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A Framework for Understanding Regime Transformation: Introducing the ERT Dataset*

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Abstract

Gradual processes of democratization and autocratization have gained increased attention in the literature. Assessing such processes in a comparative framework remains a challenge, however, due to their under-conceptualization and a bifurcation of the democracy and autocracy literatures. This article provides a new conceptualization of regime transformation as substantial and sustained changes in democratic institutions and practices in either direction. This allows for studies to address both democratization and autocratization as related obverse processes. Using this framework, the article introduces a dataset that captures 680 unique episodes of regime transformation (ERT) from 1900 to 2019. These data provide novel insights into regime change over the past 120 years, illustrating the value of developing a unified framework for studying regime transformation. Such transformations, while meaningfully altering the qualities of the regime, only produce a regime transition about 32% of the time. The majority of episodes either end before a transition takes place or do not have the potential for such a transition (i.e. constituted further democratization in democratic regimes or further autocratization in autocratic regimes). The article also provides comparisons to existing datasets and illustrative case studies for face validity. It concludes with a discussion about how the ERT framework can be applied in peace research.

Introduction

What explains the rise and fall of political regimes? Why do some dictators resist pressures to liberalize, whereas others respond to these pressures with only minimal reforms and still others transition to democracy? Why do some democracies exhibit resilience, whereas others experience backsliding or even breakdown? These and similar questions about political regime change constitute one of the most intensely researched areas in political science, to which quantitative analyses have made valuable and increasingly sophisticated contributions. Yet, the two dominant approaches to addressing these questions require improbable assumptions and use debatable units of analysis. They also pursue research under separate frameworks concerning democratic breakdown versus democratic transition, which hinders a joint and coherent study of regime change. This article contributes an innovative conceptual framework and dataset – the Episodes of Regime Transformation (ERT) – available for the study of regimes to overcome these limitations.

The ERT framework conceptualizes processes of regime change in either direction along the democratic-autocratic continuum as episodes of regime transformation. This provides new opportunities to study democratization and autocratization within a unified research agenda. It allows for research on four broad types of regime transformation, including liberalization in autocracies, democratic deepening in democracies, and regression in both democracies and autocracies. We also distinguish between ten possible outcomes for those episodes that matter for contemporaneous research, including standard depictions of regime change (i.e. transition to- and breakdown of democracy). Our operationalization of this framework – ERT dataset – includes start and end dates, as well as the type and outcome of 680 episodes observed within the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset from 1900–2019 (Coppedge et al., 2020a). Thus, the ERT enables scholars to analyze processes, mechanisms, and outcomes within defined periods of regime transformation in comparison to each other, as well as to years without regime transformation.

The ERT provides three main advantages over existing approaches to studying regime change. First, it avoids problematic assumptions of unit homogeneity, symmetric and constant effects. Second, it integrates key insights from the qualitative comparative literature by treating regime change as a prolonged, gradual, and highly uncertain process of regime transformation. Finally, the ERT allows scholars to study democratization and autocratization within the same systematic framework.

For quantitative researchers, the ERT provides opportunities to model the causes and consequences of democratization and autocratization simultaneously. For qualitative researchers, the ERT provides key insights for single and comparative case selection.

While approached with academic goals in mind, the questions about regime transformation raised here are also highly relevant to the policy- and practitioner community. Democracy is associated with international peace (Altman et al., 2020; Hegre, 2014; Hegre et al., 2020), human security (IDEA, 2006), economic development (Acemoglu et al., 2019; Doucouliagos and Ulubaşoğlu, 2008), and environmental protection (Farzin and Bond, 2006; Winslow, 2005). Generally speaking, democratic institutions promote investments in human development (Gerring et al., 2012) that benefit ordinary citizens through improved education (Ansell and Lindvall, 2013; Stasavage, 2005), health (Wigley et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019), and gender equality (Sundström et al., 2017; Zagrebina, 2020). Better understanding under what conditions democracy emerges, declines, and dies is therefore not merely an academic exercise; it has important normative implications from a policy perspective.

This article first discusses the two dominant approaches to analyzing regime change, highlighting several drawbacks of the current state of the art. We then suggest a unifying framework of regime transformation and explain the logic behind operationalizing episodes of regime transformation using data from V-Dem. We introduce the ERT dataset, describing the sample of episodes and the frequency of outcomes, and compare them to other frequently used datasets. After two illustrative case studies, we discuss applications in conflict research. We conclude by outlining the advantages of the ERT for future research on democratization and autocratization as both effects and causes.

A bifurcated literature on regime change

The state of the art in the study of regime change can be roughly classified into *transitologist* and *incrementalist* ontological perspectives. While often treated as incongruent (e.g. Jackman and Bollen, 1989), the two perspectives are complementary in their assumptions and unified in their overarching object of inquiry, which we refer to as regime transformation. Yet, three fundamental disadvantages emerge from this divided field that undermine efforts at knowledge accumulation and practical relevance. To overcome these limitations, we develop a novel framework of regime transformation that can help unify the literature.

Table I provides an overview of the two dominant approaches to the study of regime change, including the ontological assumptions, guiding questions, dominant data sources, and limitations. The first approach – here referred to as transitologist¹ – focuses on democratic transitions or breakdowns as discrete events. For example, classic case-based works on democratic transitions focus on founding elections as moments of discrete regime change (O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Diamond et al., 1989; Bratton and van de Walle, 1997). While the comparative case-study literature typically details complex processes and multiple pathways to uncertain outcomes, the object is usually to explain the transition moment. Meanwhile, quantitative works in this genre, like those found in debates over modernization theory, often employ a dichotomous measure of democracy, regressing discrete changes in regime classification on explanatory factors of interest (e.g. Boix and Stokes, 2003; Epstein et al., 2006; Przeworski et al., 2000; Brownlee, 2009; Haggard and Kaufman, 2012; Miller, 2015). The binary classification of the dependent variable necessarily means that the transition moment is treated in isolation from the longer processes often discussed in case studies. Regardless of methodology, however, works employing the transitologist approach share two core ontological assumptions: (1) that regimes can be dichotomized into democracies and autocracies and (2) that there is a distinct, observable moment of transition between democracy and autocracy.

Table I. Two dominant approaches to the study of regime change

	Transitologist	Incrementalist
Ontological assumptions	Democracy & autocracy as dichotomy, observable transition moment	Democracy-autocracy continuum, incremental changes in either direction are meaningful equivalents
Guiding questions	What explains democratic transition, survival, and breakdown?	What explains changes in levels of democracy?
Data sources, key studies	Alvarez et al. (1996); Boix et al. (2013); Cheibub et al. (2010)	Acemoglu and Robinson (2006); Jackman and Bollen (1989); Teorell (2010)
Limitations	Assumptions of unit homogeneity, omits unsuccessful attempts, transitions as discrete events, democratization/autocratization as separate inquiries	Assumptions of symmetric and constant effects, short-run changes as discrete events, democratization/autocratization as empirical equivalents

¹We borrow the terminology from the case-based “transitology” literature (e.g. O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Diamond et al., 1989) since we find their ontological assumptions to be similar to those of the discussed quantitative works.

The second approach – which we call incrementalist² – explores incremental (usually annual) changes in levels of democracy (e.g. Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006; Coppedge and Reinicke, 1990; Jackman and Bollen, 1989; Teorell, 2010; Levitz and Pop-Eleches, 2010). These studies are almost invariably quantitative, although they might be paired with qualitative case studies. For example, Teorell (2010) provides an empirical overview of the determinants of democratization based on annual changes, as well as annual upturns and downturns. Meanwhile, studies like Beal and Graham (2014) investigate democratization using a mixed-methods research design. These studies avoid ontological assumptions about the dichotomous nature of regimes or transitions as events (Jackman and Bollen, 1989); instead, they rely on two entirely different ontological assumptions: (1) that democracy and autocracy lie at opposite ends of a continuum and (2) that incremental changes in one direction or another are meaningful equivalents.

Three core limitations

The bifurcation in the literature on regime change impedes efforts at knowledge accumulation and risks making the field appear disjointed for those seeking out practical implications from academic research. Bridging this divide requires attention to three limitations. First, the transitologist approach treats all observations within the same regime class as equivalent, i.e. assumes unit homogeneity, even though cases and their underlying processes often differ. For example, assuming that all autocracies have an equal likelihood of transitioning to democracy, *ceteris paribus*, ignores the great deal of heterogeneity among autocracies. Critically, it fails to account for those cases where processes of democratization (or autocratization) occur but a transition was never observed. This treats a highly stable case like North Korea as the equivalent to Argentina in 1930–1960 when three episodes of liberalization failed to usher in democracy. Ignoring heterogeneity among the null units in the sample means overlooking “potentially relevant and theoretically revealing cases” (Ziblatt, 2006: p.24).³ The incrementalist approach overcomes the assumption of unit homogeneity by measuring changes in levels of democracy, and sometimes controlling for lagged levels; yet, this

²We use the term “incrementalist” because these studies tend to operationalize regime change in increments, i.e. changes between two relatively close points in time. These studies are sometimes described using the term “gradualist” (Carothers, 2007). Yet this implies attention to longer-term regime change processes – such as those delineated in case-based research and the ERT dataset - which cannot adequately be addressed through incremental operationalization.

³This well-known problem is often referred to as Simpson’s Paradox (Wagner, 1982).

introduces an equally vexing assumption of symmetric and constant effects or that the same unit change means the same thing for all cases, regardless of initial levels. It seems unrealistic to assume that an annual change of 0.05 on a scale of 0-1 means exactly the same, and would be driven by the same causes for a case that scores only 0.02 versus a case scoring 0.90 (e.g. Saudi Arabia vs. Denmark in 2019), or for that matter a case near the regime cutoff, where it may signal the difference between autocracy and democracy. Finally, the incrementalist approach typically assumes symmetric effects and models negative and positive changes simultaneously, while we have no specific theories suggesting whether the drivers should be expected to be the same (Teorell, 2010).

Second, the quantitative literature from both approaches amplifies short-term changes. Whether measured as a dichotomy or interval, regime change is typically treated as an annual event. Regressing the probability of regime change (whether dichotomous or incremental) on antecedent factors without considering the gradual changes that preceded it risks misattributing causes by interpreting the effects of a long-term process through short-term changes in correlated independent variables. This contrasts with the longer, gradual, and highly uncertain processes of regime transformation described in the case-based literature (e.g. Rustow, 1970; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006; Boix, 2003).

Third, existing approaches require scholars to choose between either treating democratization and autocratization as separate fields of inquiry or as meaningful equivalents. For example, while Huntington (1993) analyzes waves and reverse waves within a unified framework, his ultimate area of inquiry rests on democratic transitions. Whereas Linz (1978) discusses the breakdown of democratic regimes, Linz and Stepan (1996) focus exclusively on democratic transitions (and consolidation), with little bridging between the theories. This trend carries over into quantitative research that typically theorizes and models democratic transition and democratic breakdown in separate publications. By contrast, the incrementalist approach usually provides no distinction between democratization and autocratization. Incremental annual changes on democracy scores – whether the outcome or the predictor – implicitly assume that all unit changes are empirical equivalents, regardless of whether those changes are positive or negative. Few studies assess whether factors associated with positive changes are distinct from those associated with negative ones (Bernhard and Edgell, 2019; Teorell, 2010). As a result, the literature presents parallel sets of explanations for related processes, with a proliferation of jargon (e.g., “democratic backsliding” versus “autocratiza-

tion”) and incomplete theory building. We know very little about whether, and how transitions in either direction are similar (or complements) over time, both in process and their determinants.

We submit a unified framework with accompanying dataset making it possible to avoid these three limitations.

The episodes of regime transformation (ERT) framework

In essence, the transitologist approach treats regimes taxonomically by dichotomizing them and the incrementalist approach treats regimes as a single class of phenomenon whose attributes can be quantified along a unidimensional continuum⁴, akin to differences in kind vs. degree (Sartori, 1970). While presently distinct in the literature, they are compatible. Long ago Sartori (1970: 1039) noted, “... the logic of either-or cannot be *replaced* with the logic of more-and-less. Actually the two logics are *complementary*, and each has a legitimate field of application.” (emphasis added). With the ERT, we offer a unifying framework that bridges the complementary transitologist and incrementalist perspectives and leverages the strengths of each, to overcome some of the present challenges in the field of regime change studies. We conceptualize *episodes of regime transformation* as periods when a country undergoes sustained and substantial changes along a democracy-autocracy continuum.⁵ These episodes substantively *transform* the regime (fitting with the incrementalist approach) but may not necessarily yield a regime *transition* (from the transitologist approach).⁶ Thus, we apply a “directional” definition to regime transformation whereby democratization and autocratization occur even if the case does not cross some qualitative threshold of democracy (Treisman, 2020: p.6).

As illustrated in Figure 1, we begin by broadly distinguishing episodes based on their direction of movement along a continuum from liberal democracy to closed autocracy (Schedler, 2001). We treat regimes as the same class of phenomena that can exhibit varying degrees of conformity to liberal democracy as an ideal type (similar to the incrementalist approach), while also acknowledging the important dividing line between regimes that fulfill the minimal criteria for democracy and those

⁴This is possible because at its very core autocracy is considered to be a “residual category” (Svolik, 2012) defined by “what it is not” (Linz, 1975), namely not democracy.

⁵Such an approach was first suggested by Lührmann and Lindberg (2019) for episodes of autocratization.

⁶Here we refer to regime transition as any transition from autocracy to democracy or from democracy to autocracy. While we also consider changes between closed and electoral autocracy (for democratization episodes) and liberal and electoral democracy (for autocratization episodes) as outcomes of regime transformation, we do not refer to these as regime transitions.

that do not (similar to the transitologist approach). We base these minimal criteria on the six institutional guarantees for participation and contestation set forth by Dahl (1971). The upper part of Figure 1 illustrates *democratization* as an overarching concept for episodes that exhibit substantial and sustained improvement of democratic institutions and practices (Wilson et al., 2020). Conversely, the lower part of Figure 1 depicts *autocratization* as episodes that result in a sustained and substantial decline of democratic attributes (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019). Thus, we consider autocratization and democratization as obverse regime transformation processes.

We further distinguish episodes that have the *potential* to produce a regime transition from those that enrich qualities congruent with the current regime type.⁷ The former, represented by the dashed lines in Figure 1, include episodes of democratization in autocracies (*liberalizing autocracy*) and episodes of autocratization in democracies (*democratic regression*). The latter, represented by the solid lines in Figure 1, include episodes of democratization in democracies (*democratic deepening*) and episodes of autocratization in autocracies (*autocratic regression*).

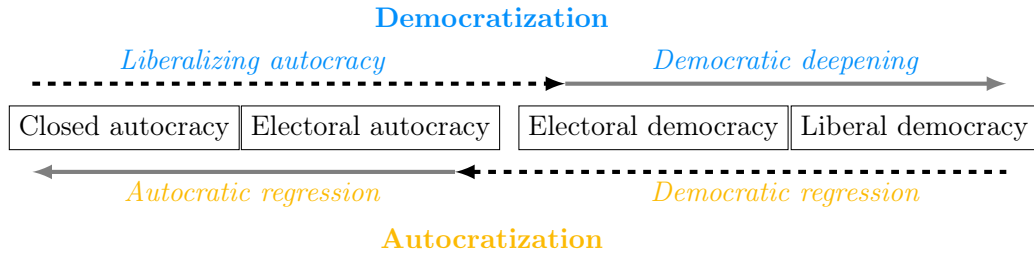


Figure 1. Conceptualizing episodes of regime transformation

Regime transformation processes are highly uncertain and a transition is neither inevitable nor the only possible outcome (Schedler, 2001, 2013; Treisman, 2020). Figure 2 depicts possible outcomes of ERTs. The dotted line illustrates the boundary between democracy (above) and autocracy (below). Panel (a) provides an overview of outcomes for democratization episodes. A *democratic transition* occurs when an autocratic regime sees sufficient reforms to cross a minimal threshold of democracy and then holds a founding democratic election. We define a democratic founding election as the first free and fair election held under minimally democratic conditions after which the elected officials assumed or continued office in either the national legislature, executive, or constituent assembly. Liberalizing autocracies can fail to produce a democratic transition in three ways. First,

⁷In Figure 1, transitions to democracy and democratic breakdowns are represented by the space between electoral autocracy and electoral democracy but are included under the dashed line because they have the potential to reverse.

the regime could encounter a *preempted democratic transition* by achieving minimally democratic conditions but failing to hold a founding election before reverting back to autocracy. Second, autocratic regimes may undergo substantial liberalization before becoming a *stabilized electoral autocracy*. Third, after experiencing substantial liberalization, the regime could revert back to lower levels of democracy (i.e. *reverted liberalization*, Wilson et al., 2020). Finally, for existing democracies that experience an ERT (i.e. democratic deepening), we consider the outcome a foregone conclusion - referring to this as *deepened democracy*.⁸

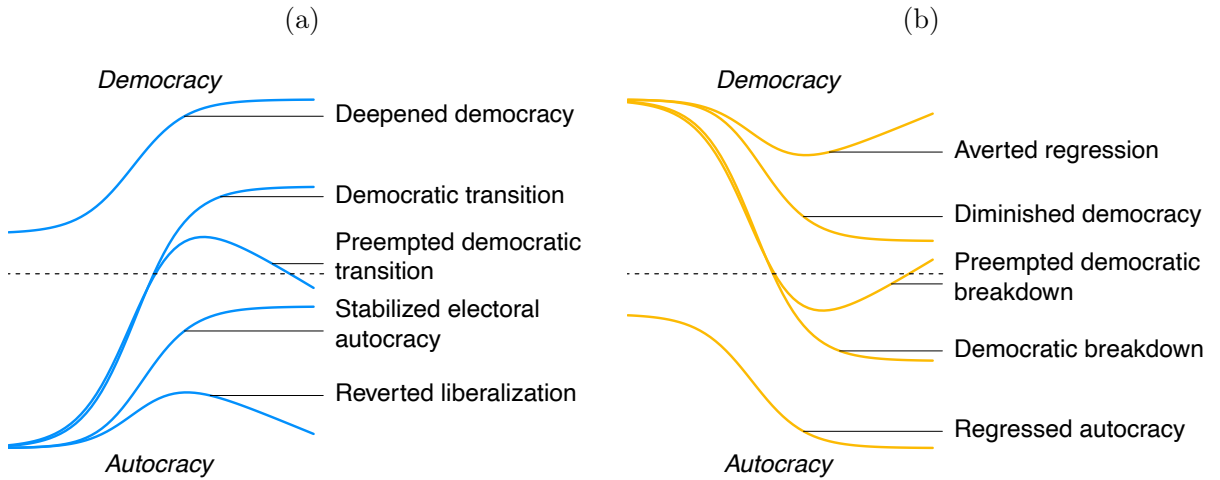


Figure 2. Outcomes of democratization (a) and autocratization (b) episodes.

Panel (b) of Figure 2 illustrates outcomes in autocratization episodes, which mirror Panel (a). A *democratic breakdown* occurs when a democratic regime regresses to below the minimal threshold of democracy and one of the following conditions holds (a) it is considered to be a closed autocracy (i.e. no longer holds multiparty elections for the executive or the legislature); (b) holds a founding authoritarian election for the executive, legislature, or a constituent assembly; or (c) remains autocratic for a sufficient period of time to no longer be considered a democracy. Episodes of democratic regression may avoid breakdown in three ways. First, a *preempted democratic breakdown* occurs when a democracy falls below the minimal threshold for democracy but then crosses back above the threshold meeting any of the additional criteria sufficient for breakdown listed above. Second, a regime can decline in democratic quality before stabilizing as a *diminished democracy*.

⁸Admittedly this is one area where more theorizing is yet to be done.

Third, episodes of democratic regression that see substantial declines in democratic quality before reverting back to some higher democratic state are classified as *averted regression*.⁹ Finally, we also consider the outcome a foregone conclusion for autocracies experiencing further autocratization (i.e. autocratic regression), referring to this simply as *regressed autocracy*.¹⁰

Operationalizing ERTs

We operationalize the ERT framework using data collected by the V-Dem project (v10, Coppedge et al., 2020a). We use the electoral democracy index (EDI) as the continuum from autocracy (0) to democracy (1). It is based on the perhaps the most widely accepted definition of democracy – Dahl’s institutional guarantees of polyarchy (Dahl, 1971). The index is constructed from over forty expert-coded indicators aggregated using a state-of-the-art Bayesian IRT model (Pemstein et al., 2020; Teorell et al., 2019).

As summarized in Table II, we code ERTs based on substantial and sustained changes on the EDI, which we operationalize as an initial annual change of at least ± 0.01 (*start inclusion*), followed by an overall change of at least ± 0.10 over the duration of the episode (*cumulative inclusion*). ERTs are considered ongoing as long as the EDI score (i) has an annual change in one out of every five consecutive years (*tolerance*), (ii) does not have a *reverse* annual change of 0.03 or greater (*annual turn*), and (iii) does not experience a cumulative *reverse* change of 0.10 over a five-year period (*cumulative turn*). The final year of all episodes is coded as the year the case experienced a change of at least ± 0.01 after episode onset and immediately prior to experiencing one of these three conditions for termination. The final year of an ERT (and therefore its duration) is censored if its end date corresponds with the final year of coding or the year before a gap starts in the V-Dem coding for the country unit.

Table II. Operationalization of episodes

EDI parameters	Democratization	Autocratization
Start inclusion	0.01	-0.01
Cumulative inclusion	0.1	-0.1
Annual turn	-0.03	0.03
Cumulative turn	-0.1	0.1
Tolerance	5	5

⁹This outcome is similar to “re-equilibration” (Linz, 1978).

¹⁰As above, more work could possibly be done to theorize about other potential outcomes here.

We then determine the outcome of each episode in accordance with Figure 2. We use the Regimes of the World categorization (Lührmann et al., 2018) and information about the timing of elections from V-Dem to identify regime changes such as democratic transitions and breakdowns. Other outcomes are based on criteria for determining episode termination. The outcome is censored for episodes that have the potential for a regime change but are ongoing in the final observation year of the dataset or before a gap in coding. Further details on the operationalization of ERT outcomes can be found in the codebook (Edgell et al., 2020).

Many of the thresholds set here may seem somewhat arbitrary. We have intentionally combined these cutoffs on a continuous scale with additional qualitative criteria guided by existing theories about democratization and autocratization. We began with initial expectations about logical cutoffs and conducted comprehensive checks to test the face validity of the operationalization method. As a result of these tests, and due to a desire to harmonize the data across episodes and minimize overlap between autocratization and democratization, the cutoffs for *annual turn* and *tolerance* have been adjusted from our initial values based on an inductive process.¹¹ For additional transparency and accessibility, we provide an R package (Maerz et al., 2020) that replicates the ERT based on the most recent V-Dem dataset.¹² The package allows users to engage in robustness and face-validity tests by setting their own parameters for the cutoffs illustrated in Table II. The ERT dataset builds on earlier efforts (Wilson et al., 2020; Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019) but includes several important innovations, which we briefly summarize in the Appendix C.

Overcoming the three core limitations

The unified ERT framework addresses each of the precarious limitations imbued in the bifurcated literature on regime change. First, the ERT avoids assumptions of unit homogeneity and symmetric and constant effects. It supports studying *gradual* processes of regime transformation by drawing on continuous data while also enabling differentiation of processes and outcomes in a categorical way, allowing for heterogeneity. By identifying episodes of regime transformation regardless of their outcome, our approach provides information about “near misses” where a regime transition did not occur despite considerable potential for it, allowing us to compare “successful” and various types of

¹¹Which were ± 0.02 and 10 years respectively for democratization and ± 0.02 and 4 years, respectively for autocratization.

¹²The ERT dataset, R package, and codebook are available here: <https://github.com/vdemoinstitute/ERT>

“unsuccessful” cases. This is especially important, as simply labeling countries as “democratizers” or “autocratizers” risks overlooking equifinality.

Second, the ERT provides for historically grounded comparisons that allow us to better study political regime change quantitatively as an inherently uncertain process that is sometimes dramatic and other times incremental. It recognizes both the transformation process and transition event as key elements of regime change. While we are not the first to conceptualize regime changes within “episodes” (see for example, Cassani and Tomini, 2020; Dresden and Howard, 2016; Gurses, 2011; Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019; Papaioannou and Siourounis, 2008; Tilly, 2001), past treatments use the term in the context of creating regime typologies or discrete observations of regime change.

Finally, our approach captures episodes of regime transformation in either direction (both democratization and autocratization) within one framework. This helps us to unify the literature on democratic transitions and breakdowns, while also avoiding assumptions about the empirical equivalence of unit changes in opposite directions on the democracy-autocracy continuum. This opens up opportunities for theory building about whether democratization and autocratization have similar causes (and effects). In addition, it opens new questions. For example, sequentially obverse episodes may explain or even be legacies of one another. In sum, establishing replicable rules for identifying democratization and autocratization episodes and summarizing the ways that they begin and end takes seriously calls for improving research on regime change, both unifying and expanding on previous works on the topic.

120 years of regime transformation at a glance

Based on these coding rules, the ERT dataset provides information on the start and end year, type, and outcome of 680 ERTs from 1900 to 2019. Figure 3 provides a summary of these episodes and their outcomes, following the framework laid out in Figure 1 and 2. We begin by exploring trends in democratization - by far the more commonly studied pathway of regime transformation in the literature. Afterward, we turn to the episodes of autocratization, which is a growing area of inquiry for scholars and of pressing concern for policy-practitioners given the ongoing third wave of autocratization (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019). Thus, our chief contribution is to provide a comprehensive overview of regime transformation in either direction over the past 120 years, bringing

together two complementary but often juxtaposed literatures. The frequency of episode types and outcomes on its own highlights several novel descriptive inferences, which we discuss below.

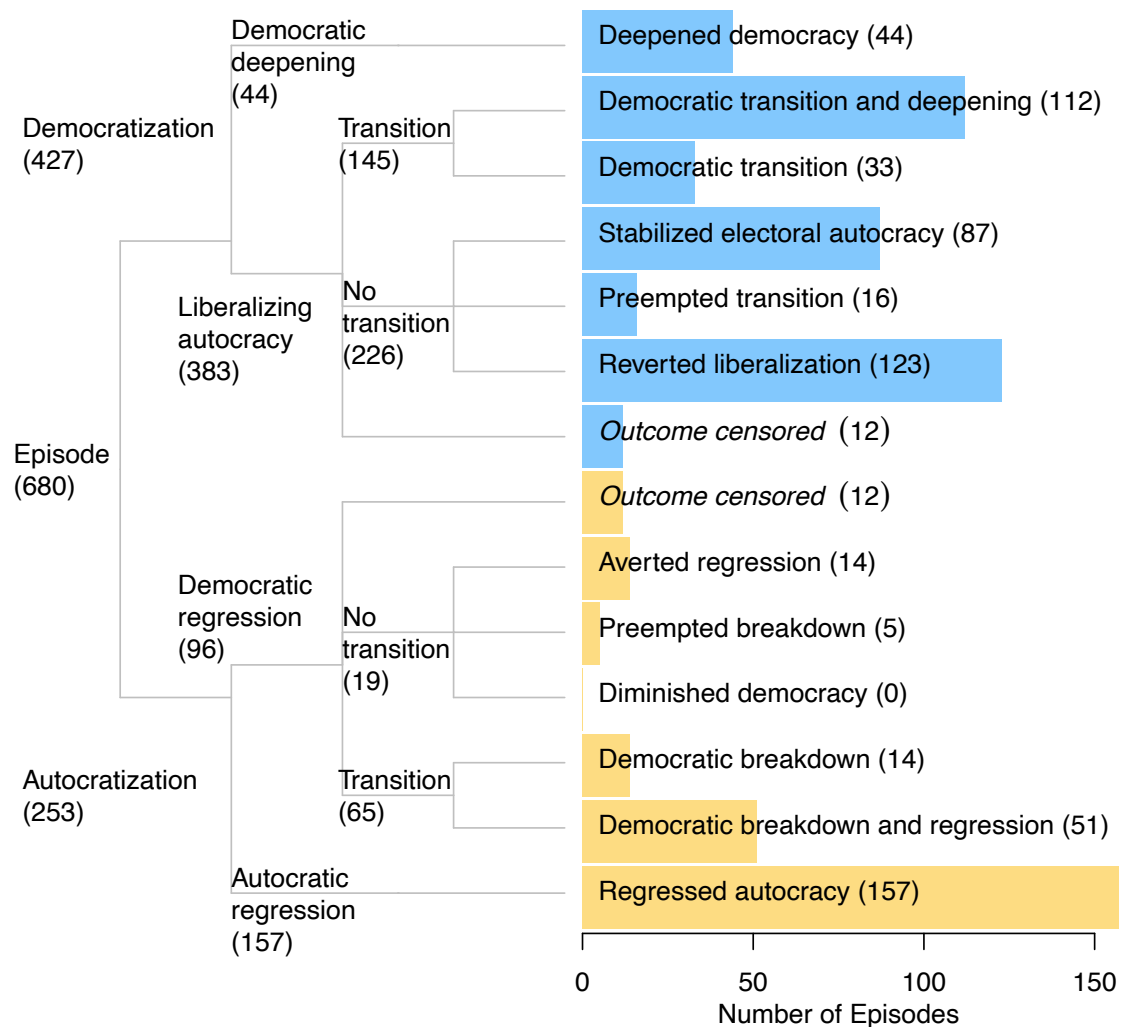


Figure 3. Description of our sample of episodes of regime transformation (1900-2019)

Episodes of democratization

As shown in the upper half of Figure 3, 63% of the ERT dataset (427 episodes) constitute democratization. The past 120 years are characterized more by advances of democracy than by setbacks. This comes as no surprise; since autocracy was the default regime type throughout all of human history (Ahram and Goode, 2016), regime transformations are more likely to proceed in the democratic di-

rection. Liberalization in autocracies is far more common ($N=383$) than deepening in democracies ($N=44$), suggesting that reforms occur in autocratic regimes rather than in cases that have already met the minimal criteria for democracy.

Democratic transition represents the modal outcome for liberalizing autocracies, representing two out of every five episodes where the outcome is known (or 145 out of 371 uncensored liberalizing autocracy episodes). A vast majority (77%, 112 episodes) of these episodes go on to experience further democratic deepening after the transition occurs. Thus, while often considered to be a culminating event in the literature, democratic transitions more commonly act as waystations embedded within a longer process of regime transformation. This opens up new opportunities to answer novel research questions, such as: Why do some countries stop at minimal levels of democracy after transitioning while others continue with the process of deepening?

Still, democratic transitions are the exception rather than the rule. Over 60% of the time (226 out of 371 uncensored episodes), liberalization does not yield a democracy. This suggests support for previous findings pointing to democratic emulation as a strategy for survival in autocracies (Levitsky and Way, 2010; Schedler, 2013; Lust-Okar, 2009; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007), but in fact only 23% (87 episodes) of uncensored liberalizing autocracy episodes result in a stabilized electoral autocracy. We find a higher frequency of reverted liberalization (one-third or 123 episodes), in which reforms – whether strategic or genuine – abruptly reverse course over a one to five year period. Meanwhile, sixteen other episodes come close to a complete democratic transition, only to be preempted. To our knowledge, we are the first to demonstrate empirically for a large sample of countries the high level of uncertainty for liberalization in autocracies that is often discussed by case-based researchers (e.g. O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Diamond et al., 1989). The ERT also provides the first data on preempted democratic transitions, as a category of democratic “near misses” that might be useful for case-based researchers in particular. In large part, these observations have been overlooked due to limitations of the dominant approaches discussed above, namely an emphasis on transitions as events or treating incremental changes as equivalents.

Finally, the ERT also provides evidence that the number of ongoing episodes of democratization are relatively few at present, counting only 20 at the end of 2019 (illustrated by Figure D1 in the Appendix). This is barely above 4% of all recorded democratization episodes. This reflects the current world outlook that autocratization is much more common than democratization. Amongst

these cases, three – Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, and North Macedonia – achieved a democratic transition and continued deepening. Six others were already democratic when the episode began, falling under deepened democracy in Figure 3. The outcome is censored for eleven other ongoing episodes, as well as for the German Democratic Republic in 1990 due to German reunification.

Episodes of autocratization

As shown in the lower half of Figure 3, 37% of the ERT data (253 episodes) concern autocratization. A clear majority of these (62%, 157 episodes) occur in already autocratic regimes, resulting in regressed autocracies. By contrast, only 96 (38%) affect democracies. This demonstrates that democracies are highly resilient to autocratization onset (cf. Boese et al., 2020), whereas autocracies are fairly unstable regimes.

The ERT suggests that autocratization is quite fatal for democracies. Amongst the 84 uncensored episodes of democratic regression, 65 (77%) encounter a democratic breakdown. Put differently, democracies undergoing autocratization have less than a one-in-four chance of survival. In addition, once breakdown occurs, further autocratization continues about 79% of the time (51 out of 65 breakdowns). This reinforces the argument made above that regime transitions are often embedded within a longer process of regime transformation.

While rare, we do observe 19 instances where democracies survived autocratization (i.e. “no transition” in the lower half of Figure 3). Averted regression is the most common way, occurring fourteen times (74%). Cases of preempted democratic breakdown are even more infrequent, appearing just five times in the ERT dataset – Mali (1997–1998), India (1971–1976), Georgia (2006–2010), Finland (1937–1940), and North Macedonia (2000). Qualitative research on this small but diverse set of episodes may offer new insights into how democracies on the brink of collapse managed to turn things around. The relative infrequency of averted regression and preempted breakdown suggests that Linz’ (1978) process of “reequilibrium” is a rare empirical phenomenon.¹³

Reflecting the present “third wave of autocratization” (e.g. Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019; Kasuya and Mori, 2019; Diamond, 2015; Bermeo, 2016; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018) – we observe 38 countries with an ongoing autocratization episode (more than 15% of the sample) at the end of 2019,

¹³While we conceptualize diminished democracy as a fourth potential outcome of democratic regression, we do not observe any cases of this using our empirically derived default parameters.

hence their duration is censored (see Figure D1).¹⁴ Fourteen of these are autocracies falling under regressed autocracy in Figure 3, such as Egypt since 2013 and Honduras since 2016. Another 13 represent cases of democratic breakdown followed by further regression - such as Venezuela (since 1999, breakdown in 2003), Zambia (since 2013, breakdown in 2014), and Turkey (since 2007, breakdown in 2014). For twelve other democracies, the duration *and* outcome of autocratization remains censored - including the United States (since 2015) and India (since 2002), the world’s most populous democracies. This contrasts with just 20 countries (less than 5%) undergoing democratization.

Comparisons to other datasets

How adequately do dichotomous treatments of democracy and autocracy – which are commonly used to denote regime change – capture the aforementioned processes of regime transformation? In Table III, we compare the outcomes observed in the ERT to regime transitions found in Boix et al. (BMR, 2013) and Cheibub et al. (CGV, 2010), as well as the set of transitions observed when dichotomizing the continuous Polity IV index at a score of 6 (Marshall et al., 2019). The left column lists the ERT outcomes and their frequencies. The other columns show the number of democratic transitions or breakdowns by each of the binary measures that fall within ERTs by outcome.

In general, comparing the outcomes in our sample to discrete transitions indicated by alternative measures shows evidence of convergent validity – many of the democratic transitions and democratic breakdowns represented in commonly used binary measures overlap with similar outcomes coded in the ERT. For democratic transitions, we see the greatest overlap with the BMR measure, accounting for 62 (43%) out of 145 episodes in the ERT, followed by Polity (57, 39%), and CGV (46, 32%). Polity shows slightly greater overlap when it comes to democratic breakdown with 30 episodes (46%) as compared to BMR with 26 episodes (40%). By contrast, CGV only corresponds to 11 (17%) of democratic breakdowns in our sample. In part, the lower numbers for CGV are the result of the limited time span covered by this measure (1946–2008). Table D1 in the Appendix reports the extent of overlap within the temporal domain of each.

At the same time, some discrepancies are striking. For example, transitions based on the Boix et al. (2013) measure indicate democratization as having occurred in 5 episodes of autocratic re-

¹⁴One other autocratization episode in Austria from 1931–1938 is censored by the German invasion and occupation, which results in a gap in the V-Dem data.

Table III. Number of episodes that include transitions coded by other datasets

ERT outcomes (N)	Democratic transition			Democratic breakdown		
	BMR	CGV	Polity	BMR	CGV	Polity
Deepened democracy (44)	2	0	1	0	0	0
Democratic transition (145)	62	46	57	0	0	2
Liberalizing autocracy, no transition (226)	36	35	26	3	4	6
Democratic regression, no transition (19)	0	0	6	0	0	3
Democratic breakdown (65)	1	0	3	26	11	30
Regressed autocracy (157)	5	3	2	35	32	22
Outcome censored (24)	0	0	5	0	0	2
Total (680)	106	84	102	64	47	68
<i>Not counted</i>	28	17	29	20	17	17

BMR=Boix, Miler, Rosato (2012); CGV=Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010);
 Polity threshold value=6.

gression, as well as in 36 of our episodes in which liberalization was not followed by a transition. The differences between dichotomous democracy measures and the ERT support four major take-aways. First, the extent to which alternative ways of representing regime transition do *not* overlap underscores our contribution of a larger sample that covers a longer period of time and counts a larger number of potential and actual transitions. Second, some of the overlap shows questionable cases that are misrepresented by binary measures. Third, the differences between binary measures evidences the potential for measurement error – disagreement between which transitions are registered by each – affecting quantitative analyses. Fourth, the exercise highlights the importance of the ERT measuring regime *transformations* to capture more complex processes (and outcomes) than can be gleaned from discrete notions of regime change.

Illustrative cases

Face validity is important for determining the value of a new framework. Here, we demonstrate that the ERT accurately characterizes the dynamics associated with regime transformation in Turkey and Argentina.

Turkey

Figure 4 illustrates the various ERTs in Turkey over the last century, alongside Polity scores (dotted line) and regime change events as measured by BMR and CGV. The figure shows that Polity frequently overstates the level of democracy. The events recorded by BMR and CGV often (but not always) capture transitions and breakdowns, but only the episodic approach describes Turkey's long-term development.

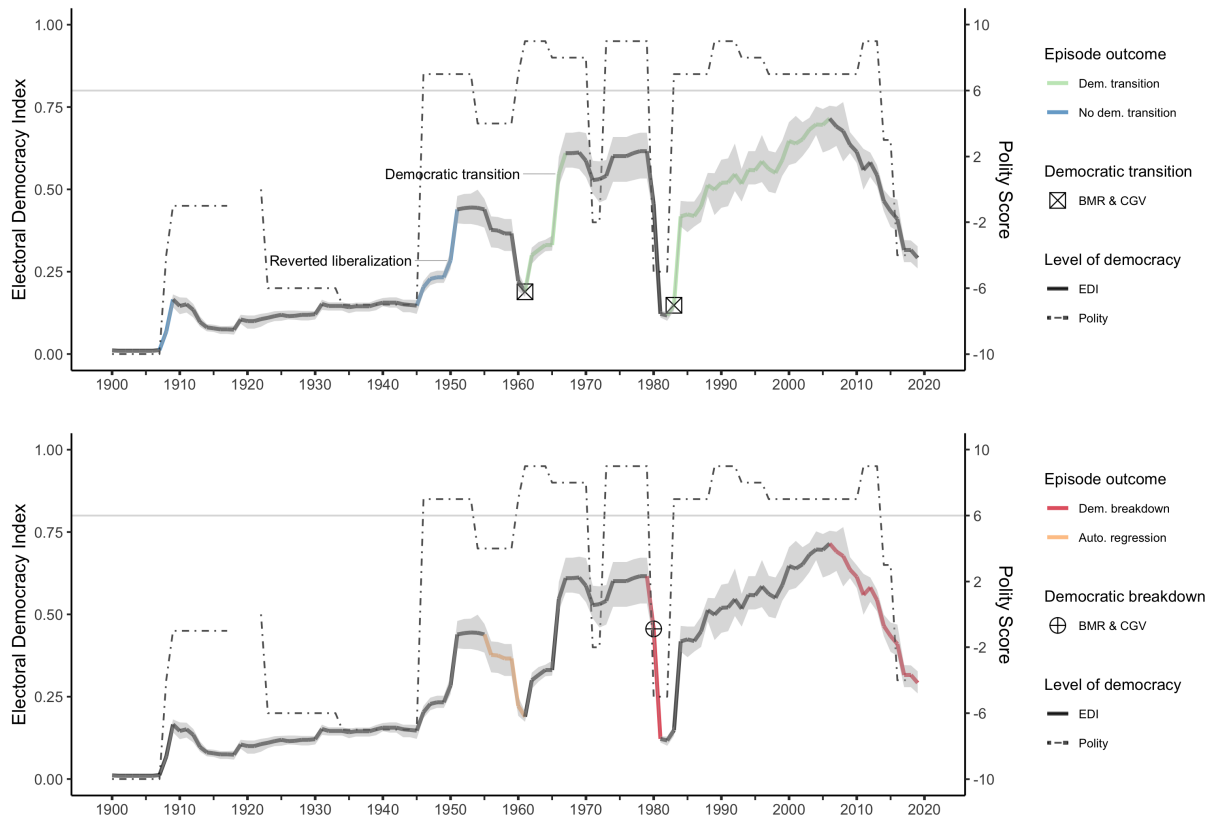


Figure 4. Illustrating the ERT's face validity for Turkey. Democratization episodes (top) and autocratization episodes (bottom). Dashed line = Polity.

In 1908, a coalition of reformists called the Young Turks revolted against the authoritarian sultan Abdülhamid II and re-established constitutional rule, but factionalization among its members resulted in the centralization of authority under a triumvirate of leaders. The Polity score increased substantially then but remained low, consistent with the observed episode of liberalization in the ERT that did not result in a transition to democracy (rather, reverted liberalization). Following the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1938 and World War II, notable reforms occurred such as

allowing new political parties and trade unions, establishing universal suffrage and direct elections, and improvements in press freedoms. Based on a threshold value of 6, Polity scores indicate a democratic transition. However, the Democrat Party that secured a majority of legislative seats in 1950 became increasingly repressive. As a result, the ERT codes this episode as reverted liberalization followed by an episode of autocratic regression. Meanwhile, the dichotomous BMR and CGV measures suggest that *nothing* happened during this time, which is misleading.

Military officers led a bloodless coup against the party in 1960 and a new constitution was approved by referendum in 1961, at which point all three measures – and the ERT – suggest that a democratic transition occurred.¹⁵ Likewise, all measures code the military coup in 1980 and the imposition of martial law as a democratic breakdown. A new constitution was approved by referendum in 1982 and new elections were held in 1983, facilitating another transition to democracy on which all measures agree.

Democracy in Turkey took a decisive turn after the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*; AKP) – a conservative populist party with Islamist roots – won a majority of seats to the legislature in 2002. The Turkish government pursued a democratic reform agenda to gain EU membership between 2002 and 2005, but reforms stalled and human rights violations intensified when the EU turned its focus from verbal commitments to the actual implementation of political reforms (Kubicek, 2011). For many observers, the crackdown against civil society groups, the media, and peaceful protesters during Istanbul’s Gezi Park protests in 2013 provided a clear indication that Turkey was regressing (Esen and Gumuscu, 2016; Bashirov and Lancaster, 2018). Esen and Gumuscu (2016: p. 1590), however, claim that the Freedom and Justice Party (AKP) began intimidating journalists immediately after its ascent to power in 2002, suggesting an earlier authoritarian turn. The episodes depicted in Figure 4 suggest that autocratization began in 2007. Instead of emphasizing democratic breakdown in 2014, our approach treats the events surrounding the start of the democratic regression episode in the mid-2000s as a critical part of a longer trend.

The case underscores an important difference between an *episodic* versus a dichotomous approach to depicting regime change. The different measures of regime change indicate that Turkey transitioned to democracy in 1982, although the process would seem more protracted than is conveyed

¹⁵Polity stands alone in coding a 1970 coup as a return to non-democracy. Although military intervention occurred, it did not result in major political changes.

by alternative measures. The combination of the episodic approach and V-Dem's more fine-grained data used to create the ERT portrays it as more gradual, conflictual, and iterative. The precariousness of democratic development in Turkey after 1982 helps to explain its regression in the late 2000s (Somer, 2017).

Argentina

Figure 5 illustrates major changes in the political development of Argentina, which, like Turkey, also saw fluctuations in liberalization that did not always represent successful democratization. In 1912, President Roque Sáenz Peña established universal, secret, and mandatory male suffrage through the creation of an electoral list. The introduction of free, fair and confidential voting based on universal adult male suffrage enabled the candidate for the Radical Civic Union (Hipólito Yrigoyen) to win general elections, ending the party dominance that the oligarchy had once enjoyed (Chen, 2007; Wynia, 1990). During this time, elections were considered free and fair and courts enjoyed greater independence (Alston and Gallo, 2010). Notably, this change does not register much in the Polity data, though both BMR and ERT treat it as a transition to democracy.

Crisis unleashed by the Great Depression led to a coup d'état in 1930 by Lieutenant General José Félix Uriburu, which both Polity and Boix et al. (2013) register as democratic breakdown (Chen, 2007; Wynia, 1990). A political alliance that supported the 1930-coup won the subsequent general elections; initiating a decade of rule in which conservative groups prevent extremists from coming to power through fraudulent indirect elections (Alston and Gallo, 2010; Chen, 2007; Wynia, 1990). During this period, the Polity data suggest that the restoration of civilian rule was more democratic than before the coup, while BMR do not register any regime change.

By the 1940s, the military worried that continued electoral fraud would radicalize Argentine politics. In 1943, Arturo Rawson replaced President Ramón Castillo in a coup, which invited subsequent coups. In the presidential election held in 1946, Colonel Juan Perón won as the candidate of the newly formed Labor Party. Perón was a consummate populist who maintained support through paternalistic policies and the manipulation of elections, and he was eventually sent into exile by a military coup in 1956. The datasets disagree on the Peronist period—only CGV codes his ascension as a democratic transition. The measures also disagree on successor governments. CGV and BMR code the restoration of civilian government as a democratic transition, while Polity and

the ERT do not code Argentina as democratizing until after another military intervention in 1962.

Although Perón returned to office in 1973, his death in 1974 and a series of political and economic crises prompted another coup – this time against his wife and Vice President Isabel Martínez de Perón – in 1976 (Chen, 2007; Wynia, 1990). The fact that all three measures portray his brief return as a democratic transition demonstrates a limitation of using discrete events to indicate democratization. The defeat of Argentina by Great Britain in the Falkland War in 1982 led to a swift return to civilian rule, which by all measures represented a successful transition to democracy – the succession of presidents in 1989 marked the first alternation in power between civilians since 1928 (Chen, 2007; Wynia, 1990).

The case of Argentina shows several instances in which various measures disagree. For example, Boix et al. (2013) seem to concur that Argentina transitioned to democracy in 1912, but this would be ignored using conventional thresholds for Polity. There are also several instances of liberaliza-

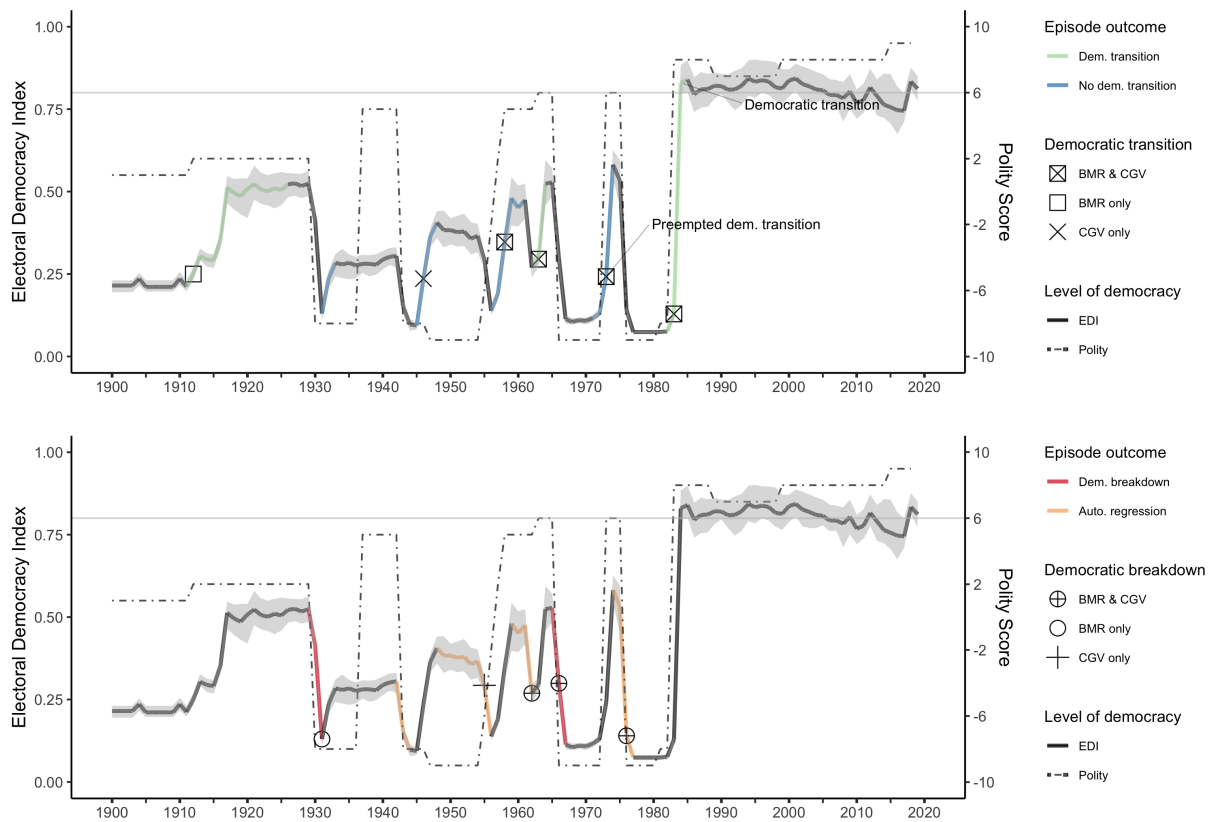


Figure 5. Illustrating the ERT's face validity for Argentina. Democratization episodes (top) and autocratization episodes (bottom). Dashed line = Polity.

tion that did not result in democratization but which dichotomous measures suggest did. Notably, alternative datasets disagree on whether Perón’s first presidency occurred under democracy. The episodes shown in Figure 5 differed in important ways. One involved a democratic transition that did not deepen and another a preempted democratic transition. Moreover, two were characterized by stabilized electoral autocracy and one by liberalization under autocracy that reverted. These patterns of regime change – offset by periods of democratic breakdown and autocratic regression – exemplify the importance of the ERT joining together information on democratization and autocratization to explain democratic development over time.

The ERT and peace research

The ERT dataset makes several contributions to the study of regime change and will find broad applications in conflict research. For example, the ERT can inform ongoing debates in the field such as whether or not autocratizing countries are more or less belligerent (e.g., Ward and Gleditsch, 1998) or whether democratization in ethnically heterogeneous societies leads to a higher risk of civil conflict (Mousseau, 2001). To illustrate potential applications, we plot in Figure 6 and Figure 7 the occurrence of inter- and intrastate conflict as recorded in the PRIO/UCDP armed conflict dataset (Sundberg and Melander, 2013: V20.1), and coup d’états (Powell and Thyne, 2011; Przeworski et al., 2013) during episodes of liberalizing autocracy (top panel) and democratic regression (bottom panel).¹⁶ Similar plots for deepening democracies and regressing autocracies are in the Appendix (Figure D2).

Both figures allow for a comparison between episodes that resulted in a regime transition and those that did not. Figure 6 shows that interstate conflict is more prevalent in episodes without a transition to democracy. Almost 9% of such episodes experience one or more interstate conflicts versus only in 4% of episodes that produced a democratic transition. By contrast, we record only a single international conflict (Indo-Pakistani War of 1971) during episodes of democratic regression, suggesting that domestic factors drive the erosion and breakdown of democracy. For civil conflicts, the differences are less pronounced. According to our data, liberalizing autocracies experience relatively similar rates incidences of intra-state conflict, regardless of whether the ERT produces

¹⁶We limit our episodes sample to the post-1945 period so that they overlap with the PRIO/UCDP data.

a transition to democracy (26% for transitions and 27% for no-transition outcomes). By contrast, autocratization episodes that produced a democratic breakdown had a much higher incidence of civil conflict (30% experienced at least one intra-state conflict) than those democracies that avoided breakdown during autocratization (only 13%). This descriptive finding points to the importance of domestic conflicts for democratic resilience.

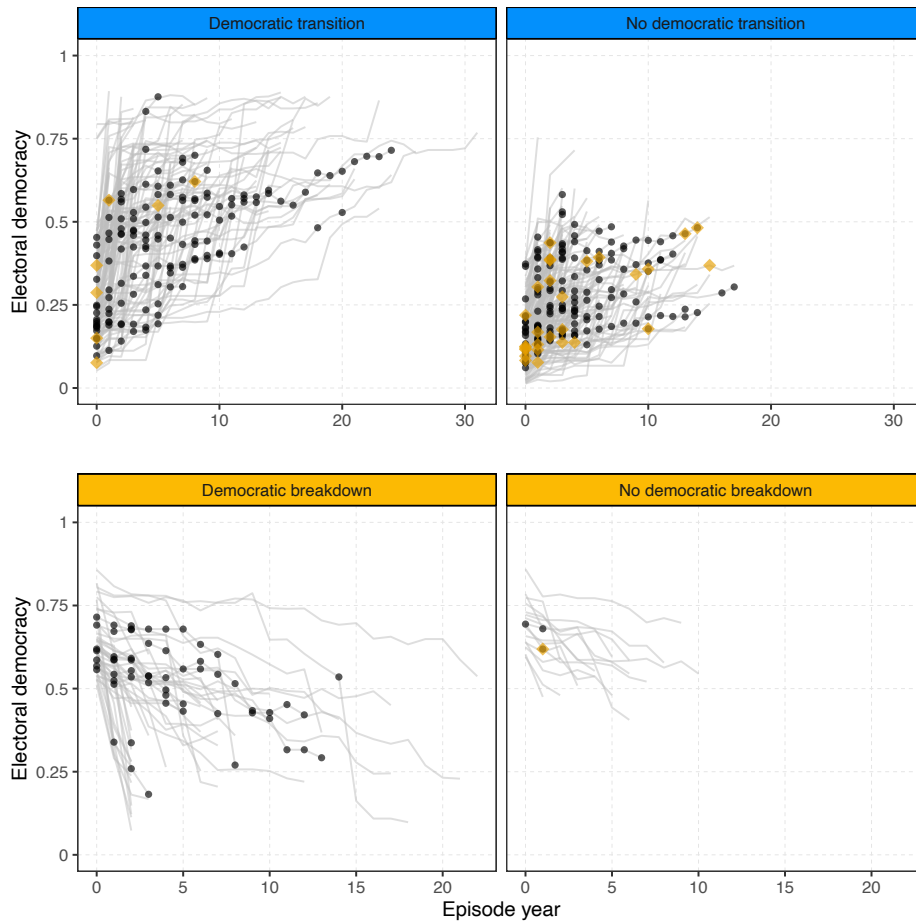


Figure 6. Conflict and regime transformation. Intrastate conflict (black dots) and interstate conflict (orange diamonds) as recorded in the UCDP/PRIO armed conflict dataset (Sundberg and Melander, 2013) during episodes of liberalizing autocracy (top) and democratic regression (bottom) by aggregated outcome, 1946–2019. Y-axis shows V-Dem’s electoral democracy index and year zero represents the pre-episode year.

Figure 7 reveals similar patterns when looking at the occurrence of attempted and successful coup d’états. Democratization episodes in autocracies that do not result in a democratic transition are more likely to experience one or more successful coups (13%) or attempted coups (14%) compared to democratic transitions (10% and 9%, respectively). Again, there are larger differences for

autocratization episodes in democracies. Our data shows that one or more successful coups occurred in more than one-third of episodes producing a democratic breakdown, while not a single successful coup is observed during episodes that avoided democratic breakdown. This further reinforces our knowledge about the the perils of coups (e.g., Derpanopoulos et al., 2016).

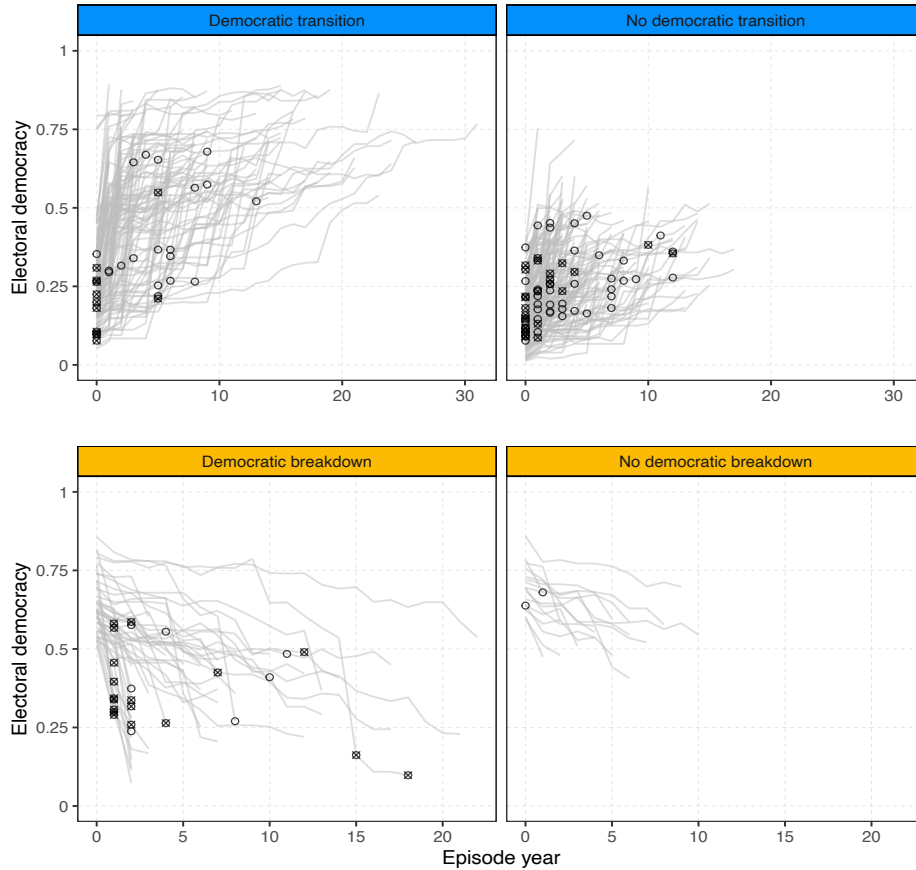


Figure 7. Coups. Attempted (empty circles) and successful (crossed circles) coup d'états as recorded by Powell and Thyne (2011) and Przeworski et al. (2013) during episodes of liberalizing autocracy and democratic regression by aggregated outcome, 1946–2019. Y-axis shows V-Dem's electoral democracy index and year zero represents the pre-episode year.

This illustration, while brief, showcases several potential applications of the ERT for peace research. First, researchers can use episode outcomes as the dependent variable in quantitative analyses, for example, to analyze the effect of ethnic, religious, or economic conflicts on (failed) democratic transitions or democratic breakdown. Second, the ERT allows for an adequate sampling strategy to identify comparable observations, for instance, to explore the role of conflict in determining what sets apart democratic breakdown from pre-empted breakdowns. The ERT data make

it easy to identify cases that followed a similar trajectory but arrived at very different outcomes. Third, the ERT facilitates the study of sequences, processes, and trajectories, shedding new light on the timing of events – like coups and conflict onset – during periods of regime transformation. Finally, qualitative researchers may benefit from the ERT in their search for suitable cases for small-n comparisons. For example, it allows researchers to isolate cases that have similar starting values for paired comparisons, with conflict as a possible explanation for divergent outcomes of regime transformation.

Conclusions and reflections

This article presents a framework and accompanying dataset seeking to unify the bifurcated literature on democratization and autocratization, while also addressing the precarious limitations imbued in the present literature. The ERT framework eschew assumptions of unit homogeneity and symmetric and constant effects, and allows analysis of gradual regime transformation processes while simultaneously categorizing outcomes and identifying equifinality. Second, the ERT facilitate quantitative analysis of regime change as an inherently uncertain processes that is sometimes dramatic and other times incremental. Third, the ERT captures episodes of regime transformation in either direction (both democratization and autocratization) within a unified framework, while avoiding assumptions about the empirical equivalence of unit changes in opposite directions on the democracy-autocracy continuum, or at different ends of the scale. The ERT not only identifies episodes with a potential for transition, it also includes episodes of “democratic deepening” and “autocratic regression”. These do not have a prospect for transitions and are often treated as a separate domain (see, for example, the literature on democratic consolidation). Integrating them alongside episodes with regime transitions is a valuable point of comparison and represents research areas that could use and build on the approach outlined here.

Based on the ERT framework and dataset, the article provides several novel empirical conclusions. First, only some ERTs have the *potential* for a regime transition, and there is no guarantee that such a transition will occur. Rather, we observe that only about 40% of autocracies that liberalize become democratic. This contrasts with the 77% fatality rate observed for democracies once autocratization begins. Second, when a democratic transition or breakdown occurs, in most

cases the country continues to experience further democratization or autocratization, respectively. The transition event is one step in a longer process rather than its culmination. Third, democratic regimes are less prone to experiencing regime transformation, in either direction, when compared to autocracies. Roughly 80% of the observed episodes of regime transformation since 1900 have occurred in autocracies. In other words, authoritarian regimes are generally less stable than democracies. Fourth, we have shown that democratization is much more common than autocratization. This finding fits with the modern expansion of democracy through several global waves of democratization (Huntington, 1993). Yet, we also reiterate recent evidence showing that the world is currently undergoing a wave of autocratization – nearly two out of every three countries undergoing regime transformation at the end of 2019 were autocratizing. The fact that we observe many different outcomes – not just successful democratization – shows considerable room for growth in studying regime transformation. This is exemplified by the step-wise deterioration of democracies like present-day Turkey and the bumpy road to democracy experienced by preempted democratization or reverted liberalization in countries such as Argentina. By embracing an episodes-based approach, we support a research agenda that encourages bounded generalizations about a complex and indeterminate phenomenon. Such conclusions may be present in the existing literature, but the conditions under which certain theories hold are unclear, nor have the explanations for related processes been unified. Further developing and exploring a process-oriented approach to identifying and explaining regime transformation may therefore help to knit together epistemological conclusions and expand scholarly understanding of an important set of outcomes.

Several promising areas of research await exploration. One area entails looking at the interrelation of past episodes to understand how previous experiences accumulate and affect future outcomes. Breaking down the assumption that such episodes are independent encourages “sequencing” analyses of development. Particularly, in the realm of peace research, the ERT allows for a more fine-grained empirical analysis of how patterns and trajectories of conflicts affect regime transformations and vice versa. Another important next step is to dig into the processes and evaluate changes within them, which involves identifying which *components* of democracy and autocracy changed. One possibility is that by better conceptualizing episodes of regime transformation and using them to make empirical comparisons, we might be able to identify cases that are about to transition to democracy or where democracy might be about to breakdown, which has important policy implications.

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Online Appendix:
Episodes of Regime Transformation

Appendix A Description of democratization episodes

Country	Start	End	Outcome
Afghanistan	2002	2006	Reverted liberalization
Albania	1919	1922	Reverted liberalization
Albania	1946	1947	Reverted liberalization
Albania	1991	1995	Reverted liberalization
Albania	1998	2002	Preempted democratic transition
Algeria	1962	1964	Reverted liberalization
Algeria	1977	1977	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Algeria	1990	1990	Reverted liberalization
Algeria	1995	1998	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Angola	2008	2011	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Argentina	1912	1926	Democratic transition
Argentina	1932	1933	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Argentina	1946	1948	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Argentina	1957	1961	Reverted liberalization
Argentina	1963	1964	Democratic transition
Argentina	1972	1974	Preempted democratic transition
Argentina	1983	1985	Democratic transition
Armenia	1998	2000	Reverted liberalization
Armenia	2010	2019	Outcome censored
Australia	1901	1904	Deepened democracy
Australia	1918	1923	Deepened democracy
Australia	1942	1947	Deepened democracy
Austria	1918	1921	Democratic transition
Azerbaijan	1991	1993	Reverted liberalization
Bahrain	1972	1973	Reverted liberalization
Bahrain	2000	2003	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Bangladesh	1972	1974	Reverted liberalization
Bangladesh	1977	1979	Reverted liberalization
Bangladesh	1984	1997	Democratic transition
Bangladesh	2009	2012	Preempted democratic transition
Barbados	1944	1977	Democratic transition
Belgium	1919	1921	Democratic transition
Belgium	1944	1954	Democratic transition
Belgium	1961	1965	Deepened democracy
Benin	1952	1964	Reverted liberalization
Benin	1990	1997	Democratic transition
Benin	2013	2016	Deepened democracy
Bhutan	2006	2014	Democratic transition
Bolivia	1938	1939	Reverted liberalization
Bolivia	1945	1948	Reverted liberalization
Bolivia	1952	1961	Reverted liberalization
Bolivia	1982	1987	Democratic transition
Bolivia	1990	1994	Deepened democracy
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1996	2003	Democratic transition
Botswana	1960	1967	Democratic transition
Brazil	1945	1947	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Brazil	1975	1993	Democratic transition
Bulgaria	1990	1997	Democratic transition
Burkina Faso	1949	1961	Reverted liberalization
Burkina Faso	1978	1979	Reverted liberalization
Burkina Faso	1990	2008	Democratic transition
Burkina Faso	2016	2016	Preempted democratic transition
Burma/Myanmar	1922	1923	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Burma/Myanmar	1945	1953	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Burma/Myanmar	2010	2019	Outcome censored
Burundi	1960	1962	Reverted liberalization
Burundi	1982	1985	Reverted liberalization
Burundi	1992	1993	Reverted liberalization
Burundi	1999	2006	Reverted liberalization
Cambodia	1947	1960	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Cambodia	1990	1994	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Cameroon	1990	1993	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Canada	1920	1938	Democratic transition

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Canada	1942	1954	Deepened democracy
Cape Verde	1972	1975	Reverted liberalization
Cape Verde	1980	1981	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Cape Verde	1990	2000	Democratic transition
Central African Republic	1947	1950	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Central African Republic	1956	1961	Reverted liberalization
Central African Republic	1987	1994	Reverted liberalization
Central African Republic	2005	2010	Reverted liberalization
Central African Republic	2014	2019	Outcome censored
Chad	1945	1957	Reverted liberalization
Chad	1990	1997	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Chile	1932	1937	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Chile	1958	1971	Democratic transition
Chile	1988	1994	Democratic transition
Colombia	1958	1969	Reverted liberalization
Colombia	1972	1975	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Colombia	1982	1995	Democratic transition
Colombia	2007	2015	Deepened democracy
Comoros	1990	1991	Reverted liberalization
Comoros	1997	1997	Reverted liberalization
Comoros	2002	2014	Democratic transition
Costa Rica	1919	1924	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Costa Rica	1950	1962	Democratic transition
Costa Rica	1971	1982	Deepened democracy
Croatia	1992	2004	Democratic transition
Cuba	1901	1904	Reverted liberalization
Cuba	1909	1909	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Cuba	1936	1945	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Cyprus	1960	1961	Preempted democratic transition
Cyprus	1970	1983	Democratic transition
Cyprus	1988	1993	Deepened democracy
Czech Republic	1920	1926	Democratic transition
Czech Republic	1945	1947	Reverted liberalization
Czech Republic	1990	1991	Democratic transition
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1955	1960	Reverted liberalization
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1998	2009	Reverted liberalization
Denmark	1901	1902	Democratic transition
Denmark	1916	1920	Deepened democracy
Denmark	1945	1946	Democratic transition
Dominican Republic	1924	1925	Reverted liberalization
Dominican Republic	1961	1963	Reverted liberalization
Dominican Republic	1966	1970	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Dominican Republic	1978	1988	Democratic transition
Dominican Republic	1995	2013	Democratic transition
Ecuador	1911	1912	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Ecuador	1938	1939	Reverted liberalization
Ecuador	1947	1953	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Ecuador	1967	1969	Reverted liberalization
Ecuador	1978	1984	Democratic transition
Ecuador	2018	2019	Deepened democracy, duration censored
Egypt	1956	1965	Stabilized electoral autocracy
El Salvador	1982	1985	Stabilized electoral autocracy
El Salvador	1991	2000	Democratic transition
El Salvador	2006	2014	Deepened democracy
Equatorial Guinea	1968	1969	Reverted liberalization
Equatorial Guinea	1982	1994	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Eritrea	1940	1942	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Estonia	1919	1922	Democratic transition
Estonia	1993	1993	Democratic transition
Eswatini	1964	1969	Reverted liberalization
Ethiopia	1987	1992	Reverted liberalization
Ethiopia	2015	2019	Outcome censored
Fiji	1963	1977	Democratic transition
Fiji	1992	1997	Democratic transition
Fiji	2002	2002	Democratic transition
Fiji	2010	2019	Outcome censored

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Finland	1917	1925	Democratic transition
Finland	1945	1946	Deepened democracy
Finland	1948	1950	Deepened democracy
France	1945	1949	Democratic transition
France	1966	1980	Deepened democracy
Gabon	1957	1961	Reverted liberalization
Gabon	1987	1994	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Georgia	1993	2005	Democratic transition
Georgia	2011	2015	Deepened democracy
German Democratic Republic	1990	1990	Outcome censored
Germany	1919	1925	Democratic transition
Ghana	1947	1951	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Ghana	1969	1971	Reverted liberalization
Ghana	1979	1980	Preempted democratic transition
Ghana	1993	2001	Democratic transition
Greece	1924	1924	Reverted liberalization
Greece	1927	1930	Reverted liberalization
Greece	1945	1953	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Greece	1974	1976	Democratic transition
Guatemala	1945	1949	Reverted liberalization
Guatemala	1984	2004	Democratic transition
Guatemala	2011	2016	Deepened democracy
Guinea	1957	1958	Reverted liberalization
Guinea	1985	2001	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Guinea	2010	2019	Outcome censored
Guinea-Bissau	1973	1977	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Guinea-Bissau	1990	2002	Reverted liberalization
Guinea-Bissau	2005	2006	Reverted liberalization
Guinea-Bissau	2014	2015	Democratic transition
Guyana	1901	1906	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Guyana	1957	1958	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Guyana	1966	1967	Reverted liberalization
Guyana	1986	2009	Democratic transition
Haiti	1951	1951	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Haiti	1987	1988	Reverted liberalization
Haiti	1991	1991	Reverted liberalization
Haiti	1993	1998	Reverted liberalization
Haiti	2006	2007	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Honduras	1949	1951	Reverted liberalization
Honduras	1971	1971	Reverted liberalization
Honduras	1980	1996	Democratic transition
Hong Kong	1985	1992	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Hungary	1918	1918	Reverted liberalization
Hungary	1920	1925	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Hungary	1988	1995	Democratic transition
Iceland	1904	1909	Democratic transition
Iceland	1916	1917	Deepened democracy
India	1950	1957	Democratic transition
India	1977	2000	Deepened democracy
Indonesia	1945	1956	Preempted democratic transition
Indonesia	1997	2000	Democratic transition
Iran	1906	1910	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Iraq	2004	2011	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Ireland	1921	1924	Democratic transition
Israel	1949	1957	Democratic transition
Israel	1967	1974	Deepened democracy
Italy	1944	1961	Democratic transition
Ivory Coast	1990	1993	Reverted liberalization
Ivory Coast	1995	1996	Reverted liberalization
Ivory Coast	2001	2006	Reverted liberalization
Ivory Coast	2008	2019	Democratic transition, duration censored
Jamaica	1935	1945	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Jamaica	1953	1956	Democratic transition
Jamaica	1984	1998	Democratic transition
Jamaica	2003	2019	Deepened democracy, duration censored
Japan	1945	1964	Democratic transition

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Jordan	1989	1994	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Kenya	1956	1965	Reverted liberalization
Kenya	1990	2003	Reverted liberalization
Kenya	2010	2016	Reverted liberalization
Kosovo	2002	2007	Democratic transition
Kosovo	2013	2015	Deepened democracy
Kosovo	2018	2019	Deepened democracy, duration censored
Kuwait	1961	1966	Reverted liberalization
Kuwait	1981	1981	Reverted liberalization
Kuwait	1991	2005	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Kyrgyzstan	1991	1992	Reverted liberalization
Kyrgyzstan	2003	2012	Reverted liberalization
Laos	1945	1948	Reverted liberalization
Laos	1950	1958	Reverted liberalization
Latvia	1922	1923	Democratic transition
Latvia	1991	1997	Deepened democracy
Lebanon	1942	1944	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Lebanon	1996	2010	Preempted democratic transition
Lesotho	1960	1967	Reverted liberalization
Lesotho	1992	1994	Reverted liberalization
Lesotho	2002	2003	Democratic transition
Liberia	1985	1988	Reverted liberalization
Liberia	1997	1998	Reverted liberalization
Liberia	2005	2007	Democratic transition
Libya	2011	2013	Preempted democratic transition
Lithuania	1920	1922	Democratic transition
Luxembourg	1916	1920	Democratic transition
Luxembourg	1945	1954	Democratic transition
Madagascar	1956	1961	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Madagascar	1985	1994	Democratic transition
Madagascar	2003	2006	Democratic transition
Madagascar	2013	2019	Outcome censored
Malawi	1960	1964	Reverted liberalization
Malawi	1992	1995	Preempted democratic transition
Malawi	2005	2015	Democratic transition
Malaysia	1946	1956	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Malaysia	1972	1975	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Malaysia	1999	2019	Outcome censored
Maldives	1933	1935	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Maldives	2003	2010	Democratic transition
Maldives	2018	2019	Outcome censored
Mali	1946	1961	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Mali	1992	1993	Democratic transition
Mali	2002	2009	Deepened democracy
Mali	2014	2015	Democratic transition
Malta	1921	1921	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Malta	1932	1933	Reverted liberalization
Malta	1945	1951	Democratic transition
Malta	1962	1965	Democratic transition
Mauritania	1945	1947	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Mauritania	1957	1957	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Mauritania	1987	1994	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Mauritania	2007	2007	Reverted liberalization
Mauritania	2010	2010	Reverted liberalization
Mauritius	1948	1949	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Mauritius	1959	1961	Reverted liberalization
Mauritius	1968	1983	Democratic transition
Mexico	1915	1918	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Mexico	1977	2002	Democratic transition
Moldova	1994	1998	Democratic transition
Moldova	2006	2011	Democratic transition
Mongolia	1951	1952	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Mongolia	1990	1998	Democratic transition
Mongolia	2006	2006	Deepened democracy
Montenegro	1999	2004	Democratic transition
Morocco	1963	1964	Reverted liberalization

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Morocco	1993	2005	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Namibia	1989	1991	Preempted democratic transition
Namibia	1995	1995	Democratic transition
Namibia	2003	2016	Deepened democracy
Nepal	1950	1952	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Nepal	1990	1992	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Nepal	2006	2009	Democratic transition
Nepal	2014	2014	Democratic transition
Netherlands	1917	1923	Democratic transition
Netherlands	1945	1949	Democratic transition
Nicaragua	1980	1991	Democratic transition
Niger	1957	1961	Reverted liberalization
Niger	1988	1991	Reverted liberalization
Niger	1993	1994	Democratic transition
Niger	1997	1998	Reverted liberalization
Niger	2000	2002	Democratic transition
Niger	2011	2012	Democratic transition
Nigeria	1976	1980	Reverted liberalization
Nigeria	1998	2000	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Nigeria	2010	2016	Democratic transition
North Macedonia	1993	1999	Democratic transition
North Macedonia	2002	2004	Deepened democracy
North Macedonia	2017	2019	Democratic transition, duration censored
Norway	1906	1918	Democratic transition
Norway	1945	1948	Democratic transition
Oman	2000	2003	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Pakistan	1962	1974	Reverted liberalization
Pakistan	1985	1990	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Pakistan	2002	2015	Reverted liberalization
Palestine/West Bank	1994	2005	Democratic transition
Panama	1904	1905	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Panama	1947	1950	Reverted liberalization
Panama	1953	1956	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Panama	1990	1992	Democratic transition
Papua New Guinea	1960	1977	Democratic transition
Paraguay	1990	1994	Democratic transition
Paraguay	2000	2009	Deepened democracy
Peru	1939	1940	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Peru	1950	1957	Reverted liberalization
Peru	1964	1964	Reverted liberalization
Peru	1976	1982	Democratic transition
Peru	1994	1996	Reverted liberalization
Peru	2001	2004	Democratic transition
Philippines	1944	1948	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Philippines	1982	1990	Democratic transition
Philippines	2007	2015	Democratic transition
Poland	1919	1920	Democratic transition
Poland	1980	1994	Democratic transition
Portugal	1908	1916	Reverted liberalization
Portugal	1970	1984	Democratic transition
Republic of the Congo	1957	1961	Reverted liberalization
Republic of the Congo	1990	1993	Reverted liberalization
Republic of the Congo	2002	2003	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Republic of Vietnam	1955	1957	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Republic of Vietnam	1966	1968	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Romania	1990	1997	Democratic transition
Russia	1987	1992	Democratic transition
Rwanda	1955	1962	Reverted liberalization
Rwanda	1979	1982	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Rwanda	1991	1992	Reverted liberalization
Rwanda	2003	2019	Outcome censored
Sao Tome and Principe	1972	1975	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Sao Tome and Principe	1987	1995	Democratic transition
Senegal	1945	1946	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Senegal	1960	1961	Reverted liberalization
Senegal	1978	1982	Reverted liberalization

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Senegal	1992	1993	Deepened democracy
Serbia	1992	1993	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Serbia	2000	2003	Democratic transition
Seychelles	1963	1970	Reverted liberalization
Seychelles	1979	1985	Reverted liberalization
Seychelles	1991	2004	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Seychelles	2016	2017	Democratic transition
Sierra Leone	1958	1963	Reverted liberalization
Sierra Leone	1994	1997	Reverted liberalization
Sierra Leone	2002	2003	Democratic transition
Sierra Leone	2013	2019	Democratic transition, duration censored
Singapore	1955	1960	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Slovakia	1994	2010	Democratic transition
Slovenia	1990	1998	Democratic transition
Solomon Islands	1960	1982	Democratic transition
Solomon Islands	2002	2004	Preempted democratic transition
Solomon Islands	2007	2011	Democratic transition
Solomon Islands	2015	2019	Deepened democracy, duration censored
Somalia	1950	1966	Reverted liberalization
Somaliland	1993	2014	Reverted liberalization
South Africa	1990	1995	Democratic transition
South Africa	1998	2006	Deepened democracy
South Korea	1945	1949	Stabilized electoral autocracy
South Korea	1964	1964	Stabilized electoral autocracy
South Korea	1976	1998	Democratic transition
South Korea	2015	2019	Deepened democracy, duration censored
Spain	1931	1932	Democratic transition
Spain	1976	1980	Democratic transition
Sri Lanka	1947	1948	Democratic transition
Sri Lanka	1983	1987	Democratic transition
Sri Lanka	1992	1995	Deepened democracy
Sri Lanka	2011	2016	Democratic transition
Sudan	1949	1956	Reverted liberalization
Sudan	1965	1965	Reverted liberalization
Sudan	1986	1987	Reverted liberalization
Sudan	1996	2009	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Suriname	1949	1956	Democratic transition
Suriname	1975	1978	Deepened democracy
Suriname	1987	1990	Preempted democratic transition
Suriname	1992	1992	Democratic transition
Sweden	1917	1929	Democratic transition
Sweden	1971	1974	Deepened democracy
Switzerland	1970	1981	Deepened democracy
Syria	1943	1948	Reverted liberalization
Syria	1953	1955	Reverted liberalization
Syria	1961	1962	Reverted liberalization
Taiwan	1987	2002	Democratic transition
Tanzania	1958	1964	Reverted liberalization
Tanzania	1986	1996	Democratic transition
Thailand	1933	1938	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Thailand	1974	1975	Reverted liberalization
Thailand	1978	1987	Reverted liberalization
Thailand	1992	2001	Democratic transition
Thailand	2008	2008	Reverted liberalization
Thailand	2010	2012	Preempted democratic transition
The Gambia	1946	1948	Stabilized electoral autocracy
The Gambia	1960	1962	Reverted liberalization
The Gambia	1966	1971	Preempted democratic transition
The Gambia	1996	1998	Stabilized electoral autocracy
The Gambia	2014	2019	Outcome censored
Timor-Leste	1998	2008	Democratic transition
Timor-Leste	2012	2019	Deepened democracy, duration censored
Togo	1956	1960	Reverted liberalization
Togo	1991	1999	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Togo	2005	2009	Preempted democratic transition
Togo	2012	2014	Democratic transition

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Trinidad and Tobago	1925	1926	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Trinidad and Tobago	1933	1967	Democratic transition
Trinidad and Tobago	1973	1981	Deepened democracy
Tunisia	1956	1960	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Tunisia	2011	2012	Democratic transition
Turkey	1908	1909	Reverted liberalization
Turkey	1946	1951	Reverted liberalization
Turkey	1962	1967	Democratic transition
Turkey	1983	2006	Democratic transition
Uganda	1953	1963	Reverted liberalization
Uganda	1981	1981	Reverted liberalization
Uganda	1989	1992	Reverted liberalization
Ukraine	1991	1996	Democratic transition
Ukraine	2005	2007	Democratic transition
United Kingdom	1919	1931	Democratic transition
United Kingdom	1945	1952	Deepened democracy
United States of America	1913	1921	Democratic transition
United States of America	1942	1957	Deepened democracy
United States of America	1966	1981	Deepened democracy
Uruguay	1915	1920	Democratic transition
Uruguay	1922	1926	Democratic transition
Uruguay	1936	1949	Democratic transition
Uruguay	1981	1986	Democratic transition
Vanuatu	1970	1984	Democratic transition
Vanuatu	2008	2016	Deepened democracy
Venezuela	1936	1948	Reverted liberalization
Venezuela	1958	1974	Democratic transition
Vietnam	1946	1947	Reverted liberalization
Yemen	1988	1993	Reverted liberalization
Zambia	1961	1964	Reverted liberalization
Zambia	1990	1993	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Zanzibar	1957	1963	Reverted liberalization
Zanzibar	1992	1999	Stabilized electoral autocracy
Zimbabwe	1979	1981	Stabilized electoral autocracy

Appendix B Description of autocratization episodes

Country	Start	End	Outcome
Albania	1937	1940	Regressed autocracy
Algeria	1965	1966	Regressed autocracy
Algeria	1992	1992	Regressed autocracy
Argentina	1930	1931	Democratic breakdown
Argentina	1943	1944	Regressed autocracy
Argentina	1949	1956	Regressed autocracy
Argentina	1960	1962	Regressed autocracy
Argentina	1966	1967	Democratic breakdown
Argentina	1975	1977	Regressed autocracy
Armenia	1992	1997	Democratic breakdown
Armenia	2001	2008	Regressed autocracy
Australia	1907	1917	Averted regression
Austria	1931	1938	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
Azerbaijan	1994	1994	Regressed autocracy
Bahrain	1974	1976	Regressed autocracy
Bahrain	2011	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Bangladesh	1975	1976	Regressed autocracy
Bangladesh	1982	1983	Regressed autocracy
Bangladesh	2002	2008	Democratic breakdown
Bangladesh	2013	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Belarus	1995	2006	Democratic breakdown
Belgium	1914	1915	Regressed autocracy
Belgium	1937	1941	Democratic breakdown
Benin	1965	1966	Regressed autocracy
Benin	1970	1973	Regressed autocracy
Benin	2007	2012	Averted regression
Benin	2017	2019	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
Bolivia	1930	1935	Regressed autocracy
Bolivia	1941	1944	Regressed autocracy
Bolivia	1962	1965	Regressed autocracy
Bolivia	1998	2019	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2010	2015	Averted regression
Brazil	1927	1931	Regressed autocracy
Brazil	1959	1965	Regressed autocracy
Brazil	2012	2019	Uncertain outcome, duration censored
Bulgaria	1923	1935	Regressed autocracy
Bulgaria	2002	2019	Uncertain outcome, duration censored
Burkina Faso	1965	1966	Regressed autocracy
Burkina Faso	1980	1985	Regressed autocracy
Burkina Faso	2014	2015	Democratic breakdown
Burkina Faso	2017	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Burma/Myanmar	1942	1943	Regressed autocracy
Burma/Myanmar	1958	1963	Regressed autocracy
Burundi	1963	1967	Regressed autocracy
Burundi	1987	1988	Regressed autocracy
Burundi	2008	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Cambodia	1970	1975	Regressed autocracy
Cambodia	2011	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Central African Republic	1963	1966	Regressed autocracy
Central African Republic	1999	2004	Regressed autocracy
Chad	1972	1976	Regressed autocracy
Chile	1921	1928	Regressed autocracy
Chile	1973	1974	Democratic breakdown
Chile	2011	2019	Uncertain outcome, duration censored
Colombia	1947	1950	Regressed autocracy
Comoros	1996	1996	Regressed autocracy
Comoros	1999	2000	Regressed autocracy
Comoros	2015	2019	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
Costa Rica	1917	1917	Regressed autocracy
Costa Rica	1946	1948	Regressed autocracy
Croatia	2011	2019	Uncertain outcome, duration censored
Cuba	1906	1907	Regressed autocracy
Cuba	1927	1934	Regressed autocracy

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Cuba	1950	1953	Regressed autocracy
Cuba	1959	1961	Regressed autocracy
Czech Republic	1934	1940	Democratic breakdown
Czech Republic	2009	2019	Uncertain outcome, duration censored
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1961	1966	Regressed autocracy
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2010	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Denmark	1933	1944	Democratic breakdown
Dominican Republic	1930	1931	Regressed autocracy
Dominican Republic	1964	1964	Regressed autocracy
Dominican Republic	1985	1991	Democratic breakdown
Dominican Republic	2015	2018	Averted regression
Ecuador	1905	1906	Regressed autocracy
Ecuador	1932	1936	Regressed autocracy
Ecuador	1940	1946	Regressed autocracy
Ecuador	1963	1964	Regressed autocracy
Ecuador	1970	1973	Regressed autocracy
Ecuador	2008	2017	Averted regression
Egypt	1952	1953	Regressed autocracy
Egypt	2013	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Equatorial Guinea	1971	1973	Regressed autocracy
Estonia	1929	1935	Democratic breakdown
Estonia	1991	1992	Democratic breakdown
Eswatini	1970	1974	Regressed autocracy
Fiji	1987	1988	Democratic breakdown
Fiji	2000	2001	Democratic breakdown
Fiji	2006	2007	Democratic breakdown
Finland	1937	1940	Preempted democratic breakdown
France	1934	1941	Democratic breakdown
France	1964	1965	Averted regression
Georgia	2006	2010	Preempted democratic breakdown
Germany	1921	1939	Democratic breakdown
Ghana	1962	1966	Regressed autocracy
Ghana	1972	1973	Regressed autocracy
Ghana	1981	1982	Regressed autocracy
Greece	1915	1923	Regressed autocracy
Greece	1933	1937	Regressed autocracy
Greece	1966	1968	Regressed autocracy
Guatemala	1953	1956	Regressed autocracy
Guinea	2002	2009	Regressed autocracy
Guinea-Bissau	2010	2013	Regressed autocracy
Guyana	1969	1981	Regressed autocracy
Haiti	1992	1992	Regressed autocracy
Haiti	2000	2005	Regressed autocracy
Honduras	1955	1955	Regressed autocracy
Honduras	1972	1973	Regressed autocracy
Honduras	1998	2011	Democratic breakdown
Honduras	2016	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Hungary	1919	1919	Regressed autocracy
Hungary	1926	1945	Regressed autocracy
Hungary	1948	1950	Regressed autocracy
Hungary	2010	2019	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
India	1971	1976	Preempted democratic breakdown
India	2002	2019	Uncertain outcome, duration censored
Indonesia	1957	1961	Regressed autocracy
Iran	1953	1954	Regressed autocracy
Iraq	1957	1969	Regressed autocracy
Iraq	2009	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Israel	2010	2019	Uncertain outcome, duration censored
Italy	1916	1929	Regressed autocracy
Ivory Coast	2000	2000	Regressed autocracy
Kosovo	2016	2017	Averted regression
Kuwait	1975	1976	Regressed autocracy
Kuwait	1986	1986	Regressed autocracy
Kyrgyzstan	1993	2002	Regressed autocracy
Laos	1959	1965	Regressed autocracy
Laos	1973	1976	Regressed autocracy

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Latvia	1929	1939	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
Lesotho	1969	1971	Regressed autocracy
Lesotho	1995	1995	Regressed autocracy
Lesotho	2015	2017	Averted regression
Liberia	1980	1981	Regressed autocracy
Liberia	1989	1996	Regressed autocracy
Liberia	1999	2004	Regressed autocracy
Libya	2014	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Lithuania	1924	1927	Democratic breakdown
Luxembourg	1940	1941	Democratic breakdown
Madagascar	1972	1973	Regressed autocracy
Madagascar	1996	2002	Democratic breakdown
Madagascar	2009	2010	Democratic breakdown
Malawi	1996	2000	Regressed autocracy
Malaysia	1964	1970	Regressed autocracy
Maldives	2011	2017	Democratic breakdown
Mali	1964	1969	Regressed autocracy
Mali	1997	1998	Preempted democratic breakdown
Mali	2011	2012	Democratic breakdown
Malta	1930	1931	Regressed autocracy
Malta	1934	1934	Regressed autocracy
Malta	1954	1959	Democratic breakdown
Mauritania	1978	1979	Regressed autocracy
Mauritius	1962	1962	Regressed autocracy
Moldova	2000	2005	Democratic breakdown
Moldova	2012	2018	Averted regression
Namibia	1992	1994	Regressed autocracy
Nepal	1960	1961	Regressed autocracy
Nepal	2000	2003	Regressed autocracy
Nepal	2012	2013	Democratic breakdown
Netherlands	1933	1941	Democratic breakdown
Nicaragua	1992	1999	Averted regression
Nicaragua	2003	2019	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
Niger	1962	1975	Regressed autocracy
Niger	1995	1996	Democratic breakdown
Niger	1999	1999	Regressed autocracy
Niger	2007	2010	Democratic breakdown
Niger	2013	2019	Uncertain outcome, duration censored
Nigeria	1983	1984	Regressed autocracy
North Macedonia	2000	2000	Preempted democratic breakdown
North Macedonia	2007	2013	Democratic breakdown
Norway	1937	1943	Democratic breakdown
Pakistan	1978	1979	Regressed autocracy
Pakistan	1999	2000	Regressed autocracy
Pakistan	2016	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Palestine/West Bank	2007	2013	Democratic breakdown
Panama	1941	1946	Regressed autocracy
Panama	1964	1969	Regressed autocracy
Papua New Guinea	2002	2018	Democratic breakdown
Peru	1948	1949	Regressed autocracy
Peru	1968	1973	Regressed autocracy
Peru	1985	1992	Democratic breakdown
Philippines	1941	1942	Regressed autocracy
Philippines	1969	1973	Regressed autocracy
Philippines	2001	2005	Democratic breakdown
Philippines	2016	2019	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
Poland	1926	1931	Democratic breakdown
Poland	2013	2019	Uncertain outcome, duration censored
Portugal	1926	1927	Regressed autocracy
Republic of the Congo	1962	1969	Regressed autocracy
Republic of the Congo	1994	1998	Regressed autocracy
Republic of Vietnam	1960	1964	Regressed autocracy
Romania	1938	1940	Regressed autocracy
Russia	2000	2004	Regressed autocracy
Rwanda	1973	1974	Regressed autocracy
Rwanda	1993	1995	Regressed autocracy

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Country	Start Year	End Year	Outcome
Senegal	1963	1963	Regressed autocracy
Serbia	2009	2019	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
Seychelles	1977	1978	Regressed autocracy
Sierra Leone	1965	1968	Regressed autocracy
Sierra Leone	2007	2014	Democratic breakdown
Solomon Islands	2000	2001	Democratic breakdown
Somalia	1965	1970	Regressed autocracy
South Africa	2009	2019	Uncertain outcome, duration censored
South Korea	1962	1962	Regressed autocracy
South Korea	1971	1973	Regressed autocracy
South Korea	2008	2016	Averted regression
Spain	1922	1924	Regressed autocracy
Spain	1936	1940	Democratic breakdown
Sri Lanka	1970	1982	Democratic breakdown
Sri Lanka	1998	2009	Democratic breakdown
Sudan	1957	1960	Regressed autocracy
Sudan	1969	1970	Regressed autocracy
Sudan	1989	1990	Regressed autocracy
Suriname	1980	1982	Democratic breakdown
Suriname	1991	1991	Regressed autocracy
Syria	1949	1952	Regressed autocracy
Syria	1958	1960	Regressed autocracy
Syria	1963	1966	Regressed autocracy
Tajikistan	1992	1995	Regressed autocracy
Tanzania	1965	1967	Regressed autocracy
Tanzania	2000	2005	Democratic breakdown
Tanzania	2015	2019	Uncertain outcome, duration censored
Thailand	1976	1977	Regressed autocracy
Thailand	1991	1991	Regressed autocracy
Thailand	2005	2007	Democratic breakdown
Thailand	2013	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
The Gambia	1993	1995	Regressed autocracy
Togo	1963	1963	Regressed autocracy
Togo	1967	1967	Regressed autocracy
Togo	2010	2011	Regressed autocracy
Togo	2017	2019	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
Trinidad and Tobago	1969	1972	Averted regression
Turkey	1956	1961	Regressed autocracy
Turkey	1980	1981	Democratic breakdown
Turkey	2007	2019	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
Uganda	1966	1972	Regressed autocracy
Uganda	1985	1986	Regressed autocracy
Ukraine	1997	2004	Democratic breakdown
Ukraine	2008	2017	Democratic breakdown
United States of America	2015	2019	Uncertain outcome, duration censored
Uruguay	1921	1921	Democratic breakdown
Uruguay	1931	1934	Democratic breakdown
Uruguay	1959	1976	Democratic breakdown
Vanuatu	1988	1992	Averted regression
Venezuela	1949	1949	Regressed autocracy
Venezuela	1992	1992	Averted regression
Venezuela	1999	2019	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
Yemen	2008	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Zambia	1965	1974	Regressed autocracy
Zambia	2013	2019	Democratic breakdown, duration censored
Zanzibar	1964	1964	Regressed autocracy
Zanzibar	2013	2019	Regressed autocracy, duration censored
Zimbabwe	1978	1978	Regressed autocracy

Appendix C The ERT dataset vs earlier operationalizations

The ERT dataset builds on earlier efforts of measuring democratization and autocratization episodes (Wilson et al., 2020; Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019) but includes several important innovations: First, because many countries operate on a five-year election cycle (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020), we adjust the time-tolerance parameter to five years, allowing countries to hold an election during the episode interval. Second, we increase the annual turn threshold from 0.02 to 0.03, because face-validity checks show that it is not uncommon that episodes experience a single-year annual turn of 0.02 followed by continued sustained declines (autocratization) or improvements (democratization). The lower threshold used by previous works thus has the consequence of sometimes artificially cutting apart episodes in separate pieces, which our change reconciles. Finally, we introduce a cumulative turn parameter as an additional termination criteria based on gradual changes of 0.10 for the measurement of autocratization episodes (cf. Wilson et al., 2020).

Appendix D Additional figures and tables

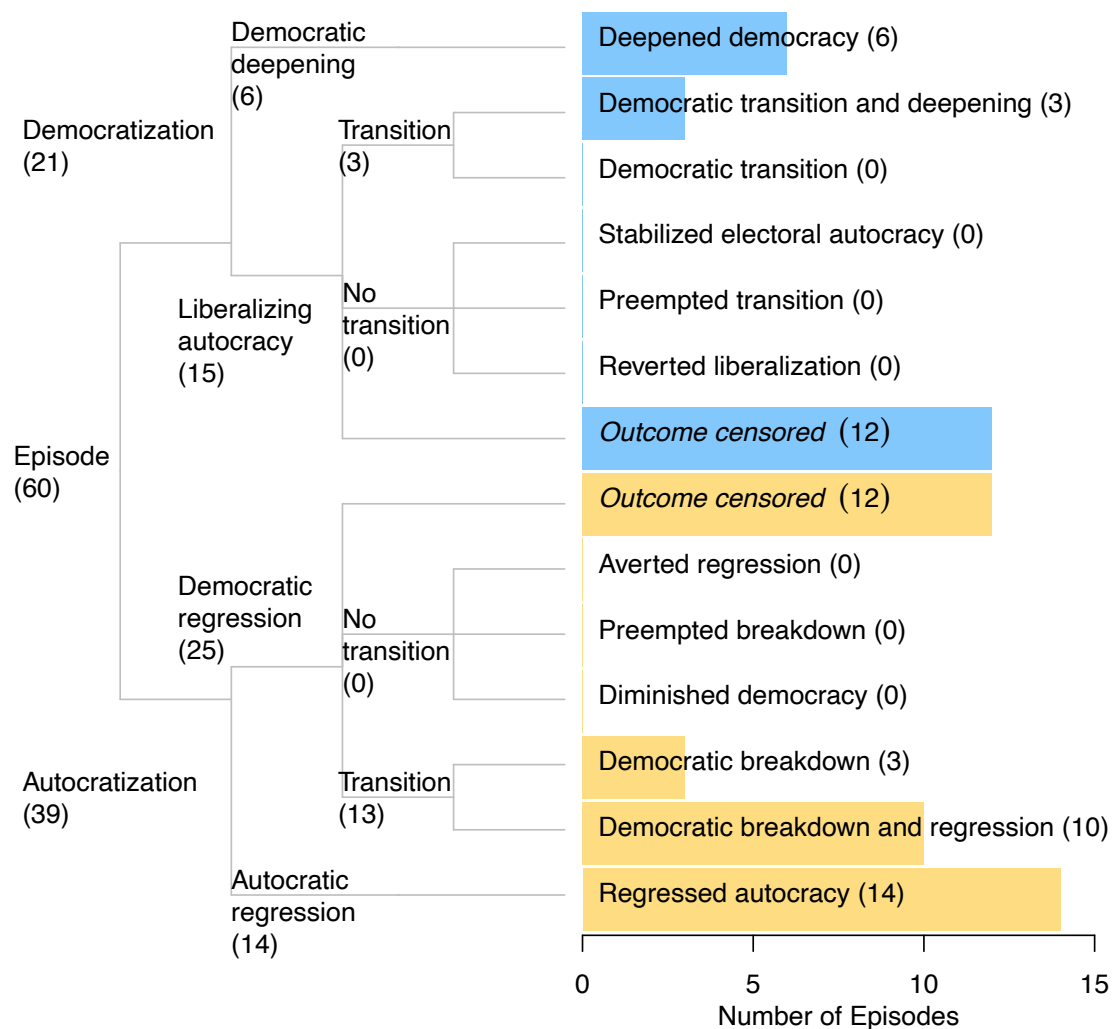


Figure D1. Description of episodes in the sample with duration censored.

Table D1. Proportion of episodes that include transitions coded by other datasets
(Note: based on the number of episodes in the same time span)

ERT outcomes (N)	Democratic transition			Democratic breakdown		
	BMR	CGV	Polity	BMR	CGV	Polity
Deepened democracy	0.07	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00
Democratic transition	0.49	0.53	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.01
Liberalizing autocracy, no transition	0.17	0.21	0.12	0.01	0.02	0.03
Democratic regression, no transition	0.00	0.00	0.32	0.00	0.00	0.16
Democratic breakdown	0.02	0.00	0.06	0.59	0.46	0.56
Regressed autocracy	0.04	0.03	0.01	0.25	0.29	0.15
Outcome censored	0.00	0.00	0.16	0.00	0.00	0.11

BMR=Boix, Miler, Rosato (2012); CGV=Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010);
Polity threshold value=6.

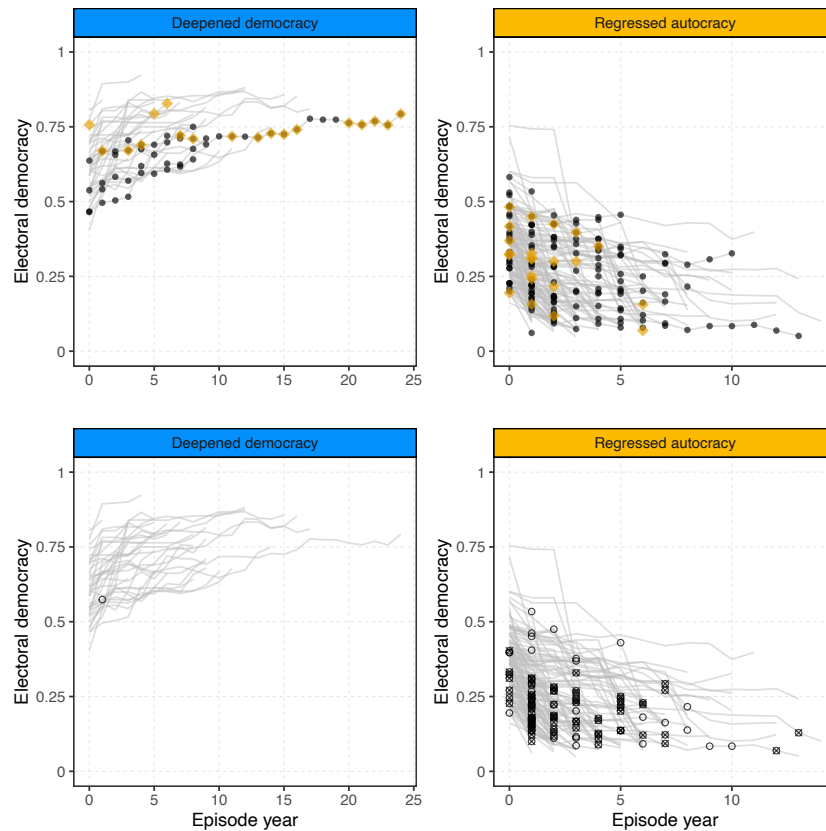


Figure D2. Coups and conflict. Intrastate conflict (filled circles) and interstate conflict (orange diamonds) and Attempted (empty circles) and successful (crossed circles) coup d'états during episodes of deepened democracy and regressed autocracy, 1946–2019. Y-axis shows V-Dem's electoral democracy index and year zero represents the pre-episode year.