

# Political Representation and Direct Democracy

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# Outline of the lecture

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1/14/2025

- ▶ Political Representation in Modern Times
- ▶ Representative Decision-Making under the Shadow of Direct Democracy
- ▶ Political Parties and Direct Democracy
- ▶ Interest Groups and Direct Democracy
- ▶ Direct Democracy in a Cosmopolitan World
- ▶ Discussions

# Political representation in modern times

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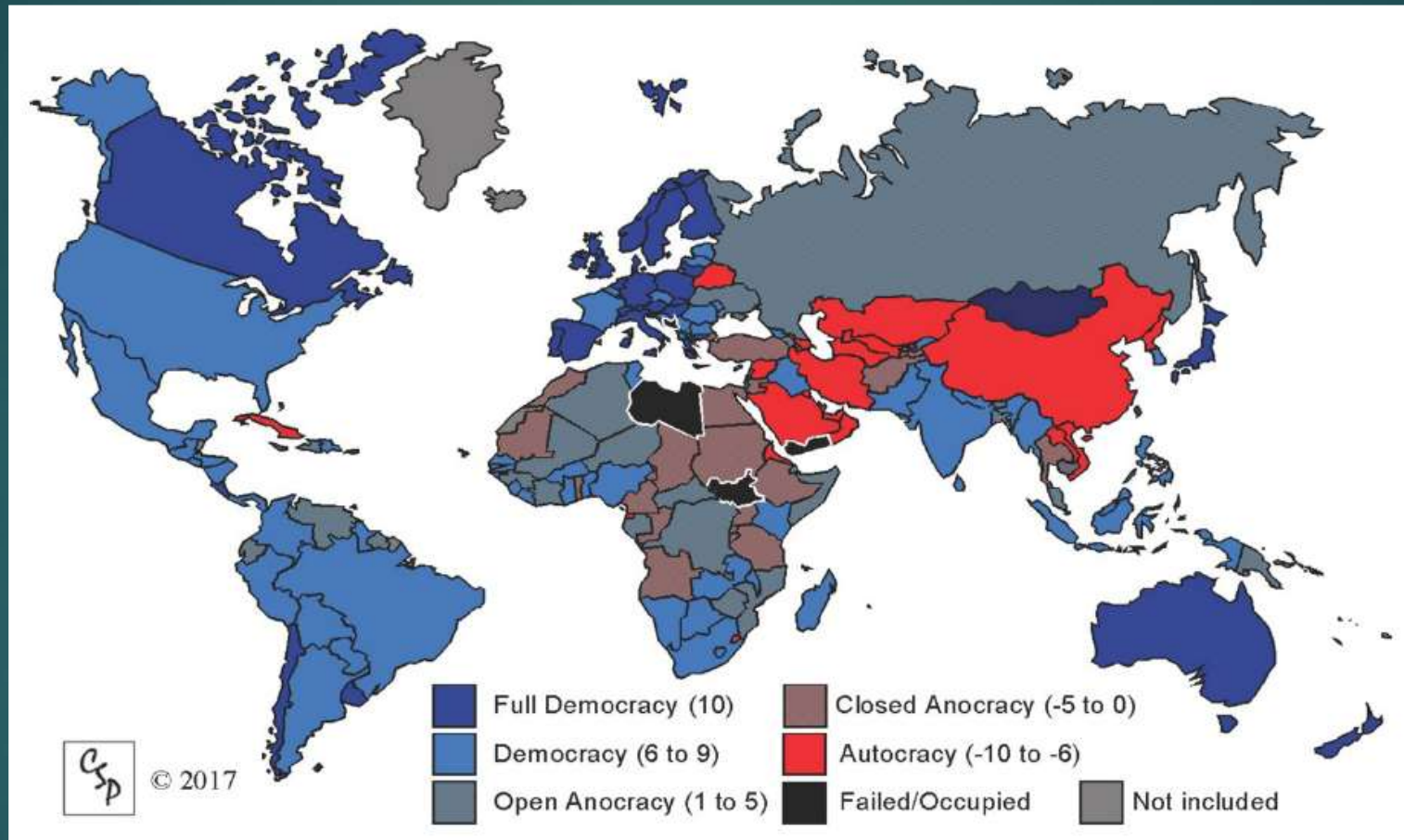
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- ▶ Today, nation-states continue to be the basic unit of political representation
  - ▶ Political representation at the state level
  - ▶ Intra-state disagreement and domestic governance (comparative politics)
  - ▶ Inter-state conflict and global governance (international relations)
- ▶ The co-existence of different political regimes
  - ▶ Anarchy, democracy, aristocracy, authoritarianism, dictatorship...
  - ▶ Except for anarchy, most political regimes all claim some degree of legitimacy by 'representing the people'

# The Polity IV Project

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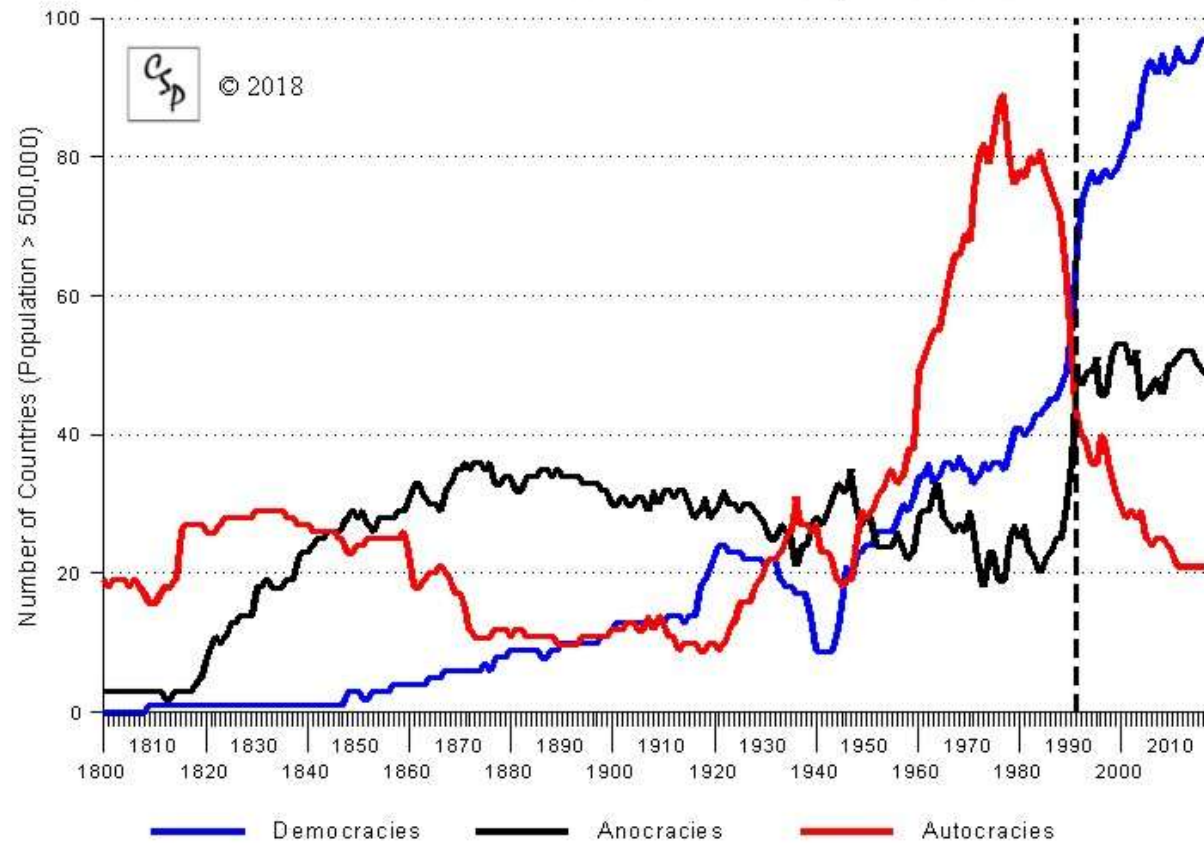
# The Polity5 Project

<http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity1.htm>

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## Global Trends in Governance, 1800-2017



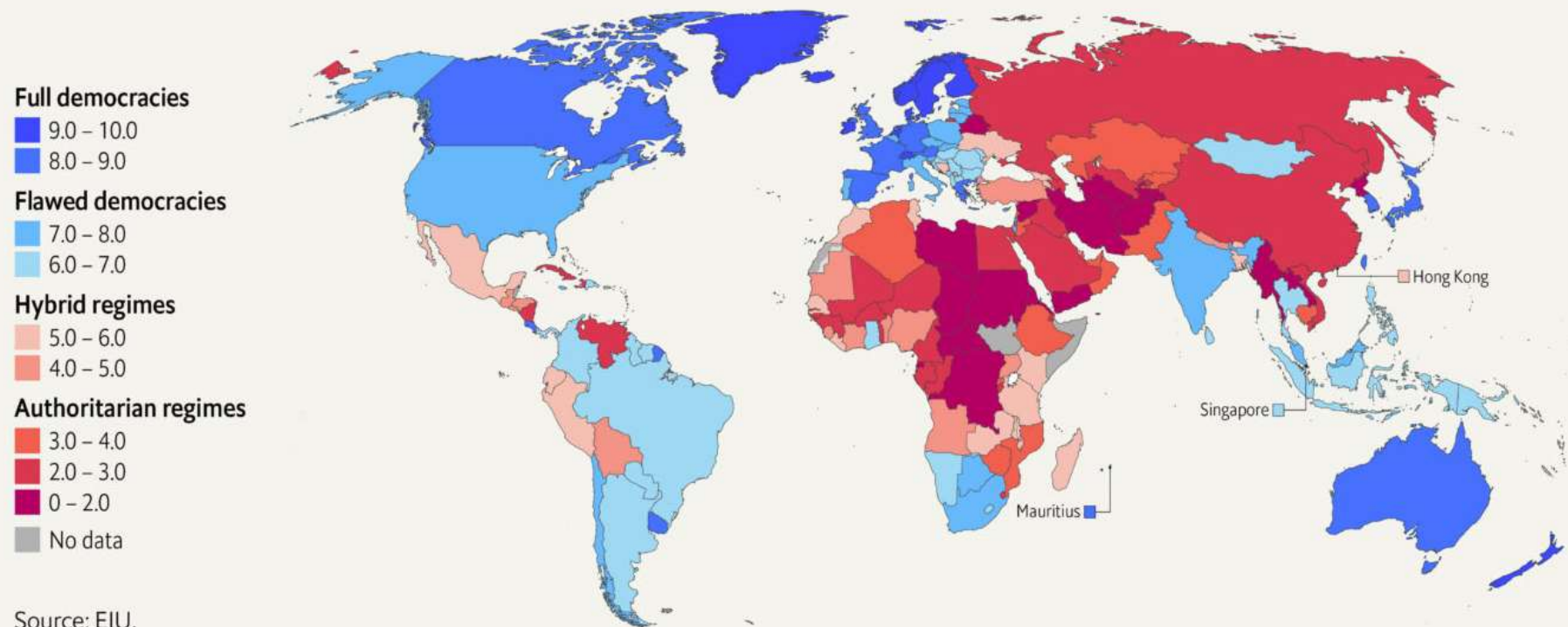
# The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index

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## Democracy Index 2023

Only 8% of the world's population lives in a “full democracy”



# Representative decision-making under the shadow of direct democracy

- ▶ Why does direct democracy still matter?
  - ▶ Political representation relies ultimately on the consent of the people
  - ▶ The challenges to traditional political representation have increased in recent years
  - ▶ The demand for direct democracy is also on the rise
- ▶ Direct democracy and representative decision-making
  - ▶ The 'median voter'...
  - ▶ Using direct democracy as a bargaining tool
  - ▶ Blocking/allowing direct democracy via representative institutions

# Political parties and direct democracy

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- ▶ The functions of political parties
  - ▶ Representation
  - ▶ Interest articulation and mediation
  - ▶ Political mobilization
  - ▶ Political recruitment
  - ▶ Government formation
- ▶ Direct democracy and party functions: contrasting views
  - ▶ Party weakened: direct representation, interest unmediated, government by the people
  - ▶ Party strengthened: grassroots mobilization, informing the public, fighting intra-party dissidents, assisting inter-party competition, strengthening leadership and legitimacy

# Interest groups and direct democracy

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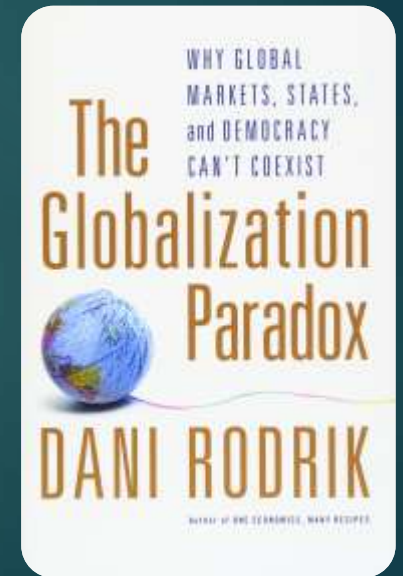
- ▶ Interest groups
  - ▶ Issue-oriented advocacy groups
  - ▶ Representation: often self-claimed
  - ▶ Funding sources: not always transparent
- ▶ Interest groups and direct democratic campaigns
  - ▶ Financing direct democracy
  - ▶ Taking part in the direct democratic process (e.g., gathering signatures, proposing popular ballots)
  - ▶ Informing the public (e.g., waging referendum campaigns, reporting implementation measures)
- ▶ Transnational movements in national direct democracy

# Political representation in modern times

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- ▶ The growing importance of global governance
  - ▶ International organizations: UN, WTO, IMF...
  - ▶ International NGOs: Greenpeace, Transparency International...
  - ▶ Supranational authorities: EU
- ▶ Multi-level governance in the making
  - ▶ Sub-regional level
  - ▶ State level
  - ▶ Regional level
  - ▶ Global level
- ▶ Political representation in a globalised world...



# Direct democracy in a cosmopolitan world

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- ▶ To 'be' in a cosmopolitan world
  - ▶ Public governance in the context of globalization
  - ▶ Technocracy becomes an essential and integral part
  - ▶ An inter-connected world which is also increasingly isolated
- ▶ The ancient political institution facing new challenges
  - ▶ Are we a cosmopolitan 'idiot'?
  - ▶ Can we conduct informed, deliberative, and effective public decisions?
  - ▶ How to draw a line between 'us' and 'them'?
  - ▶ ...

# Discussions

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- ▶ Is direct democracy compatible with representative democratic institutions?
- ▶ Is direct democracy voting still meaningful in a globalized world?
- ▶ Reconsidering the normative and empirical assessments of direct democracy
- ▶ What have you learned from this course?