



## **FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2011: THE AUTHORITARIAN CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY**

by Arch Puddington

As the year 2010 drew to a close, a series of disturbing events brought into sharp relief the challenges confronting the partisans of global freedom. In the most notorious case, the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party created an unprecedented international confrontation over the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to dissident intellectual Liu Xiaobo. Having failed to intimidate the Nobel committee into rejecting Liu, the authorities in Beijing threatened economic retaliation against Norway, hinted at reprisals against other governments that sent representatives to the award ceremony, and cast a dragnet for Liu's relatives and fellow dissidents, dozens of whom were arrested or confined to their homes by police.

Meanwhile, parliamentary elections in Egypt resulted in a 95 percent vote for longtime president Hosni Mubarak's National Democratic Party. Elections in Belarus had a similarly implausible outcome, as President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, who has held power for 16 years, won a new term with an astonishing 80 percent of the vote. When protesters filled the streets of Minsk to object to polling practices that were strongly criticized by outside monitors, Lukashenka ordered a massive police crackdown, sneering that "there will be no more mindless democracy in this country."

In Russia, an especially discouraging year was punctuated by the conviction and sentencing of regime critic and former oil magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky on his second round of charges, which will force him to remain behind bars despite legal proceedings that were widely dismissed as fraudulent. In Venezuela, parliamentary supporters of President Hugo Chávez pushed through legislation that allowed him to rule by decree on a broad range of topics, a bill that will further constrain non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and a

measure that extends media restrictions to the internet. Finally, in Iran, hundreds of political activists arrested in the wake of the stolen 2009 elections were placed on trial, and prosecutors declared their intention to take aim at the principal leaders of the opposition.

To be sure, rigged elections, persecution of dissidents, and rule by executive fiat are not novel developments in these countries. But the violations were carried out with a striking degree of aggressiveness, self-assurance, and disregard for outside opinion. No government—not even the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany—has ever treated the Nobel Peace Prize with anything like the disdain exhibited by Beijing. Egypt, a country favored by the United States, responded to gentle encouragement toward democratic change by orchestrating election results comparable to those in such obvious dictatorships as Syria and Tunisia. Belarus, recently courted by the European Union, blithely ignored its own promises to hold clean elections. In Russia, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin publicly declared that Khodorkovsky belonged in jail even as the court was nearing a verdict. Venezuela's Chávez seized his decree powers immediately before the inauguration of a new parliament with substantial opposition representation, effectively sidestepping the results of the recent elections. And Iran pushed controversial cases through its deeply flawed judicial system despite the misgivings of even its allies in parts of the developing world.

The increasing truculence of the world's most powerful authoritarian regimes has coincided with a growing inability or unwillingness on the part of the world's democracies to meet the authoritarian challenge, with important consequences for the state of global freedom. According to *Freedom in the World 2011*, the latest edition of Freedom House's annual survey

of global political rights and civil liberties, conditions worsened for the fifth consecutive year in 2010. While the decline for the year was less extensive than in some years past, the multiyear spate of backsliding is the longest of its kind since *Freedom in the World* was first published in 1972, and threatens gains dating to the post-Cold War era in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the former Soviet bloc.

The number of countries exhibiting declines for the past year, 25, was substantially higher than the number showing gains, 11. The most notable changes occurred in Mexico and Ukraine, both of which declined from Free to Partly Free, and Ethiopia, which dropped from Partly Free to Not Free. Among other countries showing declines were Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Kuwait, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka. There were some countries with important gains, such as Colombia, Guinea, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Tanzania.

The number of countries designated as Free dropped from 89 to 87, but more disturbing was the further decline in the number of electoral democracies, from 116 to 115, putting the figure well below its 2005 level of 123. The electoral democracy roster has not been so short since 1995.

Another source of concern was the continued poor performance of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. The region, which had been the focus of policies to encourage democratic reforms under former U.S. president George W. Bush's Freedom Agenda, deepened its multiyear decline from an already-low democratic baseline.

For the first time in a number of years, the former Soviet Union saw modest gains, with improvement noted in Moldova, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, the region's democracy indicators continued to rank near the global bottom, only slightly above those for the Middle East.

**Among other trends:**

- **Violence and Organized Crime as Enemies of Democracy:** Mexico's decline from Free to Partly Free was a result of the uncontrolled wave of organized criminal activity that has afflicted several states. The problem, of course, is regionwide; at year's end, Guatemala declared a state of siege in a part of the country where criminal violence has grown unchecked, and there is strong evidence that similar problems could be migrating from the Americas to Africa.
- **Freedom Gap Persists in Muslim-Majority Countries:** Despite a few noteworthy gains, primarily Indonesia's embrace of democracy and civil rights, Muslim-majority countries have failed to make significant progress over the past decade. Only two are ranked as Free, with 19 Partly Free and 26 Not Free. While practically no improvements were registered in the Middle East and North Africa, some gains were recorded in Muslim-majority countries outside the region.
- **Economic Crisis Challenges Central Europe's Progress:** Among the countries most severely affected by the global economic downturn are a number of formerly communist states in Central Europe and the Baltic region. While the consolidation of democratic institutions and the influence of the European Union have prevented major regression, some of these societies are already showing evidence of backsliding, most notably Latvia and Hungary.
- **China's Latest Pretext for Repression:** In 2008, Beijing cited the need for security during the Olympic Games as the reason for its crackdown on dissident intellectuals, journalists, and others. In 2009, the rationale for repression was the need for order surrounding the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Communist Party's seizure of power. In 2010, the authorities' mobilization was presented as a response to

the supposed hostility behind the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo.

- **Immigration Woes:** France's civil liberties score slipped due to the country's inability to cope with immigrants from the Middle East and Africa, as well as Roma from Eastern Europe. But the failure to deal humanely with mass immigration was a common theme that affected Europe, the United States, and other societies ranging from Argentina to South Africa and the monarchies of the Persian Gulf.

### Results for 2010

The number of countries designated by *Freedom in the World* as Free in 2010 stood at 87, representing 45 percent of the world's 194 polities and 2,951,950,000 people—43 percent of the global population. The number of Free countries declined by two from the previous year's survey.

The number of countries qualifying as Partly Free stood at 60, or 31 percent of all countries assessed by the survey, and they were home to 1,487,000,000 people, or 22 percent of the world's total. The number of Partly Free countries increased by two from the previous year.

A total of 47 countries were deemed Not Free, representing 24 percent of the world's polities. The number of people living under Not Free conditions stood at 2,434,250,000, or 35 percent of the global population, though it is important to note that more than half of this number lives in just one country: China. The number of Not Free countries remained unchanged from 2009.

The number of electoral democracies dropped by one, and stands at 115. Three countries achieved electoral democracy status due to elections that were widely regarded as improvements over previous polls: the Philippines, Tanzania, and Tonga. Four countries were dropped from the electoral democracy roster: Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, and Sri Lanka.

Two countries moved from Not Free to Partly Free: Guinea and Kyrgyzstan. In both cases, authoritarian regimes gave way to civilian rule determined through competitive elections. Two countries, Mexico and Ukraine, dropped from Free to Partly Free, and two countries, Ethiopia and Djibouti, declined from Partly Free to Not Free. One territory, Nagorno-Karabakh, dropped from Partly Free to Not Free.

### FREE, PARTLY FREE, NOT FREE

*Freedom in the World* applies one of three broad category designations to each of the countries and territories included in the index: **Free, Partly Free, and Not Free.**

A **Free** country is one where there is open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life, and independent media.

A **Partly Free** country is one in which there is limited respect for political rights and civil liberties. Partly Free states frequently suffer from an environment of corruption, weak rule of law, ethnic and religious strife, and a political landscape in which a single party enjoys dominance despite a certain degree of pluralism.

A **Not Free** country is one where basic political rights are absent, and basic civil liberties are widely and systematically denied.

For more on how these designations are determined, see the Methodology section on page 30.

### Signs of Decline

Since they were first issued in 1972, the findings of *Freedom in the World* have conveyed a story of broad advances for freedom that enriched every part of the world save the Middle East and North Africa. Thus the share of countries

designated as Free increased from 31 percent in 1980 to 45 percent in 2000, and the proportion of countries designated as Not Free declined from 37 percent in 1980 to 25 percent in 2000. Throughout this period, honest elections proliferated as freedom of expression, freedom of belief, and pluralistic civil societies flourished in many former dictatorships, even in countries with little history of democratic institutions. There were certainly some unresolved problems. In a number of new democracies, corrupt practices remained rampant, gnawing away at the public's faith in multiparty politics and market economies. And adherence to the rule of law was often poor, giving rise to blights ranging from politicized judiciaries to uncontrolled street crime and drug-related violence.

Freedom's forward march peaked around the beginning of the last decade. The percentages of countries designated as Free, Partly Free, and Not Free are nearly the same for the year 2010 as they were for the year 2000. Behind that overall appearance of stasis, however, the *Freedom in the World* data show two distinct periods of change.

In the five-year stretch from 2002 through 2006, there were far more gains for freedom than declines. For example, a total of 77 countries (40 percent) registered improvements in their political rights scores, as opposed to 59 (30 percent) that showed declines. Similarly, there were 109 countries (56 percent) with gains in the civil liberties categories, as opposed to just 62 (32 percent) with declines. This trajectory is almost reversed during the next five-year period, from 2006 through 2010. On the checklist of political rights indicators, there have been just 47 countries (24 percent) with gains as opposed to 70 (36 percent) with declines. The record for civil liberties categories is even more worrying. Over the same period, improvements were recorded for 36 countries (19 percent), and declines for 77 (40 percent).

While all *Freedom in the World* indicators have shown some degree of deterioration in the past five years, the trend has not affected all democratic institutions equally. Elections and

the core components of political pluralism, including party competition and participation by minority groups, have suffered the least. In Asia, electoral institutions have actually improved over the past five years.

### WORST OF THE WORST

Of the 47 countries designated as Not Free, nine have been given the survey's lowest possible rating of 7 for both political rights and civil liberties. These worst-rated countries represent a narrow range of systems and cultures. One—North Korea—is a one-party, Marxist-Leninist regime. Two—Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan—are Central Asian countries ruled by dictators with roots in the Soviet period. Libya is an Arab country under the sway of a secular dictatorship, while Sudan is ruled by a leadership that has elements of both radical Islamism and a traditional military junta. The remaining worst-rated states are Burma, a tightly controlled military dictatorship; Equatorial Guinea, a highly corrupt regime with one of the worst human rights records in Africa; Eritrea, an increasingly repressive police state; and Somalia, a failed state. The one worst-rated territory in the survey, Tibet, is under Chinese jurisdiction.

An additional 10 countries and territories received scores that were slightly above those of the worst-ranked countries, with ratings of 6,7 or 7,6 for political rights and civil liberties: Belarus, Chad, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Laos, Saudi Arabia, South Ossetia, Syria, and Western Sahara.

The indicators that have suffered the most significant setbacks include a broad category called functioning of government. This measures effective, honest, and transparent governance, and includes the corruption indicators on which many countries fare poorly. Another area of special concern is freedom of expression, a category that includes freedom of the press, freedom of belief, and academic freedom. The

rule of law category has also suffered considerable decline, reflecting a global erosion of judicial independence, unequal application of the law, arbitrary detention, and various other human rights violations by both state and nonstate forces.

These findings suggest that while elections remain critical, an effective strategy for the advancement of freedom should pay special attention to freedom of the press (especially freedom for bloggers and new media), building the foundations of a genuine rule-of-law society, effective crime-fighting tactics that protect civil liberties, and measures to increase government transparency and curtail corruption.

## **ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL TRENDS**

### **Middle East and North Africa: Election Rigging, Repression, and Violence**

In 2005, Egypt conducted what many assessed as the most open parliamentary elections in the country's modern history. While the balloting was far from free and competitive—the number of opposition candidates was limited, some voters in opposition strongholds were kept from the polls, opposition leaders were persecuted—the result was a major breakthrough for the forces arrayed against the entrenched ruling group around President Hosni Mubarak. Furthermore, developments in Egypt were hailed as a sign of broad change coming to the Middle East's long-stagnant political environment. Progress was seen in several other societies, including the Persian Gulf monarchies.

However, instead of additional gains, the period since those promising elections has brought steady decline for the region, including further backsliding in 2010. In Egypt, the rationed pluralism that marked the 2005 vote gave way to the sort of near-unanimous results found in communist regimes or ossified dictatorships like Syria and Tunisia. The 2010 balloting was accompanied by credible allegations of fraud, widespread repression, and severe restrictions on opposition candidates. The deterioration extended to the media environment. After several years of modest openings for the press,

the past year featured the closure of publications as well as both arrests and physical attacks aimed at independent journalists and bloggers.

The crackdown triggered by Iran's stolen June 2009 elections extended into 2010, with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his supporters in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps moving to consolidate control over a growing list of Iranian institutions. Security forces continued to arrest and imprison members of the opposition and civil society activists, and launched a new round of persecution against the Baha'i religious minority.

There were also negative developments in the Gulf states. Bahrain's scores declined due to a campaign of repression directed at the country's Shiite Muslims, who form a majority of the population. Meanwhile, Kuwait suffered a decline in its civil liberties rating due to restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

Threatened or actual violence remained an important factor in Middle Eastern politics. Attacks by Islamist extremists and sectarian militias escalated somewhat in Iraq as the national leadership struggled for nine months to form a government after parliamentary elections. Yemen was also afflicted by violent uprisings, fomented both by Islamist militants and by regional factions opposed to the deeply flawed central government. While Lebanon experienced a year of relative political peace, the Hezbollah movement threatened a violent response should the United Nations tribunal investigating the 2005 murder of former prime minister Rafik Hariri indict any of its members.

Israel remains the only country in the region to rank as Free and qualify as an electoral democracy. While there was relatively little violence between Israel and the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza during the year, there were a series of conflicts over security, land, and human rights. Some Israelis have become concerned about the role of NGOs that criticize of Israeli policies in the Palestinian territories and often receive funding from foreign donors. Legislation to compel NGOs to publicize details

of any foreign funding has been presented in the Knesset, drawing considerable opposition from democracy and human rights advocates. A proposed law requiring new citizens, including non-Jews, to recognize Israel as a Jewish state has also stirred controversy, and Israeli Jews and Arabs have been locked in a series of disputes over property in predominantly Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem.

### **Central and Eastern Europe/Former Soviet Union: ‘Color Revolution’ Gains and Losses**

The so-called color revolutions that swept parts of the former Soviet Union between 2003 and 2005 set off a variety of aftershocks in the subsequent years. Initially, these movements of reform-minded activists, which swept away corrupt and repressive leaders in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, were regarded as potential models for democratic change both in neighboring countries and elsewhere in the world. A few years later, the color revolutions were seen as major disappointments due to the display of authoritarian tendencies by the new presidents in Georgia and especially Kyrgyzstan, and the infighting and incompetence of the new leadership in Ukraine.

However, the most recent developments suggest something more complex. On the positive side, all three color revolution countries, plus Moldova, have thus far escaped the authoritarian fate of practically all other non-Baltic former Soviet republics. While the functioning of political institutions in color revolution countries generally falls short of strict democratic standards, these societies have avoided the transparently rigged elections, widespread censorship, leader-for-life arrangements, and thuggish security forces that define the political landscape of so many of their neighbors.

For example, although the president of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, had grown increasingly autocratic after taking power in a 2005 popular uprising, he was forced into exile in 2010. The politicians who replaced him presided over the adoption of a revised constitution and national elections that were regarded as credible and competitive. Among

other improvements, the new charter moves away from the kind of superpresidential system that has undergirded autocratic rule in other Central Asian countries. As a consequence of these developments—and despite a wave of persecution against the ethnic Uzbek minority in which hundreds are believed to have been killed—Kyrgyzstan’s *Freedom in the World* status improved from Not Free to Partly Free. Likewise, Georgia, which has experienced both reform and regression since its color revolution in 2003, saw an improvement in its civil liberties rating for 2010 due to a more relaxed security environment and increased media diversity.

On a less positive note, events in Ukraine in 2010 caused it to fall from Free to Partly Free. Viktor Yanukovich, whose fraudulent electoral victory in 2004 had been overturned by the Orange Revolution, won the presidency on his second attempt in early 2010. He then oversaw a deterioration in press freedom, state efforts to curb student activism, intimidation of NGOs, local elections that were almost universally derided as neither free nor fair, and indications of increased executive influence over the judiciary. Ukraine had previously been the only country in the non-Baltic former Soviet Union to earn a Free designation, and its decline represents a major setback for democracy in the region.

Meanwhile, the news from Russia, the leading power in the region, remained relentlessly grim in 2010. President Dmitry Medvedev’s highly publicized pledges to combat corruption, arrest those responsible for a series of high-profile murders of journalists and activists, and strengthen the rule of law have not been fulfilled. Instead, bribery and embezzlement remain the norm, politically motivated violence goes unpunished, and the law is enforced at the caprice of the leadership. Conditions seemed to worsen toward the end of the year, a period marked by guilty verdicts in politicized trials, the sham prosecution of human rights activist Oleg Orlov on trumped-up defamation charges, the savage beating of journalists, violent dispersal of sanctioned demonstrations in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and a campaign against migrants from southern Russia and

Central Asia by ultranationalist soccer hooligans who enjoy a measure of support from elements of the political leadership.

For the countries of Central Europe and the Baltic states, the principal challenge remains the growing pressure on living standards and economic stability stemming from the global economic downturn. In general, this newly democratic region weathered the economic storm successfully, and the protection of civil liberties remained strong. Hungary, however, experienced a score decline due to policies adopted by newly elected prime minister Viktor Orbán, leader of the right-leaning Fidesz party. He was widely criticized for pushing through legislation that will enhance state control of the press and threaten journalistic freedoms. Latvia, another country that was hit hard by the economic downturn, saw its civil liberties rating drop due to the impact on press freedom from the recent sale under less-than-transparent circumstances of one of the country's most influential newspapers.

#### **Americas: Violence in Mexico, Autocracy in Venezuela**

Two of the most worrying recent challenges to freedom in Latin America—uncontrolled crime and authoritarian populism—led to declines in two of the region's leading states, Mexico and Venezuela.

Mexico suffered a decrease in its political rights rating and a drop from Free to Partly Free status due to the government's inability to stem the wave of violence by drug-trafficking groups in several states. While the country benefited from an important consolidation of democracy during the past decade, government institutions have failed to protect ordinary citizens, journalists, and elected officials from organized crime. Extortion and other racketeering activities have spread, and conditions for the media have deteriorated to the point where editors have significantly altered coverage to avoid repercussions from drug gangs.

In Venezuela, the policies of President Hugo Chávez continued to erode the space for

independent political activity and civil society. The country's civil liberties rating declined even though the political opposition scored impressive gains in parliamentary elections held in September. Opposition parties, which had boycotted the previous parliamentary polls in 2005, organized a unified coalition; this bloc and a formerly pro-Chávez party that has drifted into opposition won a combined 52 percent of the vote. However, due to changes in the electoral system, opposition representation in the new parliament will be just over 40 percent.

In response to the opposition gains, Chávez pushed through a series of laws in the final days of the old parliament that will extend his influence over the press and civil society, and limit the rights of incoming legislators. The outgoing parliament also approved a measure giving Chávez the power to bypass the opposition bloc in the new parliament and rule by decree on a range of issues for 18 months.

Other developments in the region were more positive. Brazil further solidified its democracy by holding a presidential election that was deemed fair and competitive, resulting in victory for Dilma Rousseff, an ally of outgoing president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. A new president, Juan Manuel Santos, was also elected in Colombia, which enjoyed a decline in political polarization after outgoing president Álvaro Uribe accepted a Constitutional Court decision that ended his effort to pursue a third term.

#### **Asia-Pacific: Pressure on Free Assembly and Expression, Progress in Philippines**

Conforming to the trends in other regions and in contrast to modest improvements in 2009, the number of countries with declines in aggregate score in the Asia-Pacific region outnumbered those with gains by a ratio of 2 to 1.

The most positive development was a major improvement in the Philippines due to elections that were deemed relatively free and fair, and that were conducted in notably less violent circumstances than in the recent past. The Philippines had its designation as an electoral

democracy restored as a result. Tonga held its first free and fair legislative elections, with prodemocracy candidates winning the majority of seats. Moreover, the prime minister was named by an elected parliament for the first time; previously the king had chosen the head of government. The military regime in Burma oversaw that country's first elections since 1990. The electoral process was tightly controlled to ensure the government-backed party's sweeping victory, and the popular opposition National League for Democracy was formally dissolved during the year. Nevertheless, aspects of the new electoral laws enabled the registration and participation of a range of political parties, and some opposition and independent ethnic minority members won election to the new assembly.

The most prominent decline in the region was in Sri Lanka, which suffered from the misuse of state resources prior to national elections, the persecution of opposition presidential candidate Sarath Fonseka, and the increasing concentration of power in the hands of President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his family. Declines in the areas of freedom of assembly and freedom of expression were apparent in several other countries and territories. In Cambodia, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Indian-administered Kashmir, the space for peaceful protests on politically sensitive matters was curtailed, with security forces in some cases using deadly violence and arrests to disperse demonstrators. In Vietnam, a crackdown on activists in advance of a Communist Party Congress created a climate of self-censorship on political topics.

While China's activist community was encouraged by the decision to grant the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize to jailed democracy advocate Liu Xiaobo, the Chinese Communist Party's response highlighted the depth of its anxiety over any public debate on the need for a more open and responsive political system. The repression surrounding the award also reflected a broader trend of Communist Party efforts to tighten control over the media, the judiciary, and civil society, and to strengthen its repressive apparatus in the face of growing rights-consciousness among the public. In 2010,

internet censorship and violent forced evictions increased; highly questionable judicial procedures in commercial cases pointed to political intervention; leading human rights lawyers were harassed, disbarred, and "disappeared"; and new regulations made it more difficult for civil society groups to obtain funding from overseas donors. Meanwhile, conditions for ethnic and religious minorities remained harsh, and in some cases worsened. Uighur webmasters and journalists were sentenced to long prison terms after unfair trials, including two sentences of life imprisonment; the persecution of house church Christians intensified toward year's end; and Falun Gong practitioners were a key target of crackdowns ahead of the Shanghai World Expo as well as a reinvigorated three-year forced conversion program. It is noteworthy that despite such pressures and often at great personal risk, many of China's bloggers, journalists, legal professionals, workers, petitioners, and members of minority groups continued to push the limits of permissible activity in increasingly sophisticated ways.

### **Sub-Saharan Africa: Past Gains in Jeopardy**

The year 2010 featured a continued pattern of volatility and decline for sub-Saharan Africa. There was more backsliding than improvement, though gains were noted in several of the region's more important countries.

During the 1990s, the state of African democracy improved dramatically, with major increases in the number of Free and Partly Free countries and a substantial decrease in the roster of countries designated as Not Free. Over the past decade, however, conditions have stagnated; the number of countries ranked as Not Free actually showed a slight increase, and the region as a whole registered declines in both political rights and civil liberties indicators.

The most notable improvement in 2010 took place in Guinea, which emerged from a murderous military dictatorship and held successful elections amid enhanced observance of freedom of speech and other civil liberties. Also making gains during the year were Kenya,



Nigeria, Tanzania, and the territory of Somaliland.

The most significant setback occurred in Ethiopia, which declined from Partly Free to Not Free. Ethiopia has experienced steady, incremental declines in recent years, and in 2010 the pace of erosion accelerated due to massive repression that accompanied national elections. Another major decline occurred in Côte d'Ivoire, where at year's end President Laurent Gbagbo refused to give up power despite having lost the long-delayed presidential election by what neutral observers described as a decisive margin. Gbagbo's supporters in the military were allegedly responsible for a number of postelection killings, and reportedly menaced leaders of the political opposition and a United Nations peacekeeping force.

Other declines were recorded in Djibouti (which dropped from Partly Free to Not Free), Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Rwanda, Swaziland, and Zambia. Of particular concern were the setbacks in Rwanda, due to heightened repression in the run-up to national elections, and Burundi, also stemming from ruling party intimidation of the opposition during an election campaign.

**Western Europe and North America: Immigration, Free Speech, and Security**

The countries of Western Europe and North America continued to register the highest scores on the *Freedom in the World* scale despite their ongoing inability to devise rational and humane policies toward immigrants from the developing

world. A backlash against immigration—especially from Muslim countries—has spread throughout Europe and triggered controversies over the construction of mosques, the wearing of veils and headscarves, and changes to citizenship laws. The political and societal friction has been exacerbated by a series of cases in which Muslims professing extremist ideologies have allegedly plotted to commit terrorist acts in major European cities. Indeed, at year's end, arrests of terrorism suspects with North African or South Asian backgrounds were made in Belgium, Britain, Denmark, and Sweden.

Many European countries have opted for policies that restrict future immigration and, in some cases, asylum applications. A growing number have taken steps to curtail customs identified with Islam that much of the population finds offensive. France is one of several countries to have adopted limits on the wearing of veils in public places. In another move against migrants, France systematically deported several thousand Roma to Romania, drawing harsh criticism from European Union officials.

Tensions with Muslim minorities have also led to problems concerning freedom of expression. Threats of violence have repeatedly been made against *Jyllands-Posten*, the Danish newspaper that first published contentious cartoons of the prophet Muhammad, and other media outlets that were involved in the controversy. At the same time, the Netherlands and several other countries have threatened to prosecute journalists and bloggers who caricatured Muslims in their writings or drawings.

<b>REGIONAL PATTERNS</b>			
	<b>Free</b>	<b>Partly Free</b>	<b>Not Free</b>
<b>Americas</b>	24 (69%)	10 (29%)	1 (3%)
<b>Asia-Pacific</b>	16 (41%)	15 (38%)	8 (21%)
<b>Central &amp; Eastern Europe/Former Soviet Union</b>	13 (45%)	9 (31%)	7 (24%)
<b>Middle East and North Africa</b>	1 (6%)	3 (17%)	14 (78%)
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	9 (19%)	22 (46%)	17 (35%)
<b>Western Europe</b>	24 (96%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)

Britain's new Conservative Party government has not yet acted on its pledges to reform laws that contribute to the phenomenon of "libel tourism," in which foreign individuals use the plaintiff-friendly English courts to press libel suits against critical journalists and scholars. Press freedom advocates have described libel tourism as a serious menace to intellectual inquiry and the robust exchange of ideas. While the most highly publicized cases have involved writings on terrorism-related subjects, more recent suits have been brought against scientists and medical researchers who put forward controversial opinions. The United States took a major step against libel tourism in 2010 by enacting a law that makes it practically impossible to enforce foreign libel rulings in U.S. courts.

While the United States has a generally more successful record of absorbing large numbers of immigrants than does Europe, the country has recently experienced a heated and sometimes ugly debate over policies toward undocumented workers, especially from Latin America. In a testament to federal legislative paralysis on the issue, Congress in late 2010 rejected a bill that would have offered a path to citizenship to young illegal immigrants who had been raised in the United States and enrolled in college or the U.S. military.

President Barack Obama has not attempted major rollbacks of his predecessor's antiterrorism policies. While the Obama administration has put an end to practices that were widely regarded as torture and taken other steps applauded by civil libertarians, it has also aggressively pursued terrorists abroad—including through targeted killings by unmanned aircraft—and declined to investigate, much less prosecute, officials from the Bush administration who were responsible for extreme antiterrorism measures. Moreover, Obama has so far failed in his efforts to close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where over 100 terrorism suspects are still held.

## CONCLUSION

### Democratic Resistance

In addition to its overall finding of a fifth year of "freedom recession," *Freedom in the World 2011* reflects a number of developments that may be cause for optimism. The global economic downturn has not triggered a major reversal for democratic institutions in the countries where the impact has been greatest. And in Latin America, the examples of democratic governance set by Chile and Brazil have proven more attractive than Hugo Chávez's "21st century socialism." While South Asia remains a source of political volatility, the region has experienced more gains than setbacks for democracy in recent years.

Nor have years of repression succeeded in destroying the spirit of democratic resistance in authoritarian settings. In Belarus, the example set by thousands of demonstrators who flooded the streets to express their fury at yet another bogus election was just as important as the ruthless reaction by President Lukashenka's security forces. The steady erosion of democratic space in Venezuela did not discourage opposition supporters, who exhibited sufficient tenacity and unity to win a majority of votes in parliamentary elections. Independent-minded journalists and intellectuals refused to be silenced in China, Iran, and Egypt. And the release from house arrest of Burmese opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was a welcome reminder that there are limits to the power of even the most relentless dictatorships.

There were also signs—modest, to be sure—that the democratic world was more attuned to the challenges posed by an increasingly assertive band of autocracies. In their public statements, especially at multilateral venues, President Obama and other senior U.S. officials showed a greater inclination to talk about the importance of democracy and identify threats to freedom. Perhaps more tellingly, documents released by WikiLeaks indicated that U.S. diplomats in authoritarian countries were realistic, astute, concerned about growing repression, and often sympathetic toward the political opposition.

Thus even as U.S. officials spoke favorably in public about Russia under the president's "reset" policy, American diplomats were writing messages about a "mafia state" in which corrupt security forces held sway.

More often, however, the world's most powerful authoritarians have acted with aggression and self-assurance, and democratic leaders have responded with equivocation or silence. Few heads of state joined President Obama in congratulating Liu Xiaobo on his Nobel award, even fewer called for his release from prison, and none called Beijing to account for its malicious campaign against the prize, or its efforts to dissuade foreign governments from sending representatives to the award ceremony. Among lesser powers, those with energy riches or geostrategic significance demonstrated that acts of antidemocratic contempt will draw no serious rebuke from the democratic world. Thus the dearth of comment on the patently fraudulent elections in Ethiopia and Egypt, both beneficiaries of close ties to the United States, or in Azerbaijan, a crucial exporter of oil and gas.

The failure of the major democracies of the developing world to speak out against authoritarian abuses is another source of disappointment. The image of Brazil's Lula embracing Iran's Ahmadinejad is especially unsettling given that Lula himself was once the political prisoner of a military dictatorship. India's reluctance to exert pressure on Burma's ruling junta remains an impediment to political change in one of the world's most repressive environments. And the consistent refusal of South Africa to join in solidarity with the forces of democracy in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the world stands in stark contrast to the international cooperation that helped to bring down apartheid.

It is often observed that a government that mistreats its people also fears its people. Certainly it is not merely self-confidence that is leading Iran's rulers to conduct wave after wave of political arrests, or Hugo Chávez to attempt to smother civil society, or China's Communist leadership to devote billions of dollars to the control of information. But authoritarian regimes will have a much freer hand to silence their

domestic critics if there is no resistance from the outside world. Indeed, if the world's democracies fail to unite and speak out in defense of their own values, despots will continue to gain from divide-and-conquer strategies, as Russia's leaders are now doing in their approach to Europe and the United States.

This is not the first time that the adversaries of freedom seemed to have the wind at their backs and democracy appeared to be in retreat. In the past, the forces of democracy invariably recovered and prevailed. Democracy still boasts its most potent weapon: the attractive example of free institutions, free minds, civil liberties, and law-based societies. Despite talk about the China model, no society has indicated a desire to emulate the political system that rules over the Chinese people, with its elaborate censorship apparatus, remote leadership, suppression of religion, and contempt for minority cultures. Only despots seeking more efficient and comprehensive methods of control see in China—or Russia—a template worth copying. Nor is today's challenge as intimidating as many seem to believe. Nearly 40 years ago, more than half of the world was ruled by one form of autocracy or another; many millions lived under outright totalitarianism. The majority now live in democratic states.

The past decade began at a high point for freedom and concluded with freedom under duress. The next decade could witness a new wave of democratic development if democracy's champions remember that freedom is more powerful—both as an idea and as the basis for practical governance—than anything its adversaries have to offer.

*Eliza B. Young assisted in the preparation of this report.*