RESOURCES AND STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL REGIMES

HANDBOOK

PART 1

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Resources and Structure of Political Regimes

PART I

HANDBOOK

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The first part of the handbook aims to organise the existing theories that elucidate the political characteristics and dynamics of contemporary regimes. It explores the essence and purpose of political regimes within the broader political framework, the social and political contexts in which these regimes operate, how they gain legitimacy, and the impact of internet technologies on their stability. A substantial focus is placed on traditional and modern approaches to classifying political regimes.

This handbook is intended for political science students and researchers interested in analysing the stability and dynamics of modern political regimes.

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INTRODUCTION

Political regimes play an integral role in the political systems of countries across the globe. The 20th and 21st centuries have brought about significant transformations in the dynamics of these regimes, reflecting their notable institutional evolution. The early decades of the 20th century were characterised by a marked trend toward totalitarianism, which militarised major economies of that era. However, in the aftermath of the totalitarian bloc's defeat in World War II, democratisation emerged as the primary driver of political development, a trend that was further reinforced by the ongoing processes of decolonisation, and the latter half of the 20th century witnessed significant democratic advancements and substantial setbacks. The demise of the communist system at the century's end revealed the complex dynamics of political regimes, which ranged from young people's democracies to modified versions of sultanates. Recent geopolitical shifts and the escalation of military conflicts worldwide have prompted political scientists to explore the evolving nature of modern political regimes.

The identified historical stages in the evolution of political regimes underscore the necessity of understanding the resources and structures that define their specific types. This handbook focuses on several pertinent areas, including mechanisms of legitimisation, the social environment of political regimes' operation, resources essential for maintaining regime stability, the impact of external factors on these regimes, and the effort toward developing a comprehensive typology of political regimes.

The handbook is organised into five main chapters. *The first chapter* addresses the political nature of the regime, providing an analysis of the key institutional features required for its effective operation. *The second chapter* examines the environmental context of the political regime, taking into account both endogenous factors – such as social and cultural influences – and exogenous factors that impact its functionality. *The third chapter* is dedicated

to assessing the indicators that contribute to the stability of the political regime. It encompasses an evaluation of the regime's legitimacy and the resources essential for sustaining its vitality, including socioeconomic welfare, state coercion, and mechanisms that safeguard citizens' rights and freedoms. *The fourth chapter* of the present handbook discusses the interrelation between modern Internet technologies and contemporary political regimes. It begins by analysing the influence of Internet freedom and social media on the types of political regimes. *The fifth and final chapter* is devoted to classifying political regimes, with a clear differentiation between traditional and modern approaches to this classification.

I genuinely hope that the first part of the handbook will provide a fresh perspective and valuable insights into the structure and resources of political regimes, paving the way for a comprehensive assessment of the dynamics underlying the operation of modern political systems. This meticulously designed handbook will serve as an invaluable resource for educators and practitioners in the field of political science.

PART 1

POLITICAL REGIMES IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

1.1 Exploring Approaches to Defining Political Regimes

In political science, the term *'political regime'* is a normative concept that defines the discipline and establishes it as an autonomous area of study. The evolution of political systems, from the earliest state formations to the dawn of the 21st century, has refined our comprehension of political regimes. A political regime is typically understood as the power dynamics between the elite (the rulers) and society (the ruled). However, contemporary political systems are sophisticated management structures integrating various power institutes to facilitate these relationships. Consequently, it is essential to analyse political regimes more thoroughly – specifically, in reference to individual countries or regions – and through a broader lens that incorporates methodologies from sociology, psychology, and public administration.

Encyclopaedia Britannica offers a comprehensive interdisciplinary definition of a regime within the field of political science, defining it as a structured framework of means for establishing specialised institutes. Each regime is built upon the institutionalisation of managerial decision-making, based on well-defined principles, norms, rules, and procedures (Ward 2016).

Britannica defines political regimes and offers a general classification that considers various criteria. These classifications can be associated with different factors, such as the authority of a specific individual, exemplified by Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime in Romania; a particular ideology, such as a fascist regime; a

distinctive approach to governance (a military regime); or a particular political model (a neoliberal regime) (Ward 2016).

With the emergence of modern states, the first political regimes began to take shape, delineating the relationship between the political elite – predominantly the monarch – and the population. The most traditional forms of political regimes emerged during the previous century, each employing distinct resources to exert authority. These three political regimes, incorporating specific methodological modifications, have developed from the classical approach in political science (Linz 2000, Arendt 1958, Dahl 1971, Sartori 1987, Powell & Bingham 1982, Perlmutter 1981, Moore 1966, Macridis 1986, Lijphart 1977, Friedrich & Brzezinski 1965, Almond & Powell, 1966). However, recent advancements in political science methodology and the enhanced capacity for objective analysis of political regimes in specific countries have significantly supplemented and refined the typology of regimes (Gasiorowski 1996, Kailitz 2013, Levitsky & Way 2010, Reich 2002, Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub & Limongi 2000, Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi & Przeworski 1996, Brooker 2008, Cheibub, Gandhi & Vreeland 2010, Ezrow & Frantz 2011, Gerschewski 2013, Hadenius & Teorell 2007, Ottaway 2003, Schedler 2006, Skaaning 2006).

The Traditional Approach to Political Regime Typology:

• *Totalitarianism:* This regime extensively uses violence and militarism to maintain control. Notable historical examples include the totalitarian regimes of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Joseph Stalin.

• *Authoritarianism:* In contrast, authoritarian regimes operate by upholding certain traditions and imposing restrictions on the political freedoms of their citizens. This form of governance characterises a vast majority of countries in the Muslim world. Over the past century, authoritarianism has adapted to the political contexts of southern Europe and South America.

• *Democracy:* A democratic regime is fundamentally based on pluralism across all sectors, a prevalent characteristic in most contemporary nations.

Political regimes tend to reproduce themselves over time, and each historical period is often defined by a political 'fashion' that favours particular governance systems. In the first half of the 20th century, totalitarianism was the dominant regime. In contrast, following the collapse of the totalitarian coalition led by Nazi Germany, there emerged a widespread movement toward democratisation in the latter half of the century. Between the 1960s and 1980s, a plethora of *'distorted'* versions of democratic regimes facilitated the rise of authoritarian regimes. The collapse of communism at the turn of the 20th to 21st centuries became a catalyst for democratic transitions on a global scale.

The collapse of the communist system in the 1980s, along with the transition of numerous countries to democratic governance, is pivotal in studying political regimes. Today, political systems are continuously transforming, reflecting the dynamic nature of global governance. Notably, there are currently over 200 countries worldwide – as of 2025, there are 193 countries that have officially joined the United Nations (United Nations 2025) – and each of them has a specific type of regime. Larry Diamond states that there are hundreds of democratic regimes worldwide (Diamond 1996). Each region or province may operate under its specific governmental structure, which may differ from the national regime. The political regime is a system of administrative mechanisms and a particular approach to exercising state power.

Political science delineates three fundamental categories related to state organisation: forms of government, forms of state structure, and political regimes. The political regime is regarded as a distinct political category, whereas forms of government and forms of state structure fall under both political science and constitutional law.

Political relationships among the elite, the opposition, and citizens often categorise modern political regimes into three fundamental categories: 'state', 'government', and 'power' (Waldner 2001). In this context, a regime should be understood as a framework of formal and informal rules and procedures that enable the effective interaction of political, economic, and social institutions. Regimes encompass all segments of society, their political characteristics being typically the most prominent.

The term 'regime' can be defined in a variety of ways:

(1) Regime and Power: This perspective suggests that political power consists of two essential components: order and subordination. The fundamental role of a political regime is to exercise state power.

(2) Regime and the System: From this standpoint, a regime functions as a mechanism for exercising power and is an indispensable element of the political system. Other political institutions include political parties, governments, political culture, and political elites. As a rule, the political regime brings together these various institutions.

(3) Regime and Legitimacy: A regime also ensures the legitimacy of the political elite. The most stable regimes typically arise from a successful combination of legality and legitimacy.

The term *'political regime'* refers to concrete implementations within the political system rather than abstract concepts. It is instrumental in regulating the interactions among the ruling elite, the opposition, and society. Accordingly, the political regime can be effectively examined through both political-legal and sociological frameworks.

The concept of 'political regime' can be understood through various approaches:

(1) Political-Legal Approach: This perspective combines the political regime with forms of government and state structures, as discussed by H. Lasswell and F. Riggs (Merelman 1981, Riggs

1984). In this view, the political regime impacts the nature of power distribution among government branches – whether that distribution is formal or informal – and defines the constitutional relationships between national and regional authorities;

(2) Sociological approach: It describes the social foundations of political regimes, as noted by M. Duverger and J.-L. Quermonne (Duverger 1980; Quermonne 2006). This approach explores the dynamics between society and the state within the context of constitutional norms, emphasising the formal characteristics commonly associated with undemocratic regimes and the practical elements that are distinctive to democratic systems.

As articulated by a well-known French political scientist and sociologist J.-L. Quermonne, the political regime encompasses the ideological, constitutional, and sociological elements that lay the foundation of state administration during a defined period (Quermonne 2006). This definition offers a comprehensive explanation of a political regime as a component of a political system. However, this perspective may come across as abstract, as it overlooks political practice's nuances. As an institute of a political system, a political regime comprises specific forms of political relations. The principal political process that establishes connections between these individual forms and defines distinct types of political regimes is the relationship to power. A political regime synthesises various forms of political relations into a whole, structured around five primary forms.

J.-L. Quermonne outlines the following essential elements of a political regime (Quermonne 2006):

(1) Legitimacy refers to the recognition and acceptance that society grants to a political regime and its representatives. It reflects the extent to which a part of society agrees with and supports the existing political system.

To function effectively, every political regime requires a maximum degree of legitimacy. Totalitarian regimes are characterised by high legitimacy, whereas the legitimacy of

political elites in democratic countries is often more unstable and subject to change. In authoritarian states, the leaders typically serve as the primary source of legitimacy. The legitimacy of the political elite is directly linked to voter turnout.

Various parties predicted voter turnout on the eve of the 2018 Russian presidential elections. The Kremlin centre predicted a turnout of 86%, while the opposition, led by Alexei Navalny, anticipated a turnout of just over 55%. Ultimately, Vladimir Putin was expected to secure his fourth presidential term, with approximately 45% of the electorate casting their votes in his favour (Kästner 2018). The official results indicated that 76% of voters supported Vladimir Putin, the voter turnout reported at 67% (RIA 2018). The opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, was not allowed to participate in the elections.

(2) Organising state organisations' activities. Within state institutions, it is a fundamental priority in public administration. This process involves the critical decision-making by political leaders regarding the balance between rigid bureaucracy and the professionalism of public servants. In undemocratic regimes, these structures often operate on a party or ideological basis. In contrast, in democratic regimes, decision-making is founded on professional standards and practices.

(3) The type of party system: The relationship between the political regime and the party system is essential, as they are inherently interconnected, depending on the ideological roles of specific parties. These factors determine the degree of plurality within political regimes.

Single-party systems are primarily associated with totalitarian regimes, such as the Communist Party in the USSR and the Labour Party in North Korea (DPRK). They can also be found in specific authoritarian regimes where one party dominates and others face persecution. However, there are exceptions; for instance, in Japan, the Liberal Democratic Party was the dominant political force from 1960 to 1990. In contrast, bipartisan systems, like those in the USA

and the UK, and multi-party systems, are typical of democratic regimes.

(4) The influence of the state on society. Each regime strives to optimise its political impact on society, thereby significantly enhancing its legitimacy and acceptance among the population.

The state can pursue total control over society, a system known as totalitarianism. Alternatively, it can exert control mainly over the political and some economic aspects while permitting freedoms in cultural and religious spheres, a system referred to as authoritarianism. In contrast, in a democracy, the state typically refrains from interfering with society except to enforce the rule of law.

1.2 The Peculiarities of Political Regimes

The political regime is a multifaceted concept that impacts the interactions between political systems and individuals, social groups, and society. It functions as a mechanism that affects modern states' political and social dimensions. Let us explore political regimes' fundamental characteristics by examining contemporary political systems' practices.
Here are ten key characteristics of modern political regimes:

(1) A constitutional mechanism is a legally established mechanism that ensures the protection of citizens' rights and freedoms.

In case a state fails to protect the constitutional rights of its citizens, we often observe the emergence of *'facade democracies'*, where constitutional norms are disregarded, a phenomenon that is typical of most post-Soviet republics, with the exception of the Baltic countries. A good example of such 'facade democracy' is Ukraine during the 1990s, when the country navigated the

complexities of formal democratisation while grappling with the challenges of effective transformation (Petrov & Serdiuk 2010).

(2) The principle of separation of powers among the highest state bodies establishes the distinct competencies of the President, the head of government, the parliament, and the judiciary bodies.

Juan Linz argues that the consolidation of presidential power is often associated with authoritarian regimes. In contrast, bolstering parliamentary authority enhances democratic governance (Linz 1990).

There are certainly exceptions in political practice where parliament assumes a more formal or consensual role. This phenomenon is often observed in authoritarian countries, such as Russia under Vladimir Putin, where the dominant party is 'United Russia'. Similarly, in hybrid regimes like Ukraine during President Viktor Yanukovych's administration, the 'Party of Regions' acted as a satellite party.

(3) A model of power interrelations between the central authority and the regions, focusing on decentralisation of power and the establishment of local self-government.

The primary criteria for decentralisation include the territory, historical traditions, cultural aspects, and ethnic specificity. At the close of the 20th century, decentralisation became the standard model for the administrative-territorial systems in Europe. This trend has since extended to former communist autocracies. In Slovakia, decentralisation began successfully with the implementation of fiscal decentralisation between 2005 and 2007. This transition was facilitated by the country's accession to the European Union (Caselli & Ralyea 2017). Asymmetric decentralisation reforms pose a potential risk of separatism (Lele 2021).

(4) The system of relationships between the state and political parties – Political parties play a vital role in maintaining the

stability of the regime, and their interactions with the state can manifest in a variety of ways.

Certain regimes identify state power with a single political party, where decisions are primarily made by the party bureaucracy, as exemplified by Communist systems or the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in North Korea. In some instances, undisclosed party funding can lead to oligarchy in post-Soviet countries or mafia influence in Italy. Laws that govern state funding for parliamentary parties may be enacted; however, in undemocratic nations, such funding often serves as a means of ensuring loyalty to the ruling party. For instance, during the 2016 parliamentary elections in Russia, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, previously led by Vladimir Zhirinovsky, received around 99.7% of its funding from the government (CIK 2018).

(5) The interaction between the ruling elite and the opposition. It encompasses the mechanisms through which the opposition influences the ruling elite's decision-making and holds it accountable.

In any country, it is important to define the legal status of the opposition. There are various types of opposition:

• party opposition (the most common type in countries with developed political systems, where multiple parties compete for power);

• military opposition (often found in military authoritarian regimes: this type is characteristic of countries such as Chile and Argentina in the past, as well as present-day North Korea);

• terroristic opposition (this includes groups that resort to violence, such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the UK and the separatist group ETA in Spain).

An effective model of opposition can be seen in the UK, where one party forms the government while the other party effectively holds the ruling party accountable for its actions.

(6) Transparency within the electoral system and the model of the electoral system – Elections are the only effective method for rotating political elites, while the political opposition serves as a 'watchdog' for government decisions and the actions of political leaders.

The existence of an opposition in a political system does not always ensure effective restrictions on the ruling elite. For instance, the weakness of the opposition in Russia is evident through several key events: the murder of Boris Nemtsov in 2015, the exclusion of Alexei Navalny from participating in elections, and the subsequent assassination of this prominent opposition figure in prison in 2024. Additionally, the opposition represented by Gennady Zyuganov and Vladimir Zhirinovsky by 2022 appears to be largely fictitious in relation to Putin's regime. In competitive political systems, the opposition serves as a stabiliser, as illustrated by the rotation of power between the Labour and Conservative parties in the United Kingdom.

(7) The relationship between the state and interest groups that involves advocating for the non-political interests of the public.

Democratic regimes rely on a well-developed civil society; undemocratic regimes seek to exert control over various social groups, especially the youth who may be inclined toward revolutionary ideas. To achieve their objectives, totalitarian and authoritarian regimes actively engage with the youth. These undemocratic governments aim to regulate youth movements that may threaten their stability. One effective strategy is supporting youth organisations affiliated with the ruling parties. Historical examples include the militarised Hitlerjugend (1922–1945) and the 'Nashi – Russian Youth Movement', initiated under the administration of Vladimir Putin and operating from 2005 to 2019 (Atwal & Bacon 2012).

(8) The impact of ideology on the nature of political regimes – The stronger the dominance of a single ideology within a political system, the lower the competitiveness of the regime.

Undemocratic regimes are typically based on specific ideologies, such as fascism, Nazism, communism, Islamic fundamentalism, and Juche in North Korea. In contrast, democratic regimes are founded on national ideas, exemplified by concepts like Pan-Americanism, and thus do not require ideological control. A significant threat to democracy is the rise of populism in the political discourse of the early 21st century; populist politicians frequently speculate on the concepts of 'the people' and 'the elite' (Meijers, Huber & Zaslove 2025).

(9) The dynamics of political regimes that encompass a range of transformation stages, as each regime progresses toward either a democratic or an anti-democratic state.

The latter half of the 20th century was marked by profound transformations of political regimes across the globe. The main factors driving these changes included a global trend towards democratisation, the dismantling of colonial systems in many Third World countries, and the dissolution of communist authoritarian regimes. During this time, transitology emerged, a new subdiscipline within comparative political science, focusing on the analysis of democratic transits in various regions worldwide (Rustow 1970).

(*10) The interplay between a political regime's internal dynamics and its external environment* presupposes the influence of foreign policy factors, which affect the stability of the regime.

In the second half of the 20th century, the process of globalisation prompted countries to actively engage in international cooperation, often through membership in international organisations such as the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The United Nations (UN), as a framework system of international organisations, fosters global peace and stability. Furthermore, underlying geopolitical patterns determine the countries' behaviour in the international arena (Bassin 2007). Since the beginning of the 21st century, democratic regimes have sought to

strengthen cooperation through membership in international organisations, such as the Council of Europe. However, following the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022, we have observed the emergence of new forms of anti-Western military and political cooperation, like the anti-democratic triad of Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

PART 2

ENVIRONMENT FOR THE EFFECTIVE OPERATION OF POLITICAL REGIMES

2.1 Social and Cultural Environment for the Functioning of Political Regimes

In a political system, a political regime establishes power relations that involve political elites' decisions and the extent to which the individual, social groups, and societal needs of individuals are addressed. The features of a political regime are shaped by various social and cultural factors, which influence the internal dynamics of its functioning.

In the functioning of a political regime, the social environment is essential, impacting the regime's economic and cultural legitimacy. Economic factors influence the technological advancement of society and contribute to social and class divisions. Each individual belongs to a specific social group, which determines their needs and interests. The political system must address these needs and interests. The following pattern indicates a well-functioning political regime: a stable economic system is the foundation for a strong and legitimate regime.

Historically, democratic regimes are stabilised by a robust and developed economy. The openness of the market and economic transparency inherent in a democratic system have the potential to enhance the stability of such regimes. However, at present, there exist *'poor democracies'*, in which democratic political systems are maintained, but the levels of economic development are insufficient to support effective reform efforts. The emergence of 'poor democracies' frequently stems from *'poor performance'* of a democratic regime (Keefer 2009). Post-socialist Romania and Bulgaria, despite their EU accession in 2007, have exhibited only

modest positive dynamics in economic development. Notably, the economic success in longstanding authoritarian regimes such as China, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey questions the direct correlation between economic performance and democratic practices.

The influence of the economy on the stabilisation of political regimes is ambiguous. Nevertheless, distinct economic models emerge that are characteristic of specific types of regimes. The economic principle governing political regimes states that a developed market economy fosters stable democratic systems; in contrast, a command-administrative economy relies on a centralised bureaucratic structure that leads to authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

Democratic regimes tend to align more closely with poorly functioning market mechanisms, which, though problematic, significantly reduce the economy's dependence on state intervention. This assertion is substantiated by the reforms in the transitional countries of Eastern Europe and Latin America following the dissolution of authoritarian regimes (Przeworski 1991).

Another set of social factors that impacts the operation of a political regime includes cultural values and the broader cultural system. Cultural values stem from historical traditions and the social experiences of the people. Unlike economic factors, culture is defined by emotional connotations and the irrational behaviours of individuals.

There are the following sociocultural factors influencing political regimes:

(1) Religious factors – Historically, religion has affected the types of government in various countries, leading to the development of different regimes. A particular type of religion and the extent of influence that religious institutions have on politics determine the nature of these regimes, ranging from historical tyrannies to modern secular societies. As a renowned social scientist, Max Weber argues, Protestant values have a direct impact on the spread of capitalism (Weber 1922). Collectivist religions, including Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam, have historically been associated with

the emergence of dictatorships. In contrast, individualist religions such as Protestantism and Judaism contribute to democratic governance and collective decision-making. Notable historical instances of society radicalization and the detrimental influence of religion on the entrenchment of authoritarian power are the Bolshevik Revolution in the Russian Empire (1917), the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979), and the development of postwar welfare states (most post-war era countries across Western Europe) (Grigoriadis 2018). At times, successful cases from the post-communist space illustrate what role a church denomination can play in the fall of a dictatorship. During the crisis of the communist regime in Poland, the predominantly Roman Catholic nature of society played a substantial role. The Roman Catholic Church, in collaboration with the opposition group Solidarity, became a central force in advancing the process of democratisation in the late 1980s (Millard 1997).

(2) Ethnic factors – The ethnic composition of a country determines the relationships between the dominant ethnic group and ethnic minorities. Democratic regimes typically maintain a balanced ethno-national policy that emphasises parity and respects the rights of ethnic minorities. In contrast, when a country's resources are unevenly distributed in favour of one ethnic group – regardless of its dominant status – it can result in political imbalances, leading to the emergence of undemocratic regimes. The dissolution of communist dictatorships in Central and Eastern Europe was an impetus for the emergence of new national democracies. The ethnic factor has often posed a threat to transitional regimes, leading to issues ranging from civil wars sparked by ethnic polarisation (Somer 2002) to political instability caused by the actions of ethnic parties (Bernauer 2015). A country that is rapidly moving towards an authoritarian political system typically displays heightened politicisation of interethnic relations and increasing ethnic polarisation. This phenomenon can be described as 'ethnocratization' in the context of the 21st century (Panzano 2023). Ethnic parties remain a complex subject, given the ambiguity surrounding their definitions and classifications (Chandra

2011). However, within democratic systems, these parties primarily focus on protecting the interests of ethnic minorities.

(3) Cultural and moral factors – Culture shapes societal mentality and socialises individuals. The dominance of specific cultural values can lead to the formation of either open or closed political regimes. Additionally, it is essential to examine the concept of political culture, which has been affected by both historical traditions and modern societal dynamics.

The foundation of political culture is the level of conflict between the ruling elite and the main carriers of various cultural traditions in society, such as language, customs, beliefs, dominant culture, and subcultures (Almond 2000). The pursuit of political compromises between the political elite and various social groups (interest groups, age and gender groups, professional associations) forms a distinct type of political culture. This spectrum of political culture ranges from those most conducive to a democratic regime, such as participatory or civic culture, to those more suited to non-democratic systems, including parochial and subject political cultures (Almond & Verba 2015). Another factor affecting regimes at the global level is the international conflict of civilisations in the post-war world of the latter half of the twentieth century. The primary aspect of the "clash of civilisations" is the ideological and cultural tensions between Western and non-Western civilisations (Huntington 1993). The ongoing confrontation is not between particular countries, but rather between distinct cultures.

The 2025 report by Freedom House on the protection of rights and freedoms worldwide further highlights the persistent imbalances in the classification of countries into three categories: (a) democratic (free), (b) transitional (partly free), and (c) non-democratic (not free) regimes (See Table 01).

Table 01

Classification of Countries Worldwide by Their Level of Freedom as of 2024
(Freedom in the World)

World regions	Status by Country			Status by Population		
	free	partly free	not free	free	partly free	not free
Africa	19%	31%	50%	8%	35%	57%
Americas	63%	26%	11%	71%	24%	5%
Asia-Pacific	46%	31%	23%	6%	54%	40%
Eurasia	—	33%	67%	—	16%	84%
Europa	81%	17%	2%	83%	4%	13%
Middle East	8%	15%	77%	3%	6%	91%

Source: author's calculations based on Freedom in the World 2025 (Freedom in the World, 2025).

2.2 External Environment for a Political Regime Functioning

The political regime is constantly affected by a combination of internal (endogenous) and external (exogenous) factors. When examining how internal processes influence the type and dynamics of the regime, we primarily consider the prevailing trends in the socio-economic and socio-cultural development of society. Most internal processes have been shaped by historical influences, which have contributed to the so-called *'mentality of society'*, making it lean more towards either authoritarianism or democracy.

In the context of globalisation in the latter half of the twentieth century, the complexity of exogenous factors has become particularly evident. These factors have affected the internal political features of various regimes. During this period, globalisation processes compelled countries to pursue international cooperation. *Respectively,* the world split into a bipolar structure, leading to the establishment of

two ideologically opposing international blocs: the Western bloc and the Soviet bloc. The Western bloc focused on promoting democracy and the principles of democratisation, while the Soviet bloc was typical of communist and authoritarian regimes.

Secondly, following the Second World War, international cooperation gained momentum. It was an era characterised by the pursuit of democratic ideals and the rise of anti-colonial movements, leading to the establishment of various global organisations. The primary objective of the largest international organisations, such as the European Union, NATO, and the Council of Europe, is to foster unity among countries with similar governance structures. Membership in these organisations reflects a country's commitment to adapting its political systems, economic models, and legal frameworks to widely accepted democratic standards.

Thirdly, the dawn of the 21st century has offered new prospects for international cooperation. The framework for such collaboration, established since the 1950s and grounded in the political partnership of democratic regimes, is still relevant. However, we are witnessing how undemocratic regimes are uniting in opposition to the Western world. Additionally, the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022 has not only drawn North Korea out of international isolation but also brought up new military threats to the West, with Russia at the forefront.

The external environment plays a central role in the regime's stabilisation or destabilisation. This interaction is frequently expressed through foreign policy channels. Furthermore, exogenous factors can have a profound impact on the internal dynamics of the regime. Based on historical examples of ideological dictatorships, we can identify four main ways in which political regimes interact with their external environment (Tsygankov 1995).

(1) The political regime's high legitimacy and stability due to internal factors, against minimal external influences. One of the historical examples to discuss can be the Soviet Union during Stalin's era in the 1930s and 1940s. In contemporary times, a similar model can be observed in some of the most isolated world countries with

ideological dictatorships, e.g. North Korea, which has been governed by the Kim dynasty since 1953. The nation's external isolation is maintained by the distinct Juche ideology, which integrates communism with a strong sense of North Korean nationalism (Quinones 2009). The internal dictatorship in North Korea has been intended to suppress dissent, while the limited external channels for alternative information have solidified the country's totalitarian regime.

(2) A substantial weakening of the political regime as a result of various external and internal factors. A fragile political system is affected by the prevailing international political climate, e.g. the imitation of liberal democracy in the late 1980s in the USSR, where attempts to adopt the democratic principles and market economy significantly changed the political landscape. Efforts to transform the Soviet model of authoritarianism and pursue pluralism through *'perestroika'* ultimately served as a catalyst for the nation's downfall (Brown 2007). In practice, it has become evident that a partial pluralization of an authoritarian country in crisis only accelerates its downfall. A contemporary example illustrating the regime's weakening due to both internal and external factors is Venezuela since 2013. Amidst a severe financial and economic crisis, the country has faced not only an ideological crisis following the death of Hugo Chávez but also rampant hyperinflation (Bílek & Vališková 2020). President Nicolás Maduro has failed to resolve the ongoing political and economic crisis in the country for over a decade.

(3) A change in the type of political regime – the external factor serves as a model for developing the regime's internal structure, directly imitating the regime of a foreign state model. Changes in political regimes often occur through two primary mechanisms: modernization, which involves partial institutional renewal, and transformation, which represents a fundamental change in the nature of the political regime. Anotable example is the transition in Russia during the early 1990s, following the dissolution of communist rule. During this period, the Russian elite took an ultimately ineffective transformation path, marked by challenges in implementing

democratic practices and privatization reforms (Leonard & Pitt-Watson 2013). Russia failed to establish a European-style pluralism and market economy. Consequently, in the early 2000s, the country developed a new form of authoritarianism known as *'Putinism'* (Horvath 2011). On the other hand, there are numerous successful examples where external factors have stabilized regimes toward democracy, such as the European integration processes for some post-socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

(4) Consolidation of the political regime – the final establishment of political institutions in transitional countries that aligns with international standards to ensure effective governance. As these institutions develop, we can expect a gradual stabilisation of the political regime within the new operational conditions. This phenomenon occurs when a new type of political regime, different from its predecessor, occurs. Transitology suggests that, influenced by transformational processes, a successful transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one is possible – similar to the post-communist transitions that took place in the 1990s. Over time, these new democracies become more established by solidifying political elites, leading political parties, and civil society around the principle of plurality (Karl & Schmitter 1995). Conversely, another example of regime consolidation is the shift towards authoritarianism as seen in Hungary following Viktor Orbán's ascent to power in 2010. This Central European nation moves further away from a consolidated democratic regime each year, gradually adopting more authoritarian practices, a phenomenon often referred to as *'Orbánism'* (Kürti 2020). The external factors impacting the decline of Hungarian democracy were the global trend towards populism in the early 21st century.

When examining the relationship between a regime's internal structure and the impact of the external environment, it is essential to acknowledge the significance of the regime's ability to adapt to external demands. How the regime perceives these external requirements shapes its developmental trajectory – either toward preserving its national characteristics or adapting to new external pressures.

The American researcher James N. Rosenau identified four types of political adaptation that regimes can exhibit in response to their external environment (Rosenau 1981):

(1) Gradual adaptation refers to the passive adjustment of the political regime in response to the external environment. We are discussing the direct imitation of political and economic behaviour models based on the actual requirements of the external environment within a specific regime. In cases of gradual adaptation, a regime may adjust itself and often adopt or mimic the model of another political system. This type of adaptation is peculiar to weaker regimes that face challenges in implementing effective domestic policies. A notable example of this passive adherence to external demands can be found in some post-colonial regimes in Africa. In these instances, a new 'national regime' is formed in the country, which effectively borrows and replicates the regime type from the former colonial power. Between 1922 and 1994, approximately 54 independent countries emerged as a result of the decolonization process in Africa (Birmingham 1995). However, despite the former colonies' strong political ties to France, Great Britain, and Portugal, large-scale migration from these regions to their former metropolises has notably increased since the 1970s, particularly in France (Barou 2014).

(2) Unyielding adaptation – a political regime's endeavor to discard the requirements imposed by the external environment. The regime utilizes its internal resources and tends to disregard external demands. This form of adaptation is often unfavorable for the promotion of democratic practices in non-democratic societies. Depending on the level of isolation, the regime may resist external pressures for democratization. For instance, under President Vladimir Putin, Russia transitioned away from the unsuccessful democratic experiments of the 1990s during his first two terms in office (2000–2008). This unyielding adaptation resulted in the establishment of a system (Chatterjee 2023) that diverged significantly from Western democratic standards.

(3) Facilitating adaptation – the political regime demonstrates a careful perception of the external environment and the political obligations to advance the country's national interests. The most favourable option for developing a regime is achieving a balance between the protection of national interests and the influence of external factors. This regime can be enhanced both politically and economically due to the positive impact of the external environment. A relevant example is the internal reforms in the Visegrad Four countries during the late 1990s and 2000s. The context of European integration compelled these post-socialist countries to undertake extensive reforms, ranging from improving the transparency of the electoral process to decentralizing local government (Bauerová 2018). Reforms associated with European integration have been successful, and since 2004, these countries have gradually adapted to the European political and economic landscape.

(4) Conservative adaptation – the political regime's failure to meet environmental demands due to the strong stability of traditional political institutions. This type of political adaptation by regimes to their external environment is almost static. External influences penetrate the regime selectively, primarily by reinforcing the legitimacy of political elites. Often, resistance to such adaptation arises from the inherently undemocratic nature of the regime, particularly the political elite's desire to maintain the existing model of power. Conservative adaptation can be observed in the Central Asian dictatorships that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These *'clan regimes'* (Lewis 2021) are characterized by the inheritance of power and the preservation of ruling dynasties, with external influences largely tied to the pursuit of economic benefits. Typical examples of such authoritarian regimes include Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and the semi-totalitarian regime in Turkmenistan.

PART 3

THE STABILITY OF POLITICAL REGIMES AND PECULIARITIES OF THEIR FUNCTIONING

3.1 Legitimacy and Socio-Economic Welfare as Determinants in the Effectiveness of a Political Regime

Every political regime is constantly evolving, shaped by both domestic and foreign policies. An essential feature of any regime is its capacity for long-term self-sustainability. To achieve this, every regime aims to establish a high level of legitimacy, a key prerequisite for ensuring stability over time. Appropriate legitimacy not only facilitates effective political decision-making but also enhances the overall efficacy of the regime. In this context, the esteemed American political scientist Seymour Lipset has provided valuable insights into the concept of regime legitimacy: *"Legitimacy involves the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate or proper ones for the society"* (Lipset 1959, p. 86).

The stability and effective operation of a political regime depend on several key factors that are aligned with the available resources. Seymour Lipset argues that the following two parameters determine the political regime's stability:

(1) Legitimacy of power;

(2) Economic development of the country.

Both the abovementioned parameters are seen not only as factors of regime stability, but also as elements that can either strengthen or weaken democracy (Lipset 1959, p. 71).

Legitimacy is paramount in stabilising and ensuring the sustainable functioning of a political regime. Broadly speaking, the

effectiveness of a regime depends on its ability to fulfil governmental functions that align with the needs of the majority in society. The level of legitimacy directly impacts the regime's capacity to address and navigate profound crises. Three primary factors that threaten the legitimacy of a regime are the following: (a) internal political and economic depressions, (b) defeats in wars, and (c) socio-political cleavages that impact the party system (Lipset 1959, p. 86).

The classic concept of political regime legitimacy was developed by Max Weber, who put forward a theory connecting specific factors to various types of legitimacy (See Table 02). Importantly, these types of regime legitimacy are considered ideal types; in practice, we often encounter combinations of these types within political systems.

Table 02

Max Weber's Ideal Types of Regime Legitimacy

Legitimacy factors	Types of Legitimacy
Historical & Traditional	Traditional legitimacy
Socio-economic & Legal	Rational legitimacy
Faith & Affective	Charismatic legitimacy

Source: prepared by the author based on Max Weber's studies (1918; 2019) Weber, 2009).

The most complex form of regime legitimacy is charismatic legitimacy, which combines elements of traditional and rational legitimacy. The key factor of a charismatic leader's success is their ability to achieve economic progress, which resonates with the broader society. For example, during the early 1930s, Stalin consolidated power and initiated a noticeable economic transformation from a pre-industrial to an industrial society. This achievement, along with extensive propaganda, contributed to a strong sense of legitimacy Stalin enjoyed as a leader.

When considering the Stalinist model of totalitarianism from 1927 to 1953, it is evident that the leader's charisma plays a pivotal

role in stabilising or destabilising the regime. Furthermore, Stalin's charisma is deeply rooted in a 'cult of personality', which can only exist under conditions of harsh repression (Strong & Killingsworth, 2011). Charismatic legitimacy is indispensably connected to a country's economic development. We can draw the following conclusions about the intrinsic features of charismatic legitimacy within the political regime and its economic context:

• The charismatic legitimacy of a political regime is influenced by the country's economic performance;

• A charismatic-authoritarian regime is at risk of failing in the case of insufficient economic progress;

• The trajectory of economic reforms is determined solely by the will of the charismatic leader.

A pivotal element of regime legitimacy is the role of charismatic leaders in the democratisation processes. It is important to consider the historical context of the collapse of communist authoritarian regimes in Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. The experiences of notable opposition leaders, such as Václav Havel in Czechoslovakia, Lech Wałęsa in Poland, and Boris Yeltsin in Russia, demonstrate that the influence of charismatic leaders on democratisation is complex and multifaceted (Bernhard 1998). During the turbulent regimes of the late 1980s and mid-1990s, various outcomes emerged across different countries: Czechoslovakia peacefully separated into two independent national democracies; Poland steadily stabilised its political system and continued advancing its democratic reforms, whereas Russia's democratic experiments ultimately failed.

Every contemporary political regime formulates a long-term strategy to sustain its legitimacy. According to experts from the V-Dem Research Centre, four principal resources contribute to regime legitimacy: (a) Ideology, (b) Leadership, (c) Performance, (d) Rational-legal (Tannenberg, Bernhard, Gerschewski, Lührmann & Soest 2019, p. 10).

Different types of regimes must appropriately utilise specific resources to achieve the desired level of legitimacy. Although all resources are embedded into the structural framework of each regime, the manner in which they are employed to establish legitimacy can vary considerably (See Table 03).

Table 03

Strategies for Establishing Legitimacy in Political Regimes (V-Dem)

Regimes	Legitimacy Resources (Priority)			
	Ideology	Leader	Performance	Rational-legal
One party	1	4	2	3
Multiparty	3	4	2	1
Monarchy	2	1	3	4
Military	2	4	1	3
Democracy	3	4	2	1

Source: prepared by the author based on the analytical report from V-Dem (2019) (Tannenberg, Bernhard, Gerschewski, Lührmann & Soest 2019, p. 13).

The economic development of a country affects the type of its political regime. Research indicates that there are clear patterns linking socio-economic factors to the extent of democratisation in a nation. The primary socio-economic factors differentiating between democratic and non-democratic regimes are as follows: (Lipset 1959, p. 75):

• The well-being and income levels of citizens;

• The extent of industrialisation and urbanisation, both at a general level and within individual regions;

• The educational attainment of the population, including relevant indicators for higher education.

Seymour Lipset's research in the 1950s revealed that countries with democratic regimes outperformed non-democratic regimes across various indicators of socio-economic development. For example, the per capita income in stable democratic regimes (European and English-speaking Stable Democracies) averages $695. In contrast, per capita income in European and English-speaking transitional regimes (European and English-speaking

Unstable Democracies and Dictatorships) is approximately $308, nearly half the amount. In Latin America, transitional regimes (Latin American Democracies and Unstable Dictatorships) demonstrate even lower per capita income, averaging $171. The lowest per capita income is observed in stable non-democratic regimes (Latin American Stable Dictatorships), where it stands at just $119 (Lipset 1959, p. 76).

The stability of democratic and undemocratic regimes is determined by their effective functioning over a certain timeframe. The stable operation of essential democratic institutes – such as elections, political opposition, and a robust party system – along with the absence of a significant anti-democratic movement over the past 25 years, allows us to categorise these regimes into four groups, particularly within the historical context of 1914 to the 1950s (Lipset 1959, p. 74) (See Table 04).

Table 04

Classification of Global Countries by Regime Type During the Post-War Period of the 1950s (Seymour Lipset)

Regime Type	Total Number of Countries
European and English-speaking Stable Democracies	13
European and English-speaking Unstable Democracies and Dictatorships	15
Latin American Democracies and Unstable Dictatorships	7
Latin American Stable Dictatorships	13

Source: prepared by the author based on Seymour Lipset's studies (1959) (Lipset 1959, p. 74).

The correlation between a stable economy and an effective government remains relevant in the 21st century. The most democratic countries also tend to be the most economically stable. In these stable democratic regimes, the welfare of citizens is pivotal in maintaining the stability of the government. This conclusion is based on data from the Freedom in the World

monitoring program by Freedom House, as well as the GDP per capita (current US$) indicator for 2023 (See Table 05).

Despite the global trend toward *'wealthy'* or economically prosperous democracies, it is essential to recognise certain exceptions. One such exception relates to the economic challenges faced by numerous democratic regimes, particularly in the Balkan and Baltic regions. These post-socialist countries, currently classified as "free" in terms of their political systems, display a significant range in GDP per capita for 2023 (GDP 2023), with values spanning from $15.800 in Bulgaria to $30.100 in Estonia. Another notable case is wealthy autocracies, which frequently utilise their economic potential to wage military actions. A notable example of this is Russia's war in Ukraine, ongoing since 2014. Other wealthy autocracies include China, with a GDP per capita of $12.600; Russia, at $13.800; and several Arab monarchies, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, each with a GDP per capita of approximately $32.000, along with the United Arab Emirates, which has a GDP per capita of $49.000.

Table 05

The Correlation between the Level of Freedom and the Overall Well-Being of Citizens as of 2024

Country	Democracy Score (%)	Regime Type	GDP per capita
Finland	100%	free	52 925
New Zealand	99%	free	48 280
Norway	99%	free	87 925
Sweden	99%	free	55 516
Canada	97%	free	53 431
North Korea	3%	not free	data missing
Eritrea	3%	not free	688
Sudan	2%	not free	2 183
Turkmenistan	1%	not free	8 232
South Sudan	1%	not free	1 080

Source: prepared by the author based on data from the Freedom in the World 2025 (Freedom in the World 2025) report and GDP per capita (current US$) indicators obtained from the World Bank 2023 (GDP 2023).

3.2 Resources for Promoting the Stability of the Political Regime

The potential of each political regime primarily concerns its ability to sustain itself and maintain long-term stability. One of the earliest comprehensive approaches in comparative political science that elucidates the transition from authoritarian to democratic regimes identifies *seven critical factors that influence changes in regime types* (Binnendijk, Nalle & Bendahmane 1987, p. XXVI):

(1) The influence of the authoritarian leader on the regime (both physical and spiritual).

(2) The regime's military capabilities and its current combat capacity.

(3) The current economic landscape and the anticipated economic prospects.

(4) The level of social tension within society, which may lead to a rift between the authoritarian leader (or elite) and the wider population.

(5) Socio-political factors that may incite a crisis within the regime, including a broad crisis of the regime's legitimacy or its dominant ideology, the persecution of political opposition (including assassination or imprisonment), and the overall level of corruption within the ruling elite.

(6) The functioning of a political coalition can operate on an oppositional and anti-government basis.

(7) The degree of control that the ruling regime has over the army and its generals.

The factors identified as potential threats to the regime's stability can also serve as important resources for its preservation. The resources available for stabilising a political regime can be

categorised into two main mechanisms: *(a) state coercion* and *(b) resources aimed at ensuring rights and freedoms.*

State Coercion as a Means of Maintaining Political Regime Stability. State coercion is a common method for stabilising political regimes, whether democratic or non-democratic. In democratic nations, the deployment of military and police forces is frequently employed to address and mitigate internal chaos, ensuring stability and order. For example, the anti-terrorism measures implemented in France in 2015 as a direct response to the Charlie Hebdo shooting (Petrikowski 2025) or the international anti-terrorism operations following the 9/11 attacks on the United States in 2001(The 9/11 Commission Report 2004).

The frequency and extent of state violence against its citizens serve as indicators of a potential crisis within the political regime. The state possesses a monopoly on the legitimate use of force and is authorised to employ violence only in situations that pose a direct threat to constitutional order or state security. All other social conflicts should be resolved through non-violent means.

Internal social anti-authoritarian revolutions are frequently labelled as terrorist attacks by the dictators in power. As a result, the protesters are often regarded as terrorists. This was evident in the responses of President Viktor Yanukovych during the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine from 2013 to 2014 (Shveda & Park 2016) and President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt in 2011 (El-Bendary 2013). Of course, democratic regimes also have the authority to use police forces to restore local order, such as during incidents involving football hooligans or street violence.

Undeniably, state control over society can manifest in both coercive and more peaceful measures. In a democratic regime, such control is typically exercised through legal constraints defined by the Constitution and relevant legislation. In the economic sector, state control is often characterised by uniform taxation that applies across all levels of economic relations.

The practice of a political regime's operation indicates that the frequency of violence is often a sign of weakness rather than strength within the regime. This allows us to *categorise political power into four types, depending on the state's use of violence* (Tsygankov 1995, pp. 137–138):

(1) Stable power – a high level of stability without resorting to violence. In many contemporary regimes, it is a feature of stable and effectively functioning democracies. The stability of these regimes is supported by entrenched democratic traditions, e.g. the rule of law, a competitive party system, a robust opposition, and an active civil society. Examples of such stability can be observed in Western democracies, particularly in Western Europe and Anglo-Saxon nations with well-established competitive democratic systems.

(2) Partially stable power – grounded in the support of the majority in society and based on the infrequent use of state-sanctioned violence. It is an ambiguous type of governance that can be observed in both stable democracies and stable autocracies. A concern with such regimes is their lack of established traditions, whether democratic or authoritarian. Consequently, they may resort to employing partial violence as a means to strengthen their control. In instances where a regime exhibits democratic traits, this may be the imposition of restrictions on the political activities of specific groups, e.g. the policy of apartheid in South Africa, from 1948 to 1991, as well as the subtler manifestations of violence associated with soft 'white genocide', which began around 1994 (Akinola 2020). In an authoritarian regime, episodic violence is often employed against the opposition, especially when the regime feels threatened by potential destabilisation. A relevant example of this is the Kremlin's response in Russia to opposition activities during the period of 2011 to 2013 (Weiss 2013).

(3) Relatively stable power – the political regime operates exclusively through the use of state coercion. In this case, the stability of a political regime is linked to its methods of

maintaining order through violence. State enforcement is carried out by the police and intelligence agencies, while the army may be deployed during crises. Authoritarian regimes often fluctuate in stability that correlates with the frequency of state coercion employed. In contrast, totalitarian regimes typically require state coercion and are marked by a high degree of inherent legitimacy, contributing to their overall stability, e.g. modern North Korea has maintained its totalitarian model for over 75 years, from 1948 to 2023 (Jeong 2023).

(4) Unstable power – the political regime is undergoing a gradual disintegration, transitioning towards a different type. This type of governance is typical of transitional regimes, which are frequently very unstable. The political rules of the previous regime are no longer in effect, and the fragile new regime has yet to establish a clear political development strategy. A notable example of this is the widespread transitions to democracy that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s, following the dissolution of authoritarian communist regimes (Haydanka 2021). Some new democracies gradually stabilised, like the Visegrad Four, while others, such as in Central Asia, evolved into strong dictatorships.

Total state coercion is among the prime means of consolidating dictatorial regimes in the 21st century. According to experts from Freedom House, there are at least *six forms of political dictatorship* in countries that exhibit the poorest democratic indicators (See Table 06).

Table 06

Contemporary Forms of Dictatorial Regimes, as Estimated by Freedom
House in 2018

Country	Forms of Dictatorship	Democracy Score (%)
Syria	Embattled Dictatorship Shattered by Civil War	-1%
South Sudan	Shattered by Civil War	2%
Eritrea	Hermetic Police State Longstanding Dictatorship	3%
North Korea	Hermetic Police State	3%
Turkmenistan	Oil Kleptocracy	4%
Equatorial Guinea	Oil Kleptocracy	7%
Saudi Arabia	Absolute Monarchy	7%
Somalia	Shattered by Civil War	7%
Uzbekistan	Hermetic Police State	7%
Sudan	Embattled Dictatorship	8%
Central African Republic	Shattered by Civil War	9%
Libya	Shattered by Civil War	9%

Source: prepared by the author based on data from the Report by Freedom in the World 2018 (Freedom in the World 2018).

Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Citizens as a Strategy for Enhancing Political Stability. A political regime can operate successfully and sustain legitimacy through liberal methods, particularly by safeguarding the rights and freedoms of its citizens. A comprehensive system of ensuring these rights and freedoms serves as a key indicator of the democratic level of a political regime. Political practice demonstrates that a well-developed mechanism for ensuring rights and freedoms is often the only effective tool for maintaining the stability of a regime. This is typically seen in many of the democratic regimes in Western Europe and Anglo-Saxon countries during the latter half of the 20th century. However, there are exceptions to this trend, as some

regimes may appear to operate on a formally liberal basis (with mechanisms for guaranteeing rights and freedoms), while in reality, they distort this liberal institutional framework. A notable example of this is Hungary's hybrid political regime, which has emerged and evolved after 2010 under the leadership of Viktor Orbán (Kürti 2020).

The idea of 'citizens' rights' in comparative political science is broad, as it pertains to various aspects of society where these rights are realised. Political regimes can ensure *three categories of citizens' rights:*

(1) Civil rights – a category of rights that emerged historically after the decline of most absolute monarchies. Examples of civil rights include freedom of thought, freedom of religion, and the presumption of innocence etc. In contemporary society, the interpretation of civil rights has evolved and can be understood within a different political context. Overall, civil rights *"are the guarantee of equal social opportunities and equal protection under the law, regardless of race, religion, or other personal characteristics"* (Hamlin 2025). These rights are quite dynamic, with their nature and scope changing over time. In some Western democratic regimes of the 21st century, the emphasis on civil rights includes not only the protection of fundamental rights but also the rights of LGBTQ individuals (Hamlin 2025). Among all types of rights, they require the highest level of political support from the state. Conversely, the more effective the mechanisms for guaranteeing civil rights, the more democratic the regime.

(2) Economic and Social rights – encompass the rights that emerged after World War II, such as the right to healthcare, education, and social security. This broad category of rights can evolve based on the political and economic context, the pace of economic development, and the level of crisis within society. To be more precise, *"economic rights refer to the right to property, the right to work, and the right to social security. Social rights are those entitlements necessary for an adequate standard of living,*

including rights to food, housing, health, and education" (Felice 2017). The extent of state protection for social rights is directly linked to the country's level of economic development. The primary responsibility of the state is to strike a balance between the economic well-being of its citizens and the safeguarding of their social rights.

(3) Political rights – the modern system of rights, including the right to vote, be elected, and participate in political party activities, etc.). This is the most modern form of rights that requires states to ensure their stability by encouraging greater citizen engagement in political life and processes. In the aftermath of World War II, with the collapse of totalitarian regimes such as fascist Italy, nazi Germany, and imperial Japan, nations began to explore optimal pluralistic governance models. This transition has encouraged the development of effective mechanisms for safeguarding political rights. The fundamental constitutional and political principle that underpins the assurance of political rights for citizens is the promotion of their equal access to state governance (Schabas 2021). Access to political life is primarily ensured through equal suffrage and providing citizens with a range of opportunities to participate, including the rights to public association, assembly, and involvement in civil society development.

The extent of rights protection varies depending on the type of regime (See Table 07).

Table 07

The Correlation between the Type of Political Regime and the Assurance of Citizens' Rights

Regimes	Citizen Rights		
	Civil	**Economic & Social**	**Political**
Democratic	Full	Partial	Full
Non-democratic	None	Min.	None
Transitional	Min./None	Min./None	Min./None

Source: prepared by the author

The relationship between political regimes and the assurance of rights:

(1) Democratic regimes – ensure the protection of civil and political rights, although the provision of social rights may be implemented more selectively. For example, democratic regimes share similar mechanisms for guaranteeing basic civil rights, such as freedom of thought and religion. However, there is a significant difference in how modern civil rights related to sexual minorities are protected across different democratic regimes. The young democracies in Central Europe and populist governments tend to be the most conservative regarding these issues (Yermakova 2021). The assurance of social rights is closely related to the overall welfare of a country. As a result, we observe considerable variations among democratic regimes based on this criterion.

(2) Non-democratic regimes – provide a basic level of social rights, often at the expense of civil and political rights. This phenomenon was particularly evident during the era of *'developed socialism'* in Central and Eastern European countries. The 'developed socialism' regime ensured that citizens had no alternatives in their political and social lives but were provided with a sufficient social package for living (Sokol 2001). Communist regimes have often overlooked the political and civil rights of their citizens, prioritising uniform social guarantees instead. A contemporary example of this phenomenon can be observed in Venezuela under the leadership of Hugo Chavez, where the government upheld socialist populism (Ponniah, Eastwood & Armada 2011). One way or another, for non-democratic regimes, minimising political and civil rights is essential for sustainable functioning.

(3) Transitional regimes – political systems situated between authoritarianism and democracy, which often lack a comprehensive framework to protect rights and are prone to instability. Regimes that have lost their previous institutional foundations – such as party-state structures, free elections, or a

stable army – experience a significant decline in legitimacy, often reaching a state of zero legitimacy. In this context, both political elites and society find themselves in turbulence as they seek to establish a new institutional design. Such regimes are typically marked by instability and an inability to ensure the rights of citizens. A notable example of transitional regimes can be observed in the post-socialist countries of Central Europe and the post-communist states of the former USSR during the period between 1990 and 1995.

The issue of safeguarding citizens' rights in contemporary regimes has been a focus of numerous recent studies. The "Freedom in the World" monitoring program, developed by Freedom House, employs a methodology that evaluates the state of democracy on a percentage scale, ranging from a democratic minimum of 0% to a maximum of 100%. In this framework, democracy is a key mechanism for ensuring civil liberties, allocated a maximum of 60%, and political rights, assigned a maximum of 40%. The specific indicators allow for the classification of the regime type (See Table 08).

Table 08

Political Systems and the Safeguarding of Citizens' Rights and Freedoms (Freedom in the World)

		Political Rights						
	%	**0–5**	**6–11**	**12–17**	**18–23**	**24–29**	**30–35**	**36–40**
Civil Liberties	**53–60**	PF	PF	PF	F	F	F	F
	44–52	PF	PF	PF	PF	F	F	F
	35–43	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	F	F
	26–34	NF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	F
	17–25	NF	NF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
	8–16	NF	NF	NF	PF	PF	PF	PF
	0–7	NF	NF	NF	NF	PF	PF	PF

F – Free countries

PF – Partly Free countries

NF – Not Free countries

Source: prepared by the author based on data from the Report by Freedom in the World 2025 (Freedom in the World 2025).

It is essential to address the indicators of 'civil liberties' and 'political rights', as they help assess the degree of democracy within a given regime.

'Civil Liberties' consist of four fundamental components: (1) Freedom of Expression and Belief, (2) Associational and Organisational Rights, (3) Rule of Law, and (4) Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights.

The second indicator, 'Political Rights', includes three components: (1) Electoral Process, (2) Political Pluralism and Participation, and (3) Functioning of Government (Freedom in the World 2025). This comprehensive approach enables us to objectively assess the quality of a regime's provision of civil liberties and political rights.

THE INTERNET AND THE DYNAMICS OF POLITICAL REGIMES AROUND THE GLOBE

4.1 The Internet and Political Regimes

Modern internet technologies have considerably improved the channels of political communication and interaction between public authorities and citizens. Since the early 1990s, various information and communication technologies, as well as internet tools, have been ultimately integrated into public service delivery systems. Internet technologies have altered the dynamics of political processes across the globe, directly affecting the types of modern regimes.

The information exchange processes have accelerated, and *citizens have gained enhanced access to information*. The widespread availability of the Internet in the early 2000s has improved the speed of direct communication. Consequently, this technological advancement has facilitated the emergence of new forms of public engagement and has encouraged greater involvement of citizens in political activities (Gerodimos 2005). In democratic regimes, citizens can discuss important issues within virtual spaces. Conversely, non-democratic regimes are actively exploring methods to strengthen internet censorship and restrict access to diverse sources of information.

Secondly, advanced social networks such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and Telegram have largely supplanted Internet technologies. These platforms have evolved into extensive virtual forums for political discourse. Notably, the events of the 'Arab Spring' in North Africa demonstrated the critical influence of social media in facilitating the downfall of long-standing authoritarian regimes (Zeynep & Meral 2017). In the future, major

social networks are expected to evolve into platforms for official addresses from prominent political figures around the world. For example, US President Donald Trump has utilised Twitter, now rebranded as X, as his primary medium for disseminating information since 2023. Additionally, entrepreneur Elon Musk has leveraged the X network to establish himself as an influential global leader.

Thirdly, the Internet has posed new challenges to the stability of political regimes, including the proliferation of disinformation, propaganda, and censorship, along with the emergence of internet bot farms. In many totalitarian or authoritarian systems, online platforms offer a space for the free exchange of ideas. However, non-democratic leaders are aware that a free Internet can undermine their authority. Consequently, throughout the 2000s, many such regimes responded to dissent and opposition by restricting access to social networks and platforms like YouTube. Examples of this include the information blockade in North Korea (Chen, Ko & Lee 2010) and the potential for YouTube to become an alternative to traditional television as a propaganda vehicle in Russia (Litvinenko 2021).

In contemporary political science, the Internet has become vital in promoting democracy on a global scale (Lonkila 2008). Various scientific approaches have emerged to define *the role of the Internet in facilitating democratization processes:*

(1) Access to high-speed Internet is predominantly available to the wealthy and middle-class populations, which hinders its ability to promote democracy globally, especially in poorer countries (Thornton 2001).

(2) Following the collapse of communist regimes from 1992 to 2002, the spread of the Internet played a critical role in fostering the advancement of democracy (Best & Wade 2005).

(3) Traditional media, including television, radio, and newspapers, have proved to be more effective in promoting

democratic principles or spreading anti-democratic sentiment compared to online resources (Scheufele & Nisbet 2002).

There are *three primary Internet mechanisms that affect democracy levels*, based on a survey of 189 countries conducted between 2000 and 2010 (Rhue & Sundararajan 2014):

(1) Information flow and transparency through smart mobile phones.

(2) Coordination and communication, enabled by Internet facilities, allow remote communication between distant geographical locations.

(3) International pressure on undemocratic countries to promote Internet freedom, particularly through the annual monitoring of Freedom in the World by Freedom House.

The global practice of the establishment of democratic regimes in the digital era underscores *three key factors that contribute to the spread of democracy:* (a) the evolution of communication practices between governments and citizens, (b) the widening or constriction of communication channels among citizens, and (c) the extent to which governments can control or impact international information policies (Rhue & Sundararajan 2014).

Key factors that influenced the protection of civil liberties and political rights in the early 2000s are the availability of high-speed, affordable Internet and the extensive adoption of mobile Internet (Rhue & Sundararajan 2014, pp. 51–52).

In 2017, Dutch scientist Ali Pirannejada conducted an empirical study to evaluate the impact of the Internet on democracy (Pirannejad 2017). The study encompassed a survey of 122 countries from 2000 to 2014. The analysis was grounded in two primary indicators, as of the end of 2014:

(1) The number of active Internet users per 100 individuals.

(2) Data derived from the annual monitoring conducted by Freedom House (the annual monitoring of Freedom in the World).

Based on these indicators, all the countries examined can be classified into three distinct groups (See Table 09).

Table 09

Analysis of Countries Based on Democratic Levels and Internet Access, 2014

	Internet usage < 25 of 100		Internet usage 25 ≤ — < 50 of 100		Internet usage ≥ 50 of 100	
L	↓	Eritrea	↓	Kenya	↓	Malaysia
e	↓	Somalia	↓	Maldives	↓	Singapore
v	↓	CAR		…		…
e	↓	Turkmenistan	↑	Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	↑	Finland
l	↓	Equatorial Guinea	↑	Tuvalu	↑	Sweden
	↓	Sudan	↑	Cabo Verde	↑	Netherlands
o		…	↑	St. Vincent, Grenadines	↑	Luxembourg
f	↑	Mali			↑	Liechtenstein
	↑	Burkina Faso			↑	Denmark
D	↑	Pakistan			↑	Norway
e	↑	Cote d'Ivoire			↑	Iceland
m						
o						
c						
r						
a						
c						
y						
	Total:	**34**		**27**		**61**

Source: prepared by the author based on the study by Ali Pirannejada (2017) (105).

The analysis of the above data indicates a correlation between Internet usage and the strength of democratic institutions. Specifically, countries with limited access to the Internet tend to be less democratic, whereas those with greater Internet access are generally more democratic.

The impact of the Internet on political regimes varies considerably depending on the type of regime in question. In democratic regimes, active Internet users and social media participants can translate their opinions into real political influence. Their behaviour offline closely resembles their online discussions and activities. Democracies encourage citizens to freely express themselves on the Internet, making online freedom

an essential aspect of well-functioning democratic societies. In contrast, non-democratic regimes tend to be wary of active citizen participation in political life. As a result, authoritarian and totalitarian governments often impose restrictions or exercise state control over citizens' activities on various Internet platforms as a necessary survival strategy (You & Wang 2006). Freedom and independent thought in specific areas, such as virtual environments, are entirely incompatible with the absence of freedom in political life.

4.2 The Essence of Freedom on the Internet

Each year, the Internet and social networks are increasingly becoming an indispensable part of the daily lives of average citizens. Consequently, in recent decades, communication technologies have become powerful tools for political engagement. The widespread adoption of smartphones, which facilitate quick access to online platforms, has contributed to this trend. Recently, the role of the Internet and mobile phones has gained momentum for all citizens, even in undemocratic regimes (See Table 10).

In recent decades, the influence of Internet technologies and social media on global political processes has grown dramatically. To evaluate the level of Internet freedom and access to social networks, systematic monitoring is undertaken. The annual reports published by Freedom House, titled **'Freedom on the Net'**, provide an insightful comparison of the extent of democracy or anti-democratic trends within various regimes alongside the state of Internet freedom. The assessment of Internet freedom is based on three primary indicators:
(1) Obstacles to Access;
(2) Limits on Content;
(3) Violations of User Rights (Freedom on the Net 2024).

Table 10

Analysis of the Communication Technologies Distribution in Selected Non-Democratic Regimes

	Internet usage[1]		Mobile Phone usage[2]	
Saudi Arabia	2013, **60.5%**	2023, **100%**	2016, **62%**	2022, **100%**
Russia	2013, **68%**	2023, **92.2%**	2017, **95%**	2022, **99%**
Cuba	2013, **27.9%**	2022, **73.2%**	2013, **19%**	2021, **63%**
Nicaragua	2013, **15.5%**	2022, **61.1%**	-	-
China	2013, **45.8%**	2023, **77.5%**	-	-
Afghanistan	2013, **5.9%**	2020, **18.4%**	-	2016, **47%**
Ethiopia	2013, **4.6%**	2022, **19.4%**	2015, **50%**	2016, **58%**
Egypt	2013, **29.4%**	2022, **72.3%**	2014, **81%**	2022, **97%**
Iran	2013, **29.9%**	2022, **81.7%**	2015, **70%**	2021, **72%**
Vietnam	2013, **38.5%**	2023, **78.1%**	2019, **78%**	2022, **79%**

Source: prepared by the author using statistical data from the Our World in Data portal (Ritchie, Mathieu, Roser & Ortiz-Ospina 2023).

The research primarily focuses on countries with available objective information regarding Internet freedom. This often results in the exclusion of data from closed dictatorships, such as North Korea, as well as from open democracies like those in Scandinavia.

As of 2024, approximately 5 billion people have access to the Internet. Nevertheless, there are *six challenges related to Internet freedom that affect the communication between the government and society* (Funk, Vesteinsson & Baker 2024, p. 6):

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[1] An Internet user is defined as someone who has accessed the Internet at least three months prior.
[2] A phone user is someone who possesses at least one SIM card for personal use.

(1) Arrests and imprisonment for publishing content related to political, social, and religious issues faced by individuals in countries where approximately 78% of the global population resides.

(2) Physical attacks or killings of individuals as a consequence of their online activities occur in regions where about 67% of the population lives.

(3) Pro-government commentators and bots to manipulate online discussions are engaged by authorities in around 66% of the global population.

(4) Selective blocking of social media platforms for political, social, or religious reasons occurs in countries home to approximately 65% of the population.

(5) Access to social media is either partially or completely restricted in areas where about 52% of the population resides.

(6) Disconnection of the internet or mobile networks solely for political motives affects approximately 46% of the global population.

According to data from 2024, a study of 72 countries categorised their level of Internet freedom into *three groups:*
(a) free – 19 countries,
(b) partly free – 32 countries,
(c) not free – 21 countries.

Let us focus on the countries with the highest and lowest levels of Internet freedom (See Table 11).

Table 11

A Comprehensive Ranking of Countries by Internet Freedom for 2024

Country	Freedom on the Net Score (%)	Regime Type	Infringement
Iceland	94%	free	—
Estonia	92%	free	Political, social, or religious content blocked
Canada	86%	free	Blogger or ICT user arrested
Chile	86%	free	—
Costa Rica	97%	free	—
Cuba	20%	not free	Social media blocked Political, social, or religious content blocked ICT networks deliberately disrupted Pro-government commentators Blogger or ICT user arrested Blogger or ICT user physically attacked
Russia	20%	not free	Social media blocked Political, social, or religious content blocked ICT networks deliberately disrupted Pro-government commentators New law increasing censorship passed New law creating surveillance passed Blogger or ICT user arrested Blogger or ICT user physically attacked
Iran	12%	not free	"
China	9%	not free	"
Myanmar	9%	not free	Social media blocked Political, social, or religious content blocked ICT networks deliberately disrupted Pro-government commentators Blogger or ICT user arrested Blogger or ICT user physically attacked

Source: prepared by the author based on the Freedom on the Net 2024 Report (Freedom on the Net 2024).

The evolution of freedom on the Internet and the rise of social networks have become key factors influencing the dynamics of democracy on a global scale. In recent decades, advancements in information technology have often been referred to as *'postmodern*

totalitarianism' (Diamond 2019), presupposing a gradual erosion of democratic rights and freedoms. Although the Internet and social networks were initially perceived as symbols of freedom in the early 2000s, they have gradually transformed into challenges threatening the stability of democratic regimes over the past twenty years. The evolution of the social media industry is shaped by various business structures. This is exemplified by issues such as privacy concerns on platforms like Facebook, the dissemination of illegal content on Telegram, and the recent acquisition of Twitter by Elon Musk. Concurrently, modern China is actively advancing tools such as artificial intelligence, all while maintaining its ideological autocracy (Sheehan 2023). The current state of information and technological development often enables undemocratic regimes to enhance their control over society and more effectively suppress dissenters.

PART 5

CLASSIFICATION OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL REGIMES

5.1 Classification of Contemporary Political Regimes: An In-Depth Analysis

Political regimes define the dynamics between a government and its society. The specific regime type is determined by the resources employed by the government and the political elite's degree of legitimacy. In the political science field, a comprehensive classification of political regimes ranges from classical typologies to the transitional regimes characteristic of modern times.

Several key criteria define the type of a political regime:
(a) the historical context in which it operates;
(b) the overall objectives of the regime;
(c) the methods and strategies employed to achieve these objectives;
(d) the social composition of the ruling elite;
(e) the distinctive features of the official state ideology;
(f) the nature of political leaders' behaviours.

The criteria for classifying political regimes can be abstract; therefore, it is expedient to consider both historical practices and contemporary operation in analysing these regimes. Each country, and in some instances specific regions, may align with the characteristics of particular regimes. There are established political science approaches that support the concept of *'regional regimes'* (Giraudy 2013) and the coexistence of over 550 subtypes of democratic regimes worldwide (Collier & Levitsky 1997).

In the field of comparative political science, the classical approach to classifying political regimes encompasses *three primary options* (Tsygankov 1995, pp. 150–151):

(1) Democratic – Authoritarian – Totalitarian: the main criterion is exercising power. The exercise of power can occur through two primary vectors: top-down or bottom-up. This classification of political regimes is a widely represented framework observed in historical and contemporary contexts. The notable absence of traditional totalitarian regimes in the 21st century – except for North Korea and Eritrea (Connell 2011) – looks somewhat problematic. Additionally, the post-totalitarian regimes that emerged in the latter half of the 20th century (Linz 1996) and the early 21st century (Thompson 2002) do not fit neatly into this classification. In the aftermath of the collapse of authoritarian dictatorships in Latin America, there has been a notable rise in hybrid regimes between authoritarianism and democracy (Karl 1995). Despite being grounded in scientific principles, this typology of regimes requires further clarification and refinement.

(2) Ochlocracy – Oligarchy – Tyranny: the main criterion is determining the nature of the ruling authority and the methods employed in state governance. The ancient Greek perspective highlights three types of power realisation: the power of the masses, the power of the self-serving (greedy), and the power of ruthless despots (Hoekstra 2016). The limitations of this classification are evident, primarily due to its historical context and geographic confinement to Ancient Greece. Nevertheless, this framework can be partly adapted to contemporary political circumstances. For example, one can observe a notable synthesis of oligarchy and authoritarianism in the post-Soviet region (Roeder 1994, pp. 67–78).

(3) Liberal – Moderate – Repressive: the main criterion is methods for enhancing the regime's legitimacy. This typology aligns with the classical framework for classifying political

regimes into totalitarian, authoritarian, and democratic. The primary criterion for this classification is the method through which the political elite assumes power, including elections, inheritance, revolutions/military coups, etc. Notably, this typology is somewhat conditional, as it can only be confirmed or refuted by examining specific country cases. For instance, during the transition of Chile's political regime and constitutional reforms from 1973 to the 1990s, the nation moved from a military dictatorship to a personal dictatorship under the presidency, ultimately evolving into a democratic regime (Davis 2004).

The most common classical approach in political science is categorising regimes as totalitarian, authoritarian, or democratic. However, we should examine the following *challenges associated with this typology of modern regimes:*

• The classical typology of political regimes, with three fundamental types, serves as a broad framework for understanding governance structures. It is primarily intended for individuals who are new to the field of political science, rather than for experts. The three classical types demonstrate how power is organised and exercised within a country. Furthermore, this classification is widely applicable across various disciplines related to political science, such as sociology, public administration, history, specific economic fields, and international law.

• The classical typology of political regimes classifies them based on the degree and frequency of violence employed to maintain control. In a totalitarian regime, violence serves as the primary source of legitimacy and underpins the entire governance structure. In contrast, a democratic regime is characterised by institutional mechanisms facilitating compromise between the governing bodies and society, rejecting illegal state coercion. An authoritarian regime is a so-called bridge between a power monopoly and a pluralistic system. Recent political transformations have demonstrated that ideal types of regimes are quite rare.

• Due to the complex nature of political systems in the post-bipolar world of the 21st century, pure types of political regimes are rarely observed. The triumph of the anti-Hitler coalition in World War II and the collapse of communist regimes at the end of the 20th century initiated a global trend toward democratic governance. Nevertheless, many nations pursuing democracy have given rise to distinct forms of regimes. For example, the democratic models in Africa, as seen in Botswana and South African Republic, markedly differ from those in post-communist countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic. These diverse manifestations of political regimes highlight the limitations of traditional typologies, rendering them less effective in capturing the complexities of modern governance.

• The transformations of modern political regimes illustrate that these systems are dynamic rather than static. This leads to the emergence of intermediate regimes within a country or a group of countries, steering them toward totalitarianism, authoritarianism, or democracy. Consequently, the classification of approximately 200 global regimes into only three categories seems overly simplistic.

• Considering the political transformations of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, comparative political science has developed new methodological approaches to classifying political regimes. These updated approaches incorporate each country's contemporary political landscape, its geographical characteristics, and the dynamics of political transformations.

Traditional (classical) typologies of political regimes can be validated or refuted in two scenarios: (a) depending on the historical and political context, and (b) depending on the regime's geographical setting, specifically a certain country or region. The evolution of political regimes in the post-Soviet space illustrates the limitations of classical regime typologies.

The initial phase of political development in post-Soviet states revealed the complexity of the political transformations in these

independent republics. This context required a revised classification system for their political regimes. In the years following the transformations (1990–1993), most post-Soviet regimes demonstrated characteristics that fell between *four distinct types of political systems* (Roeder 1994, p. 66):

(1) **Autocracy** – the accountability of politicians to a limited political group, such as a bureaucracy, junta, or revolutionary council, which dictates both foreign and domestic policies. This phenomenon was observed in Ukraine from July 1990 to December 1993, and in Belarus from May 1990 to August 1991;

(2) **Oligarchy** – politicians primarily respond to the interests of influential groups outside the executive branch, typically consisting of large financial organisations or individual oligarchs. This phenomenon was observed in Georgia from January 1992 to December 1993 and in Tajikistan from September 1992 to December 1993;

(3) **Exclusive republic** – closely mirrors democratic principles; however, in this system, politicians are primarily accountable to a minority within society, such as Estonia from April 1990 to December 1993, as well as in Latvia and Lithuania during March/April 1990 through December 1993;

(4) **Balanced republic** – a transitional state of governance that shapes the potential political prospects of the elite. These republics typically emerge from conflicts between the president and parliament, coupled with favourable conditions for a shift toward democracy. Examples of balanced republics include Russia from May 1990 to September 1993 and Moldova from April 1990 to December 1993.

Even a decade after the onset of political transformations, many post-Soviet republics have not transitioned from one classical regime to another – whether shifting from authoritarianism to democracy or vice versa. In several instances, these regimes exhibit cyclical developments rather than linear progressions, thus rendering it impossible to categorise them as authoritarian or

democratic. This cyclical nature of governance demonstrates why the 'colour revolutions' of 2003–2005 were successful in certain countries, such as Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine, while traditional dictatorships took root in others, including Russia, Belarus, and Azerbaijan (Hale 2005). The balance between elements of conventional authoritarianism and democracy within post-Soviet regimes underscores the importance of exploring alternative classifications for political systems.

5.2 Modern Perspectives on the Typology of Political Regimes

One of the earliest methodological approaches to classifying political regimes, based on how these regimes operate, was developed by *M.Alvarez, J.A. Cheibub, F.Limongi, and A.Przeworski* (Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi & Przeworski 1996). Their comprehensive study analysed 141 countries from 1950 to 1990. The researchers categorised regimes according to *three key criteria:*

(a) the method of electing the head of the executive branch, either a President or Prime Minister;

(b) the method of electing the legislature;

(c) the type of party system.

Based on these criteria, political regimes can be divided into *five distinct types* (Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi & Przeworski 1996, pp. 23–30):

(1) Parliamentarism – a regime closely aligned with parliamentary democracy, characterised by a multi-party system and the political dominance of parliament. Such regimes are typically found in countries with established democratic traditions, particularly in Western Europe.

(2) Presidentialism – a political system characterised by a strong executive branch led by a President, typically elected

through a popular vote. This system may either fulfil democratic principles, as exemplified by the United States, or edge toward authoritarianism, as observed in Uganda under President Milton Obote from 1980 to 1984. While the country needs to hold elections, these elections often occur with significant violations of democratic practices.

(3) Mixed – a regime, characterised by a balanced distribution of power between the parliament and the offices of the President or Prime Minister. This democratic framework was typical of countries such as France, Finland, and Iceland during the period from 1950 to 1990.

(4) Bureaucracy – a regime that can operate within various institutional frameworks. It is often characterised by undemocratic principles, where elections may serve a nominal purpose or, in some cases, may not occur. Power tends to be concentrated within a small group of individuals. For example, the communist party nomenklatura in socialist Bulgaria from 1950 to 1989.

(5) Autocracy – a traditional form of authoritarian or totalitarian governance characterised by the absence of political processes such as elections and a multi-party system. These regimes are commonly observed in various regions worldwide, particularly those referred to as 'third-world countries'.

Depending on the prevailing political dynamics, a country may undergo multi-vector transformations. As a result, the nature of political regimes in the country frequently changes (Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi & Przeworski 1996, pp. 23–30). Between 1950 and 1990, in South Korea, *four different types of political regimes* took turns:
 • Bureaucracy regime (1950–1959);
 • Parliamentarism regime (1960);
 • Bureaucracy regime (1961–1971);
 • Autocracy regime (1972);
 • Bureaucracy regime (1973–1987);

• Presidentialism regime (1988–1990).

In contrast, the political regime changes in the socialist republics, such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria, followed a more linear path: from 1950 to 1989, they operated under a bureaucratic regime, transitioning to parliamentarism or a similar regime in 1990.

The following typology of political regimes was proposed by *Steffen Kailitz*, a renowned researcher in political regime practice (Kailitz 2013). The scholar examined the dynamics of political regimes from 1946 to 2010, categorising them along a spectrum ranging from liberal democracy to personal autocracy. The principal criterion for this classification is the methods to legitimise each political regime. In this analysis, Steffen Kailitz has identified *seven distinct types of political regimes* (Kailitz 2013, pp. 46–49):

(1) Liberal Democracy – a political system that aligns closely with classical democratic principles. For a regime to be classified as a liberal democracy, it must adhere to three key legitimacy procedures: the head of state must be elected through a public vote, the legislature must consist of elected representatives, and there must be an opposition party or leader. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, liberal democratic regimes were established in all traditional Western democratic nations.

(2) Electoral Autocracy – a hybrid regime that differs from traditional autocracy and liberal democracy. In such regimes, multi-party elections and alternative processes for selecting the head of the executive branch are conducted; however, these electoral processes are often manipulated by the ruling elite, thereby undermining the principles of free and transparent elections. Electoral autocracies exhibit instability and frequently transition toward liberal democracy, as evidenced by historical examples such as Kenya in 2002 and South Korea in 1998.

(3) Communist Ideocracy – a non-democratic political regime characterised by a political system organised around a single communist ideology, which shapes the structure of society. In such a system, the electoral process is either opaque or absent, and opposition to the ruling party is not permitted. In the second half of the twentieth century, three main models of ideocracies emerged: communist, national socialist, and Islamic.

(4) One-party Autocracy – a non-democratic regime characterised by a single political party's dominance, without utopian ideologies like communism or fascism. In such systems, elections are often merely ceremonial, and opposition parties are typically excluded from the political process. One-party regimes are frequently observed in economically underdeveloped countries, such as the regime of Ahmed Sékou Touré in Guinea, which lasted from 1958 to 1984.

(5) Military Regime – a wide range of regimes characterised by centralised decision-making, typically led by a single military leader of the highest rank or by a group of military officials, known as a junta. While such regimes may permit the functioning of certain institutions and processes, such as elections and opposition parties, these structures often serve mainly as formalities. Over time, military regimes frequently develop into personal dictatorships. Notable examples include General Idi Amin in Uganda (1971), Officer Jerry Rawlings in Ghana (1981), and Officer Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso (1983).

(6) Monarchy – a traditional political regime closely resembling autocracy due to the absence of cyclical turnover among the political elite. In traditional monarchies, three sources of legitimacy are recognised: divine right (power from God), natural law (power granted by nature), and historical entitlement to personal or dynastic rule. Examples of traditional monarchies include Islamic monarchies, such as the *'Commander of the Faithful'* in Morocco and the *'Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques'* in Saudi Arabia.

(7) Personalist Autocracy – a regime closely resembling political dictatorships, characterised by the limitations placed on plural institutions. A key feature of personal autocracy is the leader's capacity to modify the country's political framework while sustaining personal dictatorship. Such regimes are frequently observed in Africa and are typically rooted in presidentialism. For example, Hastings Banda in Malawi (1971), Jean-Bédel Bokassa in the Central African Republic (1972), and Idi Amin in Uganda (1976). There are also notable geographical exceptions, such as Turkmenistan in the post-Soviet era, governed by President Saparmurat Niyazov from 1990 to 2006.

Contemporary approaches for classifying political regimes are quite similar, as they emphasise the practical functioning of each regime. A thorough analysis of institutional characteristics plays a vital role in differentiating regime types, particularly the historical development of the regime, its sources of legitimacy, and the potential threats to its stability. Furthermore, it is vital to consider *three additional approaches to classifying modern political regimes* (See Table 12).

Table 12

Varieties of Typology of Political Regimes in Comparative Political Science

Authors	Democracies			Autocracies			
Cheibub, Gandhi, Vreeland, 2009	Parliamentary	Semi presidential	Presidential	Monarchic	Military		Civilian
Hadenius, Teorell, 2007	Democratic multiparty	Non dominant limited multiparty	Dominant limited multi party	No-party	Military	One-party	Monarchy
Geddes, Wright, Frantz, 2014	Democracy			Party	Personal	Military	Monarchy

Sources: prepared by the author based on the research by Cheibub, Gandhi, Vreeland (2009), Hadenius, Teorell (2007), Geddes, Wright, Frantz (2014).

The most relevant classifications of political regimes in contemporary society are proposed by leading global centres that focus on the monitoring of democratisation through empirical methodologies. *The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project* (Anckar & Fredriksson 2019) has put forward a modern typology of political regimes that illustrates the dynamics inherent to each type. In their analysis of political regimes from 1800 to 2016, Carsten Anckar and Cecilia Fredriksson provide a comprehensive understanding of the political characteristics of modern regimes. The principal criterion for categorising these political regimes is their positioning along the spectrum of 'Democracy' to 'Autocracy'.

The group of democratic regimes encompasses the following (Anckar & Fredriksson 2019):

(1) Presidentialism – a political regime where the President occupies a central role, typically elected through a popular vote. This structure grants the president considerable authority over the legislative body. Notable examples of presidentialism include the United States and Bolivia.

(2) Parliamentarism – a political system characterised by the dominance of parliament, which possesses significant personnel and oversight powers over the prime minister and the composition of the government, for example, the Scandinavian and Baltic countries, with the possible exception of Lithuania.

(3) Semi-presidentialism – a mixed political regime that divides power between the president and the parliament. The distinguishing feature of this system is the duality of executive authority, shared by both the president and the prime minister, who is accountable to the parliament. Various adaptations of semi-presidentialism can be observed, particularly in the post-communist contexts of Poland (1991–1997) and Ukraine (1996–2004).

(4) Semi-monarchy – a transitional regime between absolute monarchies and democratic governance, characterised by the

monarch retaining significant executive authority. This governance was evident in Italy from 1919 to 1921 and in Sweden from 1911 to 1916.

The group of autocracies encompasses the following (Anckar & Fredriksson 2019):

(1) Absolute monarchy – a regime where the head of state ascends to their position through inheritance, under established political traditions or constitutional provisions. Standard titles include king, queen, emperor, emir, etc.

Examples of modern absolute monarchies can be observed in certain Muslim nations, such as Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (Lawson & Legrenzi 2017). In contrast, constitutional monarchies represent a distinct category in which a constitution regulates the monarch's powers and are subordinate to parliamentary authority. This system is prevalent in various parliamentary republics throughout Western Europe.

(2) Military rule – undemocratic regimes where the military assumes power or exercises control over civilians.

Several military regimes emerged in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in Latin America, as evidenced by the history of military juntas in Argentina and post-colonial Africa. Europe experienced a similar phenomenon with the military dictatorship known as the 'black colonels' in Greece from 1967 to 1974 (Maragkou 2006).

(3) Party-based rule – a political regime where authority and governance are centralised around a single political party. The nature of the party system can vary considerably; in some contexts, political parties may be entirely forbidden, while in others, they may have limited participation within the political landscape.

These regimes can be classified into two models: single-party systems and multi-party authoritarian systems. The geographic prevalence of single-party regimes is extensive, encompassing

historical instances such as the Soviet Union and current Laos, which has maintained this regime since 1991 (Stuart-Fox 2007).

(4) Personalist rule – an authoritarian regime led by a single leader, with legitimacy derived from hereditary power, military coups, or popular votes within multi-party systems. A defining feature of these regimes is the lack of ideological influence on leadership decisions, meaning specific ideologies do not manipulate these leaders.

One-person dictatorships have been observed in various parts of the world, exemplified by Augusto Pinochet in Chile, Idi Amin in Uganda, and Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, the President of Turkmenistan (Kunysz 2012).

(5) Oligarchy – a political regime in which, despite the existence of political competition, administrative decisions are made by a select minority.

This is evident in contemporary post-Soviet republics (Stewart, Klein, Schmitz & Schröder 2012) and in countries such as Iran and South Africa during the apartheid era. Historical instances of oligarchic republics include Britain from 1800 to 1884, a period marked by limited suffrage and a division of power between the monarchy and Parliament.

CONCLUSIONS

Political regimes are an integral part of contemporary political systems, facilitating communication between the political elite and society. The political elite seeks to gain and sustain power, while society aims to safeguard its interests. Given the complex nature of internal politics, political regimes exhibit intricate structures and necessitate significant resources for effective operation. In political science, political regimes have been interpreted in a variety of ways; however, the term 'regime' is most frequently associated with the concepts of 'power, 'system', and 'legitimacy'. Modern political regimes are distinguished by their institutional attributes, ranging from the constitutional framework of a country to its foreign policy strategies.

The operation of political regimes underscores the substantial influence of the social, cultural, and economic environment on the nature of such regimes. Furthermore, they adapt to external conditions, resulting in a spectrum of interactions that range from stability and legitimacy to the potential disintegration of the regime. It is worth mentioning that a political regime can adapt to external circumstances both passively and actively.

It is essential for each political regime to uphold a high level of legitimacy, as this is essential for ensuring its stability. The availability of socio-economic resources stabilises the regime, as these resources can substantially alleviate (or, alternatively, intensify) conflicts within society. Two primary practical resources that influence the degree of stability of a regime are state coercion and the systems to safeguard citizens' rights and freedoms.

The past few decades have underscored the significance of the Internet and information and communication technologies in the operation of political regimes, influencing a range of outcomes from the enhancement of online freedoms to the spread of propaganda. Key factors that directly affect the diversity of these

regimes include the accessibility and speed of Internet connections, the technological capabilities of smartphones, and the extent of governmental persecution of opposition journalists through targeted policies against independent media.

The classification of political regimes continues to be a considerable area of inquiry in contemporary political science. Traditionally, regimes are categorised as authoritarian, totalitarian, or democratic. However, the current political landscape reveals a more nuanced spectrum of regime subtypes, which encompasses forms ranging from liberal democracies to personal autocracies.

The first part of this handbook addresses relevant themes such as legitimacy, stabilisation, essential resources for the effective functioning of regimes, and offers attempts at classifying modern political regimes. The second chapter is dedicated to a thorough analysis of the organisation and practical operation of specific regime types.

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