



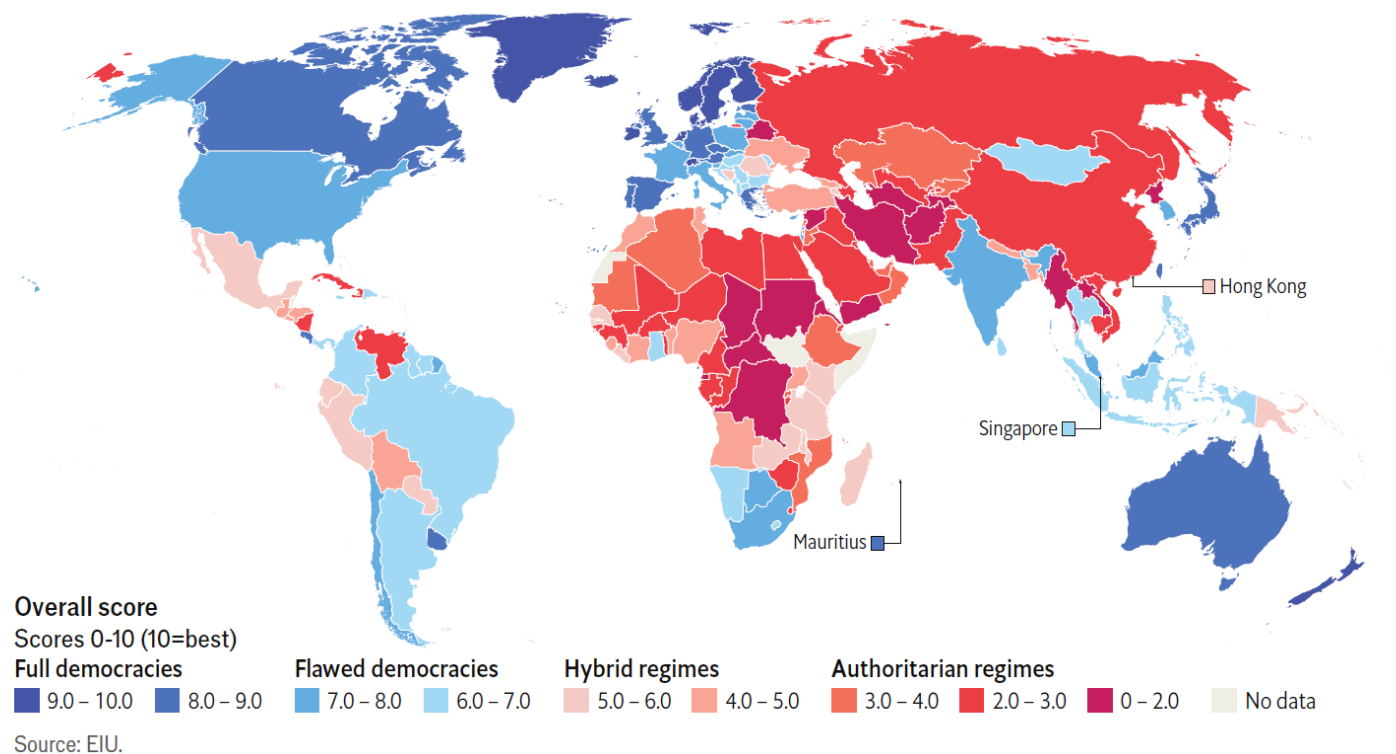
THE ROLE OF EXTREMISM IN UNDERMINING DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AND WEAKENING SOCIAL COHESION IN THE REGION: THE CASES OF ROMANIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Democracy under pressure in 2024

- Elections in 70+ countries, representing 50%+ of global population.
- Widespread disinformation, propaganda and loss of trust in institutions.
- Extremist forces gained ground – national, EU, and local elections.
- Drivers of radicalization: economic insecurity, social media as a radicalization tool, distrust in traditional political institutions.
- Focus case studies: Romania & Moldova – vulnerabilities exploited by extremism.

Democracy Index 2024, global map by regime type





Romania - Rising extremism and democratic erosion

- Extremist ideologies have persisted in Romania since the 1990s (PRM, PPDD, AUR).
- In 2024, pro-Russian candidate Călin Georgescu unexpectedly won 1st round of presidential elections, driven by a stealth TikTok campaign targeting youth and anti-system voters.
- The Constitutional Court annulled elections, citing foreign interference and electoral irregularities – an exceptional but controversial decision.
- Lack of transparency deepened institutional distrust and societal polarization.
- Romanian society remains vulnerable to revisionist ideologies. 41% of young people aged 18 to 34 would opt for an authoritarian regime.
- The upcoming 2025 presidential elections will be another key test for democratic resilience and institutional trust.

Moldova – 2024 elections and Russian interference

- Maia Sandu was re-elected in 2024, and the EU referendum narrowly passed with 50.38% support – a sign that **the Republic of Moldova has managed to safeguard its pro-European trajectory despite mounting pressures.**
- Russian interference included **fake news, bribery, intimidation & social media manipulation.** Pro-Russian actors aimed to discredit the EU path by amplifying fear-based narratives and exploiting public anxieties.
- **Key vulnerabilities** persist – low trust in institutions, rural disengagement, and a fragmented media landscape.
- **Public confidence is fragile** – 70% believe the country is headed in the wrong direction.
- **The 2025 parliamentary elections will be a decisive moment** for Moldova’s democratic trajectory.
- **Priorities** include strengthening institutions, depoliticizing the EU integration narrative, and tackling both corruption and disinformation.



**Why extremism is
not a solution –
and what lessons
we must learn for
the future**

1. Strengthening democratic institutions

2. Rebuilding trust through citizen
Engagement

3. Investing in education for democratic
resilience

4. Combatting disinformation and
propaganda through public policy

Extremism can be defeated—not through fear, but through education, engagement, and institutional strength.

Thank you!

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