

Challenges to Democracy

Session 3: State of Democracy

Mirko Wegemann

Universität Münster
Institut für Politikwissenschaft

30 October 2024

Last session



Figure: Summary of last session with GPT-4o

Last session



Figure: Summary of last session with GPT-4o

***Prompt:** Can you create an infographic containing the following elements?

- Democracy is about five partial regimes: the electoral regime (free + fair elections), civil rights (rule of law), political rights (freedom of expression), horizontal accountability (checks and balances between legislative, executive and judiciary), effective power to govern (no actor without legitimacy can substantially shape policy outcomes).
- If all of these attributes are sufficiently fulfilled, there's a liberal democracy.
- There is a tension between some of these regimes, like civil and political rights (equality vs freedom).
- Democracy is strengthened if there is socio-economic equality.

Last week...



Figure: 'Is Trump a Threat to Democracy?' asked to MAGA-Supporters (Link)

So, how does this interview relate to our discussion on the conceptualization of democracy last week?

Today's session

- The end of history
- Maximalist definitions and measuring the quality of democracy
- Current state of democracy and autocratic tendencies
- Work with data
- Develop your research question for the podcast project

November 1989



Figure: Fall of the Berlin Wall 1989 (Report by the Guardian)

November 1989



Figure: Fall of the Berlin Wall 1989 (Report by the Guardian)

What were the broader implications of the Fall of the Berlin Wall with regard to democracy?

End of History?

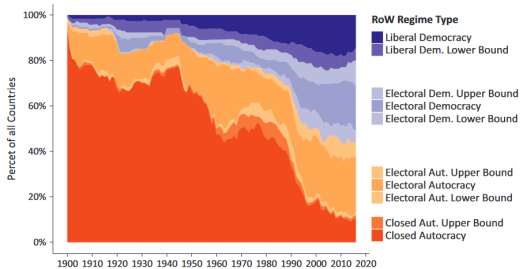


Figure: Diffusion of the democratic idea (Lührmann et al. 2018)

In 1990, authoritarian regimes became under threat.

End of History!

In pairs, discuss the following questions [3 minutes]:

- How did you feel when reading Fukuyama (1989)?
- What does he observe?
- What's his definition of democracy?

End of History!

*“the century that began full of self-confidence in the ultimate triumph of Western liberal democracy seems at its close to be returning full circle to where it started [...] an unbashd victory of economic and political liberalism”
(Fukuyama 1989, p. 3)*

End of History!

According to Fukuyama (1989)

- the world has found its favoured system of governing → it's liberal democracy
- history has worked towards this (e.g., French Revolution) but the victory of liberal democracy was incomplete
- after World War II, a significant push and spread of liberalism

End of History!

Fukuyama's (1989) definition of liberal democracy?

- At the start: liberal **and** economic liberalism → so, democracy comes with a specific economic system
- Later, he defines it rather in a minimal fashion as a government constituted by the people and a state recognizing the rule of law

End of History!

Why now?

And isn't the author inconsistent when claiming that in 1806 Napoleonic rights won the contest in the realm of ideas despite material defeat, yet fascism is said to have lost because it was defeated materially? [Max]

End of History!

Why now?

- it's not (only) the economics, but a change in 'consciousness'; led by political elites
- *consciousness* is similar to beliefs
- however, there is a mutually reinforcing mechanism between the two

End of History!

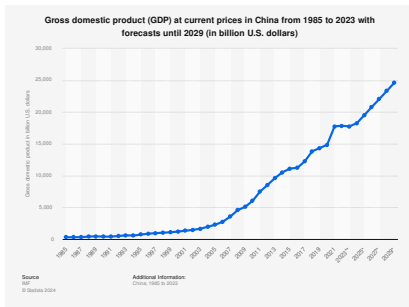


Figure: Evolution of GDP in China

→ according to Fukuyama (1989), **economic liberalism** precedes **political liberalism** (just a matter of time as no competing ideologies)

End of History!

*“Perhaps this very prospect of centuries of boredom at the end of history will serve to get history started once again”
(Fukuyama 1989, p. 17)*

History starting again?

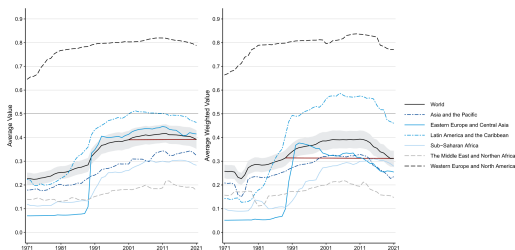


Figure 1. Liberal Democracy Index, global and regional averages, 1971–2021.
Note: The grey area marks the confidence intervals. The left panel is based on conventional country averages. The right-hand panel shows average levels of democracy weighted by population sizes.

Figure: Trends in Regime Type (Boese et al. 2022, p. 985)

What can we see here? What could be the causes?

History starting again?

Some possible reasons for the current trends

- threats to civil society organizations (restricting positive freedoms; political polarization)
- attempts on freedom of expression (e.g., censoring of the media, misinformation)
- weaknesses of horizontal accountability, particularly regarding judicial oversight

How can citizens themselves contribute to the weakening of democratic principles by, for example, supporting autocratic leaders or movements? [Luisa]

History starting again?

Some possible reasons for the current trends

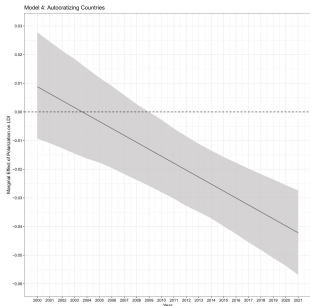


Figure: Effect of Polarization on LDI over Time (Boese et al. 2022, p. 996)

History starting again?

What's the graph showing? What is the inherent challenge in interpreting these findings?

History starting again?



History starting again?

or this direction?



The quality of democracy...

Munck (2016) makes a strong point in equating the **quality of democracy** to **democracy**.

What are the implications of his argument?

The quality of democracy...

The reconceptualization by Munck (2016) is guided by two core principles

1. political freedom
2. political equality

The quality of democracy...

Majoritarian conception

**Juridicial-constitutional
conception**

What's the difference?

The quality of democracy...

	Majoritarian conception	Judicial-constitutional conception
Key principle	Majority needs to be able to change status quo	Minority needs to be protected by rule of law
Intermediary outcome	1. fair seat allocation, 2. majority preferences translate into law	checks and balances, extensive veto rights
Best achieved through...	Unicameral parliaments, weak president, flexible constitution	Judicial review (+ strong constitution), bicameral parliaments

Which position does Munck (2016) favour? Why?

A maximalist view on democracy...

*Imagine you did not enjoy formal education and have no money,
does this influence your experience of democracy?*

A maximalist view on democracy...

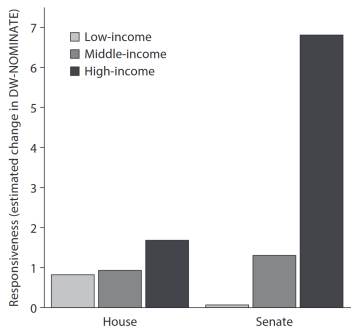


FIGURE 8.3 House and Senate Responsiveness to Income Groups, 2011–2013

Figure: Relationship between Income Inequality and Elite Responsiveness (Bartels 2016)

A maximalist view on democracy...

Therefore, others have emphasized the importance of socio-economic equality among citizens (Sigman and Lindberg 2019).

- that's one example of what's called a maximalist view on democracy; not its input (vote) or throughput (process) but also its output (e.g., equality) matters
- implicitly, Merkel (2004) also accounts for this conception with what he called the external embeddedness
- Munck (2016) is cautious but acknowledges that socio-economic equality needs to be guaranteed to prevent economic inequality from translating into political inequality

Resources

There are many indices trying to assess the quality of government. Each come with advantages and disadvantages.

- Today, we try to get a first glimpse into recent developments regarding democracy around the globe.
- We will do this with online visualization tools provided by the data sources.
- Want to work more on this? Come and learn statistics with us (next term).

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)

One of the most established source to trace the quality of democracy is **Varieties of Democracy**.

- It's idea and operationalization is outlined in Lindberg et al. (2014)
- Data on five principles: electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian components of democracy
- No fixed definition of democracy, instead, everyone can use those indicators they deem important
- Coding of each category by five independent experts (mostly highly educated and nationals) who assign a confidence value for each indicator
- Time coverage: 1789–; Geographic coverage: all (semi-)sovereign states

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)

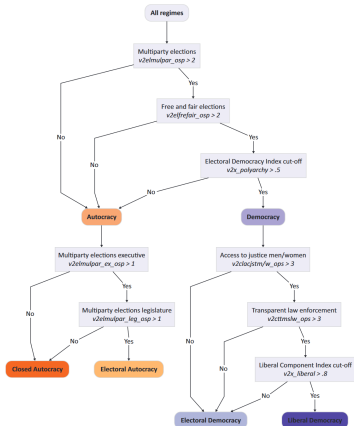
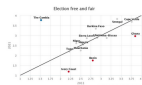
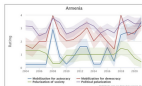
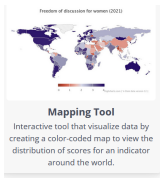


Figure: Regimes of the World by Lüthmann et al. (2018), based on V-DEM

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)

V-DEM offers several different online tools to visualize trends in the quality of democracy.



Thematic Comparison
Thematic Comparison
Displays the development of a thematic category between two selected years.

Freedom House

Freedom House follows a more qualitative approach in their assessment of democracy.

- “Freedom in the World operates from the assumption that freedom for all people is best achieved in liberal democratic societies” (Methodology of Freedom House)
- Core components are **civil rights** and **political liberties** which are further disaggregated into 7 sub-categories
- “an electoral democracy designation requires a score of 7 or better in the Electoral Process subcategory, an overall political rights score of 20 or better, and an overall civil liberties score of 30 or better”
- Assessment by 132 analysts and 40 advisers based on variety of non-academic and academic sources

Freedom House

- Since 1972, large coverage of states; in 2023, 195 countries covered

Freedom House

Out of these qualitative reports, Freedom House calculates a 'Freedom Indicator'

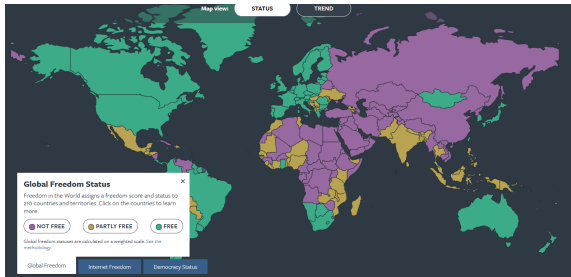


Figure: Global Freedom Status in 2024 by Freedom House

Quality of Government

Up until now, we mainly dealt with procedural definitions of democracy. The ‘Quality of Government’ (QoD) project goes into a different direction.

- for a thorough discussion, please refer to Holmberg et al. (2009)
- vast amount of indicators
- broadly defined by three core attributes: impartiality, bureaucratic quality and corruption
 - impartiality: treating citizens equally irrespectively of their characteristics or personal motives

European Social Survey

The **European Social Survey** (ESS) does not explicitly focus on democracy, but it is a large European cross-country survey.

- it allows you to trace satisfaction with democracy and other aspects of life
- broad array of items on political attitudes and behaviour
- socio-economic background of respondents
- full potential only if used in statistical software but for a start:
ESS Data Portal

Podcast project

Form groups of 3 people.

- Discuss what you think is the most important threat for democracy right now.
- Look into the data, is there any indicator tracing the development of that pillar?
- Describe differences between country and over time.
- Do you assume that your indicator correlates with something else? Is there any data, so that you could visualize the association?

Podcast project II

Inspiration from two of your peers:

1. When and in which context have debates been resumed that address autocracies as a possibly more suitable system of government than democracies?
2. Fukuyama describes the US as 'egalitarian and moderately redistributionist'. Did these characteristics changed recently and are these changes maybe reasons for the rise of far right elements?

Other sources

- **Polity V**: covers a wide array of countries until 2018 (but has been terminated)
 - captures gradual levels of autocracy/democracy
 - main indicator is the 'Polity Score' which can be used to categorize regimes into autocracies, anocracies (hybrid regimes) and democracies
- **Democracy-Barometer**: translates the concept by Merkel (2004)
 - main pillars: freedom, control and equality

Conclusion

What we have learned today...

- After the fall of the iron curtain, there was widespread optimism about the spread of democracy.
- Indeed, democratic regimes have been on the rise in the 1990s.
- Support for the democratic idea is still high around Europe.
- However, in recent years, the quality of democracy eroded in several aspects.

To prepare for the week after next...

- next week, there will not be any session in person **but:** you are warmly invited to come to the election night on Tuesday evening
- work on the podcast project:
 - survey citizens on the streets and record their replies
 - prepare a presentation; either on tape or just play sound snippets while presenting
- next session will be on November 13 with the following readings
 - Hager, A., & Krakowski, K. (2022). Does State Repression Spark Protests? Evidence from Secret Police Surveillance in Communist Poland. *American Political Science Review*, 116(2), 564–579.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421000770>

To prepare for the week after next...

- Baturo, A., & Tolstrup, J. (2024). Strategic Communication in Dictatorships: Performance, Patriotism, and Intimidation. *The Journal of Politics*, 86(2), 582–596.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/726945>

- Optional: Boix, C. (2011). Democracy, Development, and the International System. *American Political Science Review*, 105(4), 809–828.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055411000402>

- Optional: Guriev, S., & Treisman, D. (2020). The Popularity of Authoritarian Leaders: A Cross-National Investigation. *World Politics*, 72(4), 601–638.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887120000167>

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature

- Bartels, L. M. (2016). *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age - Second Edition*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400883363>
- Baturo, A., & Tolstrup, J. (2024). Strategic Communication in Dictatorships: Performance, Patriotism, and Intimidation. *The Journal of Politics*, 86(2), 582–596. <https://doi.org/10.1086/726945>
- Boese, V. A., Lundstedt, M., Morrison, K., Sato, Y., & Lindberg, S. I. (2022). State of the world 2021: Autocratization changing its nature? *Democratization*, 29(6), 983–1013. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2022.2069751>

Literature

- Boix, C. (2011). Democracy, Development, and the International System. *American Political Science Review*, 105(4), 809–828. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055411000402>
- Fukuyama, F. (1989). The End of History? *The National Interest*, (16), 3–18. Retrieved August 5, 2024, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184>
- Guriev, S., & Treisman, D. (2020). The Popularity of Authoritarian Leaders: A Cross-National Investigation. *World Politics*, 72(4), 601–638. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887120000167>

Literature

- Hager, A., & Krakowski, K. (2022). Does State Repression Spark Protests? Evidence from Secret Police Surveillance in Communist Poland. *American Political Science Review*, 116(2), 564–579.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421000770>
- Holmberg, S., Rothstein, B., & Nasiritousi, N. (2009). Quality of Government: What You Get. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12(1), 135–161.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-100608-104510>
- Lindberg, S. I., Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., & Teorell, J. (2014). V-Dem: A New Way to Measure Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(3), 159–169.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2014.0040>

Literature

- Lührmann, A., Tannenberg, M., & Lindberg, S. I. (2018). Regimes of the World (RoW): Opening New Avenues for the Comparative Study of Political Regimes. *Politics and Governance*, 6(1), 60–77.
<https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v6i1.1214>
- Merkel, W. (2004). Embedded and defective democracies. *Democratization*, 11(5), 33–58.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340412331304598>
- Munck, G. L. (2016). What is democracy? A reconceptualization of the quality of democracy. *Democratization*, 23(1), 1–26.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2014.918104>

Literature

Sigman, R., & Lindberg, S. I. (2019). Democracy for All: Conceptualizing and Measuring Egalitarian Democracy. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 7(3), 595–612. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2018.6>