin	EA	↓
Burundi	EA	
Cambodia	EA	
Cameroon	EA	
CAR	EA	
Comoros	EA	
Congo	EA	
Djibouti	EA	
DRC	EA	
Egypt	EA–	
El Salvador	EA+	↓
Equatorial Guinea	EA	
Ethiopia	EA	
Fiji	EA	↑
Gabon	EA	
Gambia	EA+	
Haiti	EA	
Honduras	EA	
Hungary	EA+	↓
India	EA	↓
Iran	EA–	
Iraq	EA	
Ivory Coast	EA	
Kazakhstan	EA	
Kenya	EA+	
Kyrgyzstan	EA	
Lebanon	EA+	↓
Madagascar	EA+	↑
Malaysia	EA	
Mauritania	EA	
Montenegro	EA+	↓
Mozambique	EA	
Nicaragua	EA–	
Nigeria	EA+	
Pakistan	EA	
Palestine/West Bank	EA	
Papua New Guinea	EA	
Philippines	EA	↓
Russia	EA	
Rwanda	EA	
Serbia	EA	↓
Singapore	EA	
Somaliland	EA	
Tajikistan	EA	
Tanzania	EA	
Togo	EA	
Tunisia	EA+	
Turkey	EA	↓
Turkmenistan	EA–	
Uganda	EA	
Venezuela	EA	
Zambia	EA	↓
Zanzibar	EA	
Zimbabwe	EA	

CLOSED AUTOCRACIES

COUNTRY	2021	CHANGE FROM 2011
Afghanistan	CA	↓
Bahrain	CA	
Chad	CA	↓
China	CA	
Cuba	CA	
Eritrea	CA	
Eswatini	CA	
Guinea	CA	↓
Hong Kong	CA	
Jordan	CA	
Kuwait	CA+	
Laos	CA	
Libya	CA	
Mali	CA	↓
Morocco	CA	
Myanmar	CA	↓
North Korea	CA	
Oman	CA	
Palestine/Gaza	CA	
Qatar	CA	
Saudi Arabia	CA	
Somalia	CA	
South Sudan	CA	
Sudan	CA	↓
Syria	CA	↓
Thailand	CA	↓
UAE	CA	
Uzbekistan	CA+	↓
Vietnam	CA	↓
Yemen	CA	↓

TABLE 2: COUNTRY SCORES FOR THE LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI) AND ALL COMPONENTS INDICES, 2021

↑ Indicates that the country's score has improved over the past 10 years, substantively and at a statistically significant level

↓ Indicates that the country's score has decreased over the past 10 years, substantively and at a statistically significant level

SD+/- reports the standard deviation to indicate the level of uncertainty

	LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI)			ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (EDI)			LIBERAL COMPONENT INDEX (LCI)			EGALITARIAN COMPONENT INDEX (ECI)			PARTICIPATORY COMPONENT INDEX (PCI)			DELIBERATIVE COMPONENT INDEX (DCI)			
COUNTRY	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	
Sweden	1	0,88	0,04	2	0,91	0,036	2	0,98	0,015	11	0,91	0,043	25	0,66	0,023	15	0,93	0,029	
Denmark	2	0,88	0,042	1	0,91	0,038	1	0,98	0,014	2	0,97	0,024	7	0,71	0,014	5	0,97	0,043	
Norway	3	0,86	0,044	4	0,9	0,04	4	0,96	0,017	1	0,97	0,025	28	0,65	0,018	1	0,99	0,035	
Costa Rica	4	0,85	0,042	3	0,9	0,036	9	0,95	0,025	18	0,89	0,049	18	0,66	0,037	-1	7	0,96	0,063
New Zealand	5	0,84	0,045	6	0,89	0,039	10	0,95	0,026	21	0,89	0,057	5	0,73	0,035	38	0,84	0,029	
Estonia	6	0,84	0,046	5	0,89	0,04	11	0,95	0,027	20	0,89	0,054	38	0,63	0,036	32	0,87	0,028	
Switzerland	7	0,84	0,049	7	0,89	0,042	6	0,96	0,028	5	0,94	0,039	1	0,88	0,016	3	0,97	0,043	
Finland	8	0,83	0,047	14	0,87	0,043	3	0,97	0,018	13	0,91	0,046	24	0,66	0,018	17	0,93	0,063	
Germany	9	0,82	0,048	13	0,87	0,043	7	0,96	0,025	4	0,94	0,033	20	0,66	0,013	2	0,98	0,028	
Ireland	10	0,82	0,05	9	0,88	0,043	14	0,93	0,032	16	0,89	0,051	21	0,66	0,041	11	0,94	0,041	
Belgium	11	0,82	0,05	8	0,88	0,044	15	0,93	0,034	7	0,93	0,043	35	0,64	0,025	9	0,95	0,042	
Portugal	12	0,81	0,047	10	0,88	0,041	18	0,92	0,031	26	0,85	0,061	39	0,63	0,038	31	0,88	0,034	
Netherlands	13	0,81	0,049	16	0,86	0,046	8	0,95	0,024	10	0,91	0,044	48	0,61	0,038	6	0,97	0,038	
Australia	14	0,81	0,05	20	0,85	0,046	5	0,96	0,018	27	0,85	0,059	23	0,66	0,043	23	0,91	0,031	
Luxembourg	15	0,8	0,051	11	0,88	0,043	25	0,91	0,04	3	0,94	0,038	32	0,65	0,042	4	0,97	0,038	
France	16	0,79	0,05	12	0,87	0,043	22	0,91	0,037	23	0,88	0,052	37	0,64	0,032	19	0,92	0,041	
South Korea	17	0,79	0,052	17	0,86	0,046	17	0,92	0,034	29	0,85	0,065	43	0,62	0,04	14	0,93	0,064	
Spain	18	0,78	0,049	19	0,86	0,043	16	0,93	0,035	25	0,88	0,053	27	0,65	0,031	30	0,88	0,035	
United Kingdom	19	0,78	0,048	15	0,86	0,043	23	0,91	0,035	34	0,82	0,07	12	0,68	0,026	26	0,89	0,027	
Italy	20	0,77	0,05	21	0,85	0,044	21	0,91	0,034	6	0,93	0,041	2	0,76	0,028	18	0,92	0,045	
Chile	21	0,77	0,048	25	0,83	0,045	12	0,95	0,022	56	0,74	0,075	30	0,65	0,039	10	0,95	0,036	
Slovakia	22	0,77	0,053	22	0,85	0,048	20	0,92	0,034	44	0,78	0,073	16	0,67	0,049	62	0,77	0,028	
Uruguay	23	0,76	0,051	23	0,84	0,046	24	0,91	0,035	39	0,8	0,074	3	0,74	0,049	37	0,84	0,032	
Canada	24	0,75	0,054	18	0,86	0,044	32	0,88	0,049	24	0,88	0,057	29	0,65	0,022	36	0,85	0,041	
Iceland	25	0,75	0,057	26	0,83	0,053	27	0,9	0,042	19	0,89	0,058	10	0,69	0,021	28	0,89	0,043	
Austria	26	0,75	0,056	28	0,83	0,052	19	0,92	0,034	12	0,91	0,05	22	0,66	0,038	42	0,82	0,031	
Lithuania	27	0,74	0,056	37	0,8	0,055	13	0,94	0,026	22	0,88	0,054	9	0,7	0,046	44	0,82	0,023	
Japan	28	0,74	0,052	24	0,83	0,046	31	0,88	0,043	8	0,92	0,045	73	0,56	0,054	20	0,92	0,028	
USA	29	0,74	0,055	29	0,82	0,05	26	0,9	0,038	76	0,65	0,089	26	0,66	0,014	61	0,78	0,034	
Latvia	30	0,73	0,061	27	0,83	0,056	29	0,9	0,044	28	0,85	0,058	17	0,66	0,048	45	0,81	0,026	
Czech Republic	31	0,71	0,055	34	0,8	0,051	28	0,9	0,04	15	0,9	0,049	49	0,61	0,041	74	0,72	0,028	
Taiwan	32	0,7	0,056	32	0,81	0,049	39	0,86	0,05	9	0,92	0,044	4	0,73	0,031	24	0,9	0,034	
Jamaica	33	0,69	0,058	33	0,81	0,056	40	0,85	0,046	38	0,8	0,074	57	0,59	0,054	58	0,79	0,063	
Cyprus	34	0,69	0,056	31	0,82	0,048	52	0,82	0,059	14	0,9	0,052	60	0,58	0,055	51	0,8	0,047	
Barbados	35	0,68	0,059	35	0,8	0,056	41	0,85	0,048	32	0,83	0,072	147	0,3	0,033	35	0,85	0,027	
Greece	36	0,67	0,058	36	0,8	0,052	49	0,83	0,056	30	0,84	0,059	36	0,64	0,047	29	0,88	0,034	
Vanuatu	37	0,66	0,061	39	0,78	0,059	43	0,84	0,05	58	0,73	0,08	95	0,53	0,068	65	0,76	0,036	
Argentina	38	0,66	0,058	30	0,82	0,051	60	0,77	0,061	55	0,74	0,072	46	0,61	0,042	46	0,81	0,063	
Trinidad and Tobago	39	0,66	0,063	41	0,78	0,061	44	0,84	0,052	41	0,79	0,077	65	0,57	0,05	16	0,93	0,039	
Peru	40	0,65	0,056	43	0,76	0,056	36	0,86	0,042	101	0,57	0,088	15	0,67	0,052	71	0,73	0,031	
Israel	41	0,65	0,056	48	0,74	0,057	30	0,9	0,039	35	0,82	0,066	47	0,61	0,043	66	0,74	0,029	
Cape Verde	42	0,65	0,058	46	0,75	0,058	34	0,87	0,048	51	0,74	0,084	80	0,55	0,059	53	0,8	0,033	
Suriname	43	0,65	0,059	42	0,76	0,057	42	0,85	0,051	64	0,71	0,084	67	0,57	0,054	63	0,77	0,063	
Romania	44	0,64	0,06	38	0,78	0,055	64	0,76	0,06	78	0,65	0,087	6	0,73	0,055	88	0,67	0,029	
Malta	45	0,63	0,059	40	0,78	0,057	54	0,81	0,057	17	0,89	0,06	14	0,67	0,054	50	0,81	0,028	
Croatia	46	0,63	0,058	44	0,75	0,056	45	0,84	0,053	48	0,75	0,08	31	0,65	0,053	82	0,7	0,027	
Moldova	47	0,62	0,062	49	0,74	0,063	48	0,83	0,05	52	0,74	0,078	33	0,65	0,05	54	0,8	0,064	
Slovenia	48	0,6	0,055	52	0,7	0,056	38	0,86	0,051	42	0,79	0,073	11	0,68	0,048	92	0,66	0,026	
South Africa	49	0,59	0,061	50	0,72	0,063	50	0,83	0,054	72	0,67	0,079	86	0,54	0,053	22	0,91	0,028	
S.Tomé & P.	50	0,58	0,059	53	0,69	0,063	46	0,84	0,051	70	0,68	0,084	72	0,56	0,057	73	0,73	0,031	
Seychelles	51	0,57	0,057	56	0,67	0,062	37	0,86	0,045	43	0,78	0,079	148	0,3	0,051	34	0,85	0,037	
Ghana	52	0,57	0,061	58	0,66	0,067	35	0,87	0,048	61	0,72	0,071	129	0,42	0,059	60	0,79	0,027	
Panama	53	0,56	0,06	45	0,75	0,057	81	0,71	0,068	90	0,61	0,09	90	0,54	0,062	64	0,76	0,032	
Armenia	54	0,56	0,06	47	0,74	0,059	84	0,7	0,066	36	0,8	0,07	71	0,56	0,061	59	0,79	0,033	
Senegal	55	0,55	0,065	51	0,71	0,067	63	0,76	0,065	62	0,72	0,078	123	0,44	0,066	41	0,83	0,039	
Bulgaria	56	0,55	0,058	60	0,66	0,063	47	0,83	0,051	63	0,71	0,079	8	0,7	0,047	33	0,85	0,036	
Malawi	57	0,53	0,058	71	0,62	0,067	33	0,87	0,043	112	0,54	0,092	44	0,62	0,037	56	0,8	0,029	
Namibia	58	0,51	0,062	64	0,63	0,069	57	0,8	0,059	129	0,46	0,101	92	0,54	0,058	75	0,72	0,038	
Brazil	59	0,51	0,052	59	0,66	0,056	67	0,75	0,059	136	0,41	0,093	59	0,58	0,05	117	0,55	0,036	
Lesotho	60	0,5	0,058	69	0,62	0,066	58	0,79	0,057	46	0,76	0,08	68	0,57	0,058	72	0,73		

COUNTRY	LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI)				ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (EDI)				LIBERAL COMPONENT INDEX (LCI)				EGALITARIAN COMPONENT INDEX (ECI)				PARTICIPATORY COMPONENT INDEX (PCI)				DELIBERATIVE COMPONENT INDEX (DCI)			
	RANK	SCORE	SD+/-		RANK	SCORE	SD+/-		RANK	SCORE	SD+/-		RANK	SCORE	SD+/-		RANK	SCORE	SD+/-		RANK	SCORE	SD+/-	
Hungary	91	0,36	0,043	↓	98	0,46	0,055	↓	74	0,73	0,062		75	0,66	0,084		58	0,59	0,063		138	0,38	0,626	
Guinea-Bissau	92	0,36	0,055		83	0,56	0,066		102	0,58	0,079		122	0,5	0,092		146	0,31	0,059		147	0,33	0,639	
India	93	0,36	0,042	↓	100	0,44	0,055	↓	69	0,74	0,063		114	0,53	0,088		85	0,55	0,053		102	0,61	0,626	↓
BiH	94	0,35	0,049		87	0,53	0,06		98	0,61	0,074		77	0,65	0,084		82	0,55	0,052		114	0,56	0,632	
Nigeria	95	0,34	0,046		93	0,49	0,06		96	0,62	0,073		128	0,46	0,086		51	0,6	0,044		112	0,58	0,62	
Papua New Guinea	96	0,34	0,038		103	0,42	0,049		78	0,72	0,067		135	0,42	0,093		104	0,5	0,063		128	0,5	0,629	
Singapore	97	0,33	0,037		108	0,4	0,047		73	0,74	0,067		40	0,79	0,072		167	0,14	0,061		57	0,8	0,628	
Guatemala	98	0,32	0,049		90	0,5	0,062		103	0,58	0,078		162	0,29	0,083		78	0,55	0,063		131	0,45	0,627	
Ukraine	99	0,32	0,047		89	0,52	0,062		110	0,54	0,074		73	0,67	0,09		70	0,57	0,057		48	0,81	0,63	
Tanzania	100	0,31	0,032	↓	117	0,36	0,043	↓	65	0,76	0,061		60	0,73	0,088		79	0,55	0,056		77	0,71	0,634	
Zambia	101	0,3	0,036	↓	112	0,38	0,047	↓	89	0,68	0,07		107	0,55	0,089		63	0,58	0,055		142	0,36	0,635	↓
Malaysia	102	0,29	0,039	↑	106	0,41	0,054	↑	99	0,61	0,073		74	0,67	0,09		101	0,51	0,058		85	0,69	0,63	
Lebanon	103	0,28	0,041		99	0,45	0,057		113	0,53	0,073		116	0,51	0,091		118	0,47	0,072		81	0,7	0,633	
Philippines	104	0,28	0,042	↓	102	0,43	0,054	↓	106	0,57	0,079	↓	149	0,36	0,097		55	0,59	0,052		52	0,8	0,637	
Benin	105	0,28	0,038	↓	104	0,42	0,055	↓	104	0,57	0,068	↓	50	0,74	0,076		112	0,49	0,064		103	0,6	0,628	↓
Kuwait	106	0,27	0,025		127	0,3	0,026		77	0,72	0,064		93	0,6	0,08		163	0,15	0,06		122	0,51	0,642	↓
Fiji	107	0,27	0,038	↑	109	0,4	0,05	↑	105	0,57	0,073	↑	96	0,59	0,097		140	0,35	0,061		83	0,7	0,634	↑
Kyrgyzstan	108	0,27	0,038		105	0,42	0,051		109	0,54	0,074		125	0,48	0,096		127	0,42	0,078		108	0,59	0,633	↓
Somaliland	109	0,26	0,037		107	0,41	0,05		111	0,54	0,073		160	0,31	0,09		103	0,51	0,067		125	0,5	0,624	
Jordan	110	0,25	0,023		138	0,26	0,025		80	0,72	0,067		95	0,59	0,094		150	0,28	0,071		106	0,6	0,631	
Serbia	111	0,24	0,032	↓	122	0,34	0,041	↓	101	0,58	0,074	↓	57	0,74	0,079		97	0,53	0,061		130	0,45	0,632	↓
Madagascar	112	0,24	0,042	↑	94	0,48	0,061	↑	129	0,39	0,07		156	0,32	0,091		109	0,5	0,069		129	0,48	0,634	
Mozambique	113	0,24	0,032		119	0,36	0,039		108	0,55	0,074		115	0,52	0,086		87	0,54	0,059		109	0,58	0,619	
Ivory Coast	114	0,24	0,037	↓	101	0,43	0,054		123	0,45	0,073	↓	119	0,51	0,093		34	0,65	0,051		91	0,66	0,645	
Morocco	115	0,24	0,024		137	0,26	0,024		88	0,68	0,071		99	0,58	0,093		126	0,43	0,073		70	0,73	0,627	
Honduras	116	0,24	0,034		110	0,39	0,044		117	0,51	0,074		165	0,28	0,083		89	0,54	0,055		111	0,58	0,633	
Pakistan	117	0,23	0,033		116	0,36	0,045		118	0,5	0,072		163	0,29	0,085		98	0,53	0,062		79	0,71	0,639	
Iraq	118	0,22	0,033		114	0,37	0,047		120	0,48	0,072		138	0,4	0,095		128	0,42	0,072		107	0,6	0,639	
El Salvador	119	0,21	0,036	↓	97	0,47	0,057	↓	146	0,3	0,065	↓	141	0,39	0,082		108	0,5	0,063		134	0,39	0,645	↓
Uganda	120	0,21	0,028		128	0,28	0,031		107	0,55	0,077		142	0,39	0,093		113	0,49	0,066	↓	99	0,65	0,63	
Haiti	121	0,21	0,029		120	0,35	0,042		121	0,47	0,064		177	0,15	0,065		124	0,44	0,067		104	0,6	0,643	
Gabon	122	0,21	0,029		113	0,38	0,046		126	0,43	0,059		71	0,68	0,091		61	0,58	0,053		87	0,67	0,634	↓
Hong Kong	123	0,2	0,022	↓	134	0,27	0,023	↓	124	0,45	0,065	↓	84	0,63	0,084		159	0,18	0,057	↓	164	0,14	0,63	↓
Zanzibar	124	0,2	0,026		136	0,26	0,028	↓	112	0,54	0,077		79	0,65	0,091		142	0,35	0,085		86	0,69	0,646	
Togo	125	0,2	0,03		115	0,37	0,048		128	0,41	0,065		82	0,64	0,099		96	0,53	0,065	↑	69	0,73	0,632	
Angola	126	0,19	0,031		121	0,35	0,044		127	0,41	0,074		164	0,28	0,08		169	0,14	0,058		145	0,35	0,627	
Zimbabwe	127	0,19	0,025		130	0,28	0,031		119	0,49	0,07		145	0,38	0,095		102	0,51	0,064		116	0,55	0,622	
Mali	128	0,18	0,025	↓	141	0,25	0,015	↓	122	0,46	0,081	↓	120	0,51	0,094		110	0,5	0,057	↓	84	0,69	0,636	
Thailand	129	0,17	0,023	↓	151	0,2	0,021	↓	116	0,52	0,075	↓	118	0,51	0,093		145	0,32	0,068		167	0,14	0,64	↓
Mauritania	130	0,17	0,033		111	0,38	0,054		143	0,31	0,071		175	0,19	0,074		75	0,56	0,079	↑	89	0,67	0,649	
CAR	131	0,16	0,029		123	0,33	0,036		135	0,33	0,079		161	0,29	0,091		151	0,28	0,06		139	0,37	0,641	
DRC	132	0,16	0,029		118	0,36	0,043		142	0,32	0,069		143	0,38	0,094		111	0,49	0,065		94	0,65	0,649	
Ethiopia	133	0,15	0,026		125	0,31	0,037	↑	141	0,32	0,067		111	0,54	0,094		136	0,37	0,065	↑	96	0,65	0,635	
Libya	134	0,15	0,022	↑	133	0,27	0,018	↑	131	0,38	0,068	↑	134	0,42	0,094		141	0,35	0,061		90	0,67	0,633	
Algeria	135	0,15	0,023		129	0,28	0,033		137	0,33	0,065		59	0,73	0,085		153	0,24	0,059		132	0,44	0,621	
Palestine/West Bank	136	0,14	0,021		142	0,25	0,02		130	0,38	0,065		104	0,56	0,098		119	0,47	0,073		141	0,37	0,662	↓
Oman	137	0,14	0,021		161	0,18	0,016		125	0,44	0,073		94	0,6	0,082		135	0,37	0,071		161	0,17	0,632	
Kazakhstan	138	0,13	0,02		140	0,26	0,03		139	0,32	0,059		103	0,57	0,094		157	0,21	0,062		146	0,34	0,635	
Comoros	139	0,13	0,021	↓	124	0,32	0,031	↓	153	0,25	0,056	↓	92	0,6	0,093		64	0,57	0,061		110	0,58	0,63	
Cameroon	140	0,13	0,021		126	0,3	0,031		150	0,27	0,059		113	0,53	0,091		152	0,25	0,069	↓	140	0,37	0,636	
Vietnam	141	0,13	0,022		147	0,22	0,021		133	0,36	0,073		87	0,62	0,1		77	0,56	0,058		97	0,65	0,63	
Iran	142	0,12	0,02		159	0,18	0,021		136	0,33	0,068		108	0,55	0,095		170	0,13	0,063		127	0,5	0,649	
Djibouti	143	0,12	0,021		143	0,25	0,028		144	0,31	0,062		117	0,51	0,092		139	0,36	0,071		137	0,39	0,625	
Egypt	144	0,12	0,02		157	0,18	0,016		132	0,37	0,068		166	0,26	0,079		155	0,22	0,051		143	0,36	0,622	↓
Rwanda	145	0,12	0,022		145	0,24	0,027		140	0,32	0,07		91	0,61	0,099		105	0,5	0,072		101	0,61	0,62	
Bangladesh	146	0,12	0,022	↓	135	0,27	0,028	↓	148	0,28	0,065		172	0,22	0,075		144	0,32	0,072		152	0,27	0,63	
Turkey	147	0,11	0,021	↓	131	0,28	0,031		152	0,26	0,061	↓	123	0,5	0,092	↓	131	0,4	0,06		168	0,13	0,63	↓
Guinea	148	0,11	0,022		132	0,28	0,03		154	0,25	0,066		140	0,39	0,09		99	0,52	0,068		155	0,24	0,636	
Eswatini	149	0,11	0,022		170	0,13	0,016		134	0,34	0,077		169	0,24	0,08		132	0,39	0,077		162	0,16	0,639	
Congo	150	0,11	0,023		144	0,24	0,023		151	0,27	0,071		147	0,36	0,094		83	0,55	0,062	↑	113	0,57	0,6	

V-Dem Methodology: Aggregating Expert Assessments

Author: Kyle L. Marquardt

V-DEM USES INNOVATIVE METHODS TO aggregate expert judgments and thereby produce estimates of important concepts. We use experts because many key features of democracy are not directly observable. For example, it is easy to observe whether or not a legislature has the legal right to investigate an executive. However, assessing the extent to which the legislature actually does so requires evaluation by experts with extensive conceptual and case knowledge.

V-Dem typically gathers data from five experts per country-year observation, using a pool of over 3,700 country experts who provide judgment on different concepts and cases. Experts hail from almost every country in the world, allowing us to leverage diverse opinions.

Despite their clear value, expert-coded data pose multiple problems. Rating concepts requires judgment, which varies across experts and cases; it may also vary systematically across groups of experts. We address these concerns by aggregating expert-coded data with a measurement model, allowing us to account for uncertainty about estimates and potential biases.

The logic of the V-Dem measurement model is that an unobserved concept exists (e.g. a certain level of academic freedom and freedom of cultural expression) but we only see imperfect manifestations of this concept in the form of the ordinal categories which experts use to code their judgments. Our model converts these manifest items (expert ratings) to a single continuous latent scale and thereby estimates values of the concept.

In the process, the model algorithmically estimates both the degree to which an expert is reliable relative to other experts, as well as the degree to which their perception of the response scale differs from other experts. Similarly, we use patterns of overlapping coding – both in the form of experts who code multiple countries and experts who code hypothetical cases (anchoring vignettes) – to estimate the degree to which differences in scale perception are systematic across experts who code different sets of cases. Given the iterative nature of the estimation process, these estimates of reliability and scale perception weight an expert's contribution to the estimation of the unobserved concept.

In the resulting V-Dem dataset, we present users with a best estimate of the value for an observation (the point estimate), as well as an uncertainty estimate (the credible regions, a Bayesian corollary of confidence intervals). More precisely, the output of the measurement model is an interval-level point estimate of the latent trait that typically varies from –5 to 5, and its associated measurement error. These estimates are the best for use in statistical analysis.

However, the interval-level estimates are difficult for some users to interpret substantively. We therefore also provide interval-level point estimates that we have linearly transformed back to the coding scale that experts originally used to code each case. These estimates typically run from 0 to 4; users can refer to the V-Dem codebook to substantively interpret them. Finally, we provide ordinal versions of each variable for applications in which users require ordered categorical values. Each of the latter two data versions are also accompanied by credible regions.

VERSIONS OF THE V-DEM INDICATORS

Suffix	Scale	Description	Recommended use
None	Interval	V-Dem measurement model estimates	Regression analysis
_osp	Interval	Linearized transformation of the model estimates on the original scale	Substantive interpretation of graphs and data
_ord	Ordinal	Most likely ordinal value of model estimates on the original scale	Substantive interpretation of graphs and data
_codelow / _codehigh	Interval	One standard deviation above (<i>_codehigh</i>) and below (<i>_codelow</i>) a point estimate	Evaluating differences over time within units
_sd	Interval	Standard deviation of the interval estimate	Creating confidence intervals based on user needs

The result of this process is a set of versions of indicators of democratic institutions and concepts, which allow academics and policymakers alike to understand the different features of a polity. The box summarizes the output with which we provide users.

KEY TERMS

Point Estimate: A best estimate of a concept's value.

Confidence Intervals: Credible regions for which the upper and lower bounds represent a range of probable values for a point estimate. These bounds are based on the interval in which the measurement model places 68 percent of the probability mass for each score, which is generally approximately equivalent to the upper and lower bounds of one standard deviation from the median.

Significant Differences or Changes: When the upper and lower bounds of the confidence intervals for two point estimates do not overlap, we are confident that the difference between them is not a result of measurement error.

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Nagaon, India, March 27, 2021. Security personnel stand guard as voters queue to cast their votes during Assam Assembly election, at a polling station in Batadrawa Constituency, Nagaon. Photo: Shutterstock.

V-Dem Indices

The Liberal Democracy Index

The V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) captures both liberal and electoral aspects of democracy based on the 71 indicators included in the Liberal Component Index (LCI) and the Electoral Democracy Index (EDI). The EDI reflects a relatively ambitious idea of electoral democracy where a number of institutional features

guarantee free and fair elections such as freedom of association and freedom of expression. The LCI goes even further and captures the limits placed on governments in terms of two key aspects: The protection of individual liberties, and the checks and balances between institutions.

FIGURE A1.1: THE V-DEM LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1901/1961–2021

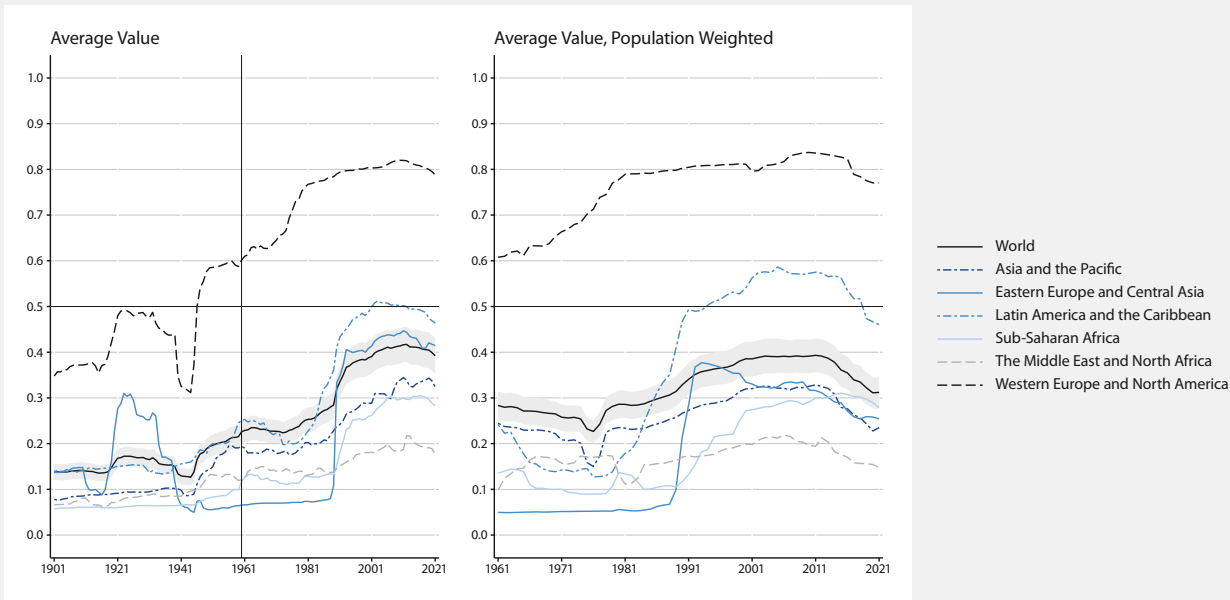
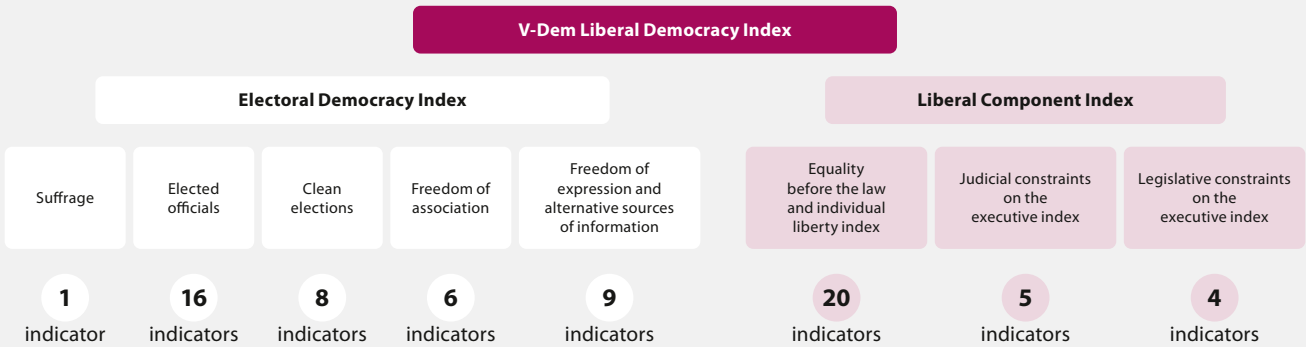


FIGURE A1.2: EXPLANATION OF THE V-DEM LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX



The Electoral Democracy Index

For several decades, scholars and practitioners alike depicted democracy in the world as though the extant measures really captured what is meant by the concept “electoral democracy”. Yet, we have all known that they did not. V-Dem is the first systematic effort to measure the *de facto* existence of all the institutions in Robert Dahl’s famous articulation of “polyarchy” as electoral

democracy. The V-Dem Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) captures not only the extent to which regimes hold clean, free and fair elections, but also their actual freedom of expression, alternative sources of information and association, as well as male and female suffrage and the degree to which government policy is vested in elected political officials.

FIGURE A2.1: THE V-DEM ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1901/1961–2021

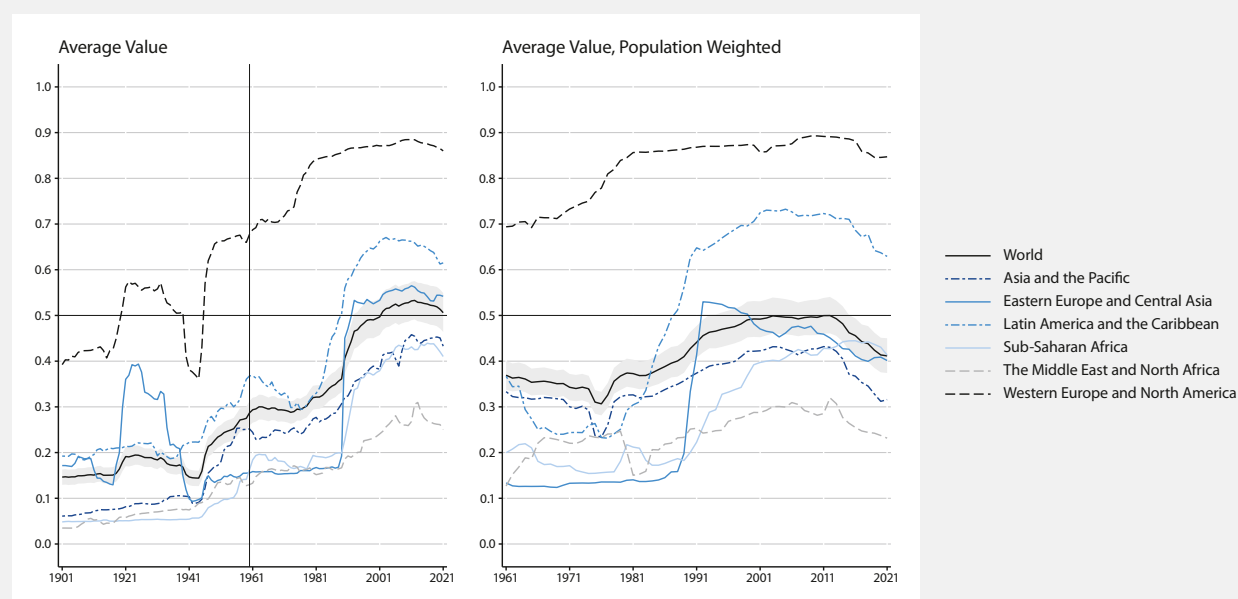
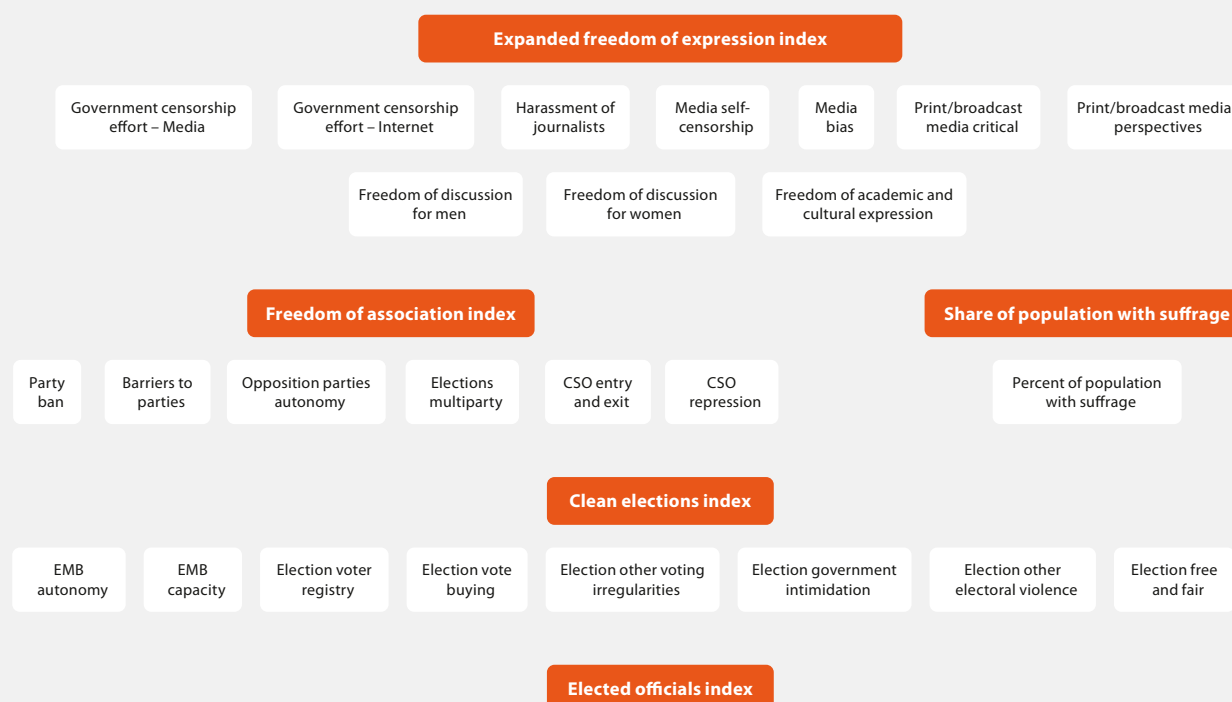


FIGURE A2.2: THE V-DEM ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (EDI)



The Liberal Component Index

In V-Dem’s conceptual scheme the liberal principle of democracy embodies the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against both the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. It also captures the “horizontal” methods of accountability between more or less equally standing institutions that ensure the effective checks and balances between institutions and in particular limit the exercise of executive power. This is achieved by strong rule of law and constitutionally protected civil liberties,

independent judiciary and strong parliament that are able to hold the executive to account and limit its powers. The three indices that capture these dimensions are: the equality before the law and individual liberties (v2xcl_rol), judicial constraints on the executive (v2x_jucon), and legislative constraints on the executive (v2xlg_legcon). Taken together they measure the V-Dem Liberal Component Index (v2x_liberal).

FIGURE A3.1: THE V-DEM LIBERAL COMPONENT INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1901/1961–2021

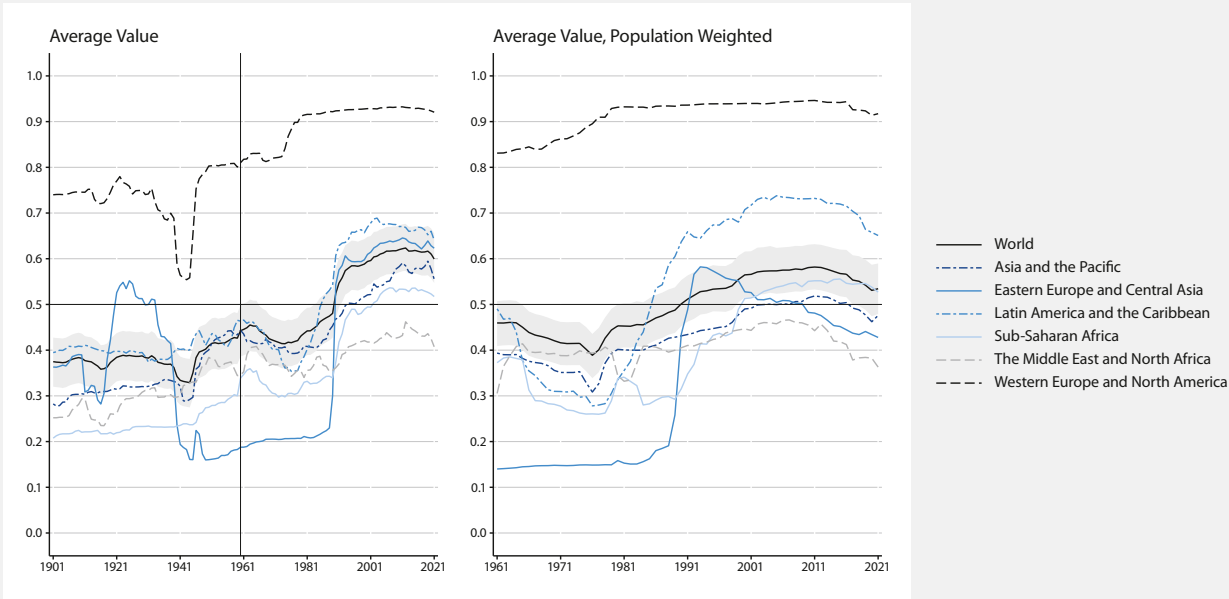
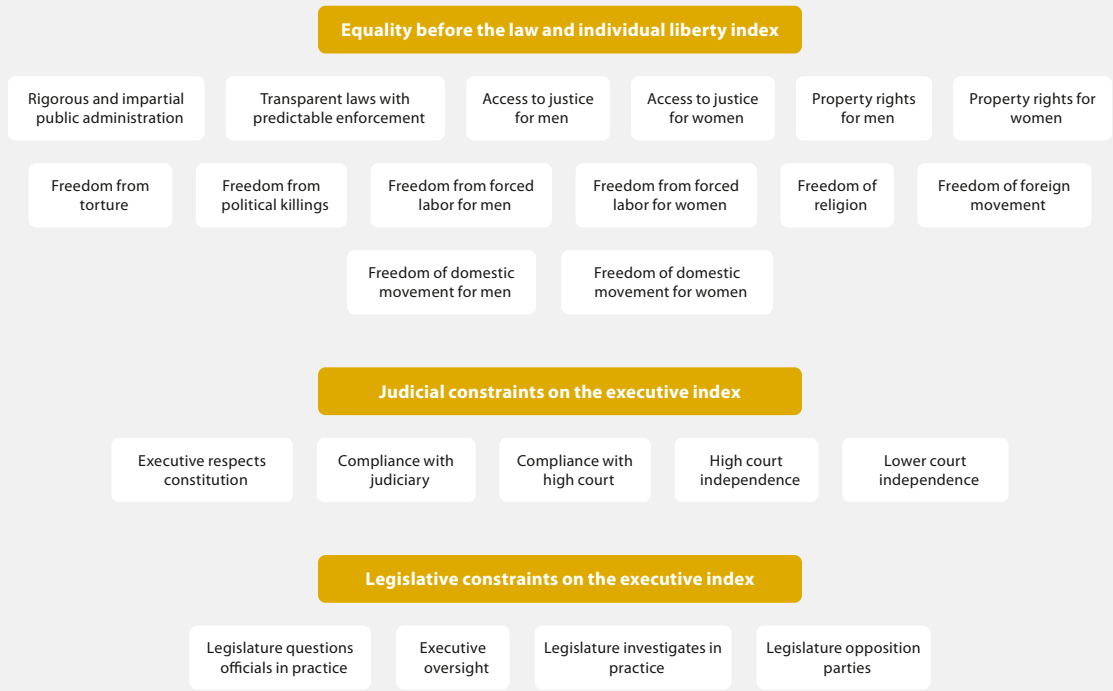


FIGURE A3.2: THE V-DEM LIBERAL COMPONENT INDEX (LCI)



The Egalitarian Component Index

The egalitarian principle of democracy measures to what extent all social groups enjoy equal capabilities to participate in the political arena. It relies on the idea that democracy is a system of rule “by the people” where citizens participate in various ways, such as making informed voting decisions, expressing opinions, demonstrating, running for office or influencing policy-making in

other ways. The egalitarian principle of democracy is fundamentally related to political participation, as systematic inequalities in the rights and resources of citizens of specific social groups limit capabilities to participate in the political and governing processes. Therefore, a more equal distribution of resources across groups results in political equality and hence democracy.

FIGURE A4.1: THE V-DEM EGALITARIAN COMPONENT INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1901/1961–2021

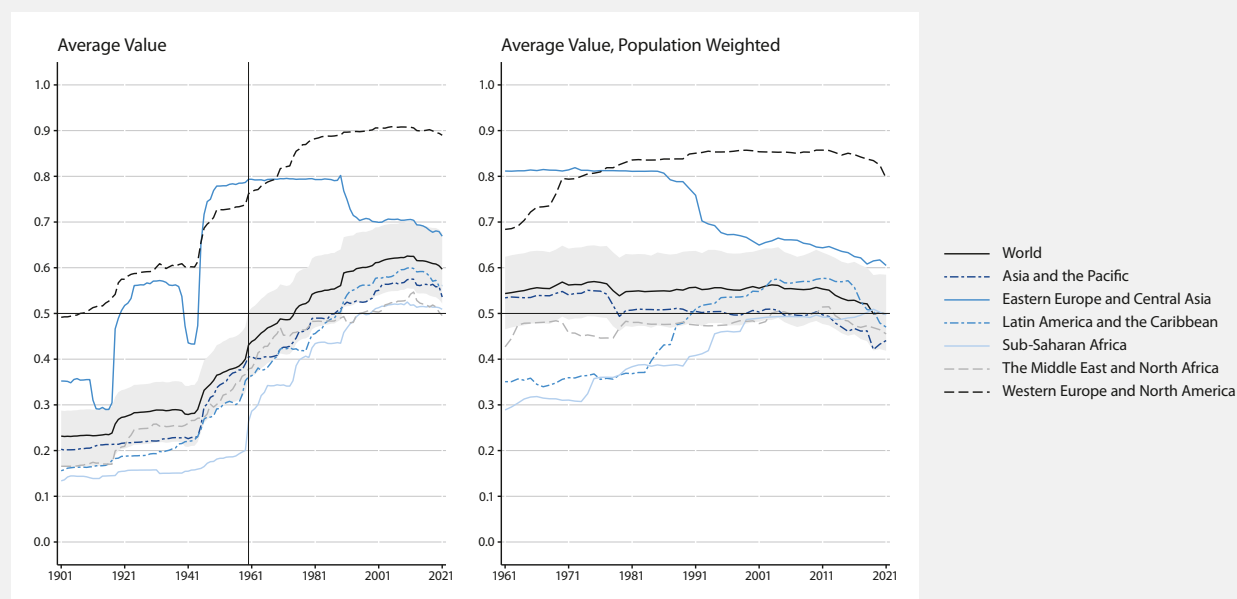
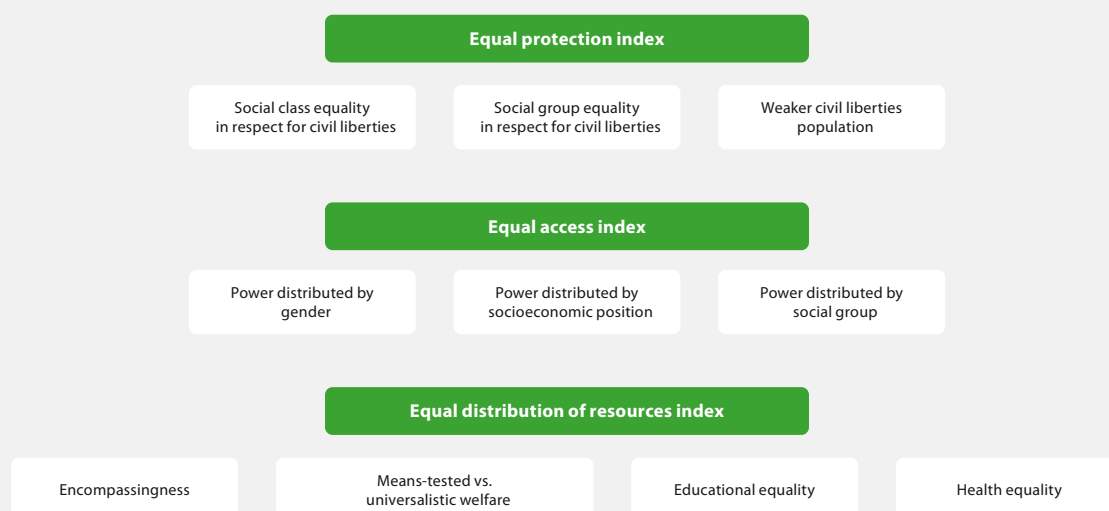


FIGURE A4.2: THE V-DEM EGALITARIAN COMPONENT INDEX (ECI)



The Participatory Component Index

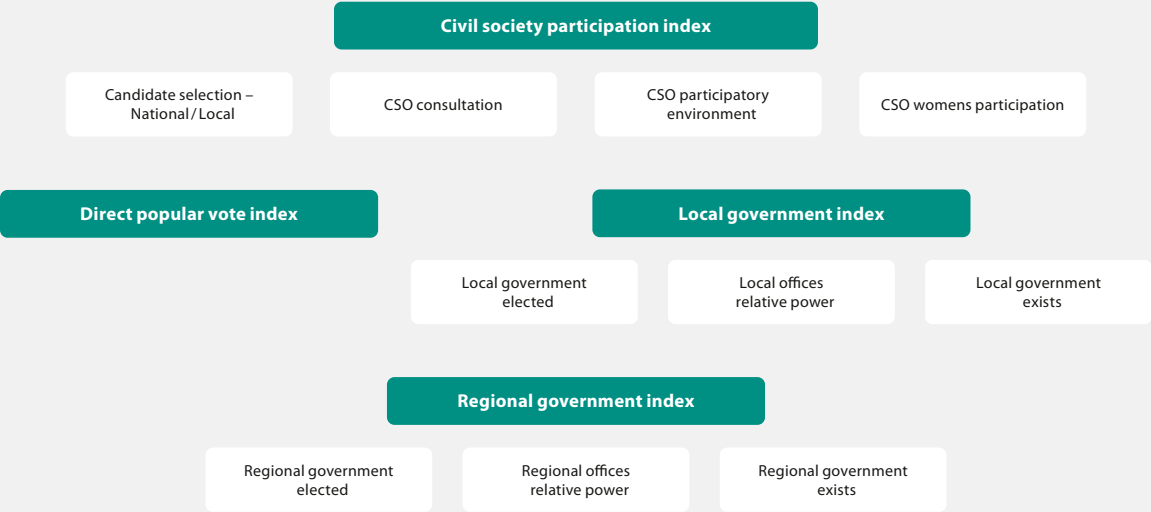
The participatory principle of democracy emphasizes active participation by citizens in all political processes, electoral and non-electoral. This principle prefers direct rule by citizens as practicable. The V-Dem Participatory Component Index (PCI) takes into account four important aspects of citizen participation:

civil society organizations, mechanisms of direct democracy, and participation and representation through local and regional governments. Four different V-Dem indices capture these aspects and are the basis for the PCI.

FIGURE A5.1: THE V-DEM PARTICIPATORY COMPONENT INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1901/1961–2021



FIGURE A5.2: THE V-DEM PARTICIPATORY COMPONENT INDEX (PCI)



The Deliberative Component Index

The V-Dem Deliberative Component Index (DCI) captures to what extent the deliberative principle of democracy is achieved. It assesses the process by which decisions are reached in a polity. A deliberative process is one in which public reasoning, focused on the common good, motivates political decisions – as contrasted with emotional appeals, solidary attachments, parochial interests

or coercion. According to this principle, democracy requires more than an aggregation of existing preferences. There should also be respectful dialogue at all levels – from preference formation to final decision – among informed and competent participants who are open to persuasion.

FIGURE A6.1: THE V-DEM DELIBERATIVE COMPONENT INDEX: WORLD AND REGIONAL AVERAGES, 1901/1961–2021

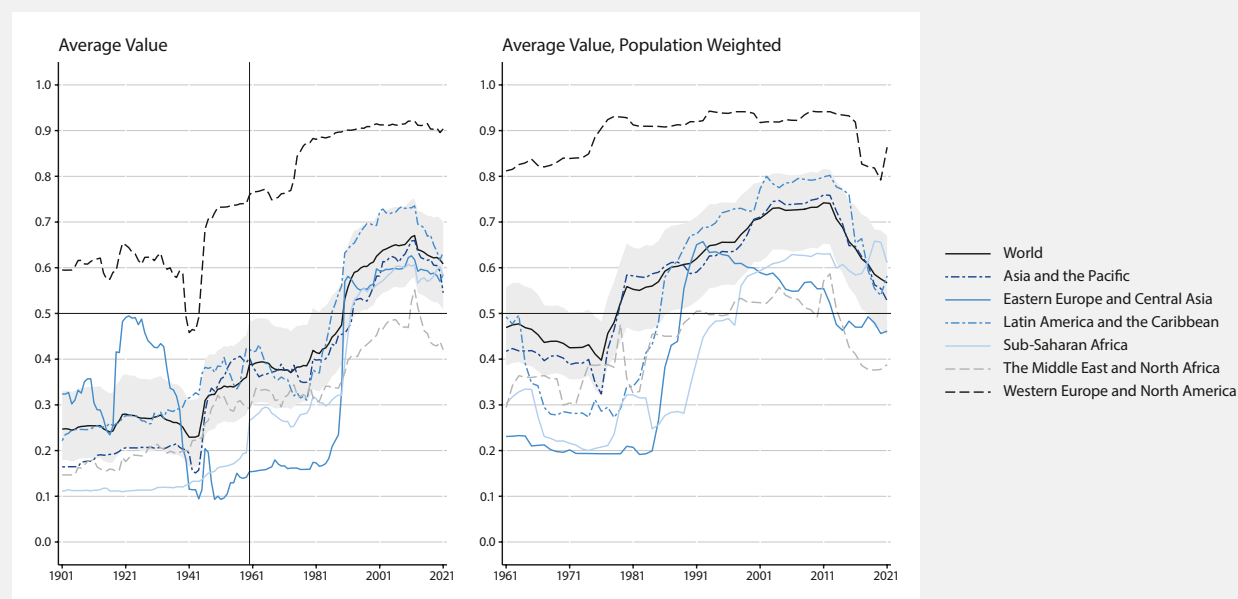
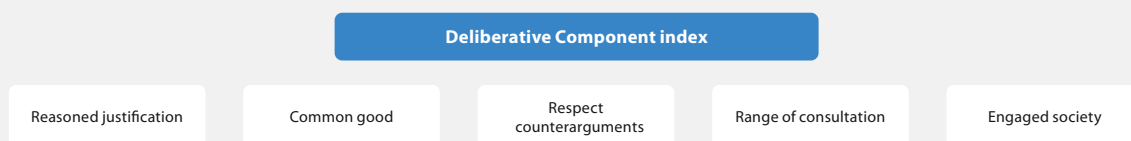
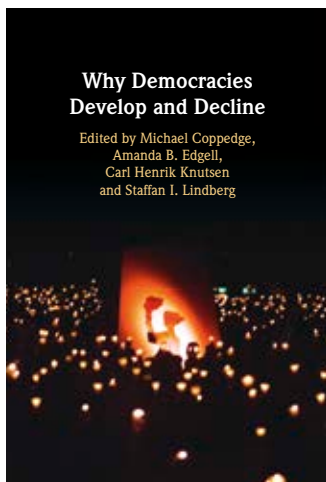


FIGURE A6.2: THE V-DEM DELIBERATIVE COMPONENT INDEX (DCI)



Publications from the V-Dem Team



Why Democracies Develop and Decline.

Michael Coppedge, Amanda B. Edgell, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Staffan I. Lindberg (Eds.)

2022 | *Forthcoming Cambridge University Press*

Why do some countries manage to escape autocratic rule and become democratic, whereas others remain trapped? And why do some democracies remain stable or improve their level of democracy while others “backslide” or even die? These are the big questions this book seeks to answer.

Featured Publications

2022

Patterns of Democracy over Space and Time

Vanessa A. Boese, Scott Gates, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Håvard Mokleiv Nygård, and Håvard Strand.

2022 | *Forthcoming at International Studies Quarterly*.

The authors disaggregate the concept of democracy and propose a multidimensional conceptualization of democracy. Three theoretically informed dimensions are featured: participation, electoral contestation, and constraints on the executive. The three dimensions constitute a cube covering all regime types, and the article places all countries since 1789 along these dimensions. The evolution of countries in this three-dimensional cube can be traced over time.

Episodes of Liberalization in Autocracies: A New Approach to Quantitatively Studying Democratization

Matthew C. Wilson, Juraj Medzihorsky, Seraphine F. Maerz, Patrik Lindenfors, Amanda B. Edgell, Vanessa A. Boese, and Staffan I. Lindberg.

2022 | *Forthcoming in Political Science Research and Methods*

Introduces a new approach to the quantitative study of democratization, empirically identifies episodes of liberalization in autocracies since 1900, and offers a new classification of successful and different types of failed liberalization episodes.

Not All Elections Are Created Equal: Election Quality and Civil Conflict

Daniela Donno, Kelly Morrison, and Burcu Savun.

2022 | *Journal of Politics* 84(1)

This article shows how variation in electoral integrity shapes the opportunities and incentives for civil conflict. In an analysis of 134 non-OECD countries from 1950 to 2012, the results show that flawed presidential elections increase the risk of civil conflict onset.

Resistance to Populism

Sato, Yuko, and Moisés Arce

2022 | *Democratization* #OpenAccess

Populist leaders in office often attempt to erode democracy to concentrate their power. However, using the V-Party dataset, the authors show that popular mobilization in defense of democracy increases in response to such anti-pluralistic attempts.

2021

Populism and COVID-19: How Populist Governments (Mis)Handle the Pandemic

Michael Bayerlein, Vanessa A. Boese, Scott Gates, Katrin Kamin, and Syed Mansoob Murshed.

2021 | *Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy* 2(3) #OpenAccess

The article assesses how populist governments have handled the pandemic, theorizing that such governments introduce less far-reaching policy measures and lower the effort of citizens to counter the pandemic. Evidence is found that countries with populist governments had 8 percentage points higher excess mortality than countries with non-populist governments.

How Democracies Prevail: Democratic Resilience as a Two-Stage Process

Vanessa A. Boese, Amanda B. Edgell, Sebastian Hellmeier, Seraphine F. Maerz, and Staffan I. Lindberg.

2021 | *Democratization* 28(5) #OpenAccess

Introduces a new conceptualization of democratic resilience as a two-stage process in which democracies can avoid decline altogether or avert democratic breakdown once autocratization has already begun. The authors find that democratic resilience has become weaker since the end of the cold war, and that once autocratization sets in, only one in five democracies manages to avert breakdown.

Waves of Autocratization and Democratization: A Rejoinder

Vanessa A. Boese, Staffan I. Lindberg, and Anna Lührmann.

2021 | *Democratization* 28(6) #OpenAccess

Adding to the debate on what a wave of democratization and autocratization is, the authors argue that is urgent to understand how the current wave of autocratization shapes autocratization processes, and that waves need to be clearly defined and measured, for example with the Episodes of Regime Transformation dataset.

The Institutional Order of Liberalization

Amanda B. Edgell, Vanessa A. Boese, Seraphine F. Maerz, Patrik Lindenfors, and Staffan I. Lindberg.

2021 | *British Journal of Political Science* #OpenAccess

Examines the institutional order of democratic reforms among 371 episodes of liberalization in autocracies between 1900 and 2019, finding that the patterns of liberalization are similar across failed and successful cases of democratization. However, successful democratization is characterized by reforms to electoral administration occurring earlier in the liberalization process.

State of the World 2020: Autocratization Turns Viral

Sebastian Hellmeier, Rowan Cole, Sandra Grahm, Palina Kolvani, Jean Lachapelle, Anna Lührmann, Seraphine F. Maerz, Shreeya Pillai, and Staffan I. Lindberg.

2021 | *Democratization* 28(6) #OpenAccess

Analyses the state of democracy in the world in 2020, demonstrating that the third wave of autocratization is accelerating and deepening. It also examines the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on democracy worldwide.

A Framework for Understanding Regime Transformation: Introducing the ERT Dataset

Seraphine F. Maerz, Amanda B. Edgell, Matthew C. Wilson, Sebastian Hellmeier, and Staffan I. Lindberg.

2021 | *V-Dem Working Paper* 113

Introduces a new dataset on all democratic and autocratic episodes of regime transformation (ERT) from 1900 to 2019, allowing for comprehensive analysis and comparison of regime transformation and regime transition.

Additional publications

2022

John Gerring, Haakon Gjerlow, and Carl Henrik Knutsen. 2022. **Regimes and Industrialization**. *World Development* 152.

2021

David Altman and Clemente T. Sanchez. 2021. **Citizens at the Polls Direct Democracy in the World, 2020**. *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 17(2).

Nancy Arrington, Lean Bass, Brian Delgado, Adam Glynn, Jeffrey Staton, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2021. **Constitutional Reform and the Gender Diversification of Peak Courts**. *American Political Science Review* 115(3).

Nils Dupont, Berker Kavasoglu, Anna Lührmann, and Ora John Reuter. 2021. **A Global Perspective on Party Organizations. Validating the Varieties of Party Identity and Organization Dataset (V-Party)**. *Electoral Studies* 75.

Adea Gafuri. 2021. **Can Democracy Aid Improve Democracy? The European Union's Democracy Assistance 2002–2018**. *Democratization*.

Sandra Grahn and Anna Lührmann. 2021. **Good Seed Makes a Good Crop? The Relationship between Civil Society and Post-Independence Democracy Levels**. *Journal of Civil Society* 17(3–4).

Sebastian Hellmeier, Rowan Cole, Sandra Grahn, Palina Kolvani, Jean Lachapelle, Anna Lührmann, Seraphine F. Maerz, Shreeya Pillai, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2021. **State of the World 2020: Autocratization Turns Viral**. *Democratization* 28(6).

Yuko Kasuya and Kota Mori. 2021. **Re-examining Thresholds of Continuous Democracy Measures**. *Contemporary Politics*.

Berker Kavasoglu. 2021. **Opposition Party Organizational Features, Ideological Orientations, and Elite Co-optation in Electoral Autocracies**. *Democratization*.

Eda Keremoglu, Sebastian Hellmeier, and Nils B. Weidmann. 2021. **Thin-Skinned Leaders: Regime Legitimation, Protest Issues, and Repression in Autocracies**. *Political Science Research and Methods* 10(1).

Carl Henrik Knutsen. 2021. **A Business Case for Democracy: Regime Type, Growth, and Growth Volatility**. *Democratization* 28(8).

Melis G. Laebens and Anna Lührmann. 2021. **What Halts Democratic Erosion? The Changing Role of Accountability**. *Democratization* 28(5).

Anna Lührmann. 2021. **Disrupting the Autocratization Sequence: Towards Democratic Resilience**. *Democratization* 28(5).

Kyle L. Marquardt. 2021. **Language, Ethnicity, and Separatism: Survey Results from Two Post-Soviet Regions**. *British Journal of Political Science*.

Kyle L. Marquardt and Daniel Pemstein. 2021. **Estimating Latent Traits from Expert Surveys: An Analysis of Sensitivity to Data-Generating Process**. *Political Science Research and Methods*.

Kelly McMann, Daniel Pemstein, Brigitte Seim, Jan Teorell, and Staffan Lindberg. 2021. **Assessing Data Quality: An Approach and an Application**. *Political Analysis*.

Wolfgang Merkel and Anna Lührmann. 2021. **Resilience of Democracies: Responses to Illiberal and Authoritarian Challenges**. *Democratization* 28(5).

Marcus Tannenber. 2021. **The Autocratic Bias: Self-Censorship of Regime Support**. *Democratization*.

Johannes Vuellers and Sebastian Hellmeier. 2021. **Does Counter-Mobilization Contain Right-Wing Populist Movements? Evidence from Germany**. *European Journal of Political Research*.

V-Dem Working Papers and Reports

FEATURED PUBLICATIONS

Case for Democracy: Conference Report

Nazifa Alizada, Martin Lundstedt, Kelly Morrison, Yuko Sato, Vanessa A. Boese, and Staffan I. Lindberg.

2022 | *University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute*

From November 30th to December 1st, 2021, 26 scholars and over 400 policymakers and practitioners participated in a hybrid onsite/virtual conference held in Brussels on the Case for Democracy. Scholars presented scientific evidence on the dividends of democracy across six broad areas. This report summarizes these findings and discussions.

V-DEM WORKING PAPERS

2022

Vanessa A. Boese and Markus Eberhardt. 2022. **Which Institutions Rule? Unbundling the Democracy-Growth Nexus**. *V-Dem Working Paper* 131.

Vanessa A. Boese and Matthew Wilson. 2022. **A Short History of Contestation and Participation**. *V-Dem Working Paper* 130.

Sebastian Hellmeier and Michael Bernhard. 2022. **Mass Mobilization and Regime Change. Evidence From a New Measure of Mobilization for Democracy and Autocracy From 1900 to 2020**. *V-Dem Working Paper* 128.

Carl Henrik Knutsen and Palina Kolvani. 2022. **Fighting the Disease or Manipulating the Data? Democracy, State Capacity, and the COVID-19 Pandemic**. *V-Dem Working Paper*, 127.

2021

Kelly M. McMann and Daniel Tisch. 2021. **Democratic Regimes and Epidemic Deaths**. *V-Dem Working Paper* 126.

Maria C. Lo Bue, Kunal Sen, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2021. **Clientelism, Public Goods Provision, and Governance**. *V-Dem Working Paper* 125.

Jørgen Møller and Svend-Erik Skaaning. 2021. **Varieties of Measurement: A Comparative Assessment of Relatively New Democracy Ratings based on Original Data**. *V-Dem Working Paper* 123.

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Michael Coppedge, Benjamin Denison, Paul Friesen, Lucia Tiscornia, and Yang Xu. 2021. **International Influence: The Hidden Dimension**. *V-Dem Working Paper* 119.

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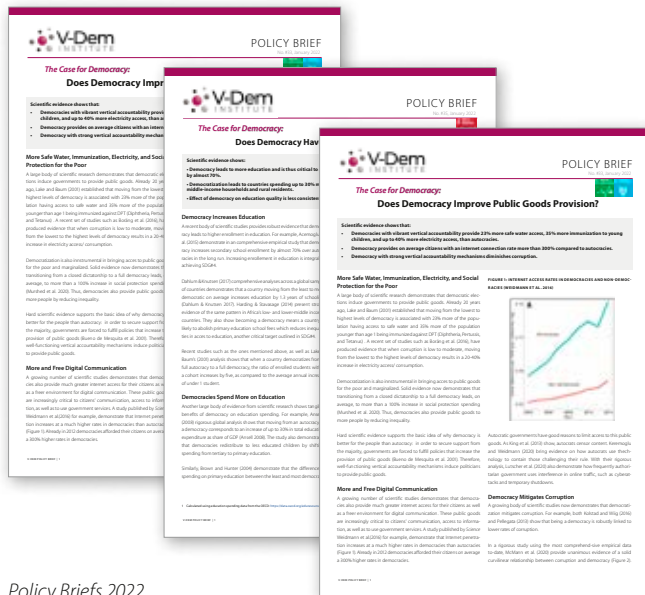
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