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## Political Administration VS Political Competition Under Neo-Authoritarian Rule

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**Abstract.** The article discusses the replacement of political competition with political administration in order to maintain the power of the ruling political actors and ensure the tenure of the ruling regime under neo-authoritarian rule in a number of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The administration of all key arenas of the political sphere is implemented through special political technologies and informal practices of political corruption. A pseudo-multiparty system with a dominating ruling party is being constructed in the party-political arena. In the media arena, the most influential mass media are being “nationalized”. In the arena of personnel, through political nepotism, adherents of the ruling regime are placed in key political and administrative positions of public power. In the electoral arena, the institution of elections is transformed into a procedure for the formation of public authorities by manipulating the voting procedures. In the legislative arena, the ruling party provides political administration of legislative and parliamentary activities in general. In the judicial arena, through the administrative regulation of the judiciary personnel, the judicial system is integrated into a single system of neo-authoritarian rule aimed at providing judicial protection for the ruling regime from the discontent of the citizens and using courts for political purposes. To demonstrate the appearance of democratic legitimacy, all neo-authoritarian regimes imitate the work of the basic institutions of democracy.

**Keywords:** neo-authoritarian regime, political competition, political administration, deviant political technologies, imitation of democratic institutions

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## Политическое администрирование VS политическая конкуренция в условиях неоавторитарного правления

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**Аннотация.** Рассматривается замещение в условиях неоавторитарного правления в ряде стран Азии, Африки и Латинской Америки политической конкуренции политическим администрированием с целью сохранения власти правящих политических акторов и обеспечения несменяемости правящего режима. Администрирование всех ключевых арен политического поля реализуется с использованием специальных политических технологий и неформальных практик политической коррупции. На партийно-политической арене конструируется псевдомногопартийная система с доминированием партии власти. На арене массового информирования осуществляется «огосударствление» наиболее влиятельных СМИ. На кадровой арене посредством политического nepотизма на ключевые политические и административные должности публичной власти расставляются адепты правящего режима. На избирательной арене институт выборов трансформируется в процедуру формирования органов публичной власти посредством манипулирования процессом голосования. На законодательной арене партия власти обеспечивает политическое администрирование законодательной и в целом парламентской деятельности. На судебной арене посредством административного регулирования кадров судебных органов судебная система встраивается в единую систему неоавторитарного правления для решения задач судебной защиты правящего режима от недовольства граждан и использования судов в политических целях. Для демонстрации видимости демократической легитимности всеми неоавторитарными режимами имитируется работа основных институтов демократии.

**Ключевые слова:** неоавторитарное правление, политическая конкуренция, политическое администрирование, девиантные политические технологии, имитация институтов демократии

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## **Introduction: Competition, Politics, Freedom of Choice**

Under the veil of democratic governance, the main driver of political, economic, informational and other social processes is competition, which in general can be defined as “competition of people, groups, organizations in achieving similar goals, attaining the best results in a certain public sphere”<sup>1</sup>. This role of competition is due to the fact that the fundamental goals of democracy can be realized only when all the actors comply with the legal and regulatory, as well as professional and moral-ethical “rules of the game”. One of these goals is the freedom of choice, the essential properties and characteristics of which, within the framework of the institutional goal-oriented paradigm, are determined by a set of specific political and state orders — institutions of democracy [Nisnevich 2012]. At the same time, citizens get a real opportunity and freedom to choose between various alternatives only if the functioning of the democratic institutions adequately ensures competitiveness in various social and governmental spheres.

Based on the general definition of competition presented above, political competition can be defined as competition between collective and individual political actors in achieving similar goals in the public sphere of politics. Within the framework of this study, politics is defined as “a set of relations formed as a result of the interaction between groups regarding the conquest, retention and use of state power aimed at realizing their socially significant interests” [Solovyov 2008: 36]. Considering this approach to the concept of “politics”, it is of fundamental importance that the goal of politics lies in the realization of socially important interests, as opposed to group or private interests.

The inseparable connection between politics, competition and freedom of choice, the subject of which are the citizens, is pointed out by the founder of sociology of politics Pierre Bourdieu, whose theory’s general concept dictates that “the political sphere is a place where political products, problems, programs, analyses, comments, concepts and events, from which ordinary citizens have to choose, are born in the competitive struggle between agents who find themselves involved in it” [Bourdieu 1993: 182]. At the same time, it is important to note that, as political practice shows, the political sphere consists of two parts: public, informationally open; and non-public, events and processes in which are hidden from external observers.

In the interrelation of politics, competition and freedom of choice, a fundamentally different situation occurs in the case of modern authoritarian rule or neo-

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<sup>1</sup> Prokhorov, A.M. (Ed.). (2001). Russian encyclopedic dictionary (Vol. 1). *Great Russian Encyclopedia*. (In Russian).

authoritarianism. The latter can be defined as “a form of organization of political and state orders based on using informal practices in order to preserve the power of the ruling political actor (individual or collective) and the redistribution of national resources in their interests” [Nisnevich 2021: 111].

The research question we put forward is what replaces political competition as the basis of freedom of choice under neo-authoritarian rule and how it is achieved. To answer this question, we use institutional approach, with application of methods of political-legal and factual analysis.

### **Political Administration as a Method of Replacing Political Competition**

Under authoritarian rule, key decisions determining the actions of the authorities are made by a narrow circle of individuals who form the so-called political “inner sanctums” [Cheibub, Gandhi, Vreeland 2010]. Under a personalistic authoritarian regime (found in, for example, Egypt, Nicaragua, Uzbekistan), this shadow sanctum is comprised of the supreme ruler and his closest associates, while under an authoritarian corporate-type regime (found in, for example, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Myanmar) it includes the leaders of the ruling political and economic groups and/or various clans (ethnopolitical, territorial and others). If the collective ruling political actor of a corporate authoritarian regime is a political party, as it is, for example, in China, the “political sanctum” is comprised of top party executives.

At the same time, all types of authoritarian rule are characterized by a fierce struggle for power and resources (land, natural resources, financial flows, property and possessions, the most profitable areas of economy) not only between those who are already part of the “inner sanctum”, but also those who seek to enter it. This struggle is conducted through informal practices, is of a non-public nature and tends to be continue up to the complete elimination of the rival.

It is obvious that the struggle for a place in the shadow sanctum, for power and resources does not correspond to any of the previously mentioned features of political competition, although some researchers speak of some kind of an “authoritarian political competition” [Shilov, Rylkina 2011: 180], which does not seem adequate to the essence of the phenomenon of political competition in its definition given above.

The main institutional, but not publicly advertised political goal of authoritarian rule is to ensure the tenure of the regime and the retention of power by the ruling

political actors.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the goal that is publicly advertised is political stability, which allegedly allows to avoid socio-political disasters that would threaten the safety of the citizens [Malashenko 2011]. This serves as a justification and predetermines the tendency of authoritarian rulers towards conservatism, not as a classical ideology, in their understanding, but as an ideological justification for the preservation of their regime.

All modern authoritarian regimes (with the exception of five absolute monarchies and five states with a form of government similar to Soviet Republics, including the DPRK with a ruling totalitarian regime), in addition to the desire of the ruling political actors for immutability, have the task of demonstrating to the world community and their own citizens the legality as well as electoral legitimacy of their regime. At the same time, in all sovereign UN member states, except for the mentioned exceptions, at the constitutional level, the institution of direct national elections has been established as the fundamental mechanism through which state power is formed.

It should be noted that nowadays, even in absolute monarchies, there is a tendency to form proto-parliaments with partial use of electoral mechanisms. For instance, since 2011, on a regular basis, every four years the UAE have been holding elections to the Federal National Council — a consultative parliamentary-type body with advisory functions, which consists of 40 people, half of whom are elected directly, while the other half are appointed by the rulers of the seven emirates.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, since 2011, every four years Oman has regularly held elections to the Consultative Assembly (Majlis al-Shura), the lower house of the Council of Oman, all 84 members of which are elected as representatives of the regions.<sup>4</sup> In 2021, Qatar held its first elections to the Advisory Council (Majlis al-Shura), a consultative body with parliamentary functions, 30 members of which are publicly elected, while the other 15 are appointed by the emir.<sup>5</sup>

China also sees a gradual introduction of competitive electoral procedures at the lowest level of local government, and currently village committees (councils) are directly elected by the villagers [Arbatskaya, Xu 2021: 683].

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<sup>2</sup> With some rare exceptions, when other goals are involved, including the regimes that carried out successful “authoritarian modernizations” — the “soft dictatorships” of Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore and Augusto Pinochet in Chile.

<sup>3</sup> Federal National Council. *Website ru.knowledgr.com*. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://ru.knowledgr.com/02165237/>

<sup>4</sup> Consultative Assembly of Oman. *Website ru.knowledgr.com*. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://ru.knowledgr.com/02168681/>

<sup>5</sup> Koroleva, N. Women were defeated in the first parliamentary elections in the history of Qatar. *Deutsche Welle*. 03.10.2021. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.dw.com/ru/napervyh-v-istorii-katara-parlamentskih-vyborah-zhenshiny-poterpele-porazhenie/a-59387608>

For authoritarian regimes in states with a republican form of government, the problem lies in the fact that the guaranteed tenure of the regime cannot be realized while working with the proper quality of democratic political and state orders designed to ensure not only freedom of choice, but also accountability and turnover of public authority. For traditional autocracies such as authoritarian monarchies and communist regimes, this problem basically does not exist. In postcolonial dictatorships, this problem is solved by conducting government-controlled plebiscites which use the main governmental mechanism for such regimes — state-power coercion [Nisnevich 2021: 114].

Under modern neo-authoritarian regimes,<sup>6</sup> the insurmountable contradiction between the regime's desire for tenure and the true purpose of democratic institutions, including the institution of elections, is eliminated by administrative management, the administration of processes in the public political sphere by the current government. Such administration can be defined as political, since it is implemented through deviant political technologies [Shabrov 2012: 329], which represent a specially designed set of informal practices of political corruption, coercive power and information manipulation in order to block the possibility of political competition and to distort the meaning and content of institutions of democracy.

Using the approach of identifying the most significant areas of the public political field in the context of political competition, proposed by American political scientists Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, which they call “arenas” [Levitsky, Way 2002], it is possible, with some additions and clarifications, to identify party-political, media, personnel, electoral, legislative and judicial arenas.

The existing political practice makes it possible to identify rather general special political technologies and informal practices of political corruption, coercive power and information manipulation, which are used by neo-authoritarian regimes in various arenas of the public political sphere to suppress political competition. At the same time, it should be noted that the surviving postcolonial dictatorships, mimicking in the ever-changing foreign policy conditions, in certain situations also resort to the use of similar technologies of political administration, which leads to the erosion of the boundary between dictatorships and neo-authoritarian regimes.

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<sup>6</sup> A neo-authoritarian regime is a regime in which, depending on the current political situation and the tasks of political and public administration, the dominating mechanism is either systemic corruption, primarily in its political manifestations, or politically motivated state-power coercion, while manipulation of public opinion is permanently used [Nisnevich 2021: 112].

## **The Technologies and Practices of Political Administration During the Formation of Neo-authoritarian Regimes**

### The Party-Political Arena

The “root system” of representative democracy and, above all, the formation of public power through elections is provided by the political party system. Therefore, in order to demonstrate their pseudo-democratic legitimacy, neo-authoritarian regimes are forced to maintain multiparty systems, which, with the help of deviant political technologies, they can administratively regulate with varying degrees of rigidity in order to impede real party competition that could potentially threaten the regime’s tenure. Such multiparty systems can theoretically be attributed to party systems with a dominant party, where the presence of other parties, including opposition, is allowed, and whose activities and degree of influence in the political field is regulated through political administration. The absolutely dominant party in this system, which in Russian political science is referred to as the “party of power”, ensures the realization of the interests and goals of the current government in the public political sphere and, primarily, in the processes of forming public authorities through elections both in legislative and overall parliamentary activities, as well as organizes mass public actions in support of the current government. The party-political arena is one of the key arenas forming neo-authoritarian regimes.

Under neo-authoritarian regimes, the nature of the multiparty system and the process of its formation is determined by the conditions under which the regime has emerged. It depends on whether the regime arose as a result of certain transformations, including the complete collapse of the previous traditional authoritarian regime (authoritarian monarchy, communist regime, dictatorship), or as a result of authoritarian regression against democratic rule, as well as on the presence or absence of a multi-party system under the rule of the previous regime.

In case a neo-authoritarian regime is a result of authoritarian regression (as, for example, in Nigeria, Turkey and the Comoros), the regime obviously emerges in the conditions of a democratic multiparty system. One of the parties of this system becomes the “midwife” of the neo-authoritarian regime — it generates a political actor that constructs a personalist-type regime, as, for example, in Turkey, or acts as the collective designer of a corporate-type regime, as, for example, in Tanzania.

Under these circumstances, the primary task of the emerging neo-authoritarian regime in the party-political arena is to ensure the dominance of the party that formed the regime by suppressing the already existing political parties that

are able to become real competitors for the party of power, up to completely eliminating them. Political administration is designed to ensure the reformation of the existing multiparty system in a way that makes it asymptotically similar to a multiparty system with an absolute dominant party of power and a set of parties, including opposition ones, which have no significant impact on the political process.

Removing the most popular and influential opposition leaders from the public political field and marginalizing opposition parties is the technological basis for the reformation of the original democratic multiparty system through political administration and ensuring the full supervision and control of the system by the current government. Informal practices used for administrative “cleansing” of the party-political arena include publicly discrediting opposition politicians through mass media controlled by the authorities, intimidating and forcing them into emigration, detention through law enforcement agencies and prosecution on specially fabricated grounds with subsequent restrictions in rights, and applying sanctions such as house arrest and imprisonment, as well as violent actions from causing health damage up to physical elimination. Moreover, in some cases, splits in opposition parties and coalitions as well as bribing influential members of their leadership are provoked.

A typical example is President Daniel Ortega’s regime in Nicaragua, which emerged as a result of authoritarian regression. After sixteen years of democratic rule, Ortega, the leader of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (SNLF), won the 2006 democratic presidential election and, for the second time in his political career, became President of Nicaragua in 2007. During the four years of his presidential term he not only constructed a neo-authoritarian regime of his personal power, but also led it to the top of these regimes, which is described by American political scientist Thomas Carothers as a “dominant power”. Under this regime, one political grouping — whether it is a movement, a party, an extended family, or a single leader — dominates the system in such a way that there appears to be little prospect of alternation of power in the foreseeable future; and the long hold on power by one political group usually produces large-scale corruption and crony capitalism [Carothers 2002: 11,12]. The SNLF became the party of power and took an absolutely dominant position in the party system (In parliamentary elections of 2011 — 60,85 %, 2016 — 65,86 %, and 2021 — 74,17 %). At the same time, according to researchers, in order to suppress the opposition and mass protests, Ortega condemned political opponents as traitors, incited mobs to violence, and then denied responsibility: as a result, hundreds of protesters



were killed throughout the country, and many others were imprisoned.<sup>7</sup> Ortega also uses institutions and the judicial system against his opponents to detain them and file lawsuits against them [Haynes 2018].

Such situations mainly emerge in neo-authoritarian regimes formed as a result of authoritarian regression, such as the regimes of President Recep Erdogan in Turkey with the ruling Justice and Development Party [Vartazarova, Kobrinskaya, Utkin 2019], President Hugo Chavez, and since 2013 his successor Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela with the ruling United Socialist Party,<sup>8</sup> President Pierre Nkurunziza, and since 2020 his successor Evariste Ndayishimiye in Burundi with the ruling National Council for the Defense of Democracy — Forces for the Defense of Democracy.<sup>9</sup>

In cases where neo-authoritarian regimes arise as a result of the collapse of the previous traditional authoritarian regime, different initial states of the party system and different scenarios for the formation of new regimes are possible. After the collapse of the previous regime, there may be a transitional period, sometimes even with “glimpses” of democratic rule, before the political system starts to stably develop towards neo-authoritarianism.

When neo-authoritarian regimes emerge as a result of the collapse of postcolonial dictatorships, as a rule, the circumstances of the party-political arena are determined by the existence of a monopolistically ruling party, which acted as the core of the former party system and represented the interests of the dictatorship in the public political sphere. At the same time, several minor parties remain active, and the number of new parties grows rapidly, especially, as opposition political groups reveal themselves and the insurgent organizations, that waged the armed struggle against the dictatorship, transform into political parties claiming a leading role in the public political sphere. Under these circumstances, political actors constructing the new neo-authoritarian regime dissolve the party that used to rule under the dictator, form their own party of power and suppress the parties that are capable of creating real political competition, using the previously mentioned political technologies and informal practices of political administration.

A typical example is how the corporate neo-authoritarian regime emerged and developed in Ethiopia after the overthrow of the dictatorial regime of Mengistu

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<sup>7</sup> Anderson J.L. “Fake News” and Unrest in Nicaragua. *New Yorker*. 27 August 2018. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/09/03/fake-news-and-unrest-in-nicaragua>

<sup>8</sup> Dabaghyan E. The Specifics of the Political System of Venezuela. *Information site of political comments “Politcom.ru”*. 09.06.2020. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <http://politcom.ru/23843.html>

<sup>9</sup> Burundi country review 2020. *Country Watch*. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.countrywatch.com/intelligence/countryreviews?countryid=29>

Haile Mariam in 1991. The political bloc of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which was created in 1989 by insurgent groups, became the collective ruling political actor in the new regime. The leaders of the EPRDF have been irreplaceably ruling since 1991 — Meles Zenawi, as President from 1991 to 1995, then as Prime Minister from 1995 until his death in 2012; his successor Hailemariam Desalegn as Prime Minister from 2012 to 2018; and Abiy Ahmed Ali, who became Prime Minister after Desalegn's resignation, and who reformatted the EPRDF into the Prosperity Party in 2019. In the party-political arena, the Workers' Party of Ethiopia, which was the ruling party during the Mariam regime, and which he led, was banned, and most of its members were arrested and sent to re-education camps. All political rivals of the EPRDF were brutally suppressed and many members of opposition parties, including about 20 thousand members of the Oromo Liberation Front, were also arrested and sent to prisons and camps [Krylov 2007].

Another typical example is the personalistic neo-authoritarian regime in Egypt after the fall of the dictatorial regime of Hosni Mubarak in 2011, who had been ruling for thirty years since 1981, before his resignation as president. Under the Mubarak regime, the National Democratic Party, founded in 1978 by the previous dictator Anwar Sadat, held an absolutely dominant position in the decorative multiparty system constructed under Mubarak and acted as the ruling party. After his overthrow, this party was abolished by the decision of the Supreme Administrative Court of Egypt. As a result of the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2011–2012, the Freedom and Justice Party of the Islamic religious and political association “Muslim Brotherhood”<sup>10</sup> came to power, and its candidate Mohammed Morsi became the president. As a result of mass opposition protests directly by the military, led by Defense Minister General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, this political force was removed from power in 2013, and el-Sisi, having won the presidential elections in 2014 and then in 2018, formed a neo-authoritarian regime of his personal power. Since el-Sisi came to power in 2014, tens of thousands of his political opponents have either been put under investigation or arrested, while “the ‘fight against terrorism’ mainly assumes the suppression of the opposition represented by the “Muslim Brotherhood” and their Islamist allies, as well as any secular democratic forces whose activities may threaten the political order”.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Recognized as a terrorist organization by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation.

<sup>11</sup> Ibragimov, I. Domestic political situation in Egypt. *Russian International Affairs Council*. 28.03.2019. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/vnutripoliticheskaya/>

At the same time, the Nation's Future Party, created in 2014 by the employees of the Egyptian Military Intelligence, posing as a party supporting President el-Sisi and the military, has taken a dominant position in the party-political arena and in the multiparty system of Egypt, which includes more than 100 parties.

During the transition to neo-authoritarianism after the collapse of a traditional authoritarian regime, a situation may occur which is described by Levitsky and Way as “competitive authoritarianism” [Levitsky, Way 2002]. Under these circumstances, none of the authoritarian groups fighting for power (especially ethno-political, religious, or territorial) can take hold of the power for a continuous period, while the struggle between such groups emerges in the public political sphere and escalates during election campaigns. At the same time, electoral processes seem to be far from democratic standards: this brings to falsifications of the results, coercion, intimidation and bribery of voters, mass pre-electoral and post-electoral clashes between the supporters of different groups, accompanied by physical violence up to the use of weapons. A typical example of competitive authoritarianism is the political process in Nigeria, which started after the “Fourth Republic” came to replace the military junta in 1998 [Sabo 2012]. It seems that the regime of competitive authoritarianism is fundamentally unstable and therefore limited in its time and continues until one of the opposing groups completely seizes the power, and the neo-authoritarian rule transforms into a regime of dominant power.

The emergence of neo-authoritarian regimes in the post-Soviet states, formed after the collapse of the USSR, developed a specific situation in the party-political arena. During the short period of political turbulence at the initial stage of the formation of the post-Soviet states, a number of political associations, that could be considered proto-parties, appeared. Nevertheless, full-fledged parties and party systems did not emerge. Therefore, political actors constructing neo-authoritarian regimes in post-Soviet states faced the task of forming both a party of power and a decorative administratively managed multiparty system. Forming the party of power through informal practices of abusing administrative resources of public power, i.e., through the use of political corruption, has become one of the key technologies of political administration in the construction of post-Soviet neo-authoritarian regimes.

In the post-Soviet states in which neo-authoritarian regimes were formed, their constitutions established presidential forms of government (except for Armenia). At the same time, the strong institution of presidential power, without having the support of real political parties or coalitions, and due to the lack of other resources,

used its own administrative resources and the administrative resources of the entire system of public power in order to ensure its self-sufficiency in achieving political goals. This institution became the dominant actor of the political field, the president's inner circle became the "political sanctum" in which the main political decisions are made, while the presidential administration became the key executive mechanism, implementing and coordinating political administration in all arenas of the political sphere.

To directly represent and protect the interests of the presidential power in the public political sphere, a party of power and a pseudo-multiparty system are created. The core of this system consists of the dominant party of power, one or more of its satellite parties and a limited number of parties representing the so-called systemic opposition, with a permissible level of opposition strictly administratively regulated.

For example, regulatory and normative administrative resources were actively used in the creation of New Azerbaijan, the party of power in Azerbaijan, whose members, according to official data, exceed 700 thousand citizens of the country. That "in relation to the total population, is quite comparable with the same figures for the USSR and the Communist Party by 1989".<sup>12</sup> The usage of regulatory and normative resources is confirmed, in particular, by the fact that "it is not uncommon to hear a story that some employee of a state institution accidentally discovers that he is a member of this party," and at the same time "a significant part of those who joined took this step consciously, hoping to get closer to the authorities and their resources, to acquire useful symbolic capital".<sup>13</sup> The decorative multiparty system of Azerbaijan consists of more than 50 parties, but not all of them are really operating.

It is important to note that the parties of power constructed by post-Soviet neo-authoritarian regimes through political administration do not meet the basic criteria by which the political theory characterizes a party as dominant. They have no significant influence neither on the decisions taken in the "political sanctum" that determine the actions of the ruling regime, nor on the appointments for political positions of public power.

It should also be noted that one of the normative instrument that has been and is currently being used in the construction of parties of power and pseudo-multiparty systems in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes is the special law on political parties.

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<sup>12</sup> Rumyantsev, S. Behind Azerbaijan's facades. *Global media organization "openDemocracy"*. March 14, 2017. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ru/azerbaijan-strana-vysokikh-zaborov/>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

This law purposefully lays mechanisms of power-enforcement regulation, which provide state bodies with the opportunity to refuse the registration of or eliminate those political parties that, for one reason or another, do not appeal to the current government. A key mechanism is the multi-stage procedure to formally apply, but, in fact, get a permission to register or re-register a party, based on the quantitative requirements for the organizational structure of the party and its regional branches varying depending on the political situation. Typical examples include “the Law on Political Parties” of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated July 15, 2002 No. 344-II.

It is fundamentally important that, despite the strict political administration, post-Soviet neo-authoritarian regimes systematically see the manifestation of opposition politicians, public figures and prototypes of political organizations that can contribute to the initial emergence of political competition. Such politicians, public figures and organizations are eliminated by the current government through the same informal practices of suppressing political competition as mentioned earlier for transformational neo-authoritarian regimes. One example is the situation that developed in Belarus after the mass protests in August 2020 against the regime of Alexander Lukashenko, which, as the scale and intensity of those practices increased, acquired the characteristics of an “enclosed dictatorship”.<sup>14</sup> A tough course aimed at the elimination of opposition politicians and parties is typical for such Central Asian states as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan [Zhiltsov, Zonn 2019]. In Azerbaijan, under the rule of Ilham Aliyev, “it is necessary to speak about the elimination of any political struggle (even its mere imitation), and the transition to consistent repression and marginalization of opponents, their active displacement from public sphere”.<sup>15</sup>

Party systems in such Central Asian republics as Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are typical results of political administration of the party-political arena under post-Soviet personalistic neo-authoritarian regimes [Kurtov 2007, Malysheva 2018]. In Kazakhstan, a pseudo-multiparty system has been created, with the number of parties varying from 8 to 12, with the complete domination of the pro-presidential “Nur Otan” party. A pseudo-multiparty system consisting of 8 parties has been created in Tajikistan, the party of power being the ruling People’s Democratic Party of Tajikistan, whose permanent leader since 1998 has been President Emomali Rahmon. In Uzbekistan, the pseudo-multiparty

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<sup>14</sup> Kumin, M. Not the last dictator: how Lukashenka’s regime has changed in a year after the elections. Forbes.ru. August 11, 2021. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.forbes.ru/obshchestvo/437003-ne-posledniy-diktator-kak-izmenilsya-rezhim-lukashenko-za-god-posle-vyborov>

<sup>15</sup> Rummyantsev, S. Behind Azerbaijan’s facades. Global media organization “open Democracy”. March 14, 2017. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ru/azerbaijan-strana-vysokikh-zaborov/>

system currently includes 5 parties, while “The Movement of Entrepreneurs and Businesspeople — The Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan” serves as the party of power. In Turkmenistan, the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, which is the successor of the Communist Party of the Turkmen SSR, is the party of power, while two more parties were registered to simulate multiparty system after the adoption of the law on parties in 2012 (there used to be a one-party system before that).

### The Media Arena

Another key arena for the emergence of neo-authoritarian regimes is the arena of mass information. The purpose of the political administration of this arena is to suppress information competition and ensure the complete dominance of the mass media controlled and managed by the current government. The key task of such media is the informational manipulation of public opinion by influencing the mass consciousness in order to ensure support for the ruling regime. The manipulation of public opinion is an informal political practice and is projected by “black” informational political technologies [Rossoshansky 2011] which combine classical methods and techniques of ideological propaganda with new methods and techniques generated by modern information and communication technologies and, first of all, the Internet.

Public opinion manipulation under neo-authoritarian regimes is implemented by means and systems of mass media dominating the information arena and controlled by the regime. The pool of such media is constructed through political administration and includes both traditional media (television, radio, print media) and Internet media (social networks, network media, blogs, instant messengers and others).

Political administration of the media arena is carried out through the “nationalization of the media”, which has two implications. The first one is appointing adherents of the ruling regime to leading positions at both traditional and modern state media and systems of mass information dissemination from the very emergence of the neo-authoritarian regime. These adherents are intended to ensure the strict implementation of directives and informational-propaganda campaigns, the content and scenarios of which are developed by political strategists serving the current government, aimed at manipulating the mass consciousness. The second implication is redistributing the property in the media market, the “nationalization” of the most significant and influential non-state media through the voluntary-compulsory change of their owners or their transfer to the ownership of businessmen and financial-industrial groups affiliated with the current government. This is carried out through both economic leverage and informal practices of blackmail and intimidation, including persecution by law

enforcement agencies on trumped-up grounds and biased trials. The “nationalized” mass media are united with the state media into a single, centrally controlled system of mass information, designed to conduct a unified policy and impact the mass consciousness through information, propaganda, and mobilization.

To suppress any possibility of information competition, oppositional and the most influential independent media are removed from the information arena by either of the two ways: they are closed through pre-trial or judicial proceedings based on trumped-up charges of conducting anti-state activities, supporting terrorism and extremism, propagating views that are contrary to national interests, etc.; or they are “suffocated” economically, by limiting or completely depriving them of possible funding sources. At the same time, some media that are independent from the state remain in the media arena as democratic decorations, operating under “a sword of Damocles” — the constant threat of liquidation, if they cross the limit of permissible freedom of opinion established by the current government, or, in other words, if they begin to spread information about sensitive topics and events that are considered improper by the authorities.

A typical example of the political administration of the information arena under neo-authoritarian regimes, primarily in terms of the “nationalization” of the media, is Turkey, as “to date, the largest media — television channels CNN Türk, Kanal D, the Hürriyet newspaper, the Doğan Haber Ajansı news agency and others have become part of the media resources 95 % controlled by the president’s entourage” [Vartazarova, Kobrinskaya, Utkin 2019]. Similarly, in Nicaragua, the neo-authoritarian regime of President Ortega consolidated all mass media in its hands (especially state media, which include almost all television in the country) and closed down all independent mass media [Haynes 2018]. In Côte d’Ivoire, “the government manages the media with the widest coverage: two radio stations, two TV channels and a leading daily newspaper”.<sup>16</sup> And in Honduras, after the 2009 coup d’état and the emergence of a neo-authoritarian regime, “the authorities imposed censorship and limited the activities of the media, and some of them were completely closed” [Honduras 2015].

In addition, the political administration of the media arena includes “sweeping” specific opposition journalists and bloggers. To do this, informal practices are used, similar to those used to eliminate opposition politicians — intimidation and forced exile, persecution by law enforcement agencies, initiation of criminal cases and trials on specially fabricated charges, physical violence by “unknown persons” up to murder.

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<sup>16</sup> Ivory Coast profile — Media. *BBC News*. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13287219>

A striking example of the individual persecution of journalists and bloggers is the international scandal that received wide media coverage related to the arrest of journalist and editor-in-chief of opposition Telegram channel NEXTA Roman Protasevich and his companion, Russian citizen Sofya Sapega in Belarus. The two were arrested after a Ryanair aircraft flying from Athens to Vilnius made an emergency landing at Minsk Airport on May 23, 2021, and were subsequently charged with criminal offenses, in particular, inciting social hatred.<sup>17</sup>

All neo-authoritarian regimes use the mechanism of informational manipulation of public opinion along with such basic mechanisms as systemic political corruption and politically motivated government coercion. At the same time, the regimes that widely and actively use this mechanism, including as a key in solving certain political problems, can be interpreted as “information dictatorships” [Guriev, Treisman 2015].

### The Arena of Personnel

The arena of personnel is also essential for the formation of neo-authoritarian regimes. The purpose of the political administration of this arena is to ensure that the ruling political actor (individual or collective) has control over the state apparatus, law enforcement system and special services of internal and external security, as well as the army and other armed formations. This is implemented through such type of political corruption as political nepotism: instead of prioritizing professional qualities and filling positions on a competitive basis, the adherents of the ruling regime are given the key political and administrative positions of public power, including the top leadership of law enforcement agencies, special services, the army and other military formations, which essentially means the privatization of public power. It is important to note that political nepotism is one of the key deviant technologies of political administration under neo-authoritarian rule.

At the same time, the adherents of the ruling neo-authoritarian regime are purposefully placed not only in the system of public power and, as mentioned earlier, in the system of mass information, but also in the leadership of the budget-forming and most profitable state and non-state joint-stock companies, banks and other economic entities. This provides control over financial flows and the possibility of using national resources in private and group interests, creates a breeding ground for economic corruption, which is organically inherent in neo-authoritarian regimes.

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<sup>17</sup> Detention of the founder of the NEXTA Telegram channel. *RIA News*. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from [https://ria.ru/category\\_zaderzhanic-osnovatelya-telegram-kanala-nexta/](https://ria.ru/category_zaderzhanic-osnovatelya-telegram-kanala-nexta/)



Political nepotism is most clearly manifested in personalistic neo-authoritarian regimes, where its objects are family members, relatives and the inner circle of the head of state. For instance, in Nicaragua, under President Ortega, “his regime is a family affair. His wife — and indeed his vice president — is Rosario Murillo, known as the more ruthless of the two”, and some of their eight children “run key sectors in Nicaragua: media, public investment, and more” [Nordlinger 2019: 24]. A similar situation occurs in Azerbaijan, where on February 21, 2017, the President’s wife, Mehriban Aliyeva, took office as First Vice President, her family members hold prominent government posts, and “the Pashayev clan has long been spoken of as an independent force”.<sup>18</sup> A clear example of clan nepotism in politics was clearly and publicly demonstrated by a series of resignations, when the family members and supporters of the former President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev left government positions and top positions in state-owned companies following the events of January 2022.<sup>19</sup>

## **The Technologies and Practices of Political Administration under Regimes of Dominant Power**

### The Electoral Arena

Elections are one of the most significant arenas for political administration not only when the neo-authoritarian regime is still forming, but even more so after it fully emerges and reaches its apogee in the form of a regime of dominant power. The purpose of the political administration of this arena is, on the one hand, to ensure that the ruling political actors and the ruling regime as a whole do not change through the institution of elections, to exclude the likelihood of even hypothetical “overturning elections”, and, on the other hand, — to create the appearance of rational democratic legitimacy for the public authorities formed as a result of electoral procedures.

To achieve this goal, the technologies of political administration of the electoral arena use informal practices to consistently solve the following key tasks.

The first task is to suppress real electoral competition, while, at the same time, imitating such competition during the entire electoral procedure. The suppression of competition in the party-political arena creates favorable initial conditions for addressing this issue. However, opposition political figures and

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<sup>18</sup> Rummyantsev, S. Behind Azerbaijan’s facades. *Global media organization “openDemocracy”*. March 14, 2017. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ru/azerbaijan-strana-vysokikh-zaborov/>

<sup>19</sup> News about resignations and appointments to public office. *Information agency “Kursiv”*. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://kursiv.kz/news/otstavki-i-naznacheniya>

structures (parties, coalitions) may still appear right before the new electoral cycle, which can significantly affect the results of the elections. In order to prevent these from participating, various informal practices are used to form the required “elections menu”.

Preventive arrest on trumped-up charges and subsequent long-term imprisonment of potentially influential opposition candidates is widespread. This is exactly what happened during the 2020 presidential elections in Belarus. Potentially dangerous for incumbent President Lukashenko, new opposition candidates — banker Viktor Babariko and businessman and blogger Sergei Tikhanovsky, were arrested and subsequently sentenced: Babariko — to 14 years on charges of economic crimes, and Tikhanovsky — to 18 years on charges of organizing mass riots, inciting social hostility and other far-fetched crimes.<sup>20</sup> In Nicaragua, seven potential presidential candidates were arrested ahead of the 2021 presidential elections.<sup>21</sup>

A similar situation took place in Egypt, when the incumbent President el-Sisi was re-elected in 2018. These elections were virtually non-alternative (there was only one alternative candidate), “since the president-elect had no real competitors, some of them were placed under arrest, others withdrew on their own, following the call of some opposition parties and prominent public figures to boycott elections”.<sup>22</sup>

Creating conditions under which the participation of opposition candidates and parties in the elections becomes a priori pointless in terms of influencing its results, which forces such candidates and parties to refuse to participate in this procedure and to call for its boycott, is a common practice. For instance, the main opposition parties boycotted the early presidential elections held in Azerbaijan in 2018, because “opposition representatives believed that by postponing the elections, the authorities prevented potential candidates from running a full-scale campaign, and, according to independent political analysts, all the other seven candidates were nominated by the authorities in order to create the illusion of competition in the elections”.<sup>23</sup> During the 2021 parliamentary elections in Ethiopia, “two of the most prominent Oromo opposition

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<sup>20</sup> Kozenko A. Revolution of Unfulfilled Hopes. How Belarus went from mass demonstrations to repressions in a year. *BBC News. Russian Service*. August 21, 202. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-58016427>

<sup>21</sup> Kropman V. In Nicaragua, seven candidates for president have already been sent under arrest. *Deutsche Welle*. 25.07.2021. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.dw.com/ru/v-nicaragua-otpravleny-pod-arest-uzhe-sem-kandidatov-v-prezidenty/a-58634512>

<sup>22</sup> Ibragimov I. Domestic political situation in Egypt. *Russian International Affairs Council*. 28.03.2019. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/vnutripoliticheskaya/>

<sup>23</sup> Election Results in Azerbaijan: One of the Candidates Voted for Aliyev. *Information agency REGNUM*. April 12, 2018. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2403100.html>

parties — the Oromo Federalist Congress, led by prominent politician Merera Gudina, and the Oromo Liberation Front, refused to participate in the elections due to the arrest of their candidates and destruction of the offices of their organizations”.<sup>24</sup>

The official “elections menu” is formed through the registration of candidates and party lists, which is carried out by a state agency authorized to organize and conduct the electoral procedure (generally, the electoral commission). At the stage of registration, political administration is carried out by the electoral commission through the illegal use of its regulatory resource according to the instructions of the current government, which refers to the practices of electoral political corruption. Using such informal practices, the electoral commission does not register and thus does not allow the participation in the elections of the candidates and parties whose participation is undesirable for various reasons for the current government.

Since different states apply different regulations and requirements for the registration of candidates and party lists, there is a whole set of informal political administration practices at the registration stage.

The registration of candidates and party lists based on collected signatures of voters has become widespread. At the same time, restrictions are set on the minimum number of signatures required for registration and the maximum allowable number of invalid and unreliable signatures. Non-compliance with such quantitative requirements based on the results of verification of the collected signatures by the election commission in closed session, which is practically impossible to verify and question, is used to refuse registration. This practice is common in all post-Soviet neo-authoritarian regimes.

Another reason for refusing registration is the purely formal, and sometimes virtually unreliable, discrepancy between the information about a candidate submitted to the electoral commission and the regulatory requirements for such information, which is determined either by the electoral commission itself or in a judicial proceeding. Thus, in the 2020 presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire, the Constitutional Council excluded former President Laurent Gbagbo from the list of candidates on the grounds that he was a person “convicted of offenses and crimes with deprivation of civil rights”, although by that time Gbagbo had already been acquitted by the International Criminal Court.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ismagilova R.N. Elections and the Ethnopolitical Situation in Ethiopia. *Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences*. Current comment.19.08.2021. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.inafran.ru/node/2518>

<sup>25</sup> Sadovskaya, L.M. Presidential Election 2020 in Côte d'Ivoire. *Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences*. Current comment. 11.12.2020. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://www.inafran.ru/node/2377>

The second key task of the political administration of the electoral procedure is to ensure, first, the level of voter support set by the current government for the re-election of the incumbent president or the election of his publicly announced successor and / or the party in power and its satellites; and second, a sufficiently high level of voter turnout to demonstrate the legitimacy of the electoral process and its results.

To solve this problem at the stage of the election campaign, two technologies of political administration are used together, complementing each other.

Informational-political technologies implement a massive propaganda impact, primarily on supporters of the ruling regime and those who hesitate, to mobilize them to participate in the elections and support the incumbent president or his successor and / or the party in power based on the concentration and coordination of informational manipulation, carried out by state media dominating the arena of mass information.

Administrative-political technologies implement administrative pressure on various groups of voters and, above all, on those who are directly administratively, economically and socially dependent on the current government (state and municipal employees, employees of state, municipal and government-affiliated enterprises, organizations and institutions, pensioners, students, military personnel and others). Such pressure is carried out through informal practices such as: bribing voters in various ways, including using budgetary funds; threatening that in case of voting against candidates and political parties supported by the current government their personal economic and social status will deteriorate and socio-economic crises and cataclysms that threaten stability and security will emerge; as well as administrative coercion and voting under the control of officials for the candidates and parties indicated by them.

For example, this technology is used by the regime of President Maduro in Venezuela, which, in order to retain power, can “threaten, expel, detain, bribe” and, specifically, on the eve of the 2018 presidential elections, used such “weapon” the handout of rice, pasta and canned goods that was the main source of sustenance for 15 percent of the population.<sup>26</sup>

If the required results of the elections are not obtained at stage of the election campaign, various technologies and informal falsification practices are used

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<sup>26</sup> Kirschner, N. Maduro election tactics: Threaten, exile, detain, bribe. *ShareAmerica*. 20 December 2019. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://share.america.gov/maduro-election-tactics-threaten-exile-detain-bribe/>

to determine the voting results. One of these technologies is called “carousel” — multiple voting at different polling stations by the same persons who are specially brought to the polling stations. The practice of distorting the results of voting at polling stations by falsifying the protocols of precinct commissions is also used. The officially announced general results of the voting are also being falsified.

The falsification of the election results in almost all neo-authoritarian regimes provokes, if not permanent, then sporadic post-election mass protests, which, as a rule, are suppressed by force. A similar situation occurred in Haiti in 2015, after the first round of the presidential elections, which led to the postponement of the second round of elections to 2016; in Honduras in 2017, after the general presidential and parliamentary elections; in Kyrgyzstan in 2020, after the parliamentary elections, the results of which were declared invalid.

The political administration of the electoral arena deforms and transforms the institution of elections, turning it into a procedure aimed to form public authorities through the manipulation of the voting process.

It should be noted that a clear indicator of the explicit political administration of the electoral arena and its successful implementation for the current government through special political technologies and informal practices of electoral corruption can be the results of voting at a plebiscitary level, which is practically unattainable under real electoral competition in free and fair democratic elections.

Most presidents in states with personalistic neo-authoritarian regimes, when re-elected for their next term, according to official data, receive more than 70 % of the vote. The absolute RECORD holders, who exceeded 90 %, are President of Turkmenistan Berdimuhamedov, who, when re-elected for a third term in 2017, received 97.69 %; the President of Egypt el-Sisi, who received 97.08 % when he was re-elected for a second term in 2018; the President of Côte d’Ivoire Ouattara, who received 94.27 % when he was re-elected for a third term in 2020; and the President of Tajikistan Rahmon, who, when re-elected for a sixth term in 2020, received 90.92 %. The absolute record holder among the parties in power is the ruling political bloc in Ethiopia, the EPRDF, which, since the 2010 parliamentary elections, has been holding more than 90 % of the seats in the parliament.

### Legislative Arena

The state of the legislative arena under regimes of dominant power is determined by the fact that the majority of seats in the national parliament belong to the ruling party and its satellites, which ensures full control and manageability of the parliament.

It should be noted that this situation occurs “in most full-scale authoritarian regimes” in which legislatures, if any, are “thoroughly controlled by the ruling party” [Levitsky, Way 2002: 55].

The political administration of the legislative arena and legislative and parliamentary activity in general has the following purposes: adopting legislative acts on a de facto uncontested basis in the interests and goals of the ruling regime; simulating within acceptable limits the independence of the parliament and political competition in its activities; providing support for the position of the ruling regime on domestic and foreign policy issues in the form of official resolutions and statements of the parliament, public statements by deputies, participation of the parliament and parliamentarians in the informational and propaganda campaigns conducted by the regime in the public political sphere. Such administration is carried out through the party in power, acting under presidential neo-authoritarian regimes in accordance with the instructions and under the control of the presidential administration.

The key distinctive feature of legislative activity under regimes of dominant power is that the legislative acts adopted by the parliament are designed to ensure, as a matter of priority, the retention and privatization of public power by the ruling political actors; create regulatory conditions for the possibility of suppressing political, economic and informational competition through political administration; set at the legislative level the priorities of public authorities based not on national interests, but private and corporate interests of the ruling political and economic groups and clans. Such legislative activity is an abuse of the legislative resource of public authority in terms of the content of legislative provisions and is a form of political corruption.

As part of the political administration of the legislative arena, constitutional legislation is of particular importance for neo-authoritarian regimes. The Constitution can be amended to expand the powers of the ruling political actors and consolidate the constitutional grounds for prolonging the rule of the incumbent president. While the means of extending the constitutional powers of the ruling political actors vary quite widely from one neo-authoritarian regime to another, there is a fairly universal and standard technology for constitutionally prolonging the rule of an incumbent president. This technology includes amendments to the constitution that increase the term of office for the president's position and / or expand the restrictions on the number of terms for one person, up to the complete abolition of such restrictions, and “zeroing” all terms of office of the incumbent president before introducing amendments to the constitution. Such “zeroing” is established either by making

appropriate constitutional amendments or by a decision of the supreme body of constitutional proceedings.

According to studies by American specialists [Baturu, Elgie 2019], since the beginning of the 21st century, changes that in one form or another prolonged the rule of the incumbent president have been made to the constitutions of the vast majority of states not only with neo-authoritarian but also dictatorial regimes.

### Judicial Arena

The purpose of the political administration of the judicial arena is to integrate the judiciary into a single centralized system of neo-authoritarian rule in order to provide judicial protection to the ruling regime from the discontent of the citizens and to use the courts for political purposes as one of the tools for suppressing political and other types of competition within the technologies and informal practices discussed earlier. These issues are addressed through the administrative alignment of the cadres of the judiciary and, above all, the highest ones and by ensuring the dominance in the judiciary of judges who are at least loyal to the ruling regime. The ruling political actors pay special attention to the judges of the highest judicial bodies because these bodies can not only provide judicial protection of the interests of the ruling regime, which is not subject to any dispute, but can also provide constitutional legitimation of the decisions and actions of the regime, confirming their compliance with the constitution using not so much legal as political argumentation based on the principle of “political expediency”.

An example of using the judiciary for political purposes is Nicaragua, where the Supreme Court, where eight judges were members of the ruling FSLN party and the remaining seven were members of the opposition Liberal Constitutional Party, de facto violated the constitution in 2009 by allowing incumbent President Ortega to be re-elected for a second term.<sup>27</sup> Another example can be found in Turkey, where, under the regime of President Erdogan, “the powers of the judiciary, which is the fundamental basis of the principle of separation of powers, are used as an instrument of revenge for certain political and ideological beliefs”.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The Supreme Court of Nicaragua allowed Daniel Ortega to be re-elected for a second term. *RIA News*. 21.10.2009. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://ria.ru/20091021/189885316.html>

<sup>28</sup> Former Head of Constitutional Court: Turkey’s judiciary is under political siege, *Moskovskij Komsomolets*. November 12, 2019. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from <https://mk-turkey.ru/life/2019/11/12/mo-byvshij-glava-konstitucionnogo-suda-sudebnaya.html>

## Conclusion

Under neo-authoritarian rule, in order to maintain the power of the ruling political actor (individual OR collective) and ensure the tenure of the ruling regime as a whole, political competition is suppressed through political administration of the key arenas of the political sphere. To implement such administration, a set of special political technologies and informal practices of political corruption is used. At the same time, in order to demonstrate the appearance of democratic legitimacy, the functioning of the main democratic institutions is simulated within the limits tightly controlled and regulated by the current government.

In particular, the institution of elections is deformed and transformed into a procedure of administratively controlled formation of public authorities with a given result through manipulating the voting process; the institution of political parties autonomous from the state is transformed into a pseudo-multiparty system with a completely dominant party of power, one or more of its satellite parties and a limited set of parties of the so-called systemic opposition, the permissible opposition of which is strictly administratively limited; the institution of alternative sources of information is transformed into a single system of “nationalized” mass media, which ensures the conduct of informational and propaganda campaigns for manipulating mass consciousness in the interests and goals of the current government, while maintaining a certain set of media limitedly autonomous from the government.

The fact that all neo-authoritarian regimes, as well as the surviving post-colonial dictatorships, precisely imitate the work of the main institutions of democracy through political administration determines that doctrinal discussions about “hybrid authoritarianism”, “electoral authoritarianism” and other “authoritarianisms with adjectives” do not seem to be quite productive and relevant to political reality, in the way it existed earlier within the doctrinal discussions about “democracies with adjectives”.

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