



Human Rights System's Fall-out: Impact on Peace and Security

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What is it?



Concept of human rights stems from human dignity

As old as humanity

Formalized in 1948 @ Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Declaration / No new rights / Just set of universal principles

Goal: Protect Inherent Dignity of Every Human being / Role of Charles Malik

How did it come to fruition?

Declaration

- Important but not sufficient

Global momentum / driven by West:

- Build on Declaration / Political & Social liberalization contributed

Declaration+2 Covenants
+ multiple conventions

- Part of international law + monitoring mechanisms

1950's-late 1990's:

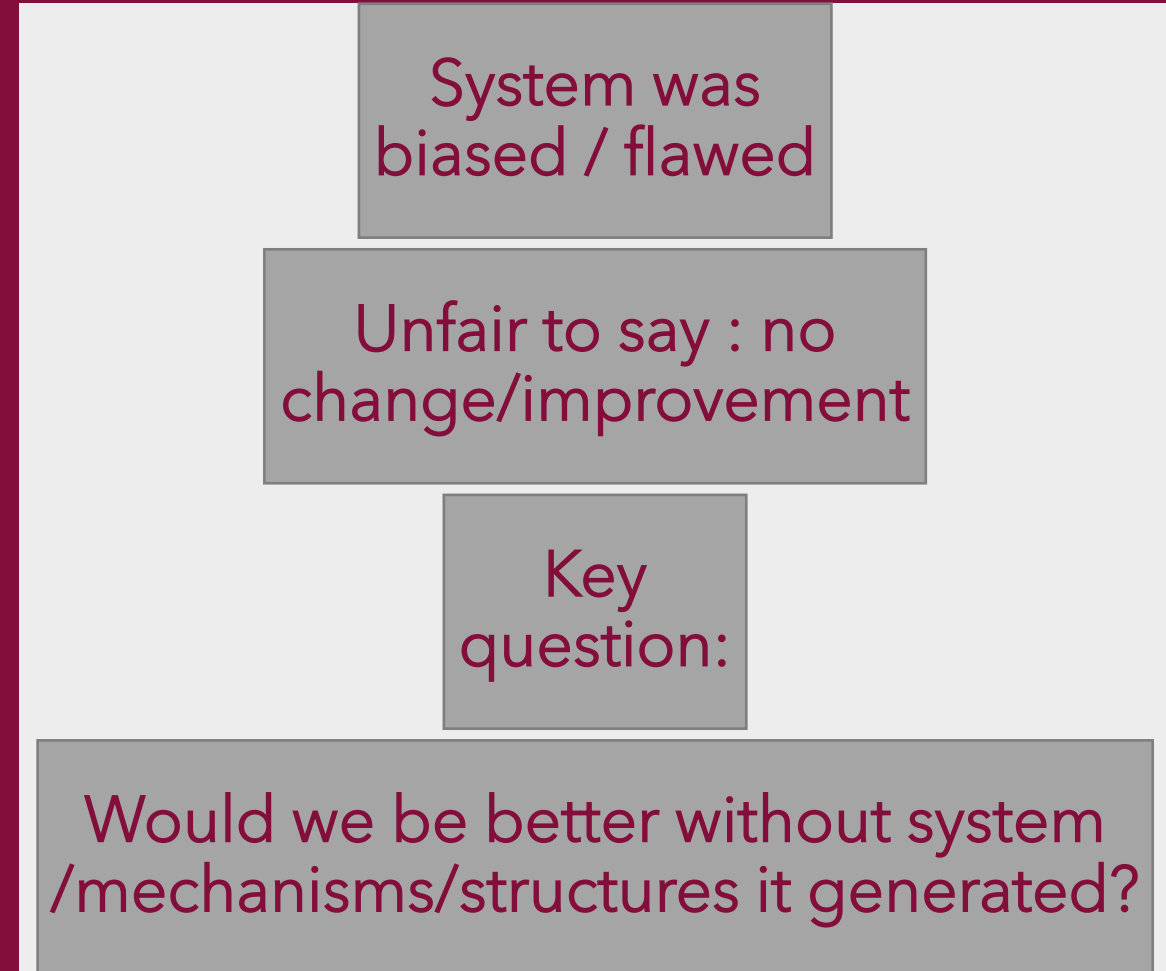
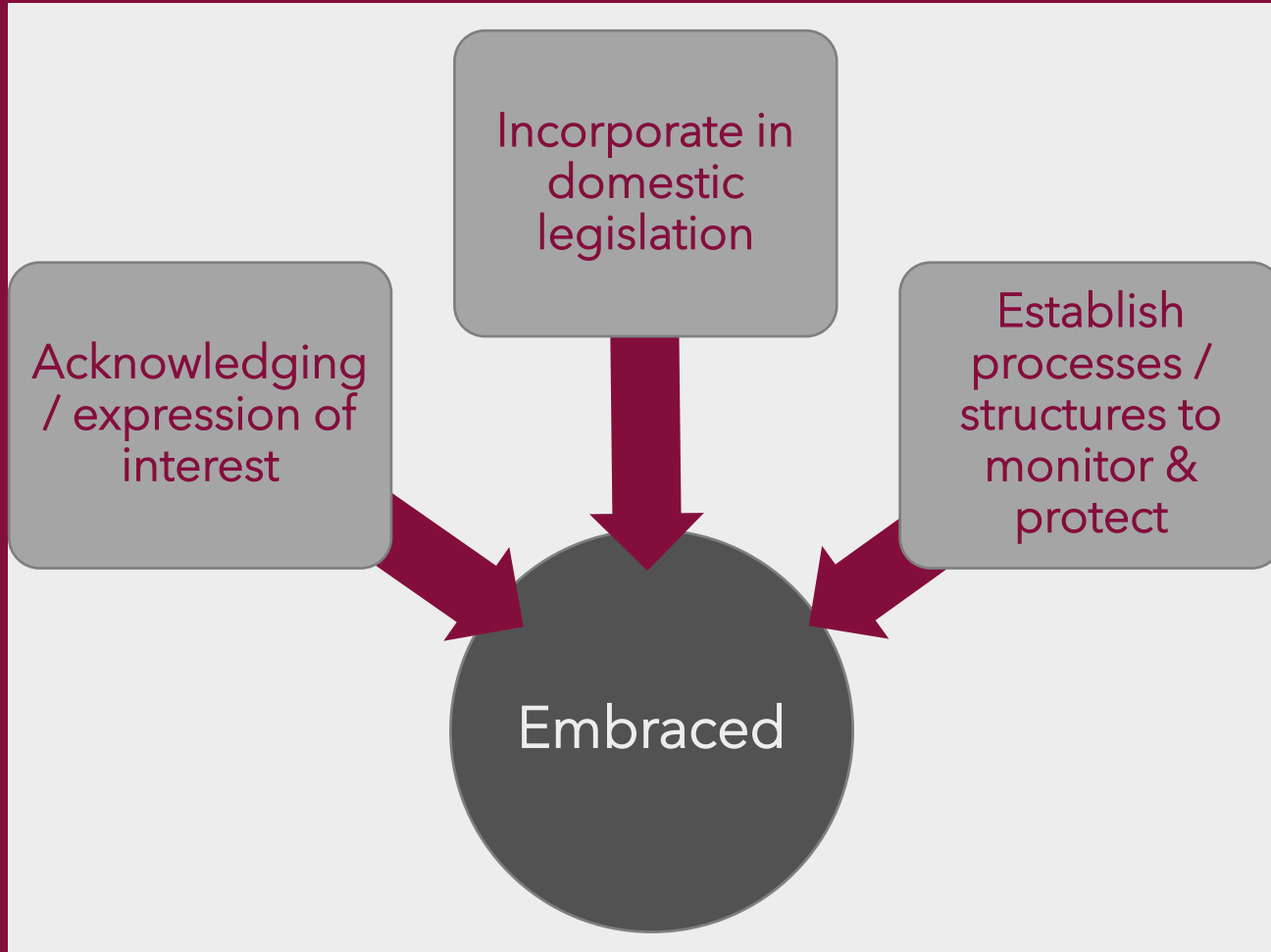
- System increasingly influential in international affairs

System now agonizing/dead :

- Not surprise / No clear-cut date but last 20-30 years = Agony

What happened?

Never universally / fully embraced by all state & non-state actors / abused



Positive Balance?

Theory of Change = addressing discrimination, inequality, and lack of access to resources = better management of grievances = less armed conflicts

Truth & Reconciliation commissions healed post-conflict societies /built foundation for peace

Protection of civilians during armed conflicts (Geneva Conventions) / Worked relatively well in conventional wars

Promoted political participation

Emphasized sustainable development

Despite failure@
Yugoslavia
Myanmar
Rwanda:
Allowed accountability mechanisms for genocides

Without accountability:
rights of victims jeopardized = endless cycles of violence

Monitoring human rights violations during peace negotiations @ Colombia

Sanctions against apartheid @ South Africa

What went wrong?

Achievements < Expectations / Several factors

Most important = conflict of interests: same duty bearers of rights are judges

Governments prioritized own power and fake stability over human rights

No accountability for deliberate violations

Discrimination = a global challenge (multifaceted)

Cultural relativism succeeded / denying universal standard applicable to all individuals in any place

How the West messed up?

Most harmful = double standards by governments justified by

- Democracy-security dilemma
- Nuanced approaches geopolitical challenges

Western governments selectively criticize or condemn human rights abuses based on interests

Justify /tolerate practices i.e. torture, arbitrary detention, or other practices by allies

Inconsistent responses to violations & violent conflicts

Immigration measures in violation of human rights

But it is not only the West !!

Ukraine, Syria,
Libya, Africa:

- Russia's deliberate and extensive attacks caused civilian deaths
- No reaction from Russia's allies in Global South

Global South /
Eastern bloc:

- Ill-treatment of prisoners
- Execution of civilians
- Deportations of children

They only blame the West for
double standards

Post October 7th / Gaza



West emphasized Israel's right to self defense / Unlimited support

Often Absurd / unable compel Israel to avoid large scale violations

Russia /Global South didn't condemn Hamas' violations before, during or after Oct 7

Genocidal statements by both Israeli & Palestinians / No reactions from Global South/East leaning countries

Implications

Gaza war: Coup de Grace to both legal & philosophical constructs



Deeper and long-lasting scars especially in MENA & parts of Europe



Collapse affects social cohesion in some EU countries / increasing migration MENA = rapidly growing Muslim population.



Perceptions of biased governments will affect integration of refugees and migrants



Contributes to feelings of alienation



Hinders migrants' association with a shared national identity



Increases social divisions

Implications

Feeling of danger among minorities/migrants leads to:

Social tension

Loss of trust in state institutions & law

Need to seek protection outside the system:

Exploited by extremist groups/ Islamists/far right

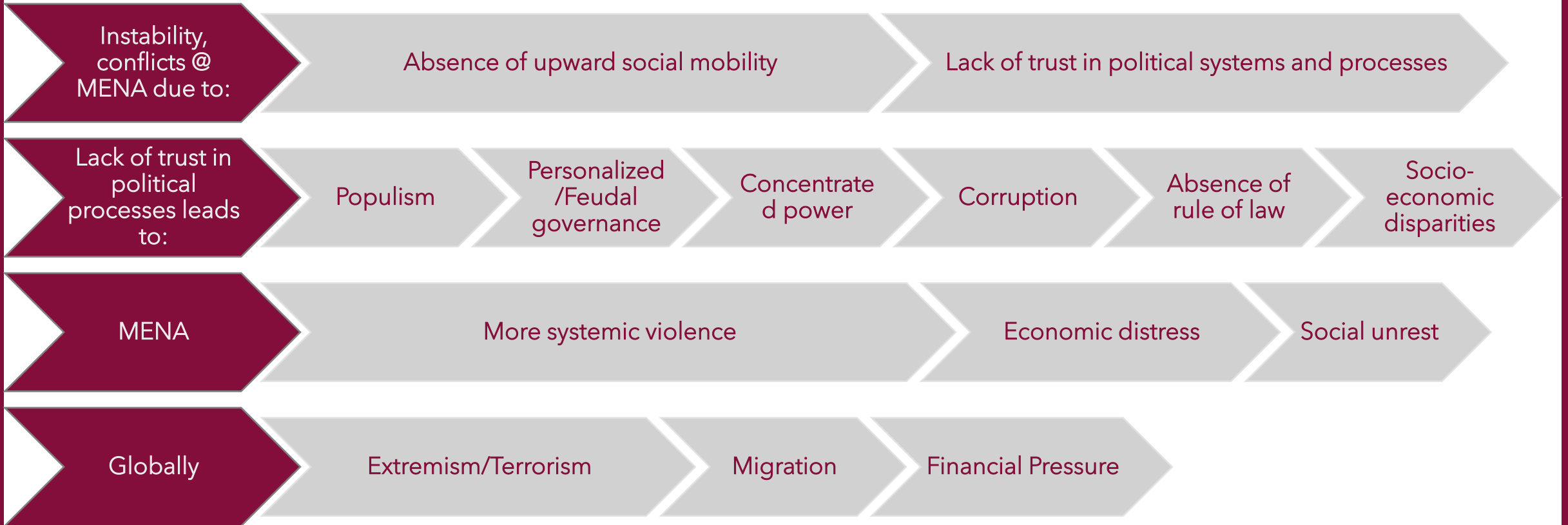
Mitigating risks:

Commitment to human dignity as a value underpinning legislation & political, social practices

Inclusive policies

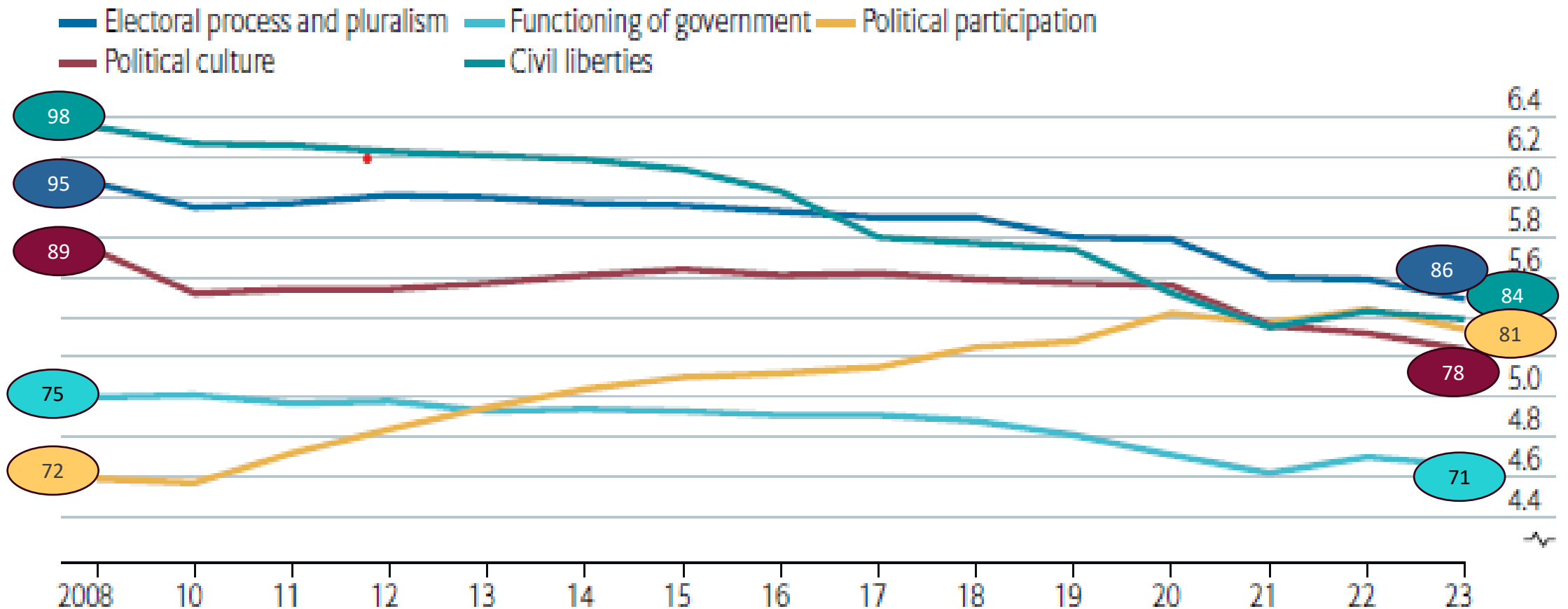
Addressing social inequities / perceived or real

Conclusion



Global Changes / The Economist Intel Unit

Democracy Index categories, 2008-23



Source: EIU.

In closing

Locally owned,
healthy, & robust
human rights
agenda to break
endless cycles of
violence

East, West &
Global South will
suffer if human
dignity is not
propelled to the
forefront of
international
relations

