

Challenges to Democracy

Session 4: State of Democracy

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Last session

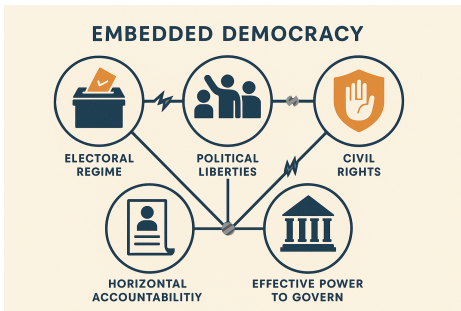


Figure: Summary of last session with GPT

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
- Current state of democracy and autocratic tendencies
- How to summarize an empirical paper

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?

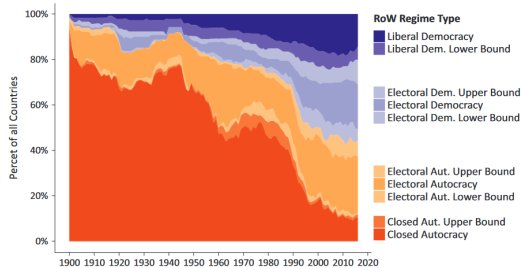


Figure: Diffusion of the democratic idea (Lührmann et al. 2018)

In 1990, authoritarian regimes became under threat.

End of History!

In pairs, discuss the following questions [5 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 unabashed 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?

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!

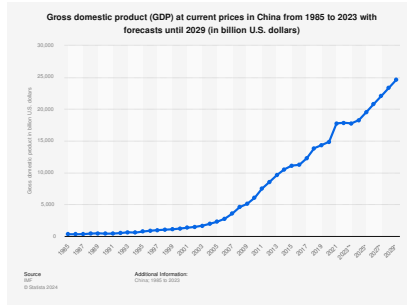


Figure: Evolution of GDP in China

→ 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)*

Question by Robin: Is the assumption of Fukuyama false, that fascism is defeated?

End of History!



Figure: Federico Finchelstein on fascism and Trumpism (Video)

Critical appraisal?

Think of the criteria we defined for ‘good research’. In which aspects does Fukuyama (1989) follow these guidelines?

- Inference
- Openness about uncertainty
- Transparency
- Method

Critical appraisal?

“I want to avoid the materialist determinism that says that liberal economics inevitably produces liberal politics, because I believe that both economics and politics presuppose an autonomous prior state of consciousness that makes them possible” (Fukuyama 1989, p. 8)

“...political liberalism has been following economic liberalism, more slowly than many had hoped but with seem inevitability” (Fukuyama 1989, p. 9)

State of democracy

In the following sessions, particularly on the causes of democratic backsliding, we will use this scheme to summarize the readings:

- **Relevance, Gap and Question:**
- **Main Argument:**
- **Data and Method:**
- **Results:**
- **Implications:**

There is a sheet of paper in front of everyone. There's a sheet for every sub-dimension. Now, everyone fills in a short response (1-2 sentences max.) to the respective dimension, folds the paper, hands it to the next one until everyone has written a short response on relevance and question, argument, data and method, results and implications. Then, we'll collect.

Relevance and Question

Usually, we distinguish between empirical and theoretical relevance. In this article, only the empirical relevance is highlighted

- world is in upheaval (exemplified by Russian invasion of Ukraine)
- no attempt to close a research gap

Research Question(s): “What is the current level of democratization **and** how has autocratization changed in nature?”

Argument

This is a data-driven article, it lacks a bit in theory but there is some argument made. Which one?

Argument

Polarization drives democratic backsliding.

- mechanism:
 - ‘toxic’ levels of polarization turn opponents into enemies
 - in polarized systems, voters are willing to trade policy preferences or partisan loyalties for democratic principles

Data and Method

- data: 'Varieties of Democracy'
- main outcome (dependent) variable: Liberal Democracy Index (composed of several sub-dimensions, more on that in the next week)
- main explanatory (independent) variable: polarization
- method: mainly bivariate analysis, regression analysis on polarization

Results: History starting again?

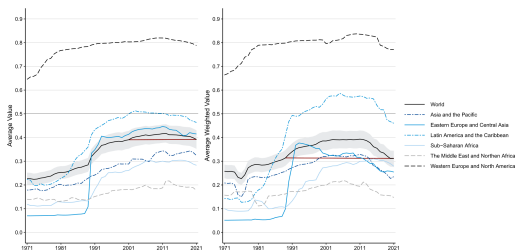


Figure 1. Liberal Democracy Index, global and regional averages, 1971–2021.

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?

Results: 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

Results: History starting again?

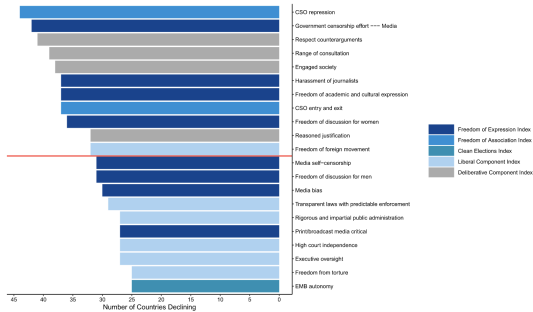


Figure: Declining quality of democracy

Results: On polarization

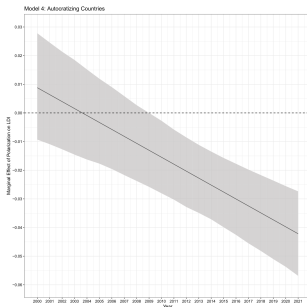


Figure: Effect of Polarization on LDI over Time (Boese et al. 2022, p. 996)

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

Results: On polarization



Results: On polarization

or this direction?



Implications

A lot of information: if you take a step back, what can we learn from the article?

Implications

1. era of global democratization is done
2. there's no end of history but a major reshuffle in the competition for the best system
3. autocratization (might) change in its nature

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.
- Dynamics of autocratization might be different from the past

To prepare for the week after next...

- next week, we'll meet for a session on how to analyse democracies
- moreover, we'll form groups for the podcast project and decide on the research question
- no readings but bring your laptops with you!

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature

- 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>
- Fukuyama, F. (1989). The End of History? *The National Interest*, (16), 3–18. Retrieved August 5, 2024, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184>
- Lührmann, A., Tannenbergh, 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.
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