

Forum: General Assembly 3 (SOCHUM II)

Issue: Addressing the Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Effects of Authoritarianism (SDG 16)

Chair:

Introduction

The authoritarian control has continued from the beginning of time until modern society. There were many extreme cases in the last century with Hitler's fascist Germany party and Stalin's Soviet Union being the most brutal. While there is no distinct time that authoritarianism was established, it came to be a form of governance that was adopted for its certain effects that include efficiency and national security. Having a single ruling party or leader also ensures the maximum use of resources. However, this idea of authoritarianism can be related back to one person: Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes believed that the only correct form of government was in an absolute monarch. This belief stemmed from the tenet of his natural philosophy that human beings are, at the core, selfish creatures required to be ruled by a military junta. In the past, authoritarian governance has seen effects that range from aggressive war to genocide. Many of the authoritarian rulers instilled fear in order to maintain control and establish obedience. In the modern world, authoritarianism can be viewed as the principle of blind submission to authority, as opposed to the individual rights of freedom in thought and action. On a negative outlook, authoritarian sought to establish monopolistic control over different aspects of political life with a party system organized around a strongman. These traditional authoritarian states were common in that they wanted control over the political sphere through ways such as using censorship to control the state-media, or even with pervasive force, which was especially prevalent in military dictatorships. However, authoritarianism still had its benefits, which is why this form of governance has been seen adopted by numerous different states. Nowadays, modern authoritarianism have some defining features, some including the oligarchic control over the national economy, state-controlled information on certain political subjects and sectors of the

media, the suppression of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are focused on the notion of human rights, and etc.

Definition of Key Terms

Authoritarianism

“of, relating to, or favoring a concentration of power in a leader or an elite not constitutionally responsible to the people” as defined by Merriam Webster.

Social

“of, or relating to, human society, the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society” as defined by Merriam Webster.

Social Effects

“the effect that something has on the wellbeing of a community” as defined by Merriam Webster.

Cultural

“of or relating to culture or culturing” as defined by Merriam Webster.

Culture

“the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group, or, the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization” as defined by Merriam Webster.

Cultural Effects

“of or relating to a particular group of people and their habits, beliefs, traditions, etc.” as defined by Merriam Webster.

Humanitarian

“a person promoting human welfare and social reform” as defined by Merriam Webster.

Dictatorship

“a form of government in which absolute power is concentrated in a dictator or a small clique” as defined by Merriam Webster.

Repression

“the act of using force to control someone or something” Many authoritarian regimes are described as repressive in its nature as autocratic rulers use coercion as a strategy to restrict the majority from interfering with the political aspects of society in order to maintain control” as defined by Merriam Webster.

Background Information

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is the implementation of obedience to rule at the expense of personal freedom. Some current effects of authoritarianism on countries including the infringement on individual freedom and rights, state controlled media, violation of human rights. In order to fully understand authoritarianism, we must first understand the notion of democracy and human rights, the opposite of authoritarianism. In the past,

Democracy

Democracy can be perceived as a set of ideas and principles about freedom, in which it consists of a set of procedures that have been molded through a long history. In short, democracy essentially is the institutionalization of freedom in a country.

Human Rights

Human rights are rights inborn to every person, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or other status. Some basic human rights include

the freedom from slavery and torture, the right to life and liberty, freedom of opinion and expression and the right to work and education.

Key people in the development of authoritarianism

These people contributed to the making and popularizing the notion of authoritarianism. They were extremely vital to the step by step development of authoritarianism rule through advocating their ideas through mediums such as books and speeches.

Heinrich von Treitschke

Heinrich von Treitschke was a German historian and political writer who advocated for the idea of power politics. As a son of a Saxon general, he studied at Bonn and Leipzig, however as a public figure, his ability was handicapped by his total deafness. Treitschke was a defender of authoritarian power politics and a vociferous envoy of the unity of Germany through Prussian might. Treitschke believed that the state ought to be the focal point of the lives of its residents and that it should be going by authoritarian rulers without the check of a parliament.

Robert Michels

Robert Michels was born into a wealthy bourgeois family as a German Italian political economist that was famous for his creation and formulation of the “iron law of oligarchy”. He states that the different political parties and its membership organizations inevitably are going bend toward an oligarchy, authoritarianism, and bureaucracy. Furthermore in his work *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie (Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy)*, he set forth his ideals on the inevitable development of oligarchies even in states that are committed to democratic ideals. He reasoned this with that these states are in need of quick decision making and a full-time activity running the state.

Juan Linz

Juan Linz was born in Germany and was a Spanish American political scientist who was known for his studies of democratic and authoritarian governments. His

analysis of authoritarianism and democratic transitions increased attention regarding the potential frailty of post totalitarian and post authoritarian democratic systems.

Guillermo O'Donnell

Guillermo O'Donnell was an Argentine political scientist and was mostly known for writing various books on Latin American authoritarianism and democracy and the transition of one to the other. Furthermore, his analysis of "bureaucratic authoritarianism" which is a specific type of military rule found in Latin American contributed greatly to the development and understanding of comparative politics.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

China

China's political system can be described as authoritarian as it enables the president to exercise power over the government. China is a model of an authoritarian regime that exercises control over several spheres of society, but not all. Under China's government, it has seen progress in economics. However, China has gradually become a more repressive authoritarian regime under the Chinese Communist Party (CPP). The CPP controls the institutions of the government. Until recently, the conventional wisdom was that China's authoritarian system would gradually disperse and relax since the middle class expanded and that the country has become integrated into the global diplomatic and economic systems. However, the leadership of China allowed the expansion of the citizens' freedom to travel, make money, and access information that did not touch on any sensitive subjects (aka media that is not censored). The social effects of this are that China's internet platform and its peoples' personal information are under government scrutiny and monitoring, which allows the government to use digital governance to centralize power. However, even after this transformation, China has resolutely refused to give up control of the political sphere. As a result, the state has become more aggressive on its suppression of political dissent and information that may be a threat to the Communist Party narrative. The regime's narrative has created a lot more animosity towards democracy and has notably opposed the western liberal ideals but instead championed authoritarian ideals. Its propaganda asserts the efficiency of the one-party system and belittles

the notion of democracy. The focus of its repressive apparatus has expanded from a narrow segment of political figures to encompass a larger amount of target groups such as human rights lawyers, women's rights advocates, and etc. This discrimination towards certain ethnicities or groups that do not conform to the mainstream beliefs of Chinese culture under the government are put under heaving punishments. One example of this would be the Uighurs, as they are placed in reeducation camps facing persecution in Xinjiang, China and is currently facing oppression and persecution.

Russia

Russia is an authoritarian regime, in the constitution, the president is named head of the state exercising all the executive power. Russia's centralization of power has resulted in the tightening of control over state media and the spread of disinformation. The regime established the capture of the media through the use of state enterprises and the adoption of laws that are designed to dissect the civil society. Some examples of this would be shutting down independent media outlets and according to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), 1127 journalists were killed in Russia since 2000. Additionally, there is a lack of social freedoms as domestic violence is a pertinent issue in Russia. Putin signed a law that decriminalized acts of domestic violence that do not result in permanent physical harm in 2017. Furthermore, they use the judiciary as an instrument of political harassment and most essentially, the development of modern propaganda and disinformation. Moreover, they also launched a campaign that is against liberal values and have relentlessly export authoritarian ideas and techniques to both neighboring Eurasian countries and other places in the world. Through authoritarian means, they have developed a network of cooperation that has proven effective at the United Nations and regional bodies.

DPRK (North Korea)

DPRK has been ruled by the Kim family since 1948 when Kim Jung-Il assumed power as the Supreme Leader and the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK). His government exercises almost total political control by restricting civil and political liberties, and prohibiting organized political opposition, independent media, civil society, and trade unions In July 1994, Kim Il Sung, the founding leader of North Korea's died, this led to a period of famine that lasted 3 years due to a power vacuum that killed hundreds of thousands of citizens. Fast forwarding in time, with the coming to power at the end of 2011, the newly elected Kim Jong Un began to purge leaders

from his father's circle that had been hand picked to guide the transition of him becoming leader. This process boiled down to a brutal climax with the arrest and execution of Jang Song Taek, the husband of Kim's paternal aunt. Under his reign, he is notorious for human rights violations under the Kim family reign including assassinations and public torture. The civilians of DPRK face arbitrary arrests, detainment, and prosecution from the government officials. As of now, the current humanitarian situation in DPRK according to a UN news report, 10.9 million people (which is more than 43% of the population) are affected by hunger/starvation. The majority of DPRK's resources are focused towards advancing their military technologies.

Venezuela

Venezuela has a past of authoritarian action and governance under President Hugo Chavez. Under the rule of President Chavez, he committed many authoritarian actions. Some examples of his actions includes the seizing the Supreme Court and withdrawing from the American Convention on Human Rights. Moreover, President Chavez also concentrated power and granted the government the ability to sanction and censor private media and prosecute people that worked against his political agenda. Currently, Venezuela still is under President Nicolas Maduro's authoritarian rule and is currently suffering from hyperinflation and severe food and medical equipment shortages. President Maduro has blockaded humanitarian aid from the U.S., unwilling to receive aid as he does not officially recognize the situation in Venezuela as a crisis.

Saudi Arabia

The government of Saudi Arabia under a monarchy rule and is led by King Salman, who acceded to the throne in 2015, under his rule, no political parties or national elections are permitted. Saudi Arabia has features of an authoritarian regime under its economy driven by its oil production.

Vietnam

Vietnam is considered an authoritarian regime due to various actions taken by the nation. One instance of this would be the 2019 Cybersecurity law to boost online censorship in order to clear out information and media that is presented as harmful to the nation. The Vietnam Communist Party (VCP) as stated in Article 2 of the national law, the media is owned and controlled by the VCP, therefore, there is no chance of any independent media, thus all

information going out into the public is heavily monitored and modified to suit the country's interests.

Chad

Chad is ruled by an authoritarian ruler Idriss Deby, who rose to power in 1990 as part of a coup. In 2005, an amendment to Chad's constitution removed term limits, allowing the president to remain in power and exercise authority.

Syria

Syria is a prime example of authoritarianism, with the al-Assad family ruling since 1971 when Hafez al-Assad first came to power. The authoritarian rule is supported by the military. Currently, Syria is under Bashar al-Assad's absolutist rule. There is currently a humanitarian crisis in Syria: deadly civil war abruptly in March 2011 when protestors wanted to put an end to the Assad's authoritarian regime, the Syrian government responded by using violence/force to combat the protestors. There were also the extensive use of military, police, and paramilitary forces, many civilians were harmed and killed by Syrian militia (Shabeeha). The social effects of al-Assad's family ruling includes the use of censorship/surveillance and violence against suspected opponents of the regime.

Yemen

For a long period of time, Yemen was ruled under the authoritarian President Ali Abdullah Saleh. President Saleh's 33 years in office ended in 2012 after he faced numerous protests from the citizens of the country. Some humanitarian effects under his rule includes government security attacks on peaceful protestors. According to HRW, provocateurs loyal to President Saleh & security forces started attacks on the peaceful protestors which involved police arresting activists. Other instances of authoritarian rule includes war crimes during his civil wars against the Houthis from 2004-2010, and in 2007, Saleh's forces crushed a separatist movement in the South with violence.

Alliance for Securing Democracy (ASD)

ASD Blueprint for Countering Authoritarian Interference in Democracies was a plan that was used to counter the Kremlin's operation to undermine democracy by exploiting several vulnerabilities in American government and society.

Timeline of Events

Since there is no exact timeframe of how authoritarianism rose up in popularity in the world, we will be looking at specific examples of how authoritarianism became popular in different countries.

Russia

Date	Description of event
1905	Bloody Sunday, the massacre of unarmed in St. Petersburg, this increased the support for communism. October Manifesto was a document of demands and grievances that Czar Nicholas II had no desire of accommodating.
1906	1st Russian Constitution which established a bicameral legislature.
1917	Signs of authoritarianism are starting to show up after the establishment of Cheka, which functioned to eliminate the “enemies of the people”.
April 3rd, 1922	Joseph Stalin assumed power as the General Secretary of the Communist Party, demonstrating signs of authoritarianism in Stalin’s regime.
1928	The Soviet Union begins its their first 5 year plan.
1930	Stalin’s Great Purges killed a massive amount of people. This purge asserted Stalin’s authoritarianism approach to communism.

China

Date	Description of event
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1927	The Chinese Civil War began between the KMT and the Communist.
	The Shanghai massacre or the White Terror (similar to Bloody Sunday) was a mass killing of Chinese communists.
1949	Mao Zedong forms the People's Republic of China (PRC) after the defeat of the KMT, which focused on the collective leadership, this therefore formed the basis for Mao to have all the leadership, which he then transferred this power to become an authoritarian leader.
1958	Mao created the Mao's Anti-Rightist Campaign in which he took down any political opponent. This demonstrated authoritarian tendencies as Mao is willing to persecute anyone that challenged him. Through 1958-1962, Mao launched the Great Leap Forward, a program where Mao wanted to rapidly industrialize China, however these plans failed. His dedication to this program caused so many to die, but this was done to keep his image up.
1966	The Cultural Revolution was a movement that had the goal of purging capitalism from the Chinese Society, this was done by getting rid of old people, texts and other tenets/aspects of Chinese culture. This movement was to reassert Mao's authoritarianism ideologies, however, it was the unjustifiable persecution and deaths of millions that weakened and debilitated China.
1976	Mao dies from a sudden heart attack.
2013	Xi Jinping gets elected.
June1, 2017	China's Cybersecurity Law went into effect, which established stricter guidelines on internet usage and also to reform data management. The law is an example of China's act to have jurisdictional control over the content on the media
March 2018	China's parliament passed an amendment that allows President Xi Jinping to remain in office indefinitely, removing presidential term limits. This allows China to exercise even more political control.

DPRK (North Korea)

Date	Description of event
September 9, 1948	Kim Il-sung nominated as military leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
1994-1998	A 3-year long period of famine and mass starvation in Korea

Venezuela

Date	Description of event
2004	A new law passed by President Chavez and his National Assembly followers seize control of the Supreme Court.
2008	The Venezuelan government under President Chavez had representatives from the Human Rights Watch detained and removed from reporting on the human rights violations within the country.
September 2012	Venezuela announces its withdrawal from the American Convention on Human Rights
2013	Nicolas Maduro succeeds President Chavez

Vietnam

Date	Description of event
October 3, 2018	General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong is nominated as the sole candidate for president by the Communist Party Central Committee and becomes president while holding his current position as party leader. The act of holding both positions of state president and secretary-general.

Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties

- The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet, 27 June 2016 (A/HRC/32/L.20)
- Name of the Resolution, Date of the Resolution (Resolution Number)

Possible Solutions

Focus first on economic reform. In an authoritarian system, one key characteristic is that the country puts the economic power into private hands. Moreover, nations that are more conservative would go even further, giving the central government strong control over the economy. One example would be the "post perestroika" arrangement. This is where several large state conglomerates would pull the country out of its economic downfall. For example, in South Korea, the government provided financing help and tax breaks. However, one problem that this may face is that private entrepreneurs would have no place in this system, therefore, they would still run the economy.

Install the notion and of a government check. Although authoritarian rule does not equate to poorer living conditions or Per definition, authoritarianism is the centralization of power in a focused group or an individual. The centralization of power has resulted in the priorities shifting towards other aspects of a nation such as military advancements or economic growth. Notably, these aspects are all essential to a country's development, however, because of the shift of focus to these components, often social, cultural and humanitarian aspects are disregarded. Conducting government checks on its societal development should be of equal importance for the nation's progress.

The potential solution summarized into one sentence (this sentence should be bolded). A description of the solution including how it directly solves the issue at hand, who is involved, and how it can be carried out. Always include the disadvantages/limitations to the written solution, so delegates are more aware of what to focus on when trying to write a detailed and comprehensive resolution.

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