

Forum: Special Conference on Pacifism & Injustice (SPECON)

Issue: Addressing the rise of Illiberal Democracies

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Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Manos Alevras, I'm 16 years old and I'm an IB1 student in Athens College. It is my utmost honor and pleasure to be serving as a Deputy President in the Special Conference on Pacifism and Injustice in PSMUN 2023.

From a very young age I have been interested in joining any endeavor that strives to tackle global problems. MUN was a truly unique opportunity for this, and I couldn't help but get involved. Ever since I started participating in this academic simulation, I have been given a valuable platform that fosters various skills. I feel like it has forged my perspectives, establishing a foundation for a more confident and globally aware version of myself. As a delegate, I've been required to research my assigned countries in-depth, analyzing and understanding their foreign policies and considering which factors would influence their behavior at an international level. I find this conference a unique opportunity to enrich my exciting MUN career.

Through this study guide, I hope to introduce you to the topic of "Addressing the rise of Illiberal Democracies" and offer you critical information on the issue that will help you draft resolutions. Nevertheless, I recognize that it is not a very easily comprehensible topic so if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at malevras2006@gmail.com. I am looking forward to working with all of you at the conference!

Kind regards,

Manos Alevras

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the optimistic perspective that the world was destined for liberalism seems to have faded. Indeed, democratic backsliding, autocratization and a swift rise of illiberalism have made attempts to uphold human rights and the rule of law more imperative than ever. Nationalism and populism have risen across the world and crucial components of democracies like electoral integrity and power to the people become all the more challenged. A number of world leaders opt to ignore the constitutional limits of their power and choose to exercise it at the expense of several, inalienable civil liberties of the populations they represent.

Illiberal democracies have been forming across the world, systems which possess the typical characteristics of democratic institutions such as elections, yet strip citizens of real power and access to civil liberties. This phenomenon of democratic recessions is prominent both in rising illiberal democracies like Poland, Hungary, and Tunisia, as well as established geopolitical powers who adopt authoritarian practices like Brazil, India, and China. As such, there is a range of illiberal democracies, those that touch upon illiberalism and those that border full-on dictatorships. In any case, the fundamental metric that renders a democracy liberal or illiberal is the adherence to international humanitarian law and consequently, the allowance of civil liberties.

Furthermore, the issue of illiberal democracies is strongly connected to Pacifism & Injustice. To be more precise, it relates most to the second aspect, that of injustice. Authoritarian, illiberal states function in clear violation of established norms, treaties, and agreements. Practices like the limitation of freedoms such as speech, religion, and assembly are classified as humanitarian injustice, since they lack compliance with international humanitarian law. The causes of this injustice vary from country to country and are a topic of intense debate. However, in most regimes, the fundamental issues that contributed to the rise of illiberalism are mostly similar. For this reason, increased scrutiny on the precise cause-and-effect pattern of authoritarianism and illiberalism in a spectrum of nations – from premature autocratic regimes like Hungary and Poland to open one-party States like North Korea – can be conducive in the fight against democratic recession.

The gradual decline of democratic governance is an imperative issue that has hindered progress towards a balanced and progressive global system. Due to its illusory nature, it is often a difficult phenomenon to approach both for the Member States themselves as well as the international community. However, action is crucial and necessary therefore this Study Guide will assist you in grasping the dimensions of the topic together with directing you towards effective solutions.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Democracy

The word democracy comes from the Greek words "demos", meaning people, and "kratos" meaning power; so democracy can be thought of as "power of the people": a way of governing which depends on the will of the people.¹

Illiberalism

A strain of political culture; a set of institutional reforms (such as assaults on an independent judiciary) and broader societal processes (such as declining trust in liberal democratic institutions) that, over the past two decades, has emerged in response to liberalism as experienced by various countries.²

Liberalism

A political doctrine that takes protecting and enhancing the freedom of the individual to be the central problem of politics. Liberals typically believe that government is necessary to protect individuals from being harmed by others, but they also recognize that government itself can pose a threat to liberty.³

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is characterized by highly concentrated and centralized power maintained by political repression and the exclusion of potential challengers. It uses political parties and mass organizations to mobilize people around the goals of the regime.⁴

Nationalism

Nationalism is an ideology that emphasizes loyalty, devotion, or allegiance to a nation or nation-state and holds that such obligations outweigh other individual or group interests.⁵

¹ Ross, Seth. "Democracy - Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People - Publi.coe.int." *Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People*, 2014, www.coe.int/en/web/compass/democracy#:~:text=The%20word%20democracy%20comes%20from,t he%20will%20of%20the%20people.

² Geneva Graduate Institute. "Democracy at Risk." *Global Challenges*, Sept. 2017, globalchallenges.ch/figure/what-is-illiberal-democracy/.

³ Girvetz, Harry K. , Minogue, Kenneth , Ball, Terence and Dagger, Richard. "liberalism". Encyclopedia Britannica, 6 Oct. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/liberalism>.

⁴ European Center for Populism Studies. "Authoritarianism." *ECPS*, 8 Jan. 2021, www.populismstudies.org/Vocabulary/authoritarianism/.

⁵ Kohn, Hans. "nationalism". Encyclopedia Britannica, 30 Nov. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/nationalism>.

Populism

A political program or movement that champions, or claims to champion, the common person, usually by favorable contrast with a real or perceived elite or establishment. Populism usually combines elements of the left and the right.⁶

Civil Liberties

Freedoms from arbitrary interference in one's pursuits by individuals or by government. Civil liberties are protected explicitly in the constitutions of most democratic countries. In authoritarian countries, civil liberties are often formally guaranteed in a constitution but ignored in practice.⁷

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The concept of illiberal democracies

Illiberal democracies are regimes that, despite maintaining some basic features of a democracy, violate basic civil liberties and often misuse the power given to them. In some cases, this looks like prioritizing factors like stability or economic growth but achieving them through anti-democratic means and compromising human rights. The concept of illiberal democracies was first introduced by Indian American journalist Fareed Zakaria. In his 1997 contribution to *Foreign Affairs*, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy", Zakaria defines illiberal democracies as "democratically elected regimes, often ones that have been reelected or reaffirmed through referenda, [but] are routinely ignoring constitutional limits on their power and depriving their citizens of basic rights and freedoms."⁸

Over the past 15 years, illiberalism is on the rise across the world. However, this democratic backsliding may vary from country to country. Religion is used as a political weapon in some ethnonationalist campaigns, for example India, while others target gender parity and LGBTQ rights, for example Poland and Turkey. Certain backsliding nations are among the world's biggest economies, like Brazil, India, and the United States of America (USA). Slovenia, which was the President of the Council of the

⁶ Munro, André. "populism". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 29 Apr. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/populism>.

⁷ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "civil liberty". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 29 Apr. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/civil-liberty>.

⁸ Zakaria, Fareed. "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy." *Foreign Affairs*, 7 Dec. 2022, www.foreignaffairs.com/world/rise-illiberal-democracy.

European Union in 2021, had been considered to face democratic backsliding issues for at least a year already.

Indeed, many of these Member States have been facing democratic backsliding for a long time, like Hungary, while others began regressing from an already weak democratic situation, like the Philippines. This process may clearly be expedited in such democracies, but the risk of backsliding is still pertinent in mid-democracies. At the same time, nearly 30% of regressing democracies turned autocratic or hybrid, like Venezuela and Nicaragua. In most cases, this was the result of the lack of electoral integrity, especially from incumbent administrations. Some illiberal states even hold proper elections, but then, rule outside the constitutional limits of their power, cracking down on civil liberties and limiting the possibilities of check-and-balance institutions. In general, disputes over election results are rapidly increasing, even in liberal democracies. In 2020, President Trump cast doubt on the credibility of the USA's election results. Unfounded charges of electoral fraud and accompanying disinformation eroded basic trust in the democratic process, culminating in the January 2021 attack on the US Capitol. A similar excuse was used to justify the coup in Myanmar, while in Brazil, when Bolsonaro tried to call Lula's election into question he was immediately dismissed.

Causes of illiberal democracies

Rise of populist political parties

In the past decade, the emergence of authoritarian and populist parties in power has been a major explanatory element in democratic backsliding and collapse. This can be contributed to a variety of factors including economic and political instability in the past decade urging citizens to look for radical change. Elected leadership, free speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of press all suffer during periods when such administrations are in power, therefore contributing to illiberalism in regimes.

The most characteristic example is, of course, Hungary, under Orbán. However, there are more extreme cases where militant groups have taken over and not just illiberal parties. An example of this is the Taliban leadership in Afghanistan, which has consistently cracked down on the civil liberties of the country's citizens.

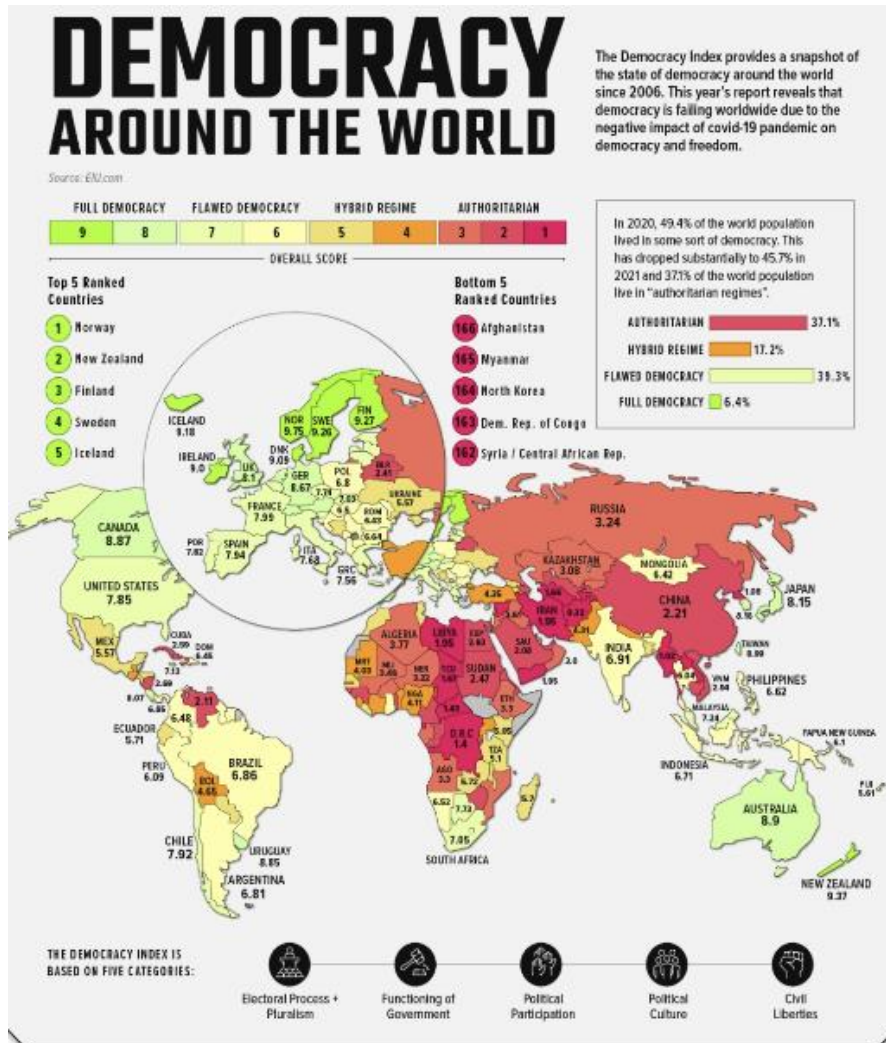


Figure 1 Democracy Index classifying states on a scale of 1 to 9, from most to least democratic

Increasing polarization

Democratic regression is also connected to rising political and cultural polarization, as well as declining numbers of confidence in democracy. States with significant internal divisions and heated political debates, as well as low levels of public backing of democracy, are more likely to become oppressive and to backslide. This is exacerbated even more when political parties utilize hate speech or spread misleading information through their campaigns. For example, the situation in the USA under Trump was immensely polarized, something that backfires on many freedoms which were contingent on Senate decisions.

Struggle to prioritize

The inability of governments to maintain a balance between national security and civil liberties, as well as the dissemination of misinformation can fuel illiberalism in states. Quite often, governments are unable to control the power of media firms or to limit the spread of misleading information. As a result, public opinion in many fields may be significantly influenced and/or swayed, and privacy may be compromised. At the same time, many countries, in their attempt to tackle COVID-19, cracked down in civil liberties. The most characteristic example of this is China, with its Zero Covid policy which triggered mass unrest among the Chinese population.

Case studies

Case Study 1: Orban's illiberalism in Hungary

Hungarian democracy has radically changed since 2010, and most experts argue that its efficiency has deteriorated over this period. When Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of the Fidesz party described his aim of constructing an "illiberal democracy" in Hungary in a big speech in 2014, many of his opponents felt vindicated.⁹

The regime shift that occurred in Hungary in 1989 and 1990 resulted in profound changes in the political system as well as the nation's socio-economic structure. The one-party state was overtaken by a pluralist government, the economy shifted to a free-market, and all State property was privatized. Economic changes impacted the labor market and employment, resulting in a fast increase in unemployment and a declining working population. The social structure was altered as well; a new class of plutocrats arose, the number of small and medium-sized businesses grew, while the population of the lower socio-economic classes and those living in poverty increased substantially quicker, resulting in exacerbating social inequalities.

In a speech held in 2014 before an audience consisting mainly of ethnic Hungarians, Prime Minister Orbán said that Hungary had renounced liberal elements of social organization and would instead pursue an illiberal approach to governance, influenced by today's "big players" such as China, Turkey, and Russia. Orbán argued that, because liberalism favors the vested interests of

⁹ Biro-Nagy, Andras. "Illiberal Democracy in Hungary: The Social Background and Practical Steps of Building an Illiberal State." *CIDOB*, 2017, www.cidob.org/en/articulos/monografias/illiberals/illiberal_democracy_in_hungary_the_social_background_and_practical_steps_of_building_an_illiberal_state.

people often disloyal to citizens, only an illiberal democracy could diligently promote the greater interest of the entire nation.

The transformation of Hungary into Fidesz's ideal vision started with the adoption of the nation's new Fundamental Law, which took effect on January 1, 2012.¹⁰ The formulation and adoption of the Bill were heavily criticized from the start for lacking any parliamentary or expert discussion. Communication with opposition parties and civil society organizations was completely ignored. The Fundamental Law, by openly defining the normative desires of an individual's personal life, established the idea of a Christian-conservative political sphere while simultaneously setting the framework for political centralization. The process of appointment of judges was also revised; the old, fair procedure in which a member from each party in parliament could choose a nominee was abandoned in favor of a new process in which the party with the most delegates chose the nominee.

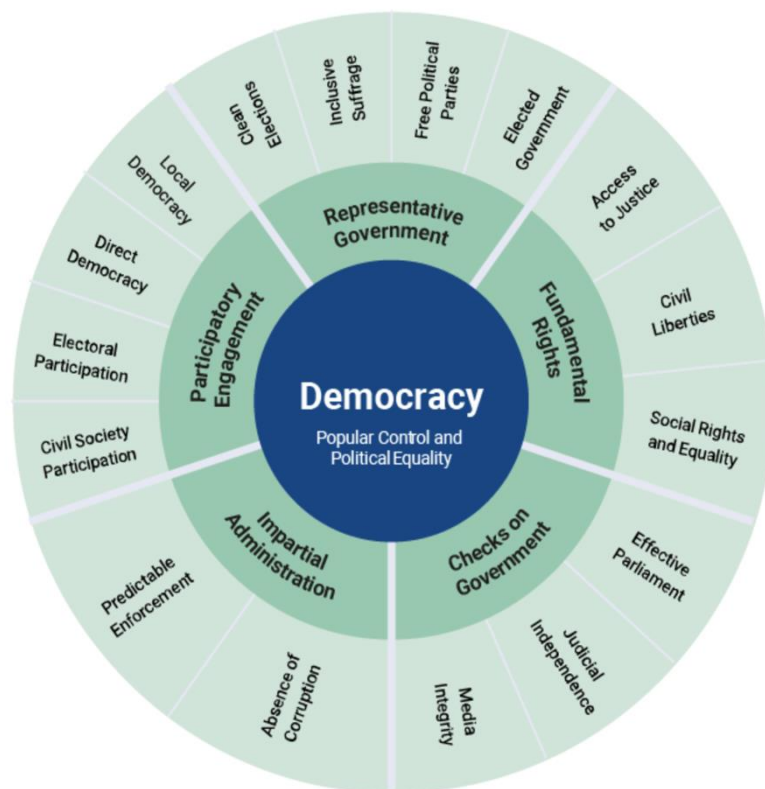


Figure 2: Essential features of a democratic system

¹⁰ Biro-Nagy, Andras. "Illiberal Democracy in Hungary: The Social Background and Practical Steps of Building an Illiberal State." *CIDOB*, 2017, www.cidob.org/en/articulos/monografias/illiberals/illiberal_democracy_in_hungary_the_social_background_and_practical_steps_of_building_an_illiberal_state.

Case Study 2: Abuse of power in Iran

Ebrahim Raisi, the former head of Iran's judiciary, was elected president in June to avoid being prosecuted for crimes against humanity connected to the widespread abductions and extrajudicial killings of 1988, demonstrating Iran's institutional impunity.

Elections took place in a restrictive context with a low voter turnout. Officials prevented women, religious minorities, and rivals from running, and tried to arrest anybody who encouraged an electoral boycott. Continued US sanctions, COVID-19, and corruption exacerbated Iran's economic recession, which was characterized by high inflation and job losses. Strikes and protests marked the year as authorities failed to prioritize proper salaries, housing, healthcare, food security, and education in public budgets. Iran has also continued to give military assistance to regime troops in Syria's civil war.¹¹

Thousands of people have been questioned, wrongfully prosecuted, and/or arbitrarily incarcerated just for lawfully practicing their civil rights, and hundreds have been jailed unjustly. To quell protestors, security officers employed fatal force and live ammunition. Women, LGBTQ individuals, and ethnic and religious minorities experienced persistent prejudice and violence. Legislative reforms weakened sexual and reproductive rights, the freedom of religion and belief, and internet access. Torture and other forms of ill-treatment, such as failing to provide inmates with sufficient medical care, remained prevalent and systematic. Authorities failed to guarantee that Covid-19 vaccinations were available in a timely and equal manner. Floggings, amputations, and blindings were enforced as judicial penalties. The death sentence was regularly employed, notably as a tool of repression. Following unjust trials, executions were carried out.

Case study 3: Human Rights violations in Syria

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) concluded on 12 April 2021 that there was a "logical basis" to think that the Syrian state carried out a chemical strike on Saraqib city in the Idlib province in 2018.¹² As a response, the OPCW halted "certain rights and benefits" previously given to Syria.

¹¹ Amnesty International. "Iran Archives." *Amnesty International*, 2021, www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/iran/report-iran/.

¹² Amnesty International. "Syria Archives." *Amnesty International*, 2021, www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/report-syria/.

Bashar al-Assad was re-elected president for a fourth term on 26 May 2021. Only residents of state-controlled regions and the Syrian minority in some other countries were permitted to vote. In June, tensions between the government, backed by Russia, and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham erupted in the Idlib northern province and the Aleppo countryside as government troops attempted to seize control of both the M4 and M5 highways. Also, the state initiated an offensive against militant opposition groups in July.

Parties to the dispute continued to perpetrate significant violations of international human rights law, including extrajudicial killings, and other grave human rights abuses, with indifference. In the Idlib province and West Aleppo governorate, government troops engaged in direct attacks on people and civilian infrastructure, notably clinics and gas stations, as well as indiscriminate aerial bombing and artillery fire. They also surrounded people in southern Syria and prevented civilian access to humanitarian supplies throughout the nation. Security personnel arbitrarily subjected returning refugees to unlawful imprisonment, torture, and other ill-treatment, as well as enforced disappearance. Thousands of individuals, including nonviolent demonstrators, aid workers, attorneys, and reporters, were unjustly detained by government forces, and many were forced to flee.

At the Northeast, the Democratic Union Party-led Autonomous Administration unlawfully seized minors in al-Hol camp and moved them to jails where they were held alongside adults. The opposition armed organization Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham unlawfully imprisoned and intimidated activists and journalists in the north-west. The State was unable to respond forcefully to the outbreak of COVID-19, and thousands of Syrians in the south and north-east were denied access to medical care. Due to poor living circumstances, tens of thousands of internally displaced persons were at danger of getting Covid-19. Under the basis of "universal jurisdiction," certain European countries investigated and punished individuals accused of perpetrating crimes under international humanitarian law in Syria through their domestic courts. Meanwhile, the death sentence was still in effect.

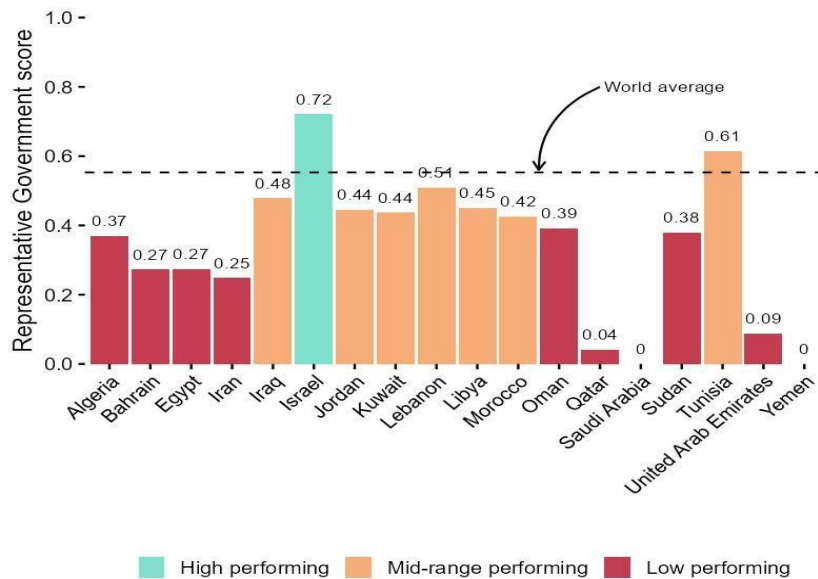


Figure 3: Chart comparing the performance of representative different governments are

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

China

China has had a long history of civil liberty restrictions and is one of the major illiberal democracies. The lack of electoral integrity and opposition parties as well as the crackdown on the freedoms of speech and expression are some of its prominent characteristics. At the same time, the use of technological means to restrict freedoms is a significant part of China's illiberal repertoire.¹³ A number of surveillance agencies help the government monitor the citizens, especially minorities. These agencies were part of the process of rounding up Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang Province and taking them to concentration camps with inhumane living conditions.

Russia

President Vladimir Putin holds enormous power in Russia's authoritarian political system. The Kremlin can rig elections and repress real dissent with loyalist security forces, an obedient court, a controlled media environment, and a legislature comprised of a ruling party and malleable opposition fractions. Corruption promotes changing relationships between state officials and organized criminal organizations. In January, the arrest and incarceration of key opposition member Aleksey Navalny sparked some of the greatest rallies in a decade. Authorities employed extreme force against the protesters, and over 11,500 individuals were arrested.¹⁴ Meanwhile,

¹³ Amnesty International. "China Archives." *Amnesty International*, 2021, www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/east-asia/china/report-china/.

¹⁴ Amnesty International. "Russian Federation Archives." *Amnesty International*, 2021, www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/russian-federation/report-russian-federation/.

election observers and independent media reported widespread anomalies in the September elections for the Duma, the lower chamber of parliament.

Turkey

To begin with, serious weaknesses in Turkey's legal system have gone unaddressed. Opposition members, reporters, human rights advocates, and others are being investigated, prosecuted, and convicted based on bogus allegations. Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention, which safeguards basic human rights. Politicians, opposition members, reporters, human rights advocates, and others are being investigated, prosecuted, and convicted based on bogus allegations. Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention, which safeguards basic human rights. Politicians use homophobic rhetoric against LGBTQ individuals, and the freedom of peaceful protest has been heavily limited. A new law also severely curtailed civil society groups' freedom of association. Over the years, serious and genuine charges of torture and other ill-treatment have been raised. Despite hosting 5.2 million migrants and refugees, Turkey denied access to thousands of asylum applicants.¹⁵ Physical attacks on refugees and migrants have grown in response to anti-refugee sentiment.

Venezuela

The repressive stance of Nicolás Maduro's government has persisted, with new reports of extrajudicial killings, disproportionate use of force, arbitrary detentions, torture, and other ill-treatment of anyone believed to be opposed to the regime. Human rights advocates, journalists, and campaigners face threats, harassment, violence, and arrest. With an increasingly crippled healthcare system and shortages of water, gasoline, food, and energy, the humanitarian crisis deteriorated and breaches of economic, political, cultural, and environment rights persisted. Impunity for abuses of human rights remained the rule.¹⁶ The UN Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on Venezuela recorded and criticized widespread impunity, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) Office of the Prosecutor established reasons to suspect that crimes against humanity had been committed in Venezuela and started an investigation.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is a branch of the UN Secretariat that works to safeguard and promote human rights granted by international humanitarian law and outlined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the aftermath of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, the UNGA created the agency on December 20, 1993. The High Commissioner for Human

¹⁵ Amnesty International. "Turkey Archives." *Amnesty International*, 2021, www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/turkey/report-turkey/.

¹⁶ Amnesty International. "Venezuela Archives." *Amnesty International*, 2021, www.amnesty.org/en/location/americas/south-america/venezuela/report-venezuela/.

Rights leads the agency, which oversees human rights operations throughout the United Nations System and serves as the head of the Human Rights Council in Switzerland. Through its mandate it focuses on the adequate adherence to international humanitarian laws and is involved in cases of human rights violations. As these are often prevalent in illiberal democracies and represent a fundamental feature of progressive governances, the OHCHR is crucial for preventing democratic backsliding.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International is an international non-governmental organization focused on human rights. It was established on 28 May 1961 in the United Kingdom, and it currently holds more than ten million members and supporters around the world. The stated mission of the organization is to campaign for a world in which all individuals have access to the human rights provided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as other international humanitarian agencies and agreements. It helps curb anti-democratic practices in many illiberal regimes and attempts to consistently mobilize public support.

UN Women

The United Nations General Assembly established UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, in July 2010. As such, UN Member States made a significant step toward furthering the organization's gender parity and women's female empowerment goals. UN Women was established as part of the UN reform program, bringing together resources and mandates for better effect. It combines and expands on the vital work of four formerly different divisions of the UN system that were solely concerned with gender equality and women's empowerment.

The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)

The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) was established in 2005 as a United Nations General Trust Fund by Secretary General Kofi Annan to promote global democracy initiatives. UNDEF funds programs that improve civil society's representation, safeguard human rights, and empower all groups to participate in democratic processes. The vast bulk of UNDEF grants are directed into local civil society groups, both in the transition and consolidation stages of democracy. In this approach, the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) performs a creative and unique role in advancing democratic government across the world. UNDEF is totally funded by voluntary contributions.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
10 December, 1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.
28 May, 1961	Amnesty International is established.
14-25 June 1993	The World Conference on Human Rights is held in Vienna and attended by representatives from governments, NGOs, civil society organizations, and experts from around the world.
17 February 1999	The World Movement for Democracy is established.
12 October 1999	General Pervez Musharraf seizes power in a bloodless coup and overthrows the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Pakistan.
15 December 1999	Hugo Chávez, a former military officer, rises to power in Venezuela, after winning the presidential election with a leftist, populist platform.
17 July 2005	The UN Democracy Fund is established to promote global democracy initiatives.
2 July 2010	UN Women is established to promote gender equality and empower women around the world.
29 July 2014	Orbán delivers his “illiberal democracy” speech in Hungary, outlining his vision for a new form of governance in Hungary that would reject liberal democracy and the values of the European Union.
16 September 2022 - present	Following the death and alleged murder of Mahsa Amini, widespread protests break out in Iran in support of women’s rights met by a harsh governmental response.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

[Resolution 2000/47 – “Promoting and Consolidating Democracy”](#)

This resolution was signed in April of 2000 and called upon states to consolidate democracy through the promotion of pluralism and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also urged them to maximize the participation of individuals in decision-making and the development of competent and public institutions, including an independent judiciary, effective and accountable legislature and public service and an electoral system that ensures periodic, free and fair elections. It also requested that the Secretary-General bring the resolution to the attention of Member States and that the High Commissioner take action based on its mandate.

[Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted in accordance with Commission resolution 2001/41 - “Continuing dialogue on measures to promote and consolidate democracy”](#)

This resolution was signed in January of 2003 and had two main objectives. The first was to explore the conceptual linkages between democracy and human rights, and the second was to spur dialogue on practical ways and means of promoting and consolidating democracy. It refers to the interdependence between democracy and human rights, the centrality of the rule of law, parliaments, institutions of democracy, human rights safeguards in democracies, the contribution of the human rights treaty bodies and special procedures to democracy and the United Nations system engagement in democracy assistance.

[Resolution 49/30 – “Support by the United Nations system for the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies”](#)

This resolution was signed in December of 1994 and called upon the Secretary-General of the UN to examine the ways in which the UN could help promote and consolidate new or restored democracies. This is a useful measure as it can often guide individual states into ways they can contribute to the overall prevention of democratic recession across the world.

[World Movement for Democracy](#)

The World Movement for Democracy is a global network of democratic civil society organizations that aims to promote and strengthen democratic norms and institutions worldwide. It was established in 1999 and is based at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in Washington, D.C. The World Movement for Democracy convenes regular global gatherings, called the Global Forum for Democracy, to bring together democratic activists and practitioners from around the world to share strategies and best practices. The World Movement also provides small grants to support the work

of civil society organizations that are working to promote democracy and human rights in their countries. Additionally, it also offers opportunities for training and capacity building for civil society organizations and democracy activists. The World Movement for Democracy's goal is to support the efforts of civil society organizations to strengthen democratic norms and institutions, promote inclusive governance, and combat corruption.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Reorientating the agendas of democracy assistance organizations

This measure involves shifting the focus of these organizations from a traditional, top-down approach to one that is grounded in research and data. This can involve a number of different strategies. For example, this could look like prioritizing data collection and analysis. In this way, democracy assistance organizations should prioritize data to better understand the political and social context in which they operate. Also, this could include conducting public opinion polls, focus groups, and other forms of research to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and concerns of citizens. Meanwhile, democracy assistance organizations could build partnerships with local organizations and institutions, such as civil society groups, academic institutions, and media outlets, to gain a better understanding of the local political context and to ensure that their programs are responsive to local needs and priorities.

Prioritizing tools that identify likely democratic recession

Prioritizing tools that identify democratic recessions involves finding and utilizing measures and indicators that can accurately identify declines in democratic governance and civil liberties. This may involve several different strategies and approaches.

Firstly, developing composite indices, such as the Democracy Index or the Freedom in the World Index, can provide a comprehensive overview of a country's democratic and civil liberties status by combining a number of different indicators, such as political rights, civil liberties, and the rule of law. Moreover, utilizing expert assessments, such as those provided by organizations like Freedom House or the World Bank, can provide in-depth analysis and evaluation of a country's political and civil liberties environment. Monitoring media freedom and the ability of journalists to operate freely and without fear of retaliation can also be an important indicator of democratic decline and should thus be monitored.

Furthermore, by tracking the ability of civil society organizations to operate freely and without government interference together with measuring corruption and the rule of law, signs of democratic decline can be identified and dealt with. Finally, the use of technology such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and social media monitoring can help to identify early warning signs of democratic recession, such as

changes in political discourse, misinformation campaigns, and signs of government repression.

Redesigning institutions and putting historically disadvantaged groups at the forefront to address inequality

An important measure for states who are gradually transitioning into democracies is uplifting minority groups or in general historically disadvantaged groups. A characteristic example of this is affirmative action. It is a set of policies which promotes these groups either in university admissions or in the job markets and attempts to compensate for past discrimination. Furthermore, an important measure assessing and addressing the ways in which current institutions and policies perpetuate inequality and discrimination. This can involve conducting a comprehensive review of existing laws, policies, and practices to identify areas where changes are needed. It can also involve gathering input and feedback from historically disadvantaged groups themselves to better understand their experiences and perspectives.

Creating a more equitable and inclusive society also requires changes in culture and attitudes. This can be achieved by promoting awareness and education about the experiences and contributions of historically disadvantaged groups and encouraging people to value diversity and inclusion. Finally, it is important to have accountability and transparency mechanisms in place to ensure that the changes made are effective and responsive to the needs of historically disadvantaged groups. This can involve creating independent oversight bodies, collecting data and monitoring progress, and involving community members in decision-making processes.

Reforming electoral management bodies and protecting integrity

An essential feature of a democracy is electoral integrity. Over the past few years, as happened in Brazil in 2022 and in the U.S.A in 2020, this integrity has been actively challenged, sparking widespread civil unrest. Reforming electoral bodies and protecting the integrity of the electoral process involves a number of steps that can be taken by governments and other organizations. One important step is to ensure that electoral bodies are independent, impartial, and accountable to the public. This can be achieved by establishing clear rules and regulations for the formation and operation of electoral bodies, as well as by providing oversight and transparency mechanisms to ensure compliance with these rules.

Another key step is to promote voter education and participation. This can be done by providing citizens with accurate and comprehensive information about the electoral process, as well as by encouraging them to register to vote and participate in elections. Additionally, it is important to ensure that voting systems are transparent, secure, and accessible to all citizens, including those with disabilities or other special needs. In order to protect the integrity of the electoral process, it is also necessary to take steps to prevent and combat electoral fraud and other forms of manipulation. This can be done by implementing measures such as voter identification

requirements, securing voting machines and other equipment, and conducting audits and investigations to detect and prevent fraud. Additionally, it is important to have effective mechanisms in place for resolving disputes and addressing complaints related to the electoral process.

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