

Comparing Political Systems

Authoritarian rules and democratic backsliding

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Lecture 3

Plan

- 1 Conceptualizing and measuring autocracy
- 2 Varieties of autocracies
- 3 Elections in autocracies
- 4 Democratic backsliding
- 5 Conclusion

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Autocracy

Definition from textbook

- ▶ Regimes based on submission to authority, characterized by ruling elites, limited political pluralism, centralized political control, intolerance of opposition, and human rights abuses

Key elements

- ▶ Ruling eliteS
- ▶ No contestation
- ▶ Centralized power (controversial)
- ▶ Human right abuses

Measuring autocracy

Symmetrical measurement

- ▶ If one measures democracy, one also measures autocracy

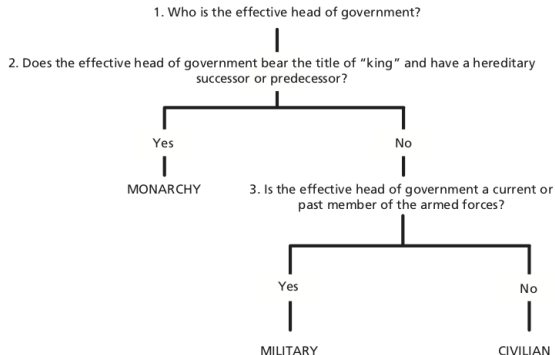
Therefore, see lecture on Week 2

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Classifying autocracies (simplest one)

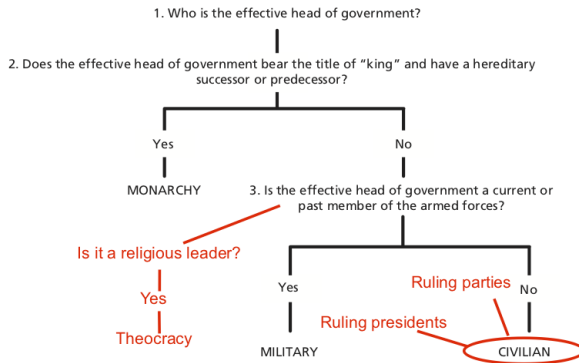
FIGURE 10.1 Classifying Dictatorships



Clark, WR, M Golder, and SN Golder (2017). *Principles of Comparative Politics, 3rd Edition*. Sage/CQ Press

Classifying autocracies (textbook)

FIGURE 10.1 Classifying Dictatorships



Clark, WR, M Golder, and SN Golder (2017). *Principles of Comparative Politics, 3rd Edition*. Sage/CQ Press

What they all varieties in common

What autocrats needs

- ▶ Control
- ▶ Support

Key elements

- ▶ Support from the military
- ▶ Support from key actors via patronage (or purge)
- ▶ Control over media

Note on totalitarianism

- ▶ Extreme control of everyday life
- ▶ All autocracies can be totalitarian

Why is typology important?

Because it has consequences

Succession

- ▶ Key issue in autocracies
- ▶ Some varieties (e.g., monarchy), better than others (e.g., military regime) at facilitating it

Institutional dependence

- ▶ Institutions stay after democratization
- ▶ Some institutions (e.g., elections, courts...) facilitate transition

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Why elections in autocracies

Main goal

- ▶ Way to select ruling elites
- ▶ WITHIN the group of autocrats

Other goals

- ▶ Spoil some opposition
- ▶ Get information about popularity and opposition groups
- ▶ Please international community

How actors behave

Politicians

- ▶ Patronage, vote buying, threat
- ▶ Fraud as last resort

Voters

- ▶ Seek benefits for them or community
- ▶ Abstaining as a form of protest

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Everywhere in the news

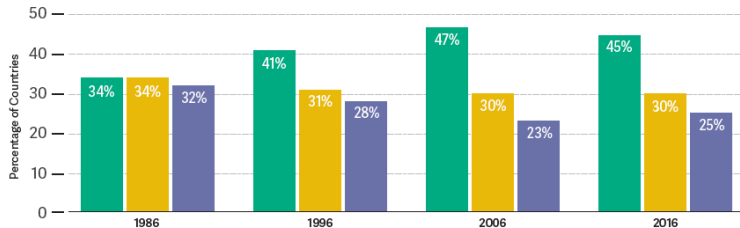


What are we talking about

Decrease in the number of “free” democracies

FREEDOM IN THE BALANCE

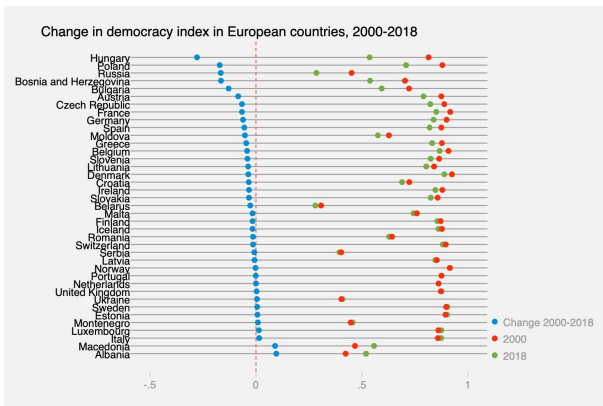
After years of major gains, the share of Free countries has declined over the past decade, while the share of Not Free countries has risen.



Source: Freedom House

What are we talking about

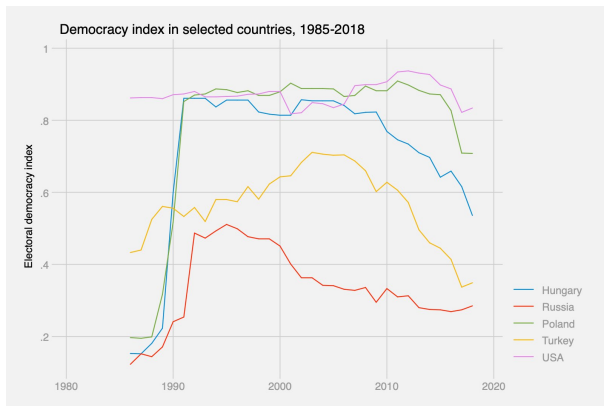
Small decrease in the quality of many democracies



Source: Vdem democratic indicator (Mechkova et al 2017, see Further Reading List)

What are we talking about

Even in some long-established democracies



Source: Vdem democratic indicator (Mechkova et al 2017, see Further Reading List)

Why democratic backsliding

Economic explanation

- ▶ Globalization creates inequalities
- ▶ Unskilled workers fear offshoring and arrival of unskilled migrants
- ▶ Perceive democracies (democrats) are impossible to stop globalization

Colantone and Stanig (2018). The Trade Origins of Economic Nationalism: Import Competition and Voting Behavior in Western Europe. *American Journal of Political Science* 62(4): 936–943.

Why democratic backsliding

Cultural explanation

- ▶ With globalization constraints, politics is increasingly identity politics
- ▶ Norms shifting towards liberal ideas (gender, race, sexuality, PC...)
- ▶ Groups of people resisting
- ▶ Especially those who (used to) have all privilege (i.e., old white men)

Norris and Inglehart (2019), see Further Reading List

Why democratic backsliding

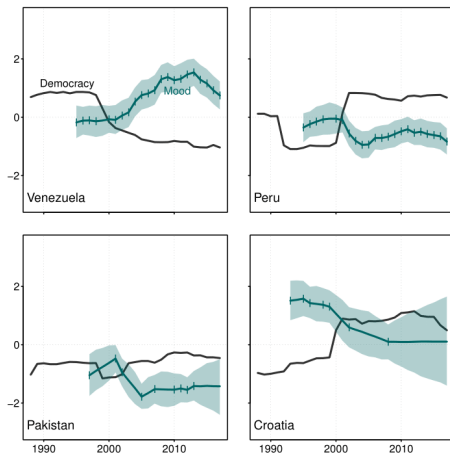
Necessary condition

- ▶ Inaction of international community
- ▶

Hyde (2020), see Further Reading List

Why democratic backsliding

Endogenous to political culture



Claassen (2020), see Further Reading List

Summary

Varieties of autocracies

- ▶ Various varieties with various consequences
- ▶ Importance of elections in autocracies

Democratic backsliding comes

- ▶ Economic explanation
- ▶ Cultural explanation
- ▶ Inaction of international community
- ▶ Political culture (see next week's lecture)