



AUTHORITARIANISM: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

AUTORYTARYZM: REORIENTACJA I CIĄGŁOŚĆ W PERSPEKTYWIE GLOBALNEJ

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— ABSTRACT —

The article analyzes the specificity and distinctiveness of authoritarian regimes operating in a global network of complex and multidimensional international relations. The author of the article asks the question: to what extent the dynamically changing paradigm of authoritarian ideology is responsible for the occurrence of various types of tensions, rivalries, and antagonisms caused by authoritarian regimes, the effects and consequences of which affect not only national and regional political conditions but also cause severe international repercussions? The applied research method allows exposing the complex particularity of authoritarian regimes in the context of the multidimensional dynamics of recent geopolitical changes. It is crucial when a number of modern ideological trends often downplay the brutal nature of many authoritarian systems and even treat the “authoritarian model” – especially in the form of socialist autocracies – as a “specific historical phenomenon” trying to resolve many complex and multiple political and economic issues.

— ABSTRAKT —

Podstawowym celem artykułu jest ukazanie specyfiki reżimów autorytarnych działających w globalnej sieci zawiłych i wielowymiarowych stosunków międzynarodowych. Autor artykułu stawia pytanie: w jakim stopniu dynamicznie zmieniający się paradygmat ideologii autorytaryzmu jest odpowiedzialny za występowanie różnego rodzaju napięć, rywalizacji i antagonizmów wywoływanych przez reżimy autorytarne, których skutki i konsekwencje dotyczą nie tylko narodowych i regionalnych uwarunkowań politycznych, ale także wywołują poważne reperkusje międzynarodowe? Zastosowana metoda badawcza pozwala wyeksponować złożoną specyfikę reżimów autorytarnych w kontekście wielowymiarowej dynamiki współczesnych przemian geopolitycznych. Ma to kluczowe znaczenie w przypadku, gdy wiele współczesnych trendów ideologicznych często bagatelizuje barbarzyński charakter wielu systemów autorytarnych, a nawet traktuje „model autorytarny” – zwłaszcza w wydaniu autokracji socjalistycznych – jako „specyficzne zjawisko historyczne”, próbujące rozwiązać wiele złożonych i wielorakich kwestii politycznych i gospodarczych.

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Słowa kluczowe: autorytaryzm; reżim polityczny; demokracja; postkomunizm; dyktatura; rządy prawa

INTRODUCTION

Since *Homo sapiens* began to live in the earliest forms of settled communities, most of them dwelt and functioned in the reality of authoritarian political systems. Still, various types of authoritarian constitutional configurations currently rule in more than 40 percent of countries worldwide. Historically, virtually all international wars up to the end of World War I were fought with the participation of authoritarian states. Also, more than two-thirds of civil wars and local armed conflicts since World War II had broken out in states under authoritarian rule. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, authoritarian regimes have been responsible for almost 85 percent of the mass killings committed at the despotic government's behest. In other words, various types of authoritarian systems respond to and directly affect the lives and deaths of billions worldwide. Thus, they are becoming a serious challenge faced by the entire international community as well as its decision-makers.

In this context, it is essential to present the specificity of contemporary authoritarian political regimes, their diversity, the ability to adapt to specific socio-political conditions, the possibility of acting in the global reality of international relations, and the critical requirements as factors that support them. The reason is that most academic analyses of the political systems of modern countries focus on democratic regimes. However, much less is known about the complexity of the authoritarian rule. In fact, authoritarian systems are not only very different from democracies but also from each other. Consequently, the above differences have severe implications for local civil societies in individual countries and significantly affect the sphere of international security.

While some authoritarian regimes are the source of violent armed conflicts, many others maintain friendly, good-neighborly relations and show a high level of administrative efficiency, which translates into a dizzying standard of living in their society. Paradoxically, the fastest technologically developed countries are currently ruled by various autocratic regimes (Middle East countries, China, "Asian Tigers", etc.). However, other autocracies are among the worst managed states in the current world. Some authoritarian regimes apply a policy of equalizing income

in their political and economic practice. Other autocracies have raised social and economic inequalities, often to absurd levels. In this sense, political theories that treat all authoritative systems as the same cannot grasp and unravel the fundamental problems of the essence of authoritarianism and its role in the dynamically changing reality of the global world. Unfortunately, the limited understanding of the phenomenon and the problem of how authoritarian regimes function hinders international institutions' ability to influence and negotiate with them.

While there is extensive literature on specific authoritarian systems, only a few studies undertake comparative research based on empirical evidence. There are also some attention-grabbing monographs and articles on the theory of authoritarian regimes, but few findings are firmly embedded in the actual reality of the modern world. Thus, little is known about why some authoritarian regimes establish stable governments while others suffer chronic and destabilizing political upheavals while remaining in a fragile state. Nor is much known why some authoritarian regimes create quasi-democratic political institutions and can engage their community while enjoying a high level of political legitimacy, and others do not. Some autocracies prefer a wide-ranging program of redistribution of material resources based on the "common good" – others, in contrast, concentrate and distribute the wealth around a small group of regime supporters. Why do some regimes last for many decades and many fail over a brief period? In other words, little is known about how authoritarianism work and – sometimes – why it does not work.

However, by approving the façade of quasi-democratic structures of the power apparatus and the rhetoric typical of democratic systems, authoritarian regimes often strive for the legitimacy of their governments, both at the national, regional, and international levels. In authoritarian regimes, identifying falsified and phony – albeit diverse and often successful forms of state management – is essential in dissociating from the traditional, so-called "binary" typology that contrasts democratic political systems with "politically incorrect" authoritarian regimes. In this context, it becomes justified to pose challenging questions about the disappointments related to the ineffectiveness of management presented by democratic governments, often constrained by ineffective state administration procedures and shallow rhetoric of the political elite "in power". Consequently, this leads to the constitution and popularization of numerous authoritarian-autocratic regimes promoting populist ideas of political casuistry, radical solutions, and often trivialized as well as populist strategies to manage the state (Svolik, 2013, pp. 8–10).

In the literature on the subject, however, two currents of interpretation of the concept of authoritarianism and the political systems related to them prevail. (1) The first tendency can be defined as a methodological concept where authoritarians are analyzed concerning political processes in their ideological, historical, economic and social, international, civilization, or religious context. In other words, the so-called “comparative-explanatory trend” prefers a “comprehensive” approach. It focuses on the premises of the genesis and development of authoritarian ideologies, as well as their ideological impact on political and social changes in the local, regional, and global dimensions. In this case, much emphasis is placed on a critical and explanatory analysis of the impact of the above factors on the nature of the relationship between bureaucratic and authoritarian entities in authoritarian states and less emphasis on critical studies or controversial assessments of the effects that have occurred. (2) Secondly, the interpretive trend – emphasizing the attitude of disapproval and negation towards authoritarian systems – is based on the a priori adoption of the paradigm that defines the bureaucratic and despotic style, as well as the systemic nature of the authoritarian rule. In this case, the exposition of destructive and non-conformist facts and events is intended to suggest an utterly negative assessment of authoritarian regimes. Though, negative disapproval of all sorts of authoritarianism does not go through too profoundly into the situational context of particular historical and socio-political conditions. It focuses more on the comparative method of searching for external analogies and parallelisms between various models of authoritarian regimes.

The research methodology used in the article is in line with the first interpretive trend (comparative-explanatory trend). The main goal of these analyses is to present the genesis, specificity, and ideological assumptions of authoritarian systems, as well as the aspirations of their apologists and promoters. In the context of the above considerations, the political praxis is of fundamental importance, i.e., the adaptability of the particular authoritarian regimes, as well as their effectiveness in dealing with various types of controversial conflict situations (national security strategy), as well as socio-political and economic problems, which – in many cases – determines their systemic efficiency, effectiveness, and efficiency. After all, the functional efficacy of authoritarian regimes is a condition for the legitimacy of their power, both at the local and international levels.

Hence, when analyzing authoritarian power systems, attention should also be paid to the vital role of the political ideology approved by a given governmental regime. It is a condition for endorsing appropriate forms used to legitimize the

authoritarian strategies to maintain order and control in the state. It is especially vital concerning the contemporary erosion of democratic political systems. And so, it is the main topic of the first part of the discussion. In the next part of the article, attention is focused on the issues of systemic conditions characteristic of modern authoritarian regimes, the visible growth of the so-called authoritarian “soft power”, and the contemporary context of political changes of global importance. It is essential to understand the specifics of the authoritarian regimes operating in the world, their complexity, diversity, and the manner of implementing their political action strategy. However, the issue of autocratic elements present in democratic systems of power and its implications for determining the implementation of the national *raison d'état* on international politics is also of significant importance.

To sum up, the above article ends with a conclusion summarizing the issues raised to draw the findings and conclusions on assessing the role and place of contemporary authoritarian regimes based on the complex sphere of international relations in the modern-day world.

AUTHORITARIANISM AND DEMOCRATIC EROSION OF POLITICAL PRACTICE

Although even the above figures seem to be controversial, based on official UN statistics, there were 194 sovereign states globally at the beginning of 2022. Undoubtedly, the concept of “state” is associated with many interpretations, comments, and conclusions regarding its definition (Branka & Janczak, 2015, pp. 23–48; Svolik, 2013). However, even with the most original and eccentric approach to the issue of statehood, especially in the context of fragile states, in this case, one cannot do without analyzing its fundamental attribute, which is the political system conditioning the functioning of state administrative structures (Alvarez et al., 1996).

Nevertheless, the most widespread political regime in human history is authoritarianism. In the case of dictatorship and autocracy, authoritarianism is a political regime profoundly rooted and in force in many modern countries of the world (e.g., Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Transcaucasia countries, China, Cameroon, Tunisia, Venezuela, etc., though the above list seems to be much longer) (Przeworski, 2019). Essentially, the authoritarianism of political regimes and the autocratic nature of particular power systems are determined by many

different reasons: among others, historical considerations, the specific mentality of the citizens living in its territory, culture, traditions, religious preferences, etc.

Also, in the case of many post-communist countries, such as Poland, many researchers of the subject believe that the historical legacy (the period of the partitions as well as the influence of communist ideology in the post-war period) undoubtedly induced the functioning of the present political system, where authoritarian tendencies can be observed in many respects. In conditions where the society of the country has been “plucked” by force from the traditional socio-cultural environment cherishing the legacy of an independent and sovereign state and placed for many years of occupation in a decidedly hostile environment, it seems pretty possible and justifiable (Howard, 2003, pp. 31–55; Jaskiernia, 2019; Fernandez, 2020).

In this context, the issues of balance and interrelationships between democratic systems and authoritarianism, the issue of systemic transformation, as well as the possibilities of reforming an authoritarian society have not yet been sufficiently explored, making the above article topical. The study of such a complex structural finding thus seems to crystallize through its exhaustive formulation. The universal and comprehensive concept of authoritarianism as a form of most current fragile states’ political regimes is offered by many contemporary researchers of the problem. In this respect, authoritarianism is understood as a form of political system, the specific nature of government structures, where political power is concentrated in the hands of one politician or a small group of people (Svolik, 2013; Fyderek, 2011).

In this sense, authoritarianism is not only a political system but, at the same time, a particular form of the state system characterized by a set of peculiar social features inherent in both political culture and mass consciousness (Morelock, 2018; Moghaddam, 2019, pp. 49–97). In this sense, the specificity of authoritarianism is characterized by the following features:

First, it is a hallmark of many political cultures worldwide where people alienate and distance themselves from political power. Its consequence is an almost complete monopolization of the political sphere. The power carrier in such a society is either one charismatic person (autocracy) or a party (a “partocracy” forming the oligarchic system of people “holding power”). Former one-party communist regimes can be an excellent example of authoritarian one-person rule. An interesting exemplum here is also the political regime of Juan Domingo Perón, formed in Argentina in the years 1946–1955. The authoritarian ideology promoted by Perón, as well as his personal charisma, contributed to the

emergence of a new political doctrine based on the idea of “justicism” (social justice), nationalism (striving to build a “great Argentina”), and the “third way” between capitalism and communism. As president, he introduced many social, economic, and fiscal reforms that improved the welfare of the poorest, developed local production, as well as strengthened Argentina’s solid and stable position in the world. In the initial phase, however, the socially legitimate so-called “new military government”, unable to cope with its various economic and social tasks, gradually – albeit more and more radically – gravitated towards tyranny and violence. Moreover, this kind of political strategy had become the method and recipe for maintaining power in the state (James, 1988).

Secondly, governing the state based on the paradigm typical of the military-political junta is supported by a fossilized and formalistic ideological base with a different assortment, albeit non-codified legal and formal rules. Generally, they emphasize the conglomerate of militarist and ethnic-national ideas that fit into the specificity of classical authoritarianism. An excellent example is the so-called “Black colonels” political regime in Greece, 1967–1974. Also, in this case, a specific ideological narrative played an important role. It largely shaped the mystical-irrational reality, where the heroic past and the idealism of the heroic present created a synthesis of “political mythology” aimed at the noble goals of a bright future. In other words, the aim of the concept of the “political myth” was the “*idée fixe*”, the expectations and fears of the ethnonational movement, to give it some fullness based on an attractive civilization mirage (Woodhouse, 1985; Kassimeris, 2006).

“Political mythology”, inscribed in the canons of more or less sophisticated political and social engineering, experienced a flourishing period while building the foundations of totalitarian systems, Nazism and Bolshevik communism (both systems presented extreme versions of socialist ideology). The “myths” and imaginations disseminated by the regime’s propaganda were often saturated with irrational, emotional contents supporting the current political strategy of the authorities aimed at the perspective of the “new times”. Their opposite was the liberal ideology based mainly on nineteenth-century rationalism, where the social sphere – including politics – was dominated by reason. The construction of “political mythology” turned out to be effective not only because of the nature of human consciousness preferring this kind of *Weltanschauung* but also because, in unstable periods of social crisis, the available rational methods seem insufficient to understand the specifics of the surrounding world (Casper, 1995, pp. 3–15).

Third, depending on the type and specificity of the authoritarian political regime, there is a certain degree of control over the life and political commitment of the population. A manifestation of this is the functioning of only the “licensed” opposition. A typical example is the many authoritarian political regimes operating in Africa and Asia, especially in the Middle East and Transcaucasia countries. A historical example of a total ban on opposition parties is the Augusto José Ramón Pinochet regime in Chile from 1974 to 1990, wherein the political elite was utterly subordinated to the dictator. Characteristically, authoritarianism in this version did not mean exercising complete control over public life (Bawden, 2016).

Fourth, the ruling elite’s formation does not occur through democratic elections, but through top-down appointment, by transferring power to, for example, a predetermined successor. An example is a situation in Turkmenistan. The first president of the republic, Saparmurat Niyazov, appointed his successor Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, who – as a consequence – became the president of the country (Horák & Šír, 2009).

ARRANGEMENT CONDITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

The classifications of authoritarianism can be various, as it is easy to identify many differentiating criteria. Due to the main political goal of the regime, one can speak of authoritarianism (1) reactionary, (2) conservative, and (3) revolutionary. Reactionary authoritarianism is rare. It is represented by a system inconsistent with the existing reality and it wants to restore the old political and social solutions, which are already widely regarded as an anachronism (Ficek, 2007, pp. 199–208; Casper, 1995, pp. 39–64). Conservative authoritarianism is a system referring to the unity of the nation, proclaiming the value of the state and often manifesting a deep attachment to tradition and religion. This authoritarianism sees itself as a guardian of order and traditional values, which it intends to defend against various innovations and social experiments. In addition, revolutionary authoritarianism aims to destroy the old lawfulness and build a new radical order. As a rule, it always has a solid left-wing tone. However, revolutionary authoritarianism was the reality of many Third World countries in the postcolonial era (Kiernan, 2004).

In its intensity of coercion and restrictions on civil liberty, authoritarianism is gradual. Its diversity presents various forms: from authoritarian democracy

through multiple forms of dictatorship to totalitarianism. Thus, there are numerous forms of political regimes that are authoritarian: always (despots, dictatorships), almost always (theocracies, absolute monarchies, military autocracies), often (fascist states, socialist states), and only sometimes (authoritarian democracies). Therefore, the concept of authoritarianism, which is too broad and imprecise in its content, blurs the possibility of a clear division of the system of authorities into democratic and authoritarian ones (Svolik, 2012, pp. 53–62).

In this context, however, to present a comprehensive typology of authoritarianism, it is worth referring to the research by Juan J. Linz, who distinguishes the following types of authoritarianism:

1. Bureaucratic and military authoritarianism – the authority belongs to a group derived from the higher circles of the state apparatus or the army; the rulers are interested in a low level of political participation of citizens in political life. However, there is political pluralism, but it does not convert into the free electoral competition.
2. The authoritarianism of organic statism. It presupposes a hierarchical state order. Pluralism is permissible, although it is not political pluralism, but only pluralism of interest groups and socio-economic groups. There is often a mono-party supporting the power system.
3. The authoritarianism of post-democratic mobilization. It aims at the significant political mobilization of the society, there is a solid ruling mass party here, and the state identifies itself with some ideology. The above system arises after a compromised or ineffective democratic system collapses.
4. The authoritarianism of post-independence mobilization arises after the victorious end of the struggle for national liberation in an environment incapable of building the structures of a democratic state. There is then a weak mono-party, a clear desire to work out a state ideology, including the extensive cult of the leader, often presented as the “father of independence”.
5. Post-totalitarian authoritarianism. It is represented by communist systems that have undergone a thorough de-Stalinization process and have abandoned their totalitarian aspirations.
6. The authoritarianism of imperfect totalitarianism appears when the development of a system towards totalitarianism has been inhibited for some reason. As a result, an authoritarian regime has emerged, which uses various procedures specific to totalitarianism, but in this case, it is very soft totalitarianism (Linz, 2000, pp. 159–261).

This breadth of the topic and analytical imprecision results primarily from the common belief that all power can – and even should – pretend to be the authority. The concept of authoritarianism distinguishes between the positive sense of authoritarianism – consistent with the idea of a democratic system – and the negative and anti-democratic meaning of authoritarianism. Related closely to democratic standards, genuine freedom accepts authority just as “true rule” recognizes the need for freedom. In other words, a rule that does not develop freedom and independence becomes authoritarianism (Sartori, 1994, p. 238). In these circumstances, however, authoritarianism results from the concentration of power in the hands of a small “administrative-governmental elite”, the limitations of the political space available to differences of opinion, and often opaque patrimonial systems, as well as unclear methods of obtaining and distributing material resources. There is also general agreement that highly authoritarian regimes can adapt façade democratic institutions (multi-party, electoral law, mass media, etc.) that favor openness of diverse debate in the political-national space. In reality, however, they use them instrumentally to consolidate and maintain power within the party elite’s small executive group. In other words, parliamentary elections and executive, as well as judicial structures resemble and relate to a democratic system but may point to entrenched forms of authoritarianism.

CONFUSING TYPOLOGY: MULTI-FACETED, DIVERGENCES, AND APPLICABILITY IN POLITICAL *PRAXIS*

As Furio Cerutti put it: “Political scientists have outlined elaborated typologies of authoritarianism, from which it is not easy to draw a generally accepted definition; it seems that its main features are the non-acceptance of conflict and plurality as normal elements of politics, the will to preserve the status quo and prevent change by keeping all political dynamics under close control by a strong central power, and lastly, the erosion of the rule of law, the division of powers, and democratic voting procedures” (Cerutti, 2017, p. 17). In other words, political pragmatics and geopolitical reality demonstrate an extremely heterogeneous phenomenon of authoritarian political regimes, which can be reduced to several fundamental categories:

1. Traditional absolutist monarchy. It is characterized by the fact that the sovereign of the state is the monarch. In other words, power is legally in the hands of the monarch. However, the monarch’s power is not limited

by parliament or law. In the author's opinion, such a regime acquires a characteristic feature of an autocracy. The monarchical system is rare in the modern world, except for Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Brunei.

2. A limited caste group generally rules the traditional authoritarian regime of the oligarchic type. Usually, in such authorities, the political elite exercises power to pursue their own political and economic interests, as in Russia or some Latin American countries.
3. The hegemonic authoritarianism of the new oligarchy. It was created as a response to the interests of the new political elite. An example of this system is the Ferdinand Marcos regime in the Philippines from 1965 to 1986. Marcos's first two terms were marked by significant political and economic reforms aimed at improving the situation of agriculture, industry, and education. However, various conflicts and tensions gradually began to intensify in the country. In response, Ferdinand Marcos imposed a state of emergency on September 21, 1972, and carried out mass arrests of political opponents. The parliament was dissolved, and a new constitution was introduced, significantly increasing the power of the presidency. In January 1981, the state of emergency was lifted, but Marcos exercised power by decrees (Casper, 1995, pp. 40–53).
4. Authoritarian military regime (military junta). These are militarized authoritarian states, e.g., in Egypt under the rule of Gamal Abdel Nasser (1956–1970) (Ferris, 2013) or Fiji in the current situation of the country (taking power by the military in December 2006).
5. A theocratic authoritarian regime. In the modern world, such powers have survived only in the Islamic world, in countries such as Iran, where Islam is the state religion, and the entire internal political course is developed based on Sharia law (Hirschl, 2010, pp. 241–250).
6. Authoritarian regime with a socialist provincial state. The name is conditional and emphasizes countries with a socialist orientation, such as Belarus, Mozambique, and Tanzania, where a socialist, often Marxist worldview ideologically supports authoritarianism. Despite the fundamental difference in the political culture and different approaches to understanding socialism and conducting national and international politics, the political system of the above countries displays several similarities.

In many respects, an interesting division systematizing authoritarian political regimes is presented by Jerzy Wiatr. In his opinion, authoritarian regimes are

divided into the following types: military rule, theocratic regime, personalized regime, monarchical regime, and neo-authoritarian regime (Wiatr, 2019, pp. 172–177). Suppose the types of authoritarian regimes listed above are reflected in the work of domestic and foreign political actors to one degree or another. In that case, the study of neo-authoritarian regimes is complicated because the analysis is generally carried out without pre-established traditional scientific genealogies. In this context, the processes of systemic transformation taking place on a global scale today, one can observe the formation of quite specific systems of authoritarian government, which can be considered a form of liberalized political regimes, often quite loyal to society (Levitsky & Way, 2010, pp. 22–35). The “neo-authoritarianism” of political regimes began to take shape relatively recently in countries characterized by numerous political parties, opposition, and efficiently functioning electoral system. In this case, however, the opposition political parties seem to be too weak and/or focused solely on their particular interests. Therefore, after each parliamentary election – after all – the same political elite rules. Civil society cannot change anything and has largely lost faith in a democratic and transparent chance to win the elections justly (Wiatr, 2019, pp. 177–180).

To restore the violated rights and freedoms, as well as legally protected interests, people do not turn to the judicial and law enforcement agencies not to worsen their situation. Episodic civic movements, veiled by the ethnopolitical power or close-to-government opposition, become an imitation of civil society and civic activism and consequently do not give any hope for change. It occurs when social agitation, apathy, and lack of faith in the chances of winning elections using legitimated democratic tools and procedures typical of mature and genuine parliamentary democracies arise (Magyar, 2016; Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2011).

Authoritarianism takes different faces depending on the time and place, chosen assumptions, and pursued goals but retains its essential features. In this sense, authoritarianism has many different looks and appearances, but its nature is changeless and always the same. In the authoritarian system, political power is not chosen in free elections, or it does not derive from the consent of the ruled, and – as such – is not subject to social control. This kind of systemic invariability of authoritarianism distinguishes it from democracy, which is multi-faceted and functions not only at the universal level but also at the level of sources and natural foundations. In other words, democracy is dynamic, while despotism is static and, in its essence, always unchanging. The most primitive power systems that appeared at the dawn of humankind were authoritarian in nature, and modern

totalitarianism represented the same face regarding the mechanism of power. The common denominator here has always been the same: an imposed power based on force cannot be controlled by members of the community within which it operates (Svolik, 2012, pp. 85–122).

However, in the situation of current neo-authoritarian political regimes and the so-called “fragile states”, the problem seems to be more complicated. (1) In the first case, one can observe a sharp polarization of political forces and rivalry between essential actors in the political scene, both domestically and internationally. This type of socio-political situation usually develops in the event of a sudden and radical change in the social system, e.g., a political and economic crisis in the post-Soviet countries. (2) The seizure of power by authoritarian regimes often affects fragile states that have experienced prolonged economic and political crises, civil wars, and ethnic conflicts, the solution of which is becoming impossible by peaceful, democratic means (Levitsky & Way, 2010, pp. 37–84).

The analysis of current international geopolitical conditions allows us to present the following typology of authoritarian regimes:

1. A reactionary authoritarian regime. In political practice, it is closely related to the totalitarian regime. Political power, in this case, is strictly centralized and exercised by a single person (dictatorship), in rarer cases, by a limited group of people. Political culture is closely related to and subordinated to the political goals of the regime in power. An example of a country characterized by a reactionary authoritarian regime is, among others, Zimbabwe or Kazakhstan, where the scale of human rights violations and the development of the “cult of personality” gradually exceeds the limits of authoritarianism, approaching totalitarianism (Frantz & Ezrow, 2011).
2. A conservative authoritarian regime. The above political system focuses on preserving and maintaining historically shaped, traditional state and public life forms. Modern countries where Islam is the state religion are an excellent example of this (the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, etc.). The main pillars that legitimize the functioning of such states are religious and ethnic structures and comparable political regimes they have developed. The central post of state policy is religious or ethnic traditions that consolidate and supervise the specificity of the country’s political system. In other words, the basis of the socio-political system is a conservative tradition that preserves the archaic system of beliefs and customs (Pratt, 2007).

3. A liberal authoritarian regime. It is characterized by elements of the democratic system but used instrumentally. In other words, liberal-democratic political patterns are tolerated as long as they serve the socio-political and economic development of the state. In the case of a liberal authoritarian regime, the political power interferes in various spheres and structures of state life, striving to create favorable conditions for its further development. An excellent example of this is the so-called “Asian Tigers”, i.e., South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong (Levitsky & Way, 2010, pp. 309–337).

In the case of liberal-authoritative regimes, one can observe, on the one hand, a relatively low level of interdependence between economic factors and comprehensive control of the socio-political sphere, and, on the other hand, the mentality of society and the stability of social and political-administrative structures. The state strengthens its legitimacy by exposing the sense of community ties and emotional solidarity of the society, an essential element of which is religion and the specificity of the ethnic conditions of a given country. This type of political system is visible in mono-ethnic countries. The complex and unique specificity of authoritarian regimes can be seen in the case of Russia and many post-communist countries of the former Eastern Bloc (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, etc.). Interesting from the point of view of social sciences is also the systemic form of these countries in the phase of political transformation from a totalitarian system to democracy and vice versa (Levitsky & Way, 2010, pp. 87–128).

CONCLUSIONS

In a globalized world, authoritarian political regimes present a complex structure of socio-political, cultural, and economic determinants requiring meticulous scrutiny in all their symptoms. In other words, authoritarianism as a phenomenon in the modern world is complex, multidimensional, and intricate. Thus, it develops in all spheres and appears in new forms, conditioned by the level of political culture as well as psycho-social and psycho-political factors in communities living in modern countries. In addition, authoritarian systems, their specificity, diversity, and identity – different in individual countries – determine both the state’s internal policy and regional as well as international political strategy, depending on the economic resources or the effectiveness and political creativity of a particular state.

The above analysis defines authoritarianism as a political system in which power and material resources as well as other human resources have been centralized and remain at the exclusive disposal of either an individual or an elite group that holds power. It significantly limits political and economic integration and leads to the takeover of key state institutions in order to centralize authority and power. In other words, authoritarian political systems can broadly be defined based on the lack of political space for the implementation of free elections, the restriction of political liberties as well as freedom of civil society, and the concentration of power within a narrow elite. In this case, authoritarian power systems are characterized by a broad spectrum: personalist regimes and limited groups of military (military governments), political, or party elite. Overall, the greater the concentration of power on the individual, the more a particular authoritarian regime exhibits despotic features.

Yet, the inquiry presented in the above article was aimed at displaying the issues of the genesis and political nature of the operation of various types of authoritarian regimes, with particular emphasis on potential adaptation possibilities in a diverse geopolitical reality, the effectiveness of implementing one's political strategies, operating in the space of today's international relations, as well as legitimizing for their activities both on the domestic level and globally. To be sure, ideology displays an essential role in this respect. However, contemporary authoritarian regimes have significantly evolved to become often efficient and effective systems of political power.

Nevertheless, maintaining social control is still not only a fundamental issue of authoritarian power systems but also a significant concern for any political system, international relations, and all socio-political life. Guaranteeing public order is a prerequisite for social integration and achieving critical political goals. Nevertheless, attempts to create socio-political stabilization, as well as internal order, are associated with the imposition of a single value system on the entire diverse community of the state, which may become a source of severe conflicts and violence. Therefore, *differentia specifica* of authoritarian governments, their forms, features, parameters, and attributes are a fundamental element of the above analyses. In this context, however, it is worth underlining the role of ideology. Hence, in shaping the paradigm of the functioning of authoritarian power, several primary threads emerge, touching basic patterns and trends.

The first element determining the significance of the above considerations is the role of political pragmatism concerning the ideology shaping the essential components of the state. In other words, ideology played a crucial role

in providing the rationale for the existing political regime and generating an acceptable form of the legitimacy of power. The second factor is the variety of authoritative regimes placed on a broad spectrum of political systems depending on the ideology presented. However, authoritarian regimes represented relatively clearly defined characteristics in the past. This categorization is made much more difficult with the emergence of “hybrid” authoritarian regimes. Another critical factor is the multilevel functioning of authoritarian regimes. The above aspect is a significant challenge for countries with well-established democratic traditions. However, the low efficiency of democratic authority mechanisms, chronic economic crises, and political inevitability undermine the authority of democratic systems, creating room for radical and populist systemic concepts with authoritarian characteristics. Paying attention to the above elements seems to be a priority guarantee for understanding the functioning of authoritarian rule in a particular political reality.

In other words, the dynamics, operability, and expansion of authoritarian power enclaves at the sub-state level can lead to imitation by other sub-state entities. Consequently, authoritarianism can gain influence at the national level if authoritarian power structures can provide socio-political stability and economic prosperity. It should also be noted that authoritarian system forms are dynamic and constantly evolving. From the beginning of the 21st century, however, a disturbing regression can be observed concerning democratic power systems. Moreover, several alarming trends can be noticed: the accelerated pace of dystrophy and disintegration of the democratic rules of management, the degeneration of the so-called democratic “system of values”, crisis of efficiency and effectiveness of democratic systems of strategic planning, the spread of authoritarianism in the area of strategically important countries and regions, decline of interest in the promotion of democracy by Western powers.

It is because all power systems use rules that regulate and govern the behavior of various actors on the political scene. These include multiple types of regulations, directives, or standards that differ in the degree of respect and value and the reasons for their observance. Therefore, coercion, self-interest, and legitimacy are typical forms of social control. Each of these forms generates compliance – or non-compliance – with the rules of functioning of the state community through a different – alternative – control mechanism. While each of these forms can be analytically separated from the others – in practice, they are rarely found in pure form. In fact, in an authoritarian state, they function at various levels, as well as

in specific conditions – depending on particular situations and socio-political strategies – both in terms of form and content.

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