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## Hybrid political regimes, their typology and classification

**Abstract.** Hybrid regimes are a complex phenomenon in modern politics, which requires detailed analysis and classification. The article provides an overview of the problems of hybrid regimes, analyses the elements of democracy and autocracy in hybrid regimes, considers the preconditions and historical context of the emergence of hybrid regimes. The author determines that there are several approaches to the typology of hybrid regimes based on different criteria and characteristics. One approach involves the classification of hybrid regimes based on the level of political competition in the state. This approach allows us to distinguish such types of hybrid regimes as electoral authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism and delegated authoritarianism. Another approach to the classification of hybrid regimes is the level of respect for human rights. According to this approach, hybrid regimes can be categorised into repressive hybrid regime, liberal hybrid regime and pragmatic hybrid regime.

Classification of hybrid regimes is important to understand and analyse the current political situation in different countries. The study of different types of hybrid regimes helps political scientists and researchers to identify the distinctive characteristics and trends of their functioning and to develop effective strategies to overcome the challenges associated with them.

The author considers the intricate nature of hybrid regimes not merely as an intermediate form, but as a unique political phenomenon with its own specificity and concludes that hybrid regimes are a complex and ambiguous phenomenon that challenges traditional notions of the political system. Their emergence and evolution require in-depth analysis to understand the dynamics of contemporary politics and to develop effective strategies to respond to the problems that modernity dictates.

**Keywords:** hybrid regimes; democracy; autocracy; civil liberties; civil society; mass media; response strategies

The topic we are discussing seems to be one of the most interesting and relevant in modern political science. The historical context of the origins of the problems of hybrid regimes can be traced back to the second half of the 20th century, when the influence of a number of different factors initiated the preconditions for their emergence.

The Cold War and the ideological competition between the two centres of world politics, the USA and the USSR, caused an arms race and the constant threat of a «hot conflict». This rivalry resulted in the advent of novel forms of «indirect» confrontation. The so-called proxy wars. The US and the USSR actively supported proxy wars in third countries, using indirect methods of influence to achieve their political goals. Thus, proxy wars can be embodied in compact operations (proxy operations) leading to imbalance of power. Proxy operations become an element in the chain of heterogeneous subversive actions, which affected the countries and made their political development non-self-sufficient and dependent on the conjuncture of relations between the two centres, which implied the lack of stability in their internal political development [1]. This situation left the countries «in the middle» or in a transitional, in other words, hybrid state.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and political turbulence left a «political vacuum» in the post-Soviet region, which led to the emergence of new independent states, many of which were politically unstable and prone to conflict. They experienced the processes typical for such a phenomenon — the construction of radically new political institutions and the transition to a market economy, the implementation of the state policy of decommunisation aimed at cleansing the historical past from the totalitarian legacy, which is an important stage in overcoming the ambivalence of historical memory and crisis phenomena in national identity [2]. But it is also worth mentioning that these processes were accompanied by instability and internal conflicts in most of the new sovereign states, which made their development intermittent and did not give the opportunity to bring the reforms to completion. It was this factor which predetermined their "hybrid" state.

So, what is a *hybrid political regime* and what are its characteristics? A *hybrid political regime* is understood as a political regime that combines «elements of institutional democracy and authoritarian practices» [3, p. 27]. Hybrid regime implies such political system that includes elements of authoritarian and democratic regimes, but it is important that it is not fully neither of them. In these political systems there are not only formally democratic institutions, but also authoritarian tendencies to restrict civil liberties. In such cases, democracy is officially recognised and manifested, for example, in holding of elections, the existence of parliament, and the observance of some constitutional guarantees. However, these institutions are significantly weakened or controlled by the ruling elite. For example, freedom of assembly is restricted, media are controlled and independent journalism is suppressed, governmental powers of officials are used for personal purposes. Such phenomena are frequent companions of hybrid regimes.

Hybrid political regimes are a complex and diverse category in themselves, which makes it difficult to classify them uniformly. There are many opinions on this subject in the academic community. The typology proposed by T. Karozers, which distinguishes between regimes characterised by syndrome of weak pluralism and those defined as the syndrome of dominant party, is regarded as a significant contribution to the field. The leading features of regimes with weak pluralism syndrome, to which T. Karozers refers a number of countries in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe, are: regular elections; a high level of political competition between groups of the political elite; weak political participation of citizens, which is limited to elections; corrupt political elites who pursue selfish interests; weak state and ineffective socio-economic policy. As for the regime

with the dominant party syndrome, its main feature is the weakness of the opposition and the blurring of the boundaries between the state and the ruling party [4]. However, it is possible to distinguish other subtypes of regimes based on various evaluation criteria.

Thus, one criterion that is considered extremely important is the level of political competition in the state. Based on this criterion, we can distinguish some types of hybrid regimes:

- electoral authoritarianism — elections are held, but they are not free and fair, access to political power is limited, media control and other restrictions on civil liberties are typical;
- competitive authoritarianism — higher degree of political competition, existence of several political parties, sufficient independence of mass media, but it is possible to use unjust practices to maintain power, for example, falsification of elections;
- delegated authoritarianism — democratic institutions and processes function formally, the actual decision of the main political issues belongs to informal «centres» of power, oligarchic groups.

Another equally important criterion is the level of respect for human rights. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter, it is essential to examine the various types that have been identified on the basis of this criterion:

- an oppressive hybrid regime — meaning that it restricts civil liberties, suppresses civil dissent, and persecutes political opponents;
- a liberal hybrid regime characterised by relatively high levels of freedoms, a fairly independent judiciary and effective protection of human rights, but with notable restrictions on political freedom;
- pragmatic hybrid regime, the most difficult to categorise, as the level of human rights varies depending on the political conjuncture and the interests of the ruling elite.

An important criterion is also the form of organisation of state government. Depending on it, the following types of hybrid regimes can be distinguished:

- presidential form of government, which implies that the president is vested with considerable powers, which makes it possible for strong personalist power to emerge and for official powers to be used to restrict the rights and freedoms of citizens;
- a parliamentary republic, where the legislature has a significant impact on government formation, can lead to a concentration of power in the hands of a few parties or oligarchic groups;
- a mixed governed republic, as a system that combines elements of presidential and parliamentary forms of government, can be the existence of a president with strong personalist power, served by several parties or oligarchic groups interested in maintaining the status quo regarding the distribution of political forces and power in the country. In such system, the president is the guarantor of the political power of the elites.

As noted by Professor, Doctor of Law N.I. Grachev: «the most extreme opposites in the classification of state regimes are totalitarianism and liberalism, which in their «pure» form are almost never found» [5, p. 22], and the object of our study involves a combination of both. Let us consider some of the elements of democracy, which in a limited form can be present in hybrid regimes. As the American sociologist and political scientist Samuel Huntington noted: «elections are not only the life of democracy, but also the death of dictatorships» [6, p. 10]. So, first of all, it is important to note that while electoral processes or elections are held in hybrid regimes, they may not be entirely free and fair.

Since there may be restrictions on the participation of opposition parties, there may be difficulties in registering and participating in elections. But overcoming these problems, even if only partially, already indicates a move towards democracy. Hybrid regimes may have several political parties, but their functioning is naturally limited, which leads to the consolidation of a weak «systemic» opposition as the «main» opponent of the ruling party. The institution of civil society may be quite developed, but politically unmotivated, operating outside the framework of political struggle. Independent civil society organisations may feel serious pressure from the authorities, and the media may be restricted in their activities. In hybrid regimes, there are constitutional guarantees of citizens' rights and freedoms, operating properly, but with the possibility of finding ways to violate them. The constitution itself may be subject to interpretation in the interests of the ruling elite. Laws can be unclear or ambiguous, which can be expressed in selective enforcement, and as a result, there is suppression of the opposition and opposition-minded citizens. It is important to acknowledge that the extent to which democratic principles are observed in hybrid regimes can vary considerably. Some regimes may be more democratic than others. Hybrid regimes are often characterised by instability. They may move quickly from democratic practices to authoritarian methods because there is no established democratic tradition that is part of the overall culture. Examining the elements of democracy in hybrid regimes allows to understand how they function and what distinguishes them from democracy and authoritarianism.

Let us examine the key elements of authoritarian governance as they manifest in hybrid regimes, and identify the constraints they face. Firstly, the control of the media and its utilisation as a conduit for manipulation and propaganda, rather than for the free flow of information, is also a characteristic of hybrid regimes, although clearly more limited than in authoritarian ones. The media are censored, restricting access to information about political opponents, social problems or corruption in the state. A typical phenomenon is the list of «non grata» persons who are denied the right to appear on television and whose name is forbidden to be mentioned. Independent journalists are subject to pressure or intimidation, but there is no explicit repression. State media propaganda is used to disseminate discrediting material against the opposition and to create a positive image of the ruling elite. Distorted information and the use of «post-truths» are tools to manipulate citizens. As S.V. Chugrov, Professor of the Department of Sociology at MGIMO, observes: «The most striking examples of the policy of post-truth to destroy the reputation of a political opponent (character assassination) relate to the mythical interference of «Russian bloggers» in the presidential campaign of Hillary Clinton; fake facts about Russian «kompromat» on president Trump. As proven by the investigation of the Mueller Commission in 2019, there is no evidence that Donald Trump is directly connected with the authorities, and could not be, although human sympathy of D. Trump to Russian President Vladimir Putin really took place» [7, p. 51]. Thus, the use of mass media and manipulation of information on the Internet allows authoritarianism to be based not on mass violence, but on manipulation of information [8]. All this ultimately leads to the restriction of individual rights and freedoms and the expansion of control over society. Restrictions on civil liberties expressed in the «strangulation» of dissent are characteristic.

Hybrid regimes restrict civil liberties in order to suppress dissent and ensure stability for their own power by creating legislative barriers to peaceful protests and demonstrations, using police and intelligence services to disperse demonstrations and harass participants. Restriction of freedom of speech is often expressed in the adoption of laws «protecting morality and morals». Since punishment remains in the arsenal of criminal law means, criminal law has and always will have a repressive orientation [9]. The elements of the offences of libel, disclosure of state secrets and dissemination of disinformation are expanding, legislation on insulting the feelings of believers is adopted, and so on. Such legislation is used to persecute activists, critics and journalists who express their opinions. In hybrid regimes, the opposition is subjected to constant pressure and persecution, and political opponents are prosecuted on trumped-up charges of treason, terrorism or other offences to eliminate

the threat of regime change. There is often a lack of transparency in hybrid regimes with authoritarian tendencies. The state conceals information about its activities and financial flows to avoid accountability and responsibility for corrupt practices. The use by officials of their position for illicit enrichment, by embezzling public funds, or by using connections to obtain favourable business conditions is also a feature of such regimes. Depending on the sphere of activity, the following types of corruption should be distinguished: corruption in public administration, parliamentary corruption, and corruption in enterprises [10]. It should be noted that corruption degrades statehood and creates a significant difference between ordinary citizens and the bureaucratic apparatus.

It can thus be concluded that in the context of rapid global changes, the political map of the world is undergoing a period of transformation, giving rise to new and complex political phenomena. One of them is a hybrid political system, which uniquely combines elements of democracy and authoritarianism.

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## **Гибридные политические режимы, их типология и классификация**

**Аннотация.** Гибридные режимы представляют собой сложное явление в современной политике, которое требует детального анализа и классификации. В статье проводится обзор проблематики гибридных режимов, анализируются элементы демократии и автократии в гибридных режимах, рассматриваются предпосылки и исторический контекст возникновения гибридных режимов. Автор устанавливает, что существует несколько подходов к типологии гибридных режимов, основанных на различных критериях и характеристиках. Один из подходов предполагает классификацию гибридных режимов, в основе которого положен уровень политической конкуренции в государстве. Этот подход позволяет выделить такие типы гибридных режимов, как электоральный авторитаризм, конкурентный авторитаризм и делегированный авторитаризм. Другой подход к классификации гибридных режимов — это уровень соблюдения прав человека. Согласно этому подходу, гибридные режимы могут быть разделены на репрессивный гибридный режим, либеральный гибридный режим и прагматичный гибридный режим.

Классификация гибридных режимов имеет важное значение для понимания и анализа современной политической ситуации в различных странах. Изучение различных типов гибридных режимов помогает политологам и исследователям выявить особенности и тенденции их функционирования, а также разработать эффективные стратегии для преодоления вызовов, связанных с ними.

Автор принимает во внимание сложную природу гибридных режимов не просто как промежуточной формы, а уникального политического явления со своей спецификой и делает вывод, что гибридные режимы являются сложным и неоднозначным явлением, которое бросает вызов традиционным представлениям о политической системе. Их возникновение и эволюция требуют глубокого анализа, позволяющего понять динамику современной политики и выработать эффективные стратегии реагирования на проблемы, которые диктует современность.

**Ключевые слова:** гибридные режимы; демократия; автократия; гражданские свободы; гражданское общество; СМИ; стратегии реагирования

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