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The Copernicus Journal of Political Studies nr 2 (4), 78-96

2013

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POLITICAL REGIME THEORY: IDENTIFYING AND DEFINING THREE ARCHETYPES

ABSTRACT

This article aims to clear the field of proliferated terminology by clearly defining what constitutes a political regime and what does not. After a clear definition, the article will advocate a dichotomous and trichotomous division for political regimes. Further it will analyze the defining aspects of democratic, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes and draw clear divisions between these archetypes. Finally the paper proposes some well outlined definitions for each regime type.

Key words

political regime, regime type, typology, democracy, authoritarianism, totalitarianism, anocracy, chaocracy, definition

1. Introduction: Defining a Political Regime

In the last four decades the difference between state and regime has become commonly accepted in political science. This turn has proven very useful to differentiate between the temporary nature of regimes and the more lasting structure of states. As Robert Fishman stated in one of the first attempts to distinguish the concepts:

> A regime may be thought of as the formal and informal organization of the center of political power, and of its relations with the broader society. A regime determines who has access to political power, and how those who are in power deal with those who are not. (…) Regimes are more permanent forms of political organization than specific governments, but they are typically less permanent than the state. The state, by contrast, is a (normally) more permanent structure

> of domination and coordination including a coercive apparatus and the means to administer a society and extract resources from it.[1]

The concept of the state is probably one of the oldest in political sciences and its various definitions have been compared, improved and reassessed at regular intervals. In the shadow of the state, regimes (as a political concept) have been implicitly recognized and used by scholars since the time of Aristotle. From the 1970s, however, attempts have been made to treat them as autonomous objects of analysis. The concept is commonly accepted, but still there exist very few works that have compared definitions with the aim to improve them. The work of Svend-Erik Skaaning,[2] which will be addressed later, is a noteworthy exception.

This article aims to identify, select and define the most useful basic concepts that can be used in political regime theories. This article consists of four parts: In the first step, based on Skaaning's comparative work, I shall define political regimes in relation to the state and government. In the second, I shall define the most common typological differences between political regimes and drop those concepts that duplicate others or are too narrow in meaning. The appearance of 'hybrid regimes' in the scientific literature at the end of the Cold War has raised the need to go deeper and create a clear division between the different types. In step 3, I will analyze my selection of regime types in light of the defining aspects of a political regime as worked out by Skaaning. In the conclusion, I shall formulate some minimalist definitions of each archetype.

Skaaning starts his analysis by referring to Ruth and David Collier, who argue that "regime(s) should not be confused with particular incumbents of higher state or governmental positions or the political coalition supporting these persons."[3] Regimes are linked to institutions and rules, while being a constellation of actors at the same time. Two governments succeeding each other under the same institutional arrangement can represent identical interests in some cases, but often do not. This institutional view links the concept of regime with rules and thus with behaviour. Rules can be formal (written laws) or informal. Equalling political regimes exclusively with the former would be a flagrant error and obstacle in their operationalization. On the other hand, the lack of correspondence

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[1] R. Fishman, *Rethinking State and Regime: Southern Europe's Transition to Democracy*, "World Politics" 1990, No. 3, p. 428.

[2] S. Skaaning, *Political Regimes and Their Changes: A Conceptual Framework*, "CDDRL Working Papers" 2006, No. 55.

[3] R. Collier, D. Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America*, Princeton 1991.

between formal rules and the observed behaviour is not enough to omit this approach.[4] Some scholars, like Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, concur that many outcomes cannot be explained by formal institutional design alone.[5] Roeder goes even further by stating that informal constraints more often shape actor's incentives in systemic and robust ways than formal rules.[6]

On the importance of actors as an element of regimes it is worth quoting Skaaning at length:

> The regime concept also covers a behavioural dimension because of the political actors' undeniable importance. In other words, the actors' significance has to be emphasized at the same time as we take the many political actions affected by the structural frame constituted by institutionalized rules into account. The acceptance of institutions as a significant contextual factor forming, limiting and enabling the actions of political actors consequently does not mean that it makes sense to exclude the actors from the analyses. In contrast, the behavioural dimension accentuates that certain rules are only important if they are observed by the actors; due to the fact that the institutional setting is constructed by actors. Moreover, actors have to decide how to structure their choices and interaction according to these rules and, finally, the reproduction of the operative rules continuously depends on the actions taken by the actors.[7]

His next step is to identify four defining properties of different regimes types. By comparing ten definitions of regimes, Skaaning points out that any definition of political regimes should encompass their access to political power, the way they structure the interaction in the political power centre (horizontal relation: the relationship between the executive, legislative and judicative powers) and its relations with the broader society (vertical relation: method of access to the principal political posts). Finally a fourth element is the character of the ruler(s), which allows us to differentiate between autocratic and democratic regimes and their behaviour.[8]

Combining all above elements in one definition, Skaaning summarizes: a political regime designates the institutionalized set of fundamental formal and informal rules identifying the political power holders (*character of the possessor(s)*

[4] S. Skaaning, *Political Regimes and Their Changes: A Conceptual Framework*, "CDDRL Working Papers" 2006, No. 55, pp. 7–8.

[5] G. Helmke, S. Levitsky, *Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda*, "Perspectives on Politics" 2004, No. 4, pp. 725–740.

[6] F. Roeder, *Red Sunset. The Failure of Soviet Politics*, Princeton 1993.

[7] S. Skaaning, op.cit., pp. 9–10.

[8] Ibidem, pp. 13–14.

of ultimate decisional sovereignty) and it also regulates the appointments to the main political posts (*extension and character of political rights*) as well as the vertical limitations (*extension and character of civil liberties*) and horizontal limitations on the exercise of political power (*extension and character of division of powers – control and autonomy*).[9]

In contrast, a government only constitutes a part of the regime and has narrower definition as a

> public organization consisting of the small group of decision-makers who control and coordinate the execution of authoritative political decisions.[10] So regimes structure the forming and decision-making of governments as well as their execution of state power. As different government can succeed each other within the same regime (by accepting the rules constituting an established regime to exercise state power), regimes have a similar relations vis-à-vis the state: Regimes might change, while the state endures as a rather permanent set of public administrative, enforcing and judging organizations claiming, and generally, possessing a monopoly on the authority to make binding decisions for a specific territory.[11]

2. Classifying Political Regimes: Dichotomy or Trichotomy?

The field of comparative politics has been flooded with various terms and concepts to describe state organization, some referring to regimes, some to political systems and other to its leadership. This part takes a closer look at different conceptual divisions and proposes some new conventions. The term democracy has received most attention and counts many definitions, but it is its opposite that has often been carelessly conceptualized under different labels as autocracy, dictatorship, despotism, authoritarianism, patrimonial regime, personalist regime, fascism, totalitarianism, etc. Moreover, with the fall of the Berlin wall, democracy became (normatively) the only game in town as there was no longer a communist alternative to challenge it. This lead to a proliferation of new regimes, which quickly disappointed and were classified as anocracies or hybrid regimes, or as democracies with adjectives: unfinished, stalled, halted,

[9] Ibidem, p. 15.

[10] Ibidem, p. 16.

[11] Ibidem, pp. 16–17; M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaf* [Economy and society], Köln 1964, p. 1043; R. Fishman, *Rethinking State and Regime: Southern Europe's Transition to Democracy*, "World Politics" 1990, No. 3, p. 428.

transitional, frozen, weak and fragile 'democracies,' all lacking a clear definition and division.

In this article I therefore propose to select some clearly defined archetypes, which researchers can subdivide when necessary. If the need presents itself to divide a group of countries between democracies non-democracies and further make no distinction, I personally prefer the term "autocracy." Derived from the ancient Greek *autokrateia*, its meaning in time came to refer to the "autonomy" of the rulers to create their own norms in opposition to "heteronomy" where the people create the norms by which rulers have to abide. Its original meaning means self-rule and leans closer to terms like dictatorship, despotism and personalism. While these classifications are perfectly suitable for governments they cannot be applied to regimes. They put the emphasis on the leader and the concentration of power in the hands of this person. In this situation only the broad meaning of autocracy (as autonomous power, but not *by* the people) is suitable for political regimes. Within a dichotomous juxtaposition to democracy, the term autocracy is interchangeable with "authoritarian regime."

One of many examples of flawed terminology (not scholarly research!) would be *Classifying Political Regimes* by Mike Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi and Adam Przeworski from 1996. In their introduction they write: "Our purpose is to classify political regimes observed in each country during each year either as democracies or as dictatorships, a term we use interchangeable with 'authoritarian regimes.'"[12] Labeling all authoritarian regimes or autocracies as personalist or despotic, on the other hand, leads to a different methodological error. While in some regimes the leadership possesses a disproportional amount of power vis-à-vis other state organs and interest groups, it would be wrong to characterize all autocracies this way, as the nature of one-party or multiparty regimes for instance demands differentiation due to their diversity in stability, behaviour, robustness, etc.

Too often autocracies have been labelled in juxtaposition to democracy, which in the field of democratization studies has led to the trend to label some of them as incomplete democracies or hybrid regimes. Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way have brought this issue under attention in 2002. After the Cold War the democratic political system was no longer normatively challenged as communist one-party systems one by one were discredited and collapsed throughout Eurasia. As this trend diffused to other continents, global optimism in the late 1980s and 1990s

[12] M. Alvarez, J. Cheibub, F. Limongi, A. Przeworski, *Classifying Political Regimes*, "Studies in Comparative International Development" 1996, No. 2, pp. 3–36.

led to a belief that all these transitions would lead to new democracies. A certain intellectual stubbornness ingrained this teleology in scientific literature, hence the proliferation of terms to classify these new non-democratic regimes as incomplete democratic transitions, and not as autocracies, which they were and often still are.[13]

I agree with Levitsky and Way that such a classification is misleading, as there exist no empirical foundations to assume that all these transitions will end in democratic regimes, or move in that direction at all. The fact that many of these regimes acquired the formal architecture of democracy – particularly multiparty elections – does not necessarily turn them into post-authoritarian and certainly not into incomplete democratic regimes.[14] Elections do no equal democracy.

The zenith of confusion in existing classifications is the construct of anocracies. The term has been used to catalogue regimes between democracies and autocracies by attributing special characteristics like instability and opposition mobilization. Hegre et al. place them in opposition to "institutionally consistent democracies and stark autocracies" and states that these "semi democracies" are "partly open yet somewhat repressive."[15] Fearon and Laitin add the element of state weakness: "politically weak central governments," which are unable to maintain their monopoly on violence.[16] Anocracy (as a term) was created to label the middle field between democracies and autocracies in the Polity IV Index of Marshall and Gurr.[17] Through its operational definition in the index the term was promoted as a separate regime type in the literature, mostly to analyze its relations with civil war and intrastate violence.[18]

Regan and Bell adequately describe the term's conception:

> Anocracy, moreover, is not a regime type as we might generally think of a democratic one. The term is used to denote a mix of institutional characteristics that

[13] S. Levitsky, L. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid regimes after the Cold War*, Cambridge–New York 2010, pp. 3–5.

[14] Ibidem, pp. 4–5.

[15] H. Hegre, T. Ellingsen, S. Gates, N. Gleditsch, *Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992*, "The American Political Science Review" 2001, No. 1, pp. 33, 35.

[16] J. Fearon, D. Laitin, *Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War*, "The American Political Science Review" 2003, No. 1, pp. 75–76, 81.

[17] M. Marshall, T. Gurr, *Polity IV Index Project 2005*, The Center for Systemic Peace, http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm.

[18] J. Vreeland, *The Effect of Political Regime on Civil War: Unpacking Anocracy*, "The Journal of Conflict Resolution" 2008, No. 3, pp. 401–425.

> often constrain or facilitate democratic processes. As such, most scholars identify a range of institutional constraints that describe adequately a democratic or autocratic regime, respectively, and relegate combinations that fall into neither ideal type to a catchall anocratic category. This range of institutional characteristics is necessarily broader than either of its polar corollaries. We adopt the anocratic convention in part because it has been convention but also because it is in these ranges of political-institutional arrangements that empirical results suggest a link to civil war.[19]

According to Regan and Bell, the institutional characteristics contribute to the regime's inherently unstable nature. Weak institutions limit state ability to provide political goods, especially social welfare payments. At the same time these weak institutions create opportunities for the citizenry to make demands on the state and rebel. The combination of these factors increases the potential for violent contentious politics.[20]

According to the different definitions, both autocracies and democracies can turn into anocracies. This fact, in my opinion, with weakness and instability as specific characteristics is not enough to classify anocracy as a separate regime. If we compare its qualities with the definition of a political regime (See 1), I do not see enough definitive treats to classify it separately. When a democratic regime loses its capability to accommodate conflicts, is unable to prevent violent outbreaks and is pressured to give in to unelected parties it is not an anocracy, but a *weak democracy*, unable to uphold neither civil rights nor the rule of law. In the other direction, when an autocracy is no longer able to maintain its dominant position and must share power with other parties we call this a *weak autocracy*. In both cases the situation may spin out of control and result in more violence and repression, which we usually call *civil war*. When such a situation deteriorates even further, one may speak of '*Chaocracy*' – the rule of chaos, where all central authority breaks down and enclaves of unlimited power rise from its ashes.[21] When no mass-scale violence erupts and conflicting parties maintain an unstable equilibrium though some form of dialogue, one can use the term *transitional regime*, which in time can lead to a restoration of the old regime (albeit in a slightly different form) or to a completely new regime composed of elements of the different parties.

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[19] P. Regan, S. Bell, *Changing Lanes of Stuck in the Middle: Why Are Anocracies More Prone to Civil Wars?*, "Political Research Quarterly" 2010, No. 4, p. 748.

[20] Ibidem, p. 748.

[21] J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, Colorado–London 2000, pp. 36–37.

In my opinion, regime weakness does not need a separate classification. No definition of anocracy identifies a political power holder in a different way than in a democracy or autocracy. Nor is there a change of rules (written, unwritten) within the regime. Even when the regime's ability to regulate their appointments to main political posts is openly contested and it cannot enforce its preferred limitations on the vertical and horizontal dimensions of political power; this does not mean it is another regime type. All these characteristics of anocracy are, in essence, elements of a regime breakdown, with chaocracy – or the absence of a political regime at state level – as an extreme result. Since the term is widely accepted and does describe a specific set of conditions that can apply to regimes, I propose to uphold its use as the "*state of anocracy*." That is, when a political regime has weakened to such a degree that it finds itself in the unstable equilibrium between collapse and transformation. Regimes in this state often face similar challenges and opportunities, but I argue that their regime type (democratic or autocratic, with subtype differentiation) matters in how they will react to their environment. This theoretical elaborated though is beyond the scope of this article.

Another approach is the earlier Trichotomy, which was developed in the 1950s to differentiate between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. There are overwhelming arguments to treat totalitarian regimes separately, despite the fact that since the 1980s their number has diminished considerably.[22] Many aspects of totalitarianism have been highlighted, but I prefer the ones singled out by Juan Linz in his groundbreaking work *Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes* from 1975. Totalitarian regimes are entitled to a separate category because they are unique in the simultaneous presence of an ideology, a single mass party and concentrated power in the hands of an individual or small group. Each of these characteristics can be found separately in a wide variation of authoritarian regimes, but their combination leads to a unique form of regime performance (stability, mobilization, control, etc.) and behaviour (the "unachievable" aim of destroying the line between state and society).[23]

A trichotomous division likewise allows a more specific definition of authoritarian regimes. Situated between democracy and totalitarian regimes, Linz

[22] In my opinion, today only the People's Republic of Korea could fit the definition of a totalitarian regime. All other regimes of this type have evolved to democracy or different forms of authoritarianism, some still containing elements of post-totalitarianism. (For the concept of post-totalitarianism see Linz 2000.)

[23] J. Linz, op.cit., pp. 66–68.

attributes this type some defining characteristics regarding pluralism, ideology and mobilization. Authoritarian regimes, to various degrees allow for more pluralism. In comparison with democracies of course, this pluralism is limited and can be called limited monism as well. This pluralistic dimension can be *de jure* or *de facto*.[24] Since they cannot derive their legitimacy from free and fair elections, nor from ideology as totalitarian regimes, they must rely on coercion (and in some cases on traditional forms of legitimacy, e.g. monarchies). This legitimacy deficit is projected in their relation with civil society, which they are not able to mobilize as in totalitarian or democratic regimes. This makes them the most instable of all three types.[25]

Obviously, this basic trichotomous typology still requires more nuances and subdivisions. Especially the authoritarian type is much too heterogeneous to be effectively applied in comparative politics. In this paper I will mention some renowned classifications of authoritarianism, but I will stick to the three archetypes. In my conclusion I elaborate why. Nonetheless, even a basic typology has its merits for comparative studies. But first of all, I will define these three groups of regimes, in line of the earlier proposed definition of political regimes by Skaaning.

3. Defining Democracy, Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism as Regimes

The first part of the definition provided by Skaaning starts by outlining the "who" of regimes: a political regime is a group of people, identified by a set of formal and informal rules as the power holders within a state. According to these rules, they decide who gets what piece of the cake. This brings forth three main dimensions by which we can differentiate between democratic, totalitarian and authoritarian regimes: the pluralism of the power holding group, its legitimacy, and how this group divides the main political posts. If one translates these three issues on the paradigm of formal-informal rules, democracy finds itself at the far formal end, totalitarianism at the other side, and authoritarianism in the middle. The typology can further be outlined by focusing on the horizontal and vertical power limitations of each regime.

[24] Ibidem, p. 161.
[25] Ibidem, pp. 159–166.

Formal and informal rules

Democracy has clear formal rules to identify the group of power holders and institutionalize them. Different election systems, all based on the consensus of free and fair elections, in combination with a level playing field[26] for all participating groups (previously registered as political parties, fulfilling formal requirements), provide a selection mechanism for different groups. Those elected groups possess the legitimacy to create a power holding coalition according to their size of the vote. According to the electoral system, there are different elections for the legislative and executive branch. The division of main electoral posts is done according to informal rules, backed up by the formal framework of checks and balances, conflict of interest, accountability, etc.

Ideal totalitarian regimes would not bother with elections at all, as their formal power is based on ideology. In reality, even those regimes have often used a minimalistic democratic façade in the form of rubber stamp legislatives that unanimously ratify decisions put in front of them.[27] Ideology identifies the power holders, always united in *one* party. Their informal power on the other hand is derived from a combination of coercion and mass following. Solely informal rules regulate which members of the groups get the main political posts. This type of regime has a very small "selectorate" in comparison with democracy's electorate. Originally coined by Bueno de Mesquita et al., the term denotes those, "whose endowments include the qualities or characteristics institutionally required to choose the government's leadership and necessary for gaining access to private benefits doled out by the government's leadership."[28] In totalitarian regimes the selectorate normally constitutes the highest ranking party officials, which have strong personal ties with the leader(s).

Identification of the power holding group in authoritarian regimes exposes their heterogeneous structure, which requires further differentiation. In theory, these regimes have a broader selectorate than their totalitarian counterparts, but

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[26] The term is borrowed from Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way. It denotes the situation in which all parties have a real chance of winning elections. In other words the playing field is not skewed by fraud, abuse of state and media resources or a breach of civil liberties (See Levitsky, Way 2010).

[27] D. Furman, *The Origins and Elements of Imitation Democracies. Political developments in the post-Soviet space*, "Eurozine" 2007, http://www.eurozine.com, first published in *The Europe beyond Europe, Outer borders, inner limits*, "Osteuropa" 2007, No. 9, p. 2.

[28] B. Russet, *Hegemony and Democracy* [in:] *Security and Governance Series*, F. Adamson et al. (eds.), London–New York 2011, p. 15.

smaller than a democratic electorate. Different authoritarian regimes can be arranged along this broad scale of limited pluralism (smaller –bigger selectorate), but as a sole defining characteristic this aspect would be too vague to label them as one group. Luckily, there exist other criteria to define these various regimes as a separate group, for instance, legitimacy.

Authoritarian regimes possess different levels of formal legitimacy. Those regimes with strong institutionalized formal rules, like monarchies or theocracies, can rely on their tradition or constitution to prove the legitimacy of the power holding group. Some regimes are highly reliant on coercion and intimidation to stay in power (military coups), and try to formulate some nationalistic, ideological, pragmatic or other discourses to make up for their lack of formal legitimacy. Those regimes which lack both (formal legitimacy and coercion potential) or choose not to use them, usually install a multiparty system as a democratic façade with the aim to create a source of formal legitimacy. To summarize, the lower a regime's formal legitimacy and/or its potential to extort its power holding position by force, the bigger its selectorate and power sharing level. Authoritarian regimes, who allow other parties to participate in elections, sometimes have to co-opt opposition parties and interest groups and share some power with them in exchange for their support and acceptance of the existing set of rules (formal/informal).

Horizontal limitations

The next defining aspect of political regimes is the horizontal limitations or the division of powers. Democracies have constitutionally based checks and balances between the legislative, executive and judiciary. These formal divisions are absolute in most cases. In case of doubt or overlap the judiciary branch, especially the constitutional court has the final world. Usually, each of the different branches can initiate investigating commissions when they perceive another branch has acted outside its competence. The army and intelligence agencies are also *de facto* and *de jure* subjugated to the executive and legislative.

In totalitarian regimes the party is the monistic centre of power. Its task is not to represent the people, but to transform its members.[29] Its power towers far above all other ceremonial branches of government. Depending of the heteronomy of its ideological foundations, the party's actions can be normatively restricted in some dimensions. For instance Leninism-Marxism provided a stable, autonomous basis of legitimacy for communist parties, but at the same time confined

[29] J. Linz, op.cit., pp. 79–86.

its policies within the boundaries of its ideological content. Fascist totalitarian regimes could draw from various ideological sources and could interpret its meaning more loosely.[30] So even when there are no formal or informal divisions of powers, the totalitarian party does not possess absolute power. Army and secret services, while they are often used in intraparty struggles, are clearly subdued by the party. If at a given moment the military apparatus or government would exert control over the totalitarian party, we can no longer call the regime totalitarian.

Once more authoritarian regimes find themselves in between. Notwithstanding its many forms, this regime type is characterized by its unbalanced division of power. Whereas some of these regimes can have additional government structures or even (temporary) suspend existing institutions, the power holders usually have a monopoly on executive power (although theoretically authoritarian leaders could exercise their supreme power through judiciary institutions). Joakim Ekman concisely summarizes the position of the legislative branch in autocracies: "In outright authoritarian regimes real legislatures do not exist or, if present, are so firmly controlled by the ruling executive or the ruling party that there are de facto no checks and balances between the executive and legislative branches. In hybrid regimes, parliaments may be ever so weak, but they can still function as potential platforms for the opposition."[31] The position of the judiciary is in general more instrumental. The power holders bribe, extort, dismiss, or appoint their own loyal candidates within its structure to create a third branch that is independent in form only.[32] They use its arbiter function to their own advantage to make up for their lack of formal legitimacy. The rule of law in autocratic regimes is often absent regarding the horizontal dimension of power.

Vertical limitations

The relation between the power holders and the people they govern provides some clear criteria to treat these three regime types separately. In democracies political, civil and economic liberties are protected and balanced. Political rights grant opportunities to the people to organize themselves, vote, participate in the political process, express their opinion without fear of persecution, etc. In short, they hand to people all the tools to take part in the decision-making process

[30] Ibidem, pp. 76–78.

[31] J. Ekman, *Political Participation and Regime Stability: A Framework for Analyzing Hybrid Regimes*, "International Political Science Review" 2009, No. 1, p. 9.

[32] Ibidem, p. 9.

through elections (indirectly) or through referenda (directly). Civil rights, on the other hand, protect the population from their government and from short-term populist majority rule. And economic liberties provide an additional check on political power as it gives the citizens a livelihood. This allows them to gain personal autonomy and equips them with the means to associate and organize.[33]

All these necessary conditions enable a booming civil society and independent media, which are key to push, alter or oppose the political decision-making. Opposition in itself is an important feature of democratic regimes. Formal rules provide a framework for opposition from the civil society in the form of strikes, manifestations, etc. but also foresee a platform for legal political opposition within the state structures (the legislative). The rule of law is upheld, breaches are sanctioned, and the rights are protected. Of course, the image drawn here is an ideal type of a democracy, but still, democracies, once consolidated, must be closer to this definition than to ideal types of other regimes in order to be recognized as such.

As an ideal type, totalitarian regimes are exactly the opposite. In no way they protect their citizens from arbitrary persecution. On the one hand, the rule of law is installed; on the other, it offers the people no protection from the state. While these regimes adhere to civil and political rights on paper only, even basic economic rights are denied. The economy is centrally planned, which eliminates the formation of interest groups outside the party. Leftist totalitarian regimes do have a tradition of granting some socioeconomic fundamental rights, which are "positive" in nature:[34] The right to housing, the right to medical care, the right to work, and so on. Depending on the economic potential of the state, these rights are allocated to its citizens on condition that their civil duties are met.[35]

Civil society is controlled in totalitarian regimes. With instruments ranging from propaganda and education to coercion, the masses are mobilized and integrated into the system. Mostly recruitment starts at an early age through youth movements like the Komsomol or the Hitlerjugend. Another function of the party is to control all specialized functions that can become independent, non-political centre of power over time.[36] Paradoxically, these regimes emphasis

[33] S. Chan, *Liberalism, Democracy and Development*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 39–45.

[34] In opposition to the historically 'negative' human rights developed in the West since the Feudal age, which protect citizens from the state.

[35] K. Malfliet, *Hoever kan Europa oostwaarts reiken. De Russische factor* [How Far East Can Europe Reach. The Russian Factor], Leuven 2008, pp. 75–77.

[36] J. Linz, op.cit., pp. 80–94.

on participation also brings some democratic aspects with it. Linz adequately states:

> Foremost, their capacity to penetrate the society, to be present and influential in many institutional realms, to mobilize people for large-scale tasks on a voluntary or pseudo voluntary basis rather than just for material incentives and rewards allows such systems to carry out important changes with limited resources and therefore to serve as instruments for certain types of economic and social development. It also gives them a certain democratic character, in the sense of offering to those willing to participate (accepting the basic goals of the leadership rather than advancing alternative goals) a change for active participation and a sense of involvement. Despite the bureaucratic character of the state and of many organizations and even the party, the mass membership in the party and in related sponsored organizations can give meaning, purpose, and a sense of participation to many citizens.[37]

Although this facet of mobilization is a central feature in the vertical relation of totalitarian regimes, civil society cannot opt for any alternatives, nor propose them. All forms of opposition are categorically opposed by the party. Of course in history no totalitarian regime has been able to actually achieve these totalitarian characteristics all the way. Like with democratic regimes, the mentioned defining features give form to an ideal type. Existing totalitarian regimes have come closest to this type and arguably deserve this separate classification.

Authoritarian regimes as a separate group encompass more vague criteria in their (vertical) relation with civil society. Their subtypes could provide a more nuanced classification. Generally speaking, as a group, these regimes cannot bridge the gap between the power holders and civil society as do the democratic or totalitarian archetypes. Once their formal and informal rules are institutionalized, these regimes usually face continuous challenges from various groups they draw support from. Some power holders are masters in playing out these different groups against each other to remain in (more or less) full control. Others are less successful and must include some in their selectorate, when they do not possess other means to subdue them. This usually results in the suspension of (some) political rights for the population as a whole and arbitrary breaches of civil rights for those targeted by the regime for some reason: (perceived) politically dangerous individuals or groups, discriminated ethnic or religious minorities, personal vendettas of the power holders, etc. Economical freedoms

[37] Ibidem, pp. 72–73.

are usually granted to the population in a fairly high degree, especially in those regimes which abide by a liberal economic policy. Depending on their level of control power holders consolidate their grip over the main state resources. Civil society as a whole is restricted, but not systematically penetrated by state actors, nor dismantled.

Two aspects are constitutive to these regimes. Firstly, their set of rules provides no framework or opportunities for mobilization for big segments of the population. As there are no formal rules to become included in the selectorate, the gap widens between the power holders and the population as a whole. Linz therefore sees authoritarian regimes as inherently unstable. As these regimes do possess some support and mobilization at the time of their creation, participation becomes hard to sustain without moving more in the direction of democracy or totalitarianism. This equilibrium and limited access to power leads to apathy and disappointment among its initial followers.[38] Secondly, as it was mentioned above, authoritarian regimes with few sources of alternative legitimacy and/or coercion potential, invest more in their democratic façade. This means they allow a restricted platform for opposition. The exact forms of this opposition (legal, illegal, alegal and semiopposition)[39] differ according to the category's subtypes. This phenomenon is a crucial aspect of incremental democratization and is clearly absent in totalitarian regimes. In extension my argument that authoritarian regimes should be treated as a separate type, despite their heterogeneousness.

4. Conclusion: Three definitions of political regime archetypes

I would like to summarize this article by proposing three workable definitions – one for each regime type, based on the insights presented in the previous steps and in line with the definition of a political regimes offered by Skaaning. These definitions could be my point of reference for further research as too often existing flawed terminology is parroted without reflection or definitions of political systems are projected as regime concepts.

In the above figure, the institutional hierarchy of each regime type is presented in a simplified way. While the figure does not represent the actual relations between different political and societal groups, it succeeds in indentifying those actors who potentially play an important role in each separate regime type. Although far from exact, the figure has its merits as for instance the difference

[38] Ibidem, pp. 166–167.

[39] Terminology borrowed from J. Linz (See Linz 2000, pp. 168–170).

between an electorate and a selectorate is well represented. Intelligence, police and security forces were not mentioned separately, but should be included in the tag "Army."

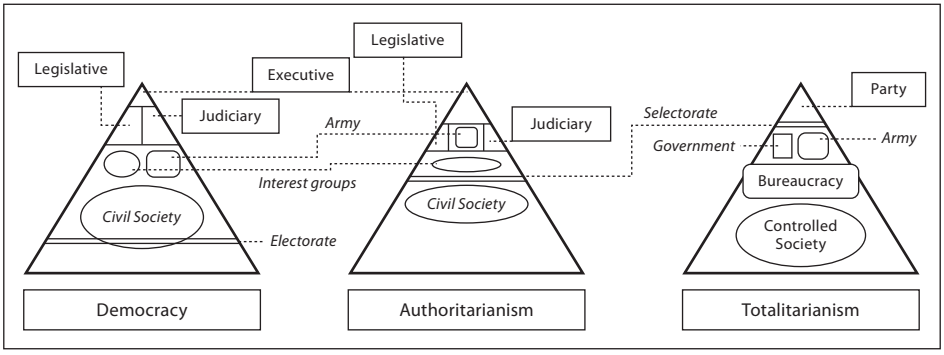

Figure 1.1. Basic Typology of Political Regimes

In a democracy the regimes are usually chosen from political parties (although sometimes independent candidates win elections). The governmental instruments of their power are the legislative and the executive. Depending of the political system, the regime's power is more concentrated in the former or latter. For instance, in parliamentary democracies the nexus of power is the legislative. In presidential regimes power typically lies in the executive. The judiciary plays a crucial role as it is has the final word in disputes and has a important hand in the creation of new formal rules. In democratic regime types, the three branches of government all have their turf, and maintain this balance through checks and balances.

Decision-making in democracies does not exclusively belong to parties: Interest groups and sometimes the military apparatus can influence or steer decisions through lobbying the governing parties or by their leverage on the branches of government. Key is that there are clear rules, widely accepted by all actors at all levels. Even when rules are broken, those actors who break them realize they are crossing a line. There exist formal rules to denote the electorate: usually citizenship, universal suffrage and an age limit at 18. In consolidated democracies the rule of law is upheld and political, economic and civic liberties are protected. Breaches of the law or cases of discrimination are usually investigated under pressure of citizens and civil society.

As democratic regimes are elected, there are no general "rules" on how often these regimes change and succeed each other. Analyzing elections results and

coalition forming does not suffice. In democracies with a first-past-the-post electoral system and its typical dualistic playing field with two historic grand parties competing each other, there is a bigger chance of regime change when one party defeats the other in national or presidential elections. In democracies with many smaller parties this level of analysis is not enough. A regime can constitute a dominant "bigger" party and its traditional coalition partners, or two or more parties of similar size with a history of cooperation, or a big party that enters a coalition with anyone remotely acceptable to create a minimal winning coalition. In the last case the regime will be concentrated within the ranks of the big party, as the small coalition party gets only a few government posts as a reward for cooperation. In the second and first case there is no clear division line between the parties, as their mutual understanding is an essential informal part of the regime they compose together. Democratic regimes are very closely intertwined with the different government institutions because the strict formal framework, the informal consensus on some basic issues with the opposition parties and the long-lived nature of consolidated democratic systems and the traditional parties that operate within it. This makes radical regimes change rare.

In the figure (1.1.) it is clear that authoritarian regimes often have a similar "formal" outlook when compared to democratic types. This has grown historically: during the Cold War and before, many authoritarian regimes did not feel the pressure to pretend to be democracies. Only after the fall of the Berlin wall the normative supremacy of democracy has increased this pressure. This does not mean all authoritarian regimes fit this model: there still exist many military and monarchic types that do not fit this institutional structure. Although the global trend towards a democratic façade was clearly visible and was a main catalyst in the scientific literature on these "hybrid" regimes and political regimes in general.

As a very heterogeneous type, the nexus of political power is not evenly divided among the different branches of the government or even lies completely outside it. Generally political power is concentrated in the executive, the army or other institutions (not included in the figure) like a theocratic institution or royal family. In some regimes they can be strongly intertwined with existing interest groups that provide support for the regime in return for economical benefits, are partly incorporated or even created by the regime. Anyway these groups are often included in the selectorate, exercising leverage on the choice of future candidates and benefiting from the rewards they get in exchange for their loyalty. These arbitrary criteria to become part of the regime and limited

access make its population apathetic towards its rulers in the long run.[40] As some regimes tolerate opposition and other forbid elections, the exact relations between existing institutions and the regime's behaviour cannot be analyzed deeper, without establishing some clear subtypes of authoritarian regimes. The same goes for regime transition as it based on informal rules.

The totalitarian type is inherently different from the other archetypes. Considering that in its structure *the* party completely dominates the institutional hierarchy, it does not even remotely resemble the traditional division of power. Traditional government institutions are a formal appendix to the well-oiled bureaucracy that aims to control every aspect of its citizens. Army and security services are clearly subjugated to the party's power. Both government and the military apparatus are excluded from the selectorate, although it might happen that high ranking members of the party are in charge of these institutions. If so, their function is not to represent the institutions they command within the party. Usually they are responsible for them as it is their duty to control these institutions. With their instruments of propaganda, ideology and education they do bridge the gap with the population in a way authoritarian regimes are not able. Mobilization is a crucial element of these regimes' internal long life expectation, although ideological erosion is widespread in light of economic decline.

Summarizing the above analyses of these three archetypes, it is possible to create some minimal definitions for each type. As each type can be divided in more precise subtypes, these definitions only stress the basic differences between the main types. Still as I argued above, all three regimes are each distinctively unique to be treated separately. Their minimal definitions sound as follows:

A democratic regime is a group identified by a highly formalized, institutionalized set of rules, accepted by all parties on the basis of their electoral legitimacy under free and fair elections that take place on a level playing field. The electoral victors (usually in the form of political parties) create a ruling coalition according to internal informal rules. Their political power is divided within the group among different branches of the government in interaction with legal opposition according to strict formal rules. In general democratic regimes are more *open* than other types, because they are usually recreated in modified form with every election. The power holders are constrained by (external) formal rules like a constitution and human rights. They are accountable to the electorate. Succession is formally regulated through elections.

[40] J. Linz, op.cit., p. 167.

An authoritarian regime is governed by a small group internally regulated by an informal set of rules. Their power may be concentrated in on one or more branches of the government (no real checks or balances) or outside the government. Its power holders are identified by informal legitimacy like coercion or seemingly fair elections, or in combination with formal, traditional legitimacy. In case of elections, they are not free or fair, or lack a level playing field, since political power is not derived from an electorate. In case of the former, the selectorate is even narrower, but often does include some selected interest groups. Internal succession is regulated according to informal rules by the selectorate. Power holders are not bound by external formal rules since informal rules supersede them. The regime is closed to big segments of the population.

A totalitarian regime is organized in one mass party led by a small group, formally identified and its actions constrained by ideology. The party controls state institutions and the military apparatus and aims to do the same with its population. The rule of law is upheld and serves to implement the ideology. No legal framework protects the citizens. Human rights are provided arbitrarily if at all. The regime's aim is to mobilize and transform its population according to its ideology and uses the state for control, propaganda and education. The selectorate is very narrow as only the party can influence succession. The regime is more open as some (loyal) citizens are offered opportunities to participate in the system.

One may question the point of creating these minimal definitions when subtypes would be better suited for analyses. On the one hand I agree with this view, on the other I do not presuppose there exists only one way to subdivide these three archetypes. As political regimes differ on so many dimensions: institutional structure, nature of rules, pluralism, main actors, behaviour, cultural outlook, potential, horizontal and vertical limitations, and so on, I cannot possibly claim there exists only one way to divide them internally into subtypes. Each researcher should use or create his/her own typology that fits best to the research's level of analysis, as long as they are in line with the definition of a political regime.