On the State of Democracy in the World before and after the Great Recession

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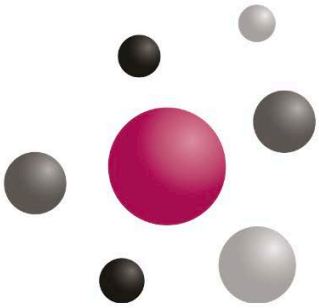

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On the State of Democracy in the World before and after the Great Recession

Ricardo de la Peña

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DEPT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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On the State of Democracy in the World before and after the Great Recession [*]

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Abstract.

Much has been said about the impact of the Great Recession (2008-2009) on the conditions and foundations of democracy, especially in the Western world. But has it really been like this? Today we have various options to approach the comparative study of the state of democracy in the world through wide-ranging cross-sectional and longitudinal sections. Perhaps one of the most successful is that of Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), whose approach to conceptualizing and measuring democracy is to provide a data set that attempts to reflect the complexity of the concept of democracy as a system of government that includes, but it goes beyond the simple presence of elections. For this reason, the V-Dem project collects data to measure different principles of democracy, one of which is the electoral one.

In principle, the main finding of this documentary effort leads its authors to affirm that "autocratization", a word with which they call the decrease in democratic features, has accelerated in the world, particularly when the existing state at the time of The Great Recession will occur with the present situation in 2019. This has to be reflected in the state of the principles in the electoral question.

Detailing the scope and characteristics of this loss of democratic features in general and its manifestation in the electoral sphere throughout this century and between two ten-year cuts (2000-2009 and 2010-2019) is the task that we propose to carry out in this paper. . This, knowing that 2020 will represent a new watershed in the conditions for the development of democracy and elections in the world, given the experience of the Great Confinement, with a practice and hopefully temporary suspension of electoral exercises in the world and a return uncertain at the polls in which the repercussions of this event will gradually be seen in the spirit of the electoral bodies of the world.

Key words: Great Recession, democracy, autocracy, elections, 21st Century, V-Dem.

Introduction.

Much has been said about the impact of the Great Recession (2008-2009) on the conditions and foundations of democracy, especially in the Western world. But has it really been so? Today we have various options to approach the comparative study of the state of democracy in the world through wide-ranging cross-sectional and longitudinal cuts. Perhaps one of the most successful is Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), whose approach to conceptualizing and measuring democracy consists of providing a set of data that tries to reflect the complexity of the concept of democracy as a system of government that includes, but it goes beyond the simple presence of elections. Therefore, the V-Dem project collects data to measure five different principles of democracy, one of which is electoral.

In principle, the main finding of this documentary effort leads its authors to affirm that "autocratization", a word they refer to as the decrease in democratic features, has accelerated in the world, particularly when comparing the state existing at the time of The Great Recession will occur with the present situation in 2019. Some authors (Malamud, 2019) even see democracy as besieged from two fronts: populism from within and autocracies from without. This would in any case be reflected in the state of the electoral question.

Detailing the scope and characteristics of this loss of democratic features in general and its manifestation in the electoral field throughout this century and between two ten-year cuts (2000-2009 and 2010-2019) is the task that we propose to carry out in this paper. .

This, knowing that 2020 will represent a new watershed in the conditions for the development of democracy and elections in the world, given the experience of the Great Confinement, with a practical and hopefully temporary suspension of electoral exercises in the world and a return uncertain to the polls where the repercussions of this event will gradually be seen in the mood of the world's electoral bodies.

The source of information.

For logical and practical reasons, this section basically takes up the content of a section of a recently prepared paper on the bases for the study of electoral processes (de la Peña, 2020).

Perhaps the largest free and open data collection effort on democracy in the world today is the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project, whose approach to conceptualizing and measuring democracy is to provide a dataset that attempts to reflect the complexity of the concept of democracy as a system of government that includes, but goes beyond the simple presence of elections. It is from these data that the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) generates its own index. How does the "Varieties of Democracy" project define itself?

The project is carried out by a permanent entity, founded by Professor Staffan I. Lindberg in 2014, just six years ago: the V-Dem Institute (of "Varieties of Democracy"), which defines itself as "a research institute based in the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden" (V-Dem, 2022a). This Institute is in charge of most, but not all, of the operations related to data collection and data set.

Every year, the V-Dem Institute organizes a Policy Conference, which is a platform where users and professionals can meet and where the goals, research and findings of the V-Dem project are presented to a wider audience.

Varieties of democracy (V-Dem), as a project, is conceived as "a new approach for the conceptualization and measurement of democracy" (V-Dem, 2022b), product of the collaboration of more than thirty academics from around the world, originally jointly organized by the Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Sweden; and the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame, which by adjusting its actual role and contribution has now become simply the V-Dem Regional Center in North America.

Its structure for the integration of the information that it will later disseminate seems to have six main researchers, two project coordinators, fifteen project administrators in charge of the thematic areas, more than thirty regional administrators, almost 170 coordinators per country, who have the support not only from various research assistants, but from approximately three thousand experts per country.

V-Dem is one of the largest social science data collection efforts in history, with a database that today contains over thirty million data points.

V-Dem is not and is not intended to be the recovery of the vivid experience of those who experience democracy in a community. V-Dem is defined as a project that seeks objectivity through the recovery of the theoretical and methodological experience of a complex and extensive multidisciplinary global team, so that the sum of the knowledge of experts achieve the production of data in the most objective and trustworthy that you consider possible.

Additional advantages of this project is that, while it provides a complete set of indexes for each conception and component, it allows its fundamentally intended users—academicians and professionals—to build their own indexes to suit their purposes, exploring the relationships between very specific elements of democracy over long periods of time; which, due to its logic of reconstruction of long time series, allows us to try to advance in the understanding of the historical process of democratization, shedding light on the sequences by which the regimes have developed, in recognizing the possible causes and effects of democracy, allowing us to approach to estimate to what extent the type of regime is important in today's world, among other advantages that the project itself highlights.

About half of the indicators in the V-Dem dataset are based on factual information that can be obtained from official documents, such as constitutions and government records. The other half consists of evaluations that they describe as more subjective, on topics such as political practices and compliance with de jure rules. In these issues, to seek a certain evaluative neutrality, they normally resort to a minimum of three and an average of five experts for the historical reconstruction from 1789 to 1899 (warning to take care with chaos with few experts evaluating) and to five or more experts in the period considered as contemporary from 1900, who provide the qualifications that will give rise to the estimators that will have to be added to their extensive database.

To conceptualize and try to better measure democracy, the V-Dem project assumes the distinction of five principles of democracy that it calls "high level": Electoral, Liberal, Participatory, Deliberative and Egalitarian. Each of them leads to a high-level index, whose definitions are (Coppedge *et al.*, 2020):

- Electoral: "the electoral principle of democracy seeks to embody the central value of making rulers responsive to citizens, achieved through electoral competition for the approval of the electorate in circumstances in which suffrage is extensive; Political and civil society organizations can operate freely; elections are fair and not marred by fraud or systematic irregularities; and elections affect the composition of the country's executive branch. Between elections, there is freedom of expression and independent media capable of presenting alternative opinions on matters of political relevance. In the V-Dem conceptual scheme, electoral democracy is understood as an essential element of any other conception of democracy.
- Liberal: "The liberal principle of democracy emphasizes the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. The liberal model takes a "negative" view of political power insofar as it judges the quality of democracy by the limits placed on government. This is achieved through constitutionally protected civil liberties, a strong rule of law, an independent judiciary, and effective checks and balances that, together, limit the exercise of executive power. To make this a measure of liberal democracy, the index also takes into account the level of electoral democracy.

- Participatory: "The participatory principle of democracy emphasizes the active participation of citizens in all political, electoral and non-electoral processes. It is motivated by concern about a fundamental practice of electoral democracy: delegating authority to representatives. Thus, direct government by citizens is preferred whenever possible. This model of democracy takes suffrage for granted, emphasizing participation in civil society organizations, direct democracy, and the election of sub-national bodies. To make it a measure of participatory democracy, the index also takes into account the level of electoral democracy.
- Deliberative: "The deliberative principle of democracy focuses on the process by which decisions are reached in political practice. A deliberative process is one in which public reasoning focuses on the common good and motivates political decisions, in contrast to emotional appeals, solidarity, attachments, parochial interests, or coercion. According to this principle, democracy requires more than an aggregation of existing preferences. There must also be respectful dialogue at all levels, from preference formation to final decision, between knowledgeable and competent participants open to persuasion. To make it a measure of democracy as well, the index takes the level of electoral democracy into account."
- Egalitarian: "The egalitarian principle of democracy holds that material and immaterial inequality inhibit links in the exercise of formal rights and freedoms and diminish the capacity of citizens of all social groups to participate. Egalitarian democracy is achieved when people's rights and freedoms are equally protected in all social groups; resources are distributed equally in all social groups; and groups and individuals enjoy equal access to power. This index also takes into account the level of electoral democracy."

Each of these principles disaggregates them, which makes it possible to have several dozen components of democracy at a lower level, such as ordinary elections, judicial independence, direct democracy and gender equality, and provides disaggregated indicators for each conception and each component.

At a basic level, all the variables collected by the Varieties of Democracy project are divided into fifteen themes: elections, political parties, direct democracy, executive, legislature, deliberation, judiciary, civil liberties, sovereignty and state, civil society, media, political equality, exclusion, legitimation and civic and academic space. This thematic account gives an idea of the scope and ambition of this project as an information source.

The information it presents in its database covers all countries and some dependent territories from 1789 to the present, wherever possible, and provides a statistical estimate of the reliability of the measure for each rating, while allowing all Ratings are public, free of charge, in an easy-to-use interface.

That is why V-Dem divides variables into different types for coding purposes: variables coded by research assistants based on existing sources of a factual nature (type A*); variables coded by project managers and research assistants based on existing sources of a factual nature (type A); variables of a factual nature coded by country coordinators or research assistants (type

B); variables codified by country experts, who are usually academics or professionals from a particular political institution, citizen or resident of the country (type C) and which can be model estimates, original scoring scales or ordinal scales, among other possibilities; when these last variables are collated by research assistants, they are classified as A, C; when variables composed of others are generated, they are classified as type D; and if they correspond to variables not generated by the project itself, they are indicated as type E.

Regarding elections in particular, the database generated by the V-Dem project distinguishes between elections for the lower or unicameral house of the legislature (including the constituent or constitutional assemblies), the upper house of the legislature, and for the presidency. . For present purposes, an executive elected by a legislature is considered prime minister, not president. To be considered president, an executive must, under normal circumstances, be directly elected by the electorate (perhaps mediated through an electoral college).

For each election, the date is pre-coded and indicators are generated regarding the disclosure of campaign donations, public financing of campaigns, autonomy of the electoral management body (EMB), capacity of the EMB, multi-party nature of the election, voter registration for the election, vote buying, other electoral irregularities, government intimidation in the elections, other acts of electoral violence, acts of sabotage, freedom of the media in the campaign, payment of advertising in campaigns, payment of publicity by interest groups, the acceptance of the result by the losers, the assumption of the position by the winner and, in addition, the assessment of cleanliness and electoral freedom, in addition to some reagents related to sub-national elections.

It should be noted that, despite all the indicated precautions that seek to prevent any particular subjectivity from sneaking in, ignorance biasing the assessments or other effects that invalidate the information, it is clear that the estimates presented by the project correspond to the vision of democracy, of the world and of life that is predominant in the present century and that cannot be detached from its historical determinants that may not be valid as evaluative criteria for other historical moments or cease to be valid in the immediate future.

As can be discovered from the long list of indices and indicators available as a result of the democracy assessment exercise carried out by this project, it would be impossible in a paper to cover all possible informative disaggregated to know the differences in the state of the situation in one decade and another of the two periods chosen for the analysis, using the tenth version of the V-Dem database (V-Dem, 2020).

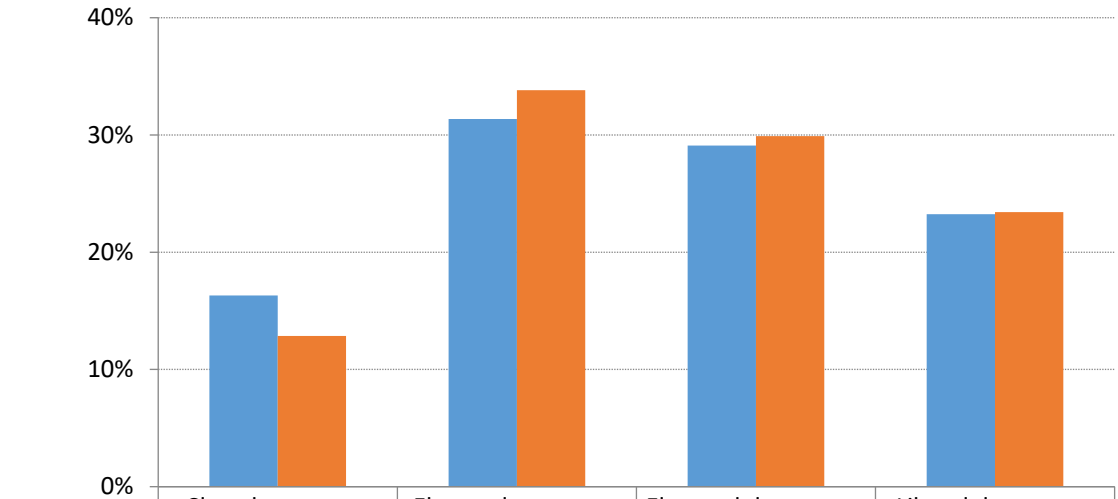
For this reason, we have privileged to analyze the variations of the general indices and of the main indicators in a particular way, without seeking for this moment a crossover that would complicate the analysis and make this paper excessively long.

Democracy in the 21st Century.

As we said in the introduction to this paper, the main finding of the documentary and statistical effort of the authors of V-Dem leads them to affirm that "autocratization", a word with which they define the decrease in democratic features, has accelerated in the past world, particularly when comparing the existing state at the time of the Great Recession with the present situation in 2019. This would then have to be reflected in the state of the indicators on democracy in general and regarding the electoral issue in particular.

However, the first surprise that we face when reviewing the data compiled by V-Dem in the world during the period 2000-2019 is that if the decade up to the Great Recession is compared with the period after that for which data is available, previous After the Great Confinement, a decrease in the proportion of closed autocracies is discovered in favor of autocratic formats that assume an electoral principle and that democracy, in its different forms and scopes, as something limited to the electoral or that reaches the liberal, does not shows percentage changes between decades (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Regimes in the world by decade (2000-2019).

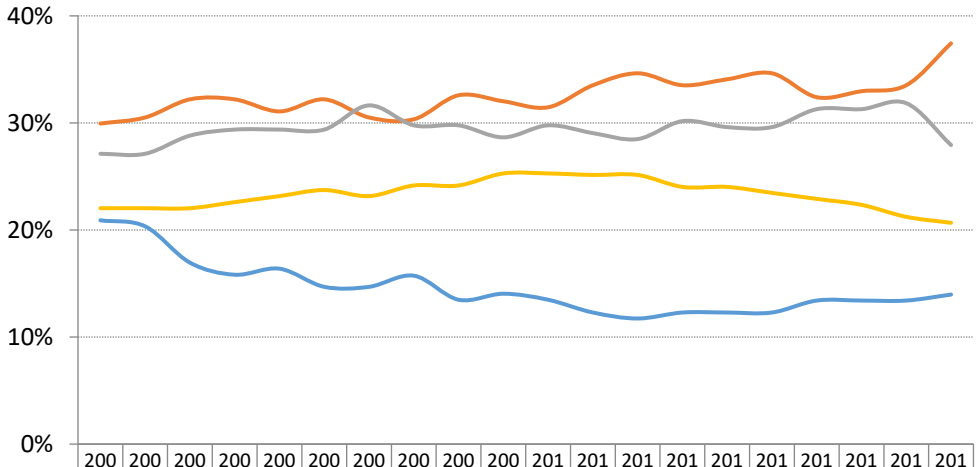


	Closed autocracy	Electoral autocracy	Electoral democracy	Liberal democracy
2000-2009	16%	31%	29%	23%
2010-2019	13%	34%	30%	23%

SOURCE: Coppedge, Michael *et al.* (2020). "V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v10". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20.

And if the exercise is done year after year (Figure 2), more oscillations than clear trends are found, except for the significant reduction in the proportion of closed autocracies during the first years of the century and a significant change in the last year, which should be reviewed in detail, since it could correspond to immediate evaluative criteria and critical attitudes towards certain democratic governments that have assumed populist overtones, rather than true alterations in the patterns of development and installation of democratic forms in the world.

Figure 2. Regimes in the world by year (2000-2019).

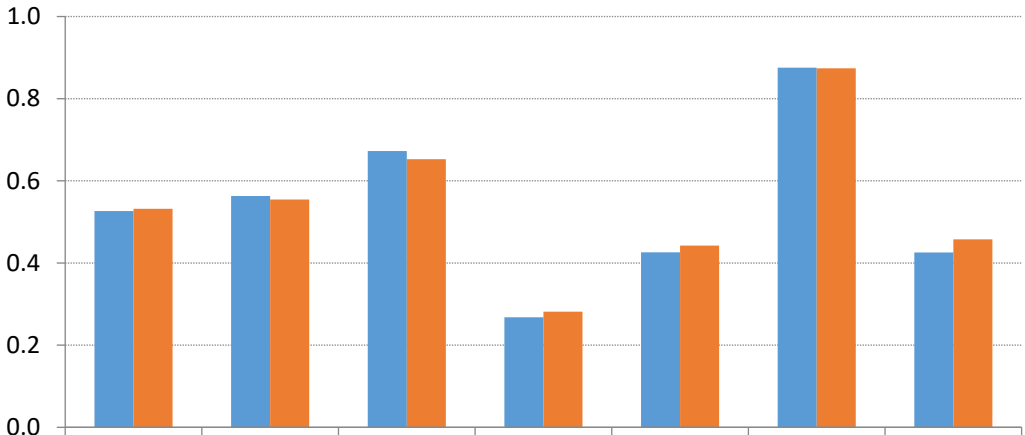


	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Closed autocracy	21%	20%	17%	16%	16%	15%	15%	16%	13%	14%	13%	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%	13%	13%	13%	14%
Electoral autocracy	30%	31%	32%	32%	31%	32%	31%	30%	33%	32%	31%	34%	35%	34%	34%	35%	32%	33%	34%	37%
Electoral democracy	27%	27%	29%	29%	29%	29%	32%	30%	30%	29%	30%	29%	28%	30%	30%	30%	31%	31%	32%	28%
Liberal democracy	22%	22%	22%	23%	23%	24%	23%	24%	24%	25%	25%	25%	25%	24%	24%	23%	23%	22%	21%	21%

SOURCE: Coppedge, Michael *et al.* (2020). "V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v10". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20.

This is seen more clearly when what is observed is the value of the electoral democracy index per decade and its values are distinguished by political-geographical region of the world, which is presented in Figure 3. At the global level, there have been no significant changes in the perceived level of electoral democracy and region by region the changes are so minor that one could speak of stability in the levels of democracy in force in the different regions of the world, although of course with greater democracy in the practices of Western Europe and North America, followed for a Latin America and the Caribbean in which democratic formats are the majority and a very important lag in the implementation of democratic formulas in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Figure 3. Electoral democracy index by decade and region (2000-2019).

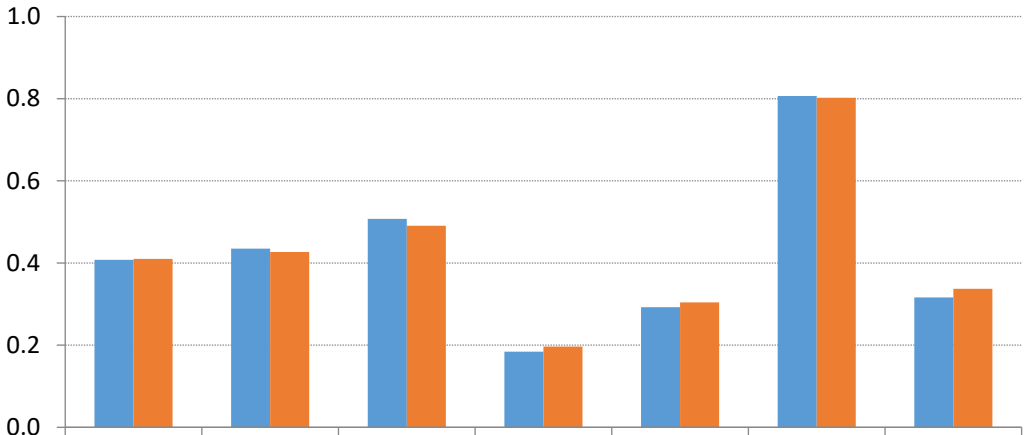


	World	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	The Middle East and Norther Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Western Europe and North America	Asia and Pacific
2000-2009	0.527	0.563	0.673	0.268	0.426	0.876	0.426
2010-2019	0.532	0.554	0.653	0.281	0.442	0.874	0.458

SOURCE: Coppedge, Michael *et al.* (2020). "V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v10". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20.

When what is seen is the implantation of properly liberal democratic forms and not only electoral ones (Figure 4), lower levels of rooting of these characteristics are discovered, but with a regional implantation similar to that of electoral democracy itself. But, again, the changes between the first decade of the century and the second decade under observation are marginal.

Figure 4. Liberal democracy index by decade and region (2000-2019).

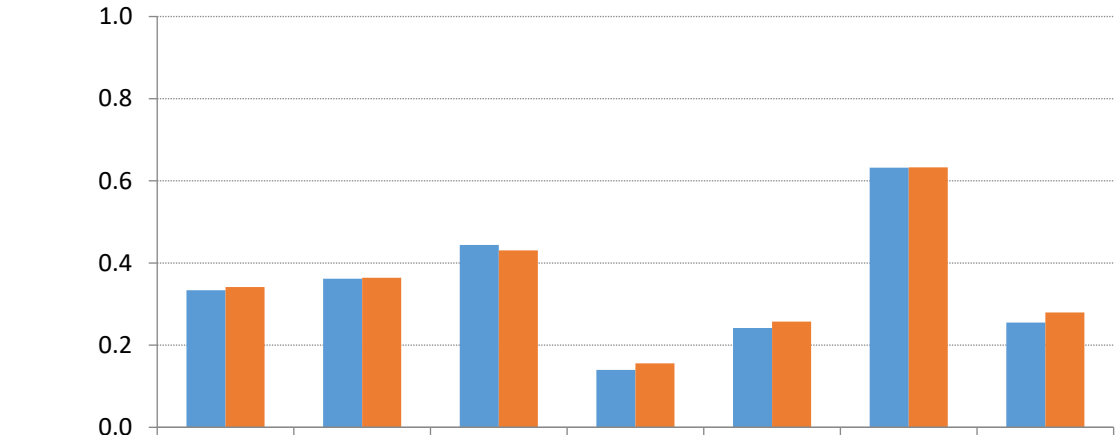


	World	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	The Middle East and Norther Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Western Europe and North America	Asia and Pacific
2000-2009	0.408	0.435	0.507	0.184	0.292	0.807	0.316
2010-2019	0.410	0.427	0.491	0.197	0.304	0.802	0.337

SOURCE: Coppedge, Michael *et al.* (2020). "V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v10". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20.

A new cut in the scope of the democratic model is when what is observed is whether it acquires a participatory character, which occurs only in a third of the nations, but without major changes over time (Figure 5). Once again, the same differences between regions are shown, with little variation from decade to decade.

Figure 5. Participatory democracy index by decade and region (2000-2019).

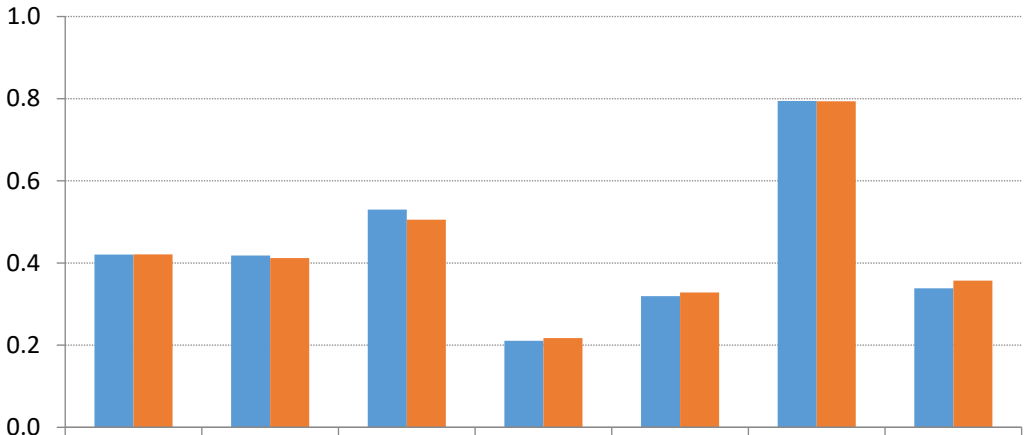


	World	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	The Middle East and Norther Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Western Europe and North America	Asia and Pacific
2000-2009	0.334	0.362	0.444	0.140	0.242	0.632	0.255
2010-2019	0.342	0.364	0.431	0.156	0.257	0.633	0.280

SOURCE: Coppedge, Michael *et al.* (2020). "V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v10". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20.

Deliberative democracy is achieved by 42% of the regional units under analysis (nations or territories), without any change from decade to decade (Figure 6) and with differences that maintain Western Europe and North America as the geopolitical region with the greatest implantation of what deliberative, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean and with a clear lag in the Middle East and North Africa.

Figure 6. Deliberative democracy index by decade and region (2000-2019).

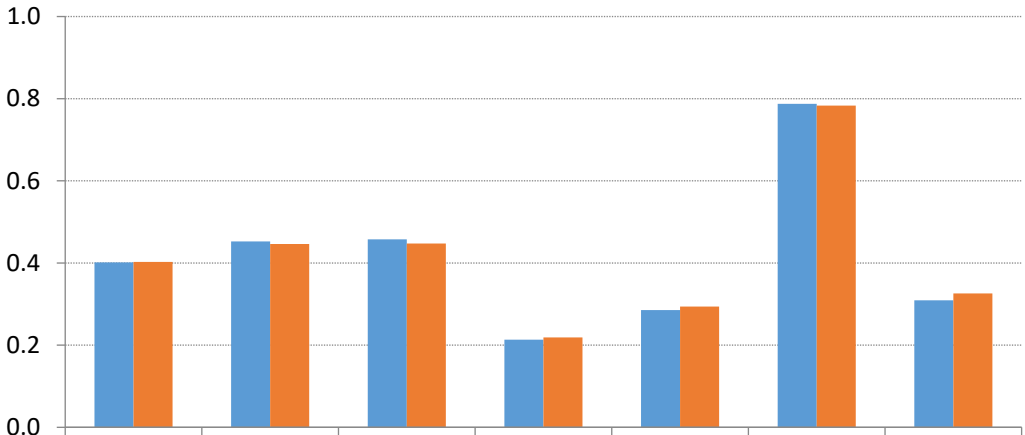


	World	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	The Middle East and Norther Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Western Europe and North America	Asia and Pacific
2000-2009	0.421	0.418	0.530	0.210	0.319	0.794	0.338
2010-2019	0.421	0.412	0.506	0.217	0.328	0.794	0.357

SOURCE: Coppedge, Michael *et al.* (2020). "V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v10". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20.

The fifth way of measuring democracy is egalitarian, which reaches two out of every five nations observed (Figure 7), with geo-regional differences consistent with what has already been seen and minimal changes between the two periods under study.

Figure 7. Egalitarian democracy index by decade and region (2000-2019).

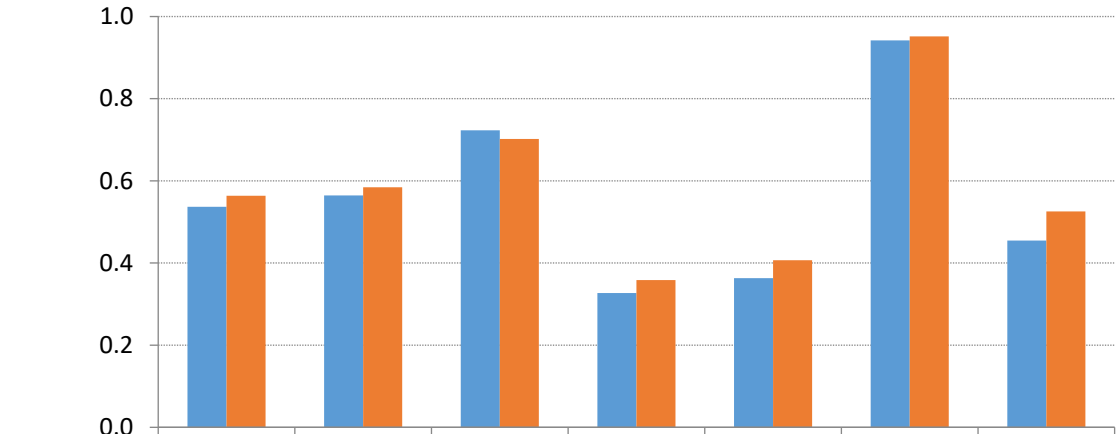


	World	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	The Middle East and Norther Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Western Europe and North America	Asia and Pacific
2000-2009	0.401	0.453	0.458	0.213	0.285	0.787	0.309
2010-2019	0.403	0.446	0.447	0.219	0.294	0.783	0.326

SOURCE: Coppedge, Michael *et al.* (2020). "V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v10". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20.

What happens when we touch on aspects directly linked to the electoral? Although the change here is minor, there is a slight increase in the rate of clean elections in the world from decade to decade, with uneven behavior on a regional scale (Figure 8): Asia and the Pacific show clear progress and some improvement in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, while in Latin America and the Caribbean there is a slight setback, which nevertheless places this region as the second with the highest adherence to clean elections, only surpassed by Western Europe and North America.

Figure 8. Clean elections index by decade and region (2000-2019).

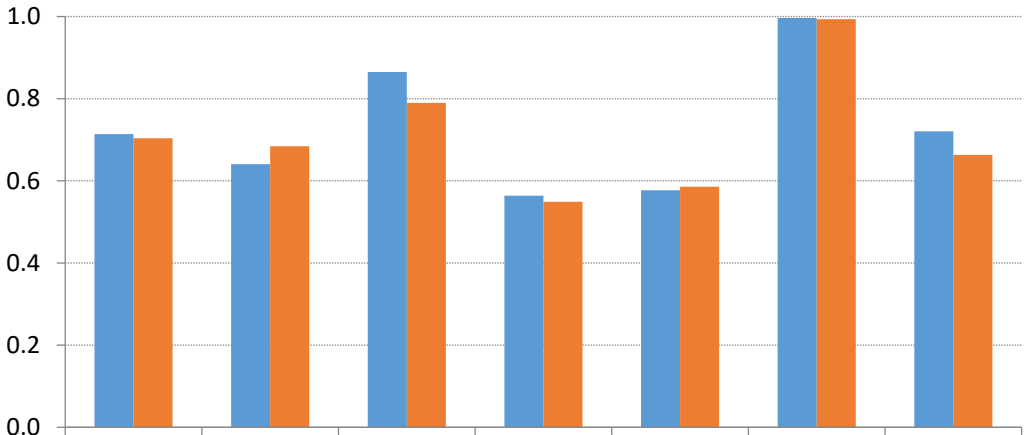


	World	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	The Middle East and Norther Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Western Europe and North America	Asia and Pacific
2000-2009	0.537	0.565	0.723	0.327	0.363	0.942	0.455
2010-2019	0.564	0.584	0.702	0.358	0.407	0.952	0.526

SOURCE: Coppedge, Michael *et al.* (2020). "V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v10". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20.

Strangely, and perhaps due to the subjective part that remains as a residue in the evaluation processes, no matter how much they seek to be neutralized in the preparation of the databases, the rise detected in the index of clean elections is not reflected in the indicator on free and fair elections, which decreased slightly mainly due to reductions in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the Asia and Pacific region, which are not enough to offset the rise achieved in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Election free and fair by decade and region (2000-2019).

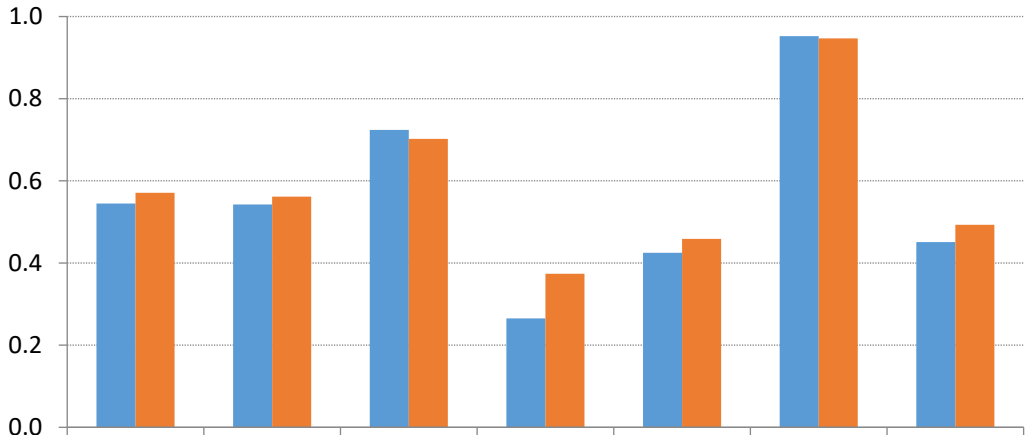


	World	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	The Middle East and Norther Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Western Europe and North America	Asia and Pacific
2000-2009	0.714	0.641	0.865	0.564	0.577	0.997	0.721
2010-2019	0.704	0.684	0.790	0.549	0.586	0.994	0.663

SOURCE: Coppedge, Michael *et al.* (2020). "V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v10". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20.

Where a tie is discovered in the condition of improvement with what is registered in the index of clean elections is in the indicator of existing autonomy of the electoral body, which goes from 54 to 57 percent worldwide (Figure 10). It is noteworthy that the Middle East and North Africa region is where there is a greater change and in a positive sense, as the proportion of units that have an autonomous electoral body rises eleven percent, which still does not allow them to achieve autonomous status achieved by this type of institution in other regions of the world, but it does narrow the gap that was present at the beginning of this century.

Figure 10. Electoral Management Body autonomy by decade and region (2000-2019).

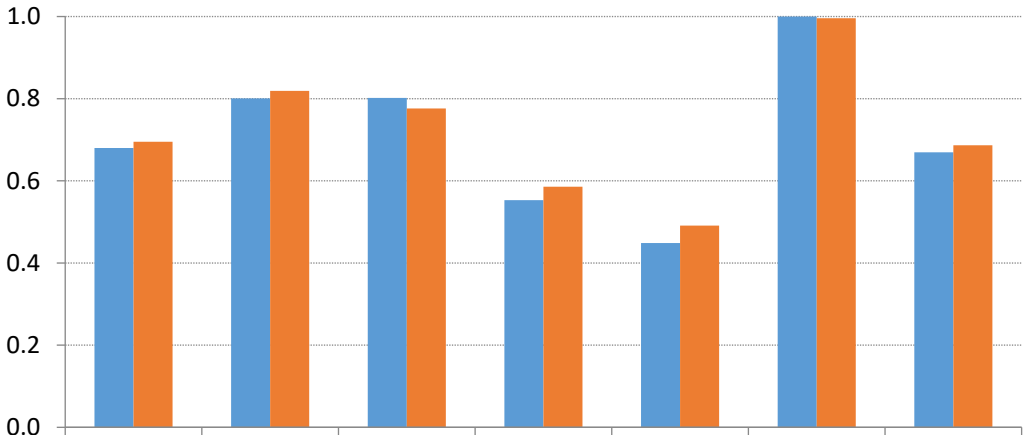


	World	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	The Middle East and Norther Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Western Europe and North America	Asia and Pacific
2000-2009	0.545	0.543	0.724	0.265	0.425	0.952	0.451
2010-2019	0.571	0.562	0.702	0.374	0.459	0.947	0.493

SOURCE: Coppedge, Michael *et al.* (2020). "V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v10". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20.

The sufficiency of financial, material, and human resources that provide the world's electoral bodies with operational capacity has increased minimally from one decade to the next (Figure 11), with a smaller drop, but a reduction after all, in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is interesting to note that in this area the sufficiency granted to the electoral bodies in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is now even higher than that of these bodies in Latin America and the Caribbean. And that in Western Europe and North America it is practically invariable that the electoral bodies are granted sufficiency to carry out their tasks as regulators and guarantors of the elections.

Figure 11. Electoral Management Body capacity by decade and region (2000-2019).



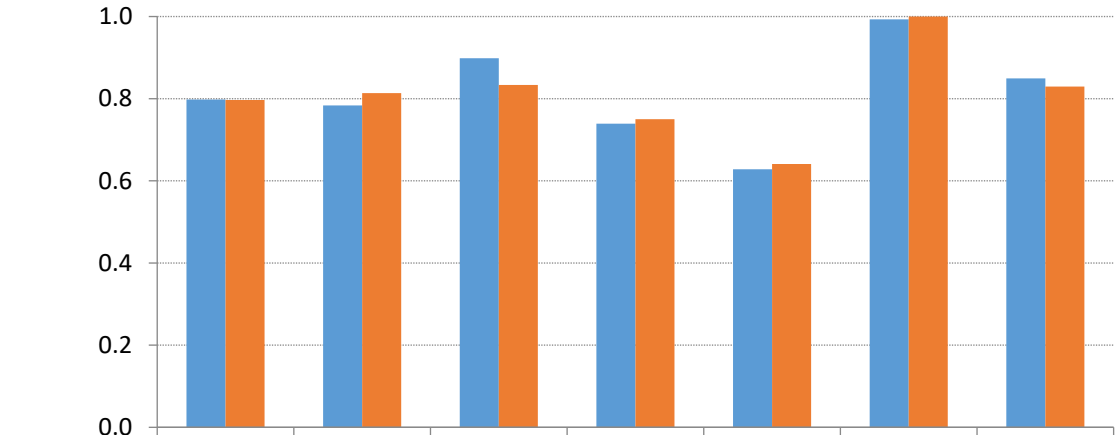
	World	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	The Middle East and Norther Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Western Europe and North America	Asia and Pacific
2000-2009	0.680	0.801	0.802	0.553	0.449	1.000	0.670
2010-2019	0.695	0.819	0.776	0.586	0.491	0.996	0.687

SOURCE: Coppedge, Michael *et al.* (2020). "V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v10". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20.

One last fact that we would like to review, of the many that could be seen but that due to limitations of the nature of a presentation we do not have space to get to know and analyze, is the acceptance of the result by the losers (Figure 12). This is a natural outcome of a well-conducted electoral process.

It must be remembered in this regard that political legitimacy appeals to a subjective substratum that compromises both ends of a relationship: from the perspective of those who must obey, a government that gains power and exercises it by fulfilling certain requirements that they believe it has will be legitimate to fulfill to command; but from the perspective of the one who commands, the government that gains power and exercises it by making those it obeys see that it meets the requirements to command will be conceived as legitimate.

Figure 12. Election losers accept results by decade and region (2000-2019).



	World	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	The Middle East and Norther Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Western Europe and North America	Asia and Pacific
2000-2009	0.798	0.784	0.899	0.739	0.628	0.993	0.849
2010-2019	0.797	0.814	0.833	0.750	0.641	1.000	0.830

SOURCE: Coppedge, Michael *et al.* (2020). "V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v10". Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20.

> "There is no ideal electoral system. The parameters of choice are, without a doubt, the supposed or probable effects of electoral systems (which) depend on different historical-contingent factors (...) Different functional demands are placed on electoral systems (which) require that they be make an evaluation and establish priorities (which) are based on positions anchored in theories of democracy and, of course, in calculations of power (...) it is difficult for electoral systems to simultaneously and completely satisfy the different functional demands (for that) electoral systems that try to fulfill different functions at the same time in a balanced way are in general complex" (Nohlen, 2012).

Thus, from this theoretical perspective there are five important functional demands: representation, concentration and effectiveness, participation, simplicity and legitimacy, which would be the one that encompasses all the others, since "it refers to the general acceptance of the results of the elections and the electoral system; and, even, to recognition and respect for the rules of the game of democracy". In short: if it serves to unite or divide a society.

Elections are the universally accepted procedure for defining this right to access power and invariably the recognition of the fairness of an election will depend on very different conditions, a very subjective one —that its results coincide with the political preferences of the individual— and others that could objective: that there are effective guarantees of respect for the integrity of the losers and their subsequent participation in political life without obstacles; two, the narrowness of the difference between the official result and the requirements established to grant victory; three, the provision of timely, continuous, transparent and verifiable information mechanisms on the results; and four, have an electoral authority that can be an arbitrator who exercises his functions impartially, not representing the interests of any party, nor being against any party (de la Peña, 2019).

The results of four out of five elections are accepted by the losers on average. And this has not changed, whether we observe the elections from 2000 to 2009 or those from 2010 to 2019. There have been minor changes in the express acceptance given to the result by the losers: in Latin America and the Caribbean this acceptance has been reduced between decades, while other regions show progress, albeit very modest: Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa. And it is universal practice to accept the result in the nations that make up the region of Western Europe and North America, where this aspect seems to be a resolved and closed matter.

Conclusion.

As a very general and preliminary conclusion, since it would be necessary to delve into the data with the crossing with many other available variables, the empirical evidence presented in the V-Dem database does not allow to support its affirmation that "autocratization" has been accelerated in the world, particularly when comparing the state at the time of the Great Recession with the current situation in 2019. In fact, there are no significant changes in the state of democracy in the world when comparing the decade from 2000 to 2009 with the following decade, from 2010 to 2019.

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