September 2022
Global Democracy Has Been in Recession for More Than a Decade
Freedom House Shows The Third Wave Cresting Around 2007
V-Dem Shows a Sharp Decline in Past Decade, by Country and Population
The Economist Intelligence Unit Survey Showed a Nadir in 2021

The global average score hit an all-time low:

The average global score in the 2021 Democracy Index fell from 5.37 in 2020 to 5.28 in 2021.

“This fall is the biggest since 2010... and sets another dismal record for the worst global score since the world democracy index was first produced in 2006.”
Autocratic Regimes Are Rising in Democracy’s Place

V-Dem Institute Liberal Democracy Index, 2021
The United States Has Been Far From Immune to This Trend
The U.S. is Among Top Autocratizing Countries in the Past Decade

V-Dem Institute Liberal Democracy Index, 2021
And Americans’ Commitment to Democracy Has Eroded Substantially

Share of Americans In Favor of “Army Rule”

Data from Democracy Fund Voter Study Group, 2020
Younger Americans’ Commitment to Democracy is Weaker Than in Poland

Percentage who agree that Democracy is a “bad” or “very bad” way to run a government.

- **Globally:** 1 in 10
- **Poland prior to Law and Justice:** 1 in 6
- **US Millennials:** 1 in 4

Share of US respondents who believe it is “essential” to live in a democracy, by decade of birth.

69% of Americans worry that their democracy is at risk of collapse.
The Result: A Wave of Autocrats
What Do These Autocrats Do to Dismantle Democracies?
Modern Authoritarians Across the World Use a Similar Playbook
Modern Authoritarians Across the World Use a Similar Playbook

- Politicizing Independent Institutions
- Spreading Disinformation
- Executive Power Grabs
- Quashing Dissent
- Delegitimizing Communities
- Corrupting Elections
- Stoking Violence
They politicize independent institutions
- They spread disinformation
- Aggrandize executive power
- Quash dissent
- Target vulnerable communities
They corrupt elections

- Suppress the Vote
- Prematurely Claim Victory and Alleged Fraud
- Use Court Challenges to Amplify Fraud and Delay
- Pressure State Legislatures to Override
- Get Congress to Certify Alternative Electors

And if all of those steps fail, incite a violent insurrection.
They stoke violence
Democracy depends on the public having unbiased information about what’s happening.
Is this politics-as-usual?
or
Is this a threat to democracy?
This is not easy.

How Journalists Wrestle With Covering Threats to Democracy

A new report challenges news outlets to provide richer, more urgent coverage of the rise of authoritarian movements in the United States and abroad.

But we’ve learned three lessons that can help.
Lesson 1: Does this fit in the Playbook?

Be able to spot tactics in the wild.

Pattern recognition is key: Does the actor use other tactics from the Authoritarian Playbook?

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Lesson 2: Is this new?

How much does an action deviate from precedent?
Significance = degree + frequency.

“In an authoritarian transition, what everyone thinks is normal is the authoritarian transition. Journalists have a responsibility to ask whether they are doing enough to record the strangeness or novelty of what politicians do.”
TIMOTHY SNYDER, YALE UNIVERSITY
Lesson 3: Is this a systemic risk to democracy?

“The key thing ... is how systemic the threat to democracy is. Just as personalistic authoritarian regimes are more fragile than party- based ones (because when the leader disappears from personalistic regimes, the regime tends to crumble), threats to democracy that ... are rooted in an institutionalized party are much more dangerous.”

— Sheri Berman, Columbia University
The Bottom Line:

The public needs context and judicious coverage so they can recognize the story before it’s too late.
Thank You.
Q & A