Committee: Special Political and Decolonization Committee

Issue: The question of illiberal democracy

Student Officer: Lampros Mallios

Position: Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Lampros Mallios and it is with great honor that I will serve as the Co-Chair in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee in the forthcoming conference of the CSMUN. I am 16 years old and a student of IB2 in Doukas Schools.

My MUN journey started in the first grade of high school and since then is something I truly love. The fact that I was able to take the role of a delegate, propose solutions, debate upon them with peers, exchange different views and agreeing with or juxtaposing people's opinions is something I take pleasure in doing. In total I have attended six conferences four of those as delegate and the other two as a chair.

In the following study guide, I have included the most crucial information regarding the issue of the rise of illiberal democracies. I hope that the study guide will provide you with sufficient information in order to thoroughly understand the issue, prompt you to make the further research needed to write you resolution and debate upon the issue itself. If in any way you face any difficulties and therefore you need further clarifications, do not hesitate to email me at lamprossmallios@gmail.com. I anticipate that this Study Guide covers the most part of your research and I look forward to seeing you in the conference.

Kind regards,
Lampros Mallios

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Nowadays it is safe to say that liberalism is in decline. For close to two centuries liberalism has been a major force that has in many ways shaped the course of human history. When communism collapsed in 1991, the influence of liberalism seemed to have reached its peak. It became a truly global phenomenon. Even countries that had not been traditionally in the sphere of Western influence, such as Russia or China, adopted wholesale the liberal socio-political practice. The success of liberalism was indisputable. There just did not seem to be any alternative to liberalism. Many believed that human history had reached its end and liberalism was this end.

However, no sooner had liberalism achieved its extraordinary success as its influence both around the world and even in the West it began to decline. Today liberalism faces a very uncertain future, as the threat of revived nationalism and populism, and is on the rise. Why is liberalism that has been in the ascendency for so long, losing its position and influence in the world?

To give some examples: in Turkey, the legally elected president Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly restricted the free press and has moreover repeatedly suppressed minorities. Also, the legally elected government in Poland has passed laws that restrict the independence of the judiciary. Viktor Orban, who publicly praised illiberalism in his campaign, has delivered on his promises by taking measures such as restricting the free press. Nevertheless, the 2017 Democracy Index only identified 76 states in the world qualify as either a "full" or even a "flawed democracy", 38 states as "hybrid regimes" and 51 states as "authoritarian".

The United Nations state on their website that " democracy is one of the universal and indivisible core values and principles of the United Nations", because "it is based on the freely expressed will of people and closely linked to the rule of law and exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms".

This raises the question of whether democracy still helps to maintain peace and security and, if it does not, what the United Nations could do to improve it.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Liberalism

Political doctrine that takes protecting and enhancing the freedom of the individual to be the central problem of politics. Liberals typically believe that government is necessary to protect individuals from being harmed by others, but they also recognize that government itself can pose a threat to liberty.[1]

Democracy

A government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections.[2]

Illiberalism

Illiberal institutions are those which do not effectively protect the rule of law and *do not* guarantee individual rights such as freedom of speech, worship, press, and association to all citizens (including ethnic and religious minorities).

Populism

Populism, political program or movement that champions the common person, usually by favourable contrast with an elite. Populism usually combines elements of the left and the right, opposing large business and financial interests but also frequently being hostile to established socialist and labor parties. The term populism can designate either democratic or authoritarian movements. Populism is typically critical of political representation and anything that mediates the relation between the people and their leader or government. In its most democratic form, populism seeks to defend the interest and maximize the power of ordinary citizens, through reform rather than revolution.[3]

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[1] Dagger, Richard, et al. "Liberalism." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., https://www.britannica.com/topic/liberalism.

[2] "Democracy." Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/democracy.

[3] Munro, André. "Populism." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., https://www.britannica.com/topic/populism.

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism**,** principle of blind submission to authority, as opposed to individual freedom of thought and action. In government, authoritarianism denotes any political system that concentrates power in the hands of a leader or a small elite that is not constitutionally responsible to the body of the people. Authoritarian leaders often exercise power arbitrarily and without regard to existing bodies of law, and they usually cannot be replaced by citizens choosing freely among various competitors in elections. The freedom to create opposition political parties or other alternative political groupings with which to compete for power with the ruling group is either limited or nonexistent in authoritarian regimes. [4]

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

1992	Establishment of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA), which assesses the political situation and development around the world in order to prevent or end conflicts.
1993	Establishment of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) whose goal is to protect and promote Human Rights around the world
November 1, 1993	Establishment of the European Union
1997	Fareed Zakaria uses the term "illiberal democracy" in an article in the journal "Foreign Affairs"

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[4] Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Authoritarianism." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., https://www.britannica.com/topic/authoritarianism

2006	Establishment of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) by Kofi Annan that supports democratization around the world through encouragement of participation, promoting and protecting human rights, and giving a voice to the civil societies
2014	Hungarian president Viktor Orban declares an illiberal democracy as the goal of his political party
November 1, 2015	Justice and Development Party (AKP) regains a Parliamentary majority in the Turkish general election
September 8, 2016	Donald J. Trump wins the presidential election of the United States of America
September 24, 2017	The right-wing party Alternative for Germany receives 12.6% in the German federal election and by that becomes the third largest party in German politics
March 4, 2018	The centre-right coalition becomes the strongest party with 37% followed by the populist Five Star Movement with 32.7% in the Italian general election
March 18, 2018	Putin wins reelection in the Russian presidential election with 76.69%

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As mentioned above an illiberal democracy is a governing system in which although elections take place, therefore citizens are politically cut off and are not aware of the decisions and action implemented by their government because of the lack of civil liberties. According to Fareed Zakaria which was the first person to use the term illiberal democracies; "illiberal democracies are increasing around the world and are increasingly limiting the freedoms of the people they represent.'' He argues that democracy without constitutional liberalism upholds the principles of producing the erosion of liberty, ethnic competition, conflict, and war. Hybrid regimes are political systems in which the mechanism for determining access to state office combines both democratic and autocratic practices. In hybrid regimes, freedoms exist and the opposition is allowed to compete in elections, but the system of checks and balances becomes inoperative. As a result, nations with illiberal democracies impaired with many social, economical, and political issues which if not resolved will eventually disrupt the development and welfare of a nation.

The rise of democracy

Every male adult citizen could decide over the fate of Athens in 500 BC through voting on every matter directly. They called it "$\delta\eta\mu o\kappa\rho\alpha\tau\iota\alpha$" - Power by the people. At the time, it was an innovative form of running a country. So innovative that even 2,500 years later, over 4 billion people live in a democracy .(Slaves, minors, women, foreigners and non-citizens however did not possess the right to vote. In addition, they structured their society in classes, whose affiliation was determined by wealth. Furthermore, they did not take any action to achieve equality as we define it today, nor had anything similar to human rights. Nevertheless, they identified their form of government as a democracy. In 1943, 222 million people lived in a democracy. In the wake of World War II, democracy was spread around the globe. The amount of people living in a democracy increased by over 3.9 billion in 72 years.

The recent decline of democracy

However, this trend seems to be in reverse. Since 2007, more democracy scores have declined than improved. Hence, they suggest that the degree of liberalism has tremendously decreased in the last decade. In 2018, Nations in Transit registered the most score declines in the project's 23-year history: 19 of the 29 countries experienced declines in their overall Democracy Scores. For the second year in a row, there are more Consolidated Authoritarian Regimes than Consolidated Democracies. In addition, Freedom House has recorded for 13 consecutive years that

freedom around the world declined. Nineteen "full democracies", 57 "flawed democracies", 39 "hybrid regimes" and 52 "authoritarian regimes" exist according to the Democratic Index of 2017.

Homogeneity as a cause

The massive increment in immigration through the European refugee crisis beginning in 2015 undoubtedly decreased the homogeneity in many European countries. This decrease in homogeneity lead to fear, which in turn lead to a prodigious spark in votes for populist parties, which campaigned on decreasing immigration and by that attenuating future increases in homogeneity. Humans are generally in most cases afraid of what they do not know. In this case is the decrease in homogeneity caused merely through globalization and in Europe through the refugee crisis leads to unknown cultures and perspectives. The unknown in turn seemingly leads to instability. Many illiberal politicians promise stability through the promotion of illiberalism what in their perception protects from the unknown. Therefore electing these politicians seems like a reasonable decision.
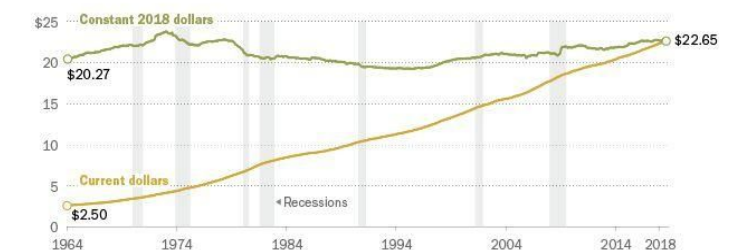
New media as a cause

The technological advancement that took place in the last years might also have contributed to the rise of illiberalism. The media used to possess the ability to filter many extreme views, but now, because of the internet, everybody can spread their views.

Stagnation of wealth as cause

The European refugee crisis, real income has stagnated over the last few years and even decades. Because of that, many people do not prosper as well as the general economic data might suggest. Because of that many workers are disappointed in the parties that were in power the last years and decades. Therefore, electing outsider parties, who promise to resolve their economic hardship makes sense for them. The disastrous illiberalism of the parties concerns people in or on the brink of poverty very little. This can again

Americans' paychecks are bigger than 40 years ago, but their purchasing power has hardly budged

Average hourly wages in the U.S., seasonally adjusted

Note: Data for wages of production and non-supervisory employees on private non-farm payrolls. "Constant 2018 dollars" describes wages adjusted for inflation. "Current dollars" describes wages reported in the value of the currency when received. "Purchasing power" refers to the amount of goods or services that can be bought per unit of currency.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

be compared to Europe in the 1930s. Back then, many people also encountered economic challenges because of the great depression. This led to desperation that in turn led them to elect radical politicians, which promised improvement through easy resolutions.

Even though we can not simply equate the 1930s in Europe to the world now, we can recognize some of the parallels. Elections generally indicate how well the democracy and the economy thrive. If the economy and the government function well, voters will reelect parties or candidates because of their satisfaction with their achievements. On the contrary, voters are also very likely vote for an opposition party in order to achieve some sort of change if the current parties in power did not improve their economic or social situation. Slow economic growth and the signorance of politicians to address the problems distributed among large portions of the population might also represent a cause of frustration for many people.

Effects of illiberal democracies

If injustice and oppression aren't bad enough, illiberal governments bear an enormous social cost. Dictator-led countries have higher rates of mental illness, lower level of health and life expectancy and, as Amartya Sen argued, higher susceptibility to famine. Their citizens are less educated and file fewer patents. Clearly, the suppression of free expression and creativity has harmful effects on innovation and economic growth. Citizens of free and open societies such as Germany, South Korea and Chile witness advances in business, science while illiberal nations do not. And consider that free nations do not go to war with each other. History has shown this to be the only ironclad law of political theory. Meanwhile, illiberal nations are always at conflict, often with a foreign power and always with their own people.

In conclusion, we can understand that the rise of illiberal democracies has devastating effects on both a national and global level. Moreover, since the international society apprehends the causes as to why these democracies continually rise it is essential that the problem is tackled specifically and immediately.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)

The United Nations has made many efforts in actively promoting civil society. In 2006, Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan launched the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF) to support an array of civil society organizations. Eighty-five percent of the funds are required to go to nongovernmental organizations rather than UN agencies or governments as implementers. Prior to UNDEF, a great deal of dialogue occurred in the UN about the importance of civil society to economic development and human rights, but the rhetoric was not supported with effective programing. The UNDEF is beginning to change that. To date, its four rounds of grants have wisely funded a broad range of democracy's building blocks, including women's empowerment, civic education, and anti-corruption measures. Although UNDEF remains underfunded, it is a step in the right direction. President Obama was right to note in his 2010 address to the UN General Assembly that "it's time for every Member State ... to increase the UN Democracy Fund."

The European Union

Populist parties have entered parliaments in nearly all European countries. Countries like Spain, Great Britain, France, and Germany are in favor of liberalism, while countries like Poland, Hungary, Austria and Italy may be opposed.

China

China has been classified as a "not free" nation by the Freedom House with an aggregate Freedom score of 14/100. There are no real chances for an opposition to have influence in politics in China. Also, civil resistance against the government is illegal. The Chinese Communist Party, which is the party in power, has increasingly regulated media, online speech, religious groups, and civil society associations to their benefit. Personal freedom as well as freedom of press is restricted. The government also undermines civil society and human rights movements as much as possible.

Hungary

While the aggregate freedom score has decreased significantly over the last years, the Freedom House classifies Hungary as a "free" country with an aggregate Freedom score of 72/100. The decrease in the freedom score can be ascribed the trend of the legislative party in power (Fidesz) to take power away from the other independent institutions and accordingly eliminate

checks and balances. Also, the government has shown a trend towards repressing groups and organizations whose views differ from their own. President Viktor Orban, moreover, is a public advocate of illiberal democracies and cites China, Turkey and Russia as successful illiberal countries.

Poland

While also undergoing a tremendous decrease in their freedom score in the last couple of years, the Freedom House still considers Poland as "free" with an aggregate freedom score of 85/100. Poland experienced great economic growth and a perspicuous increase in liberty after the end of the communist rule in 1989. The uneven distribution of the benefits achieved by the economic and social growth lead to a divide among the population, which in turn lead the national conservative and Eurosceptical PiS to win an overall majority in the presidential election in 2015. Since then, they have approved a reform making it more difficult for the constitutional court to make majority rulings as well as a new media law which allows the government to appoint the heads of state TV and radio, all leading to stagnation, and even reduction of already achieved democratic progress.

Russian Federation

With an aggregate freedom score of 20/100, the Freedom House identifies Russia as a "not free" country. The press is not free and political opponents regularly face imprisonment and other penalties. While holding manipulated elections, the party in power controls the media, the judiciary, the legislature and moreover poses a security force. Corruption represents a momentous problem.

Turkey

The Freedom House also identifies Turkey as a "not free" country with an aggregate freedom score of 32/100 and the non-existence of free press. Erdogan has fundamentally restricted the free press, has violated human rights--undermining minority rights, free expression, and associational rights. Turkey also has displayed decisive problems with corruption and the rule of law.

United States of America

The Freedom House considers the United States of America one of the or arguably even the oldest democracy in the world, as a "free" country with an aggregate freedom score of 86/100. The United States of America possess "a strong rule-of-law tradition, robust freedoms of expression and religious belief, and a wide array of other civil liberties." (Freedom House) Nevertheless, their society has displayed increasing polarization over the last years. The United States of America has repeatedly actively tried to promote freedom in the world, because according to the Democratic Peace Theory, this would lead to overall more freedom. Critics however argue that the US had other strategic reasons and that trying to achieve more freedom and peace in the world through war would not work and in addition contradict the goal of more peace. To give some examples: US-President Woodrow Wilson stated 1917 that the United States should enter World War I in order to "make the world safe for democracy". After World War II, the US took steps to successfully promote liberalism in Western Europe. Among other reasons, the United states also invaded Iraq in 2003 purportedly in order to spread democracy there.

Venezuela

Rated with an aggregate freedom score of 26/100, the Freedom House identifies Venezuela as a "not free" country. Venezuela is rich in oil, which establishes a great opportunity for economic prosperity. Hugo Chávez won the presidential election in 1998, changed the governing system in the next few years in order to have more power and subsequently governed in an extensively authoritarian. Democratic institutions and overall conditions have worsened dramatically as a result of the concentration of power and oppression of opposition. In addition, many civil liberties have been suppressed. Former Vice President Nicolas Maduro Moros took over after the death of Chávez in 2013. High inflation, corruption as well as horrifying crime rates resulted in enormous disaffection and instability. The judiciary replaced the legislative after the opposition gained legislative power through elections through the National Constituent Assembly which serves the interests of the executive.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- **Resolution (HR/CN/937):** adopted by human rights commission and aimed on promoting democracy.

- **Resolution (A/69/L.54):** adopted by human rights commission resolution aimed at promoting peace and democracy through the use of education for Democracy.

- **The Maastricht Treaty of 1992**: aims to promote democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

- **Articles 2 and 21 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Article 205 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU):** In 2009, the Council adopted conclusions on Democracy Support in EU External Relations and the related EU Agenda for Action, which outlined a new strategy for supporting democracy by means of a country-specific approach, greater coherence and the involvement of all stakeholders. Democracy and human rights were mainstreamed across all policy areas.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The prevention of human rights violations and other horrendous happenings that took place in World War Two as well as the adherence and enforcement of the human rights constitute for the reason of establishment and main goals of the United Nations. Therefore, the United Nations have to take action towards significantly decreasing illiberal democracies that undermine human rights and promoting democracy. More specifically, ethnic cleavages, stagnating standards of living and the new possible ways to inform through new media are the three most significant factors for the rise of illiberal politicians. Extremist parties usually gain support if the socio-economic situation of the population worsens. This makes sense considering that desperation increases immensely when people are in a difficult situation. The stagnating standard of living and stagnation or decrease in real wages certainly illustrates a factor in wanting to explain the rise of populism. Since the middle class prospers if the amount of investment increases, and since investment most likely occurs in a stable system with appealing incentives, countries have to provide incentives and stability in order to increase investment, which in turn will most likely strengthen the middle class and through that the trust in liberalism. People do not care about liberalism and human rights if they can barely survive. Hence, the economic situation has to improve in countries where democracy and/or liberalism is threatened.

Many countries also display difficulties in successfully integrating immigrants into their society, which epitomizes another factor that has encouraged the rise of illiberal parties. The United Nations or countries/regions which have problems successfully integrating immigrants could distribute financial aid for communities which take their immigrants in order to solve this problem. These could also use for investment. Non-governmental-organizations or governmental organizations could take measures to achieve stabilization.

In addition, the UN could take measures to support groups which champion liberalism. The UNDEF has already taken steps in that regard but needs more funding in order to achieve more. Nevertheless, trying to promote democracy in a country with a non-democratic government remains a paradox and therefore difficult task.

Lastly liberalism could also be achieved through direct intervention into a country, what might in many cases however not tenable. Another problem consists in the fact that democratic countries often support non-democratic countries for their own economic benefits. Supporting democracy in other countries would also bring significant problems with it, not promoting democracy on the other hand, would also bring enormous problems, because the United Nations

at all events remain obligated to help if human rights violations occur. Because of even these problems and the many countries who do practice a governmental system that cannot be identified as a democracy and the fear of countries that can only be identified as thin democracies of thick democracies to extend solutions, even solutions that promote democracy thin have a relevant chance of failing. The United Nations therefore might not be able to pass any resolution that promotes democracy or liberalism.

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