



## **SIIAEC Conference 2021**

**Ethical Action:  
COVID Affecting Human Rights and Democracy**

# **Introduction to the Topic**

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SIIAEC, Vienna, Austria



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# Motivation

- **COVID-19 measures by governments** may cause **drastic effects on** the application of **human rights** and the **practice of democracies**
- This issue will be tackled from the point of view of **ethics** being the **scientific reflection on lived morals**

Light will be shed on the **impact of COVID-19 measures on:**

- **Freedom of opinion and expression**
- **Medical ethics**
- **Security ethics**
- **Economical ethics**
- **Ecological ethics.**

## Pluralism of Ethical Systems

- Philosophical
- Theological
  
- Jewish
- Christian (Protestant - Catholic)
- Muslim
  
- Hindu
- Buddhist

## Philosophical Ethics

- **Ethics of virtues**  
Aristotle Nicomachian ethics:  
Happiness (eu-daimonia) by virtues  
wisdom, justice, bravery (courage), moderation,  
faith, hope, love
- **Ethics of standards**  
10 Commandments (Religious background)  
Human Rights
- **Categorical imperative**  
Dignity (Immanuel Kant) .....
- **Utilitarianism**  
Greater benefit for the greatest number, the individual is neglected
- **Ethics of responsibility**  
(Jonas, Social Research 40 (1973) 31-54)
- **Discourse ethics**  
(Habermas, 1983)

## Social Ethics of Hans Jonas: the responsibility principle

- Draft for the **ethics of technological civilization**.
- **Synthesis** of philosophy, theology, science and metaphysics.
- **“Humankind has to survive!”** is its imperative.
- Contemporary civilization, marked by the syndrome of technology, grants the mastery for homo faber. He is free of manipulating with external objects as well as with the inside structure of homo sapiens. The interference of homo faber into human nature deprives morality off its universality and autonomy.
- **Progress of technology devaluates nature** and causes **nihilism** and vacuum in place of morality.
- Therefore, **responsibility** as the **first principle** of new ethics
- Responsibility encompassing not only human beings but also **science, technology, and nature**.
- **Personal moral responsibility of scientist** for the practical implementation of his discoveries and inventions.
- The new ethics is not a science of morality; it is an instruction of giving future to humankind.

## Discourse Ethics (DE) of Jürgen Habermas

Discourse ethics (DE) has two aims:

- 1) specify the **ideal conditions for discourse**
  - 2) ground ethics in the **agreements reached** through the **exercise of such discourse**
- DE thus instantiates the intuition that if people **discuss issues** in **fair and open** ways, the resulting **conclusions** will be **morally binding** for those appropriately **involved** in the conversation.
  - Such a view of ethics has special relevance in a **scientific and technological world** characterized by **expanding means of communication**

# Government responses to COVID-19

... impacted

- a wide range of **rights**
- **social exclusion**
- **inequality**
- **state overreach**
- thinning **civil society** through **financial attrition**

Observations:

- **Under-resourcing of health systems**
- **failure** to provide adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) exacerbated the **death rates**,
- public health measures disproportionately affected **marginalized** individuals and groups
- pandemic as a smokescreen for **power grabs**
- **clampdowns on freedoms**
- pretext to **ignore human rights obligations**

<https://www.idea.int/gsod-indices/about-covid19>

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1032022021ENGLISH.PDF>

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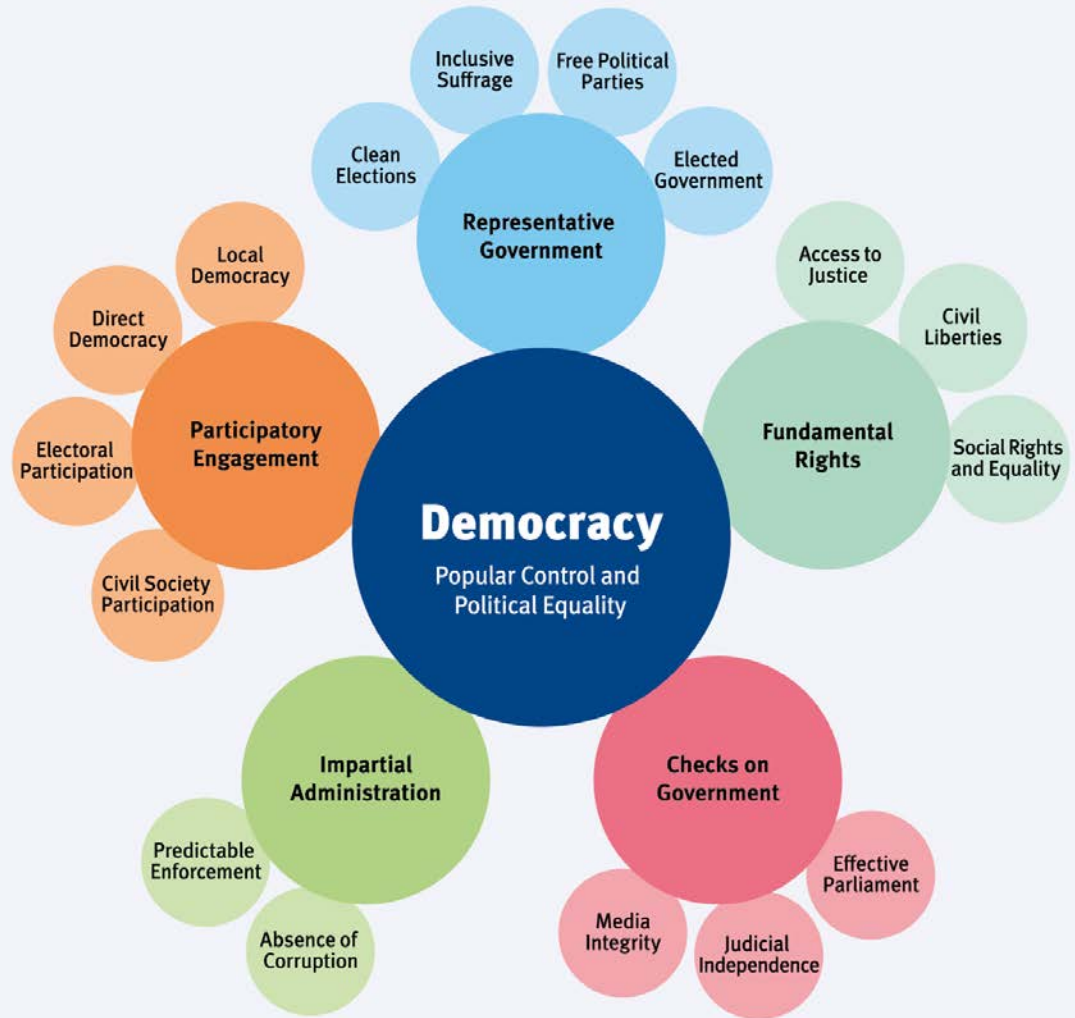
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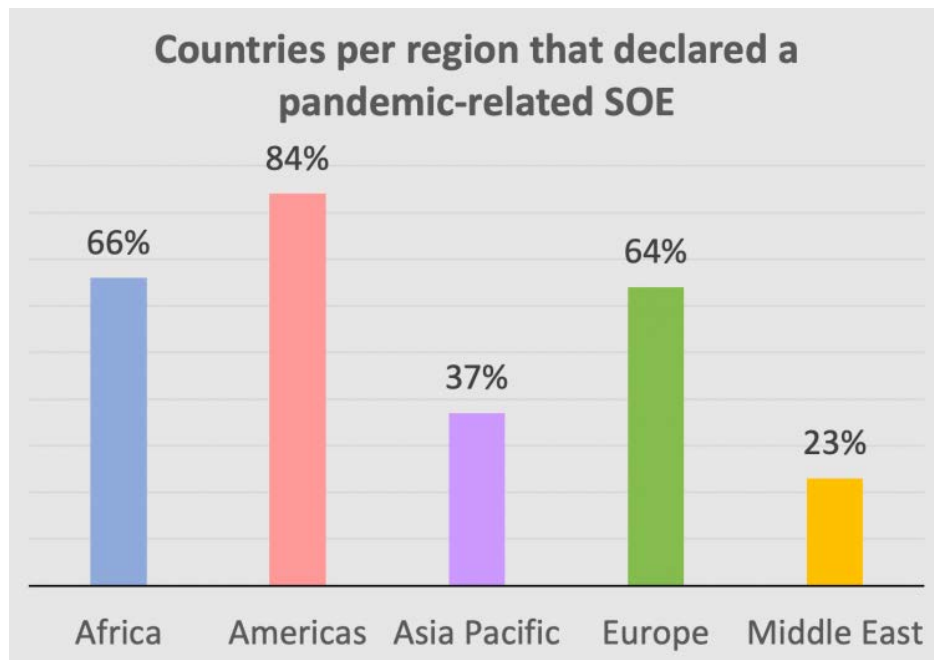
## Conceptual Framework: The Global State of Democracy



# Democracy & Human Rights

- The **Covid-19** pandemic may represent one of the **most serious challenges to global democracy**
- **Authoritarian regimes or illiberal governments** used the crisis as cover to **rule by decree, postpone elections, arrest critics and heighten censorship**
- Even **non-authoritarians** won praise for **limiting democratic freedoms** „in ways that would have drawn condemnation in ordinary times“
- democratic institutions come under **stress**:  
„executive overreach“ (Diebel 2019)  
„executive underreach“ (Scheppelle & Pozen 2020)
- Strong **preferences** for a **national response** to the COVID crisis
- Sharp increase in **technocratic preferences**, more pronounced among those most affected and less informed.
- Willingness to accept a **strong leader** and **trade-off rights and freedoms** for protection against the virus.

## State of Emergency (SOE)



International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

<https://www.idea.int/gsod-indices/#/indices/countries-regions-profile>

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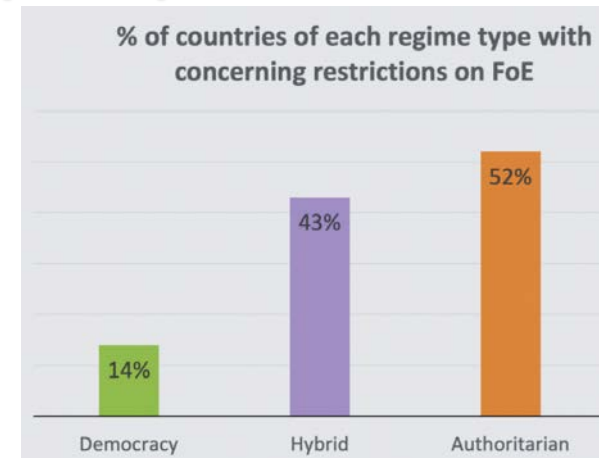
# Freedom of Expression (FoE)

**89 (55%) countries** have passed laws or taken actions to **restrict freedom of expression:** **detaining, arresting or investigating** of journalists, news outlets, citizens, activists or opposition politicians

## Europe:

At least 17 countries (39%) have passed laws or taken actions to

- **restrict freedom of expression**
- **combat disinformation on the virus.**



Restrictions include

- use of the **penal code to criminalize COVID-19 misinformation** (**Spain**)
- **arrests of journalists and critics** (**Belarus**)
- **doctors being threatened with criminal cases** (**Moldova**)
- Seven countries (22%) have made **disinformation on COVID-19 an imprisonable offence:**

**Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Russia, Serbia, and Turkey.**

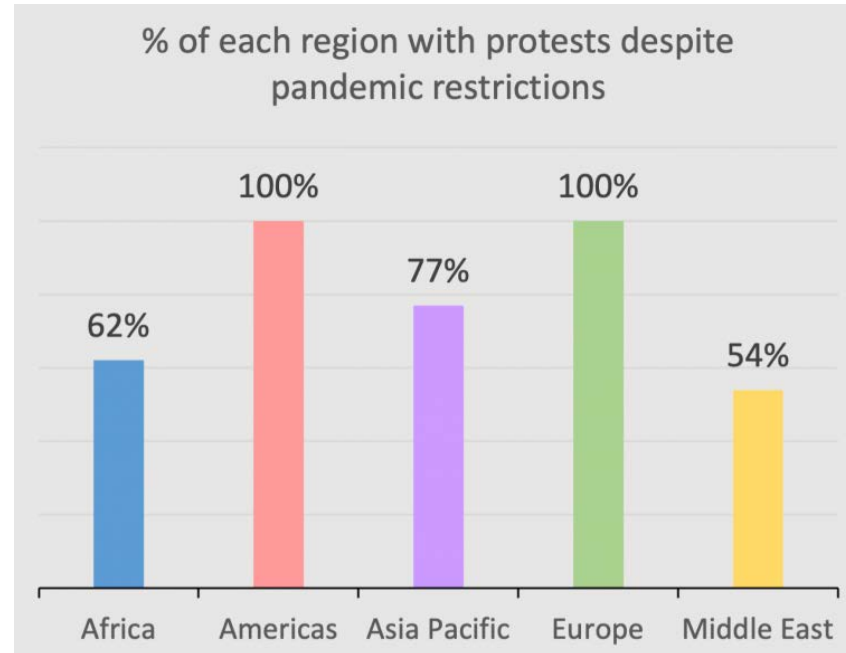
Justified as combatting **disinformation about the virus**

# Freedom of Religion

At least 129 countries (or 80%) placed some form of restriction on freedom of religion during the pandemic, either **banning religious gatherings** or **restricting their size and duration**.

Discrimination has been reported against various religious minorities in Pakistan, such as some groups being denied access to COVID-19 aid.

# Freedom of Association and Assembly



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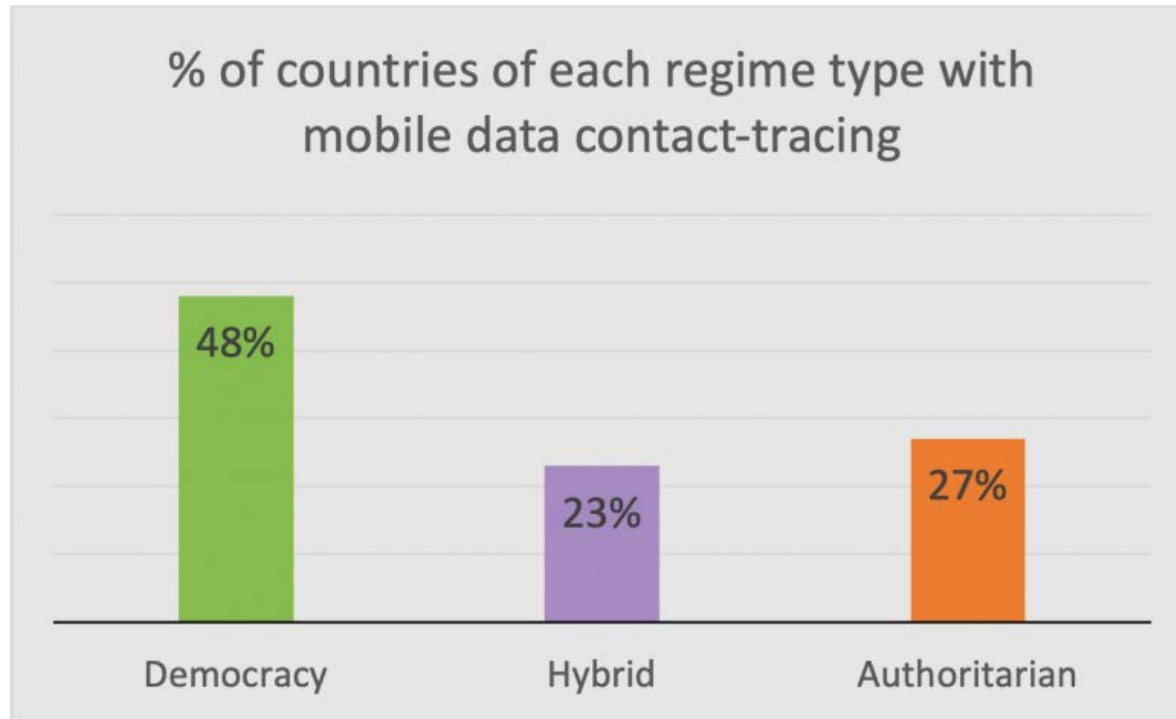
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## Personal Integrity and Security



29 countries (66%) placed **restrictions** on Personal Integrity and Security.  
At least 28 countries (64%) have used **contact tracing apps or mobile data**.  
At least 19 countries have made tracing apps voluntary,  
while they are **compulsory** in two countries (**Azerbaijan and Turkey**).

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

<https://www.idea.int/gsod-indices/#/indices/countries-regions-profile>

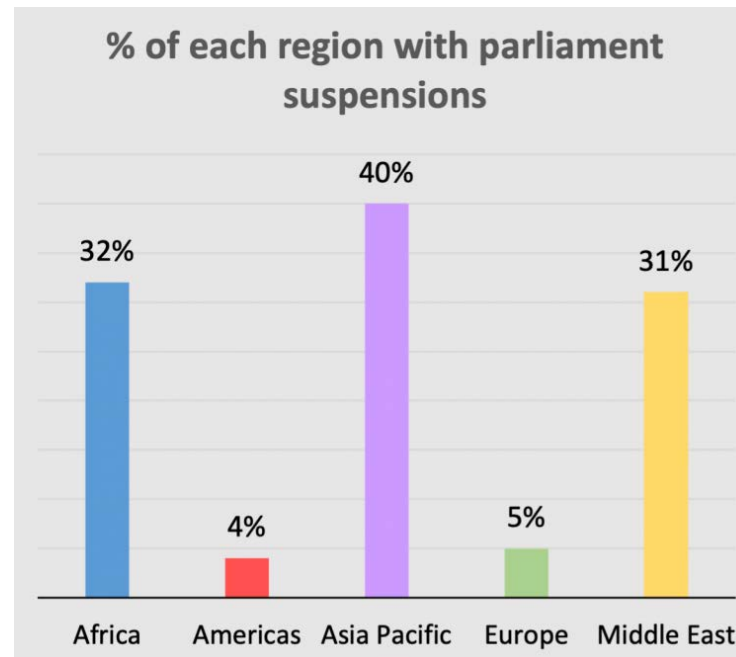
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## Effective Parliament



Europe and the Americas are the region with the lowest share of countries that suspended parliament due to the pandemic.

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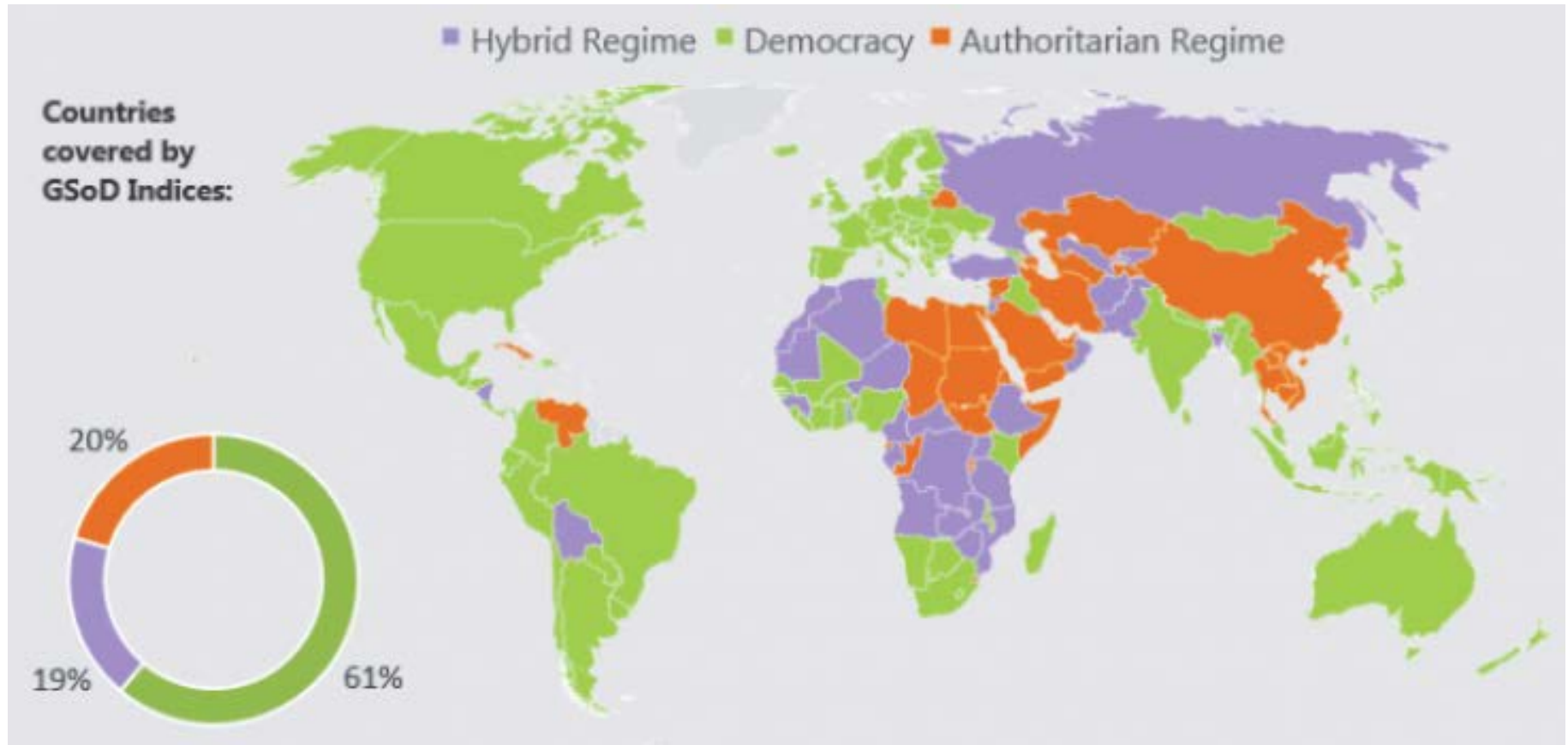
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# Global State of Democracy Indices 2019 before COVID



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# COVID & World

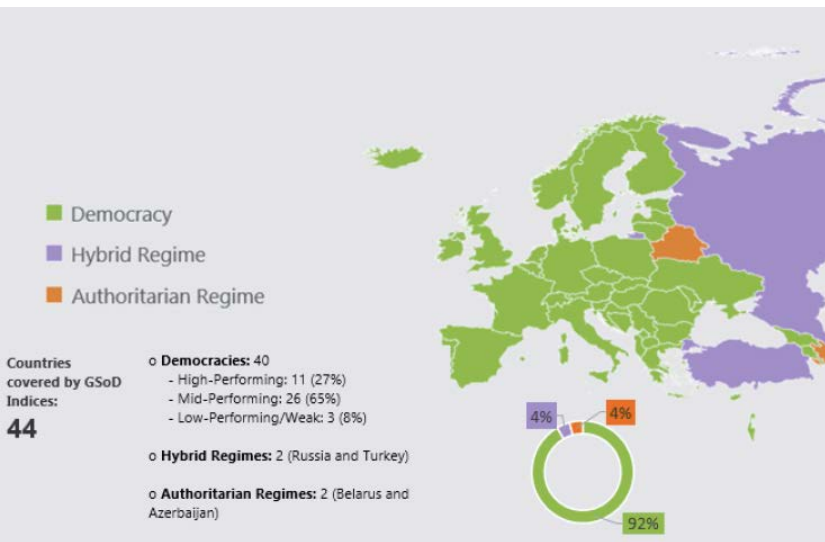


0.00 - 0.399 Low performance    0.40 - 0.70 Mid-range performance    0.701 - 1.00 High performance

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# COVID & Europe



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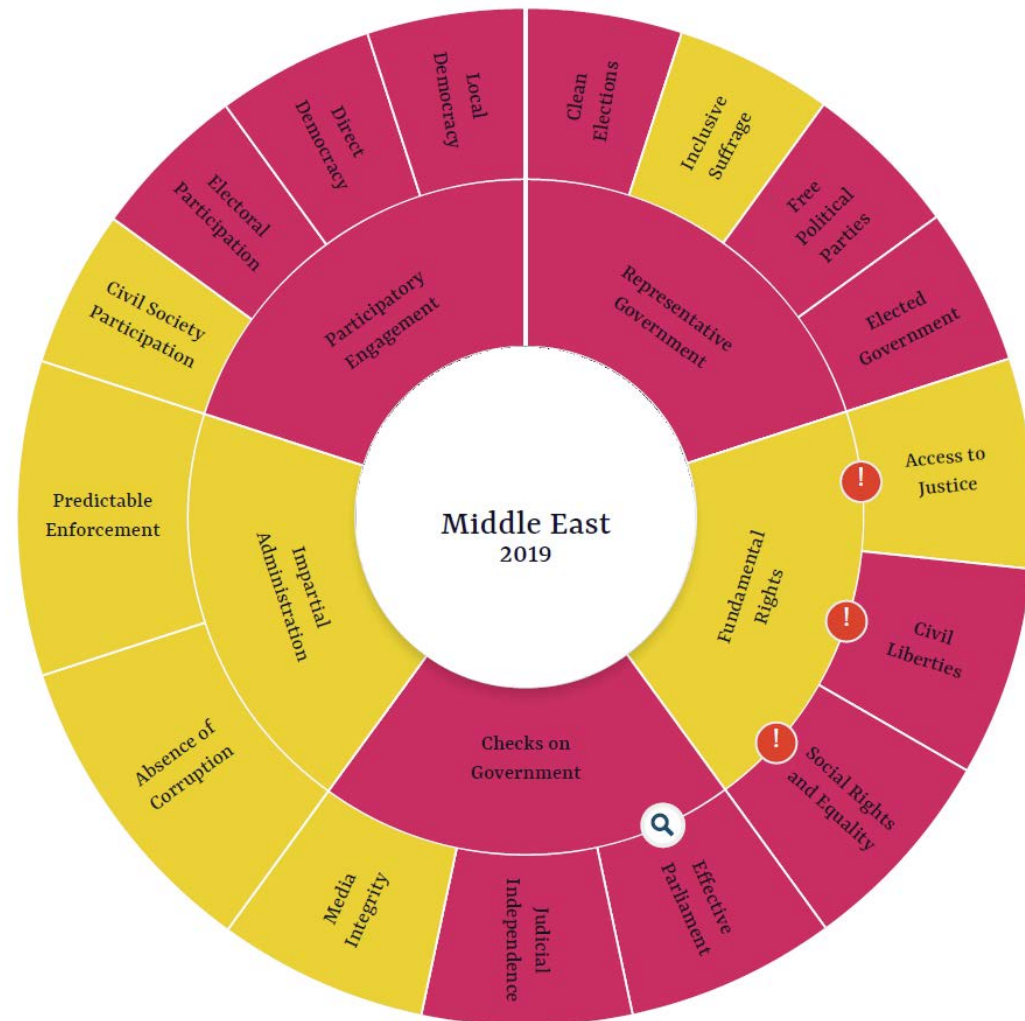
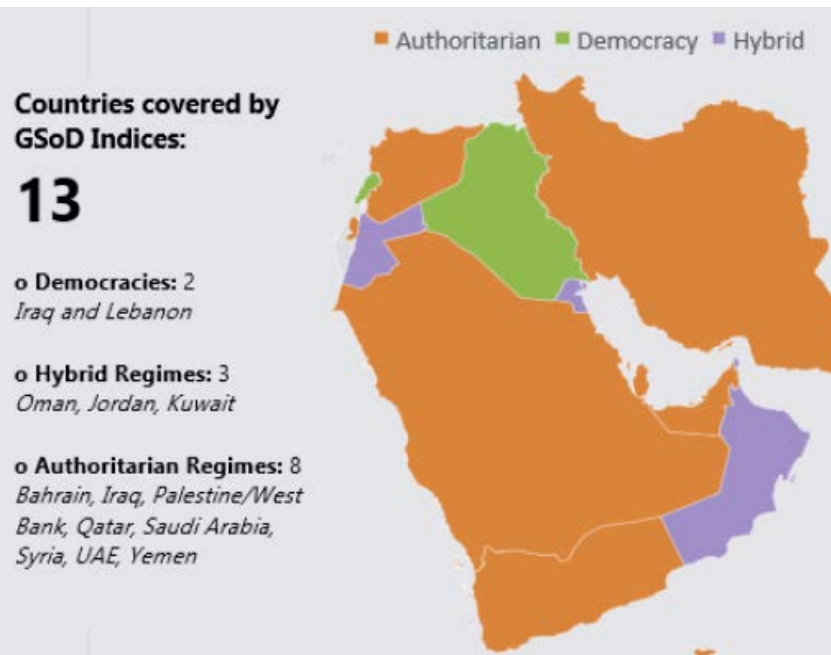
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# COVID & Middle East



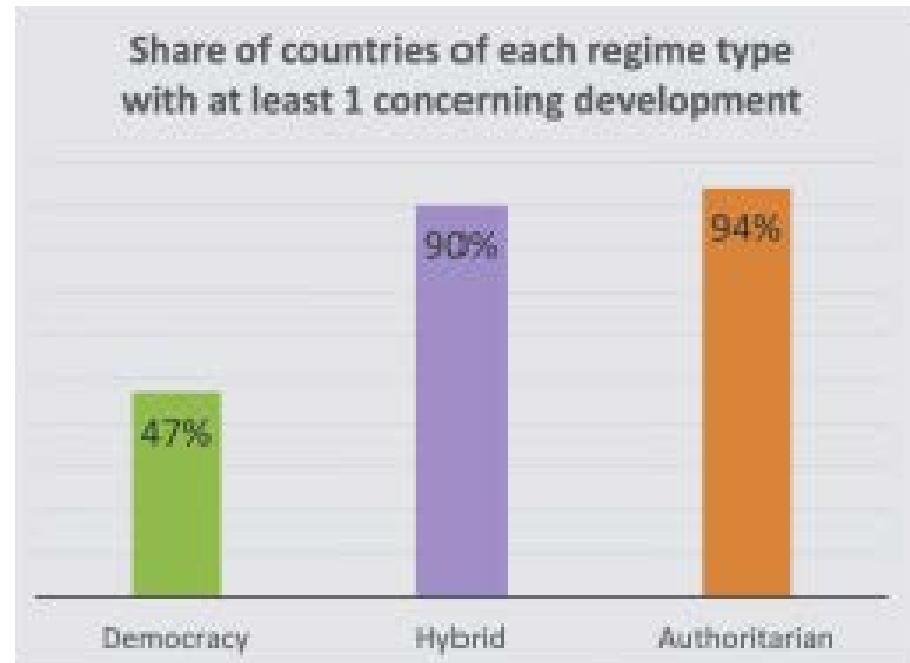
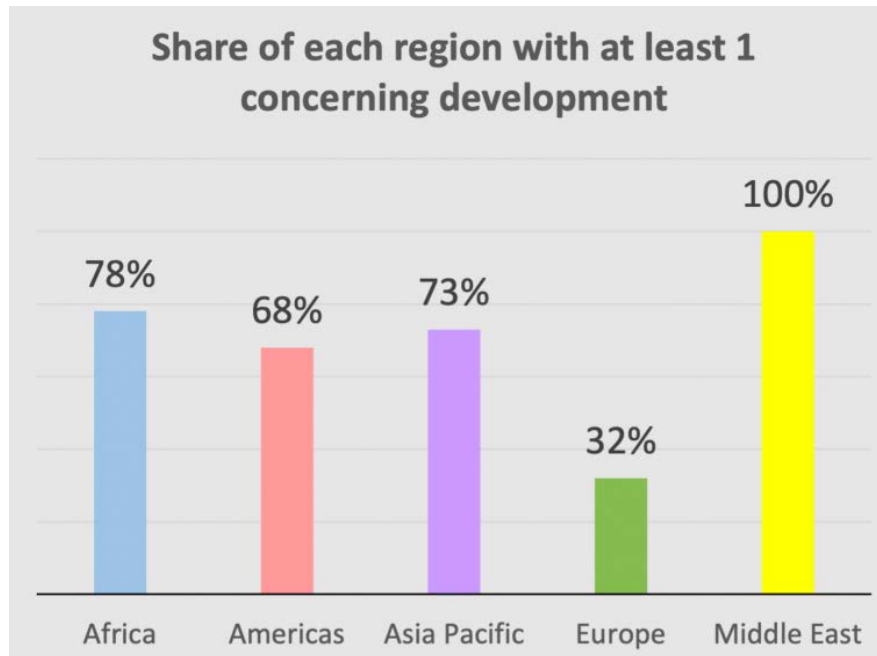
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# COVID-19 Democracy & Human Rights Impact Summary



International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

<https://www.idea.int/gsod-indices/#/indices/countries-regions-profile>

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# Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

- Article 13
  - (1) Everyone has the right to **freedom of movement** and residence **within the borders of each state**.
  - (2) Everyone has the right to **leave any country**, including his own, and to **return to his country**.
- Article 18

Everyone has the right to **freedom of thought, conscience and religion**;  
this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance
- Article 19

Everyone has the right to **freedom of opinion and expression**;  
this right includes freedom to **hold opinions without interference** and to **seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers**

# The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

- **Article 3 “Right to the integrity of the person”**

1. Everyone has the **right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity**.
2. In the fields of medicine and biology, the following must be respected in particular:
  - the free and informed consent of the person concerned, according to the procedures laid down by law,
  - the prohibition of eugenic practices, in particular those aiming at the selection of persons,
  - the prohibition on making the human body and its parts as such a source of financial gain,
  - the prohibition of the reproductive cloning of human beings.

- **Article 7 “Respect for private and family life”**

Everyone has the **right to respect for** his or her private and family life, home and **communications**.

- **Article 8 “Protection of personal data”**

1. Everyone has the right to the **protection of personal data** concerning him or her.
2. Such data must be processed fairly for specified purposes and on the basis of the consent of the person concerned or some other legitimate basis laid down by law. Everyone has the right of access to data which has been collected concerning him or her, and the right to have it rectified.
3. Compliance with these rules shall be subject to control by an independent authority.

- **Article 11 “Freedom of expression and information”**

1. Everyone has the **right to freedom of expression**. This right shall include **freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers**.
2. The **freedom and pluralism of the media** shall be respected.

- **Article 35 “Health care”**

Everyone has the right of access to preventive health care and the right to benefit from medical treatment under the conditions established by national laws and practices. A high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Union policies and activities.

# „The Great Reset“ - Klaus Schwab ?

- **"Covid-19: The Great Reset"** by **Klaus Schwab** (founder of the World Economic Forum - WEF)
- **New world order** for the post-Corona era
- **Claim:** "sustainability" & "justice" & "ecology"
- System of **surveillance** and **social control**?



Coronavirus electronic bracelet & Hunt for Corona offenders with drones

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/08/building-blocks-of-the-great-reset/>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHRkkeecg7c>



# Klaus Schwab „Covid19: The Great Reset“ ???

- **"The pandemic represents a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our world" –**  
Professor Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman, World Economic Forum.
- **"The context"**  
The Covid-19 crisis, and the political, economic and social disruptions it has caused, is **fundamentally changing the traditional context for decision-making**. The **inconsistencies, inadequacies and contradictions** of multiple systems –from **health and financial to energy and education** – are more exposed than ever amidst a global context of concern for lives, livelihoods and the planet. Leaders find themselves at a historic crossroads, managing short-term pressures against medium- and long-term uncertainties.
- **"The opportunity"**  
As we enter a unique window of opportunity to shape the recovery, this initiative will offer insights to help inform all those determining the future state of global relations, the direction of national economies, the priorities of societies, the nature of business models and the management of a global commons. Drawing from the vision and vast expertise of the leaders engaged across the Forum's communities, the Great Reset initiative has a set of dimensions to **build a new social contract** that honours the dignity of every human being.

# Klaus Schwab „Covid19: The Great Reset“ ???

## **Create new metrics – measuring what matters will change everything**

Dissatisfaction with GDP is widespread, and there are many alternatives being trialled that focus on the well-being of people and planet:

- UN's Human Development and Social Development Indexes,
- WellBeing metrics,
- Genuine Progress Indicators,
- a Happy Planet Index and an initiative to use
- Gross National Happiness.

# „The Great Reset“ - Klaus Schwab ?

## Questionable Issues

- Eliminate national states ?
- Unconditional basic income ?
- Cash to be abolished ?
- Abolish private property & free market economy?
- Destroy family structures ?
- Eliminate Christian culture ?
- **Result:** powerful super-state with radical steering measures?

# Klaus Schwab „Covid19: The Great Reset“ ???

## Questionable Issues

To make the world safer, to protect the environment from destruction and people from disease and suffering, they must be

- monitored and
- controlled all around
- Virtual world
- Disempowerment of people
- “Social distancing” even within the family, are to continue to exist and be expanded
- Power is to be concentrated in a global elite that cooperates with states
- Cash is to be abolished
- Unconditional basic income, which will make citizens dependent

# 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015

- UN Agenda 2030 strives for a "**sustainable world**" defined as one with
- **income equality**  
**gender equality**  
**vaccines for all**

Partnership between

- UN
- WHO: Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)
- World Economic Forum, June 13, 2019, Klaus Schwab
- Maurice Strong (1929 – 2015):  
*"Isn't the only **hope** for the planet  
that **industrialized civilizations** will **collapse**?  
Is it not our responsibility to achieve this?"*

# Ethics: Topics

- **Cancel culture (or call-out culture)**

is a modern form of ostracism in which someone is thrust out of social or professional circles - either online on social media, in the real world, or both. Those who are subject to this ostracism are said to be "canceled." The expression "cancel culture" has mostly negative connotations and is commonly used in debates on free speech and censorship.

- **Political correctness**

has played a major role in the "culture war" between liberals and conservatives. "Culture war" concerns issues such as abortion, homosexuality, transgender rights, pornography, multiculturalism, racial viewpoints and other cultural conflicts based on values, morality, and lifestyle which are described as the major political cleavage.

# Ethics:

## 10 Theses About Cancel Culture

1. Cancellation, properly understood, refers to an attack on someone's employment and reputation by a determined collective of critics, based on an opinion or an action that is alleged to be disgraceful and disqualifying.
2. All cultures cancel; the question is for what, how widely and through what means.
3. Cancellation isn't exactly about free speech, but a liberal society should theoretically cancel less frequently than its rivals.
4. The internet has changed the way we cancel, and extended cancellation's reach.
5. The internet has also made it harder to figure out whether speech is getting freer or less free.
6. Celebrities are the easiest people to target, but the hardest people to actually cancel.
7. Cancel culture is most effective against people who are still rising in their fields, and it influences many people who don't actually get canceled.
8. The right and the left both cancel; it's just that today's right is too weak to do it effectively.
9. The heat of the cancel-culture debate reflects the intersection of the internet as a medium for cancellation with the increasing power of left-wing moral norms as a justification for cancellation.
10. If you oppose left-wing cancel culture, appeals to liberalism and free speech aren't enough.

Details: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/14/opinion/cancel-culture-.html>

# Epistemization of the Political:

## how the power of knowledge endangers democracy

- *Alexander Bogner:*  
When **politicians rely only on scientific advice**, they cease to fulfill their role as representatives of the majority
- Whether it's the **vaccination debate**, the **Corona crisis** or the **climate crisis** - many **political disputes** today are negotiated as **conflicts of knowledge**.
- People are less concerned with normative aspects and individual options for action
- The implicit assumption is that whoever **agrees** most precisely with the **results of science** also has **solutions** that are then **without alternative**.
- "Epistemicization of the political" is **more dangerous for democracy** than the easily transparent game of **fake news, conspiracy ideologies and alternative facts**