



Political Freedom On the Rise Around the World Despite Naysayers

The next U.S. president doesn't need to try to set the world right.

Marian Tupy

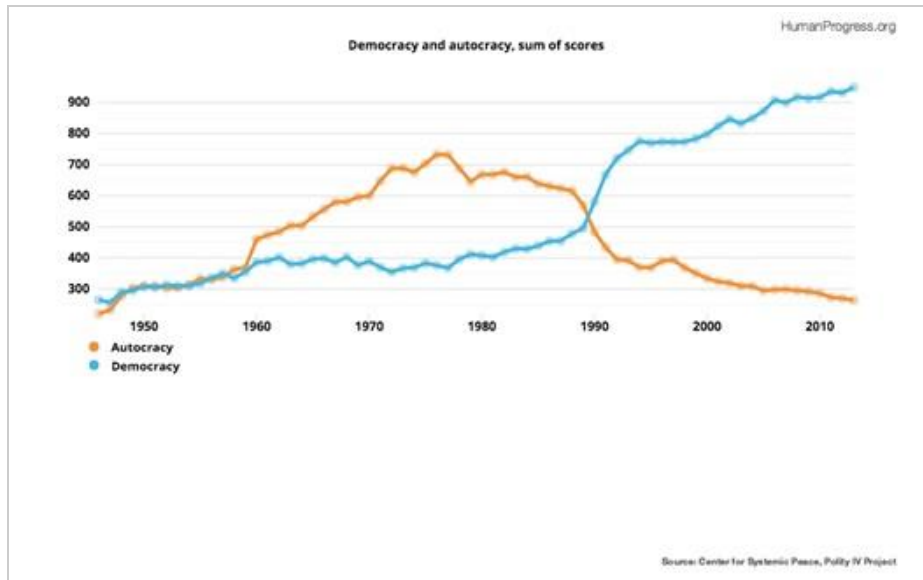
January 26, 2016

Listening to the GOP presidential candidates, you would think that humanity is sprinting toward the gates of hell. What's needed, the talking heads on TV maintain, is a strong leader to set the world right. But, the world is already on the mend—irrespective of the actions of the megalomaniacal narcissist in the Oval Office today or the megalomaniacal narcissist poised to replace him in January 2017.

In recent years, plenty of commentators expressed concerns about the future of political freedom. As late as last year, Freedom House's "[Freedom in the World](#)" survey found that autocrats "now increasingly flout democratic values, argue for the superiority of what amounts to one-party rule, and seek to throw off the constraints of fundamental diplomatic principles."

What a difference a year makes!

In the America's, Argentina and Venezuela stepped back from the precipice. Far from being a vanguard of autocratic renaissance, Cuba is once again isolated as the hemisphere's sole full-fledged dictatorship. Africa and the Middle East remain, as ever, a bloody mess. Still, Nigeria, Africa's largest economy and most populous country (there will be more Nigerians in 2050 than Americans), saw a peaceful and largely free election that, for the first time, transferred power to an opposition candidate. Finally, the luster came off China and Russia—two countries that so many would-be autocrats pointed to as alternative models of political and economic development.



Back in 2014, John Mueller of the Cato Institute organized a conference entitled "Francis Fukuyama's 'The End of History' 25 Years Later." I had the privilege to participate. In my remarks I concluded that Fukuyama's thesis concerning the eventual triumph of economic and political liberalism remained relevant. Political freedom, as the Human Progress chart above illustrates, is not in retreat!

Moving forward, there are at least three distinct reasons for continued optimism. First, over half of humanity now resides in the cities. The urban share of the world's population will grow to 66 percent by 2050. Urban dwellers have been, historically speaking, more politically assertive than the peasantry. A corollary second reason for optimism is the spread of information and communications. As anti-government protests from Kiev to Hong Kong show, large groups of urbanites are now able to organize and show their displeasure with government policies in very short periods of time. The third reason is the near certainty that the world in 2050 will be much richer than it is today. According to *Reason's* own Ron Bailey, if the world economy grows by 3 percent per annum, inflation adjusted global GDP per capita will increase from \$10,285 in 2014 to \$21,737 in 2050. Typically, people with more wealth have more to lose and are, therefore, insistent on more predictable and accountable governing structures.

Political freedom in the world is in a decent shape. The next occupant of the White House should focus on fixing the domestic mess left behind after 16 years of misrule by the Bush/Obama duumvirate.

Explore more data like this at HumanProgress.org.

Marian L. Tupy is a policy analyst at the Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity and editor of www.humanprogress.org