

## DEMOCRACY–SECURITY INTERPLAY: RESILIENCE AND FRAGILITY IN A TURBULENT WORLD

### ВЗАЄМОЗВ'ЯЗОК ДЕМОКРАТІЇ ТА БЕЗПЕКИ: СТІЙКІСТЬ І КРИХКІСТЬ У ТУРБУЛЕНТНОМУ СВІТІ

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This study aims to identify the democracy–security interplay in the face of escalating global security challenges. It is organized around two interrelated tasks: first, to analyze recent global trends in democratic performance in parallel with the intensification of threats; and second, to examine how diverse cases and regions illustrate either the convergence or divergence between democratic quality and resilience to security pressures. The study employs correlative and comparative analysis of global democracy and peace threats indexes, supported by a methodological matrix of democracy–security interplay. This matrix enables the classification of cases into categories of high and low performance, highlighting both reinforcing and divergent patterns. The analysis reveals a global trend of declining democratic performance amid rising uncertainty and intensifying international conflicts. At the extremes, high democracy scores correspond to strong security resilience, while low democracy scores align with heightened vulnerability. In the regional dimension, Europe, particularly the EU, demonstrates the most consolidated democracy–security interplay, sustaining resilience despite external threats, whereas African countries face the most acute security challenges. Importantly, the correlation matrix shows that not all cases fit neatly into expected patterns. For instance, some states combine relatively strong democratic institutions with lower security rankings, while others demonstrate limited democratic quality yet maintain comparatively high security standings. These outliers, such as the United States and China, underscore the need for broader methodological approaches to capture the complexity of the democracy–security nexus. A further critical finding is that most countries fall within the dimension of democratic fragility and vulnerability to peace threats. This widespread condition can be assessed as a major driver of global turbulence, contributing to the emergence and escalation of conflicts worldwide.

**Key words:** democracy, security, peace, threats, conflicts.

Метою цього дослідження є виявлення взаємозв'язку демократії та безпеки в умовах загострення глобальних викликів у сфері безпеки. Дослідження структуроване навколо двох взаємопов'язаних завдань: по-перше, проаналізувати сучасні глобальні тенденції у функціонуванні демократії паралельно з інтенсифікацією загроз; по-друге, дослідити, як різні кейси та регіони ілюструють або зближення, або розходження між якістю демократії та здатністю протистояти тиску у сфері безпеки. У дослідженні застосовано кореляційний та порівняльний аналіз глобальних індексів демократії та рівня стійкості до загрози миру, доповнений методологічною матрицею взаємодії демократії та безпеки. Ця матриця дає змогу класифікувати випадки за категоріями високої та низької ефективності, виокремлюючи як узгоджені, так і дивергентні закономірності. Аналіз засвідчив глобальну тенденцію до зниження рівня демократії на тлі зростання невизначеності та інтенсифікації міжнародних конфліктів. На крайніх позиціях високі показники демократії відповідають високій стійкості, тоді як низькі показники корелюють із підвищеною вразливістю. У регіональному вимірі Європа, зокрема ЄС, демонструє найбільш консолідовану взаємодію демократії та безпеки, зберігаючи стійкість попри зовнішні загрози, тоді як африканські країни стикаються з найгострішими проблемами у сфері безпеки. Важливим висновком є те, що не всі випадки точно відповідають очікуваним моделям. Наприклад, деякі держави поєднують відносно сильні демократичні інститути з нижчими показниками безпеки, тоді як інші демонструють обмежену якість демократії, але водночас зберігають відносно високі показники безпеки. Такі випадки, як Сполучені Штати та Китай, підкреслюють необхідність ширших методологічних підходів для адекватного відображення складності взаємозв'язку демократії та безпеки. Ще одним критичним результатом є те, що більшість країн перебувають у вимірі демократичної крихкості та вразливості до загроз миру. Цей поширений стан можна оцінити як один із головних чинників глобальної турбулентності, що сприяє виникненню та ескалації конфліктів у світі.

**Ключові слова:** демократія, безпека, мир, загрози, конфлікти.

**Introduction.** In recent decades, the global political landscape has been marked by two interrelated dynamics: the erosion of democratic governance and the intensification of armed conflicts and secu-

rity threats. Indicators from international monitoring organizations reveal a steady decline in democratic practices, while at the same time, the proliferation of military confrontations and geopolitical instability



has heightened concerns about the sustainability of democratic institutions. This dual trend underscores the urgency of examining the relationship between security imperatives and democratic resilience.

While security is often prioritized in times of crisis, excessive reliance on coercive measures risks undermining democratic values and institutions. Conversely, the preservation of democratic governance may itself serve as a source of resilience, enabling societies to withstand external and internal threats more effectively. Against this backdrop, the central research question guiding this inquiry is: to what extent is the resilience of democracy possible in the face of escalating security challenges? Therefore, the central problem addressed in this study is the erosion of democratic governance worldwide, occurring in parallel with the intensification of armed conflicts and the proliferation of security threats.

**Literature review.** A growing body of literature has explored the tension between security and democracy, drawing on theoretical perspectives from realism, liberal institutionalism, and democratization studies. Scholars have debated whether security concerns inevitably lead to democratic backsliding, or whether democratic institutions can adapt and survive under pressure. Recent contributions enrich this debate from different angles: A. P. Olimid, C. M. Georgescu, and C.L. Gherghe [1] provide theoretical grounding by showing how narratives of security and democracy are constructed and contested, offering a useful lens for framing the conceptual model of this study. From a policy perspective, L. Farinha and R. Youngs [2] demonstrate how securitization increasingly shapes democracy-support strategies, a finding directly relevant to the European integration context. Finally, D. Dumitrescu [3] offers empirical grounding, illustrating how the state-building–security nexus operates in practice and providing a comparative case for examining democratic resilience under war threats. This study situates the relationship between security and democracy within the contemporary context of war threats, aiming to identify the key factors that allow democracy to be preserved despite escalating security challenge.

**Research objectives.** The aim of this research is to reveal the democracy–security interplay in the face of escalating security challenges. Given that the object of this research is the security–democracy nexus under contemporary threats, the study is structured around interrelated tasks: 1) to analyze recent global trends in democratic performance and the escalation of threats; 2) to examine countries’ performance in relevant global indexes, thereby identifying how different cases and regions illustrate the alignment or divergence between democratic quality and resilience to security threats.

**Methodological design.** To ground the analysis in reliable evidence, this study employs two comple-

mentary datasets. The global Democracy Index [4] provides a systematic measure of democratic performance across countries, allowing for the identification of both long-term trends and regional variations in democratic decline. In parallel, the Normandy Index [5] captures the intensity of threats to peace and security, including militarization, hybrid threats, and authoritarian pressures. It is important to note a difference in coverage between the two datasets. The Democracy Index evaluates 167 countries [4], while the Normandy Index ranks 138 countries plus the European Union as a collective actor [5]. Since the EU represents 27 member states, this allows for corresponding cross-data comparisons between countries at the top and bottom of both rankings, despite the numerical difference in scope. Taken together, these indices form the empirical foundation of the research, enabling a comprehensive assessment of how democracy is challenged and sustained under contemporary war threats (see Table 1.).

This matrix serves as the methodological frame for the comparative analysis. It structures the relationship between democracy and security into four possible configurations. By organizing countries into these categories, the matrix provides a systematic lens for identifying divergences, exceptions, and patterns across the two indices. It highlights that while democracy and security often reinforce one another, there are notable cases where fragile democracies struggle to sustain resilience, or authoritarian regimes demonstrate unexpected security capacity. This matrix will be used to classify countries into comparative groups, guide case study selection, and frame the analysis of extremums. This methodological framing enables the study to move beyond isolated rankings and toward a comparative understanding of how governance models interact with peace and security resilience under contemporary global pressures.

**Findings.** Recent global assessments reveal an evident tendency toward democratic decline, accompanied by rising security threats that increasingly challenge the stability of political institutions worldwide. Rising militarization, hybrid threats, and geopolitical rivalry dominate the global landscape. According to “Global Risks Report 2026” nearly one-third of survey respondents identified either geoeconomic confrontation or state-based armed conflict as the most pressing risks, with geoeconomic confrontation rising to the top position and armed conflict falling to second [6, p. 7-9]. Alongside these traditional threats, technological risks are gaining prominence: misinformation and disinformation remain among the leading concerns, while adverse outcomes of artificial intelligence and cyber insecurity have entered the top ten for the first time. Together, these findings illustrate a global landscape in which conflict, economic rivalry, and technological disruption converge to challenge both security and governance. These converging risks

Table 1

**Methodological matrix of democracy–security interplay**

<b>Top Democracy / Top Security</b>	<b>Top Democracy / Low Security</b>
Strong democracies aligned with strong security standings	Democracies with high performance but weaker security outcomes
<b>Low Democracy / Top Security</b>	<b>Low Democracy / Low Security</b>
States with but relatively strong security resilience.	Fragile states marked by both democratic weakness and security threats.

not only destabilize the security environment but also intensify pressures on democratic systems, reinforcing the broader trend of institutional erosion documented across global indices.

Over the past decades, global democracy has shown a persistent tendency toward decline, a trend documented across the most authoritative international indices and research. What is particularly striking is that this erosion is not confined to fragile or transitional states; it has become increasingly acute in countries traditionally regarded as consolidated democracies. This signals a structural shift in the global democratic landscape, where long-standing institutions are now under pressure from both domestic and international forces. Analytical observations reveal that this uncertainty is shaped by multiple overlapping crises, with global migration emerging as a key factor. Migration flows raise complex questions about citizenship, belonging, and the universality and equality of rights, while also testing the capacity of democracies to remain inclusive and resilient in the face of rapid change [7].

Global patterns confirm that democracy continues to weaken worldwide. In 2024, 94 countries – representing 54 % of all those assessed – experienced a decline in at least one factor of democratic performance compared with their own performance five years earlier. In contrast, only 55 countries (32%) registered improvement in at least one factor during the same period [7, p. 13]. These figures highlight the imbalance between regression and progress, reinforcing the conclusion that democratic backsliding has become the dominant trajectory of our time. All regions of the world have experienced some degree of change in democratic performance. The steepest declines have been recorded in Africa, followed by Europe [7, p. 15]. Asia and the Pacific, together with the Americas, have also experienced notable deterioration, while West Asia – already the lowest-performing region globally – has shown only marginal additional change [7, p. 15]. The gravest concerns are emerging within a climate of radical uncertainty, illustrated by political developments in the United States that unsettle long-standing assumptions about democracy and multilateralism.

Recent analytical findings indicate that regressions are most evident in the domains of representation, rights, and the rule of law. The sharpest setbacks

have occurred in freedom of the press, followed by freedom of expression, economic equality, and access to justice. Press freedom alone declined in 43 countries, marking its most significant reversal in the past 50 years [7, p. 14]. These findings highlight that both fragile and established democracies are exposed to mounting pressures on civil liberties, underscoring the global scope of democratic erosion.

To illustrate the relationship between democratic performance and threats to peace, the analysis compares countries at both ends of the Democracy Index and the Normandy Index. The top five democracies are examined in relation to their positions in the Normandy Index, while the highest-ranked states in the Normandy Index are assessed through their Democracy Index scores. Likewise, countries at the bottom of either ranking are cross-referenced, enabling the matrix to highlight alignments and divergences across the global spectrum. This comparative structure reveals how democratic strength or weakness corresponds to varying levels of security threats (see Table 2).

This correlation presents the global extremums in democratic performance and peace vulnerability, contrasting the top and bottom performers. Among the leading democracies, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, Iceland, and Switzerland stand out, with Iceland showing exact alignment in both rankings and Norway and New Zealand performing consistently well [4]. Switzerland leads the Normandy Index despite ranking fifth in democracy, while Australia emerges as a top security performer outside the top five democracies, illustrating partial divergence between the two measures [5].

At the opposite end of the spectrum, fragile states such as Syria, the Central African Republic, North Korea, Myanmar, and Afghanistan occupy the lowest positions in the Democracy Index [4], while the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, and Syria rank lowest in the Normandy Index [5]. These overlaps and variations underscore that while strong democracies often correspond to resilient security standings, autocracies are consistently associated with heightened peace vulnerability.

An interesting case is the United Kingdom, which holds the 17th position in both the Democracy Index and the Normandy Index [4], [5]. Unlike countries that show divergence between the two measures, the

Table 2

**Global extremums in democratic performance and peace vulnerability.**

Top-down	Top 5 in Democracy Index	Top 5 in Normandy Index	Bottom 5 in Democracy Index	Bottom 5 in Normandy Index
1	Norway	Switzerland	Syria	Democratic Republic of Congo
2	New Zealand	Norway	Central African Republic	Chad
3	Sweden	Australia	North Korea	Central African Republic
4	Iceland	Iceland	Myanmar	Afghanistan
5	Switzerland	New Zealand	Afghanistan	Syria

United Kingdom demonstrates consistency, reflecting a mid-tier status where democratic institutions and peace resilience align at the same level. This equilibrium highlights that while the UK does not rank among the top performers, it maintains a stable correspondence across both dimensions.

The position of the United States within these rankings reflects one of the most concerning global trends: the erosion of democratic performance in states that have traditionally positioned themselves as global advocates of democracy. In the Democracy Index, the United States ranks 28th and is classified among the group of “flawed democracies”, signaling persistent challenges in institutional trust, political polarization, and governance effectiveness [4]. Its position in the Normandy Index is especially troubling: ranked 90th, it lies far below other advanced democracies. Particularly striking is that the United States scores below the global average – 5.36 compared to the mean of 5.74 [5, p.11]. This gap reinforcing concerns about growing vulnerabilities within advanced democracies.

Another noteworthy tendency revealed by these indexes is the presence of countries that, despite being classified as authoritarian regimes, demonstrate relatively strong security resilience. For instance, Qatar, ranked 19th, and the United Arab Emirates and China, both ranked 32nd, illustrate this pattern [5, p. 11]. These cases highlight that moderate or even low democratic performance does not necessarily preclude a country from achieving a comparatively high capacity to resist peace and security threats. Such divergences call for more thorough investigation, as they suggest that resilience in the face of global risks may be shaped not only by democratic strength but also by alternative governance models, strategic resources, or regional security dynamics.

According to the data from global indexes, there is no clear evidence of a systematic correlation between top-ranked democracies and low security, or conversely, between top security performers and weak democratic systems. Instead, two distinct tendencies emerge. The first group consists of regimes with fragile or “flawed democracies” (e.g., the United States, Brazil, India), which face persistent challenges in institutional trust, political polarization, or structural vulnerabilities, and “hybrid regimes” (such cases as Mexico, Tanzania, and El Salvador), which com-

bine limited democratic practices with authoritarian tendencies and often struggle to ensure consistent security resilience [4]. These states typically confront overlapping challenges such as weak institutional safeguards, uneven rule of law, and vulnerability to internal or regional instability. As a result, their performance in global indexes reflects both democratic fragility and constrained capacity to resist peace and security threats, positioning them in a precarious middle ground between “flawed democracies” and authoritarian regimes.

The second group comprises countries with low or explicitly authoritarian regimes that nevertheless demonstrate relatively high or moderate performance in resisting security threats, such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and China. Their resilience often stems from centralized governance structures, strategic resource management, and regional security policies that bolster stability even in the absence of robust democratic institutions. Taken together, these patterns highlight two contrasting pathways in the democracy–security nexus: fragile democracies and hybrid regimes struggling to sustain resilience, and authoritarian regimes that, under certain conditions, generate notable security capacity. This divergence underscores the need for deeper investigation into the contextual drivers shaping these outcomes and challenges the assumption that democracy alone guarantees peace resilience. Therefore, there is a need to adapt the initial analytical matrix by substitution categories “*Top Democracy / Low Security*” and “*Low Democracy / Top Security*” by more relevant: “*Fragile or Hybrid Democracies with Limited Security Capacity*” and “*Authoritarian Regimes with Elevated Security Capacity*” (see Table 3.).

In light of these findings, there is clear evidence that in the regional dimension Europe – particularly the European Union – remains the highest-performing domain in the democracy–security interplay. Even in the face of apparent threats posed by Russia’s war against Ukraine and the broader menaces directed at EU member states, the region demonstrates a consolidated capacity to sustain both democratic performance and resilience against security pressures. By contrast, the African region reveals the most acute fragility in this domain, where weak institutional safeguards, limited democratic consolidation, and persistent exposure to conflict and instability converge to produce

Table 3

**Analytical matrix of democracy and security outcomes**

<b>Top Democracy / Top Security</b>	<b>Fragile or Hybrid Democracies with Limited Security Capacity</b>
Strong democracies aligned with strong security standings (examples: Iceland, Norway, New Zealand)	Fragile democracies or hybrid regimes and weaker security outcomes (examples: Brazil, India Mexico, Tanzania, El Salvador)
<b>Authoritarian Regimes with Elevated Security Capacity</b>	<b>Low Democracy / Low Security</b>
States with but relatively strong security resilience (examples: UAE, China, Qatar).	Fragile states marked by both democratic weakness and security threats (examples: Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, and Syria).

the lowest scores in both democracy and security. Yet the most challenging tendency revealed by the comparative analysis is the alignment between decreasing democratic performance and declining resistance to threats to peace. This convergence underscores a critical vulnerability: when democratic institutions weaken, states simultaneously lose resilience against security pressures. Therefore, it can be assumed that this dynamic represents the core driver of the global rise in conflict turbulence within contemporary international relations, highlighting the urgent need to address both democratic erosion and security fragility as interconnected phenomena.

An examination of the key factors underpinning high national and regional performance in the democracy–security interplay shows that the experience of top-ranked countries reveals a consistent pattern. Strong institutional safeguards, anchored in transparent governance, independent judiciaries, and effective checks and balances, provide stability in times of crisis. Societal cohesion, fostered through inclusive participation, media freedom, and robust civil society, reinforces public trust and mitigates polarization. Internationally, these states benefit from deep integration into cooperative frameworks and alliances, which enhance their security guarantees and diplomatic leverage. Finally, perceptive legitimacy, rooted in high levels of citizen confidence and shared democratic identity, sustains resilience even under external pressures. Taken together, these factors explain why leading democracies are able not only to preserve their institutions but also to resist escalating threats to peace, embodying the most successful configuration in the democracy–security nexus

**Conclusions and future research directions.**

This study set out to identify the key factors that enable the preservation and resilience of democratic institutions in the face of escalating security challenges, by exploiting a methodological matrix of the democracy–security interplay to systematically analyze global trends, country cases, and regional divergences. The comparative analysis reveals a global trend of declining democratic performance, unfolding against a backdrop of rising uncertainty and intensify-

ing international conflicts, which together amplify the fragility of democratic institutions and erode states’ resilience to threats to peace.

The correlative analysis of top- and bottom-ranked countries in terms of democratic performance and resilience or vulnerability to threats to peace reveals several notable tendencies. At the extremes, there is clear evidence of correspondence between high democracy scores and strong resilience, as well as between low democracy scores and heightened vulnerability. In regional terms, Europe – particularly the European Union – demonstrates the most consolidated democracy–security interplay, while African countries consistently register the lowest indicators in this domain. The most striking global tendency, however, is the rising alignment between democratic decline and diminishing resilience to peace threats, a dynamic that contributes not only to regional instability but also to global turbulence and the escalation of conflicts. At the same time, “flawed democracies” such as the United States, which combine relatively strong democratic institutions with lower security rankings, highlight the importance of contextual and regional variations. Taken together, these patterns suggest that democracy–security correlations must be understood not only through the lens of institutional quality but also in relation to broader geopolitical and societal dynamics. This alignment and divergence illustrate that while strong democratic institutions often correspond to resilient security standings, the relationship is not uniform across all cases.

An important finding within the initial correlation matrix is that cases positioned at the extremes of the democracy–security interplay – those with the highest and lowest indices – do not always match precisely across both dimensions. Specifically, countries with high democratic performance but relatively low security scores, as well as those with low democracy but comparatively high security, challenge the assumption of a perfect correspondence. This indicates the need for broader analytical characteristics and additional methodological input to evaluate such cases more accurately. For example, the United States and China illustrate how institutional strength, geopolitical posi-

tioning, and societal dynamics can produce outcomes that diverge from the expected democracy–security correlation. Addressing these complexities requires a more nuanced framework that accounts for contextual variations and highlights the multidimensional nature of resilience in the face of contemporary threats.

Future research should focus on the relations between countries with different levels of democracy–security interplay, examining how their interactions shape both democratic development and secu-

rity outcomes. Comparative analysis of partnerships, rivalries, and regional alignments can reveal whether cooperation between high-performing democracies and more fragile states strengthens resilience or, conversely, whether tensions exacerbate vulnerabilities. Such inquiry is essential for understanding how cross-regional dynamics influence the global state of peace sustainability and for identifying strategies that foster more balanced and inclusive security–democracy frameworks worldwide.

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*Дата першого надходження статті до видання: 27.01.2026*

*Дата прийняття статті до друку після рецензування: 27.02.2026*

*Дата публікації (оприлюднення) статті: 23.03.2026*