



# DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING



Introduction to international Relations  
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John Oliver notes three characteristics of authoritarian leaders:

1. Dismantling institutions
2. Demonizing enemies
3. Displaying force on a grand scale



# WHAT IS DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING?

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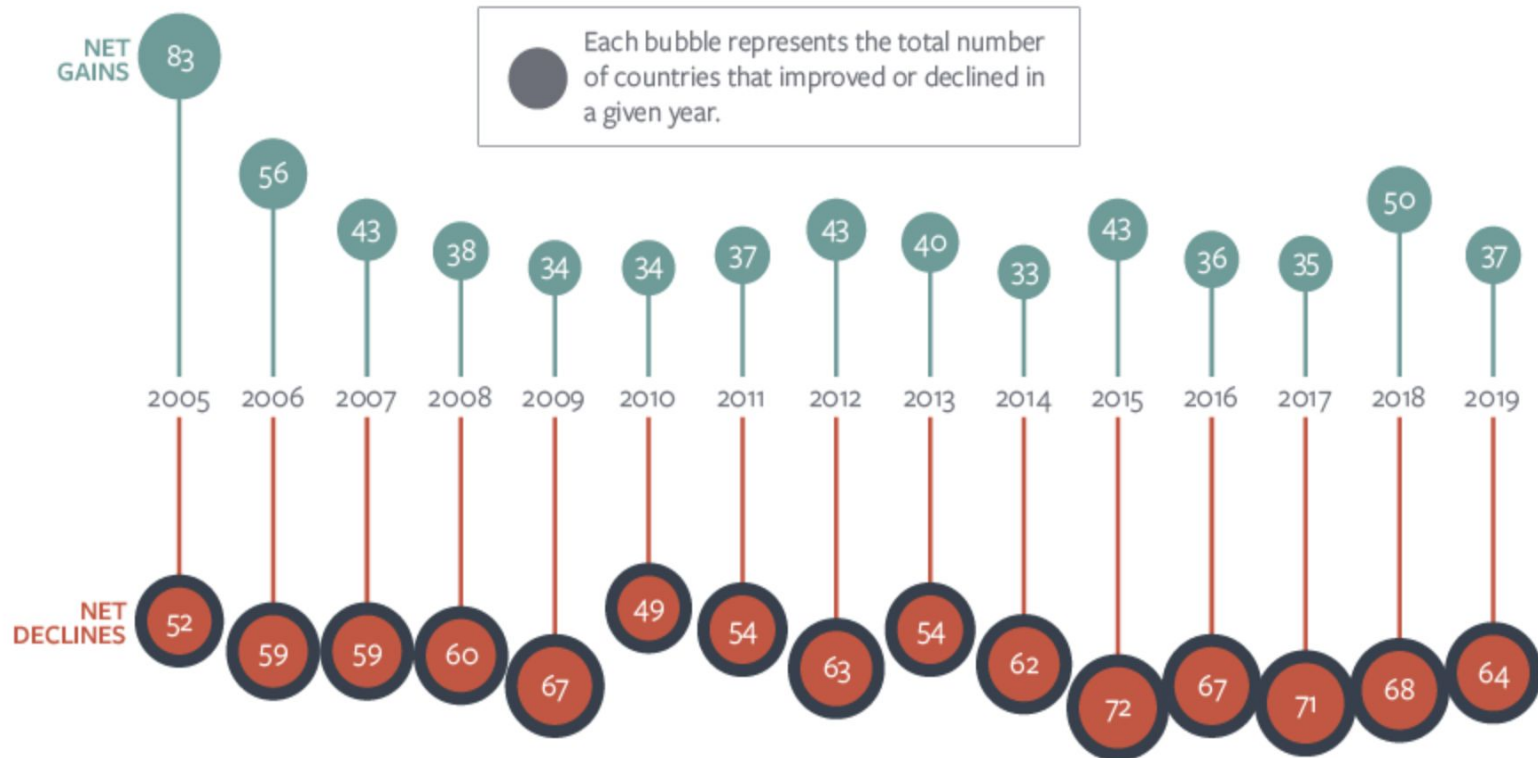
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Some definitions that are used:

1. **Decay** of **democratic characteristics** possessed by a government.
2. **Decay** of **institutions** that affect arenas of democracy.
3. Democratic backsliding also may be **formal** (e.g. in the form of laws) as well as **informal** (generally acting contrary to institutional norms).

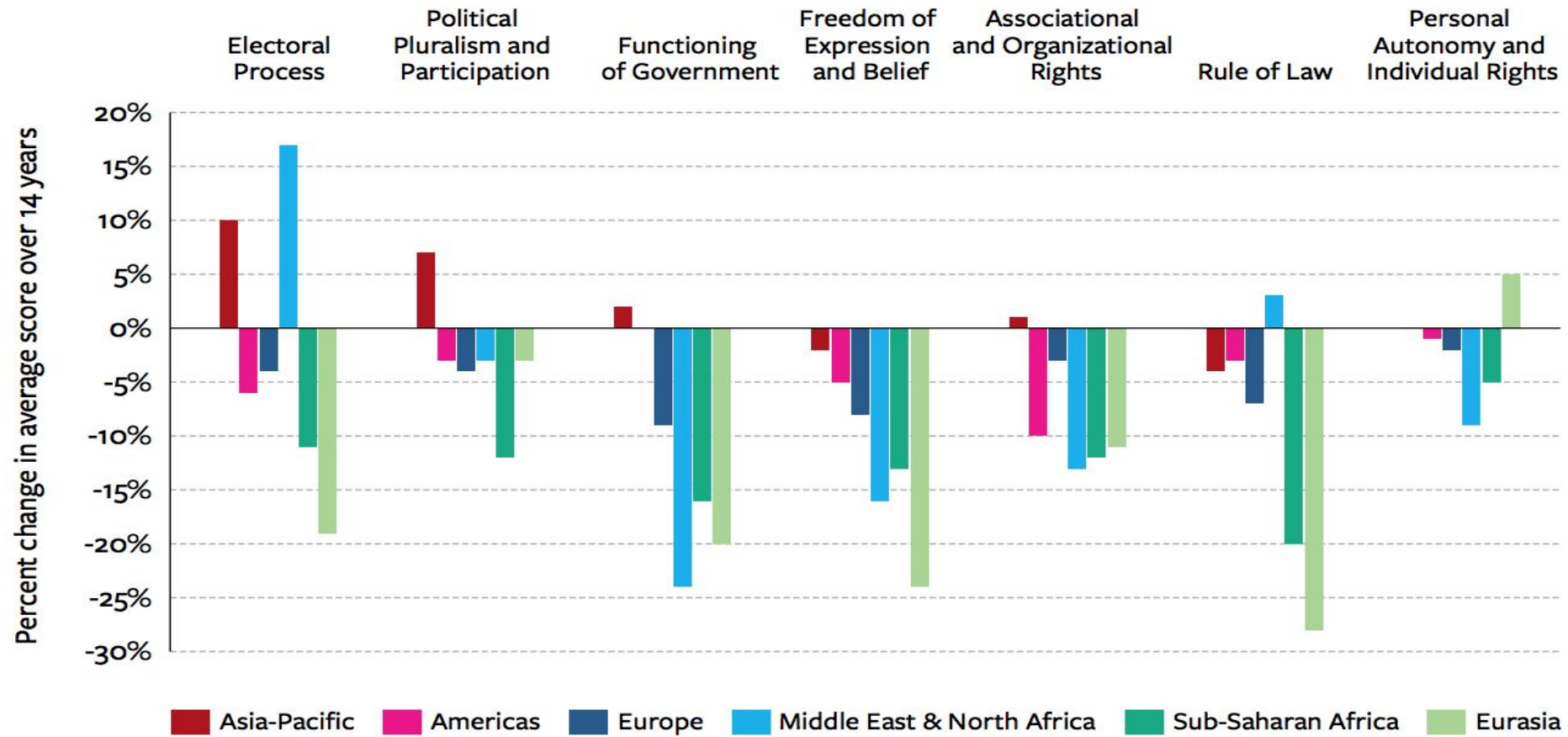
## 14 Years of Democratic Decline

Countries with net declines in their aggregate *Freedom in the World* score have outnumbered those with gains for the past 14 years.



# DECLINES ACROSS THE BOARD

The 14 years of decline have affected all regions and *Freedom in the World* subcategories.



# BUT BACKSLIDING ISN'T REVERSION TO AUTOCRACY

Unwelcome Change: Coming to Terms with Democratic Backsliding

David Waldner and Ellen Lust

Annual Review of Political Science 2018 21:1, 93-113

**“We understand backsliding as potentially occurring through a discontinuous series of incremental actions, not a one-time coup de grâce.”**



**Table 1** Datasets with indicators of regime change

Indicator name	Concept	% toward autocracy
Freedom House, Freedom in the World (any change)	Political rights (contestations and participation) and civil liberties	9.67
Polity IV (any change)	Contestations and participation	3.76
<b>Skaaning et al. 2015</b>	Contestations and participation	2.52
V-Dem: Electoral Democracy	Contestations and participation	2.93
<b>Wahman et al. 2013</b> (any change)	Combination of Freedom House and Polity IV	11.21

**I. COMPETITION**

**II. PARTICIPATION**

**III. ANSWERABILITY**

# SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEFENDING DEMOCRACIES

FREEDOM HOUSE 2020 'FREEDOM IN THE WORLD' REPORT



- Emphasizing **democracy** strengthening **programs** in **foreign assistance**.
- Focusing attention and **funding** on **countries** at critical junctures.
- Supporting civil society and **grassroots movements** calling for democracy
- Investing in **alliances** with other democracies, and in multilateral institutions.
- Addressing impunity by imposing **targeted sanctions** on individuals and entities involved in human rights abuses and acts of corruption



# QUESTIONS

A grayscale background image showing several raised fists, symbolizing protest or solidarity. The fists are of various skin tones and are positioned at different heights, creating a sense of movement and collective action.

- In context of Democratic Peace theory, should other democracies **interfere** covertly or overtly with other **declining democracies**?
  - Freedom house in its suggestions to promote democracy talks about supporting grassroots movements. Will bypassing state actors to support other actors, affect the **stability** of a **democracy**?
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# THANK YOU

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