BRINGING DEMOCRACY DEFENDERS TOGETHER

DEM-DEC | DEMOCRATIC DECAY & RENEWAL
www.democratic-decay.org

INFORMATION BOOKLET
Democratic Decay & Renewal (DEM-DEC) is an online resource designed to assist researchers and policymakers focused on the deterioration of democratic rule worldwide and rethinking democracy – and to help them work together.

DEM-DEC provides an information hub and platform for collaboration through a mixture of curated and user-generated content, including an Experts Database, Events Database, Research Updates, Teaching Materials, Concept Index, and Links.

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WHAT IS DEMOCRATIC DECAY?
Democratic decay refers to the pressing GLOBAL CHALLENGE posed by the DETERIORATION OF DEMOCRACIES WORLDWIDE.
Unlike the quick death of democracy (e.g. by a coup d’état), democracy is ERODED OVER TIME and can be DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY until it is well advanced.
After decades of expanding democracy worldwide, global democracy assessment organisations have registered declines every year since the mid-2000s, in states across every world region. 

e.g. Freedom House, Economist Intelligence Unit

Xenophobic, racist, and authoritarian populist governments and leaders have been elected across the world. Anti-democratic and illiberal political parties are on the rise. Politicians are increasingly unwilling to ‘play by the rules’

Governments are attacking democratic organs (e.g. courts), civil society (e.g. media, human rights NGOs), and human rights. 

e.g. current attack on the Supreme Court in Poland, buyouts of independent media in Hungary

Government surveillance has increased. Police powers have been expanded.

e.g. law on blanket surveillance in Hungary, Aadhar biometric controversy in India

Minorities are being targeted as scapegoats for societies’ problems.

e.g. anti-Semitism across Europe, attacks on immigrants in the USA and Hungary, attacks on Muslims in India and the USA

Public faith in democracy is falling in states worldwide.

e.g. polls in many democracies show little public trust in political parties or parliaments, support for military rule is rising in states including USA and Brazil
A range of internal and external drivers are discussed as underlying democratic decay. These include:

- Economic inequality
- Backlash against cultural and demographic change
- Social and political polarisation
- Echo chambers
- External influences and interference
- Illiberal political models rising
- Election ‘hacking’
- Globalisation
- Immigration
- Social media
KEY STATES WHERE SERIOUS CONCERNS REGARDING DEMOCRATIC DECAY HAVE BEEN RAISED

- Hungary & Poland
- Japan
- Venezuela & Brazil
- USA
- India
- South Africa
- Israel & Turkey

Searching for Solutions
DEMOCRATIC DECAY & RENEWAL (DEM-DEC)
DEM-DEC went live on 25 June 2018 and is designed to provide a useful hub, resource and platform for researchers and policymakers focused on addressing democratic decay.

DEM-DEC contains **7 key sections.**
Research on democratic decay has mushroomed in the past 5 years but has until now been scattered across different research fields and policy reports. The bibliography on DEM-DEC sets out all key research on democratic decay, divided by themes, world regions and international organisations.

Research Updates are issued monthly, based on searches for new research and suggestions from DEM-DEC users, which include leading democracy experts.

You can suggest additions too – see the Research section on DEM-DEC for more details.
Democratic decay is now discussed under a bewildering number of labels. The phenomenon of democratic decay itself also requires us to revisit how we define concepts such as authoritarianism and liberalism.

If you struggle to tell your 'autocratic legalism' from 'abusive constitutionalism', or 'constitutional rot' from 'democratic deconsolidation', head to the Concept Index, which contains definitions and explainers of some 80 key concepts in the field, including links to all key texts.
Experts on democratic decay are found in many different areas of the academic and policy worlds. Yet, experts often do not know who else is working on this issue. Policy organisations struggle to identify academic collaborators and vice versa. The Experts Database helps by providing useful lists of leading experts worldwide.

The Database has recently been expanded to include academics from more disciplines, and policymakers.

Not on the list? No problem - just fill out the feedback form and get added.
Struggling to get a handle on the growing range of events on democratic decay worldwide?

Worried about duplicating an event happening elsewhere?

Keen to identify possible partners for an event, or simply want to know what events might be happening near you?

Check out the Events Database. Sections provide details of forthcoming events across the world as well as a list of past events.
Educating the next generation of democracy defenders is crucial.

The Teaching section provides a suite of resources for teaching students about democratic decay.

The principal resources are based on the course ‘Understanding Democratic Decay Worldwide’ first delivered by Dr Tom Gerald Daly at the University of Melbourne in 2018. These will be uploaded soon.

Additional teaching resources from other researchers are also available. You’re your materials using the form provided or email democraticdecay@gmail.com
Although it is not primarily an advocacy tool, DEM-DEC engages in selected information campaigns.

DEM-DEC’s first information campaign disseminated information booklets to members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in advance of a vote on 12 September 2018 on whether to trigger the EU treaty process against the Hungarian government for violation of fundamental EU values (including democracy and the rule of law).

DEM-DEC’s second information compiled information on the leading presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro in advance of the presidential elections in Brazil on 7 October 2018.

Go to the Campaigns section for more details.
Useful information on democratic decay is scattered across a wide range of websites, publications, and organisations.

The Links section on DEM-DEC aims to provide a useful ‘one stop shop’ for accessing key information, projects, and organisations.

As well as lists of key research projects and research resources, the Links section provides lists of journals, blogs, podcasts, democracy indices, policy organisations and international instruments relevant to democratic decay.

As with all other sections on DEM-DEC, users can suggest additions to the Links section.
WHAT LEADING DEMOCRACY EXPERTS SAY ABOUT DEM-DEC
DEM-DEC IS A CRUCIAL TOOL FOR UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING AND DECAY.

UNFORTUNATELY, IT LOOKS LIKE IT WILL BE NEEDED FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, BUT WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF DECAY, WE CANNOT HOPE TO REBUILD THE MOMENTUM FOR DEMOCRACY.

PROFESSOR TOM GINSBURG
LEO SPITZ PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
AUTHOR (WITH AZIZ HUQ) OF ‘HOW TO SAVE A DEMOCRACY’
DEMOCRACY IS IN TROUBLE ALL OVER THE WORLD. ONE ASPIRING AUTOCRAT LEARNS FROM ANOTHER, AND DODGY PRACTICES SPREAD FROM PLACE TO PLACE. SCHOLARS NEED TO KEEP UP WITH THESE DEVELOPMENTS ACROSS COUNTRIES, ACROSS REGIONS, ACROSS LANGUAGES, AND OVER TIME. DEM-DEC ALLOWS US TO FOLLOW THESE DEVELOPMENTS BY LINKING US ACROSS AREA-STUDIES SPECIALIZATIONS, ACROSS TOPICS AND ACROSS DISCIPLINES. IT’S AN INVALUABLE RESOURCE FOR A FAST-MOVING TOPIC OF WORLD-HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE.

PROFESSOR KIM LANE SCHEPPELE LAURANCE S. ROCKEFELLER PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
WORKING IN THE FIELD OF CONSTITUTION BUILDING MEANS STAYING UP-TO DATE ON EVENTS AND TRENDS AROUND THE WORLD, FROM THE SOUTH PACIFIC TO THE MIDDLE EAST.

DEM-DEC, AND ITS CURATOR TOM DALY, ARE FAST BECOMING GO-TO RESOURCES FOR ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS ON THE MOST PRESSING CHALLENGES FACING DEMOCRACIES AROUND THE WORLD.

SUMIT BISARYA
HEAD OF CONSTITUTION BUILDING
INTERNATIONAL IDEA
WITH THE RISE OF THE ALTERNATIVE FÜR DEUTSCHLAND PARTY AND GERMANY'S INCREASINGLY POLARIZED POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT, DEM-DEC PROVIDES AN "INDISPENSABLE PLATFORM FOR ANALYSIS AND COLLABORATION TO UNDERSTAND THREATS TO DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW IN GERMANY AND BEYOND."  

DR MICHAELA HAILBRONNER  
UNIVERSITY OF MÜNSTER
Today's democracies no longer die by violent means, but by ‘law’ through an imperceptible capture of their underlying institutions. As a one-stop shop for democracy defenders to gather informative and actionable contents to counter such a phenomenon.

Dem-Dec sets the standard for a new form of academic engagement at a time of democratic urgency.

Professor Alberto Alemanno
Global Professor of Law
NYU
THE NEW GLOBAL WAVE OF AUTHORITARIANISM IS SUBTLE AND INCREMENTAL. AS ELECTED LEADERS TRY TO KILL DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTIONS WITH A THOUSAND CUTS, THE

SOUTH ASIAN REGION

VERY MUCH EXEMPLIFIES THIS GLOBAL TREND TOWARDS CREEPING AUTHORITARIANISM.

A COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCE LIKE DEM-DEC

WILL NOT ONLY ENABLE COMPARATIVE SCHOLARS TO COMPARE THE CONTINUITIES WITH AND THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DIFFERENT JURISDICTIONS, 

IT WILL ALSO

AID ACTORS WITHIN AT-RISK JURISDICTIONS TO LEARN FROM EXPERIENCES ELSEWHERE.

DR TARUNABH KHAITAN

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
DR TOM DALY
DIRECTOR OF DEM-DEC
Tom is an academic and consultant in the area of democracy-building, public law, and human rights, and is on a mission to bring democracy defenders together and to help them in their work.

He is Assistant Director of Melbourne School of Government, Associate Director of the Edinburgh Centre for Constitutional Law (ECCL), MLS Fellow at Melbourne Law School, and Co-Convenor of the Constitution Transformation Network (Melbourne Law School). As a consultant he has worked on European Union, Council of Europe, African Union, International IDEA and Irish government projects.

Recent publications include an article, ‘Democratic Decay: Conceptualising an Emerging Research Field’ in the Hague Journal on the Rule of Law, and policy analysis of the ‘third wave of autocratization’ for Carnegie Europe.

Past publications include a chapter on ‘Democratic Decay in 2016’ in International IDEA’s Annual Review of Constitution-Building. Tom has also written on democratic decay as a columnist for the I-CONnect blog and tweets @DemocracyTalk.
OUR TEAM

Two Research Editors provide valuable assistance in producing the monthly Global Research Update for DEM-DEC.

Kuan-Wei Chen is a doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Law at University of Munich (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München) in Germany.

Anant Sangal is a student of B.A. LL.B. (Hons.) at the National Law University Delhi, India.

Funding & Communications Coordinator Konstantina Yaneva is a recent graduate of Columbia University in political science and human rights and currently works with the Conseil Régional Île-de-France.

Want to Join the DEM-DEC Team?

Simply fill out the form at www démocratic-decay.org/get-involved/
DEM-DEC enjoys the support of a range of partners, which are leading organisations in public law and policy worldwide:

- Centre for Comparative Constitutional Studies (CCCS)
- Centro de Estudos sobre Justiça de Transição (Study Center on Transitional Justice (SCTJ), Brazil)
- Constitution Transformation Network (Melbourne Law School)
- Constitutionally Speaking (blog – South Africa)
- Democracy Reporting International (DRI)
- Democratic Erosion: A Cross-University Collaboration (USA)
- Edinburgh Centre for Constitutional Law
- ICON-S-Israel
- International Association of Constitutional Law (IACL) Blog
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)
- International Journal of Constitutional Law (I-CONnect) Blog
- Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)
- School of Transnational Governance (European University Institute)
- V-Dem (Varieties of Democracy)
- Verfassungsblog

Views expressed on DEM-DEC do not necessarily reflect the views of DEM-DEC’s partners.
WANT TO KNOW MORE?
YOU CAN GET MORE INFORMATION AT
WWW.DEMOCRATIC-DECAY.ORG
OR BY E-MAILING
DR TOM GERALD DALY
DEMOCRATICDECAY@GMAIL.COM
DEM-DEC
Bringing Democracy Defenders Together