

NON-DEMOCRATIC SYSTEMS: TYPES AND CHARACTERISTICS

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-abstract-

While studying political systems nowadays, science usually considers the characteristics of the democratic systems and the systems that transit from non-democratic to democratic. The overall impression is that very little attention is paid to studying the characteristics and the types of non-democratic systems. Such neglect of the characteristics and types of non-democratic systems contributes to the general public ignoring the danger of the rise of such systems. The rise of non-democratic systems in the last two decades in the world is evident and therefore it is important that the basic characteristics and types of non-democratic regimes are clearly elaborated. In that direction, this paper aims to define non-democratic systems, make a clear distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, and elaborate on the different types of authoritarian regimes. The paper also analyzes the rise of hybrid regimes and their difference from classic authoritarian regimes. Through such an elaboration of the non-democratic systems, the paper concludes that the non-democratic systems possess characteristics and values that are not compatible with the rule of law and the protection of human freedoms and rights, and therefore their progress represents a global threat and danger.

Keywords: *politics, political system, democracy, totalitarian regimes, authoritarian regimes, hybrid regimes, repression, human rights.*

I. INTRODUCTION

“Democracy is the worst form of government – except for all the others that have been tried“ is a famous quote by Winston Churchill in defining the meaning of democracy for humanity. And indeed, democracy is not the perfect form of government, but it is far better than communism, fascism, absolute monarchy, military regimes, theocracies, etc. However, mankind has had far more experience with non-democratic than with democratic systems. By using absolute sovereignty, absolute monarchs have been absolute masters for centuries, and limited power and the protection of human rights and freedoms were an unknown category. It was the rise of liberal ideology and democracy in the XVIII and XIX centuries that brought an end to the rule of absolute monarchs in most parts of the world. However, the rise of democracy did not lead to the end of undemocratic systems. On the contrary, the XX century witnessed the emergence of brutal totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. The victory over fascism, and especially the victory over communism, contributed to the euphoria that democracy is victorious in the battle with non-democratic systems and that it is the last stop in the development of forms of government. However, such euphoria is completely unjustified when it is considered that even today only 20

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percent of the world's population lives in consolidated democracies.¹ For the remaining 80 percent of the world's population, democracy is only an imagined ideal, and authoritarian and hybrid regimes are a reality. A reality that is filled with unlimited power, suppression and prohibition of political pluralism, unfair conditions for political competition and elections, as well as violation of human freedoms and rights

II. BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-DEMOCRATIC SYSTEMS

The reality in non-democratic systems is such because these systems are often defined as systems of the elite and the privileged in which political decisions are made either by a single individual, the elite, a junta, or an oligarchy.² In such systems, elections either do not exist or, on the other hand, represent only a farce in the election of political institutions. Therefore, theoreticians who define these systems through the analysis of electoral processes emphasize that non-democratic systems mean the theft of public office and powers.³ That is why the authorities in non-democratic systems believe that they are above the law and that they can act beyond constitutional constraints.⁴ When studying non-democratic systems, we should keep in mind that there is a great diversity between them. There are various classifications of non-democratic systems, but the simplest classification of non-democratic systems is based on the division between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. In totalitarian regimes ideology plays an important role in legitimizing the regime and there is a one-party system in which the regime party is strong and well organized and it is connected to the official ideology of the regime. As such, totalitarian regimes strives to mobilize the popular masses and to have total control of society (the boundary between state and society is abolished) in order to completely transform society and the state.

In authoritarian regimes, the main goal is for authoritarian authorities to stay in power as long as possible. In them, ideology does not play a significant role, and political parties may not exist, and if they do exist, they have no power and are not strictly organized as in totalitarian regimes. Additionally, the regime does not have total control over society (there is a boundary between the state and society), so a small degree of pluralism is allowed. Thus, the authoritarian regime actually aims to contribute to the demobilization of the popular masses in order to prevent organized resistance to the regime's survival. However, to get a clearer picture, detailed analysis of the general characteristics of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes is needed.

III. TOTALITARIAN REGIMES

When it comes to totalitarian regimes, we should keep in mind that such regimes appeared in the XX century and are often associated with fascist, Nazi, and communist regimes. Namely, it was Benito Mussolini and theoreticians associated with Italian fascism who coined the term '*totalitario*' in the early 1920s to describe a new type of state whose task was to lead Italy out of

¹ Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2023: Marking 50 Years in the Struggle for Democracy" 30 at https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/FIW_World_2023_DigitalPDF.pdf

² Natasha M. Ezrow and Erica Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 127.

the postwar crisis after World War I.⁵ The desire for a new type of state was soon perceived by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party in Germany, as well as by the Communist Party in the USSR.

The building of a new type of state should have led to a complete (total) transformation of human nature and current societies. That is why totalitarianism speaks of the abolition of democracy and the creation of a state that will influence every sphere of human existence, starting with the control of the economy, education, culture, religion, family, and private life. This means that within the framework of totalitarian regimes, there is no space for civil society or a market economy, and the state gets the right to decide on the most personal matters of the citizens, i.e. who they are married to, who they are friends with, what they will study, where they will work, how they spend their free time, etc. Practically, totalitarianism leaves no room for any organization outside the state because the boundary between the state and society is abolished. This is best understood from Benito Mussolini's quote "*All within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state*". The construction of such a state, which will completely control and organize every segment of individual and social life, is based on the values of a certain ideology that is closely related to the establishment of the totalitarian regime. This means that totalitarian regimes are firmly associated with a certain ideology and expect that the state, and therefore the whole society, should be organized according to the values of the specific ideology.⁶ Therefore, fascist totalitarian regimes are built on the values of fascist ideology, while communist totalitarian regimes are built on the elements of communist ideology. There is no space for elements from other ideologies because other ideologies are the ideologies of enemies and traitors.

This is the reason why in totalitarian regimes all political parties are banned except for the party that is associated with the official ideology of the totalitarian regime. Thus, totalitarian regimes create a one-party system and do not allow space for political pluralism. In them, the elections are either prohibited or they are a farce since they are one-party elections. As an example of one-party elections, we can take the communist regimes in which the Communist Parties presented a candidate, and the voter's task was simply to turn up at the polls and confirm the party's choice.⁷ We are talking about elections with one candidate without the possibility of choosing between several candidates. Certain communist regimes, in order to show a greater degree of openness in the organization of elections, introduced a measure of choice to their elections by allowing a choice of candidates from within the ruling party.⁸ Election were organized with several proposed candidates, but all candidates had to be members of the Communist Party. Although such elections allowed a certain competitive spirit, however, considering that it is a one-party election, it becomes clear that the elections are only a facade.

Practically, totalitarian regimes leave no possibility for a political organization outside the political party that is related to the ideology of the totalitarian regime. This is so because only these parties possess knowledge of the ideological values of the totalitarian regime. Hence, such parties have a major role in the creation and functioning of the totalitarian regime. The party in the totalitarian regimes is hierarchically and oligarchically organized and at the same time, it is completely intertwined with the state bureaucracy.⁹ This tells us that in totalitarian regimes the goal is to

⁵ Martin Palous, "Totalitarianism and Authoritarianism," In *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict Vol. 3*, ed. Lester Kurtz (Oxford: Elsevier, 2008), 2131

⁶ Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 3.

⁷ Rod Hague, Martin Harrop and John McCormick, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction – 10th Edition* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 282.

⁸ Hague, Harrop and McCormick, *Comparative Government and Politics*, 282.

⁹ Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 4.

achieve a complete amalgamation of the state and the party,¹⁰ that is, in such regimes, in addition to the abolition of the boundary between the state and society, there is also the abolition of the boundary between the state and the party.

A solid and well-organized party in totalitarian regimes is led by a strong leader, as well. In fact, the entire totalitarian regime is inseparable from its Führer/Duche.¹¹ By creating a cult of personality, the leader in such regimes is presented as a hero and God who possesses all the political wisdom and an unfailing judge of the national interest.¹² Simply, the leader is perceived as superhuman, and therefore all members of the society should have faith in their leaders' intuitions and follow their orders.¹³ Therefore, the cult implies that any form of criticism or opposition amounts to treachery or lunacy.¹⁴ On the contrary, totalitarian regimes expect complete loyalty, discipline, and sacrifice to the leader and the regime.

Totalitarian regimes achieve such loyalty, discipline, and sacrifice through the following ways:

- Through complete control of mass communications and their abuse for party propaganda and promotion of the leader. In such regimes, all media are controlled and are part of the propaganda machinery that aims to keep the political party and regime in power.
- Violence and terror towards dissenters and critics of the leader, the party, and the regime. Totalitarian regimes are always associated with brutal secret police that possesses excessive and unregulated power through which they curtail civil liberty and create a climate of fear and intimidation.¹⁵

Totalitarian regimes are therefore described as police states in which pressure, wiretapping, surveillance, detention, torture, prisons, labor, and concentration camps for dissenters and critics of the totalitarian regime are commonplace. In totalitarian regimes, in addition to critics and dissenters, the basis for violence and torture is the very belonging of individuals to a certain collective. This is the case with the Jews in Nazi Germany or the landowners in the USSR. We are talking about a degree and scale of violence and terror that cannot be observed in other types of non-democratic systems.

IV. AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

It is precisely the degree and scope of violence and terror that is one of the main differences between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Terror and propaganda may also be used in authoritarian regimes, but not to the same extent as in totalitarian regimes.¹⁶ Also, in authoritarian, unlike totalitarian regimes, there are either no political parties or, if they do exist, they are loosely organized and their power is small. Additionally, authoritarian regimes differ from totalitarian regimes in terms of the role of ideology and the desire for complete control of society. Namely, the role of ideology in authoritarian regimes is usually weak, and moreover, authoritarian regimes do not control the whole society but small degree of pluralism is allowed.¹⁷ Within authoritarian

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Florida: A Harvest Book Harcourt Brace and Company, 1973), 419.

¹¹ Sheldon S. Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 44

¹² Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 335.

¹³ Baradat and Phillips, *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact – Twelfth Edition*, 245.

¹⁴ Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 335.

¹⁵ Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 419.

¹⁶ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

regimes, we can observe the existence of civil society, the market economy, and sometimes even opposition organized in political parties. Such findings lead us to the question of why then authoritarian regimes are placed in non-democratic regimes together with totalitarian regimes. This is because authoritarian regimes are similar to totalitarian regimes in terms of their elitist rule, arbitrary use of political power, restriction of human freedoms and rights, as well as building relationships in society based on subordination and hierarchy.¹⁸

Within the framework of the theory, under the term *authoritarianism*, we can often find the definition that it is a question of government ‘from above’, in which authority is exercised regardless of popular consent.¹⁹ In fact, in authoritarian regimes, power is in the hands of an individual or a group, and citizens are excluded from politics. This means that in authoritarian regimes governance is never acquired through fair and democratic elections. On the contrary, support for such a rule is provided through two instruments: loyalty or repression.²⁰

Thus, within the framework of authoritarian regimes, a regime elite is created that is completely loyal to the authoritarian regime. In fact, the regime is administered and functions through this regime elite. It is the members of this elite who perform important services for the regime, such as mobilizing voters, rigging elections, threatening opposition members, and spying on the public.²¹ In that direction, the regime elite has an interest in the authoritarian leader and regime remaining in power because through the leader they get the opportunity to influence public policies, hold political positions, and acquire economic benefits. Practically, the authoritarian leader and regime acquire loyal supporters through patronage politics, clientelism, and corruption, and not through ideology as in totalitarian regimes.

In addition to a regime elite, authoritarian regimes create their business elite. Unlike totalitarian regimes in which the economy is controlled by the state, in authoritarian regimes there is a market economy, but economic flows are led by businessmen loyal to the regime who get the opportunity because of their loyalty to the leader to manage monopolies and lucrative business contracts.²² Thus, authoritarian regimes create their business oligarchs who are loyal to and under the control of the authoritarian leader. Through this, the authoritarian leader controls and directs the economic flows in the country.

The creation of a business oligarchy loyal to the authoritarian leader allows such businessmen to enter the media sector and create pro-regime media. This tells us that in authoritarian regimes the media sector is not fully controlled by the state, but through similar tactics as tactics in the field of economy, these regimes manage to prevent the emergence of strong independent and opposition media. Practically, in authoritarian regimes, criticism of the government is suppressed in the media, and censorship is practiced because the media are typically state-owned or controlled by groups connected to the ruling regime.²³ Here we should emphasize that the media plays an important role, as it serves as a vehicle for distributing personalist cult propaganda.²⁴

In addition to a certain amount of plurality in the economy and the media, and in order to show a certain openness in politics as well, authoritarian regimes often allow elections. However, in such regimes, elections are only a facade. Certain authoritarian regimes allow voting that looks more

¹⁸ Michael Curtis, *Totalitarianism* (New Jersey: Transaction, Inc, 1987), 71.

¹⁹ Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 121.

²⁰ Vinconze Bove and Jennifer Brauner, “The Demand for Military Expenditure in Authoritarian Regimes,” *Defence and Peace Economics* Vol 27 No 5 (2016): 613

²¹ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 57.

²² Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 257.

²³ Hague, Harrop and McCormick, *Comparative Government and Politics*, 60.

²⁴ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 223.

like a referendum rather than an actual election. As an example, we can take the elections in Iraq during the rule of Saddam Hussein, when the voters on the ballot by circling "yes" or "no" decided whether Saddam Hussein should remain in power in the coming years. It is interesting that in elections organized in this way, there is always a huge turnout rate and huge support for the rulers. Such a high turnout is the result of the fear that not turning out for elections could be interpreted as a move against authoritarian authorities.

On the other hand, in certain authoritarian regimes, opposition parties are allowed to participate in elections, but through electoral manipulations, pressures, and bribes, in fact, even before the start of the elections, it is known that the authoritarian leader and his party will win the elections. For this situation to be ensured in authoritarian regimes, the opposition candidates and the voters who might potentially support them are target to pressure and harassment.²⁵

In fact, elections are tools by which authoritarian regimes can discourage and co-opt the opposition, manage elites, enhance regime legitimacy, acquire foreign support, and gain information about the strength of the opposition movement.²⁶ Therefore, elections in authoritarian regimes are without a doubt a farce. Such elections are allowed because they do not pose a threat to the survival of the authoritarian regime. Elections do not pose a danger because authoritarian regimes, through a variety of repressive measures, come to terms with the individuals and groups that represent a real danger to the survival of the regime long before the elections. History is full of examples of how authoritarian regimes brutally treat potential rivals of the authoritarian leader through execution of possible rivals to give a lesson to others, forces them to resign, discredits them, and also have them to be arrested or hindered from leading an office.²⁷ In this way, authoritarian regimes, in addition to eliminating the dangers for their survival, also send a clear message to the rest of what will follow if they decide to criticize or question the authoritarian regime.

It is true that authoritarian regimes leave little room for pluralism and do not control the entire society in the spirit of totalitarian regimes. They indeed leave little space for the development of civil society, economic flows, and opposition. However, that should not fool us. These are brutal regimes that, if they feel threatened, use all means of repression to suppress critics and dissenters. To a greater or lesser extent, we can observe these characteristics in all authoritarian regimes. However, there is a big difference between authoritarian regimes in the way they are established, organized, and function. Therefore, when we talk about authoritarian regimes, we have to keep in mind that there are different types of authoritarian regimes. We usually divide such authoritarian regimes into authoritarian monarchies, personalized regimes, and military regimes. It is interesting that behind such authoritarian regimes, we can find also a certain geographic logic. Authoritarian monarchies are usually found in the Middle East, personalized regimes in Africa, and military regimes in South America and Asia.

1. Authoritarian monarchies

Authoritarian monarchies are defined as regimes in which a person of royal descent has inherited the position of head of state in accordance with accepted practice and/or the constitution.²⁸

²⁵ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 72.

²⁶ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 69.

²⁷ Kris A. Beck, "On Tyranny: The Political and Economic Characteristics of the Authoritarian Regime", *New England Journal of Political Science* Vol 5 No 1 (2010): 76.

²⁸ Michael Wahmana, Jan Teorell and Axel Hadeniusec, "Authoritarian regime types revisited: updated data in comparative perspective," *Contemporary Politics* Vol. 19, No. 1 (2013): 25.

Practically speaking, it is an absolute monarchy in which absolute monarchs possess unlimited power. Such unlimited authority results from the ruler being the representative of God. Therefore, the legitimacy of such power in the hands of a single person usually comes from a religious doctrine with the top religious leaders giving the approval for a monarch's right to rule.²⁹ This tells us that in such societies, besides tradition, religion also plays a big role. Therefore, in addition to absolute monarchies, such states are often described as theocracies. In addition to invoking tradition and religion, such regimes also persist through the construction of clientele networks necessary to secure the support of key sectors of the populace,³⁰ as well as a robust security apparatuses that is crucial to the durability of monarchies.³¹ Such regimes can afford all this because they are one of the richest countries in the world that have rich natural resources (mostly oil and gas).

We should also keep in mind that in such regimes, the members of the royal family have a special place. Practically, the members of the royal family create the regime elite and occupy key positions in politics, the economy, the military, the police, etc. Family ties create a tightly-knit ruling elite that, led by the monarch - decides who can participate in politics and determines the political rules of the game.³² In addition, the royal family typically controls succession.³³ Most often the throne is inherited by the king's eldest son, but there are also examples where members of the royal family choose a member of the royal line to succeed the king after his death. For example, in Saudi Arabia, although the king appoints the crown prince, such an appointment usually occurs after the king and the senior members of the royal family reach an agreement on who should take over the throne. This tells us that besides the king, the royal family also has a role in ruling.

Political parties and elections in such systems are either prohibited or represent only a facade. However, it is interesting to mention that the king in such regimes practices special consultative councils in which any member of the state can ask a question and highlight their problems. Such consultative councils create an image that people's voices are being heard.³⁴ Through this, the authoritarian leaders in such systems try to show a certain openness and accountability towards their citizens.

Today, such authoritarian monarchies can be observed in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Oman.

2. Personalized regimes

Personalized regimes represent some of the most brutal authoritarian regimes. This is so because in such regimes the power and distribution of power is in the hands of one certain individual.³⁵ Although such an individual is often part of the army or is the leader of a political party, neither the army nor the party has a role in the creation of policies and the composition of the regime's elite. On the contrary, the authoritarian leader in personalized regimes deliberately weaken parties and the military to prevent challenges to their rule.³⁶ Thus, in personalized regimes, the

²⁹ Gaspare M. Genna and Taeko Hiroi, *Exploring Politics [A Concise Introduction]* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publishing, 2022), 130.

³⁰ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 249.

³¹ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 252.

³² Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 244.

³³ Genna and Hiroi, *Exploring Politics [A Concise Introduction]*, 130.

³⁴ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 250.

³⁵ Gustav Liden, "Theories of Dictatorships: Sub-Types and Explanations," *Studies of Transition States and Societies* Vol 6 / Issue 1 (2014): 54

³⁶ Genna and Hiroi, *Exploring Politics [A Concise Introduction]*, 131.

authoritarian leader, whether military or civilian, controls all policy decisions and the selection of regime personnel.³⁷ Those are regimes in which we are talking about an excessive concentration of power in the hands of one individual. The power of an authoritarian leader is unlimited. Such excessive concentration of power and total unrestricted rule cause leaders in such regimes to often resort to extreme brutality and repression to stay in power. This is also the reason why leaders of personalized regimes are often described as the most ruthless leaders of all authoritarian leaders.³⁸ Therefore, the leader in personalized regimes is also known by the terms sultan, autocrat, tyrant, and dictator.

In exercising power, such an authoritarian leader is helped by a regime elite that is very small, arbitrarily chosen according to personal friendship, loyalty or ties of kinship.³⁹ That is why the members of the regime elite are directly chosen by the leader and are usually his close friends or members of his family. However, authoritarian leaders in personalized regimes are frequently more paranoid about their political futures than are their counterparts in other authoritarian regimes.⁴⁰ Therefore, in such regimes, individuals who are not completely loyal to the leader are often removed from the regime's elite through purges or execution. This leads members of the regime's elite to fear the leader and not to say what they really think, but to tell what the leader wants to hear.⁴¹ Thus, those who surround authoritarian leader in personalist regimes give them endless flattery and positive feedback, such that personalist leader “frequently engage in self-delusional fantasies.”⁴² This is precisely why leaders of personalized regimes are ruling with extreme freedom, allowing for eccentric policies.⁴³ As an example, we can point out the decision of Muammar Gaddafi who, during his personalized regime in Libya, decided to change the names of the calendar months and introduce new names for them. Such extravagant policies are possible because the power of an authoritarian leader is unlimited. The situation in which all power is concentrated in the hands of the leader allows an authoritarian leader to get whatever the leader wants.

Similar to other authoritarian regimes, in personalized regimes the leader is maintained in power through the use of fear and rewards. However, what is specific about personalized regimes is that in such regimes even the slightest internal dissent is usually not tolerated.⁴⁴ It is precisely in such authoritarian regimes that we can observe the most brutal and atrocious murders of dissenters. Brutality and repression that cannot be seen in other authoritarian regimes.

What is also specific to personalized regimes is that the size of the patronage network is typically kept as small as possible, with resources distributed to select individuals of critical importance to the leader's survival.⁴⁵ Additionally, the decision about which individuals will be rewarded rests solely with the leader in a personalized regime. There is no institutional control. Such freedom of the leader in the disposal of resources allows the leaders in such regimes through corruption to increase their wealth.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 235.

³⁹ Jeroen Van den Bosch, “Personalism: A type or characteristic of authoritarian regimes?,” *Politologicka Revue* 1 (2015): 14.

⁴⁰ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 219.

⁴¹ Van den Bosch, “Personalism: A type or characteristic of authoritarian regimes?,” 12.

⁴² Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 159.

⁴³ Van den Bosch, “Personalism: A type or characteristic of authoritarian regimes?,” 13.

⁴⁴ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 221.

⁴⁵ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 222.

Since the entire regime is created around the authoritarian leader, the creation of a cult of the leader occupies a special place in personalized regimes. Control of the media and propaganda have the task of contributing to the citizens of the country to blindly trust the leader and follow his policies without question, and in addition, images of the leader pervade society, and objects that glorify the leader are omnipresent.⁴⁶

Put in this way, personalized regimes comparatively manage to stay in power for the longest period of time compared to other authoritarian regimes. Here we have to take into account that most often the fall of the authoritarian leader in personalized regimes comes through violence (coup d'état, revolution, foreign military intervention), and in addition, the fall or death of the authoritarian leader also means the fall of the entire regime. As examples of personalized authoritarian regimes, we can take the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, and Milton Obote in Uganda.

3. Military regimes

Military regimes as a type of authoritarian regime occur in a situation where the military carries out a military coup overthrows the civilian authorities, and takes political power into its own hands. Practically, military regimes are defined as systems in which a group of high-ranking officers hold power, determine who will steer the country, and exercise influence over policy.⁴⁷ These are regimes in which the military elite controls political power. This tells us that it is not enough for the leader of the regime to be part of the army, but in order to establish a military regime, it is also necessary for the regime's elite to be connected with the army. Moreover, the organization of military regimes tends to reflect the organization of the army itself, i.e. just as most militaries are cohesive and disciplined units that are tightly organized, military regimes have a clear and respected hierarchical structure.⁴⁸ Considering that the army is not a symbol of freedom but much more of discipline and repression, then it is quite expected that military regimes are quite repressive and brutal. That is why after the implementation of the military coup, in the military regime normal political and constitutional arrangements are usually suspended, and institutions through which opposition can be expressed, such as elected assemblies and a free press, are either weakened or abolished.⁴⁹ In that direction, military regimes in their pure form do not allow any political parties or opposition.⁵⁰ However, we should keep in mind that there is great diversity among military regimes as well.

Primarily, we should bear in mind that in certain military regimes the leader of the regime is typically a current or former military officer, but in some cases a group of military officers holds the power - junta.⁵¹ In fact, the junta represents a form of collective military government centred on a command council of officers who usually represent the three armed services: the army, navy and air force.⁵²

However, we must bear in mind that even when the power is in the hands of an individual military person and not a group of military persons, such an individual remains in power thanks to the support of the military. This is precisely what distinguishes military regimes from personalized regimes.

⁴⁶ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 223.

⁴⁷ Genna and Hiroi, *Exploring Politics [A Concise Introduction]*, 131.

⁴⁸ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 167.

⁴⁹ Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 127.

⁵⁰ Van den Bosch, "Personalism: A type or characteristic of authoritarian regimes?," 24.

⁵¹ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 166.

⁵² Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 127.

We should also bear in mind that military regimes can be classified according to their role. Thus, in theory, a distinction is made between a military regime-arbiter and a military regime-ruler. In the case of a military regime-arbiter, the military takes the power through a military coup, but is willing to return to the barracks after disputes are settled.⁵³ The main motivation for the military coup is to resolve certain issues/crises, and after the crisis is resolved, the military arbitrarily surrenders power and returns to the barracks. On the other hand, the military regime-ruler after a military coup has no desire to hand over power and return to the barracks but wants to maximize time in power, convinced that military rule is the only alternative to political disorder.⁵⁴

Regardless of whether we analyze the military regime-arbiter or the military regime-ruler, we can easily notice that in both cases the emergence and existence of the military regime is connected with a certain previous crisis and disorder. This tells us that military regimes usually occur in countries with economic problems, weak legitimacy of civilian authorities, as well as a clash between military and civilian authorities regarding the basic goals and values of the order.⁵⁵ Simply, the military decides to take the power because it considers civilian politicians as incompetent and dangerous to stability.⁵⁶

However, data show that out of all authoritarian regimes, military regimes have the shortest duration. This is because military regimes are known for their very low level of legitimacy and are usually temporary solutions to acute state disorder.⁵⁷ Most of the time the army promises to give back power to the civilians, but when they delay or decide to cling on to power popular dissent rises.⁵⁸ On the other hand, military regimes that are led by an individual (a general), if the power increases during the military regime, it can easily be abolished and transformed into personalized regimes of the general. This was exactly the case in Chile, where General Pinochet, with the help of the army, succeeded in establishing a military regime through a military coup, but later transformed it into a classic personalized regime. In addition to the example in Chile, we can notice other examples of military regimes in Brazil in the period from 1964 – 1985, Honduras in the period from 1972 – 1981, Argentina in the period from 1976 – 1983, Turkey in the period from 1980 – 1983, Greece in the period from 1967 до 1974, etc.

V. DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE RISE OF HYBRID REGIMES

The second half of the XX century led to the fall of the many military regimes in South America, Spain, Portugal, and Greece, as well as the fall of the communist regimes in the world. The Arab Spring, also, led to the fall of authoritarian regimes during the XXI century. However, specifically, the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was seen as a victory of democracy over the non-democratic systems. A signal for such a victory was the fact that such post-communist and post-authoritarian states, after the fall of their non-democratic regimes, began the process of democratization (a transition from authoritarianism to liberal democracy). Citizens in post-communist and post-authoritarian states enthusiastically entered into the process of building democracy in their societies, expecting a system based on constitutionally limited government, the rule of law, human freedoms and rights, fair, free, and plural elections, civil society, and economic progress. However,

⁵³ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 7.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 128.

⁵⁶ Ezrow and Frantz, *Dictators and Dictatorships Understanding Authoritarian Regimes and Their Leaders*, 7

⁵⁷ Van den Bosch, "Personalism: A type or characteristic of authoritarian regimes?," 24.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

building a democratic society in post-communist and post-authoritarian countries has proven to be a long and arduous process. The term *transition* instead of a bright future began to symbolize grayness and uncertainty. Thus, instead of consolidated democratic societies, most of the post-communist and post-repressive societies in their search for democracy ended up with corruption, weak and dysfunctional institutions, partitocracy, fragile civil society, violations of human freedoms and rights, military conflicts and bad economic condition. That is why enthusiasm for democracy in such societies was replaced by disappointment.

Such disappointment among the citizens of post-communist and post-authoritarian countries has led to a new rise in authoritarianism, but this time known as hybrid regimes. Often for such systems despite the term hybrid regimes, we also come across the terms illiberal democracies and competitive authoritarianism. These are regimes that are in the gray zone between democratic systems and classical non-democratic regimes because in such regimes electoral democracy operates alongside weak checks and balances, and the routine intimidation of oppositional force.⁵⁹ Such regimes cannot fit into a consolidated democracy because they show little respect for the 'liberal' aspects of liberal democracy; those that are designed to uphold limited government, such as protections for individual and minority rights, media freedom, the rule of law, and institutional checks and balances,⁶⁰ but, on the other hand, they cannot be placed in classic authoritarian regimes either, because, unlike those where opposition political parties are banned or repressed, in the hybrid regimes constitutional channels exist through which opposition groups compete in a meaningful way for executive power.⁶¹

That means that in such systems there is even a certain dose of uncertainty in terms of who will be the winner of the elections. This is because elections are held regularly and opposition parties can open offices, recruit candidates, organize campaigns, and politicians are rarely exiled or imprisoned.⁶² The elections are organized with the participation of multiple political parties through the use of universal, equal, secret, and direct suffrage. Formally, the elections fulfill all criteria to be characterized as democratic. However, the substantive analysis reveals that in such systems the elections are far from democratic. This is the case because in such systems we are talking about organizing elections marked by unfair and unequal terrain for competition. Such creation of unequal terrain for competition between the ruling political parties and the opposition political parties can be observed through several aspects.

- Primarily, the ruling political elites are united around a populist leader, while the opposition political parties are divided;
- The ruling political parties use state institutions and budget funds for party purposes.
- Clientelistic functioning of the ruling political elites by providing their party members and supporters with jobs in the public administration, obtaining public tenders and contracts, as well as systematically lowering taxes or increase spending before elections (subventions, scholarships, etc.) in order to attract as many voters as possible.⁶³ Practically, through such clientelistic policies, the ruling political elites subtly bribe the voters.
- The ruling political elites in the confrontation with their political opponents use one type of "legal repression". Such "legal repression" implies technically correct application of the

⁵⁹ Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 123.

⁶⁰ Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 88.

⁶¹ Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 7.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Michalik, *Multiparty Elections in Authoritarian Regimes: Explaining their Introduction and Effects*, 29.

law, but its use is selective and partisan rather than universal.⁶⁴ Practically, political opponents are constantly under the pressure of inspections, audits, and investigations, which on the one hand are formally and legally justified, but on the other hand, are tendentious and purposeful. On the other hand, the institutions remain blind and silent about the abuses and crimes of the supporters of the ruling political elites. This tells us that the judicial system is not independent and is under the influence of the ruling political elites.

- Control of the media expressed by members of the ruling political elites dominating media coverage. The leading figure dominates media coverage, using television to trumpet what are often real achievements in office.⁶⁵ Independent media are allowed to exist, but such media are frequently threatened, attacked, and – in some cases – suspended or closed.⁶⁶
- Beside the control of the media, the ruling political parties also try to control and limit criticism of their governance. That is why opposition politicians, independent judges, journalists, human-rights activists, and other government critics are subject to harassment, arrest, and – in some cases – violent attack.⁶⁷

Practically within the framework of hybrid regimes, we can observe soft and subtle forms of pressure, as well as the bribery of voters through the use of clientelistic policies. Through the creation of an unequal and unfair playing field within the framework of hybrid regimes, the role of the ruling political elites is strengthened, and the political opposition parties tend to be weak and fragmented. In other words, competition is real but unfair.⁶⁸ Such a situation contributes to the fact that the ruling political parties do not need major election manipulations on election day. Election day in such systems usually passes peacefully because the ruling political elites manipulation is done a subtly way and long before the electoral day. Such subtle manipulations are possible because in hybrid regimes there is pressure on the free media and the rule of law and the independent judiciary are constantly being undermined.

Here we have to emphasize that measuring such subtle manipulations and forms of pressure is very difficult. Such a situation, supplemented by the fact that in hybrid regimes there is still a certain uncertainty about the outcome of the elections, contributes to the opposition participating in the elections and the work of political institutions. With that, the opposition political parties fall into the trap of the ruling political parties, because by participating in the elections, they contribute to confirming the legitimacy of the ruling political elites.⁶⁹ Thus, the legitimacy of the ruling political elites is confirmed through elections, even though they are unfair elections in which there is a high degree of predictability as to who will be the winner. Therefore, some theoreticians call such systems competitive authoritarianism, considering that such systems offer an excellent opportunity for authoritarian leaders to reap the fruits of electoral legitimacy without running the risks of democratic uncertainty.⁷⁰

We should keep in mind that the rise of such hybrid regimes comes at a time when we are talking about a crisis of democracy and the rise of authoritarian values in the world. Research shows that starting from 2005, for 17 years in a row, in a large number of countries, democratic values

⁶⁴ Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 9.

⁶⁵ Hague, Harrop and McCormick, *Comparative Government and Politics*, 283.

⁶⁶ Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 8.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Michalik, *Multiparty Elections in Authoritarian Regimes: Explaining their Introduction and Effects*, 24.

⁶⁹ Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 3.

⁷⁰ Michalik, *Multiparty Elections in Authoritarian Regimes: Explaining their Introduction and Effects*, 23.

experienced a setback instead of progress.⁷¹ Autocrats have created a more favourable international environment for themselves over the past decade and a half, empowered by their own political and economic might as well as waning pressure from democracies.⁷² Unlike the XX century, in the XXI century, it is becoming evident that authoritarian regimes manage to compete economically with democratic systems. In that direction persists the fact that if current growth rates persist, by 2023 the share of global income held by countries that possess authoritarian political systems, such as China, Russia and Saudi Arabia, will surpass the share held by Western liberal democracies.⁷³ Thus, in such authoritarian regimes, instead of acting as the traditional bastion of democracy, the educated middle class, benefiting from improved living standards, has often provided authoritarian regimes with crucial support.⁷⁴ Such fact, supplemented by the failed transitions to democracy after the Arab Spring in North Africa and the Middle East, as well as the growth of hybrid regimes in post-communist countries gives us the answer to why so far in the XXI century the number of overthrown non-democratic systems is decreasing, whereas the number of the authoritarian and hybrid regimes is increasing worldwide.

And while non-democratic regimes are experiencing political and economic progress in Western consolidated democracies there is dissatisfaction with the functioning of liberal democracy. A large percentage of the population in such countries see politicians as alienated and distant representatives who lead wrong policies without vision and do not have the capacity to ‘deliver the goods’ by affecting people’s lives and to bring about meaningful economic and social change.⁷⁵ The perception that "everyone is the same" and that mainstream politicians live in an imaginary bubble completely separated from the needs and concerns of ordinary citizens leads to reduced political participation⁷⁶ and the rise of radical-right populist parties in consolidated democracies.⁷⁷ This is worrying because even in the most democratic countries in the world, although they are not dominant political forces, political options that seek to subvert safeguards on executive power, such as institutional checks and balances, judicial independence and the rule of law⁷⁸ have been experiencing a rise.

To all this, we should add that the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant negative effect on democracy in the world. In fact, the Covid-19 pandemic hit the fundamental foundations of a democratic society because the fight against the Covid-19 virus by declaring a state of emergency contributed to violation of human freedoms and rights, marginalizing parliaments and increasing the power of executive government. Already at the end of 2020, certain studies noted that the fight against Covid-19 causes discrimination against minorities, violations of fundamental rights (non-derogable rights), excessive use of force, absence of a time limit for emergency measures, limitations on the legislature’s ability to constrain the executive, official disinformation

⁷¹ Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2023," 3.

⁷² Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2022: The Global Expansion of Authoritarian Rule," 3 at https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/FIW_2022_PDF_Booklet_Digital_Final_Web.pdf

⁷³ Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 122.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 465.

⁷⁶ In the 60s of the XX century 15 percent of the European population belonged to certain political parties while, today this number is under 5 percent of the European population. In terms of election turnout there is an evident decrease as well. On the European continent the turnout in the last 50 years has decreased by as much as 17 percent. Ingrid van Biezen и Thomas Poguntke, "The decline of membership-based politics," *Sage Journal Party Politics* (2014): 2.

⁷⁷ The rise of the populist parties in Europe is from 2 percent of the votes in the parliamentary elections in 1980, through 10 percent in 2000, to almost 20 percent of the votes in the parliamentary elections in 2016 and 2017. Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 267.

⁷⁸ Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 251.

campaigns, and restrictions on media freedom.⁷⁹ In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic caused major problems in the implementation of the elections. The challenge faced by a large number of countries was how and whether to hold elections in a state where health measures are active that make it difficult to organize election campaigns and the elections themselves. This led to the postponement of the elections in a large part of the states or to hold them in extremely difficult circumstances, which caused a low turnout in the elections.

Thus, in certain democratic countries, the Covid-19 pandemic was used to erode democratic institutions, while, on the other hand, in non-democratic regimes, such a pandemic was only an excuse for even greater control of societies by repressive political elites. In addition, the Covid-19 virus was used by non-democratic states to gain global sympathy through the promotion of vaccine diplomacy. For instance, China, India, and Russia have championed the so-called “vaccine diplomacy” as means of amassing goodwill in the developing world and developing “soft power.”⁸⁰ Practically, the non-democratic regimes within the framework of domestic politics used Covid-19 to further strengthen the position of the ruling elites and suppress the opposition, while, on the other hand, on international level through vaccine diplomacy, they used the Covid-19 pandemic to spread their geopolitical influence in the developing countries.

VI. CONCLUSION

All this tells us that, today the fight against non-democratic regimes is becoming far more complex and difficult. Often, non-democratic regimes are hidden behind democratic platitudes and promises of economic prosperity. It is evident that the world is changing and the shift in global power, from the US-led West to Asia in particular, has not only diminished the USA’s willingness and ability to promote democracy elsewhere, but also tarnished the US political and economic model.⁸¹ Also, the failure of the democratization processes in the post-communist countries, as well as the countries of North Africa and the Middle East affected by the Arab Spring, is used by the protagonists of non-democratic regimes. Additionally, the political world appears to be dominated by a new style of leader – the ‘strongman’.⁸² In this way, one gets the impression that non-democratic regimes are in a better position than democratic ones. And, the numbers confirm that. Therefore, in an era of the political and economic rise of non-democratic regimes in the world, it is even more important to highlight and elaborate on the characteristics of non-democratic systems, because through this the danger of their rise can be perceived.

The basic division of non-democratic systems comes down to totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Although there is a difference between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in terms of the role of ideology, the degree of control of society, as well as in the dose of repression and the dose of allowed plurality, there is no doubt that in both of them, there is repression, violation of human freedoms and rights and suppression of pluralism. Certain differences can also be observed in authoritarian regimes, however, regardless of the differences, authoritarian monarchies, personalized regimes, and military regimes are characterized by suppression of opposition, repression, and violation of human rights and freedoms.

⁷⁹ V-Dem Institute, “Autocratization Turns Viral: Democracy Report 2021,” 10 at https://www.v-dem.net/documents/12/dr_2021.pdf

⁸⁰ Joseph Amankwah-Amoah and Robert E. Hinson, “COVID-19 pandemic, vaccine nationalism and counterfeit products: Discourse and emerging research themes,” *Thunderbird International Business Review* (2022): 599.

⁸¹ Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 123.

⁸² Heywood, *Politics – Fifth Edition*, 333.

Unlike classic authoritarian regimes, hybrid regimes present a more complicated story. Such regimes cannot be placed under consolidated democracies because they do not adhere to liberal values such as the protection of human freedoms and rights, protection of minority rights, freedom of media, rule of law, and institutional check and balances, but on the other hand, they can neither be placed under the authoritarian regimes because, unlike those in which the opposition political parties are banned or repressed, hybrid regimes enable the existence of opposition political parties that compete in the election to win power. Therefore, hybrid regimes are an excellent way to disguise authoritarian governments. Such fact, supplemented by the fact that the sympathies towards authoritarian and firm leaders are growing worldwide, are issues that will have to be seriously addressed in the coming decade, in order to stop the rise of the authoritarian and hybrid regimes and to restore the faith in democracy. Such faith in democracy should be restored not because democracy is the perfect form of government, but because it is the only form of government that allows space for the promotion and protection of human freedoms and rights.

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