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DEMOCRACIES, GREY ZONES, HYBRID REGIMES-CLIMBING THE BABEL OF TERMINOLOGY

Resume

The objective of the paper is to provide a distinction of the often partially or completely overlapping hybrid regime terms and to discuss the notions and concepts related to the discourse on hybrid regimes. The clarification of grey zone related definitions is highly justified due to the existing rich Babelian terminology as well as the potential benefit of having a clearer view on the contradictions and limitations inherent to traditional democracy interpretations. There is a scientific consensus on the grey zone between democracy and autocracy forming its own regime type, but the different approaches apply various terms to it. Using country examples arching over eras, we demonstrate that the adjective "hybrid" actually represents a threshold indicating if a given system reaches the level above which it may be considered democratic. After identifying this level and its elements, the study also discusses how different regimes relate to elections in order to determine the institutional conditions for the stability or replacement of a regime.

Keywords: hybrid regime, competitive authoritarianism, transitology, electoral authoritarianism, democratization

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INTRODUCTION

Being an EU member state, Hungary's post-2010 regime change (Körösényi 2015) caused an increased political and scientific interest in identifying and describing the new political system. The discussions of Hungary's post-2010 political system have typically become characterized by genres, roles and approaches being mixed even within the same study. As a general trend observed in many political interpretation attempts, these papers appeared to be less intent on conducting a scientific investigation of the Orbán regime and often more focused on "changing" the regime, despite their aspirations to be descriptive. They were motivated by the "what to do" question, and they identified their political allies and opponents accordingly. These observations are the products of political mindedness. Hungarian political scientist István Schlett defines their status and function as follows: when it comes to the reality constructs of political mindedness, "any attempt at their verification (validation or refutation) is pointless; you can either reject or accept them, identify with them or contrast them with another reality construct that is naturally also organized by the »what to do« question, i.e., politically interpreted as well" (Schlett 2015, 193). Of the numerous examples, the phenomenon can be best illustrated by the "Mafia state" theory (Magyar 2016) that is so popular in the Hungarian and international public discourse. Here the "Mafia state" is presented as the polar opposite of liberal democracy, as in a juxtaposition of "bad" and "good". By doing so however, the theory does not only provide an undifferentiated description of democracy and liberalism, but also presents "liberal democracy" as the only and exclusively desirable political form. Relying on the literature, this paper aims to reflect on the political rather than scientific nature of the ideological takes that are similar to the description above.

These types of cognitive characteristics stem from, firstly, the fact that they are the products of political thinking and, secondly, the fact that regime debates are not purely descriptive; they are a question of value choice, too. Keeping the ideological neutrality of science in mind, we do not wish to dispute this statement, but it does give rise to the question as to which group of actors involved in politics is actually in the most difficult position when it comes to describing a regime.

Depending on their ideological values, certain politicians create different products of political thinking. Politicians struggle with making immanent the problem of unnameability, because it is counter-productive to their political action. Political scientists studying the issue are in a difficult position as well: they are also expected to identify, categorize

or typify regimes. This expectation is voiced by the public as well as certain political actors. The latter tend to add high stakes to this challenge because, as they believe, scientists can put everything in order in this Babel-like chaos of terminology (Armony and Schamis 2005).

As far as this paper is concerned, we will refrain from discussing either an exhaustive presentation of all the competing theories of political thinking or scientific investigations, nor will we attempt to serve scientific justice. Our objective is to clarify the terminology of competitive authoritarianism and hybrid regimes, which has recently become relevant and extensively used by the Hungarian and international public and scientific discourse. Furthermore, we also aim to analyze the rich Babel-like terminology that has determined the discourse on democracy theory over the last decades. We do not suggest that the Hungarian regime debate can be considered closed after this study and, unlike others (Bozóki and Hegedűs 2018), we do not wish to determine how much the terminologies of competitive authoritarianism or hybrid regimes apply to the Hungarian situation. The reason for that is not some kind of scientific modesty. Instead, we agree with political philosopher János Kis who says every regime type description must be aware that it is a terminological construct without a temporal dimension (Kis 2019, 54).

Consequently, this study aims to present and reduce the "Babel-like" nature of terms and concepts related to the hybrid regime discourse itself, because the debates around the definition of hybrid regimes can be instrumental in clarifying and pinpointing the contradictions and limitations of traditional democracy interpretations. We are fully aware that the accomplishment of the above goal would require working with a constantly growing literature, so we are going to base our conceptualization on the studies that have already been processed as reference works recognized by the international political science community.

THE DIFFICULTY AND NECESSITY OF TERM DEFINITION

With regard to hybridization theories and the definition of the hybrid regime, we are undoubtedly facing such a pluralism of the term that entails the necessity as well as the difficulty of clarification. Our premise is that the democracy vs. non-democracy dichotomy, despite its prominence before grey zone literature became part of the mainstream scientific discourse, is now too general, which inevitably leads to blurred differences between the two endpoints of this dualism. This dichotomy incorporates the teleological approach that system transformation, i.e.,

the dismantling of authoritarian systems must inevitably result in the emergence of a democracy. The democracy vs. autocracy approach interprets political systems in such a dichotomous framework that defines their change as linear as well as progressive (Gyulai and Stein-Zalai 2016, 45). But this also leads to the research question that if certain political systems with an adjective can be defined in the function of their deviance from the conceptual ideal of democracy, then is there still a point in using the original term? In other words, is it worth calling a system a democracy with an adjective if it violates the criteria of democracy in any form or to any extent? (Gyulai and Stein-Zalai 2016, 49).

According to today's relatively wide consensus, the regimes in the grey zone between democracy and autocracy should be identified as an independent type. In general, grey zone countries demonstrate several traits of democracy (for example: legal opportunity to organize parties and NGOs, existence of a democratic constitution, regular elections), but the operation of these systems is marred by certain deficits. These deficits may be manifested in such phenomena as poor representation of citizens' interests, low levels of political activity and participation, frequent abuse of the law by government officials, intransparency of political decisions, excessive centralization of power, interconnectedness of governmental and independent institutions, elections of uncertain legitimacy, etc. (Carothers 2002, 9–10).

While the democracy vs. non-democracy approach tended to oversimplify categorization problems, the description of grey zone regimes, as we demonstrate below, clearly struggle with the issue of terminological diversity with regard to particular regimes. The political scientific debates on the definition of hybrid regimes have led to the birth of increasingly complex typologies, "and the adjustment of definitions to empirical examples results in more and more restricted types and subtypes", with the potential consequence that we cannot find an empirical example of liberal democracy as a pure model, either (Gyulai and Stein-Zalai 2016, 56). Even more importantly, the factors of informal exercise of power, the complex typology, the meticulous terminological clarification and the analysis focused on particular moments, when applied in a strict set of criteria, may categorize many countries as hybrid regimes. This would certainly raise interesting theoretical questions, but almost completely prevents the accomplishment of the original objective, i.e., making the grey zone transparent (Gyulai and Stein-Zalai 2016, 56). According to János Kis, typology creation cannot be a simple task unless the distinctive types are based on exclusive rather than relative features,

but political systems are characterized by relative features instead of exclusive ones (Kis 2019, 49).

The terminological pluralism to be presented below is all rooted in the otherwise inspiring problems of political science described above. Below we give a brief overview of the reasons why the study of hybrid regimes has become today's current trend.

TRANSITOLOGICAL OPTIMISM

After the key Eastern Central European political system changes of 1989-1990, many scientists made various attempts to analyze the global geopolitical map as it was being redrawn. The beginning of the post-Cold War era was dominated by a general optimism in politics and social sciences, since the Soviet Union's collapse appeared to mark Samuel Huntington's third wave of democratization, leading to a global breakthrough of democracy (Huntington 1991). The process was started in the 1970s by the democratization of such Southern European military dictatorships as Portugal, Spain and then Greece, followed and made global by the political system changes in Eastern Central Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia from the mid to late 1980s. The common elements in these countries were the self-restriction of the state, the dismantling of single-party structures as well as the development of the rule of law and the independent constitutional institutions. These countries were characterized by the appearance of regularly held elections, a growing number of NGOs with a controlling function over the state as well as the launch and the subsequent growth of free press.

Not independently from the hopes invested in the democratic changes of Eastern Central Europe, this period was the heyday of transitology literature. The theory (Whitehead 2002) focused on the institutional aspects of the transition and the development of the democratic institutions, laying less emphasis on the analysis of politico-economic or micro-level attitudinal changes. According to transitology, these countries were moving away from the traits of dictatorial regimes and entered into the phase of democratic transition. The latter can be divided into three stages: political opening, collapse of the previous regime and consolidation of the new system.

However, the transitology paradigm (deregulation, then democratization, and finally consolidation) often failed to reach its end point. By the second half of the 1990s, it became clear that the post-Cold War era gave rise to the emergence of democracies along with the appearance of many hybrid systems. Hybridization was experienced

in several countries in Latin-America (Haiti, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru), post-Communist Eurasia (Albania, Croatia, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine) and Africa (Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique) (Levitsky and Way 2002). Although these new states manifested several traits of democracy, they nonetheless were fundamentally different from each other and the democracies of developed Atlantic states as well. Social scientists considered these systems as the unfinished or transitional forms of democracy. These presumptions or hope often remained unfulfilled, however. The countries in question, predominantly in Africa and the former Soviet territory, either remained hybrid regimes or moved towards authoritarianism.

This area of research once again became the subject of scientific interest due to the stagnation (and in some countries the backlash) of the democratization process in the 2000s, especially in the post-Soviet and post-Communist region. These processes form one of the reasons why we need to examine these countries and their state structures as an independent system type rather than a system in transit.

TRANSITOLOGY FOLLOWED BY "BABEL OF TERMINOLOGY"

The heightened interest in hybrid regime research was indicated by such factors as a growing number of scientists focusing on hybrid regimes as well as a rich terminology used in the attempts to describe them (Armony and Schamis 2005; Wigell 2008; Cianetti, Dawson and Hanley 2018; Knott 2018; Dimitrova 2018). The list of terms intended for use includes:

- *virtual democracy*,
- *pseudo-democracy*,
- *illiberal democracy* (Zakaria 1997),
- *quasi democracy* (Morlino 2009),
- *semi-democracy*,
- *electoral authoritarianism* (Schedler 2013),
- *competitive authoritarianism* (Levitsky and Way 2002),
- *defective democracy* (Merkel 2004).

Furthermore, the literature has no consensus on whether the term hybrid regime is more attributable to the notion of democracy or autocracy. Another "weakness" of the literature is that it is often characterized by a palpable democratic bias. The authors considered the analysed countries as "part" democracies, relying on the premise that these states would move towards democracy after a certain time. However, the subsequent developments showed that while some hybrid states indeed set out on

the path of democratization, (e.g.: Mexico, Taiwan), many others went in the opposite direction (e.g. Belarus). Others persistently remained as hybrid systems (e.g. Malaysia).

Due to the characterization of the different systems by democracy with adjectives, the difference between these states is often blurred. In the early 1990s, El Salvador and Latvia were both put in the partly free category (Levitsky and Way 2002, 52), even though the situations of these two countries were fundamentally different. While Latvia was put in this category because it denied its Russian-speaking citizens their rights in different ways, the Latin-American country was lacking civilian control over the military, in addition to the massive human rights violations (Levitsky and Way 2002). These examples properly indicate the elemental difficulties lying in the definition and distinction of these systems.

DEMOCRACY WITH ADJECTIVES

The terms containing the word "democracy" with an adjective added some further aspects to the definition attempts. The phrases similar to "defective democracy" (Bogaards 2009) are created to describe the movement between autocracy and democracy (Collier and Levitsky 1997; Bogaards 2018). It makes a lot of sense, because differentiated terminology and research are vital for the description and evaluation of the reasons and consequences of democracies/autocracies.

The literature debates whether the definition of democracy as a procedural minimum helps us to identify the relatively reduced contents (Schedler 2013). In order to describe pluralist democracy, Robert Dahl famously introduced the term "polyarchy", which means multi-centred power. Societal pluralism ensures that the various actors of power remain autonomous from each other as well. This pluralism restricts absolute power in five different ways: (1) through the freedom of founding organizations, (2) through the competition of officials, (3) the pluralist competition allows for the selection of leaders who are able to compromise, (4) alternative information sources are required and (5) thus societal pluralism is able to create a complex system of power division (see Dahl 1982).

So, if the existing democracies are adjusted to the procedural minimum above, then the country examples indicated herein based on Collier – Levitsky should be described as "damaged democracies" (Collier and Levitsky 1997). This means that they lack some characteristics of how a fully functional democracy operates. This process can mostly be detected in certain Latin American countries where the legacy of the

authoritarian systems was the government's inability to have a full control over the military, which meant that the government, despite winning the democratic elections, was unable to extend its control over the military, or the state was not fully separated from the church. It could be observed in the cases of Chile, El Salvador and Paraguay as well.

Looking further into South America, certain studies (Weffort 1992; O'Donnell 1994) showed that the semi-feudal and authoritarian social structures caused such civil rights violations in Brazil, i.e., a country in transit from an authoritarian regime, that the state could no longer be considered a democracy. The consideration of social issues as an aspect of definition may be an important complementary idea for certain system typology discourses. The reason lies in the special situation of Latin American countries. These states are often characterized by so wide social inequalities that not only deprive some citizens of their rights, but even affect the categorization of the state's political system. However, this terminological novelty has not achieved the consensus of researchers yet.

IMPERFECT (DEFECTIVE) DEMOCRACY

Unlike the previous one, Wolfgang Merkel's term "defective democracy" is more widely accepted. Its democracy concept consists of three elements: vertical legitimacy, horizontal accountability and the existence of effective governance (Merkel 2004). Vertical legitimacy pertains to the citizens' relation to the power and it is realized through the elections and the enforcement of civil rights. Horizontal accountability essentially establishes liberal constitutionality. Effective governance assumes that only properly elected actors are able to make proper decisions.

Democracies can be considered defective if their fundamentally functional democratic electoral system is sufficient for selecting the proper decision makers, but the dysfunctionality of a component causes the loss of vital lines of defence and the system therefore is no longer able to protect freedom, equality and the licence to control.

Merkel identifies four types of defective democracies: exclusive (democratic institutions are strong but certain societal groups are restricted in terms of their civil rights); illiberal (elections are free but civil rights are partially nullified, the constitutional norms have little or no binding impact on elected officials); delegative (free elections are followed by an undemocratic governance because the executive branch becomes independent from the other branches of power); and domain democracy (the executive power completely neglects democratic processes and

vetoes them as well) (Merkel 2004, 49–50. The above typology of defective democracies includes and systematically categorizes the most commonly appearing forms of imperfect democracies.

nd you, most newly-developed democracies are defective democracies, but they rarely turn into pure autocracies. Applying Merkel's typology, the most common forms are the illiberal and the delegative democracy. The defects of certain systems may often change over the years. However, regional trends may become increasingly influential among defective democracies; for example, several Latin American countries covered the same path in recent decades.

In addition to helping us define systems lying between democracy and authoritarianism, the defective democracy concept also takes us closer to explaining the various reasons and consequences of incomplete transitions.

ELECTORAL AUTHORITARIANISM

While democracy remains as the fundamental term for the literature, many researchers suggest using authoritarianism as a fundamental term as well. One of these scientists is Juan Linz (Linz and Stepan 1996), and Levitsky – Way also used authoritarianism as a fundamental term. Larry Diamond distinguishes three authoritarian systems: competitive authoritarian, hegemonic electoral authoritarian, and politically closed authoritarian (Diamond 1999). Each political system identifies the minimization of future uncertainties as one of its key goals. This objective is also served by the political institutions that ensure the appropriate consolidation of a given system. Schedler's system typology contains four categories: closed autocracy – electoral authoritarianism – electoral democracy – liberal democracy (Schedler 2013). Closed autocracy and liberal democracy are located at the two poles. This system typology discards the idea of "mixed systems" and upholds the dichotomy of democracy-autocracy.

Electoral authoritarian regimes comprise two thirds of post-Cold War autocracies. Today, this category includes such countries as Putin's Russia or Venezuela. These regimes are characterized by elections that are not genuinely competitive, where the real function of the elections is to legitimize the system through a voting process. While formally retaining the institutions of representation, these systems also install manipulative strategies into the operation of these institutions in order to minimize the chances of a multi-party competition leading to an unexpected outcome for the autocratic leaders. Electoral authoritarian regimes attribute a real

function to elections: they are especially important for the simulation of legitimacy (Schedler 2013). Electoral authoritarianism is basically a new form of authoritarianism with an "election façade". Although elections are held by universal suffrage, the state's manipulation causes so much damage to the electoral competition that it can no longer be considered democratic.

Graeme Gill identifies seven criteria of electoral authoritarianism: (1) control the electoral process; (2) constantly mobilise the population; (3) control the legislature; (4) maintain the elite's unity; (5) manage the succession and recruitment of those in power; (6) maintain extensive state control; finally (7) conduct targeted distribution of state budgetary funding (Gill 2013, 458–460). Nevertheless, authoritarian leaders may allow for a multi-party election for two reasons: firstly, to yield to foreign pressure, i.e., to obtain the necessary domestic or international legitimacy. Secondly, an election may ensure the long-term stabilization of the authoritarian regime.

As a potential result of external pressure, authoritarian regimes, if they are in need of international aid, interested in a military alliance or perhaps vulnerable due to their existing trade relations and thus dependent upon democratic countries, may be more likely to turn from a pure autocracy into an electoral authoritarian regime. The given country's regional position or the neighbouring states' political systems may also promote democratization, i.e., the proximity of others may be instrumental in moving towards electoral authoritarianism.

Thus, we can establish that electoral authoritarian regimes may also emerge due to an explicitly "democratic" motivation or economic interest. No wonder electoral autocracies have become dominant among authoritarian regimes. Since the end of World War 2, 113 authoritarian regimes have held multi-party elections. At this point, let me mention the four categories in Schedler's system typology (closed autocracy – electoral authoritarianism – electoral democracy – liberal democracy), with regard to which, closed autocracies either completely lack electoral institutions or there is no real multi-party structure to speak of (e.g. Laos and Swaziland at present). Despite all preliminary disadvantages however, multi-party elections can still help the opposition even in authoritarian regimes. In fact, the incumbent leader may even be forced to leave office after the elections. It happened in Malawi in 1994 as well as in Mexico in 2000. In order to prevent such an outcome, autocracies employ various means to manipulate the elections: gerrymandering, controlling media and campaign funding, arresting opposition politicians, fraud, etc.

COMPETITIVE AUTHORITARIANISM

Competitive authoritarianism considers the formal institutions of democracy as the key tools for grabbing and exercising political power. However, the holders of power tend to commit so massive violations of these institutions' rules that the regime's operation fails to reach even the minimum of democratic functions. In the 1990s, this operational logic was dominant in such countries as Tudjman's Croatia, Milosevic's Serbia or President Alberto Fujimori's Peru (Levitsky and Way 2002, 52).

Competitive authoritarianism must be distinguished from purely authoritarian regimes as well as from functional democracies, because modern democracies have four attributes the combination of which is not demonstrated by competitive authoritarian regimes: (1) legislative and executive powers are assigned by way of free elections (2) the country has universal suffrage (3) political and civil rights are protected (4) power is exercised by elected officials (Levitsky and Way 2010).

Of course, the representatives of democratic powers may also breach the rules from time to time, but these norm violations never become systemic, i.e., they do not fundamentally transform the arena of competition between the governing forces and the opposition. In contrast, the norm violations committed by competitive authoritarian regimes are significant and frequent enough for the field to be slanted. In competitive authoritarianism, power can be attacked in four areas with the help of democratic institutions: the election, the legislature, the judiciary and the media (Levitsky and Way 2002).

Purely authoritarian systems undermine the elections either *de jure* (e.g.: China, Cuba) or *de facto* (e.g.: Kazakhstan in the 1990s). Conversely, competitive autocracies are often characterized by tight(er) races where the final outcome of the election may be uncertain for the incumbent forces (e.g. Russian presidential election in 1996). Furthermore, opposition forces have been able to topple the system this way in several cases (e.g. Nicaragua 1990, Albania 1997).

The biggest challenge for competitive autocracies is to handle the system's inherent contradictions and the resulting uncertainty entailed by the co-existence of democratic rules and autocratic methods. This sui generis uncertainty puts forth a major dilemma for the incumbent: it may be costly to suppress these regime components, since the existing norms are considered legal both domestically and internationally, but leaving them intact may result in potentially losing the power. This may often lead to a crisis of a regime (e.g. Mexico 1988, Russia 1993). The system may successfully survive the crisis in some cases (Russia, 1996), while

the incumbent leaders may also lose their status in others (e.g. Mexico 2000). The system may potentially fall after a brief transitional state (e.g. Peru 2000, Serbia 2000).

In the 1990s, competitive autocracies typically emerged in three different ways (Levitsky and Way 2010, 1–83): (1) through the decline of pure autocracies. Combined external and internal pressures have often forced these regimes to create formal democratic institutions or to give real functions to such institutions if they already existed. Due to the weak opposition however, the transition did not result in democracy. Instead, the holders of power successfully adapted to the democratic rules. This phenomenon can be observed in Sub-Saharan Africa. (2) Competitive authoritarianism may emerge after the collapse of an autocratic regime. Since the fall of the autocracy was followed by the establishment of weak electoral systems, the lack of democratic norms and the weak civil society allow the elected leaders to continue governing the country in an authoritarian manner, but they are unable to consolidate the original autocracy. This structure was manifested in Armenia, Ukraine or Romania in the 1990s. (3) The regime type in question may also develop subsequently to the decline of a democratic system. Deep and extended political and economic crises may lead to situations where a freely elected government itself undermines the democratic institutions without intending to fully dismantle them. Examples include 1990s Peru or today's Venezuela.

The 1990s saw the emergence of competitive authoritarianism in such countries where the conditions were favourable for neither a democracy nor an autocracy to be consolidated (e.g. post-Soviet region). However, the presence of all these conditions does not necessarily lead to competitive authoritarianism: sometimes democracy is consolidated under explicitly unfavourable conditions (e.g.: Mongolia, Mali), while the fall of the authoritarian regime is followed by the collapse of the state and a subsequent civil war in other countries (e.g. Libya, Somalia).

So the differences between Andreas Schedler's and Steven Levitsky et al's system typologies are as follows: the former presents a tetrachotomy (closed autocracy – electoral authoritarianism – electoral democracy – liberal democracy), while the latter thinks along the lines of a trichotomy (authoritarianism – hybrid regime – democracy). According to Schedler, the presence of multi-party elections is not an argument for a regime's movement towards democracy, while Levitsky et al emphasize that hybrid regimes are essentially competitive since they have multi-party elections. In terms of describing a system, Schedler's model lays the

emphasis on formal institutions, whereas Levitsky et al say the essence of a system is best determined by the informal actors and procedures.

HYBRID REGIME

The literature debates whether the term "hybrid regime" is the most adequate one to grasp the issue in question (Morlino 2009). First of all, both components of the phrase need to be defined. The word "regime" allows us to clarify what governmental institutions we investigate, and what formal and informal norms can be considered established in the given country. The emphasis is always on the institutions that carry the traces of the previous political system (for example, the courts or the constitutional court of a given state inherently carry their earlier verdicts and positions even when the system is changed). To use the "regime" label for a given country, we need a minimal stability, so the investigation must always consider an extended time period.

The adjective "hybrid" suggests that a given system does not reach the threshold above which a system can be defined as democratic. This threshold must contain the following elements: free, competitive, fair, regularly held general elections, universal suffrage, a multi-party system and free, independent media. As a complementary condition, the state must guarantee political and civil rights. The democratic institutions must not fall under the influence of external or unelected actors (e.g. army, church). If any of these conditions are not met, the given country can no longer be considered a democracy.

The term "hybrid regime" has a wider meaning than "mixed regime." Situated between democracy and autocracy, it comprises all the systems that can be considered neither an autocracy nor a democracy. Hybrid regimes always have ambiguous institutions that carry the legacy of the previous system as well. When providing an exact definition for the term, we need to emphasize the following elements: it has persistent, stable institutions; it was preceded by an authoritarian regime or a minimal democracy; it is characterized by a departure from restricted pluralism and/or independent autonomous participation and, finally, the system lacks at least one element of a minimal democracy.

The definition and the criteria of a hybrid regime should be summarized as follows: it is not a subspecies/subcategory of democracy or autocracy; it is an independent category. The hybrid regime comprises all the political systems that cannot be fitted into the "template" of autocracy or democracy (Bogaards 2009).

The investigation of hybrid regimes as a phenomenon allows for reliance on indices. Of the extremely diverse classifications that are available globally, Freedom House's indices are considered the accepted standard, as the institute has been measuring the world's countries since the 1970s, with annual updates to the data sets and the reports (Morlino 2009, 275). With regard to Freedom House's rankings, their "partly free" category can be best applied to hybrid regimes. According to their 2009 data, 67 countries were put in this category (e.g. Albania, Morocco, Senegal, Venezuela) (Freedom House, 2009). Ten years later, Freedom House's 2019 report identifies 61 states as partly free, of which 48 countries were already categorized as such back in 2009. The 2020 list contained the following new entries in this category: Guinea, Myanmar, Serbia, Lesotho, Dominican Republic, Hungary, Ukraine, Indonesia, Mali, Zimbabwe, Kosovo, Mexico, Ivory Coast (Freedom House 2019).

The soaring hybrid regime numbers may be attributed to the fact that post-Cold War democratic and authoritarian systems were not consolidated in line with the theory of transitology. Despite the general democratic optimism of the 1990s, the creation of a democracy became a difficult and costly "genre". System changes occurred in several countries that had already been struggling with poverty and social inequality, characterized by a weak state, civil society and unstable institutions, and often even burdened by border disputes as well (Levitsky and Way 2002).

Despite the few democratic transitions completed in the 1990s, the authoritarian ideas did not become dominant, either. The post-Cold War international environment had an undeniable role in it, too. The victory of liberal democracy and the collapse of the Soviet Union undermined the ideological base of alternative systems, giving peripheral or semi-peripheral countries the motivation to install democratic institutions or at least attempt to do so. The liberal hegemony of the 1990s created a "net of boundaries", which even the non-democratic countries were forced to accept in order to improve their international reputation and to preserve their viability. After overcoming the internal and external obstacles of the 1990s however, certain countries nonetheless remained authoritarian. Due to economic or security reasons, they enjoyed the leniency of western countries (e.g.: Central Asia). Others leveraged the fact that the country's valuable raw materials and products remained beyond state control (Levitsky and Way 2002). Combined, these factors stunted the development of an autonomous civil society and a truly powerful opposition.

Robert Kagan, a historian and geopolitical expert of the American Brookings Institution explains the "backsliding" of democracies with the

changing geopolitical aspects (Kagan 2015). According to Kagan, the presence of American hegemony played a significant part in the ebbs and flows of democratization, just like the surges of authoritarianism are not independent from the withdrawal of such hegemony. Furthermore, they are also correlated with the growing power of Russia and China, with special regard to the strengthening military, trade and economic relations as well as the "soft pressure" practices, i.e., cultural diplomacy, NGO funding, etc. applied by these two countries (Plattner 2006, 9.).

As Nikolay Petrov, Maria Lipman and Henry E. Hale presented in their study published in *Post-Soviet Affairs*, elections always raise a dilemma for hybrid regime leaders as the result of the vote may jeopardize their power, but a landslide victory may also provide an additional legitimacy for their governance (Petrov, Lipman, and Hale 2013). The formative influence of elections on authoritarian regimes is also described by Jennifer Gandhi – Ellen Lust-Okar, who present Chinese examples to show how local elections may be instrumental in democratization (*creeping democratization)* (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009).

Consequently, the system-shaping role and influence of formal institutions are decisive in terms of a hybrid regime's emergence. As an example, let me briefly discuss two countries of the post-Soviet region here. The now independent republics of the former Soviet Union are often considered as if they were the same, even though their post-Communist development took different routes despite their potentially similar starting positions. Starting out from highly similar circumstances, Ukraine and Central Asian Kyrgyzstan completed different journeys between 2005 and 2010 in the system typological sense as well (Hale 2011). After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, both countries saw the emergence of a clientelistic society that created a strong presidential republic lasting from the mid-1990s to the revolution of the late 2000s. In both countries, the head of state was the most influential representative of power, formally and informally alike. The strong presidents were toppled by an "electoral revolution" in both cases. In the aftermath, neither of the emerging victors was able to become the exclusive holder of power; they could only take control of the country in tandem. Neither president was able to completely assume presidential power for himself, partly due to the country's existing regional conflicts. One of the tandem members became the head of state, while the other one took the prime minister's seat.

However, Ukraine formalized the division of power by codifying it in the constitution; the agreement between the two parties of Kyrgyzstan was never formalized. It was only declared informally. These changes were instrumental in the later developments seen in the two countries:

Ukraine experienced a political opening between 2005 and 2010, whereas Kyrgyzstan did not. Ukraine's transition was greatly assisted by the draft constitution lying in the ousted government's desk drawer. The concept was designed to help the division of power, and it indeed proved useful for the post-revolution transition. In contrast, Kyrgyzstan retained its presidential constitution without any formal division of power. As a result, the president unsurprisingly marginalized the prime minister, and then completely squeezed him out of power by 2007.

According to Freedom House's data, Kyrgyzstan was considered less democratic in 2007, i.e., after the revolution, than in 2004. Conversely, Ukraine demonstrated completely opposite processes. The above cases show that the presence of functional formal institutions may have a significantly instrumental impact on a country's transition process.

In the context of Hungary's post-2010 political system, discussed in the introduction, a recurrent descriptive category in the academic community is the hybrid regime. However, there is no consensus in political science on whether this framework is appropriate. Regimes can be compared along institutional lines, but in this case additional aspects such as social history, the informal system of politics or the primacy of leaders are not considered. Comparison is therefore only possible if we are looking at an ideal regime (e.g. liberal democracy) in terms of its norms.

In the case of Hungary under Viktor Orbán, however, the specific way in which power is aggregated makes it difficult to classify the regime. Institutional changes follow few consistent and discernible principles, and the concentration and dispersal of power are exclusively Orbán's own. There are also regulations that are explicitly in line with the norms of liberal democracy, but the concentration of power is also specific to authoritarian regimes. In order to resolve these dichotomies, some literature classifies Hungary as a hybrid regime.

CONCLUSION

The literature of political science has amassed a significant knowledge base of democracy theories as well as the research methodology of democratization. Due to the processes discussed above, the research of non-democratic systems is on the rise as well. The discussed terminological confusion is inevitable since, as shown above, the explanations behind the emergence of a regime always include the unique characteristics of the given country and region.

The objective of this study is neither to categorize Hungary's post-2010 political system, nor to present regime debates. Instead, we aimed to provide an explanation of the existing definitions in order to throw a light on the reasons behind the diversity and uncertainty of political thinking and scientific investigation. In line with our goals, we avoided discussing how those who self-evidently compare hybrid regimes to liberal democracies always focus on the dysfunctionality of institutions, even though the emergence of these regimes demonstrates a deeper underlying conflict within post-authoritarian political systems (Jayasuriya and Rodan 2007). This is particularly noteworthy because hybrid regimes do not tend to achieve their desired consolidated power in spite of their quasi-democratic institutions, but rather partly "with the help" of such institutions. Since they are able to demonstrate long-term stability, these regimes can be considered as carefully constructed and maintained systems rather than transitional ones (Ottaway 2003). Despite having their own regime type, hybrid regimes are in motion. Nikolay Petrov at al note that the potential authoritarian-leaning tendencies and radicalization of these regimes, without open representation and sufficiently credible information sources, may turn public policy-making into mere guesswork, which may lead to a general discontent (Petrov, Lipman, and Hale 2013). According to Levitsky and Way, competitive authoritarian regimes do not actually show real stability. Most of the countries they studied either became democratic or turned into a purely authoritarian regime.

Conversely, Christopher Carothers' paper released in the *Journal of Democracy* in October 2018 discusses how the stability of competitive authoritarian regimes is often eroded in the mid and long term, because they are relatively open in the political sense and they, unlike autocracies, contain the element of competition (Carothers 2018). Based on Carothers, (1) competitive authoritarian systems allow a legal opportunity for the opposition to run in the elections, so the opposition may choose the "baby steps" strategy and target the municipal elections first. This formula was applied by the Mexican opposition in the late 1990s. On the other hand, (2) the operators of the regimes discussed here may decide to manipulate the elections. However, this move may cause such disgruntlement in the society which may as well grow into a mass movement capable of toppling the regime. Such a contradiction to the general expectations may act as a catalyst for large-scale demonstrations which may allow other, much earlier political demands to the surface. That's what happened in Ukraine in 2004, when the so-called orange revolution broke out. The regime operators may also decide to (3) introduce a purely authoritarian

system in order to prevent any further loss of position. This option was selected in 1970s South Korea by the military leadership that had grabbed the power through a military coup earlier. A particular weakness of competitive authoritarian regimes may be (4) failing to construct an ideological legitimacy to validate their system. This also means that these systems may lack an ideological base. This poses no threat to the government as long as it can rely on legitimization through achievement (for example: improving economic indicators, efficient bureaucracy), but if governmental errors and crisis occur, the opposition has a chance to attack the system on an ideological basis (Carothers 2018, 132–134).

The literature contains several other research avenues (regarding stability in this case), for which we believe we presented the best known or most accepted ones that are, in our opinion, necessary for terminological clarification and explanation.

In conclusion, the in-depth knowledge of the scientific apparatus of non-democratic systems is necessary for several reasons: firstly, such knowledge may prevent certain ideological regime descriptions from considering themselves as the only scientific description. Secondly, it allows us to develop a more comprehensive insight into the formation of non-democratic regimes as well as their often highly extended survival along with the reasons and consequences of their stability. Thirdly, the scope of scientific investigation needs to be widened in order to better understand the alternatives available for post-Cold War (and Eastern Central Europe's post-Communist) countries.

Despite the transitological optimism of the 1990s, such alternatives are still available (as of today); no matter how undesirable they are for actors in and outside the scientific community.

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ДЕМОКРАТИЈЕ, СИВЕ ЗОНЕ, ХИБРИДНИ РЕЖИМИ-УСПОН БАБЕЛ ТЕРМИНОЛОГИЈЕ

Сажетак

Циљ рада је да пружи разлику између термина хибридног режима који се често делимично или потпуно преклапају и да продискутује појмове и концепте у вези са дискурсом о хибридним режимима. Појашњење дефиниција везаних за сиву зону је веома оправдано због постојеће богате бабелске терминологије, као и потенцијалне користи од јаснијег погледа на контрадикције и ограничења својствена традиционалним демократским тумачењима. Постоји научни консензус о сивој зони између демократије и аутократије која формира свој тип режима, али различити приступи за то примењују различите термине. Користећи примере земаља који се нижу кроз епохе, показујемо да придев „хибридни“ заправо представља праг који показује да ли дати систем достиже ниво изнад којег се може сматрати демократским. Након идентификовања овог нивоа и његових елемената, студија такође разматра како се различити режими односе на изборе како би се утврдили институционални услови за стабилност или замену режима.

Кључне речи: хибридни режим, конкурентски ауторитаризам, транзитологија, изборни ауторитаризам, демократизација

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