

# [The lack of clearly formulated ideology essay sample](https://assignbuster.com/the-lack-of-clearly-formulated-ideology-essay-sample/)

“ Processions, meetings, military parades, lectures, waxwork displays, film shows, telescreen programs all had to be organized; stands had to be erected, effigies built, slogans coined, songs written, rumors circulated, photographs faked.”.

The term “ authoritarianism” itself is quite complex and includes many different aspects. By considering them, we may understand what authoritarianism actually is, learn more about how this unique political regime works and why is it different from any other type of non-democracies.

Let’s start by asking ourselves – what are the distinctive features of authoritarianism? According to Juan Linz, the definition of authoritarianism is “ Political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some point in their development, and in which leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones” (Linz 2009: 159.) As we can see, the definition elaborates on how is authoritarianism different from any other regime. Starting from here, we can clearly distinguish some important factors that determine the regime as authoritarian:

Limited political pluralism;

No guiding ideology (unlike totalitarianism);

None or minimal political mobilization.

By appealing to Linz and studying his works, we may also distinguish some other vital points of authoritarianism:
Control of potentially dangerous institutions (like mass media or civil society);

Closed political elite, with strong pressure on opposition;

Formally distinguished and predictable power of political leader or elite.

The political power in the authoritarian institutions does not try to invade each part of the society, that is why a lot of personal questions, for example, those are linked to religion, culture or family are often up to the citizens, unlike in totalitarian regimes. Another difference is that, unlike in totalitarianism, the power structures in authoritarian states are based on the passiveness and apathy of the citizens, their so-called depolitization, which is inevitably caused by lowered political mobilization and the lack of clearly formulated ideology.

Linz determines the key points that distinguish authoritarianism from totalitarianism, but nevertheless, the definition of authoritarianism itself might be very general. For example, Jerzy Wiatr believes that “…compared to totalitarianism, autocracy is a category that includes a lot of the things that are neither democracy nor totalitarianism”.

We may take another definition that is given by Michael Roskin – “ nondemocratic government but not necessarily totalitarian” (Roskin, 2016: 102), which is a very short but nevertheless an informative message about the essence of authoritarianism – a kind of middle state between democracy and totalitarianism. That includes a variety of regimes that might be more or less democratic and may be applied to virtually any country at some point of its history – including, for example, the German Empire (1871-1918), fascist Italy, communist regimes of Eastern Europe in the 20th century, modern Arabic monarchies and so on. That is why, whilst Linz gives, in my opinion, a clear and most detailed definition of authoritarianism, the notion of this regime is generally very broad. Most of the definitions are unable to distinguish the specific points of that kind of states.

Since the general concept of authoritarianism is facing the problem of being too blurred, political scientists distinguish a variety of sub-regimes within the framework of it. A comprehensive typology was given by Juan Linz, who distinguishes five basic types of authoritarian regimes:

Corporate authoritarianism, which is established in those states which are economically and socially developed enough to increase the citizens’ political mobilization. In such regimes, people are said to rule the state through various corporative organizations altogether, which is an an alternative to one-party rule. An example of such regime might be Francoist Spain, in which “…the participation of the people in the legislative tasks and in the other functions of general interest shall be implemented through the Family, the Municipality, the Syndicate, and other organically representative entities recognized by law for this purpose. Any political organization whatever outside this representative system shall be considered illegal.”

Pre-totalitarian authoritarianism, which is more of a stage between the fall of democracy and the establishment of the totalitarian regime. The structures of power that are supposed to rule the totalitarian state cannot be established in short-term, since why such transitional stage exists. They are characterized by increased political mobility of the citizens and the presence of strong ideology. Such regimes may be distinguished from totalitarianism by pointing out small details – such as yet relatively unstable political elite, the temporary autonomy of certain institutions (religion, interest groups and so on), and a situation of societal uncertainty, when the citizens are highly divided by their position to the newly established regime and the expectations from the future of it. As for example of such regimes, Linz refers to newly built fascist autocracies, appearing in the countries of former democracies.

Post-colonial authoritarianism appears right after the former colonial state gains independence from the metropole. They are built in societies with a relatively low level of economic development and gain initial power by using various nationalistic sentiments. They appear on the peak of such events, initially overshadowing internal conflicts and economic collapse, but since in such unsatisfactory state of the country there is a high chance of formation of strong opposition, the leaders often use violent methods of societal control.

Military-bureaucratic regime. This type is characterized by the strong presence of military and bureaucratic elite in the government, the lack of thoroughly formulated ideology, and – in the majority of cases – the ruling of one single party. The unique feature of that regime is that the posts in the government are taken according to the position in the military hierarchy and in a variety of forms of governing, ranging from the one-person dictatorship to junta’s rule. One of the most well-known and violent military regimes was the rule of Pinochet in Chile, formed in 1973 as a result of a coup d’état.

Racial, or ethnic democracy. That is a unique mix of democracy and autocracy, and the essence of it is that the participation in the democratic institutions of a country is only allowed to certain racial groups, whilst the others are virtually excluded from the politics or being physically oppressed. Such polarization of society often results in racial conflicts and prevents the formation of equal and complete democracy. The examples of such regimes might be apartheid in South Africa or the policy of segregation in the United States of the 20th century.

As we can see, Linz distinguishes several different political regimes, which are united by their common features – limited or nonexistent political pluralism, restriction, bounded political participation of the citizens, and the total control of certain institutions by the government. Nevertheless, they are quite different by their nature. They are mostly specific for certain countries at the certain period of times and cannot be applied to any situation – for example, post-colonial regime can’t appear in independent states, and racial democracy is very unlikely to be built in a nation-state. They are also quite different in the degree of the societal control – through all the types use violence and freedom limitations to a certain extent, some of those might be more or less tender. As an example, ethnic democracies apply such restrictions to certain racial or ethnic groups, and others may freely participate in the political life of their state.

As the essence of authoritarianism is quite controversial, the media and common citizens often use this term as a sign of something negative, or to emphasize the consequences of strengthening the laws. Nevertheless, it doesn’t mean that authoritarianism only has negative sides – the strict political regime might be more efficient for the economy of the country, though it depends on the government itself. As an example, we may take the case of Singapore – the power in the state belongs to a single party, there are known cases of repressions towards the opposition, however, the government of Singapore holds the status of one of the least corrupt governments in the world and the economy of the country is highly developed, resulting in higher quality of life.

There are not many authoritarian states left in the world. A lot of regimes had collapsed after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, whilst the others have transformed their governments into more democratic institutions, either because of the revolutions or just during a natural process of transferring the power. The majority have now transformed into hybrid regimes, while still maintaining the strict authoritarianism is characterized by.
An interesting case we may look at closer is the dictatorship of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. Mugabe became the first democratically elected head of the newly established state of Zimbabwe, after a lingering war for independence of the country. His first years were an anticipated change after the war, and in addition, he was a politician who could enthrall the masses, but his further actions, such as failure to keep his promises to the veterans of the war and devastation of the state’s economy plummeted his popularity. However, he still managed to preserve the power by repressing his opponents and holding unfair elections. During his rule, Zimbabwe was an exemplary dictatorship state, where the leader had his informal power over basically anything. His reign has come to an end on November 14th, 2017, after a coup d’état organized by Zimbabwe Defense Forces, replacing him with Emmerson Mnangagwa, former Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. It is doubted, however, that the regime in Zimbabwe will undergo sufficient changes, as the new president is known to be a ruthless person who used to participate in the repressions of the opposition.

Zimbabwe is a case of post-colonial authoritarianism, according to the typology by Linz, and there are a lot of similar states in Africa and other parts of the world. However, the state of democracy in such countries had strongly improved compared to the days of the Cold War, as a lot of states had shifted their regimes to hybrids in order to improve their image and rule the country more effectively by manipulating the laws instead of openly breaking them. The same tactic is being applied by the majority of authoritarian leaders around the world, and because of this, most likely, pure authoritarianism is going to be obsolete in the near future.

Summing up, authoritarian regime is a complex term that includes a variety of different aspects and vastly differs from any other type of political regimes, even though some of them may appear familiar. The distinctive features of authoritarianism, by which we may also differentiate it from totalitarianism, is the lack of clearly formulated ideology and political mobilization, since the power in such states is held purely by the passiveness of the citizens and their absenteeism. Though authoritarian regimes might seem more stable than democracies, that is a statement that is not necessarily true. For example, Andrew J. Nathan argues that “ regime theory holds that authoritarian systems are inherently fragile because of weak legitimacy, overreliance on coercion, over-centralization of decision making, and the predominance of personal power over institutional norms…Few authoritarian regimes—be they communist, fascist, corporatist, or personalist—have managed to conduct orderly, peaceful, timely, and stable successions” (Nathan, A. J, 2003).

I mostly agree with this statement – if we look at historical evidence, most ex-authoritarian states had now shifted to hybrid regimes, and some of the countries that used to be dictatorships are now democracies. People do have the desire to be free from the coercive power, since why democracy wins in most cases, and the reliance on violence is an Achilles’ hill for authoritarian states, since why their future is often unclear and blurred. The probability of the neoconservative revolution in the world always remains though – since why we see such interesting cases as the presidency of Donald Trump and Brexit. Authoritarianism will undoubtedly remain in the world, there is no way we can transform every country into a democracy, and it is not always needed– however, how many of such states will disappear or undergo substantial changes in the near future, only time will tell.

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