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Deterring Dictatorship:
Explaining Democratic Resilience since 1900*

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Abstract

Democracy is under threat globally from democratically elected leaders engaging in erosion of media freedom, civil society, and the rule of law. What distinguishes democracies that prevail against the forces of autocratization? This article breaks new ground by conceptualizing democratic resilience as a two-stage process, whereby democracies first exhibit resilience by avoiding autocratization altogether and second, by avoiding democratic breakdown given that autocratization has occurred. To model this two-stage process, we introduce the Episodes of Regime Transformation (ERT) dataset tracking autocratization since 1900. These data demonstrate the extraordinary nature of the current wave of autocratization: Fifty-nine (61%) episodes of democratic regression in the ERT began after 1992. Since then, autocratization episodes have killed an unprecedented 36 democratic regimes. Using a selection-model, we simultaneously test for factors that make democracies more prone to experience democratic regression and, given this, factors that explain democratic breakdown. Results from the explanatory analysis suggest that constraints on the executive are positively associated with a reduced risk of autocratization. Once autocratization is ongoing, we find that a long history of democratic institutions, durable judicial constraints on the executive, and more democratic neighbours are factors that make democracy more likely to prevail.

Introduction

Democracy is under threat globally. Over 20% of the world's polities and one-third of the global population are now experiencing substantial and sustained declines in democracy.[2] As this article demonstrates, democracies are particularly vulnerable during this "third wave" of autocratization.[3] Of the 96 episodes of autocratization within democracies between 1900 and 2019, 59 (61%) began after 1992. Since then, autocratization has killed an unprecedented 36 democratic regimes, causing over 700 million people to lose access to democratic institutions. Rather than employing blatant and unconstitutional means (e.g. military or self-coups),[4] democratically elected leaders increasingly engage in more subtle and nuanced attacks on democratic institutions and practices, such as executive aggrandizement,[5] curtailment of media freedoms,[6] and the gradual erosion of horizontal accountability.[7] Freedom of expression and civil society are typically affected first and the most.[8]

What distinguishes democracies that prevail against a global wave of autocratization from those that do not? Our object of inquiry is democratic resilience – the capacity to prevent substantial regression in the quality of democratic institutions and practices.[9] Democratic resilience takes two forms. Democracies can prevent autocratization altogether, meaning they never experience a substantial or sustained decline in democratic qualities (such as New Zealand and Sweden). Alternatively, democracies may experience an episode of autocratization but pro-democracy actors and institutions manage to change the course and avert democratic breakdown (such as South Korea from 2008–2016, and Benin from 2007–2012).

These two forms of democratic resilience are conceptually and empirically distinct. For democracies, episodes of autocratization are uncommon. We find only 96 such episodes in 70 polities from 1900 to 2019. This suggests that a given democratic country-year exhibits an overall high resilience, all else equal. However, once a democracy enters an autocratization episode, democratic resilience becomes unlikely. A mere 19 episodes of democratic regression managed to avert breakdown. Thus, democratic resilience manifests as a two-stage

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[2] Maerz et al., "State of the world 2019: Autocratization Surges - Resistance Grows."
[3] Lührmann and Lindberg, "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?"
[4] Svolik, "Which democracies will last? Coups, incumbent takeovers, and the dynamic of democratic consolidation."
[5] Bermeo, "On democratic backsliding."
[6] Mechkova, Lührmann, and Lindberg, "How much democratic backsliding?"
[7] Coppedge, "Eroding regimes: What, where, and when?"
[8] Maerz et al., "State of the world 2019: Autocratization Surges - Resistance Grows."
[9] This builds on concepts of democratic durability and resilience as defined by Burnell and Calvert, "The resilience of democracy: An introduction."

phenomenon, where some democracies show resilience by avoiding autocratization altogether, and others, after having "selected into" an episode of autocratization, prevail by averting breakdown.

Existing studies typically address this two-stage process by modelling democratic breakdown as a discrete outcome, ignoring potentially important selection effects in the process.[10] Alternatively, building on Lührmann and Lindberg,[11] we take an *episodes* approach that treats autocratization as a process. To do so, we use the V-Dem data[12] to develop the Episodes of Regime Transformation (ERT) dataset, covering democratization and autocratization episodes in most political units from 1900 to 2019.[13] The episode approach enables us to empirically model the two-stage process of democratic resilience using a Heckman selection model. In the first "selection" stage model, we assess which factors are associated with resilience to experiencing an autocratization episode. In the second "outcome" stage, we analyse what factors are associated with resilience to democratic breakdown, conditional on being in an episode of democratic regression.

We offer several novel insights into democratic resilience. First, our data provides the most comprehensive coverage of autocratization episodes from 1900 to 2019, and for the first time, codes subtypes of democratic regression and autocratic regression and outcomes of these episodes. This approach generates new information on the scope and nature of autocratization. We find that democracies are increasingly susceptible to undergoing autocratization and that once autocratization begins, avoiding democratic breakdown is very rare. Second, our empirical models suggest that democracies with stronger constraints on the executive are both less likely to undergo democratic regression and if they do, they are more likely to avert breakdown. High levels of economic development in democracies also reduce the probability of experiencing an episode of autocratization. In addition, we find that neighbourhood levels of democracy play a crucial role; the breakdown of democracy is less likely in regions where democratic institutions are the norm. Finally, countries with a long democratic experience are also more resilient to breakdown once democratic regression is ongoing.

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[10] E.g. Svolik, "Authoritarian reversals and democratic consolidation"; Bernhard, Nordstrom, and Reenock, "Economic performance, institutional intermediation, and democratic survival"; Alemán and Yang, "A duration analysis of democratic transitions and authoritarian backslides"

[11] Lührmann and Lindberg, "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?"

[12] Coppedge et al., "V-Dem Dataset V10"

[13] Combined with our coding of episodes of democratization, their subtypes, and outcomes, the ERT dataset provides a useful new tool for scholars to explore regime transformation since 1900. Maerz et al., "Vdemdata – and R package to load, explore and work with the most recent V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy) dataset"; Edgell et al. "Episodes of Regime Transformation (ERT) dataset codebook, v1.0".

Existing insights into democratic resilience

The literature on democratic breakdown and survival informs much of what we know about democratic resilience. Scholars in this field typically test for the effects of structural determinants on the probability of democratic survival or breakdown as events.[14] Alternatively, they may look at more incremental regressions (sometimes termed backsliding, reversal, or erosion) using annual changes in measures of democracy.[15] We focus here on four main determinants from the literature: institutional constraints on the executive, economic factors, neighbouring regimes, and previous democratic experience.

Constraints on the executive

A prominent body of work concerns the "perils of presidentialism".[16] According to Linz, separate legislative and executive elections create a dual legitimacy and individual mandate of the executive that predisposes political actors to view presidential systems as a zero-sum game. This discourages coalitions and a diversity of viewpoints, while concentrating substantial powers in one individual.[17] In effect, presidential systems are more prone to political polarization and deadlock, personalization of politics, and exclusion of losers when the winner takes-it-all, thus furthering military coups and other types of breakdown compared to parliamentary democracies.[18]

Noting that the United States is the only durable presidential democracy,[19] several large-N studies find a negative relationship between presidentialism and rates of democratic survival.[20] Case evidence suggests that executives in presidential democracies are likely to "rule at the edge of the constitution" because the legislature has limited removal powers.[21] In

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[14] E.g. Svolik, "Authoritarian reversals and democratic consolidation"; Hollyer, Rosendorff and Vreeland, "Transparency, Protest and Democratic Stability"; Bernhard, Nordstrom, and Reenock, "Economic performance, institutional intermediation, and democratic survival"

[15] E.g. Ginsburg and Huq, "How to save a constitutional democracy"; Erdmann, "Transition from Democracy. Loss of Quality, Hybridisation and Breakdown of Democracy"; Mechkova, Lührmann, and Lindberg, "How much democratic backsliding?"

[16] Linz, "The perils of presidentialism."

[17] Linz, "The breakdown of democratic regimes"; Linz, "The perils of presidentialism"; Linz and Valenzuela, "The failure of presidential democracy"

[18] Kaufman and Haggard, "Democratic decline in the United States: What can we learn from middle-income backsliding?"

[19] E.g. Linz, "The perils of presidentialism"; Cheibub, Presidentialism, parliamentarism, and democracy.

[20] E.g. Mainwaring, "Presidentialism, multipartism, and democracy: The difficult combination"; Bernhard, Nordstrom, and Reenock, "Economic performance, institutional intermediation, and democratic survival"; Riggs, "Presidentialism versus parliamentarism: Implications for representativeness and legitimacy"; Svolik, "Which democracies will last? Coups, incumbent takeovers, and the dynamic of democratic consolidation."

[21] Stepan and Skach, "Constitutional frameworks and democratic consolidation: Parliamentarianism versus presidentialism."

response, scholars and practitioners often promote parliamentarism to strengthen democratic endurance, particularly in developing countries and divided societies.[22] However, several critiques contend that the relationship is spurious, driven by presidentialism being adopted in countries already susceptible to democratic breakdown due to prior experiences with military rule[23] or democratic instability.[24] Other scholars warn that an uncritical embrace of parliamentarism in ethnically-divided countries may not produce the desired effect.[25]

Recent trends suggest that attacks on democracy are often driven by a concentration of power in democratically elected executives. This calls for revisiting Linz's opening statement, which centres on the effects of weak constraints on the executive. Empirically, the extent to which the executive is constrained *de facto* varies considerably both within and between systems of government. Executive aggrandizement affects both presidential and parliamentary systems, as the examples of Hungary and Poland currently illustrate.[26] In effect, the phenomenon of "presidential hegemony" poses a potential risk to democratic stability everywhere.[27]

The Linz-thesis is yet to be tested using granular data on the specific causal mechanism of weak constraints on the executive.[26] Rather than relying solely on *de jure* institutions, the V-Dem data provides the opportunity to test this theory using measures of *de facto* powers. Our expectation is that stronger constraints on the executive by the legislature and the judiciary are positively associated with both a lower likelihood of autocratization episodes in democracies and greater resilience to democratic breakdown once such an episode has begun.

Economic factors

Since Lipset's seminal work on the societal effects of economic development, questions about the links between economics and democratic stability have preoccupied the discipline.[28] While many view Lipset as the birthplace of the modernization theory, his original focus is actually on democratic resilience, arguing that "the more the well-to-do a nation, the greater the

[22] Lijphart, Democracy in plural societies: A comparative exploration; Lijphart, "Constitutional design for divided societies."
[23.] Cheibub, Presidentialism, parliamentarism, and democracy.
[24] Hiroi and Omori, "Perils of parliamentarism? Political systems and the stability of democracy revisited."
[25] E.g. Wilson, "A Closer Look at the Limits of Consociationalism."
[26] Bermeo, "On democratic backsliding."
[27] Pérez-Liñán, Schmidt, and Vairo, "Presidential hegemony and democratic backsliding in Latin America, 1925–2016."
[28] Lipset, "Some social requisites of democracy: Economic development and political legitimacy."

chances that it will *sustain* democracy" (emphasis added).[29] Some tests of Lipset's theory such as by Przeworski and Limongi suggest that democracies become resilient to breakdown once they are above a certain threshold level of income - at the time $6,000 (GNP/cap, PPP).[30] Several studies find that positive economic growth predicts democratic survival,[31] but this may be good for the stability of any regime, including autocracies.[32] Overall, the expectation is that a better quality of life makes people more likely to support the status quo over those seeking to undo the existing order.

Indicators of economic development are now standard practice in models estimating democratization, democratic breakdown, and democratic survival.[33] In line with the bulk of previous studies, we expect that higher levels of economic development will make democracies more resilient to experiencing an autocratization episode. Once a democracy selects into an episode of autocratization, we remain agnostic about the potential stabilizing effects of development.

Neighbourhood effects

Several studies provide evidence of diffusion effects across countries. This is often described as a "pull towards the regional mean" – or a tendency for countries "left behind" to eventually adapt to regional norms about institutional configurations for autocratic as well as democratic regimes by way of diffusion, emulation, spill-over, or demonstration effects.[34] In light of the

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[29] Ibid., 75.
[30] For example, Burkhart and Lewis-Beck, "Comparative Democracy: The Economic Development Thesis"; Przeworski et al., Democracy and development: Political institutions and well-being in the world, 1950-1990; Boix and Stokes, "Endogenous democratization"; Epstein et al., "Democratic transitions"; Teorell, Determinants of democratization: Explaining regime change in the world, 1972–2006. Przeworski and Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and facts," 165.
[31] For instance, Gasiorowski, "Economic Crisis and Political Regime Change: An Event History Analysis"; Gates et al., "Institutional Inconsistency and Political Instability: Polity Duration, 1800– 2000"; Morlino and Quaranta, "What is the impact of the economic crisis on democracy? Evidence from Europe."
[32] E.g. Alemán and Yang, "A duration analysis of democratic transitions and authoritarian backslides"; Svolik, "Authoritarian reversals and democratic consolidation"; Feng, "Democracy, political stability and economic growth"; Gates et al., "Institutional Inconsistency and Political Instability: Polity Duration, 1800–2000."
[33] For example Olson, "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development"; Teorell, Determinants of democratization: Explaining regime change in the world, 1972–2006; Morlino and Quaranta, "What is the impact of the economic crisis on democracy? Evidence from Europe."
[34] E.g. Brinks and Coppedge, "Diffusion is no illusion: Neighbor emulation in the third wave of democracy"; Gleditsch and Ward, "Diffusion and the international context of democratization"; Tansey, Koehler, and Schmotz, "Ties to the Rest: Autocratic Linkages and Regime Survival"; Bader, Grävingholt, and Kästner, "Would autocracies promote autocracy? A political economy perspective on regime-type export in regional neighbourhoods"; Risse and Babayan, "Democracy promotion and the challenges of illiberal regional powers: introduction to the special issue"; Gleditsch, All international politics is local: The diffusion of conflict, integration, and democratization; Gleditsch and Ward, "Diffusion and the international context of democratization"; Houle and Kayser, "The Two-step Model of Clustered Democratization."; Gates et al., "Institutional Inconsistency and Political Instability: Polity Duration, 1800–2000."

gradual nature of democratic regression during the third wave, we expect at most small neighbourhood effects on the probability of experiencing democratic regression. Once a democracy opts into an episode of autocratization, however, we hypothesize that the complete dismantling of democracy becomes more difficult for aspiring autocrats in more democratic regions.

Previous democratic experience

Previous experience under democracy may reinforce democratic survival through the "construction of solid links between the democratic institutions and society".[35] Some scholars suggest that the institutionalization of democratic procedures like party systems and judicial institutions[36] helps to address "problems of monitoring and social coordination that complicate democratic compromise".[37] Others claim that election cycles have a self-reinforcing, self-improving quality, altering the incentives to accept the rules of the game.[38] Indeed, everyday experiences living under democracy seem to promote democratic attitudes within society, making successful challenges to democracy less likely over time.[39] Based on these findings, we expect that previous experience with democracy will decrease the likelihood of democratic regression. If a democracy nevertheless experiences autocratization, we hypothesize that countries with longer democratic histories will show a greater resilience to democratic breakdown.

An episodes approach to democratic resilience

While some partial exceptions exist,[40] previous insights on democratic resilience tend to rely on a conceptualization of regime *transitions* as events, i.e. democratic breakdowns occur at a specific point in time and democratic survival or durability is indicated by the absence of a breakdown in a given year. This approach overlooks the important conceptual distinction between two forms of democratic resilience - the complete avoidance of autocratization

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[35] Tomini and Wagemann, "Varieties of contemporary democratic breakdown and regression: A comparative analysis," 690.

[36] Pérez-Liñán and Mainwaring, "Regime legacies and levels of democracy: evidence from Latin America."

[37] Reenock, Staton, and Radean, "Legal institutions and democratic survival," 491.

[38] Lindberg, Democracy and elections in Africa, 144.

[39] Putnam, Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy; Persson and Tabellini, "Democratic capital: the nexus of political and economic change"; Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales, "Long-term persistence"; Grosfeld and Zhuravskaya, "Cultural vs. economic legacies of empires: Evidence from the partition of Poland."

[40] Erdmann, "Transition from Democracy. Loss of Quality, Hybridisation and Breakdown of Democracy"; Ginsburg and Huq, "How to save a constitutional democracy."

altogether and the ability to avert breakdown once autocratization has begun. A rich comparative literature suggests that democratic breakdowns are the culmination of episodes of autocratization – a process of regime *transformation* producing substantial declines in democracy over a sustained period. In democracies, autocratization entails intra- and inter-elite bargaining between regime insiders and opposition forces.[41] This can unfold over an extended period and does not always end with a complete transition to autocracy.[42] Focusing on democratic breakdowns as events could "blind us to potentially important and theoretically revealing cases."[43] This is relevant today, as the world experiences a wave of autocratization characterized by gradual regressive reforms in many democracies whose fates as of yet remain uncertain.[44] For these reasons, we adopt the episodes approach to studying regime transformation.

Conceptualizing episodes of autocratization

Based on Lührmann and Lindberg, we define autocratization as any "substantial de-facto decline of core institutional requirements for electoral democracy."[45] This definition is encompassing, allowing for autocratization to occur in both democratic and autocratic regimes.[46] We speak of *episodes* of autocratization to capture periods with a definitive start and end date during which substantial and sustained declines in the quality of democracy take place.[47] These transformations may be incremental and may not necessarily yield a complete *transition* between democracy and autocracy. This allows us to capture the full range of possibilities when it comes to democratic resilience, combining the benefits of studying autocratization as a process unfolding over time with those achieved through "breakdown as event"-models.

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[41] E.g. Linz, The breakdown of democratic regimes; Bermeo, Ordinary people in extraordinary times: The citizenry and the breakdown of democracy; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, Democracies and dictatorships in Latin America: emergence, survival, and fall.

[42] E.g. Tilly, Contention and democracy in Europe, 1650-2000; Epstein et al., "Democratic transitions"; Linz and Stepan, Problems of democratic transition and consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and post-communist Europe; O'Donnell and Schmitter, Transitions from authoritarian rule: Tentative conclusions about uncertain democracies.

[43] Ziblatt, "How did Europe democratize?," 326.

[44] See Lührmann and Lindberg, "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?"; Bermeo, "On democratic backsliding."

[45] Lührmann and Lindberg, "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?"

[46] It is also, notably, the mirror of democratization - or the substantial improvement of electoral democracy over a sustained period of time. See Wilson, et al. "Successful and Failed Episodes of Democratization: Conceptualization, Identification, and Description."

[47] Lührmann and Lindberg, "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?"; Wilson et al., "Successful and Failed Episodes of Democratization: Conceptualization, Identification, and Description."
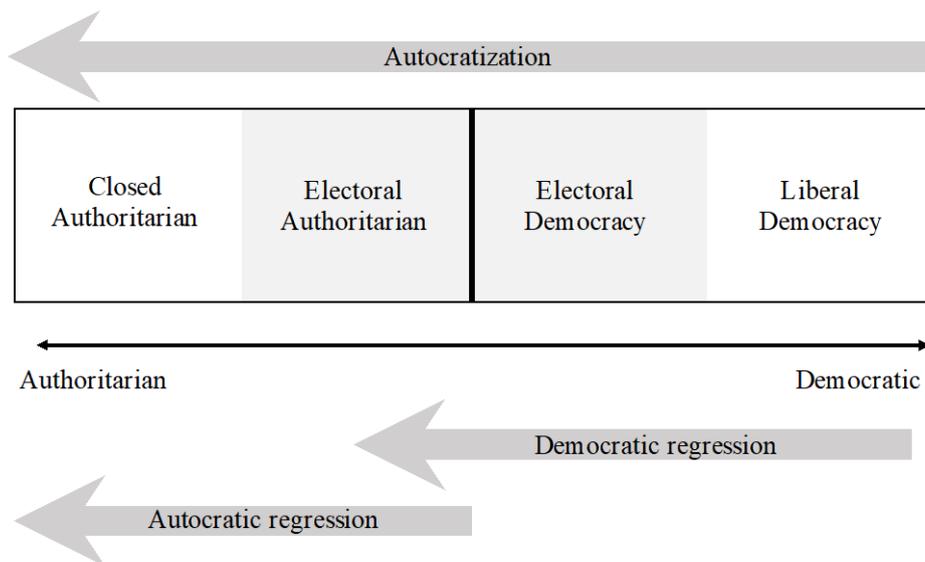
Figure 1. Typology of autocratization, based on Lührmann and Lindberg

Our typology of autocratization episodes is summarized in Figure 1. Compared to Lührmann and Lindberg, we share their view that autocratization episodes come in two forms – here labelled democratic and autocratic regression. We use the more neutral term "regression" for terminological consistency and avoid terms like "autocratic consolidation" because substantial moves toward harsher authoritarianism in autocracies could also signal regime instability. Within an episode of autocratization, countries may move between these subtypes uninterrupted when an initial period of democratic regression results in a democratic breakdown followed by a subsequent period of autocratic regression.

We focus our attention exclusively on democratic regression as a subtype of autocratization.[48] Once in motion, episodes of democratic regression can have two possible outcomes: democratic breakdown or averted democratic breakdown. Therefore, Figure 1 does not include democratic breakdown because it represents one of several possible outcomes.[49] Democratic breakdown occurs when a democracy experiences a genuine transition into autocracy (as defined below). This possibility is indicated by the arrow for democratic regression crossing over into authoritarianism in Figure 1. When democratic breakdown is averted, cases remain on the right side of the same arrow within the democratic regime spectrum, similar Linz's "re-equilibriation".[50] What happens after a democratic

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[48] Similar to Tomini and Wagemann, "Varieties of contemporary democratic breakdown and regression: A comparative analysis."
[49] See Figure 1 in Lührmann and Lindberg's "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?".
[50] Linz, The breakdown of democratic regimes.

breakdown, which may entail a period of autocratic regression, lies outside the scope of this study.

Operationalizing episodes of autocratization

We operationalize episodes of autocratization using V-Dem's Electoral Democracy Index (EDI). The EDI captures the degree to which a country observes Dahl's institutional guarantees of polyarchy.[51] It is based on over forty unique indicators aggregated using a state-of-the-art Bayesian IRT model.[52] We consider substantial and sustained declines to begin with an annual EDI drop of at least 0.01, followed by an overall decline of at least 0.10 throughout the episode. Autocratization is considered ongoing so long as (i) annual EDI declines continue for at least one out of every five consecutive years, (ii) the EDI does not increase by 0.03 or greater in a given year, and (iii) the EDI does not gradually increase by 0.10 over a five-year period. The end date of all episodes is the year the case experienced an annual decline of at least 0.01 after episode onset and prior to experiencing one of these three conditions for termination.

We employ these coding rules to construct the Episodes of Regime Transformation (ERT) dataset, which identifies 293 episodes of autocratization occurring in 128 political units from 1900 to 2019.[53] The complete ERT dataset also includes 427 episodes of democratization, as the mirror of autocratization, occurring in 166 political units during the same time period.

The ERT builds on Lührmann and Lindberg's operationalization of autocratization episodes with three modifications: First, we increase the time tolerance from four to five years to allow more countries to hold an election during the episode interval.[54] Second, we increase the annual upturn threshold from 0.02 to 0.03 because face-validity checks show that the lower threshold[55] can artificially terminate longer episodes (e.g. India 2002–2019, Turkey 2007–2019, and Venezuela 1999–2019) due to a single year increase followed by continued

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[51.] Teorell et al., "Measuring polyarchy across the globe, 1900–2017."; Dahl, Polyarchy: Participation and opposition.

[52] Pemstein et al., "The V-Dem Measurement Model: Latent Variable Analysis for Cross-National and Cross-Temporal Expert-Coded Data".

[53] We provide an R-package that replicates all episodes based on the most recent V-Dem dataset. The package allows for further robustness tests and has flexible parameter settings to redefine the episode data. Maerz et al., "Vdemdata – and R package to load, explore and work with the most recent V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy) dataset"; Edgell et al. "Episodes of Regime Transformation (ERT) dataset codebook, v1.0".

[54] Most countries hold legislative elections every four or five years, with an average term of 4.7 years (cf. Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parliaments at a glance: Term).

[55] Lührmann and Lindberg, "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?"

sustained declines. Finally, we introduce an additional termination criterion based on gradual upward changes of 0.10 to reduce overlap with democratization episodes.[56]

Driven by our motivation to explain democratic resilience as a two-stage process, we are the first to systematically differentiate democratic and autocratic regression within episodes of autocratization. To do so, the ERT dataset uses the Regimes of the World (RoW) classification.[57] Because noise can cause some countries to jitter around the RoW cutoffs, we require that cases reaching the threshold for democracy hold a founding election for the legislature, executive, or constituent assembly before being considered a democracy.[58] We differentiate the democratic and autocratic regression subtypes based on this modified regime classification. Of the 293 episodes of autocratization, 96 (38%) include a period of democratic regression. The remaining 157 autocratization episodes are classified as autocratic regression and fall outside the scope of this study.

We are also the first to operationalize the outcomes of democratic regression using the episodes approach. Democratic breakdown occurs when a democratic regime through an episode of autocratization becomes reclassified as an autocracy. Similar to above, noise in the data may cause some cases to move into and out of electoral autocracy due to cut points in the RoW measure.[59] We impose three criteria to signal a genuine democratic breakdown: (i) the country becomes a closed autocracy; (ii) it holds an election while being coded as an electoral autocracy indicating that the country is now a *de facto* electoral autocracy; or (iii) it becomes an electoral autocracy and stays that way for at least 5 years. Episodes of democratic regression where the regime avoided becoming autocratic before the end of the episode are coded as averted democratic breakdown for their outcome. Based on these criteria, 65 (68%) episodes of democratic regression have resulted in democratic breakdown since 1900, and only 19 (20%) averted democratic breakdown. This suggests that few democracies survive once an episode of democratic regression is underway.[60]

An alternative autocratization operationalization is found in the annual Democracy Report and "State of the World" articles from the V-Dem Institute.[61] It measures autocratization in a simplified manner as substantial if there is a drop of at least 0.05 on the

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[56] Wilson et al., "Successful and Failed Episodes of Democratization: Conceptualization, Identification, and Description."

[57] Lührmann, Tannenberg, and Lindberg, "Regimes of the World (RoW): Opening New Avenues for the Comparative Study of Political Regimes."

[58] Also see Wilson et al., "Successful and Failed Episodes of Democratization: Conceptualization, Identification, and Description."

[59] Kasuya and Mori, "Better Regime Cutoffs for Continuous Democracy Measures."

[60] In the current version, 12 episodes of democratic regression are censored because their outcome is yet undetermined.

[61] E.g. Maerz et al., "State of the world 2019: Autocratization Surges - Resistance Grows."

Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) between the start- and end-year of a ten year period.[62] While this approach offers a broad and easy-to-grasp operationalization suitable for the general audience these publications are designated for, the present episodes-based approach with (admittedly somewhat complex) coding decisions driven by theories from the literature on regime change, provides a much more rigorous foundation for research. It also allows for analysis of the two possible forms of democratic resilience - i.e. avoiding autocratization episodes altogether and averting democratic breakdown once in an episode.

Descriptive analysis

Figure 2 plots global trends for the two subtypes of autocratization episodes from 1900 to 2019. In the Appendix, Figure 6 compares trends in episodes of autocratization and democratization from 1900 to 2019. Together, these two figures provide an update on the progression of the "third wave of autocratization",[63] including additional detail on the types of episodes within each wave. Generally, the results suggest that autocratization episodes are relatively uncommon, but their prevalence is increasing over time. The "third wave of autocratization" is particularly intense, with a record 25% of polities experiencing an episode of autocratization in 2017 (the sum of both types in Figure 2). Since then, the share of countries in autocratization episodes has declined to about 21%. This contrasts with the previous second wave of autocratization, which affected about 15% of the world's countries at its peak in 1965. Figure 2 also suggests that the nature of autocratization is changing and threatens democracies more than in previous waves. Of the 96 episodes of democratic regression, 59 (61%) began after 1992. Apart from a few cases in the 1930s, autocratization in democracies is overwhelmingly a post-Cold War phenomenon.

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[62] The LDI aggregates V-Dem's Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) and Liberal Component Index (LCI).
[63] Lührmann and Lindberg, "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?"
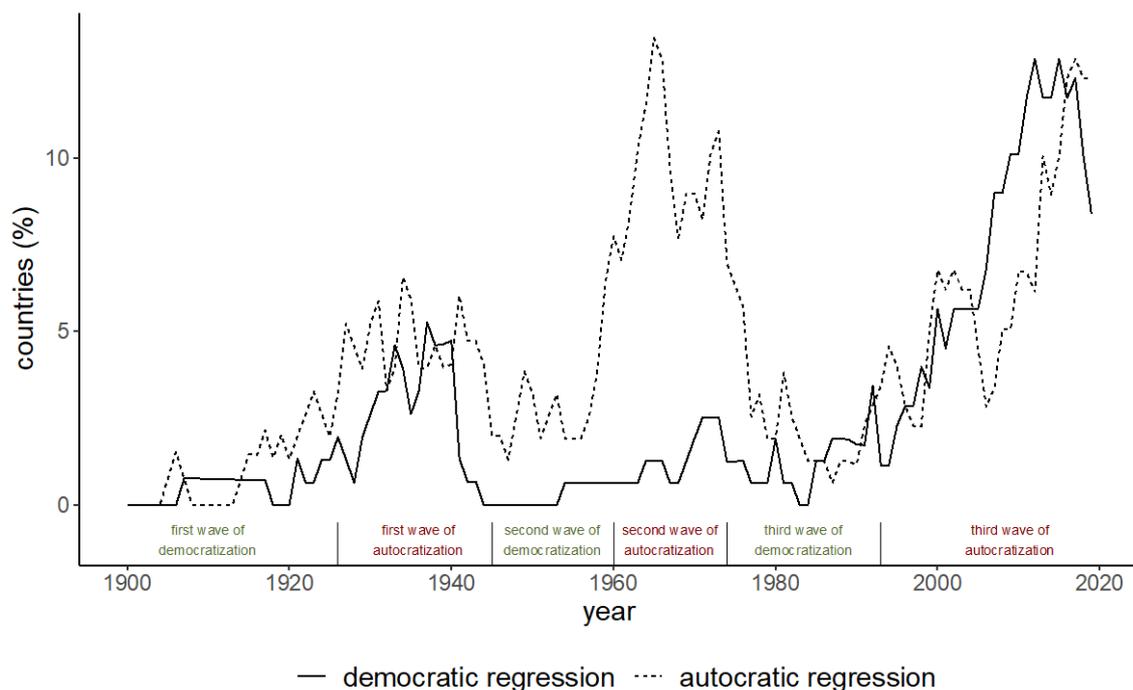
Figure 2. Episodes of democratic and autocratic regression, 1900--2019

The increasing share of autocratization episodes in democracies may be partially explained by a democratic world. At the start of the third wave of autocratization in 1993, 41% of countries were democracies, compared to just 19% at the start of the second wave and 15% at the start of the first wave of autocratization. If autocratization is randomly "assigned" to countries, the third wave should affect a greater number of democracies than previous waves. However, existing theories suggest that autocratization episodes are not random processes but spurred by leaders, party elites, and various groups in societies.[64] Therefore, the high incidence of democratic regression in the current period may mark a new and more worrying trajectory for democracies than Lührmann and Lindberg suspected.

While democratic regression has declined recently, this could be driven by a high fatality rate for democracy. So far, the third wave of autocratization has led to the breakdown

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[64] Linz, The breakdown of democratic regimes.

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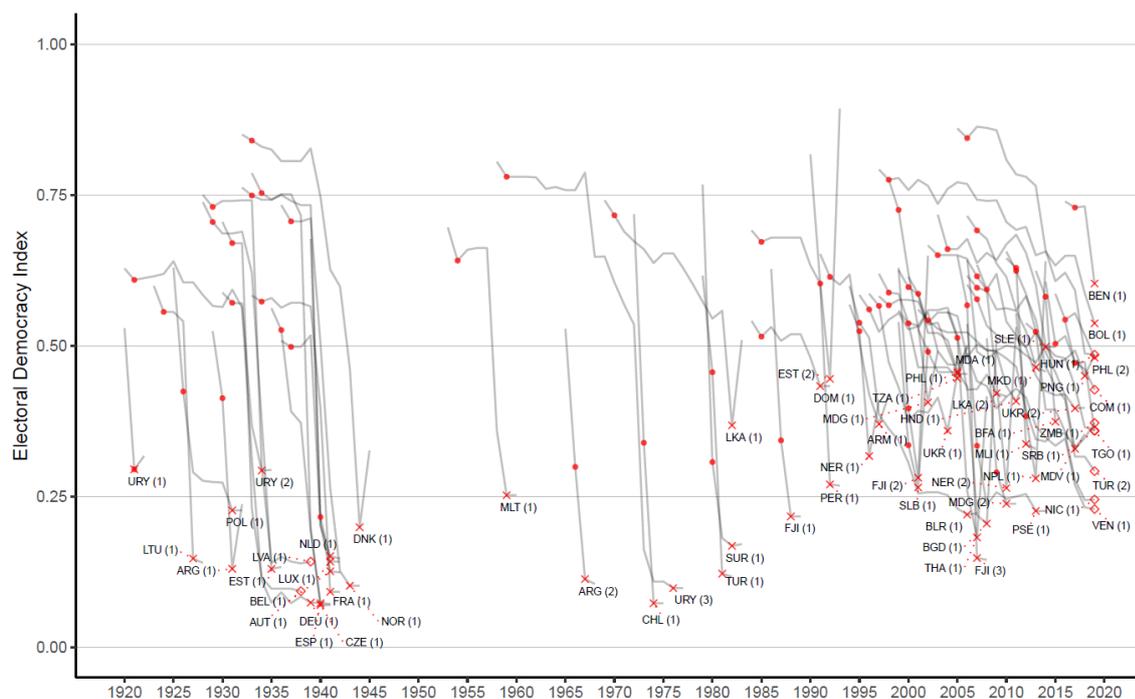
Figure 3. Trajectories of democratic regression episodes that ended with democratic breakdown. Red dots mark the start year of an episode and the red crosses mark the end year. Plots include the pre- and post-episode year. Number of episode by country in brackets.

of an unprecedented 36 democratic regimes. As a result, 717 million people have lost access to democratic institutions and freedoms.[65] Some of these countries (28) have continued to regress as autocracies, contributing to an increase in autocratic regression.[66]

Figure 3 and Figure 4 plot the trajectories of each democratic regression episode in the ERT dataset differentiated by outcome. The two figures generate three insights. First, they reinforce the importance of taking an episodes approach to understanding democratic resilience. The lines for each episode show wide variation in the quality of democracy at the onset of democratic regression, the degree to which democracy declines throughout the episode, and the duration of the autocratization process. Taking democratic
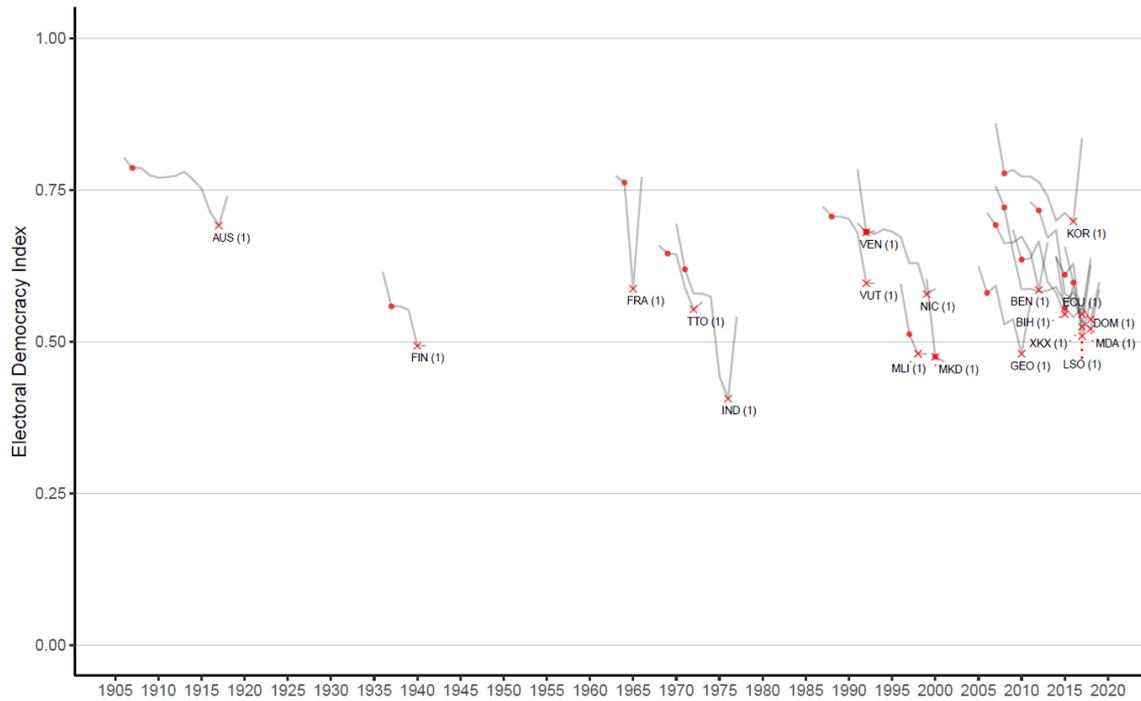
Figure 4. Trajectories of democratic regression episodes that ended without democratic breakdown. Red dots mark the start year of an episode and the red crosses mark the end year. Plots include the pre- and post-episode year. Number of episode by country in brackets.

survival, breakdown, or annual changes at a given point in time would obscure this variation and the potentially vital information from the patterns that can help explain democratic resilience. Second, they further illustrate the high prevalence of democratic regression in the most recent wave of autocratization regardless of outcome (see Appendix, Figure 6). Third, while the third wave poses a high risk of democratic breakdown, Figure 4 reveals that averted breakdown is also much more common now than in past waves of autocratization. Prior to 1992, only five democracies undergoing an episode of autocratization managed to avert democratic breakdown – Australia (1917), Finland (1940), France (1965), India (1976), and Trinidad and Tobago (1972). Since then, fourteen others have followed suit.

Explaining democratic resilience

Data and empirical approach

Following our conceptualization of democratic resilience as a two-stage phenomenon, we use

a Heckman selection model to estimate determinants of democratic regression and breakdown.[67] The first "selection" stage estimates the probability that a given democratic country-year falls within an autocratization episode. Thus, the outcome variable equals one while being in an autocratization episode and zero otherwise, using a sample of democratic country-years within the ERT dataset (3,759 observations). The second "outcome" stage estimates the probability that a given year of democratic regression results in democratic breakdown. This model is conditional on the case being within an episode of democratic regression, accounting for selection bias estimated in the first stage. Thus, the outcome variable is coded as one for democratic breakdown and zero otherwise, with a sample of all country-years coded as one in the first stage (330 observations).[68] To reduce concerns of simultaneity bias, that could arise if aspiring autocrats dismantle institutional checks and balances, we lag all variables (except for coups) by one year.

We focus on a number of economic and political variables that emerge from the literature as prime suspects for explaining democratic resilience. First, to capture the key mechanism in the "perils of presidentialism", we include two *de facto* measures of executive constraints provided by the V-Dem dataset: the judicial constraints on the executive index (v2x_jucon) and the legislative constraints on the executive index (v2xlg_legcon).[69] The former measures judicial independence and whether the executive respects court rulings and the constitution. The latter indicates the degree to which the legislature and government agencies exercise oversight of the executive.[70] Second, we include measures of inflation-adjusted GDP per capita and economic growth from the Maddison project[71] to capture level of economic development and economic performance, respectively. Third, to address spatial clustering of regimes and potential neighbourhood effects found in the literature, we include the average scores of V-Dem's EDI for all other countries in the region using the tenfold geo-political classification scheme in V-Dem (*e_regionpol*).[72] Finally, studies show that democracies in countries with a longer history of democratic rule are more likely to survive.[73]

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[67] Toomet and Henningsen, "Sample Selection Models in R: Package sampleSelection."
[68] For details on our episode coding criteria, refer to the ERT codebook.
[69] Linz, "The perils of presidentialism."
[70] While both indices are part of the Liberal Component Index, there is no overlap with the EDI that is used to determine the start and end of autocratization episodes. For the full list of all variables included in the two indices, see Coppedge et al. (V-Dem Codebook v10, 357).
[71] Bold et al., "Rebasing 'Maddison': new income comparisons and the shape of long-run economic development." We use a five-year moving average of GDP growth to make sure our results are not driven by short-term fluctuations.
[72] E.g. Brinks and Coppedge, "Diffusion is no illusion: Neighbor emulation in the third wave of democracy,"
[73] E.g. Svolik, "Authoritarian reversals and democratic consolidation."

To capture past democratic experience, we draw on a recently developed measure of democratic stock that captures the accumulation of democratic experience over time.[74]

In addition to this common set of predictors and in line with assumptions of the Heckman selection model, we include some additional predictors for "selection into" democratic regression in the first stage. First, we count the cumulative number of previous autocratization episodes. A large number of previous episodes should be indicative of a high general vulnerability to democratic regression. Second, as evidenced from the descriptive analysis above, regime transformations unfold in global waves. Therefore, we account for the percentage of countries with ongoing democratization and autocratization episodes for each year. Third, we include region dummies in the first stage to control for unobserved time-invariant factors at the regional level that affect autocratization.[75] These additional selection variables are only included in the first stage of the model to satisfy the exclusion restriction. We argue that these variables determine whether a country is more likely to autocratize, for instance, if it is hit by a global wave of autocratization, but that they are substantively unrelated to the outcome of the episode.

We also control for a series of other correlates of democratic resilience. Because military coups are one of the main threats to democracy,[76] we control for the occurrence of one or more military coups in a country (binary indicator) by combining information from two coup datasets included in V-Dem (*e_pt_coup* and *e_coups*).[77] We also include population size from the Maddison project[78] as it might affect a polity's susceptibility to conflict and democratic regression. In the second stage, we control for the duration of the episode by including the number of years since episode onset and its square term, as shorter or longer episodes may be more prone to breakdown.[79] We include decade dummies in both stages of the model to account for global shocks such as the two World Wars simultaneously affecting a large number of countries. Summary statistics for all variables in the analysis are displayed in Table 2 (full sample) and Table 3 (episodes sample) in the Appendix.

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[74] Edgell et al., "Democratic Legacies: Using Democratic Stock to Assess Norms, Growth, and Regime Trajectories."

[75] Due to the low number of observations in the second stage, we cannot include region dummies in the second stage.

[76] Marinov and Goemans, "Coups and democracy."

[77] Powell and Thyne, "Global instances of coups from 1950 to 2010: A new dataset"; Przeworski et al., Political Institutions and Political Events (PIPE) Data Set.

[78] Bolt et al., "Rebasing 'Maddison': new income comparisons and the shape of long-run economic development."

[79] The second stage is similar to a regular duration model, which is why we add a variable for the duration of the ongoing episode as well as its squared term.

Table 1. Main results: Heckman-style selection model

	Model 1	
	Selection	Outcome
Judicial constraints on executive	−1.73*	−3.15***
	(0.69)	(0.80)
Legislative constraints on executive	−1.85**	−0.62
	(0.59)	(0.87)
GDP per capita (log)	−1.07*	0.14
	(0.45)	(0.33)
GDP growth (5 year avg)	−0.00	−0.03
	(0.02)	(0.03)
Regional democracy levels	−2.27	−5.73***
	(2.18)	(1.17)
Democratic stock	−2.12	−9.70**
	(3.46)	(3.22)
Coup	1.73***	2.85***
	(0.42)	(0.65)
Population (log)	0.13	0.04
	(0.16)	(0.12)
Previous aut. episodes	1.65***	
	(0.30)	
Autocratizing countries (%, global)	3.96	
	(2.75)	
Democratizing countries (%, global)	−3.89*	
	(1.80)	
Episode duration		0.25
		(0.24)
Episode duration^2		−0.01
		(0.02)
Intercept	10.43*	3.32
	(4.14)	(2.79)
ρ		0.39
		(0.36)
Decade dummies		yes
Region dummies (1st stage)		yes
AIC		1238.45
BIC		1562.93
Log Likelihood		-567.23
Total obs.		3,789
Censored obs.		3,459
Obs. in outcome stage		330

Dependent variable in selection equation: democratic regression.

Dependent variable in outcome equation: democratic breakdown.

Standard errors clustered at the country-level. Significance levels ***
p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05.

Results

The results are summarized in Table 1. The left column shows the probit regression coefficients for the first stage of the model (selecting into a democratic regression episode).

In line with our expectations regarding institutional checks and balances, the results demonstrate that greater legislative and judicial constraints on the executive are associated with a decreased probability of experiencing democratic regression. The results also support the hypothesis that a higher level of economic development is linked to significant reductions in the likelihood of experiencing an episode of democratic regression. Economic performance, however, does not show a statistically significant effect. While regional levels of democracy and democratic stock display the expected negative coefficient, their effect is not statistically significant in the first stage of the model. We can thus corroborate the relevance of political and economic factors in explaining resilience to democratic regression. Among the selection variables included in the first stage, we see that previous autocratization episodes make democracies more prone to experience democratic regression and a higher percentage of democratizing countries globally decreases the likelihood of democratic regression.

The right column of Table 1 shows the results for the outcome stage of the model. Most variables show results similar to the first stage. Judicial constraints on the executive significantly reduce the likelihood of breakdown, while the effect for legislative constraints on the executive is not significant in the second stage. The importance of different institutions varies over the course of democratic regression. Judicial institutions act as the last bulwark against democratic breakdown. Our results further show that economic development and growth do not offer much explanation for why some democracies break down and others do not. However, higher levels of democratic stock and quality of democracy in neighbouring countries significantly reduce the chance of regime breakdown.

We simulate predicted probabilities for ongoing democratic regression episodes (first stage) and democratic breakdown (second stage) based on our model estimates and plot them over the range of the key independent variables in Figure 5. The plots on the left show how the probability of experiencing democratic regression varies with increasing legislative and judicial constraints on the executive and GDP per capita. Country-years where the de facto constraints on the executive are greater, are much less
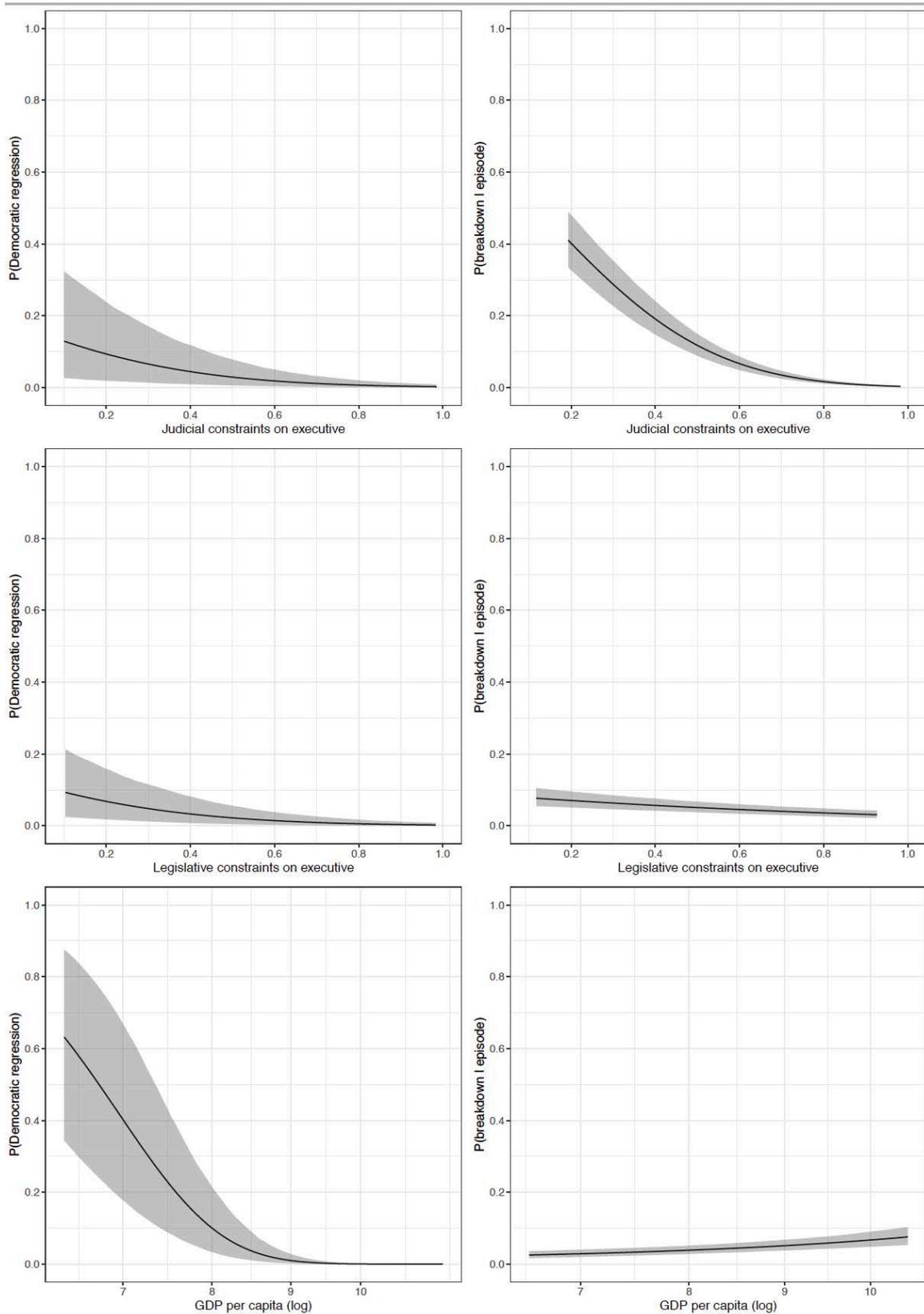
Figure 5. Predicted probabilities of being in an episode of democratic regression (left panel) and democratic breakdown (right panel) over the range of selected explanatory variables. Estimates and 95% confidence intervals are based on simulations from the model parameters.

likely to be followed by an episode of democratic regression. At low levels of executive constraints, there is a 10% chance that democratic regression occurs, while the chances are almost zero with tight constraints.

The relationship between economic development and episode onset is even more pronounced. Democracies at the lower end of the income distribution like Niger or Liberia face a considerable risk of experiencing democratic regression whereas this almost never occurs in very rich countries. A comparison of the plots on the left and right underlines the usefulness of separating ongoing episodes and episode outcomes. While legislative and judicial constraints make onset less likely, only judicial constraints are related to a lower likelihood of democratic breakdown conditioned on that a democratic regression began.

We report a series of robustness tests in the Appendix. First, we run separate models for episode onset and outcome. We argue that democratic regression is a phenomenon potentially unfolding over several stages and years. However, the Heckman model does not properly model episode onset; it merely distinguishes countries with ongoing episodes from those that do not experience democratic regression. Therefore, we run an event history model (Model 2 in Table 4) in which we exclude all ongoing episode-years and add polynomials for time since last democratic regression (or initial democratic transition). The results for episode onset are highly comparable to the first stage of our selection model and corroborate that our main independent variables are valid predictors of episode onset.[80]

Second, we rerun our main model including all components of the executive constraints indices as separate predictors to test if certain sub-components are particularly influential (Model 4 and Model 5 in Table 5). Only indicators for executive respects constitution and legislature questions officials are significantly associated with a lower likelihood of experiencing autocratization. The results for all other variables remain unchanged.

Third, our operationalization of episodes depends on several, arguably idiosyncratic choices regarding how to identify start and end dates of episodes. While we have chosen theoretically motivated default parameters, we run additional models where we modify these.[81] For Model 7 in Table 6, we reduce the threshold to avert democratic breakdown in one year from 0.03 to 0.02 in line with Lührmann and Lindberg. For Model 8, we lower the threshold for total decline to 0.05. The results corroborate our initial results.

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[80] Model 3 (Table 4) is a probit model of the second stage of our selection model with similar results even when ignoring the selection process.

[81] Our accompanying R package makes it easy for the user to operationalize episodes according to his or her own criteria.

A more general challenge is the small number of episodes. Thus, including a large number of explanatory variables can be problematic, as can the exclusion or inclusion of influential episode cases. However, our main findings are robust to different modelling choices and operationalization of autocratization episodes. Executive constraints are consistently associated with a lower likelihood of democratic regression and democratic breakdown. While economic development can prevent democratic regression, it cannot explain why some countries break down while others do not. By contrast, countries with more democratic stock and higher levels of democracy in their neighbourhood are less likely to see democratic breakdown.

Conclusion

The world is currently experiencing a third wave of autocratization characterized by the gradual erosion of democratic norms and executive aggrandizement.[82] Yet, existing quantitative studies of democratic resilience typically operationalize democratic breakdown as events. This disregards conceptual and empirical differences between those democracies that never experience autocratization and those that having begun autocratizing somehow manage to avert breakdown. This naturally leads to questions about selection bias, especially if factors influencing the experience of an autocratization episode are correlated with the outcome of the episode itself. This means that our existing theories remain incomplete until we account for the two-stage nature of democratic resilience.

Thus, this article expands our understanding of democratic resilience by taking an episodes approach to studying autocratization. Such an approach enables us to fully account for the two forms of democratic resilience by conceptualizing autocratization as a process with defined beginning, end, and outcome. Thus, democratic resilience can be analysed in two stages – either by avoiding democratic regression altogether or, once it has started, by avoiding a full breakdown. To do so, we develop the ERT dataset, the most comprehensive identification of episodes of autocratization from 1900-2019, along with an R-package enabling many varied analyses of the phenomena. This includes a refined empirical delineation of democratic regression episodes allowing for a distinction between cases in which democracy broke down from those in which breakdown was averted.

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[82] Lührmann and Lindberg, "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?"; Bermeo, "On democratic backsliding."

Through our descriptive analysis, we demonstrate that for democracies, autocratization episodes are overwhelmingly a post-Cold War phenomenon. Of the 96 episodes of democratic regression in the ERT dataset, 59 (61%) began after 1992. Thus far, the third wave of autocratization has led to the breakdown of 36 democratic regimes, an average of 1.33 per year.[83] Never before has the world witnessed such a high fatality rate for democracy. This suggests that the current third wave of autocratization has an extraordinary effect on democracies.

Results from the explanatory models provide insights into how democracies can be resilient to this wave of democratic regression. In particular, how democracies prevail is partly a function of institutions, economics, and the political environment. However, these factors have different effects depending on the stage of the process. Both, legislative and judicial constraints, for example, are associated with a decreasing likelihood of experiencing democratic regression. Yet, once democratic regression is ongoing only judicial constraints matter for averting democratic breakdown. This suggests that legislatures may be more affected during the early stages of democratic regression, to the point of being obsolete as bulwarks safeguarding democracy by the time breakdown occurs. By contrast, judicial institutions may play an important role as democracy's last line of defence. The findings also suggest that economic development is associated with a reduced likelihood of undergoing democratic regression but has little influence on the outcome once an episode has begun. Instead, to avert breakdown once democratic regression is ongoing, the results of this study suggest that having democratic neighbours and long previous democratic experiences are key.

This study further underscores the need for more holistic research on the changing role of structural factors in different stages of regime transformation. For practitioners in democracy promotion and pro-democracy activists, the spectre of autocratization requires different responses depending on whether the process has already begun. Only then can democracies prevail.

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[83] As compared to 0.73 per year in the first wave and 0.21 per year in the second wave of autocratization.

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Appendix

Episodes of Democratization & Autocratization, 1900–2019
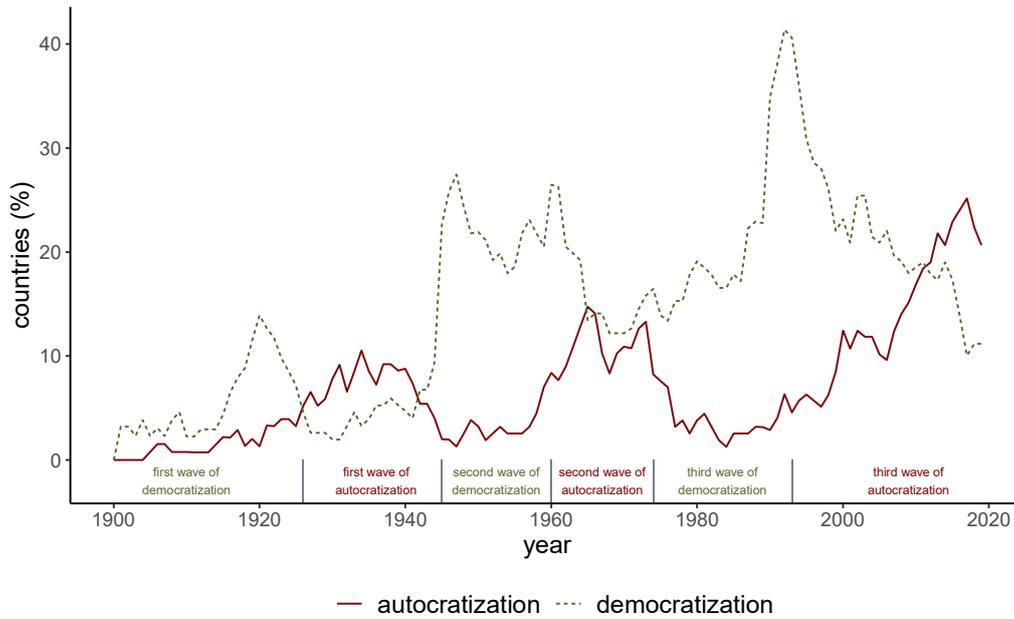
Figure 6. Episodes of Democratization and Autocratization, 1900–2019

The percentage of countries involved in the global waves of regime transformation has increased over time, reflecting increased interconnectivity and the diffusion of ideas through global normative frameworks. Figure 6 illustrates trends in episodes of autocratization compared to episodes of democratization, the mirror of our coding rules, from 1900 to 2019 (for a description of the conceptualization and operationalization of these democratization episodes see Wilson et al., "Successful and Failed Episodes of Democratization: Conceptualization, Identication, and Description"). These results conform well to expectations regarding three waves of autocratization and democratization [1]. At its peak in 1992, we find that the most recent wave of democratization affected about 41.4% of the countries in the world. Since then, there has been a rapid decline in episodes of democratization, reaching just 10% in 2017, the lowest rate since 1944. Meanwhile, similar to Lührmann and Lindberg, "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?," we find a rise in autocratization starting in the early 1990s. There is some evidence that a peak in the current wave occurred in 2017, with about 25% of all countries affected by episodes of autocratization. Given that previous waves also encountered several peaks and especially in light of the downward decline in episodes of democratization, it is too soon to say whether the current autocratization tide is turning.

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1. Huntington, *The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century*; Lührmann and Lindberg, "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?"

Table 2. Summary statistics for main variables (full sample, n = 3,789
country-years)

	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Autocratization episode	0.08	0.28	0	1
Judicial constraints on executive	0.83	0.15	0.06	0.99
Legislative constraints on executive	0.79	0.16	0.05	0.98
GDPpc (log)	9.17	0.95	6.41	11.31
GDP growth (5 year avg.)	2.28	3.47	−26.54	23.74
Regional democracy levels	0.58	0.21	0.10	0.89
Democratic stock	0.30	0.14	0.03	0.67
Previous autocratization episodes	0.47	0.65	0	3
Coup	0.01	0.09	0	1
Population (log)	8.94	1.66	4.52	13.82
Autocratizing countries (%, global)	0.09	0.06	0.00	0.25
Democratizing countries (%, global)	0.20	0.08	0.00	0.41

Table 3. Summary statistics for main variables (episodes only, n = 330
country-years)

	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Judicial constraints on executive	0.66	0.21	0.19	0.98
Legislative constraints on executive	0.62	0.23	0.12	0.93
GDPpc (log)	8.47	0.81	6.57	10.47
GDP growth (5 year avg)	1.70	4.35	−22.79	11.76
Regional democracy levels	0.48	0.13	0.15	0.71
Democratic Stock	0.22	0.08	0.07	0.39
Previous autocratization episodes	1.28	0.54	1	3
Coup	0.05	0.21	0	1
Population (log)	9.24	1.24	5.75	13.32
Autocratizing countries (%, global)	0.12	0.06	0.01	0.25
Democratizing countries (%, global)	0.17	0.08	0.02	0.41
Episode duration	4.61	3.62	1	20

Table 4. Robustness checks: Pooled probit models ignoring selection effects.

	Model 2	Model 3
Judicial constraints on executive	−2.02*	−2.74**
	(0.95)	(0.95)
Legislative constraints on executive	−1.21†	−0.33
	(0.68)	(0.53)
GDP per capita (log)	−0.73*	0.08
	(0.36)	(0.15)
GDP growth (5 year avg)	−0.00	−0.03
	(0.02)	(0.03)
Regional democracy levels	−1.56	−5.56***
	(2.39)	(1.34)
Democratic stock	−25.44***	−9.05***
	(6.17)	(1.81)
Coup	1.72***	2.66***
	(0.35)	(0.50)
Population (log)	0.19*	0.02
	(0.09)	(0.08)
Previous aut. episodes	2.78***	
	(0.44)	
Autocratizing countries (%, global)	6.16	
	(4.78)	
Democratizing countries (%, global)	−0.37	
	(2.34)	
Episode duration		0.25**
		(0.09)
Episode duration^2		−0.01
		(0.00)
t	0.27***	
	(0.06	
t^2	−0.04	
	(0.07)	
t^3	0.00	
	(0.00)	
Intercept	9.97**	
	3.56	
Decade dummies	yes	yes
Region dummies	yes	no
AIC	311.81	203.58
BIC	523.37	279.56
Log Likelihood	−121.91	-81.79
Num. obs.	3723	330

Model 2 estimates episode onset modeled as event history model including time since last episode (t). The sample only includes country-years without democratic regression episodes and the first episode year. DV: democratic regression onset. Model 3 is a probit model for ongoing episodes of democratic regression without taking into account selection effects. DV: democratic breakdown. Standard errors clustered at the country-level. Significance levels ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$, †$p < 0.10$.

Table 5. Robustness checks: Subcomponents of executive constraints indices (Model 4 and 5) and censored observations included (Model 6).

	Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	Selection	Outcome	Selection	Outcome	Selection	Outcome
Executive respects constitution	−0.47*	−0.13				
	(0.21)	(0.47)				
Compliance with judiciary	−0.08	−0.22				
	(0.23)	(0.51)				
Compliance with high court	−0.24	−0.45				
	(0.26)	(0.49)				
High court independence	0.10	−0.50				
	(0.27)	(0.32)				
Lower court independence	0.12	0.41				
	(0.29)	(0.35)				
Legislature questions officials			−0.52***	0.18		
			(0.16)	(0.15)		
Executive oversight			−0.09	−0.26		
			(0.22)	(0.35)		
Legislature investigates in practice			−0.00	0.02		
			(0.19)	(0.30)		
Legislature opposition parties			0.04	−0.12		
			(0.22)	(0.23)		
Judicial constraints on executive			−1.72*	−3.14**	−1.18†	−3.03***
			(0.71)	(1.03)	(0.68)	(0.83)
Legislative constraints on executive	−1.62**	−0.69			−1.23*	−0.71
	(0.57)	(0.88)			(0.59)	(0.76)
GDP per capita (log)	−1.20*	0.03	−1.18**	0.07	−0.48†	0.13
	(0.50)	(0.47)	(0.42)	(0.31)	(0.29)	(0.34)
GDP growth (5 year avg)	0.00	−0.02	−0.01	−0.02	−0.01	−0.03
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.04)
Regional democracy levels	−1.65	−6.46***	−2.79	−5.18**	−2.31	−5.68***
	(1.82)	(1.66)	(2.23)	(1.68)	(2.12)	(1.12)
Democratic stock	−1.50	−9.02	−2.48	−8.57*	−3.23	−9.99**
	(3.80)	(5.21)	(3.59)	(3.44)	(3.32)	(3.38)
Coup	1.68***	2.86***	1.73***	3.05***	1.39***	2.61***
	(0.48)	(0.87)	(0.34)	(0.83)	(0.35)	(0.69)
Population (log)	0.10	−0.02	0.19	0.04	0.20	0.00
	(0.16)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.13)
Previous aut. episodes	1.79***		1.82***		4.58	
	(0.35)		(0.34)		(2.50)	
Autocratizing countries (%, global)	3.40		−4.48*		7.14***	
	(3.00)		(1.86)		(1.73)	
Democratizing countries (%, global)	−3.75*		−4.48*		−3.30*	
	(1.64)		(1.86)		(1.42)	
Episode duration		0.30		0.23		0.25
		(0.24)		(0.23)		(0.23)
Episode duration^2		−0.01		−0.01		−0.01
		(0.02)		(0.02)		(0.02)
Intercept	11.15*	3.71	10.41*	3.14	4.16	3.87
	(4.55)	(3.19)	(4.12)	(3.15)	(2.52)	(2.69)
ρ		0.26		0.49		0.11
		(0.62)		(0.48)		(0.37)
Decade dummies		yes		yes		yes
Region dummies (1st stage)		yes		yes		yes
AIC		1216.583		1201.74		1559.25
BIC		1584.71		1563.64		1884.99
Log Likelihood		-549.29		-542.87		-727.62
Total obs.		3,788		3,788		3,883
Censored obs.		3,458		3,458		3,459
Obs. in outcome stage		330		330		424

Dependent variable in selection equation: democratic regression. Dependent variable in outcome equation: democratic breakdown. Standard errors clustered at the country-level. Significance levels ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$, †$p < 0.10$.

Table 6. Robustness checks: Different operationalization of episodes.

	Model 7		Model 8	
	Selection	Outcome	Selection	Outcome
Judicial constraints on executive	−1.56	−2.62*	−1.08†	−2.80***
	(0.82)	(1.04)	(0.57)	(0.74)
Legislative constraints on executive	−1.54*	−0.52	−1.56***	−0.19
	(0.76)	(1.19)	(0.43)	(0.91)
GDP per capita (log)	−0.98†	0.00	−0.20	0.01
	(0.51)	(0.43)	(0.16)	(0.20)
GDP growth (5 year avg)	−0.05	−0.01	−0.01	−0.03
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.16)	(0.03)
Regional democracy levels	−2.83	−4.57**	−0.72	−3.37**
	(1.78)	(1.49)	(1.77)	(1.12)
Democratic stock	−2.82	−6.48**	−2.15	−6.29**
	(3.76)	(4.54)	(1.61)	(2.18)
Coup	1.51***	2.18*	1.10*	2.65***
	(0.43)	(0.91)	(0.34)	(0.57)
Population (log)	0.12	−0.06	0.11	−0.06
	(0.18)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.08)
Previous aut. episodes	1.46***		0.72***	
	(0.34)		(0.20)	
Autocratizing countries (%, global)	2.71		3.14**	
	(2.54)		(1.16)	
Democratizing countries (%, global)	−4.39*		−1.91†	
	(1.83)		(1.00)	
Episode duration		1.14		0.25
		(0.26)		(0.17)
Episode duration^2		−0.01		−0.01
		(0.03)		(0.01)
Intercept	8.75*	2.32	2.70*	3.00†
	(4.47)	(996)	(1.34)	(1.78)
ρ		−0.18		0.28
		(0.38)		(0.64)
Decade dummies		yes		yes
Region dummies (1st stage)		yes		yes
AIC		1242.37		2411.79
BIC		1567.36		2734.53
Log Likelihood		-569.18		-1153.89
Total obs.		3,827		3,665
Censored obs.		3,544		3,069
Obs. in outcome stage		283		596

Model 7 uses a sudden turn threshold of 0.02. Model 8 uses a threshold of 0.05 change in EDI to identify manifest episodes. Dependent variable in selection equation: democratic regression. Dependent variable in outcome equation: democratic breakdown. Standard errors clustered at the country-level. Significance levels ***$p < 0.001$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$, †$p < 0.10$.

Table 7. Averted democratic breakdown, 1900–2019

Country	Begin	End
Australia	1907	1917
Benin	2007	2012
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2010	2015
Dominican Republic	2015	2018
Ecuador	2008	2017
Finland	1937	1940
France	1964	1965
Georgia	2006	2010
India	1971	1976
Kosovo	2016	2017
Lesotho	2015	2017
Mali	1997	1998
Moldova	2012	2018
Nicaragua	1992	1999
North Macedonia	2000	2000
South Korea	2008	2016
Trinidad and Tobago	1969	1972
Vanuatu	1988	1992
Venezuela	1992	1992

Table 8. Democratic breakdown, 1900–2019

Country	Begin	End
Argentina	1930	1930
Argentina	1966	1966
Armenia	1992	1996
Austria	1931	1933
Bangladesh	2002	2002
Belarus	1995	1997
Belgium	1937	1940
Benin	2017	2019
Bolivia	1998	2019
Burkina Faso	2014	2015
Chile	1973	1973
Comoros	2015	2015
Czech Republic	1934	1939
Denmark	1933	1943
Dominican Republic	1985	1990
Estonia	1929	1934
Estonia	1991	1992
Fiji	1987	1987
Fiji	2000	2000
Fiji	2006	2007

Continued on next page

Table 8 – continued from previous page

Country	Begin	End
France	1934	1940
Germany	1921	1933
Honduras	1998	2008
Hungary	2006	2018
Latvia	1929	1934
Lithuania	1924	1927
Luxembourg	1940	1940
Madagascar	1996	2001
Madagascar	2009	2009
Maldives	2011	2014
Mali	2011	2012
Malta	1954	1958
Moldova	2000	2005
Nepal	2012	2012
Netherlands	1933	1940
Nicaragua	2003	2007
Niger	1995	1996
Niger	2007	2009
North Macedonia	2007	2013
Norway	1937	1941
Palestine/West Bank	2007	2007
Papua New Guinea	2002	2011
Peru	1985	1992
Philippines	2001	2004
Philippines	2016	2019
Poland	1926	1926
Serbia	2004	2015
Sierra Leone	2007	2012
Solomon Islands	2000	2000
Spain	1936	1937
Sri Lanka	1970	1982
Sri Lanka	1998	2006
Suriname	1980	1980
Tanzania	2000	2001
Thailand	2005	2006
Togo	2017	2017
Turkey	1980	1980
Turkey	2007	2014
Ukraine	1997	1998
Ukraine	2008	2012
Uruguay	1921	1921
Uruguay	1931	1933
Uruguay	1959	1973
Venezuela	1999	2003
Zambia	2013	2014

Table 9. Censored democratic regression,
1900–2019

Country	Begin	End
Brazil	2012	2019
Bulgaria	2002	2019
Chile	2011	2019
Croatia	2011	2019
Czech Republic	2009	2019
India	2002	2019
Israel	2010	2019
Niger	2013	2019
Poland	2013	2019
South Africa	2009	2019
Tanzania	2015	2019
United States of America	2015	2019