



SUBSCRIBE TO THE NPR POLITICS PODCAST

POLITICS

Decline In Democracy Spreads Across The Globe As Authoritarian Leaders Rise

LISTEN · 5:15

PLAYLIST

Download

Transcript

August 3, 2017 · 4:35 PM ET

Heard on All Things Considered

Across the world, many democracies are sliding further and further toward authoritarianism. NPR's Ari Shapiro talks with Larry Diamond of Stanford University about this "global democratic recession."

ARI SHAPIRO, HOST:

Turkey is not the only country where democratic ideals are eroding. Democracy is retreating in Venezuela, where President Nicolas Maduro is consolidating power. In the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte has jailed his political opponents. In Poland and Hungary, leaders are cracking down on the press and trying to control the judiciary. We reached out to Larry Diamond at Stanford University - he's a founding editor of the Journal of Democracy - and asked what he sees when he looks at the state of democracy worldwide.

LARRY DIAMOND: The whole spectrum of regimes in the world is moving in the wrong direction. Liberal democracies, I'd say, including ours, are under pressure of becoming less liberal, less tolerant. Countries that are democracies but maybe not liberal ones like the Philippines are at very serious risk of sliding back into

authoritarian rule. And countries that have been authoritarian are becoming more authoritarian.

SHAPIRO: Why is this happening now? We're talking about countries that are so far apart geographically, so different from one another culturally. Why are they all moving in the same direction?

DIAMOND: Well, I think because they think there are no international consequences. And they're drawing inspiration from one another. In some cases they're drawing ideas from one another as we are...

SHAPIRO: When you say international consequences, do you mean that in the past the European Union or the United States would have used carrots and sticks to help bolster democracies and that's not happening anymore?

DIAMOND: Yep. That's exactly what I mean. These countries perceive that in contrast to earlier eras and I'd say the predominant weight of international influence in the post-Cold War world until a few years ago where if they were blatant in their reversal of democracy, the U.S. and the European Union would call them out. There might be consequences for aid. There might be consequences for our symbolic relationship. They wouldn't be welcome at the White House. Now, increasingly - and this didn't start with President Trump. I think there was a perceptible drawback from democracy and human rights pressure in the later years of the Obama administration.

But they increasingly perceive, I think correctly, that they can do whatever they want, they can repress and arrest and even murder whoever they want, they can rule as nastily as they want. And in particular, the most powerful democracy in the world, the United States, is not going to express concern or deliver consequences in terms of our bilateral relationship.

SHAPIRO: Are these authoritarian leaders learning from each other's playbooks? Is there a certain sort of contagious quality to this?

DIAMOND: There certainly is. If you watch what the Polish law and justice government has done in the last year or so, they're obviously drawing many pages out

of Viktor Orban's playbook in Hungary.

SHAPIRO: Hungary's - yeah.

DIAMOND: And I think that Orban probably watched what Putin did a decade before. If you, you know, start by suppressing judicial independence and packing the courts and then proceed to intimidate and control the media, pretty soon there's no opposition left. So it's really a progressive, step-by-step elimination of countervailing forces in the political system, the judiciary, the media, the business community and civil society. And you don't do it all at once. So it's like the frog boiling in the water. If it happens gradually, the frog doesn't jump out of the water, civil society doesn't rise up, and the international community doesn't sufficiently complain.

SHAPIRO: Do you see a path out of this?

DIAMOND: Yes, I do. I think there are multiple paths out of this. One is that there are a lot of people in these countries - and certainly Polish civil society in recent months has made that clear - who are not going to simply sit by idly and watch their freedom stolen from them. And I think the urgent imperative now for the United States both for our government - but since our government is not putting a high priority on this, I would certainly underscore our Congress - our think tank community and our civil society, we need to speak out as a country and push back against this.

And most importantly, stand in solidarity morally, diplomatically with Democrats in these countries - in the Philippines, in Poland, in Venezuela, in Bangladesh and certainly in Turkey, as well as Russia - who are fighting a very brave and difficult struggle to either defend their freedom before it's taken away or, as in the case of Russia and Venezuela, to try and recover it.

SHAPIRO: Larry Diamond is a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. Thanks for joining us.

DIAMOND: Thank you, Ari.

NPR transcripts are created on a rush deadline by Verb8tm, Inc., an NPR contractor, and produced using a proprietary transcription process developed with NPR. This text may not be in its final form and may be updated or revised in the future. Accuracy and availability may vary. The authoritative record of NPR's programming is the audio record.

Subscribe to the The NPR Politics Podcast

NPR ONE

APPLE PODCASTS

GOOGLE PODCASTS

POCKET CASTS

SPOTIFY

RSS

More Stories From NPR



POLITICS

How Does 1 Man Have So Much Power Without Being President?



POLITICS

Pa. Workers Forced To Choose Between Watching Trump, No Pay Or Using Paid Time Off



ANIMALS

Marium, The Dugong Who Charmed Thailand, Dies After Ingesting Plastic



Vicente Guerrero
Murder 2nd -
L.A. - 5 to Life -
P.I. - 24 -
Houseboy -
5'4 3/4" - Comp
Blk - Eyes
Mar - Hair
Blk - 128.

21 π -
NATIONAL

Rec'd 10/8-30

My Grandfather, A Killer



EUROPE

Leaked Brexit Document Depicts Government Fears Of Gridlock, Food Shortages, Unrest



EUROPE

Amid A Brewing Royal Scandal, Prince Andrew Distances Himself From Epstein

NPR Editors' Picks



BUSINESS

U.S. Gives Huawei Another 90-Day Reprieve Amid Concerns Of Rural Service Disruptions



FOOD

Why European Restaurants Are Much More Vigilant About Food Allergies



STRANGE NEWS

Spicy With A Twist: Nearly 4 Tons Of Pot Found In Jalapeno Shipment



NATIONAL

The End Is Nigh For FogCam, Billed As The Internet's Oldest Running Webcam

READ & LISTEN

CONNECT

Home

News

Arts & Life

Music

Podcasts

Programs

Newsletters

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

Contact

Help

ABOUT NPR

Overview

Finances

People

Press

Public Editor

Corrections

GET INVOLVED

Support Public Radio

Sponsor NPR

NPR Careers

NPR Shop

NPR Events

Visit NPR

terms of use

privacy

your privacy choices

text only

© 2019 npr