In the West, these two traditions liberty and law from one viewpoint, and popular participation on the other progressed toward becoming entwined, making what we call Liberal Democracy. It was perceptible when I composed the paper, and significantly clearer now, that in various nations including Hungary, Russia, Turkey, Iraq and the Philippines the two strands have broken into pieces. Democracy rules system persists (much of the time), however Liberty is under siege. In these nations, the rich and differed internal stuffing of liberal majority rules system is vanishing, leaving only the external, popularity based shell. As Prime Minister Viktor Orban consistently settled an “Illiberal State” in Hungary, dismantling the nation’s balanced governance, stacking its protected court with followers and making a format for other far-right pioneers, a ground-breaking gathering of European lawmakers observed.

And said little. Mr. Orban is now seen as a threat to Europe’s mainstream leadership, especially the conservative alliance that for years chose to shelter him. Leaders of Europe’s conservative political parties including Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany refrained from reining him in, largely because he was part of their coalition in Brussels, and they thought they could control him. More recently, Mr. Orban has directly challenged the direction of the conservative alliance. In speeches this summer, Mr. Orban presented himself as the true voice of the alliance and real heir to Helmut Kohl, the former German chancellor considered one of its icons.
In any case, there is a considerably older tradition in Western legislative issues that, since the Magna Carta in 1215, has focused on the Rights of Individuals against arbitrary arrest, religious conversion, censorship of thought. These individual freedoms (of discourse, conviction, property proprietorship and dispute) were in the end ensured from the manhandle of a despot as well as from law based larger parts. The Bill of Rights, all things considered, is a rundown of things that larger parts can’t do.

Mr. Orban has changed Hungary’s political framework into what one faultfinder calls “another thing under the sun.” Once commanded by guard dog bunches as a main popu government of post-Soviet Eastern Europe, Hungary is currently viewed as a vote base system in sharp, troubling decay.

He has done this even as Hungary remains a member of the European Union and receives Billions of Dollars in funding from the bloc. European Union officials did little as Mr. Orban transformed Hungary into what he calls an “Illiberal Democracy”. His relationship with the European People’s Party is now at an inflection point, as some powerful members, including Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, have suggested that his party leave the alliance. Several parties inside the coalition are gathering signatures to force an internal vote, and Mr. Weber, in a major about-face, said late on Tuesday that he would personally support the European Parliament motion to sanction Hungary.

Twenty years ago, CNN’s Fareed Zakaria wrote an essay in Foreign Affairs titled “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy.” His thesis was that Democracies around the World were Surrendering to Illiberal Reforms, and that the strands holding the Traditions of Democracy and Liberalism together were rapidly eroding.

Zakaria’s piece made an important distinction between democracy and liberalism, constructs that are often conflated. Democracy is a process for choosing leaders; it’s about popular participation. To say that a state is democratic is to say little about how it is actually governed.

Liberalism, by contrast, is about the norms and practices that shape political life. A properly liberal state is one in which individual rights are paramount. It protects the individual not only against the abuses of a tyrant but also against the abuses of democratic majorities. The belief that the democratic experiment was destined to end in something like liberal democracy was just that: a belief. There is nothing inexorable about the logic of democracy; it is just as likely to culminate in tyranny as it is freedom.
Through legislative fiat and force of will, Mr. Orban has transformed the country into a political greenhouse for an odd kind of soft autocracy, combining crony capitalism and far-right rhetoric with a single-party political culture. He has done this even as Hungary remains a member of the European Union and receives billions of dollars in funding from the bloc. European Union officials did little as Mr. Orban transformed Hungary into what he calls an “illiberal democracy.”

Mr. Orban is undeniably popular with many Hungarians, and recent polls show that roughly 50 percent of decided voters support Fidesz. A weak, divided opposition helps him, as does a pliant news media. In a small nation troubled by historical anxieties, he also has positioned himself as a buffer against what he portrays as modern-day threats: such as European Union bureaucrats; or George Soros, the liberal Hungarian-American philanthropist; or, above all, migrants who seek to settle in the country.

“Migration fits into a wider agenda about the protection of the Hungarian people,” said Andras Biro-Nagy, a politics lecturer at Corvinus University of Budapest. “He’s protecting us from everything.” As Zakaria put it, “Western liberal democracy might prove to be not the final destination on the democratic road, but just one of the many possible exits.”

The rise of illiberal democracy, and in certain cases illiberal autocracies, is indeed one of the big challenges of the 21st century. Attacks on critical and independent NGOs in Hungary and Israel, for instance, must be criticized and sanctioned without any compromise – but they are not, neither by the EU, nor by the US. Similarly, outcomes of elections that are fundamentally unfair and unfree, such as in Russia and Venezuela, should not be treated as democratic or as a basis of legitimate government. But to successfully fight illiberal democracy, you have to understand its main causes. Each country has its own particularly national circumstances that are often unique (at least in their national configurations). But in the western world, the creeping undemocratic liberalism of our age plays a major role in the rise of illiberal democracy in general, and populism in particular.

CONCLUSION

In the European Union’s political hierarchy, Mr. Orban has often been cast as an unruly outsider — a loud, populist voice peripheral to the mainstream, and peripheral to real power. But he is now possibly the bloc’s greatest political challenge. He is arguing that Europe’s post-war liberal consensus “is now at an end” and his vision is being emulated in Poland, while his influence is felt elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe.
“Viktor Orbán has demonstrated that in Europe things are possible,” the leader of Poland’s governing Law and Justice party, Jarosław Kaczyński, said in 2016. “You have given an example, and we are learning from your example.”

The Founding Fathers were sceptical of democracy and conceived of America as a republic to mitigate some of the dangers of illiberal democracy. The Bill of Rights, the Supreme Court, state governments and the Senate are all bulwarks against majoritarianism. But United States also developed a democratic culture, formed in large part by a series of informal buffers that worked in similar ways. Alexis de Tocqueville called them “associations” — meaning nongovernmental groups such as choir societies, rotary clubs and professional groups — and argued that they acted to “weaken the moral empire of the majority.” What happens in Hungary is likely to be a leading indicator of what’s happening in the world; it has symbolic value. It slides into illiberalism, that has a dramatic symbolic effect.

Ankit Malhotra