

# The illiberals

by Takis S. Pappas\*

According to all indices for measuring its health across the world (including [Freedom House](#), the [Economist Intelligence Unit](#), and [V-Dem Institute](#)), liberal democracy is under threat by illiberal regimes. By “liberal democracy” we mean a form of institutionalized government based on individual freedom and political moderation, safeguarding minority rights, and adhering to the rule of law as expressed primarily in (liberal) constitutions. But if liberal democracies are all alike, every foe of liberalism is illiberal in his own way. This infographic shows the global expansion of illiberal rule but also distinguishes **seven types** of contemporary illiberal leaders by putting their main differences on display. (But if you still look for similarities, did you notice that all illiberal leaders are men?).

## MODERN POPULISTS 1



They rise in established liberal democracies and may fall in free and fair elections. While in power, they erode existing liberal institutions and weaken the rule of law.

## 2 PRE-LIBERAL DEMOCRATS



Found in illiberal states with strong religious and nationalist ideologies, they retain the trappings of normal democracy while operating as de facto autocrats.

## ELECTED AUTOCRATS 3



All but outright dictators, they run corrupt states, suppress the opposition, organize elections only to win them by large margins, and maintain power through force and intimidation.

## 4 AUTHORITARIANS



This is dictatorial rule by military supremos, usually forming a junta, who grab power by coup and establish “disciplined democracies”.

## TOTALITARIANS 5

They head heavily armed, single-party states exercising total control over their citizens’ lives. Privacy, let alone free expression, are nearly impossible.



## 6 SULTAN-TYPE MONOCRATS



Also of a totalitarian nature, they run their states (typically as prisons) by building a cult of personality and aided by family members and courtiers.

## 7 THEOCRATS

They are religious zealots who rule in the name of a god. Their governments do not accept secular individual and social freedoms, nor do they recognize human rights.



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