



Autocratization Surges – Resistance Grows

DEMOCRACY REPORT 2020



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 some 28 million data points for 202 countries from 1789 to 2019. Involving over 3,000 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://www.v-dem.net/en/v-dem-institute/funders/>.

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

Democracy Report Team: Anna Lührmann (Coordinator), Seraphine F. Maerz, Sandra Grahn, Nazifa Alizada, Lisa Gastaldi, Sebastian Hellmeier, Garry Hindle, Staffan I. Lindberg.

V-Dem Data and Management Team: Nazifa Alizada, Lisa Gastaldi, Garry Hindle, Nina Ilchenko, Kyle Marquardt, Juraj Medzihorsky, Johannes von Römer.

Editors: Anna Lührmann, Staffan I. Lindberg.

Editing/Proof-Reading: Katherine Stuart, ToEnglish Pty Ltd.

Design and Final Art: Harald Schörnig, Frank&Earnest AB.

Printing: GU Intertryckeri.

Cover photo: Los Angeles, USA. Photo: Alex Radelich on Unsplash.

Suggested citation: Anna Lührmann, Seraphine F. Maerz, Sandra Grahn, Nazifa Alizada, Lisa Gastaldi, Sebastian Hellmeier, Garry Hindle and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2020. Autocratization Surges – Resistance Grows. Democracy Report 2020. Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem).

The Democracy Report Team would like to thank Lukas Bernhard, Lydia Finzel, Nina Ilchenko and Johannes von Römer for support in creating additional figures.

V-Dem Institute:

Department of Political Science
University of Gothenburg
Språngkullsgatan 19, P.O. box 711
SE-405 30 Gothenburg Sweden
contact@v-dem.net
+46 (0)31 7863043
www.v-dem.net

March 2020
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Preface

N JUNE 2019, VLADIMIR PUTIN declared liberalism to be “obsolete”*. At first sight, the data reported in this *Democracy Report* appear to support this assertion because they show a global decline in liberal democratic institutions. For the first time since 2001, there are more autocracies than democracies in the world. Hungary is no longer a democracy, leaving the EU with its first non-democratic Member State. India has continued on a path of steep decline, to the extent it has almost lost its status as a democracy. The United States – former vanguard of liberal democracy – has lost its way.

Nevertheless, the value of political liberalism continues to shine. It is founded upon Enlightenment principles of rights, reason and tolerance. These principles have led the world from societies governed by repression and prejudice to open societies based on merit and freedom.

This is why, in parallel with intensifying autocratization, V-Dem’s latest data show growing popular demand for democracy. We have observed rising numbers of pro-democracy protests demonstrating that those living in autocratizing and autocratic regimes are continuing to fight for rights and freedoms. These rays of hope are countries such as Armenia, Tunisia and Sudan, where we have observed substantial democratic progress. They prove Putin wrong. Liberal democracy is not dead and will not be as long as people crave freedom and equality. Citizens around the world are demanding a more democratic future – including in Russia.

In order to better understand these trends, this year we are publishing two new surveys. The Civic and Academic Space survey sheds new light on citizen mobilization and academic institutions. This survey will hugely enrich and broaden analyses of the role of citizens in both autocratization and democratization processes. In summer 2020, we will publish data and findings from the new Party Identity and Organization survey – an unprecedented effort to capture the policies and positions of political parties in 178 countries since 1970. This dataset offers new opportunities to analyze how political parties evolve and respond to social, economic and political pressures.

This report builds on the efforts of the entire global V-Dem team. The V-Dem Institute has its headquarters and is located at the University of Gothenburg. We are immensely grateful to the over 3,000 Country Experts who provide an invaluable service to the international community and to the Country Coordinators, Regional Managers, Project Managers and Steering Committee Members, without whom this enterprise would not be possible.

The V-Dem Institute Team



V-Dem Institute in Gothenburg, Sweden. Photo: Karin Andersson.

V-Dem in Numbers

WHO IS V-DEM?

V-Dem is an international effort comprised of:

- 5 Principal Investigators
- 19 Personnel at the V-Dem Institute
- 18 Project Managers
- 30 Regional Managers
- 170 Country Coordinators
- 3,000 Country Experts

All working together to produce

28,413,876
data points in the v10 dataset.

NEW MEASURES IN THE V10 DATASET

21 new indicators on democracy adding to the 408 existing indicators.



WHERE IS V-DEM DATA USED?



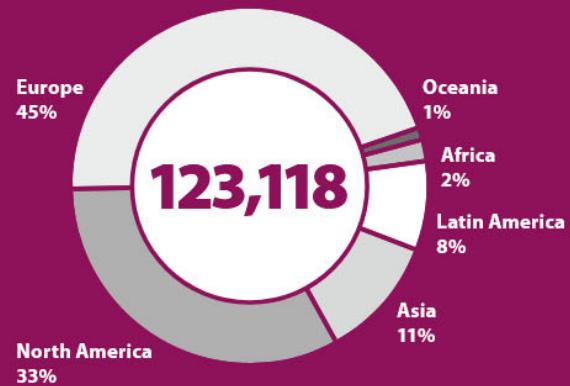
The V-Dem dataset has been downloaded by **users in 153+ countries** since 2015.



3,512,895 graphs created using the online tools by users in 158+ countries since 2015.

While the majority of the dataset downloads in 2019 come from Europe and North America, users from all regions of the world have accessed the data and used the online tools since 2015.

Dataset downloads (2015–2019)



V-DEM PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS TO ACADEMIC AND POLICY COMMUNITIES

- **675 presentations** across the world by V-Dem scholars since 2007.
- **106 visiting scholars** presented at the V-Dem Institute since 2014.





Executive Summary

AUTOCRATIZATION SURGES

Autocratization – the decline of democratic traits – accelerates in the world:

- For the first time since 2001, autocracies are in the majority: 92 countries – home to 54% of the global population.
- Almost 35% of the world's population live in autocratizing nations – 2.6 billion people.
- The EU has its first non-democracy as a member: Hungary is now classified as an electoral authoritarian regime.

Major G20 nations and all regions of the world are part of the “third wave of autocratization”:

- Autocratization is affecting Brazil, India, the United States of America, and Turkey, which are major economies with sizeable populations, exercising substantial global military, economic, and political influence.
- Latin America is back to a level last recorded in the early 1990s while Eastern Europe and Central Asia are at post-Soviet Union lows.
- India is on the verge of losing its status as a democracy due to the severely shrinking of space for the media, civil society, and the opposition under Prime Minister Modi's government.

Attacks on freedom of expression and the media intensify across the world, and the quality of elections begins to deteriorate:

- Attacks on freedom of expression and media freedom are now affecting 31 countries, compared to 19 two years ago.
- The Clean Elections Index fell significantly in 16 nations while improving in only twelve.
- Media censorship and the repression of civil society have intensified in a record 37 countries – eleven more than the 26 states currently affected by severe autocratization. Since these indicators are typically the first to move in a gradual process of autocratization, this development is an early warning signal for what might be yet to come.

New V-Dem indicators on Civic and Academic Space show that autocratization taints the whole society:

- Academic freedom has registered a conspicuous average decline of 13% in autocratizing countries over the last 10 years.
- The right to peaceful assembly and protest has declined by 14% on average in autocratizing countries.
- Toxic polarization, pro-autocracy mass protests, and political violence rise in many autocratizing countries, such as in Brazil and Poland.

PRO-DEMOCRACY RESISTANCE GROWS

New V-Dem data on pro-democracy mass mobilization reveals all-time highs in 2019:

- The share of countries with substantial pro-democracy mass protests rose from 27% in 2009 to 44% in 2019.
- Citizens are taking to the streets in order to defend civil liberties and the rule of law, and to fight for clean elections and political freedom.
- The unprecedented degree of mobilization for democracy in light of deepening autocratization is a sign of hope. While pro-autocracy rulers attempt to curtail the space for civil society, millions of citizens have demonstrated their commitment to democracy.

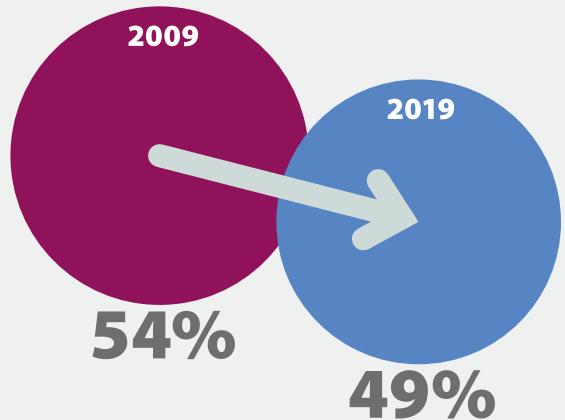
Protesters in democracies resist the dismantling of democracy while their counterparts in autocracies are demanding more democracy:

- During 2019, citizens in 29 democracies mobilized against autocratization, such as in Bolivia, Poland, and Malawi.
- Citizens staged mass protests in 34 autocracies, among them Algeria, Hong Kong, and Sudan.
- In several cases such as in Sudan, citizens successfully achieved breakthroughs for freedom and democracy.

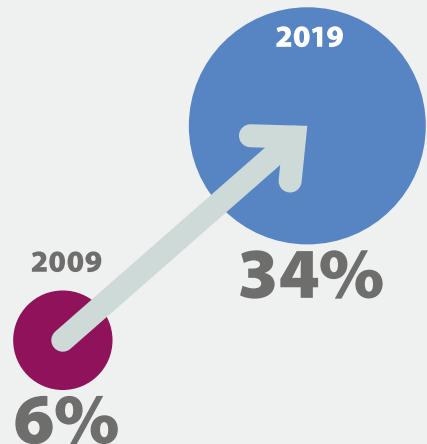
Democratization continues to progress around the world:

- In 22 countries, pro-democracy mass protests have been followed by substantial democratization during the last ten years.
- Armenia, The Gambia, Sri Lanka, and Tunisia are the four countries achieving the greatest democratic gains.
- Ecuador shows that while autocratization can be turned around, it is difficult to return to a stable democracy.

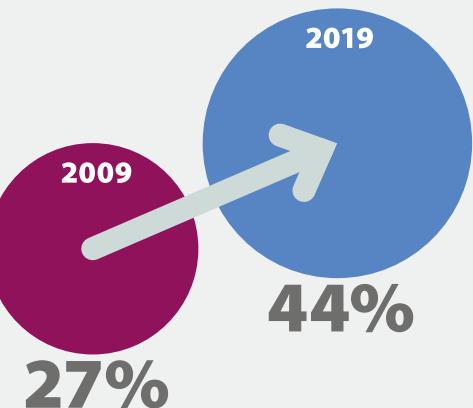
GLOBAL SHARE OF DEMOCRACIES



SHARE OF WORLD POPULATION LIVING IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES



SHARE OF COUNTRIES WITH SUBSTANTIAL PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTESTS





State of the World 2019: Autocratization Surges – Resistance Grows

WITH THE DEMOCRACY REPORT 2020, we issue an autocratization alert. The “third wave of autocratization”¹ is accelerating and deepening. Democracy declined in 26 countries during 2019, up from 18 in 2017. For the first time since 2001, democracies are no longer in the majority. Down from 55% (98 states) at its peak in 2010 to 48% of the countries in the world as of 2019, the world is now left with 87 electoral and liberal democracies, which are home to 46% of the world’s population. The dramatic loss of eight democracies in the last year sets a new record in the rate of democratic breakdowns. Exemplifying this crisis is Hungary, now the EU’s first ever authoritarian regime Member State.

The report details how an increasing number of countries are being affected by the decline in critical democratic traits. Government assaults on civil society, freedom of expression, and the media are proliferating and becoming more severe. A new and disturbing trend in this year’s data is that the quality of elections is now also deteriorating in many countries. After years of undercutting countervailing forces, rulers seem now to feel secure enough to attack the very core of democracy: free and fair elections.

Nevertheless, while the “third wave of autocratization” has escalated, there are positive signs of pro-democracy responses. New indicators in the V-Dem dataset show that pro-democracy protests reached an all-time high in 2019. People are taking to the streets to protest the erosion of democracies and challenge dictators. Popular protests have contributed to substantial democratization in 22 countries over the last ten years – including Armenia, Tunisia, and Sri Lanka.

This year’s *Democracy Report* details the state of democracy in the world in 2019 against the backdrop of the decisive changes during the last decade. The report’s analyses are based on the new version 10 of the V-Dem dataset.² It builds on assessments by more than 3,000 global experts and provides almost 30 million data points on democracy, human rights, media, civil society, judiciaries, legislatures, and many related issues. The data is freely available for download at <https://v-dem.net>.

Decline in Liberal Democracy Intensifies

- The average global decline in liberal democracy in 2019 is more pronounced than was found in last year’s Democracy Report.

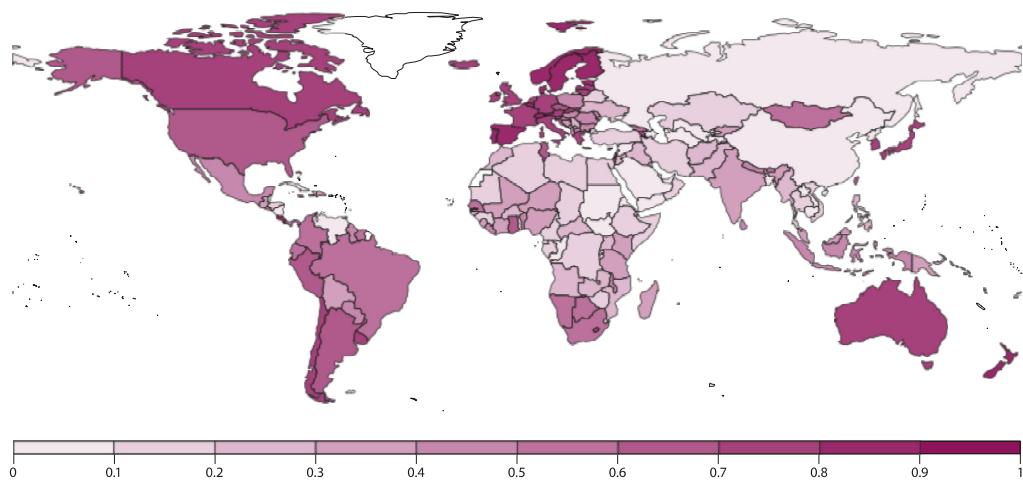
- Autocratization is affecting major G20 states such as Brazil, India, the United States of America and Turkey – major economies, with sizeable populations, exercising substantial global military, economic, and political influence.

- Latin America is back to a level last recorded around 1992 while Eastern Europe and Central Asia is at post-Soviet Union lows.

Western Europe, North America, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, New Zealand and parts of Latin America remain among the most democratic countries and regions in the world – in spite of substantial declines in the level of democracy in the United States of America in recent years.

1 Lührmann and Lindberg (2019).

2 We base this report on the V-Dem Dataset v10. Every year V-Dem improves the quality of the data and engages a larger number of experts, which may lead to a correction of the scores reported in prior versions of the Democracy Report.

FIGURE 1: THE STATE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IN 2019

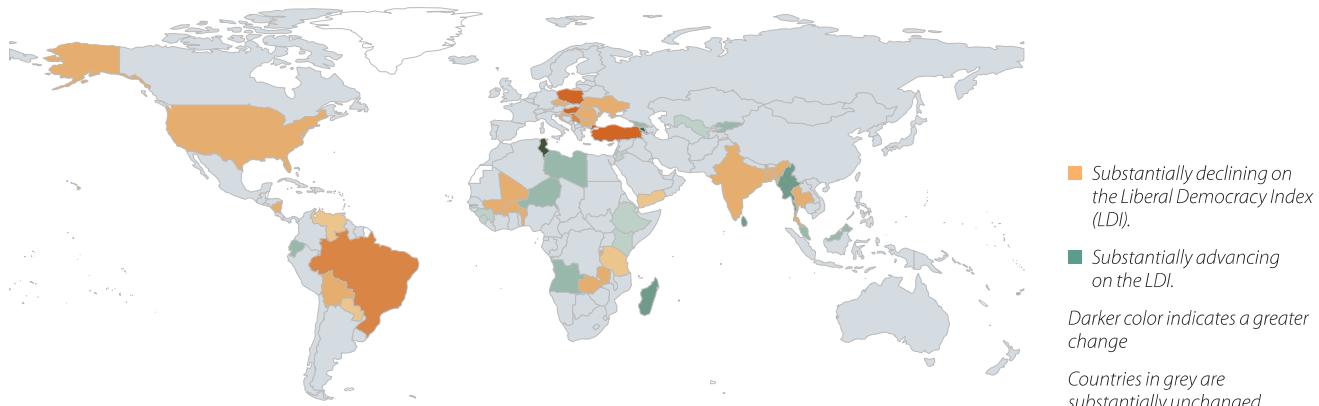
Create similar maps using V-Dem data.

Figure 1 shows the state of democracy in 2019 using the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI). This index combines measures of the quality of elections, suffrage, freedom of expression and the media, freedom of association and civil society, checks on the executive, and the rule of law.³ Spread around the world, countries such as China and North Korea, Eritrea and Burundi, Nicaragua and Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, as well as Russia and Turkey, have among the lowest levels on V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index.

Figure 2 shows where in the world democracy has advanced (green) or retreated (orange) as measured by LDI score over the last 10 years. It demonstrates that the "third wave of democratization" set off by the 1974 Carnation revolution in Portugal that

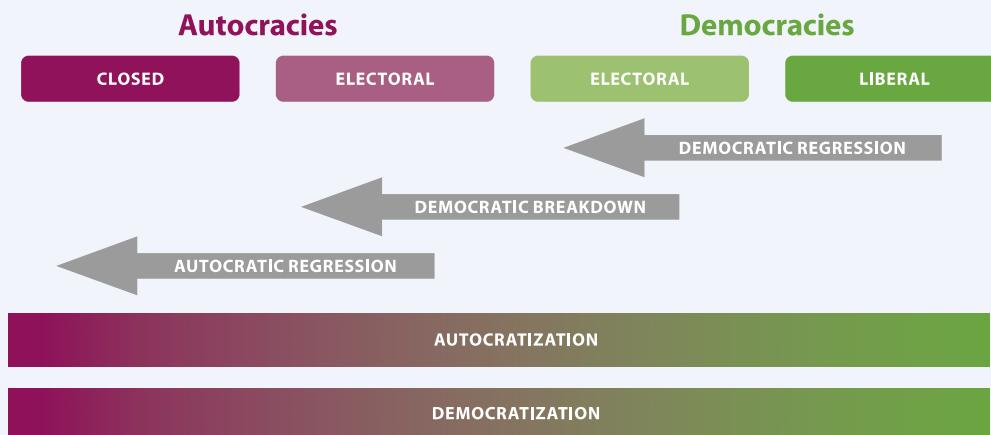
intensified during the 1990s is clearly over. Over the last ten years, more nations have become characterized by autocratization than by democratization as this map shows.

Figure 3 provides more detail by depicting average global as well as regional levels of liberal democracy from 1972 to 2019. The left side is based on straight country averages and the thick black line on the left side represents the global average of the LDI along with confidence intervals.⁴ After peaking around 2012, the growing decline in liberal democracy brought the global average in 2019 down to a level last registered in 2002. However, an issue with this conventional measure is that the Seychelles, with some 95,000 inhabitants is given as much weight as India with 1.3 billion inhabitants.

FIGURE 2: COUNTRIES SUBSTANTIALLY DEMOCRATIZING OR AUTOCRATIZING, 2009–2019

3 The Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) aggregates V-Dem's Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) and Liberal Component Index (LCI). The first captures whether the components of Robert Dahl's "polyarchy" (1971) are present *de facto*. The latter measures whether electoral democracy is complemented by civil liberties, the rule of law and sufficient constraints on the executive by the judiciary and legislature as vital elements of liberal democracy.

4 To save space, the regional averages are illustrated without confidence intervals.



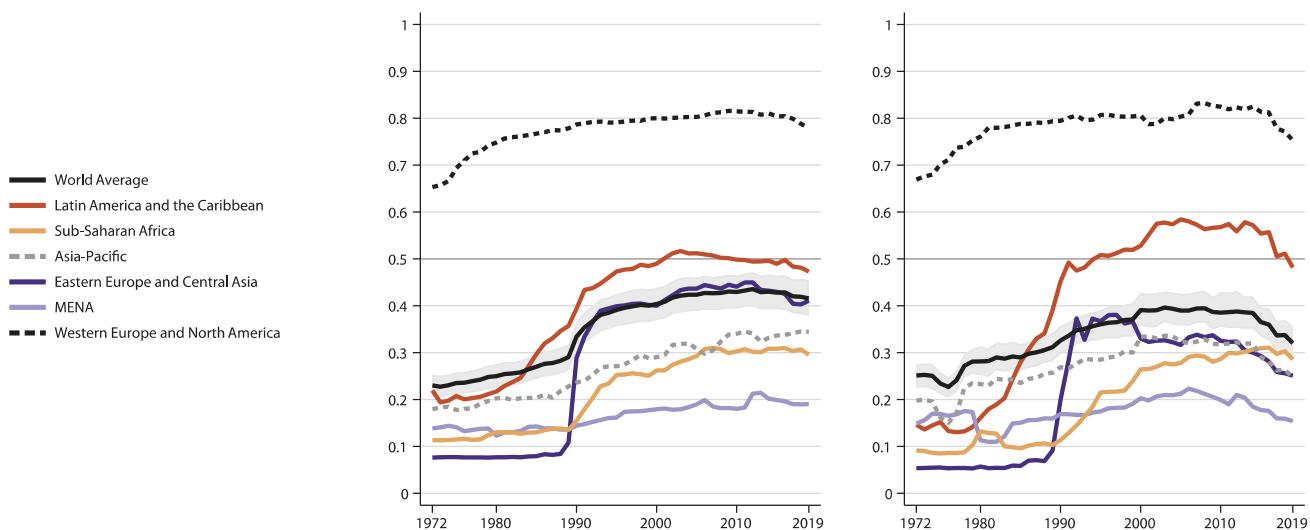
Autocratization captures any substantial and significant decline on V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index (LDI), which may start in democracies (democratic regression) or autocracies (autocratic regression). Democratization is the opposite process and means any substantial and significant improvement on the LDI scale either in autocracies (liberalization) or democracies (democratic deepening).

To distinguish different types of regimes, we use the Regimes of the World (RoW) typology, classifying countries as democratic if they not only hold free and fair multiparty elections, but also guarantee freedom of speech and expression. Electoral autocracies fail to reach such standards while closed autocracies

do not even hold multiparty elections for the chief executive. We further distinguish between liberal democracies, which uphold the rule of law and have constraints on the executive, and electoral democracies, which do not.⁵

We measure autocratization and democratization as a substantial and significant change on the LDI over ten years. For each year, we take the difference of the score at time t and time $t-10$, capturing both sudden and gradual changes. Significant means that the confidence intervals do not overlap (see Methods section towards the end of this report). We consider a change substantial if the absolute value of the change on the LDI is greater than 0.05.⁶

FIGURE 3: LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX, GLOBAL AND REGIONAL AVERAGES (RIGHT SIDE POPULATION WEIGHTED), 1972–2019



5 This measure uses V-Dem data but is not officially endorsed by the V-Dem Steering Committee. See Lührmann, Tannenberg and Lindberg (2018).

6 This is a rather broad operationalization of autocratization and democratization based on the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI). For more fine-grade and parsimonious operationalizations, see the V-Dem team's recent work on episodes of democratization and autocratization (Wilson et al. 2020; Lührmann and Lindberg 2019).