

# Democratic Decline in Asia: Hidden Interest's of States & Non -States Actors

Amar Kumar

RD Scholar

Central University of Himachal Pradesh

## Abstract:

Democracy is considered to be one of the best systems of governance but some states and new non-state actors are challenging this system. In the 20th century, democratic governments have been toppled in about 30 states. Before the completion of four decades of the 21st century, democratic systems have been toppled in 10 states. For example, the toppling of democracy in Afghanistan by the Taliban, the toppling of democracy in Myanmar by the military and the intervention of other states in Bangladesh, Kenya, etc. This research paper will analyze the historical events of the rise and fall of democratic systems using content analysis method to find solutions to the questions of the democratic decline taking place in Asia. Also, measures have been presented to prevent the collapse of democracy due to the intervention of new non-state actors, civilians, military in the present times.

**Keywords:** Decline of democracy, States & Non -States Actors, Hidden interest, Transboundary crises, Political decline, ideological war.

## Introduction:

history of democratic decline from the 15th century to 2000 is marked by the rise and fall of democratic institutions, often influenced by economic, political, and social changes. This period saw the initial development of democratic ideas in early modern Europe, their expansion and contraction during the age of revolutions, and the significant challenges posed by authoritarian regimes in the 20th century. Renaissance in Europe brought a revival of classical learning, including ideas about governance that emphasized civic participation and republicanism, inspired by ancient Greece and Rome. The Protestant Reformation further challenged the authority of the Catholic Church, promoting ideas about individual conscience and governance. During this period, some city-states and small republics, such as the Republic of Venice and the Swiss Confederation, maintained forms of government that included elements of democratic participation, though they were limited in scope and often restricted to the wealthy elite. English Civil War was a key moment in the history of democracy, as it challenged the absolute power of the monarchy. The conflict led to the temporary establishment of a republican government under Oliver Cromwell, although this did not last long, and the monarchy was restored in 1660. 18th century saw the flourishing of Enlightenment thought, which emphasized reason, individual rights, and the social contract. Thinkers like John Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau laid the intellectual groundwork for modern democracy by advocating for the separation of powers, representative government, and popular sovereignty. American Revolution resulted in the creation of a new democratic republic based on Enlightenment principles. The U.S. Constitution of 1787 established a federal system with a strong

emphasis on checks and balances, serving as a model for future democracies. French Revolution was a radical upheaval that led to the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of the First French Republic. Although the revolution descended into the Reign of Terror and eventually gave way to Napoleon's authoritarian rule, it profoundly influenced democratic movements worldwide.

19th century saw the spread of democratic ideals, especially in Europe and the Americas. Many countries adopted constitutions and expanded suffrage, though these were often limited by class, race, or gender. Despite the spread of democracy, the 19th century also witnessed significant challenges. The rise of nationalism and imperialism often led to the suppression of democratic movements. For example, the revolutions of 1848 across Europe initially sought to establish democratic regimes, but most were quickly crushed by conservative forces. American Civil War was a critical test of democracy, centered on issues of slavery and states' rights. The Union's victory preserved the democratic system, but the post-war Reconstruction period saw significant struggles over civil rights for newly freed African Americans, with gains being rolled back during the Jim Crow era. early 20th century was a period of both democratic expansion and significant challenges. The Russian Revolution of 1917 led to the establishment of a communist regime, while World War I brought about the collapse of empires and the formation of new democratic states in Europe. interwar years (1918-1939) were marked by significant democratic decline in many countries. The Great Depression, economic instability, and the rise of extremist ideologies like fascism and communism led to the collapse of democracies in countries such as Germany, Italy, and Spain, which became authoritarian regimes under Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco, respectively. After World War II democracy experienced a resurgence, especially in Western Europe and North America, where the Marshall Plan and the establishment of international institutions like the United Nations promoted democratic governance. However, the Cold War (1947-1991) led to a global division between democratic and communist states, with many countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America experiencing military coups and authoritarian rule. late 20th century saw the third wave of democratization, beginning in the 1970s and accelerating after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Countries in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and parts of Africa transitioned to democratic systems. However, this period also saw challenges, such as the persistence of authoritarianism in some regions and the rise of "illiberal democracies," where formal democratic institutions existed but were undermined by autocratic leaders. While periods of democratic expansion have been followed by setbacks and declines, the overall trend has been towards the gradual spread of democratic governance. However, the 20th century, in particular demonstrated that democracy is fragile and must be continually defended against internal and external threats.

### **Democratic decline in Venezuela:**

democratic decline in Venezuela is not only a result of internal factors but also influenced by the hidden interests of both state and non-state actors. These interests have shaped the trajectory of Venezuela's political crisis and continue to impact its governance. Here's an overview of these hidden interests.

#### **State Actors**

Russia views Venezuela as a strategic ally in Latin America, a region historically influenced by the United States. By supporting the Maduro regime, Russia aims to counter U.S. influence in the Western Hemisphere. Russia has significant investments in Venezuela's oil and energy sectors, primarily through state-owned companies like Rosneft. In return, Venezuela has received military equipment, financial support, and political backing from Russia. Maintaining a foothold in Venezuela, Russia gains leverage in its broader geopolitical competition with the West. Venezuela serves as a site for military cooperation and

a potential base for intelligence operations close to the U.S. China is a major creditor to Venezuela, having provided billions of dollars in loans in exchange for oil. These loans have made Venezuela highly dependent on Chinese financial support, which has allowed the Maduro regime to bypass international sanctions and maintain its grip on power.<sup>1</sup> China's involvement in Venezuela aligns with its broader strategy of securing resources and expanding its influence in Latin America. By supporting Venezuela, China also secures a steady supply of oil and strengthens its presence in the region's. has long viewed Venezuela as a threat to its interests in Latin America, especially under Chávez and Maduro, who aligned themselves with anti-American regimes. The U.S. has supported opposition movements, imposed sanctions, and attempted to isolate the Maduro government internationally. Venezuela's vast oil reserves have always been of interest to the U.S. Despite the political conflict, U.S. oil companies, until recently, continued to have interests in Venezuelan oil production<sup>2</sup>.

### **Non-State Actors**

Venezuela has become a key transit country for drug trafficking, particularly cocaine from Colombia. The involvement of high-level officials in the Venezuelan government in drug trafficking, often referred to as the "Cartel of the Suns," has linked the state to organized crime, further entrenching authoritarian practices as the government relies on illicit revenue streams to maintain power. Political elite in Venezuela is also involved in money laundering operations, often facilitated by international networks. These financial crimes are tied to corruption within the government, undermining democratic institutions and fueling the decline. These pro-government armed groups operate with impunity and have been used by the Maduro regime to suppress opposition protests, intimidate dissidents, and maintain control over impoverished neighborhoods. Their existence is a tool of coercion and control, undermining any democratic opposition. These Colombian guerrilla groups have found refuge in Venezuela, with some reports suggesting that they cooperate with the Venezuelan military. Their presence contributes to the destabilization of the region and supports the regime's anti-U.S. stance. Various international networks, often based in countries like Turkey, Iran, and parts of the Middle East, have been involved in helping Venezuela evade international sanctions. These networks facilitate the sale of Venezuelan oil through shadowy channels, providing the regime with the hard currency needed to survive economically. With traditional financial avenues cut off, the Maduro government has also turned to cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin, and even launched its own cryptocurrency, the Petro, to bypass sanctions and secure funds.

### **Impact on Democratic Decline**

interplay of these hidden interests has had a profound impact on Venezuela's democratic decline. Dependence on foreign powers like Russia and China has allowed the Maduro government to resist internal and external pressure for democratic reforms. These countries have provided financial lifelines in exchange for strategic and economic concessions, entrenching the authoritarian regime. Involvement of criminal organizations has blurred the lines between the state and illicit actors, making it increasingly difficult to re-establish the rule of law and democratic governance. Use of paramilitary groups and international support has enabled the government to suppress opposition movements effectively, making it harder for democratic forces to gain traction. These hidden interests reveal how Venezuela's democratic

<sup>1</sup> Roberts, S. R. (2020). The Fall of Democracy and the Rise of Authoritarianism in Venezuela. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5mj6j3t8>

<sup>2</sup> Bull, B., & Rosales, A. (2020). The crisis in Venezuela: Drivers, transitions, and pathways. *109*, 1–20. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26936900>

decline is not solely an internal affair but is heavily influenced by the interests of powerful state and non-state actors, making the path to democratic restoration extremely challenging<sup>3</sup>.

### **Democratic decline in Turkey:**

democratic decline in Turkey under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been influenced by a range of hidden interests from both state and non-state actors. These actors have shaped Turkey's political trajectory by supporting or exploiting the government's shift toward authoritarianism. Here's an overview of these interests.

#### **State Actors**

Turkey's relationship with Russia has grown closer in recent years, particularly after the 2016 failed coup attempt. Erdoğan has sought to diversify Turkey's foreign policy away from the West, and Russia has been a willing partner in this strategy. The deepening ties include energy deals, military cooperation (such as the purchase of the S-400 missile system), and political support, which have allowed Erdoğan to consolidate power domestically without excessive pressure from the West. Russia benefits from Turkey's drift away from NATO and the EU. By strengthening ties with Turkey, Russia weakens the cohesion of NATO and gains influence in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. EU has a complex relationship with Turkey, particularly concerning the 2016 migration deal, where Turkey agreed to prevent migrants from crossing into Europe in exchange for financial aid and political concessions. This agreement has provided Erdoğan with leverage over the EU, as he can threaten to "open the gates" to Europe, reducing the EU's ability to push back against his authoritarian tendencies. Despite tensions EU remains one of Turkey's largest trading partners. Economic interdependence has led some EU countries to prioritize stability over democracy promotion, leading to a muted response to Turkey's democratic backsliding. U.S. has historically valued Turkey as a key NATO ally, particularly due to its strategic location near the Middle East and Russia. This strategic importance has often led to a cautious approach in criticizing Turkey's internal politics, especially when U.S. military bases, like Incirlik Air Base, are at stake. U.S.-Turkey relationship has been strained by Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 missile system, leading to Turkey's removal from the F-35 fighter jet program. However, U.S. interests in the region, including counterterrorism and regional stability, have led to a balancing act, where strategic concerns sometimes outweigh concerns about democratic decline.

#### **Non-State Actors**

Erdoğan's government has garnered support from various Islamist groups within and outside Turkey. These groups view Erdoğan as a leader who has successfully brought Islam back into the public sphere in a country that was traditionally secular under the Kemalist tradition. His policies, such as lifting the headscarf ban and expanding religious education, have strengthened his base among conservative and religious segments of society. Islamist movements in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, particularly those aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood, have also supported Erdoğan. Turkey's support for Islamist groups in countries like Egypt, Libya, and Syria has furthered its influence but has also contributed to regional instability. Erdoğan's government has systematically taken control over much of the Turkish media. Pro-government business elites have acquired major media outlets, turning them into propaganda tools for the government. In return, these elites receive favorable treatment, including government contracts and lenient regulatory oversight. Business elites who align with the AKP have

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<sup>3</sup> McCoy, J. L., & Smith, W. C. (1995). Democratic Disequilibrium in Venezuela. Pp- 113–179. <https://doi.org/10.2307/166273>

benefitted from lucrative state contracts and government favors, creating a system of crony capitalism. This economic patronage has helped maintain the AKP's grip on power, as it ties the economic fortunes of the business class to the regime's survival. Erdoğan has increasingly relied on nationalist rhetoric and policies, particularly after the failed 2016 coup. This shift has been marked by an alliance with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which has bolstered Erdoğan's base by appealing to nationalist and anti-Kurdish sentiments. Ongoing conflict with Kurdish separatists, primarily the PKK, has been used by Erdoğan to justify crackdowns on political opposition and civil liberties. Nationalist groups support these measures, seeing them as necessary for preserving Turkey's territorial integrity.

### **Impact on Democratic Decline**

The hidden interests of these state and non-state actors have contributed to Turkey's democratic decline in several ways. Aligning with powerful international actors like Russia and exploiting strategic partnerships with the EU and the U.S., Erdoğan has been able to maintain a degree of international legitimacy despite his authoritarian practices. Support of Islamist and nationalist groups has allowed Erdoğan to consolidate his power domestically by fostering a divided and polarized society where opposition is often equated with terrorism or betrayal of national values. Government's control over the media and its patronage networks have stifled dissent and created an environment where economic and political power is concentrated in the hands of those loyal to the regime. Democratic decline in Turkey is deeply intertwined with the hidden interests of both state and non-state actors. These actors have provided the Erdoğan regime with the tools and legitimacy needed to weaken democratic institutions and entrench authoritarian rule. The interplay of these interests complicates any efforts to reverse the decline and restore democratic governance in Turkey<sup>4</sup>.

### **Democratic decline in Hungary:**

Democratic decline in Hungary has been a significant topic of concern in recent years. This decline is often attributed to the actions of the ruling party, Fidesz, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Under Orbán, Hungary has seen a shift towards more authoritarian practices, including the centralization of power, weakening of democratic institutions, and restrictions on media freedom. Orbán's government has implemented reforms that undermine judicial independence, control over media, and civil society organizations. The changes to the constitution and electoral laws have been criticized for consolidating power and diminishing democratic checks and balances. The European Union (EU) has expressed concerns about democratic backsliding in Hungary and has taken actions such as launching infringement procedures and cutting funding. However, the effectiveness of these measures is debated, and Hungary has often managed to resist substantial pressure from the EU. Some argue that geopolitical interests play a role in the EU's handling of Hungary. For example, Hungary's strategic position in Central Europe and its complex relationship with Russia may influence how EU member states and other international actors engage with Hungary's democratic issues. Various NGOs and international watchdogs are actively monitoring and reporting on Hungary's democratic decline. These groups often work to raise awareness and apply pressure, but their impact can be limited by the government's efforts to undermine their influence and credibility. Interplay between these factors creates a challenging environment for addressing

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<sup>4</sup> Göğüş, S. İ., & Mannitz, S. (2016). Conclusion and outlook: The chances for democratic consolidation in Turkey. pp. 28–30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep14549.7>

democratic decline in Hungary, making it a multifaceted issue with both domestic and international dimensions<sup>5</sup>.

### **Democratic decline in Thailand:**

Thailand's democratic decline, particularly since the military coup in 2014 and the subsequent establishment of a military-backed government, has been influenced by a complex mix of internal and external factors. Here's a breakdown of the hidden interests and roles of various actors in this context.

#### **Internal Factors**

military coup in 2014, led by General Prayuth Chan-o-cha, established a regime that has since maintained a strong grip on power. The military-backed government has been criticized for undermining democratic institutions, limiting political freedoms, and suppressing dissent. Thailand has experienced significant political polarization, with conflicts between pro-democracy groups and those loyal to the monarchy and military. This polarization has made it challenging to build a unified response to democratic decline. 2017 Constitution drafted under the military government, has been criticized for creating a political system that favors the military and limits the power of elected officials. These changes have further entrenched the military's influence in politics.

#### **External Factors**

Thailand's strategic location in Southeast Asia makes it important to regional and global powers. Countries like the United States and China have their own geopolitical interests, which can affect their stance on Thailand's democratic situation. For instance, while Western nations have often criticized the democratic backsliding, China has maintained a relatively neutral or supportive stance, focusing more on economic and strategic ties. Thailand is a key player in regional trade and investment. Major economies might temper their criticism of democratic decline to protect their economic interests and trade relationships with Thailand.

#### **Non-State Actors**

Various local and international NGOs and human rights organizations have been vocal in condemning the erosion of democracy in Thailand. They often work to highlight abuses and mobilize international pressure, though their effectiveness can be limited by government crackdowns and restrictions. Both domestic and international media play a critical role in shaping perceptions of Thailand's democratic situation. Social media has also become a platform for activists to organize and express dissent, although it faces censorship and surveillance. Other Southeast Asian countries and regional organizations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), may have their own interests in Thailand's political stability. Their responses can vary based on how closely aligned they are with Thailand's government or their own domestic political considerations. democratic decline in Thailand is thus influenced by a complex interplay of internal dynamics, external geopolitical and economic interests, and the actions of various non-state actors.<sup>6</sup>

### **Democratic decline in Egypt:**

Democratic decline in Egypt, particularly since the military coup in 2013 that ousted President Mohamed Morsi, has been shaped by various internal and external factors. Here's a look at the hidden interests and roles of different actors.

<sup>5</sup> KOVACS, Z. (2019). HOW DEMOCRATIC IS Hungary 244–245. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26798309>

<sup>6</sup> Ferrara, F. (2011). Thailand: minimally stable, minimally democratic. pp. 512–528. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41308911>

**Internal Factors**

current government led by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi came to power through a military coup and has since maintained a strong grip on power. The military's influence over Egyptian politics and society has resulted in significant restrictions on political freedoms, suppression of dissent, and curtailment of civil liberties. Government has cracked down on opposition groups, independent media, and civil society organizations. Laws restricting freedom of expression, assembly, and association have been implemented, further eroding democratic norms. Economic difficulties and high unemployment rates have been used by the government to justify its policies and repression. The focus on economic stability and growth has sometimes overshadowed concerns about democratic governance.

**External Factors**

Egypt's strategic importance in the Middle East, including its control of the Suez Canal, makes it a key player in regional geopolitics. Countries such as the United States and Gulf Arab states have strategic interests in maintaining a stable relationship with Egypt, which can influence their response to the country's democratic decline. U.S. has historically provided significant military and economic aid to Egypt, partly to ensure regional stability and counterterrorism efforts. This aid often continues despite concerns about human rights and democratic practices, reflecting a balancing act between strategic interests and values. Countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have supported the Sisi government both financially and politically. They have a vested interest in maintaining a stable Egypt due to shared strategic and security concerns, including countering Islamist movements. Egypt's relations with other major powers, such as China and Russia, have also played a role in shaping its political landscape. Both China and Russia have provided support to Egypt in various forms, often focusing on economic and military cooperation rather than pressing for democratic reforms.

**Non-State Actors**

International NGOs and human rights organizations have been active in documenting and condemning the human rights abuses and democratic erosion in Egypt. They often face challenges operating within Egypt due to restrictive laws and government crackdowns. While international media outlets report on Egypt's democratic decline, the government has exerted significant control over local media and has attempted to censor social media platforms. Nevertheless, social media remains a tool for activists to mobilize and voice dissent, despite government efforts to monitor and suppress online content. Countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have their own political and strategic interests that can affect their stance on Egypt's political situation. Regional dynamics and alliances can influence how much pressure is applied to Egypt regarding its democratic practices. Democratic decline in Egypt is influenced by a combination of internal political repression, strategic external interests, and the actions of various non-state actors. The complex interplay of these factors creates a challenging environment for addressing and reversing democratic erosion in the country<sup>7</sup>.

**Democratic decline in Afghanistan:**

democratic decline in Afghanistan, particularly following the U.S. withdrawal in 2021 and the Taliban's return to power, has been driven by a range of internal and external factors. Here's an overview of the hidden interests and roles of various actors in this context.

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<sup>7</sup> Abdelmoez, Joel W. (1 June 2017). "Is it a revolution or a coup? Scandinavian media representations of the ousting of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsy". pp.109–131. [doi:10.1386/ajms.6.2.109\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/ajms.6.2.109_1)

### Internal Factors

Taliban's return to power has led to significant democratic erosion. The group's strict interpretation of Sharia law, its restrictions on women's rights, and its suppression of political dissent have dismantled many of the democratic gains made over the previous two decades. Afghanistan has long faced political instability, characterized by weak central governance, corruption, and factionalism. This instability has made it difficult to build and sustain democratic institutions. Ongoing violence and security issues have further complicated efforts to establish and maintain democratic governance. The presence of various insurgent groups and criminal networks continues to undermine stability.

### External Factors

U.S. had invested heavily in Afghanistan over two decades, focusing on counterterrorism and building democratic institutions. The abrupt withdrawal in 2021 and the subsequent collapse of the Afghan government revealed the challenges and limitations of these efforts. The U.S. and its allies have been criticized for not having a clearer exit strategy and for the consequences of the rapid Taliban takeover.<sup>8</sup> Pakistan has long been a key player in Afghan politics, with complex and often ambiguous relations with the Taliban. Pakistan's strategic interests include managing its own security concerns and influence in Afghanistan. Its support or tolerance of the Taliban has been a contentious issue in regional geopolitics. China has shown increasing interest in Afghanistan, focusing on economic opportunities and stability in the region. China's engagement is partly driven by its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and concerns about potential instability affecting its own interests, including security issues related to its Xinjiang region. Iran has been involved in Afghanistan's political dynamics, often supporting certain factions and maintaining influence through its interactions with both the Taliban and other local actors. Iran's interests include managing its borders and addressing refugee flows. India has had a history of engagement with Afghanistan, supporting democratic initiatives and development projects. However, the return of the Taliban has complicated India's strategic position, given its concerns about regional stability and its rivalry with Pakistan.

### Non-State Actors

Various international and local NGOs have been working to address humanitarian needs and advocate for human rights in Afghanistan. However, their efforts face severe challenges under Taliban rule, including restrictions on their operations and increased risks for their staff. The international media has played a crucial role in reporting on the humanitarian and human rights situation in Afghanistan. Social media has also been a platform for advocacy and information sharing, though it faces censorship and repression under the current regime. Various terrorist organizations, such as ISIS-K, have been active in Afghanistan, adding to the instability and complicating the political and security situation. Their presence influences both internal dynamics and external responses. Democratic decline in Afghanistan is influenced by a complex interplay of internal factors, such as the Taliban's authoritarian rule and ongoing instability, as well as external interests from major powers and regional actors. Non-state actors also play a significant role, although their effectiveness and operations are constrained by the current political and security environment.

### Democratic decline in Myanmar:

democratic decline in Myanmar, particularly following the military coup in February 2021, involves a

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<sup>8</sup> SOARE, S. R. (2020). WHAT IF ... THE EU AND THE US LAUNCHED A PARTNERSHIP TO DEFEND DEMOCRACY? In F. Gaub (Ed.), *WHAT IF ...?: 14 futures for 2024*. pp. 53–59. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep21146.12>



complex mix of internal and external factors, with various state and non-state actors playing significant roles. Here's a look at these influences.

### **Internal Factors**

Myanmar military, known as the Tatmadaw, has seized control and established a military junta, reversing the democratic gains made since 2011. The coup has led to widespread human rights abuses, suppression of dissent, and the dismantling of democratic institutions. Myanmar has long experienced ethnic and communal conflicts, which have been exacerbated under military rule. The military's policies and actions against various ethnic groups, including the Rohingya, have intensified internal divisions and resistance. In response to the coup, there has been significant civil resistance, including protests and civil disobedience movements. The military's brutal crackdown on these movements has further destabilized the country and deepened the democratic crisis.

### **External Factors**

China has strategic interests in Myanmar, including economic investments through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and regional influence. Despite international condemnation of the coup, China has maintained a relatively neutral stance, focusing on protecting its economic interests and ensuring stability in its neighboring country. India has been cautious in its approach, balancing its strategic interests with concerns over human rights. India has a significant interest in regional stability and managing its border with Myanmar, as well as countering the influence of China in the region. The U.S. and European countries have been vocal in condemning the coup and imposing targeted sanctions on Myanmar's military leaders. Their responses include diplomatic pressure, sanctions, and support for humanitarian efforts, reflecting their commitment to promoting democracy and human rights. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has struggled with its response to the crisis. While ASEAN has attempted to mediate and facilitate dialogue, its effectiveness has been limited due to the principle of non-interference and varying national interests among member states. Thailand as a neighboring country, has its own strategic and economic interests in Myanmar. The Thai government's response has been cautious, balancing diplomatic relations with concerns about regional stability and refugee flows.

### **Non-State Actors**

International and local NGOs have been actively involved in providing humanitarian aid and advocating for human rights in Myanmar. Their work is often hindered by the military's restrictions and the challenging operational environment. International media has played a crucial role in reporting on the crisis, while social media has been a platform for activists and protesters to organize and share information. However, the military has attempted to control and censor information, making it difficult for independent reporting to reach a global audience. Various ethnic armed groups and resistance movements have been involved in armed resistance against the military junta. Their actions and alliances with other resistance forces significantly impact the overall stability and political dynamics in Myanmar. democratic decline in Myanmar is driven by a combination of internal factors, such as military repression and ethnic conflicts, and external influences, including the strategic interests of major powers and regional actors. Non-state actors, including civil society organizations and ethnic groups, also play critical roles in shaping the situation, though they face significant challenges under the current regime.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Banerjee, Sreeparna.(2022,sep 15).*The democracy conundrum in Myanmar*. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-democracy-conundrum-in-myanmar>

**Democratic decline in Kenya:**

democratic decline in Kenya has been influenced by a range of internal and external factors, with various state and non-state actors playing significant roles. Here's an overview of the hidden interests and influences at play.

**Internal Factors**

Kenya has experienced political instability and electoral violence, particularly during and after elections. Disputed elections and the associated violence, such as the 2007-2008 post-election violence, have undermined democratic processes and eroded public trust in institutions. Corruption remains a significant challenge in Kenya, affecting various levels of government and undermining democratic governance. Corruption can lead to weak institutions, lack of accountability, and erosion of public confidence in the political system. Issues related to governance, including the concentration of power, the weakening of democratic institutions, and the erosion of checks and balances, have contributed to democratic decline. There have been concerns about the manipulation of constitutional and legal frameworks to entrench power.

**External Factors**

U.S. and other Western countries have strategic interests in Kenya due to its role in regional stability, counterterrorism efforts, and economic relations. While they have generally supported democratic reforms, their responses can be influenced by broader strategic considerations, such as security partnerships and economic interests. China has increasingly invested in Kenya through infrastructure projects and economic partnerships. China's engagement often focuses on economic development and does not always prioritize democratic governance issues. The Chinese government's interests include securing trade routes and resources, as well as expanding its influence in the region. As a neighboring country Ethiopia has its own political and security interests that can influence its stance on Kenya's internal issues. Regional stability and cross-border relations impact Ethiopia's engagement with Kenya. Kenya's involvement in Somalia, particularly in the context of counterterrorism and military operations against Al-Shabaab, affects regional dynamics and Kenya's international relations. Somalia's instability also has implications for Kenya's internal security and governance.

**Non-State Actors**

Kenyan and international NGOs play a critical role in advocating for democratic reforms, monitoring elections, and addressing human rights issues. Their work often faces challenges due to political interference and restrictions on civil society activities. Independent media and social media platforms are important for transparency and accountability. However, there have been instances of media repression, censorship, and harassment of journalists, impacting their ability to report freely and hold the government accountable. Influential political and business elites have significant power in Kenya and can impact democratic processes through their control over resources, media, and political influence. Their interests often align with maintaining the status quo or advancing their own agendas, which can contribute to democratic decline. Democratic decline in Kenya is shaped by internal factors such as political instability and corruption, as well as external influences including geopolitical interests of major powers and regional dynamics. Non-state actors, including civil society organizations and media, play crucial roles but face significant challenges in advocating for democratic reforms and accountability.

**Democratic decline in Bangladesh:**

Democratic decline in Bangladesh, particularly under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and

the Awami League, is influenced by a range of internal and external factors. Here's an overview of the hidden interests and roles of various state and non-state actors.<sup>10</sup>

### Internal Factors

Awami League government has been criticized for its increasingly authoritarian practices, including the suppression of opposition parties, curtailment of press freedoms, and manipulation of electoral processes. The government's control over state institutions and the judiciary has also been a point of concern. Elections in Bangladesh have been marred by allegations of rigging, voter suppression, and violence. The 2018 general election, in particular, faced significant criticism for being neither free nor fair, leading to widespread accusations of electoral malpractice. There has been a crackdown on dissent, including the harassment and arrest of activists, journalists, and opposition leaders. Laws restricting freedom of speech and assembly have been enacted, further stifling democratic engagement.

### External Factors

U.S. and European countries have expressed concerns about human rights and democratic governance in Bangladesh. Their responses often include diplomatic pressure and targeted sanctions, but these measures are balanced against strategic and economic interests in the region. China has been a significant economic partner for Bangladesh, investing in infrastructure and development projects. China's interest in Bangladesh is largely economic, focusing on trade, investment, and regional influence. China's engagement often downplays democratic issues in favor of maintaining strong economic ties. India has a strategic interest in Bangladesh due to their shared border and regional security concerns. India has generally supported the current government for its role in countering extremism and maintaining regional stability, which can influence its stance on democratic issues in Bangladesh. Situation in Myanmar particularly the Rohingya crisis, has implications for Bangladesh. While the government's handling of the refugee crisis can affect its international standing, regional dynamics involving Myanmar also impact Bangladesh's domestic and foreign policies.

### Non-State Actors

Local and international NGOs have been active in advocating for human rights and democratic reforms in Bangladesh. Their work often faces significant challenges due to government restrictions and the risk of retaliation against activists and organizations. Independent media and social media platforms are crucial for reporting on democratic issues and human rights abuses. However, media freedom has been under threat, with restrictions on journalists and attempts to control online content. Social media is also a space for dissent and activism, though it faces censorship and surveillance. Opposition parties, particularly the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its allies, have faced significant repression. The lack of a level playing field for political competition affects democratic engagement and stability. democratic decline in Bangladesh is driven by internal factors such as authoritarian governance and electoral issues, and is influenced by external interests, including geopolitical considerations and economic partnerships. Non-state actors, including civil society organizations and media, play critical roles in advocating for democratic reforms but face considerable obstacles in their efforts.<sup>11</sup>

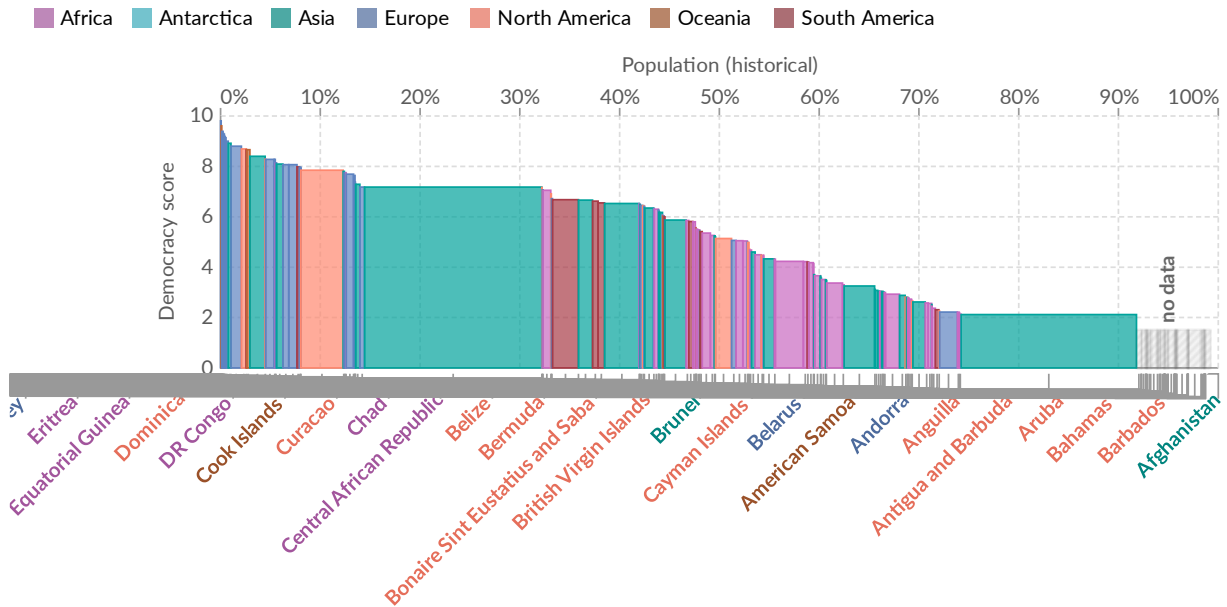
<sup>10</sup> International Crisis Group. (2024). New Challenges. In *Beyond the Election: Overcoming Bangladesh's Political Deadlock* .pp. 9–18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep56972.6>

<sup>11</sup> Ali, Syed Mohammad.(2022, Sep 15). *Bangladesh's Declining Democracy*. <https://newlinesinstitute.org/political-systems/bangladeshs-declining-democracy/>

## Distribution of democracy index, 2023

Our World in Data

Based on the expert estimates and index by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2006-2023)<sup>1</sup>, weighted by countries' populations. It combines information on the extent to which citizens can choose their political leaders in free and fair elections, enjoy civil liberties, prefer democracy over other political systems, can and do participate in politics, and have a functioning government that acts on their behalf. It ranges from 0 to 10 (most democratic).



Data source: Economist Intelligence Unit (2006-2023)

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1. Economist Intelligence Unit: The Economist Intelligence Unit publishes data and research on democracy and human rights. It relies on evaluations by its own country experts, supplemented by representative surveys of regular citizens to assess political institutions and the protection of rights. The Economist Intelligence Unit is the research and analysis division of The Economist Group, the sister company of The Economist newspaper. Learn more: Democracy data: how do researchers measure democracy?

Source : Our world in data. <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/democracy-index-ieu?time=earliest>

### Conclusion:

democratic decline a range of actors—both common and new—play significant roles. Here's a breakdown of these actors and how they influence the erosion of democratic norms. According to the above democratic table, various states are showing signs of democratic decline. Some of these states may experience a collapse of the democratic system in the coming decade due to military intervention, civil rebellion and non-state actors.

### Common Actors

Leaders or regimes that centralize power, undermine democratic institutions, and suppress dissent. Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey. These leaders often manipulate laws and institutions to extend their control, curtail freedoms, and weaken checks and balances. Ruling and opposition parties that either support or resist authoritarian trends. Awami League in Bangladesh and the ruling parties in various other countries. Parties may engage in electoral manipulation, suppress opposition, or fail to uphold democratic principles. Courts and legal institutions that can be either upholders of democracy or tools for its erosion. Courts that become politicized or are used to target political opponents. When the judiciary is compromised, it can undermine legal protections and facilitate authoritarian practices. Organizations and groups that advocate for democratic norms and human rights.

Human rights organizations, electoral watchdogs, and advocacy groups. These actors work to hold governments accountable and promote democratic practices, though they often face repression and challenges. Press and media outlets that provide information and scrutinize government actions. Independent newspapers, investigative journalism outlets, and online media platforms. Media plays a crucial role in exposing abuses and informing the public, but can be censored or controlled in authoritarian contexts.

### ***New Actors***

Online platforms that facilitate communication, activism, and information dissemination. Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok. Social media can amplify dissent and mobilize protests but is also used for surveillance, misinformation, and state control. Technology firms that develop tools for communication, surveillance, and data management. Companies providing surveillance technology or software used for censorship. These companies can either support democratic engagement through their platforms or enable authoritarian regimes to control and monitor populations. Bodies that engage in diplomacy, provide aid, and influence global norms. United Nations, European Union, and various international financial institutions. They can exert pressure through sanctions, diplomatic channels, and funding conditions, though their effectiveness varies. Businesses and corporations that may have political and economic stakes in democratic or authoritarian regimes. Companies investing in authoritarian states or lobbying for favorable regulations. Corporate interests can shape political outcomes through economic leverage, lobbying, and influencing public opinion. Non-state actors that engage in political violence or resistance. Rebel groups, militias, or terrorist organizations. These groups can impact democratic processes by contributing to instability, violence, and challenges to state authority. dynamics of democratic decline involve a diverse set of actors, including traditional political and judicial entities as well as new players such as tech companies, social media platforms, and international organizations. Each actor contributes to or mitigates democratic erosion in different ways depending on their interests and influence.

### **Suggestions for democratic countries:**

#### **1. Equal distribution of resources and services:**

Part of the reasons for the democratic decline in the above states is the resentment among the citizens due to the lack of equal distribution of resources, services and political participation. Also due to high taxes on the basic amenities of the citizens, the citizens can overthrow the current system. A vivid example of this case is Kenya and Bangladesh. Therefore, the states are advised not to take such steps otherwise the citizens will overthrow the democratic system.

#### **2. Control over the activities of the state and non-state actors**

There is evidence of involvement of many other states and non-state actors in the democratic decline of the above states, due to which a healthy and stable democratic system was overthrown. For example, military intervention in Myanmar, Taliban intervention in Afghanistan, etc. Therefore, democratic states should control the army, diplomatic solution of other states and non-state groups who want to end democracy should be resolved by use of force.

#### **3. Democratic Color Revolution**

democratic system is moving towards decline due to the above reasons. In the 20th century, the democratic system has been uprooted from about 40 states and in the 21st century, it has been uprooted from 10 states. Therefore, to stop this downfall, democratic states should do a democratic color revolution. In this revolution, using economic, force, rebellion, democracy should be established in the converted state. This

democratic balance should be used in the region, continent and world i.e. in increasing order. This will be the fourth wave of democracy.

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