

Chapter 4

The state of democracy in Asia and the Pacific

This chapter offers an overview of the long-term democratic trends in Asia and the Pacific, and an analysis of the current democratic landscape, using the GSoD conceptual framework as an organizing structure. The analysis covers issues linked to Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement, highlighting the current opportunities for democracy in the region, as well as the democratic challenges it faces. The analysis is based on the GSoD Indices as the principal data source, complemented by other sources. The section concludes with an overview of policy considerations relevant to democratic trends and challenges in Asia and the Pacific.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Asia and the Pacific has made some progress in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) since 2015, although significant challenges remain.

Of the 18 GSoD Indices indicators used to measure progress on SDG 16, half (nine) have seen more countries with gains than declines since 2015. This is the case for SDG 16.3 on rule of law and SDG 16.5 on reducing corruption.

SDG 16.6 on accountable institutions has seen gains outnumbering declines for independent judiciaries, effective parliaments and civil society, but not on political parties. SDG 16.7 on inclusive decision-making has seen advances in Clean Elections, but stagnation in Elected Government and Social Group Equality, and declines in Electoral Participation and Local Democracy.

Despite these recent advances, a large number of countries continue to have low levels of performance on all these

dimensions compared to the rest of the world. The target that presents most cause for concern is SDG 16.10, on which Media Integrity and Freedom of Association and Assembly have seen more countries declining than advancing since 2015, pointing to a shrinking civic space in the region. More than a third (39 per cent) of the people in Asia and the Pacific live in countries that have seen declines on these aspects since 2015.



Gender Equality

Significant challenges continue to hinder the achievement of gender equality and SDG 5.5 on political representation of women. The GSoD Indices measure of (political) Gender Equality for Asia and the Pacific has seen stagnation since 2015, with no countries declining or advancing. Almost one-third of countries in the region perform below the world average on Gender Equality.

KEY FINDINGS



Positive developments

- **Asia and the Pacific has experienced a significant democratic expansion in the past four decades.** The number of democracies has doubled (from 7 to 15) and there has been a reduction of non-democracies (from 14 to 10). This expansion has been driven by democratic transitions, with 12 countries becoming democracies for the first time since 1975. Two of these countries (Malaysia and Myanmar) made the transition in the last four years. Sri Lanka, one of the region's five pre-1975 democracies, returned to democracy in 2015, after its second hybrid hiatus.
- Malaysia, one of the region's two most persistent hybrid regimes (together with Singapore), transitioned to democracy for the first time after the 2018 elections ended the ruling party's 60-year monopoly on power.
- **The older democracies in Asia and the Pacific have proven resilient.** Of the seven extant democracies in 1975, five have remained so uninterrupted until today: Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. Of the 12 countries that became democracies after 1975, all but two remain democracies, and half have not had any undemocratic interruptions.
- **Of all the early third-wave democracies (i.e. those that transitioned between 1975 and 2000), the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and Taiwan have made the most democratic advances.** Of the newer democracies, Timor-Leste stands out for its democratic gains. These are the only third-wave democracies that have high levels of Representative Government.
- **The region's democracies come in many shapes and forms.** Only Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Taiwan have high performance on all five of their democratic attributes, followed by Japan which performs high on four attributes. The most common performance (40 per cent of the region's democracies) is mid-range on all attributes.
- Myanmar and Papua New Guinea, show low performance on at least one of their democratic attributes. Still others have experienced democratic erosion.
- **Asia and the Pacific is one of the regions most affected by democratic erosion, with more than half of its democracies suffering from it.** India is currently experiencing democratic backsliding and has the highest number of democratic subattribute declines since 2013. The Philippines, also a democratically backsliding country, follows India in number of democratic declines. Older democracies such as Australia, Japan and New Zealand have suffered some erosion, as have Indonesia, Mongolia and Timor-Leste.
- **Several countries in the region have experienced democratic fragility, with democratic breakdowns since their first transition to democracy.** Bangladesh (since 2014) and Pakistan (since 2018) have regressed into hybridity. Thailand backslid into military rule in 2014, although elections in 2019 have paved the way for a civilian government.
- **A number of Asian countries suffer from weak human rights protection.** Human rights violations are perpetrated by both state and non-state actors. These violations are sometimes related to internal conflicts which are further aggravated by waves of re-emerging ethnonationalism.
- **Despite advances in gender equality in some countries in the last decades, progress in Asia and the Pacific has not kept the same pace as the rest of the world.** Significant challenges remain to achieve gender equality and SDG 5.5 on political representation of women. Efforts are needed to increase the representation of women, not only in new democracies but also in countries such as Japan and South Korea.
- **Recent attacks on institutions central to the integrity of functioning democracies constitute a significant challenge to democracy in Asia and the Pacific.** Threatened institutions include the judiciary, court systems, electoral commissions, parliaments and institutions fighting corruption.
- **Despite some recent advances in reducing corruption (SDG 16.5), almost half of all countries in Asia and the Pacific still suffer from high levels of corruption.** This situation is compounded by weak judicial systems lacking capacity to combat corruption.
- **There have been attempts throughout the region to undermine civic space, freedom of speech and a free media in recent years.** In Cambodia, for example, the shrinking of civic space has occurred in a context of deepening autocratization, while in Thailand a similar shrinkage occurred after the democratic breakdown in 2014. In other countries, it has occurred in contexts of democratic backsliding and erosion, explained by the rise of nationalist political parties, and justified by arguments of national sovereignty, law and order, national security and responses to terrorism.
- The SDG 16 target that presents most cause for concern is SDG 16.10, with Media Integrity, and Freedom of Association and Assembly, having seen more countries declining than advancing since 2015.



Challenges to democracy

- **Half of the countries in Asia and the Pacific do not have democratically elected governments.** Some countries in the region have suffered from deepening autocratization in recent years. For example, Cambodia, which never fully transitioned to democracy, ultimately became a non-democratic regime in 2018. After the Middle East and Africa, Asia is home to the largest number of countries that have never experienced democracy at any time in their history (40 per cent of countries in the region).
- **Democracies in Asia and the Pacific suffer from democratic fragility and weak democratic performance.** Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka have experienced undemocratic interruptions since their transitions. Others, such as Malaysia,

4.1. Introduction

Asia and the Pacific is the most populous region covered by the GSoD Indices. It includes 30 countries across five subregions: Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, South East Asia and Oceania (which includes Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea). As the GSoD Indices only cover countries with more than one million inhabitants, most Pacific Islands are not included. However, if these island nations are counted, the Asia and the Pacific region is composed of 50 countries. In order to ensure coverage for Pacific Islands, qualitative analysis and other data sources have been used to analyse these smaller countries.

Asia and the Pacific is also the most democratically diverse region covered by the GSoD Indices. It includes all regime types: democracies, hybrid regimes and non-democracies. Among the democracies, the region is home to both older and third-wave democracies of varied performance ranges. Among the non-democracies, the region includes absolute monarchies, Communist one-party states, autocracies and authoritarian regimes. This large heterogeneity makes it difficult to draw general conclusions that are valid for the entire region.

Moreover, some countries in Asia and the Pacific are outliers compared to the rest of the world. Unlike other regions, a number of Asian countries have achieved unprecedented economic growth and societal modernization under authoritarian rule. This challenges the common view on democracy and economic and social performance. Some of these countries (e.g. South Korea and Taiwan) transitioned to democracy after their economic development while others (e.g. Cambodia, China, Singapore and Viet Nam) never made the transition or (as in the case of Malaysia) only did so very recently.

Apart from their economic performance, some hybrid regimes and non-democracies also perform better than a number of democracies on other aspects measured by the GSoD Indices. For example, on Impartial Administration, Singapore has the lowest levels of corruption in the world, and China and Viet Nam record mid-range levels of Impartial Administration. In addition, a number of the region's democracies also defy conventional wisdom on gender equality. For example, three democracies (Japan, Myanmar and Papua New Guinea) have among the lowest levels of women's representation in parliament in the world (under 12 per cent of legislators).

However, as will be seen in this chapter and throughout this report, while the economic and other performance of some hybrid regimes and non-democracies may seem

impressive in the short term, this performance represents an exception to the rule. The large majority of these countries do not guarantee other important dimensions of sustainable development, such as low levels of corruption, environmental sustainability or gender equality.

Democracy faces a number of challenges in Asia and the Pacific. These include democratic fragility, recurrent interference of the military in the political sphere, enduring hybridity, pockets of autocratic persistence, deepening autocratization, conflict, the rise of ethnonationalism and anti-establishment leaders, a shrinking civic space, the spread of disinformation, and weakened checks on government.

The region's democracies have a lot to be proud of as well. First, they have proven resilient over the past decades. Of the region's 15 democracies, all but three have remained democracies without interruptions. Moreover, the region hosts some of the third-wave democracies with the highest levels of Representative Government, Gender Equality, Social Group Equality and Civil Society Participation in the world.

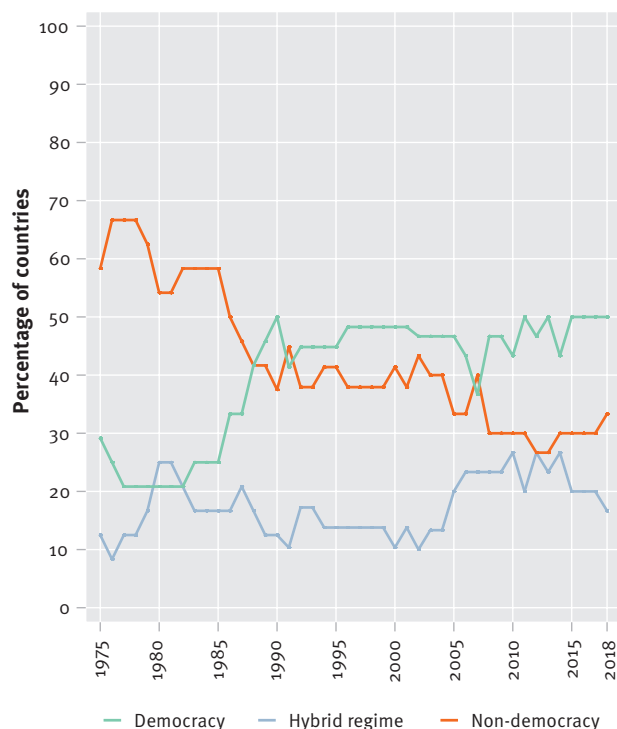
4.2. Taking the long-term perspective: democratic developments since 1975

Asia and the Pacific has experienced significant democratic expansion in the past four decades. The share of democracies increased from 29 per cent in 1975 to 50 per cent of countries in 2018. There has also been a reduction in the share of non-democracies, from 58 per cent to 33 per cent. However, the share of hybrid regimes increased from 12 per cent in 1975 to 17 per cent in 2018 (see Figure 4.1).

The democratic aspects with the most improvements in Asia and the Pacific between 1975 and 2018 have been Direct Democracy, Basic Welfare, Local Democracy and Electoral Participation. Other aspects that have seen improvements in the past four decades are Representative Government, Gender Equality, Clean Elections and Civil Society Participation.

The expansion of democracy in Asia and the Pacific has been driven by democratic transitions in a number of countries. Since 1975, a total of 11 countries in the region have transitioned to democracy and Timor-Leste became a democracy when it gained independence from Indonesia in 2002. These 12 countries are referred to as 'third-wave democracies'. Of these, two-thirds transitioned during the early third-wave period (i.e. before 2000) and three (Myanmar, Timor-Leste and most recently Malaysia) transitioned after 2000 as part of the so-called new third wave. Nepal and Sri Lanka experienced re-transitions to democracy in 2008 and 2015, respectively, after going through hybrid hiatuses.

FIGURE 4.1

Regime types in Asia and the Pacific 1975–2018

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

At the subregional level, in East Asia, Japan was the lone democratic country in the region until Mongolia, South Korea and Taiwan transitioned to democracy from the late 1980s onwards.

In South Asia, democracy has demonstrated significant resilience, and overall democratic gains have outweighed setbacks (Rikkila Tamang and Bakken 2017). The absolute monarchy in Bhutan paved the way for democracy under a new Constitution in 2008, a year which also saw the country's first elections.

Nepal initiated its first transition to a fragile democracy in 1991, backsliding into non-democracy again between 2002 and 2007, and then returning to democracy in 2008 in what is usually marked as its democratic transition after a decade-long civil war. A new Constitution was adopted in 2015, transforming the country into a multiparty, federal, secular and democratic republic. Such constitution-building processes have been at the heart of many of the region's democratic transitions (Ginsburg 2018). Over the last

decade Nepal has advanced in its transition to federalism, establishing provinces and, despite an electoral collapse of pro-federalist opposition forces, hosting elections at three levels of government.

Pakistan's first transition to democracy occurred in 1988, although a military coup in 1999 returned the country to military rule for almost a decade. In 2008, Pakistan experienced its second transition to democracy. The 18th amendment to its Constitution in 2010 was envisaged to end a tradition of military coups and leadership instability, constraining executive power, increasing decentralization and thereby increasing democratic space. Despite these important changes in Pakistan's democracy framework, the last decade has been marked by advances in some areas, but also significant democratic weaknesses. In 2018, the country regressed into hybridity.

Sri Lanka was considered a democracy in 1975, regressed into a hybrid regime in 1977 and returned to democracy in 1989 for a period of 20 years, after which it regressed into hybridity again between 2010 and 2014. The country was ravaged by a brutal civil war from 1983 to 2009. In 2015, a coalition of various opposition parties won a landslide electoral victory, which led the country back to democracy.

A number of South East Asian countries have also made significant strides towards democracy following the turbulence of post-colonial statehood. Countries previously under decades-long, non-democratic rule have transitioned to democracy, including the Philippines in 1986 after two decades of rule by President Ferdinand Marcos; and Indonesia in 1999 after 30 years under the military rule of President Suharto. Timor-Leste became independent from Indonesia in 2002. Seven years after a UN Peacekeeping Mission left the country it remains democratic and has significantly strengthened its democratic performance.

Myanmar, previously under military rule for 25 years, has gradually democratized since the adoption of the 2008 Constitution and the first democratic elections in 25 years held in 2015, although severe human rights violations and restrictions on press freedom persist. Malaysia and Singapore have been the region's most enduring hybrid regimes, although the prospects of strengthened democracy in Malaysia were raised with the unprecedented results of the 2018 general elections, which ended the 60-year monopoly on power of the National Front (Barisan Nasional, BN), on the back of a united opposition and a strong civil society. Although Malaysia made the transition to democracy in 2018, major political rights reforms are still pending.

In the Pacific Islands, democracy has survived in most countries since the achievement of independence in the 1960s, apart from Fiji, which experienced a series of democratic breakdowns and military interventions in 1987, 2000 and 2006. Governance in Pacific Island countries can be understood within a historical and cultural context in which highly privileged kinship is expressed through the distribution of power, wealth and opportunities. With the exception of Fiji and Solomon Islands, democratic elections have been held regularly in most Pacific Island countries (Firth 2018). A Westminster-type parliamentary system is the most common institutional setup, with some countries adopting a presidential or hybrid system. A number of countries have constitutionally mandated councils reserved for chiefs and traditional leaders. The type of legislature and electoral system also varies across the subregion (Corbett 2015).

As a result of these democratization processes, independent accountability institutions have been established across Asia and the Pacific, with varied results. Judiciaries that can review official acts and adjudicate political disputes are now in place. The creation of constitutional courts in, for example, Indonesia and the Philippines (see e.g. Chen and Harding 2018), as well as anti-corruption bodies (in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam), to strengthen the integrity and accountability of state institutions and bureaucracies, are positive examples in this respect. National human rights institutions have also been established in many countries (e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Timor-Leste) to promote and protect human rights.

Both older and third-wave democracies in Asia and the Pacific have proven remarkably resilient over the past four decades. Of the seven countries that were democracies in 1975, five (Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea) have remained democracies uninterrupted. Of the two remaining democracies in 1975, Sri Lanka has experienced democratic interruptions and Thailand backslid into non-democracy in 1976, a situation which was not reversed until 1983.¹³

Of the 10 countries that became democracies after 1975 and remain democracies today, all but five have remained democracies without interruptions. Of all the early third-wave democracies, South Korea and Taiwan have made the most democratic advances. Of the post-2000 democracies, Timor-Leste stands out for its democratic gains, having increased by an average of 72 per cent across all its democratic

aspects since independence. In addition, together with South Korea and Taiwan, Timor-Leste records high levels of Representative Government.

Six third-wave countries have either suffered from democratic fragility or experienced democratic interruptions since their transitions. Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Thailand had full democratic breakdowns (Nepal and Pakistan once, Bangladesh twice and Thailand four times), while the Philippines regressed into hybridity for four years between 2007 and 2010 and Sri Lanka regressed on two occasions, between 1977 and 1988 and between 2010 and 2014. Of these six countries, Bangladesh regressed into hybridity in 2014 and Pakistan in 2018. Table 4.1 presents a timeline of these episodes.

While the region has seen significant democratic advances since 1975, not all aspects of democracy have advanced at the same pace, with some dimensions trailing behind and even declining. The regional average on Absence of Corruption has declined by 11 per cent since 1975, meaning that average levels of corruption in the region are higher today than they were 43 years ago. Social Group Equality and Freedom of Religion have seen insignificant advances (with an average increase of 6 per cent). Finally, while Asia and the Pacific's Gender Equality score has increased by 47 per cent since 1975, the rate of progress is slower than other regions in the world, including Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa.

4.3. The current democracy landscape in Asia and the Pacific

The analysis in this section covers issues linked to Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement, highlighting the current opportunities for democracy in Asia and the Pacific, as well as the democratic challenges the region faces.



Representative Government

The GSoD Indices use the Representative Government attribute to evaluate countries' performance on the conduct of elections, the extent to which political parties are able to operate freely, and the extent to which access to government is decided by elections. This attribute is an aggregation of four subattributes: Clean Elections, Inclusive Suffrage, Free Political Parties and Elected Government.

¹³ For this reason, it is more appropriate to state that Thailand was a third-wave democracy until 2013.

Summary: Representative Government in Asia and the Pacific, 2018

Regional average: Mid-range (0.48)	
High (0.7)	Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan and Timor-Leste
Mid-range (0.4–0.7)	India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore and Sri Lanka
Low (0.4)	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Kazakhstan, Laos, North Korea, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam

The democratic landscape in the region is heterogenous

Today's democratic landscape in Asia and the Pacific presents great levels of heterogeneity in democratic performance. While half (15) of the countries in the region covered by the GSoD Indices hold competitive elections as the basis for electing their governments, and are therefore considered democracies, there is wide variety in their performance. A total of seven democratic performance patterns can be discerned among the region's democracies (see Table 4.2).

Four countries in the region perform highly on all five attributes of democracy: two (Australia and New Zealand) are older democracies, while the other two (South Korea and Taiwan) are early third-wave democracies. Japan, also an older democracy, performs high on all attributes except Participatory Engagement. India performs in the mid-range on all five of its democratic attributes. This is also the most common performance pattern in the region, with four other countries in that bracket: Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

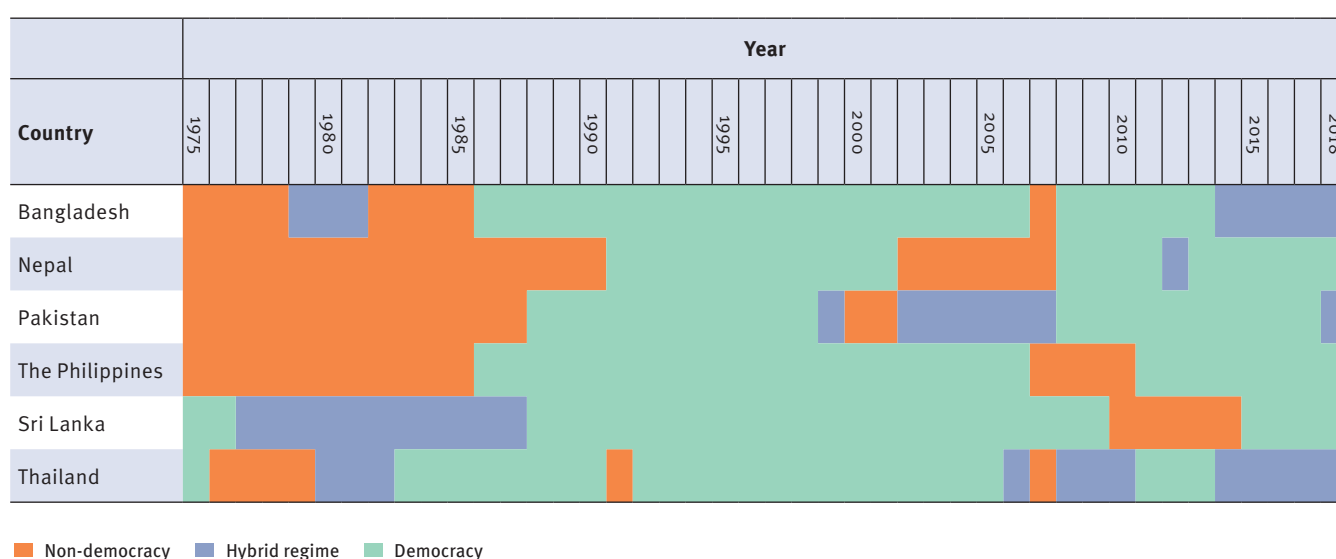
Democratic performance also varies across subregions (see Figure 4.2). All subregions in Asia contain democracies, except Central Asia, where all the countries except Kyrgyzstan (considered a hybrid regime) are classified as non-democracies. The most democratic subregion is Oceania, where all countries are democracies, followed by East Asia where two-thirds of countries are democracies.

Asia and the Pacific also hosts a large number of non-democracies (10) and five hybrid regimes (see Table 4.7). After the largely non-democratic Central Asia, South East Asia has the largest share of non-democracies and hybrid regimes, and South Asia also has three hybrid regimes.

Even hybrid regimes and non-democracies present wide variations in performance. A country such as Singapore,

TABLE 4.1

Changes in regime type in third-wave democracies in Asia and the Pacific, 1975–2018



Notes: Cell colours denote types of political regimes. Green: Democracy; Blue: Hybrid regime; Dark orange: Non-democracy. This timeline displays the changing regime types in Asia and the Pacific between 1975 and 2018 in countries that experienced hybridity or democracy at some point during that period.

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

TABLE 4.2

Heat map of democratic performance patterns in Asia and the Pacific, 2018

Country	GSoD Indices attribute				
	Representative Government	Fundamental Rights	Checks on Government	Impartial Administration	Participatory Engagement
Australia	High	High	High	High	High
South Korea	High	High	High	High	High
New Zealand	High	High	High	High	High
Taiwan	High	High	High	High	High
Japan	High	High	High	High	Mid-range
Timor-Leste	High	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	High
Indonesia	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	High
India	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range
Mongolia	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range
Nepal	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range
Philippines	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range
Sri Lanka	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range
Malaysia	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Low
Myanmar	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Low
Papua New Guinea	Mid-range	Mid-range	Mid-range	Low	Mid-range

High Mid-range Low

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

which is classified as a hybrid regime because it does not hold competitive elections, nonetheless has high levels of Impartial Administration and the lowest levels of corruption in the world, outperforming democracies such as Australia and New Zealand in this respect. Viet Nam, classified as a non-democracy on account of being a one-party state, has mid-range levels of Fundamental Rights and Impartial Administration; and China, which is also classified as a non-democracy, performs in the mid-range on Impartial Administration. Hence, when analysing democracy at the country level, regime classifications can be used as a general reference point, but they should always be contextualized and complemented by nuanced multi-dimensional analysis.

Democratic resilience bodes well for sustained gains in Representative Government

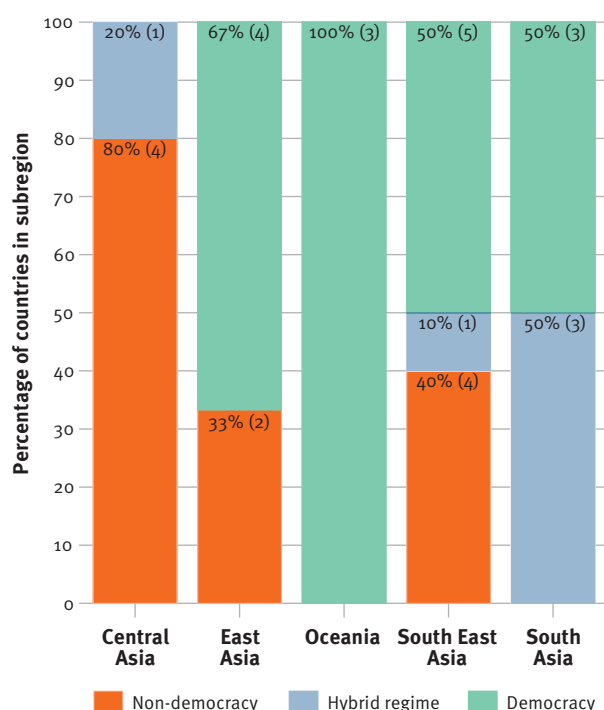
Asia and the Pacific's older and third-wave democracies have shown democratic resilience. Of the region's five

older democracies, only Sri Lanka has experienced hybrid regressions (twice). Of the 15 democracies today, twelve have remained democracies uninterrupted. This is the case for all the older democracies, five of the seven early third-wave democracies (Indonesia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, South Korea and Taiwan) and three of the newer third-wave democracies (Malaysia, Myanmar and Timor-Leste). Three



The majority of Asia and the Pacific's older and third-wave democracies have shown democratic resilience. Of the region's five older democracies, only Sri Lanka has experienced hybrid regressions (twice). Of the 12 countries that became democracies after 1975 and remain democracies today, more than half have remained democracies uninterrupted.

FIGURE 4.2

Regime types by subregion in Asia and the Pacific, 2018

Notes: The absolute number of countries in each subregion is also shown in brackets within each column.

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

(or a little less than half) of the countries in the region that have had interruptions of a hybrid or non-democratic nature subsequently returned to democracy, namely Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

Democratic fragility still poses risks for some third-wave democracies

Despite the democratic resilience shown by a number of third-wave democracies, democratic fragility still poses challenges to representative government in a number of countries in the region. The three democracies that returned to democracy after experiencing undemocratic interruptions (Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka) provide an indication that these democratic gains remain fragile and need to be consolidated to avoid repeated regression. Indeed, two countries (Bangladesh and Pakistan) have currently backslid into a state of hybridity, while a third (Thailand¹⁴) experienced a full democratic breakdown from 2014 up to the elections of 2019.

Bangladesh, a previously fragile democracy, regressed to a hybrid regime in 2014. However, the process of backsliding began earlier than that. Since winning the 2008 general elections, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League has waged full-scale attacks on the press, using defamation laws and other lawsuits, and reportedly physical attacks and harassment against journalists. The tightening of a series of laws has given the Bangladeshi Government broad powers to limit media that is critical of the government or its security forces, or deemed to threaten national security (Rocha 2018; Reporters Without Borders 2019).

The Awami League has also used restrictions on civil liberties to oppress opposition parties, including arresting opposition leaders and banning the Jamaat-e-Islami party on the basis of a constitutional prohibition on religious parties. After elections were announced in 2018 approximately 21,000 opposition members were arrested; and in attacks by non-state organizations led by Awami League members, impunity reigned, despite widespread reports of arson and public beating (Asadullah and Savoia 2018).

The opposition rejected the results of the December 2018 elections, in which Sheikh Hasina won 96 per cent of the votes and the Awami League secured 258 out of the 299 parliamentary seats up for election, reducing the opposition to a very small minority (Asadullah and Savoia 2018).

The military contributes to inhibit representative government in some countries

The role of the military partly explains the democratic fragility that characterizes some countries in the region. Military forces have historically played pivotal roles in either endorsing or withdrawing support for elected civilian authorities, thereby continuing to inhibit both popular control and political equality. Indeed, authoritarian resurgence has been a constant threat to new democracies and the representativity of governments in the region, particularly in South East Asia.

Thailand is the country in the region that has experienced most democratic breakdowns (four in total) in the past 43 years, each driven by coups that installed military governments, the most recent of which lasted from 2014 until 2019. In 2017, Thailand's parliament approved the country's 20th Constitution, which transformed the Senate into a 250-seat non-elected body. The 2017 Constitution and National Strategy Act assures the Thai military of its continuing role as an overseer of national political life (see e.g. Marcan-Markar 2018). Similar to the 2008 Myanmar

14 The GSOD Indices data for 2019, which would show the country's regime status following the 2019 elections, is not yet available.

Constitution, it also provides guarantees of military immunity against both civil and criminal prosecutions.

Pakistan, which regressed from a fragile democracy to a hybrid regime in 2018, has retained a strong military presence in political life since its first transition to democracy in 1988. Military support for the current Prime Minister, Imran Khan, has allegedly assumed a variety of guises including pressuring politicians from other parties to defect, and the press to provide positive coverage of the President's party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), which came to power in elections held in 2018 (Fair 2018).

Myanmar was under military rule for 25 years but transitioned to democracy in 2015, when the first fully free and fair elections were held and Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won a landslide victory. However, the army continues to exert significant political influence, thereby undermining representative government. The 2008 Constitution guarantees the armed forces 25 per cent of parliamentary seats and gives the commander-in-chief of the armed forces the power to appoint three government ministers (AsiaWatch 2019).

This type of provision, and the continued influence it gives the military over political decision-making in Myanmar, contributes to dilute the principle of popular control. In 2019, the NLD presented a motion to establish a constitutional amendment committee in order to revise these provisions. The 45-member committee presented a report to the Union Parliament in July 2019, which listed more than 3,000 proposed changes to the Constitution (Joint Committee to Amend the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Constitution 2019). Although the armed forces sent representatives to sit in the committee, they did not present any proposals. Any amendments to the Constitution are likely to face opposition from the armed forces (Win Ko Ko Latt and Wai Mar Tun 2019; Thant 2019).

In the Pacific Islands, Fiji is a strong state whose historically fragile democracy is nonetheless gaining in strength. The country has held competitive elections since 2014, before which it experienced a 10-year undemocratic hiatus. The state apparatus it inherited from British colonizers remains largely intact. Its present stability relies on former military commander and current Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama and the military. Democracy was partially restored by the 2014 elections and further consolidated by the 2018 elections.¹⁵

Representative government has not necessarily prevented political instability

Even uninterrupted and relatively well-performing third-wave democracies in the region have experienced political instability. Timor-Leste, which became a democracy when it was granted independence from Indonesia in 2002, is the region's newest third-wave democracy with the highest levels of Representative Government (well above the regional and world average) and high levels of Participatory Engagement. However, it has also struggled to maintain a stable political system, having experienced an attempted coup and civil conflict in 2006 as well as fierce rivalry among its political leadership that intermittently affects the Timorese Government's capacity to govern. Indeed, disputes between national leaders—which usually play out in public—tend to stifle national political life (Guterres 2018).

Government instability also affects the older democracies in the region. In Australia, the electoral and political-party systems have been undermined by a number of challenges in recent years, of which one is the regular ousting and resignation of prime ministers (within the same ruling party). Since 2007, Australia has had five prime ministers, with none of them finishing a full term. Causes cited for the political instability in the form of changes in political leadership include the type of parliamentary system, short-term mandates, internal party rules, internal party divisions, party fragmentation, and perceived lack of progress on key policy reforms (Noack 2018; Stober 2018).

Over the past two decades an 'arc of political instability' has also stretched over the Pacific (Wallis 2015: 39). This has been compounded by weak institutional capacities, as Pacific Island countries such as Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are 'states-in-formation' characterized by significant ethno-linguistic diversity that poses a challenge to attempts to assert traditional, mono-ethnically derived conceptions of nationhood (Firth 2018: 1).

Despite being an uninterrupted democracy since 1974, Papua New Guinea has persistently recorded low scores on a number of measures relating to its democratic performance. For example, it scores in the bottom 25 per cent of countries in the world on Inclusive Suffrage and on measures relating to Social Rights and Equality, including both Basic Welfare and Gender Equality.

The political instability experienced by Pacific Island countries has manifested itself in frequent changes of

¹⁵ Fiji is not covered by the GSod Indices.

government (Aqorau 2016). The concept of ‘terminal event’ is used to denote ‘the frequency of changes of government and the political instability that these changes represent’ (International IDEA 2015: 1). Between 1968 and 2018, there were 125 ‘terminal events’ in the subregion; 66 of these were associated with executive instability such as early elections, successful no-confidence motions and resignations. Successful no-confidence motions are the most common event, especially in Nauru (International IDEA 2015).

In other parts of the subregion stability has been restored after a series of political upheavals. In Vanuatu, the coalition government of Prime Minister Charlot Salwai (in power since 2016) has survived two attempted no-confidence motions. In 2017, Solomon Islands experienced political turbulence after the Prime Minister was ousted in a no-confidence vote that occurred after members of his cabinet defected to the opposition. However, the Prime Minister managed to negotiate a coalition of opposition members and members of his former administration in order to form a new government and returned as Prime Minister in 2019 (Blades et al. 2017).

In the grey zone of representative government: Asia’s hybrid regimes

The region’s hybrid regimes exist in the grey zone of representative government. **Of the world’s hybrid regimes, 18 per cent are located in Asia and the Pacific and this share has increased in the past decades.** Hybrid regimes are countries that combine democratic with non-democratic characteristics. They tend to hold regular elections, although these are not considered to be fully competitive. Five countries in the region currently classify as hybrids: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Singapore. Cambodia was also classified as a hybrid regime until 2018, as was Malaysia uninterruptedly from 1975 until it transitioned to democracy in 2018.

Of the currently five hybrids, only Bangladesh and Pakistan have ever been categorized as democracies in the 43 years

covered by the GSoD Indices. Singapore has been a hybrid regime uninterruptedly for the past 43 years and flourished under export-led growth strategies facilitated by the strong hand of the state. Unlike the other three so-called Asian tigers—South Korea, Taiwan, and more recently Malaysia—Singapore has never fully transitioned to democracy (Acharya 2018).

Afghanistan has never been classified as a democracy, having transitioned from a non-democracy to a hybrid regime in 2005 and remaining in this category for the past 14 years. Similarly, Cambodia developed into a hybrid regime in 1993, after the civil war and Vietnamese occupation, and remained a hybrid for 14 years until it backslid into a non-democracy in 2018. Hence, hybridity has not been a transitional stage leading to democracy for any of these regimes—rather, hybridity is a defining feature of their political systems, which sit somewhere in the grey zone of democracy. Indeed, these are countries that have allowed multiparty systems, but only under highly restrictive conditions and with severe limits on civil liberties. However, there are wide variations in performance between these hybrid regimes.

Malaysia was a hybrid regime until 2018, when the BN’s single-party hold on power ended. The country has held regular elections, although they were not classified as competitive until 2018.

In Afghanistan, the end of the Taliban rule in 2001, the holding of elections and the promulgation of the 2004 Constitution, which included provisions for freedom of speech and universal suffrage, media and civil society to flourish, and laid the foundation for a transition to hybridity. However, these democratic advances were quickly subsumed by violent conflict, which persists 18 years after the defeat of the Taliban. Moreover, ambiguities in the Constitution, and instability perpetuated by the ongoing conflict, have led to a confrontational relationship between parliament and the executive. The executive has expanded its power using emergency declarations, knowing it can do so with impunity, while the parliament has proven unable to effectively oversee the executive according to its powers as outlined in the Constitution (Pasarlay and Mallyar 2019).

Singapore offers an alternative to China’s hybrid model of development and governance that may seem similarly attractive to countries in the region. Singapore does not hold competitive elections but scores in the mid-range on Representative Government, Fundamental Rights and Checks on Government. It scores highly on Impartial Administration, where it performs among the top 25 per cent in the world, with the lowest levels of corruption in



A total of 5 countries (17 per cent) in Asia and the Pacific are hybrid regimes. The region is home to 18 per cent of the world’s hybrid regimes. Two (Bangladesh and Pakistan) have experienced alternating periods of democracy, hybridity and non-democracy in the last four decades, while three (Afghanistan, Singapore and Kyrgyzstan) have never fully experienced democracy. Malaysia transitioned to a weak democracy in 2018, after more than six decades of hybridity.

BOX 4.1

Deepening autocratization in Cambodia

A multiparty system was instituted in Cambodia in 1993 after the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement following a bloody civil war and genocide perpetrated during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979) in which almost two million people were killed. Elections supported by the international community were held in 1993 and occurred regularly until 2018, when the country backslid into a non-democracy. However, its classification as a hybrid regime up to that point was based on the monopolization and concentration of political power for 30 years by Prime Minister Hun Sen and his Cambodian People's Party (CPP).

Until the elections in 2013, Cambodia allowed a limited space for opposition parties that had representation in parliament. Since then, however, Hun Sen has not disguised his efforts to suppress democracy. During 2017 and 2018, he completed the process of eliminating opposition forces, outlawing the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) and incarcerating its

leaders, as well as silencing civil society voices and the media through violent repression and weaponizing the law and legal processes. The judiciary commands very little support from the population and is perceived as highly corrupt (International Bar Association 2015), routinely violating fair-trial rights and being patently biased in favour of the ruling CPP (Lipes 2018).

Before the 2018 national elections, the courts handed out prison sentences to CNRP leaders and dissolved the party. This rendered the 2018 elections non-competitive and unfair, and in the absence of an effective opposition the ruling CPP won by a landslide in elections that were denounced by the international community. Cambodia's score on Clean Elections is now among the bottom 25 per cent in the world. China is thought to play a key role in supporting the Cambodian regime economically through investments and no-strings financial loans, which has enabled Cambodia to avoid both aid conditionalities and wider international criticism (*The Economist* 2019).

the world. Singapore also enjoys a highly effective public administration and is the only high-income economy in an otherwise mostly low- and medium-income region.

A factor widely believed to have played a role in the ability of Singapore (and Malaysia, up until 2018) to maintain a state of hybridity is the high levels of economic performance that have helped legitimize its regime. This also partly explains why Cambodia, which is still a low-income economy but has experienced one of the highest growth rates in the region in the past decade, persisted as a hybrid regime until 2018, although the memory of the bloody Khmer Rouge regime also provides an explanation for popular yearnings for political stability in the country (Öjendal and Sedara 2011; *The Economist* 2019).

In some countries, hybridity has evolved into non-democracy. For example, Cambodia, which never fully transitioned to democracy, has suffered from deepening autocratization in recent years (see Box 4.1). This is the term used in the GSoD Indices to refer to hybrid regimes or non-democracies that have experienced significant declines on at least 3 of their 16 democratic subattributes in the past five years.

Non-democracies in the region are persistent, with alternatives models of development and governance

After the Middle East and Africa, Asia and the Pacific is home to the largest share of countries which have

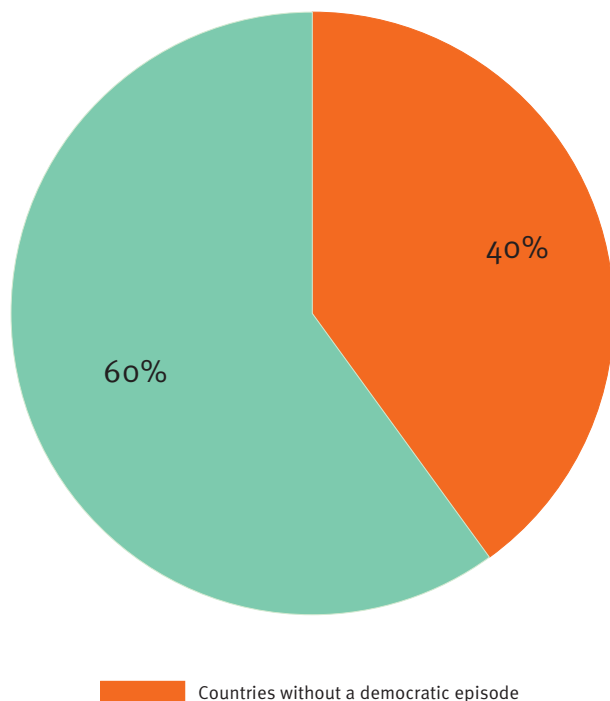
never experienced democracy at any time during the third wave of democratization. A total of 12 countries (or 40 per cent of the countries in the region) have never experienced democracy (Figure 4.3). Of these, five have alternated between periods of hybridity and non-democracy, and Singapore has remained a hybrid uninterruptedly.

The remaining six countries have never been anything but non-democracies, with governments that cannot be considered as either representative or upholders of the principles of popular control and political equality. This is the case for only 18 countries in the world, and Asia is home to one-third of those regimes.

Therefore, despite the democratic gains made in Asia and the Pacific over the past decades, pockets of autocracy remain, specifically in Central Asia, East Asia and South East Asia. Central Asia is the only subregion that has never undergone a process of full democratic transition, and where there are no democracies. In East Asia, China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) persist as autocracies, while South East Asia is home to three non-democratic regimes: Brunei Darussalam, Laos and Viet Nam.

According to the GSoD Indices, the five Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) are all considered non-democracies, of which Kyrgyzstan, given recent political openings, is the

FIGURE 4.3

Percentage of countries in Asia and the Pacific that have never been democracies

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

only hybrid regime. Uzbekistan has seen some democratic advances in recent years, but not yet sufficient to be classified even as a hybrid regime.

In contrast to Eastern Europe and the Baltic states, Central Asia did not undergo any democratic transitions following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Given the absence of strong democratic movements that could have enabled revolutions from below, power was largely left concentrated within regime elites based on subnational clan identities and patronage networks (Cummings 2002; Collins 2006). Therefore, Central Asia experienced a process of non-rupture as, one by one, presidents opted for authoritarian alternatives (Cummings 2012). Democratic reforms were mostly used by elites to enhance their ability to capture distributive gains during the transition. However, all Central Asian regimes paid lip service to electoral democracy and held elections (Cummings 2012). Over the last 25 years, analysts have continued to wonder when—and how—a process of democratization might begin to emerge in Central Asia.

Some identify the highly patriarchal and hierarchical nature of Central Asian society as the root cause of authoritarianism in the subregion (Anderson 1997; Hale 2015). Others argue that it is tightly connected to debates over regional political culture (Heathershaw and Schatz 2017). Some contend that the root causes are located in clan politics (Collins 2006). Others emphasize the importance of political will and the new elite's ability to forge unity and negotiate with oppositional elites (Cummings 2012), while still others claim that the presidential function inherited from the Soviet Union constitutes the chief causal factor (Ishiyama 2002).

Since 2012 almost all Central Asian states have instigated a wave of constitutional or legal reforms pursued under the rubric of democratization, although critics have condemned the use of ostensibly democratic tools such as constitutional reviews to implement reforms aimed at further entrenching non-democratic rule and practices (Landau 2013). The most promising may be those in Kyrgyzstan, the only hybrid regime in the subregion (since 2005), whose 2010 Constitution instituted a premier-presidential form of governance headed towards parliamentarism (Fumagalli 2016), followed by several constitutional amendments in 2016–2017. These latest amendments, passed through a highly contested referendum, have, however, been criticized for strengthening the presidential grip on power, undermining human rights, especially those of LGBT groups, and weakening adherence to international human rights treaties.

Since holding elections in 2016, Uzbekistan, still classified as a non-democracy, has undergone an unprecedented reform process with respect to taxation, economic and monetary policy as well as administrative and constitutional reforms. If implemented and able to help provide the basis for a viable opposition and democratic plurality, these reforms could increase the potential for democratization in Uzbekistan and, indeed, the subregion. Uzbekistan's statistically significant gains since 2016 are also reflected in its GSoD Indices scores, specifically in five subattributes:



None of the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) has transitioned to democracy since breaking away from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Nonetheless, Uzbekistan has seen some statistically significant advances in five of its GSoD Indices scores over the past five years, although these advances are not yet sufficient to classify the country as a hybrid regime, let alone a democracy.

Access to Justice, Civil Liberties, Absence of Corruption, Effective Parliament and Civil Society Participation.

Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have both undertaken reforms that strengthen their constitutional courts, although these two countries' political systems largely remain closed, lacking any form of competitive elections. The resignation in 2019 of Kazakhstan's President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, after three decades in power, paves the way for a leadership change, although it does not seem to suggest a political opening in the country: Nazarbayev remains in charge of the army and intelligence services, and political reforms have not occurred (*New York Times* 2019).

The influence of Russia on Central Asian countries' economies and national security, and the ways in which this influence extends to the political sphere through the lens of norm diffusion, is seen by many as key to understanding the regional political landscape (Kembayev 2016). The shift away from international human rights treaties in Kyrgyzstan's constitutional revisions, for example, reflects both the current Russian approach to international law and its relationship with the European Court of Human Rights and other international bodies (Ziegler 2016).

China is another source of influence which, some argue, has undermined democratization efforts in Central Asia. Specifically, China's influence is viewed as extending through such measures as offering alternative sources of donor assistance, investment, generous lending and economic cooperation, but without good governance and environmental protection conditionalities (Omelicheva 2015). As a result, China has become a key economic partner to all countries in Central Asia. It is also seeking to exert influence through its alternative development model, which promotes norms based on authoritarian governance and a socialist market economy with an emphasis on public ownership and state-owned enterprises within an overarching market economic structure.

China's model of authoritarian capitalism has adapted elements from the East Asian developmental models of Japan, South Korea and even Singapore (Horesh 2015). This model, although not openly praised by Central Asian countries, is appealing to them, as it offers political stability without requiring them to fundamentally alter their political systems in order to achieve economic development (Sharshenova and Crawford 2017; Ibañez-Tirado and Marsden 2018).

The expeditious growth of China's alternative development model provides a politically significant counter-narrative

to liberal democracy norms in Asia and the Pacific, and therefore continues to play an important role in understanding the region's changing democratic landscape beyond Central Asia (Benner 2017). The model has been reinforced under President Xi Jinping, who has been criticized for further autocratizing the political system, moving away from a more collective leadership towards greater personalistic rule (Shirk 2016).

In 2018, at the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s 19th Party Congress, Xi explicitly rejected Western-style liberal democracy and offered the Chinese authoritarian, single-party political model as a system for the world to emulate (Glaser 2018). China's political model may seem appealing as it provides promises of economic gains to hybrid regimes, non-democracies and new and fragile democracies. Beyond its economic performance, the Chinese Government is perceived as fighting corruption, although this has not yet translated into a statistically significant increase in its Absence of Corruption score (which only saw an insignificant increase, from 0.43 in 2016 to 0.45 in 2018).

China's economic influence stretches across the region and beyond. It has helped launch the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, a multi-nation, USD 100 billion initiative to finance infrastructure needs in Asia and the Pacific, which is likely to further increase the country's economic influence over the region. The Belt and Road Initiative, a strategy adopted by the Chinese Government to fund infrastructure development in countries across all regions of the world, is also seen as an effort to extend Chinese dominance in global affairs (Chatzky and McBride 2019).

China also uses its economic clout to export its own model of 'digital authoritarianism', in particular Internet censorship, to like-minded countries. In 2017–2018, for example, a total of 36 countries reportedly sent representatives to Chinese training programmes on censorship and surveillance, and another 18 purchased monitoring technology or facial recognition systems from Chinese companies (Romaniuk and Burgers 2018; Freedom House 2018a).

In recent years, non-democratic countries have created a Eurasian alliance consisting of Russia, China and the Central Asian states which has worked closely to challenge democratic norms and values and dismantle human rights guarantees. Recently Turkey has also signalled its intent to join this alliance (Cooley 2012).

At the same time, the potential for economic development combined with the growth of an educated middle class could potentially disrupt the foundation of non-democratic

regimes such as China's (Fortunato 2015). For China, where there is strong support for the existing regime across classes, an analysis of data from the Asian Barometer Survey indicates that 'Chinese citizens who identify themselves as the middle class express a stronger preference for liberal democracy than those in either a higher or lower class, and they also tend to regard democracy as the best form of government' (Wu, Chang and Pan 2017: 349). Overall, and as the Chinese middle class continues to grow, this may lead to greater demands for democratic reform, although signs of such a development are barely visible yet.

China has also recently shifted its strategy in trying to influence domestic politics in Taiwan. After conducting live-fire military exercises and launching missiles close to the Taiwan Strait since the 1990s, China opted for a subtler strategy in the context of the 2018 Taiwanese local elections. Specifically, it is reported to have mobilized 'influence operators'—local ethnic-Chinese front groups trying to influence domestic politics—in elections that resulted in a major defeat for the ruling pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party and a political comeback for the pro-Beijing Kuomintang Party. Allegedly, similar attempts have been made in other countries as well (McGregor 2018).

Therefore, both China's rising power and Russia's assertiveness pose significant challenges to democratic governance: not only in the subregion of Central Asia, but arguably throughout the whole world. Both have assiduously expanded their networks of client states by leveraging no-strings-attached financial aid, lending and investment (in the case of China) and weapons sales (in the case of Russia).

One country where this influence is currently playing out in the open is Venezuela, which for years has supplied oil to both countries in exchange for low-interest loans and military equipment, which are believed to play key roles in maintaining Venezuela's President, Nicolás Maduro, in power (Seligman 2019; Cara Labrador 2019). Both countries offer a potent narrative regarding the alleged advantages and successes of 'strongman rule' (Kendall-Taylor and Shullman 2018).

South East Asia also hosts a number of non-democracies.

While not covered by the GSoD Indices, Brunei Darussalam is an absolute monarchy where the Sultan possesses all state powers (Black 2011). Laos and Viet Nam are also countries that, while lacking the economic clout of China, have to date proved immune to genuine democratization. Both are still classified as non-democracies by the GSoD Indices, and although Viet Nam has mid-range levels of Impartial Administration, its civil society is restricted.

Both countries practise a form of 'socialist law-based state' or 'constitutional socialism' through one-party rule (Bui 2014; Deinla 2017).

In Viet Nam, the so-called *doi moi* economic reforms, initiated in 1986 with the goal of creating a 'socialist-orientated market economy', have taken a liberal turn in the economic sphere, along with a relaxation in some aspects of the political arena. Although a closed leadership is responsible for policy and decision-making, the past few years have seen moves to both tackle widespread corruption in government in Viet Nam (which has increased the country's Absence of Corruption score from 0.4 in 2012 to a mid-range level of 0.50 in 2018) and extend elections to the provincial level.

In contrast, Laos has maintained the status quo (Gainsborough 2012), although there have allegedly been some discussions in elite circles over how to bring about some form of democracy (High 2013). Dubbed the 'world's most closed political system after North Korea' (*The Economist* 2016), Laos held elections for provincial representatives in 2016 for the first time. While not considered competitive, free or fair by GSoD Indices standards, the fact that 73 per cent of the seats in the 149-member National Assembly were elected for the first time is a small step towards a potential political opening (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2016). At the same time, only five officially approved 'independent' candidates (i.e. non-members of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party) were elected.

Electoral processes in Asia and the Pacific present opportunities and challenges

Asia and the Pacific has made significant advances in strengthening its electoral processes and institutions in the past decades, but a number of challenges remain.

More than half (eight) of the region's democracies have high levels of electoral integrity (referred to in the GSoD Indices as Clean Elections), while 47 per cent have mid-range levels (Figure 4.4). High levels of electoral integrity can be found not only in four older democracies (Australia, India, Japan and New Zealand), but also in three early third-wave democracies (Indonesia, South Korea and Taiwan) and a new third-wave democracy (Timor-Leste).

Mongolia is another third-wave democracy that has had levels of Clean Elections well above the world average, although it scores mid-range in absolute terms (at 0.68). Nepal is also a recently re-transitioning democracy that has significantly increased its levels of electoral integrity, with its score on Clean Elections increasing from 0.53 in 2012 to 0.65 in 2018, and with elections for the three levels of government effectively carried out in 2017.



More than half (53 per cent) of democracies in Asia and the Pacific have high levels of Clean Elections: Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan and Timor-Leste. A little less than half (47 per cent) have mid-range levels.

One challenge affecting the region relates to the use and abuse of elections as a legitimizing façade by weak or non-representative governments, such as hybrid regimes and non-democracies. All countries in the region, even non-democratic regimes such as China, conduct some form of elections at some level of government, even though these cannot be considered clean, competitive or fair.

In the Chinese case, for example, local people's congresses are directly elected, although only members of the CCP can stand as candidates (Sudworth 2016). In the GSoD Indices for the region, only China scores 0 (out of 1) on Clean Elections. However, all other non-democracies in the region score between 0.16 (Laos and North Korea) and 0.44 (Thailand) on this indicator. All hybrid regimes conduct regular elections, although they are not classified as fully competitive. When non-democratic regimes hold elections, it distorts the meaning of such processes for democracies, as they do not uphold the core principles of popular control and political equality. Electoral tokenism in non-democracies may also undermine the credibility and trust in elections in democracies.

Another challenge relates to elite representation, which can distort the meaning of popular representation. Although regional elites are not cohesive (Case 2017), political elites—incumbents and their families, or those with extensive political, military or economic ties or influence—have often dominated politics in the region. While the nature of these elites varies in each country, elite politics, rather than inclusive and broad-based political participation, has been at the heart of democratization in Asia and the Pacific.

This is also reflected in the region's levels of Social Group Equality (which measures equality in access to political power and enjoyment of Civil Liberties by social group and class), which is the second lowest in the world (at 0.43) after the Middle East (0.30). Asia and the Pacific's low score on this measure can be partially explained by the fact that many democratic transition processes in the region were elite-

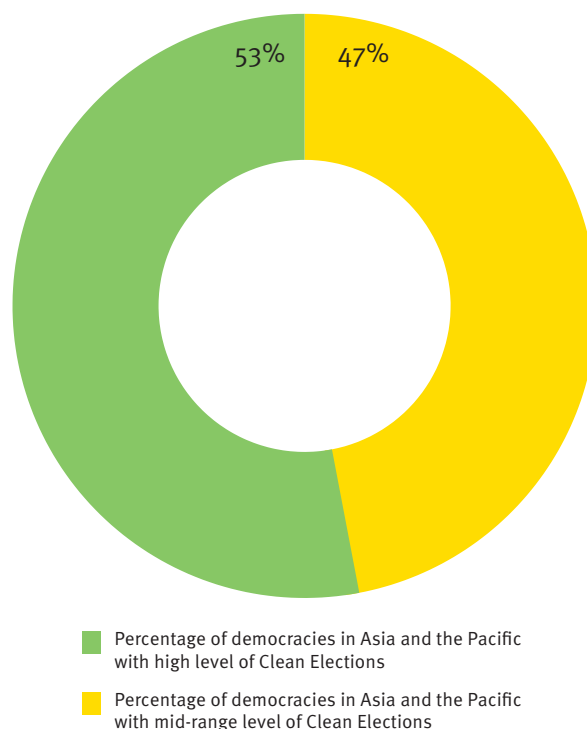
driven and negotiated transitions, rather than resulting from bottom-up social mobilization.

Almost half of the countries in the region have low levels of Social Group Equality. Of these, two (Myanmar and the Philippines) are democracies; the Philippines scores among the bottom 25 per cent in the world. However, elite representation does not only affect the newer democracies in the region. Older democracies in the region also suffer from low levels of cultural and ethnic diversity in their representative structures.

In Australia, the challenges of equitable ethnic representation are manifested in the national parliament's composition. Fewer than 20 of the 226 members of parliament serving in the federal parliament come from a non-English speaking background, despite the fact that the 2016 national census found that almost 50 per cent of Australians were born overseas or have a parent born overseas, and that almost one-quarter of the population speaks a language other than English at home (Tasevski 2018).

FIGURE 4.4

Percentage of democracies in Asia and the Pacific with high and mid-range levels of Clean Elections



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

Indigenous communities in Australia have made calls for greater recognition in the democratic system, most notably through the Uluru Statement from the Heart, produced by delegates to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Referendum Convention in May 2017, which called for an indigenous ‘Voice to Parliament’ aimed at enhancing the input of indigenous communities in the legislative process (Referendum Council 2017). However, this call was denied by the Australian Government on the basis that it would be seen as a third chamber of parliament (Remeikis 2019). At the state level, the Government has committed to negotiating a treaty with Aboriginal communities in the state. If successful this would be the first indigenous–state treaty in Australia’s history, which may provide a model for others to follow (Rimmer, Saunders and Crommelin 2019).

Moreover, intimidation and violence are also persistent features of political contests in many countries in the region. In particular, countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Pakistan, and Papua New Guinea all have high levels of electoral violence. Political violence, particularly at the local level and during the election period, has also been a problem in the Philippines (see e.g. Maitem and Navales 2019).

Finally, social media is contributing to profound changes in the electoral and political landscape of Asia and the Pacific, as it is in the rest of the world (see Box 4.2).

Populism and ethnonationalism are on the rise, as is the infusion of religion into politics

Asia and the Pacific’s democratic expansion and consolidation have been challenged by resurgent nationalism and nascent populism. If unchecked, nationalism and populism can lead to a gradual erosion of democratic institutions and processes (Daly 2017). While populism has swept across Europe in recent years, and is also seen in Latin America, the phenomenon is not as stark in Asia and the Pacific, although the region is by no means immune from it.

Some Asian politicians have been described as having populist characteristics, the most well-known being Duterte in the Philippines, but also to some extent Modi in India, albeit with a Hindu-nationalist bent. Since 2013, and under the tenure of these political leaders, both countries have seen significant declines in their democratic scores: India on Civil Liberties, Civil Society Participation, Media Integrity and Effective Parliament; and the Philippines on Civil Liberties, Effective Parliament and Predictable Enforcement.

Other Asian politicians have also been described as exhibiting some populist features, including the current President of Mongolia, Khaltmaagiin Battulga, who rode a wave of voter discontent with the country’s ruling party to win the 2017 elections on an anti-corruption and anti-poverty platform (Denyer 2018).

These politicians all vary widely in style, programmatic focus and political leanings, but share the cloaking of their regimes in nationalist discourse, with some having a more anti-establishment bent than others.

Similar to other parts of the world, nationalism and nationalist discourse are on the rise in a number of countries in the region. In China, President Xi, under the slogan of ‘realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’, has successfully mobilized nationalist sentiment to consolidate political power and legitimize his uncontested leadership. Xi’s brand of Chinese nationalism is ‘suffused with a cocktail of economic achievement, political nostalgia, and national grievance together with a new culture of political self-confidence’ (Rudd 2018).

Rising nationalism, and in particular ethnonationalism, has led to the infusion of religion in politics in a number of countries. This contributes to the weakening of democracy by undermining secularism and pluralism, increasing societal polarization and, in the worst cases, heightening conflict. An increasingly globalized world affects established social identities, belief systems and patterns of living. Faced with these social dislocations, some politicians, religious leaders and citizens seek refuge in identity politics, or claim that other groups and identities threaten established identities.

In the past, India, one of the region’s older democracies, served as a model for much of South Asia by establishing a democratic system that prioritized a secular state identity and safeguarded pluralism. Today, India with its strong Hindu-nationalist currents is itself experiencing challenges to these principles (Vaishnav 2019).

A weakening of commitments to secularism and pluralism in the face of majoritarian, and often religious, movements is not, however, unique to India.

In Sri Lanka, with the next parliamentary elections due in 2020, the political revival of ex-President Mahinda Rajapaksa—on the back of an ever-present but latent Buddhist nationalism among the majority Sinhalese population—constitutes a critical challenge to the country’s future democratic trajectory. Sri Lanka’s two

BOX 4.2

Social media, elections and democracy

In recent years, social media and new technologies have contributed to a profound reshaping of the democratic landscape in Asia and the Pacific.

The use of social media is having a profound impact on democratic politics in the region, providing a powerful platform for candidates to deliver their messages during election campaigns, a sophisticated means for spreading disinformation, and an instrument for civil society activists to hold politicians and security forces accountable.

All too often, however, debate over this impact collapses into a good versus evil exchange, with social media viewed as either the answer to every political challenge or, conversely, the source of every conceivable problem. Like all major technological innovations, however, social media in and of itself is neither good nor bad. Rather, the way in which social media is used determines whether its impact on society is either benign or malignant.

Social media's rise to prominence brings new political and social challenges. Politically, governments—and increasingly key platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp too—are coming under pressure to develop a meaningful regulatory framework designed to prevent or at least curtail dissemination of the worst online excesses, including hate speech, disinformation and pornography. However, regulatory attempts face stark criticism from free speech advocates, who argue that any attempt to regulate online speech undermines democratic principles such as freedom of expression. In parallel, many countries are waking up to the need to educate young people in responsible online user habits, starting in the classroom.

South East Asia encompasses a large and ever-growing population of digital users that analysts increasingly compare in scope to the global digital 'superpowers', including China, Europe and the United States. Whether via computer, tablet, mobile phone or other e-device, social media communication, principally (but not exclusively) via Facebook and the WhatsApp messaging service, now constitutes a core element of regional online activity (AseanUp 2019).

In terms of the impact of social media on democratic politics, regional experiences can broadly be categorized as positive or negative. On the positive side, in some countries social media use has helped to both expose official corruption and, as in the case of Malaysia, unseat a graft-friendly regime at the polls. The negative impact of social media is exemplified by the case of the Philippines, where a social media-savvy President, Rodrigo Duterte, has successfully deployed the full array of 'fake news'-producing instruments—online troll armies, 'buzzers' and Facebook campaigns in particular—to smear and even crush opponents.

The outcome of Malaysia's 2018 elections, which saw former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad unseat the incumbent, Najib

Razak, represented an impressive—and, to many, unexpected—vindication of democratic process in a country where the BN has won all 13 elections since independence from the United Kingdom in 1957. Despite rolling out a relatively sophisticated social media campaign in a country with high Internet penetration, the BN failed to overcome the obstacle posed by corruption allegations—notably the 2015 1MDB scandal—swirling around former Prime Minister Razak.

In addition, as one commentary noted, 'all-round internet access allowed for increased transparency by making it easier for citizens to perform fact-checks and background-checks, facilitating higher involvement in civic issues'. This, in turn, 'provided more space for dissent and competing narratives, leading to a further distrust in authority' (Abdullah and Anuar 2019). The fact that Malaysians increasingly access news via social media platforms which, unlike traditional media, are not government-controlled, made it much harder for the Razak camp to dominate the political narratives, despite determined official efforts to label reports critical of him as 'fake news' (Abdullah and Anuar 2019). This may well be of growing relevance for elections across the region.

The picture with respect to social media's impact on Indonesia's political landscape is complex. The April 2019 election campaign, which for the first time culminated in simultaneous presidential and legislative elections, saw widescale deployment of the full array of social media instruments. Both the incumbent civilian President, Joko Widodo, and his opponent, former general Prabowo Subianto, used social media campaigns to reach voters, and in particular young people, who constitute half of Indonesia's population (Abraham et al. 2019). Common to both candidates' campaigns were efforts to appeal to the electorate using nationalist and religious sentiments, which were further amplified by social media, leading to a climate of political polarization (Gunia 2019; Tehusijarana 2019).

In South Asia, too, social media's political impact is far-reaching. India, the world's largest democracy, exemplifies this pattern. Social media communications were a feature of campaigning for the 2019 general elections, involving an estimated 900 million prospective voters (Mahapatra 2019). Two key factors played a role: (a) the immediacy of the engagement facilitated by social media, combined with the deep social penetration readily obtained by viral online posts; and (b) the suspension of prevailing norms of rational discourse and facilitation of highly polarized, often identity-based exchanges owing to the anonymous nature of people's online engagement.

Keen to build on its powerful and highly effective use of social media during the 2014 election campaign, in the run-up to the 2019 elections the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) targeted ordinary smartphone-owning voters. Reportedly more

than 900,000 ‘cell phone pramukhs’ (volunteers driving the WhatsApp-based campaign ahead of the Indian parliamentary election) created neighbourhood-based WhatsApp groups to disseminate information about the BJP’s achievements and Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s campaign activities. The opposition Indian National Congress sought to counter this campaign with the launch of its smartphone application and the appointment of an extensive group of volunteers to coordinate local digital campaigns (Williams and Kamra 2019).

In Sri Lanka, social media played a critical role in the successful campaign to unseat President Mahinda Rajapaksa in the January 2015 presidential elections. For years, the Rajapaksa regime’s tight grip on all forms of opposition meant that online communication constituted one of the few areas of public life not wholly subject to official scrutiny and control.

Recently, however, social media platforms have also become tools for the dissemination of hate speech towards minority

groups, and in particular Muslim communities. The March 2018 anti-Muslim riots instigated by small but organized radical Buddhist formations led the Sri Lankan Government to impose temporary restrictions on access to social media. This also occurred in the aftermath of 2019 bombings on Christian churches (Wakefield 2019).

In Myanmar, the proliferation of online hate directed at the Rohingya minority has contributed to demands that social media platforms become more proactive in moderating and blocking all forms of hate speech. However, this is also causing resistance among freedom-of-speech advocates, who argue that this undermines democracy.

Taken together these developments have brought into sharp relief social media’s potential to make or break key democratic processes and events. The question of how best to respond to these challenges will likely continue to dominate the democracy debate in the foreseeable future.

dominant Sinhalese parties have both tried to appeal to Buddhist nationalism, which has limited the political system’s ability to accommodate Tamil and Muslim minorities. The 2015 presidential election offered an opportunity to address such ethnic tensions, which Sinhalese nationalists resisted (Staniland 2019). Nepal, possibly influenced by India, has also expressed doubts about secularization and pro-Hindu nationalism is gaining strength in the country, alongside the strong nationalist current represented by the Nepalese Government and its policies.

In Pakistan, the military, through its support for Prime Minister Imran Khan, also empowered three political parties with known ties to terrorism and a commitment to radical religious edicts. These include the Pakistani Tehreek-i-Labbaik, a party ‘whose single position is the strict enforcement of the country’s controversial blasphemy law’, which has led to many murders and extrajudicial killings based on (mostly false) allegations of offences committed against the Prophet Mohammed (Fair 2018). The military’s interest in recruiting these parties demonstrates the level of popular support they currently enjoy in Pakistan, and the threat they pose to the development of a more secularized, tolerant Pakistani democracy.

In Indonesia, while civil society was one of the key political forces in the democratization process, democratic consolidation has also spawned groups that do not share the democratic ethos. The emergence of radical Islamic and conservative nationalist groups, outside of the mainstream moderate Islamic movement,

has been successfully exploited by certain political interests in Indonesia (Nabbs-Keller 2018). These groups demonstrated their disruptive potential to undermine pluralist democracy in South East Asia’s largest Muslim democracy by staging protests in 2016 and initiating a blasphemy case in 2017 against Basuki ‘Ahok’ Purnama, the then-Governor of Jakarta and a prominent Chinese–Indonesian Christian (Hadiz 2017).

Indonesia’s national law already adopts some aspects of sharia law for Muslims (e.g. provisions on marriage and inheritance). However, efforts by certain Muslim groups—primarily the United Development Party and Partai Bulan Bintang (Crescent Star Party), as well as civil society organizations (CSOs) such as the Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front)—to reinforce sharia law in Indonesia’s legal system could present a potential threat to democracy.

The two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama, have rejected calls for the further reinforcement of Islamic law, as have nationalist groups. At the same time, while efforts to implement Islamic law at the national level have subsided in Indonesia, a number of regional bylaws with clear sharia influences having already been passed, even if their implementation often remains unclear (Assyaukanie 2007; Buehler 2013; Salim 2008). This has caused significant concern in areas with primarily non-Muslim populations. In other areas, such as Aceh (the only province in Indonesia to enforce sharia provisions due to its special autonomy), the drive to reinforce Islamic law has even threatened to undermine the principle of inclusion essential to democracy.

In Bhutan, resistance to democracy has been brewing in some sectors of society on the grounds that it inhibits Bhutanese ‘happiness’. While ethnonationalism has not been encouraged by any single party or leader, this ‘popular’ resistance to constitutional democracy is often based on ethno-religious norms. Many observers have commented that party politics in Bhutan are divisive and negatively affect community relationships; this divisiveness is often framed as contrary to aspects of Bhutanese Buddhist culture (see e.g. Berthelsen 2013; Slater 2018).

Some Bhutanese express dissatisfaction with the democratic system in place for the past 10 years and a longing for the monarchy. This rising homegrown resistance to democracy could easily be grafted onto the Bhutanese Government’s efforts to preserve culture—always welcomed by the populace—and thereby threaten the country’s democratic gains.



Fundamental Rights

The Fundamental Rights attribute aggregates scores from three subattributes: Access to Justice, Civil Liberties, and Social Rights and Equality. Overall it measures the fair and equal access to justice, the extent to which civil liberties such as freedom of expression or movement are respected, and the extent to which countries are offering their citizens basic welfare and political equality.

Summary: Fundamental Rights in Asia and the Pacific, 2018

Regional average: Mid-range (0.54)	
High (>0.7)	Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan and Timor-Leste
Mid-range (0.4–0.7)	India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore and Sri Lanka
Low (<0.4)	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Kazakhstan, Laos, North Korea, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam

Ethnonationalism, conflict and democracy interact in numerous ways

Historic and re-emerging ethnonationalism is also at the core of deep-seated pockets of conflict in Asia and the Pacific. Beyond their impact on geopolitical stability, these

conflicts also undermine democratic principles and erode respect for human rights, heighten democratic fragility, and reduce prospects for democratic consolidation in the region. Ethnonationalist conflict across the region encompasses continuing violence in older, early and new third-wave democracies (including India, Myanmar and Sri Lanka) and non-democracies (including China).

However, this list is not exhaustive and does not include other types of conflict, such as Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, West Papua in Indonesia and Afghanistan.

Among the democracies, **India** suffers from three central conflict nodes. First, the tensions and sporadic violence in the northern border state of Jammu and Kashmir are long-standing. Second, a swathe of Maoist/Naxalite-inspired insurgencies continues, spread across more than 60 districts of the country, many dating back a number of decades and all directed against the central authorities. These insurgencies continue to pose a stark challenge to the established order. To date, more than 6,000 people have died in the fighting. The Indian Government continue to view this as essentially an issue of law and order, while the Maoists view it as a political conflict and there is no sign to date of moves towards a peaceable ending (Routray 2018). Third, a rash of often tribally based insurgencies in many of India’s north-eastern states, many dating back to the late 1940s, should also be noted in this context.

Sri Lanka, formally at peace since the end of its civil war in 2009, is still dealing with the legacy of that conflict. Until a definitive political solution to the underlying ethnic conflict is achieved, it can be argued, Sri Lanka will remain a fragile democracy subject to unpredictable upsurges in ethnic tension and violence. This view, moreover, draws a measure of support from the experience of recent years, during which the country has seen a rise in ethno-religious tensions.

In 2018, anti-Muslim riots, whose leaders included a number of radical Sinhalese Buddhist monks, left several dead and many properties destroyed, and led the Sri Lankan Government to declare a state of emergency accompanied by a temporary shutdown of access to social media (*The Economist* 2018). Most recently, in April 2019, a series of large-scale suicide bombings targeted the country’s Christian minority, as well as foreign tourists, leaving over 250 dead and many hundreds more injured (Associated Press 2019).

Myanmar has experienced ethnic insurgency campaigns since it achieved independence from the United Kingdom in 1948. The ethnonationalist violence in the shape of a wave of brutal security-force assaults, starting in August 2017, on

the country's predominantly Muslim Rohingya minority has received the most international attention. Insurgencies continue to affect other parts of Myanmar, including Kachin, Karen and Shan states (Human Rights Watch 2019b).

Less widely reported on than other regional conflicts, latent ethnic tensions in southern **Thailand** over the last decade have led to intermittent conflict between Thai security forces and armed militants from the south's majority-Muslim, ethnic-Malay population (Küng 2018).

Even less well-known internationally is **China's** increasingly repressive treatment of the majority Muslim Uyghur population in the autonomous north-western Xinjiang province. Mass detention camps exist in which an estimated one million Uyghurs and Kazakhs have been incarcerated to date and there is systematic destruction of mosques and other architectural monuments, all accompanied by electronic surveillance. Responding to the critics, the Chinese Government argues that it is aimed at targeting religious extremism, and that the detention camps are in fact vocational training centres (Kuo 2018, 2019).

The expansion of civil liberties has been countered by a resurgence of human rights violations and unabated impunity

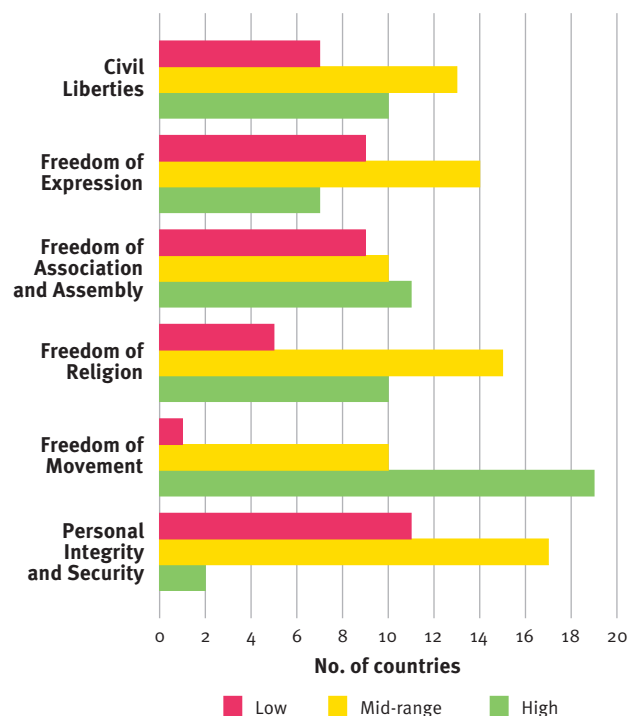
The democratization process in Asia and the Pacific has led to an expansion of civil liberties over the past four decades. Civil Liberties is one of the region's three best-performing aspects, judging from the share of countries with high score performance: almost one-third of countries in the region have high levels of Civil Liberties. The regional performance is particularly high on Freedom of Movement (where 19 countries score highly) and Freedom of Association and Assembly (on which 11 countries record high scores). Figure 4.5 illustrates performance of countries in Asia and the Pacific on Civil Liberties and its five subcomponents in 2018.

However, the protection of human rights in a number of countries in the region is weak. A total of 11 countries in Asia and the Pacific have low levels of Personal Integrity and Security, of which two (Myanmar and the Philippines) are democracies. Moreover, seven countries have seen significant declines in Civil Liberties in the past five years—four of these countries (India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand) were democracies in 2013 although only India and the Philippines were still classified as democracies in 2018 (see Table 4.3). In Thailand (until 2019, at least), these declines coincided with democratic breakdown, while in Cambodia they occurred in the context of deepening autocratization.

In some countries, human rights abuses are occurring within the context of ethnic conflict, while other violations take different forms, including suppression of the freedoms of expression, the press and assembly; arbitrary detention;

FIGURE 4.5

Countries with high, mid-range and low performance on Civil Liberties and its five subcomponents in Asia and the Pacific, 2018



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

TABLE 4.3

Countries in Asia and the Pacific with statistically significant declines on Civil Liberties, 2013–2018

Countries with declines in Civil Liberties	Cambodia, Tajikistan, Thailand until 2019, Viet Nam (non-democracies)
	Pakistan (hybrid regime)
	India, the Philippines (democracies)

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

poor access to justice through lack of due process and an inability to seek counsel or legal aid; poor prison conditions; widespread human trafficking; and the denial of basic education and health services to refugees and migrants (see e.g. US State Department 2018; Human Rights Watch 2018). These violations occur to a significantly larger extent in the non-democracies in the region, as well as in the hybrid regimes, but also in democracies, undermining the prospects for democratic consolidation.

In 2017, two years after Myanmar's first free and fair elections, a massive and violent military crackdown against the Rohingya minority in Rakhine state resulted in a humanitarian disaster, displacing more than 730,000 people and leading to the deaths of at least 6,700 people by conservative estimates (Médecins Sans Frontières 2017; Human Rights Watch 2018), constituting a serious setback to Myanmar's democratic path. The UN Human Rights Council's Independent Fact-Finding Mission to Myanmar found patterns of both gross human rights violations and systematic ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya, and recommended prosecution of the Tatmadaw (Myanmar's armed forces) for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity (UN Human Rights Council 2018).

The military-led transition and the strong presence of the military in the democratic institutions of the country, plus the fact that Myanmar's Constitution guarantees military immunity from civil and criminal prosecutions, go a long way towards explaining why these crimes occurred without reprisals. Another explanation is the lack of domestic public condemnation of the military's actions, due to historical anti-Muslim, anti-Rohingya sentiment among the majority Buddhist population in Myanmar (Albert and Chatzky 2018).

Laws that privilege national interests over fundamental freedoms exist in many countries. In Viet Nam (which scores 0.40 on the GSoD Indices attribute of Civil Liberties, well under the world average), activists are routinely beaten up and charged under article 79 of the 1999 Penal Code for carrying out activities allegedly aimed at threatening the government (Human Rights Watch 2019d).

Human rights violations in the region are also perpetrated by non-state actors. Such violations have chiefly been committed in the context of armed conflicts by secessionists, radical groups or organized criminal groups. One of South East Asia's biggest problems is human trafficking: it is estimated that at least 225,000 women and children are trafficked every year for sexual exploitation or forced labour (International Organization for Migration 2015). A combination of

factors related to poverty, gender, education and lack of law enforcement have facilitated human trafficking in both destination countries (including Malaysia and Thailand) and countries of origin (including Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar and the Philippines).

The resurgence of gross human rights violations in Cambodia, Myanmar and the Philippines over the past five years testifies to the systemic failure of accountability and justice institutions in these countries. It also shows that this type of failure—when coupled with a leadership that exhorts or condones the use of violence—can all too easily result in the gravest forms of human rights violations and impunity.

The role of the military, police and other security personnel in the perpetuation of widespread human rights violations is evident in all three of these countries. In particular, it has been argued that the war on drugs in the Philippines cannot be decoupled from the issue of corruption in the police force (Jensen and Hapal 2018; see also Box 4.3). Moreover, when security personnel act under a mantle of democracy in the name of public security, the danger of impunity becomes higher, as perpetrators are more easily cleared of responsibility and accountability.

Advances have been made in Gender Equality but significant challenges remain



The Asia and the Pacific countries with the highest levels of political Gender Equality are Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan, while the countries with the lowest levels are Afghanistan, North Korea, Papua New Guinea and Tajikistan, which all score in the bottom 25 per cent in the world on Gender Equality.

Asia and the Pacific has seen significant gains in Gender Equality in the past decades, although significant challenges remain if gender parity is to be achieved.

Asia and the Pacific has increased its average regional score on the GSoD Indices measure of Gender Equality by 46 per cent since 1975. Five countries in the region have reached the critical minority point of 30 per cent women's representation in the legislature: New Zealand (40 per cent), followed by Timor-Leste (34 per cent), Nepal (33 per cent), the Philippines and Australia (both 30 per cent) (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019). Myanmar, Nepal and New Zealand have seen the greatest quantitative improvements in their Gender Equality scores since 1975.

BOX 4.3

The war on drugs in the Philippines

Duterte entered the fray with one basic campaign promise: to end corruption and the proliferation of illegal drugs by all means, extrajudicial killings included (Teehankee and Thompson 2016).

Shortly after Duterte's election as President in 2016 and emboldened by his many public pronouncements on his intent to kill key personalities in the drug-dealing world, the Philippines National Police (PNP) issued Command Memorandum Circular No. 16-2016, otherwise known as the PNP Anti-illegal Drugs Campaign Plan: Double Barrel. Thus began a campaign of house-to-house visits with police personnel visiting suspected drug users and, initially at least, requesting their surrender. Many drug suspects have been killed, either by vigilantes or by members of the PNP.

Despite making democratic progress since its transition in 1986, the Philippines still suffers from an impunity crisis, as manifested by the failure to hold government officials accountable for the widespread human rights abuses of the

Marcos regime; continued extrajudicial killings of journalists and government critics; the enduring cycle of violence in conflict zones; and Duterte's so-called war on drugs which, based on official reports, has claimed more than 4,000 lives. Other estimates put the total of fatalities at anywhere between 12,000 and 20,000 (Santos 2018).

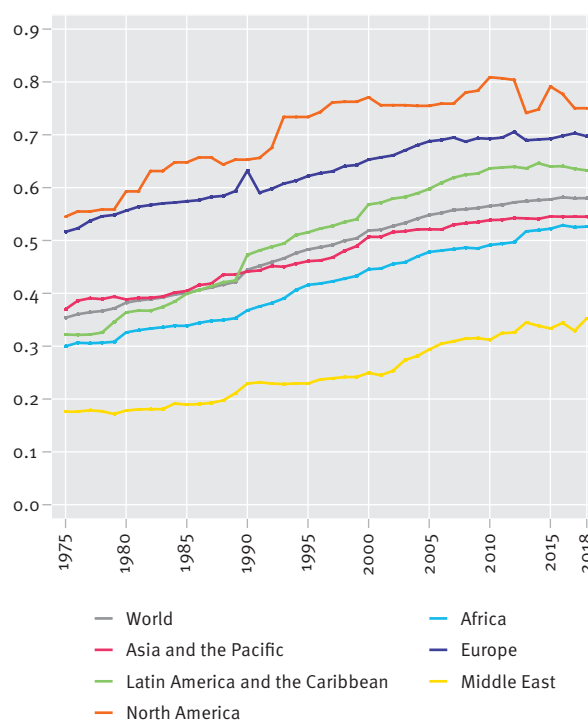
Despite the high death toll, and reports of abuses to date, only a few police personnel have been prosecuted (Baldwin and Marshall 2017). As the primary agency implementing the war on drugs, the PNP has been depicted as brutal, corrupt and prone to using paid killers, and there are persistent allegations of quotas and rewards in effect for the number of drug suspects killed per operation (Jensen and Hapal 2018). With resounding, blanket protection from the Philippine Government backed by the president's order to kill (Ernst 2017), the PNP has become widely prone to abuse and exploitation by 'rogue' police personnel. For example, in 2017 PNP officers were caught on closed-circuit television planting evidence on alleged drug suspects in the National Capital Region (Santos 2017), prompting a senate committee to investigate the matter.

The introduction of a 33 per cent parliamentary quota in Nepal's 2015 Constitution and the implementation of a parity regime in Timor-Leste have been crucial in increasing women's representation in parliament in these two countries (International IDEA 2019a). However, despite these important gains, significant challenges to gender equality persist throughout the Asia and the Pacific region.

Despite these advances, the rate of increase in Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific has not kept pace with increases in the rest of the world. Both Latin America and Africa have advanced at a faster rate in the last four decades. Asia and the Pacific's regional average on Gender Equality is now below the world average (although it was slightly above the world average in 1975) (see Figure 4.6). The region also has the lowest average share of female legislators (18 per cent in 2019) in the world. At the country level, the average share of female legislators ranged from 0 per cent in Papua New Guinea to 40 per cent in New Zealand.

Democracy has not necessarily paved the way for an increase in women's political representation in the region. In Japan, an older democracy, women hold just 10 per cent of seats in the parliament. In South Korea, which transitioned to democracy in 1988 during the early third wave, the share is just 17 per cent. The democracies in the Pacific Islands

FIGURE 4.6

Trends in Gender Equality by region, 1975–2018

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

are among the countries with the lowest share of women legislators, and the only countries in the world with no women in parliament (Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu).

In Malaysia and Myanmar, two much more recent democracies, women occupy just 14 and 11 per cent of seats, respectively, in the legislature (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019). Explanatory factors include a combination of cultural norms and a lack of institutional solutions to address their underrepresentation (Moon 2016; UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2015). Gender discrimination in the region has also manifested itself in the form of gender-based violence. Cambodia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam have all recorded a high incidence of violence against women (UN Women 2015).



Checks on Government

The Checks on Government attribute aggregates scores from three subattributes: Effective Parliament, Judicial Independence and Media Integrity. It measures the extent to which parliament oversees the executive, as well as whether the courts are independent, and whether media is diverse and critical of the government without being penalized for it.

Summary: Checks on Government in Asia and the Pacific, 2018

Regional average: Mid-range (0.50)		
High (>0.7)	Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and Taiwan	
Mid-range (0.4–0.7)	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste	
Low (<0.4)	Cambodia, China, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia, North Korea, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	

Gender Equality is not necessarily correlated with democratic performance in Asia and the Pacific. North Korea (16 per cent) and China (25 per cent), which do not have democratically elected legislatures, have more women in their respective legislative bodies than Japan and South Korea (True et al. 2014). Indeed, promoting gender equality

and women's participation has been part of the legitimizing ideologies of both the CCP and the Communist Party in North Korea. In China, the inclusion of women deputies and the concomitant gradual increase of their numbers within both national and local people's congresses are mandated by the electoral law.

Dismantling and weakening of integrity institutions, checks and balances

Recent attacks on institutions central to the integrity of functioning democracies represent a significant challenge to democracy in the region. Institutions under attack include the judiciary, the court system, electoral commissions, the parliament and institutions fighting corruption. According to the GSoD Indices, Asia and the Pacific scores 0.46 on Judicial Independence, which is below the world average, making it one of the poorest performing aspects of the region's democracies.

Recent attacks on judicial institutions have occurred in a number of countries and they pose a serious impediment to democratic strengthening. Cases include Bangladesh, which regressed into hybridity in 2014 and Afghanistan. As one commentator notes, in order to survive, democracy and constitutionalism rely on a commitment to 'horizontal accountability'—to 'core institutions interacting to uphold the values that undergird the system' (Davis 2017: 152). When institutions fail to speak, listen and respond to each other—or, worse, when they attack one another—the principles of democracy and separation of powers break down, putting nations at risk of authoritarian reversal or democratic backsliding (Davis 2017; Deinla 2014). In this context, 'guaranteeing institutional autonomy in the face of entrenched power is one of the hardest challenges' for Asian democracies (Davis 2017: 156).

In Bangladesh, the governing Awami League has significantly undermined anti-corruption efforts through political interference, using the Anti-Corruption Commission and the politicization of judicial processes to bring cases against opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party's leaders. This has, in turn, undermined accountability, institutional integrity and political competition, thereby weakening democracy (Human Rights Watch 2019a).

In Afghanistan, constitutional ambiguities, combined with instability perpetuated by ongoing conflict, have resulted in a confrontational relationship between parliament and the executive. Since the end of the Taliban regime, parliament has only passed two laws, with the executive branch passing the rest (Pasarlay and Mallyar 2019). This breakdown in the separation of powers does not bode well for Afghanistan's

democratization, even as the country advances towards peace talks with the Taliban and negotiates the exit of US and international troops. In addition to the conflictual legislature–executive relationship, accusations of overt political interference in the functioning of the Independent Election Commission, undermining its autonomy and effectiveness, have been made (Haidary 2018). The end of a conflict is an opportunity for democratic consolidation, but without strong institutions and oversight this could lead to a return to authoritarian rule if power vacuums and competition rather than cooperation come to define the democratic landscape.

Using the law and the judiciary to silence the opposition is a long-established practice among non-democracies in Asia and the Pacific. However, it also occurs in democracies such as the Philippines. Known for its defence of constitutional democracy and fundamental freedoms, the Philippine Supreme Court and its chief justices have become the object of political contestation.

In what is dubbed a ‘supermajority’, with two-thirds of House of Representatives and Senate members aligned with President Duterte, reforms and impeachments can now pass easily through the Philippine political system. Impeachment has therefore been used as a tool for deposing constitutionally protected officials who oppose the policies of the present government. For example, in May 2018, after the House of Representatives conducted impeachment proceedings, the Supreme Court removed the country’s first female Chief Justice, Maria Lourdes Sereno.

By the time Duterte’s term ends in 2022, he will have been able to appoint 12 of the 15 Supreme Court justices (*Manila Times* 2016). This concentration of power and weakening of checks and balances both compromises and erodes the institutional integrity and independence of congress, and also contributes to weakening the democratic system.

However, despite these cases where judicial institutions have been severely undermined, the region also presents some more hopeful cases in which the judiciary was able to act with independence.

In Sri Lanka, by ousting and replacing the Prime Minister in 2018 without consultation, undermining the role of the courts and parliament in order to complete an attempted transition of power, President Sirisena disregarded democratic norms and the Constitution. The resilience of the country’s democratic institutions was demonstrated by

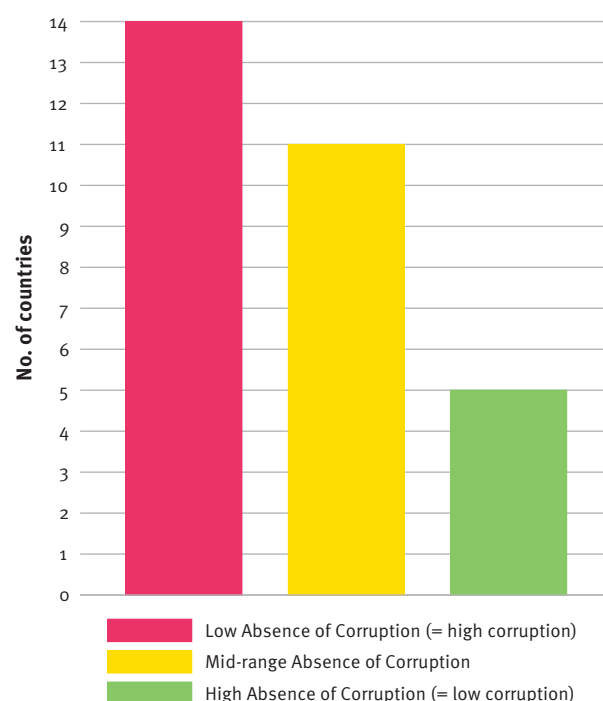
the Supreme Court’s willingness to protect constitutional order, by suspending the presidential order to dissolve parliament (Safi and Perera 2018).

Nonetheless, the fact that the President considered himself able to act unconstitutionally demonstrates the inherent weakness of Sri Lanka’s current democratic system (Welikala 2019). Moreover, the deadly terrorist bombings that occurred in 2019 are widely believed to have been enabled by the rivalry and distance between the President and the reinstituted Prime Minister, which led to the withholding of key information that could have prevented the coordinated attacks (Beswick 2019).

In the Maldives, President Abdulla Yameen attempted to fill the electoral commission with members of his own party in advance of the September 2018 elections, with a view to protecting his claim to power against the opposition coalition (Zulfa 2018). After the announcement of his record loss in the elections, Yameen

FIGURE 4.7

Countries with low, mid-range and high Absence of Corruption in Asia and the Pacific, 2018



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

went on to petition the Supreme Court to annul them. Nonetheless, the Supreme Court rejected the petition, holding that there was no legal or constitutional basis on which to question the elections' legality (*Maldives Independent* 2018). The court's decision was hailed by the opposition.

In Pakistan in early 2019, in a blasphemy case, the Supreme Court upheld its decision to overturn the conviction and death sentence of Asia Bibi, a woman originally convicted in 2010 after being accused of insulting the Prophet Muhammad in a quarrel with her neighbours, and who spent eight years on death row (Safi 2019). This ruling shows that, despite challenges to institutional and process integrity, courts are manifesting both resilience and a willingness to protect democracy.



Impartial Administration

Impartial Administration is the aggregation of two subattributes: Absence of Corruption and Predictable Enforcement. It measures the extent to which the state is free from corruption, and whether the enforcement of public authority is predictable.

Summary: Impartial Administration in Asia and the Pacific, 2018

Regional average: Mid-range (0.46)	
High (>0.7)	Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan
Mid-range (0.4–0.7)	China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam
Low (<0.4)	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, North Korea, Papua New Guinea, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan



More than half (53 per cent) of democracies in Asia and the Pacific have high levels of Clean Elections: Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan and Timor-Leste. A little less than half (47 per cent) have mid-range levels.

Endemic corruption undermines the impartiality of administration

A number of Asian countries suffer from high levels of corruption. This situation is compounded by weak judicial systems lacking the capacity to combat corruption. Weakened checks on governments further contribute to the undermining of efforts to combat corruption.

According to the GSoD Indices, Impartial Administration is the attribute of democracy on which Asia and the Pacific records its lowest performance, with Absence of Corruption (on which the region scores 0.45) being one of its four lowest-performing aspects overall. Almost half of the countries in the region have high levels of corruption, which is the highest share in the world after Africa and the Middle East (see Figure 4.7). Of these, nine score among the bottom 25 per cent in the world.

Levels of corruption are, on average, significantly lower for the democracies in the region (0.55) than for the hybrid regimes (0.28) or non-democracies (0.29), with some exceptions (e.g. Singapore). At the same time, three democracies in the region (Mongolia, Nepal and Papua New Guinea) also have high levels of corruption (see Table 4.4). This poses serious challenges to democracy, as it undermines and distorts accountability and increases discontent with democracy as a system of government, fuelling support for anger-based politics, and reinforcing candidates with populist tendencies who promise to restore law and order through means that are not always compatible with democratic practices.

Money, politics and patronage are closely linked to corruption in the region. This is true for democracies such

TABLE 4.4

Average Absence of Corruption score in Asia and the Pacific by regime type, 2018

Regime type	Average Absence of Corruption score
Democracies	0.55
Hybrid regimes (except Singapore)	0.28
Non-democracies	0.29

Note: Absence of Corruption scores range from 0 to 1, with a lower score indicating high levels of corruption (0–0.4) and a higher score indicating lower levels of corruption (mid-range 0.4–0.7).

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

as Indonesia, Mongolia, Pakistan and the Philippines—a fact which, despite these countries' elections being considered free and fair, serves to undermine their competitive electoral dynamics (Aspinall and Sukmajati 2016; Teehankee 2016).

Vote buying is so widespread in Indonesia that it was recently established that one in three Indonesians is exposed to the practice (Muhtadi 2018). The quality of Indonesian democracy has been eroded by corruption. Despite advances in anti-corruption reform and an increase in the number of cases prosecuted, citizen perceptions of corruption in Indonesia have only slightly improved since the transition to democracy in 1998 (Silva-Leander 2015). Strong public discontent persists regarding the 'endemic' government corruption (Crouch 2010: 228; Butt 2011: 383), which is seen as 'a core norm of Indonesia's political economy' (Sorensen, Juwono and Timberman 2006: 9, quoted in Silva-Leander 2015). Decentralization has contributed to the deepening of democratization but also dispersed power and corruption to regional and local levels.

Corruption is also present in the Philippines and can help explain Duterte's rise to power, given that he promised to rid the country of the illness. Duterte's predecessor, Benigno Aquino III, had gained traction through greater transparency and anti-corruption initiatives, as a result of which the Philippines had achieved a respectable ranking compared to its peers in the region. However, Aquino's administration was nonetheless shaken by a pork-barrelling scam involving fake non-profit organizations securing funds from members of parliament (Espiritu 2014; Sidel 2015).

When Duterte assumed the presidency in 2016 he issued a stern warning to corrupt government officials and requested their resignations, although his efforts in this regard were accused of being partisan. In the Philippines, as across the region, highlighting corruption has also become a precarious task for both the media and whistleblowers who expose corruption. Indeed, the Philippines has been cited as one of the top three offenders in the Asia and the Pacific region in terms of the intimidation and murder of members of the media who investigate corruption (Transparency International 2018).

Singapore, a hybrid regime with the lowest levels of corruption in the world, constitutes the exception to the rule in the GSoD Indices. Other countries in the region could take note of Singapore's successful efforts to fight corruption. Its recipe includes a highly professional and impartial public administration and effective formal checks on government, with a functioning and independent judiciary.



Participatory Engagement

Participatory Engagement is the only attribute that does not have a score, as its four subattributes (Civil Society Participation, Electoral Participation, Direct Democracy and Local Democracy) are not aggregated. The subattributes measure citizens' participation in civil society organizations and in elections, and the existence of direct democracy instruments available to citizens, as well as the extent to which local elections are free.

Summary: Participatory Engagement in Asia and the Pacific, 2018

Regional average: Mid-range	
High	Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan and Timor-Leste
Mid-range	India, Japan, Mongolia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Sri Lanka
Low	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, North Korea, Pakistan, Singapore, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam



While East Asia has seen the most significant growth in terms of the GSoD Indices measure of Civil Society Participation, Oceania is currently the subregion with the highest levels, and Central Asia has the lowest.

The countries with the highest levels of Civil Society Participation in the region are Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Korea and Taiwan.

Among the democracies in the region, the countries with the lowest levels of Civil Society Participation are Malaysia, Myanmar and Papua New Guinea, which all score within the range of 0.51–0.58, but also record mid-range scores compared to the rest of the world. India's levels of Civil Society Participation went from high (0.78) in 2013 to mid-range (0.59) in 2017, a statistically significant drop of 25 per cent in only five years.

Civil society has expanded while civic space has contracted

Democratic expansion has opened up spaces for greater public deliberation and civil society participation in the Asia and the Pacific region. Since 1975, Asia and the Pacific's level of Civil Society Participation has increased by

46 per cent. The region's vibrant civil society first emerged in the form of concerted resistance against authoritarian regimes in the region. It was then a key player in service delivery, advocacy, democracy and human rights promotion, including monitoring governments and holding them to account. At times, civil society has also safeguarded democracy when it has been threatened. In this sense, the emergence of a strong civil society in the region has been a defining feature of the democratic era.

In the Philippines, for example, CSOs have played a key role in recovery efforts after natural disasters, working with the state in the provision of immediate humanitarian assistance. CSOs are also represented in local government and are usually engaged in policymaking processes through a variety of national-level advocacy and interest groups. When judicial independence was threatened by the removal of the chief justice in 2018, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines intervened and made public its opposition, and a Coalition of Justice (made up of CSOs, personalities and activists) was formed to criticize the executive's interference with judicial integrity (Terrazola 2018).

Since the transition to democracy in Indonesia, civil society has grown exponentially, in line with the range of issues with which it engages. A large number of watchdog NGOs that monitor government performance in areas such as environmental management, education, health, human rights, legislative performance, public spending, local governance and anti-corruption reform have been created. These are active both in exposing corruption cases and in advocating for legislative reform, usually in tandem with the media (Silva-Leander 2015). In Sri Lanka, together with political parties, parliament and the courts, CSOs played a key role in both condemning and ultimately blocking President Sirisena's unconstitutional move to oust Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and replace him with former President Mahinda Rajapaksa in late 2018.

As part of the expansion of Asian civil society, and especially in East Asia, a series of protest movements in which youth political activism has played a key role has emerged as a potent political force on the political landscape, defending democracy, holding political leaders to account and serving as a potential source of reform in non-democracies. In Taiwan in 2014 the Sunflower Student Movement opposed what it saw as an unfair trade agreement with China (Morris 2018). In South Korea, the 'Candlelight Revolution' protests of 2016–2017 against then-President Park Geun-hye's contentious proposals on labour laws and history textbooks eventually morphed into mass demonstrations against state corruption demanding the President's impeachment (Chang 2017). In

Japan in 2015, there were mass demonstrations against Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's new military legislation (Aizawa 2016).

The impact of youth political engagement has also been visible in Mongolia, which was rocked by mass anti-corruption protests in 2018 (Dierkes 2017; Bittner 2019). Even in non-democracies, youth have the potential to disrupt the prevailing political situation. Acknowledging the influence and possible impact of 'Western values', President Xi has ordered universities to adhere to the ideology and leadership of the CCP, out of fears of liberal democratic values trumping the party's grip on the loyalty of the country's youth (Fish 2017).

The most recent expression of civic voice and social mobilization in the region was seen in Hong Kong in 2019. The largest street protests paralyzing Hong Kong since the 2014 pro-democracy protests (the so-called Umbrella Movement) shook the special administrative region. The 2019 protests were triggered by a draft extradition bill proposed by the Hong Kong Government, which would have allowed suspects to be sent to mainland China for trial. The protesters argued that such legislation would threaten the status arrangement under which Hong Kong's legal system operates (also known as 'one country, two systems').

While the draft bill triggered the protests, the sentiments of protesters had been brewing for a long time, and their demands also included full representation in the legislative body, and direct election of the chief executive.

The emergence of both the youth-led Sunflower Student Movement in Taiwan and the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong in 2014 and 2019 is indicative of a democratic push back against China's growing influence (Ichihara 2017). Given their shared concern regarding China's encroachments, Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party and New Power Party (an offshoot of the Sunflower Student Movement) collaborated in June 2017 and formed the Taiwan Congressional Hong Kong Caucus which seeks to support democracy-building efforts in Hong Kong.

In addition to this synergy, the pro-democracy movements in Taiwan and Hong Kong have helped inspire youth activism in Japan. Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy, a youth-led movement in Japan, was formed in 2014 to protest against Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's military legislation (to deploy military overseas). Activists contend that such legislation will unconstitutionally allow Japan to exercise its right to collective self-defence and deploy military forces overseas to defend allies that are under attack (Soble 2015).

More recently, a grouping of youth activists from East and South East Asia has been created to resist entrenched authoritarianism. Calling themselves the Network of Young Democratic Asians, the nascent organization includes the Umbrella Movement, the Sunflower Movement and the antijunta movement in Thailand. Apart from resisting authoritarianism, some of its members plan to stand for election. In 2016, Hong Kong activist Nathan Law, at 23 years of age, became the youngest legislator elected in the history of Hong Kong (Solomon 2016).

These efforts within the region may assume increasing geopolitical significance given the incessant growth of China's politico-economic influence and encroachments.

However, in recent years, there have been notable attempts to undermine civic space, freedom of speech and the media throughout Asia and the Pacific.

In countries such as Cambodia and Thailand (until 2019), the shrinking of civic space has occurred in the context of a general democratic breakdown. In other cases, it has occurred in a context of democratic backsliding (as is the case in India and the Philippines) or erosion, explained by the rise of nationalist political parties, and justified by arguments of national sovereignty, law and order, national security and responses to terrorism. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, these restrictions on civic space have been aimed at limiting the space for opposition and manipulating electoral processes (table 4.5). In India and Nepal, they have sought to undermine civil society activity.

The weakening of civil society in Asia and the Pacific represents a significant threat to the health of the region's democracies. A vibrant and democratic civil society constitutes a safeguard against democratic backsliding, ensures a diversity of voices in society and helps build social capital, which is key to the healthy fabric of democratic societies.

In an increasingly globalized world, closing civic space in one country may have spillover effects in others. This, in turn, occurs through the domino effect that such phenomena in large countries may have on others in a particular region (Hossain et al. 2018). Added to this is the role of countries such as China that provide (and export) a model of governance in which limited civic space is an intrinsic feature.

India has played an inspirational role as the world's largest democracy where three million CSOs and vibrant social movements enjoy constitutionally protected rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. At

the same time, civil society groups such as CIVICUS, an online platform that tracks civic spaces across the globe, have expressed alarm at what they describe as an obstructed civic space in the country (CIVICUS 2017).

This concern on the part of civil society groups is partly based on a specific piece of legislation, the 2010 Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Act (FCRA), which regulates Indian NGOs' external (i.e. foreign) funding, and which is increasingly being used to stymie civil society activities. NGOs affected by enforcement of the Act's provisions include Greenpeace India, whose FCRA registration was cancelled in September 2015, ostensibly on the grounds of 'prejudicially affecting the public interest and economic interest of the state' (Singh 2015).

This shrinking of civic space is confirmed by the GSoD Indices, which identify India as one of seven countries in the world (alongside Brazil, Burundi, Thailand, Turkey, Venezuela and Yemen) and the only democracy apart from Brazil that has seen significant declines in all three aspects of civic space in the past five years, namely Civil Liberties, Civil Society Participation and Media Integrity. The largest Civil Liberties declines in India are seen in Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Association and Assembly (see Figure 4.8).

The shrinking of civic space in India has also occurred in the context of democratic backsliding, which the GSoD Indices

TABLE 4.5

Countries in Asia and the Pacific with declines in one to three aspects of civic space, 2013–2018

Extent of decline	Examples
Declines on all three aspects of civic space	India (moderate democratic backsliding), Thailand until 2019 (democratic breakdown 2014–2019)
Declines on two aspects of civic space	Pakistan (regressed to a hybrid regime in 2018)
Decline on one aspect of civic space	Democracies: Indonesia, Mongolia and the Philippines (moderate democratic backsliding) Non-democracies: Cambodia, Tajikistan and Viet Nam

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

define as a gradual and intentional weakening on checks on government and accountability institutions coupled with declines in Civil Liberties. India and the Philippines have been identified as two of the 10 countries in the world experiencing democratic backsliding. In both cases, the backsliding is classified as moderate (see Chapter 1).

CIVICUS has also highlighted formal restrictions on the right to form associations, assemble peacefully and without arms, and the specific targeting of human rights defenders and journalists, which violates the right to freedom of expression. Although these are all part of constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights, in Indian law they are subject to certain broad restrictions such as state security

provisions, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, contempt of court, defamation, incitement to offence and the sovereignty and integrity of India. These provisions have, moreover, been used by successive governments to clamp down on civil society (Human Rights Watch 2019c; see also Box 4.4).

On the positive side, in September 2018 India's Supreme Court struck down a section of the country's penal code criminalizing consensual adult same-sex relations. The ruling followed decades of determined efforts by activists, lawyers and members of LGBT communities to change colonial-era legislation criminalizing homosexuality (Safi 2018).

BOX 4.4

Case study: India's shrinking civic space

A number of factors explain the shrinking civic space in India, a development that became evident from 2010 onwards in the wake of the introduction of the Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Act (FCRA) passed by the ruling United Progressive Alliance, which replaced an earlier act of 1976.

One factor is the pushback against new social movements that have questioned the established Indian development and governance model, including Narmada Bachao Andolan, which opposes large dams and their impact on the most vulnerable sections of the population, and the People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy in Kudankulam.

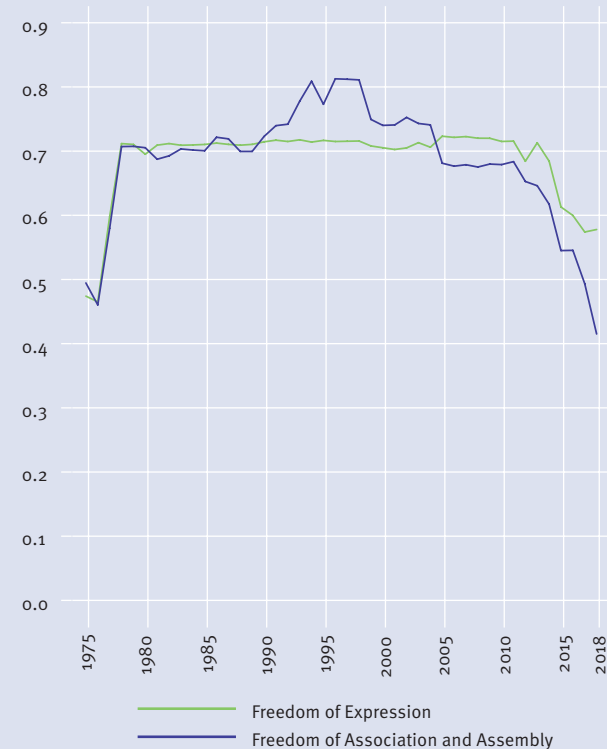
In 2011–2012 the India Against Corruption group challenged the idea that lawmaking was the exclusive task of elected legislators. This, in turn, created a debate around the role of civil society in India, with many legislators expressing the view that laws should be made in parliament by legislators, and that civil society activists were exceeding their mandate in claiming a space in the legislative drafting process.

The second factor relates to current global narratives around terrorism, which have provided ammunition for restrictions on civic space in India under the rubric of protecting national security. Moreover, so-called elite capture of many central government systems and the private sector, together with a dwindling foreign aid supply, have made NGOs more dependent on government and the corporate sector, with all the limitations this implies.

While the right to form associations is protected by the Constitution, the Indian Government can place restrictions on the foreign funding an NGO can receive, as it does indirectly through the FCRA. In 2015, the Ministry of Home Affairs made amendments to FCRA rules by increasing reporting requirements for CSOs and making it compulsory for all registration applications to be completed online.

FIGURE 4.8

Trends in Freedom of Association and Assembly and Freedom of Expression in India, 1975–2018



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

Under the amended rules, organizations receiving funding from foreign sources must publish audited statements of these funds. The statements must include information on donors, the amount received and the date of the donation. An additional clause was introduced making it mandatory to report any funds received from foreign sources within 48 hours. Predictably, this new act was enacted to prevent foreign contributions ‘for any activities detrimental to the national interest and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto’. By not defining these activities, the Indian Government has created a large space within which it can act according to its own discretion.

The FCRA also prohibits funding for any political organization. As a result, the foreign funding of 4,000 small NGOs has been revoked. While the government claims that this is due to procedural violations, critics have pointed out that human rights organizations opposed to government policies have been particularly targeted (Lakshmi 2013).

In India, as elsewhere, freedom of expression—which is often seen as one of the most significant markers of the health of civil society—cannot be delinked from the Internet and freedom of the press. Civil society has contested both government

and private efforts to monitor Internet activity and penalize dissenting online voices. Freedom House’s 2018 Freedom on the Net Report ranked India as ‘partly free’ in terms of Internet freedom, based on yardsticks related to government censorship of public information and surveillance (Freedom House 2018c).

The report also identifies India as the country in the world with the highest number of Internet shutdowns, with more than 100 reported incidents in 2018 alone (Freedom House 2018b). Responding to this challenge, in 2018 a group of lawyers and policy analysts unveiled a community project backed by the Internet Freedom Foundation called Save our Privacy, with a view to developing a model citizen law for data protection, surveillance and interception (Save Our Privacy 2018).

The restrictive provisions of the Indian Penal Code, and particularly section 124A, which adopts a broad definition of sedition, have given the Indian Government a great deal of freedom to target speech that is critical of the government (including content shared on social media) and label it seditious. Journalists, bloggers and media agencies have been targeted by both state and non-state actors, for example on the grounds of prevention of communal unrest, or during election periods.

In Nepal, despite initial optimism that the new 2015 Constitution—which civil society played a central and significant role in formulating—provided an opportunity for deepening democracy, the May 2018 merger of the two largest parties into the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) effectively signalled the opposition’s collapse (Baral 2018). Since then, Nepal’s vibrant civil society has been under attack. As one commentator noted, ‘Not only is Nepal’s civic space shrinking, but the pillars of democracy, like freedom of the press, equality, and liberty, are facing the hammer of new draconian laws (Budhathoki 2018). Even before the passage of these new laws, experts highlighted concerns that the Constitution was in many ways more restrictive than its 2007 counterpart, due to limitations on the rights of freedom of expression and association, with one group observing that the ‘underlying laws and Government of Nepal decisions do not respect the independence of civil society’ (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law 2017: 6).

In addition to these problematic constitutional provisions, a proposed law on a national integrity policy would have further restricted civil society space by allowing increased government monitoring of, and interference in, CSO activities, although it has been met with harsh criticism from the international community. The Association Registration Act also allows the Nepali Government to



Between 2013 and 2018, seven Asia and the Pacific countries (Cambodia, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Tajikistan, Thailand and Viet Nam) registered significant declines in Civil Liberties. These declines particularly affected Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Association and Assembly. The regional mean score on Civil Liberties has decreased by 6 per cent since 2013—the third-highest decrease among the world’s regions for this period.

investigate associations, instruct them to work on certain issues and terminate those that do not comply with these instructions.

The media in Nepal face similar challenges, with the Nepali Government using licensing and registration requirements to restrict freedom of speech. Indeed, overall there are concerns that Nepal’s democracy has become more restrictive under the 2015 Constitution and the CPN’s leadership (see e.g. Budhathoki 2018; Manandhar 2018; International Center for Not-for-Profit Law 2017).

Restrictions on civil liberties have also affected other older democracies in the region. In Japan, concerns have been

raised regarding the passage of a 2017 anti-conspiracy law, which is viewed as potentially contributing to undermine civil liberties (Osaki 2017). The law, which amends the country's anti-organized crime legislation to address potential terrorist threats, earned a rebuke from UN Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy, Joseph Cannataci, in a May 2017 letter addressed to Prime Minister Abe (*The Mainichi* 2017).

The Japanese Government justified the law's passage as part of the country's counter-terrorist preparations ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Members of Japan's vibrant civil society have, however, echoed the UN Rapporteur's concerns. The controversy forms a backdrop to rising concerns about Japan's deteriorating press freedom. In fact, between 2010 and 2018, Japan declined from 11th to 62nd in the world in global press freedom rankings (Hurst 2017; Reporters Without Borders 2010, 2018) and has also seen declines on the GSoD Indices' Freedom of Expression indicator since 2012.

In Australia, Civil Liberties including Freedom of Expression and Movement, and Personal Integrity and Security, have been put under pressure due to a variety of developments. Free speech has been restricted by a number of laws, including the 2014 Workplaces (Protection from Protesters) Act in Tasmania, which was struck down by the High Court in October 2017 on the basis that it significantly restricted protest, particularly regarding environmental issues.

Concerns regarding adequate protections for journalists' metadata have also been raised: in at least one case the Australian Federal Police has admitted to accessing a journalist's metadata without the special warrant required. In the sphere of national security, serious concerns have been raised by UN special rapporteurs regarding the potential for broadly worded espionage offences in the 2018 National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act to restrict expression and access to information that is central to accountability and public debate.

An ongoing challenge regarding the protection of civil liberties in Australia is the absence of any federal Bill of Rights (although a number of rights instruments exist at subnational levels). This diminishes the capacity of the democratic system as a whole to identify the nature and scope of core civil liberties, and to subject rights-restricting laws to adequate scrutiny in both political and judicial forums during the drafting of legislation, and after enactment (Kaye, Forst and Ní Aoláin 2018).

Attacks on media freedom are a sign of repression in an age of disinformation

In the context of different forms of democratic backsliding and shrinking civic space, Asia and the Pacific has experienced a number of attacks on media freedom and integrity in recent years, which has contributed to a decline in the region's Media Integrity scores in the GSoD Indices. Moreover, under the guise of counteracting disinformation, freedom of both offline and online speech has been subjected to severe restrictions in a number of countries in the region.

With the advent of dedicated online disinformation campaigns, the threat to media integrity has become both more pervasive and harmful. This constitutes a serious threat to democracy in the region, as democracy thrives on a diversity of critical and less critical media perspectives that monitor state performance and hold the state to account for its actions.

In the **Philippines**, many mainstream media outlets have resorted to self-censorship as President Duterte has threatened not to renew their licences or initiate legal proceedings against them. Rappler, the country's most popular independent online news outlet, and which is also critical of Duterte's administration, has been the target of numerous legal assaults by government agencies.

In 2018, the Securities and Exchange Commission first attempted to revoke Rappler's certificate of incorporation, subsequent to which the Department of Justice filed five tax evasion charges against Rappler and its editor in 2018 (BBC News 2018a, 2018b). This was denounced by the domestic and international press as an attempt to silence Rappler and fire a warning to other media outlets.

In the last three years of the Aquino administration, parliament had failed to pass a freedom of information (FOI) law that would allow citizens and interested parties access to unreleased information in the possession of government agencies. Three weeks after assuming the presidency, as part of his campaign promise for transparency and to fight corruption, Duterte signed an executive order to operationalize FOI within the executive. A 24/7 service facility was installed to enable citizens to scrutinize government transactions and file complaints about corruption cases.

Emboldened by this move, the media sector intensified its reporting, including widespread coverage of Duterte's controversial statements and those of his spokespersons. In response to the intensive coverage of the Philippine Government's drug war, Duterte bolstered his own social

media army, appointing a blogger popularly known as 'Mocha' to the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO).

The PCOO and Mocha became the president's alternative channel for reaching the public, through which they could spin and tailor their message to counter negative coverage of Duterte from credible media outlets. Although Mocha eventually resigned in 2018, she had by then amassed an estimated 5.7 million Facebook followers, and earned for herself the title 'Queen of Fake News' among online critics of the government.

A recent Oxford University research project also concluded that cybertroops or troll armies have been deployed by the Philippine Government to manipulate public opinion via social media (Bradshaw and Howard 2017:15; Cabanes and Cornelio 2017; Williams 2017; Ong 2018). The intensity of the exchanges has been seen as contributing to polarize Philippine society and the divisiveness is evident in public political debate, which often classifies citizens as either 'dutertards' (red) or 'dilawan' (yellow).

These developments have prompted the Philippine Senate to conduct investigations into trolls and disinformation. Facebook has also intensified its security features and closed fake accounts. The Philippine Government's attempts to silence critical media outlets have not, however, prevented the propagation of disinformation. Instead, it has threatened non-renewal of the ABS-CBN franchise, conducted continuing and consistent attacks on the *Philippines Daily Inquirer*, and pursued the case against Rappler.

Being able to express one's opinion without the threat of harm or the fear of retaliation is a fundamental democratic tenet. The developments in the Philippine social media landscape undermine the fabric of credible media reporting in the country, which can be harmful for democracy.

In **Cambodia**, attacks on online, printed and offline speech and media increased substantially ahead of the general elections in 2018. Some of the country's last remaining independent news sites were closed down or sold off as part of an ongoing media crackdown. Arrests and prison sentences for online speech increased in an attempt to silence dissent (Lamb 2018).

Myanmar has also seen the imposition of significant restrictions on media freedom since its transition to democracy in 2015. A symbolic event that drew strong

international criticism was the imprisonment in 2018 of two Reuters journalists investigating a massacre by the military in a village in Rakhine state, although they were released in 2019 (Richardson 2018). Hate speech against the Rohingya minority has also proliferated on Facebook, which was strongly criticized by the international community for further deepening polarization in the country. In response, Facebook hired local staff in Myanmar to review and take down hate speech from its platform in the country.

In the Pacific Islands, there have also been attempts to stifle dissent and censor the Internet. Most recently, governments in the subregion have made efforts to regulate the Internet through legislation relating to the prosecution of cyber-criminals and restrictions on the use of social media platforms such as Facebook (Kant et al. 2018).

A notable example is the Papua New Guinean Government's justification of the 2016 Cybercrime Code Act on the grounds that cybercrime is a threat in the context of the country's market liberalization (Mou 2016). Critics, however, did not subscribe to this argument. Questions regarding the act's implications for freedom of expression and the apparent lack of public consultation prior to its certification have plagued the government (Kant et al. 2018).

Making matters worse, there have also been recent attempts in Papua New Guinea to temporarily block Facebook and investigate how the social media platform can be regulated. Similar censorship attempts have been made in Fiji. Enacted in May 2018, according to the Fijian Government, the Online Safety Act was passed to protect citizens from cases of cyberbullying and harassment (Singh 2018). While the implications of the law are yet to be realized, commentators have cautioned that it may have undesirable effects on political expression, given Fiji's history of censorship (Kant et al. 2018).

Legislation governing cybercrime is also pending in Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Such legislation is predicated on factors such as online sexual exploitation and alleged excessive liberties (Kant et al. 2018). For example, in 2015 the Nauruan Government banned Facebook to combat pornography. However, the ban was perceived as an effort to silence opposition groups and suppress communications at the Nauru Regional Processing Centre, an offshore immigration and detention centre run by Nauru on behalf of the Australian Government, in which human rights violations have been documented (Martin 2015; Olukotun 2015).

4.4. Conclusion

The democracy landscape in Asia and the Pacific is varied, with a number of significant advances achieved in the last few decades but increasing challenges evident across all of its subregions and in countries at all stages of democratic development.

As one of the few regions in the world that continues to see first-time democratic transitions (Myanmar in 2015 and Malaysia in 2018) as well as returns to democracy (Sri Lanka in 2015), Asia and the Pacific presents a number of opportunities for democracy building.

The end of formal military rule in Thailand in 2019, marked by multiparty elections and the formation of a civilian government, also provides grounds for optimism, although the military will continue to exert significant influence over Thai politics, as has been the case historically.

However, a number of countries suffer from significant democratic weaknesses, including those that have recently transitioned (Malaysia and Myanmar), but also countries

that transitioned in the early third wave (e.g. Papua New Guinea) or now show signs of democratic fragility (e.g. Nepal and Sri Lanka), or which have regressed into hybridity (e.g. Bangladesh in 2014 and Pakistan in 2018).

Moreover, several countries have suffered deepening autocratization in recent years. Cambodia, for example, regressed from a hybrid regime to a non-democracy in 2018. The region's persistent non-democracies are also a concern, particularly as their economic and political influence is expanding across the region as well as globally.

Efforts should focus on strengthening new democracies and on opening civic and democratic space in contexts where it is currently shrinking.

The aspect of SDG 16 that requires closest attention is SDG 16.10 on access to information, freedom of expression and media integrity. More attention also needs to be paid to achieving SDG 5 on Gender Equality, on which stagnation is currently observed, and where Asia and the Pacific continues to perform poorly compared to the rest of the world.

TABLE 4.6

The GSoD Indices snapshot: Policy considerations for Asia and the Pacific

This table offers a snapshot of the state of democracy in Asia and the Pacific, using the GSoD conceptual framework as an organizing structure. It presents policy considerations across the five main attributes of democracy—Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement.



Representative Government

GSoD Indices score: Mid-range (0.48)



Elected Government:

Half (15) of the 30 countries in Asia and the Pacific covered by the GSoD Indices hold competitive elections to determine their governments. The region also has 10 non-democracies (the largest number of which are in South East and Central Asia) and five hybrid regimes.

The total number of democracies in the region has remained stable at 15 since 2014, and the number of hybrid regimes was reduced from six in 2015 to five in 2018, while the number of non-democracies increased from nine in 2015 to 10 in 2018, when Cambodia went from a hybrid regime to a non-democracy. While the total number of democracies remained the same, Pakistan backslid to hybrid in 2018 and Malaysia became a democracy the same year.

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Timor-Leste



Clean Elections:

Almost half (12) the countries in the region have mid-range levels of Clean Elections, while 10 countries have low levels and eight have high levels. Of the countries with low scores, 90 per cent are non-democracies and 10 per cent are hybrid regimes. 53 per cent of democracies have high levels of Clean Elections, while 47 per cent have mid-range levels.

From 2013 to 2018, five countries experienced significant increases in Clean Elections while four saw declines.

Priority countries for reform:

Hybrid regimes with some space for reform (e.g. Afghanistan and Pakistan)

Priority areas for reform:

Further strengthen the integrity of elections; strengthen capacity of EMBs; reduce electoral violence.

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan and Timor-Leste



Inclusive Suffrage:

All countries in the region apart from China (which scores low) have high levels of Inclusive Suffrage. However, some democracies, including Myanmar, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea, have levels of Inclusive Suffrage on a par with non-democracies. One hybrid regime (Singapore) has levels of Inclusive Suffrage on a par with older democracies such as New Zealand.

Priority countries for reform:

Papua New Guinea (democracy among the bottom 25 per cent of countries in the world). Hybrid regimes (except Singapore) and non-democracies

Priority areas for reform:

Strengthen inclusive suffrage in countries with weaknesses in this area.



Free Political Parties:

More than half of the democracies in the region (67 per cent) score in the mid-range on Free Political Parties and five countries score highly (Australia, Japan, Nepal, New Zealand and Taiwan).

From 2013 to 2018, no countries experienced significant increases in Free Political Parties, while four saw declines.

Priority countries for reform:

Hybrid regimes with some space for reform (e.g. Afghanistan and Pakistan)

Priority areas for reform:

Strengthen the social base of political parties and make political party leadership more inclusive and diverse, including for women.

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, Japan, Nepal, New Zealand and Taiwan



Fundamental Rights

GSoD Indices score: Mid-range (0.54)



Access to Justice:

The majority of countries (60 per cent) score in the mid-range on Access to Justice, while six score in the high range and nine score low. Of the countries that score low on Access to Justice, one is a hybrid regime, and five are non-democracies.

From 2013 to 2018, five countries experienced significant increases in Access to Justice, while three saw declines.

Priority countries for reform:

Hybrid regimes with some space for reform (e.g. Afghanistan and Pakistan)

Priority areas for reform:

Strengthen access to justice for poor and marginalized groups, including women.

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Korea and Taiwan



Civil Liberties:

One-third of countries in the region have high levels of Civil Liberties. The regional performance is particularly high on Freedom of Movement (where 19 countries score highly) and Freedom of Association and Assembly (on which 11 countries also score highly).

However, more countries (seven) have seen significant declines in Civil Liberties since 2013 than advances (five). Of the declining countries, four were democracies in 2013 (India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand), one was a hybrid regime (Cambodia) and two were non-democratic regimes (Tajikistan and Viet Nam). In two cases these declines coincided with a declining regime status (Cambodia and Thailand).

The region performs particularly poorly on some aspects of Civil Liberties: of the 11 countries which have low levels of Personal Integrity and Security, 64 per cent are non-democracies, 18 per cent are hybrid regimes and 18 per cent are democracies.

Priority countries for reform:

Democracies with significant declines (e.g. India and the Philippines)

Priority areas for reform:

Strengthen freedom of expression and remove legislation and regulation that stymie freedom of expression; strengthen freedom of association and assembly, in particular in relation to funding and operation of CSOs; strengthen human rights protection.

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Timor-Leste



Gender Equality:

The region's level of Gender Equality is in the mid-range (0.55), slightly above Africa (0.53). The majority of countries in the region (77 per cent) also score in the mid-range.

Almost one-third of countries (nine) score in the bottom 25 per cent in the world on Gender Equality. The largest share of low scores are non-democracies: Cambodia, China, North Korea, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan; three are hybrid regimes (Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan), but one is a democracy (Papua New Guinea).

Six countries (all democracies) score in the top 25 per cent in the world on Gender Equality: of these, two are older democracies (Australia and New Zealand) while the others transitioned to democracy after 1975 (Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines and Nepal most recently).

No countries have experienced significant declines or advances in Gender Equality since 2013.

Priority countries for reform:

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, North Korea, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan (among bottom 25 per cent in the world)

Priority areas for reform:

Expand efforts to strengthen political gender equality in all spheres and at all levels, by adopting quota or parity laws or enable better enforcement, to ensure equal representation of women in legislatures, in political parties, the executive and in local administrations. (For more detailed recommendations see International IDEA, CoD and UNDP 2017).

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, Nepal, the Philippines, Taiwan and New Zealand; India for local-level quotas, Fiji



Social Group Equality:

Social Group Equality is one of the democratic aspects on which Asia and the Pacific performs the poorest. Almost half (47 per cent) of all countries in the region have low levels of Social Group Equality, indicating highly unequal access to political power and enjoyment of Civil Liberties by social group. Only two countries score highly (Japan and New Zealand).

More than half (64 per cent) of the highly politically unequal countries are non-democracies (Cambodia, China, Kazakhstan, Laos, North Korea, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and three are hybrid regimes (Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan), while two are democracies (Myanmar and the Philippines).

Priority countries for reform:

Myanmar, the Philippines (democracies with low performance); Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan (hybrid regimes with low performance)

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, Japan, Nepal, New Zealand South Korea and Taiwan (among top 25 per cent in the world)



Basic Welfare:

The majority of countries (57 per cent) have mid-range levels of Basic Welfare, but more than one-third have high levels, making it one of the four democratic aspects with a high-performance share over 37 per cent.

Levels of Basic Welfare vary across regime types. Six countries in the region are among the bottom 25 per cent in the world with the lowest levels of Basic Welfare; of these, half are democracies (Myanmar, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste).

Of the 11 countries with high levels of Basic Welfare, 64 per cent are democracies (Australia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Taiwan), but one is a hybrid regime (Singapore) and two are non-democracies (China and Kazakhstan).

Priority countries for reform:

Afghanistan, Laos, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste (among bottom 25 per cent in the world)

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan (among top 25 per cent in the world)



Checks on Government

GSoD Indices score: Mid-range (0.50)



Effective Parliament:

About half (47 per cent) of countries score mid-range on Effective Parliament. However, the number of low-performing countries (10) is almost double the number of high performers (6). Of the low performers, 90 per cent are non-democracies and 10 per cent are hybrid regimes.

From 2013 to 2018, eight countries experienced significant increases in Free Political Parties while two saw declines.

Priority areas for reform:

Strengthen the capacities and enhance transparency and effectiveness of parliaments

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and Taiwan



Judicial Independence:

Judicial Independence is low in a large number (nine) of countries in the region. Of these, one is a hybrid regime and eight are non-democratic regimes. Only two countries have high levels (Australia and New Zealand), both of which are democracies.

Five countries have seen advances in Judicial Independence since 2013, while three have seen declines.

Priority areas for reform:

Strengthen the capacities of the judiciary and reduce its politicization, susceptibility to corruption and institutional weaknesses

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia and New Zealand



Media Integrity:

Levels of Media Integrity in the region are fairly equally split between high (7) and low (9) performance, with a large mid-range category (14, or 47 per cent of countries).

Worryingly, five countries have seen levels of Media Integrity decline in the past five years.

Priority countries for reform:

Countries that have experienced significant declines since 2013 (India, Mongolia and Pakistan, and Thailand until 2019)

Priority areas for reform:

- Addressing disinformation on social media will require innovative cross-sectoral strategies and dialogue across regions. Foster regional and global cross-sectoral dialogues to identify solutions to address the spread of disinformation, without harming core values of democracy such as free speech
- Guarantee an independent, diverse and vibrant media landscape, and safety for journalists and avoid concentration of media in a few hands

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan



Impartial Administration

GSoD Indices score: Mid-range (0.46)



Absence of Corruption:

Absence of Corruption is one of the poorest performing aspects of democracy in Asia and the Pacific. Almost half (47 per cent) of countries record low scores, with the largest share of these being non-democracies (57 per cent) followed by hybrid regimes and democracies (both 21 per cent).

Only five countries have low levels of corruption: the hybrid regime of Singapore has the lowest levels of corruption in the world and the rest are democracies (Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea).

Priority countries for reform:

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, North Korea, Papua New Guinea, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

Priority areas for reform:

- Strengthen institutions, including judicial, to more effectively combat corruption
- Review and strengthen political finance regulations and their enforcement, together with measures to promote integrity and transparency in elections and lobbying activities, of finances of political parties; consider introducing public subsidies to political parties and for women, especially for the funding of their ordinary activities to level the playing field of candidates; place reasonable regulations on donations from legal persons as well as consider caps for party spending; provide oversight authorities, particularly those in charge of auditing financial reports, with independence and sufficient capacities to conduct meaningful investigation and apply sanctions (International IDEA 2019b)

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore and South Korea



Predictable Enforcement:

Levels of Predictable Enforcement are low in Asia and the Pacific; 47 per cent of countries have low levels. Of these, two are democracies, three are hybrid regimes and nine are non-democracies.

Only four countries have high levels of Predictable Enforcement. All four are democracies (Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Taiwan).

Priority countries for reform:

Papua New Guinea and the Philippines (democracies); Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan (hybrid regimes with low performance)

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Taiwan



Participatory Engagement

GSoD Indices score: Mid-range



Civil Society Participation:

Levels of Civil Society Participation have grown by 12 per cent in the last two decades, but average levels (0.54) are still below the world average (of 0.59).

Of the six countries with the highest levels, five are democracies, of which most are third-wave democracies (Indonesia with the highest level in the region, South Korea and Taiwan) and one is a hybrid. The remaining two, Australia and New Zealand, are older democracies.

Priority countries for reform:

India, and Thailand until 2019 (countries with significant declines)

Priority areas for reform:

Revert legislation that restricts funding and operations of CSOs; provide a free and enabling environment for civil society

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan and Timor-Leste



Electoral Participation:

Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean are the equal-best-performing regions in the world on Electoral Participation (with an average regional score of 0.66).

Almost half (47 per cent) of countries in Asia and the Pacific have high levels of voter turnout. Of the countries with high Electoral Participation, 64 per cent are democracies, while 36 per cent are non-democratic regimes.

Priority countries for reform:

Afghanistan (hybrid regime with low levels)

Priority areas for reform:

Ensuring absentee voting, voter education.

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, India (voter education), Indonesia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste



Direct Democracy:

Levels of Direct Democracy in Asia and the Pacific are below the world average. Taiwan stands out as the country with the highest levels of Direct Democracy in the region with a score of 0.81, followed by New Zealand with a score of 0.49.

Four countries score among the top 25 per cent in the world with the highest levels of Direct Democracy. Of these, three are democracies (Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan), but one is not: Kyrgyzstan (hybrid regime).

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan



Local Democracy:

Levels of Local Democracy are in the low range, with more countries scoring low (17) than high (6).

Taiwan is one of the six countries in the world with the highest levels of Local Democracy; five other countries also score among the top 25 per cent (Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and Timor-Leste).

Nine countries in the region score among the bottom 25 per cent in the world with the lowest levels of Local Democracy: 6 of the 10 non-democracies in the region (China, Kazakhstan, North Korea, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), one hybrid regime (Singapore) and two democracies (Malaysia and Myanmar).

Priority countries for reform:

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Singapore (hybrid regimes with low levels); Malaysia and Myanmar (democracies with low levels)

Priority areas for reform:

Balance of power through decentralization, inclusion of local governments

Good-practice countries for regional learning:

Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan and Timor-Leste

TABLE 4.7

Regime classification, Asia and the Pacific, 2018

This table shows the regime classification for all of the countries in Asia and the Pacific covered by the GSoD Indices, as well as their respective scores on the five GSoD attributes.

Country	GSoD attribute				
	Representative Government	Fundamental Rights	Checks on Government	Impartial Administration	Participatory Engagement
Democracies					
Australia	0.81 =	0.85 =	0.87 =	0.83 =	High
India	0.69 =	0.57 =	0.58 =	0.53 =	Mid-range
Indonesia	0.65 =	0.61 =	0.62 =	0.51 =	High
Japan	0.78 =	0.83 =	0.75 =	0.79 =	Mid-range
Malaysia	0.54 =	0.65 +	0.57 +	0.51 =	Low
Mongolia	0.64 =	0.67 =	0.60 =	0.48 =	Mid-range
Myanmar	0.44 =	0.49 =	0.55 =	0.49 =	Low
Nepal	0.62 =	0.63 =	0.65 +	0.43 =	Mid-range
New Zealand	0.80 =	0.84 =	0.82 =	0.85 =	High
Papua New Guinea	0.47 =	0.51 =	0.62 =	0.38 =	Mid-range
The Philippines	0.59 =	0.60 =	0.58 =	0.41 =	Mid-range
Republic of Korea (South Korea)	0.77 =	0.83 =	0.77 =	0.71 =	High
Sri Lanka	0.66 =	0.65 +	0.61 =	0.50 =	Mid-range
Taiwan	0.81 =	0.82 =	0.72 =	0.71 =	High
Timor-Leste	0.705 =	0.56 =	0.60 =	0.53 =	High
Hybrid regimes					
Afghanistan	0.38 =	0.36 =	0.54 =	0.33 =	Low
Bangladesh	0.38 =	0.44 =	0.43 =	0.27 =	Low
Kyrgyzstan	0.52 =	0.61 =	0.59 =	0.39 =	Low
Pakistan	0.52 =	0.46 =	0.56 =	0.407 +	Low
Singapore	0.50 =	0.64 =	0.46 =	0.83 =	Low

Country	GSoD attribute				
	Representative Government	Fundamental Rights	Checks on Government	Impartial Administration	Participatory Engagement
Non-democracies					
Cambodia	0.31 =	0.36 =	0.30 =	0.18 =	Low
China	0 =	0.394 =	0.22 =	0.43 =	Low
Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)	0.12 =	0.13 =	0.07 =	0.16 =	Low
Kazakhstan	0.33 =	0.50 =	0.28 =	0.38 =	Low
Laos	0.16 =	0.32 =	0.32 =	0.31 =	Low
Tajikistan	0.27 =	0.31 =	0.27 =	0.21 =	Low
Thailand	0.20 –	0.42 –	0.38 =	0.25 –	Low
Turkmenistan	0.25 =	0.32 =	0.15 =	0.22 +	Low
Uzbekistan	0.28 =	0.41 =	0.19 =	0.33 +	Low
Viet Nam	0.23 =	0.46 =	0.34 =	0.50 =	Low

■ High ■ Mid-range ■ Low

Notes: = denotes no statistically significant increase or decrease in the last five-year period; + denotes a statistically significant increase in the last five-year period; – denotes a statistically significant decrease in the last five-year period.

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

References

- Abdullah, N. and Anuar, A., 'What effect did social media have on the Malaysian election result?', Today, 16 May 2018, <<https://www.todayonline.com/commentary/what-effect-did-social-media-have-malaysian-election-result>>, accessed 15 July 2019
- Abraham, T. K., et al., 'Millennials will decide who runs Indonesia's four trillion-dollar economy', Bloomberg, 5 April 2019, <<https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2019-indonesia-election/>>, accessed 15 July 2019
- Acharya, A., 'Asia after the liberal international order', East Asia Forum, 10 July 2018, <<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/07/10/asia-after-the-liberal-international-order/>>, accessed 8 December 2018
- Aizawa, N., 'Accommodating Japan's youth and women in a silver democracy', East Asia Forum, 28 September 2016, <<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/09/28/accommodating-japans-youth-and-women-in-a-silver-democracy/>>, accessed 8 December 2018
- Albert, E. and Chatzky, A., 'The Rohingya crisis', Council on Foreign Relations, 5 December 2018, <<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/rohingya-crisis>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Anderson, J., 'Elections and political development in Central Asia', *Journal of Communist and Transition Politics*, 13/4 (1997), pp. 28–58, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13523279708415359>>
- Aqorau, T., 'Political intrigues in the Pacific islands: the dire need for political stability', DevPolicy Blog, 10 February 2016, <<http://www.devpolicy.org/political-intrigues-in-the-pacific-islands-the-dire-need-for-political-stability-20160210/>>, accessed 10 December 2018
- Asadullah, M. N. and Savoia, A., 'Bangladesh's deadly elections', The Diplomat, 24 December 2018, <<https://thediplomat.com/2018/12/bangladeshs-deadly-election/>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- AseanUp, 'Southeast Asia digital, social and mobile 2019', 31 July 2019, <<https://aseanup.com/southeast-asia-digital-social-mobile/>>, accessed 31 August 2019
- Asian Barometer, 'Asian Barometer wave4 survey [national results]', 2016, <<http://www.asianbarometer.org/survey/wave-4th-survey>>, accessed 19 August 2019
- AsiaWatch, 'Suu Kyi's NLD moves to amend Myanmar constitution to curb military', AsiaWatch, 31 January 2019, <<https://www.asiawatch.net/2019/01/31/suu-kyis-nld-moves-to-amend-myanmar-constitution-to-curb-military/>>, accessed 31 August 2019
- E. Aspinall and M. Sukmajati (eds), *Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia: Money Politics, Patronage and Clientelism at the Grassroots* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2016), <<http://www.doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1xxzz2>>
- Associated Press, 'Sri Lanka bombings: police and defence chiefs held on negligence charge', *The Guardian*, 2 July 2019, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/02/sri-lanka-bombings-police-and-defence-chiefs-held-on-negligence-charge>>, accessed 8 September 2019
- Assyaukanie, L., 'The rise of religious bylaws in Indonesia', S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 29 March 2007, <<https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/905-the-rise-of-religious-bylaws-i/#.XUAlgOgzaM8>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Baldwin, C. and Marshall, A., 'Dead on arrival: Duterte's war on drugs', Reuters, 29 June 2017, <<http://fingfx.thomsonreuters.com/gfx/rngs/PHILIPPINES-DRUGWAR/010041TN3Z8/index.html>>, accessed 4 December 2018
- Baral, B., 'Nepal left parties merger: how the political behemoth came to life', The Wire, 18 May 2018, <<https://thewire.in/south-asia/nepal-left-parties-merger>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- BBC News, 'Philippine news website Rappler has licence revoked by SEC', 15 January 2018a, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42692723>>, accessed 19 August 2019
- , 'Rappler CEO calls Philippine tax evasion charges "intimidation"', 11 November 2018b, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46168997>>, accessed 15 July 2018
- Benner, T., 'An era of authoritarian influence?', *Foreign Affairs*, 15 September 2017, <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2017-09-15/era-authoritarian-influence>>, accessed 8 December 2018
- Berthelsen, J., 'Booming Bhutan: the happiest place on earth?', *Foreign Affairs*, 30 January 2013, <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/bhutan/2013-01-30/booming-bhutan>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Beswick, E., 'Sri Lanka: what started the feud between the PM and president?', Euronews, 23 April 2019, <<https://www.euronews.com/2019/04/23/sri-lanka-what-started-the-feud-between-the-pm-and-president>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Bittner, P., 'Mongolia's march against corruption', The Diplomat, 2 February 2019, <<https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/mongolias-march-against-corruption/>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Black, A., 'Brunei Darussalam: ideology and law in a Malay sultanate', in A. Black and G. Bell (eds), *Law and Legal Institutions of Asia: Traditions, Adaptations and Innovations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 299–339, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511921131.010>>
- Blades, J. et al., '2017 in Pacific politics: A turbulent ride to stability', Radio New Zealand Pacific, 23 December 2017, <<https://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/346880/2017-in-pacific-politics-a-turbulent-ride-to-stability>>, accessed 10 December 2018
- Bradshaw, S. and Howard, P., 'Troops, trolls and troublemakers: a global inventory of organized social media manipulation', University of Oxford Working Paper, 2017, <<https://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/research/troops-trolls-and-trouble-makers-a-global-inventory-of-organized-social-media-manipulation/>>, accessed 3 December 2018
- Budhathoki, A., 'Nepal's communist government tightens its grip on civil society', The Diplomat, 10 September 2018, <<https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/nepals-communist-government-tightens-its-grip-on-civil-society>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Buehler, M., 'Subnational Islamization through secular parties: comparing Shari'a politics in two Indonesian provinces', *Comparative Politics*, 46/1 (2013), pp. 63–82, <<https://doi.org/10.5129/001041513807709347>>
- Bui, N. S., 'Constitutional developments in Viet Nam in the first decade of the twenty-first century', in A. Chen (ed.), *Constitutionalism in Asia in the Early Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 194–218, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107338333>>
- Butt, S., 'Anti-corruption reform in Indonesia: an obituary?', *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 47/3 (2011), pp. 381–94, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2011.619051>>
- Cabanes, J. and Cornelio, J., 'The rise of trolls in the Philippines (and what we can do about it)', in N. Curato (ed.), *A Duterte Reader: Critical Essays on Rodrigo Duterte's Early Presidency* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press, 2017)
- Cara Labrada, R., 'Maduro's allies: who backs the Venezuelan regime?', Council on Foreign Relations, 5 February 2019, <<https://www.cfr.org/article/maduros-allies-who-backs-venezuelan-regime>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Case, W., *Populist Threats and Democracy's Fate In Southeast Asia: Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2017), <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315188140>>
- Chang, H.-J., 'South Koreans worked a democratic miracle. Can they do it again?', *New York Times*, 14 September 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/14/opinion/south-korea-social-mobility.html>>, accessed 15 July 2019
- Chatzky, A. and McBride, J., 'China's massive Belt and Road Initiative', Council on Foreign Relations, 21 May 2019, <<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>>, accessed 31 August 2019
- Chen, A. and Harding, A., *Constitutional Courts in Asia: A Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), <<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108163903>>

- CIVICUS, 'India: democracy threatened by growing attacks on civil society', 9 November 2017, <<https://www.civics.org/index.php/media-resources/reports-publications/2991-india-democracy-threatened-by-growing-attacks-on-civil-society>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Collins, K., *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511510014>>
- Cooley, A., *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), <<http://www.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199929825.001.0001>>
- Corbett, J., 'Democracy in the Pacific Islands: comparable practices, contested meanings', *Democratic Theory*, 2/2 (2015), pp. 22–40, <<https://doi.org/10.3167/dt.2015.020203>>
- Crouch, H., *Political Reform in Indonesia after Soeharto* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Publishing, 2010), <<https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812309211>>
- S. Cummings (ed.), *Power and Change in Central Asia* (London: Routledge, 2002), <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203166918>>
- , *Understanding Central Asia: Politics and Contested Transformation* (London: Routledge, 2012), <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203403143>>
- Daly, T. G., 'Democratic decay in "keystone" democracies: the real threat to global constitutionalism?', I-CONNECT, International Journal of Constitutional Law, 10 May 2017, <<http://www.iconnectblog.com/2017/05/democratic-decay-in-keystone-democracies-the-real-threat-to-global-constitutionalism-i-connect-column/>>, accessed 8 December 2018
- Davis, M., 'Strengthening constitutionalism in Asia', *Journal of Democracy*, 28/4 (2017), pp. 147–61 <<https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0074>>
- Deinla, I., 'Public support and judicial empowerment of the Philippine Supreme Court', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 36/1 (2014), pp. 128–58, <<https://doi.org/10.1355/cs36-1f>>
- , *The Development of the Rule of Law in ASEAN: The State of Regional Integration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), <<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108147934>>
- Denyer, S., 'Mongolia's president, a former martial-arts champion, wrestles with some major problems', *Washington Post*, 18 June 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/mongolias-president-a-former-world-judo-champion-wrestles-with-some-major-problems/2018/06/15/15cfc8f2-68cb-11e8-a335-c4503d041eaf_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.38024e29ef16>, accessed 8 December 2018
- Dierkes, J., 'Mongolia: an unexpected bastion of democracy thanks to its youth', *The Conversation*, 19 July 2017, <<https://theconversation.com/mongolia-an-unexpected-bastion-of-democracy-thanks-to-its-youth-80765>>, accessed 8 December 2018
- The Economist*, 'Agreeing to agree: South-East Asian summitry is the apogee of form of substance. That may be no bad thing', 1 September 2016, <<https://www.economist.com/asia/2016/09/01/agreeing-to-agree?fsrc=scn/tw/te/pe/ed/agreeingtoagree>>, accessed 31 August 2019
- , 'Anti-Muslim riots in Sri Lanka signal a new social fissure', 8 March 2018, <<https://www.economist.com/asia/2018/03/08/anti-muslim-riots-in-sri-lanka-signal-a-new-social-fissure>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- , 'Rapid economic growth props up Cambodia's strongman', 17 April 2019, <<https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/04/20/rapid-economic-growth-props-up-cambodias-strongman>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Ernst, D., 'Filipino president orders cops to "kill the idiots" who resist arrest', *Washington Times*, 28 August 2017, <<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/aug/28/rodrigo-duterte-orders-philippines-cops-to-kill-th/>>, accessed 4 December 2018
- Espiritu, B., 'The public sphere, blogs, and the pork barrel scam: online citizens' voices on corruption and governance in the Philippines', *Media Asia*, 41/4 (2014), pp. 343–54, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2014.11726910>>
- Fair, C. C., 'Pakistan's sham election: how the army chose Imran Khan', *Foreign Affairs*, 27 July 2018, <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/pakistan/2018-07-27/pakistans-sham-election>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Firth, S., 'Instability in the Pacific Islands: a status report', Lowy Institute for International Policy, 4 June 2018, <<https://www.loyyinstitute.org/publications/instability-pacific-islands-status-report>>, accessed 10 December 2018
- Fish, E., 'Why's Beijing so worried about Western values infecting China's youth?', *China File*, 4 February 2017, <<http://www.chinafile.com/features/whys-beijing-so-worried-about-western-values-infecting-chinas-youth>>, accessed 8 December 2018
- Fortunato, P., 'Democratic government and development: a survey', *Asian Development Review*, 32/2 (2015), pp. 153–77, <https://doi.org/10.1162/ADEV_a_00055>
- Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World 2018: China Country Profile', 2018a, <<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/china>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- , 'Freedom in the World 2018: India Country Profile', 2018b, <<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/india>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- , 'Freedom on the Net 2018: The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism', October 2018c, <<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/freedom-net-2018>>, accessed 3 September 2019
- Fumagalli, M., 'Semi-presidentialism in Kyrgyzstan', in R. Elgie and S. Moestrup (eds), *Semi-Presidentialism in the Caucasus and Central Asia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-38781-3_7>
- Gainsborough, M., 'Southeast Asia: elites vs. reform in Laos, Cambodia, and Viet Nam', *Journal of Democracy*, 23/2 (2012), pp. 34–46, <<https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2012.0024>>
- Ginsburg, T., 'Democracy's near misses', *Journal of Democracy*, 29/4 (2018), pp. 16–30, <<https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2018.0059>>
- Glaser, B. S., 'Is China proselytising its path to success?', *East Asia Forum*, 11 January 2018, <<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/01/11/is-china-proselytising-its-path-to-success/>>, accessed 8 December 2018
- Goodpaster, G., 'Reflections on corruption in Indonesia' in T. Lindsey and H. Dick (eds), *Corruption in Asia: Rethinking the Governance Paradigm* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2002)
- Gunia, A., 'Social media gets a bad rap in elections, but activists in Indonesia are using it to boost transparency', *Time*, 17 April 2019, <<https://time.com/5567287/social-media-indonesia-elections-kawal-pemilu/>>, 15 July 2019
- Guterres, J., 'Timor-Leste: the challenges of democracy and development', *The Diplomat*, 1 June 2018, <<https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/timor-leste-the-challenges-of-democracy-and-development/>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Hadiz, V. R., 'Indonesia's year of democratic setbacks: towards a new phase of deepening illiberalism?', *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 53/3 (2017), pp. 261–78, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2017.1410311>>
- Haidary, M. S., 'By the numbers: is Afghanistan's democracy at risk?', *Asia Foundation*, 15 August 2018, <<https://asiafoundation.org/2018/08/15/by-the-numbers-is-afghanistans-democracy-at-risk/>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Hale, H., *Patronal Politics: Eurasian Regime Dynamics in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139683524>>
- J. Heathershaw and E. Schatz (eds), *Paradox of Power: The Logics of State Weakness in Eurasia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017)
- High, H., 'Laos in 2012: in the name of democracy', *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2013, pp. 135–50, <<https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814459563-013>>
- Horesh, N., 'The growing appeal of China's model of authoritarian capitalism, and how it threatens the West', *South China Morning Post*, 19 July 2015, <<https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1840920/growing-appeal-chinas-model-authoritarian-capitalism-and-how>>, accessed 8 December 2018
- Hossain, N. et al., 'What does closing civic space mean for development? A literature review and proposed conceptual framework', *Institute of Development Studies*, 31 July 2018, <<https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/what-does-closing-civic-space-mean-for-development-a-literature-review-and-proposed-conceptual-framework-2/>>, accessed 15 July 2019

- Human Rights Watch (HRW), *World Report 2018* (New York: HRW, 2018), <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018>>, accessed 5 January 2019
- , 'Bangladesh: events of 2018', *World Report 2019* (New York: HRW, 2019a), <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/bangladesh>>, accessed 5 January 2019
- , 'Myanmar: events of 2018', *World Report 2019* (New York: HRW, 2019b), <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/burma>>, accessed 5 January 2019
- , 'India: events of 2018', *World Report 2019* (New York: HRW, 2019c), <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/india>>, accessed 5 January 2019
- , 'Vietnam: events of 2018', *World Report 2019* (New York: HRW, 2019d), <<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/vietnam>>, accessed 5 January 2019
- Hurst, D., 'Japan's democracy in retreat or responding to new world order?', *Asia Times*, 27 June 2017, <<http://www.atimes.com/article/japans-democracy-retreat-responding-new-world-order/>>, accessed 8 December 2018
- Ibañez-Tirado, D. and Marsden, M., 'China's Old and New Central Asian Ties', *Current History*, 117/801 (2018), p. 283
- Ichihara, M., 'The changing role of democracy in Asian geopolitics', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 14 September 2017, <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/09/14/changing-role-of-democracy-in-asian-geopolitics-pub-73110>>, accessed 8 December 2018
- International Bar Association, 'IBAHRI report highlights extent of corruption in the Cambodian judiciary', 17 September 2015, <<https://www.ibanet.org/Article/NewDetail.aspx?ArticleUid=FB11E885-5F1D-4C03-9C55-86FF42157AE1>>, accessed 4 January 2019
- International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 'Assessment of the legal environment for civil society and media in Nepal', 26 June 2017, <http://www.icnl.org/programs/asia/Nepal%20Assessment_Final_June26.pdf>, accessed 30 July 2019
- International IDEA, 'Leadership turnover and political instability in Pacific Island states', Policy Brief, November 2015, <<https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/leadership-turnover-and-political-instability-pacific-island-states>>, accessed 31 August 2019
- , 'Gender equality in Nepal: at crossroads of theory and practice', 3 March 2019a, <<https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/gender-equality-nepal-crossroads-theory-and-practice>>, accessed 15 July 2019
- , *The Integrity of Political Finance Systems in Asia: Tackling Political Corruption*, International IDEA Policy Paper No. 19 (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2019b), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2019.22>>
- , The Global State of Democracy Indices, 1975–2018 (2019c), <<http://www.idea.int/gsoi-indices>>, accessed 3 September 2019
- International IDEA, Community of Democracies (CoD) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Regional Organizations, Gender Equality and the Political Empowerment of Women* (Stockholm: International IDEA/CoD/UNDP, 2017), <<https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/regional-organizations-gender-equality-and-political-empowerment-women>>, accessed 16 May 2019
- International Organization for Migration (IOM), *World Migration Report 2015* (Geneva: IOM, 2015), <<https://www.iom.int/world-migration-report-2015>>, accessed 9 December 2018
- Inter-Parliamentary Union, 'Lao People's Democratic Republic, Sapha Heng Zat (National Assembly): Last elections', 2016, <http://archive.ipu.org/parline/reports/2175_E.htm>, accessed 30 July 2019
- , 'Percentage of women in national parliaments', 1 February 2019, <<https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=2&year=2019>>, accessed 7 September 2019
- Ishiyama, J., 'Neopatrimonialism and the prospects for democratization in the Central Asian Republics' in S. Cummings (ed.), *Power and Change in Central Asia* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 42–58, <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203166918>>
- Jensen, S. and Hapal, K., 'Police violence and corruption in the Philippines: violent exchange and the war on drugs', *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 37/2 (2018), pp. 39–62, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341803700202>>
- Joint Committee to Amend the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Constitution, 'Findings and Observations', 12 July 2019, <<http://constitutionnet.org/vl/item/report-produced-july-2019-myanmars-joint-parliamentary-committee-constitutional-amendment>>, accessed 9 September 2019 [unofficial English translation]
- Kant, R. et al., 'Internet under threat? The politics of online censorship in the Pacific Islands', *Pacific Journalism Review*, 24/2 (2018), pp. 64–83, <<https://doi.org/10.24135/pjr.v24i2.444>>
- Kaye, D., Forst, M. and Ní Aoláin, F., 'Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism', OL AUS 2/2018, 15 February 2018, <<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Opinion/Legislation/OL-AUS-2-2018.pdf>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Kembayev, Z., 'The Court of the Eurasian Economic Union: an adequate body for facilitating Eurasian integration?', *Review of Central and East European Law*, 41/3–4 (2016), pp. 342–67, <<https://doi.org/10.1163/15730352-04103004>>
- Kendall-Taylor, A. and Shullman, D., 'How Russia and China undermine democracy', *Foreign Affairs*, 2 October 2018, <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-10-02/how-russia-and-china-undermine-democracy>>, accessed 8 December 2018
- Küng, J., 'Thailand's Muslim rebellion has army living in "constant fear"', *Deutsche Welle*, 6 November 2018, <<https://www.dw.com/en/thailands-muslim-rebellion-has-army-living-in-constant-fear/a-46177073>>, accessed 8 September 2019
- Kuo, L., 'China claims Muslim detention camps are education centres', *The Guardian*, 14 September 2018, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/14/china-claims-muslim-internment-camps-provide-professional-training>>, accessed 15 July 2019
- , "'If you enter a camp, you never come out': inside China's war on Islam", *The Guardian*, 11 January 2019, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/11/if-you-enter-a-camp-you-never-come-out-inside-chinas-war-on-islam>>, accessed 15 July 2019
- Lakshmi, R., 'India cracks down on foreign funding of NGOs', *The Guardian Weekly*, 11 June 2013, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/11/india-crackdown-foreign-funded-ngos>>, accessed 8 September 2019
- Lamb, K., 'Cambodia's "fake news" crackdown prompts fears over press freedom', *The Guardian*, 6 July 2018, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/06/cambodia-fake-news-crackdown-prompts-fears-over-press-freedom>>, accessed 15 July 2019
- Landau, D., 'Abusive constitutionalism', *UC Davis Law Review*, 47/1 (2013), pp. 189–260, <<https://ssrn.com/abstract=2244629>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Lipes, J., 'Cambodia's judiciary routinely violates fair trial rights: CCHR', *Radio Free Asia*, 19 June 2018, <<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/judiciary-06192018153148.html>>, 15 July 2019
- McGregor, R., 'Beijing's ground game in Taiwan is growing smarter', *Bloomberg*, 27 November 2018, <<https://www.bloombergquint.com/onweb/taiwan-s-2018-election-result-shows-smarter-chinese-influence#gs.ds2ByCw>>, accessed 20 December 2018
- Macan-Markar, M., 'Thai military moves to cement relations with big business', *Nikkei Asian Review*, 18 May 2018, <<https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Thai-military-moves-to-cement-relations-with-big-business>>, accessed 6 January 2019
- Mahapatra, S., 'India online: How social media will impact the 2019 Indian general election', *London School of Economics*, 11 January 2019, <<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2019/01/11/long-read-india-online-how-social-media-will-impact-the-2019-indian-general-election/>>, 15 July 2019
- The Mainichi*, 'UN privacy expert shoots down Japan's complaints about "anti-conspiracy" bill criticism', 24 May 2017, <<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170524/p2a0om/ona/014000c>>, accessed 19 August 2019
- Maitem, J. and Navales, M., 'Philippine mayor survives latest assassination attempt', *Benar News*, 7 January 2019, <<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/philippine-mayor-survives-01072019105537.html>>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Maldives Independent*, 'Maldives top court rejects president's petition for fresh polls', 21 October 2018, <<https://maldivesindependent.com/>>

- politics/maldives-top-court-rejects-presidents-petition-for-fresh-polls-142183, accessed 30 July 2019
- Manandhar, S., 'Communist government moves to curtain civil liberties: two new policies look set to curb dissent', *The Record*, 15 June 2018, <https://www.recordnepal.com/wire/communist-government-moves-to-curtail-civil-liberties/, accessed 30 July 2019
- Manila Times*, 'Duterte to appoint 12 new SC justices', 29 May 2016, <https://www.manilatimes.net/duterte-to-appoint-12-new-sc-justices/264897/, accessed 30 July 2019
- Martin, A. J., 'Pacific nation accidentally does good thing in web crackdown', *The Register*, 5 May 2015, <https://www.theregister.co.uk/2015/05/05/of_course_we_blocked_facebook/, accessed 10 December 2018
- Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), 'MSF surveys estimate that at least 6,700 Rohingya were killed during the attacks in Myanmar', Press release, 12 December 2017, <https://www.msf.org/myanmarbangladesh-msf-surveys-estimate-least-6700-rohingya-were-killed-during-attacks-myanmar, accessed 30 July 2019
- Moon, K. H. S., 'Women and politics in East Asia', *East Asia Forum*, 19 June 2016, <http://www.easiaforum.org/2016/06/19/women-and-politics-in-east-asia/, accessed 8 December 2018
- Morris, J. X., 'Brian Hioe: The Sunflower Movement, 4 years later', *The Diplomat*, 18 July 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/07/brian-hioe-the-sunflower-movement-4-years-later/, accessed 8 September 2019
- Mou, F., 'Parliament passed Cybercrime Code Bill,' *Loop*, 11 August 2016, <http://www.loopng.com/content/parliament-passed-cybercrime-code-bill/, accessed 10 December 2018
- Muhtadi, B., 'A third of Indonesian voters bribed during election—how and why', *The Conversation*, 20 July 2018, <https://theconversation.com/a-third-of-indonesian-voters-bribed-during-election-how-and-why-100166, accessed 6 January 2019
- Nabbs-Keller, G., 'Indonesia: populism and politicisation of Islam', *The Interpreter*, Lowy Institute, 26 October 2018, <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/indonesia-populism-and-politicisation-islam, accessed 4 January 2019
- New York Times*, 'After 30 years, Kazakhstan gets a new ruler. Sort of', 22 March 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/22/opinion/sunday/kazakhstan-president-nazarbayev-resignation.html, accessed 31 August 2019
- Noack, R., 'Australia has had five prime ministers in five years. No wonder Merkel needed a cheat sheet at the G-20', *Washington Post*, 3 December 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/12/03/australia-has-had-prime-ministers-years-no-wonder-merkel-needed-cheat-sheet-g-20/?utm_term=.a45fa4e69030, accessed 15 July 2019
- Öjendal, J. and Sedara, K., 'Real democratization in Cambodia? An empirical review of the potential of a decentralization reform', Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy Working Paper, 2011, <https://icld.se/en/project/kc-ojendal-j-sedara-k-2011-real-democratization-in-cambodia-an-empirical-review-of-the-potential-of-a-decentralization-reform, accessed 30 July 2019
- Olukotun, D., 'Why is a tiny island nation facing an internet shutdown?', *Access Now*, 14 May 2015, <https://www.accessnow.org/why-is-a-tiny-island-nation-facing-an-internet-shutdown/, accessed 10 December 2018
- Omelicheva, M., *Democracy in Central Asia: Competing Perspectives and Alternative Strategies* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.5810/kentucky/9780813160689.001.0001>
- Ong, J., 'Trolls for sale in the world's social media capital', *Asia Global Online*, 30 August 2018, <https://www.asiaglobalonline.hku.hk/philippines-internet-trolls-social-media-duterte/, accessed 21 December 2018
- Osaki, T., 'Lawmakers ram conspiracy bill through Lower House as UN expert slams Tokyo', *Japan Times*, 23 May 2017, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/05/23/national/politics-diplomacy/u-n-rapporteur-takes-tokyo-task-conspiracy-bill/, accessed 8 December 2018
- Pasarlay, S. and Mallyar, Z., 'The Afghan Parliament: constitutional mandate versus practice in the post 2001 context', *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*, 30 January 2019, <https://areu.org.af/publication/1902/, accessed 30 July 2019
- Referendum Council [Australia], 'Uluru Statement from the Heart', May 2017, <https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/final-report.html#toc-anchor-ulurustatement-from-the-heart, accessed 30 July 2019
- Remeikis, A., 'Peter Dutton rules out voice to parliament, labelling it a "third chamber"', *The Guardian*, 12 July 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/jul/12/peter-dutton-rules-out-voice-to-parliament-labelling-it-a-third-chamber, accessed 15 July 2019
- Reporters Without Borders, 'World Press Freedom Index', 2010, <https://rsf.org/en/ranking/2010, accessed 30 July 2019
- , 'World Press Freedom Index', 2018, <https://rsf.org/en/ranking/2018, accessed 30 July 2019
- , 'Serious press freedom violations mar Bangladesh's election', 2 January 2019, <https://rsf.org/en/news/serious-press-freedom-violations-mar-bangladesh-election, accessed 30 July 2019
- Richardson, A., 'Reuters journalists detained in Myanmar', *Reuters*, 6 August 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-journalists-timeline/timeline-reuters-journalists-detained-in-myanmar-idUSKCN1LB015, accessed 30 July 2019
- Rikkila Tamang, L. and Bakken, M., 'Democracy in Asia: a glass half full or half empty?', *The Diplomat*, 15 September 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/09/democracy-in-asia-a-glass-half-full-or-half-empty/, accessed 9 January 2019
- Rimmer, B., Saunders C. and Crommelin, M., 'Working better with other jurisdictions', *Australia and New Zealand School of Government*, Research Paper for the Australian Public Service Review, March 2019, <https://www.apsreview.gov.au/sites/default/files/resources/working-other-jurisdictions.pdf, accessed 30 July 2019
- Rocha, E., 'Factbox: Bangladesh's broad media laws', *Reuters*, 12 December 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-election-media-factbox/factbox-bangladesh-broad-media-laws-idUSKBN1OC08S, accessed 15 July 2019
- Romaniuk, S. and Burgers, T., 'How China's AI technology exports are seeding surveillance societies globally', *The Diplomat*, 18 October 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/how-chinas-ai-technology-exports-are-seeding-surveillance-societies-globally/, accessed 30 July 2019
- Routay, B. P., 'State of Play: Insurgencies in India's Northeast', *Mantraya Analysis* No. 21, 19 February 2018, <http://mantraya.org/analysis-state-of-play-insurgencies-in-indias-northeast/, accessed 30 July 2019
- Rudd, K., 'How Xi Jinping views the world', *Foreign Affairs*, 10 May 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-05-10/how-xi-jinping-views-world, 8 December 2018
- Safi, M., 'Campaigners celebrate as India decriminalises homosexuality', *The Guardian*, 6 September 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/06/indian-supreme-court-decriminalises-homosexuality, accessed 15 July 2019
- , 'Asia Bibi arrives in Canada after leaving Pakistan', *The Guardian*, 8 May 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/08/asia-bibi-arrives-in-canada-after-leaving-pakistan, accessed 30 July 2019
- Safi, M. and Perera, A., 'Sri Lanka's supreme court suspends president's decision to dissolve parliament', 13 November 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/13/sri-lanka-supreme-court-suspends-presidents-decision-to-dissolve-parliament, accessed 8 September 2019
- Salim, A., *Challenging the Secular State: The Islamization of Law in Modern Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.21313/hawaii/9780824832377.001.0001>
- Santos, A., 'Duterte plans anti-communist "death squad" in Philippines', *Deutsche Welle*, 28 November 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/duterte-plans-anti-communist-death-squad-in-philippines/a-46484215, accessed 6 January 2019
- Santos, E., 'Caught on video: police allegedly planting evidence during raid', *CNN Philippines*, 28 January 2017, <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2017/01/27/video-police-evidence-planting-senate.html, accessed 4 December 2018
- Save Our Privacy, 'Indian Privacy Code, 2018', 2018, <https://saveourprivacy.in/bill, accessed 8 September 2019
- Seligman, L., 'US military wary of China's foothold in Venezuela', *Foreign Policy*, 8 April 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/04/08/us-military-wary-of-chinas-foothold-in-venezuela-maduro-faller-guaido-trump-pentagon/, 15 July 2019

- Sharshenova, A. and Crawford, G., 'Undermining Western democracy promotion in Central Asia: China's countervailing influences, powers and impact', *Central Asian Survey*, 36/4 (2017), pp. 453–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2017.1372364>
- Shirk, S., 'China in Xi's "New Era": the return to personalistic rule', *Journal of Democracy*, 29/2 (2016), pp. 22–36, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2018.0022>
- Sidel, J., 'The Philippines in 2014: Aquino fights back', *Asian Survey*, 55/1 (2015), pp. 220–27, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2015.55.1.220>
- Silva-Leander, A., 'The role and influence of nongovernmental organisations on anti-corruption policy reform in Indonesia', PhD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015, <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/3247>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Singh, I., 'Online safety bill passed in Parliament', FBC News, 16 May 2018, <https://www.fbcnews.com.fj/news/online-safety-bill-passed-in-parliament/>, accessed 10 December 2018
- Singh, V., 'Greenpeace India's registration cancelled', *The Hindu*, 4 September 2015, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/greenpeace-indias-registration-cancelled/article7613184.ece>, accessed 19 August 2019
- Slater, J., 'In tiny Bhutan, known for its pursuit of happiness, democracy brings discontent', *Washington Post*, 18 October 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/in-tiny-bhutan-known-for-its-pursuit-of-happiness-democracy-brings-discontent/2018/10/17/05e43118-d229-11e8-a275-81c671a50422_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.08a137b9a4fc>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Soble, J., 'Japan's parliament approves overseas combat role for military', *New York Times*, 19 September 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/19/world/asia/japan-parliament-passes-legislation-combat-role-for-military.html>, accessed 8 December 2018
- Solomon, F., 'Youthful Asian activists have set up a new regional network to fight for democracy', *Time*, 14 November 2016, <http://time.com/4560233/asia-youth-democracy-network-noyda/> accessed 8 December 2018
- Staniland, P., 'The future of democracy in South Asia: why citizens must stay vigilant', *Foreign Affairs*, 4 January 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/south-asia/2019-01-04/future-democracy-south-asia>, accessed 9 January 2019
- Stober, E., 'Why Australia has had 6 prime ministers in the last 8 years', *Global News*, 24 August 2018, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4406960/australia-prime-ministers/>, accessed 15 July 2019
- Sudworth, J., 'China elections: Independent candidates fight for the ballot', *BBC News*, 17 November 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-37997706>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Tasevski, O., 'Australia's Parliament looks nothing like its community. A quota would help fix it', *ABC News*, 16 March 2018, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-16/ethnic-diversity-quotas-multicultural-australian-parliament/9538954>
- Teehankee, J., 'Weak state, strong presidents: situating the Duterte presidency in Philippine political time', *Journal of Developing Societies*, 32/3 (2016), pp. 293–321, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0169796X16654594>
- Teehankee, J. and Thompson, M., 'The vote in the Philippines: electing a strongman', *Journal of Democracy*, 27/4 (2016), pp. 125–34, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0068>
- Tehusijarana, K. M., 'Postelection polarization: real or imagined?', *Jakarta Post*, 8 May 2019, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/05/08/postelection-polarization-real-or-imagined.html>, accessed 15 July 2019
- Terrazola, V. E., 'Coalition of Justice appeals against quo warranto petition', *Manila Bulletin*, 2 May 2018, <https://news.mb.com.ph/2018/05/02/coalition-of-justice-appeals-against-quo-warranto-petition/>, accessed 15 July 2019
- Thant, H., 'Parliament approves constitutional amendment committee by 2-to-1', *Myanmar Times*, 20 February 2019, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/parliament-approves-constitutional-amendment-committee-2-1.html>, accessed 15 July 2019
- Transparency International, 'Corruption Perceptions Index 2017', 21 February 2018, <https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017>, accessed 4 January 2019
- True, J. et al., 'Women's political participation in Asia and the Pacific', Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, Working Paper on Women in Politics No. 3 (2014), <http://webarchive.ssrc.org/working-papers/CPPEF_WomenInPolitics_03_True.pdf>, accessed 8 December 2018
- United Nations, Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), 'Eliminating violence against women in the Asia-Pacific: it's all of our responsibility', November 2015, <https://unwomen.org.au/our-work/focus-areas/eliminating-violence-against-women/>, accessed 6 January 2019
- , Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific: Perspectives of Governments on 20 Years of Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (Bangkok: UN ESCAP, 2015), <https://www.unescap.org/publications/asia-pacific-report-beijing-20-review>, accessed 30 July 2019
- , Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Fact-finding Mission on Myanmar*, A/HRC/39/64, 27 August 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/ReportoftheMyanmarFFM.aspx>, accessed 29 December 2018
- United States Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/>, accessed 5 January 2019
- Vaishnav, M., 'Religious nationalism and India's future', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 4 April 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/04/04/religious-nationalism-and-india-s-future-pub-78703>, 15 July 2019
- Wallis, J., 'The South Pacific: "arc of instability" or "arc of opportunity"?', *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 27/1 (2015), pp. 39–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2015.992010>
- Wakefield, J., 'Sri Lanka attacks: The ban on social media', *BBC News*, 23 April 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-48022530>, accessed 4 August 2019
- Welikala, A., 'Sri Lanka's (un)ending road to a new Constitution: technical progress, political collapse', *ConstitutionNet*, International IDEA, 29 January 2019, <http://constitutionnet.org/news/sri-lankas-unending-road-new-constitution-technical-progress-political-collapse>, accessed 30 July 2019
- Williams, S., 'Rodrigo Duterte's army of online trolls', *New Republic*, 5 January 2017, <https://newrepublic.com/article/138952/rodrigo-dutertes-army-online-trolls>, accessed 3 December 2018
- Williams, P. and Kamra, L., 'India's WhatsApp election: political parties risk undermining democracy with technology', *The Conversation*, 28 February 2019, <https://theconversation.com/indias-whatsapp-election-political-parties-risk-undermining-democracy-with-technology-111699>, accessed 31 August 2019
- Win Ko Ko Latt, and Wai Mar Tun, 'New committee maps out plans to amend Myanmar's Constitution', *Radio Free Asia*, 25 February 2019, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/new-committee-maps-out-plans-02252019170851.html>, accessed 22 August 2019
- Wu, W. C., Chang, Y. T. and Pan, H. H., 'Does China's middle class prefer (liberal) democracy?', *Democratization*, 24/2 (2017), pp. 347–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2016.1192607>
- Ziegler, C. E., 'Great powers, civil society and authoritarian diffusion in Central Asia', *Central Asian Survey*, 35/4 (2016), pp. 549–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2016.1228608>
- Zulfa, M., 'Constitutional reform in Maldives: towards a parliamentary system of government and decentralization?', *ConstitutionNet*, International IDEA, 3 December 2018, <http://constitutionnet.org/news/constitutional-reform-maldives-towards-parliamentary-system-government-and-decentralization>, accessed 30 July 2019