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**STUDY GUIDE**  
**General Assembly**



**Addressing the Impact of Rising Authoritarianism  
on Global Democratic Stability**



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## II. Letter from Chairs

Esteemed Delegates,

It is our honour, as the Presidency, to welcome you to this year's United Nations General Assembly at ZaMUN 2025.

We are committed to maintaining the highest level of debate throughout the conference and ensuring to give you the most unforgettable, enriching experiences and memories. In this document, known as the Study Guide, aims to provide you with an introduction to the topic that will be discussed.

We strongly encourage you to thoroughly study the contents of this guide. However, please note that it is not a comprehensive source. To prepare fully, we recommend conducting further research into the topic and, most importantly, your country's official stance and foreign policy regarding the issue.

This year's General Assembly topic will focus on a highly relevant matter, the topic: 'Addressing the Impact of Rising Authoritarianism on Global Democratic Stability' can open doors for debates full of thoughtful, creative arguments and proposals since the democracy faces many problems across many nations.

Last but not least, we kindly ask you to follow our official social media, and if you have not joined the discord yet, do that as well. Contact us if you have any unanswered questions through discord. We are hoping to help you create an unforgettable memory of ZaMUN2025 and we are looking forward to seeing you in April!

Sincerely,

*Alex & Shanti*



### III. Introduction to the General Assembly

**The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** is the main policy-making organ of the Organization. Comprising all Member States, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter of the United Nations. Each of the 193 Member States of the United Nations has an equal vote.

The UNGA also makes key decisions for the UN, including:

- appointing the Secretary-General on the recommendation of the Security Council
- electing the non-permanent members of the Security Council
- approving the UN budget

The Assembly discusses specific issues through dedicated agenda items or sub-items, which lead to the adoption of resolutions.

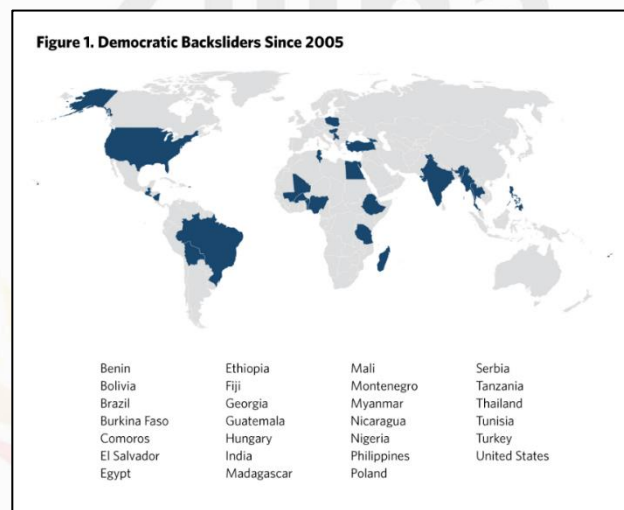
### IV. Introduction to the Topic

From its earliest interpretations, tracing back to the golden age of classical Athens, democracy has consistently symbolized unity and freedom of expression. Despite enduring intense repression over the centuries, its fundamental principles withstood numerous efforts by authoritarian and autocratic regimes to dismantle it—eventually enabling democracy to flourish once again. Today, billions of people proudly live in democratic nations, where political power lies with the people, granting them the liberty to participate in shaping society without restriction. This system offers individuals unmatched personal freedoms, encouraging equity over extremism and fostering conditions for growth, prosperity, and peace—often more so than in authoritarian systems. While democracy, like all political systems, is not without flaws, the United Nations affirms that it "provides an environment that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in which the freely expressed will of people is exercised." Still, some



nations deviate from these principles, engaging in a concerning trend known as *democratic backsliding*.

In recent years, democratic backsliding has emerged as a prominent theme in global politics. It refers to “the state-led debilitation or elimination of the political institutions sustaining an existing democracy.” In essence, it represents the undoing of a nation’s democratic progress, not only weakening the core values on which democracy stands but also curbing the freedoms of its citizens. This process is often subtle and gradual, rarely resulting in the outright collapse of democracy. Instead, it unfolds through a series of legal and administrative actions by governments and leaders that slowly erode democratic institutions and norms. This incremental deterioration is especially troubling, as it can pave the way for authoritarian or illiberal regimes to gain power—without the sudden upheaval typically seen in coups or revolutions.



Following a global surge in democratization during the 1980s and the post-Cold War era, democracy has been on a steady decline since the mid-2000s. Today, more than half of the world’s democratic systems are experiencing structural erosion—even in long-established strongholds like Europe and the United States. This decline is marked by issues such as limitations on free speech and growing scepticism toward electoral legitimacy. Leaders of the democratic world now face an array of unprecedented challenges, including “Russia’s war in Ukraine, cost of living crises, a looming global recession, and climate change,” as outlined by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. These mounting pressures



create a fertile ground for democratic backsliding to take root. Although it is a global phenomenon, the motivations driving governments and officials to adopt anti-democratic measures often vary widely, reflecting the unpredictable and context-specific nature of this troubling trend.

When we are trying to find the root of this problem, we have to deeply analyse and consider numerous factors. One such possibility rests in analysing the events that led up to democratic backsliding trends in certain states around the world, as a set of distinct reasons for its eventuality have been identified. These are divided into, so-called, internal and external drivers. They serve as partial explanations for the concept, and one of the best resources we have to carefully analyse the problem.

## **V. External and Internal Drivers**

### **External Drivers**

#### **1. Russia and China**

Many experts attribute the problem of democratic backsliding in certain countries to the influence authoritarian, pseudo-democratic countries such as the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China exert both upon their neighbours, as well as states lacking affiliation in an increasingly bipolar world order. Undoubtedly, the growing power and assertiveness of Russia and China have been detrimental to the worldwide fortunes of democracy. These nations actively seek to undermine shared norms and are willing to employ or threaten force to destabilize governments that have been democratically elected, as illustrated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. These efforts encompass a spectrum of strategies, ranging from military and paramilitary actions to economic incentives and interference in electoral processes. Their influence is not the only factor one can consider, however. In India, Poland, Türkiye, Brazil or Tunisia, for example, domestic affairs were responsible for the degradation of democracy, not the work of the dragon and the bear slashing their claws at democracies in their vicinity.



## **2. Social Media and Technology**

With the advancement of technology at the dawn of the century, a new era of political propaganda and oft-times its evil machinations of misinformation and falsity carefully enveloped the masses. Many experts believe that social media, fundamentally controlled not by traditional media gatekeepers, but rather by international technology companies, “disproportionately benefits outsiders and extremist candidates.” The unrestrained ability to share information publicly allows for the unfortunate widening of polarization in society. The breeding of animosity and distrust amongst individuals of different political beliefs further fundamentally affects the functioning of an effective democracy. This fact is extensively utilized by radicals to promote their agenda and campaign of hate. In nations where the general public is exposed to hoaxes and disinformation the most, the danger posed to democracy cannot be understated, as highlighted in “Hungary, Turkey, and the Philippines that seek to stabilize and reinforce their new electoral authoritarianism at home.”

### **Internal Drivers**

#### **1. Product of Populism**

A common academic opinion about democratic backsliding suggests, that populist policies of a leader conform with the degradation of democracy in the states where it dictated the rule of law. Cited examples include the rise to power of Donald Trump—subsequently leading to a decrease in many democracy indexes—President Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India, President Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, and President Nayib Bukele in El Salvador to name a few. On the other hand, however, the political agenda of populism may not necessarily have a direct impact on democratic backsliding, as compared to the autocratic and authoritarian tendencies exhibited by some leaders who promote it. While populism can serve as a means of rallying discontented citizens and amplifying their voices within the political landscape, the crucial factor lies in the manner in which leaders employ this rhetoric and the tactics they utilize for governance. When populist leaders undermine democratic institutions, curtail checks and balances, restrict freedoms, and concentrate power in their hands, it is these autocratic tendencies that pose a more significant threat to democratic backsliding, not populism. It is therefore



imperative to analyse all variables of the equation, and to scrutinize such leaders to protect the increasingly more fragile integrity of democracy worldwide.

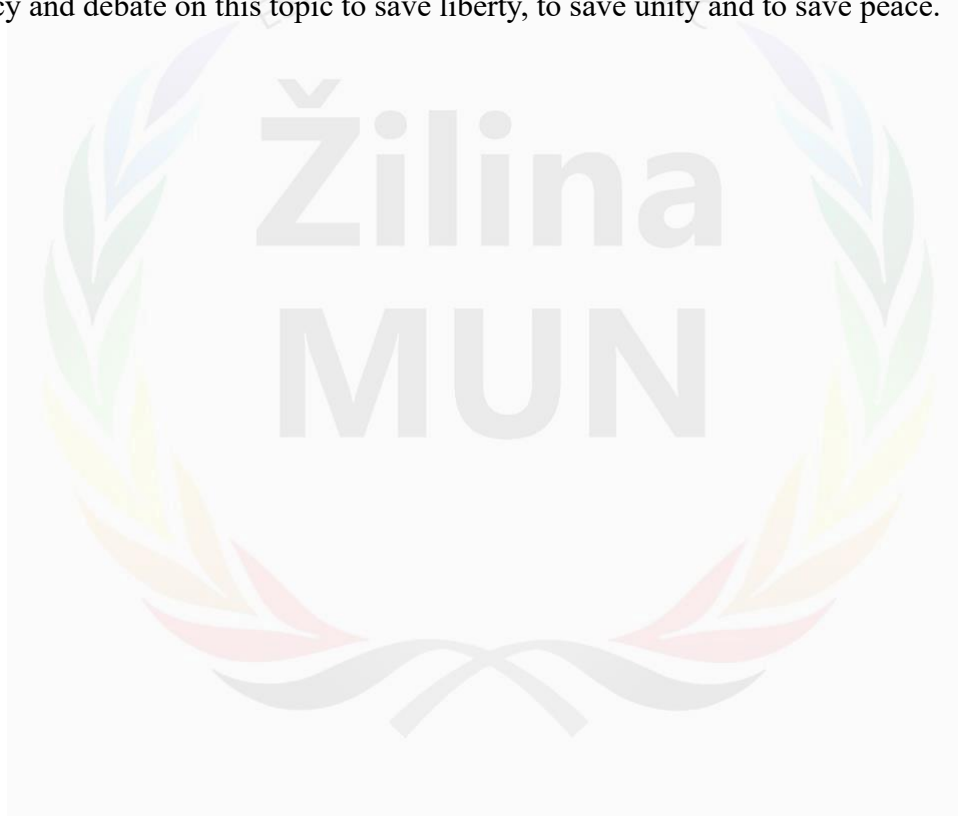
## **2. The Failure of Democracy**

Another prominent argument to explain the tendency to swerve towards democratic backsliding lies in the apparent failure citizens attribute to democracy in their states. Widespread economic disparity, poverty and wealth inequality in society subsequently lead to frustration amongst the general populace, for instance. Examples of illiberal figures gaining power in the face of economic crises include Bolsonaro, Orbán, and Erdoğan, nations whose democratic solidity has slowly crumbled since. Furthermore, a political landscape dominated by corruption, ineffective governance or even political gridlock fuels a fire, which, in certain states, spread engulfed everything in its path. This omnipresent dissatisfaction from the citizens of a nation that become disillusioned with democracy due to perceived failures or ineffectiveness, become the ideal ground for authoritarian leaders to exploit this discontent by promising quick and often simplistic solutions to their grievances. They skilfully place blame on democratic structures for allegedly creating the very conditions that have given rise to these grievances. Interestingly, the grievances at the heart of this illiberal drive encompass a wide array of issues, extending beyond just mere economic concerns. They include deeply rooted societal frustrations such as racial, religious, and ethnic marginalization, as well as public discontent over pervasive corruption, escalating crime rates, or perceived ineffectual governance, all carefully harnessed by leaders wishing to turn public outrage into their favour. These individuals often present themselves as strong figures who can "fix everything" through decisive actions, offering an alternative vision that may appeal to those disenchanted with the complexities and perceived inefficiencies of democratic processes.



## **VI. Conclusion**

Democracy embodies a stronghold of solidarity amongst man; a historical pledge to not return to the times of destruction and war that were fuelled by the greed of autocracy. As the world descends into an epoch dominated by economic downturn, a jeopardized geopolitical landscape and the global effects of war, this fortress has begun to crumble. One by one the beacons in the night are dying out, and if nothing is done, soon we will all be left in the dark. Universal democratic backsliding still can, however, be averted. While not ubiquitous, the causes of the phenomenon as well as its consequences are known, and it is crucial to commence effective diplomacy and debate on this topic to save liberty, to save unity and to save peace.





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## VII. Possible issues regarding the topic

Various threats may be the subject of discussion, yet democracy has been defined as a multidimensional, complex concept. The most common conceptualization throughout the international space is based on electoral, majoritarian, egalitarian, and liberal processes that lead the communities to governments by the people and for the people.

### 1. Attacks on Press Freedom

A functional democracy requires a free and independent media. Governments with autocracy tendencies entail attempts to manipulate or directly control the media. These efforts often include:

### 2. Censorship

Autocrats tend to maintain their power by media repression because they believe that gaining control over the flow of information means a guarantee over the system as its whole.

### 3. Harassment of Journalists

Last year, eighty-six journalists were murdered as a result of their impartial efforts to inform the general public about ongoing matters, regarding internal and external affairs in the country of their residence. Since the onset of the digital era and artificial intelligence has altered every aspect of the information landscape, independent journalism is needed more than ever. This era has not only determined the journey of development of our society but has also triggered an avalanche of disinformation and propaganda. Thus, the role of governments to provide a suitable and safe environment for journalists is breaking down.

### 4. Erosion of Political Rights

Backsliding often involves the curtailment of the political rights and civil liberties of each individual. The ways in which people participate in political power have been enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Democratic backsliding can be seen as:

#### A/ Electoral Fraud

This may occur as a way to acquire supremacy over the electoral process where a political candidate interferes illegally either by manipulation of the vote share in favour of the political candidate or against his rival candidates.

#### B/ Suppression of the Opposition, of the Freedom of Speech and Restrictions of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)



The NGO Human Rights Watch has pointed out that for instance, Erdogan's rule has become increasingly authoritarian. They brought up the limits and persecutory practices imposed on social networks. The Government has implemented measures that increase its capacity to monitor opposition points of view across social media and channels. If such content is not taken down, the Turkish government has the right to do it on its own or even punish websites containing opposition content. The enactment of restrictive laws raises international concerns, since in many cases, these laws are directly threatening pillars of human rights.

**c/ Discriminatory Policies**

In a system supporting actions of autocracy, it is always visible how the partisan government is trying to achieve a seamless society where each individual is expected to behave in order to fulfil the vision of the leader. Therefore, the government is taking violent measures to repress minorities and their culture. Such an example of violence against minorities can be seen in the People's Republic of China, where the Chinese government has committed various human rights abuses against Uyghurs for their ethnic and religious differences. Since 2014, the Chinese Communist Party has imprisoned more than one million Uyghurs in Xinjiang internment camps, so-called "vocational education and training centres".

**d/ Concentration of Power**

A common feature of democratic backsliding is the concentration of authority in the hands of a single leader or ruling party, as is the case of the Communist Party in the People's Republic of China, but also in countries such as Hungary, Russia or Turkey where the power is concentrated in one person or one party even though they formally have established a multi-party system.

**After completing the Position Paper, please submit it through [discord](#) into the [#ga-documents](#) channel as a .pdf file.**



## VIII. Position Paper

The position paper is a document of every country. It should outline a few practical solutions and a reflection of your nation's policies and interests. It should be AT LEAST a half-page document; however, one page is a standard. If you are not the only delegate representing your country in the General Assembly, we kindly ask you to get in touch with your fellow delegates, as you will be sharing the podium during sessions. We recommend that you collaborate on writing the position paper together to ensure a consistent stance.

Please include these points:

1. Present your country's approach to the agenda topic.
2. Describe your country's past and present actions undertaken regarding the agenda topic, highlighting their effectiveness or lack of it.
3. Introduce ideas for the resolution.
4. Make sure your position paper, as well as your statements during the debates, correspond with the country's policy.
5. Including factual knowledge, such as charts and statistics is highly recommended.



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## IX. Further Reading

<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/democracy>

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2022/global-expansion-authoritarian-rule>

<https://protectdemocracy.org/work/authoritarianism-explained/>

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/how-democracies-defend-themselves-against-authoritarianism/>

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/advancing-freedom-defeating-authoritarianism-a-democracy-agenda-for-2025-2029/>

<https://www.visionofhumanity.org/trend-of-political-disruption-kickstarts-again-in-2025/>

