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Study of the Managerial Effectiveness of Authoritarian and Totalitarian Regimes

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews key works that investigate the managerial efficiency of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. The article also explores the main set of ideas regarding the reasons for the functional efficiency of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. The article explores ideas regarding the efficiency of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in times of crisis, military operations, mobilizations, etc., their ability to quickly make risky decisions, the ability to massively and immediately redistribute resources, direct the budget to strategic sectors, forcibly mobilize labor, material and scientific resources, ensure the predictability of the political process, which achieves high administrative manageability. On the other hand, the main ideas regarding the problems of the stability of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes and their vulnerability in terms of efficiency are presented. Thus, this article provides an overview of the main ideas that allow for a deeper analysis of the phenomenon of managerial efficiency of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. At the same time, this article helps to understand the fundamental weakness of totalitarian regimes, which stems from their strength. This weakness, in particular, lies in the inability to ensure the full functioning of market mechanisms, which remain distorted. Quite often, totalitarian and authoritarian regimes make irrational economic decisions associated with the illusion of omnipotence. The problem is sometimes simply obtaining realistic statistical data by such regimes and understanding the objective state of affairs in the country by the authorities, given the reign of fear among the bureaucracy and the formation of a culture of false reporting. Corruption and favoritism can form a wave of ineffective decisions, determined by purely subjective things. In addition, in democratic political regimes, such mistakes are usually easier to correct under public pressure or election cycles. At the same time long existence of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, their ability to survive and to overcome crises through centralization, more effective mobilization of resources and achieving regime integrity through suppression of social alternatives, does not allow to underestimate the potential for the stability of such regimes and their high competitiveness even in comparison with powerful developed democratic states. The ability of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes to adapt and maintain their authoritarian and totalitarian nature under the guise of formal changes and purely ritual pseudo-democratic electoral processes requires special further study.

KEYWORDS

authoritarian regimes, totalitarian regimes, managerial efficiency, mobilization potential, crisis management, bureaucratic reporting, institutional stability, repressive mechanisms, market distortions, pseudo-democratic elections.





Дослідження управлінської ефективності авторитарних і тоталітарних режимів

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СТАТТЯ

АНОТАЦІЯ

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У статті здійснено огляд ключових праць, що досліджують управлінську ефективність тоталітарних і авторитарних режимів. Також у статті досліджено основний набір ідей щодо причин функціональної ефективності тоталітарних та авторитарних режимів. Стаття досліджує ідеї щодо оперативності тоталітарних та авторитарних режимів в умовах криз, військових операціях, мобілізаціях тощо, їхню здатність швидко ухвалювати ризиковані рішення, здатність масово й негайно перерозподіляти ресурси, спрямовувати бюджет у стратегічні галузі, примусово мобілізувати трудові, матеріальні та наукові ресурси, забезпечувати прогнозованість політичного процесу, чим досягається висока адміністративна керованість. З іншого боку, наведено основні ідеї щодо проблем стійкості авторитарних і тоталітарних режимів та їхньої вразливості з точки зору ефективності. Дана стаття дає огляд основних ідей, що дозволяють глибше аналізувати феномен управлінської ефективності тоталітарних і авторитарних режимів. У той же час дана стаття допомагає зрозуміти і фундаментальну слабкість тоталітарних режимів, яка впливає з їхньої сили. Ця слабкість, зокрема, полягає в нездатності забезпечити повноцінну діяльність ринкових механізмів, які лишаються спотвореними. Достатньо часто тоталітарні та авторитарні режими ухвалюють нераціональні економічні рішення, пов'язані з ілюзією всевладдя. Проблемою іноді є просте отримання реалістичних статистичних даних такими режимами і розуміння владою об'єктивного стану речей в країні, з огляду на панування страху серед бюрократії і формування культури фальшивої звітності. Корупція і фаворитизм можуть формувати вал неефективних рішень, зумовлених суто суб'єктивними речами. Крім того, у демократичних політичних режимах такого роду помилки як правило легше виправляються під тиском громадськості чи виборчих циклів. Водночас, досвід тривалого існування тоталітарних та авторитарних режимів, їхня здатність долати кризи шляхом централізації, значно ефективнішої ніж у демократичних державах мобілізації ресурсів та досягнення цілісності режиму через репресії й придушення суспільних альтернатив не дозволяє недооцінювати потенціал стійкості таких режимів і їхньої високої конкурентоздатності навіть у порівнянні з потужними розвиненими демократичними державами. Особливого подальшого вивчення потребує здатність тоталітарних та авторитарних режимів пристосовуватися і зберігати свою авторитарну й тоталітарну природу під маскою формальних змін та суто ритуальних псевдодемократичних електоральних процесів.



КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

авторитарні режими, тоталітарні режими, управлінська ефективність, мобілізаційний потенціал, кризове управління, бюрократична звітність, інституційна стійкість, репресивні механізми, ринкові спотворення, псевдодемократичні вибори.

1. Introduction

The issue of managerial efficiency of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes is of considerable interest to researchers, since many such regimes have proven their ability to exist for many decades, despite their disregard for human rights, democracy and the relatively low standard of living of the majority of the population.

2. Literature Review

The obvious managerial advantages of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes have long aroused interest among scholars from democratic countries, who, on the one hand, seek to prepare their countries for competition, to learn the strengths of autocracies, and on the other hand, to understand their weaknesses and features of mass consciousness in totalitarian and authoritarian states. In ancient times, the greatest contribution to the study of this problem was made by philosophers Aristotle [2] and Plato [24], who considered this issue from opposite points of view – the first as a supporter of politics (in the modern interpretation – qualified democracy), and the second – from the point of view of a sympathizer of the aristocracy. In modern times, a whole galaxy of outstanding scientists, including Thomas Hobbes [13] and John Locke, joined the study of this issue. Among the thinkers of modern times, the problems of competitiveness of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes were studied by the German sociologist Max Weber [29], the French psychologist Gustave Lebon [19], the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas [12], the French philosopher Michel Foucault [7], the German philosopher Carl Schmitt [26], the German-Swiss social psychologist Erich Fromm [9], the Spanish philosopher Ortega-i-Hasset [23], the German-American political scientist Hanna Arendt [1] and others. Among the researchers of the effectiveness of totalitarianism and authoritarianism of our times are American political scientists Erika Frantz [8] and Anne Applebaum [5; 6], Ukrainian historian Stanislav Kulchyskyi [16] and others, the analysis of the main ideas of which is made in this article.

3. Problem Statement

The article is aimed at studying the paradox of managerial efficiency of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes by comparing their high mobilization efficiency in crisis conditions with systemic long-term inefficiency caused by market distortions, corruption and a culture of false bureaucratic reporting.

4. Methods and Materials

The material of the study is the state of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, the principles of their functioning, processes and changes in them, the advantages and disadvantages of the administration of such regimes in comparison with democratic regimes. The key materials of the study are primarily the works of key specialists who studied this problem. This article analyzes theoretical approaches related to the managerial efficiency of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Key scientific concepts and theoretical approaches are considered. This article uses mainly logical, historical and comparative research methods.

5. Results and Discussion

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato in his work “The State” [25, pp. 42–70], outlined concepts that were essentially early models of a totalitarian or authoritarian state. His idea of an “ideal state” envisaged a rigidly governed hierarchy of a fully ordered society in accordance with philosophical reason.

Plato’s society was to be divided into three castes: philosopher rulers, warriors, producers, without the possibility of changing the state. In fact, a “functional” inequality was proposed, reminiscent of the structure of authoritarian regimes with rigidly distributed roles. Plato believed that only the elite (philosophers) possess the knowledge of the truth and are able to determine the “true good”. Therefore, power should be concentrated in the hands of a narrow elite and not limited to the masses or democratic

institutions. And personal interests are always lower than the interests of the polis, and the individual is only “part of the organism”. Plato directly describes the mechanisms that are considered totalitarian technologies in modern political theory: the state monopoly on education from an early age, censorship in literature and art. In his Republic, Plato, although he does not support tyranny, an extreme manifestation of totalitarianism, himself defines the structure of tyranny as follows: absolute control of the ruler, a system of spies and denunciations, distribution of goods to loyal, repression against bearers of potential threats to authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

To achieve cohesion of the elite, Plato even went so far as to propose the commonality of wives and children in the caste of warriors, the absence of private property among the elite, centralized regulation of sexual relations and birth control. In his work “Laws” [24], Plato proposed regulating life to the smallest detail for the sake of totalitarian control; in particular, he prescribed rules for food, holidays, education, professions, art, and introduced an extensive system of supervision and punitive bodies.

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle in his book “Politics” [2, pp. 129–164], gives the first detailed description in the Western tradition of the mechanisms of tyrannical power, where the goal of tyranny is to preserve power at any cost.

Among the instruments of tyranny, he cites the destruction of the strong and independent, the destruction of alternative centers of power, the weakening of institutions and the community, that is, the atomization of society. Interestingly, Aristotle considered the poverty of the population to be a conscious policy of tyrannical power, acting as an instrument of control (“poor people do not have time to think about rebellion”). Aristotle singles out constant war or its imitation as a method of tyrannical management. The tyrant maintains a constant state of threat to keep people at bay and to justify repression. Another tool of tyrannical politics is the creation of mistrust between people, in order to create totalitarian control by isolating people from each other.

Aristotle believed that authoritarianism often grew out of demagoguery, the politics of the masses and the hatred of different classes of society among themselves.

He analyzed how democracies degenerate into authoritarianism due to the destruction of the law by demagogues, the concentration of power in leaders, the elevation of one leader and the habit of society towards despotism. Interestingly, it was Aristotle who affirmed the decisive role of the middle class in democracy. According to him, where there is no middle class, tyranny is inevitable. Aristotle, himself a supporter of aristocratic rule, argued that the key remedy against tyranny was a strong law that should limit the ruler.

In modern times, societies in the West, which were experiencing the process of economic growth of the bourgeoisie, became interested in the topic of limitation and distribution of power.

The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes in his work “Leviathan” [13, pp. 107–119] justified the absolutism of power as a means of achieving stability and, through fear as a mechanism of political obedience, came to a rational justification of authoritarianism.

Among the thinkers of modern times, the French philosopher Michel Foucault in his work “Security, Territory, Population” [7, pp. 134–136] explains why authoritarian regimes can be functionally effective. According to him, an authoritarian regime is effective when people internally accept supervision as the norm, and, accordingly, there is an automation of obedience, control becomes “smeared” throughout the social fabric. By getting used to authoritarianism, the regime's costs of repression are reduced, and most of the control is achieved through the self-discipline of the population. In the case of total control over various spheres of life, the state receives the most manageable human resource. The state creates norms of thinking, behavior, and even speech, but instead makes “deviation” everything that goes beyond the official norm. As a result, people get used to authoritarianism and recreate power on their own without realizing it.

Israeli scholar Yuval Kharari, in his book “Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind” [15, p. 243], argues that the strength of great powers is in the ability to organize millions of people around common ideas that exist only in human consciousness. Totalitarian regimes use this trait most radically: they create an all-encompassing fictional reality in which ideology, state and leader have an almost sacred status. When millions of people believe the same story at the same time, the state acquires the potential to act as a single mechanism — quickly, centrally, and with powerful mobilization energy. He emphasizes that the effectiveness of totalitarianism is not in cruelty as such, but in the ability to create systems of symbols, rituals and myths that are perceived as indisputable truth. Ideology becomes a tool of coordination: it determines who is a friend and who is an enemy, what is right and what is wrong [15,

pp. 248-265]. Therefore, such regimes can carry out grandiose projects—industrialization, mass campaigns, collective action—with precision and speed beyond the reach of complex pluralistic societies. Harari also points out that totalitarian systems rely on a bureaucracy that turns ideology into everyday practice. This creates the illusion of high efficiency, although all the energy of society is directed to a single “corridor”.

Thus, totalitarian regimes can be extremely effective in organizing collective action, but this efficiency is paid for by blocking competitive alternatives. Therefore, dictatorships have an advantage in the speed of decision-making, but as a rule, they lose in technical quality, which requires high-quality work of millions, and innovation. Thus, information, ideology and rituals are the infrastructure of dictatorships, which is no less important than law enforcement agencies.

The German philosopher Carl Schmitt [26, p. 58] explained the effectiveness of an authoritarian regime by the fact that it can make decisions without procedures, act instantaneously, and mobilize resources centrally. Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes use the normalization of the state of emergency and divide society into friends and foes, thereby marginalizing criticism and normalizing coercion in society.

The German-Swiss social psychologist Erich Fromm, in his book “Escape from Freedom”, noted that the masses mostly voluntarily surrender freedom as a result of escaping from freedom in search of a “strong hand”, since the development of morality lags behind technological development [9, p.12].

The German sociologist Max Weber [29, pp. 157-172] defined the nature of the legitimacy of totalitarian and authoritarian power. According to Weber, for authoritarian power, it is usually traditional, and for totalitarian power, it is charismatic.

The German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas, in his work “The Theory of Communicative Action” [12, p. 156-198]. defines the degradation of public discourse as a sign of the transition to totalitarianism and authoritarianism, when there is a distortion of public communication in authoritarian systems.

The French psychologist Gustave Lebon in his work “The Psychology of the Crowd” [19, pp. 12-19] determined the nature of the emergence of totalitarianism. He argued that since the masses act irrationally, the leader sets an emotional matrix in which suggestion becomes more important than argument.

The Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset, in his work “The Revolt of the Masses” [23, pp. 15-139] writes about the dominance of the “mass man” and the crisis of elites as a prerequisite for the establishment of authoritarianism.

The German-American political scientist Anna Arendt, in her work “The Origins of Totalitarianism” [1, p. 392], argued that the effectiveness of totalitarianism rests on mass mobilization, constant artificially induced “revolutionary” tension in society, and the fanaticizing of ideology. Moreover, in her opinion, totalitarian ideology is presented as a scientific and historical pattern that already determines the future result, any even adventurous decision of the authorities is justified as inevitable. Arendt sees terror not as chaos, but as an administrative technology that destroys independent groups, isolates people, and destroys horizontal ties in society, which complicates organized social resistance to totalitarianism.

According to her, the authoritarian apparatus is most effective when people do not have independent institutions, influential communities that unite citizens, and trust each other. There is a “trivialization of evil” — when the commission of crimes is perceived by a significant part of people as a routine.

Together, this creates a totalitarian system that can be operationally very effective, although strategically — often catastrophic.

That is, totalitarian regimes achieve extraordinary efficiency not because of the competence of the administration or rational management, but because of the ability to transform the entire space of human life into the arena of political movement. They eliminate the boundary between the state and society, private and public, and thereby create conditions under which any areas of activity can be mobilized in accordance with the goals of the regime.

Ideology gives totalitarian power a specific “logic of irreversibility”: it explains reality not as it is, but as it should be according to an imaginary “law of history” or “law of nature.” This logic allows the regime to act with exceptional determination and speed, because each decision is presented as an inevitable step towards the intended ultimate goal. Since ideology does not allow for an alternative, totalitarian power is freed from the need to persuade. Terror has a dual function: it eliminates real and

potential adversaries and at the same time isolates people from each other, destroying social ties that could generate solidarity or resistance. It is this isolation that makes the masses extremely controllable—a person deprived of communication with others is incapable of collective action, but easily mobilized [1, p. 460-479].

Thus, the effectiveness of totalitarian regimes is not based on productivity or organizational excellence, but on the ability to turn the chaos of mass society into an instrument of power, using ideology as an absolute justification and terror as a universal method. But this effectiveness is always temporary: it lasts only as long as the regime can maintain total mobilization and continuous pressure, because totalitarianism is not capable of stability or normal existence — it needs constant movement and a constant enemy.

Ukrainian historian Stanislav Kulchytskyi in his work “Communism in Ukraine: The First Decade (1919–1928)” [16, pp. 43-62]. argues that Soviet power in Ukraine was built as a vertically integrated system of control, in which real decision-making mechanisms were located outside the republic. He emphasizes that the effectiveness of this system did not stem from economic rationality or public support, but from a monopoly on coercion, ideological pressure and constant mobilization of the population. From the author’s point of view, the main tool for the functioning of totalitarian power was the “administrative resource” — the ability of the state to directly intervene in all spheres of life, from economic planning to the regulation of cultural processes. Kulchytskyi also writes that the stability of the Soviet regime in Ukraine was ensured by a combination of fear and dependence, when the repressive apparatus coexisted in parallel with the system of social guarantees, which created a double state in the population: subordination and at the same time attachment to the state. The totalitarian system was effective only in conditions of isolation, information monopoly and suppression of alternative forms of self-organization.

Ukrainian historian Volodymyr Baran in his work “Ideological control of the Stalinist regime over the intelligentsia in the Ukrainian SSR in 1945-1953” [3, pp. 181-188] argues that the Stalinist regime created a comprehensive model of ideological subordination in Ukraine, in which the intelligentsia occupied a central place. It was seen as a potentially dangerous group capable of forming alternative meanings, so the authorities sought to prevent even the slightest autonomy of thinking. In this context, the “effectiveness” of totalitarian rule was determined not by the productivity or competence of state institutions, but by the ability to stifle all forms of intellectual independence. The regime built a system in which success was measured by the degree of control over the word, creativity, academic discussions, and the personal behavior of artists and scientists. The instruments of control—from party surveillance and censorship to repression—acted as a single coordinated machine. Their task was not only to punish dissidents, but also to create an atmosphere of supposed self-control, when the intelligentsia itself began to avoid topics and positions that went beyond the official line. In such a system, fear became not a by-product, but the main resource of management. It was because of this that the Stalinist model seemed “effective”: it allowed no alternatives, reduced the space for criticism, and provided stability through forced unanimity rather than persuasion. The author emphasizes that this “efficiency” was superficial and destructive, because it blocked the development of humanitarian thought, destroyed creative potential and turned intellectual space into a propaganda tool.

The book by the American political scientist Juan Linz [22, pp. 65-143] states that in totalitarian regimes, power achieves an exceptional ability to mobilize society and concentrate resources through a combination of ideology, mass party, and centralized control. Ideology gives the leaders of the regime a sense of historical mission and justifies intervention in all spheres of life, creating a framework within which any resistance can be defined as hostile or anti-historical. The mass party ensures the vertical integration of society, turning individuals into part of an organized movement capable of responding quickly to directives.

Through the monopoly on information and the suppression of alternative institutions, totalitarian regimes can operate at high speed and without the internal barriers inherent in pluralistic political systems. They can carry out large-scale social engineering projects, mobilize millions of people, centrally redistribute resources, and impose homogeneous political decisions.

The effectiveness of such systems depends on the regime’s ability to maintain ideological unanimity and maintain the level of coercion necessary to suppress alternative norms and values. When the monolithic system collapses, either due to economic constraints or internal contradictions, the effectiveness of totalitarian governance drops sharply, as the system loses mechanisms for adaptation

and adjustment. According to Linz's classification, totalitarian regimes seek a radical transformation of society; authoritarian — to maintain the status quo of the elites.

Russian oppositionist Garry Kasparov, in his book "Winter Is Coming: Why Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World Must Be Stopped" [14], argues that modern authoritarian regimes (such as Putin's) are highly effective, primarily because they have been able to build a system where the authorities control everything — media, resources, security, institutions, and where any attempt at resistance is suppressed.

These regimes turn elections and democracy into a façade — but the real power remains in a narrow circle that can quickly make decisions. Through control over information, power structures and resources, the regime can manipulate moods, consolidate fear, suppress alternative political centers and create the appearance of stability.

It is the combined vertical of power + fear + information monopoly that gives the authoritarian system short-term efficiency — in terms of control, preservation of power and mobilization of resources. But, according to Kasparov, this effectiveness, based on repression, is potentially unsustainable — it requires constant pressure and support.

Russian oppositionist Sergei Guriev and British-American political scientist Daniel Treisman in their book "Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century" [11, p. 34]. argue that modern autocratic regimes remain highly effective not only through terror or all-consuming ideology, as in classical totalitarian regimes, but to a large extent through impression management, information manipulation, and selective repression. They have learned to act in such a way that they seem legitimate not only to their own citizens, but also to an international audience. These so-called "spin dictators" build an image of competent, rational leadership, which supposedly ensures stability and development. They have control over the media, manipulation of socially significant topics, economic incentives, and the transformation of elections into a ritual of support that creates the illusion of general agreement. Instead of mass repression, they use targeted punishments aimed at those who may pose a real threat. This minimizes fear among the population, allows you to maintain the appearance of normality, and does not scare away investors. Such leaders can effectively mobilize resources and maintain order, as society often does not realize the depth of manipulation.

The effectiveness of these new dictatorships is explained by the fact that they have learned to imitate democracy and the market, using them as instruments of power. They do not destroy institutions, but turn them into decorations, while exploiting the global economy and information technology. That is why their power can last for a long time. Repression in such regimes can be massive or selective [11, p. 52].

American political scientist from the University of Michigan Erika Frantz, in her book "Authoritarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know" [8, pp. 86-102] emphasizes that authoritarian regimes can maintain significant effectiveness because they have the ability to act without the limitations that are characteristic of democratic systems. They control key institutions, including the media, law enforcement agencies, and courts, which allows them to minimize political risks and make decisions quickly. Such centralization of power often gives the impression of efficiency and competence. Authoritarian leaders can mobilize resources and direct them to priority areas without lengthy consultation or verification. This is especially noticeable in situations of crisis, when society tends to interpret determination as efficiency. At the same time, the authorities seek to limit citizens' access to alternative information, creating a controlled environment in which the leader's popularity seems natural and widespread. Frantz emphasizes that this efficiency is selective: the regime is able to provide stability, but usually does so at the expense of political freedoms and open competition. The system is based on the loyalty of the elites and the security apparatus, as well as on the leader's ability to demonstrate successful results or convincingly simulate them. It is this combination — control, centralized decisions, limited accountability, and information manipulation — that allows authoritarian regimes to remain effective for a long time, although their stability depends on the continued retention of power over key institutions. According to her, the most important factor in the collapse of totalitarian regimes is the split of elites, not popular protest. Authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, to protect themselves, ensure the rotation of elites, the control of security forces, a combination of visible and invisible coercion, preventive censorship, the formation of the information field through the control of the media, the Internet, and education. creation of fake government-controlled elections, screen parties, "pseudo-institutions", etc.

American political scientist from Yale University Milan Svoblik, in his work "The Politics of Authoritarian Rule" [27, pp. 3-8], emphasizes that the effectiveness of authoritarian regimes is based on the ability of the leader to maintain a balance between two fundamental threats: the threat from the masses and the threat from the elites. An authoritarian leader can act quickly and decisively because he is not obliged to go through the consent procedures characteristic of democracy. But such freedom of action creates another problem — it is difficult for the elites to control the ruler, and for the ruler himself to trust the elites. Therefore, the regimes that remain effective try to create mechanisms of joint management, allocation of resources and mutual guarantees that minimize the risk of coups. Svoblik explains that authoritarian systems remain manageable when they are able to combine selective repression, which deters potential dissidents, with the involvement of elites, which ensures the loyalty of the elite. The effectiveness of totalitarianism and authoritarianism is ensured by the fact that the leader can direct resources to strategic areas and keep the political space under control. According to Svoblik, it is the elites that are the main factor in the stability of the authoritarian and totalitarian regime; Instead, the masses are a secondary factor that becomes key only in moments of crisis. In his opinion, an authoritarian and totalitarian leader must maintain a balance between law enforcement agencies, party elites, and economic groups. Accordingly, elections under authoritarianism are not an instrument of democracy, but a way to test the loyalty of elites and gain legitimacy. Like Erika Franz, Svoblik believes that the collapse of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes almost always occurs as a result of an internal conflict between elites, rather than a mass uprising. Loyalty stimulation is provided through access to resources, rent, and positions. Instead, the repression against the elites is a signal to the rest of the elites, and repression against the masses is a tool to prevent protests.

One of the main theorists of authoritarianism, an American political scientist from the University of California, Barbara Geddes, in her book "How Dictatorships Work" [10], emphasizes that the effectiveness of dictatorships is based not on the strength of one person, but on how the regime organizes control over elites and information. Dictators survive and remain viable by forming structures that allow them to track potential threats, punish "traitors," and maintain discipline in their immediate environment. One of the key tools is the secret police, which acts not only as a body of repression, but also as a mechanism for internal monitoring. It provides a flow of information that is not very available in an open political system — information about the mood of elites, their level of loyalty, and possible conspiracies. It is the ability to obtain reliable data in conditions of fear and mistrust that allows dictators to act quickly and accurately, without relying on formal institutions.

Geddes explains that a dictator cannot rely on fear alone, because it creates paranoia and destroys the ability of the elites to work. Therefore, he creates a system of incentives and opportunities that make loyalty more profitable than resistance. Regimes that are able to maintain this balance have higher institutional stability and are able to provide manageability for a long time.

As a result, its approach is that the effectiveness of dictatorships is a consequence of institutional decisions, not the personal qualities of the ruler. The strongest autocracies are those that build internal control systems, minimize external information influence, and maintain the discipline of the power apparatus. Where the secret police are well-organized and the elites are integrated and interdependent, regimes have significant resilience and the ability to act consistently and effectively. In her opinion. The size and structure of the repressive apparatus determine the duration of the regime. In the modern world, dictatorships learn from each other to control society, including using technical means. In her opinion, different types of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes have different life expectancies: personalist ones are long, but unstable at the end; one-party — the most stable; The military is the most fragile. Authoritarian leaders are characterized by the active use of "purges" to reduce threats from security forces and entourage.

American political scientist Jason Brownlee, in his book "Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization" [4] explains that the effectiveness of authoritarian regimes largely depends on how closely the ruler is connected with the political elites that form the basis of his power. Successful dictatorships are built on strong internal coalitions that ensure stability, access to resources, and the regime's ability to withstand both domestic challenge and international pressure.

He emphasizes that the key factor is the institutionalized relationship between the leader and his allies, which creates the predictable rules of the game. In such regimes, conflicts within the ruling coalition are resolved not through violence or coups, but through established mechanisms for the distribution of power and benefits. This allows the ruler to make quick and effective decisions without fear of the collapse of his own support. Brownlee emphasizes that efficiency occurs where there is unity

of elites. Regimes in which the ruler and key institutional actors — primarily law enforcement agencies, parties, or family-clan groups — have coherent interests, capable of blocking the opposition, controlling the population, and maintaining power even during external shocks. Where such unity is weak, dictatorships quickly collapse or turn into chaotic forms of government.

In his interpretation, the effectiveness of the regime is not the product of charisma or repressive power per se, but the consequence of a stable and disciplined ruling coalition that makes authoritarian rule consistent, organized and capable of resisting democratization. According to him, authoritarian regimes do not automatically fall under the pressure of democratization; Many of them find adaptation mechanisms. Regimes that have preserved the unity of the elites have experienced both mass protests and external pressure. The unity of the elites at a critical moment, in his estimation, predicts the survival of the regime with almost 90% accuracy.

Stephen Levitsky, an American political scientist at Harvard University, and Lucan Wei, a Canadian political scientist from the University of Toronto, in their work “Competitive Authoritarianism” [20, pp. 37-52], emphasize that the effectiveness of competitive authoritarian regimes is based not on the complete suppression of opposition, as in classical totalitarian systems, but on the ability of the ruling elite to systematically violate democratic rules, while maintaining the appearance of political competition. This allows them to gain the benefits of authoritarian control without provoking large-scale international isolation or internal insurrection. Regimes of this type are effective by capturing key institutions — courts, election commissions, the media — and are able to use state resources to support the government. Formal multi-party system and regular elections create the illusion of accountability, but in practice, the opposition faces unequal conditions, which makes the success of the government almost guaranteed. This combination allows the regime to act quickly and in a coordinated manner, avoiding the use of mass terror.

The authors emphasize that competitive authoritarian regimes remain effective also because they rely on the organization and material resources of the state, which give them an advantage in management, mobilization and control. Systematic access to administrative tools makes them much stronger than any opposition that is forced to act in conditions of resource scarcity and information inequality. As a result, their effectiveness is the result of a combination of authoritarian practices with democratic forms, which allows them to simultaneously avoid full-scale repression and retain power thanks to deep-rooted institutional advantages. It is this “hybridity” that makes such regimes stable and capable of long-term existence, despite the formal openness of the political system. That is, the authors argue that in many countries in the XXI century. Competitive authoritarianisms arise, which are neither democracies nor dictatorships, but a mixture of these practices. International pressure can make such regimes more open, but it rarely leads to their downfall. The most common scenario for the collapse of such regimes is either mass protests as a result of impoverishment or defeat in the war. Some competitive authoritarianisms eventually become full-fledged dictatorships (such as Russia after 2011-2014).

Turkish-American researcher Timur Kuran, in his work “Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification” [17, p. 196], argues that authoritarian regimes remain effective not only because of repression or control over resources, but primarily because of the massive influence on the choice of human preferences. People publicly express opinions that do not correspond to their true beliefs because they are afraid of social or political sanctions. This creates an environment where the authorities seem omnipotent and society is unanimous in supporting the regime, even if privately most people are dissatisfied.

The regime is able to act effectively, because the falsification of preferences distorts the information space. Leaders receive signals that confirm their strength and lack of alternatives, and the opposition cannot assess the real level of public discontent. Under such conditions, collective action becomes almost impossible, because each individual exaggerates the degree of support that the regime has among others. The Quran emphasizes that this generates a self-reinforcing mechanism. The more people publicly obey, the more difficult it becomes to express disagreement; The fewer alternative voices are heard, the easier it is for the authorities to manage, manipulate and mobilize society. The regime seems effective, stable and even popular, because no one sees the real beliefs of others. In fact, this “silent consent”, based on fear and incorrect information, is the basis for the long-term survival of autocracy.

As a result, the effectiveness of totalitarian systems in the Quran is not a sign of their organizational perfection or rationality. This is the effect of collective lies, when society, without

realizing it, supports a system that in private life can be disapproved of by almost no one. However, at a certain point, the accumulation of hidden dissatisfaction can cause a sudden collapse after a minor trigger. Therefore, the external “stability” of such regimes may be an illusion, so the regime may fall in days. An important signal of the collapse of such regimes is the public expression of disagreement by key actors, which can catalyze others. The Koran explains the main paradox of dictatorships: they are weakest precisely when they seem most inviolable.

American researcher Jeremy Wallace from Johns Hopkins University in his book “Seeking Truth, Hiding Facts” [28], emphasizes that the effectiveness of authoritarian regimes is based not only on their ability to hide the truth, but also on their ability to produce and control certain types of truth. Autocracies need information just as much as democracies, but restricting freedom of expression creates a fundamental dilemma: the regime needs accurate data to govern, but it is this data that can threaten it politically. Therefore, the authorities are constantly balancing between searching for the truth and hiding it.

The author emphasizes that totalitarian and authoritarian states often prove effective when they manage to build institutions that simultaneously collect quality information and filter it in such a way that it does not undermine the authority of the leadership. This is the duality: officials and analytical structures create statistical systems designed to provide the state with truthful data on the economy, demography or public mood, but political logic forces them to hide or mitigate information that may indicate failures.

Wallace explains that it is the ability to manipulate data flows that makes modes seem stable and rational. Indicators that are shown publicly create an image of effectiveness, while unpleasant facts settle in internal reports or are not recorded at all. This control over the information environment helps governments avoid panic, maintain the trust of elites, and reduce the likelihood of collective protests, even when the real state of affairs worsens.

Wallace emphasizes that the effectiveness of authoritarian regimes is not a consequence of their special wisdom or modernizing power. This is the result of an information architecture in which the search for truth is closely intertwined with its suppression. The mode works as long as it is able to control which parts of reality become visible and which become hidden. Disinformation and dishonest data increase the risk of disasters because the authorities do not have a real picture. Even in totalitarian states, there are “internal channels of truth” for the elites, but they are often unstable and non-systematic. Excessive control of information can lead to a “dark control zone” of critical loss of control. Therefore, the more lies in the official data, the weaker the regime, even if it looks inviolable from the outside.

Johns Hopkins University American historian Anne Applebaum, in her book *The History of the Gulag* [5, pp. 310-330], argues that the effectiveness of the Soviet totalitarian state was deeply misleading. The Gulag system looked like a huge mechanism for mobilizing labor for industrialization, but in reality, the repressive machine undermined its own goals. Terror created the appearance of discipline and obedience, but at the same time destroyed initiative, trust and competence. The regime could make millions of people work, but it couldn't make them work well—fear ensured submission, but never provided productivity. The author notes that the totalitarian state produced statistics of “successes” that fueled the myth of efficiency, but these data were often fictitious or distorted. And it was this distorted information space that allowed the authorities not only to continue a catastrophically ineffective policy, but also to convince society and their own bureaucracy that the system works. Applebaum emphasizes that where terror destroys the truth, even the worst mistakes can look like triumphs.

Applebaum shows that totalitarianism is able to function for a long time, not because it is effective, but because it controls information and physically eliminates those who could publicly state this inefficiency.

In her other book, *The Twilight of Democracy* [6], the author argues that modern authoritarian systems seem to be effective because of the ability of a small group of political “interpreters”—intellectuals, journalists, communicators—to create a compelling alternate reality. The visible unity produced by this information apparatus can give the impression of a strong, decisive and competent government, even if in fact the state apparatus is in decline. Authoritarianism does not need effective institutions — loyal people are enough to it who are able to explain failures as victories and enemies as a threat to the nation.

She emphasizes that new authoritarian movements are fueled by nostalgia and resentment: this creates the illusion of simple solutions and quick results. A strong leader may seem effective because he is devoid of democratic “restrictions,” but this effectiveness is symbolic, not administrative. Instead of reform, he offers fairy tales from history; instead of politics, he offers an emotional narrative blaming the regime’s “traitors”. In the short term, it may look like order and determination, but in the long term, such regimes usually decompose the institutions that are the foundation of true governance. Applebaum concludes that authoritarianism can be impressively effective in creating loyalty, fear, and informational homogeneity, but it almost always proves destructive in matters of competent governance. Its effectiveness is the effectiveness of propaganda, not politics. Authoritarian regimes create a culture of fear and submission, where intellectuals become “servants of the regime.” There is a degradation of expert knowledge — experts are replaced by ideologized “functionaries.” Moreover, the more the system represses, the more it depends on repression. Totalitarian regimes are based on microsocial mechanisms: denunciations, fear, and micro-hierarchies. Authoritarianisms, on the other hand, are more inclined to produce false intellectual elites — loyal but incompetent cadres. The regime falls when these elites become so weak that they are no longer able to maintain the infrastructure of the system. Thus, authoritarian regimes decompose from within due to the degradation of competencies.

The above-mentioned American political scientist, Juan Linz and the American political scientist Alfred Stepan, in their book “Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation” [21] emphasize that the apparent effectiveness of totalitarian regimes is based not on qualitative institutional capacity, but on their ability to organize social life in conditions of maximum monopoly of power. A totalitarian regime may seem extremely purposeful, because its institutions are created not to serve social needs, but to realize a single, centrally defined goal. That is why such regimes can mobilize resources much faster than democracies, while at the same time, this mobilization is carried out at the expense of suppressing the autonomy of social and political institutions.

Linz and Stepan emphasize that totalitarian regimes often demonstrate short-term administrative efficiency in areas that directly serve their ideological goals: industrialization, information control, mass campaigns, and repressive operations. But at the same time, regimes can destroy institutional complexity, which is a condition for long-term efficiency — professional bureaucracy, economic rationality, etc. Their successes are possible precisely because no one can question the decisions of the center, and not because the decisions are competent. Centralized control, which gives speed in the execution of political orders, at the same time deprives the system of the ability to provide feedback, self-correction and adaptation. Therefore, totalitarian regimes can mobilize society for “heroic” or catastrophic projects, but rarely for stable, institutional development. They are effective in coercion, but ineffective in developing institutional competence in terms of economics and labor efficiency of large masses of the population. According to the authors, authoritarian regimes are more diverse, flexible and adaptable than totalitarian ones. For the sake of the stability of regimes, they ensure that the population is in a state of passivity.

The above-mentioned American political scientist Daniel Treisman, in his book “How Modern Dictators Survive: An Informational Theory of the New Authoritarianism” [11], together with his co-author S. Guriev, emphasizes that the effectiveness of new autocracies comes not from their repressiveness, but from the ability of technology to change the way of control. Unlike the old dictatorships, which relied on mass violence and ideological mobilization, the new autocrats sometimes seek to appear as competent managers rather than tyrants. Technology allows them to track public sentiment, adjust policies according to data, and selectively suppress only those who really pose a threat. Thanks to this, they can give the impression of speed and accuracy in decision-making. Treisman notes that digital tools have transformed information control from censorship to attention management. Internet censorship, bots, and algorithmic manipulation create an environment in which citizens can feel dissatisfied but cannot turn it into collective action. This information structuring not only protects the regime but also reinforces the illusion of its competence. Treisman highlights a paradox: modern autocracies often demonstrate efficiency precisely because technology allows them to avoid the strategic mistakes that previously led to the fall of dictatorships. They use data to monitor the economy, sentiment, and potential threats. But such regimes can be extremely adept at retaining power — and at the same time very poor at ensuring long-term development. Thus, contrary to forecasts, the Internet does not destroy authoritarianism, but, on the contrary, strengthens its ability to monitor public sentiment. Digital bureaucracy, which collects data and manages risks, is becoming an important tool of the modern dictatorship, and the role of managerial personnel, engineers, and data analysts is growing.

Technology creates a situation where the population lives in an information environment designed by the regime.

Russian researcher of North Korea Andrei Lankov, in his book "The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia" [18], emphasizes that the external effectiveness of the North Korean totalitarian regime stems not from its ability to govern competently, but from its extraordinary capacity for social control. For decades, the state has been building a system that deprived people of alternative sources of information, convinced them of the urgency of an external threat, and created conditions in which loyalty was the only possible survival strategy. This gave the regime the ability to quickly mobilize the population to carry out political or economic campaigns, even when they were irrational or harmful to society. Lankov emphasizes that the DPRK demonstrated effectiveness in those areas where the state needed to ensure unconditional submission: full control over movement, total information isolation, and stable functioning of the repressive apparatus. In these industries, the regime could operate with precision that other systems simply cannot afford. But this efficiency does not extend to the economy or social security — on the contrary, it is centralized control and fear of initiative that have destroyed any possibility of rational management. Lankov writes that the real secret of the regime's survival is in the ability to constantly maintain an atmosphere of "surrounded fortress" in the country, as well as in the uncompromising suppression of potential points of collective resistance. The regime is not effective in development, but it is extremely effective in maintaining itself. It can exist for a long time even in the face of economic collapse because it has created a society that lacks the tools, resources, and horizontal connections necessary for organized resistance. In his opinion, the DPRK regime is a rational system for the survival of the regime in extreme conditions. The leaders of the DPRK optimize their policies not for development, but to avoid collapse. The system is maintained by total social control, the caste system "songbun," and isolation. In particular, the Songbun caste system regulates access to career advancement and even food depending on political loyalty and the usefulness of the regime.

6. Conclusions

Thus, today, a significant array of ideas has been developed in the world regarding the reasons for the functional effectiveness or ineffectiveness of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. At the same time, due to the closeness of autocratic systems, access to truthful statistics of these countries and the real state of their economies and societies is significantly limited, and is most fully revealed after the fall of such regimes.

As experience shows, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes have proven to be able, thanks to the concentration of power, to ensure the speed of decision-making, because they do not have the usual parliamentary procedures in democratic countries and can instantly make decisions, including unpopular ones, ignoring public opinion and forming the direction of public communication.

Thanks to this, extraordinary efficiency is achieved in conditions of crises, military operations, mobilizations, etc. In addition, authoritarian regimes have demonstrated the ability to quickly make risky decisions on large infrastructure projects. Totalitarian and authoritarian systems can control society to a significant extent, reducing political uncertainty by controlling the media, ensuring the predictability of social behavior, the absence of public discussion and the loyalty of the masses. Threats from competing elites are neutralized by repression, blackmail, and corrupt ties, which greatly simplifies governance and increases its centralization in totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Terror provides a certain level of discipline to the bureaucracy, at least in relations with the higher levels of power, as a rule, higher than in democratic countries. Thus, fear achieves high administrative controllability. Control over the media and public debate in totalitarian and authoritarian states ensures the legitimation of any actions of the authorities and collateral victims as a result of such actions. Authoritarian and totalitarian regimes are favored by their ability to massively and immediately redistribute resources, direct the budget to strategic industries, and forcibly mobilize labor, material, and scientific resources, which allows, in particular, to carry out large-scale projects in the field of the military-industrial complex and infrastructure.

The absence of real elections allows authoritarian and totalitarian regimes to work with a planning horizon of decades, regardless of election campaigns, which are formal in such states. Although both authoritarian and even totalitarian regimes retain a certain sensitivity to the moods of the masses, they have many more means to influence or ignore these sentiments.

In addition, totalitarian and authoritarian regimes can ignore scandals, their own failures, and repeated mis decisions, thereby demonstrating greater resilience in defending politics than democracy.

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