BACKSLIDING

Democratic Regress in the Contemporary World

Stephan Haggard
Robert Kaufman
Backsliding

Democratic Regress in the Contemporary World

Elements in Political Economy

DOI: 10.1017/9781108957809
First published online: January 2021

Stephan Haggard
Robert Kaufman

Author for correspondence: Stephan Haggard, shaggard@uscd.edu

Abstract: Assaults on democracy are increasingly coming from the actions of duly elected governments, rather than coups. Backsliding examines the processes through which elected rulers weaken checks on executive power, curtail political and civil liberties, and undermine the integrity of the electoral system. Drawing on detailed case studies, including the United States and countries in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa, this Element focuses on three, inter-related causal mechanisms: the pernicious effects of polarization; realignments of party systems that enable elected autocrats to gain legislative power; and the incremental nature of derogations, which divides oppositions and keeps them off balance. A concluding chapter looks at the international context of backsliding and the role of new technologies in these processes. An online appendix provides detailed accounts of backsliding in 16 countries, which can be found at www.cambridge.org/backsliding.

Keywords: Democracy, backsliding, authoritarianism, elections, polarization.

© Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman 2021

ISBNs: 9781108958400 (PB), 9781108957809 (OC)
ISSNs: 2398-4031 (online), 2514-3816 (print)
Contents

1 Backsliding: Concept, Mechanisms, Measurement 1

2 Social and Political Origins of Backsliding: The Role of Polarization 14

3 Constitutions in the Balance: Parties, Legislatures and the Collapse of the Separation of Powers 39

4 The Backsliding Process 56

5 Conclusion 78

References 85