shortened version

THE PATH OF AUTOCRACY
Current Strategies for Democratic Erosion

LAUT
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**REELECTION OF AUTOCRATS**

Shortened version of The Path of Autocracy: Current Strategies for Democratic Erosion

**PRODUCED BY THE**

LAUT

Center for the Analysis of Liberty and Authoritarianism

We are an independent and non-partisan interdisciplinary research institution committed to creating and disseminating knowledge about the quality of the rule of law and democracy. Our goal is to monitor manifestations of authoritarianism and repression of liberties to inform the mobilization of civil society and the defense of rights.

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September 2022

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REEELECTION OF AUTOCRATS

In recent years, the world has faced an accelerated process of autocratization — a substantive decline in the quality of democracy and a deepening of authoritarian practices. International research organizations have pointed to worsening evaluations of civil liberties and respect for the rule of law in several countries, such as India, Hungary, Poland, and Turkey.

By shedding light on patterns in other countries, the report "The Path of Autocracy: Current Strategies for Democratic Erosion" presents a comparative framework to draw attention to processes currently underway in Brazil. The similarities with other examples occurring in the world, besides local specificities, alert to the potential risk of re-electing an autocratic government in the country. The present document summarizes the results of the research.

PART I
WHAT IS AN AUTOCRATIZATION PROCESS?
WHAT IS THE "THIRD WAVE OF AUTOCRATIZATION"?

The international research organizations V-Dem, Article 19, and World Justice Project state the following about the quality and autocratization of political regimes around the world:

V-DEM
GLOBAL QUALITY OF POLITICAL REGIMES:

→ By 2018, the autocratization of political regimes affected at least 2.5 billion people globally;
→ In 2020, for the first time since 2001, autocratic regimes quantitatively surpassed democratic administrations, reaching 92 countries and 54% of the world population;
→ By 2022, of the 179 countries assessed by V-Dem, 30 were classified as closed autocracies and 60 as electoral autocracies - the most common regime on the planet.

ARTICLE 19
GLOBAL QUALITY OF EXPRESSION AND INFORMATION ENVIRONMENTS:

→ In 2020, 51% of the world’s population - approximately 3.9 billion people - lived in environments classified as "in crisis." By 2021, that number jumped to 66%, affecting 4.9 billion people.

WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT
GLOBAL QUALITY OF RESPECT FOR THE RULE OF LAW:

→ In 2020, 45 of the 128 countries analyzed (35% of the total) were below the average level of respect for the rule of law. In 2021, this scenario expanded to 82 out of 139 countries evaluated (59% of the total).
WAVES OF DEMOCRATIZATION AND AUTOCRATIZATION

The current scenario of democratic crisis has been studied by several areas of knowledge, which try to explain the reasons, the means, and the effects of autocratization globally. Scholars understand that contemporary political history has been marked by periods of democratization and autocratization, also called "waves".

1830

1ST DEMOCRATIZATION WAVE

Voting rights in the US, France, UK, Canada, Australia, Argentina, etc.

1920

1ST AUTOCRATIZATION WAVE

Consolidation of fascist and Nazi regimes in Europe

1960

2ND AUTOCRATIZATION WAVE

Consolidation of military regimes in Latin America

1980

3RD DEMOCRATIZATION WAVE

Weakening and end of dictatorships in Europe, Latin America, and Asia; end of the USSR

2000

3RD AUTOCRATIZATION WAVE

Autocratization of democratic regimes around the world; Hungary, Poland, Turkey, and India are the leading examples

In this context, the new "wave" of autocratization would have, according to scholars, as main characteristics:

→ Lack of sharp ruptures:
While many historical experiences of autocratization occurred through coups and changes from democratic to autocratic rule, the current wave would be marked by more gradual and blurred ruptures.

→ Internal erosion of political and justice systems:
In recent examples of democratic decay, democratically elected autocrats have made internal changes to the political and justice systems to subvert the functioning of democratic institutions, strengthen the Executive Branch, reduce checks and balances mechanisms, and co-opt other State institutions, Branches, and agencies.

HOW IS BRAZIL RANKED AMONG THE AUTOCRATIZATION PROCESSES?

The research focuses on four examples to draw possible comparisons with the Brazilian case, given that the political regimes of Hungary, Poland, Turkey, and India have all recently declined in the V-Dem Institute’s assessment: ¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIBERAL DEMOCRACY</th>
<th>ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY</th>
<th>ELECTORAL AUTOCRACY</th>
<th>CLOSED AUTOCRACY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex. Australia, Finland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ex. Sudan, Libya, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TURKEY</td>
<td>Erdogan’s 3rd term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLAND</td>
<td>Duda’s 1st term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUNGARY</td>
<td>Orbán’s 3rd term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIA</td>
<td>Modi’s 1st term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRAZIL</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Free, fair, and multiparty elections; a high level of democratic institutional guarantees, such as freedom of expression and association and universal suffrage; mechanisms for controlling the Executive Branch by other Branches and institutions, such as legislative and judicial oversight; protection of individual liberties, and respect for the rule of law.

Free, fair, multiparty elections; high level of democratic institutional guarantees, such as freedom of expression and association and universal suffrage.

Multiparty elections for the head of the Executive Branch, but below democratic standards due to irregularities and limitations on party competition.

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¹ Democracy Facing Global Challenges indicates that in 2018, the country was on the verge of transitioning to an autocracy but did not do so until the following year.
CONTEMPORARY AUTOCRACIES: THE BRAZILIAN CASE

Brazil has been pointed out by international organizations as one of the main examples of a country undergoing a process of autocratization, especially after the election of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency. The impact of his administration has been reflected in declines in the country’s evaluation regarding the quality of the democratic regime (V-Dem), respect for civil and political liberties (Freedom House) and adherence to the rule of law (World Justice Project).

BRAZIL’S TOTAL SCORES IN DEMOCRACY REPORTS (2018-2021)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>V-DEM DEMOCRACY REPORT</th>
<th>FREEDOM HOUSE FREEDOM IN THE WORLD</th>
<th>WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SCORE IN 2018</td>
<td>0.56 / 1.00</td>
<td>75 / 100</td>
<td>0.54 / 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SCORE IN 2021</td>
<td>0.51 / 1.00</td>
<td>73 / 100</td>
<td>0.50 / 1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UNDERSTANDING BOLSONARO’S AUTHORITARIANISM

The perceptions highlighted by international organizations are also documented by LAUT, through specific events, on the Emergency Agenda platform. The tool serves as an archive of the actions and omissions of the federal government over the past three years that have undermined Brazilian democracy, pointing out which mechanisms were used to provoke this erosion. To this end, the Emergency Agenda translates the particularities of political authoritarianism and the reduction of democratic institutionality through a five categories classification system called the Authoritarian Inventory. Between January 2019 and December 2021, for instance, it mapped 1,692 acts.

An explanation of the meaning of the typology categories, which also aims to clarify more precisely how Bolsonarist authoritarianism operates, can be found in the full report (“The Path of Autocracy: Current Strategies for Democratic Erosion” – in Portuguese) and our methodology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHORITY INVENTORY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES BY CATEGORY</th>
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</thead>
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<td>DECREASE OF CONTROL AND/OR CENTRALIZATION OF POWER</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIOLATION OF INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSTRUCTION OF ENEMIES</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTACK ON PLURALISM AND MINORITIES</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGITIMATION OF VIOLENCE AND VIGILANTISM</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT IS THE STATUS OF AUTOCRATIZATION IN BRAZIL?

Attempts to impose political-ideological alignment to regime ideology in the content taught and students’ behavior are primarily designed to weaken the political opposition and conform their actions to the ruling interests and ideologies. This refers to the autonomy in the development of pedagogical curricula, research lines, and subject matters; and financial autonomy, which relates to the budgetary management by the institutions of the transfer of public funds, impacting the infrastructure of universities, payment of salaries, and the granting of student support. In the compared countries, illegitimate interferences have been observed in each of them, constituting three different tactics of interference in university autonomy: administrative autonomy, didactic-scientific autonomy, and financial autonomy.

INTERFERENCES IN UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY

In an attempt to better understand the similarities of authoritarian actions among some of the countries pointed out as the leading examples of the current wave of autocratization, three major areas of political life — education, civic space, and public security — were observed, as well as similar strategies and tactics employed by five ruling autocrats (Brazil, Hungary, Poland, Turkey, and India) to weaken their respective democratic environments.

EDUCATION

Education is a central public policy for deepening democratic societies, whether for their members’ personal and professional training, readiness for the labor market, or citizenship development. In authoritarian regimes or those with authoritarian trends, it is historically common for governments to try to control educational institutions and educational actors — teachers, students, and researchers — to weaken the political opposition and conform their actions to the ruling interests and ideologies.

INTERFERENCES IN UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY

Attempts to impose political-ideological alignment to regime ideology in the content taught and students’ behavior are primarily implemented through changes in primary education systems. This strategy has occurred through three main tactics: combating leftist indoctrination, delegitimizing gender issues, and extolling nationalism.

HISTORICAL-SCIENTIFIC REVISIONISM

In an attempt to change the approach to historical facts and narratives in school curricula and textbooks, within the scope of primary education, by extolling past governments of authoritarian tendencies with political affinity with current regimes. This strategy has been implemented through two main tactics: changes in curricula and textbooks and alteration of narratives and historical facts.

ATTACKS ON INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES OF ACADEMICS

Within the scope of the individual dimension of academic freedom, that is, of the guarantees of individual rights and liberties to educational actors - teachers, students, and researchers — to carry out teaching, research, and expression activities, state repression has surfaced through two main tactics: censorship of freedom of expression and delegitimization of the scientific community.

SECOND PART

THE PATH TO AUTOCRACY

A provisional presidential decree is issued during the coronavirus state of emergency to appoint temporary deans without consulting the academic community. The provisional measure is then revoked.

An attempt to issue a provisional presidential decree to empty university councils’ influence in choosing federal university deans, which does not become law and loses effectiveness.

An attempt to change the narrative of a military coup to a “political movement with popular support”.

APPENDIX

A letter to state and municipal education offices recommending an “indoctrination-free” school environment.

Request for a bill banning gender issues in education.

Establishment of the National Program of Civic-Military Schools, with a curriculum focused on civics and patriotism.

Interferences in university autonomy

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The slogan “We must protect children” infers combating leftist ideologies in education.

Polish-American professor at Princeton University is threatened by the government to lose an award conferred in 1996 because of his work on Poland’s role in the Nazi holocaust.

During the state of emergency, a decree removes university participation from the process of choosing deans and transfers it to the Turkish Council of Higher Education (CTES). The decision is upheld after the end of the pandemic state of emergency.

Changes in textbooks about immigrants depict Ukrainians as “good examples” of workers; other ethnic and religious groups are portrayed as responsible for social conflicts.

School curriculum altered in areas such as History and Literature, excluding war defeats of the country from the historical books.

Narratives of fascist Hungarian governments are changed in textbooks, being portrayed as examples of nationalism and patriotism.

Approval of educational reform with a curriculum guided by a nationalistic approach and exaltation of former Hungarian governments with fascist identity.

Regulation requires public universities to obtain government permission to hold international events on “national security” and determines an “appropriate level” of assessment to identify “the nature and sensitivity” of shared content.

Academics are investigated for alleged violation of anti-terrorism and defense of national security legislation due to critical speeches against the government and political institutions.

Approval of a law transferring the management of public universities to public foundations run by government appointees, generating fear of increased control and political-ideological alignment between the government and institutions, as well as possible budget cuts due to mismanagement.

Repeal of the possibility for universities to issue internationally accepted degrees, forcing them to move to other countries – the Central European University (CEU) had to transfer its activities to Vienna.

Appointment of 5 deans for public universities, including a political ally for the Boğaziçi University, disregarding consolidated selection practices and legal educational procedures.

Opening of a criminal investigation against a professor from V.M. Salgaocar College of Law due to comments on social media about conservative religious practices in the country.

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Therefore, it is crucial for developing democracy - it is a thermometer of the regime's openness and permeability. According to monitoring worsened in recent years. In Hungary, the assessment of civic space worsened considerably over Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's second term, with a rapidly declining trend since June 2022. In Poland, it shrank during President Andrzej Duda's second term. A few months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reelection, India's situation went from "obstruction" to "repression." In Brazil, there is also a reason for concern: the monitoring of the Igarapé Institute (2020) points out that there are currently "clear signs of an accelerated rollback of the protection and rights of civil society groups."

CIVIC SPACE
Civic space is the environment constructed and used by citizens and civil society organizations (NGOs) for demonstrations and claims. It can be restricted or selectively closed to some actors and expanded to others - who did not have much resonance in the past and have started to acquire protagonism - to control or repress criticism.

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STRATEGY 1 – INTERVENTION AND REGULATORY CONTROL
It involves enacting laws and regulatory measures that restrict the activities of organizations and create obstacles to their operation, as well as removing spaces for political participation in interactions with the State. As a result, the capacity for mobilizing some civil society sectors is weakened. In contrast, organizations aligned with government agendas can gain space in the sphere of political decisions. Two tactics can be employed in this area: state support and favorable of agendas and financial and bureaucratic obstacles.

STRATEGY 2 – SURVEILLANCE AND ATTACKS ON CIVIL LIBERTIES
It involves monitoring civil society organizations and restricting their ability to assemble and associate in the name of various abstract imperatives, such as national security, counter-terrorism, and transparency. As a result, NGOs and citizens become afraid to act and censor themselves (chilling effect). In this area, four tactics can be employed: rhetoric of vilification and conspiracy, use of spy software, restriction of rights to protest and assembly, criminalization and extralegal violence.

AUTOCRATIC PATH – CIVIC SPACE: BRAZIL

2019 •
A provisional presidential decree (not converted into law) eliminates automatic discounting of workers’ union dues, reducing sources of income for unions.

2020 •
High frequency of acts of police violence against protestors and slaughterhouses, congratulated by the president and governors.

2021 •
Ministry of Justice holds procurement for the contracting of spy software that includes the Pegasus system, later removed from the process.

2022 •
Authorization of the assignment of at least R$ 6.2 million to off-the-shelf NGOs of allies, linked to the soccer agenda.

CAPTION - STRATEGIES
- Intervention and regulatory control
- Surveillance and attacks on civil liberties

AUTOCRATIC PATH – CIVIC SPACE

2011 •
Hungary – 1st TERM
Approval of legislation on freedom of association restricting the number of "public utility" NGOs and changing the funding mechanisms, which became centralized in a new institution (RCE), with funds distributed through bidding.

2013 •
Hungary – 1st TERM
Conservative coalition is appointed to represent women’s NGOs in the European Institute for Gender Equality, after initiatives to destroy policies of the same agenda.

2015 •
Hungary – 1st TERM
Government party spokesperson alleges that NGOs serve foreign interests, notably those of philanthropist George Soros.

2016 •
India – 1st TERM
From this year onwards, amendments to the FCRA are approved, used as a key instrument to restrict freedom of association.

2018 •
India – 1st TERM
Regulation of NGOs, such as Lawyer’s Collective and Human Rights, are suspended by the Foreign Contribution Act (FCRA).

2019 •
Poland – 1st TERM
President of the conservative organization Ordo Iuris, Aleksander Stępkowski, becomes undersecretary in the Foreing Affairs Ministry and is appointed to the Constitutional Court (2019).

2020 •
Poland – 1st TERM
Change in the organization of bids for NGOs reduces the time interval for submitting proposals, cancels bids for lack of allied participants, and bans NGOs with little or no experience.

2021 •
Poland – 1st TERM
Amendments are made to the right of assembly law, introducing the priority of "sympathetic" assemblies and limiting the right to counter-protest, declared constitutional by the Constitutional Court.

2022 •
Poland – 1st TERM
Because of amendments to the protest law, the Free Citizens of Poland Foundation engages in civil disobedience. It has no status suspended by the Ministry of Interior and a new compulsory administration in replacement.
Government detains protester Khurram Parvez for 76 days under the Public Safety Act.

NGO Lex approved, requiring transparency of organizations' funding sources — equated to Russia's 2012 law, which classifies NGOs as "foreign agents."

Law creates the National Freedom Institute, to centralize the distribution of funds to NGOs.

Police require documentation from NGOs focused on reproductive rights after a wave of pro-abortion protests.

"Anti-Soros Package" is approved; one of its laws implements a tax for immigration-supporting organizations - such as Open Society, run by philanthropist George Soros.

Police monitor the identity of protesters and use facial recognition as a tactic for control and banning of protests.

Creation of new jurisdiction to judge protest banning is approved.

An amendment to the Constitution to restrict the right to assemble on the grounds of private life and family is approved.

Pejorative terms like "antinational," "urban naxal," "andolanjivi" come into use to discredit critics of the government.

Bill proposes to give more transparency to NGO funding sources.

Amendment is made to the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) to broaden the concept of terrorism. The following year, it is used against 5,000 protesters opposing an act that makes religion the basis for citizenship (Citizenship Amendment Act - CAA).

Activist Elżbieta Podlesna is arrested for displaying a poster with a Madonna, a Christian symbol, wearing an LGBTQIA+ flag.

Bill similar to Hungary’s Lex NGO (2017) is proposed.

Amendments to the FCRA include banning transfers between domestic NGOs of international funds and reducing the cap on spending on administrative expenses by foreign funding from 50% to 20%.

Amnesty International leaves India after government operations.

Bill that grants the State Auditor’s Office greater control over NGOs accounting is approved, which now has to prepare annual reports on the financial status of NGOs and how they “influence the public.”

Press reveals, and officials confirm, that the government spied on at least 300 critics via Pegasus.

Oxfam, among others, loses registration under the FCRA.

At least three government opponents are investigated via Pegasus, a fact confirmed by authorities.

NGOs that help migrants undergo police searches and smear campaigns for alleged illegal activities.
PUBLIC SECURITY

Public security policies are especially concerned with the State’s use of force and repression. They can be used for undue control and restriction of citizens’ rights even in democratic regimes. Still, they become even more severe in autocracies, and can result in the curtailment of freedom of expression, restrictions on citizenship and political participation of certain social groups, and further criminalization and imprisonment.

STRATEGY 1 - SURVEILLANCE AND PRIVACY VIOLATIONS

It presupposes the use of mechanisms that extend government surveillance, whether online or not. Through mass surveillance technologies or individual monitoring (illegal or legitimized by police investigations), citizens’ privacy rights are violated. The strategy has been put into practice through four main tactics: use of spy softwares, increased restrictions on Internet use, increased collection of citizens’ personal data, and unified access and expansion of criminalization and police investigation competencies.

STRATEGY 2 - PENAL POPULISM AND MORAL PANIC

Punishment populism is characterized by the rejection of empirical evidence while often presenting proposals that are more punitive, purportedly representing the interests of the people. Moreover, it seeks to mobilize large audiences, usually for electoral purposes. Moral panic is stereotyping certain social groups portrayed as a risk to society and its values. In the countries observed, it has occurred through four main tactics: speeches and propaganda of constructing an internal enemy, increased policing and militarization, multiplication of forms of criminalization and stiffening of penalties.

AUTOCRATIC PATH – PUBLIC SECURITY: BRAZIL

2018 •

Bolsonaro says he will “shoot PT voters” during the campaign — and the continuing of political opponents as internal enemies, especially those on the left, continues throughout his term.

2019 •

The Citizen’s Base Register is implemented, unifying specific personal data and enabling sharing between federal agencies, without control mechanisms limiting the use of collected data.

2020 •

Government lists the “right to life from conception” as a guideline of the Federal Development Strategy for Brazil, in opposition to the right to abortion.

2021 •

A provisional presidential decree amends the Internet Framework (Marco Civil da Internet). However, criticized for expanding the Executive branch’s interference in platforms and interfering with their autonomy, it is not turned into law. Later, Bolsonaro proposed a bill reproducing the exact content of the decree.

2022 •

Bolsonaro proposes to change the Anti-Terrorism Law with changes that make it easier for social movements to be framed as terrorists.

AUTOCRATIC PATH – PUBLIC SECURITY

2006 •

TURKEY - 1st TERM

Anti-terrorism law — with elastic definitions of “terrorists” — allows data collection on individuals and organizations via online monitoring cameras and access to personal electronic devices to investigate journalists, academics, and members of social movements.

2007 •

TURKEY - 1st TERM

“Internet Law” forces internet providers to monitor content posted online.

2010 •

HUNGARY - 1st TERM

Since the campaign, Orbán has mobilized nationalist rhetoric against foreigners and the threat of people within the EU.

2011 •

HUNGARY - 1st TERM

The government is accused of using FinFisher software to access digital records on infected computers and monitor opponents.

2013 •

INDIA - 2nd TERM

Andhika is dismissed from his position as National Personal Data Authority before the end of his term, after questioning national consultations containing specific political questions (on economic measures, for example), without being anonymized, contrary to European Union (EU) predictions on privacy. The consultation is carried out to this day in the country.

2018 •

Bolsonaro authorizes the use of the National Force in operations linked to ICMBio, to expand the competence of the security forces on environmental issues.

2019 •

The government frequently uses National Security Law devices — broad and poorly defined — to investigate critics and opponents.

2020 •

Government lists the “right to life from conception” as a guideline of the Federal Development Strategy for Brazil, in opposition to the right to abortion.

2021 •

A provisional presidential decree amends the Internet Framework (Marco Civil da Internet). However, criticized for expanding the Executive branch’s interference in platforms and interfering with their autonomy, it is not turned into law. Later, Bolsonaro proposed a bill reproducing the exact content of the decree.

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CAPTION - STRATEGIES

Surveillance and Privacy Violations

Penal Populism and Moral Panic

THE PATH TO AUTOCRACY

THE PATH TO AUTOCRACY
National Security Law adds to the previous one on the country’s intelligence services, helping to compose the government’s “mosaic of authoritarian surveillance” for protests and opponents.

A facial recognition system is implemented for police use, which, along with information already collected from other government databases, begins to cross-reference such data with collected biometrics.

Internet regulation law requires platforms and networks to delete content the government identifies as illegal because it endangers the interests of the country’s sovereignty, public order, decency, or morality. Also, a law is presented regulating the internet, requiring companies to provide user information when requested by public authorities — in effect since 2021.

Orbán claims in a newspaper that Muslim migrants are a danger to the “Hungarian way of life” because they threaten “Christian values.”

Unified public identification program based on Aadhar biometric data collection is initiated without a defined legal framework to control data storage and use. The initiative enables increased persecution against political opponents and members of social movements.

Additions to the country’s anti-terrorism legislation (UAPA) increase the police’s power to conduct investigations without respecting citizens’ privacy and allow more individuals and civil society organizations to be criminalized as “terrorists.”

A wall is built on the border with Serbia and Croatia, and there is an increase in police and investment in security technologies in the region.

The government uses the Pegasus software to collect data from infected cell phone apps to spy on political opponents and journalists.

Since 2016, the Pegasus software has been used to spy on journalists and government opponents, such as a Central European University (CEU) PhD student arrested at a protest and accused of violence against police officers.
CONCLUSIONS

→ International evidence points to the accelerating degradation of democracy with the reelection of autocrats. This was the case with Narendra Modi in India, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Recep Erdogan in Turkey, and Andrzej Duda in Poland. In these countries, the reelection coincided with a worsening of the authoritarian escalation, according to the scale of the V-Dem Institute, which classifies regimes in four degrees: liberal democracy, electoral democracy, electoral autocracy, and closed autocracy.

→ In recent years, international organizations have also pointed out Brazil as one of the main examples of the autocratization process, especially after Jair Bolsonaro’s election as president. The impact of his administration has been reflected in declines in the country’s assessment of the quality of democratic regime (V-Dem), respect for civil and political liberties (Freedom House), and commitment to the rule of law (World Justice Project).

→ Between 2019 and 2021, LAUT mapping captured 1,692 authoritarian acts at both state and federal levels expressing themselves in enemy construction from government critics, reduction of control and/or centralization, attack on pluralism and minorities, and legitimization of violence and vigilantism.

→ The longer-lived strategies of autocrats in Turkey, Poland, India, and Hungary already allow us to see how their anti-democratic effects accumulate and strengthen over time. They make it possible to look with some historical distance and make the chain of strategies and tactics prior to a more visible autocratization. Even so, in the three areas analyzed, there are events in Brazil showing strategies and tactics similar to those of autocrats of other nationalities.

→ To foresee Brazilian scenarios, it is necessary to consider:
  • There is a double pattern of action of autocrats in the analyzed countries. In a complementary way to using the state apparatus to block and repress rights and liberties, there is also the encouragement and promotion of ideological agendas.
  • Some types of tactics appear as a pattern in all the analyzed areas. These are the restrictions on rights through regulatory means, the use of surveillance tools, the rhetoric of enemy construction, and the expansion of the scope of criminalization of conduct.
  • All the tactics employed use formal (e.g., legislative change, police power, budgetary control) and informal tools (nationalistic discourse, incitement of fear and violence, delegitimization, and vilification).
  • There is no ready recipe for stopping or reversing the process of autocratization. Based on the reported experiences, what is known is that the autocrat’s reelection endangers the maintenance of democratic competition, the survival of democracy, and individual and collective freedoms.