2. Authoritarianism and totalitarianism

By Claudio Foliti
Authoritarianism
Juan Linz’ definition

1. “Political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism,
2. without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities,
3. without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development,
4. and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones.”
Limited and not responsible pluralism

• Authoritarian regimes typically rely on a small set of key groups and prevent the expression of certain group interests (e.g., labor, leftists, religious groups)

• Authoritarian regimes organize interest representation in a corporatist (not pluralist) manner. These interests are usually arranged by function.

• In contrast to totalitarian regimes, the boundary between state and society is not diminished. In authoritarian regimes, the state maintains some distance and allows for some private organization to operate (e.g. Catholic church during the fascist era in Italy)
Mentality vs. ideology

- Authoritarian regimes have mentalities rather than totalitarian ideologies.

- Ideologies are systems of belief that are intellectually organized and elaborated. Mentalities are ways of thinking (e.g. God, family, and country).

- Mentality is “intellectual attitude,” ideology is “intellectual content.”

- Mentality allows for flexibility in switching sides (e.g., from left authoritarianism to right authoritarianism), but limits the ability of authoritarian regimes

  1) to mobilize people for extended periods of time or

  2) create a strong emotional and psychological identification with the regime.
Mobilization

• Authoritarian regimes have low levels of social mobilization for several reasons:
  - When you demobilize you depoliticize
  - Depoliticization is often a regime goal which facilitates stability
  - Depoliticization suits the reality of limited political pluralism (you don’t want much political participation)
  - Mobilization initially attracts support, but becomes difficult to sustain without either a move toward democracy (real participation) or totalitarianism (which requires an ideology).

• Authoritarian regimes reduce politics to the
• 1) administration of public interest and
• 2) the expression of certain key interests
Types of authoritarian regimes/1

- Fundamentum divisionis (The principle according to which a genus is divided into species): type of legitimacy (Max Weber):
  - Traditional (monarchies, theocracies)
  - Charismatic (personal dictatorships)
  - Legal-rational (one-party systems, multi-party systems, post-totalitarian, bureaucratic-military)
Types of authoritarian regimes/2

- Fundamentum divisionis: degree of militarization
  - Military dictatorships
  - Civilian-military dictatorships
  - Civilian dictatorships
Military dictatorships and degree of participation

1. Oligarchical praetorianism: struggle among personal and family cliques; very short duration; low degree of violence (e.g. Carlos Manchено’s regime in Ecuador, 1947; Aguiyi Ironsi’s regime in Nigeria, Jan-Jul1966)

2. Radical praetorianism: struggle among institutional and occupational groups supplements that among cliques; medium degree of violence short duration (1 year) (e.g. Sanchez Cerro’s regime in Peru, 1930-1931)

3. Mass praetorianism: social classes and social movements dominates the scene; higher degree of violence; long duration (e.g. Pinochet’s regime in Chile, 1973-1990)
Civilian-military dictatorships

- Bureaucratic-military regime: limited pluralism, technocracy, repression (e.g. Brazil 1964-1985; Argentina 1975-1983)

- Corporatist regime: limited participation within organic sociopolitical organizations (corporate groups); no capitalist competition nor Marxist conflict; can include or exclude the working class (e.g. Salazar’s regime in Portugal, 1933-1974; Vargas’ regime in Brazil, 1937-1945)

- Army-party regime: usually (not only) Marxist-Leninist parties (Castro’s regime in Cuba, since 1959; al-Assad’s regime in Syria, since 1971; Hussein’s regime in Iraq from 1979 to 2003)
Civilian dictatorships

- Nationalist regimes (Angola and Mozambique, 1974)
- Communist regimes (Eastern Europe from 1945 to 1989)
- Fascist regimes (Italy, from 1922 to 1943)
- Theocratic regimes (Iran, since 1979)
Types of authoritarian regimes/3

- Fundamentum divisionis: modes of political power maintenance (Hadenius and Teorell)
- Hereditary succession, or lineage (monarchies, e.g. Saudi Arabia);
- The actual or threatened use of military force (military dictatorships, e.g. Pinochet’s regime in Chile)
  - Subtype: rebel regimes (Congo since 1997);
- Popular election
  - No-party regimes (e.g. Maldives)
  - One-party regimes (de jure, North Corea; de facto, China; independents in Hussein’s regime)
  - Limited multi-party regimes (two criteria: stability + party dominance; competitive authoritarianism in Russia)
Totalitarian regimes

- No (social or political) pluralism > Single party > Monism
- Ideology
- Frequent and wide mass mobilization
- Power managed by a leader and/or a party
- Reign of terror and concentrationary universe
- Communications monopoly
- Weapons monopoly
- Centrally directed economy
- Project: Creation of a new society/a new world order/a new man
Hybrid regimes/1: Diminished subtypes (Collier and Levitsky)

Figure 4. Diminished Subtypes vis-à-vis Procedural Minimum and Expanded Procedural Minimum Definitions
(Location of subtypes in the columns reflects their meaning in relation to the spectrum of definitions in Figure 1. The meaning of each subtype must be understood in relation to usage by the specific author. Bibliographic references are in Appendix.)

- **Nondemocratic Regime**:
  - a. Missing Attribute: Free Elections
    - Jiggle democracy (Lipset 1994)
    - Phantom democracy (Goldman 1993)
    - Pseudodemocracy (Higley/Gastner 1992)
    - Sham democracy (Bennett 1993)
  - b. Missing Attribute: Full Suffrage
    - Exclusionary democracy (Requena 1986)
    - Oligarchical democracy (Hartlyn and Valencia 1994)
    - Postsocialism (Kahn 1993)
    - Stable limited democracy (Higley/Gastner 1992)
  - c. Missing Attribute: Full Contestation
    - Asian-style democracy (Neeber 1994)
    - Controlled democracy (Bagley 1984)
    - De facto one-party democracy (Lefevre 1993)
    - Restrictive democracy (Walton 1989)
  - d. Missing Attribute: Generic
    - Imperfect democracy (Saikawa 1994)
    - Partial democracy (Weston 1987)
    - Quasidemocracy (Haggard/Kaufman 1992)
    - Semidemocracy (Vashilen 1989)
  - e. Missing Attribute: Civil Liberties
    - Electoral democracy (Halevi 1994)
    - Formal democracy (Diamond 1994)
    - Illiberal democracy (Emmons 1994)
    - Limited democracy (O’Donnell/Fleischer 1986)
  - f. Missing Attribute: Elected Government Has Effective Power to Govern
    - Guardian democracy (Torres River 1994)
    - Military democracy (Rubin 1990)
    - Protected democracy (Levermann 1994)
    - Tutelary democracy (Przeworski 1988)

- **Electoralism**:
  - Procedural Minimum Definition of Democracy
    - Elections, Full Suffrage, Civil Liberties

- **Procedural Minimum**:
  - Expanded Procedural Minimum Definition of Democracy
    - Elections, Full Suffrage, Civil Liberties, and Effective Power to Govern

Definitions of democracy that are the point of departure for subtypes
Subtypes
Hybrid regimes/2: The grey zone (Carothers)

- Most of the “transitional countries,” however, are neither dictatorial nor clearly headed toward democracy. They have entered a political gray zone.

- They have some attributes of democratic political life, including at least limited political space for opposition parties and independent civil society, as well as regular elections and democratic constitutions.

- Yet they suffer from serious democratic deficits, often including poor representation of citizens’ interests, low levels of political participation beyond voting, frequent abuse of the law by government officials, elections of uncertain legitimacy, very low levels of public confidence in state institutions, and persistently poor institutional performance by the state.
Carothers vs. diminished sub-types

- Political analysts preferred an array of “qualified democracy” terms to characterize them, including
  - semi-democracy,
  - formal democracy,
  - electoral democracy,
  - façade democracy,
  - pseudo-democracy,
  - weak democracy,
  - partial democracy,
  - Illiberal democracy
  - Virtual democracy
• By describing countries in the gray zone as types of democracies, analysts are in effect trying to apply the transition paradigm to the very countries whose political evolution is calling that paradigm into question.

• Most of the “qualified democracy” terms are used to characterize countries as being stuck somewhere on the assumed democratization sequence, usually at the start of the consolidation phase.
Two political syndromes/1: Feckless pluralism

- The first syndrome is feckless pluralism. Countries whose political life is marked by feckless pluralism tend to have significant amounts of political freedom, regular elections, and alternation of power between genuinely different political groupings.

- Despite these positive features, however, democracy remains shallow and troubled.

- Political participation, though broad at election time, extends little beyond voting.

- The alternation of power seems only to trade the country’s problems back and forth from one hapless side to the other.

- Political elites from all the major parties are widely perceived as corrupt, self-interested, dishonest, and not serious about working for their country.
• The public is seriously disaffected from politics, and while it may still cling to a belief in the ideal of democracy, it is extremely unhappy about the political life of the country.

• Overall, politics is widely seen as a stale, corrupt, elite-dominated domain that delivers little good to the country and commands equally little respect.

• And the state remains persistently weak.

• Economic policy is often poorly conceived and executed, and economic performance is frequently bad or even calamitous.

• Social and political reforms are similarly tenuous, and successive governments are unable to make headway on most of the major problems facing the country, from crime and corruption to health, education, and public welfare generally.
Feckless pluralism: where?

- Latin America: Nicaragua, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, Honduras, Bolivia, Venezuela (prior to the election of Hugo Chávez)
- Post-communist world: Moldova, Bosnia, Albania, Ukraine
- Asia: Nepal, Bangladesh, Mongolia, Thailand
- Sub-Saharan Africa: Madagascar, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone
Two political syndromes/2: Dominant power politics

• Countries with this syndrome have limited but still real political space, some political contestation by opposition groups, and at least most of the basic institutional forms of democracy.

• Yet one political grouping—whether it is a movement, a party, an extended family, or a single leader—dominates the system in such a way that there appears to be little prospect of alternation of power in the foreseeable future.

• The state’s main assets—that is to say, the state as a source of money, jobs, public information (via state media), and police power—are gradually put in the direct service of the ruling party.
• Whereas in feckless pluralism judiciaries are often somewhat independent, the judiciary in dominant-power countries is typically cowed, as part of the one-sided grip on power.

• And while elections in feckless-pluralist countries are often quite free and fair, the typical pattern in dominant-power countries is one of dubious but not outright fraudulent elections in which the ruling group tries to put on a good-enough electoral show to gain the approval of the international community while quietly tilting the electoral playing field far enough in its own favor to ensure victory.
As in feckless-pluralist systems, the citizens of dominant-power systems tend to be disaffected from politics and cut off from significant political participation beyond voting.

Yet those opposition political parties that do exist generally are hard put to gain much public credibility due to their perennial status as outsiders to the main halls of power.

Whatever energies and hopes for effective opposition to the regime remain often reside in civil society groups (NGOs and independent media)
• The state tends to be as weak and poorly performing in dominant-power countries as in feckless-pluralist countries, though the problem is often a bureaucracy decaying under the stagnancy of de facto one-party rule rather than the disorganized, unstable nature of state management (such as the constant turnover of ministers) typical of feckless pluralism.

• The long hold on power by one political group usually produces large-scale corruption and crony capitalism.
• Due to the existence of some political openness in these systems, the leaders do often feel some pressure from the public about corruption and other abuses of state power.

• They even may periodically declare their intention to root out corruption and strengthen the rule of law.

• But their deep-seated intolerance for anything more than limited opposition and the basic political configuration over which they preside breed the very problems they publicly commit themselves to tackling.
Dominant-power politics: where?

- **Sub-Saharan Africa**: Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Tanzania, Gabon, Kenya, and Mauritania
- **Post-soviet countries**: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan
- **Islamic world**: Morocco, Jordan, Algeria, Egypt, Iran, and Yemen
- **Important countries**: South Africa, Russia, Venezuela (+ Ukraine under Kuchma, 1994-2004)