

25 Years of Autocratization – Democracy Trumped?



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1. Global Level of Democracy Continues to Decline

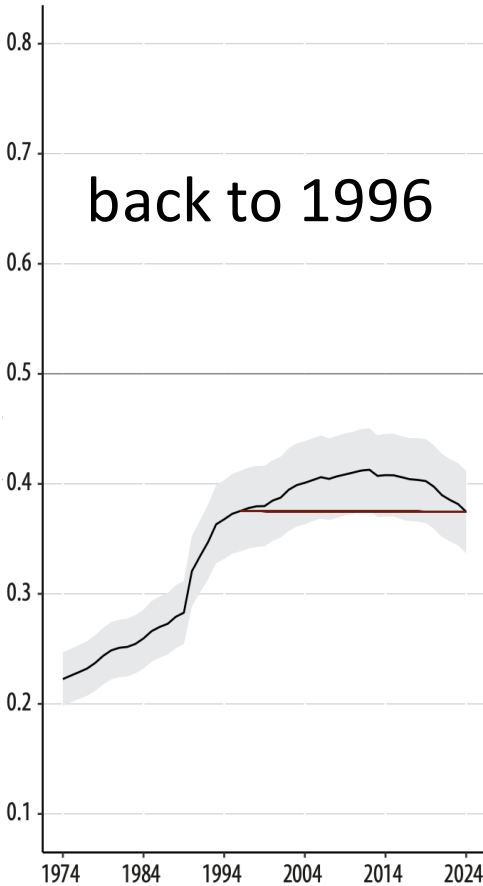
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1. Global Level of Democracy Continues to Decline

FIGURE 2. LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

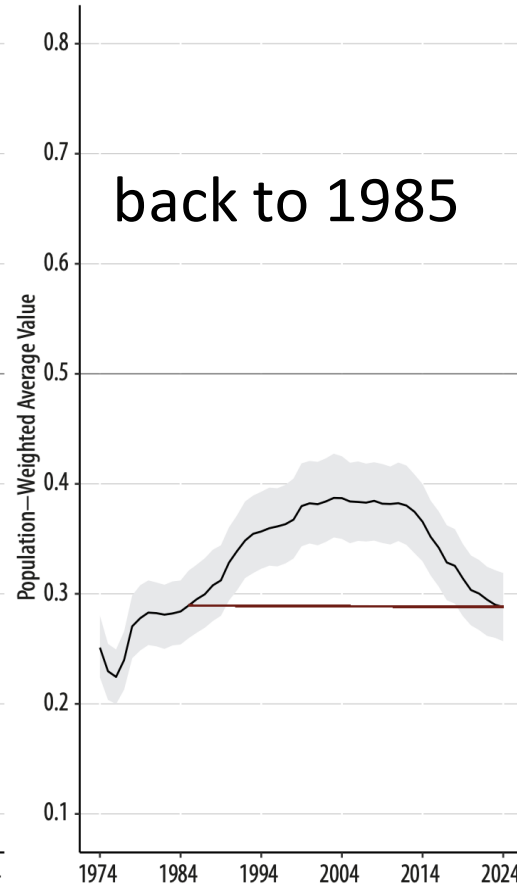
A. Country Averages

back to 1996



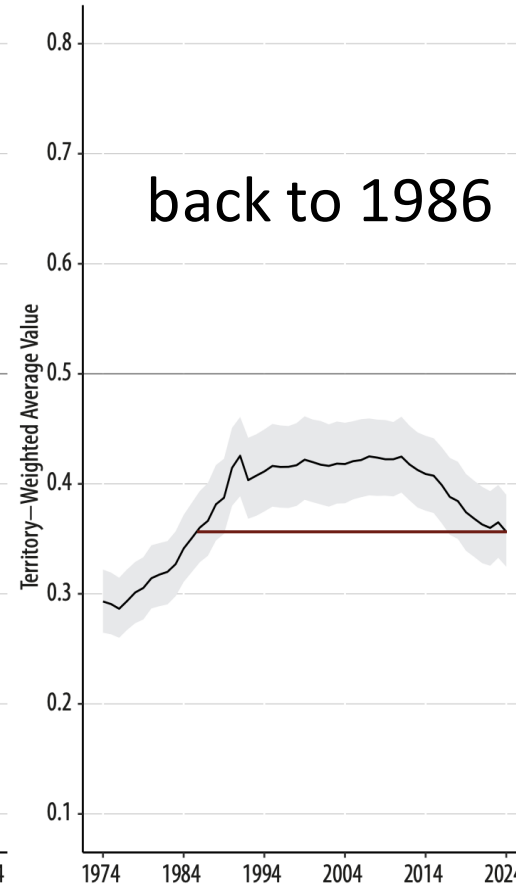
B. Population-Weighted

back to 1985



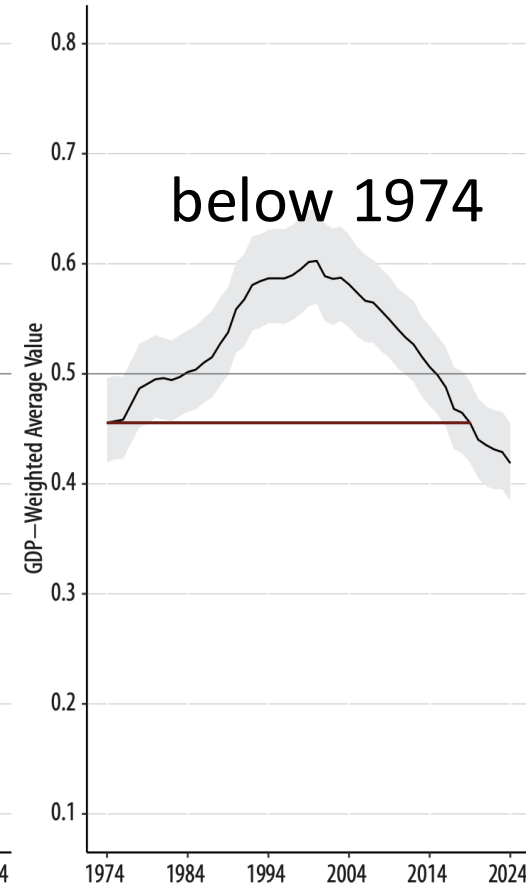
C. Territory-Weighted

back to 1986



D. GDP-Weighted

below 1974

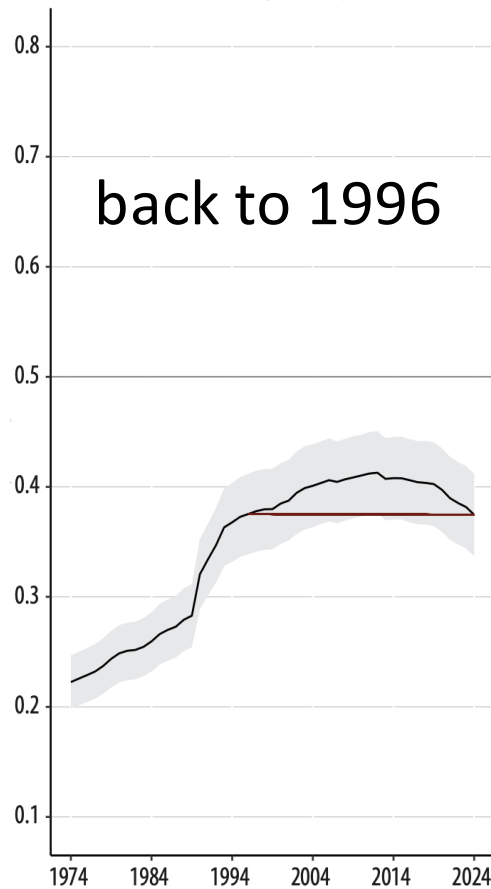


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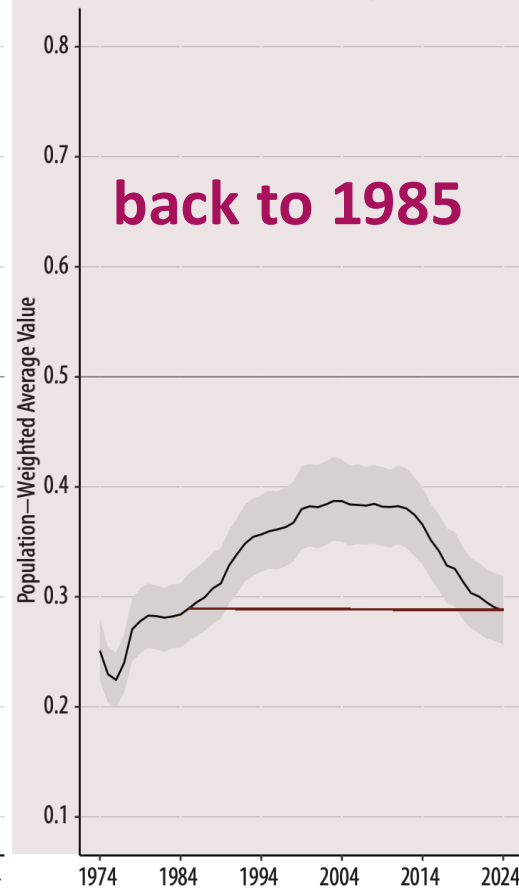
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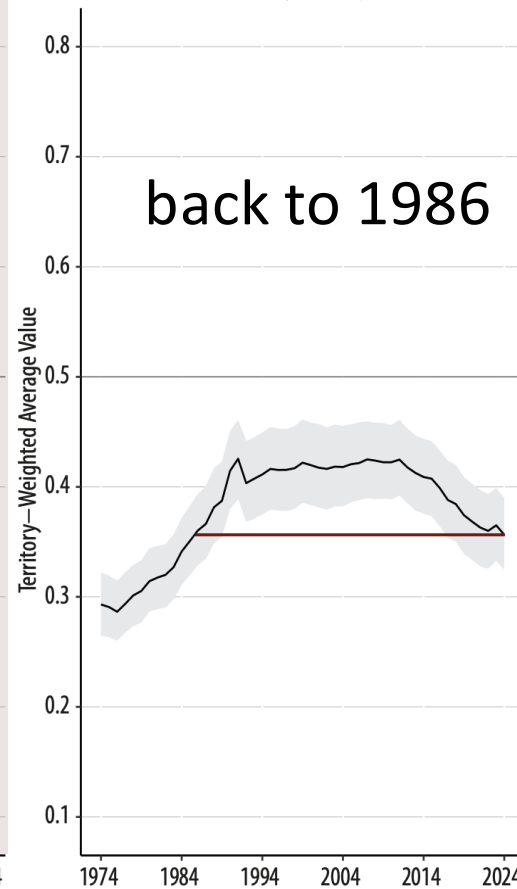
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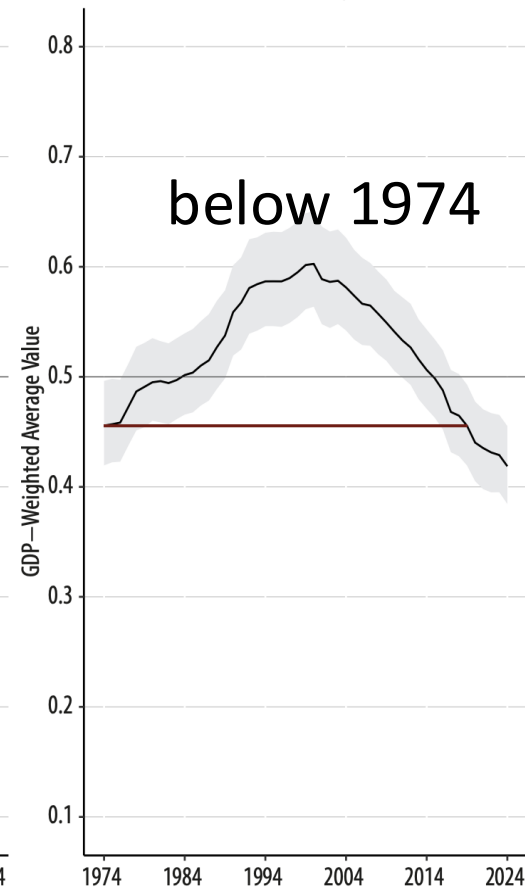
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C. Territory—Weighted



D. GDP—Weighted

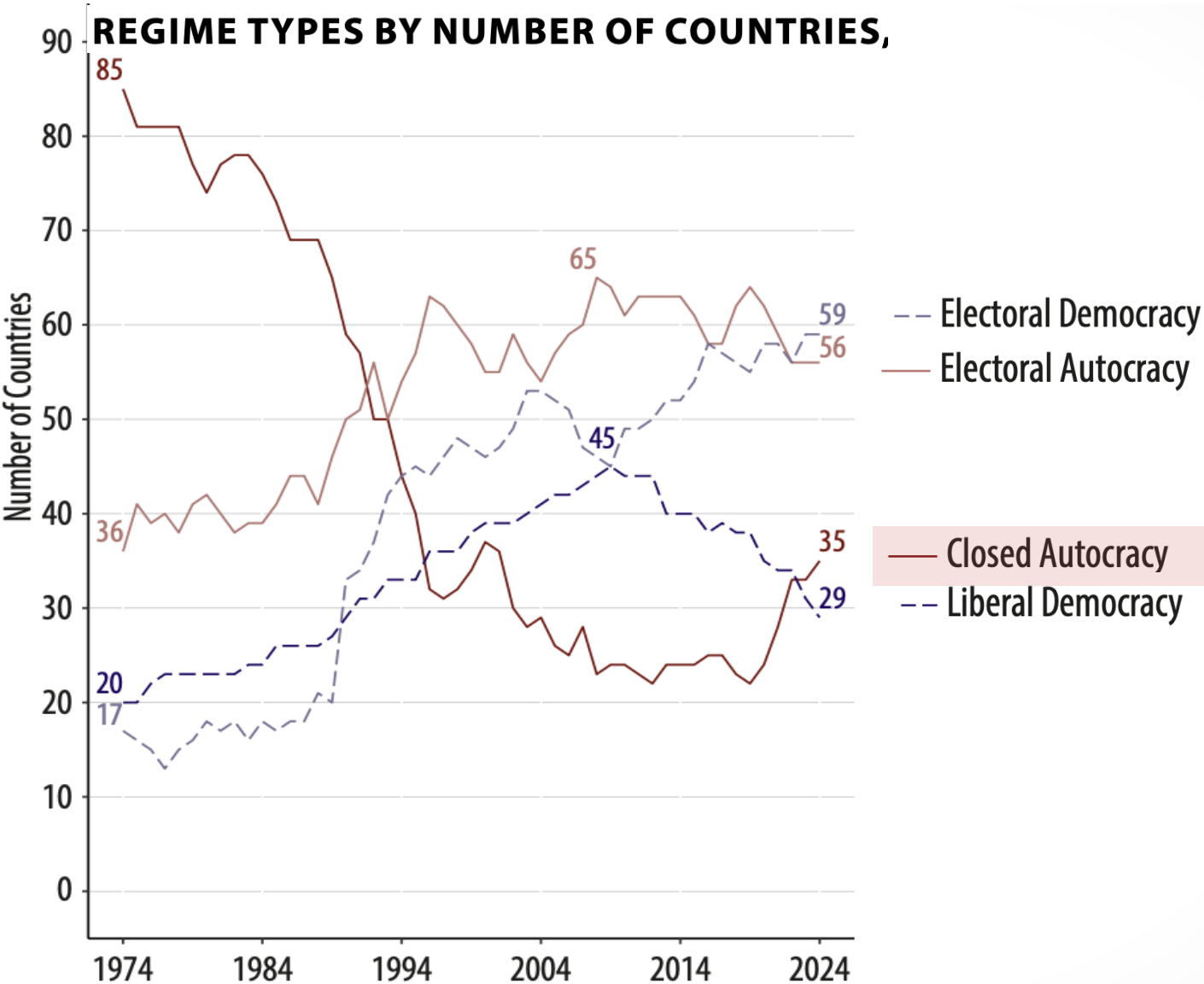


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2. Dictatorships are on the Rise

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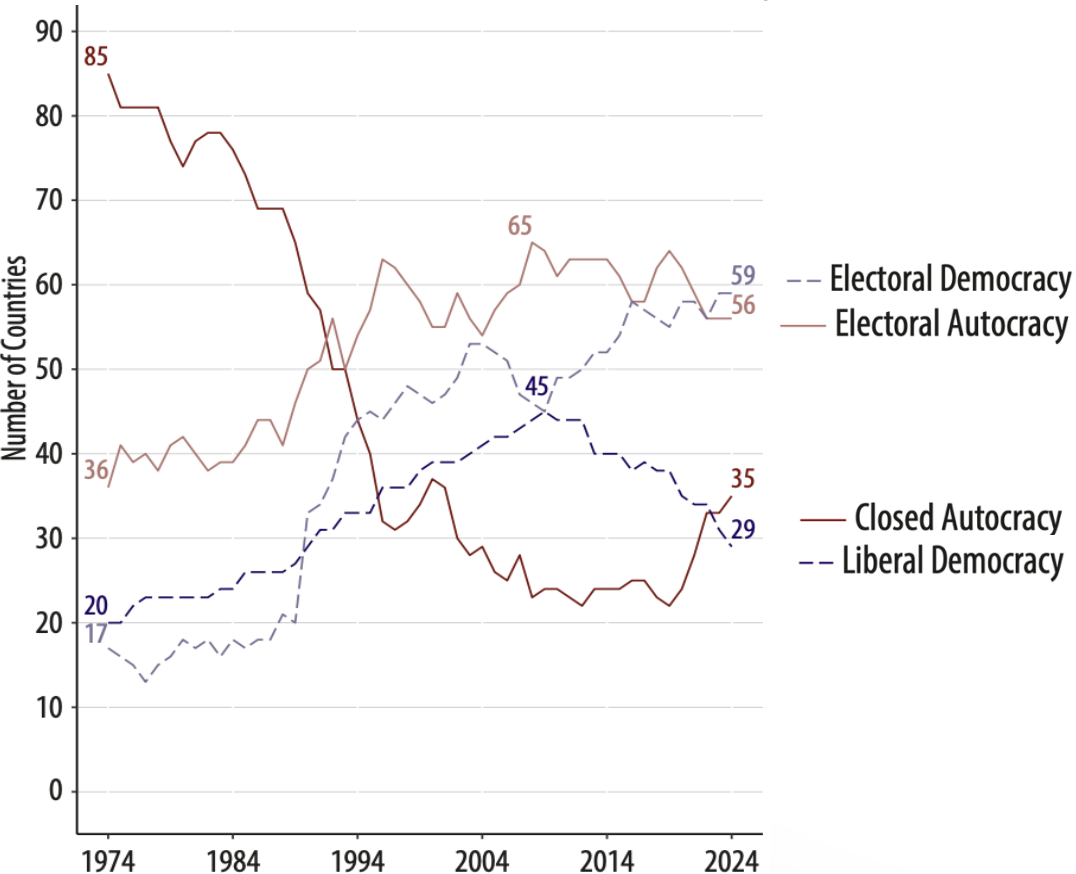
3. Autocracies Outnumber Democracies

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The world has fewer democracies ($N=88$) than autocracies ($N=91$) for the first time in over 20 years.

REGIME TYPES BY NUMBER OF COUNTRIES,

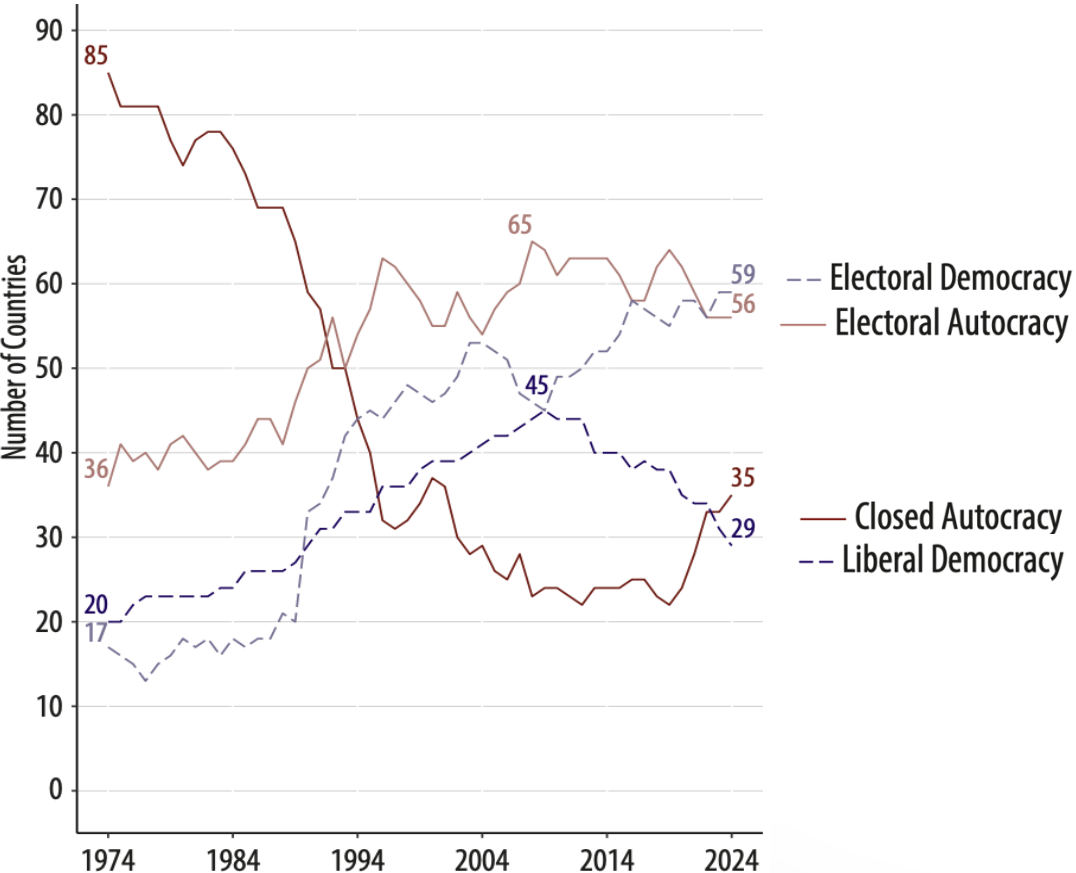


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REGIME TYPES BY NUMBER OF COUNTRIES,



SHARE OF WORLD POPULATION LIVING IN AUTOCRACIES



2004:
49%



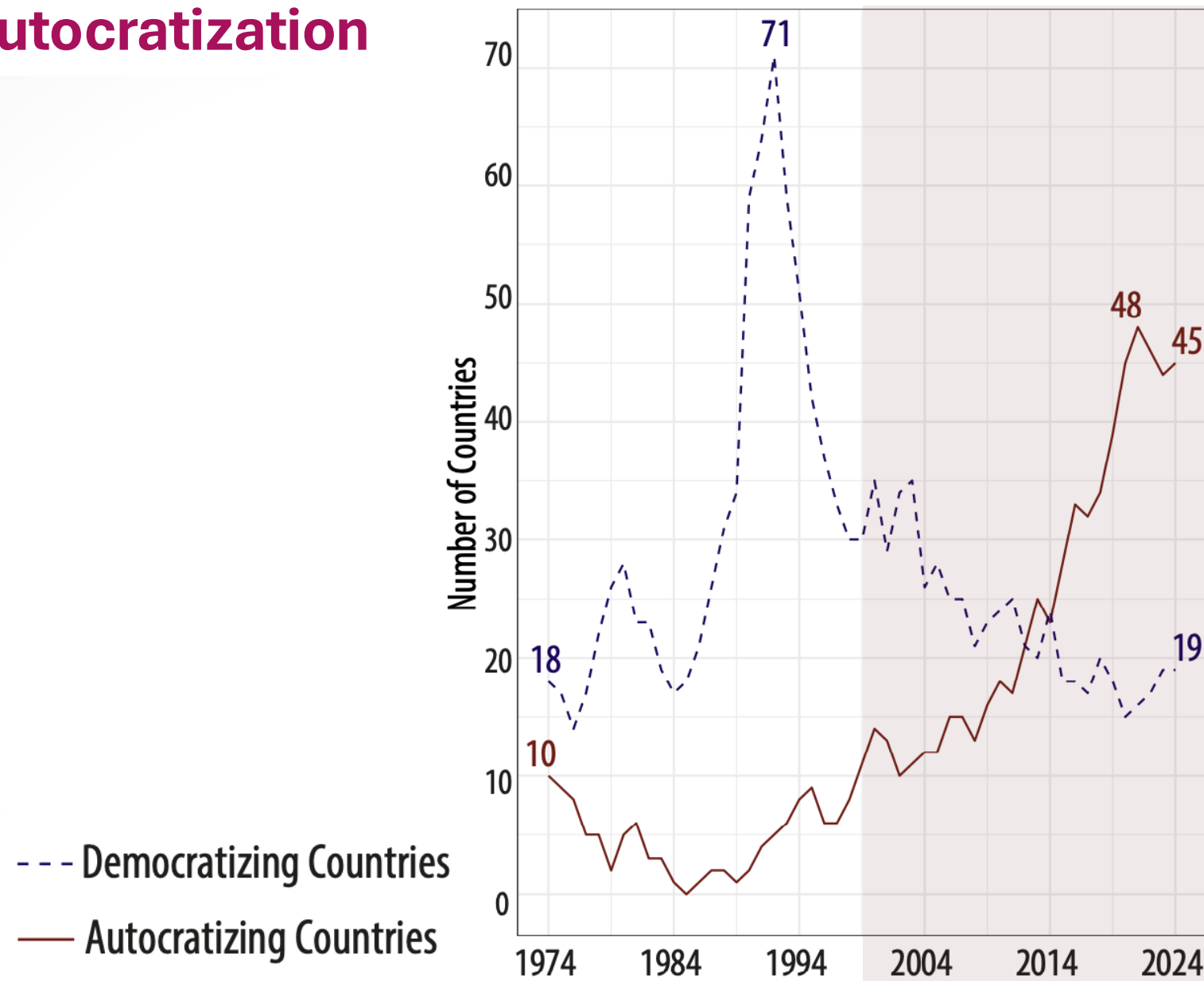
2024:
72%

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4. 25 Years of Autocratization

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4. 25 Years of Autocratization

NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AUTOCRATIZING

2004  **12**
COUNTRIES

2024  **45**
COUNTRIES

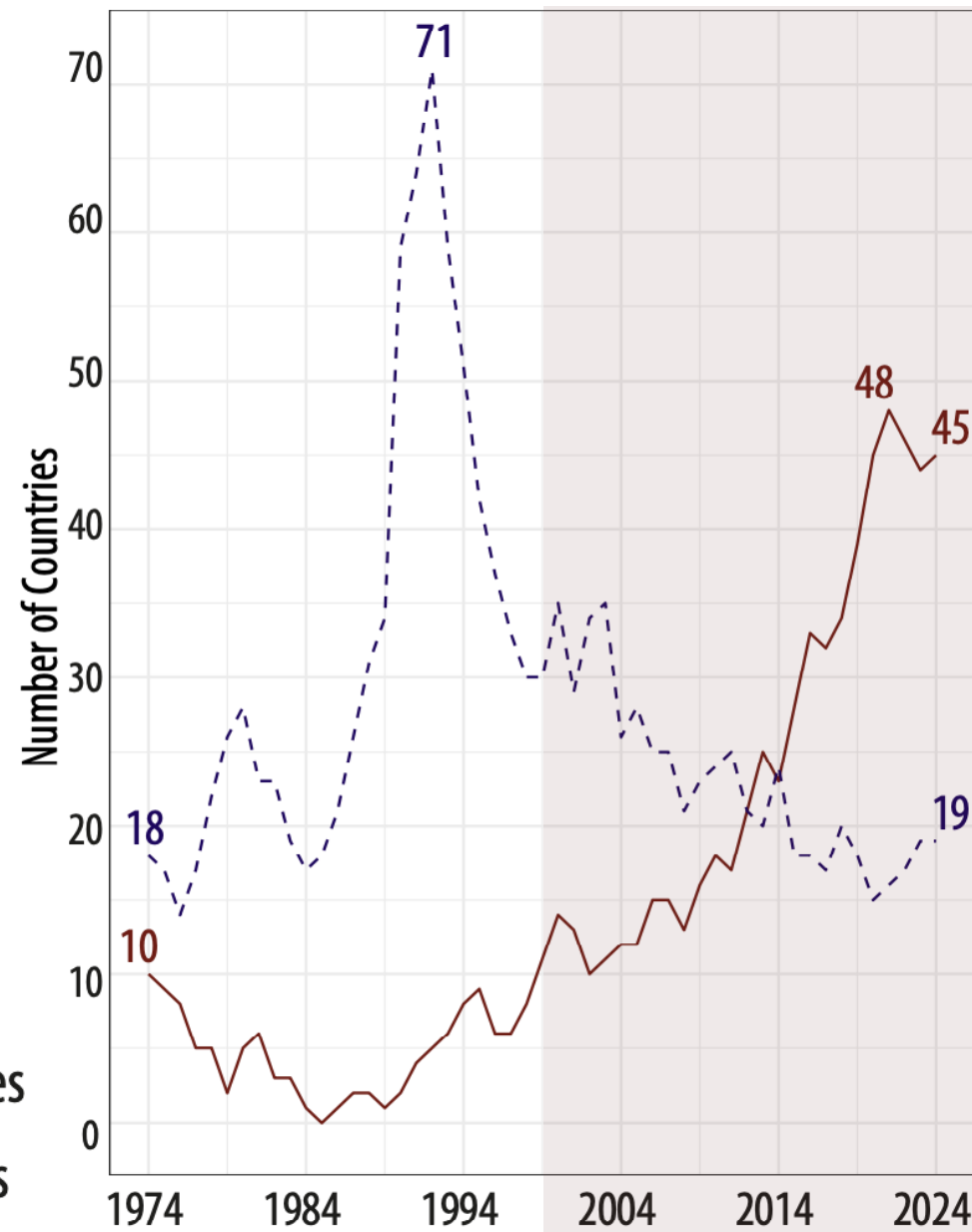
SHARE OF WORLD POPULATION LIVING IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES



2004:
7%



2024:
38%



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4. 25 Years of Autocratization

NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AUTOCRATIZING

2004 **12**
COUNTRIES

2024 **45**
COUNTRIES

NUMBER OF COUNTRIES DEMOCRATIZING

2004 **26**
COUNTRIES

2024 **19**
COUNTRIES

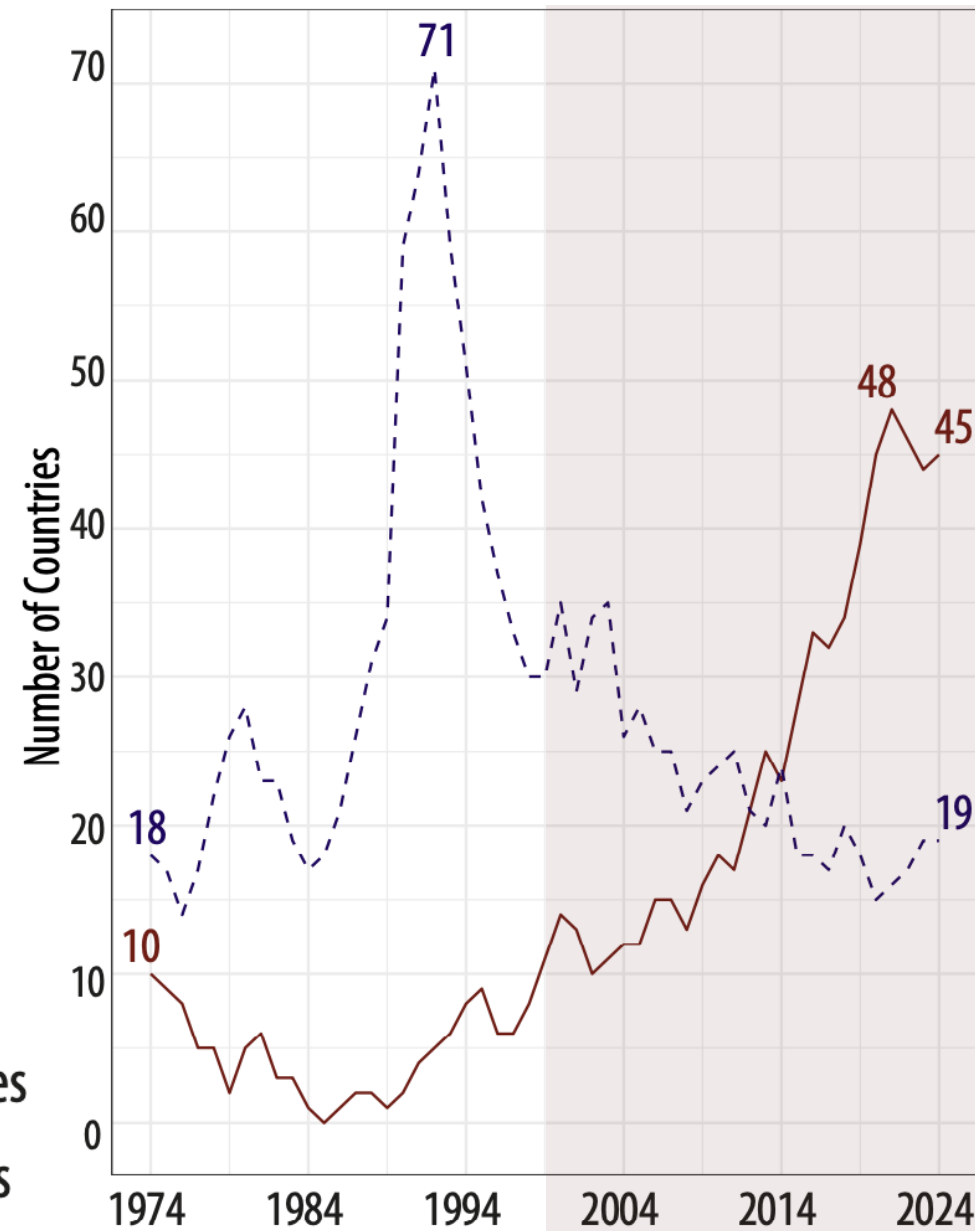
SHARE OF WORLD POPULATION LIVING IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES



SHARE OF WORLD POPULATION LIVING IN DEMOCRATIZING COUNTRIES



--- Democratizing Countries
— Autocratizing Countries



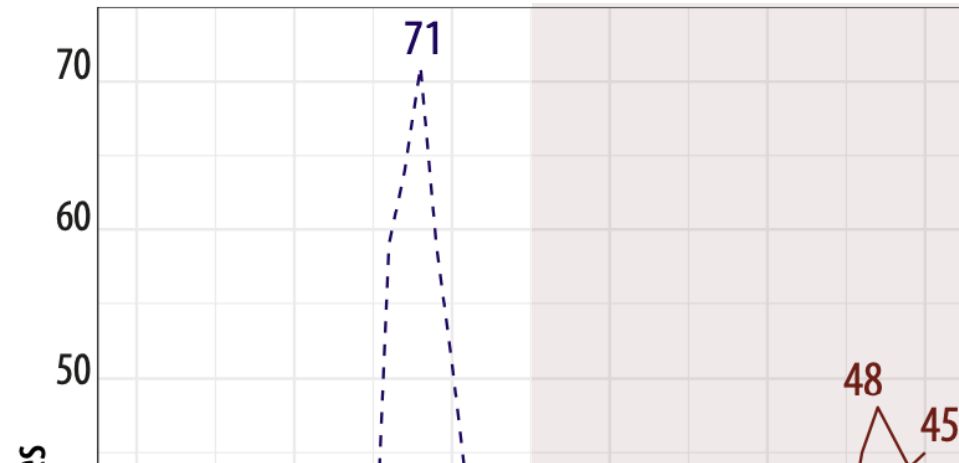
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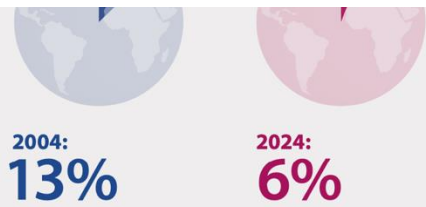
NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AUTOCRATIZING



SHARE OF WORLD POPULATION LIVING IN AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES

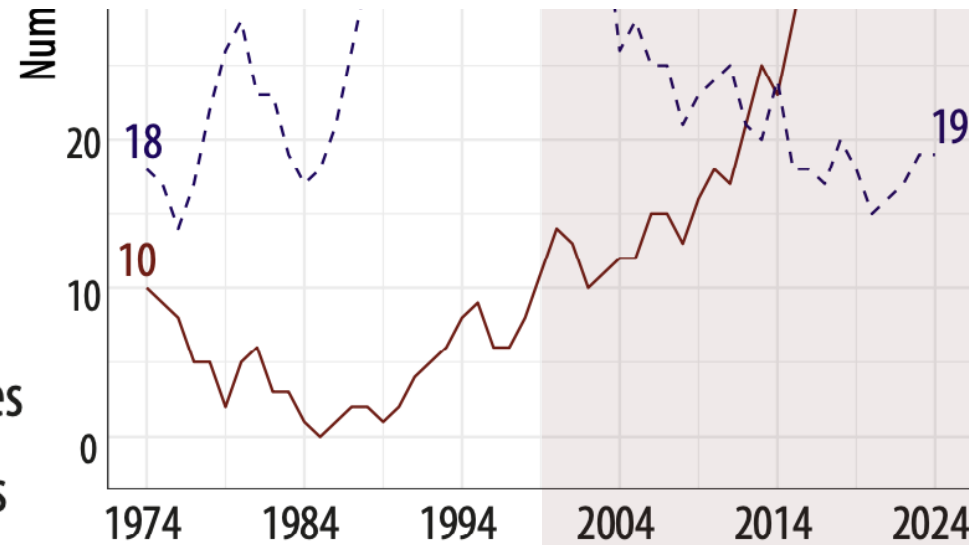


The wave of autocratization has been going on for at least 25 years and shows no signs of cresting.



--- Democratizing Countries

— Autocratizing Countries

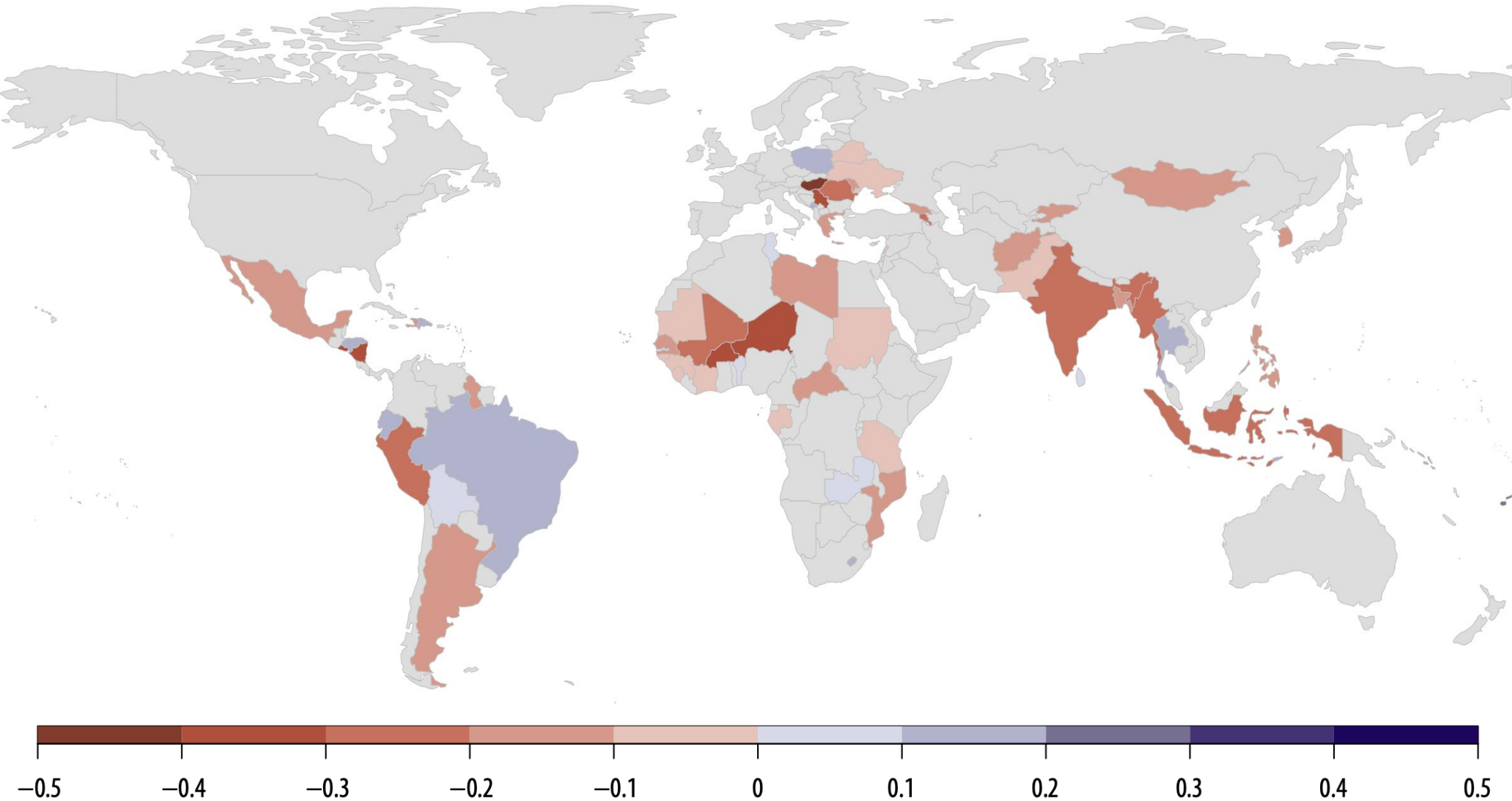


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5. Global Trend of Autocratization

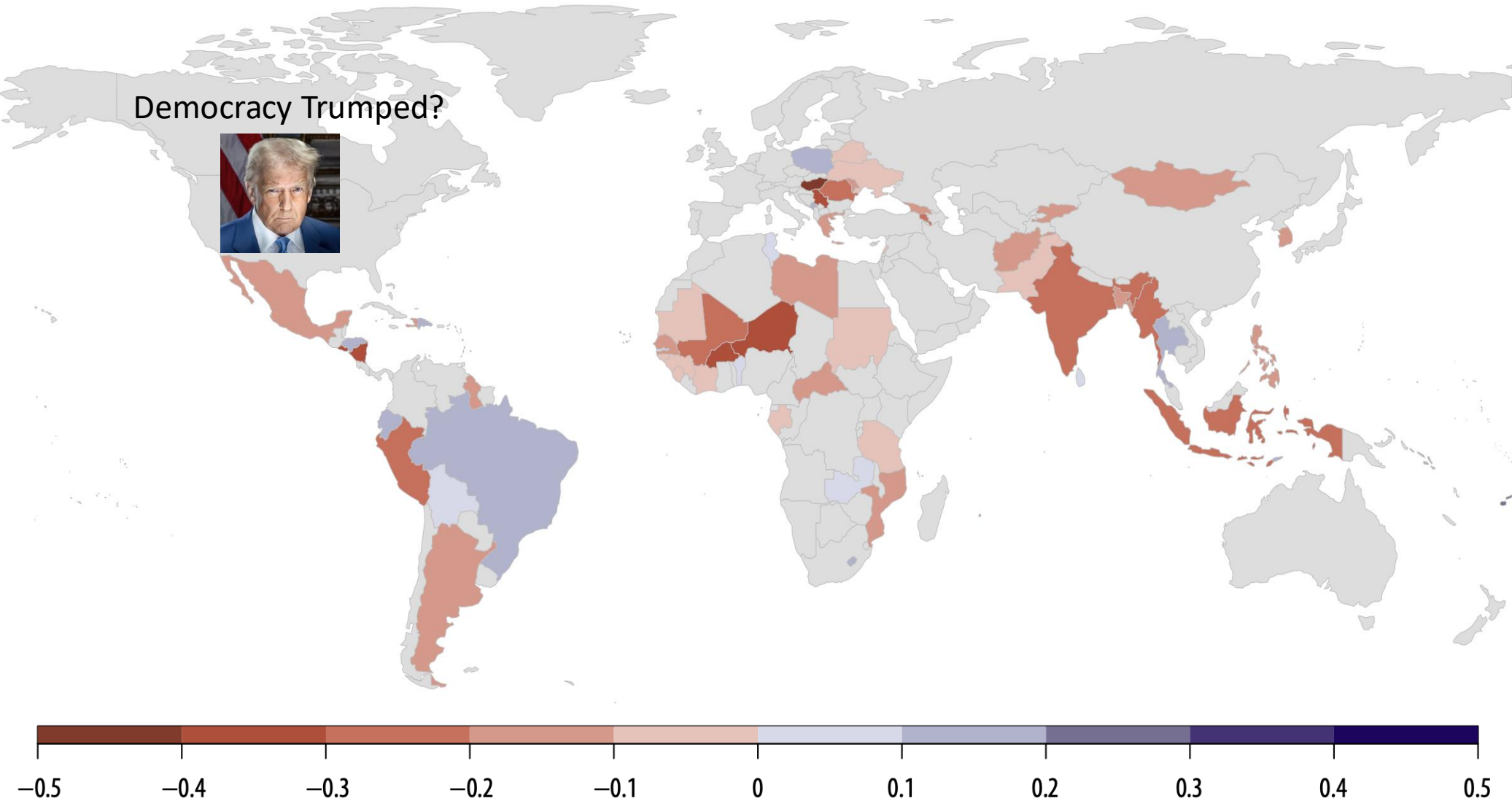
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5. Global Trend of Autocratization



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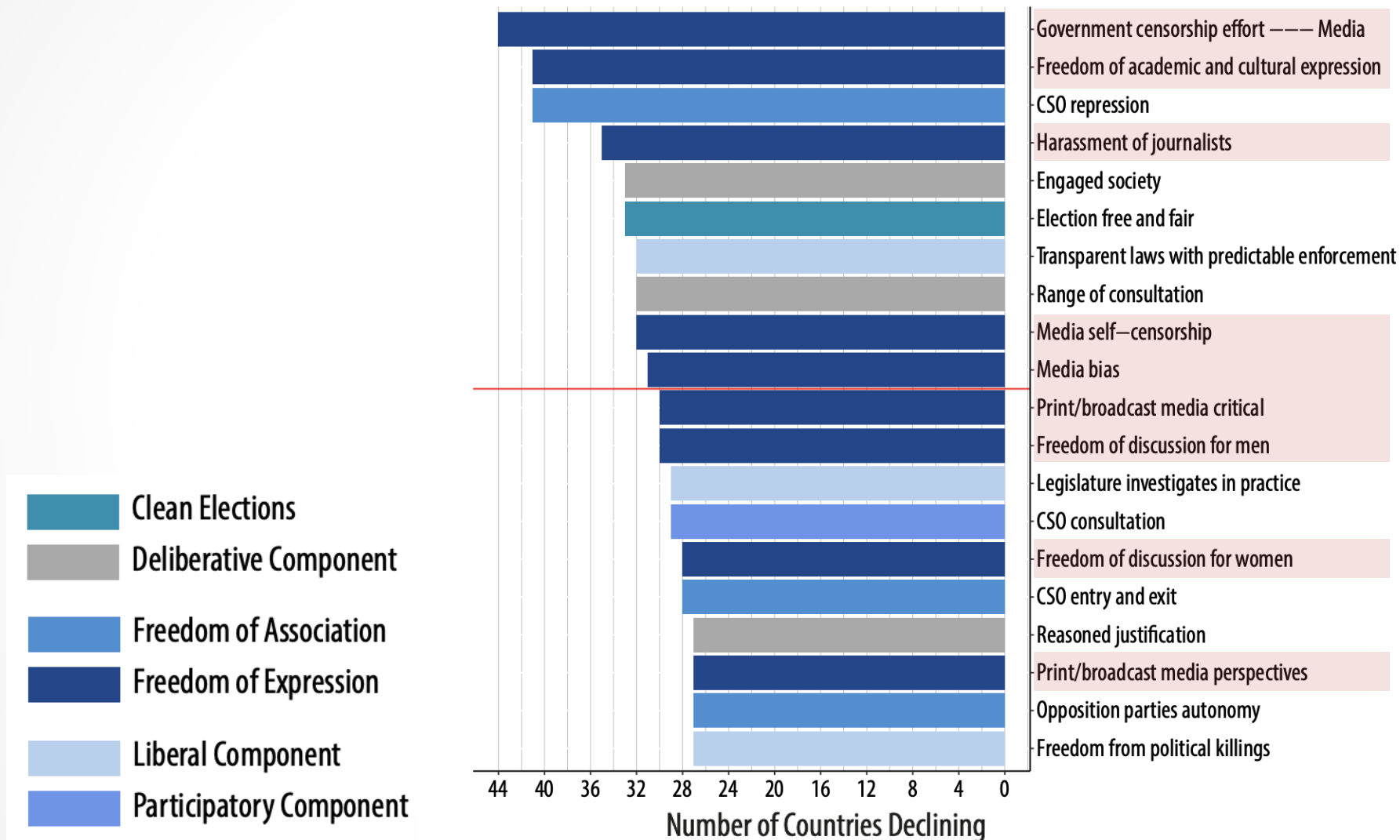
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6. Alarming Loss of Freedom of Expression

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FIGURE 8. TOP 20 DECLINING INDICATORS, 2014–2024



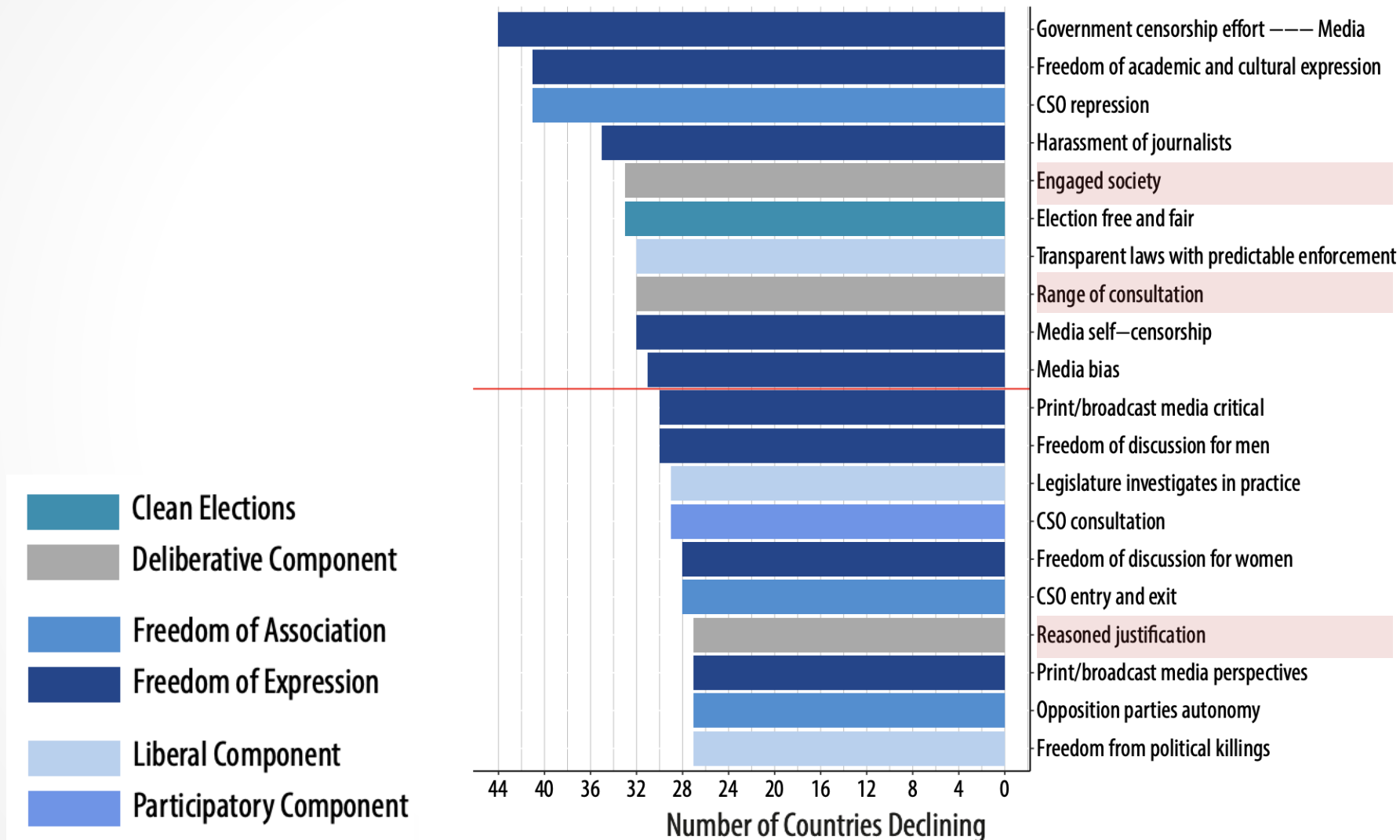
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7. Deliberation is Decreasing

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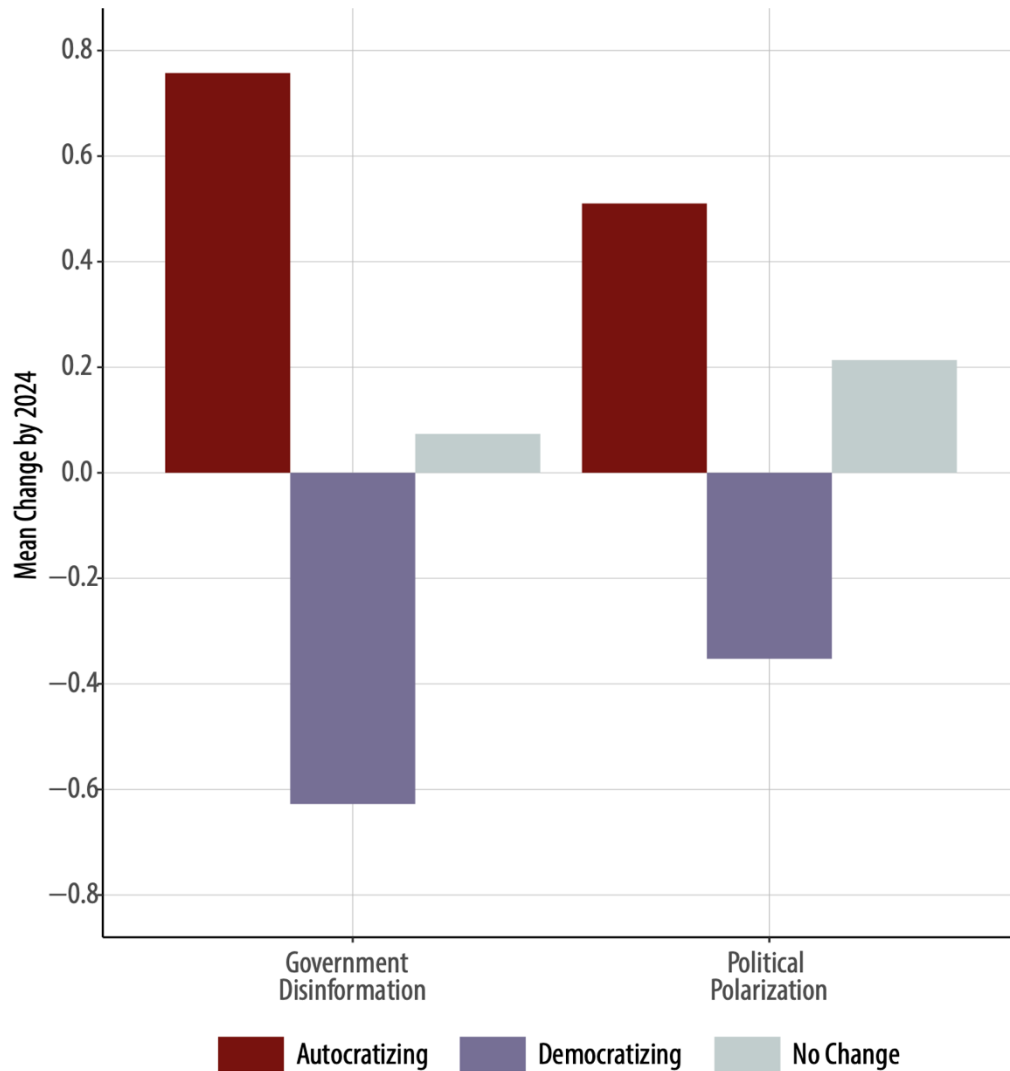


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8. Disinformation and Polarization fuel Autocratization

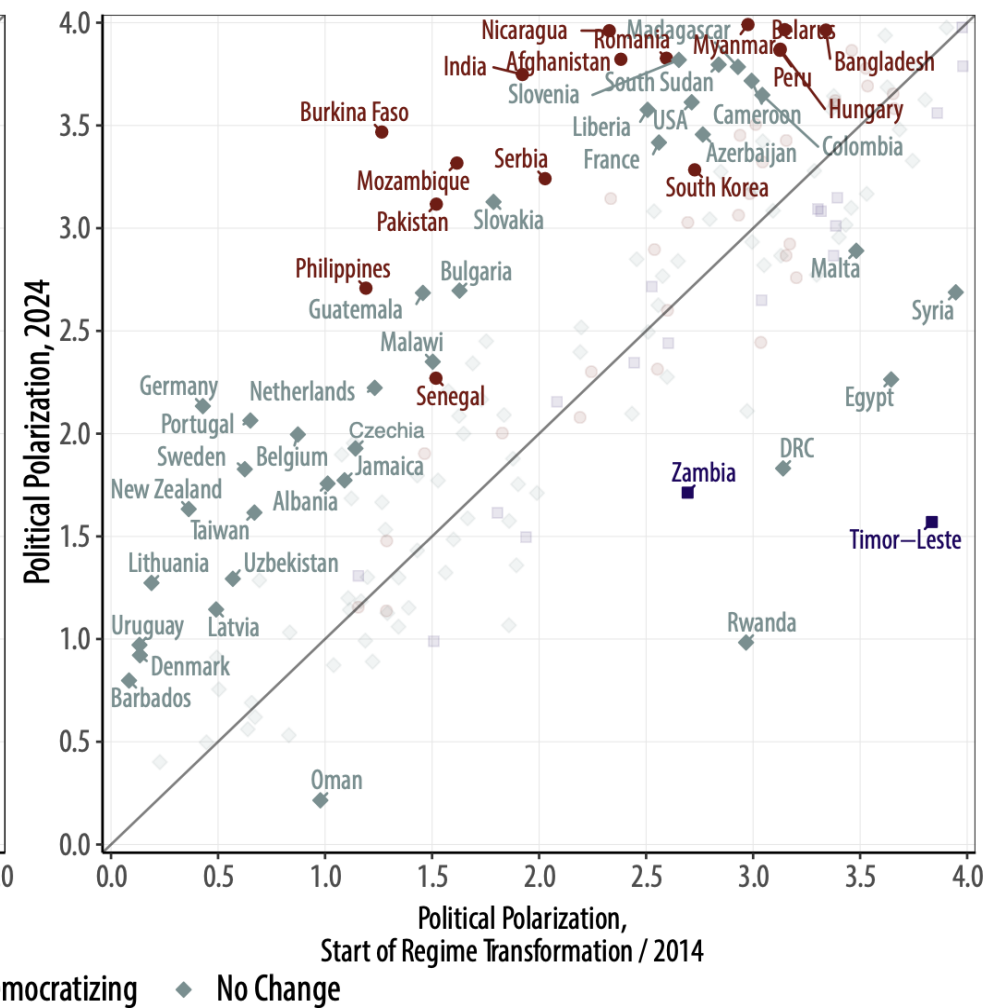
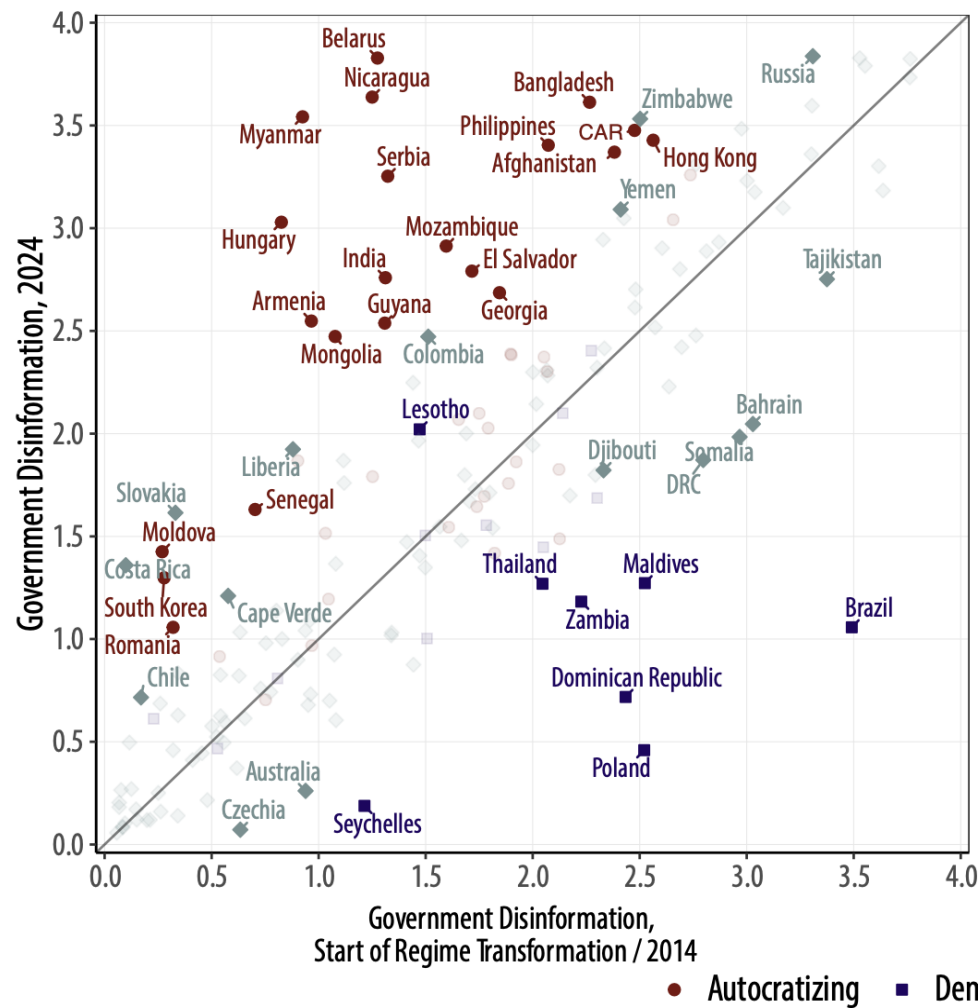
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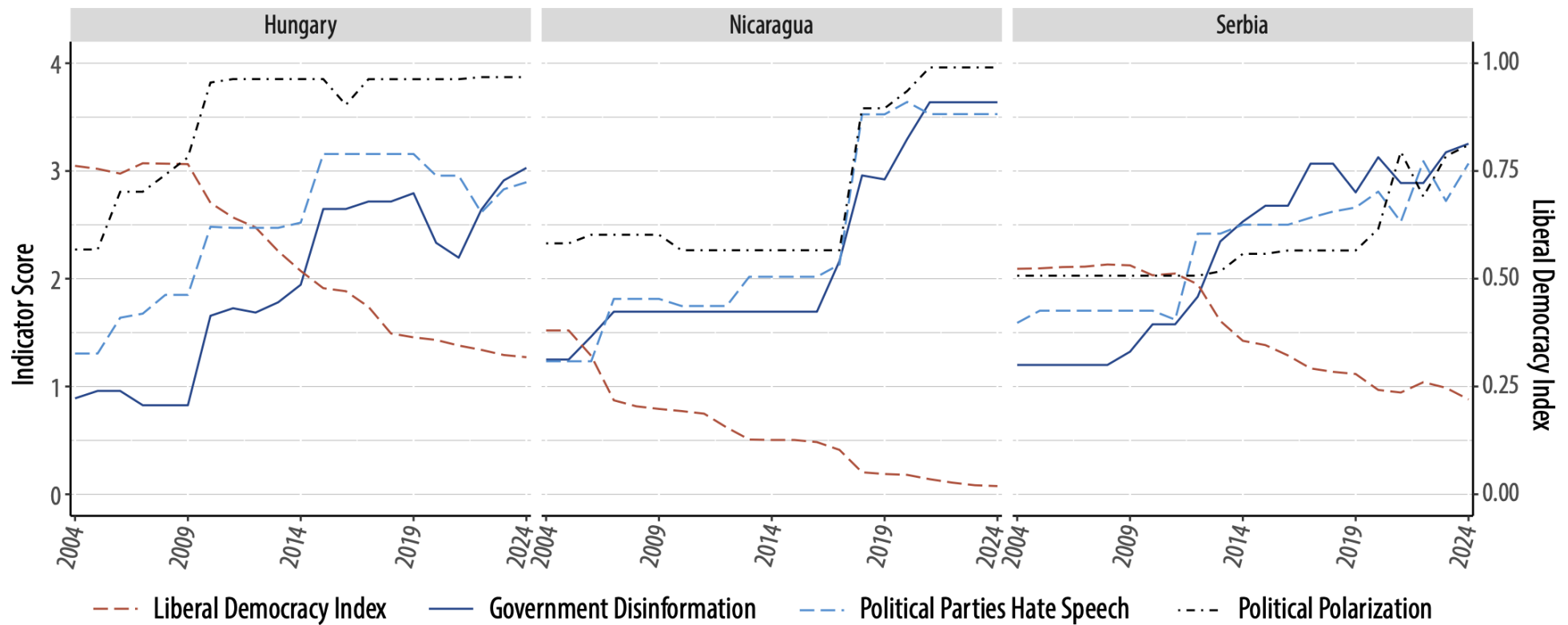
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25 Years of Autocratization – Democracy Trumped?

9. Autocratization Has Consequences

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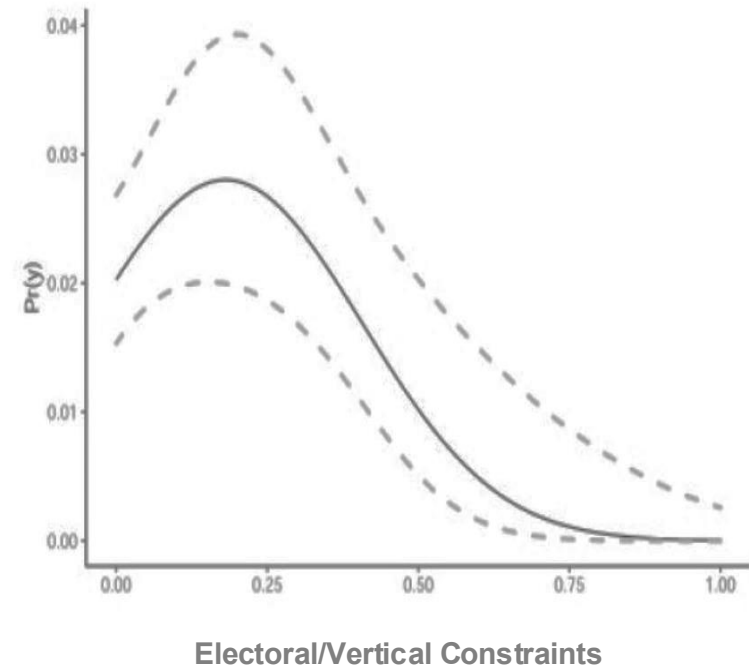
Democracies do not fight wars with each other

(e.g. Fjelde et al. 2021; Hegre et al., 2001; Hegre, 2014)

Democracies least prone to domestic violent conflicts



In 1795, Immanuel Kant wrote *Zum Ewigen Frieden*



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9. Autocratization Has Consequences

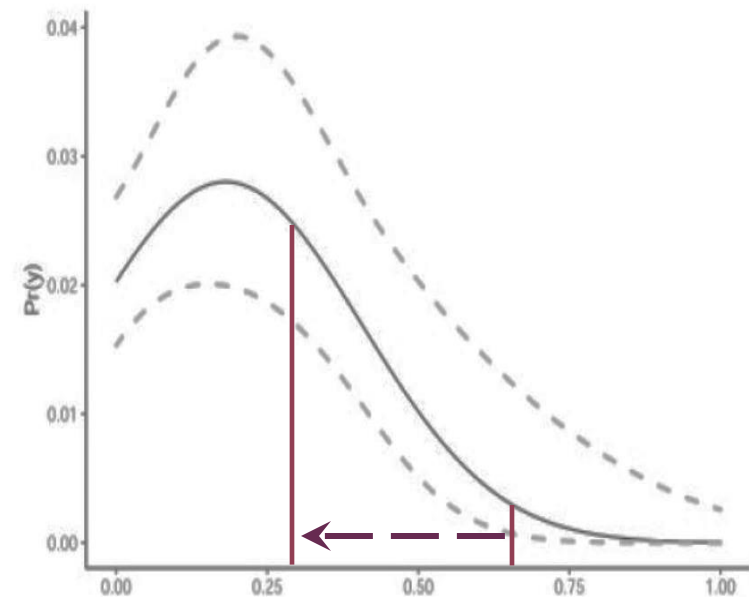
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Electoral/Vertical Constraints

2021

1995

RUSSIA

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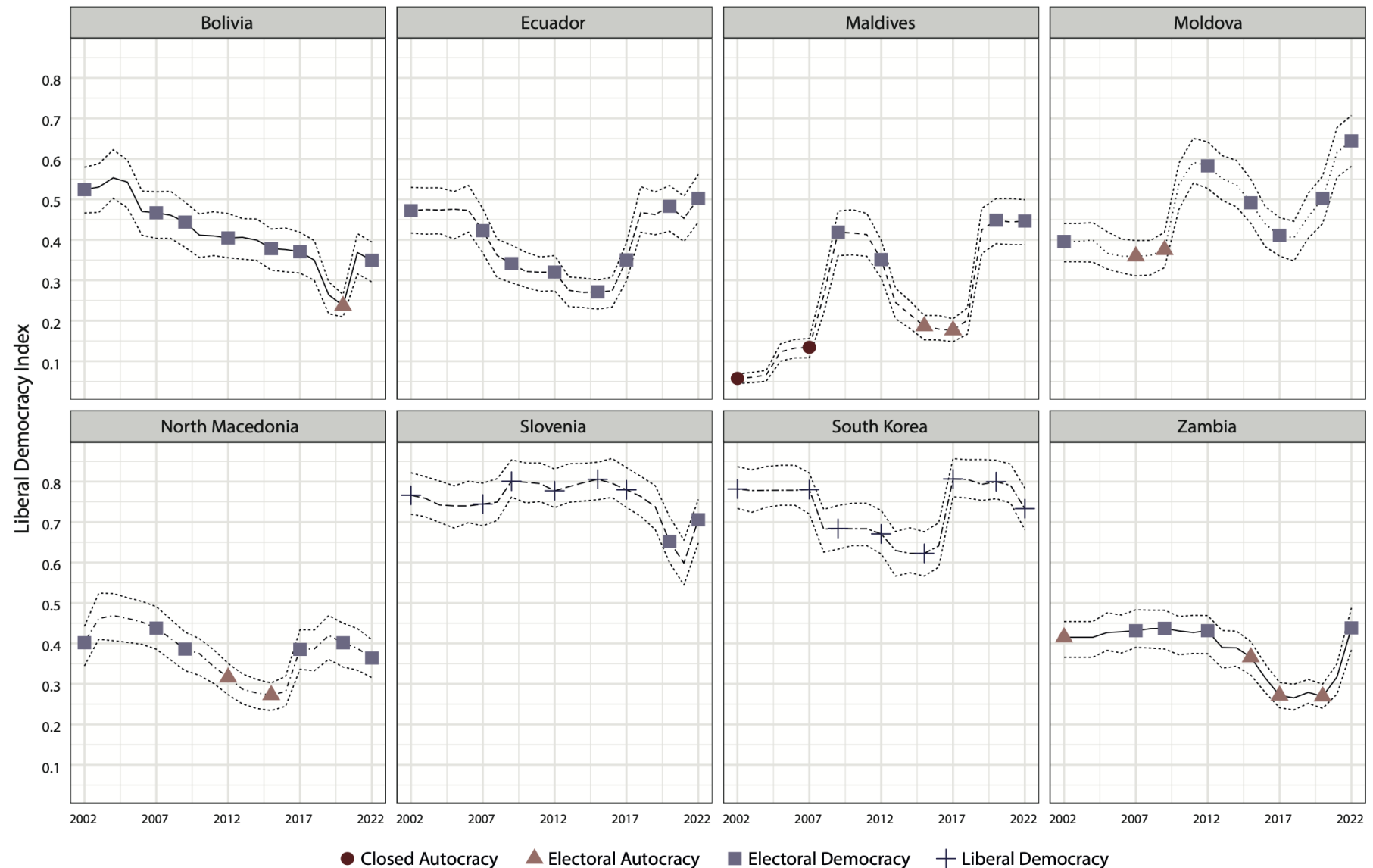
10. Autocratization Can Be Stopped and Reversed!

DEMOCRACY REPORT 2023

Defiance in the Face of Autocratization



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DEMOCRATIZATION

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2024.2448742>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

When autocratization is reversed: episodes of U-Turns since 1900

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POLICY BRIEF

No. 42, January 2025

Marina Nord and Staffan I. Lindberg

U-turns – The Hope for Democratic Resilience

Top-Level Insights

- Contemporary democracies are fairly resilient to the onset of autocratization: Since 1994, 54% have not experienced backsliding.
- Yet, democracies rarely survive if autocratization sets in: Roughly 80% break down.
- Breakdown does not prevent a return of democracy: Roughly 50% recover shortly after a democratic breakdown in a U-turn episode.
- Recovering of democracy in U-turns – or “bounce back” resilience – is the most common type of democratic resilience.
- Active, stiff, and coordinated resistance against autocratization from pro-democracy actors and institutions is key to making a U-turn.
- Acting in early stages of autocratization seems critical – within one electoral cycle (4-6 years) after the onset.

Threats to Democracy are Growing

From 1900 to 2023, there were 99 episodes of autocratization that originated in democracies. Only 35 of those episodes took place from 1900 to 1993.

Two-thirds of all recorded autocratization episodes affecting democracies occurred in the last 30 years, from 1994 to 2023: 64 episodes of backsliding in 54 countries.

The main drivers of this process are democratically elected leaders who deliberately dismantle democratic norms and institutions. Gradually, political power is concentrated in one party or in one person (Bermeo 2016).

Media freedom and civil society spaces are typically attacked first and the most. Attempts to make constitutional changes that undermine the democratic process are common (Williamson et al. 2024).

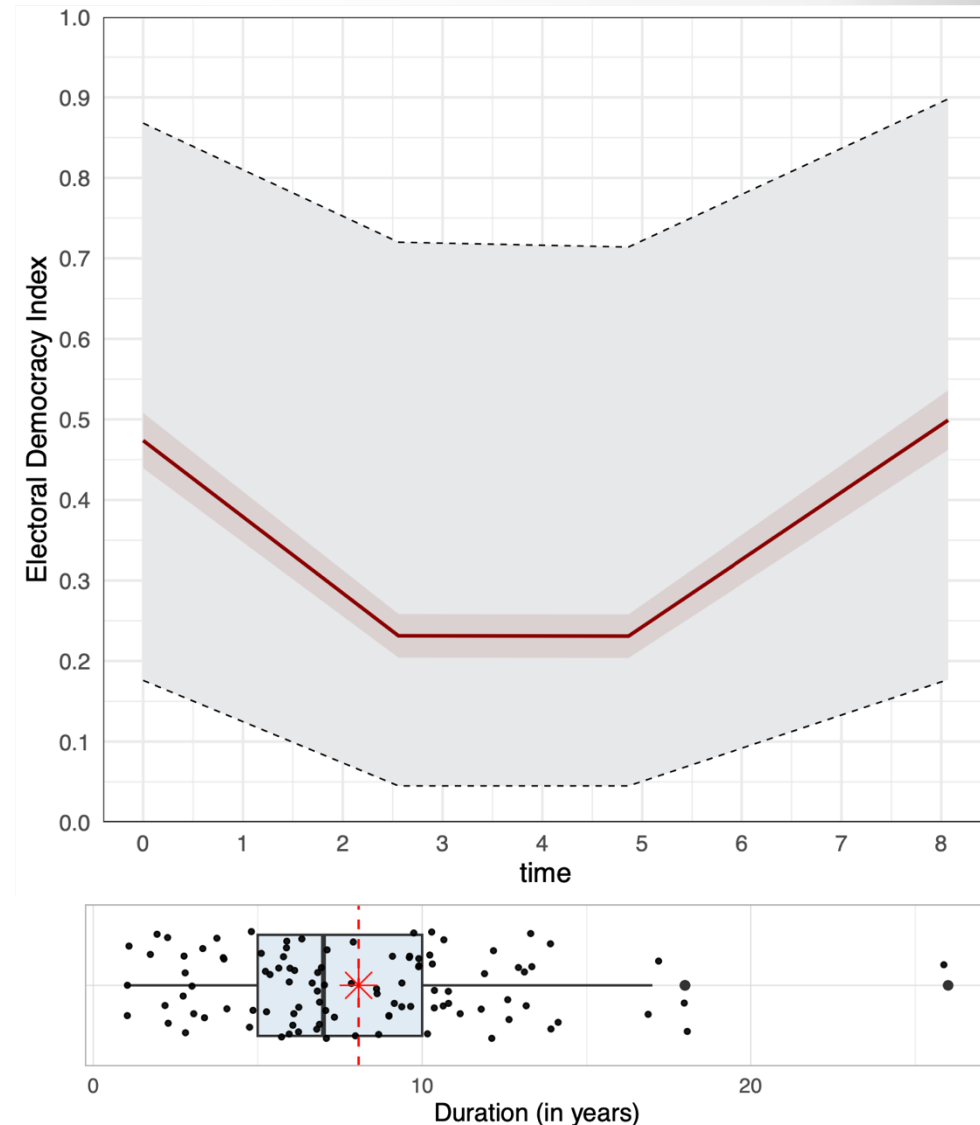


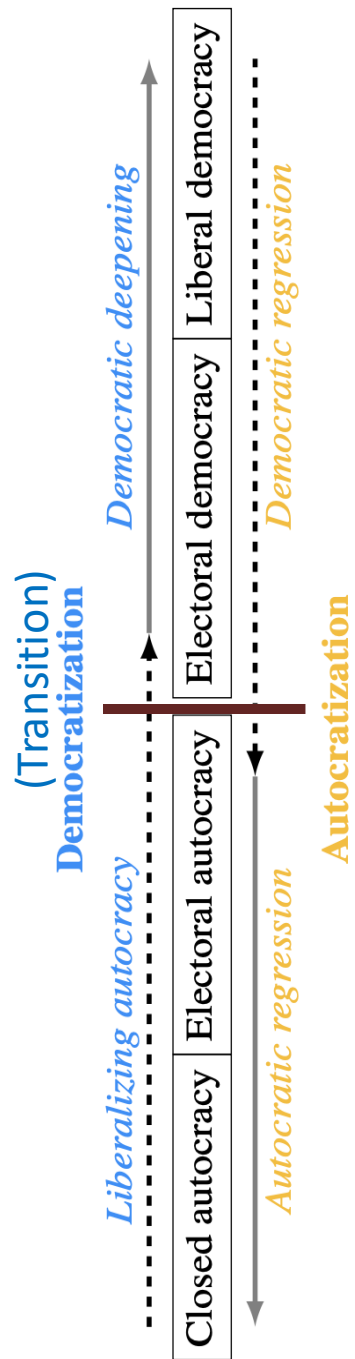
10. Autocratization Can Be Stopped and Reversed!

Descriptive results

- 1900 – 2023:
 - **198 episodes of autocratization**
↳ **102 U-Turns**

52% of autocratization episodes



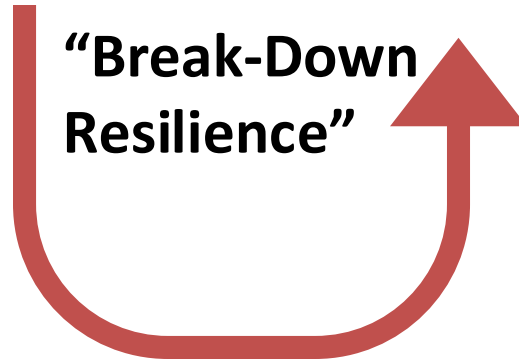


Three Types of Resilience

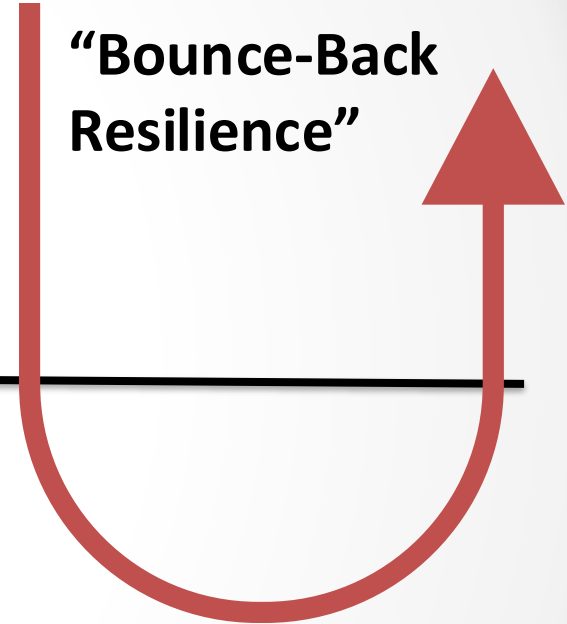
“Onset resilience”



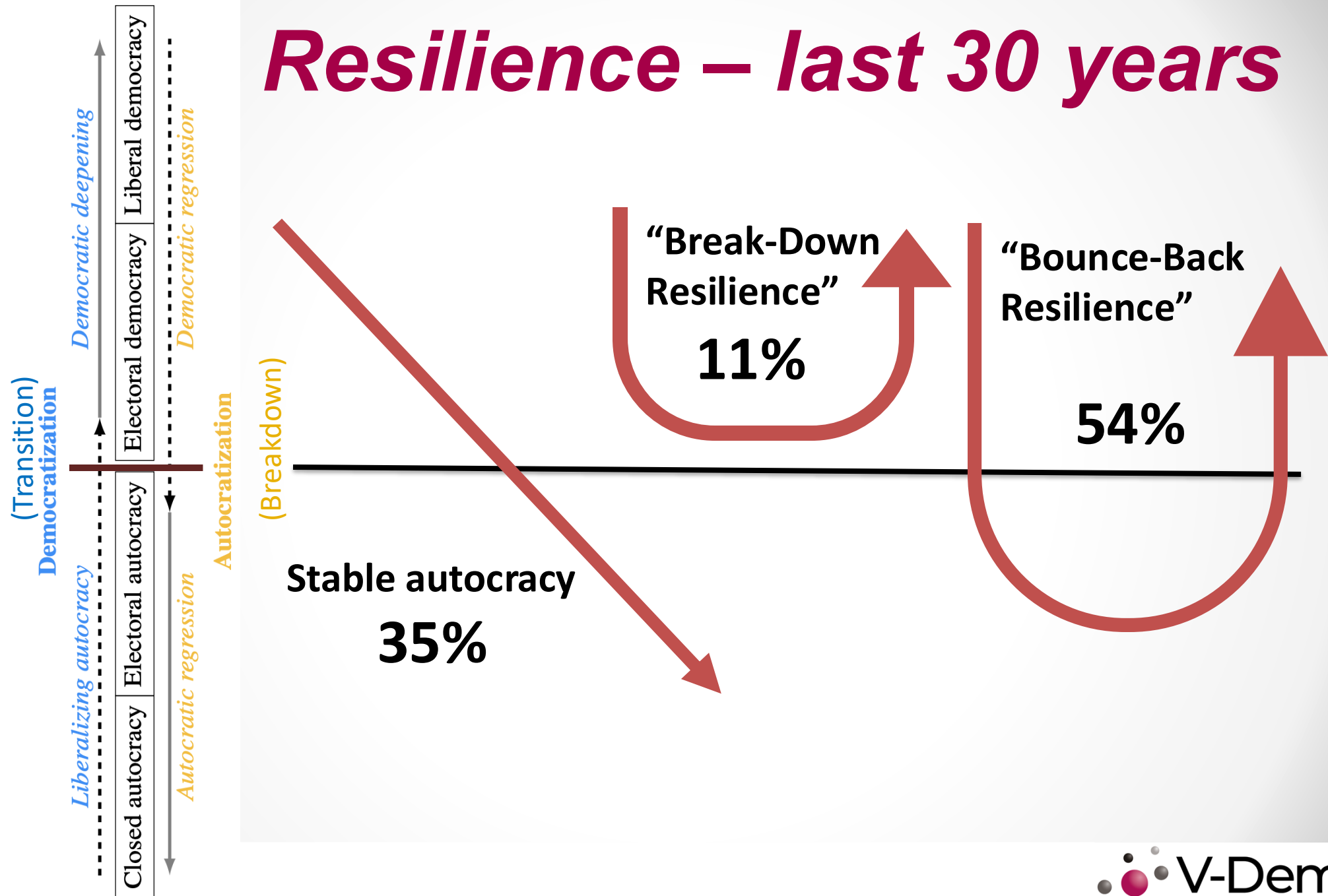
“Break-Down Resilience”



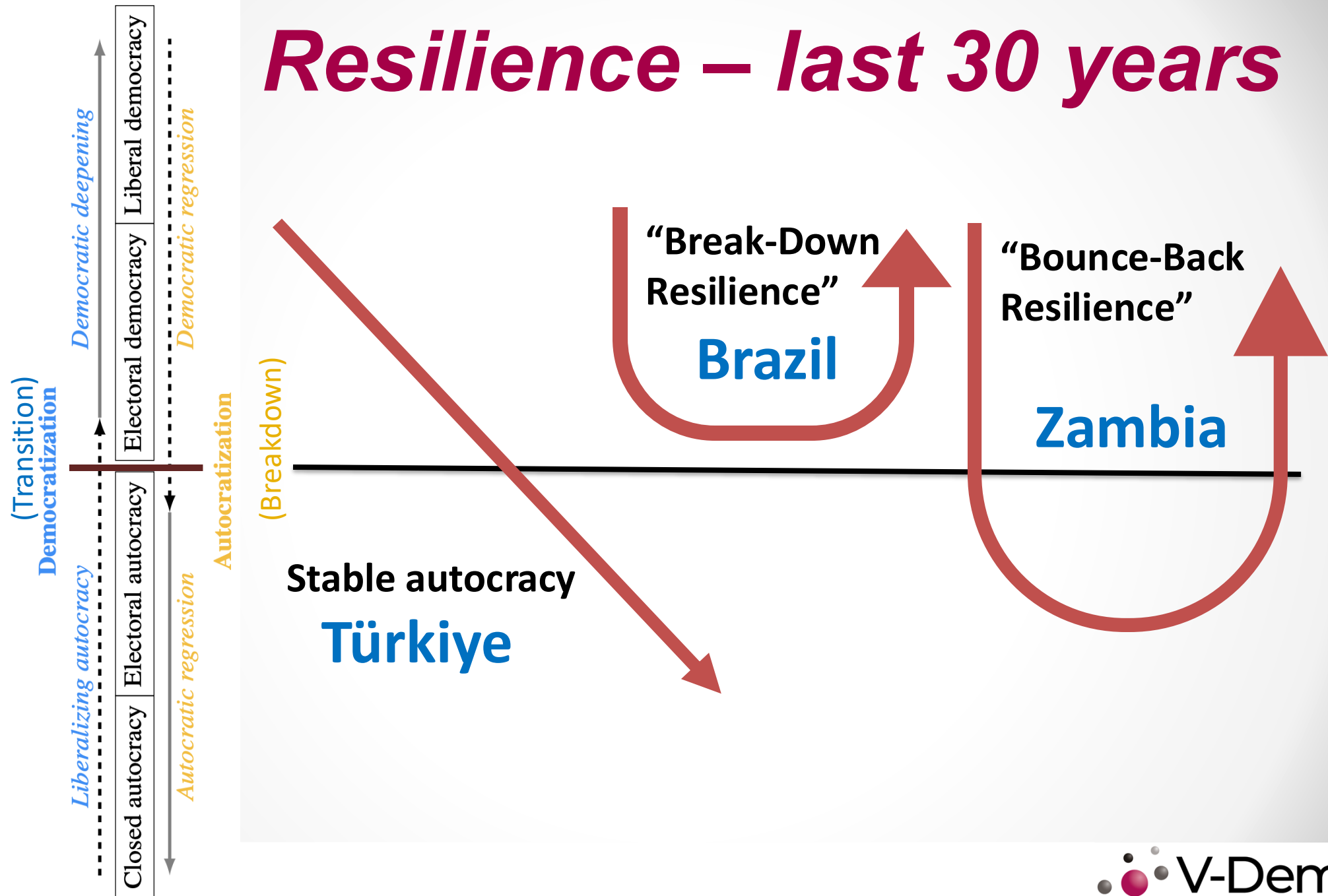
“Bounce-Back Resilience”

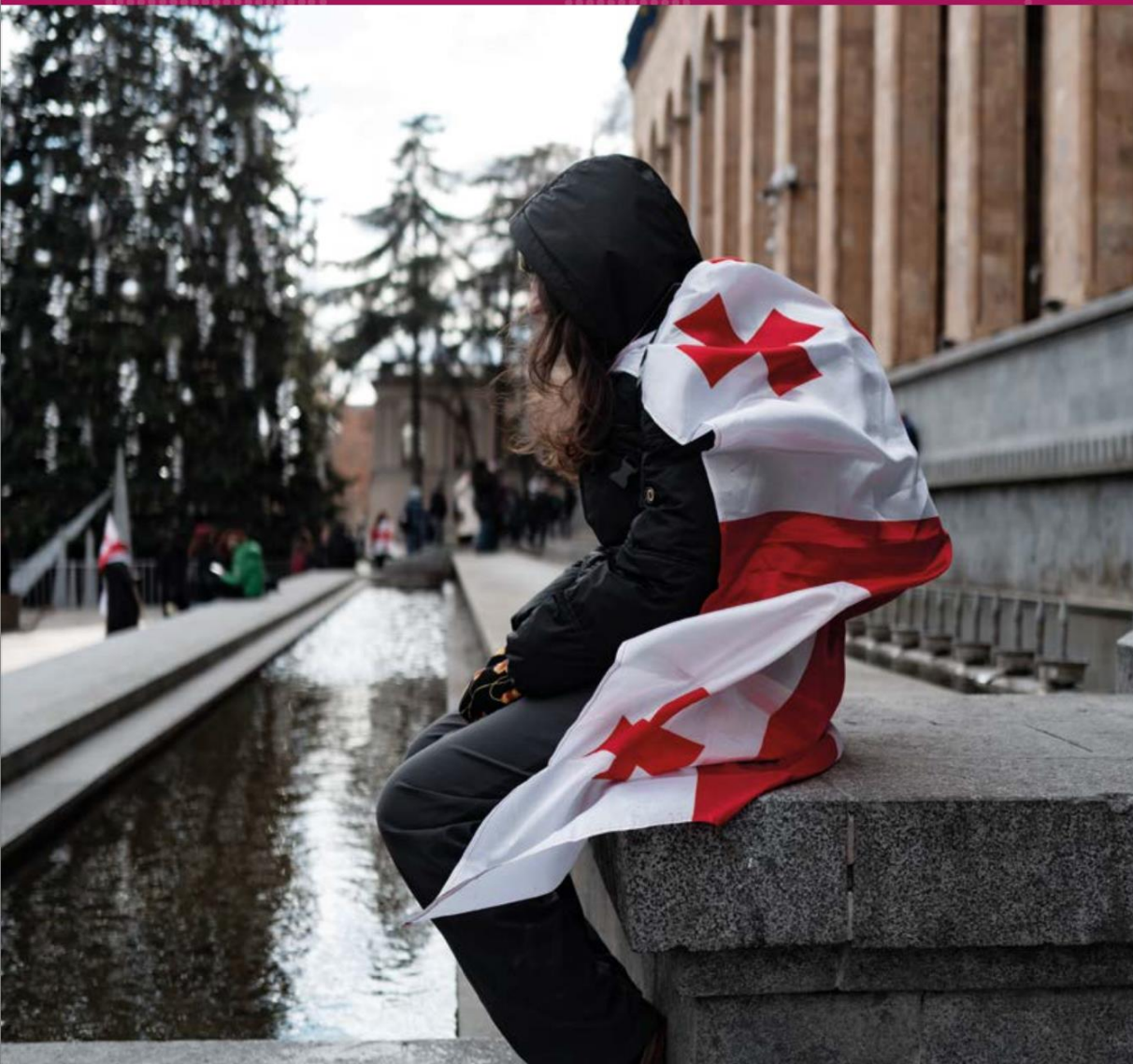


Resilience – last 30 years



Resilience – last 30 years





Thanks for
listening