



Conditions and Consequences of Populism and Democratic Backsliding

International IDEA Background Paper





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1. The impact of populism on democracy

Introduction

This Background Paper provides an overview of the calculations and statistical analysis made for Chapter 1 of *The Global State of Democracy 2019: Addressing the Ills, Reviving the Promise*. The analysis in this paper refers specifically to sections 1.2.1 ('The crisis of representation of political parties and the rise of populism') and 1.2.2 ('Patterns and conditions of democratic backsliding') of the report.

Populist government and the quality of democracy

Using the Global State of Democracy Indices (GSoD Indices), *The Global State of Democracy 2019* (International IDEA 2019) studies whether populist governments perform better than non-populist governments on measures of democratic quality and policy effectiveness. Since the GSoD Indices do not measure populism, both the full report and this Background Paper rely on two extant data sets that identify whether and for how long populist parties and politicians have governed.

The first source is a report published by the Blair Institute for Global Change that lists 46 populist leaders or political parties in office, covering 33 countries around the world since 1990 (Kyle and Gultchin 2018). According to the report, 'populism is the combination of two claims: the people are locked into conflict with outsiders; and nothing should constrain the will of the true people' (Kyle and Gultchin 2018: 19). The authors have coded political leaders as populists by screening academic journals for populism-related articles. They selected the names of politicians mentioned in these articles and validated the resulting list by consulting experts on populism.

The second data source has been compiled by the free market think tank Timbro, which publishes an Index of Authoritarian Populism that maps populist parties in 33 European countries since 1980. The Index is based on an in-house coding of parties that relies on scholarly literature, Internet sources and expert surveys of parties' ideological positions. Timbro defines authoritarian populism by the positioning of parties as 'true representatives of *the people* standing up to the *elite*' (Timbro 2019: 10), a disregard for 'constitutional rule of law' (Timbro 2019: 10) and 'the quest for a more powerful state' (Timbro 2019: 12).

The two data sets were combined by including a country-year as 'populist' if it was identified so by at least one of the sources. These selection criteria yielded a sample of 43 countries that have seen one or more years of populist government during the period 1980–

2018. The total number of years with populist government for these countries and during this period is 465 (see Table 1).

To examine how populist governments influence democracy, the following analysis compares years under populist government with years of non-populist government for the sample of countries. All other countries covered by the GSoD Indices were ignored because the sources do not contain information that would allow them to be qualified reliably as being ruled or not ruled by populist governments. Since the duration of populist governments in office differs across countries, the analysis looks at the mean changes of GSoD Indices aspects per year, comparing ‘populist’ and ‘non-populist’ episodes for the sample (see Table 2).

Table 1. Episodes of populist government, 1980–2018

Country	Episode	Country	Episode
Argentina	1989–1999; 2003–2015	Nicaragua	2007–2018
Austria	2000–2006; 2017–2018	North Macedonia	2006–2016
Belarus	1994–2018	Norway	2013–2018
Bolivia	2006–2018	Paraguay	2009–2012
Brazil	1990–1992	Peru	1990–2000
Bulgaria	2009–2018	Philippines	1998–2001; 2016–2018
Cyprus	2003–2008	Poland	1990–1995; 2005–2007; 2015–2018
Czechia	1998–2002; 2017–2018	Romania	1994–1995; 2004–2014
Ecuador	1996–1997; 2003–2005; 2007–2017	Russia	2000–2018
Finland	1980–1982; 2015–2018	Serbia	2014–2018
France	1981–1984; 1997–2001	Slovakia	1993–1998; 2006–2010; 2012–2018
Georgia	2004–2013	Slovenia	2004–2007; 2012–2013
Greece	2011–2012; 2015–2018	South Africa	2009–2018
Hungary	1998–2002; 2010–2018	Sri Lanka	2005–2015; 2018–2018
India	2014–2018	Switzerland	1995–2018
Indonesia	2014–2018	Taiwan	2000–2008
Israel	1996–1999; 2009–2018	Thailand	2001–2006
Italy	1994–2011; 2013–2013; 2018–2018	Turkey	2003–2018
Japan	2001–2006	United States	2017–2018
Latvia	1995–2004; 2006–2009; 2011–2018	Venezuela	1999–2018
Lithuania	2012–2016	Zambia	2011–2014
Netherlands	2002–2002		

Sources: Kyle, J. and Gultchin, L., *Populists in Power Around the World* (London: Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2018), <<http://institute.global/insight/renewing-centre/populists-power-around-world>>, accessed 7 November 2018; Timbro, *Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index* (Stockholm: Timbro, 2019), <<https://populismindex.com/report/>>, accessed 1 May 2019.

Table 2. Mean annual changes in GSoD Indices, populist and non-populist periods of government

Aspect	Mean level prior to episode start		Mean % change		Mean score change	
	Non-populist	Populist	Non-populist	Populist	Non-populist	Populist
1. Representative Government	0.63	0.72	1.4	-0.3	0.009	-0.002
1.1. Clean Elections	0.67	0.77	1.4	-0.3	0.009	-0.003
1.2. Inclusive Suffrage	0.89	0.92	0.5	0.2	0.005	0.001
1.3. Free Political Parties	0.62	0.69	1.0	-0.4	0.006	-0.003
1.4. Elected Government	0.87	0.95	0.9	-0.4	0.008	-0.003
2. Fundamental Rights	0.66	0.72	0.9	-0.4	0.006	-0.003
2.1. Access to Justice	0.66	0.71	0.7	-0.4	0.005	-0.003
2.2. Civil Liberties	0.72	0.81	1.1	-0.8	0.008	-0.006
2.2.A. Freedom of Expression	0.70	0.79	1.2	-0.9	0.008	-0.007
2.2.B. Freedom of Association and Assembly	0.71	0.80	1.3	-0.9	0.009	-0.007
2.2.C. Freedom of Religion	0.78	0.83	0.6	-0.4	0.004	-0.003
2.2.D. Freedom of Movement	0.80	0.86	0.6	-0.2	0.005	-0.001
2.2.E. Personal Integrity and Security	0.57	0.63	0.9	-0.4	0.005	-0.003
2.3. Social Rights and Equality	0.54	0.60	1.1	0.4	0.006	0.003
2.3.A. Social Group Equality	0.57	0.61	0.4	-0.2	0.002	-0.001
2.3.B. Basic Welfare	0.62	0.69	1.0	0.8	0.006	0.006
2.3.C. Gender Equality	0.57	0.63	1.1	0.5	0.006	0.003
3. Checks on Government	0.62	0.69	1.1	-0.8	0.007	-0.005
3.1. Effective Parliament	0.62	0.68	1.1	-0.6	0.007	-0.004
3.2. Judicial Independence	0.56	0.60	0.8	-0.7	0.005	-0.004
3.3. Media Integrity	0.66	0.75	1.2	-0.8	0.008	-0.006
4. Impartial Administration	0.58	0.61	0.6	-0.5	0.004	-0.003
4.1. Absence of Corruption	0.54	0.56	0.3	-0.1	0.002	-0.001
4.2. Predictable Enforcement	0.57	0.61	0.8	-0.8	0.005	-0.005
5. Participatory Engagement						
5.1. Civil Society Participation	0.64	0.72	1.3	-0.8	0.008	-0.006
5.2. Electoral Participation	0.67	0.65	-0.1	0.6	-0.001	0.004
5.3. Direct Democracy	0.12	0.19	2.6	2.1	0.003	0.004
5.4. Local Democracy	0.57	0.66	1.1	0.1	0.006	0.001

Measure	Mean level prior to episode start		Mean % change		Mean score change	
	Non-populist	Populist	Non-populist	Populist	Non-populist	Populist
Ecological Footprint	4.00	3.86	-0.3	0.2	-0.013	0.006
Ease of Doing Business Index	70	69	1.0	0.7	0.681	0.511

Sources: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2018 (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>; Global Footprint Network, 'Ecological Footprint' [n.d.], <<https://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/ecological-footprint/>>, accessed 20 August 2019; World Bank, Ease of Doing Business Score, 2018, <<https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/data/doing-business-score>>, accessed 6 August 2019.

These comparisons show that periods with populist governments in office entail declines on most aspects of democracy measured in the GSoD Indices data set. In contrast, episodes without populist government are frequently marked by improvements. Only six aspects of democracy improved under populist governments. Of these, only Electoral Participation increased more than under non-populist governments, while the other aspects (Direct Democracy, Inclusive Suffrage, Basic Welfare, Gender Equality, and Local Democracy) saw an increase during both periods but improved more during non-populist governments. Under populist government, the Ecological Footprint increased more than under non-populist governments, indicating a higher consumption of natural resources and higher volumes of waste and carbon emissions (Global Footprint Network n. d.). The mean annual improvement in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, a measure of business-friendly regulations, is slightly higher under non-populist governments (World Bank 2018).

To determine whether the differences between the mean changes per episode are significant, regression analyses were conducted to measure the effect of populist government on the GSoD Indices aspects and on two indicators of environmental and economic policy performance. The models include country and year fixed effects. In addition, two control variables are included: the GSoD Indices aspect of Representative Government and on the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (logtransformed using the logarithms to achieve a more balanced distribution of scores). This design made it possible to control for the influence of individual country features, years, levels of income and levels of democracy. All explanatory variables were lagged by one year. Cluster-robust standard errors were estimated to relax the assumption of uncorrelated error terms.

Tables 3–8 show the results of these analyses (year and country coefficients are omitted). Table 3 shows the impact of populist government on four of the GSoD Indices attributes: Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government and Impartial Administration. Table 4 shows the impact of populist government on Representative Government and Civil Liberties at the subattribute level. Table 5 shows the impact of populist government on subattributes of Civil Liberties and Checks on Government. Table 6 shows the impact of populist government on subattributes of Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement. Table 7 shows the impact of populist government on subcomponents of Civil Liberties. Finally, Table 8 shows the impact of populist government on subcomponents of Social Rights and Equality, and on environmental and economic performance.

In summary, declines are significant for Elected Government, and for Civil Liberties and three of its subcomponents (Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Association and Assembly, and Freedom of Movement). Differences are not significant for Ecological Footprint and the Ease of Doing Business Index.

Table 3. Populist government: impact on Global State of Democracy Indices attributes

Explanatory variables and model parameters	Dependent variable			
	Representative Government	Fundamental Rights	Checks on Government	Impartial Administration
Populist government	-0.00543 (0.13)	-0.00268 (0.08)	-0.00260 (0.23)	-0.00178 (0.25)
Representative Government	-0.205*** (0.00)	-0.0475*** (0.00)	-0.0819*** (0.00)	-0.0467*** (0.00)
GDP per capita, logtransformed	-0.0155* (0.05)	-0.0000780 (0.98)	-0.00173 (0.72)	-0.00393 (0.25)
Constant	0.246** (0.00)	0.0360 (0.19)	0.0688 (0.06)	0.0619 (0.08)
Observations	1469	1469	1469	1469
N_g	42	42	42	42
r2_w	0.193	0.123	0.123	0.0866
r2_b	0.0841	0.0660	0.0560	0.0810
p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Notes for Tables 3–8 are explained in the end note¹.

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2018 (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

Table 4. Populist government: impact on subattributes of Representative Government and Civil Liberties

Explanatory variables and model parameters	Representative Government				Civil Liberties
	Clean Elections	Inclusive Suffrage	Free Political Parties	Elected Government	Access to Justice
Populist government	-0.00613 (0.14)	-0.00450 (0.27)	-0.00358 (0.09)	-0.00864* (0.02)	-0.00250 (0.19)
Representative Government	-0.213*** (0.00)	-0.235*** (0.00)	-0.0917*** (0.00)	-0.187** (0.00)	-0.0428*** (0.00)
GDP per capita, logtransformed	-0.0142 (0.09)	-0.0167 (0.08)	-0.00268 (0.53)	-0.0159* (0.05)	0.000382 (0.90)
Constant	0.246** (0.00)	0.283** (0.01)	0.0738* (0.04)	0.219* (0.01)	0.0252 (0.33)
Observations	1469	1469	1469	1469	1469
N_g	42	42	42	42	42
r2_w	0.171	0.147	0.168	0.0878	0.0897
r2_b	0.0414	0.0229	0.192	0.0972	0.0223
p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2018 (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

Table 5. Populist government: impact on subattributes of Civil Liberties and Checks on Government

Explanatory variables and model parameters	Civil Liberties		Checks on Government		
	Civil Liberties	Social Rights and Equality	Effective Parliament	Judicial Independence	Media Integrity
Populist government	-0.00446* (0.01)	-0.000784 (0.44)	-0.00377 (0.14)	-0.000186 (0.93)	-0.00289 (0.23)
Representative Government	-0.0740*** (0.00)	-0.0162* (0.02)	-0.107** (0.00)	-0.0392*** (0.00)	-0.0784*** (0.00)
GDP per capita, logtransformed	-0.000919 (0.85)	0.000208 (0.89)	-0.00280 (0.70)	-0.000698 (0.88)	-0.00145 (0.76)
Constant	0.0575 (0.22)	0.0242 (0.10)	0.0907 (0.08)	0.0351 (0.36)	0.0652 (0.09)
Observations	1469	1469	1469	1469	1469
N_g	42	42	42	42	42
r2_w	0.133	0.0782	0.0793	0.0489	0.125
r2_b	0.124	0.0415	0.0331	0.00683	0.113
p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2018 (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

Table 6. Populist government: impact on subattributes of Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement

Explanatory variables and model parameters	Impartial Administration		Participatory Engagement			
	Absence of Corruption	Predictable Enforcement	Civil Society Participation	Electoral Participation	Direct Democracy	Local Democracy
Populist government	-0.000383 (0.78)	-0.00283 (0.18)	-0.00265 (0.34)	0.00309 (0.50)	-0.00268 (0.49)	-0.00150 (0.49)
Representative Government	-0.0280** (0.00)	-0.0594*** (0.00)	-0.0803*** (0.00)	-0.208*** (0.00)	-0.0152 (0.22)	-0.0349 (0.05)
GDP per capita, logtransformed	-0.00487 (0.18)	-0.00282 (0.45)	-0.00196 (0.68)	-0.0112 (0.19)	-0.00508 (0.32)	-0.000804 (0.86)
Constant	0.0536 (0.11)	0.0653 (0.09)	0.0809 (0.07)	0.222* (0.01)	0.0457 (0.29)	0.0396 (0.30)
Observations	1469	1469	1469	1434	1465	1440
N_g	42	42	42	42	42	42
r2_w	0.0446	0.0946	0.112	0.0991	0.0292	0.0632
r2_b	0.0360	0.0853	0.146	0.0384	0.0400	0.116
p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2018 (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

Table 7. Populist government: impact on subcomponents of Civil Liberties

Explanatory variables and model parameters	Subcomponent				
	Freedom of Expression	Freedom of Association and Assembly	Freedom of Religion	Freedom of Movement	Personal Integrity and Security
Populist government	-0.00439* (0.03)	-0.00575* (0.02)	-0.00302 (0.08)	-0.00298* (0.04)	-0.00316 (0.08)
Representative Government	-0.0806*** (0.00)	-0.0790*** (0.00)	-0.0265* (0.03)	-0.0457** (0.00)	-0.0411*** (0.00)
GDP per capita, logtransformed	0.000677 (0.90)	-0.00620 (0.26)	0.00265 (0.37)	0.0000936 (0.98)	-0.00447 (0.19)
Constant	0.0455 (0.39)	0.112* (0.03)	0.00667 (0.79)	0.0299 (0.24)	0.0632 (0.05)
Observations	1469	1469	1469	1469	1469
N_g	42	42	42	42	42
r2_w	0.123	0.116	0.0832	0.103	0.0695
r2_b	0.101	0.0775	0.0731	0.266	0.173
p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2018 (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsd-indices>>.

Table 8. Populist government: impact on subcomponents of Social Rights and Equality, and indicators of environmental and economic performance

Explanatory variables and model parameters	Social Rights and Equality				
	Social Group Equality	Basic Welfare	Gender Equality	Ease of Doing Business Index	Ecological Footprint
Populist government	-0.00200 (0.13)	-0.000479 (0.42)	0.0000688 (0.96)	-0.356 (0.06)	0.0580 (0.44)
Representative Government	-0.0191* (0.04)	0.000602 (0.85)	-0.0168* (0.04)	4.863 (0.33)	-0.278 (0.44)
GDP per capita, logtransformed	-0.000323 (0.87)	0.00106 (0.32)	0.0000323 (0.99)	4.627 (0.40)	0.773*** (0.00)
Constant	0.0274 (0.15)	0.00132 (0.88)	0.0255 (0.20)	23.33 (0.64)	-1.871 (0.10)
Observations	1469	1469	1469	123	1291
N_g	42	42	42	41	42
r2_w	0.0531	0.0442	0.0574	0.330	0.248
r2_b	0.123	0.0312	0.0102	0.407	0.775
p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2018 (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsd-indices>>.

Endnotes

1. GDP = gross domestic product; p = probability that the model does not explain more than a model with a constant only (F-test); * = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$ (P-values in parentheses); N_g = number of countries; $r2_w$ = share of explained intertemporal variation; $r2_b$ = share of explained cross-national variation.

2. Conditions for democratic backsliding

The Global State of Democracy 2019 defines democratic backsliding as the gradual weakening of checks on government and civil liberties by democratically elected governments. Democratic backsliding is an incremental, partly concealed institutional change that is legitimized by references to popular electoral mandates, majority decisions, and laws. It is often driven by the intentional dismantling of accountability institutions. Other forms of democratic erosion are generally not driven by such explicit intentions. While not all countries experiencing democratic erosion necessarily experience democratic backsliding, the countries that experience democratic backsliding always do so as part of a process of democratic erosion.

While democratic backsliding may result in a breakdown of democracy and the (re-)installation of an authoritarian regime, it may also leave the fundamentals of a democracy intact and remain confined to a permanent loss of democratic quality. Determining the endpoint of a backsliding process is difficult because many episodes of backsliding have occurred gradually and may have begun only recently. Incumbent elites need and claim to sustain the public façade of democracy and try to frame the unchecked of executive authority as a deepening of democracy. Democratic legitimacy continues to be a requirement of, and a constraint on, these elite actions, preventing incumbents from openly promoting autocratic rule. The term democratic backsliding focuses on the process itself and is therefore more open to different possible final states of backsliding.

The Global State of Democracy 2019 identifies democratic backsliding as a form of democratic erosion. When country-level declines in one or more aspects of democracy are observed, but these declines do not fit the conceptual and quantitative description of democratic backsliding, these are referred to as other forms of democratic erosion or democratic deterioration (two terms which are used interchangeably in the report).

Measuring democratic backsliding using the GSoD Indices

The Global State of Democracy 2019 builds on the analysis of democratic backsliding initiated in the first edition of the report (International IDEA 2017: 70–94) and further explores the scope and patterns of democratic backsliding, applying GSoD Indices data to identify country cases. This is done by using the GSoD Indices attribute Checks on Government and the subattribute Civil Liberties. The Checks on Government attribute captures the extent to which the legislature supervises the executive (Effective Parliament), the media landscape offers diverse and critical coverage of political issues (Media Integrity) and the courts are not subject to undue influence from other branches of government (Judicial Independence). The Civil Liberties subattribute denotes the extent to which civil rights and liberties are respected

(citizens enjoy the freedoms of expression, association, religion, movement, and personal integrity and security). Both Checks on Government and Civil Liberties capture key aspects of democracy.

The Checks on Government attribute and Civil Liberties subattribute scores are combined into a single indicator variable by calculating the arithmetic mean. Existing empirical studies of backsliding have also used composite indicators of democracy to identify declines over time (Coppedge 2017; Mainwaring and Bizzarro 2019; Kaufman and Haggard 2019), but scholars differ regarding the size and time span required to qualify as backsliding. While the gradual character of the process suggests setting low threshold values, too low thresholds would include minor declines that do not reflect institutional change and may result from imprecise measurement.

Both *The Global State of Democracy 2019* and this Background Paper propose to identify democratic backsliding cases as those democracies that have suffered a net decline of at least 0.1 points on the average score of Checks on Government and Civil Liberties over a period of five years. This value is approximately seven times the size of the confidence interval for the mean of Checks on Government/Civil Liberties. It has been selected to include all cases that have been frequently discussed as examples of backsliding—see Lührmann and Lindberg (2019) for a similarly sized indicator).

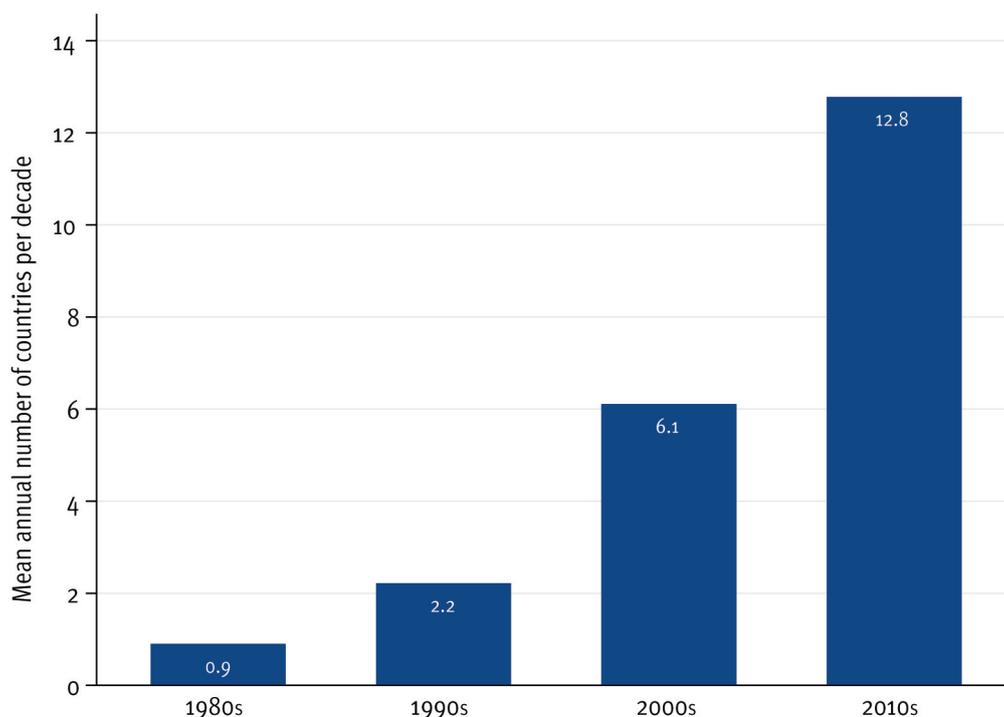
The criterion makes it possible to focus the analysis on net declines over a five-year period, and to identify accumulated declines and changes by summing up year-to-year changes (Coppedge 2017: 7). For the countries and years identified by this threshold, ‘episodes’ of backsliding are constructed by adding preceding and subsequent years without improvements of the backsliding indicator. In a third step, high-performing democracies are excluded if their mean of Checks on Government/Civil Liberties declines by less than -0.15 points during an episode. The total number of country–years showing a decline of at least -0.1 in Checks on Government and Civil Liberties during the period 1975–2018 is 158. Of these cases, 106 occurring after 1998 are selected. Countries with non-contiguous years of backsliding are then either classified as one episode if the scores for intermediate years do not improve (as in Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Ukraine and Venezuela) or the prior episode is omitted (as in Nepal 2002–2005 and Pakistan 1999).

This restriction seeks to filter out cases of minor declines at high levels of Representative Government, assuming that the comparatively resilient institutions of such democracies can better contain incumbents’ attempts to weaken accountability.

The present analysis focuses on the period since 1994, covering the period after the global expansion of democracy in the early nineties. These selection criteria generate a sample of 20 countries that have experienced democratic backsliding. The number of democratic backsliding cases has doubled in the past decade (see Figure 1).

According to the GSoD Indices, a total of 10 democracies (10 per cent of the world’s democracies) experienced democratic backsliding in 2018. In Nicaragua and Pakistan, it has resulted in partial democratic breakdown (into hybridity), while Venezuela’s democratic backsliding process resulted in a full democratic breakdown in 2017. All 10 countries have backslid over several years. The average length of a backsliding episode is nine years. The countries with the largest number of backsliding years are Hungary and Nicaragua (13 years each). While both Russia and Venezuela’s democracies have declined for a longer period of time, Russia experienced a one-year interruption to its backsliding in 2011, and Venezuela saw a two-year interruption in 2011–2012, ending the episodes identified by the above-mentioned coding rule. Within the sample of countries, European and upper middle-income countries are over-represented.

Figure 1. Average annual number of countries experiencing democratic backsliding per decade, 1980–2018



Notes: The total for the 2010s includes data for only eight years, as opposed to the full 10-year period for all preceding decades.

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2018 (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gso-d-indices>>.

Table 9 shows all backsliding countries identified by the GSoD Indices. The table distinguishes between countries affected by moderate democratic backsliding and those suffering severe democratic backsliding. Both categories are occurring to regimes that remain democratic but are experiencing a significant loss in democratic quality. Countries with declines of less than -0.15 on their averaged Checks on Government/Civil Liberties indicator during their episode of backsliding (e.g. India) are listed as cases of moderate backsliding. Countries with larger declines (e.g. Hungary, Poland and Turkey) are classified as suffering from severe democratic backsliding. Among the cases of democratic breakdown, the table separates cases of full breakdown resulting in non-democracy from cases of partial breakdown leading to a hybrid political regime. Of the countries that have experienced a partial breakdown, Venezuela became a hybrid regime in 2008 which ultimately resulted in a full democratic breakdown and regression to a non-democracy in 2017.

Declines in Checks on Government and Civil Liberties are positively and strongly correlated with declines in Civil Society Participation, Access to Justice, and Predictable Enforcement, indicating that backsliding often affects these dimensions of democracy (Coppedge 2017). Democratic backsliding is only weakly correlated with the electoral-representative dimension of democracy which comprises Clean Elections, Electoral Participation, and Inclusive Suffrage—except for cases that become so severe that they result in partial or full democratic breakdown.

Table 9. Episodes of democratic backsliding in the GSoD Indices data set

	Moderate democratic backsliding	Severe democratic backsliding	Democratic backsliding resulting in democratic breakdown	
			From democracy to hybrid regime	From democracy to non-democracy
Current cases	India (2006–2018) Philippines (2015–2018) Ukraine (2010–2018)	Hungary (2006–2018) Poland (2013–2018) Romania (2017–2018) Serbia (2010–2018) Turkey (2008–2018)	Nicaragua (2006–2018) Pakistan (2014–2018)	
Past cases	Ecuador (2008–2016) North Macedonia (2008–2016)		Central African Republic (1999–2007) Mali (2012–2016) Nepal (2012–2016) Russia (1999–2010) Venezuela (1999–2010)	Bangladesh (2001–2010) Madagascar (2009–2012) Niger (2005–2010)

Source: International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2018 (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>.

What are the causes of and facilitating conditions for democratic backsliding?

To further explore the causes of and conditions for backsliding, this Background Paper examines how characteristics of democracy, economic factors, features of the digital public sphere and political polarization contribute to trigger and sustain episodes of democratic backsliding. The statistical analyses compare the conditions prior to and during these episodes, both over time and across countries.

A first set of potentially influential factors relates to democratic institutions. Independent courts, free and pluralist media outlets, a vibrant civil society, opposition parties harnessing their powers in the legislature and impartial bureaucrats can be assumed to prevent governing majorities from dismantling checks and balances. The GSoD Indices measure the strength of these factors in detail. The GSoD Indices subattributes are therefore included as explanatory variables. Of the 16 subattributes, three—Inclusive Suffrage, Elected Government and Direct Democracy—were excluded because of their skewed distributions.

International IDEA’s classification of political regimes makes it possible to identify countries as democratic, hybrid or non-democratic regimes. This classification can be used to determine the ‘age’ of a democracy—that is, for how long a democracy has endured since the most recent transition to democracy or within the period of measurement. More stable institutions in older democracies might render them less prone to decline but may also entail institutional sclerosis due to rent-seeking and vested interests.

Democratic stability may also depend on the extent to which citizens support democracy as a political regime (see e.g. Foa and Mounk 2016; Easton 1965; Claassen 2019). To assess this so-called diffuse support, the analysis includes results from public opinion surveys that exist for approximately 91 per cent of the years identified as backsliding. These representative surveys include the Eurobarometer, Latinobarometro, Arab and Afrobarometer as well as the World Values Survey. These surveys have asked respondents whether they prefer democracy over undemocratic political regimes or view democracy as a desirable or appropriate political regime. Since these questions have been phrased differently and have also been asked in very different survey designs, the results cannot be compared directly. Fortunately, a recent scholarly study (Claassens 2019) has developed a Bayesian latent trait measurement model to

estimate comparable figures of support for democracy. This data set is used for the present analysis.

In addition, the analysis checks the extent to which levels of economic wealth and economic recessions influence backsliding processes. The GDP per capita and the annual rate of change in GDP per capita were included as explanatory variables. Logarithms of per-capita GDP figures are used, and annual GDP per capita changes are capped at ± 10 per cent to achieve less skewed distributions. An additional economic variable is the share of foreign trade in GDP, which reflects international economic dependencies and the impact of economic globalization. Some cases of backsliding countries indicate that the negative ramifications of international economic and financial crises have triggered changes of government that led to backsliding.

A final group of possible causal factors pertains to political polarization, populism and the public sphere in general. Extreme polarization, populist confrontation and radicalizing online discourses and communities have been viewed as conducive to the erosion of democratic norms, whereby extreme partisan polarization is identified as a factor contributing to the electoral success of political leaders and parties committed to eroding accountability institutions, paving the way for democratic backsliding. Polarization is seen as linked to partisan degradation of party competition and is often exacerbated by the emergence of populism (see Ginsburg and Huq 2018: 78–90). It is seen as weakening informal norms of democracy such as the acceptance of political rivals as legitimate actors and the use of restraint in employing institutional prerogatives (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018: 11). These norms often appear to have been eroded prior to the start of a democratic backsliding episode.

This Background Paper studies these potential causes by including variables that measure whether a country has a populist government and how the Internet and social media affect political behaviour. These variables come from the above-mentioned populism studies (Kyle and Gultchin 2018; Timbro 2019) and the Digital Society Survey conducted in connection with the Varieties of Democracy project (V-Dem n.d.). The survey asks country experts to assess five items:

1. *Online media existence* (variable name: v2smonex): the extent to which people consume online media;
2. *Online media fractionalization* (v2smmefra): the extent to which major domestic online media disagree in their presentation of major political news;
3. *Party dissemination of false information domestic* (v2smpardom): the extent to which parties disseminate false information in the domestic public sphere;
4. *Political parties hate speech* (v2smpolhate): the extent to which political parties use hate speech; and
5. *Polarization of society* (v2smpolsoc): the extent of ‘serious differences in opinions in society on almost all key political issues, which result in major clashes of views’ (Coppedge et al. 2019: 298).

In a first step of data preparation, values for the two years preceding the start of the period covered by the survey were imputed (1998 and 1999). This was done to ensure that one-year lagged values could be used to assess their impact on the start of backsliding in important cases, such as Russia and Venezuela. The imputation was done based by regressing the respective variable on its subsequent year. The predicted values from these regressions were used as approximations of the country–year values for 1998 and 1999.

In a second step, these variables were inverted and rescaled so that they range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating higher levels of online media use, fractionalization, disinformation, hate speech and polarization.

The variables to be explained (response variables) are (a) a binary measure of whether or not a country experienced backsliding in a given year; and (b) changes in the average score on the two components of the above-mentioned backsliding indicator: Checks on Government and Civil Liberties. As explained above, backsliding episodes were identified by an average net decline of more than 0.1 points of Checks on Government and Civil Liberties scores over a five-year period. The two measures used here reflect a dichotomous and a gradualist conceptualization of backsliding. In the dichotomous view, backsliding is considered to be a distinct phenomenon that is qualitatively different from other processes of decline occurring in democracies. Democratic declines qualify as backsliding only if they exceed a certain threshold or if they reach a critical momentum. In contrast, the gradualist view conceives backsliding as an incremental decline in democratic quality that may be characterized by very small modifications to accountability institutions.

Estimation procedure

The data set comprises 20 years (1999–2018) and all countries classified as democracies by the GSoD Indices in this period. The time period is not extended to years preceding 1999 because the conceptual discussion tends to view backsliding/autocratization as a new phenomenon related to the weakening of the post-1989 democratic expansion. Moreover, several explanatory variables are missing for the period prior to 1999 which would significantly limit the number of observations. Of the democratic political regimes covered by the GSoD Indices during 1999–2018, 20 have experienced an episode of backsliding. For nine of these countries, backsliding was associated with a transition to a hybrid or non-democratic political regime. The resulting total number of observations or country–years is 1799, of which 160 are marked as ‘backsliding’. Since the number of countries is limited, but exceeds the number of years, the data set is considered to be ‘time-series cross-section’ (TSCS) (Beck and Katz 1995; Fortin-Rittberger 2015).

The binary response variable is estimated by conditional fixed effects (FE) logit models. To estimate the continuous response variable, FE ordinary least squares (OLS) models are run. While TSCS data provide better statistical leverage than cross-sectional data, such a data structure poses some methodological challenges that need to be addressed. The values of most variables for individual countries and the measurement errors are not independent over time, which violates one of the assumptions underlying the estimation of OLS regression models. To account for serial correlation, the models are estimated with cluster-robust standard errors. In addition, the analysis of the continuous response variable focuses on changes of Checks on Government and Civil Liberties scores rather than levels, employing a so-called first-difference model. Both modelling strategies also address potential issues of non-stationarity and panel heteroskedasticity.

If countries are units of TSCS data, these units are likely to be heterogeneous—that is, their values will be influenced by unobserved variables, reflecting, for example, historical trajectories or institutional particularities. This unit heterogeneity was confirmed by an F test comparing OLS regression models with and without country dummies. To model this heterogeneity, the analysis uses fixed effects that include intercepts for each country to capture the unobserved heterogeneity.

The dependent variable of the analysis—declines in Checks on Government and Civil Liberties—may causally affect the explanatory variables which will bias estimates. To reduce such endogeneity, all explanatory variables are lagged by one year. Robustness checks were done by excluding influential observations from the sample and by including year fixed effects, but these modifications did not fundamentally change the coefficients.

Since several GSoD Indices subattributes are highly correlated, including all of them into one model may suppress or confound the effects of individual subattributes or of other explanatory variables outside the GSoD Indices. To reduce such effects and the complexity of the model, the GSoD Indices subattributes were summarized in a single explanatory variable based on a factor analysis. A maximum-likelihood factor analysis of the 13 above-mentioned subattributes for all democratic country–years since 1999 generated one factor capturing 77 per cent of the total variation. This factor was used as a single proxy variable, ‘Democracy Quality’, to replace the GSoD Indices subattributes.

High correlations among the variables measuring aspects of the Internet and social media would also make it possible to replace the five individual variables by a single variable generated through factor analysis. However, the analyses were conducted with different combinations of the disaggregated variables in order to be able to specify their effects individually.

Table 10 and Table 11 provide the results of the estimations. Table 10 displays five different logistic regression models where the dependent variables are dummies classifying country–years as backsliding or not backsliding. Table 11 shows five OLS regression models that explain the net decline on the average of Checks on Government and Civil Liberties during a five-year period. While the first two models in each table include GSoD Indices subattributes, the last three models replace the subattributes with a single Democracy Quality variable. These latter models are fit by omitting some variables from the Digital Society Survey that confounded the effect of other variables from this survey. In addition, other variables have also been excluded to improve model fit or to ensure a convergence of the estimation procedure.

The two sets of models are further distinguished according to the specific operationalization of the dependent variable and the set of country–years. In Table 10, the logistic regression models take all country–years, first years of a backsliding episode and countries experiencing backsliding in 2018 as the dependent variables. The first of these dependent variables focuses on conditions influencing the start and continuation of backsliding processes. In contrast, the second dependent variable is confined to constellations triggering a backsliding process. These two models confine the sample of countries to those 20 countries that have experienced backsliding episodes. The third model represents a cross-sectional design aimed at explaining the difference between backsliding and non-backsliding democracies in 2018.

The OLS models in Table 11 focus on all (lagged) democracies, on the 20 countries with backsliding episodes and on all (lagged) democracies in 2018. These specifications of the dependent variable examine the whole set of democracies over the whole period and in 2018, as well as the subset of (initially) democratic countries suffering more severe declines in the backsliding indicator. The differing samples were chosen to avoid case-selection bias.

Table 10. Dependent variable: Country–years classified as backsliding or not backsliding

	GSoD Indices subattributes		Single democracy variable		
	All	Start	All	Start	2018
Democracy Quality			4.049** (1.56)	9.429** (2.08)	0.9456 (0.99)
Clean Elections	5.182 (3.72)	9.026 (16.64)			
Free Political Parties	10.03 (13.89)	170.3*** (45.60)			
Access to Justice	38.54** (13.49)	92.45 (48.64)			
Civil Liberties	-10.70 (8.29)	192.2* (75.11)			
Social Rights and Equality	-33.89** (11.30)	-27.91 (37.31)			
Effective Parliament	-18.39** (5.74)	-15.57* (7.53)			
Judicial Independence	3.324 (6.78)	-0.466 (18.57)			
Media Integrity	24.96*** (7.04)	87.81*** (24.72)			
Absence of Corruption	-0.879 (6.73)	-16.92 (23.52)			
Predictable Enforcement	-7.483 (7.17)	14.20 (40.03)			
Civil Society Participation	-6.797 (5.36)	-39.99*** (11.69)			
Electoral Participation	0.465 (2.00)	-22.93 (19.46)			
Local Democracy	-10.75 (6.56)	-10.11 (15.67)			
Online media use	13.76 (7.32)	-18.81 (16.63)	2.813 (6.34)	3.139 (6.60)	-3.113 (5.07)
Polarization of society	15.81* (6.46)	0.191 (8.81)	16.08*** (4.59)	-7.349 (5.32)	2.677 (5.14)
Parties disseminate false information	-5.403 (7.19)	17.52 (15.37)	2.868 (6.78)	2.948 (11.98)	5.551 (4.16)
Online media fractionalization	6.714 (5.58)	71.87* (33.74)	8.758 (6.28)	13.09* (6.02)	1.732 (4.11)
Parties hate speech	-0.755 (5.00)	-51.33* (20.73)	-3.007 (5.16)		12.75* (5.97)
Populist government	1.723 (1.02)	6.321*** (1.41)	1.200 (0.68)	-1.738 (1.25)	
Democracy age	0.205*** (0.06)	1.268** (0.40)	0.161* (0.06)		

2. Conditions for democratic backsliding

	GSoD Indices subattributes		Single democracy variable		
	All	Start	All	Start	2018
Diffuse democracy support	-4.373*** (1.23)		-3.654** (1.33)	-1.281 (0.93)	-1.59 (1.33)
Trade (% of GDP)	0.0752* (0.03)	-0.0152 (0.08)	0.0601 (0.03)	-0.00379 (0.06)	
GDP per capita, level	3.092** (1.10)	17.93*** (5.30)	2.589* (1.04)	3.262*** (0.96)	.43 (1.10)
GDP per capita, growth	-0.160* (0.08)	-0.698** (0.23)	-0.180** (0.06)	-0.126 (0.08)	
Observations	342	397	342	342	89
Pseudo-R-Square	0.651	0.771	0.563	0.408	0.554
Loglikelihood	-64.12	-13.69	-80.26	-31.29	-12.99
chi2			305.2	40.45	32.32
p-value			0.000	0.000	0.000

Notes: GDP = gross domestic product; * = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$. Standard errors in parentheses, constant omitted.

Sources: Claassen, C., 'Does public support help democracy survive?', *American Journal of Political Science*, 31 July 2019, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12452>>; International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2018 (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gsod-indices>>; Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), Digital Society Project [n.d.], <<http://digitalsocietyproject.org/the-project/>>, accessed 11 November 2019; World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2019, <<http://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/>>, accessed 6 August 2019.

Table 11. Dependent variable: 5-year net change in Checks on Government and Civil Liberties

	GSoD Indices subattributes		Single democracy variable		
	All democracies	Backsliding episodes	All democracies	Backsliding episodes	2018
Democracy Quality			-0.000655 (0.02)	-0.0229 (0.03)	-0.0147 (0.01)
Clean Elections	-0.211* (0.08)	-0.149 (0.09)			
Free Political Parties	0.00861 (0.07)	-0.000144 (0.20)			
Access to Justice	0.0697 (0.09)	-0.0387 (0.25)			
Civil Liberties	0.104 (0.08)	-0.326 (0.16)			
Social Rights and Equality	0.0406 (0.10)	0.207 (0.22)			
Effective Parliament	0.138** (0.05)	0.250*** (0.03)			
Judicial Independence	0.0843 (0.06)	0.0556 (0.11)			
Media Integrity	0.182** (0.06)	0.0973 (0.13)			
Absence of Corruption	0.00282 (0.07)	-0.185 (0.16)			
Predictable Enforcement	-0.0300 (0.07)	0.156 (0.17)			
Civil Society Participation	0.106 (0.06)	0.248 (0.15)			
Electoral Participation	0.00292 (0.03)	0.0276 (0.06)			
Local Democracy	0.00126 (0.02)	0.0802 (0.09)			
Online media use	0.00116 (0.05)	-0.262 (0.13)	0.0100 (0.06)		-0.0127 (0.06)
Polarization of society	0.0150 (0.05)	-0.0630 (0.10)	0.0250 (0.06)		-0.0585 (0.05)
Parties disseminate false information	-0.0812* (0.04)	0.0286 (0.07)	-0.0931* (0.04)		-0.0397 (0.06)
Online media fractionalization	0.139* (0.06)	0.127 (0.08)	0.140 (0.09)	0.111 (0.12)	0.0905* (0.04)
Parties hate speech	-0.0401 (0.05)	-0.0668 (0.09)	-0.107 (0.06)	-0.195* (0.08)	-0.0446 (0.05)
Populist government	-0.00608 (0.01)	-0.0118 (0.02)	-0.0157** (0.01)	-0.0269 (0.02)	-0.0104 (0.02)

2. Conditions for democratic backsliding

	GSoD Indices subattributes		Single democracy variable		
	All democracies	Backsliding episodes	All democracies	Backsliding episodes	2018
Democracy age	-0.0016** (0.00)	-0.0018** (0.00)	-0.0024*** (0.00)	-0.00105 (0.00)	- 0.000992 (0.00)
Diffuse democracy support	0.0292** (0.01)	0.0576* (0.03)	0.0268** (0.01)	0.0291 (0.03)	0.0117 (0.01)
Trade (% of GDP)	-0.000177 (0.00)	-0.00106 (0.00)	-0.000327 (0.00)	-0.00160** (0.00)	0.000127 (0.00)
GDP per capita, level	-0.00745 (0.01)	0.0289 (0.02)	0.00368 (0.01)	0.0108 (0.02)	0.00185 (0.01)
GDP per capita, growth	-0.000361 (0.00)	0.000476 (0.00)	-0.000365 (0.00)	0.00112 (0.00)	-0.00501 (0.00)
Observations	1559	348	1560	348	89
R-Square within country units	0.353	0.470	0.243	0.282	
R-Square between countries	0.00146	0.0537	0.00557	0.0294	
R-Square adjusted	0.343	0.430	0.237	0.263	0.125
F	14.64	.	9.800	7.764	2.027
p	1.30e-22	.	3.05e-12	0.000126	0.0333

Notes: GDP = gross domestic product; * = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$. Standard errors in parentheses, constant omitted.

Sources: Claassen, C., 'Does public support help democracy survive?', *American Journal of Political Science*, 31 July 2019, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12452>>; International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2018 (2019), <<http://www.idea.int/gso-d-indices>>; Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), Digital Society Project [n.d.], <<http://digitalsocietyproject.org/the-project/>>, accessed 11 November 2019; World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2019, <<http://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/>>, accessed 6 August 2019.

3. Key findings on democratic backsliding

The results of the regression analyses confirm the view that a polarized society is associated with a higher probability and extent of backsliding. The variable indicating polarization significantly increases the probability of backsliding in the logit models examining all years of backsliding, irrespective of whether the quality of democracy is included as a single variable or disaggregated into GSoD Indices subattributes. Variables indicating aspects of political polarization—the fractionalization of online media and the use of hate speech and false information by political parties—are found to be significant in the logit model for the start of backsliding episodes, the cross-sectional logit model and the OLS models for all democracies and for the subset of backsliding democracies.

Therefore, it is possible to infer that countries with deep political divides and embittered political controversies are prone to experiencing democratic backsliding as measured by the GSoD Indices. This detrimental effect is confirmed in the majority of the statistical models that have been estimated. However, Table 10 and Table 11 in the previous chapter also show that there is no dominant strategy of polarizing political disputes and escalating political conflicts. Polarization may be facilitated by political parties that use hate speech or disseminate false information in their campaigning. However, it may also be catalysed by a public sphere disintegrating into fragmented, tribe-like communities or by journalistic quality declines that are driven by the shift from traditional quality media to online media outlets with less stable funding.

Higher levels of Effective Parliament and Civil Society Participation appear to effectively prevent the start of a backsliding process, make continued backsliding less probable and reduce the scope of backsliding. These effects may be explained by the fact that strong parliaments, civil liberties (particularly the freedoms of expression) and civil society participation often help provide voice to critics of an incumbent government. They can enable opposition parties, civil society organizations and engaged citizens to limit the attempts of incumbents to maximize their power.

However, the models with a single variable measuring the quality of democracy indicate that higher levels of democracy tend to increase the probability and scope of backsliding. This may be due to the ambivalence of democracy, as it not only provides the institutions to check executive authority, but also an arena and the means for polarizing mobilization. The salience of such political mobilization and the articulation of controversy is also reflected in the partially significant positive effects higher levels of Free Political Parties, Civil Liberties and Media Integrity have on backsliding, while Media Integrity is found to significantly limit the depth of backsliding.

Longer preceding democratic periods significantly increase the probability of backsliding and the extent of democratic decline in the models analysed. The 20 backsliding countries

had completed an average of 15 years of uninterrupted democratic regime life at the start of their backsliding episodes, while the age of individual democratic regimes varied significantly between 1 and 38 years. However, only three extremely weak and fragile democracies (Madagascar, Mali and Nepal) backslid very early after the (re-) creation of democracy. This suggests that backsliding is more likely to occur if the immediate post-transition phase has receded into history, the transitional constellation of political actors has changed and, perhaps, if initial popular expectations linked to a democratic transition are not fulfilled. However, it should be noted that his finding does not imply a linear relationship between the age of a democracy and its vulnerability to decline, since the age variable is limited by the coverage of the GSoD Indices data set (reaching back to 1975 only) and the limited observation period which does not allow an examination of whether democracies beyond a certain age might become resilient to backsliding.

Low levels of diffuse support for democracy are associated with significantly higher declines and an increased probability of backsliding. Declines in support may be due to weak governmental performance, economic crises or more adversarial political conflicts undermining the credibility of democratic institutions. The relevance of democratic legitimacy manifested in diffuse support as an explanatory factor corresponds to the importance of the public sphere, communication and the public perception of political elites. Populist presidents and governments tend to make backsliding more likely and to increase the scope of democratic decline, as one would expect. However, these effects are only partially significant and should be interpreted with caution, since the available survey and populism data do not cover all countries identified as backsliding.

Democratic backsliding also appears to be a political reaction to exposed economic vulnerabilities in the wake of international economic integration and the global financial crisis. Exposure to economic globalization, measured as a share of foreign trade in GDP, contributes to a higher probability of the continuation of backsliding. This effect reflects, to some extent, the overrepresentation of upper middle-income countries in Europe among the countries experiencing declines but the trade share also relates to economic openness, interdependency and exposure to international economic developments. The more national economies depend on international trade integration, the more likely they are to nurture a sense of economic vulnerability among citizens and domestic political actors. High levels of social rights and equality reduce the probability of backsliding and the scope of democratic decline, although this effect is only partially significant. The analyses show that lower or negative economic growth rates contribute to trigger and continue backsliding. However, when the extent of backsliding is used as a dependent variable, the models do not indicate a significant impact of economic recessions. This ambivalent finding suggests that economic factors matter for backsliding, although there is no close link between recessions and subsequent democratic declines.

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About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with the mission to advance democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and enabler of sustainable development. We do this by supporting the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels. Our vision is a world in which democratic processes, actors and institutions are inclusive and accountable and deliver sustainable development to all.

What do we do?

In our work we focus on three main impact areas: electoral processes; constitution-building processes; and political participation and representation. The themes of gender and inclusion, conflict sensitivity and sustainable development are mainstreamed across all our areas of work.

International IDEA provides analyses of global and regional democratic trends; produces comparative knowledge on good international democratic practices; offers technical assistance and capacity-building on democratic reform to actors engaged in democratic processes; and convenes dialogue on issues relevant to the public debate on democracy and democracy building.

Where do we work?

Our headquarters is located in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa, the Asia-Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

<<http://idea.int>>

The Global State of Democracy 2019 studies whether populist governments perform better than non-populist governments on measures of democratic quality and policy effectiveness. This Background Paper explains the data sources, calculations and statistical models underpinning this analysis.

It also examines how characteristics of democracy, economic factors, features of the digital public sphere and political polarization contribute to trigger and sustain episodes of democratic backsliding. This analysis provides the evidence basis for the assessment of democratic backsliding in *The Global State of Democracy 2019*.



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