

Democracy Index 2015

Democracy in an age of anxiety

A report by The Economist Intelligence Unit





The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2015

Democracy in an age of anxiety

The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index provides a snapshot of the state of democracy worldwide for 165 independent states and two territories—this covers almost the entire population of the world and the vast majority of the world's states (micro-states are excluded). The Democracy Index is based on five categories: *electoral process and pluralism*; *civil liberties*; *the functioning of government*; *political participation*; and *political culture*. Based on their scores on a range of indicators within these categories, each country is then itself categorised as one of four types of regime: “full democracies”; “flawed democracies”; “hybrid regimes”; and “authoritarian regimes”.

This is the eighth edition of the Democracy Index. It reflects the situation in 2015, a year in which democracy was tested in the face of war, terrorism, mass migration and other crises, and, in some cases, suffered serious setbacks. The title of this year's report reflects the threat to democracy emanating from the fearful mood of our times, which informs the reactions of ordinary people and political elites alike. An increased sense of personal and societal anxiety and insecurity in the face of diverse perceived risks and threats—economic, political, social and security—is undermining democracy, which depends on a steadfast commitment to upholding enlightenment values (liberty, equality, fraternity, reason, tolerance and free expression) and fostering democratic institutions and a democratic political culture.

In many democracies, political elites worry about their inability to relate to the electorate and fear the challenge that populist parties pose. In some cases, established parties have colluded to exclude or marginalise the populists. In the face of terrorist threats, democratic governments have reacted in anti-democratic ways, calling into question freedom of speech or adopting draconian laws. In non-democratic countries, authoritarian political elites fear the threat from the masses and seek to bolster their rule by imprisoning opponents, restricting the media, limiting popular freedoms and repressing protest. Meanwhile, electorates are ever more anxious—about economic insecurity, about their personal safety, about the consequences of immigration, about the threat of terrorism—and

Table 1
Democracy Index 2015, by regime type

	No. of countries	% of countries	% of world population
Full democracies	20	12.0	8.9
Flawed democracies	59	35.3	39.5
Hybrid regimes	37	22.2	17.5
Authoritarian regimes	51	30.5	34.1

Note. “World” population refers to the total population of the 167 countries covered by the Index. Since this excludes only micro-states, this is nearly equal to the entire estimated world population.

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.



angry that their concerns are not being represented by the established parties. This mood of fear and insecurity represents one of the main threats to democracy today.

Almost one-half of the world's countries can be considered to be democracies, but, in our index, the number of "full democracies" is low, at only 20 countries; 59 countries are rated as "flawed democracies". Of the remaining 88 countries in our index, 51 are "authoritarian" and 37 are considered to be "hybrid regimes". As could be expected, the developed OECD countries dominate among "full democracies"; there are two Asian countries, one Latin American country (Uruguay) and one African country (Mauritius), which suggests that level of development is not a binding constraint, but is a constraint, nevertheless. Slightly less than one-half (48.4%) of the world's population lives in a democracy of some sort, although only 8.9% reside in "full democracies". Around 2.6bn people, more than one-third of the world's population, still live under authoritarian rule (with a large share being, of course, in China).

"Flawed democracies" are concentrated in Latin America, eastern Europe and Asia. Eastern Europe does not have a single "full democracy", as some of the region's most politically developed nations, such as Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, have suffered bouts of political instability and popular support for democracy is surprisingly low. Despite progress in Latin American democratisation in recent decades, many countries in the region have fragile democracies. Levels of political participation are generally low and democratic cultures are weak. Asia has been catching up with Latin America and eastern Europe when it comes to the number of "flawed democracies" (and has overtaken eastern Europe in terms of its average regional score), adding three more to give it a total of 13 in 2015, compared with 15 in both Latin America and eastern Europe. "Authoritarian regimes" are concentrated in Africa, the Middle East and the CIS countries of eastern Europe.

There was no change in the average global score in 2015, which remained at 5.55 (on a scale of 0 to 10). However, four countries fell out of the "full democracy" category (Costa Rica, France, Japan, South Korea) in 2015, bringing the total number of full democracies down to 20 from 24 in 2014. A total of 61 countries recorded an improvement in their score compared with 2014; 56 recorded a deterioration and 50 retained the same score as in the previous year. Three regions experienced a regression: eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and North America—as signified by a decline in their regional average score, with MENA recording the biggest decline. Four regions—Asia & Australasia, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), Latin America, and western Europe—recorded an improvement in their average score, although in the case of the last two, the improvement in the average score compared with 2014 was negligible (0.01), indicating continued stagnation of democracy in these regions.



Democracy under strain, but some bright spots

Important recent developments include:

Since 2008, US democracy has been adversely affected by the increasing polarisation of the political scene and political brinkmanship; the popular mood has soured and faith in political institutions and elites has collapsed. The popularity of presidential contenders Donald Trump (Republican) and Bernie Sanders (Democrat) illustrates the mood of popular disaffection with the status quo.

Popular confidence in political institutions and parties continues to decline in many developed countries. Poor economic performance, weak political leadership and the growing gap between traditional political parties and the electorate have spurred the growth of alternative populist movements in Europe. Discontent with democracy in Europe was expressed in 2015 in the form of growing support for populist parties, which pose an increasing challenge to the established political order, as was illustrated by election results in Greece, Portugal and Spain.

In eastern Europe, where democracy was restored only relatively recently, in 1990-91, there is a mood of deep popular disappointment with democracy, and the former communist bloc has recorded the most dramatic regression of any region during the decade since we launched the Democracy Index, as measured by its average score compared with 2006. As 2015 drew to a close, a further significant challenge to democratic standards was developing in Poland, following the election of a new, socially conservative government.

With the exception of Tunisia, the Arab Spring has given way to a wave of reaction and a descent into violent chaos; the ascendancy of the extreme jihadist Islamic State (IS) and other radical Islamist groups in MENA has been permitted by the political vacuum left behind by the demise of Arab nationalism, the failure of other political forces and the collapse of nation states over the past two decades.

Japanese democracy faced challenges in 2015 and a decline in its score has resulted in its falling into the “flawed democracy” category. South Korea, too, has joined the list of “flawed democracies”. By contrast, relatively free and fair elections in Myanmar, after 50 years of military rule, resulted in its move from “authoritarian regime” to “hybrid regime”.

In China, the tension generated by rising popular support for the concept of democratic government—which resulted in a modest improvement in the country’s score and an eight-position rise in the global rankings, to joint 136th place—and the authoritarian practices of the ruling communist party is increasing.

In 2015 a popular backlash against corruption gathered pace in Latin America—where rampant crime, violence and drug-trafficking, as well as corruption, have had a corrosive impact on democracy—leading to investigations and arrests at the highest levels of government and business in countries such as Brazil and Guatemala.

In SSA, Nigeria experienced in 2015 its first democratic change of power, and Madagascar and Burkina Faso also made progress. However, the score for 18 countries declined in 2015 and, despite an improvement in the average regional score, the average ranking of countries in SSA fell by seven places, suggesting that it is falling behind other regions.



The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2015
Democracy in an age of anxiety

Table 2
Democracy Index 2015

	Rank	Overall score	Electoral process and pluralism	Functioning of government	Political participation	Political culture	Civil liberties
Full democracies							
Norway	1	9.93	10.00	9.64	10.00	10.00	10.00
Iceland	2	9.58	10.00	9.29	8.89	10.00	9.71
Sweden	3	9.45	9.58	9.64	8.33	10.00	9.71
New Zealand	4	9.26	10.00	9.29	8.89	8.13	10.00
Denmark	5	9.11	9.17	9.29	8.33	9.38	9.41
Switzerland	6	9.09	9.58	9.29	7.78	9.38	9.41
Canada	7	9.08	9.58	9.29	7.78	8.75	10.00
Finland	8	9.03	10.00	8.93	7.78	8.75	9.71
Australia	9	9.01	9.58	8.93	7.78	8.75	10.00
Netherlands	10	8.92	9.58	8.57	8.89	8.13	9.41
Luxembourg	11	8.88	10.00	9.29	6.67	8.75	9.71
Ireland	12	8.85	9.58	7.50	7.78	9.38	10.00
Germany	13	8.64	9.58	8.57	7.78	8.13	9.12
Austria	14	8.54	9.58	7.86	8.33	7.50	9.41
Malta	15	8.39	9.17	8.21	6.11	8.75	9.71
United Kingdom	16	8.31	9.58	7.14	6.67	8.75	9.41
Spain	17	8.30	9.58	7.14	7.22	8.13	9.41
Mauritius	18	8.28	9.17	8.21	5.56	8.75	9.71
Uruguay	19	8.17	10.00	8.93	4.44	7.50	10.00
United States of America	20	8.05	9.17	7.50	7.22	8.13	8.24
Flawed democracies							
Italy	21	7.98	9.58	6.43	7.22	8.13	8.53
South Korea	22	7.97	8.75	7.86	7.22	7.50	8.53
Japan	=23	7.96	9.17	8.21	6.11	7.50	8.82
Costa Rica	=23	7.96	9.58	7.50	6.11	6.88	9.71
Czech Republic	25	7.94	9.58	7.14	6.67	6.88	9.41
Belgium	26	7.93	9.58	8.21	5.56	6.88	9.41
France	27	7.92	9.58	7.14	7.78	6.25	8.82
Botswana	28	7.87	9.17	7.14	6.11	7.50	9.41
Estonia	29	7.85	9.58	7.86	6.11	6.88	8.82
Chile	30	7.84	9.58	8.57	4.44	6.88	9.71
Taiwan	31	7.83	9.58	7.86	6.67	5.63	9.41
Cabo Verde	32	7.81	9.17	7.86	6.67	6.25	9.12
Portugal	33	7.79	9.58	6.43	6.67	6.88	9.41



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	Rank	Overall score	Electoral process and pluralism	Functioning of government	Political participation	Political culture	Civil liberties
Israel	34	7.77	9.17	7.14	8.89	7.50	6.18
India	35	7.74	9.58	7.14	7.22	5.63	9.12
Slovenia	36	7.57	9.58	7.14	6.67	5.63	8.82
South Africa	37	7.56	8.33	8.21	8.33	5.00	7.94
Lithuania	38	7.54	9.58	6.07	6.11	6.25	9.71
Cyprus	39	7.53	9.17	6.43	6.67	6.25	9.12
Greece	40	7.45	9.58	5.36	6.67	6.25	9.41
Jamaica	41	7.39	9.17	6.79	5.00	6.88	9.12
Latvia	42	7.37	9.58	5.71	5.56	6.88	9.12
Slovakia	43	7.29	9.58	7.50	5.56	5.00	8.82
Timor-Leste	44	7.24	8.67	7.14	5.56	6.88	7.94
Panama	45	7.19	9.58	6.43	6.11	5.00	8.82
Bulgaria	46	7.14	9.17	6.07	7.22	5.00	8.24
Trinidad and Tobago	47	7.10	9.58	7.14	5.56	5.00	8.24
Poland	48	7.09	9.58	5.71	6.67	4.38	9.12
Indonesia	49	7.03	7.75	7.14	6.67	6.25	7.35
Argentina	50	7.02	9.17	5.00	6.11	6.88	7.94
Brazil	51	6.96	9.58	6.79	5.56	3.75	9.12
Croatia	52	6.93	9.17	6.07	5.56	5.63	8.24
Ghana	53	6.86	8.33	5.71	6.67	6.25	7.35
Philippines	=54	6.84	8.33	5.71	6.67	4.38	9.12
Hungary	=54	6.84	9.17	6.07	4.44	6.88	7.65
Suriname	56	6.77	9.17	6.43	5.00	5.00	8.24
Tunisia	57	6.72	7.00	6.07	7.78	6.88	5.88
Serbia	58	6.71	9.17	5.36	6.67	5.00	7.35
Romania	59	6.68	9.17	5.71	5.00	5.00	8.53
Dominican Republic	60	6.67	8.75	5.71	5.00	6.25	7.65
El Salvador	61	6.64	9.17	6.07	4.44	5.00	8.53
Mongolia	=62	6.62	9.17	5.71	5.00	5.00	8.24
Colombia	=62	6.62	9.17	7.14	3.89	4.38	8.53
Lesotho	64	6.59	8.25	5.36	6.67	5.63	7.06
Peru	65	6.58	9.17	5.00	6.11	4.38	8.24
Mexico	66	6.55	8.33	6.07	7.22	4.38	6.76
Hong Kong	67	6.50	4.33	5.71	5.56	7.50	9.41
Malaysia	68	6.43	6.92	7.86	5.56	6.25	5.59
Sri Lanka	69	6.42	7.83	6.79	5.00	6.88	5.59



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	Rank	Overall score	Electoral process and pluralism	Functioning of government	Political participation	Political culture	Civil liberties
Moldova	70	6.35	7.92	4.29	6.67	4.38	8.53
Paraguay	71	6.33	8.33	5.71	5.00	4.38	8.24
Namibia	72	6.31	5.67	5.36	6.67	5.63	8.24
Zambia	73	6.28	7.92	5.36	3.89	6.88	7.35
Singapore	74	6.14	4.33	7.50	5.56	6.25	7.06
Senegal	75	6.08	7.92	5.36	4.44	5.63	7.06
Guyana	76	6.05	7.92	5.36	5.56	4.38	7.06
Papua New Guinea	77	6.03	6.92	6.07	3.89	5.63	7.65
Macedonia	78	6.02	7.33	4.64	6.11	4.38	7.65
Montenegro	79	6.01	7.92	5.71	5.00	4.38	7.06
Hybrid regime							
Guatemala	80	5.92	7.92	6.07	3.89	4.38	7.35
Albania	81	5.91	7.00	4.36	5.56	5.00	7.65
Georgia	82	5.88	8.67	4.29	5.56	5.00	5.88
Ecuador	83	5.87	8.25	4.64	5.00	4.38	7.06
Honduras	84	5.84	8.75	5.71	3.89	4.38	6.47
Bolivia	85	5.75	7.00	5.36	5.00	3.75	7.65
Bangladesh	86	5.73	7.42	5.07	5.00	4.38	6.76
Benin	87	5.72	6.92	5.71	4.44	5.63	5.88
Ukraine	=88	5.70	5.83	3.93	6.67	5.00	7.06
Mali	=88	5.70	7.42	3.93	4.44	6.25	6.47
Fiji	90	5.69	4.58	5.71	6.67	5.63	5.88
Tanzania	91	5.58	7.00	5.00	5.00	5.63	5.29
Malawi	92	5.55	6.58	4.29	4.44	6.25	6.18
Kyrgyz Republic	=93	5.33	7.83	3.29	5.56	5.00	5.00
Kenya	=93	5.33	4.33	5.00	6.67	5.63	5.00
Nicaragua	95	5.26	6.17	3.29	4.44	5.63	6.76
Uganda	96	5.22	5.67	3.57	4.44	6.25	6.18
Turkey	97	5.12	6.67	5.36	5.00	5.63	2.94
Thailand	98	5.09	4.50	3.93	5.56	5.00	6.47
Venezuela	99	5.00	6.08	3.93	5.00	4.38	5.59
Liberia	100	4.95	7.83	0.79	5.56	5.00	5.59
Bhutan	101	4.93	8.33	5.36	2.78	4.38	3.82
Lebanon	102	4.86	4.42	2.14	7.78	4.38	5.59
Madagascar	103	4.85	5.50	2.86	5.56	5.63	4.71



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Bosnia and Herzegovina	104	4.83	6.50	2.93	3.89	4.38	6.47
Nepal	105	4.77	3.92	4.29	4.44	5.63	5.59
Burkina Faso	106	4.70	4.42	4.29	4.44	5.63	4.71
Morocco	107	4.66	4.75	4.64	3.89	5.63	4.41
Nigeria	108	4.62	6.08	4.29	3.33	5.00	4.41
Mozambique	109	4.60	4.42	3.57	5.56	5.63	3.82
Palestine	110	4.57	4.75	2.14	7.78	4.38	3.82
Sierra Leone	111	4.55	6.58	1.86	2.78	6.25	5.29
Pakistan	112	4.40	6.00	5.71	2.78	2.50	5.00
Cambodia	113	4.27	3.17	5.71	3.33	5.00	4.12
Myanmar	114	4.14	3.17	3.57	4.44	6.88	2.65
Iraq	115	4.08	4.33	0.07	7.22	4.38	4.41
Armenia	116	4.00	4.33	2.86	4.44	2.50	5.88
Authoritarian							
Mauritania	117	3.96	3.00	4.29	5.00	3.13	4.41
Algeria	118	3.95	3.00	2.21	3.89	6.25	4.41
Haiti	119	3.94	4.75	2.21	2.22	3.75	6.76
Jordan	120	3.86	3.58	3.93	3.89	4.38	3.53
Kuwait	=121	3.85	3.17	4.29	3.89	4.38	3.53
Niger	=121	3.85	6.25	1.14	2.78	4.38	4.71
Ethiopia	123	3.83	0.00	3.57	6.11	5.63	3.82
Gabon	124	3.76	3.00	2.21	4.44	5.00	4.12
Comoros	125	3.71	4.33	2.21	4.44	3.75	3.82
Cameroon	126	3.66	2.00	3.57	3.89	5.00	3.82
Belarus	127	3.62	1.75	3.57	3.89	6.25	2.65
Vietnam	128	3.53	0.00	3.93	3.89	6.88	2.94
Cuba	129	3.52	1.75	4.64	3.89	4.38	2.94
Togo	130	3.41	4.00	1.14	2.78	5.00	4.12
Angola	131	3.35	0.92	3.21	5.00	4.38	3.24
Côte d'Ivoire	=132	3.31	0.00	3.21	3.89	5.63	3.82
Russia	=132	3.31	2.67	2.86	5.00	2.50	3.53
Egypt	=134	3.18	3.00	2.86	3.33	3.75	2.94
Qatar	=134	3.18	0.00	3.93	2.22	5.63	4.12
Guinea	=136	3.14	3.50	0.43	4.44	4.38	2.94
China	=136	3.14	0.00	4.64	3.33	6.25	1.47



Table 2
Democracy Index 2015

	Rank	Overall score	Electoral process and pluralism	Functioning of government	Political participation	Political culture	Civil liberties
Swaziland	138	3.09	0.92	2.86	2.22	5.63	3.82
Rwanda	139	3.07	0.83	5.00	2.22	4.38	2.94
Kazakhstan	140	3.06	0.50	2.14	4.44	4.38	3.82
Zimbabwe	141	3.05	0.50	2.00	3.89	5.63	3.24
Oman	142	3.04	0.00	3.93	2.78	4.38	4.12
Gambia	143	2.97	1.33	3.93	2.22	5.00	2.35
Congo (Brazzaville)	144	2.91	1.67	2.86	3.33	3.75	2.94
Djibouti	145	2.90	0.42	2.50	3.33	5.63	2.65
Bahrain	146	2.79	1.25	3.21	2.78	4.38	2.35
Afghanistan	147	2.77	2.50	1.14	3.89	2.50	3.82
United Arab Emirates	148	2.75	0.00	3.57	2.22	5.00	2.94
Azerbaijan	149	2.71	0.50	2.14	3.33	3.75	3.82
Burundi	150	2.49	0.50	0.43	3.89	5.00	2.65
Sudan	=151	2.37	0.00	1.79	3.89	5.00	1.18
Eritrea	=151	2.37	0.00	2.14	1.67	6.88	1.18
Libya	153	2.25	1.00	0.00	1.67	5.63	2.94
Yemen	154	2.24	0.50	0.36	4.44	5.00	0.88
Laos	155	2.21	0.00	3.21	1.67	5.00	1.18
Iran	156	2.16	0.00	2.86	3.33	3.13	1.47
DRC	157	2.11	0.92	0.71	2.78	4.38	1.76
Uzbekistan	=158	1.95	0.08	1.86	2.22	5.00	0.59
Tajikistan	=158	1.95	0.58	0.07	1.67	6.25	1.18
Guinea-Bissau	=160	1.93	1.67	0.00	2.78	3.13	2.06
Saudi Arabia	=160	1.93	0.00	2.86	2.22	3.13	1.47
Turkmenistan	162	1.83	0.00	0.79	2.78	5.00	0.59
Equatorial Guinea	163	1.77	0.00	0.79	2.22	4.38	1.47
Central African Republic	164	1.57	1.33	0.00	1.67	2.50	2.35
Chad	165	1.50	0.00	0.00	1.11	3.75	2.65
Syria	166	1.43	0.00	0.00	2.78	4.38	0.00
North Korea	167	1.08	0.00	2.50	1.67	1.25	0.00

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.



Democracy after the “third wave”

The pace of global democratisation accelerated after the start of its so-called “third wave” in 1974, and especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. During the 1970s and 1980s, more than 30 countries shifted from authoritarian to democratic political systems. In recent years, the post-1970s wave of democratisation has slowed or, in the case of some countries, been reversed. There has been a decline in some aspects of governance, political participation and media freedoms, and a clear deterioration in attitudes associated with, or that are conducive to, democracy.

According to The Economist Intelligence Unit's system of measurement, one-half of the world's population now lives in a democracy of some sort. However, in recent years, there has been backsliding on previously attained progress and there has also been a mounting sense of popular disappointment with the fruits of democracy. This is the case not only in the new democracies of eastern Europe, but also in some of the oldest democracies in the world, in western Europe—whose regression since 2006, as measured by the decline in its average score, is almost as bad as that in the eastern half of the continent. The other region that has experienced significant backsliding in democracy since the first edition of our Democracy Index is North America, where the decline in the regional average score from 8.64 in 2006 to 8.56 in 2015 is due entirely to regression in the US, whose score fell over the same period, from 8.22 to 8.05 (Canada improved its score slightly over the same period, from 9.07 to 9.08).

Fall-out from the global economic and financial crisis of 2008 has undoubtedly led to a heightened mood of popular disenchantment—especially in Europe—and accentuated some negative trends in political development. Arguably, however, the crisis was not the cause of the poor state of democracy in Europe, but merely helped to reveal longstanding structural weaknesses, especially in the areas of governance. Indeed, the political-legitimacy problems that are manifest in the developed world today had a long gestation.

Post-communist disappointments

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe at the turn of the 1990s—and the subsequent disarray and retreat of leftist national-liberation movements in the third world—led many to hail the triumph of Western liberal democracy. However, that apparent triumph concealed problems and weaknesses with the functioning of democracy in the Western world, which had been less evident in the period of superpower rivalry during the cold war. Over time, the removal of the repressive and inefficient Soviet system had the unexpected consequence of leaving the Western democratic model more exposed.

In 1994 a British academic, John Gray, argued that the idea of post-communist societies being smoothly integrated into a Western-led capitalist world order was a mirage, if only because that order was confronting difficulties of its own. His argument was that Western institutions, whose legitimacy derived in large part from the cold war and the existence of a communist enemy, had been greatly weakened by the Soviet collapse.



Political developments in both eastern and western Europe in the two decades since have largely borne out Professor Gray's thesis. A deep-seated political malaise in east-central Europe has led to disappointment and widespread questioning of the strength of the region's democratic transition. Eastern Europe's score in the Democracy Index deteriorated in 2015, and, since we created the index in 2006, the region's trajectory overall has been one of regression. Meanwhile, in the developed West, a decline in political participation, weaknesses in the functioning of government, and curbs on civil liberties are having a corrosive effect on some long-established democracies. The US and western Europe have suffered a decline in their average scores since the first edition of the Democracy Index. Voters are displaying worrying levels of anger, disappointment and political disengagement, to which traditional parties and politicians are struggling to respond.

Latin America's score has stagnated since the Democracy Index was first published, illustrating the region's deep-rooted problems pertaining to political culture, political participation, the functioning of government, crime and corruption. The region's disappointing performance over the past decade illustrates the difficulties of extending and deepening the process of democratisation and of establishing full democracies. Popular frustration with the lack of political and institutional development has boiled over on several occasions in the region in recent years and, in 2015, erupted in protests against corruption.

MENA and SSA recorded very modest improvements in their regional average scores between 2006 and 2015, from very low bases. SSA has continued to make intermittent progress over the course of the past decade, but no region in the world has experienced more turbulence in recent years than MENA. It appeared conceivable for a time that the Arab Spring, which began in late 2010, might herald a period of political transformation analogous to that in eastern Europe in the 1990s. However, only Tunisia has consolidated any democratic gains, graduating into a "flawed democracy" in 2014. Egypt has reverted to authoritarian rule, while numerous countries in the region, notably Libya and Syria, have descended into bloody civil war.

Asia has been the most successful democratising region during the lifetime of our Democracy Index, registering the biggest improvement in average regional score of any region over the past decade. However, Asia is not immune to the problems assailing Western democracies, as the examples of Japan and South Korea illustrate; both fell into the "flawed democracies" category in 2015. More countries (17) registered a decline in their score or stagnated in 2015 compared with 2014 than registered an improvement (11).

Nations with a weak democratic tradition are, by default, vulnerable to setbacks. Many non-consolidated democracies are fragile and, in the post-2008 crisis years, socio-economic stress led to backsliding on democracy in many countries. The underlying shallowness of democratic cultures—as revealed by disturbingly low scores for many countries in our index for *political participation* and *political culture*—has come to the fore in recent years (see box, on page 11).



A crisis of public participation in democracy

One of the challenges democracy is facing today is declining public participation in politics. This has been one of the main themes of recent editions of the EIU's annual Democracy Index. One of the most disturbing findings of our 2014 and 2015 reports is that popular dissatisfaction with and abstention from participation in democracy is most pronounced in the most developed democracies, in the US and in western Europe, which together account for 16 of the 20 countries classified by the Democracy Index as "full democracies".

In the US and Europe, the alienation of electorates from mainstream political parties and political elites has become pronounced. From that perspective, the rise of populist parties in Europe and elsewhere, and their ability to involve and mobilise people, must surely be a positive development, in that they bring the demos—the people—back into the political arena. The Democracy Index attaches great importance to the argument put forward by the secretary-general of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Martin Chungong (Cameroon), on the occasion of International Democracy Day, September 15th 2015, that "Public participation is the bedrock upon which democracy rests."

The Democracy Index is based on five categories, one of which is *political participation* (the others are *electoral process and pluralism*; *civil liberties*; *the functioning of government*; and *political culture*). Our index is based on the view that measures of democracy that reflect only the state of political freedoms and civil liberties are not "thick" enough; That is, they do not encompass sufficiently or, in some cases, at all, the features that determine how substantive democracy is. In other measures, the elements of political participation is hardly taken into account or only in a formal way.

Why public participation matters

Democracy is more than the sum of its institutions. A democratic political culture is also crucial to the legitimacy, smooth functioning and, ultimately, the sustainability of democracy. A culture of passivity, leading to an obedient and docile citizenry, is not consistent with the healthy functioning of democracy. Participation is also a necessary component: apathy and abstention are enemies of democracy. Even measures that focus predominantly on the processes of representative, liberal democracy include (albeit inadequately or insufficiently) some aspects of participation. In a democracy, government is only one element in a social fabric made up of many and varied institutions, political organisations, and associations.

In a democracy, citizens cannot be required to take part in the political process, and they are free to express their dissatisfaction by not participating (the Democracy Index penalises countries in which voting is compulsory). However, a healthy democracy requires the active, freely chosen participation of citizens in public life. Democracies flourish when citizens are willing to participate in public debate, elect representatives and join political parties. Without this broad, sustaining participation, democracy begins to wither and become the preserve of small, select groups. To recognise that people have been turned off voting because of disenchantment with democracy or politics is not the same thing as saying that politics no longer matters. Some present the contemporary rejection of politics as a form of radical protest. Yet, cynicism towards and rejection of political engagement has a long history as a highly conservative stance. Politics is too important to be left to a small elite.

The absent demos

Modern political leaders acknowledge the importance of public participation in democracy and agree that the legitimacy of government is founded



on the consent of the public. However, they have also often regarded the public's participation in democracy as a problem or even a threat. This was especially the case with the arrival of the masses in politics in the developed world in the early twentieth century. Ruling elites often seemed to be more concerned with containing the threat posed by the newly enfranchised working class electorate than in developing democratic ideas, practices and institutions. Political leaders have often lacked confidence in their ability to inspire citizens and, sometimes, this has led them to embrace anti-democratic sentiments, as was the case during the inter-war years of the twentieth century, when democracy itself was imperilled.

In response to the catastrophe of the second world war, democracy was restored, but, during the post-war period, little was done to develop the values of democracy and popular participation. Democracy's belief in the sovereignty of people as the universal principle of legitimacy has been given short shrift. Attitudes of political leaders

towards ordinary people are often condescending and infused with suspicion—we have only to look at the antipathy of political elites in Brussels to the conduct of national referendums in recent years, or the general disdain shown for populist movements. The low esteem in which popular consent and participation are held is also evident in the trend away from parliamentary decision-making and towards technocratic interventions.

One of the central problems of political life today is the absence of clear values binding the political elite together, which could provide it with a narrative to engage with its citizens. In the early twentieth century, political leaders knew what values their nations stood for; today's leaders are preoccupied with this problem, but seem unable to spell out the values that define their societies. This crisis of self-belief and values explains much about the conduct of political life in the Western world today; without such an ethos, it is difficult for political elites to inspire the public and encourage public participation in democracy.

Table 3
 Democracy Index 2006-15

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2008	2006
US	8.05	8.11	8.11	8.11	8.11	8.18	8.22	8.22
Canada	9.08	9.08	9.08	9.08	9.08	9.08	9.07	9.07
average	8.56	8.59	8.59	8.59	8.59	8.63	8.64	8.64
Austria	8.54	8.54	8.48	8.62	8.49	8.49	8.49	8.69
Belgium	7.93	7.93	8.05	8.05	8.05	8.05	8.16	8.15
Cyprus	7.53	7.40	7.29	7.29	7.29	7.29	7.70	7.60
Denmark	9.11	9.11	9.38	9.52	9.52	9.52	9.52	9.52
Finland	9.03	9.03	9.03	9.06	9.06	9.19	9.25	9.25
France	7.92	8.04	7.92	7.88	7.77	7.77	8.07	8.07
Germany	8.64	8.64	8.31	8.34	8.34	8.38	8.82	8.82
Greece	7.45	7.45	7.65	7.65	7.65	7.92	8.13	8.13
Iceland	9.58	9.58	9.65	9.65	9.65	9.65	9.65	9.71
Ireland	8.85	8.72	8.68	8.56	8.56	8.79	9.01	9.01
Italy	7.98	7.85	7.85	7.74	7.74	7.83	7.98	7.73



The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2015
Democracy in an age of anxiety

Table 3
Democracy Index 2006-15

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2008	2006
Luxembourg	8.88	8.88	8.88	8.88	8.88	8.88	9.10	9.10
Malta	8.39	8.39	8.28	8.28	8.28	8.28	8.39	8.39
Netherlands	8.92	8.92	8.84	8.99	8.99	8.99	9.53	9.66
Norway	9.93	9.93	9.93	9.93	9.80	9.80	9.68	9.55
Portugal	7.79	7.79	7.65	7.92	7.81	8.02	8.05	8.16
Spain	8.30	8.05	8.02	8.02	8.02	8.16	8.45	8.34
Sweden	9.45	9.73	9.73	9.73	9.50	9.50	9.88	9.88
Switzerland	9.09	9.09	9.09	9.09	9.09	9.09	9.15	9.02
Turkey	5.12	5.12	5.63	5.76	5.73	5.73	5.69	5.70
UK	8.31	8.31	8.31	8.21	8.16	8.16	8.15	8.08
average	8.42	8.41	8.41	8.44	8.40	8.45	8.61	8.60
Albania	5.91	5.67	5.67	5.67	5.81	5.86	5.91	5.91
Armenia	4.00	4.13	4.02	4.09	4.09	4.09	4.09	4.15
Azerbaijan	2.71	2.83	3.06	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.19	3.31
Belarus	3.62	3.69	3.04	3.04	3.16	3.34	3.34	3.34
Bosnia & Hercegovina	4.83	4.78	5.02	5.11	5.24	5.32	5.70	5.78
Bulgaria	7.14	6.73	6.83	6.72	6.78	6.84	7.02	7.10
Croatia	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.73	6.81	7.04	7.04
Czech Republic	7.94	7.94	8.06	8.19	8.19	8.19	8.19	8.17
Estonia	7.85	7.74	7.61	7.61	7.61	7.68	7.68	7.74
Georgia	5.88	5.82	5.95	5.53	4.74	4.59	4.62	4.90
Hungary	6.84	6.90	6.96	6.96	7.04	7.21	7.44	7.53
Kazakhstan	3.06	3.17	3.06	2.95	3.24	3.30	3.45	3.62
Kyrgyz	5.33	5.24	4.69	4.69	4.34	4.31	4.05	4.08
Latvia	7.37	7.48	7.05	7.05	7.05	7.05	7.23	7.37
Lithuania	7.54	7.54	7.54	7.24	7.24	7.24	7.36	7.43
Macedonia	6.02	6.25	6.16	6.16	6.16	6.16	6.21	6.33
Moldova	6.35	6.32	6.32	6.32	6.32	6.33	6.50	6.50
Montenegro	6.01	5.94	5.94	6.05	6.15	6.27	6.43	6.57
Poland	7.09	7.47	7.12	7.12	7.12	7.05	7.30	7.30
Romania	6.68	6.68	6.54	6.54	6.54	6.60	7.06	7.06
Russia	3.31	3.39	3.59	3.74	3.92	4.26	4.48	5.02
Serbia	6.71	6.71	6.67	6.33	6.33	6.33	6.49	6.62
Slovakia	7.29	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.35	7.33	7.40
Slovenia	7.57	7.57	7.88	7.88	7.76	7.69	7.96	7.96



The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2015
Democracy in an age of anxiety

Table 3
Democracy Index 2006-15

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2008	2006
Tajikistan	1.95	2.37	2.51	2.51	2.51	2.51	2.45	2.45
Turkmenistan	1.83	1.83	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.83
Ukraine	5.70	5.42	5.84	5.91	5.94	6.30	6.94	6.94
Uzbekistan	1.95	2.45	1.72	1.72	1.74	1.74	1.74	1.85
average	5.55	5.58	5.53	5.51	5.50	5.55	5.67	5.76
Argentina	7.02	6.84	6.84	6.84	6.84	6.84	6.63	6.63
Bolivia	5.75	5.79	5.79	5.84	5.84	5.92	6.15	5.98
Brazil	6.96	7.38	7.12	7.12	7.12	7.12	7.38	7.38
Chile	7.84	7.80	7.80	7.54	7.54	7.67	7.89	7.89
Colombia	6.62	6.55	6.55	6.63	6.63	6.55	6.54	6.40
Costa Rica	7.96	8.03	8.03	8.10	8.10	8.04	8.04	8.04
Cuba	3.52	3.52	3.52	3.52	3.52	3.52	3.52	3.52
Dom Rep	6.67	6.67	6.74	6.49	6.20	6.20	6.20	6.13
Ecuador	5.87	5.87	5.87	5.78	5.72	5.77	5.64	5.64
El Salvador	6.64	6.53	6.53	6.47	6.47	6.47	6.40	6.22
Guatemala	5.92	5.81	5.81	5.88	5.88	6.05	6.07	6.07
Guyana	6.05	5.91	6.05	6.05	6.05	6.05	6.12	6.15
Haiti	3.94	3.82	3.94	3.96	4.00	4.00	4.19	4.19
Honduras	5.84	5.84	5.84	5.84	5.84	5.76	6.18	6.25
Jamaica	7.39	7.39	7.39	7.39	7.13	7.21	7.21	7.34
Mexico	6.55	6.68	6.91	6.90	6.93	6.93	6.78	6.67
Nicaragua	5.26	5.32	5.46	5.56	5.56	5.73	6.07	5.68
Panama	7.19	7.08	7.08	7.08	7.08	7.15	7.35	7.35
Paraguay	6.33	6.26	6.26	6.26	6.40	6.40	6.40	6.16
Peru	6.58	6.54	6.54	6.47	6.59	6.40	6.31	6.11
Suriname	6.77	6.77	6.77	6.65	6.65	6.65	6.58	6.52
Trinidad and Tobago	7.10	6.99	6.99	6.99	7.16	7.16	7.21	7.18
Uruguay	8.17	8.17	8.17	8.17	8.17	8.10	8.08	7.96
Venezuela	5.00	5.07	5.07	5.15	5.08	5.18	5.34	5.42
average	6.37	6.36	6.38	6.36	6.35	6.37	6.43	6.37
Afghanistan	2.77	2.77	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.48	3.02	3.06
Australia	9.01	9.01	9.13	9.22	9.22	9.22	9.09	9.09
Bangladesh	5.73	5.78	5.86	5.86	5.86	5.87	5.52	6.11
Bhutan	4.93	4.87	4.82	4.65	4.57	4.68	4.30	2.62



The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2015

Democracy in an age of anxiety

Table 3
Democracy Index 2006-15

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2008	2006
Cambodia	4.27	4.78	4.60	4.96	4.87	4.87	4.87	4.77
China	3.14	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.14	3.14	3.04	2.97
Fiji	5.69	5.61	3.61	3.67	3.67	3.62	5.11	5.66
Hong Kong	6.50	6.46	6.42	6.42	5.92	5.92	5.85	6.03
India	7.74	7.92	7.69	7.52	7.30	7.28	7.80	7.68
Indonesia	7.03	6.95	6.82	6.76	6.53	6.53	6.34	6.41
Japan	7.96	8.08	8.08	8.08	8.08	8.08	8.25	8.15
Laos	2.21	2.21	2.21	2.32	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10
Malaysia	6.43	6.49	6.49	6.41	6.19	6.19	6.36	5.98
Mongolia	6.62	6.62	6.51	6.35	6.23	6.36	6.60	6.60
Myanmar	4.14	3.05	2.76	2.35	1.77	1.77	1.77	1.77
Nepal	4.77	4.77	4.77	4.16	4.24	4.24	4.05	3.42
New Zealand	9.26	9.26	9.26	9.26	9.26	9.26	9.19	9.01
North Korea	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	0.86	1.03
Pakistan	4.40	4.64	4.64	4.57	4.55	4.55	4.46	3.92
Papua New Guinea	6.03	6.03	6.36	6.32	6.32	6.54	6.54	6.54
Philippines	6.84	6.77	6.41	6.30	6.12	6.12	6.12	6.48
Singapore	6.14	6.03	5.92	5.88	5.89	5.89	5.89	5.89
South Korea	7.97	8.06	8.06	8.13	8.06	8.11	8.01	7.88
Sri Lanka	6.42	5.69	5.69	5.75	6.58	6.64	6.61	6.58
Taiwan	7.83	7.65	7.57	7.57	7.46	7.52	7.82	7.82
Thailand	5.09	5.39	6.25	6.55	6.55	6.55	6.81	5.67
Timor-Leste	7.24	7.24	7.24	7.16	7.22	7.22	7.22	6.41
Vietnam	3.53	3.41	3.29	2.89	2.96	2.94	2.53	2.75
average	5.74	5.70	5.61	5.56	5.51	5.53	5.58	5.44
Algeria	3.95	3.83	3.83	3.83	3.44	3.44	3.32	3.17
Bahrain	2.79	2.87	2.87	2.53	2.92	3.49	3.38	3.53
Egypt	3.18	3.16	3.27	4.56	3.95	3.07	3.89	3.90
Iran	2.16	1.98	1.98	1.98	1.98	1.94	2.83	2.93
Iraq	4.08	4.23	4.10	4.10	4.03	4.00	4.00	4.01
Israel	7.77	7.63	7.53	7.53	7.53	7.48	7.48	7.28
Jordan	3.86	3.76	3.76	3.76	3.89	3.74	3.93	3.92
Kuwait	3.85	3.78	3.78	3.78	3.74	3.88	3.39	3.09
Lebanon	4.86	5.12	5.05	5.05	5.32	5.82	5.62	5.82
Libya	2.25	3.80	4.82	5.15	3.55	1.94	2.00	1.84



The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2015
Democracy in an age of anxiety

Table 3
Democracy Index 2006-15

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2008	2006
Morocco	4.66	4.00	4.07	4.07	3.83	3.79	3.88	3.90
Oman	3.04	3.15	3.26	3.26	3.26	2.86	2.98	2.77
Palestine	4.57	4.72	4.80	4.80	4.97	5.44	5.83	6.01
Qatar	3.18	3.18	3.18	3.18	3.18	3.09	2.92	2.78
Saudi Arabia	1.93	1.82	1.82	1.71	1.77	1.84	1.90	1.92
Sudan	2.37	2.54	2.54	2.38	2.38	2.42	2.81	2.90
Syria	1.43	1.74	1.86	1.63	1.99	2.31	2.18	2.36
Tunisia	6.72	6.31	5.76	5.67	5.53	2.79	2.96	3.06
UAE	2.75	2.64	2.52	2.58	2.58	2.52	2.60	2.42
Yemen	2.24	2.79	2.79	3.12	2.57	2.64	2.95	2.98
average	3.58	3.65	3.68	3.73	3.62	3.43	3.54	3.53
Angola	3.35	3.35	3.35	3.35	3.32	3.32	3.35	2.41
Benin	5.72	5.65	5.87	6.00	6.06	6.17	6.06	6.16
Botswana	7.87	7.87	7.98	7.85	7.63	7.63	7.47	7.60
Burkina Faso	4.70	4.09	4.15	3.52	3.59	3.59	3.60	3.72
Burundi	2.49	3.33	3.41	3.60	4.01	4.01	4.51	4.51
Cameroon	3.66	3.41	3.41	3.44	3.41	3.41	3.46	3.27
Cabo Verde	7.81	7.81	7.92	7.92	7.92	7.94	7.81	7.43
CAR	1.57	1.49	1.49	1.99	1.82	1.82	1.86	1.61
Chad	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.62	1.62	1.52	1.52	1.65
Comoros	3.71	3.52	3.52	3.52	3.52	3.41	3.58	3.90
Congo (Brazzaville)	2.91	2.89	2.89	2.89	2.89	2.89	2.94	3.19
Congo DRC	2.11	1.75	1.83	1.92	2.15	2.15	2.28	2.76
Côte d'Ivoire	3.31	3.53	3.25	3.25	3.08	3.02	3.27	3.38
Djibouti	2.90	2.99	2.96	2.74	2.68	2.20	2.37	2.37
Equatorial Guinea	1.77	1.66	1.77	1.83	1.77	1.84	2.19	2.09
Eritrea	2.37	2.44	2.40	2.40	2.34	2.31	2.31	2.31
Ethiopia	3.83	3.72	3.83	3.72	3.79	3.68	4.52	4.72
Gabon	3.76	3.76	3.76	3.56	3.48	3.29	3.00	2.72
Gambia	2.97	3.05	3.31	3.31	3.38	3.38	4.19	4.39
Ghana	6.86	6.33	6.33	6.02	6.02	6.02	5.35	5.35
Guinea	3.14	3.01	2.84	2.79	2.79	2.79	2.09	2.02
Guinea-Bissau	1.93	1.93	1.26	1.43	1.99	1.99	1.99	2.00
Kenya	5.33	5.13	5.13	4.71	4.71	4.71	4.79	5.08
Lesotho	6.59	6.66	6.66	6.66	6.33	6.02	6.29	6.48



Table 3
Democracy Index 2006-15

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2008	2006
Liberia	4.95	4.95	4.95	4.95	5.07	5.07	5.25	5.22
Madagascar	4.85	4.42	4.32	3.93	3.93	3.94	5.57	5.82
Malawi	5.55	5.66	6.00	6.08	5.84	5.84	5.13	4.97
Mali	5.70	5.79	5.90	5.12	6.36	6.01	5.87	5.99
Mauritania	3.96	4.17	4.17	4.17	4.17	3.86	3.91	3.12
Mauritius	8.28	8.17	8.17	8.17	8.04	8.04	8.04	8.04
Mozambique	4.60	4.66	4.77	4.88	4.90	4.90	5.49	5.28
Namibia	6.31	6.24	6.24	6.24	6.24	6.23	6.48	6.54
Niger	3.85	4.02	4.08	4.16	4.16	3.38	3.41	3.54
Nigeria	4.62	3.76	3.77	3.77	3.83	3.47	3.53	3.52
Rwanda	3.07	3.25	3.38	3.36	3.25	3.25	3.71	3.82
Senegal	6.08	6.15	6.15	6.09	5.51	5.27	5.37	5.37
Sierra Leone	4.55	4.56	4.64	4.71	4.51	4.51	4.11	3.57
South Africa	7.56	7.82	7.90	7.79	7.79	7.79	7.91	7.91
Swaziland	3.09	3.09	3.20	3.20	3.26	2.90	3.04	2.93
Tanzania	5.58	5.77	5.77	5.88	5.64	5.64	5.28	5.18
Togo	3.41	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	2.43	1.75
Uganda	5.22	5.22	5.22	5.16	5.13	5.05	5.03	5.14
Zambia	6.28	6.39	6.26	6.26	6.19	5.68	5.25	5.25
Zimbabwe	3.05	2.78	2.67	2.67	2.68	2.64	2.53	2.62
average	4.38	4.34	4.36	4.32	4.32	4.23	4.28	4.24
World average	5.55	5.55	5.53	5.52	5.49	5.46	5.55	5.62

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

Problems of democracy and the rise of populism

The impact of the global economic and financial crisis of 2008 on political trends has been most marked in eastern, southern and western Europe. Opinion polls show that confidence in public institutions in western Europe—already low before 2008 in many countries—has declined further since the crisis. Less than one-fifth of west Europeans trust political parties, and only about one-third trust their governments and parliaments. Levels of public trust are exceptionally low in eastern Europe. Less than 10% of people in this sub-region trust political parties and less than one-fifth trust their governments and their parliaments. There has been a noticeable decline in media freedom since 2008. The reasons for this decline are complex and varied. Many governments felt vulnerable and threatened, and reacted by intensifying their efforts to control the media and impede free expression. Unemployment and job insecurity fostered a climate of fear and self-censorship among journalists in many countries. The concentration of media ownership has tended to increase, which



has had a negative impact on the diversity of views and freedom of expression. In authoritarian regimes, which have become more fearful of the threat from below, state control and repression of any independent media is a given and has, if anything, tended to get worse, with an increasing number of attacks on independent journalists.

However, regressive trends in democracy in Europe had been evident for some time before the 2008 global economic crisis. Between 2006 and 2008, democracy stagnated in Europe; between 2008 and 2010, it regressed. In 2011 seven countries in western Europe suffered a decline in their democracy scores, largely due to the erosion of sovereignty and democratic accountability associated with the effects of and responses to the euro zone crisis (five of the countries that experienced a decline in their scores were members of the euro zone: Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Ireland). Most dramatically, in two countries (Greece and Italy) democratically elected leaders were replaced by technocrats. In 2012 no countries in western Europe registered a decline, but, a year later, seven countries again fell back, as harsh austerity and renewed recession tested the resilience of Europe's political institutions. Western Europe's overall score stagnated in 2014 and in 2015. Despite the stabilisation in the region's average score, however, popular discontent expressed itself in rising support at the polls for populist and protest parties across the region.

As we predicted in our 2014 Democracy Index, and in a January 2015 special report, *Democracy on the edge: Populism and protest, 2015* was a year when populist politicians and parties made their mark on the political landscape. Over the past year, populists of different hues have cut a swathe through the US and European political landscape, sending shockwaves through the political establishment. These parties have moved into the space that has opened up between the old political parties and their traditional social bases. Resentment of governing elites, opposition to austerity and fear of immigration are key themes and rallying cries for the populists. Furthermore, Donald Trump in the US, Marine Le Pen in France, Nigel Farage in the UK, and Geert Wilders in the Netherlands are capitalising on a pervasive climate of insecurity in the wake of Islamist terrorist attacks in Western cities in 2015.

The defining feature of contemporary populism is that it articulates a deep-seated antagonism between the people and the political elite. Populism comes in many forms, but its basic premise, that the existing political establishment no longer represents the people, is the key to understanding its widespread appeal.

The factors that have propelled the populists to prominence, and to political power in countries such as Greece, cannot be reduced to narrow economic matters. Populism today represents a much broader moral, social and cultural challenge to the old established parties, one that offers an alternative to the political system that expresses the technocratic, metropolitan values of the political elites and that gives due consideration to the concerns, values and traditions that ordinary people hold dear.



The third element of populism is its attempt to mobilise and unite communities on the basis of the alternative policies it offers. This is something that all the populist movements have in common, regardless of their orientation to the right or left. They provide a rallying point for people who feel alienated from the political mainstream and yet want to be part of a political culture that recognises their concerns and aspirations. The importance of populism's ability to mobilise people in a common cause should not be underestimated in an era characterised largely by abstention and disengagement from the democratic process.

The tendency to dismiss the upsurge of populism in Europe as a "protest vote" or anti-austerity "backlash" is a way of evading some uncomfortable truths. The assumption is that populism will fade away once conditions in Europe return to "normal". It is certainly not seen as something that presents a real challenge to the established political system. This is to underestimate the seismic change that is occurring: the rise of the populists signals the end of the post-war political order.

The traditional parties of the left and right in Europe are at the tail-end of an identity crisis that began several decades ago. The erosion of the post-war political order began in the 1970s, as the post-war economic boom came to an end. It accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s, so that, by the turn of the century, the political system and the parties that represented it bore little relation to their forebears of the 1950s and 1960s. Parties of the left (social democratic, socialist, communist) and the right (Christian democratic, conservative, etc.)—which dominated the post-war body politic—have lost touch with their traditional supporters and, as a consequence, have lost votes and influence. There has been a long-term secular decline in membership of the mainstream political parties across Europe, on both sides of the political spectrum. As Peter Mair showed in *Ruling the Void* (2013), there has been a staggering fall in party-membership numbers across a range of major democracies. The rupturing of the relationship between Europe's post-war political parties and their traditional support bases—especially, but not exclusively, the relationship between social democratic, labour and other left-wing parties and their working-class supporters—has paved the way for the rise of populist parties.

As these parties lost touch with their old supporters, they stopped seeing the public as the source of democratic legitimacy. Parties of left and right converged towards the centre. The emergence of technocratic, centrist parties, divorced from the electorate, has created a political chasm between the outlooks of elites and the public. Into the gap have stepped the populists, who appeal to alienated electorates—what Marine Le Pen has characterised as "the France of the Forgotten". They have been able to connect with a public hankering for a sense of belonging, by focusing on issues of identity, culture and tradition. The populists present themselves as the champions of the people in their revolt against remote, out-of-touch, privileged political elites. Even if they do not provide a coherent alternative, therein lies their appeal.



The future of democracy: confidence is flagging

The increasingly anxious and fearful era in which we live is not conducive to defending democratic standards or extending democracy's reach across the globe. In the course of 2015, murderous attacks by Islamist terrorists in African, Asian, European, Middle Eastern, North African and US cities, and, most notably, those in Paris in January and November, succeeded in their aim of spreading fear of such attacks in the target countries and resulted in a greater readiness to tolerate curtailments of rights and freedoms. At the same time, a mass migration from MENA into Europe polarised political reactions and raised troubling questions about the exercising of democracy and national sovereignty in the face of supra-national crises affecting the region (see box on page 21). Looking back on 2015 and forward to 2016, Martin Schulz, the German president of the European Parliament, declared that "Nobody knows what we are facing this year. We are threatened as never before." He added that the political fall-out from terrorist attacks and migration would test the EU to breaking point.

In our age of anxiety, the first casualty in the face of fears about terrorism or other threats is often freedom. In 2015, governments wanting to be seen to be acting in the face of the terrorist threat in Europe turned to draconian measures. They imposed states of emergency, locked down cities, closed borders and curbed freedom of movement; they sent more armed police onto the streets, chipped away at media freedoms and freedom of speech, and introduced harsh anti-terrorism legislation and summary justice for suspected extremists. All this was done in the cause of reassuring the public. By reacting in this way, governments have spread fear and panic, and have aided the extremists in their aim of terrorising society, eroding freedom and democracy in the process.

Democracy retains a near-universal appeal. Despite setbacks and overall stagnation, surveys show that most people in most places still want it. Trends such as globalisation, increasing education and expanding middle classes, tend to favour the organic development of democracy. However, after a disastrously unsuccessful attempt by the US to "export" democracy to the Middle East in the first decade of this century, coupled with a growing loss of self-confidence in Western values in recent decades, democracy's proponents have become increasingly circumspect about the prospects of a further wave of democratisation.

We expect that political upheavals will present further challenges to authoritarian regimes in future. These may not all be successful and not all will necessarily take the form of mass popular uprisings. The outlook for democratic transition is, however, uncertain. There are historical examples of major reversals of democratisation. For example, a democratisation wave after the second world war ended with more than 20 countries sliding back to authoritarianism. A rollback on that scale has not occurred recently, but developments in the wake of the Arab Spring have provided a brutal reminder that the forces of reaction can triumph even in the face of a mass popular struggle for democratic change. Moreover, as the recent history of eastern Europe illustrates well, democratisation in hitherto authoritarian states does not, of course, mean a transition to fully



fledged, consolidated democracies. Democracy means more than holding elections; it requires the development of a range of supportive institutions and attitudes. Such a transformation takes a long time.

Migration crisis strains Europe's democracies

In 2015 Europe found itself facing an influx of refugees and migrants, primarily from war-torn regions of MENA, on a scale not seen since 1945. As the wave of migration increasingly took on the characteristics of a humanitarian crisis, the EU's leaders struggled to respond adequately, with the issues of burden sharing, border control and national sovereignty prompting acrimonious divisions. At a summit in late September, a quota system was proposed to distribute 120,000 refugees from front-line states across the EU—a mere fraction of the total that had arrived—and was passed using a qualified majority voting system, despite four countries in central Europe voting against key provisions (two have since issued legal challenges against the decision). The plan has proved hard to implement, however. The European Commission admitted that, by end-2015, only 272 refugees had been redistributed, and only three of 11 planned "hotspots" to process asylum applications in frontline countries were operational.

Not only have many countries been reluctant to accommodate large numbers of refugees from very different cultures, in line with often negative public opinion, but the refugees themselves have largely proved unwilling to be sent to countries they are unfamiliar with, preferring either Germany or Sweden. Over the summer, Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, adopted an open-armed response based on moral imperative, but has since been forced to row back from this position, given

the sheer scale of arrivals, and the accompanying logistical problems and rising public concerns. Border controls in Sweden, meanwhile, were reinstated at the start of November as the influx of refugees—at around 10,000 per week—became unmanageable.

The terrorist attacks on Paris on November 13th, which left 130 people dead, have led to a new nexus of concerns around migration and security. The discovery that at least one of the attackers had entered Europe posing as an asylum-seeker led to an immediate step-up in security processes and border controls in the notionally border-free Schengen Area. It is a tacit assumption of the European "project" that the borders of nation-states should have steadily diminishing significance. However, in 2015, the risks inherent in such a perspective came into stark relief, and the sustainability of European integration is now in question.

The fabric of European integration is fraying

It is difficult to envisage the EU's framing a response to the migrant crisis that is both sufficient and sustainable. The situation is more likely to last decades than years, and the scale of the inflows is set to increase. This reflects both the push factor of prolonged instability in the Middle East and the pull factor of refugees—including the millions currently living in camps in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan—seeing the EU's reluctantly acknowledging that it will need to absorb much greater numbers. National political dynamics in a number of EU states militate against many of the bloc's leaders making internationally generous moves in the interests of European cohesion. After years of grinding financial crisis, many voters are tired, insecure and



disaffected with their political elites, a fact that has already led to a steady—and sometimes sharp—rise in the popularity of non-centrist parties across the continent. The growing electoral traction being enjoyed by many anti-establishment parties opposed to immigration is one of the key drivers of the increasingly unwelcoming stance now being taken by national governments.

The migration crisis is only the latest in a growing list of forces pushing the EU in the direction of a looser and less uniform set of relations between its member states. The euro zone crisis is the most obvious other such force. There are strong similarities between the two crises: in both cases, technocratic arguments for much greater pooling of sovereignty have bumped up against strong public resistance in some member states. However, whereas the fiscal issues that have dominated the euro zone crisis are largely instrumental, relating to what political entities do, borders are essential—they define political entities and the people who belong to them. In contrast to the creative bending of EU rules seen in those countries battling fiscal

meltdown during the euro crisis, therefore, states affected by the border-control crisis have broken the rules directly, reinstating their national borders openly and unapologetically.

Given that democratic legitimacy remains firmly rooted at national, rather than European level, political logic suggests that Europe's crises will not be resolved by a collective decision to integrate more rapidly or more comprehensively. As regards the migration crisis, the policy line of last resort will remain the re-imposition of national border controls, either in an ad hoc manner, as at present, or with a more formal agreement to roll back aspects of the Schengen Agreement.

We therefore expect a gradual drift towards a less unified arrangement within the EU, in which national opt-outs play an increased role, and like-minded states push ahead with integration only in areas where pre-existing political convergence avoids the need for contentious compromise. The EU is drifting away from the ideal, set down in its treaties, of “an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe”.

Democracy around the regions in 2015

In 2015 three regions recorded a decline in their average scores in the Democracy Index: eastern Europe, MENA, and North America. Two regions more or less stood still—Latin America and western Europe—failing to emerge from a long period during which democracy has regressed or stagnated. The remaining two regions—Asia & Australasia and SSA—registered a modest improvement, although, in the case of SSA, more countries registered a decline in their score (18) than recorded an improvement (17). In Asia & Australasia, eight countries recorded a decline, nine stood still and 11 improved their scores. Asia's results were also marred by two countries—Japan and South Korea—slipping out of the “full democracies” category and into the “flawed democracies” group as a result of a very small deterioration in their scores.

Overall, the picture from 2015 is one of global democracy struggling to advance and, in many places, regressing or standing still. There were a few bright spots, one of them being Tunisia, which, for a fifth consecutive year, recorded an improvement in its score, an achievement that stands out in a region whose descent into brutal repression, war and barbarism plumbed new depths in 2015. Libya experienced the biggest fall in the global rankings of any country, falling 34 places compared



with 2014, from 119 to 153. Syria and Yemen also experienced further regression in 2015. However, although the MENA region recorded the biggest decline in its regional average score, more countries (10) registered an improvement in their scores than recorded a decline (9), while the score for one country (Qatar) remained the same. In other regions, bright spots were Nigeria, Ghana, Madagascar, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

Table 4
Democracy across the regions

	No. of countries	Democracy index average	Full democracies	Flawed democracies	Hybrid regimes	Authoritarian regimes
North America						
2015	2	8.56	2	0	0	0
2014	2	8.59	2	0	0	0
Western Europe						
2015	21	8.42	14	6	1	0
2014	21	8.41	15	5	1	0
Eastern Europe						
2015	28	5.55	0	15	6	7
2014	28	5.58	0	14	7	7
Latin America & the Caribbean						
2015	24	6.37	1	15	6	2
2014	24	6.36	2	13	7	2
Asia & Australasia						
2015	28	5.74	2	13	8	5
2014	28	5.70	4	10	8	6
Middle East & North Africa						
2015	20	3.58	0	2	4	14
2014	20	3.65	0	2	3	15
Sub-Saharan Africa						
2015	44	4.38	1	8	12	23
2014	44	4.34	1	8	13	22
Total						
2015	167	5.55	20	59	37	51
2014	167	5.55	24	52	39	52

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.



A tale of two regions

The Democracy Index provides a snapshot of the state of democracy globally in 2015. To get a sense of the trajectory of democracy around the world, however, it is worth looking at the direction of change in the period since 2006. This time period is equivalent to only two electoral cycles, but it nevertheless gives some context in which to analyse global and regional trends. Even within this short historical timeframe, we can make inter-regional comparisons and ask some questions about democratisation trends in different regions.

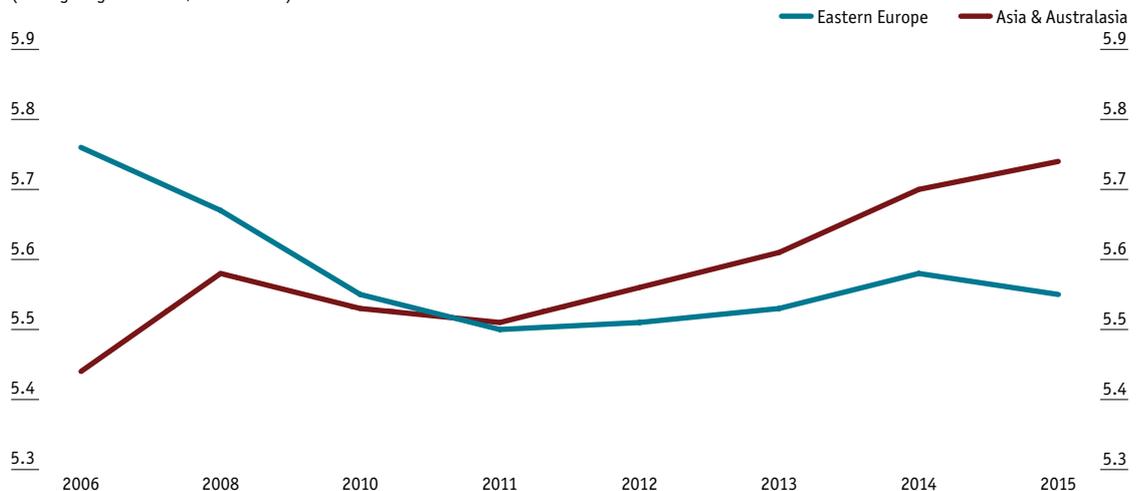
Two of the world's developing regions, Asia and eastern Europe, have seen their democratic trajectories diverge over the past decade. In 2006, eastern Europe, had an average regional score of 5.76 in our Democracy Index, comfortably outperforming Asia, on 5.44. By the end of 2015, however, eastern Europe's score had slumped to 5.55 and Asia had leapfrogged ahead, with a score of 5.74.

Table 5
 Democracy Index 2006–15 by region

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2008	2006
Asia & Australasia	5.74	5.70	5.61	5.56	5.51	5.53	5.58	5.44
Eastern Europe	5.55	5.58	5.53	5.51	5.50	5.55	5.67	5.76
Latin America	6.37	6.36	6.38	6.36	6.35	6.37	6.43	6.37
Middle East & North Africa	3.58	3.65	3.68	3.73	3.62	3.43	3.54	3.53
North America	8.56	8.59	8.59	8.59	8.59	8.63	8.64	8.64
Western Europe	8.42	8.41	8.41	8.44	8.40	8.45	8.61	8.60
Sub-Saharan Africa	4.38	4.34	4.36	4.32	4.32	4.23	4.28	4.24
World average	5.55	5.55	5.53	5.52	5.49	5.46	5.55	5.62

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

A tale of two regions, 2006-15
 (Average regional score, out of 10.00)



Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit, Democracy Index.



Asia has been the most successful democratising region during the lifetime of our Democracy Index, while eastern Europe's performance has proved disappointing.

Latin America's lack of progress between 2006 and 2014 is striking. In 2015 the region was back where it began in 2006, with a score of 6.37. The average regional score has fallen from the high-water mark of 6.43 in 2008 over the past seven years. The region comprises 24 countries, of which only one (Uruguay) is a "full democracy" and 15 are "flawed democracies". Both MENA and SSA increased their average regional scores in 2006–15, albeit from very low bases, but the former regressed again in 2015, while the latter continued to make modest progress. Given their low starting points, it might have been expected that they would have made faster progress than has been the case.

The differential progress of the seven regions assessed in the Democracy Index raises questions about the importance of democratic development of historical and cultural legacies, state capacity, starting position, development of social classes and economic growth. Below, we look at recent developments, region by region.

Asia and Australasia

Over the years since we began producing the Democracy Index, in 2006, Asia is the region that has made the most headway in advancing democracy. However, it also encompasses the widest variation—from New Zealand (globally ranked 4th in 2015, unchanged from 2014) and Australia (ranked 9th in 2015, also unchanged from 2014), through to North Korea (still last, in 167th place). In terms of the annual improvement in the regional average score (from 5.70 to 5.74), Asia was, together with SSA, the best-performing region in 2015. However, it also experienced some setbacks, as Japan and South Korea slipped into the "flawed democracies" category as a result of a very small change in their scores. Although 11 countries improved their score, eight countries registered a decline in their score and nine stagnated.

It was, therefore, a mixed year for Asia. There were some encouraging success stories, not least the holding of free and fair elections in Myanmar after 50 years of military rule. Some of the middle-ranking countries, such as Sri Lanka, rose up the rankings owing to improvements in governance and accountability. The victory in the January 2015 presidential election in Sri Lanka of Maithripala Sirisena, and the reforms his government has promised to undertake since then, have changed the status of the country from that of a semi-authoritarian "hybrid regime" to a "flawed democracy". Although China's score remained abysmal (3.14), the country rose eight places up the rankings, from 144th to joint 136th, as its score improved from 3.00, reflecting rising popular support for the concept of democratic government. This presents a challenge to the ruling Communist Party, which has counted on maintaining the support of the public by guaranteeing increasing prosperity for the burgeoning middle class, and creates a tension as the authorities clamp down on rights and freedoms in other areas.



The overall score for Asia made only a modest improvement in 2015, because many of the region's erstwhile high-ranking countries recorded a decline in their scores. Rising media censorship and a lack of accountability of incumbent governments, owing to the weakness of the opposition, have been evident in several mature democracies in East Asia, undermining the quality of their democracy. In South Korea, the opposition coalition, New Politics Alliance for Democracy (NPAD), collapsed following the defection of one of its founding members, Ahn Cheol-soo, to start his own party ahead of the April 2016 parliamentary elections. His departure effectively splits the NPAD's support base, rendering a majority win in the 2016 elections impossible. In Japan, increasing media censorship following passage of the Secrets Law in December 2014, and evidence of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) pressuring firms to withhold advertising in unfavoured publications, were enough to push the country's score below the 8.00 threshold, meaning that the country is now classified in our Democracy Index as a "flawed democracy". The disappearance of a book publisher in Hong Kong in 2015 raised concerns not only about the degree of control Chinese security forces have over the ostensibly autonomous territory, but also about the extent to which the press can be deemed to be free on the island.

Some Asian countries that had made progress in 2014 registered a significant deterioration in 2015. In Cambodia a 2014 deal between the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and the opposition broke down when the government began a crackdown on the opposition in October 2015, prompting a sharp fall in the country's score and ranking. Cambodia dropped ten places in our rankings, from 103 to 113, with its score leaving it on the cusp of the "authoritarian regime" category. India dropped eight places, owing in part to increased public support for centralised rule. Thailand dropped five places, owing to the prolonged and seemingly unyielding military regime. Overall, while some countries in Asia continued to move forward, the region as a whole experienced a loss of positive momentum. However, elections in some middle-ranking countries, such as Taiwan and the Philippines, are likely to bolster democratic values in the region in 2016.

Myanmar's election: only the beginning

Myanmar held an historic election on November 8th 2015. In the lead-up to the ballot, the signs pointed to a still-imperfect poll. From the start of the campaign in September 2015, the media ran stories about how the odds were stacked against the opposition, the National League for Democracy (NLD), and in favour of the incumbent, military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). Concerns surrounding the independence of

the Union Election Commission, which was chaired by an ex-general and former USDP lawmaker, Tin Aye, were shared by us. Indeed, the elections were by no means free and fair, as some demographics, including the persecuted ethnic-minority Rohingya, were not allowed to vote.

Crucially, however, the outcome was far from predetermined, and the election turned out to be freer and fairer—and, therefore, more legitimate—than the fraudulent exercise of 2010. A critical difference between the recent polls and the one held six years ago was the presence of foreign observers, who largely deemed the ballot in November to have



been conducted in accordance with international democratic standards. The foreign contingent included a US-based non-governmental organisation (NGO), the Carter Center, and observers from the EU. Overall, Myanmar's political establishment was well aware that they had much to lose if the ballot were not considered fair or the outcome not recognised. A likely re-imposition of some, if not most, Western sanctions in the event of another fraudulent election would have had a disastrous effect on the economy, especially since Myanmar's ties with long-time ally and economic cushion, China, have soured in recent years.

Upon the completion of the final vote-count, the NLD emerged as the clear victor. Significantly, the party secured a majority in both houses of parliament, even when taking into account the one-quarter of seats constitutionally set aside for the military. The incumbent president, Thein Sein, and the army were quick to accept the results, dispelling early concerns that the military-backed government would refuse to relinquish its grip on power. The NLD's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, a democracy activist who has been placed under house arrest by the military several times, is still constitutionally barred from becoming president. That said, the NLD's huge margin of victory has given the party enough seats to push through its own choice of candidate unilaterally, which is likely to be a trusted ally who will be comfortable with Aung San Suu Kyi's taking a leading role in government.

Despite the NLD's resounding victory, the party will face difficulties over the degree to which it can forge co-operation with the military, which, based on a partially democratic constitution, remains a

powerful political actor outside civilian control. Even after the NLD forms a government in early 2016, the military will control 25% of seats in the legislature and several powerful ministries. The army is also unlikely to take kindly to Aung San Suu Kyi's stated intention to rule "above the president".

Altogether, the incoming government will face resistance from the military in at least two areas: constitutional reform and the peace process with Myanmar's armed ethnic organisations. The NLD kept to its identity and campaigned for constitutional reform in the run-up to the election, making it one of its priorities, should it win. The huge mandate it received is likely to mean that Aung San Suu Kyi will not tread softly on this front, pushing for constitutional amendments to be made sooner rather than later. However, as amendments must be approved by more than 75% of parliament—a constitutional provision that, in effect, gives the military a veto on charter changes—a collision between the army and the NLD looks inevitable.

Yet, the signs so far have been positive. In December 2015 Aung San Suu Kyi met with Thein Sein and the army's commander-in-chief, Min Aung Hlaing. While Thein Sein and Aung San Suu Kyi have established a working relationship in recent years, the nature of the latter's ties with Min Aung Hlaing are less clear. Nevertheless, both sides have pledged to co-operate in ensuring a smooth transition of government. Although little detail is available on the particulars discussed, that the leaders, erstwhile rivals, have met face-to-face, provides reassurance to the electorate that the political establishment will honour the NLD's electoral victory.

Eastern Europe

Eastern Europe has performed poorly in our Democracy Index in recent years. In 2015 the regional average score fell, and, eastern Europe was second only to SSA when it came to the large number of country regressions (12). The scores for Russia and most Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) declined compared with 2014. The quality of democracy is declining in many countries and reform reversals are more prevalent in new EU member states in eastern Europe than elsewhere in the EU.



Belief in and support for the market system, and in democracy, are very low in much of the region and this, as discussed earlier, predates the 2008 global economic and financial crisis, which had a prolonged negative impact on the region.

Authoritarian trends have become entrenched in most members of the CIS, but setbacks to democracy have by no means been limited to that sub-region. Democracy has also suffered setbacks in east-central Europe. Previous strong performers, such as Poland (see box) and Hungary, have suffered sharp reversals. The other Baltic states, Lithuania and Latvia, are in 4th and 5th place, respectively, in the regional rankings, behind the Czech Republic, Estonia and Slovenia, and ahead of Slovakia, Bulgaria and Poland. The former communist Balkan countries have lagged behind central Europe in terms of democratic standards as well as economic performance, although several Balkan countries made progress in 2015, notably Albania and Bulgaria. Albania made some headway in 2015 in reforming the judiciary, the fight against corruption, combating organised crime and the protection of human rights, although progress is being held back by political strife between the government and the main opposition party. Bulgaria in 2015 emerged from a period of mass protests and political instability in 2013-14 and its score improved from 6.73 in 2014 to 7.14 in 2015, with the result that it rose from 10th to 7th in the regional ranking and its global ranking improved from 55th to 46th. By contrast, Macedonia's score declined in 2015, as the EU reacted to a political crisis in the country by taking charge of the country's electoral process and insisting on the installation of a caretaker government and an early election in 2016.

The success of 11 eastern European countries in achieving EU membership since 2004 has created the impression of a smooth political transition towards the Western model of democracy. However, the underlying fragility of east-central European political systems was evident to many observers, even before the 2008-09 global economic and financial crisis. The crisis has had a prolonged negative economic impact on eastern Europe, which has put those political systems under further strain.

There are a number of possible reasons for this fragility. Most important is that, although formal democracy is in place in the region, many of the necessary conditions for de facto democracy, including a political culture based on trust, are absent. This is manifest in low levels of political participation beyond voting (and even turnout at elections is low in many countries), and very low levels of public confidence in institutions. A key underlying factor is that the economic transition has resulted in a large stratum of discontented voters, who feel that they have lost out. The discrediting of the post-communist state has led to widespread voter cynicism towards state institutions. The end of ideology in public politics has led to a lack of political contestation over economic issues and a general devaluing of politics. Finally, the EU-accession process and IMF conditionality has given political elites an excuse to avoid domestic political debate on issues of national importance, which has had the effect of undermining domestic politics. The result is a fragmented party-political system, reflecting the shallow roots of many parties, and low voter identification with parties.



The 2008–09 crisis had a disproportionately negative impact on eastern Europe compared with other emerging markets, such as developing Asia and Latin America. It reinforced an existing mood of disappointment with the experience and results of the transition to democracy and market economies. A number of post-crisis surveys and reports point to a further decline in life satisfaction, support for markets and democracy, and trust in institutions.

These negative trends have recently worsened in some countries. Hungary had been the prime example of backsliding on democracy among the EU's new member states in the region. Since winning a two-thirds parliamentary majority in the 2010 election, the centre-right Fidesz party has undermined the independence of many of the country's institutions: the presidency, the state audit office, the media council and even the Magyar Nemzeti Bank (the central bank) are now all run by party appointees. Electoral reforms have undermined the opposition and smaller parties. After winning re-election in April 2014, prime minister, Viktor Orbán, stated that he aimed to build a state and society that are democratic, but not liberal. Now Poland seems to be intent on following Hungary's example, following the election in October 2015 of the main opposition Law and Justice (PiS) party, which then shocked EU observers with the speed with which it went on the offensive against media and judicial institutions, in the name of restoring moral and social traditionalism. Relations between Poland and the EU, and Germany in particular, can be expected to become more awkward under the new government, owing to the PiS's less accommodating attitude to European integration and European policy on migrant quotas and its narrower, nation state-based conception of the national interest.

Russia and the CIS

2015 was another dark year for democracy across much of the post-Soviet space. The authoritarian turn in Russia that followed Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency has intensified as a result of the stand-off with the West over Ukraine. The year opened with the murder, within sight of the Kremlin, of Boris Nemtsov, a prominent opposition figure and former deputy prime minister. The regime remains preoccupied with the threat of externally sponsored social unrest and has sought to restrict all potential channels of foreign influence. In 2015 new restrictions on ownership led to the departure of some foreign media companies. A law on "undesirable organisations", which comes on top of earlier restrictions on foreign funding for civil society, led to the blacklisting of a number of prominent international NGOs.

The Russian government's approach to the regional elections in September 2015, for which extra-parliamentary parties were in many cases prevented from registering candidates, suggests that the Kremlin has abandoned its experiment of allowing limited competition in the electoral process. The 2016 parliamentary elections could, nevertheless, prove challenging. Claims of large-scale falsification in previous parliamentary elections triggered the largest popular protests in over a decade in the winter of 2011-12. A repeat of this in 2016 appears unlikely, but the harsh economic downturn and tight public finances will give regional and national leaders cause for concern.



In a sign that Russian elites continue to set the agenda for their post-soviet colleagues, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan also adopted new legislation restricting the operations of foreign NGOs in 2015, while the Kyrgyz parliament debated a bill that borrows heavily from Russia's "foreign agents" law of 2012. Azeri officials have joined Russia in publicly warning of the threat posed by "national traitors" and the US-led democracy-promotion agenda. The Azerbaijani government has grown increasingly intolerant of dissent, imprisoning journalists and human-rights activists over the past year.

Constitutional reform was a significant issue for both Ukraine and Armenia in 2015. In Ukraine, reforms to decentralise power have stalled, as the government remains uncertain whether it can command a two-thirds constitutional majority. The reforms are one of the terms of the ceasefire agreement signed in the Belarusian capital, Minsk, in February, in an effort to end the fighting in the Donbas region. Ukraine's political system is highly centralised, and the Vienna Commission has given its approval to the constitutional changes. However, any reforms that appear to grant special status to separatist-controlled territories are highly controversial. The first reading of the bill, which passed, but did not achieve a constitutional majority, led to violent protests outside the Verkhovna Rada. The future of the bill remains in the balance.

Political tensions rose significantly in both Georgia and Moldova in 2015, exacerbated by the polarised geopolitical environment. In Moldova, a major banking crisis exposed the corruption and dysfunction of the political establishment, further threatening hopes for EU integration. In Armenia, the government succeeded in pushing through a referendum on constitutional reforms that will transform the country into a parliamentary democracy. Despite rising anti-government sentiment, which led to significant protests against rising electricity prices over the summer, the opposition failed to mobilise a strong movement against the bill. The constitutional reform has been seen by many as a mechanism for Serzh Sargsyan, the current president, to maintain his hold on power when his second and (under current legislation) final presidential term ends in 2018. However, in the longer term, a shift to a parliamentary republic could inject greater pluralism into the political system.

Indeed, the one parliamentary republic in Central Asia continued to buck the regional trend with flawed, but competitive, parliamentary elections in October 2015. While the process was marred by concerns over the abuse of administrative resources, and a new biometric-registration system that may have excluded some voters, it nevertheless offered a genuine electoral competition. Kyrgyzstan's pluralistic political system stands in stark contrast to those of its Central Asian neighbours, which remain dominated by authoritarian strongmen. Leaders in these countries may imitate the democratic process, but there is no true political competition. Faced with a serious economic downturn in 2015, Kazakhstan's president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, decided to call an early election in April to renew his mandate before embarking on difficult economic reforms and a currency devaluation. It appears that even leaders such as Mr Nazarbayev, who has ruled Kazakhstan since the late Soviet period, understand *the* power, if not the point, of the ballot box.



Poland's new government gives notice of radical intent

In mid-December 2015 there were large protests in the Polish capital, Warsaw, both for and against the new Law and Justice (PiS) government. These followed controversy over the attempt by the PiS to annul previous appointments of judges to the Constitutional Court, and to appoint its own candidates instead. The protests reawakened a deep divide at the heart of Polish politics between those who accept the basic institutional infrastructure and the values of the political system that replaced communist rule in 1989, and those who reject them. Worries about the PiS's authoritarian ideological reflexes have been confirmed by the party's willingness to tamper with the standard liberal-democratic institutional checks and balances. The PiS's readiness to set about institutional change will stir memories of its stint in office in 2005-07, pointing to the risk of greater political instability ahead.

The success of the PiS in obtaining a parliamentary majority in October 2015 can be attributed in large part to the comparatively moderate tone of its election campaign. The party's often divisive leader, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, gave way to the less abrasive Beata Szydlo as the party's candidate for prime minister, and the PiS moderated some of its more controversial proposals from previous years, while toning down its rhetoric. Despite this conciliatory rhetoric, the PiS soon gave notice of its intention to pursue radical reforms, making a number of controversial ministerial appointments and replacing the heads of security agencies. Despite holding no formal government office, Mr Kaczynski assumed a central role in directing the process of government formation and outlining a radical plan of action for the government's first few months in office.

More significant than the PiS's legislative ambitions, however, are its efforts to try to tame the

Constitutional Court, the institution most likely to thwart the party. During the PiS's previous term in office in 2005-07, the Court stymied the passage of some important bills, ruling many of their provisions unconstitutional. The government, therefore, sees "reclaiming" the Court as a matter of urgency. As it is a long way short of being able to muster the super-majority needed to restrict the Court's remit, the government has opted for disputing the legitimacy and authority of the Court as presently constituted.

Poland's constitutional crisis began in early December 2015, when parliament elected five new judges to the Constitutional Tribunal to replace five judges that, the government argued, had been chosen illegitimately by the previous parliament. Without waiting for the Constitutional Tribunal's ruling that only three of the judges had been elected in accordance with the constitution, the president, Andrzej Duda, swore in all five replacements. This fait accompli, and a subsequent set of amendments to the Law on the Constitutional Tribunal to change its quorum and alter the organisation of the Tribunal's working procedures, created a stand-off between the government and the Tribunal over the composition and functioning of the latter.

The unresolved nature of the constitutional crisis has raised concerns about the current capacity of the Tribunal to rule on some of the more controversial aspects of the government's activity. The PiS's legislative programme involves an ambitious and wide-ranging set of reforms to state institutions, and questions have been raised by the parliamentary opposition and non-parliamentary actors, such as the Human Rights Ombudsman, about the constitutionality of some of the provisions in the government's bills.

Clamping down on the media

The government has also made amendments to the Law on Public Media, which have been criticised for usurping the authority of a constitutional organ of state, the National Broadcasting Council, to appoint the heads of public media. Amendments



to the Law on the Civil Service, which replace open competitions for high office with a process of appointment, have been alleged to breach the constitutional requirement that the civil service remain apolitical. Proposed reforms to the Criminal Code, the role of the prosecutor-general and the way in which the judiciary is organised have raised concerns that constitutional protection of the independence of judges could be jeopardised. The manner in which bills have been passed by the new government, with minimal opportunity for opposition scrutiny, has also alarmed observers.

The rise in the political temperature, both within parliament and in civil society, is reminiscent of the heightened tensions that characterised the PiS's previous stint in government, in 2005-07. Then, the

frustration of the party at being unable to realise its radical ambitions to recast state institutions spilled over into the public arena, with political life increasingly dominated by the spectacle of the political establishment's defending itself against populist illiberalism. Political developments in Poland in the first weeks of the new PiS government suggest that the country is heading for a similar period of political instability, but with one difference. In 2005-07 the PiS had to rule alongside two unpredictable coalition partners; now, for a while at least, it can count on a more stable majority in parliament. The stand-off this time is, therefore, likely to be more lasting, more disruptive and to have a bigger impact on Poland's political culture, institutions and policy effectiveness.

Latin America

The consolidation of democracy in Latin America continues to be impeded by the region's inability to match the extraordinary advances in electoral democracy made in previous decades with corresponding improvements in its political effectiveness and political culture. This, in turn, has fomented popular dissatisfaction, particularly in those countries where major corruption scandals have recently come to light. By far the most publicised cases in 2015 were in Brazil, where the president, Dilma Rousseff, faces a threat of impeachment, and in Guatemala, where the president, Otto Pérez Molina, resigned and was subsequently arrested (see box). Even Chile—one of the top-ranked Latin American countries in the Democracy Index—faced protests over a scandal involving the son of the president, Michelle Bachelet. In Mexico, popular dissatisfaction was related to the political fall-out from two cases that emerged in late 2014: the "Casa Blanca" corruption allegations involving the president, Enrique Peña Nieto, and his wife, and the Ayotzinapa case involving the disappearance and assumed death of a group of students in late 2014.

One of the striking features of this wave of popular discontent is that it has been increasingly focused not just on the government, but also on the political establishment as a whole. This reflects a dangerously cynical view that governments can no longer be effectively punished at the ballot boxes, since corruption and mismanagement are so widespread that all major parties are assumed to be, to some extent, complicit. This calls into question the benefits of well-functioning electoral institutions (the region scores highest in this category in the index), and also opens the door to anti-establishment populists from both sides of the political spectrum—Jimmy Morales's victory in the October 2015 Guatemala presidential election being a case in point. The region's previous generation



of populists, moreover, has experienced troubles of its own. The Kirchner era in Argentina came to an end with the victory of a conservative, Mauricio Macri, in the November 2015 presidential run-off, while, in Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro's grip on power slipped after the landmark victory of the opposition in the December 2015 legislative elections.

A final, but no less important, driver of discontent has been the region's sluggish economic performance. In 2015 the region as a whole failed to grow for the first time since the 2008/09 global economic and financial crisis. There were economic slowdowns in most key economies and outright recession in the region's largest, Brazil (which we expect to last for a further year). Latin Americans in the past have often tolerated lower levels of democracy in exchange for economic progress. Where this trade-off is no longer possible, public attitudes towards political leaders will be increasingly hostile.

The average regional score for Latin America remained largely unchanged in 2015 compared with 2014, and the region's best and worst performers remained in the same positions. However, a modest deterioration in the score for Costa Rica resulted in its demotion to a "flawed democracy", leaving Uruguay as the region's sole "full democracy". Five out of the six countries that rose in the rankings came from Central America and the Caribbean (the exception being Argentina), while only three countries—Ecuador, Brazil and Mexico—slipped down the rankings.

More positively, the relative stability of the region's rankings is indicative of a low level of major conflicts or crises compared with other parts of the world. Indeed, the resignation of Guatemala's president was handled in an exemplary fashion and served to strengthen, rather than weaken, democracy in that country. However, the lack of major advances to improve political effectiveness and to address the main source of popular discontent—corruption—also shows how difficult it will be to entrench democracy in Latin America beyond the electoral sphere.

Anti-corruption backlash grows in Latin America

After decades of calls to address endemic corruption in Latin America, a spate of scandals led to unprecedented investigations and arrests at the highest levels of government and business in 2015. These events underscore growing popular disgust with corruption and the traditional political elite. If such scandals result in more action being taken to address the problem, this would be positive for democracy and democratic institutions. However, there are big obstacles to progress in the near term.

No case is perhaps as astonishing as that of Brazil, where the political landscape has been shaken by a scandal dubbed *Petrolão*, which pertains to several billions of dollars in bribes paid by major contractors to former directors of Petrobras and politicians from the ruling coalition. The *Petrolão* case has sent high-level members of the ruling Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) to jail, and has led to the arrest of congressmen and businesspeople, such as the CEO of BTG Pactual, one of Brazil's largest financial institutions. Most seriously, in December 2015, the speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Eduardo Cunha, himself implicated in a bribery scandal, launched formal impeachment proceedings against the president, Dilma Rousseff,



on the grounds that she had breached Brazil's fiscal-responsibility law. Ms Rousseff's mandate is also tainted by the fact that she was in charge of Petrobras when the alleged bribery took place.

Presidents hit around the region

In Guatemala, the president, Otto Pérez Molina, was forced to step down in September 2015 and was subsequently arrested, following probes into corruption spearheaded by an independent UN-supported agency, the Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala (CICIG, International commission against Impunity in Guatemala). The president was implicated in a large customs fraud scheme, whereby government officials exchanged discounted tariffs for bribes.

Similarly, the former president of El Salvador, Francisco Flores Pérez (1999-2004), was ordered in December 2015 to stand trial over accusations that he diverted US\$15m in donations to earthquake victims to his personal and political-party accounts. In Paraguay, the attorney-general moved to investigate the former president, Federico Franco Gómez (2012-13), on allegations of illicit enrichment and money-laundering.

Corruption in Mexico was given renewed attention following the revelation of a conflict-of-interests scandal involving Angélica Rivera, the wife of Mr Peña, in November 2014. The president responded by reviving a defunct cabinet ministry, the Ministry of Public Administration, and approving an Anti-Corruption System in early 2015. The new measures have been criticised for being too weak to have a material impact.

Scandals have electoral repercussions

Even in Chile—long considered to be one of the least corrupt countries in the region—the issue of public misconduct came to the fore with the eruption in early 2015 of a scandal involving a bank loan to the daughter-in-law of Ms Bachelet, and suggestions of influence-peddling by the president's son. Also, a

campaign-finance and tax-fraud scandal involving prominent Chilean corporations and members of the centre-right opposition led to the filing of criminal charges against politicians and businesspeople. Ms Bachelet then proposed several legislative bills designed to ensure transparency in campaign financing and prevent influence peddling. However, the loss of popular confidence in the traditional political parties may give impetus to independent candidates in the congressional and presidential elections in 2017.

In Peru, the government of the president, Ollanta Humala, has faced a series of scandals, capped by the "Centralita" case involving political espionage and money-laundering by a regional government and a businessman with ties to the president and the first lady, Nadine Heredia. The scandal has caused the popularity of Mr Humala and Ms Heredia to plummet, all but ensuring that the ruling party will not retain power in the April 2016 election.

In Venezuela, official corruption has become extensive in recent years, and is related to the strong centralised control of the economy and the main oil industry by the former administration of Hugo Chávez and his successor, Nicolás Maduro. However, probes are being spearheaded almost exclusively from abroad, notably by the US Treasury Department. Nonetheless, perceptions of widespread corruption amid an economic crisis probably contributed to the majority victory by the opposition in the December 6th legislative elections.

Slow progress, but obstacles ahead

Throughout the region, popular demands to tackle public-sector malfeasance are growing, encouraged by external entities such as the UN's CICIG or anti-corruption watchdogs such as Transparency International. If these demands are translated into action to tackle corruption in a concerted manner, there could be a gradual strengthening of the rule of law across the region.

However, there are obstacles to greater



transparency and the elimination of corruption in the near term. The presence of entrenched interests, combined with the weakness of judicial, prosecutorial and other institutions, suggests that progress will be slow and uneven. As a result,

endemic corruption will continue to drag down the region's Democracy Index score and rankings; it will also continue to undermine the rule of law, the business environment and economic performance.

The Middle East and North Africa

Once again, the MENA region has experienced an overall deterioration in its score in the Democracy Index, as the political climate continued to regress to its pre-2011 authoritarian state in much of the region, while Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen descended further into chaos and war. With 14 of the 20 countries in the region falling into the "authoritarian regime" category, and none rated as a full democracy, MENA ranks as the most repressive region in the world, even in the aftermath of pro-democracy protests that engulfed large parts of North Africa, the Levant and Yemen from 2011.

Scores remained largely stable in 2015 in countries with long-established autocratic polities, such as Sudan and Jordan, and also in the Gulf Arab states, where absolute monarchies have maintained their hegemony over decision making. Meanwhile, the scores and rankings of others, notably Libya and Yemen, worsened markedly as a consequence of chronic instability and rising violence. Libya slipped nine places down the Democracy Index rankings regionally, and 34 spots globally, between 2014 and 2015. Syria's already abysmal score fell from 1.74 in 2014 to 1.43 in 2015, pushing it down to 166th place out of 167 countries.

Regression to authoritarianism was particularly evident in Libya, which fell to 153rd in this year's rankings from 119th in 2014. A year-long UN-sponsored peace process, involving two rival parliaments, located in eastern and western Libya, failed to forge an agreement about a political roadmap, and the two assemblies have unilaterally extended their mandates to rule their respective regions without elections. Powerful militias, which are often used to intimidate the electorate and political opponents, back each assembly.

A few countries improved their scores in 2015. Tunisia, which provided the spur to the Arab Spring and moved from being a "hybrid regime" to a "flawed democracy" in 2014, in the face of outbursts of violence and domestic tensions, has continued to build the foundations of democracy, with its October 2014 parliamentary election attracting a higher voter turnout than in past elections, ushering in a new secular Islamist coalition government in February 2015. Despite the negative momentum in much of the region, the average regional score is higher than it was prior to the onset of the Arab Spring.

The Arab Winter continues

In its early stages, the Arab Spring popular movement appeared powerful enough to

transform the region dramatically towards rapid democratisation, akin to the fall of the Iron Curtain in eastern Europe, but such hopes proved premature. The fall-out from the failure of the Arab Spring has been violent and painful, with war in Syria, chaos in Libya and Yemen, and the rise of IS, the most



extreme jihadi group in the region, in a number of war zones in MENA. Only in Tunisia has the democratic process made genuine progress, and, even there, sporadic outbreaks of popular unrest look set to continue.

This ebbing of the democratic process has been encouraged by the failures of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), which dominated most of the elections that took place after the onset of the Arab Spring. However, it proved to be extremely challenging for the MB's to assume power—most notably in Egypt—where the group was undermined by its intolerance of dissent, its poor stewardship of the economy, and its attempts to impose an Islamist agenda on the country.

The pre-war history of the region—rooted in colonialism, externally imposed boundaries, sectarian tensions and, not to be forgotten, oil—was always going to make the task of forging a new, consensual *modus vivendi* exceptionally challenging. Equally, the stifling and repressive political atmosphere that had pervaded these countries over many decades ensured that political parties were either severely under-developed or, in Libya's case, entirely absent, making the formation

of a representative democracy extremely difficult.

With both the MB and nascent liberal political parties now marginalised in most states, the region's authoritarians are making a comeback—as is especially evident in Egypt. However, despite the setbacks to democratisation, the fate of the Arab Spring remains far from conclusive, as the ingredients that contributed to the mass outpouring of public dissent are still as combustible as ever. These can be broken into two broad areas: political and economic. Politically, repressive systems of governance, such as the traditional sheikhdoms, absolute monarchies and military-backed regimes that have dominated the region for decades, will appear ever more archaic to the region's young and increasingly globally aware populations. Economically, with around 30% of the region's population aged below 30, and the price of oil at record lows, governments will struggle to provide sufficient job opportunities for their more educated workforces—a situation exacerbated by the maintenance of the nepotistic and corrupt practices upon which the Middle East's authoritarian regimes are built. As a result, a future popular uprising against authoritarianism cannot be discounted.

North America

The state of democracy in North America has been largely unchanged in recent years. Canada and the US continue to perform reasonably well, but lag behind many Western countries, particularly those of northern Europe. The score for Canada is unchanged over the past year, at 9.08, and it remains at seventh place in the global rankings. The score for the US has deteriorated, from 8.11 to 8.05 and, as a result, it slips one place in the rankings, falling from 19th to 20th.

The decline in the US score is a result of the use of excessive violence by the state, as perpetrated by law-enforcement officers. High-profile shootings of young, black men by police, which have led to the emergence of the BlackLivesMatter activist group, have highlighted how black men make up a disproportionate number of victims of police shootings. Young black men were nine times more likely to be killed by police in 2015 than young white men. Blacks are six times more likely than whites to be in prison.

These problems go beyond the question of race. The US law-enforcement system is violent and punitive, to the extent that not only blacks, but a large percentage of whites, do not have confidence



in the police or the criminal justice system more broadly (37% of blacks have confidence in the police, compared with 59% of whites). The para-militarised police force, now equipped with grenade-launchers and armoured cars, is lethal. In 2015, more than 1,100 Americans died at the hands of US law-enforcement officers, according to a database compiled by a UK newspaper, *The Guardian* (the US government does not keep a comprehensive record of people killed by law-enforcement officers). The US jails 1% of the adult population, more than five times the developed-country average, and sentences are harsh (the US is the only developed country to impose life without parole for persistent, non-violent offenders).

The US scores comparatively poorly in the Democracy Index in terms of the functioning of government. The ideological entrenchment of congressional representatives fosters deadlock. Bitter partisanship has developed, in part because many congressional districts have been redrawn in a way that gives one party a built-in advantage. As a result, congressional representatives fear a challenge in their party primaries, which are controlled by the party base, and are consequently incentivised to move to the right (for Republicans) or to the left (for Democrats). The upshot is a stronger emphasis on ideological purity and less appetite for compromise, especially in the House of Representatives (the lower house), where lawmakers face voters every two years.

The US electoral structure means that participation is, in effect, restricted to a duopoly of parties, the Democrats and the Republicans. Nevertheless, respect for the constitution and democratic values are deeply entrenched by centuries of democratic practice. For urgent and crucial decisions, majorities can normally be obtained, but solutions to long-term problems, such as comprehensive tax reform, often fall victim to deadlock. The US score is also held back by curbs on civil liberties related to the state's anti-terrorism efforts and by moderate political participation. Confidence in politicians, and especially in Congress as an institution, is abjectly low. Popular approval for Congress was just 13% in December 2015, according to Gallup.

With a long history of democratic government, Canada scores highly in the *electoral process* category and for *functioning of government*, although liberal critics could point to Canada's first-past-the-post electoral system as an impediment to the true reflection of popular opinion in parliament's membership. There is scope for improvement in the scores for *political participation* and, to a lesser extent, *political culture*.

The new liberal government, elected in October 2015, has said that the 2015 election will be the last held under Canada's first-past-the-post electoral system, where a candidate need only get a plurality of votes to win a seat in parliament. Some form of proportional representation will take its place, but only after a parliamentary committee has studied and reported on the alternatives. The prime minister, Justin Trudeau, has said that the committee will have 18 months to examine different electoral systems, which means that legislation will not be introduced until 2017. The proposed change will have no impact on Canada's score in the Democracy Index until it is implemented.

Canada scores extremely well in the category of *civil liberties*. Personal freedom is largely



unconstrained by the state, and civil rights are guarded by an independent judiciary. Domestic print and electronic media are unfettered and competitive, access is unrestricted, and the market is not dominated by large, state-owned providers. Freedom of expression and religious and cultural tolerance are ingrained in the Canadian state and are particularly important, given its large French-speaking and native minorities. Tensions over federal-provincial relations have eased following the victory of the federalist Parti Libéral in the election for the Quebec legislature in April 2014. The defeat of the separatist Parti Québécois, formed to promote independence of the largely French-speaking province, has all but eliminated concerns over the unity of Canada (the next provincial election in Quebec is not due until 2018).

The only category in which Canada scores comparatively poorly is *political participation*. This is a problem faced by many developed countries and reflects poor voter turnout, low membership of political parties and lack of interest in political news. However, voter turnout increased in the October 2015 election, Canada's score in this category is not so bad by international comparison and it ranks ahead of the US.

Western Europe

Western Europe remains the region of the world where democracy is most firmly entrenched, holding seven of the top ten positions in our 2015 Democracy Index. However, it has also registered the second-most significant decline in its score, after eastern Europe, of all the regions since the launch of the Democracy Index rankings in 2006, with 2015 marking a further slight fall from the previous year. This downward trend has been exacerbated by a series of crises that have posed challenges to democratic cultures and institutions in the region, beginning with the global economic and financial crisis of 2008–09, and continuing with the European debt crisis, which has yet to be fully resolved. In 2015 the continued political fall-out from these crises—which resulted in a loss of some aspects of sovereignty in those countries that were subject to stringent bail-out conditions—was exacerbated by the polarised political responses to an acute migration crisis, occasioned by an influx into Europe of more than 1m refugees from MENA and elsewhere. Attempts by European officials to impose a quota system, according to which all EU member states would take a share of migrants, met with, at best, grudging acceptance and, at worst, outright opposition, and further strained relations among member states.

Norway retained its top position in the 2015 Democracy Index, and is classed as a “full democracy”, along with 13 other countries in the region. Sweden fell behind Iceland into third place, however, as membership of political parties declined and levels of social discrimination rose. Human-rights experts from the UN voiced concerns over racism and xenophobia in December, and the country's initially welcoming attitude to an influx of refugees rapidly soured as institutions struggled to cope with the volume of asylum-seekers.

Six countries were classed as “flawed democracies” in 2015, up from five in 2014, as France slipped down a category. France's slip was the result of a deterioration in social cohesion. Two countries



within the “flawed democracies” category recorded improvements in their scores in 2015. In Italy, the preference for technocratic government has declined substantially since the humiliation at the 2013 election of the Mario Monti administration, which is strongly associated with the painful austerity measures required by the EU. In Cyprus, meanwhile, the popular preference for military rule has faded. Turkey remains by far the lowest-scoring country in the region in 2015, and is classed as a “hybrid regime”.

The rise of the FN in France is just one example of an increased appetite among voters in western Europe for populist, anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic parties, with popular support for UKIP, the Sweden Democrats and Alternative for Germany also rising. The reluctance on the part of EU leaders to address popular concerns about the social and cultural consequences of immigration, and their attempt to impose an EU-wide quota system for allocating asylum-seekers—against the wishes of some national governments—is fuelling support for parties that propose alternative views.

In 2016 we expect the pooling of sovereignty that the European project has required to come under greater pressure, with the referendum to be held over Britain's continued membership of the EU being merely the most high-profile example of a general appetite for looser integration within the region and increased demands for a return of greater democratic sovereignty to individual nation-states.

Sub-Saharan Africa

SSA has made scant democratic progress since we started producing the Democracy Index in 2006. The indicators of democracy have improved: from around 20 per decade in 1960–2000, the number of successful “coups from within” has dropped dramatically in the 2000s, and regular elections are now commonplace in the vast majority of Sub-Saharan states. The idea of peaceful changes of government at the ballot box is well established in some places and has gained ground in others. The most obvious example of the latter is Nigeria, which experienced its first democratic change of power in 2015 (see box). Taking the broader definition of democracy, however—including political participation and culture, civil liberties and the functioning of government—the region's performance has barely altered.

Many elections are neither free nor fair. Peaceful and democratic changes of power are still relatively rare. Nearly 20 heads of states in SSA have been in office for more than a decade. Ten of these have been in power for more than two decades. Many incumbent heads of states have tried—and succeeded—to change their countries' constitutions to allow them to remain in office beyond constitutionally mandated term limits, often via processes that lack democratic credibility.

The uneven progress of the region is reflected in the 2015 Democracy Index. The average score for the 44 countries in the region improved only marginally, helped by positive developments in Nigeria and Madagascar, which held reasonably free and fair elections after a prolonged political crisis, and in Burkina Faso, where the November elections meant a return to constitutional order following the ousting of the country's long-time president in October 2014. Ghana also improved on a number of



indicators, cementing its position as one of the continent's strongest democracies.

The democratic progress seen in this handful of countries was partly offset by a deterioration elsewhere, most notably in Burundi, where the sitting president's decision to seek a controversial third term in office brought the country to the brink of civil war. South Africa suffered a sharp deterioration in its score and ranking, as a series of corruption scandals in recent years has worked to undermine the population's trust in the democratic system. As many as 18 countries registered a decline in their total score in 2015. Although the fall was small in most cases, this underlines the lack of progress on the continent as a whole. Overall, only one country—Mauritius—is deemed to be a “full democracy”, whereas 23 states—more than half of SSA countries—are considered “authoritarian”, and 12 are classified as “hybrid regimes”.

Despite the slight increase in the region's average score, the average country ranking fell from 106th to 113th in 2015, suggesting that SSA is falling behind other regions. The sources of democratic weakness vary. In addition to flawed electoral processes, many countries score poorly on the *functioning of government*, which reflects problems with paying civil servants, high levels of corruption, and limited administrative control over national territory. Widespread poverty and low education levels also hinder political participation, an important aspect of any democracy. In many places, the presence of a repressive regime serves to depress the score on civil liberties. As low commodity prices put pressure on governments and popular resentment towards long-serving autocratic rulers grows, repression could increase, putting further pressure on the civil liberties score.

Nigeria: setting an example?

Muhammadu Buhari—who secured 15.4m votes in the March 2015 presidential election, with the previous incumbent, Goodluck Jonathan, receiving 13.3m—was sworn in as president of Nigeria on May 29th, marking the peaceful completion of the first democratic power change in Africa's largest economy. The unseating of an incumbent ruler through the ballot box is an extremely positive political event in a country that has hitherto known only military coups and civilian governments that have clung on to power. In a region that has a mixed record with democracy, and a number of upcoming elections, political leaders will be looking to learn lessons from one of the continent's political and economic powerhouses.

An incumbent being defeated is not unheard of in Africa. Over the past 20 years, incumbents in countries such as Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Senegal and Zambia have been defeated in elections—but it is rare. For it to happen peacefully is even more rare; for example, the defeat of Laurent Gbagbo in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010 resulted in significant violence before he was eventually removed from office. The regime changes in Benin in 1996, Côte d'Ivoire in 2000 and in Madagascar in 2001 were also characterised by contestation and/or violence.

In Nigeria in 2015 public frustration—over issues such as graft, lack of jobs, and high levels of insecurity—and modest technical improvements in the election authority were enough to outweigh formidable incumbency advantages come election time. Although this could be cause for reassessing political prospects across the region—especially



given that corruption, violence and low incomes are common issues that incumbent leaders have struggled to address—the prospects of the Nigerian scenario being replicated elsewhere appear remote.

The country that is perhaps most likely to experience something similar to Nigeria is Ghana, although, there, it would be less of a surprise, given that it has historically been a beacon of African democracy. However, an incumbent Ghanaian president seeking re-election has never been defeated; changes of power have occurred after an incumbent has served the constitutional maximum of two terms in office. There are similarities between former president, Goodluck Jonathan's political trajectory in Nigeria and that of the current Ghanaian president, John Mahama. Both were vice-presidents who came to power after the death of their respective presidents. Both then contested and won a presidential election, but subsequently struggled to turn around disappointing economic performances. Mr Jonathan then failed in his bid to win a further election; Mr Mahama will seek re-election in November 2016, but his chances against a resurgent opposition look unfavourable, as was the case with Nigeria.

Cabo Verde is also due to hold a presidential vote in 2016, in which the incumbent could well lose. Yet, free and fair elections are firmly established in the small island nation and Nigeria's influence on events there will be minimal. The same holds for Zambia, where elections tend to be reasonably free and fair and the idea of regime change is widely accepted (it has had five popularly elected presidents over the past 25 years). As in Ghana, the sitting president in Zambia, Edgar Lungu, is struggling to turn around an ailing economy and is facing voters in August 2016 with an opposition victory a distinct possibility, regardless of the events in Nigeria.

Gloomier prospects elsewhere

Elsewhere, the impact of the Nigerian precedent has been, or will be, less noticeable. Côte d'Ivoire held its presidential poll in October 2015, but, with

the opposition imploding, the country's two main political parties backing the incumbent, Alassane Ouattara, and the economy performing strongly, an upset at the ballot box was not on the cards. Indeed, Mr Ouattara won an overwhelming victory. Similarly, in Togo and Guinea, the incumbency powers were too strong and the oppositions too weak to prevent incumbent victories in April and October 2015, respectively. Meanwhile, in Burundi, the incumbent, Pierre Nkurunziza, ignored widespread opposition to his seeking a controversial third term as president in July 2015, bringing the country close to a new civil war.

Niger, due to hold a presidential poll in February 2016, has several similarities with its much larger southern neighbour. The incumbent, Mahamadou Issoufou, like Mr Jonathan, has been fighting a Boko Haram insurgency and faced calls to improve management of the country's natural resources, in order to ensure that greater benefits accrue to ordinary citizens. But the Issoufou administration has been criticised for trying to undermine the country's democracy by curbing rights to freedom of speech and assembly, suggesting that he is trying to make the most of his incumbency powers to stifle the prospects of his opponents. Doubts over the fairness of the election process mean that the example of Nigeria is unlikely to be repeated in Niger.

Several sitting heads of states in SSA's more or less authoritarian regimes will also face voters in 2016 or 2017, but the prospects of a Nigerian scenario in places such as Angola, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Rwanda or Uganda appear very slim. The independence and powers of institutions such as judiciaries, electoral commissions and parliaments—which help keep the powers of the presidency in check—have been undermined in these countries, giving the incumbent presidents few obstacles to their remaining in power, despite often growing voter frustration and poorly performing economies. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, another repressive state, the incumbent regime is working



hard to avoid having to hold a presidential election in 2016, as mandated by the country's constitution.

Despite these rather gloomy prospects, the Nigerian example of peaceful change at the ballot box may well influence events in more distant future polls, such as the 2020 Ivorian election, when Mr Ouattara is obliged by the constitution to stand down and the field is likely to be more open. Moreover, on the back of Mr Buhari's victory, Nigeria's credibility as a promoter of democracy in

the region will be strengthened, and it could use this to influence developments beyond its borders. Voters will also be inspired by the example set by their Nigerian peers, and, assuming election processes are relatively credible, this could help to tilt the balance in favour of peaceful regime changes in places such as Benin (February 2016), Liberia (2017), and Sierra Leone (2017), where there will be no incumbents to defend their positions.

Defining and measuring democracy

There is no consensus on how to measure democracy. Definitions of democracy are contested, and there is a lively debate on the subject. The issue is not only of academic interest. For example, although democracy-promotion is high on the list of US foreign-policy priorities, there is no consensus within the US government as to what constitutes a democracy. As one observer recently put it, "The world's only superpower is rhetorically and militarily promoting a political system that remains undefined—and it is staking its credibility and treasure on that pursuit," (Horowitz, 2006, p 114).

Although the terms "freedom" and "democracy" are often used interchangeably, the two are not synonymous. Democracy can be seen as a set of practices and principles that institutionalise, and thereby, ultimately, protect freedom. Even if a consensus on precise definitions has proved elusive, most observers today would agree that, at a minimum, the fundamental features of a democracy include government based on majority rule and the consent of the governed; the existence of free and fair elections; the protection of minority rights; and respect for basic human rights. Democracy presupposes equality before the law, due process and political pluralism. A question arises as to whether reference to these basic features is sufficient for a satisfactory concept of democracy. As discussed below, there is a question as to how far the definition may need to be widened.

Some insist that democracy is, necessarily, a dichotomous concept: a state is either democratic or not. But most measures now appear to adhere to a continuous concept, with the possibility of varying degrees of democracy. At present, the best-known measure is produced by the US-based Freedom House organisation. The average of its indexes, on a 1 to 7 scale, of *political freedom* (based on 10 indicators) and of *civil liberties* (based on 15 indicators) is often taken to be a measure of democracy.

The Freedom House measure is available for all countries, and stretches back to the early 1970s. It has been used heavily in empirical investigations of the relationship between democracy and various economic and social variables. The so-called Polity Project provides, for a smaller number of countries, measures of democracy and regime types, based on rather minimalist definitions,



stretching back to the 19th century. These have also been used in empirical work.

Freedom House also measures a narrower concept, that of “electoral democracy”. Democracies in this minimal sense share at least one common, essential characteristic. Positions of political power are filled through regular, free and fair elections between competing parties, and it is possible for an incumbent government to be turned out of office through elections. Freedom House’s criteria for an electoral democracy include:

- 1) A competitive, multi-party political system.
- 2) Universal adult suffrage.
- 3) Regularly contested elections conducted on the basis of secret ballots, reasonable ballot security and the absence of massive voter fraud.
- 4) Significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open political campaigning.

The Freedom House definition of political freedom is more demanding (although not much) than its criteria for electoral democracy—that is, it classifies more countries as electoral democracies than as “free” (some “partly free” countries are also categorised as “electoral democracies”). At the end of 2007, 121 out of 193 states were classified as “electoral democracies”; of these, on a more stringent criterion, 90 states were classified as “free”. The Freedom House political-freedom measure covers the electoral process and political pluralism and, to a lesser extent, the functioning of government and a few aspects of participation.

A key difference in measures is between “thin”, or minimalist, and “thick”, or wider, concepts of democracy (Coppedge, 2005). The thin concepts correspond closely to an immensely influential academic definition of democracy, that of Dahl’s concept of *polyarchy* (Dahl, 1970). Polyarchy has eight components, or institutional requirements: almost all adult citizens have the right to vote; almost all adult citizens are eligible for public office; political leaders have the right to compete for votes; elections are free and fair; all citizens are free to form and join political parties and other organisations; all citizens are free to express themselves on all political issues; diverse sources of information about politics exist and are protected by law; and government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

The Freedom House electoral democracy measure is a thin concept. Its measure of democracy based on political rights and civil liberties is “thicker” than the measure of “electoral democracy”. Other definitions of democracy have broadened to include aspects of society and political culture in democratic societies.

The Economist Intelligence Unit measure

The Economist Intelligence Unit’s index is based on the view that measures of democracy that reflect the state of political freedoms and civil liberties are not thick enough. They do not encompass sufficiently, or, in some cases, at all, the features that determine how substantive democracy is.



Freedom is an essential component of democracy, but not, in itself, sufficient. In existing measures, the elements of political participation and functioning of government are taken into account only in a marginal and formal way.

Our Democracy Index is based on five categories: *electoral process and pluralism*; *civil liberties*; the *functioning of government*; *political participation*; and *political culture*. The five categories are inter-related and form a coherent conceptual whole. The condition of holding free and fair competitive elections, and satisfying related aspects of political freedom, is clearly the *sine qua non* of all definitions.

All modern definitions, except the most minimalist, also consider civil liberties to be a vital component of what is often called “liberal democracy”. The principle of the protection of basic human rights is widely accepted. It is embodied in constitutions throughout the world, as well as in the UN Charter and international agreements such as the Helsinki Final Act (the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe). Basic human rights include freedom of speech, expression and of the press; freedom of religion; freedom of assembly and association; and the right to due judicial process. All democracies are systems in which citizens freely make political decisions by majority rule. But, rule by the majority is not necessarily democratic. In a democracy, majority rule must be combined with guarantees of individual human rights and the rights of minorities. Most measures also include aspects of the minimum quality of functioning of government. If democratically based decisions cannot or are not implemented, then the concept of democracy is not very meaningful.

Democracy is more than the sum of its institutions. A democratic political culture is also crucial for the legitimacy, smooth functioning and, ultimately, the sustainability of democracy. A culture of passivity and apathy—an obedient and docile citizenry—is not consistent with democracy. The electoral process periodically divides the population into winners and losers. A successful democratic political culture implies that the losing parties and their supporters accept the judgment of the voters, and allow for the peaceful transfer of power.

Participation is also a necessary component, as apathy and abstention are enemies of democracy. Even measures that focus predominantly on the processes of representative, liberal democracy include (albeit inadequately or insufficiently) some aspects of participation. In a democracy, government is only one element in a social fabric of many and varied institutions, political organisations, and associations. Citizens cannot be required to take part in the political process, and they are free to express their dissatisfaction by not participating. However, a healthy democracy requires the active, freely chosen participation of citizens in public life. Democracies flourish when citizens are willing to participate in public debate, elect representatives and join political parties. Without this broad, sustaining participation, democracy begins to wither and become the preserve of small, select groups.

At the same time, even our thicker, more inclusive and wider measure of democracy does not include other aspects—which some authors argue are also crucial components of democracy—such as levels of economic and social wellbeing. Therefore, our Index respects the dominant tradition that



holds that a variety of social and economic outcomes can be consistent with political democracy, which is a separate concept.

Methodology

The Economist Intelligence Unit's index of democracy, on a 0 to 10 scale, is based on the ratings for 60 indicators, grouped into five categories: *electoral process and pluralism*; *civil liberties*; *the functioning of government*; *political participation*; and *political culture*. Each category has a rating on a 0 to 10 scale, and the overall Index is the simple average of the five category indexes.

The category indexes are based on the sum of the indicator scores in the category, converted to a 0 to 10 scale. Adjustments to the category scores are made if countries do not score a 1 in the following critical areas for democracy:

1. Whether national elections are free and fair.
2. The security of voters.
3. The influence of foreign powers on government.
4. The capability of the civil service to implement policies.

If the scores for the first three questions are 0 (or 0.5), one point (0.5 point) is deducted from the index in the relevant category (either *the electoral process and pluralism* or *the functioning of government*). If the score for 4 is 0, one point is deducted from the *functioning of government* category index.

The index values are used to place countries within one of four types of regime:

1. Full democracies: scores of 8-10
2. Flawed democracies: score of 6 to 7.9
3. Hybrid regimes: scores of 4 to 5.9
4. Authoritarian regimes: scores below 4

Threshold points for regime types depend on overall scores that are rounded to one decimal point.

Full democracies: Countries in which not only basic political freedoms and civil liberties are respected, but also tend to be underpinned by a political culture conducive to the flourishing of democracy. The functioning of government is satisfactory. Media are independent and diverse. There is an effective system of checks and balances. The judiciary is independent and judicial decisions are enforced. There are only limited problems in the functioning of democracies.

Flawed democracies: These countries also have free and fair elections and, even if there are problems (such as infringements on media freedom), basic civil liberties are respected. However, there are significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation.

Hybrid regimes: Elections have substantial irregularities that often prevent them from being both free and fair. Government pressure on opposition parties and candidates may be common. Serious weaknesses are more prevalent than in flawed democracies—in political culture, functioning



of government and political participation. Corruption tends to be widespread and the rule of law is weak. Civil society is weak. Typically, there is harassment of and pressure on journalists, and the judiciary is not independent.

Authoritarian regimes: In these states, state political pluralism is absent or heavily circumscribed. Many countries in this category are outright dictatorships. Some formal institutions of democracy may exist, but these have little substance. Elections, if they do occur, are not free and fair. There is disregard for abuses and infringements of civil liberties. Media are typically state-owned or controlled by groups connected to the ruling regime. There is repression of criticism of the government and pervasive censorship. There is no independent judiciary.



The scoring system

We use a combination of a dichotomous and a three-point scoring system for the 60 indicators. A dichotomous 1-0 scoring system (1 for a yes and 0 for a no answer) is not without problems, but it has several distinct advantages over more refined scoring scales (such as the often-used 1-5 or 1-7). For many indicators, the possibility of a 0.5 score is introduced, to capture “grey areas”, where a simple yes (1) or no (0) is problematic, with guidelines as to when that should be used. Consequently, for many indicators there is a three-point scoring system, which represents a compromise between simple dichotomous scoring and the use of finer scales.

The problems of 1-5 or 1-7 scoring scales are numerous. For most indicators under such systems, it is extremely difficult to define meaningful and comparable criteria or guidelines for each score. This can lead to arbitrary, spurious and non-comparable scorings. For example, a score of 2 for one country may be scored a 3 in another, and so on. Alternatively, one expert might score an indicator for a particular country in a different way to another expert. This contravenes a basic principle of measurement, that of so-called *reliability*—the degree to which a measurement procedure produces the same measurements every time, regardless of who is performing it. Two- and three-point systems do not guarantee reliability, but make it more likely.

Second, comparability between indicator scores and aggregation into a multi-dimensional index appears more valid with a two or three-point scale for each indicator (the dimensions being aggregated are similar across indicators). By contrast, with a 1-5 system, the scores are more likely to mean different things across the indicators (for example a 2 for one indicator may be more comparable to a 3 or 4 for another indicator). The problems of a 1-5 or 1-7 system are magnified when attempting to extend the index to many regions and countries.

Features of the Economist Intelligence Unit Index

Public opinion surveys

A crucial, differentiating aspect of our measure is that, in addition to experts' assessments, we use, where available, public-opinion surveys—mainly the World Values Survey. Indicators based on the surveys predominate heavily in the *political participation* and *political culture* categories, and a few are used in the *civil liberties* and *functioning of government* categories.

In addition to the World Values Survey, other sources that can be leveraged include the Eurobarometer surveys, Gallup polls, Asian Barometer, Latin American Barometer, Afrobarometer and national surveys. In the case of countries for which survey results are missing, survey results for similar countries and expert assessment are used to fill in gaps.

Participation and voter turnout

After increasing for many decades, there has been a trend of decreasing voter turnout in most established democracies since the 1960s. Low turnout may be due to disenchantment, but it can also be a sign of contentment. Many, however, see low turnout as undesirable, and there is much debate over the factors that affect turnout and how to increase it.



A high turnout is generally seen as evidence of the legitimacy of the current system. Contrary to widespread belief, there is, in fact, a close correlation between turnout and overall measures of democracy—that is, developed, consolidated democracies have, with very few exceptions, higher turnout (generally above 70%) than less established democracies.

The legislative and executive branches

The appropriate balance between these is much-disputed in political theory. In our model, the clear predominance of the legislature is rated positively, as there is a very strong correlation between legislative dominance and measures of overall democracy.

The model

I Electoral process and pluralism

1. Are elections for the national legislature and head of government free?

Consider whether elections are competitive in that electors are free to vote and are offered a range of choices.

1: Essentially unrestricted conditions for the presentation of candidates (for example, no bans on major parties).

0.5: There are some restrictions on the electoral process.

0: A single-party system or major impediments exist (for example, bans on a major party or candidate).

2. Are elections for the national legislature and head of government fair?

1: No major irregularities in the voting process.

0.5: Significant irregularities occur (intimidation, fraud), but do not significantly affect the overall outcome.

0: Major irregularities occur and affect the outcome.

Score 0 if score for question 1 is 0.

3. Are municipal elections both free and fair?

1: Are free and fair.

0.5: Are free, but not fair.

0: Are neither free nor fair.

4. Is there universal suffrage for all adults?

Bar generally accepted exclusions (for example, non-nationals; criminals; members of armed forces in some countries).

1: Yes.

0: No.

5. Can citizens cast their vote free of significant threats to their security from state or non-state bodies?

1: Yes.

0: No.



6. Do laws provide for broadly equal campaigning opportunities?
 - 1: Yes.
 - 0.5: Formally, yes, but, in practice, opportunities are limited for some candidates.
 - 0: No.
7. Is the process of financing political parties transparent and generally accepted?
 - 1: Yes.
 - 0.5: Not fully transparent.
 - 0: No.
8. Following elections, are the constitutional mechanisms for the orderly transfer of power from one government to another clear, established and accepted?
 - 1: All three criteria are satisfied.
 - 0.5: Two of the three criteria are satisfied.
 - 0: Only one or none of the criteria is satisfied.
9. Are citizens free to form political parties that are independent of the government?
 - 1: Yes.
 - 0.5: There are some restrictions.
 - 0: No.
10. Do opposition parties have a realistic prospect of achieving government?
 - 1: Yes.
 - 0.5: There is a dominant two-party system, in which other political forces never have any effective chance of taking part in national government.
 - 0: No.
11. Is potential access to public office open to all citizens?
 - 1: Yes.
 - 0.5: Formally unrestricted, but, in practice, restricted for some groups, or for citizens from some parts of the country.
 - 0: No.
12. Are citizens allowed to form political and civic organisations, free of state interference and surveillance?
 - 1: Yes.
 - 0.5: Officially free, but subject to some unofficial restrictions or interference.
 - 0: No.

II Functioning of government

13. Do freely elected representatives determine government policy?
 - 1: Yes.
 - 0.5: Exercise some meaningful influence.
 - 0: No.



14. Is the legislature the supreme political body, with a clear supremacy over other branches of government?
1: Yes.
0: No.
15. Is there an effective system of checks and balances on the exercise of government authority?
1: Yes.
0.5: Yes, but there are some serious flaws.
0: No.
16. Government is free of undue influence by the military or the security services.
1: Yes.
0.5: Influence is low, but the defence minister is not a civilian. If the current risk of a military coup is extremely low, but the country has a recent history of military rule or coups.
0: No.
17. Foreign powers and organisations do not determine important government functions or policies.
1: Yes.
0.5: Some features of a protectorate.
0: No (significant presence of foreign troops; important decisions taken by foreign power; country is a protectorate).
18. Do special economic, religious or other powerful domestic groups exercise significant political power, parallel to democratic institutions?
1: Yes.
0.5: Exercise some meaningful influence.
0: No.
19. Are sufficient mechanisms and institutions in place for ensuring government accountability to the electorate in between elections?
1: Yes.
0.5: Yes, but serious flaws exist.
0: No.
20. Does the government's authority extend over the full territory of the country?
1: Yes.
0: No.
21. Is the functioning of government open and transparent, with sufficient public access to information?
1: Yes.
0.5: Yes, but serious flaws exist.
0: No.



22. How pervasive is corruption?

- 1: Corruption is not a major problem.
- 0.5: Corruption is a significant issue.
- 0: Pervasive corruption exists.

23. Is the civil service willing to and capable of implementing government policy?

- 1: Yes.
- 0.5: Yes, but serious flaws exist.
- 0: No.

24. Popular perceptions of the extent to which citizens have free choice and control over their lives.

- 1: High.
- 0.5: Moderate.
- 0: Low.

If available, from World Values Survey

% of people who think that they have a great deal of choice/control.

- 1 if more than 70%.
- 0.5 if 50-70%.
- 0 if less than 50%.

25. Public confidence in government.

- 1: High.
- 0.5: Moderate.
- 0: Low.

If available, from World Values Survey, Gallup polls, Eurobarometer, Latinobarometer

% of people who have a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in government.

- 1 if more than 40%.
- 0.5 if 25-40%.
- 0 if less than 25%.

26. Public confidence in political parties.

- 1: High.
- 0.5: Moderate.
- 0: Low.

If available, from World Values Survey

% of people who have a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence.

- 1 if more than 40%.
- 0.5 if 25-40%.
- 0 if less than 25%.



III Political participation

27. Voter participation/turn-out for national elections.

(Average turnout in parliamentary elections since 2000. Turnout as proportion of population of voting age.)

1 if above 70%.

0.5 if 50%-70%.

0 if below 50%.

If voting is obligatory, score 0. Score 0 if scores for questions 1 or 2 is 0.

28. Do ethnic, religious and other minorities have a reasonable degree of autonomy and voice in the political process?

1: Yes.

0.5: Yes, but serious flaws exist.

0: No.

29. Women in parliament.

% of members of parliament who are women.

1 if more than 20% of seats.

0.5 if 10-20%.

0 if less than 10%.

30. Extent of political participation. Membership of political parties and political non-governmental organisations.

Score 1 if over 7% of population for either.

Score 0.5 if 4-7%.

Score 0 if under 4%.

If participation is forced, score 0.

31. Citizens' engagement with politics.

1: High.

0.5: Moderate.

0: Low.

If available, from World Values Survey

% of people who are very or somewhat interested in politics.

1 if over 60%.

0.5 if 40-60%.

0 if less than 40%.

32. The preparedness of population to take part in lawful demonstrations.

1: High.

0.5: Moderate.

0: Low.



If available, from World Values Survey

% of people who have taken part in or would consider attending lawful demonstrations.

1 if over 40%.

0.5 if 30-40%.

0 if less than 30%.

33. Adult literacy.

1 if over 90%.

0.5 if 70-90%.

0 if less than 70%.

34. Extent to which adult population shows an interest in and follows politics in the news.

1: High.

0.5: Moderate.

0: Low.

If available, from World Values Survey

% of population that follows politics in the news media (print, TV or radio) every day.

1 if over 50%.

0.5 if 30-50%.

0 if less than 30%.

35. The authorities make a serious effort to promote political participation.

1: Yes.

0.5: Some attempts.

0: No.

Consider the role of the education system, and other promotional efforts. Consider measures to facilitate voting by members of the diaspora.

If participation is forced, score 0.

IV Democratic political culture

36. Is there a sufficient degree of societal consensus and cohesion to underpin a stable, functioning democracy?

1: Yes.

0.5: Yes, but some serious doubts and risks.

0: No.

37. Perceptions of leadership; proportion of the population that desires a strong leader who bypasses parliament and elections.

1: Low.

0.5: Moderate.

0: High.



If available, from World Values Survey

% of people who think it would be good or fairly good to have a strong leader who does not bother with parliament and elections.

1 if less than 30%.

0.5 if 30-50%.

0 if more than 50%.

38. Perceptions of military rule; proportion of the population that would prefer military rule.

1: Low.

0.5: Moderate.

0: High.

If available, from World Values Survey

% of people who think it would be very or fairly good to have military rule.

1 if less than 10%.

0.5 if 10-30%.

0 if more than 30%.

39. Perceptions of rule by experts or technocratic government; proportion of the population that would prefer rule by experts or technocrats.

1: Low.

0.5: Moderate.

0: High.

If available, from World Values Survey

% of people who think it would be very or fairly good to have experts, not government, make decisions for the country.

1 if less than 50%.

0.5 if 50-70%.

0 if more than 70%.

40. Perception of democracy and public order; proportion of the population that believes that democracies are not good at maintaining public order.

1: Low.

0.5: Moderate.

0: High.

If available, from World Values Survey

% of people who disagree with the view that democracies are not good at maintaining order.

1 if more than 70%.

0.5 if 50-70%.

0 if less than 50%.



Alternatively, % of people who think that punishing criminals is an essential characteristic of democracy.

- 1 if more than 80%.
- 0.5 if 60-80%.
- 0 if less than 60%.

41. Perception of democracy and the economic system; proportion of the population that believes that democracy benefits economic performance.

If available, from World Values Survey

% of people who disagree with the view that the economic system is badly run in democracies.

- 1 if more than 80%.
- 0.5 if 60-80%.
- 0 if less than 60%.

42. Degree of popular support for democracy.

- 1: High.
- 0.5: Moderate.
- 0: Low.

If available, from World Values Survey

% of people who agree or strongly agree that democracy is better than any other form of government.

- 1 if more than 90%.
- 0.5 if 75-90%.
- 0 if less than 75%.

43. There is a strong tradition of the separation of Church and State.

- 1: Yes.
- 0.5: Some residual influence of Church on State.
- 0: No.

V Civil liberties

44. Is there a free electronic media?

- 1: Yes.
- 0.5: Pluralistic, but state-controlled media are heavily favoured. One or two private owners dominate the media.
- 0: No.

45. Is there a free print media?

- 1: Yes.
- 0.5: Pluralistic, but state-controlled media are heavily favoured. There is high degree of concentration of private ownership of national newspapers.
- 0: No.



46. Is there freedom of expression and protest (bar only generally accepted restrictions, such as banning advocacy of violence)?

1: Yes.

0.5: Holders of minority viewpoints are subject to some official harassment. Libel laws heavily restrict scope for free expression.

0: No.

47. Is media coverage robust? Is there open and free discussion of public issues, with a reasonable diversity of opinions?

1: Yes.

0.5: There is formal freedom, but a high degree of conformity of opinion, including through self-censorship or discouragement of minority or marginal views.

0: No.

48. Are there political restrictions on access to the Internet?

1: No.

0.5: Some moderate restrictions.

0: Yes.

49. Are citizens free to form professional organisations and trade unions?

1: Yes.

0.5: Officially free, but subject to some restrictions.

0: No.

50. Do institutions provide citizens with the opportunity to petition government to redress grievances?

1: Yes.

0.5: Some opportunities.

0: No.

51. The use of torture by the state.

1: Torture is not used.

0: Torture is used.

52. The degree to which the judiciary is independent of government influence.

Consider the views of international legal and judicial watchdogs. Have the courts ever issued an important judgement against the government, or a senior government official?

1: High.

0.5: Moderate.

0: Low.



53. The degree of religious tolerance and freedom of religious expression.

Are all religions permitted to operate freely, or are some restricted? Is the right to worship permitted both publicly and privately? Do some religious groups feel intimidated by others, even if the law requires equality and protection?

1: High.

0.5: Moderate.

0: Low.

54. The degree to which citizens are treated equally under the law.

Consider whether favoured groups or individuals are spared prosecution under the law.

1: High.

0.5: Moderate.

0: Low.

55. Do citizens enjoy basic security?

1: Yes.

0.5: Crime is so pervasive as to endanger security for large segments.

0: No.

56. Extent to which private property rights are protected and private business is free from undue government influence

1: High.

0.5: Moderate.

0: Low.

57. Extent to which citizens enjoy personal freedoms.

Consider gender equality, right to travel, choice of work and study.

1: High.

0.5: Moderate.

0: Low.

58. Popular perceptions on protection of human rights; proportion of the population that think that basic human rights are well-protected.

1: High.

0.5: Moderate.

0: Low.

If available, from World Values Survey:

% of people who think that human rights are respected in their country.

1 if more than 70%.

0.5 if 50-70%.

0 if less than 50%.



59. There is no significant discrimination on the basis of people's race, colour or religious beliefs.

1: Yes.

0.5: Yes, but some significant exceptions.

0: No.

60. Extent to which the government invokes new risks and threats as an excuse for curbing civil liberties.

1: Low.

0.5: Moderate.

0: High.



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