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On the classical theories of non-democratic regimes and their usefulness in examining Eastern Europe 1944–1989[*]

1. Introduction

Though classical conceptions of totalitarianism and authoritarianism are decades old, they are still a source of conflicting views and interpretations. This also applies to labeling political regimes of Eastern Europe between 1944 and 1989. There is no doubt that these regimes were not democratic. However, this rather axiomatic assertion is not sufficient; we have to analyze this issue more thoroughly and in greater depth. Such approach leads to an important question: What type of non-democracy was it?

In contemporary social sciences, we have been witnessing frequent terminological misunderstandings regarding this issue. They stem primarily from unfamiliarity with the respective concepts from the field of political theory. This unfortunate condition is demonstrated mainly through inadequate or outright erroneous application of theoretical concepts from political science to political practice. For a relevant example, we can examine the improper use of the word "totalitarianism" as a blanket term for all political regimes in communist Europe without further specification.

From the perspective of political science, what might be an even more crucial problem is whether these classic conceptions of non-democratic regimes can be applied in practice. This is a rather difficult question and this short paper cannot provide an exhaustive answer to it. This does not, however, mean that we should not aim for (at least) a schematic explanation.

The aim of this paper is twofold: to back up totalitarianism and authoritarianism as classic conceptions of political science and to examine their classifications and applicability. In the first part of this paper, the two main conceptions — totalitarianism and authoritarianism — as well as their modifications will be investigated. The purpose of this investigation is to clear up some of the misconceptions associated with these terms. In the following part of the paper, the link between these theories and political practice is examined, both from a theoretical and practical point of view. Emphasis will be placed on postwar communist Eastern Europe.

2. Totalitarianism

2.1. How to understand totalitarianism

Some critics of the totalitarianism theory claim that this concept is so maximalist that it is nearly impossible to apply it in practice. We should be talking about "totalitarian tendencies" or "trends" instead.[1] Such views are generally acceptable, but it is necessary to elaborate on this statement and explain it further. To add to this, the nexus between this claim and a critique of totalitarianism as such is not evident. This depends on what we actually mean by the "theory of totalitarianism" or "totalitarianism" and on what methodological approach we choose to analyze it with. If we employ the predominating empirical-analytical approach of contemporary political science (as opposed to ontological-normative approach), we must come down from the world of ideal norms to the realm of facts, much like Joseph A. Schumpeter did in the 1940s when introducing his "alternative" theory of democracy in opposition to the "classic" one.[2] Thus, together with Schumpeter, we are not asking how a political system should function, but how it really does instead.

Several prominent postwar authors are aware of the difference between theory and practice, and not only in the case of totalitarianism. Probably the most successful endeavor in this respect is the polyarchy theory developed by the American democracy theorist Robert A. Dahl.[3] Dahl perceives both democracy and totalitarianism as extreme forms of a political system. They are in fact ideal constructs, systemic visions that do not exist in practice. All existing political

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[1] B. Říchová, *Přehled moderních politologických teorií. Empiricko-analytický přístup v soudobé politické vědě* [Overview of Modern Theories in Political Science. An Empirical-Analytical Approach in Contemporary Political Science], Praha 2000, pp. 236–237.

[2] Cf. J.A. Schumpeter, *Kapitalizm, socjalizm, demokracja* [Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy], Warszawa 1995, pp. 312–377.

[3] Cf. R.A. Dahl, *Demokracie a její kritici* [Democracy and Its Critics], Praha 1995.

systems are situated somewhere between these two extremes — the democratic one ("polyarchic" in Dahl's terminology) and the non-democratic one.

The reasoning of the conceptually very precise political scientist Giovanni Sartori runs along similar lines; Sartori regards totalitarianism and democracy as two opposing ends of the same axis.[4] This means that we cannot expect any specific political regime to be purely totalitarian, just as we cannot expect any specific democratic regime to be a pure democracy. Actual political regimes will always move dynamically (they will evolve) along this imaginary axis. As a consequence, we have one ideal of totalitarianism and many specific regimes that are only more or less approaching it (or even moving away from it). Therefore, we should distinguish between a rather abstract notion of totalitarianism and existing totalitarian political regimes.[5]

Hence, totalitarianism, or a totalitarian regime, is (similarly to its opposite, democracy or polyarchy) understood as a type of political system that can be relatively precisely defined on the basis of its distinguishing features. I thus dismiss claims assuming that totalitarianism is a human character, way of thinking, or any kind of ideology.[6] It is rather a way of asserting political power — it is a political regime (keeping in mind the differences among various authors, including Raymond Aron, Ernst Fraenkel, Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, Juan J. Linz, Franz Neumann, Sigmund Neumann, Giovanni Sartori, etc.[7]). This is connected with another issue, which is the problem of defining totalitarianism in historical time. With respect to the fact that we understand it as a political regime and not as anything else, I cannot agree with a number of eminent authors (including Franz Neumann, Karl R. Popper, Jakob L. Talmon and in the Czech political philosophy Vladimír Čermák, etc.[8]), who see totalitarianism

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[4] G. Sartori, *Teoria demokracji* [Democratic Theory], Warszawa 1995, p. 250.

[5] Later on in the text, however, we will still use the term "totalitarianism" as it has become so commonplace that replacing it with a different one would create even more confusion. In short, there is no term that would be the equivalent of polyarchy on the opposite side of the scale, and it would probably be impractical to fabricate one at this time. For that matter, even Dahl's "polyarchy" has not been adopted as a word.

[6] Cf. S. Balík, M. Kubát, *Teorie a praxe totalitních a autoritativních režimů* [Theory and Practice of Non-democratic Regimes], Praha 2012, pp. 5–41; I.T. Budil, *Ideologické zdroje moderního totalitarismu* [Ideological Sources of Modern Totalitarianism], "Střední Evropa" 16, 2000, No. 104/105, pp. 162–163.

[7] R. Aron, *Demokracie a totalitarismus* [Democracy and Totalitarianism], Brno 1993; E. Fraenkel, *The Dual State. A Contribution to the Theory of Dictatorship*, Clark, New Jersey 2006; C.J. Friedrich, Z. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, New York 1965; J.L. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, Boulder and London 2000; F.L. Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*, New York 1942; S. Neumann, *Permanent Revolution. The Total State in a World at War*, New York 1942; G. Sartori, op. cit.

[8] F.L. Neumann, *The Democratic and the Authoritarian State. Essays in Political and Legal Theory*, New York 1957; K.R. Popper, *Społeczeństwo otwarte i jego wrogowie I., II.* [Open Society and Its Enemies], Warszawa 1993; J.T. Talmon, *O původu totalitní demokracie* [The Origins of

as a "characteristic inherent in human nature since the beginning of history,"[9] and therefore discernable since antiquity. In their features, structure, method of functioning as well as external manifestations, modern non-democratic regimes naturally differ from politics of, for example, ancient Egypt, Sparta or China, Rome under the emperor Diocletian, Calvin's Geneva, or Jacobin France. Politics and its practical mechanisms of power change together with people and their mentalities as well as with moral principles of society. Furthermore, there are serious specific arguments in favor of modernity of totalitarianism that are connected with its definitions.[10]

The definition of totalitarianism as a modern phenomenon through its characteristic features is very important not only as a reason for continuing this discourse, but also for the relationship between this ideal concept and political practice. Only when we have a sort of "list" of the features of totalitarianism, can we start examining how different states relate to it. It follows that if we want to responsibly apply the concept as it has been interpreted above, we must at least briefly define it, i.e. establish this "list."[11]

2.2. Discussing totalitarianism

Classical concepts of totalitarianism mentioned above — in a sense of a political regime that prevails in empirical-analytical political science — have been heavily criticized. Giovanni Sartori, one of the biggest advocates of the concept of totalitarian regimes, counted the eight main attacks on this theory. In the following paragraphs, the most important ones will be examined.[12] (The scope of this paper does not allow us to investigate all eight attacks. Besides, these attacks tend to resemble each other.)

In general, there are two main streams of criticism aimed at the concept of totalitarian regimes. One stream wholly rejects the theory of totalitarianism because a) it considers it a political instrument devised as a propaganda weapon

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Totalitarian Democracy], Praha 1998; V. Čermák, *Otázka demokracie. Demokracie a totalitarismus* [On Democracy. Democracy and Totalitarianism], Praha 1992.

[9] S. Balík, M. Kubát, op. cit., p. 27.

[10] Primarily mass society and modern technologies. See ibid., pp. 35–43.

[11] These classical definitions of totalitarian regimes are well known and it is not necessary to recount them here. See particularly the most known H. Arendt, *Původ totalitarismu* [The Origins of Totalitarianism], Praha 1996, pp. 429–647; R. Aron, op. cit., p. 158; C.J. Friedrich, Z. Brzezinski, op. cit., pp. 9–10; J.J. Linz, op. cit., p. 70; G. Sartori, op. cit., pp. 241–253.

[12] G. Sartori, *Totalitarianism. Model mania and learning from error*, "Journal of Theoretical Politics" 5, 1993, No. 1, pp. 7–8. See also L. Schapiro, *Totalitarianism*, London and Basingstoke 1978, pp. 105–118.

during the Cold War[13] or, as Ian Kershaw says, a "Cold War Ideology"[14] itself, and b) the term is seen as overused to the extent that it has completely lost its substance.

The first argument is simply not true. Look, for example, at the relevant literature in political science (not politics itself). If this theory is indeed politicized, it is because of the politically biased approach of its authors. Moreover, we have to take into account that first conceptions of totalitarianism were established long before the Cold War.

The second argument has a rational basis. However, is mere overuse enough to refuse the term altogether and discard the entire theory behind it? If we had to renounce terms because of their overuse (and ideologization) we would have to "discard" half of all subject matters in political science. The same applies to its ambiguity. In this context, Giovanni Sartori states that if this criterion was applied, a dictionary of political science would be wordless.[15] Consequently, we would have to refuse also such terms as democracy and fascism and we would be left with no suitable terms and concepts altogether. Admittedly, the theory of totalitarianism has its strong and weak points and it is necessary to examine it critically. However, a critical investigation should not turn into a flat and hasty rejection. A good reason for rejecting totalitarianism would be its replacement by a better concept and term, not by nothing at all.[16]

More serious arguments appear in the second stream of criticism aimed at the concept of totalitarian regimes. A number of historians have serious reservations vis-à-vis the concept of totalitarianism in its relation to political practice.[17] Their position can be summarized in two main points. First, the theory of totalitarianism is static, it "does not have a history," neither a beginning nor an end. It supposedly does not answer the question of the origins and demise of totalitarianism or its development. Totalitarian political regimes emerge from nowhere already in the middle of their life-span, in the moment when all their institutional and content-related aspects are already fully developed. Second, the theory of totalitarianism

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[13] F. Svátek, *Koncept totalitarismu a historikova skepse. Poznámky o politické a historiografické diskusi* [The concept of totalitarianism and historian's scepticism. Notes on political and historiographic discussion], [in:] K. Jech (ed.), *Stránkami soudobých dějin. Sborník k pětašedesátinám historika Karla Kaplana* [On Contemporary History. Anthology in Commemoration of Karel Kaplan's 65. Birthday], Praha 1993, pp. 29–60.

[14] I. Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship. Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, London 2000, p. 36. Kershaw does not agree with this argument, he just states it as an example.

[15] G. Sartori, *Totalitarianism…*, p. 7.

[16] G. Sartori, *Teoria demokracji…*, pp. 244–245. It is important to note in this respect that both critics and outright deniers of this theory have not come up with an alternative theory but have been working with the traditional one.

[17] During the 1970s and 80s, this was the case of area specialists on Eastern Bloc, especially the Sovietologists. Cf. V. Dvořáková, J. Kunc, *O přechodech k demokracii* [On Transitions to Democracy], Praha 1994, p. 42.

is said to have been devised in order to analyze Hitler's Nazism and Stalin's communism. With the fall of both rulers and demise of their regimes, this theory is no longer current and what is more, it is obsolete. All later usages of this theory have been marked with detachment from reality or its distortion.[18]

Though the first argument might seem logical, it is possible to dispute it. First of all, we cannot associate totalitarianism (a totalitarian political regime) only with Friedrich and Brzezinski's "six points" in a way that most critics of totalitarianism probably do, as they refer only or predominantly to them and thus neglect several other key theoreticians.[19] It is necessary to understand totalitarianism in a more complex manner through works of a greater number of authors. This concept forms one coherent entity despite the many differences among various authors indicated above. Friedrich and Brzezinski are clearly among the founders of the study of totalitarianism, but they are not its sole theoreticians.

If we then look at texts of different authors, we discover that all of them, including Friedrich and Brzezinski, acknowledge the dynamism of totalitarianism and use it in their works (see, for instance, Sartori's concept of routines in

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[18] On the other hand, in some historiographical texts we can come across a considerably loose usage of the term "totalitarianism." In one of the "standard" guides to the history of Eastern Europe during the 20th century, the author Richard J. Crampton uses this expression (naming one of his chapters after it) without even mentioning why and how. R.J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, London and New York 1994. Often in this context it comes to contradictions in terms. For instance, Czech historian Michal Reiman illogically speaks of "internally divertive" totalitarianism that leaves "room for social and political movement." Cf. M. Reiman, *O komunistickém totalitarismu a o tom, co s ním souvisí* [On Communist Totalitarianism and What Is Connected with It], Praha 2000, pp. 47–48, where he speaks of Italian Fascism while Fascist Italy in the interwar period is not classified as totalitarian. Cf. also G. Sartori, *Teoria demokracji…*, p. 242.

[19] Of the more recent Czech works, this appears, for instance, in a text by historian Emil Voráček — who criticized the theory of totalitarianism — in the process he only uses the work of Hannah Arendt and Friedrich and Brzezinski as support from political theoreticians and neglects such authorities in the field as Aron, Linz, Sartori, Gordon Skilling, Wolfgang Merkel and many others. See E. Voráček, *Stalinismus a Sovětský svaz 1927–1939. Historiografie, evoluce výzkumu, problém výkladu fenoménu a jeho interpretační modely* [Stalinism and the Soviet Union 1927–1939. Historiography, evolution of research, difficulty with explaining the phenomena and its interpretational models], [in:] B. Litera (ed.), *Formování stalinského mocenského systému. K problému tzv. sebedestrukce bolševiků 1928–1939* [Forming the Stalinist System of Power. About the Problem of the So-Called Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks 1928–1939], Praha 2003, pp. 24–27. His more recent text from 2005 contains a richer bibliography on the theories of totalitarianism. Nevertheless, even this bibliography is insufficient and all above-mentioned authors are missing. E. Voráček, *Vznik teoretického hodnocení nových mocenských systémů diktatur a některé aspekty geneze jednoho z interpretačních modelů: teorie totalitarismu. K problému komparace nacismu a stalinismu a vývoje interpretačních modelů diktatur ve 20. století* [On establishing theoretical evaluations of new dictatorship systems and some aspects in the genesis of one interpretational model: Theory of totalitarianism. Comparing Nazism, Stalinism and the evolution of models of interpretations of 20th-century dictatorships], [in:] I. Budil (ed.), *Totalitarismus. Interdisciplinární pohled* [Totalitarianism. An Interdisciplinary Perspective], Plzeň 2005, pp. 102–116.

totalitarianism).[20] Dynamism is implicitly present also in the basic concept of totalitarianism as a political regime (see above). If we are to understand totalitarianism as an ideal end point on an axis where democracy occupies the opposite end, then existing political regimes will always move along this axis; if they are moving, they are dynamic not static. Once again, the difference between the ideal notion and real practice becomes relevant. Every major theoretician of totalitarianism accepts that a strictly totalitarian regime is viable in practice only with great difficulties and only for a short period of time (owing to its maximalist demands). Any existing totalitarian political regime is still some distance away from totalitarianism as an ideal. If it starts moving in the opposite direction towards democracy, it transforms itself into authoritarianism.[21] Attempts at internal segmentation are a further proof of plasticity in the understanding of totalitarianism. We can regard these classifications as more or less successful,[22] but their very existence demonstrates that in works by political scientists, there is no mention of motionlessness and immutability connected with the concept.

The second argument, which claims that "the classic theory of totalitarianism […] ceased to exist in 1956,"[23] is again no less than an excessive simplification of the problem. It simplifies two matters: the first has already been mentioned and it is the marginalization of the development that the theory of totalitarianism has undergone since Friedrich and Brzezinski. The second simplification is the association of the concept of totalitarianism with specific historical events. It is true that Friedrich and Brzezinski were inspired mainly by the political regimes of the Soviet Union during Stalinism. However, this does not mean that the death of Stalin and Khrushchev's "liberalization" after 1956 should discredit the entire theory. It is nowhere to be said that Friedrich and Brzezinski's theory can be applied to this regime and no other (not to mention concepts of other, later authors). It is difficult to imagine that all theoreticians of totalitarianism have only recounted the Soviet reality until 1956 and have not been concerned with any other political practice. Except for the Stalinist Soviet Union, there have existed

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[20] G. Sartori, *Teoria demokracji…*, p. 249. In this context it is good to remember that, for instance, one of the most well-known theoreticians of non-democratic regimes, Juan José Linz, is, together with Alfred Stepan, also a renowned theoretician of systemic changes in both directions: from democracy to non-democracy and vice-versa. See J.J. Linz, *Crisis, Breakdown and Reequilibration*, Baltimore and London 1991; J.J. Linz, A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore and London 1996.

[21] It is, of course, possible to ask where the border line is. However, this is a different problem, one that is concerned with defining authoritarianism and establishing differences between a totalitarian and an authoritarian regime.

[22] See S. Balík, M. Kubát, op. cit., pp. 48–51.

[23] J. Vykoukal, B. Litera, M. Tejchman, *Východ. Vznik, vývoj a rozpad sovětského bloku 1944–1989* [The East. The Founding, the Evolution and the Breakdown of the Soviet Block 1944–1989], Praha 2000, p. 11.

different forms of totalitarianism, that is, political regimes that have approached it to a bigger or smaller extent. The allegation that totalitarianism is a category endangered with extinction, which could occur quite soon, as American political scientist Michael G. Roskin and his research team claim,[24] is debatable as Fukuyama's vision of "the end of history" has somewhat not been fulfilled; moreover, this claim is not at all related to the theory of totalitarianism. Eventual decline of totalitarianism does not automatically mean that it cannot return one day. Even if all existing totalitarian regimes disintegrated, the concept of totalitarianism would not cease to exist in the sphere of theory. With regards to this, Giovanni Sartori aptly remarks that this would force us to abandon such terms as feudalism, economic liberalism, or anarchism.[25] Leszek Kołakowski, the world-known Polish expert on Marxism, correctly points out that the fact that an "ideal" totalitarian regime was not established anywhere does not discredit the validity of its theory. Similarly, although there has not been an "ideal" capitalism, we use the term without questioning it.[26]

In short, we cannot regard the concept of totalitarianism as a mere characterization of some specific historical or authentic occurrences.[27] Critics of Friedrich and Brzezinski are correct in pointing to gross schematization of the "six points." However, these are not the absolute sum of the theory of totalitarianism, of which the critics of totalitarianism must be reminded constantly.

3. Authoritarianism

3.1. How to understand authoritarianism

The concept of authoritarianism does not receive as much attention of the critics of theories of non-democratic regimes as totalitarianism does, despite the fact that we can also come to think of considerable terminological difficulties. The concept of authoritarianism is hard to define, as the term is used in various contexts. If we agree that totalitarianism as an abstract ideal is not executable in practice and that any totalitarian political regime is very difficult to sustain (at least in the

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[24] M.G. Roskin et al., *Wprowadzenie do nauk politycznych* [Political Science. An Introduction], Poznań 2001, p. 99.

[25] G. Sartori, *Teoria demokracji…*, p. 251.

[26] L. Kołakowski, *Totalitarianism and the virtue of the lie*, [in:] I. Howe (ed.), *1984 Revisited. Totalitarianism in Our Century*, New York 1983, pp. 122–136.

[27] For example, František Svátek relates his criticism of totalitarianism to a great extent (but not absolutely) to Czechoslovak history after 1948. See F. Svátek, op. cit. Similarly, Ian Kershaw criticizes the conception of totalitarianism regarding German Nazism: "All in all, the value of the totalitarianism concept seems extremely limited, and the disadvantages of its deployment greatly outweigh its possible advantages in attempting to characterize the essential nature of the Nazi Regime." I. Kershaw, op. cit., p. 40.

long run, because of its maximalist demands), then the majority of non-democratic political regimes are much closer to being authoritarian than totalitarian. This is the principal reason for the previously mentioned high degree of variability in the use of the term "authoritarianism," as much in theory as in practice.

With respect to the information presented above, authoritarianism is most frequently defined through its delimitation vis-à-vis democracy (in the sense of Dahl's polyarchy) and vis-à-vis totalitarianism (in the sense of totalitarian political regime). It thus serves as a kind of an interface between the two. Authoritarianism itself is therefore also one of the types of political regimes. Juan José Linz, who developed the definition of authoritarianism in the 1960s, laid the foundation for this approach using the case study of a concrete political regime — Franco's Spain.[28] Linz's concept generated a considerable response from other scholars, both positive and negative; nevertheless, his approach was recognized to such an extent that we can speak of the "pre-Linz" and "post-Linz" eras in the studies of authoritarianism. As Stanislav Balík put it, "works of all other prominent scholars who study non-democratic forms of government take his theory into account."[29]

3.2. Discussing authoritarianism

The concept of authoritarianism is subject to criticism in a similar way as totalitarianism is; however, as has already been mentioned above, this criticism is not as harsh as in the case of totalitarianism. We can encounter several levels of criticism, of which three are probably the most common.[30]

The first problem is the etymology of the word "authoritarianism." The term derives from the word "authority." As illustrated by G. Sartori, this linguistic fact has been a source of terminological ambiguities and mistakes.[31] Authoritarianism and authority are two entirely different things and their mixing is the result of misunderstanding both terms. "Authority" is an old Latin term, which was not conceived pejoratively in the past. It was an entirely positive concept, source of respect for its holders.[32] The situation is different today. The word "authority"

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[28] J.J. Linz, *An authoritarian regime: Spain*, [in:] E. Allard, S. Rokkan (eds), *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology*, New York 1970, pp. 251–275. The original edition is from 1964. Classical definition of authoritarianism can be found in Linz's more recent edition published in 2000. See J.J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes…*, pp. 159–171.

[29] S. Balík, *Totalitární a autoritativní režimy* [Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes], [in:] V. Hloušek, L. Kopeček (eds), *Demokracie. Teorie, modely osobnosti, podmínky, nepřátelé a perspektivy demokracie* [Democracy. Theories, Models, Personas, Conditions, Enemies, and Perspectives of Democracy], Brno 2003, p. 268.

[30] We ignore criticism directed at the issue of the "shabbines" of the word, for which the same applies as in the case of totalitarianism.

[31] G. Sartori, *Teoria demokracji…*, pp. 232–238.

[32] With regards to historical, philosophical and political conceptions of authority see C.J. Friedrich, *Tradition and Authority*, London and Basingstoke 1972, pp. 45–109.

appears in a negative sense as an abuse of power. In this respect, Sartori notes that if we cannot shield the term "authority" from earning a pejorative connotation, at least we should retain the independence of the term "authoritarianism" and avoid its devaluation.[33] Why is this important? It is not merely a linguistic problem, but substantive.

Originally, the word "authority" was not defined (with exceptions) in categories of power (force). According to Sartori, this remained so until Max Weber incorrectly translated the German word *Herrschaft* into English.[34] This has led to semantic confusion in concepts such as authority, power, dominion (political power), influence, force, coercion. The authority is neither power (force) nor domain (political power, governance), but influence based on prestige and esteem. Authority is a reflection of the significance (in a positive sense), it is a moral influence. Authority does not take our freedom. Authority is also associated with legitimacy, in harmony with leadership, which has received spontaneous support. Dominion and authority are symmetrical, dominion without authority is either oppressive or powerless. The authority is essential to democracy and the crisis of authority amounts to a crisis of democracy. For this reason, we cannot equate authority with authoritarianism. If we do so, it is either an abuse of authority or a semantic error. Freedom to accept authority, authority recognizes freedom. Freedom that does not recognize authority is not freedom and authority that does not respect freedom is authoritarianism. Democracy needs authority. If it has authority, it does not turn to authoritarianism. The more authoritarian the system, the less authority it rests on.[35]

The second criticism of the concept of authoritarianism appears primarily in the countries of Central-Eastern Europe, which have recent experiences with a non-democratic political regime. It is possible to encounter arguments that authoritarianism is too "soft" a label for the toppled regimes, which inadequately highlights the "evil" present in these political regimes. Therefore, it is better to label these as "totalitarian," which better serves to evoke their "anti-democratic tendencies" and "despotism." Such line of reasoning is a misunderstanding which is probably a consequence of the dissimilarity of approaches to the problem being examined.[36] Labeling the political regimes of some East European countries prior to 1989 as authoritarian rather than totalitarian cannot be considered apologetic (see below). In this case, political science, true to an empirical-analytical approach, does not assess these concepts normatively using moral categories of

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[33] G. Sartori, *Teoria demokracji…*, p. 232.

[34] Ibid., p. 233.

[35] Ibid., pp. 237–238.

[36] B. Hoenig, *Možnosti a meze jednoho paradigmatu. Teorie totalitarismu aplikovaná na státní socialismus středovýchodní Evropy* [Potentialities and limits of one paradigm. The theory of totalitarianism applied to the state socialism in Central-Eastern Europe], "Soudobé dějiny" 16, 2009, No. 4, p. 646.

"good" or "evil." Authoritarianism is not normatively better than totalitarianism. In short, the political regimes in question correspond empirically with the features of authoritarianism more than with those of totalitarianism. It is simply a "cold" analytical observation, nothing more (this claim is of course open to criticism, but for this criticism to be meaningful, it has to come from the same methodological positions).

The third critique of the term "authoritarianism" is in its essence the same as a respective critique of the theory of totalitarianism; however, it has been even less clarified. It has been concerned with the putative mentionlessness of this concept, which supposedly does not allow for the inclusion of special and historical evolution of authoritarian political regimes in relevant analyses. According to this reasoning, it is not possible to create one model of authoritarianism that would be applicable to the large number of existing authoritarian regimes that furthermore keep transforming themselves over time.

First of all, it is important to mention that the relatively broad definition of authoritarianism lists its fundamental features, which remain constant regardless of variations in specific authoritarian regimes. Jiří Chalupa, a Czech historian researching primarily Franco's Spain, conveyed this precisely, while also entering into a contradiction himself, when he asserted that "as a sociologist accustomed to studying static social models, Linz was unable to subject Francoism to a truly historical analysis that would pay sufficient attention to specific stages in the evolution of the regime." A few lines later he went on to add that "during the forty years of its long existence, the [Franco's] regime proved able to adapt in a relatively flexible manner to the changing reality that surrounded it, but this fact did not have any significant effect on any of its fundaments."[37]

Every social science theory is a qualified generalization (or perhaps even simplification) of reality to a certain degree. Without going into any kind of complicated methodological polemic, the question remains whether this type of criticism is not criticism at all costs rooted in the kind of scepticism with which some historians regard political science and sociology in general. Nevertheless, in the case of Juan J. Linz such criticism is especially unjust. I would like to stress that Linz is the author of the typology of non-democratic regimes, which is very extensive,[38] it is based on his thorough knowledge of European and non-European history, and it possibly has still not been surpassed.[39] This typology is a sufficient proof of the fact that Linz's theory does not suffer from any kind of excessive

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[37] J. Chalupa, *Jak umírá diktatura. Pád Frankova režimu ve Španělsku* [How Dictatorship Dies. The Fall of Franco's Regime in Spain], Olomouc 1997, pp. 56–57.

[38] This typology is so well-known that it is not necessary to reproduce it here. It is mentioned in every political science textbook that covers the problems of non-democratic politics and government. Cf. J.J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes…*, pp. 171–257.

[39] V. Dvořáková, J. Kunc, op. cit., p. 50.

reliance on static models and takes the existing variability of authoritarianism into account and provides the understanding of it to the maximum degree.

4. Illusory totalitarianism

The thesis presented above can be demonstrated by examining the relationship between the theory of totalitarianism and political practice in post-war Eastern Europe. Political scientists, unlike politicians, publicists and most of the people who lived through those times, have reservations against ranking post-war Eastern Europe among totalitarian regimes; they are rather inclined to classify these political regimes as different types of non-democratic regimes. In fact, some political scientists do not find sufficient evidence to characterize the regimes of Eastern Europe as totalitarian even in the period of the late 1940s and early 50s. They prefer to label these regimes "quasi-authoritarian" or use similar expressions such as: pseudo, illusory, defective, "drifting" towards totalitarianism, etc.[40] As has already been mentioned, Juan J. Linz offers what is perhaps the most developed and the most comprehensive classification of non-democratic political regimes that existed in post-war Eastern Europe.[41] The two most important concepts in this respect are pre-totalitarianism and post-totalitarianism.

4.1. Various forms of illusory totalitarianism

First, I will examine pre-totalitarianism. A typical pre-totalitarian situation is the effort of one party to dominate a country and its society through its mass organizations. This party is not the only one in the system, but other parties are more or less subordinate to it; if they attempt to pursue a politically independent course away from the main party, they are intimidated in a variety of ways. Political "pluralism" is thus to a large extent only formal, though not completely.[42] Similarly, the constitutional character of the regime is more and more illusory as the party with totalitarian ambitions strives to merge its cadres with the state

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[40] Cf., among others, G. Skilling, *Leadership and group conflict in Czechoslovakia*, [in:] B.R. Farell (ed.), *Political Leadership in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, Chicago 1970, pp. 222–225; J. Rupnik, *Totalitarianism revisited*, [in:] J. Keane (ed.), *Civil Society and the State*, London and New York 1980, pp. 271–275.

[41] J.J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*…, pp. 240–261.

[42] The label "pluralism" is used by Juan Linz in his definition of authoritarianism. It is not appropriate, because as demonstrated by Sartori, there is a fundamental difference between pluralism and plurality (in the sense of variety). Pluralism does not mean mere "existence in greater numbers"; it is a value encompassing tolerance and political competition. G. Sartori, *Pluralismus, multikulturalismus a přistěhovalci. Esej o multietnické společnosti*. [Pluralism, Multiculturalism and Foreigners: An Essay on Multiethnic Society], Praha 2005, pp. 13–37.

apparatus, primarily in key political and economic areas as well as in the armed forces. This enables the party to penetrate the state and wield influence over society. Pre-totalitarianism is a dynamic type of political regime that aims at achieving full-fledged totalitarianism; this goal might not always be within reach. If the party fails to accomplish this objective, a different type of non-democratic political regime emerges.[43]

This concept is followed by post-totalitarianism. In a post-totalitarian regime, there is — in general — a far greater degree of social "pluralism" than in totalitarian regimes. In late post-totalitarianism there even exists a "parallel" or "alternative" culture. Unlike in authoritarian regimes, however, there are no features of political "pluralism"; one single party has the role of the community's leading political power. From both previously described types of non-democratic regimes (i.e. totalitarianism and authoritarianism), post-totalitarianism also differs in the type of leadership — the leaders (invariably the heads of revolutionary parties or movements) tend to be more bureaucratic-minded and "state technocratic" rather than charismatic. A polished governing ideology still functions as a "sacred book;" however, the leaders regard it more and more as mere utopia. The society tolerates it, but does not believe in it. Social life keeps being dominated by "mobilization vehicles" created by the regime, but they have long lost their erstwhile high intensity of effort. Participation in rituals is still obligatory for everyone, but any signs of enthusiasm are also gone.[44]

Juan Linz took over from Gordon Skilling the typology of the communist regime, which is mainly based on the criterion of the degree of autonomy of the political groups within the regime. He recognized five types of communist regimes: 1) quasi-totalitarian state, 2) consultative authoritarianism, 3) semi-pluralistic authoritarianism, 4) democratizing and pluralistic authoritarianism and 5) anarchic authoritarianism.[45]

The most interesting concept is the quasi-totalitarian state, because it evokes the above situation. The term "quasi-totalitarian" regime was used by Gordon Skilling, a Canadian expert on the communist Czechoslovakia, who understood it as a regime in which various political groups are illegitimate and are therefore strongly restricted in their activities. In some cases, these political groups disposed of state power, in other infiltrated and weakened it. If institutionalized groups, such as trade unions, exist, they are controlled by the government and

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[43] For more see J.J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*…, pp. 240–245. Simply put, it is a process of accumulating power by the communists in Central and Eastern Europe between 1944 and 1948, which is perhaps better known as "Sovietization," a term preferred by historians. See M. Tejchman (ed.), *Sovětizace východní Evropy. Země střední a jihovýchodní Evropy v letech 1944–1948* [Sovietization of Eastern Europe. Countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe in 1944–1948], Praha 1995.

[44] For a more elaborate look at this see J.J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*…, pp. 245–261; J.J. Linz, A. Stepan, op. cit., pp. 42–51.

[45] J.J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*…, pp. 253–257.

cannot express their own interests. The official groups, such as the ruling political party, are in a privileged position because of the power they possess. They control intellectuals who are deprived of all influence. Even the official groups are relatively weak and their leadership is used as a power tool.[46]

When I talk about these concepts in the context of our social environment, then it is most appropriate to recall that one of the authors of the concept of post-totalitarian regime is also Václav Havel with his famous essay *Moc bezmocných* [The Power of the Powerless] from 1978. According to Havel, Czechoslovak regime was totalitarian, but it was "totalitarian in a way fundamentally different from classical dictatorships, different from totalitarianism as we usually understand it."[47] Havel was probably not thinking in the context of the above-mentioned theories of undemocratic regimes — at least he does not mention it anywhere — on the contrary, he states that a better term simply did not occur to him and is therefore rather intuitive in his writings, but his thoughts are fully in line with our discussion.[48]

4.2. Discussing illusory totalitarianism and its applicability

How are these concepts applied in practice? Juan Linz classifies countries of Eastern Europe shortly after the Second World War as pre-totalitarian regimes. According to him, post-totalitarianism was applied in different variants (see below). Generally speaking, this concept applies to political regimes in Eastern Europe from the mid-1950s to the end of their existence during the late 1980s. Linz classifies the era of the late 1940s and early 50s as quasi-totalitarian (as does Skilling), yet in this typology quasi-totalitarianism is part of a more universal category of post-totalitarianism, as was demonstrated several lines above. This time period cannot thus be considered as full-fledged totalitarianism. The label quasi-totalitarianism indicates its close connection with totalitarianism, but does not reach the extent of the latter. Such conclusion is adequate on the more general level of analysis. In any case, during later decades, we can clearly observe that political regimes in Eastern Europe shifted along the imaginary democracy–totalitarianism axis towards the centre, to the area generally regarded as authoritarianism. It is, of course, necessary to take into account the differences between individual countries, as well as the differences in domestic development over time.

Linz's classification, however, contains certain inadequacies, of both systematic and substantive nature. It is systematically problematic to classify quasi-totalitarianism as a subset of post-totalitarianism, especially if post-totalitarianism is an independent category of non-democratic regimes. The adverb "quasi"

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[46] G.H. Skilling, op. cit., pp. 222–223.
[47] V. Havel, *Moc bezmocných* [The Power of the Powerless], Praha 1990, p. 8.
[48] Ibid.

implies an illusory character of approximation. Quasi-totalitarianism is thus approximate or illusory totalitarianism and as such it should rather be categorized as a subset of totalitarian political regimes, not of post-totalitarian ones. The latter term linguistically implies conditions that exist in a period following totalitarianism ("post" meaning succession).

The terminological and substantive problems inherent in such classification are even more important. Juan Linz claims that post-totalitarianism is applicable to Eastern Europe from the mid-1950s to the fall of communism at the end of the 1980s. Yet, if we start from the assumption that during the era of around the late 1940s to mid-1950s Eastern Europe was not totalitarian but quasi-totalitarian (with some exceptions), as the objectives of full-fledged totalitarianism were not achieved, we then cannot label the eras that followed as post-totalitarianism. It is not possible to use a label post-"x" when the "x" period did not happen at all, or if it happened, then in some defective or considerably distorted form. I agree with Linz's intention to define post-totalitarianism as flawed totalitarianism, as a system that approaches totalitarianism, but for some reasons cannot reach it, and I also agree with his application of this concept to the communist Eastern Europe. I cannot, however, agree with the word he uses for this category.[49] This is not a mere quibble because if we want to avoid misunderstandings, concepts must be precisely defined; they must clarify and not confuse.

What word can thus be used for Linz's concept of post-totalitarianism? In this case it is not necessary to devise any sophisticated new terms; it is better to return to Skilling's concept of quasi-totalitarianism which is appropriate in that it generally extends to the entire existence of communist rule in Eastern Europe.[50] Quasi-totalitarianism nicely captures the nature of those regimes which want to be totalitarian, but for some reason do not make it, or simply do not have enough forces to maintain their totalitarian nature, and thus they back down and, therefore, are satisfied with a softer substitute. At the same time I feel that this is a very different type of non-democratic regime than the non-communist authoritarianism. Linz and Stepan therefore rightly removed post-totalitarianism (in approach quasi-totalitarianism) from the typology of authoritarianism.[51] It is better to consider this type as a variant of the totalitarian regime or as a separate category

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[49] It is different in the case of pre-totalitarianism as pre-totalitarian regimes strove vehemently to become totalitarian and, from their perspective, their efforts either ended "well" (totalitarianism was achieved) or "poorly" (totalitarianism was not achieved). Therefore, the name pre-totalitarianism ("pre" meaning before) is terminologically appropriate even if the regime does not become totalitarian in the end. While the "post" in post-totalitarianism is problematic as there never really was any totalitarianism, the "pre" in pre-totalitarianism is appropriate as the regime does not know that it may never become totalitarian; it wants to achieve this end and does everything in its power to ensure it.

[50] On a personal note, I like Skilling's term, less so its definition. In this respect, I consider Linz's conception better but I have reservations to its title.

[51] J.J. Linz, A. Stepan, op. cit., pp. 42–51.

(the second option is better), but not as a variant of authoritarianism, as the communist regimes of Eastern Europe first just wanted to be totalitarian, and second, as already indicated, their political regimes were mostly closer to totalitarianism than authoritarianism (in the classical sense of Linz). This has also been pointed out by the Czech political scientist Miroslav Novák, who using the example of Czechoslovakia shows that the country was much closer to the totalitarian rather than authoritarian regime in the 1970s and 80s (compared with, e.g. Poland or Hungary of the same period).[52]

4.3. Eastern Europe 1944–1989 — what regime?

As a label for political regimes of communist countries in Eastern Europe, quasi-totalitarianism is acceptable but indeed very broad. Furthermore, not every state in the region belongs to this category. Two questions thus arise: to what category each state actually belongs and how to further divide this general concept. Several scholars of non-democratic political regimes have dealt with these two questions using different terminology.

Concerning the first question; if we are to take Linz's classification of non-democratic regimes as the basis for our analysis (however, with reservations described above), it is possible to classify various communist states of Eastern Europe as belonging to the several main categories: totalitarian regimes, quasi-totalitarian regimes, authoritarian regimes, and sultanistic regimes.[53] A totalitarian regime corresponds with the systemic concept of totalitarianism. The Soviet Union up to Stalin's death and Albania belong to this category.[54] A quasi-totalitarian political regime corresponds with Linz's category of post-totalitarianism (see above). This category contains most countries and includes Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, East Germany, Hungary until the 1950s, Poland until the 1950s, Romania

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[52] M. Novák, *Mezi demokracií a totalitarismem. Aronova politická sociologie industriálních společností 20. století* [Between Democracy and Totalitarianism: Aron's Political Sociology of Industrial Societies in the 20th Century], Brno 2007, p. 119.

[53] According to Linz, in a sultanistic regime, the "sultan's" power is limited neither in scope nor extent — no group or individual is free from the execution of his power. There is no rule of law, social life is not very institutionalized and private and public sectors are profoundly intertwined. The regime manipulates symbols, glorifying the leader to an extreme degree. It is built upon despotic personification, not an ideology or specific mentality. Sometimes it uses basic manipulative ceremonial-type mobilization without stable organizational structures. Concerning leadership, we usually encounter highly personalized and strongly dynastic tendencies. Cf. J.J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes…*, pp. 151–155.

[54] In his typology of non-democratic regimes, Wolfgang Merkel properly categorized Albania (especially after 1965) among "communist totalitarian regimes" (in the category of the so-called *Führerdiktatur*). He also places Stalin's Soviet Union of 1929–1953 (not Lenin's era) here. Cf. W. Merkel, *Systemtransformation. Eine Einführung in die Theorie und Empirie der Transformationsforschung*, Opladen 1999, pp. 34–36.

until Ceauşescu, Soviet Union after Stalin, and Yugoslavia until the 1950s. It is appropriate to consider Poland after the 1950s, Yugoslavia after the 1950s, and perhaps Hungary after the 1950s as authoritarian political regimes in the sense of Linz's basic classification (Hungary oscillates between quasi-totalitarianism and authoritarianism). Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan regard Poland as such a special case among the group of communist countries that they also labeled it authoritarian and not post-totalitarian (quasi-totalitarian according to my concept).[55] It is a correct, albeit somewhat simplified position. This does not mean that Poland was "only" authoritarian until 1956. In opposition to my proposed classification, Juan Linz regards Yugoslavia as a type of post-totalitarianism.[56] I believe that it is appropriate to regard Yugoslavia after the 1950s, with its specific "self-management socialism," as an authoritarian rather than quasi-totalitarian (in Linz's terminology post-totalitarian) regime.[57] The last category is the sultanistic regime, a special type of a non-democratic political regime. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan claim that Ceauşescu's Romania is one of the examples of sultanism. This may be somewhat controversial, but in my opinion it is generally acceptable, especially if we want to emphasise the profoundly personalized nature of government embodied by the "Carpatian Genius" or "polyvalent genius"[58] and his family (mainly his wife Elena).

Such classification can, of course, be used only as a reference point, as it does not take into account changes to the relevant political regimes over time. It is clear, for instance, that by the late 1960s Czechoslovakia had moved far away from quasi-totalitarianism. There are many similar cases of such shifts. However, the task of this typology is not to convey the ultimate labels for the political regimes of Eastern Europe; it should rather serve as a springboard for further deliberation.

This brings us to the second question, which concerns further segmentation of the universal concepts mentioned above in the light of constantly changing political reality. In this field we can encounter several typologies that are more or less similar and well developed.[59] These typologies stem from a combination of synchronic and diachronic comparative methods and attempts to assess the situation in Eastern Europe comprehensibly. The question remains whether the relevant reality was homogeneous enough to allow for such comprehensive

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[55] J.J. Linz, A. Stepan, op. cit., pp. 51–52.

[56] J.J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*…, p. 255.

[57] L. Cabada, *Byla Titova Jugoslávie totalitním státem?* [Was Tito's Yugoslavia a totalitarian state?], [in:] I.T. Budil (ed.), *Totalitarismus. Interdisciplinární pohled* [Totalitarianism. An Interdisciplinary Perspective], Plzeň 2005, pp. 46–51.

[58] M. Tejchman, *Nicolae Ceauşescu. Život a smrt jednoho diktátora* [Nicolae Ceauşescu. Life and Death of One Dictator], Praha 2004, p. 110.

[59] Cf., among others, H. Kitchelt, *Formation of party cleavages in post-communist democracies. Theoretical propositions*, "Party Politics" 1, 1995, No. 4, pp. 447–472; J.J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*…; J.J. Linz, A. Stepan, op. cit.; G.H. Skilling, op. cit.; W. Merkel, op. cit.

Table 1. Illustrative classification of Eastern Europe, 1944–1989

Totalitarian regime	Quasi-totalitarian regime*	Authoritarian regime (Linz)	Sultanistic regime (Linz)
Albania	Bulgaria	Hungary after the 1950s	Ceaușescu's Romania
Stalin's USSR	Czechoslovakia	Poland after the 1950s	—
—	East Germany	Yugoslavia after the 1950s	—
—	Hungary until the 1950s	—	—
—	Poland until the 1950s	—	—
—	Romania until Ceaușescu	—	—
—	USSR after Stalin	—	—
—	Yugoslavia until the 1950s	—	—

Source: author's elaboration.
* Corresponds with Linz's post-totalitarianism

typologies. Attempts at the internal classification of the above-mentioned types of non-democratic regimes which have the ambition to include all communist Eastern Europe appear to be problematic. In this case the somewhat banal assertion that the deeper we try to analyze specific features of these political regimes, the more difficult any comparative generalization becomes, holds true. As has already been stated, the systemic foundations on which individual types of non-democratic political regimes are constructed do not change, regardless of where they occur. We can unambiguously affirm that none of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe were democracies. Similarly, we can systematically demonstrate why the states in question are included in their respective columns in Table 1. However, it is very difficult for us to develop subsets of, for instance, quasi-to-talitarianism (second column in the table) or authoritarianism (third column in the table) that would be applicable for all the relevant states; such classification must be based also on internal development in each country, which of course differs considerably. The greater the details of the classification, the greater these differences become. As a consequence, it is more appropriate in this case to conduct a thorough analysis of case studies combining political theory and thorough historiographical research. Such an approach makes significant contribution not

only to historiography but also to political science as such in-depth case studies distinctly demonstrate the nature of the political regimes in question. In a sense, such approach brings us back to the question of determining the substance of the relevant regime, because an in-depth case study explains and solidifies (or weakens) arguments as to why the given regime is totalitarian, quasi-totalitarian, authoritarian, or perhaps some other category altogether.

5. Conclusion

Finally, I would like to introduce three basic theses resulting from the considerations presented above.

1) Concepts of non-democratic regimes are suitable for the study of Eastern Europe from 1944 to 1989, provided a careful definition of terms and consistent distinction between them is ensured.

2) Concepts of non-democratic regimes are suitable for the study of Eastern Europe from 1944 to 1989, provided a distinction between the general orientation characteristic of the region and detailed analysis of case studies is ensured.

3) Concepts of non-democratic regimes are suitable for the study of Eastern Europe from 1944 to 1989, provided an awareness of the legitimacy of the existence of different interpretations of phenomena to be investigated is ensured.

ON THE CLASSICAL THEORIES OF NON-DEMOCRATIC REGIMES AND THEIR
USEFULNESS IN EXAMINING EASTERN EUROPE 1944–1989

Summary

This study examines the classical theories of non-democratic regimes from the perspective of their possible qualifications as well as practical applicability. In the first part of this paper, the two main conceptions — totalitarianism and authoritarianism — as well as their modifications are investigated. The purpose of this investigation is to clear up some of the misconceptions associated with these terms. In the following part of the paper, the link between these theories and political practice is examined, both from a theoretical and practical point of view. In this respect, the author turns in his analysis predominantly to postwar communist Eastern Europe. The main aim of this paper is to back up these classic conceptions of political science, show their theoretical meaning and usefulness in practice.

Keywords: totalitarianism, authoritarianism, quasi-totalitarianism, Eastern Europe 1944–1989.