AUTHORITARIANISM 5

"Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains," wrote Jean-Jacques Rousseau in 1762. Since his time, democracy has emerged and flourished in many places throughout the world. However, according to Freedom House, an American nongovernmental organization that monitors and promotes open markets and democratic institutions around the world, approximately 60 percent of the world's population still lives in societies defined as either "partly free," where some personal liberties and democratic rights are limited, or "not free," where the public has little individual freedom.[1] In neither case can these regimes be described as democratic; they are instead authoritarian.

In this chapter we will look at the internal dynamics and origins of authoritarianism and explore the myriad nondemocratic systems that fall under this term. After defining the term and its relationship to freedom and equality, we will look at its sources, addressing the puzzle of why authoritarianism is the dominant regime in some countries but not in others. Behind this puzzle lies the broader question of whether society's natural political state is one of democratic or authoritarian rule. We will specifically look at competing societal and economic explanations for authoritarianism. What circumstances, if any, are more likely to promote authoritarianism? This discussion of the possible sources of authoritarianism will lead us into an examination of how authoritarian rulers maintain their hold on power. The countries of the world display a much greater diversity of authoritarianism than they do of democracy, since the former lacks any universal rules or norms other than the preservation of power. Nevertheless, we can identify a number of common methods that authoritarian rulers use to maintain control; these methods have led political sci-

entists to classify various types of authoritarianism. Finally, we will consider the future of authoritarianism. After 1989 and the end of the Cold War, many assumed that liberal democracy was the wave of the future and that authoritarianism's days were numbered. In recent years, however, some question whether, in the face of tremendous political, social, and economic obstacles, democracy is ever going to spread to all people. Such issues will set the stage for Chapter 6, in which we will look at democracy.
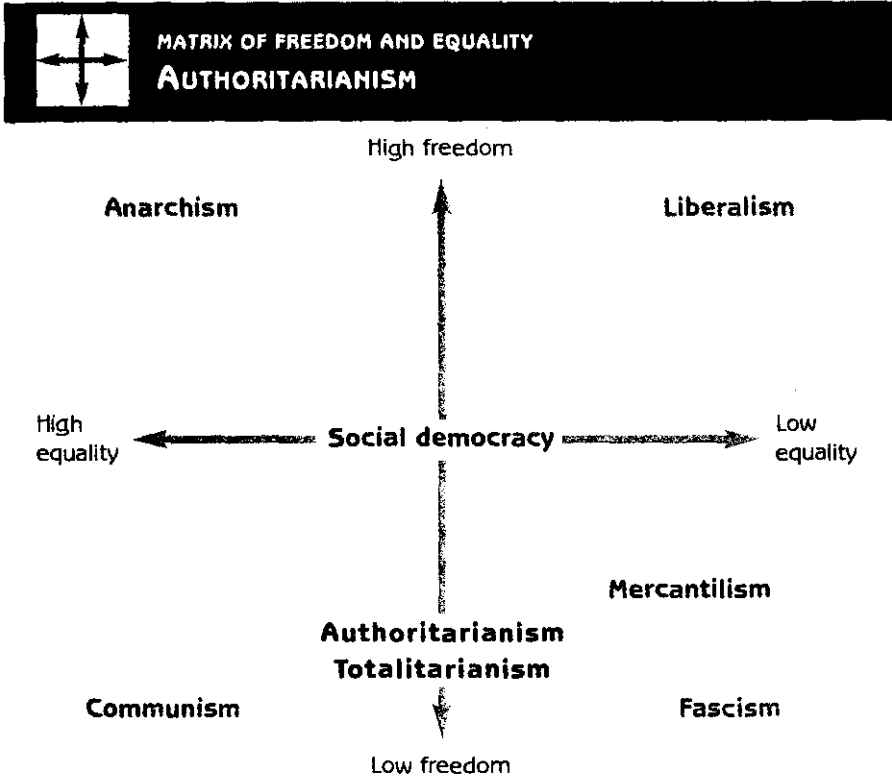
Defining Authoritarianism

Scholars define **authoritarianism** as a political system in which a small group of individuals exercises power over the state without being constitutionally responsible to the public. In authoritarian systems, the public does not play a significant role in selecting or removing leaders from office, and thus political leaders in authoritarian systems have much greater leeway to develop policies that they "dictate" to the people (hence the term "dictator"). As one can imagine, authoritarian systems by their nature are built around the restriction of individual freedom. At a minimum, they eliminate people's right to choose their own leaders, and they also restrict to varying degrees other liberties such as the freedom of speech or of assembly. Authoritarianism's relationship to equality is less clear. Some authoritarian systems, such as communism, limit individual freedom in order to produce greater social equality. Others seek to provide neither freedom nor equality, existing only to enhance the power of those in control.[2]

Various types of regimes and ideologies can be found in authoritarian systems. Authoritarian leaders do not always rule completely arbitrarily; indeed, authoritarianism can have a strong institutional underpinning of ideology. As ideologies, fascism and communism, for instance, explicitly reject democracy as an inferior form of social organization, favoring instead a powerful state and restricted individual freedoms. This ideology provides the set of norms that fascist or communist authoritarian leaders follow. But some other authoritarian systems, however, are not ideological,

IN FOCUS
AUTHORITARIANISM

A small group of individuals exercises power over the state.

Government is not constitutionally responsible to the public.

Public has little or no role in selecting leaders.

Individual freedom is restricted.

Authoritarian regimes may be institutionalized and legitimate.

MATRIX OF FREEDOM AND EQUALITY
AUTHORITARIANISM

High freedom

Anarchism   Liberalism

High   ◄————————— Social democracy ————————►   Low
equality   equality

Mercantilism

Authoritarianism
Totalitarianism

Communism   Fascism

Low freedom

Authoritarian regimes are typically able to restrict individual freedom to a much greater degree than can democratic regimes. In totalitarian regimes, individual freedom is almost completely absent.

and their politics are often driven entirely by the whims of those in power. In this case it becomes difficult to even speak of a regime. Indeed, under such conditions the term is often used pejoratively by critics, coupled with a leader's name (such as "the Castro regime" in reference to Cuba). This terminology reflects the critics' view that all decisions flow from the ruler, unfettered by political institutions of any sort. The leader, in essence, *is* the regime.

Many people use the terms totalitarian and authoritarian interchangeably to describe political regimes that severely limit individual freedom. But totalitarianism is more accurately used as a subcategory of authori-

tarianism. **Totalitarianism** is practiced by authoritarian regimes that possess some form of strong ideology that seeks to transform fundamental aspects of state, society, and the economy, using a wide array of organizations and the application of force. In other words, totalitarian systems seek to control and transform the *total* fabric of a country according to some ideological goal. Because of the ambitious goals of totalitarianism, violence becomes a necessary tool to destroy any obstacle to change. Violence not only destroys enemies of the totalitarian ideology, but, as the political philosopher Hannah Arendt pointed out, the very use of terror shatters human will, destroying the ability of individuals to create, much less aspire to, freedom.[3] The use of violence does not necessarily mean that a state is totalitarian. Totalitarianism requires a totalist ideology, the organizations to achieve those goals, and the unbridled use of terror and violence to break down the human spirit in order to remake it in the image of the ideology. Totalitarianism often emerges in cases where those who have come to power profess a radical or reactionary political attitude, both of which reject the status quo and see dramatic change as indispensable and violence as necessary or even positive.

Many countries in history have been controlled by leaders with totalitarian aspirations, but few of these leaders have been able to put their theories to practice. The Soviet Union under the rule of Josef Stalin from the 1930s to the 1950s is commonly viewed as totalitarian; during that time most aspects of Soviet private life were controlled by the state and the Communist Party. Millions who opposed these changes (and millions who did not) were imprisoned and even executed. China during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s are other examples of communist totalitarianism. In both cases those in power sought to dramatically remake society through revolutionary change and violence, and in both countries millions were killed in the course of only a few years. Nazi Germany is also commonly viewed as a totalitarian regime, although in some areas, such as the economy, changes were relatively few. Other fascist systems, such as Italy during World War II, cannot be described as totalitarian, even though they openly aspired to be so.

In the modern world, only communist North Korea can still be properly described

IN FOCUS

TOTALITARIAN REGIMES . . .

Seek to control and transform all aspects of the state, society, and economy.

Use violence as a tool for remaking institutions.

Have a strong ideological goal.

Have arisen relatively rarely.

Examples of Authoritarian and Totalitarian Regimes of the Twentieth Century		
Country	Ideology	Type of Regime
Soviet Union, 1917–91	Communist	Totalitarian (Stalin), one-party rule
Mexico, 1915–2000	None	Authoritarian, one-party rule
Germany, 1933–45	Fascist	Totalitarian, one-party rule
Zaire, 1965–1997	None	Authoritarian, personalistic

as totalitarian, dominated by a totalist ideology that is backed by violence, widespread fear, and the absence of even small personal freedoms. By way of comparison, a country such as Iraq, although highly oppressive, cannot be described as totalitarian because it lacks a clear ideology. Saddam Hussein's primarily goal as Iraq's leader is simply to maintain and expand his political power as an end in itself. Violence, then, is a means to one end alone—keeping Hussein in control—and not to a transformation of society.

To sum up, authoritarian rule is a political regime in which power is exercised by a few, unbound by any public or constitutional control. The public lacks not only the right to choose its own leaders but also any other personal liberty that those in power may see as a threat, such as freedom of speech or assembly. In some cases, particularly where it is coupled with a radical or reactionary political attitude, authoritarianism may take the form of totalitarianism. Such efforts are always sweeping, violent, and devastating.

SOURCES OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE

Now that we have defined authoritarianism, we might consider its source. What brings authoritarianism about? Naturally, there is no single or simple explanation. The earliest political philosophers debated the nature of human organization and the distribution of power within it; some, such as Karl Marx, believed that society first emerged from coercion, with the few in power limiting the freedoms of others in order to increase their own wealth at the expense of society's. Others, such as Rousseau, stressed that social organization emerged from the desire of individuals to form a soci-

ety and viewed authoritarianism as a subversion of this natural state. Modern scholars continue to debate the contribution of various forces to authoritarianism. Political scientists do not agree on what factors are most important in explaining authoritarian rule, and this debate is further complicated by their own ideological biases. These issues will become clearer as we look at the most prominent economic and societal explanations for authoritarian rule.

Economic Sources of Authoritarianism

Many observers argue that authoritarianism is essentially an expression of economic forces and institutions. Liberal and communist ideologies have been particularly powerful in this debate, and their views merit some consideration. Liberals, for example, believe that there is a strong connection between markets and authoritarianism. Free markets, liberals argue, generate and distribute wealth to a much greater and wider degree than any other economic form, creating a broad middle class. This leads to two further developments that undermine authoritarian rule. Not only is a middle-class society more educated and able to articulate its own political goals, but because wealth is dispersed the public will seek to limit any individual's or group's ability to gain enough power to threaten the wealth of the middle class. In turn, the middle class inevitably seeks to expand its own economic power into the realm of politics.[4] Where there is no middle class, however, and where poverty and inequality are great, an authoritarian system is much more likely to develop, either to defend the economic wealth of the few who possess it against the majority (producing an authoritarianism that is elite-focused), or to forcibly distribute that wealth among the majority population (producing an authoritarianism that is mass-focused). Liberals thus view laissez-faire capitalism as a powerful defense against authoritarianism.

Communists would agree that there is a strong connection between politics and economics, but in their view, capitalism is often the source of, rather than the solution to, authoritarianism. They are skeptical that capitalism can produce widely distributed economic benefits, since in their view such wealth is produced through the exploitation of others. A middle class may thrive under capitalism, they believe, but only on the back of the poor. Moreover, members of the middle class, whose democratic system really extends only to themselves, will gladly embrace authoritarianism if it means keeping the lower class under control. Even when wealthy countries reject authoritarianism at home, communists argue, they will

port its perpetuation overseas so as to better exploit poorer countries. When liberals argue that capitalism inevitably proves lethal to authoritarism, communists counter that so long as there is inequality, authoritarianism will thrive.[5]

Who is right? As we know, ideologies are built around ideals of how the world should be, but in reality, the circumstances are much more complicated. For example, although free markets may in many countries serve only as engines of wealth and enemies of democracy, we can find examples where the failures of capitalism have ushered in authoritarian rule. Periods of hyperinflation, discussed in Chapter 4, can quickly destroy the wealth of the public, generating widespread insecurity and poverty and leading to calls for drastic action, where the public is willing to see a curtailment of freedom in favor of greater economic security. The rise of Nazi rule in Germany in the 1930s, for example, was preceded by devastating hyperinflation that wiped out the savings of the middle class. When members of the middle class believes that economic insecurity, rather than those who hold political power, is the greatest threat to their wealth, they may become the greatest supporters of authoritarian rule.

Second, many who themselves accept a liberal view of politics and economics question whether a market economy automatically fosters democracy. Many authoritarian systems have been built alongside private property and market forces. Capitalism can be tolerated or even encouraged while political freedoms are restricted or eliminated entirely. In fact, some have argued that in order to build a strong market economy, political rights *must* be restricted. According to this view, by restricting political rights the government can focus on constructing the necessary environment for a market economy and attract investment by limiting the kind of turmoil that might come about in a new or weak democracy. Many modern authoritarian regimes have used this argument to justify their system, arguing that democracy is a "luxury" that their country cannot yet afford—bread first, ballots later. For example, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore experienced long periods of authoritarian rule during which they rapidly industrialized; all three are now fast-growing and powerful economies. Only in the 1980s and 1990s did Taiwan and South Korea democratize (Singapore has yet to do so).

Although these cases are pointed to as proof of the wisdom of restricting freedom for the sake of development, many more cases can be found of authoritarian systems whose economies stagnated or declined. Authoritarianism alone is no recipe for wealth. Nonetheless, in the real world capitalism and economic development can coexist with authoritarianism.

Whether in the long run the former will inevitably erode the latter is still hotly contested.

Communist views of authoritarianism are similarly problematic. Because of their belief that the core problem is one of inequality, communists typi-cally argue that it is vital to increase state power over the economy in order to ensure the equal distribution of wealth. Yet where economic and political power are concentrated in the hands of state, it is unlikely that the people will be able to check state power—paving the way for the restriction of personal freedoms in the name of equality. Under these conditions, not only personal freedom but societal wealth is threatened. Individuals lose the protection of property rights that is the cornerstone of entrepreneurship, and the state takes responsibility for all economic activity, often leading to disastrous outcomes. Communist regimes in the modern world have consistently led to the deaths of tens of millions people through terror and economic miscalculation. Thus communist views of the link between authoritarianism and capitalism must be considered in light of communism's own horrors. Whatever the differences, however, both liberals and communists share a belief that wealth and its distribution are key to understanding the emergence and persistence of authoritarian rule.

Authoritarianism and Society

Economics is not the only possible explanation for authoritarian rule, and many political scientists do not view wealth or inequality as key issues. They believe instead that authoritarianism is somehow connected to culture. (We saw in Chapter 3 that culture in the political context is a set of societal institutions that act as a social roadmap, providing guidelines for how we organize our lives.) According to this argument, culture has the capacity to either encourage or constrain democratic development, depending on whether the existing culture embodies norms and values that are consistent with democratic practices. More specifically, the cultural argument asserts that democracy is a unique product of interconnected historical experiences in Europe, such as Christianity (particularly Protestantism), the emphasis on individualism and secularism, the development of the nation-state, early industrialization, and the development of capitalism, among others. These factors, the argument goes, allowed for the creation of democracy as a system built on liberal values that emphasize freedom—what we typically call "Western" societies. According to some scholars, these liberal values are not universal, and other societies are constructed around norms and institutions that do not fit easily in with West-

COMPARING CONCEPTS
SOURCES OF AUTHORITARIANISM

| conomic | *Liberal view:* Capitalism undermines authoritarianism by promoting the distribution of wealth and the creation of a middle class that favors democratic rule. |
| | *Communist view:* Capitalism inevitably generates inequality, often necessitating authoritarianism to prevent the redistribution of wealth among the people. |
| ocietal | *Cultural view:* Certain cultural institutions are more amenable to authoritarianism because they promote such values as hierarchy, community over individual rights, and deference to authority. |

democratic practices. As evidence, they would note that the further travels from the "West" (meaning North America, western Europe, Japan), the fewer democracies one finds, even in societies that over past few decades have seen a dramatic rise in wealth, such as the oil es of the Middle East.[6]

Some have further asserted that under Islam the relationship among reli-, the nation, and the state has profound implications for the likelihood uthoritarian rule. In such societies, political power and religious power one and the same: laws are seen not as societal institutions to protect dvance individual rights, but as codes handed down by Allah that are to bserved and defended. Similarly, nationality and citizenship are defined by allegiance to a collective group or state, but by faith. Thus, some ld argue, Western ideas of competing political ideologies, of societies ded by ethnicity and citizenship, and of state power separated from reli-as authority are alien in Islamic society. In this view, Westerners' assump-s that all societies seek to be democratic are not only misguided but gerous. Other societies may not only view their own authoritarianism as perior form of politics, but may also view Western liberal democracy as ething inherently egocentric, atomized, ungodly, and destructive.

This debate over the relationship between authoritarianism and cul-e can be seen beyond the case of Islam, as well. It is also illustrated by t is commonly called the "Asian values" debate, which essentially asks hat extent there are particular cultural values in eastern Asia that con- with "Western" notions of individualism, democracy, and liberty. Pro-

GLOBAL COMPARISONS
REGIONS AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS, 2000
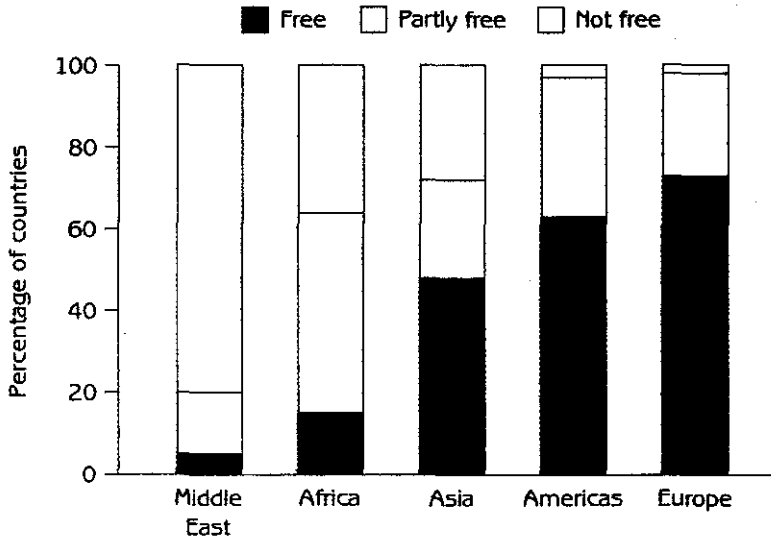
Source: Freedom House

ponents of the idea of Asian values argue that Asia's cultural and religious traditions stress conformity, hierarchy, and obedience, which are more conducive to a political system that limits freedom in order to defend social harmony and consensus. The philosophy of Confucianism is most commonly cited in this regard. Confucianism, they assert, with its emphasis on obedience to hierarchy and its notion of a ruler's "mandate from heaven," promotes authoritarian rule; the ruling elite acts as a parental figure over the people, acting in the public's best interest but not under its control. As Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, one of the major proponents of "Asian values," has put it,

> When citizens understand that their right to choose also involves limits and responsibilities, democracy doesn't deteriorate into an excess of freedom. . . . These are the dangers of democracy gone wrong, and in our view it is precisely the sad direction in which the West is heading.[7]

As you might imagine, there are many both inside and outside of Asia that reject the notion of "Asian values" and the supposed natural tendency of Asians toward authoritarianism. Critics point out that Asia, like any other part of the world, is far too diverse to speak of one set of values; differences in history, religion, social structure, and other institutions have led to very different political values from country to country. Asia has no clear set of cultures or civilizations, they assert, but rather an array of different and overlapping ideas that are in a continuous process of interaction and reinterpretation. Confucian thought, just like the Bible in the West or the Koran in Islamic countries, can be interpreted in very different ways by different readers. Thus, the very notion of "Asian values," critics argue, is a misinterpretation by observers who fail to grasp the complexity of Asia or who use the idea simply to justify authoritarian rule. As Kim Dae Jung, president of South Korea, argued, "The biggest obstacle is not [Asia's] cultural heritage but the resistance of authoritarian rulers and their apologists. . . . Culture is not necessarily our destiny. Democracy is."[8] These same criticisms can also be applied to those arguments that view democracy and Islam as incompatible.

A look at history may shed some light on these debates. In the past it was often argued that "Latin" cultures, those strongly influenced by Roman Catholicism, were also inherently authoritarian in nature (as opposed to cultures steeped in Protestant forms of Christianity). The reasons given for this were very similar to those discussed above: an emphasis on hierarchy, a lack of tolerance for other views, and a focus on community versus individual rights. In fact, several decades ago this argument would have had strong empirical support. In Europe, predominantly Catholic, Italy gave birth to fascism, and after World War II in western Europe authoritarian systems persisted only in Catholic Spain and Portugal and in Eastern Orthodox Greece. Latin America, long influenced by Catholicism, also had a strong history of authoritarian rule. However, by the 1970s the last authoritarian systems in western Europe moved to democracy, and similar processes have been under way in Latin America since the 1980s, to such a point that the majority of states there are now democratic. Perhaps culture may be more amenable to change than some think.

AUTHORITARIANISM AND POLITICAL CONTROL

There is clearly no consensus about what brings about authoritarian rule. Economic arguments emphasize wealth and its distribution, whereas cultural arguments emphasize the societal institutions that may foster or hin-

der the concentration of power. But even if we cannot be certain how authoritarianism comes to power, we can carefully examine how it stays in control. As with all political systems, a number of different state, regime, and government activities and institutions perpetuate authoritarianism. Some of these use fear and violence, others do not. In fact, in this section we will need to answer a difficult question alluded to earlier in the chapter: Do all authoritarian regimes by nature rely on force to intimidate a hostile public, or can authoritarianism be accepted or even embraced by the people? But first we should outline some of the most common features of authoritarian regimes.

Violence and Surveillance

One feature that we may initially associate with authoritarianism (and especially with totalitarianism) is the use of violence and surveillance. Compliance and obedience with authoritarian goals are often enforced through close observation of and the use of force against the population, sending a clear signal that those who oppose the authoritarian regime or government will be identified and dealt with harshly. Authoritarian systems commonly use violence as a mechanism of public control, threatening those who challenge the political order with severe retribution: arbitrary arrest, detention without trial, torture, and even death. In several authoritarian systems in Latin America in the past, "death squads" made up of police or military troops targeted individuals suspected of harboring political views opposed to the authoritarian regime. These individuals were abducted by the death squads and murdered, frequently after torture. In some cases, their bodies were dumped in the open, as a warning to others who dared to question the system; in other cases, the victims became one among thousands of "disappeared," never to be seen again.

In other authoritarian systems, terror has been used even more indiscriminately. When Stalin consolidated his totalitarian rule in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, he carried out what are known as "purges," widespread arrests that decimated the ranks of the Communist Party and the state bureaucracy. Former leaders of the 1917 Revolution, city mayors and local party bosses, high-ranking officers in the army and the navy, university professors, scientists, diplomats, and many others were detained, tortured, coerced into confessing during "show trials," forced to implicate others in their supposed crimes, and either sent to forced labor camps or executed. The targets of the purges were not limited to the party or the state; writ-

ers, artists, students, farmers, and workers were also among those accused of political sabotage and anti-Soviet views. It is not known how many died in these purges; estimates range from 5 million to 20 million. Undoubtedly, in the vast majority of these cases the victims were innocent, yet this was unimportant to Stalin's regime. By making everyone fear that they too can be arrested, the public can be controlled and even turned against itself, with everyone fearing that they will be denounced by someone else. Stalin's tactics have not been forgotten; Iraq's Saddam Hussein is apparently a great student of Stalinism and has applied the use of terror to great effect.

Another important means of authoritarian control is the ability to maintain a close watch over the population. Surveillance allows the government to prevent opposition from organizing and also instills uncertainty among the population—are they being watched? Surveillance may be conducted through the use of an internal security force or "secret police," charged with monitoring public activity, spying on individuals, and interrogating members of the public suspected of political activity hostile to the system. In some countries surveillance has included widespread telephone tapping and the creation of a huge network of public informers, where nearly anyone may be the eyes and ears of those in power.

Cooptation

The prevalence of violence and surveillance in some authoritarian systems may give the impression that an authoritarian regime must be ever vigilant against the public, to prevent opposition or revolution that would bring an end to the regime. But not all regimes need or choose to rely on fear or surveillance as a central means of control. Another method they may use involves **cooptation**, or the process by which individuals outside of an organization are brought into a beneficial relationship with it, making them dependent on the system for certain rewards. Although cooptation is not unique to authoritarianism, it tends to be much more widespread under authoritarian than under democratic systems, which are usually more suspicious of such favoritism.

IN FOCUS
AUTHORITARIAN MEANS OF CONTROL

Coercion: public obedience is enforced through violence and surveillance.

Cooptation: members of the public are brought into a beneficial relationship with the state and government, often through corporatism or clientelism.

Personality cult: the public is encouraged to obey the leader based on his or her extraordinary qualities and compelling ideas.

Cooptation can take many forms. The most structured form of cooptation is corporatism. Recall from Chapter 4 the term *neocorporatism*, a system in which business, labor, and the state engage in bargaining over economic policy. In its earliest form, however, modern **corporatism** emerged as a method by which authoritarian systems attempted to solidify their control over the public by creating or sanctioning a limited number of organizations to represent the interests of the public, and restricting those not set up or approved by the state. These organizations are meant to replace independent organizations with a handful that alone have the right to speak for various sectors of society. For example, under a corporatist system one would be likely to find labor unions, agricultural associations, student groups, neighborhood committees, and the like, all approved and funded by the state. Nonsanctioned, alternative organizations would not be allowed.

As opposed to the overlapping memberships, competition, and ever-changing nature of organizations and political parties in a pluralistic society, corporatism arranges society in a hierarchical manner, with each organization empowered by the state to have a monopoly of representation over a given issue or segment of society (meaning that no other organization may act in that area or speak on that issue). State, society, and the market under corporatism are viewed as a single organic body, with each element cooperating and performing its own specific and limited role. This is quite different from a view of politics that is centered on the individual and that values competition and conflict.

Corporatism can be an effective form of control, as it gives the public a limited influence (or at least the pretense of influence) in the policy-making process. Farmers or students have an official organization with elected officers and resources that are meant to serve their interests. In return, the regime is able to better control the public through these institutions, which are funded and managed by the state. For the average individual, a state-sanctioned interest organization is better than none at all, and many willingly participate in the hope that their needs will be met.

Many modern countries around the world have displayed elements of corporatism while under authoritarian rule. These include fascist Italy and Germany, as well as Spain and Portugal up to the 1970s. In Spain, for example, a single political party organized most business and labor interests together into a limited number of "syndicates" that represented both owners and workers in different sectors of the economy. Communist systems are similarly corporatist. In Cuba, for example, all labor is organized under a single union directly controlled by the state, and independent

unions are illegal. Although different in form and degree, in all corporatist systems we see the presence of a limited number of organizations used to represent and direct societal interests, bringing the public under organized state control. In a more pluralist system, by contrast, business, labor, and political parties stand apart from, and often in opposition to, one another.

A less structured means by which states may coopt the public is through **clientelism**, whereby the state coopts members of the public by providing specific benefits or favors to a single person or small group in return for public support. Unlike corporatism, clientelism relies on individual patronage rather than organizations that serve a large group of people. In other words, clientelism creates a patron-client relationship between the state and individual members of the public.

The state has a number of perquisites it can use in coopting individuals. Jobs within the state or in state-run sectors of the economy, business contracts or licenses, public goods such as roads or schools, and kickbacks and bribes are a few of the tools in its arsenal. Such largesse often leads to **rent-seeking**, a process in which political leaders essentially rent out parts of the state to their patrons, who as a result control public goods that would otherwise be distributed in a nonpolitical matter. For example,

Rent-Seeking in the Marketplace in Mexico

Mexico's economy is based in part on a large number of street vendors who operate in open-air markets around the country. The authoritarian, one-party regime of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which controlled the government from 1915 to 2000, recognized the potential value of such a large group of individuals whose ability to function depended entirely on the permission of the government (since the venders did not own land or shops of their own). Starting in the 1950s, the PRI began to pressure street vendors in Mexico City to provide donations to political campaigns or public support at rallies; in return, the state would not crack down on their activities. Local "bosses" acted as intermediaries between the state and the vendors, collecting funds and mobilizing vendors in return for a share of the wealth. Given the failure of the PRI in the 2000 presidential elections and the ongoing democratization of Mexico, this system may be now breaking down. Similar forms of clientelism may also be present in democracies, though clientelism is more likely and more prevalent in systems that are not accountable to the public nor subject to rules that limit corruption.

leaders might turn over control of the national postal system to political supporters, providing them with jobs and the ability to siphon off public funds from that branch of the state.

In general, cooptation may be much more successful at maintaining authoritarianism than coercive methods such as terror and surveillance, since many in the public may actively support the system in return for the benefits they derive. Political opposition can be dealt with not through repression and violence, but by simply buying opponents off. Such a system, however, runs the risk of running out of perks with which to pacify the public. In addition, in a system where economic resources are doled out for political reasons, economic and other problems may emerge as productive resources are siphoned off to secure the temporary support of the public. At its worst, such a system declines into a *kleptocracy* (literally, "rule by theft") where those in power seek only to further fill their own pockets and drain the state of assets and resources. As these resources dry up, clientelism loses its ability to provide the perks it once did and may quickly unravel.

Personality Cults

Authoritarian and totalitarian leaders may also reinforce their rule through what are known as personality cults. First used to describe Stalin's rule in the Soviet Union, a **personality cult** refers to the promotion of the image of an authoritarian leader not merely as a political figure, but as someone who embodies the spirit of the nation, possesses endowments of wisdom and strength far beyond those of the average individual, and is thus portrayed in a quasi-religious manner—all wise, all seeing, all knowing. In other words, personality cults attempt to generate a charismatic form of authority for the political leader from the top down, by convincing the public of the leader's admirable qualities.

The media and culture play a vital role in this regard, promoting the cult of personality through all aspects of daily life—news reports, public rallies, art, music, films, and other imagery of the leader. All successes in the country are attributed to the power of the leader, and mistakes are blamed on the mortal flaws of the public or on external enemies. Whether the public actually believes in the personality cult is, of course, another issue.

Cults of personality may also function largely through terror; the public may not believe the praise, but no one is willing to say so. This is especially the case where charismatic power has faded over time to become

KIM JONG IL AND THE PERSONALITY CULT IN NORTH KOREA

Communist North Korea is probably the only country in the world that remains totalitarian. Kim Il Sung, the Communist Party leader from 1945 until his death in 1994, created an elaborate personality cult while effectively sealing his country off from the rest of the world. Upon his death, his son, Kim Jong Il, succeeded him, and he also constructed an elaborate personality cult around himself. Consider this passage from a North Korean news report:

> The outstanding greatness of Kim Jong Il as a peerless politician lies in the fact that he has scientifically led the revolution and construction to a brilliant victory without a mistake or failure for nearly 40 years. His greatness is expressed in his pursuing the most independent politics, politics of love and trust and leading the revolution and construction with his invincible army-first politics. The might of his independent politics has been fully demonstrated in the most arduous and complicated struggle. The moves of the imperialists and reactionaries to stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have been totally smashed by his bold grit and just politics. Our people are now holding him in high esteem with loyalty, singing the song of infinite worship for the leader: "We live, believing in him as in heaven."*

*KCNA, Pyongyang, 19 June 2000, reported by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 19 June 2000.

little more than a facade, held up only by force. Under these conditions there is always the chance that the cult will crack and the public will turn against the leadership. This occurred in Romania in 1989, when Nicolae Ceausescu, the self-styled "conductor" of his country, was shown on national television reacting in a stunned and confused manner when attendees at a public rally he was addressing suddenly turned against him. Within hours revolution had swept the country, and within three days Ceausescu and his wife had been executed by firing squad.

Authoritarianism and Legitimacy

Authoritarianism thus relies on a range of tools to maintain power—some are "carrots" and other "sticks." But even without the use of these tools, some people may view authoritarianism as a beneficial system, because they may agree with the regime's ideology, be direct beneficiaries of its rule, venerate its leaders, or simply fear political change. Support in the

absence of coercive or cooptive methods implies that authoritarianism may be a legitimate form of rule. The idea may be hard for some to accept. Particularly in Western democracies, there is the assumption that in every authoritarian system the people are simply waiting for the chance to depose their rulers and install democracy. This belief is an exaggeration. Authoritarian regimes may be just as institutionalized—and therefore as stable and legitimate—as any democratic system, enjoying some, or even a great deal of, public support.

Max Weber's discussion of the forms of legitimacy (discussed in Chapter 2) can help explain this idea further. Authoritarian systems may rely on charismatic authority, as the preceding discussion of the cult of personality indicated. The public may strongly support and venerate its leaders, as was seen in the cases of Mao Zedong, Josef Stalin, and Adolf Hitler, and may see their leadership as indispensable. In spite of the violence used by each of these leaders, their publics venerated them as nearly divine figures. Such forms of legitimacy can produce a tremendous personal following and power.

Other systems may be based on traditional authority. In the case of North Korea, Kim Jong Il's legitimacy rests not just on a personality cult meant to protect charismatic power, but on the fact that he is the son of the founder of the country, Kim Il Sung. In fact, this claim to traditional, hereditary authority may be a greater source of power than any charisma that Kim Jong Il hopes to project. That North Korean totalitarianism weathered the death of Kim Il Sung may have much to do with the fact that his son was waiting in the wings, able to establish continuity in the regime. Similar institutions that support the idea of traditional authority are also present in much of the Middle East, where hereditary monarchies are still powerful and command popular support.

Rational authority may also play a role. Authoritarian systems often claim to be "scientific" or "technocratic" (the latter meaning, literally, rule by expertise), claiming that they alone possess the knowledge and skills necessary to guide the country. The institutions that support authoritarianism may stress a "rational" and "objective" approach to rule, implying that democracy is an emotional, inefficient, and thus inferior means of rule. In the past, both communism and fascism laid claim to rational legitimacy, arguing that their rule was based not just on ideology but on the laws of science. In the case of communism, revolution and the downfall of capitalism and liberalism were seen as inevitable laws of development; theories regarding the superiority or inferiority of peoples and races legitimized fascist rule. More recently, political sys-

tems in Asia and Latin America used claims of technocratic expertise to legitimize authoritarian rule.

Finally, authoritarianism may be legitimate among much of the population if the public cannot envision another alternative. If the people have a limited understanding of what democracy means, what it would entail, and how or why it would be better than the status quo, authoritarianism may be a more attractive choice.

TYPES OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE

By now it should be clear that authoritarianism may emerge for different reasons and may persist in different ways by using, to different degrees, tools of fear and support. Based on these characteristics, political scientists often classify authoritarianism into a number of specific forms of rule. The most commonly seen forms of authoritarian rule are personal, military, one-party, and quasi-democratic. Personal rule is based on the power of a single strong leader who typically relies on charismatic or traditional authority to maintain power. Under military rule, in contrast, the monopoly of violence that characterizes militaries tends to be the strongest means of control. One-party rule is often more corporatist in nature, creating a broad membership as a source of support and oversight. Finally, in a quasi-democracy the basic structures of democracy exist but they are not fully institutionalized and often not respected. Since these classifications are by necessity somewhat abstract, in many cases authoritarian systems will combine elements of different categories rather than fitting easily into any one. In spite of this limitation, these categories make for useful comparisons.

Personal Rule

Personal rule most commonly comes to mind when people think of authoritarianism, perhaps because long before modern politics, states, or economies came into being, people were ruled by powerful figures—kings and Caesars, emperors and sultans, chiefs and caudillos. Drawing from charismatic or traditional legitimacy, **personal rule** rests on the claim that one person is alone fit to run the country, with no clear regime or roles to constrain that person's rule. Under personal rule, the state and society are commonly taken to be possessions of the leader, to be dispensed with as he (or, occasionally, she) sees fit. The ruler is not a subject of the state; rather, the state and society are subjects of the ruler. Ideology may be weak or absent, as the ruler justifies his control through the logic that he

alone is the embodiment of the people and therefore uniquely qualified to act on the people's behalf. This claim often necessitates a strong personality cult, or a reliance on the traditional authority of bloodlines.

In some cases personal rule relies less on charismatic or traditional authority than on what is referred to as **patrimonialism**, under which the ruler depends on a collection of supporters within the state who gain direct benefits in return for enforcing the ruler's will. The state exists not as a body of trained officials but as a close group of supporters of the ruler, who in return for their allegiance seek personal profit (i.e., a kleptocracy). This is a form of cooptation, although under patrimonialism it is only the ruler's own personal followers who benefit. All others in society tend to be held in check by force, and legitimacy does not extend past the leader's own circle.

An example of personal rule based on patrimonialism was found in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) under the rule of Mobutu Sese Seko from 1965 until 1997. Although he once commanded a great deal of charismatic legitimacy, over time Mobutu increasingly used patrimonialism as a way to maintain his power. In particular, Mobutu built his patrimonial system around Zaire's abundant natural resources, such as diamonds, gold, copper, and cobalt. These resources were used by the regime not to benefit the country as a whole, but as Mobutu's personal treasury; he siphoned off the profits from these resources to enrich himself and his followers. The result was a coterie of supporters who were willing to defend Mobutu in order to maintain their economic privileges.[9] This system of dependence and economic reward helps explain how Mobutu maintained power for more than three decades while Zaire's per capita GDP dropped from $392 in 1975 to $127 in 1998.

Military Rule

A second form of authoritarianism is **military rule**. Once considered relatively unusual, over the past half-century military rule became much more common, particularly in Latin America and Africa. In conditions where governments and states struggle with legitimacy and stability, and where there are high levels of public unrest or violence, the military may choose to intervene directly in politics, seeing itself as the only organized force able to ensure stability. This view may be combined with a sense among military leaders that the current government or regime threatens the military's or the country's interests and should be removed. Military rule may even have widespread public support, especially if people believe that the

strong arm of the military can bring an end to corruption or political violence, prevent revolution, and restore stability.

Military rule typically emerges through a **coup d'etat**, in which military forces take control of the government by force. In some cases military actors may claim that they have seized control only reluctantly, promising to return the state and government to civilian rule once stability has been restored. Often, under military rule, political parties and most civil liberties are restricted, and civilian political leaders or opponents of military rule are arrested and may be killed or disappear. The use of terror and surveillance is a common aspect of military rule, since by their nature militaries hold an overwhelming capacity for violence.

Military rule typically lacks a specific ideology, although sometimes military leaders espouse radical or reactionary political attitudes. Military rule also tends to lack any charismatic or traditional source of authority, meaning that if they seek legitimacy in the eyes of the people they often must fall back on rational authority. One particular variant of military rule that reflects this logic is known as **bureaucratic authoritarianism**, a system in which the state bureaucracy and the military share a belief that a technocratic leadership, focused on rational, objective, technical expertise, can solve the problems of the country—as opposed to "emotional" or "irrational" ideologically based party politics. Public participation, in other words, is seen as an obstacle to effective and objective policy-making, and so is done away with. In the 1960s and 1970s bureaucratic authoritarianism emerged in a number of less-developed countries as rapid modernization and industrialization generated a high degree of political conflict. State and industry, with their plans for rapid economic growth, clashed with the interests of the working class and peasantry, who sought greater political power and a larger share of the wealth. This increasing polarization in politics often led business leaders and the state bureaucracy to advocate military rule as a way to prevent the working class and the peasantry from gaining power over the government.[10]

Military rule, like any form of authoritarianism, may lead to a variety of outcomes. Military rule in South Korea, Taiwan, and Chile occurred alongside high levels of economic growth that in turn helped pave the way for democracy in the 1990s. However, in many more cases military rule has simply meant more instability and violence, and little or no improvement over the governments that were replaced. Even in the most successful cases, as in the three listed above, progress occurred alongside great losses of life. In the first years of military rule in Taiwan, for instance, tens of thousands of students, intellectuals, political figures, and commu-

nity leaders were executed. In South Korea, protests by labor unions and students in 1980 lead to a military crackdown during which several hundred were killed. And in Chile, debate still rages over the legacy of Augusto Pinochet, the military leader from 1973 to 1990. During his rule thousands were arrested, tortured, killed, or "disappeared." Nor can we know whether military rule can be credited for the economic successes of these countries, since we cannot determine how they might have developed had the military not intervened in the first place.

One-Party Rule

A third authoritarian regime, and one often associated with totalitarianism in particular, is that of **one-party rule**, under which a single political party monopolizes politics and other parties are banned or excluded from power. The ruling party serves several functions. The party helps to incorporate the people into the political system through membership and participation. Typically the party only incorporates a small minority of the population—in most communist countries, for instance, party membership was less than 10 percent—but this still means that hundreds of thousands or millions of people are party members. One-party rule is often also combined with a larger corporatist system of public control.

Through membership, the party can rely on a large segment of the public that is willing to help develop and support the policies of authoritarian or totalitarian rule, as well as to transmit information back to the leadership on developments in all aspects of society. Single-party systems are often broken down into smaller units or "cells" that operate at the university, workplace, or neighborhood level. These units report back to higher levels of the party, help deal with local problems and concerns, and keep tabs on society as a whole. No area is untouched by the presence of the party, and this helps to maintain control over the public.

In return, members of the party often are granted privileges that are otherwise denied to the public at large. They may have access to certain resources (better health care or housing, for instance) that nonmembers do not; positions in government and other important areas of the economy or society may also be restricted to party members. One important result of such membership is that a large group of individuals in society directly benefit from authoritarianism and are therefore willing to defend it. This pragmatic membership, however, can backfire: if a large portion of the party membership belongs only for the personal benefits and not out of any ideological conviction, they may quickly desert the leadership in a time of crisis.

Finally, the party serves as a mechanism of mobilization. The leadership uses the party as an instrument to deliver propaganda that extols the virtues of the current regime and government; it relies on its rank-and-file members, through demonstrations and mass rallies, to give the appearance of widespread public support and enthusiasm for the leadership. If necessary, it also uses party members to control and harass those who do not support the regime. Although such terror or surveillance may be important to one-party rule, cooptation is the primary mechanism that ensures compliance and support.

One-party regimes are commonly associated with communism and fascism and were present in all cases of totalitarianism. However, they also can be found around the world as part of a variety of authoritarian regimes. In some cases other parties may exist, but they typically are highly restricted by the government so that they cannot challenge the current regime. For many years this was the case in Mexico, which was dominated by the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI. In Zimbabwe, the ruling Zimbabwe African People's Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has held power since 1980, and its political power has come under challenge by opposition groups only recently. Cuba, North Korea, China, Vietnam, and Laos are other examples of one-party systems, each controlled by an authoritarian communist party.

Quasi Democracies

Finally, some political systems feature a few or many of the familiar aspects of democracy but remain in essence authoritarian systems. In fact, the table on regions and political systems on page 128 included a large group of countries that are categorized as neither "free" nor "not free," but as "partially free," falling somewhere between democracy and authoritarianism. These systems we term **quasi democracies**, which may appear like other established democracies—people are given the right to vote, elections take place, and political parties compete—but whose regimes use procedures of questionable democratic legitimacy.

Most importantly, quasi democracies usually restrict the democratic process to a great degree, and those rights that do exist are often insecure, subject to arbitrary change or sudden withdrawal. For example, the government may control which political organizations may participate in politics, banning any it thinks might threaten the government's hold on power. Access to the media is also often restricted, with the ruling political elites able to dominate the airwaves while opposition forces have little chance

TYPES OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE

Type	Definition	Primary Tools of Control
Personal rule	Rule by a single leader, with no clear regime or rules constraining that leadership	*Patrimonialism*: supporters within the state benefit directly from their alliance with the ruler (corruption)
Military rule	Rule by one or more military officials, often brought to power through a coup d'état	Control of the armed forces, sometimes also allied with business and state elites (bureaucratic authoritarianism)
One-party rule	Rule by one political party, with other groups banned or excluded from power	Large party membership helps mobilize support and maintain public control, often in return for political or economic benefits
Quasi democracy	Rule by an elected leadership, though through procedures of questionable democratic legitimacy	Manipulation of democratic procedures, such as vote-rigging or harassment of opposition

to make their views known. Important state institutions such as the judiciary, the military, or state-run industries are likely to be under the direct control of the government and used to control political opposition. Under such conditions, open elections can often be tolerated, since the opposition functions at a great disadvantage. However, as a last resort many quasi democracies will commit electoral fraud, such as buying or forging votes, in order to ensure the perpetuation of the existing regime.

Quasi-democratic systems often involve all of our forms of authoritarian rule—force, surveillance, cooptation, personality cults—to a limited degree, degrading the democratic process. Political leaders similarly call on traditional and charismatic legitimacy even as they participate in a system that should be fundamentally rational and bound by rules. This, too, degrades democracy, since elected leaders are tempted to assert that their "special" claims to authority eliminate the need to abide by rules and standards.

In short, quasi democracy in many ways represents a halfway house between authoritarianism and full democracy. Although the mechanisms of

democracy may be in place, they remain weakly institutionalized, operating in an uncertain and hostile environment. Such structures, however, do hold out the possibility of becoming institutionalized over time and of forcing political actors to play by the rules of the game and abide by its outcomes.

Explaining Diverse Authoritarianism

Why is there such diversity in authoritarian rule? Explanations might be traced back to our original debate about the sources of authoritarianism. Economic explanations would suggest that certain forms of authoritarianism are a function of wealth and inequality; for example, rapid industrialization may lead to bureaucratic authoritarianism, as the military intervenes in response to a polarized political environment. Cultural explanations would suggest that certain forms of authoritarianism are more likely in some societies than in others. For example, the corporatist tendencies of one-party rule may be more prevalent in societies where a tradition of individualism is weaker. Whatever the explanation, authoritarianism is clearly adaptable to a number of different conditions and environments.

IN SUM: AUTHORITARIANISM IN RETREAT?

Although authoritarianism exhibits an amazing diversity and flexibility in maintaining political control, the global trend over the past half-century has been away from this form of rule. This trend is especially surprising given that historically authoritarianism has been the dominant trend around the world. In the early part of the last century, democratic countries were few and beleaguered, wracked by economic recession, whereas communism and fascism seemed to promise radically new ways to restructure states, markets, and societies. The quest for equality or inequality seemed to be the dominant concern, and freedom appeared to be an endangered species. The German philosopher Oswald Spengler summarized these views in his 1922 work *The Decline of the West*: "The era of individualism, liberalism and democracy, of humanitarianism and freedom, is nearing its end. The masses will accept with resignation the victory of the *Caesars,* the strong men, and will obey them. Life will descend to a level of general uniformity, a new kind of primitivism, and the world will be better for it."[11]

Yet the exact opposite has taken place. Over the past half-century the world has seen authoritarianism decline in numerous countries and regions around the world, from western to eastern Europe, to Latin America, to

Asia. Freedom has not only regained currency, it has become a powerful force for political change. In some cases the rise of freedom has been incomplete or has failed after a few years. In other cases, though, democracy has fully taken root.

Indeed the figure below shows that the number of countries classified as "not free" has declined dramatically over just the past thirty years, from nearly half of the countries in the world to less than a quarter. The number of fully free countries has increased by 15 percent, while those in the partly free category that we associate with quasi democracies has stayed relatively stable. These data can be viewed another way, by looking at total world population rather than the number of countries: 39 percent of the world's population currently lives in free countries, 25 percent lives in partly free countries, and 36 percent lives in not free countries.

GLOBAL COMPARISONS
AUTHORITARIANISM IN DECLINE, 1972–2000
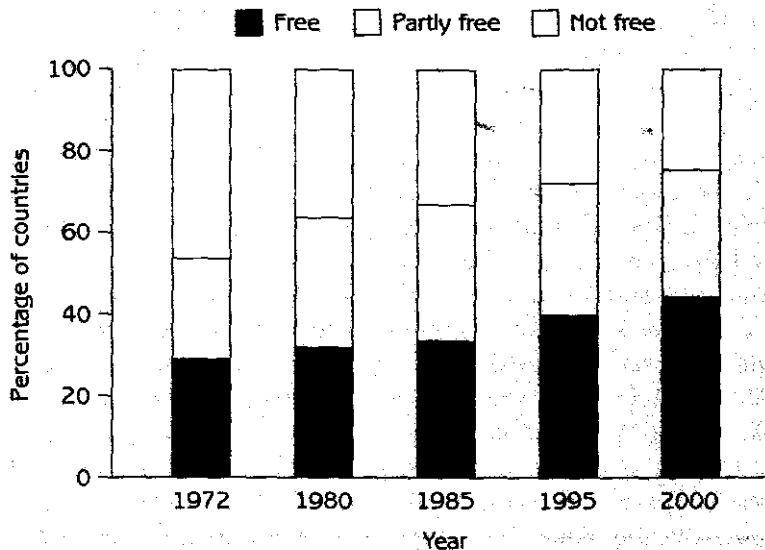
Source: Freedom House

Why this decline in authoritarianism? An economic argument might point to the fact that the world has become wealthier over the past fifty years. Although this is true in some parts of the world, in regions such as Latin America poverty has increased even as democracy has spread. This is also true of eastern Europe. At the same time, democratization has been occurring even as inequality has increased, both within and between countries. A societal argument is similarly problematic, as democracy has spread to areas previously viewed as hostile to such a system, such as Asia.

Yet there is another, perhaps simpler explanation: authoritarianism has lost much of its appeal. Fifty years ago, ideologies such as fascism and communism could mobilize people with visions of a world to be transformed. Communism promised equality among all people, while fascism promised inequality between a chosen few and their lesser subjects. However, in the aftermath of World War II and the Cold War, there is no longer any strong authoritarian ideology that combines the absence of individual freedom with some broader goal. Authoritarian leaders may claim that limitations on political rights are necessary for stability or economic development, but they no longer offer any real alternative vision for politics. It is increasingly difficult to justify authoritarianism through any universal set of ideas.

Does this mean that authoritarianism's days are numbered? Perhaps. There may in fact come a time when all societies are democratic, and authoritarianism, like slavery, is an aspect of human behavior largely consigned to history and the margins of global society. However, we cannot know what new visions may emerge that again give power and purpose to authoritarian rule. Will rising inequality eventually clash with increased freedom? Will people someday come to see the absence of freedom as a benefit rather than a form of bondage? Might a new religious or secular vision of organizing human life reject democracy as antiquated or profane? Perhaps what we now enjoy is simply a brief aberration in the long human history of authoritarian rule.

NOTES

1 See the Freedom House Website at www.freedomhouse.org.

2 For an excellent discussion of the bewildering variety of authoritarian rule see Juan Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000). This work was originally published in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1975).

3 Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1951).