

### 19.7 Rubric for Evaluating Whether Democracy is at Risk

**Instructions:** This rubric was developed by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt for their book *How Democracies Die* (2018). They propose it as a way to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of democracy in any given country. As a long-term research project, select one of these countries (listed alphabetically: Hungary, India, Israel, Malaysia, Poland, Russia, Turkey, the United States, and Venezuela) and using the rubric evaluate whether democracy in that country is at risk of being weakened or even abandoned. Potential sources include the CIA World Factbook (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>) and the Wilson Center (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/>).

1. Rejection of (or weak commitment to) democratic rules of the game	<p>a. Do they reject the Constitution or express a willingness to violate it?</p> <p>b. Do they suggest a need for antidemocratic measures, such as cancelling elections, violating or suspending the Constitution, banning certain organizations, or restricting basic civil or political rights?</p> <p>c. Do they seek to use (or endorse the use of) extra-constitutional means to change the government, such as military coups, violent insurrections, or mass protests aimed at forcing a change in the government?</p> <p>d. Do they attempt to undermine the legitimacy of elections, for example, by refusing to accept credible electoral results?</p>
2. Denial of the legitimacy of political opponents	<p>a. Do they describe their rivals as subversive, or opposed to the existing constitutional order?</p> <p>b. Do they claim that their rivals constitute an existential threat, either to national security or to the prevailing way of life?</p> <p>c. Do they baselessly describe their partisan rivals as criminals, whose supposed violation of the law (or potential to do so) disqualifies them from full participation in the political arena?</p> <p>d. Do they baselessly suggest that their rivals are foreign agents, in that they are secretly working in alliance with (or the employ of) a foreign government – usually an enemy one?</p>
3. Toleration or encouragement of violence	<p>a. Do they have any ties to armed gangs, paramilitary forces, militias, guerillas, or other organizations that engage in illicit violence?</p> <p>b. Have they or their partisan allies sponsored or encouraged mob attacks on opponents?</p> <p>c. Have they tacitly endorsed violence by their supporters by refusing to unambiguously condemn it and punish it?</p> <p>d. Have they praised (or refused to condemn) other significant acts of political violence, either in the past or elsewhere in the world?</p>
4. Readiness to curtail civil liberties of opponents, including media	<p>a. Have they supported laws or policies that restrict civil liberties, such as expanded libel or defamation laws, or laws restricting protest, criticism of the government, or certain civic or political organizations?</p> <p>b. Have they threatened to take legal or other punitive action against critics in rival parties, civil society, or the media?</p> <p>c. Have they praised repressive measures taken by other governments, either in the past or elsewhere in the world?</p>