

LESSON 3 – DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Part 1: Timeline of the history of democracy

Democracy timeline: a rocky road. This timeline features the democracy story, from its earliest beginnings in Mesopotamia in 4000BC through to advances like the Magna Carta and universal suffrage – that is, the right for all adults to vote.

It includes some setbacks like Hitler's Germany and the crushing of pro-democracy campaigns. It concludes with a tumultuous decade: 2005, in which Iraq's multi-party elections were held; and 2013, in which Tunisia's crisis during the 'jasmine revolution' of the so-called Arab Spring ended in multi-party negotiations.

Historically, these negotiations agreed on a new constitution for Tunisia, and the holding of fresh elections based on it.

Details of the key events are listed below. They are divided into three time periods:

- 1) **EARLY DEMOCRACY** (4000-27BC)
- 2) **REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY** (1215-mid 20th century) and
- 3) **MODERN DEMOCRACY** (mid-20th century to the present).

EARLY DEMOCRACY

Early Democracy: 4000BC - 27BC

Early democracy began in small societies, like city states. Discussions were held in public assemblies and decisions were made by consensus. Participation in the democratic process was intense but numbers involved were limited. It was male dominated: women, slaves and foreigners were excluded.



4000-2,500BC - Mesopotamia (Iraq)

Evidence of early democracies established in self-sufficient, autonomous Sumerian city-states, based on citizens' assemblies with presiding members and agreement by consensus.



508 BC - Greece

The Greeks evolve a system of government based on 'rule by the people' which they call democracy from the Greek for *demos* (people) and *kratein* (rule). All male citizens are members of the assembly and can vote, women and slaves are excluded.



510-27BC - Roman Italy

Nobles are represented in the Senate and commoners in the Assembly and governmental power is divided between them. The extent of the empire abroad, and conflict at home, leads to the decline of democracy in favour of strong dictators.

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

1215 - mid-20th century This period sees growth of greater representation of the people and the freedom to vote within nation states. Political parties are born plus competitive elections and suffrage for women become increasingly common. Increasingly, democracy becomes based on written laws ensuring fixed terms and use of secret ballots – guaranteed by independent judiciaries.

1215 - 1847



1215 - England

Nobles force King John to sign the Magna Carta establishing written law as a higher power than the rights of the king. The transfer of some power from the king to the nobles introduces basic freedom and property rights to 'free men'.



1248 - Mexico

The Aztecs rule a vast empire from the Valley of Mexico using a system of government based on city-states paying tributes to the emperor. The emperor is chosen from a royal family by a high-ranking council of nobles which he had to consult before taking decisions.



1295 - England

Edward I adopts the idea of an elected body or 'Model Parliament'. It includes clergy and aristocracy, as well as representatives of boroughs and counties. A similar system was used by Simon de Montfort - but Edward is the first king to call a parliament.



1628; 1642-51 - England

1628: alarmed by excesses of royal power, the House of Commons submitted to [Charles I](#) the [Petition of Right](#), demanding the restoration of their liberties.

Charles accepts petition but dissolves parliament, rules without them for eleven years. **1642:** Charles I enters House to arrest five MP critics for treason, sparking war between Royalist and parliamentary supporters. In 1649 he is beheaded. England becomes a protectorate under ruler Oliver Cromwell from 1653.

1660: The monarchy is restored after an 11-year republic but the precedent is set for future kings: parliament can survive without a king and House of Lords.



1679 - England

Habeas Corpus Act is passed which enshrines in law the rights of the individual to legally challenge their imprisonment by the authorities.



1689 - England

The Bill of Rights legally establishes the civil and political rights that an English citizen living within a constitutional monarchy ought to have. The 'Tory' faction, later the Conservatives, emerges in this period heralding the birth of the party system. 'Whigs,' the pro-parliament group opposed to the royalist Tories, evolved into the Liberal party in the reforming 1850s. Post WWI it became the Labour party.



1787 - US

The US constitution, arguably the oldest written democratic constitution, establishes a federal system of government. Separating the powers – of president, Congress and judiciary – is intended to stop the abuse of power. Slaves and women still cannot vote.



1789-99 - France

French Revolution, a period of political upheaval which sees the removal of King Louis XVI who is later executed. Power is transferred from an absolute monarchy to a republic based on citizenship and the rights of the people, although women cannot vote.

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY (contd)



1847 - Switzerland

A brief civil war leads to a national referendum, one of the first recorded uses in modern history, on a new federal constitution. Switzerland still holds more referendums than any other country.

1856 - mid-20th century



1856 - Australia

The first secret ballot is reportedly held in the former Australian colony, now state, of Tasmania on 7 February, 1856. Ballot papers with the names of those standing are printed at public expense. Secret balloting subsequently spreads to other countries.



1867 - Britain

Second Reform Act virtually doubles the size of the electorate by increasing the number of men who can vote. All male householders are given the right to vote and lodgers paying £10 a year rent.



1893 - New Zealand

Reputedly one of the first countries to achieve universal suffrage for women. But women did not achieve the right to stand for parliament until 1919 for the lower house and 1941 for the upper house. The first women politicians are, in fact, elected in 1933.



1906 - Finland

Women achieve the right to vote and to stand for election. Suffragettes in Britain adopt disruptive tactics in their bid for enfranchisement. Women's work in World War I munitions factories proves a turning point and in 1918 women over 30 gain the vote.



1917 - Russia

A series of social and political upheavals leads to the overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy. The Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, seize power in the October Revolution and establish the world's first communist government ushering in totalitarian rule for the next seven decades.



1933 - Germany

Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor after the Reichstag elections. His Nazi party passes the Enabling Bill giving him absolute power and Germany becomes a one-party state. The triumph of fascism and communism leads to a dark age for democracy in many European countries.

Modern Democracy - mid-20th century to present

While de-colonisation leads to the birth of the world's largest democracy (India), national independence movements lead to many one-party states and military regimes. The end of the century sees democracy flourishing in Eastern Europe and Latin America after decades of totalitarianism and military rule.

1947- 1970



1947 - India

Indian independence marks the beginning of the end of the British Empire as anti-colonial nationalist movements challenge the imperialist power. Three years later India becomes a republic and the largest democracy in the world.



1948 - South Africa

Apartheid is a system of racial segregation in South Africa developed by Hendrik Verwoerd, where 'blacks' are disenfranchised in 'white' South Africa and only allowed to vote in 'the homelands', which are very poor economically.



1949 - China

Chiang Kai-shek resigns as president after steadily losing ground to the Communists and Mao Zedong's million-strong Red Army. He flees to Taiwan. Mao establishes the People's Republic of China, which is ruled by the Communist party to this day.



1955-68 - US

Combining civil disobedience with direct legal action, the African-American Civil Rights Movement reverses 19th century racist legislation and denial of votes in many southern states. The Montgomery bus boycott, led by Martin Luther King, proves a turning point.



1956 - Hungary

Soviet tanks crush pro-democracy protests. More than 3,000 are killed in the violence and hundreds of thousands flee.



1957 - Africa

The end of British Empire in Africa begins with the independence of Ghana (1957) and Somalia (1960). Like many of the newly-established democracies, they become socialist autocracies. Many French colonies also gain independence, including Algeria in 1962 where Ben Bella is elected in an uncontested ballot.



1968 - Czechoslovakia

The 'Prague Spring' of political reforms is crushed by Soviet tanks. Dozens are killed and many thousands flee the country which remains under Soviet control until 1989.



1970 - Chile

Salvador Allende of Chile becomes the first democratically elected Marxist president and begins an extensive programme of nationalisation and radical social reform. Three years later he is overthrown and dies in a military coup. General Augusto Pinochet replaces him.

Modern democracies 1970 to present: democracies rise to majority of nations then decline

**USSR**

Mikhail Gorbachev becomes Soviet leader, and launches 'perestroika' (reconstruction) reforms, but living standards plummet. In 1991, as some Soviet republics push for independence, hardliners stage a coup. It fails, the Soviet Union disintegrates and Gorbachev is swept aside by Boris Yeltsin.

**1989 - China**

Pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square are brutally suppressed by the authorities. Hundreds, possibly thousands, are killed by the army. While the Communist party remains in control, far-reaching economic reforms are introduced by Deng Xiaoping.

**1989 - Germany**

Hungary opens its border with Austria, allowing thousands of East Germans to escape to the West. After the Berlin Wall falls, largely peaceful demonstrations in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania lead to the dismantling of one-party systems.

**1990 - Poland**

Solidarity leader Lech Walesa becomes the first democratically-elected president, marking the end of Soviet control. The Solidarity party wins parliamentary elections in 1989.

**1994 - South Africa**

South Africa - Nelson Mandela becomes the first democratically-elected president of a multi-racial South Africa. The beginning of the end of apartheid comes with his release from prison in 1990.

**1995 - Yugoslavia**

The Dayton Accord sets Bosnia on the road to independent statehood after a bloody civil war. Six independent countries emerge out of the ruins of Yugoslavia, with Slovenia and Croatia the first to declare their independence in 1991.

**1999 - Qatar**

Qatar becomes first Gulf state to allow women to vote and stand for election. Bahrain and Kuwait since then do the same.

**2000 - Mexico**

Vicente Fox of the National Action Party (PAN) wins the presidential elections, ending 71 years of one-party rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

**2004 - Afghanistan**

After the overthrow of the Taleban, Mohammed Karzai becomes the country's first directly elected president. Parliamentary and provincial elections take place in 2005, for the first time in more than 30 years.

**2005 - Iraq**

Iraqis vote in first multi-party elections for half a century, following the 2003 US-led invasion. Amid an escalating insurgency, which many describe as civil war, the Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani becomes president.

**2011- Tunisia**

Jasmine Revolution: widespread protests in [Tunisia](#) against corruption, poverty, and political repression force President [Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali](#) to step down in January 2011. This is followed by [multi-party negotiations which agree on a new constitution and successful fresh elections](#). [htxtP24]

Part 2: Some countries in the democracy story

This map shows some of the countries which have featured in the democracy story, from its earliest beginnings in Mesopotamia in 4000BC.

The three time periods are:

- 1) early democracy (4000-27BC)
- 2) representative democracy (1215-mid 20th century) and
- 3) modern democracy (mid-20th century to the present).



Part 3: Timeline of key events in the history of human rights

The concept of human rights has a very recent history or a very old history, depending on your how it is viewed. Belief in universal moral values has in the past been the domain of philosophy and religion. These values are expressed in every system of thought ever recorded. But belief that governments are obligated to respect the fundamental equality of all individuals is an idea that only begins to be accepted in the 20th century. It is still being developed in all countries today.

2350 BCE: The Praise Poem of Urukagina

One of the first acknowledged champions of human rights is the local Mesopotamian governor named Urukagina, who weeds out corruption in his local government, regulates slavery, and issues decrees protecting widows, orphans, and the poor.

539 BCE: The Cyrus Cylinder

Cyrus the Great, ruler of the Persian empire, is such a liberating force in the ancient world that the people of Israel described him as a messiah and the early Greek philosophers called him 'The Great King'. His reforms allow local cultures to flourish, protected religious freedom and diversity, and allow for more localized government control.

231 BCE: The Edicts of Ashoka

When the Indian king Ashoka converts to Buddhism, he preaches nonviolence and issues a series of edicts, carved on 33 pillars throughout his empire, protecting the rights of the poor and vulnerable.

AD 161: The Institutes of Gaius

Gaius' magnum opus, the *Institutes*, forms the basis of legal education and jurisprudence for much of the Roman Empire's later history. It was Gaius who draws a distinction between *jus civile*, or Roman laws, and *jus gentium*, the "laws of nations," which regulate relationships between Romans and non-Romans. His principle of *jus gentium* assumes that some legal concepts can be universally applicable, a fundamental principle of human rights law.

622: The Charter of Medina

Prophet Muhammad is quite a **libertarian** or freethinker by the standards of his day. He protects religious freedom, grants women greater **autonomy**, and ends ethnic segregation policies. For centuries to come, Islam will occupy the same role that **secular progressivism** occupies today: as a protector of minority opinions (such as Greek paganism – the survival of Greco-Roman texts can largely be traced to Islamic protection), a promoter of science, and a symbol of **pluralism** and **modernity**.

1100: The Charter of Liberties

While the Coronation Charter of King Henry I (sometimes called the Charter of Liberties) is referred to as a predecessor to the Magna Carta of 1215, it is really more of a guarantee of royal good behaviour than anything we would recognize as a human rights agreement. Still, it sets the precedent of an English monarch voluntarily restricting his own power.

1215: The Magna Carta

The Magna Carta of 1215 establishes basic due process rights for nobles, limits the power of the throne, and forms the basis of bills of rights for centuries to come. While it is not particularly libertarian, and (like its predecessor, the Coronation Charter) is more about rights voluntarily *granted* than rights universally *owed*, it remains central to the development of the British and American criminal justice systems.

1689: The English Bill of Rights

The English Bill of Rights of 1689 is the most advanced document of its kind at the time, guaranteeing free speech in parliament, the right to bear arms, the right to petition leaders, and certain other '**due process**' rights.

1789: The U.S. Bill of Rights

The U.S. Bill of Rights does not really have teeth until the U.S. Supreme Court in 1925 interprets the Fourteenth Amendment as extending its rights to the states. But even as an unenforceable statement of principles it is still forward-thinking by 18th-century standards. Americans' civil liberties depend on it to this day.

1948: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

World War II leaves the world weary of fascism in all forms. Subsequently, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights—drafted largely by Eleanor Roosevelt —

addresses the Axis powers' authoritarian horrors by describing a vision of universal human rights. It is still unachieved or 'a work in progress' to this day.

1945: Institution of the International Court of Justice and Human Rights (ICJ)

UN initiated, the ICJ's function to resolve disputes between sovereign states makes it a valuable source of support for many countries in their political relationships with other countries. **Many have suggested that the ICJ should have the power of judicial review over the Security Council so it meets UN charter aims.**

2002: International Criminal Court (ICC)

Set up by UN member nations to complement national judicial systems, ICC prosecutes individuals for international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Currently there 123 state signatories.

Part 4: Key developments in Representative Democracy (in detail):

1215 – 21st century

This period saw the growth of greater representation of the people and the freedom to vote within nation states. Political parties were born plus competitive elections and suffrage for women became increasingly common. Increasingly, democracy became based on written laws. These laws guaranteed that fixed terms of office, secret ballots, and all decisions about fair elections were backed by independent judges (the judiciary).

1215 is often given as the beginning date for the mother of all other parliaments. In that year King John is forced by landowner-nobles to agree to a Magna Carta or Great Charter of Freedoms. This document limits the king's power over both religious leaders and nobility.

Composed by the highest religious authority, this charter or document agrees to consult nobles before imposing any new taxes. From then on the consultative role of parliament is strengthened.

1236 is when 'parliament' was first used as a word. Therefore, the first breakthrough in parliament's development is a change from parliament as a council of nobility (the high born or aristocratic class) to one representing more of the people (the new landowning or 'gentry' class.)

1295: The 'model parliament' is a further breakthrough development. This name comes from the fact that from now on it becomes normal (almost) for all parliaments to have two respected representatives from each geographical area or county and two from each town. From now on those most affected by taxation have to agree to it.

The kings' desperation for money to fight wars becomes parliament's lever to gain concessions for greater powers on behalf of the people. During the 14th century the 'Lords', representatives of the aristocrats or nobles, and particularly 'the Commons', begin to demand an active say in government instead of merely consenting to tax.

1327: The pattern is now set for Parliament always to comprise three bodies: Lords, Commons and the Monarch. Representatives of the counties (knights of the shire) and of towns (burgesses) becomes a permanent part of Parliament.

1332: Parliamentarians first sit together in one chamber and become known as the House of Commons.

1341: These 'Commons' deliberate separately from the King and his nobles. This is the beginning of the Lower and Upper Houses, with the upper House a check on the lower.

1376: A spokesman is selected to take joint Commons' and Lords' complaints to the king. This 'Speaker' begins a tradition of a Commons member selected to chair its business and represent its views. Instead of everyone shouting at once so only the loudest are heard, the Speaker decides who may speak – and punishes members who break the rules.

1430: After complaints "many persons of low estate" are voting for MPs, a law is established that in county elections any '40-shilling freeholders' have the right to vote. (Today, an owner or renter of property worth at least £2,000 (US \$2, 870) per month.) These rules remain for 400 years.

Representative Democracy: 1215 – 21st century

The development of parliament parties and 'supremacy of parliament'

1628: Alarmed by excesses of royal power, the House of Commons submits to [Charles I](#) the [Petition of Right](#), demanding the restoration of their liberties. Charles accepts the petition but dissolves parliament. He rules without them for eleven years.

1642-1651: [English Civil War](#). Over the centuries, the English Parliament progressively limits the power of the English [monarchy](#). This power struggle between the king's 'divine right to rule' and parliament's right, ends in [English Civil War](#) (1642-1651). Those who back Charles I (royalists or Cavaliers) fight those supporting parliament (Roundheads). A king who dictates to parliament what they should do, or rules without them, is now regarded as a traitor to Magna Carta ideals. In 1649, after a trial, [Charles I](#) is executed for treason.

The 'God, King and country' royalists backing Charles become mocked as the Tories (Irish: 'outlaw' thus the ironically abusive 'Irish rebel'). Those supporting leader of the 'roundheads,' Oliver Cromwell, become mocked as 'Whigs,' slang then for cattle-drivers.

However, this marks the beginning of the competitive party system. The Tories evolve into the Conservative party and the Whigs into the Liberal party – and later the 'Labour' party.

The republic in England lasted 11 years. Cromwell, who becomes a sort of president plus prime minister ('Lord Protector'), dies soon after accepting this role. However, his successor son can't control the army.

1660: Parliament decide to restore the monarchy under Charles II. Religion then rises to be the main cause for dividing people. Crucially, the Restoration Settlement does not give back to the king financial control over the government and military. Thus Cromwell's legacy is to create conditions for a true parliamentary democracy.

1679: The Habeas Corpus Act is passed in England. This forever puts in law the rights of individuals legally to challenge their imprisonment by authorities.

1688. The religion of Charles II and of the army are different. To resolve this problem, parliament persuades a leader from another country to invade and unify the people under a 'protestant' Christian religion, independent of the cross-border one based in Rome (Charles II). This is called the **Glorious Revolution**.

It is called glorious because it brought radical change with relatively few deaths. It is called a revolution because part of the deal with the new leader from the Netherlands (William III) is that parliament should be the nation's lawmaker. Thus the 'supremacy of Parliament' becomes a settled principle for all future governments.

All future English and later British sovereigns are now restricted to the role of [constitutional monarchs](#) with limited executive authority. That is, they are no longer able to rule without the people's consent, as represented by parliament.

Representative Democracy: 1215 – 21st century

1688: The Bill of Rights: After 400 years of struggle to get views of the **common people** represented, this Bill allows this. It establishes the role of a representative Parliament in:

- law-making
- taxation,
- supply (finance)

The Bill of Rights also:

- confirms absolute freedom of speech in Parliament
- provides for free elections
- provides for Parliaments to be held frequently.

Parliament is still not wholly representative because the vast majority of men still do not have the vote. Also, often they are elected by only a small number of the most important people in the town – and the way MPs are elected still differs from place to place.

There is still no 'responsible government' – that is, government accountable to the Lower House – because the government does not then need to have the 'confidence' (majority consent) of the House. This means that executive government, the ability to use the power of the state to get things done, stays with appointed officials until almost 200 years later.

1707: The Act of Union merges the English Parliament with the [Parliament of Scotland](#) to form the [Parliament of Great Britain](#). When the [Parliament of Ireland](#) is abolished in 1801, its former members are merged into what was now called the [Parliament of the United Kingdom](#).

Federal systems and republics

1787 – US The US constitution, the oldest written democratic constitution, establishes a federal system of government. Separating the powers – of president, Congress and judiciary – is intended to stop the abuse of power. Slaves and women still cannot vote, however.

1789-99 – France French Revolution: a period of political upheaval which sees the removal of King Louis XVI who is later executed. Power is transferred from an absolute monarchy to a republic based on citizenship and the rights of the people. Women cannot vote but it leads to a codified law based on human reason and the rights of individuals. Human rights and obligations are based on values made famous in the motto: 'liberty, equality, and fraternity.'

1832 – UK Parliament changes the 400 year-old rules on elections. This ensures one in seven men can vote (813,000 of a population of 24 million). This is a direct response, in the 1830 election, to candidates who favour reform of Parliament getting wide support in elections.

The Great Reform Act redraws electorate boundaries to make representation fairer and simpler. It also gives the vote to anyone with property worth £10 a year or more. However, corruption continues because reformers do not win the secret ballot and other safeguards.

Chartrism, a social reform movement, begins in 1836 when a craftsman, William Lovett, and a tailor, Francis Place, form the London Working Man Association.

Representative Democracy: 1215 – 21st century

1838 - Petition for Reform: Millions of people sign the petition but Parliament rejects it in 1839, and again when it is presented in 1842 and 1848. Reformers want:

- universal male suffrage so all men over the age of 21 could vote
- voting to be by secret ballot to reduce corruption
- constituencies to be changed so each MP represents roughly the same number of people
- It wants to remove the need for MPs to own property and also to pay them a salary so working class men can become MPs.

The government's brutal response to protests and trade unions feeds the widespread feeling that Parliament itself has to change. Over the next century, reforms slowly change Parliament in the ways reformers intended, a direct response to these reformers.

1840s: Laws improve living and working conditions for working people.

1856: the first '**responsible government**' makes ministers and governments more accountable. Ministers since are officially appointed by the head of state and can be dismissed by that sovereign authority. However, they can keep their positions only by also holding the confidence of the Lower House.

If a **motion of no confidence** in the government is passed, the government must immediately resign. This puts everything back to the will of the electorate by way of another general election, to be held as soon as practicable.

Voting reforms

1856: Secret Balloting: Also, in Australia, the introduction of voting in secret stops voters feeling pressured by surrounding others – or from being intimidated during or afterwards for their political choices. 'Secret balloting' subsequently spreads to other countries.

1867: Second Reform Act: almost doubles voter numbers from 1.36 to 2.46 million. Many new voters are industrial workers in towns. In the 30 years since the 1831 Reform Act the United Kingdom has grown from 24 million to 29 million. Only about a million people have the vote. Very few of these were from the working class.

Social reforms

1868 – 1874: The government pushes through a series of major reforms to education, the army, the legal system and the civil service. It hopes reforms will improve things for ordinary people.

1870: The Education Act creates a larger budget so greater numbers of children, between five and twelve years-old, can go to school.

1872 Secret Ballot Act: voting would now take place in secret. This makes it much harder to bully voters.

Representative Democracy: 1215 – 21st century

1880 - A law makes it compulsory in the UK to go to school. Laws also improve the civil service, the army and the legal system. Attempts are made to improve public health but to get through Parliament, bills or acts have to be watered down. No one is happy with the end results.

When the UK's Prime Minister's own party argues against telling people how to live their lives he answers: "It is the duty of government to make it difficult for people to do wrong, easy to do right."

1882 Married Women's Property Act allows married women to own property and money – these no longer automatically belong to their husbands.

More reform: doubling voter numbers**1884** Third Reform Act: This doubles the number of men who have the right to vote to almost eight million men. However, Britain remains less democratic than many other places. Through the 19th century revolutions across Europe in several countries give all men the vote.

1893 - New Zealand is reputedly one of the first countries to achieve universal suffrage for women. But women there do not achieve the right to stand for parliament until 1919 (lower house) and 1941 (upper house). Finland's women win the right to be MPs in 1906. The first New Zealand women politicians are elected in 1933.

1889 to 1916: A series of UK Prevention of Corruption Acts from 1889 makes it a criminal offence if anyone, actively or passively, bribes an MP, an officer or any **public servant**.

1911: The UK Parliament Act of means the House of Lords can delay new laws only for two years. The Conservatives have a huge majority in the House of Lords. They use this to stop bills being passed by the liberal majority in the House of Commons.

The Liberals argue that the general public votes for MPs in the House of Commons and therefore they should decide the law. In a bicameral House, however, laws cannot be made without support from the 'Lords' so the Liberals limit the Lords' powers.

Further reform: tripling voter numbers

1918: The UK Representation of the People Act make radical changes to the electoral system – and finally give votes to women over the age of 30 and all men over the age of 21. As a result, the electorate – people with the right to vote – triples.

Anyone can now stand as an MP, so long as they pay a deposit of £150 – which they will lose if they do not get one eighth (12.5 percent) of the final vote.

Vote for men and women over 21

1928: UK's Equal Franchise Rights Act finally gives women the same voting rights as men. Until this time, women cannot vote until they reach 30. Women and men over 21 years old can now vote, 61 years after it is first proposed in 1867.

Representative Democracy: 1215 – 21st century

1949: The UK's new Labour government reduces the period the Lords can delay Lower House legislation to one year. (Since this time the Lords have consented not to delay laws that are in the government's election manifesto.)

1958 The UK Life Peerages Act creates 'life peers' in the House of Lords who are appointed 'for life' on their own merit. However, these positions cannot be passed on to their children. They have sat alongside hereditary peers whose positions have been handed on from father to son for hundreds of years. Under this act, women can become life peers for the first time.

After WWII there is a felt need for rapid social reform. As this House is full of old families of nobles, many feel it makes it too difficult to pass bills and change old ways of doing things. Also, many Lords only work part-time – as if it were a hobby.

Civics education and engagement as price of citizenship: 20th – 21st century

1958: Italy introduced compulsory civics as price of citizenship and as a measure to educate for a more engaged democracy and against its 25 years of fascist government. NB In 2020-21 school year it made civics a compulsory, stand-alone subject focusing on the Constitution, sustainable development, and digital citizenship.

1946: Czechoslovakia is first country to lower voting age to 18.

1964: Norway makes civics stand-alone subject compulsory for senior secondary schools (in 1974 becomes a legal requirement.)

1969: In the UK an act lowers the age at which men and women can vote from 21 to 18.

1967 and 1976: UK law changes made it illegal to discriminate against people because of their race or gender.

1979: While not compulsory Finland introduces civic education via ethics and comparative religions, differing from approaches emphasising patriotism favored in US and many Asian nations. Each year students choose between ethics or religion classes. To mould citizens, high schoolers are required to take additional course in psychology and philosophy. In 1979 research Masters degrees now required for all levels of teaching. Within 20 years Finland becomes world leading across board in PISA tests.

1985: United Arab Emirates introduce mandatory "national" or "civic" education, often emphasising patriotism and loyalty.

1998 Turkey introduces "Citizenship and Human Rights Education for grades 7 and 8 – building on **1980** "Religious Culture and Morals" following the military coup.

1999: The UK House of Lords Act is designed to make the upper house “more democratic and representative.” Hereditary peers are removed from the House of Lords altogether.

2001: Austria makes civics compulsory subject (History and Civic Education – with further reforms in **2008** when voting age dropped to 16.)

2002: England makes civics compulsory for increased political literacy and participation. In 2006, following 2005 London terrorist bombings adds critical thinking, terrorist psychology.

2003: Greece makes civics or ‘citizenship’ a separate subject at all levels of education.

2007: Austria lowers voting age to 16, Scotland follows in 2015, UK plans to do for 2026 elections. While early voting has been shown to create life-long habit, critics hold unless mandatory civics with critical thinking for schools and migrants, move will be counterproductive.

2010 – EU nations agree to mandatory civics. Kenya establishes a programme to develop a “nationally owned and sustainable programme of civic education”.

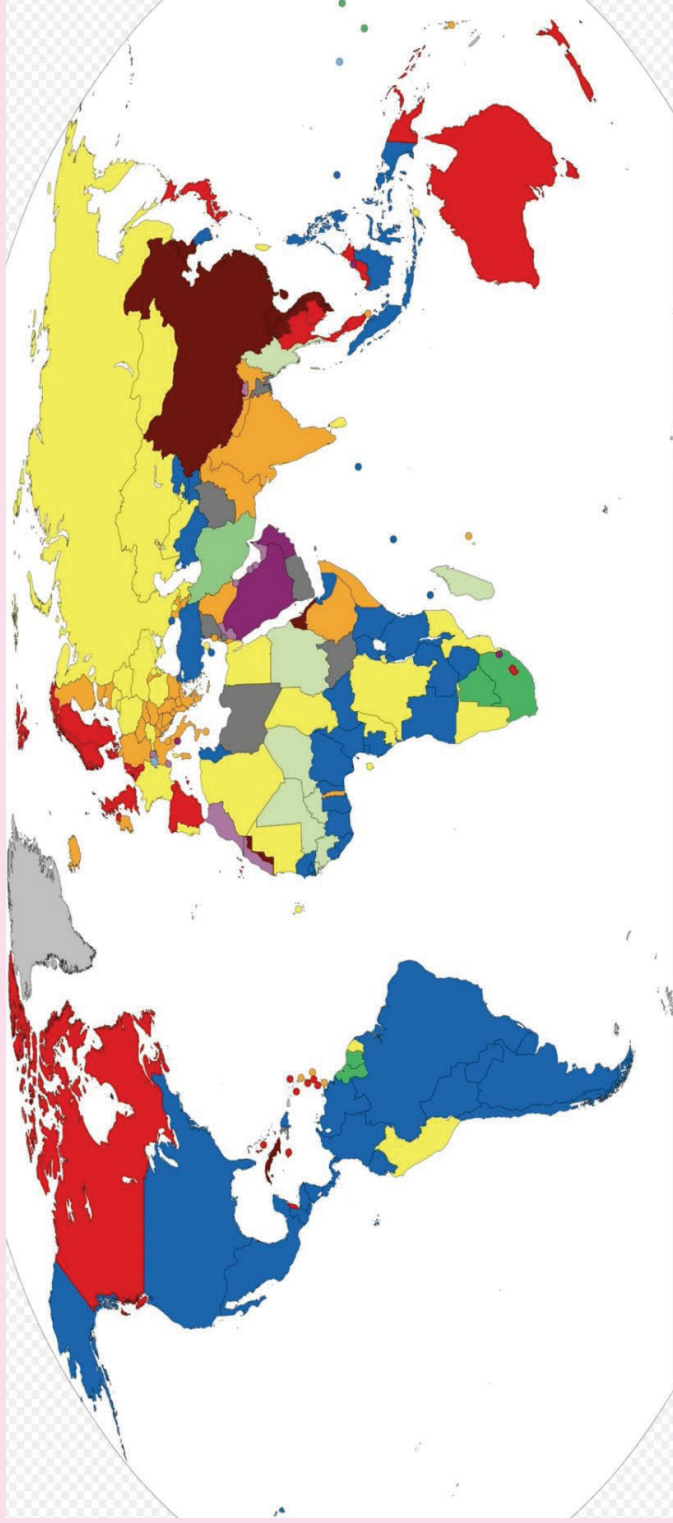
2013: Succession to the Crown Act This change allows next-in-line-to-be-monarch to be the eldest male, just the eldest. Also, marriage to another type of Christian (Catholic) would not exclude any future sovereign (king or queen). The ban on Catholics themselves becoming monarch is retained to ensure s/he will be a member of the established **Church of England**.

2015: France makes civics education a compulsory subject with introduction of Moral and Civic Education in both primary and secondary schools, after previous updates in the 1990s.

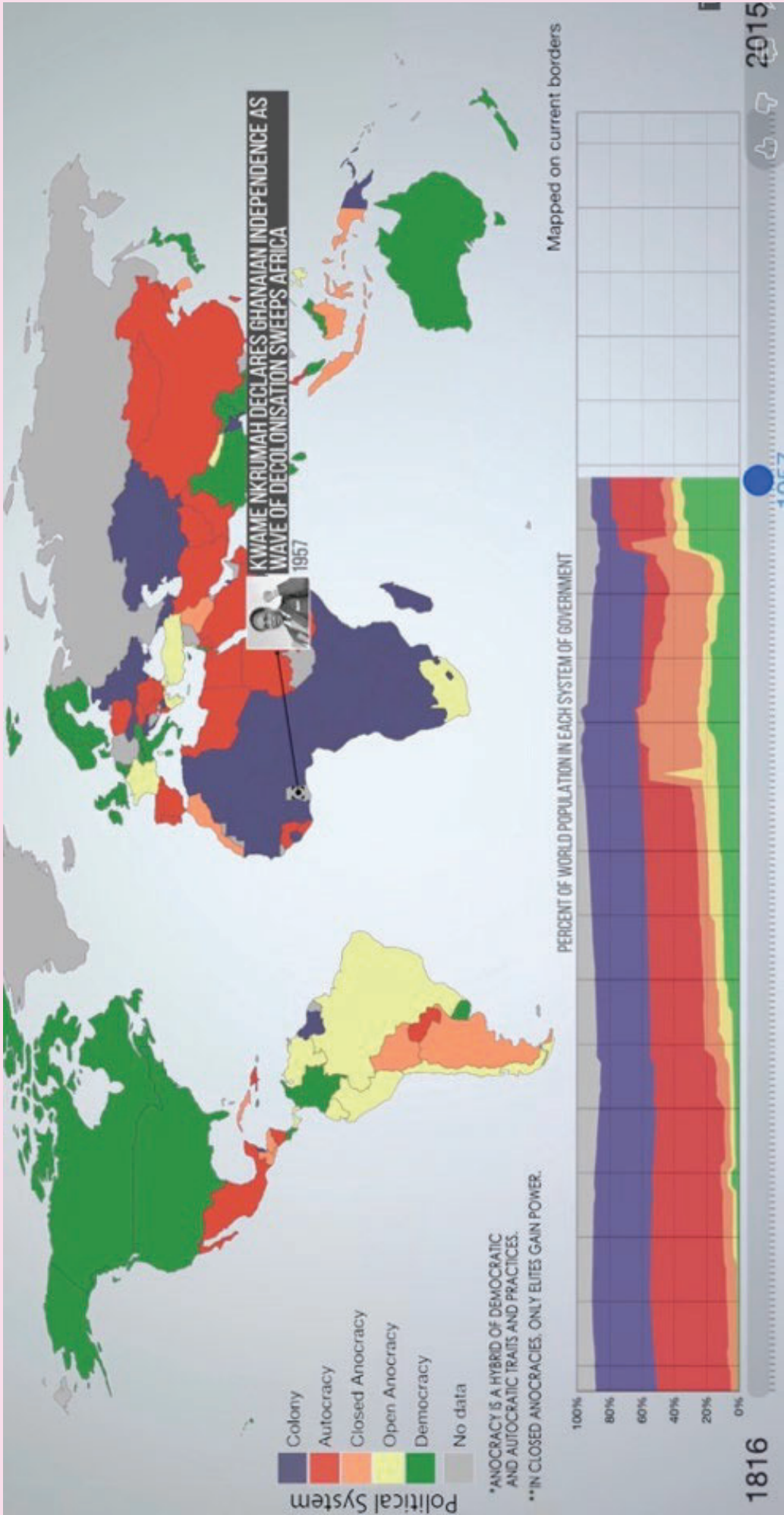
2025: Australia is first nation in world to ban under 16-year-old from 10 social media platforms in response to concerns of influence of manipulation of young minds. Critics say despite huge fines for not disabling accounts it is unenforceable - and education against harms is better.

World's states (nations & territories) colored by all type of government systems:

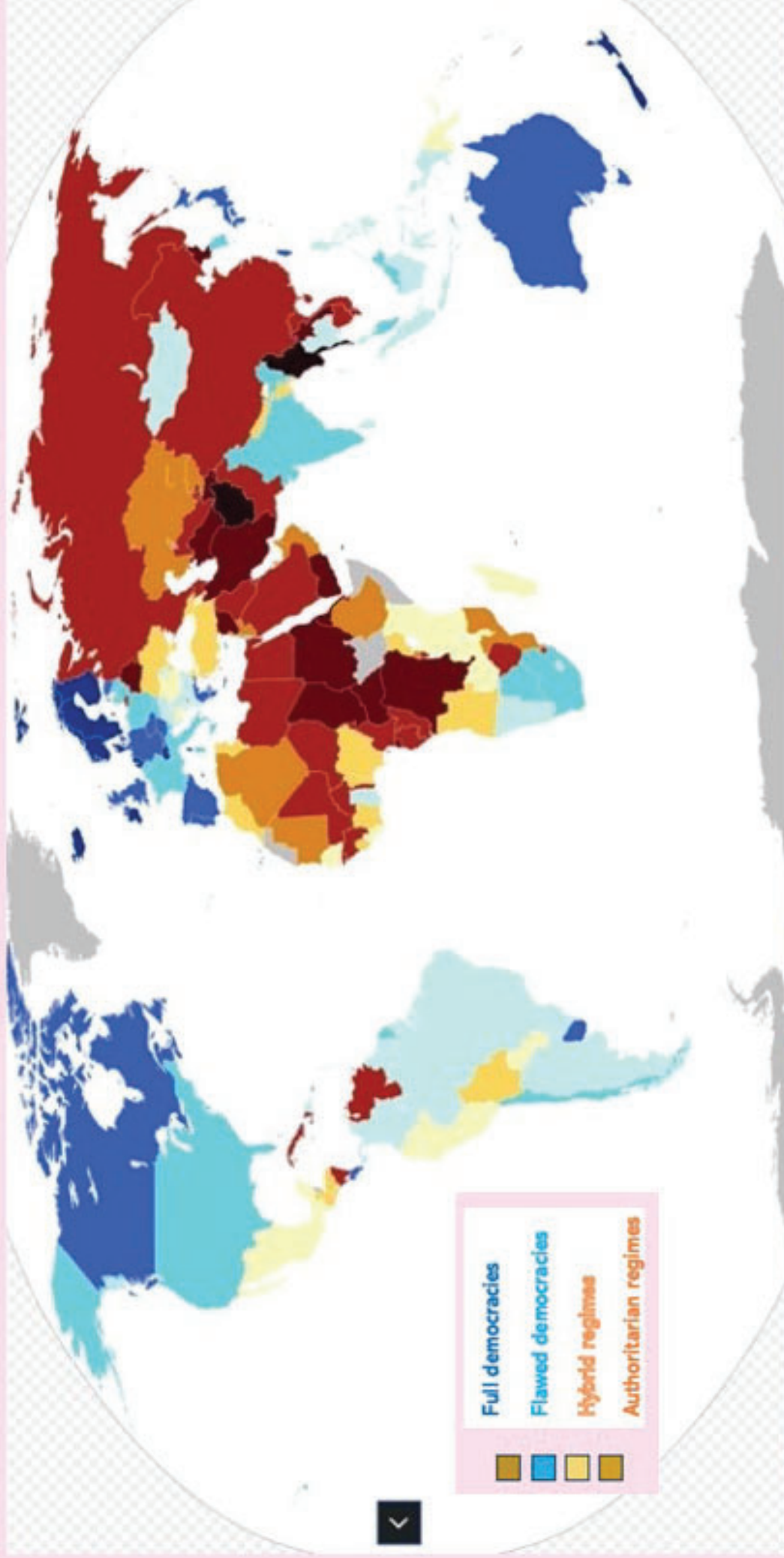
World's states colored by systems of government: **Parliamentary systems:** Head of government is elected or nominated by and accountable to the legislature. **Constitutional monarchy** with a ceremonial monarch **Parliamentary republic with a ceremonial president** **Parliamentary republic with an executive president** **Presidential system:** Head of government (president) is popularly elected and independent of the legislature. **Presidential republic** **Hybrid systems:** **Semi-presidential republic:** Executive president is independent of the legislature; head of government is appointed by the president and is accountable to the legislature. **Assembly-independent republic:** Head of government (president or directory) is elected by the legislature, but is not accountable to it. **Other systems:** **Theocratic republic:** Supreme Leader is both head of state and faith and holds significant executive and legislative power **Semi-constitutional monarchy:** Monarch holds significant executive or legislative power but is still restricted by the constitution. **Absolute monarchy:** Monarch has unlimited power. **One-party state:** Power is constitutionally linked to a single political party. **Military junta:** Committee of military leaders controls the government; constitutional provisions are suspended. **Governments with no constitutional basis:** No constitutionally defined basis to current regime, i.e., **provisional governments** or **Islamic theocracies.** **Dependent territories or places without governments** **Note:** this chart represents the *de jure* systems of government, not the *de facto* degree of democracy. v t e



World's states (nations & territories) colored by major political systems - & early history:



The Economist democracy degrees of democracy (by type) map:



The 2024 The Economist Democracy Index map Full democracies 9.00-10.00 8.00-8.99 Flawed democracies 7.00-7.99 6.00-6.99 Hybrid regimes 5.00-5.99 4.00-4.99 Authoritarian regimes 3.00-3.99 2.00-2.99 1.00-1.99 0.00-0.99





















Dashboard - Own work

Map showing countries/territories by Democracy Index score according to 2024 report Full democracies 9.01-10.00 8.01-9.00 No Data Flawed democracies 7.01-8.00 6.01-7.00 Hybrid regime 5.01-6.00 4.01-5.00 Authoritarian regimes 3.01-4.00 2.01-3.00 1.01-2.00 0.00-1.00

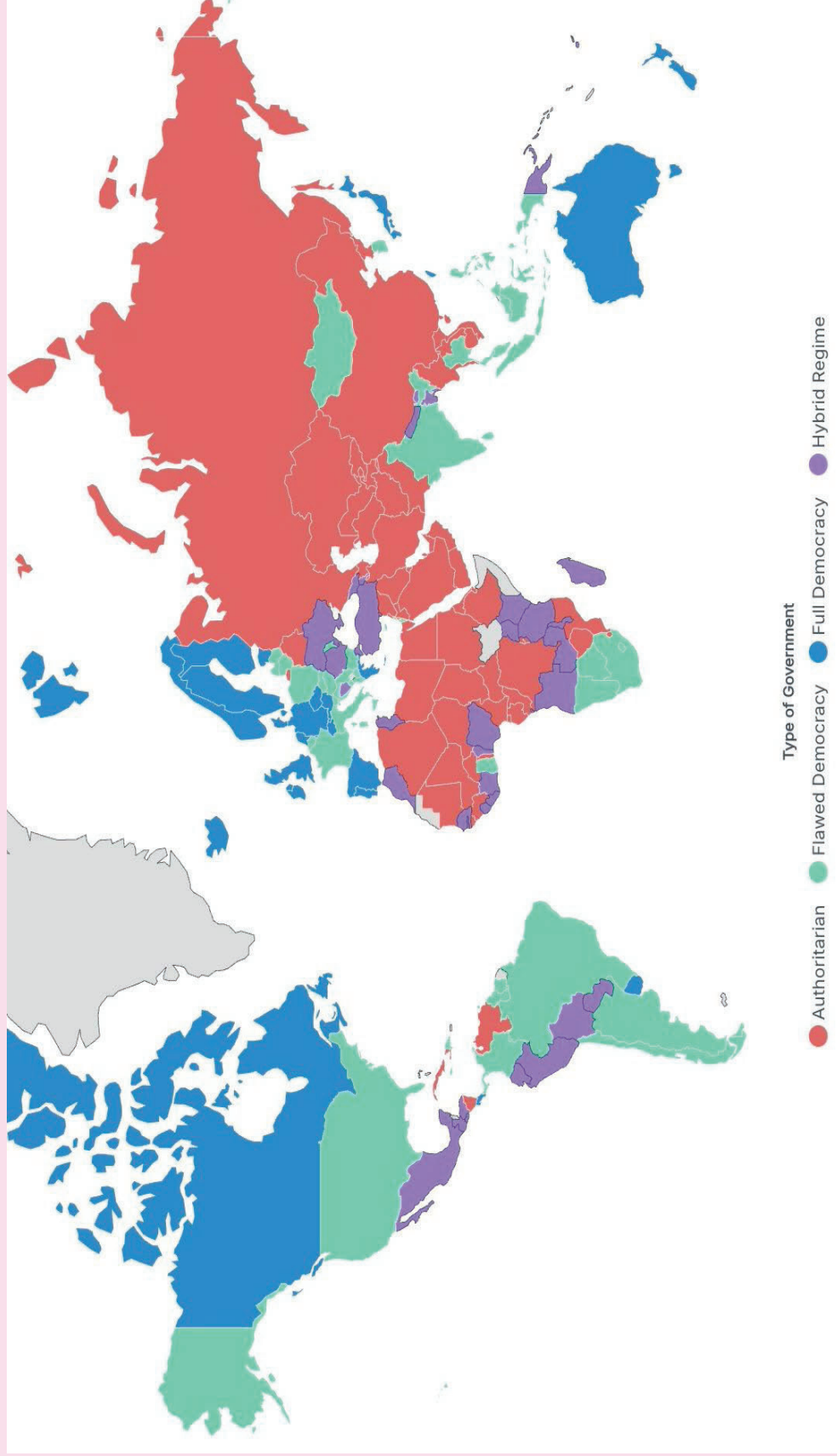
CC BY-SA 4.0

File: Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2024.svg
Created: 28 February 2025
Uploaded: 28 February 2025

The Economist democracy index scores:

Type of regime ⇄	Score		Countries		Proportion of world population (%)	
	2022–present ⇄	2006–2021 ⇄	Number ⇄	(%)w ⇄	By types ⇄	Subtotal ⇄
Full democracies	9.00–10.00 	9.01–10.00 	25	15.0%	6.6%	45%
	8.00–8.99 	8.01–9.00 				
Flawed democracies	7.00–7.99 	7.01–8.00 	46	27.5%	38.4%	
	6.00–6.99 	6.01–7.00 				
Hybrid regimes	5.00–5.99 	5.01–6.00 	36	21.6%	15.7%	
	4.00–4.99 	4.01–5.00 				
Authoritarian regimes	3.00–3.99 	3.01–4.00 	60	35.9%	39.2%	
	2.00–2.99 	2.01–3.00 				
	1.00–1.99 	1.01–2.00 				
	0.00–0.99 	0.00–1.00 				

Democracies 2025 – by percent of countries

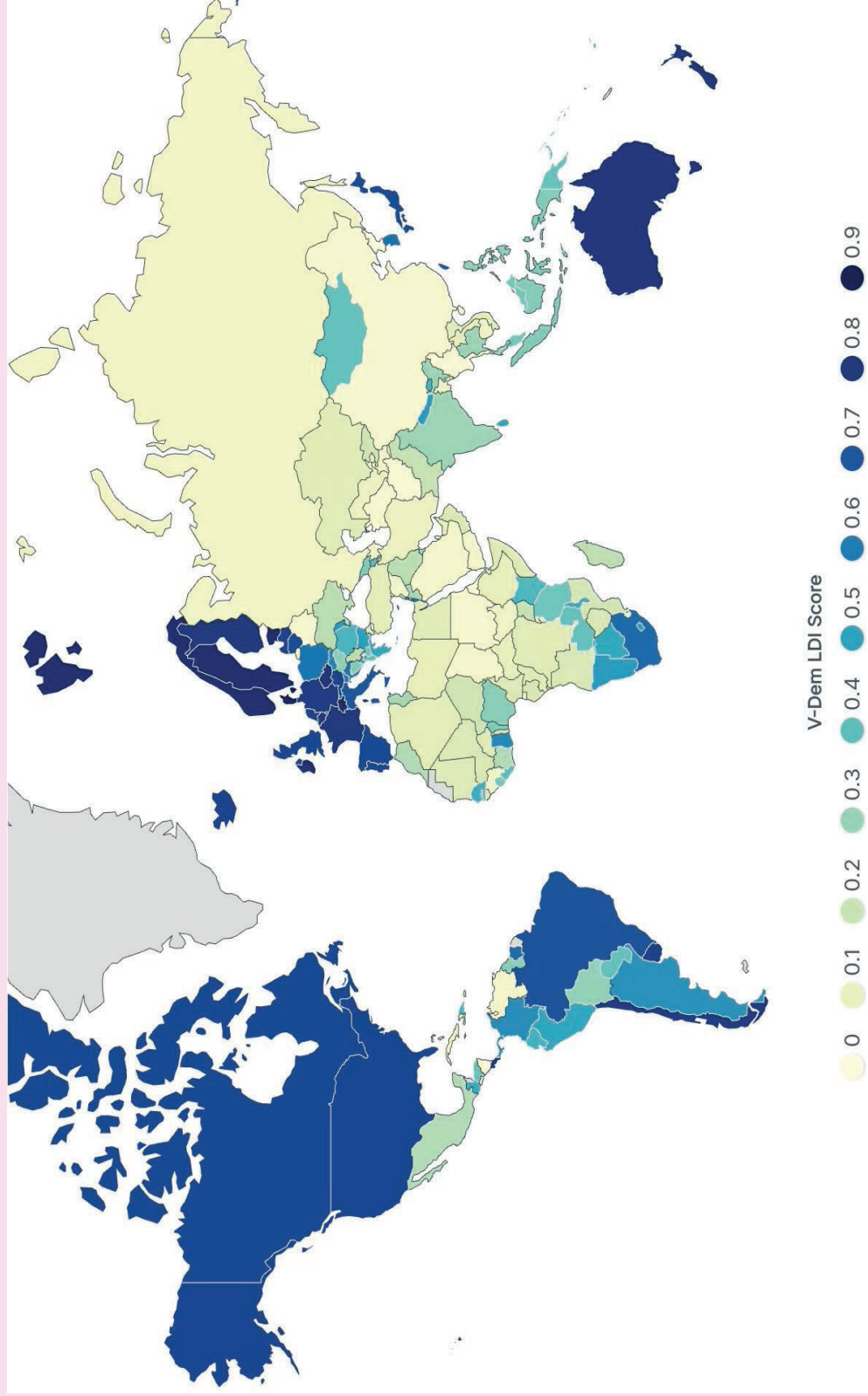


Type of Government


Type of Government



Democracy Without Borders (V-Dem) democracy index map – by overall score:




 Denmark
0.88

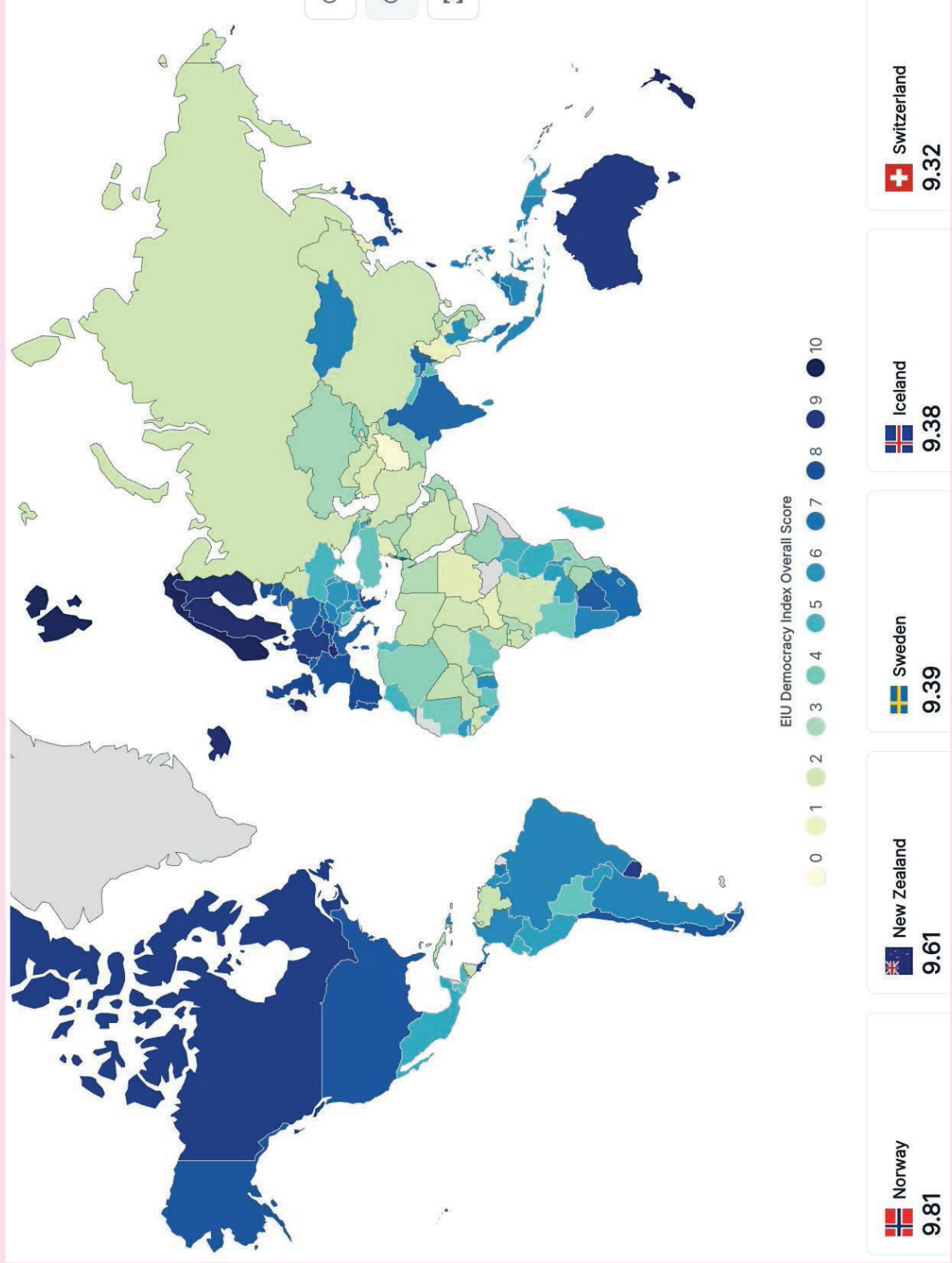
 Switzerland
0.85

 Estonia
0.85

 Norway
0.84

 Sweden
0.84

The Economist (EIU) democracy index map – by overall score:

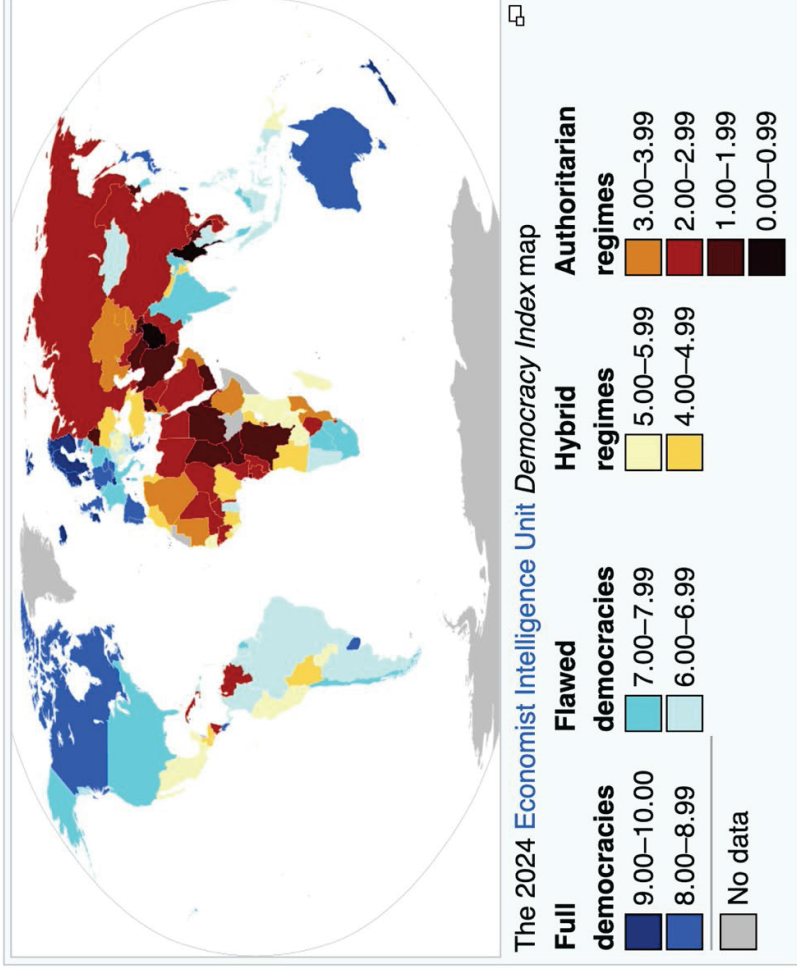


EIU Index of democracies worldwide – by democratic rights and institutions



For overview of democracy indices, see *Democracy indices*.

The **Democracy Index** published by the **Economist Group** is an index measuring the quality of democracy across the world. This quantitative and comparative assessment is centrally concerned with democratic rights and democratic institutions. The methodology for assessing democracy used in this democracy index is according to the **Economist Intelligence Unit** which is part of the Economist Group, a UK-based private company, which publishes the weekly newspaper *The Economist*. The index is based on 60 indicators grouped into five



UPDATE ON GLOBAL DEMOCRACIES: 2014 - 2026 - Preamble

The past decade or so (2014-2026) has seen more countries decline in their democratic performance than improve in it. However, active resistance and commitment to democratic norms in countries like Poland, Brazil, Senegal and step-by-step Somalia show that democratic recovery is possible.

Historically this 'third wave of autocratization' or 'democratic backsliding' is driven by political, economic, and social factors. As this decline is not a sudden event but a gradual process, its causes are harder to identify and counter. But we now know that anti-democratic actors – including not only extremist's citizens but also 'deep state' activists and foreign state subversives – have purposefully sought to undermine institutions and norms.

This backsliding restricts public's ability to participate in the process of government selection or contest it. Typically, it involves the weakening of democratic institutions, such as the peaceful transition of power or free and fair elections. It also violates the individual rights that underpin democracies – especially freedom of expression.

Key causes and contributing factors include: a rise of populism and personalism, economic inequality and social discontent, political polarization and distrust, erosion of institutional checks and balances (this includes threats to judicial independence, media freedom, electoral integrity, and rule of law), external threats and geopolitics (rise of autocratic great powers such as China and Russia who are willing to support like-minded regimes) and cultural shifts (for example, rises in ethnic diversity can lead segments of a population to favour homogeneity over diversity and individual freedoms.)

In the late twentieth century, during a period known as the third wave of democratization, many new, weakly institutionalized democracies were established. Like early 1960s African democracies, these regimes were most vulnerable to democratic backsliding. Following 2008's Great Recession, democratization's third wave has been ongoing with the number of liberal democracies dipping but still higher than before 1990.

A source of some optimism is that of all autocratization episodes from 1900–2025 a majority have a U-turn shape. Due to civil society pushbacks and outside support, such states more frequently achieve subsequent democratization.

Countries' governance systems can be rated

Credible democracy indices have been devised over the past 50 years, primarily New York based Freedom House's Freedom in the World 1-7 scale introduced in 1972 (but with data going back to 1950s), the London based Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) in 2006 with a 0-10 scale, and Sweden's V-Dem's in 2014. V-Dem uses a 0 – 1 scale to measure quality of government and

Democracy gains and losses 2014 – 2026

2014 – 2020



Xi Jinping takes power in China
2014

Xi Jinping, the new CCP leader, is formally appointed as China's president. Initial hopes that he might loosen political controls and tolerate greater dissent are dashed as he maneuvers to centralize power and launches a crackdown on grassroots activists, journalists, and online speech. (Photo: APEC 2013/Wikimedia Commons)



Hungary's Orbán proposes "illiberal" democracy
2015

Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán, who has been removing checks and balances since taking power in 2010, declares that liberal democracy is in decline and outlines a competing "illiberal new state based on national values," pointing to Turkey, China, Russia, and Singapore as models. The speech provides an ideological grounding for the rise of right-wing populism in Europe and North America. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)



Thailand's democracy falls in coup d'état
2015

Thailand suffers its 13th military coup since 1932, and unlike after previous interventions, democratic forces are not permitted to return to power. Frequent coups have contributed to the country's 13 status changes over the history of the report, and it remains Not Free to date. (Photo: Takeaway/Wikimedia)



Yanukovich flees Ukraine, Moscow seizes Crimea and eastern Donbas
2015

Authoritarian president Viktor Yanukovich flees Ukraine amid an uprising known as the Revolution of Dignity, and lawmakers enact a series of democratic reforms. Russian armed forces invade Crimea immediately after Yanukovich's ouster, and occupation authorities silence independent media, persecute political opponents, and conduct a sham referendum to support Moscow's illegal annexation of the peninsula. Russian operatives also set up separatist administrations in the eastern Donbas area, triggering a military conflict with the new government in Kyiv. (Photo: Anton Holoborodko/Антон Голобородько/Wikimedia Commons)



Umbrella Movement protesters demand democracy in Hong Kong
2015

Prodemocracy protesters in Hong Kong occupy the semi-autonomous city for 79 days after Beijing imposes antidemocratic restrictions on the next elections and rejects calls for genuine universal suffrage. The demonstrations are dubbed the Umbrella Movement due to protesters' use of umbrellas to protect themselves from pepper spray wielded by police. (Photo: Pasu Au Yeung/Wikimedia Commons)



Hungary declines to Partly Free
2019

After eight years of illiberal rule by Prime Minister Orbán, Hungary becomes the first European Union member state to lose its Free status. Several major antigovernment protests take place during the year. (Photo: Пресс-служба Президента Российской Федерации/Wikimedia Commons)



Sudan's al-Bashir ousted amid popular protests
2020

Demonstrators turn out to demand that longtime Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir step down, leading the military to intervene and remove him from office. A transitional administration in which civilian and military leaders share power lifts some restrictions and plans for elections, but the military later seizes control in 2021 and cracks down on ensuing prodemocracy protests, which continue through 2023. (Photo: Osama Elfaki/Wikimedia Commons)



Another prodemocracy movement sweeps Hong Kong
2020

Introduction of a draft law that would allow extradition of Hong Kongers to face trial in mainland China's CCP-dominated courts prompts months of large-scale protests that persist despite violent police repression and the eventual withdrawal of the bill. Prodemocracy candidates win a landslide victory in year-end elections to district councils. (Photo: Wongan4614/Wikimedia Commons)

Democracy gains and losses 2014 – 2026



US Capitol insurrection 2022

In the United States, a mob assembled at the urging of outgoing president Donald Trump turns violent and temporarily takes over the US Capitol in an antidemocratic attack aimed at preventing Congress from confirming the 2020 election victory of Joe Biden. Congress later reconvenes to complete its certification, and Biden is peacefully inaugurated as president. Trump has since continued to make false assertions about large-scale fraud in the election, but such claims were roundly dismissed by independent state and federal courts. (Photo by Samuel Corum/Getty Images)



Cubans demand freedom 2022

In the largest antigovernment mobilization in decades, Cubans take to the streets to protest economic deterioration and demand fundamental freedoms after more than 60 years of communist rule. Security forces respond with violence and arrest over 1,400 people. The regime has since come under intense international pressure to release political prisoners who were detained for participating in the movement. (Photo: 14ymedia/Wikimedia Commons)



Taliban rule returns to Afghanistan 2022

Afghanistan's elected government is overthrown by the Taliban as US military personnel withdraw from the country. Taliban authorities reimpose draconian restrictions on the population, including the exclusion of women and girls from nearly all aspects of public life. Groups of women continue to protest sporadically, despite the near-certainty that they will be beaten and dispersed by Taliban personnel. (Photo: Wikimedia/VOA News)



Democratic opposition criminalized in Hong Kong 2022

Authorities arrest dozens of prodemocracy politicians and activists for alleged violations of the draconian National Security Law, which CCP authorities in Beijing had imposed on the territory the previous year. Independent news outlets, civic groups, and labor unions are forced to disband. New electoral rules that require "patriotic" prescreening of candidates result in a Legislative Council with no members from the prodemocracy camp. (Photo: Iris Tong/VOA/Wikimedia)

2020 –
2026



Xi begins third term amid protests in China 2023

Xi Jinping secures a third term as CCP leader, setting the stage for his appointment to a third term as president of China in 2023. However, Xi's cult of personality and claims about the effectiveness of China's autocratic system are undercut by mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic, and nationwide protests prompt the government to abruptly abandon its harsh and inhumane public health restrictions. (Photo: China News Service/Wikimedia Commons)



Full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine 2023

Russia's authoritarian regime launches a massive invasion of Ukraine, dramatically escalating its attempts to seize Ukrainian territory since 2014. Despite fears that they would quickly overrun the country, Russian forces encounter fierce resistance from Ukrainians, who are determined to defend their sovereignty and democratic freedoms. Other democracies increase their military aid to Kyiv and agree to break off economic ties to Russia. (Photo: Marc Sierjoo/Getty Images)



US violates UN Charter and Venezuela sovereignty 2026

Following a January US-led operation to remove Venezuelan President Maduro, independent democracy watchdog Freedom House call for urgent international cooperation with Venezuelan opposition for a peaceful, democratic transition. While the regime was undemocratic, Freedom House said US actions must support genuine democratic governance, not instrumentalise democracy for geopolitical aims. 23 Venezuelan security officers and 32 member of Cuban military and intelligence agencies are killed in the attack. Photo: J-Media



Protests anti Iran's theocratic government 2026

Beginning 28 December, 2025 in Teheran, demonstrations by January 9, 2026 reach 280 locations in 27 of Iran's 31 provinces. The government responds by blocking the internet and international telephone calls in a bid to cut off the country of 85 million from outside influence. HRANA, a human rights agency focusing on human rights in Iran, says violence around the demonstrations has killed at least 42 people while more than 2270 others have been detained.