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# Examining the Position of Individual Security in Authoritarian and Totalitarian Systems

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## ABSTRACT

Individual security, as one of the fundamental pillars of human rights, holds a relatively institutionalized and protected position in democratic systems through the oversight of independent judicial bodies and the participation of civil society organizations. However, in authoritarian and totalitarian systems, this fundamental right faces serious challenges. These regimes, through a deliberate redefinition and conceptual hollowing of individual security, have transformed it into an instrument for consolidating political power, suppressing dissent, and implementing social engineering. Given that previous analyses have largely neglected the structural and ideological dimensions of this issue, the present study adopts an analytical-comparative approach to examine the impact of authoritarian and totalitarian structures on the restriction of individual security. The findings indicate that authoritarian regimes generally operate by enacting vague and broadly defined laws that allow expansive interpretations of political and security-related offenses, as well as by employing exceptional legal frameworks such as states of emergency, in order to legitimize the suppression of political opposition. In totalitarian systems, governments systematically and deliberately violate individual security by employing mechanisms such as the manipulation of public opinion through official media, mass mobilization, and the weakening of oversight institutions, all of which are examined in this study. Finally, the study proposes several measures to safeguard individual security, including strengthening the principle of separation of powers, ensuring judicial independence, reinforcing oversight institutions, imposing precise legal limitations on governmental authority during exceptional circumstances, and establishing democratic accountability through support for independent media, civil society institutions, and international monitoring mechanisms.

**Keywords:** *Individual security, authoritarianism, totalitarianism, expansive criminalization, apparent legitimacy, official ideology, identity engineering.*

## Introduction

Individual security, although at first glance appearing to be an obvious and universal concept, is in practice profoundly influenced by the political and legal structure of each system and is subject to differing definitions and interpretations. In democratic systems, this concept is recognized as one of the fundamental rights of citizens and is guaranteed through mechanisms such as the rule of law, separation of powers, and independent oversight institutions. In contrast, in authoritarian and totalitarian systems, the concentration of power causes individual



security to diverge from its inherent and inalienable status and instead become a privilege dependent upon the political will of those in power (1). In such circumstances, state intervention in individuals' private sphere is no longer regarded as an exception but rather as a routine and continuous practice, and individual security, instead of functioning as a safeguard against the abuse of power, assumes an instrumental character serving the interests of the governing authority.

Although international pressure on governments to comply with human rights standards has increased in recent decades, some authoritarian regimes have attempted to evade these obligations by modifying or reinterpreting domestic laws in ways that restrict the scope of individual security (2). This occurs despite the fact that, according to accepted principles of public and criminal law, any intervention in individuals' private sphere must be lawful and based on criteria of necessity, proportionality, and transparency (3). Nevertheless, in practice, governments frequently justify extensive and sometimes disproportionate interventions by invoking security imperatives, thereby expanding the scope of restrictions on individual rights—a process that, in the absence of independent oversight institutions, can lead to the systematic violation of civil liberties (4).

Within totalitarian and authoritarian structures, individual security is not only inadequately guaranteed but is also defined within the framework of official ideology and the logic of preserving political order. In such systems, any form of dissent or nonconformity is perceived as a threat to the established order and is suppressed through legal, security, and cultural mechanisms (5, 6). In societies characterized by personalized power, the thoughts and will of political leaders determine security policies, whereas in institutionalized systems, the influence of individual leaders' preferences is significantly constrained (7). In societies suffering from weak rule of law, systemic corruption, and institutional inefficiency, not only does the provision of individual security become increasingly difficult, but the state itself may emerge as a primary source of threat to that security. Consequently, individual security, as a multidimensional phenomenon dependent on political, social, and cultural structures, is redefined based on political imperatives and governance considerations and is subjected to systematic restriction through legal, surveillance, and media instruments (8, 9).

Domestic scholarship on authoritarianism and totalitarianism indicates that such domination operates not only at the structural level but is also reproduced within cultural, perceptual, and legal domains. Kadivar defines authoritarianism as a process through which mechanisms of accountability are gradually eliminated and law becomes subordinated to political power (10). Ghaffari emphasizes the role of centralized and obedience-oriented political culture in sustaining such structures (11). Fakouhi argues that domination in totalitarian systems relies less on overt coercion than on the engineering of meaning and the control of social perception (12). Rahmani demonstrates that authority lacking legal legitimacy is often justified under the guise of a state of exception, resulting in discretionary authority in which law, rather than restraining power, becomes an instrument in its service (13, 14). Shariatpanahi likewise emphasizes that, through the elimination of oversight institutions and the weakening of public participation, individual security in such systems is no longer regarded as an inherent right but rather as a privilege contingent upon political loyalty (1, 3, 15).

Despite this body of literature, a central issue that remains contested is the process by which individual security is transformed from a fundamental right into an instrument serving the logic of authority and the perpetuation of political order within authoritarian and totalitarian structures. In such systems, individual security appears to be redefined not on the basis of human dignity but rather within political, security, and ideological frameworks. Mechanisms such as the criminalization of thought, cultural engineering, and the use of advanced surveillance

technologies play a decisive role in restricting individual security (16-18). Accordingly, the present study adopts an analytical–comparative approach, drawing upon legal, political, and sociological analyses, to explain the relationship between totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and the restriction of individual security. By moving beyond general definitions, it seeks to provide theoretical insights for a deeper understanding of this phenomenon and to explore the conditions under which individual security may be strengthened in the face of expanding authoritarian interventions.

## Historical Evolution of Political Systems

### *From Autocracy to Democracy*

Throughout history, human societies have experienced various forms of political systems in order to organize power and manage social affairs. These regimes, depending on the economic, social, and cultural structures of each historical period, have assumed diverse institutional forms. According to general classifications, political systems can be divided into three principal categories: autocracy, oligarchy, and democracy (1, 19).

Autocratic systems, such as absolute monarchies and dictatorships, represent the earliest forms of political organization. In such systems, rulers exercised authority without legal constraints, and their legitimacy was often derived from religious doctrines, traditional authority, or military power (20). The theory of divine right in ancient empires and monarchies exemplifies such governance structures, where all authority was concentrated in a single individual and no institutional mechanisms existed to limit their power. These regimes, inherently authoritarian and often totalitarian in nature, typically responded to dissent with severe repression and maintained political order through coercion and ideological justification (5, 6). Absolute concentration of power frequently generated political instability and internal crises, and over time, social unrest, civil conflicts, and external pressures contributed to their eventual collapse and transformation.

Oligarchic systems emerged in response to the shortcomings of autocratic rule, transferring political authority from a single individual to a limited group of elites. Examples include aristocracy, feudalism, plutocracy, and party-based oligarchic systems. Although these regimes represented a shift away from absolute personal rule, they continued to restrict public participation and facilitated the concentration of power within privileged social groups (19). As a result, such systems often exhibited exclusionary and unaccountable characteristics, resisted social change, and ultimately faced widespread dissatisfaction and structural decline.

Democracy, founded upon citizen participation and the distribution of political power, emerged as a response to the failures and exclusivity of oligarchic systems. Early democratic experiments, such as Athenian democracy, emphasized direct participation but excluded significant portions of the population, including women and enslaved individuals. Modern democratic systems, grounded in principles such as separation of powers, rule of law, and fundamental human rights, sought to establish accountable governance structures capable of preventing the concentration of political authority (1, 21).

However, historical experience demonstrates that democratic structures alone do not guarantee protection against authoritarian regression. Weak oversight institutions, the instrumentalization of electoral processes, and the rise of populism can create conditions conducive to the gradual concentration of power and the erosion of democratic mechanisms (9). In certain cases, electoral legitimacy has been used not to strengthen democracy but rather to reconstruct authoritarian governance under a veneer of legality.

These historical transitions—from autocracy to oligarchy and ultimately to democracy—demonstrate that merely altering the formal structure of governance does not prevent the concentration of power. What safeguards political systems from authoritarian deviation is not simply institutional design, but the effective implementation of public oversight, legal transparency, and genuine citizen participation. In the absence of these conditions, political power may reproduce domination and undermine democratic foundations (14).

### *Contemporary Societies*

Contemporary societies are broadly classified into democratic and non-democratic systems based on the degree of political participation and the distribution of power. Non-democratic systems are further categorized into authoritarian and totalitarian regimes according to the extent of power concentration and state control over social life (6, 7). Democratic societies are characterized by free elections, citizen participation, and the protection of civil liberties. In contrast, authoritarian societies concentrate political power in the hands of a single individual or a limited elite while maintaining limited institutional autonomy in certain sectors.

Totalitarian societies represent a more extreme form of authoritarianism, in which the state seeks to control all aspects of public and private life, including individuals' thoughts and beliefs. Such systems rely on ideological domination, mass mobilization, and pervasive surveillance to ensure compliance and suppress dissent (5, 22). Thus, the classification of societies is fundamentally based on how political power is exercised and the degree to which the state controls social, political, and individual spheres.

### **Authoritarianism and Its Impact on Individual Security**

Authoritarianism represents a form of governance in which political power is concentrated in the hands of a single individual or a limited group, and democratic oversight mechanisms are severely constrained. In such systems, individual security is treated as subordinate to state interests and is not genuinely protected. Instead, it is frequently used as a tool for monitoring, controlling, and suppressing political opposition. Governments, through legal and institutional mechanisms, redefine individual security in accordance with political imperatives, ensuring that individual rights and freedoms remain subject to state authority (23, 24).

According to Linz's theoretical framework, authoritarian regimes are political systems in which governing institutions exercise control over resources and policymaking beyond democratic accountability (24). An examination of authoritarianism and its impact on individual security demonstrates that such regimes employ legalized authoritarianism, conceptual redefinition of security, and the weakening of judicial and oversight independence as mechanisms to restrict civil liberties—a process that will be examined in detail in the following sections.

### *Legalized Authoritarianism: Legal Mechanisms for Restricting Freedoms*

One of the most consequential phenomena in authoritarian governments is the use of ostensibly legal frameworks to institutionalize domination and social control, such that legal rules—rather than serving as safeguards for civil rights and liberties—are transformed into instruments for legitimizing restrictions and repression. This process, described as “legalized authoritarianism,” entails a conceptual reconfiguration of the relationship between law and power: the prevailing legal order does not confront authoritarianism but is mobilized to entrench it (1).

In modern authoritarianism, unlike its classic forms that relied on direct violence and extensive physical repression, legal and administrative mechanisms have increasingly replaced overt coercion. In other words, direct repression is reconstituted as the systematic restriction of individual freedoms through legal techniques (1). This transformation not only obscures the instruments of repression from public scrutiny, but—by cloaking coercion in legal legitimacy—can also weaken the responsiveness of international actors. A key feature of this transformation is the strategic redefinition of “security” in ways that portray rights violations as rational, necessary, and even morally defensible measures (14, 23).

At the core of this redefinition lies the use of expansive and ambiguous legislative concepts. Terms such as “acts against national security,” “propaganda against the system,” or “disruption of public order,” precisely because they lack narrow and determinate definitions, enable broad interpretation by security and judicial institutions. In the Iranian legal context, for example, Article 500 of the Islamic Penal Code (Book of Ta’zirat) criminalizes “propaganda against the system” without specifying its concrete elements, thereby facilitating the instrumental deployment of criminal law against political opponents, civil activists, and even academics. Such legislative ambiguity, as a governance technique, conflicts with the principle of legality in criminal law and—at the level of normative comparison—illustrates how criminalization can be expanded through indeterminate legal categories (3).

Within this framework, individual rights are displaced from the status of fundamental entitlements and are recast as conditional privileges subordinated to governmental interests. A principal justificatory mechanism in this trajectory is invocation of the “margin of appreciation” in international human rights discourse—an idea that allows states, under specific conditions, to impose temporary restrictions on rights. Yet experience in authoritarian contexts indicates that, in the absence of effective oversight, such legal techniques can mutate into durable instruments of suppression. Moreover, beyond formal limitation clauses, the operational definition of rights itself can enable restriction: states often claim discretionary space when interpreting and implementing rights, invoking public order, public morality, or national security to narrow the effective scope of protected freedoms (25). In this sense, the “margin of appreciation” functions most visibly where balancing is framed as unavoidable—between the claimant’s interest in the right and countervailing claims tied to public interest, comparative standards for limiting public freedoms, or the rights and interests of others (25).

Comparable patterns can also be observed in other jurisdictions. The Hong Kong National Security Law, for instance, has been criticized for exposing civil activists to persistent legal risk through open-ended formulations of offenses such as “subversion” or “collusion,” while in Russia, the so-called “foreign agents” framework has similarly relied on vague legal concepts to stigmatize and constrain civil society by treating foreign funding as an indicator of security threat. In comparative perspective, these developments signal a deeper crisis in the relationship between security and liberty, insofar as legal indeterminacy becomes a structural conduit for expanding state coercion (7, 9).

From the standpoint of comparative public law, this process has generated a profound tension between security and freedom. While exceptional restrictions in emergencies are recognized in many constitutional and international frameworks, such measures are generally conditioned on necessity, proportionality, temporariness, and the possibility of oversight. In authoritarian regimes, however, emergency rationales tend to become normalized, and a “permanent emergency” logic facilitates the suspension of fundamental rights through continuous securitization (13, 26).

The “state of exception” refers to extraordinary situations in which governments, citing danger or crisis, suspend ordinary legal rules and grant unprecedented powers to executive institutions. Confrontation with internal unrest

can lead to mass arrests, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, torture, hostage-taking, and the erosion of minimum legal guarantees; accordingly, crises can intensify not only severe violence but also broader patterns of human rights violations (27). In this context, political authorities invoke “necessity” or “emergency” to depart from ordinary human rights standards and to escape oversight by supervisory institutions—often accompanied by the suspension of basic rights and the restriction of individual freedoms (13).

In authoritarian (and totalitarian) systems, the state of exception is not merely a reactive response to crisis but a structural strategy for consolidating power. A salient illustration is the systemic use of counter-terrorism legislation in China’s Xinjiang region, where “anti-extremism” framing has underpinned extensive detention and surveillance practices targeting Uyghur Muslims (22). In such cases, the exception shifts from a temporary measure into a standing rule that institutionalizes repression through legal form, thereby normalizing coercive governance under a veneer of legality (26).

In Iran as well, the enactment of emergency-related legislative initiatives and the expansive interpretation of “national security” in judicial reasoning and institutional practice (as noted earlier) can be viewed as instances of authoritarian exploitation of exceptionalism to restrict individual security. This pattern is especially consequential where institutional independence is weak and crisis-determination criteria are opaque—conditions that erode the possibility of effective oversight and facilitate the structural weakening of citizens’ rights (1).

Ultimately, what emerges in contemporary authoritarianism is a form of “concealed repression” under the cover of legality. Authority is reproduced not in the absence of law, but through the strategic redefinition of legal concepts—a process that can generate internal legitimacy while simultaneously complicating external critique. In such a structure, security and judicial institutions acquire expansive power for social control through monopolistic interpretation of legal categories, hollowing out fundamental freedoms of their substantive content. Legislative trajectories in several countries also indicate that governments deploy legal instruments not only for overt repression but for altering the meaning of legal and moral concepts themselves. In this environment, individual rights are interpreted and implemented not as expressions of inherent human dignity, but through the determinations of security and judicial bodies aligned with political power (16).

#### *Restricting the Independence of Oversight and Judicial Institutions with Emphasis on Principles of International Law*

Authoritarianism, as a governance pattern grounded in power concentration, seeks to eliminate legal constraints on governmental conduct by neutralizing independent and impartial institutions—especially oversight and judicial bodies. This practice is not only incompatible with constitutional principles in democratic systems, but also constitutes a violation of fundamental norms of public international law, particularly international human rights law (4).

According to Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, “everyone shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal.” The independence of the judiciary is a core element of fair trial guarantees, and any governmental interference in the structure, functioning, or decisions of judges is regarded as a breach of this principle. The United Nations Human Rights Committee, in General Comment No. 32, further stresses that judicial dependence on the state—whether financial, administrative, or through political appointment—undermines the credibility of the judiciary.

In systems lacking effective oversight over the executive branch, governments—by intervening in the judiciary, legislation, and media—erode the capacity for rights-vindication. In fact, authoritarianism becomes fully

consolidated when oversight institutions lose their independence and are converted into instruments serving the ruling power (20).

The curtailment of oversight independence has wide-ranging implications for governance architecture. Under such conditions, the legislature is displaced from its substantive role and reduced to a ceremonial body that merely ratifies executive preferences without exercising autonomous legislative or supervisory functions. Consequently, separation of powers is weakened, and lawmaking becomes a tool for legitimizing executive decisions. Simultaneously, the judiciary loses autonomy and becomes subordinated to government priorities, such that—rather than protecting individual rights and liberties—it advances regime security and implements state policy. This trajectory diminishes public trust in courts and weakens justice within society. Alongside these developments, restrictions on media oversight intensify: by controlling media and suppressing civil society organizations, the state blocks criticism and prevents the disclosure of violations of individual security. As a result, public accountability declines, citizens are deprived of the right to information and freedom of expression, and—over the long term—this can contribute to the consolidation of authoritarian governance and the erosion of legitimacy (9).

At the comparative level, cases such as Turkey and Egypt illustrate these dynamics with particular clarity. In Turkey, after the failed coup attempt of 2016, the government dismissed a vast number of judges and prosecutors, a development criticized in the European Commission's 2019 Turkey Report (28). Such measures not only undermine judicial independence but also conflict with widely recognized standards on the independence of the judiciary.

In addition to weakening formal institutions, authoritarianism eliminates societal oversight by restricting media freedom and suppressing civil society—despite the centrality of freedom of expression, access to information, and cross-border communication in modern human-rights guarantees. Limiting media and removing civil society organizations directly undermines these protections and restricts the mechanisms through which violations of individual security can be publicly contested (4).

As a result, constraining the independence of oversight and judicial institutions is not only unacceptable under domestic constitutional principles, but also represents a clear breach of states' international obligations in the field of human rights. The persistence of such practices places the international legitimacy of governments under sustained doubt and intensifies the structural vulnerability of individual security (21).

### **Totalitarianism and Its Impact on Individual Security**

Totalitarianism represents the most severe and complex form of authoritarianism, in which the state not only monopolizes political power but also seeks comprehensive control over all dimensions of citizens' individual, social, cultural, and psychological life (5, 7). Unlike classic authoritarian systems—whose primary focus is the preservation of political domination—totalitarian systems aim to produce human beings devoid of independent thought, autonomy, and a distinct identity, defined exclusively within the framework of the ruling official ideology (6).

In such systems, concepts such as freedom, privacy, and individual security, rather than being treated as inherent and universal rights, are converted into instruments for measuring political loyalty. Put differently, individual security is not a right, but a privilege granted in exchange for complete obedience to the ideological order (1).

From a legal perspective, this condition is incompatible with the foundational logic of human-rights protection, insofar as it negates the very premise that personal liberty and security must be protected against arbitrary power. In totalitarian structures, the state's pervasive reach enables systematic interference in personal freedom and the

coercive imposition of ideological conformity, thereby undermining equality before the law and non-discrimination as basic principles of a legitimate legal order (21).

Totalitarianism can thus be understood as the systematic negation of citizens' fundamental rights: a regime that, by deploying complex surveillance architectures, pursues comprehensive domination over behavior, thought, social relations, and lifestyle. Through monopolizing an "official narrative" by means of censorship and media control, suppressing civil society institutions, and exercising pervasive oversight over digital space and social networks, the gradual erosion of citizens' intellectual independence becomes possible, and a collective identity aligned with the dominant discourse is reconstructed (17, 18).

Within these systems, **mass mobilization** is a central instrument for imposing manufactured solidarity and ideological loyalty. It not only penetrates multiple layers of social life but also compels citizens—under social, psychological, and legal pressures—to avoid any form of dissent or deviation from the ruling order. This active mass mobilization is a key pillar of totalitarian authority (7). Hannah Arendt likewise conceptualizes totalitarianism as a process whose ultimate objective is the erasure of individuality and the complete dissolution of the person into an all-encompassing social structure—achieved through continuous surveillance, targeted repression, and cultural homogenization (5).

In twentieth-century political theory, totalitarian domination is described as the most extreme form of political rule: a system that not only concentrates power within the formal institutions of the state but also aspires to total control over every aspect of human life—individual, social, and intellectual. In the classic formulation of Friedrich and Brzezinski, such a system rests on core components including a comprehensive ideology, a single mass party, an extensive security and police apparatus, monopolistic control over communications and the economy, and the systematic use of organized violence (6). These components not only restrict individual security but absorb it into the state to the point that it is effectively extinguished as an autonomous right.

Consequently, in totalitarian systems, "security" is redefined not on the basis of rights but on the basis of obedience and loyalty to the ruling ideology. In this context, individual security becomes synonymous with full alignment with the political objectives of the regime, while any intellectual independence, critique, or even neutrality is treated as a threat to the structure and becomes subject to suppression (5, 7). Legal instruments are likewise subordinated to this machinery of domination, including expansive criminalization, show trials, and ambiguous criminal provisions, all mobilized to stabilize absolute rule (16).

### *Redefining Individual Security Within the Framework of Official Ideology*

One of the most fundamental consequences of totalitarianism is a substantive transformation of the concept of "individual security." In such regimes, individual security is no longer grounded in inherent human dignity or natural rights, but is defined as an instrument for consolidating ideological domination. Only those who move within the regime's prescribed cognitive boundaries are deemed "worthy" of security, whereas dissidents or those who deviate from official principles are construed as threats to order and thus deserving of exclusion, punishment, or elimination (5, 6).

In a totalitarian system, the very idea of individual security **against** the state becomes meaningless, because the state represents itself as the owner of collective will and the embodiment of absolute truth. The individual is not treated as a citizen but as a tool for realizing ideology. As Arendt argues, the systematic suppression of individuality and the destruction of human self-understanding constitute the core of totalitarian structures (5).

Comparative analyses indicate that Nazi Germany represents a paradigmatic illustration of ideological redefinition of individual security. Under the Third Reich, “security” was effectively allocated to those considered politically and racially aligned with the ruling order, while Jews, political opponents, and other targeted groups were not merely excluded from security protections but were treated as security threats in their very existence (29).

Security in totalitarian societies is therefore selective and conditional: those who depart from the state’s ideological framework are constructed as threats. This selectivity not only empties “security” of its universal meaning but transforms it into a mechanism for legitimizing repression and stabilizing ideological order (1).

### *Controlling Individual Identity Through Social Surveillance and Cultural Engineering in Totalitarian Systems*

In totalitarian systems, the objective extends beyond preserving political domination or neutralizing opponents. States seek to produce citizens with a pre-designed identity—lacking critical self-awareness, value autonomy, and the capacity for differentiation—who are unable to critique official beliefs or even imagine alternatives to the existing order. In these regimes, individual identity is not merely controlled; it is actively reconstructed so as to become fully congruent with the state’s official worldview (5). Arendt emphasizes that totalitarianism succeeds when individuals cannot conceive of themselves outside the ruling ideology (5). To achieve this objective, totalitarian states employ a range of instruments, analyzed below in distinct terms.

### Cultural Engineering Through the Distortion of History and the Education System: An Instrument of Control and a Vehicle for Violating Cultural Rights

A foundational step in constructing ideological identity is the reconstruction of history and collective memory. In totalitarian regimes, history is not treated as a reflection of past reality but as an instrument for directing the consciousness of future generations. By removing alternative narratives, distorting historical events, and mythologizing leaders, such governments seek to shape citizens’ minds from childhood within the boundaries of official ideology. Cultural engineering and ideological historiography operate as the central tools of this process: by redefining cultural and historical narratives, they produce a social environment in which only identities aligned with regime objectives can emerge and persist. In parallel, the education system is placed under stringent control so that it reproduces this imposed identity across generations (5, 6).

A prominent illustration of this broader logic is the monopolization of narrative through systematic censorship and the suppression of dissenting interpretations, where textbooks and mass communication channels function as vehicles for repeating the official account while alternative readings are excluded from education and stigmatized as disloyalty. Such narrative monopolies are structurally reinforced through the state’s capacity to police information, regulate cultural production, and discipline public speech (16, 18).

In the Nazi period, for example, schooling and youth socialization were directed toward producing a generation loyal to the party and its leader, embedding ideological commitments through curricula and institutionalized indoctrination (29).

In analytical terms, such policies represent an effort to impose a “single narrative,” such that collective consciousness is deprived of historical pluralism and the possibility of multi-layered engagement with the past (1). By reshaping history to foreground regime interests and excluding oppositional experiences, the distortion of collective memory not only misdirects how new generations perceive the past but also erases pathways of

resistance and protest from public imagination, thereby weakening the social resources through which citizens can contest domination (30).

From the standpoint of cultural rights, these measures undermine freedom of thought and the integrity of educational processes, and they further degrade the informational environment necessary for meaningful public reasoning. Where expressive freedom and access to diverse perspectives are constrained, the erosion of intellectual autonomy becomes structurally embedded, and individual security is weakened through the progressive elimination of spaces for independent judgment (4, 9).

Accordingly, the imposition of a singular and exclusive historical narrative is not only a clear manifestation of totalitarian strategies of cognitive engineering and the elimination of critical collective memory; it also stands in direct tension with foundational principles of cultural pluralism, freedom of thought, and educational integrity. In practical terms, such policies dismantle the conditions under which individual security and intellectual freedom can be meaningfully sustained in the face of pervasive state intervention (21).

#### Instrumental Exploitation of Religion and Ideology for Social Control

In totalitarian systems, religion and ideology are not treated as matters of belief or value systems, but rather as efficient instruments for cognitive engineering and the regulation of social behavior. By distorting the original meanings of religious or ideological doctrines, these regimes construct a structure in which individual identity is weakened and the citizen is converted into an obedient subject lacking autonomous will. In such arrangements, religious or ideological commitment—rather than strengthening awareness and agency—becomes a mechanism of surveillance, repression, and the reproduction of discipline (16).

A salient illustration of this instrumentalization can be observed in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, where Islam is selectively reinterpreted so that its norms function in the service of consolidating political power. In this context, religious doctrine is mobilized not for ethical or spiritual development but for the coercive subordination of women, minorities, and political opponents. This can be conceptualized as a disciplinary order aimed at producing subjects who comply not out of faith, but out of compulsion and fear—an outcome consistent with broader totalitarian strategies of transforming inner conviction into externally enforced conformity (30).

By contrast, the Nazi regime, instead of relying on traditional religion, replaced it with a racialized ideology and extreme nationalism. Education and propaganda were deployed to instill claims of racial superiority and to negate individuality; the underlying objective was for individuals to derive meaning exclusively through the imagined totality of the “Aryan nation,” leaving unconditional obedience and loyalty as the only viable forms of self-definition (29).

Although the instruments differ across these cases—one anchored in a religious frame and the other in a secular ideology—both converge on a shared goal: producing homogenized mentalities, eliminating cultural diversity, and exerting comprehensive control over individuals’ identity possibilities. In effect, within authoritarian and totalitarian systems, religion and ideology do not operate as expressions of spiritual or political freedom, but as tools of social control that invalidate meaningful choice and pluralism (5, 6).

Within the logic of international human-rights protection, the instrumental use of religion or ideology to suppress social, cultural, or religious groups constitutes a direct assault on the freedom of conscience and belief, cultural self-determination, and the principle of non-discrimination. Such practices, as mechanisms of systematic exclusion and coercion, are incompatible with a human-security framework grounded in dignity and pluralism (21).

### Technological Authority, Surveillance, and Digital Control over Everyday Life

In the contemporary era, technology has not uniformly functioned as an instrument of political and social development; in totalitarian systems, it has increasingly become a mechanism for deepening control and engineering citizens' behavior. By integrating artificial intelligence, data analytics, digital tracking infrastructures, and smart surveillance cameras, totalitarian states have produced a new form of what can be described—through a Foucauldian lens—as a **digital panopticon**, in which continuous visibility generates internalized fear, discipline, and compliance, even without the constant application of overt punishment (16).

A paradigmatic illustration of this mechanism can be seen in China's **social credit** architecture, which evaluates individuals through economic and social behavior—including online interactions—and assigns scores that can shape or restrict access to travel, employment, education, and even public services. The expansion of such systems reflects how modern surveillance technologies enable states to exercise unprecedented levels of behavioral control, placing individual security under acute strain (4). In this context, Hosseini argues that modern technologies can function either to limit or to guarantee individual security, but in authoritarian environments they often enable systematic restriction by expanding state capacity for monitoring and intervention (31). With the growth of cyber-surveillance and electronic tracking, states can not only regulate conduct but also monitor social and ideological tendencies, producing serious human-rights risks and amplifying vulnerability in the private sphere (32).

In North Korea, despite the absence of surveillance infrastructures comparable to China, strict local control systems and compulsory reporting practices produce an analogous level of social subjugation through more conventional techniques. In this setting, any movement, interaction, or conversation outside the boundaries of official ideology is treated as an object of scrutiny, reporting, and punishment—demonstrating that totalizing control can be achieved through varied technological levels when discipline is structurally embedded (5).

From the standpoint of human security and the rule-of-law framework, such systems exemplify structural pressures that erode privacy, communication autonomy, and freedom of movement. When digital control produces discrimination, removes social opportunities, and imposes “silent” penalties through algorithmic or administrative restriction, it directly conflicts with human dignity and the substantive conditions of a life free from coercive surveillance (4, 21). Consequently, technological surveillance in totalitarian systems is not merely a tool of political discipline and population management; it constitutes an escalating challenge to international human-rights regimes and strengthens the case for more robust global regulation and accountability mechanisms (9).

### Combining Traditional and Modern Instruments in the Exercise of Authoritarian Domination

A defining feature of many contemporary totalitarian systems is the simultaneous use of traditional instruments—such as religion and ideology—and modern surveillance technologies to impose comprehensive domination. This fusion enables regimes to move beyond controlling outward behavior toward engineering mentality, shaping collective unconsciousness, and narrowing the space for intellectual and cultural resistance. As Arendt suggests in her analysis of totalitarian dynamics, such a stage reflects the “maturation” of totalitarian systems, dissolving the conventional boundary between public and private and penetrating deeper layers of personal life (5).

In Afghanistan under Taliban rule, religious narratives function as legitimizing instruments, combined with local intelligence networks to identify and eliminate dissenting cultural and intellectual currents at micro-levels. Similarly, in China, party ideology—reproduced through formal education and state-approved curricula—is integrated with

digital surveillance, artificial intelligence, and facial recognition. This synergy between “soft” and “hard” tools generates a new configuration of social discipline and political control, in which resistance can be neutralized even before it becomes publicly visible (17, 18).

### *Criminalizing Dissenting Thought in Totalitarian Systems: A Threat to Individual and Social Security*

In totalitarian systems, the restriction of individual security is not limited to citizens’ external actions; the mind, beliefs, and inner dispositions are also placed under stringent supervision. By deploying a model of ideological homogenization, these regimes treat any thought incompatible with the official discourse as a threat to national security and, in doing so, bring mental life into the domain of criminal law—an outcome that can be conceptualized as the criminalization of subjectivity (5, 6).

Within such structures, one of the clearest manifestations of authoritarian domination is the systematic suppression of heterodoxy and the penalization of ideas. Differences of belief—whether political, religious, ethnic, or cultural—are not recognized as legitimate expressions of social plurality; instead, they are construed as dangers to ideological cohesion and the legitimacy of political power. Consequently, intellectual dissent is transformed into a security offense (7).

In this framework, criminal law and judicial institutions do not function to protect public rights and liberties but serve as tools for enforcing ideological conformity. Mere disagreement—even at the level of thought or informal expression—can trigger repressive reaction. As Arendt’s analysis implies, totalitarian power aims at domination over thought as much as over action, dissolving the boundary between inward conviction and outward conduct (5).

Such an environment leaves deep and durable effects on social life. A society in which thinking itself is treated as criminal gradually becomes characterized by pervasive self-censorship, sustained fear, and the erosion of rational public dialogue. Fromm, in *Escape from Freedom*, interprets this condition as a consequence of internalizing fear of punishment, whereby individuals retreat from independent identity into the illusory safety of obedience (30).

Shariatpanahi emphasizes that in totalitarian systems, legislation is not primarily designed to regulate social relations but to impose ideological values on citizens. In such a structure, individual security loses any independent meaning and is “guaranteed” only to the extent that individuals fully accept the regime’s normative framework (3).

This suppression is not merely theoretical; it has been historically instantiated. The Soviet experience under Stalin demonstrates how even “counter-revolutionary thinking” could lead to severe punishments, including execution or forced deportation to labor camps (33). In Nazi Germany, affiliation with disfavored political currents or non-Aryan identity, even absent concrete action, could lead to arrest, torture, or execution (29).

In contemporary Iran, the broad use of accusations such as “enmity against God,” “corruption on earth,” “propaganda against the system,” and “acts against national security” has also operated as a mechanism of repression not only against political protestors but against journalists, civil activists, and social-media users—illustrating how expansive security categories can facilitate systematic restriction of individual security (1).

In such regimes, the judiciary is also emptied of independence and becomes subordinated to political power. Judges operate under political pressure, and decisions are made less on the basis of justice than on the basis of regime interests, eroding judicial legitimacy and public trust (4).

In international human-rights analysis, the criminalization of thought and the suppression of dissent directly conflict with the protection of freedom of conscience and expression, as well as minority protections and fair-trial guarantees. Yet totalitarian systems, invoking concepts such as “national security” or “preserving unity,”

systematically violate these commitments and suppress fundamental freedoms. Historical and contemporary patterns—ranging from physical elimination of opponents to mass incarceration and punishment for belief—exemplify how totalitarian domination becomes normalized as a governance technique, while simultaneously constituting a grave assault on human dignity (9, 21).

Ultimately, these systems effectively erase the boundary between “criminal conduct” and “nonconforming thought.” States claim authority not only to judge behavior but to put citizens’ mentality itself on trial. This not only collapses individual security and fundamental freedoms; it also empties the concept of “security” of meaning by subordinating it to the perpetuation of political domination, pushing society toward silence, cognitive closure, and political subjugation (5, 7). The cumulative effect is the institutionalization of a culture of fear, the spread of self-censorship, and the closure of spaces for dialogue and social reflection—conditions that weaken democratic development, civic participation, and rational public life (30).

### *The Strategy of Physical and Psychological Repression: Violence as a Mechanism for Constraining Will*

In totalitarian–authoritarian structures, the exercise of physical and psychological violence is not a reaction to criminal conduct but a strategic instrument for establishing hegemony and eliminating the possibility of resistance. In this framework, repression functions not merely as a means of maintaining order, but as a technology of domination whose objective is to institutionalize fear and destabilize the psychological foundations of society. Arbitrary arrests, torture, covert threats, and physical elimination are often carried out not as responses to objectively defined offenses, but—frequently—without even minimal judicial procedures. The Nazi regime employed diverse instruments of physical and psychological repression to dominate society, including forced labor camps for incarcerating opponents and minorities, torture and executions to extract confessions and eliminate dissent, propaganda to produce ideological conditioning and distort reality, media censorship to block oppositional information, and cultural engineering through historical distortion to construct a Nazi narrative of past and present (29).

The Soviet Union under Stalin likewise constitutes a classic illustration of this strategy, where hundreds of thousands of people were deported to Siberian forced labor camps on vague charges such as “betrayal of the revolution.” These camps were not merely sites of imprisonment but instruments of psychological engineering and the destruction of individual will (33).

Physical and psychological torture in such prisons was directed toward breaking individuals’ will and transforming them into obedient subjects. In analytic terms, totalitarian repression collapses the boundary between law and coercion: judicial and security power is converted into an apparatus for eliminating heterodoxy, and violence acquires a veneer of legal legitimacy (1).

From an analytical standpoint, this form of repression aims to weaken the agency of social actors not only through physical removal but through intrusion into the domain of mind and volition. Totalitarian regimes employ recurrent security summons, livelihood threats, targeted deprivation of basic entitlements, and psychological pressure on families to create a mechanism of “invisible violence,” in which bloodshed is displaced by chronic anxiety. This corresponds to the Foucauldian insight that modern power often operates not primarily through bodily elimination, but through disciplinary processes that undermine the mental foundations of resistance and compel compliance (16).

At the level of international legal analysis, such conduct represents a paradigmatic instance of grave human-rights violations and structural abuse of coercive power. Beyond the formal illegality of torture and inhuman treatment, the systematic nature of violence in totalitarian settings underscores its function as a governance technique aimed at dismantling personal security as a meaningful entitlement (21).

Socially, the persistence of such structural violence drives society into conditions of psychological anxiety, mutual distrust, and pervasive self-censorship, such that even silence cannot guarantee safety. Fromm's psychological analysis warns that internalized fear separates individuals from their authentic selves, eroding identity, will, and resistance, and producing subjects who are obedient yet profoundly destabilized (30).

In totalitarian systems, the pattern of organized repression—observable through historical experiences such as coerced confessions and psychological torture in Stalinist contexts, systematic violence in labor-camp regimes, and the elimination of opponents in multiple authoritarian settings—demonstrates a broader logic of destabilizing personal identity and destroying the capacity for resistance. Hence, physical and psychological repression in totalitarian orders is not a response to crime but a strategy for constraining any inclination toward independence, critical thought, or active participation in public life. This process not only violates individual security but structurally removes it from effective legal recognition, and traces of this violence-driven logic remain clearly visible in contemporary totalitarian practices (5, 7).

#### Comprehensive Espionage and Surveillance and the Construction of Fear and Distrust: A Systematic Tool of Repression

In totalitarian–authoritarian structures, organized espionage is not only one of the most effective instruments of social control, but also a foundation for systematic repression, the engineering of fear, and the erosion of social capital. This form of spying—extending from the state level into the routines of everyday life—places citizens in a condition of continuous vulnerability to being watched, reported, and punished.

In Nazi Germany, intelligence and repression organs such as the Gestapo and the SS functioned far beyond a conventional information system. They were equipped with extensive networks of informants, broad surveillance practices, and continuous recording of citizens' daily conduct. In this environment, surveillance was carried out not only by official agents but by neighbors, co-workers, and even family members, enabling the regime to transform monitoring into an internalized and omnipresent mechanism. The result was deepened social distrust, intensified interpersonal fractures, and the consolidation of chronic fear in citizens' behavior (29).

In the former Soviet Union, the KGB likewise constructed a full-spectrum architecture of political and social surveillance. By employing formal agents, infiltrators, and clandestine reporting networks, it maintained continuous monitoring of citizens' thoughts, communications, and inclinations. Such an intensity of espionage turned public space into a field of permanent suspicion and fear of exposure, where expressing a view or behaving differently could generate severe consequences (33).

In the contemporary era, China has reproduced this model through digital technology. Projects such as the “Great Firewall” not only restrict access to information but enable digital monitoring and surveillance over user communications, internet searches, and online interactions. Combined with advanced algorithms and big-data analytics, this configuration produces an “intelligent” and less visible form of espionage. As a result, fear of constant monitoring drives widespread self-censorship and political silence (18).

Overall, espionage in totalitarian systems is not an exceptional instrument but a normalized mechanism for exercising power and neutralizing social resistance. By institutionalizing fear of exposure and punishment, these systems produce a society in which individuals prefer silence, isolation, and avoidance of confrontation with authority. The final product is a distrustful, passive, and non-democratic social order that loses its capacity for collective growth and transformation (9, 30).

#### *Manufacturing Crisis and Constructing Artificial Enemies: Instruments of Repressive Policy in Totalitarian Systems*

In totalitarian systems, the production of artificial crises and the continuous construction of threats function as instruments for maintaining power cohesion and suppressing opposition. This strategy—often conceptualized as “crisis-based governance”—rests on sustaining a persistent atmosphere of insecurity and anxiety. Such crises may be framed as external threats (e.g., war, terrorism, or “enemy infiltration”) or internal threats (e.g., uprisings or political dissent). Governments typically use these threats to justify further restrictions on individual and social freedoms. In this way, society is kept in a permanent state of crisis, and repressive measures are rationalized as necessary for “security” or “defending national integrity” (13).

For instance, Nazi Germany exploited economic and political crises to maintain public anxiety through the construction of externalized enemies, thereby legitimizing violent repression and severe limitations on individual freedoms (29). Comparable patterns appear in other contexts insofar as authoritarian power is sustained through securitized narratives that convert governance failures into existential threats and thereby normalize coercion (7, 14).

More broadly, the use of external threats or manufactured crises in totalitarian systems not only preserves domination but deepens a climate of fear and insecurity, within which suppressing freedoms and violating human rights can be presented as logical and necessary measures for protecting “national security.” Over time, this process damages the substantive foundations of civil liberties and undermines the institutional conditions required for democratic resilience (4, 9).

#### *The Social and Psychological Consequences of Totalitarian Domination: From Identity Engineering to Escape from Freedom*

The integrated strategies employed by totalitarian systems—combining ideology, religion, surveillance technologies, and the distortion of historical narratives—extend far beyond behavioral regulation. Over time, these mechanisms lead to the systematic engineering of identity and the domination of citizens’ minds and emotional structures. Historical evidence demonstrates that, despite geographical and temporal differences, totalitarian regimes have produced remarkably similar social and psychological consequences across diverse contexts (5, 6).

In Nazi Germany, state propaganda and historical distortion fostered a population that engaged in self-censorship without the need for direct coercion, voluntarily aligning with the regime’s ideological framework. Similarly, in the Soviet Union, extensive espionage networks and the psychological terror generated by them created an atmosphere of persistent fear, transforming public life into a domain of chronic insecurity and mutual suspicion (33). Contemporary totalitarian systems such as China and North Korea have implemented more technologically advanced versions of these historical models by integrating digital surveillance, ideological indoctrination, and restrictions on access to global information. These mechanisms collectively reinforce social conformity while eroding independent thought and individual autonomy (17, 18).

The shared outcome of these systems is the emergence of a society in which interpersonal trust deteriorates, individual creativity is suppressed, and citizens are reduced to instruments serving the dominant ideological structure. Cultural and identity engineering plays a decisive role in this process, as it not only undermines individual freedoms but also destabilizes psychological security and weakens social cohesion. By restructuring the intellectual and emotional environment, totalitarian regimes create conditions in which citizens internalize control and regulate their own behavior in accordance with state-imposed norms (16).

From Erich Fromm's perspective, this condition represents a form of "escape from freedom," in which individuals relinquish their genuine autonomy in exchange for the illusion of security and stability. Fear and uncertainty compel individuals to abandon independent identity and seek psychological refuge in obedience, thereby reinforcing the structures of domination that constrain them (30). In this sense, totalitarianism does not merely transform political institutions; it reshapes the internal psychological landscape of society, appropriating imagination, emotional autonomy, and the capacity for independent thought. The result is the creation of a homogeneous, fearful, and politically disempowered population incapable of sustained resistance or critical engagement (5).

Ultimately, totalitarian surveillance systems not only violate individual rights but also generate a society characterized by distrust, anxiety, and pervasive fear. Citizens increasingly retreat into what may be described as a condition of "life in the shadows," where they avoid meaningful engagement with public authority and refrain from expressing their thoughts and emotions openly. Historical experiences in the Soviet Union and other totalitarian societies clearly demonstrate how such environments foster self-censorship, social fragmentation, and psychological alienation, thereby consolidating authoritarian power while simultaneously eroding the foundations of human dignity and collective freedom (9, 21).

## Conclusion

The present comparative and critical study demonstrated that the concept of individual security, although seemingly universal and self-evident, acquires fundamentally divergent meanings, functions, and consequences within different political systems, particularly authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. In democratic systems, individual security is grounded in human dignity, separation of powers, institutional accountability, and the rule of law. In contrast, in non-democratic systems, this concept is transformed into an instrument for maintaining political power and suppressing dissent. In such environments, individual security is redefined not as an inherent right but as a conditional privilege granted in exchange for obedience, while intellectual independence and critical thinking are treated as threats to the political order.

Authoritarianism emerges when the concentration of power is accompanied by the weakening of oversight institutions and the restriction of public participation. Under such conditions, political structures rely on passive obedience rather than accountability and transparency, and citizen participation is reduced to symbolic or controlled forms lacking substantive influence. Totalitarianism represents the extreme form of authoritarian rule, extending beyond political control to encompass the mental, cultural, and psychological dimensions of human existence. In such systems, individual security is no longer recognized as an inherent right but is instead contingent upon ideological conformity and political loyalty.

The theoretical analysis revealed that the distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism lies primarily in the scope, intensity, and depth of state intervention rather than in their fundamental objectives. Authoritarian regimes often begin by employing legal and administrative mechanisms that appear legitimate to restrict freedoms,

thereby creating conditions conducive to the emergence of totalitarian structures. In these advanced forms of domination, the state engages in systematic identity engineering through ideological indoctrination, manipulation of historical narratives, instrumental use of religion, and the application of both psychological and physical coercion to reshape society according to the official ideological framework.

Within totalitarian systems, individual security is not merely restricted but structurally redefined. Intellectual independence, critical discourse, and ideological diversity are perceived as threats to political stability and are suppressed through expansive legal interpretations, vague security doctrines, and coercive enforcement mechanisms. Legal institutions, which are intended to protect rights and freedoms, are transformed into instruments of domination, legitimizing repression and reinforcing political authority. Consequently, the legal system ceases to function as a protective framework and instead becomes an operational tool for sustaining centralized power.

Despite structural differences, authoritarian and totalitarian systems share fundamental characteristics, including the concentration of power, erosion of institutional accountability, weakening of independent institutions, and systematic limitation of civil and political rights. Both systems strip the concept of security of its human and legal significance, transforming it into a mechanism of political control. Authoritarianism may function as a transitional stage toward totalitarian domination when oversight institutions collapse and civil society becomes marginalized or suppressed.

Protecting individual security in the face of such political structures requires the reconstruction of legal and political institutions based on transparency, accountability, and institutional independence. This process necessitates strengthening judicial and oversight mechanisms, promoting public legal awareness, regulating emerging technologies that enable surveillance and control, and enhancing civic participation through institutional transparency and democratic accountability. Without such safeguards, the structural conditions necessary for authoritarian consolidation may persist or intensify.

Ultimately, even democratic transitions do not guarantee immunity from authoritarian regression unless the principles of transparency, rule of law, institutional independence, and protection of individual rights are genuinely implemented in practice. The defense of individual security is therefore not merely a legal obligation but a philosophical, social, and political necessity essential for preserving human dignity, intellectual autonomy, and democratic integrity.

**Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism**

Comparative Dimension	Authoritarianism	Totalitarianism
Role and function of ideology	Ideology may exist but is often instrumental, fragmented, or symbolic; used primarily to justify political order and limit participation rather than reshape society.	Ideology is foundational, comprehensive, and mandatory; it structures the entire political system and aims at creating a "new ideological human."
Mass mobilization	Political participation is generally passive, symbolic, and controlled; mass mobilization is limited or absent.	Active, organized, and compulsory mass mobilization aligned with ideology; participation is enforced and continuously monitored.
Scope and method of control	Control focuses mainly on political opposition and political institutions; intervention in daily life, culture, and private affairs is limited.	Comprehensive and intrusive control over all aspects of life, including culture, education, economy, private life, beliefs, and personal relationships.
Party system and political competition	May allow limited multiparty structures or controlled opposition; real political competition is weak or absent.	Single-party dominance; all political opposition is eliminated or absorbed into the ruling structure.
Leadership model and power concentration	Leadership may be held by a dictator, military elite, technocratic elite, or oligarchic group; personality cult may exist but is not always central.	Leadership is often charismatic and mythologized; personality cult and ideological legitimacy are central to governance.

Method of repression	Repression is targeted, selective, and often focused on political opponents; symbolic tolerance may be allowed to maintain legitimacy.	Repression is systemic, widespread, and often includes purges, imprisonment, forced labor, exile, or execution.
Role of law and judiciary	Law exists as a tool to preserve political order; legal structures may appear independent but lack substantive autonomy.	Law functions entirely as an instrument of ideological enforcement; legal norms are fully subordinated to political authority.
Source of legitimacy	Legitimacy is based on stability, order, tradition, economic performance, or bureaucratic authority.	Legitimacy derives from ideological mission, historical destiny, or revolutionary transformation.
Media and information control	Media are censored, restricted, or regulated; modern authoritarian regimes often use digital surveillance and algorithmic control.	Total monopoly over media and information; propaganda and ideological indoctrination dominate all communication channels.
Individual security and human rights	Individual rights may exist conditionally; security is maintained as long as individuals do not threaten political order.	Individual security is entirely contingent on ideological conformity; dissent results in severe punishment.
Historical origin and transformation	Often emerges through democratic erosion, political crisis, or military intervention; transition to democracy remains possible.	Typically emerges after revolution, war, or systemic collapse; transition to democracy is far more difficult.
Historical and contemporary examples	Iran, contemporary China (post-Mao), Russia under Putin, Egypt under Sisi	Nazi Germany, Stalinist Soviet Union, Maoist China, contemporary North Korea

**Table 2. Shared Characteristics of Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism**

Shared Feature	Description
Concentration of power	Both systems concentrate power at the top of the political hierarchy.
Suppression of fundamental freedoms	Civil liberties and political freedoms are severely restricted or eliminated.
Instrumental use of law	Law functions as a tool for regime preservation rather than protection of rights.
Suppression of civil society	Independent institutions and civil society are weakened, controlled, or eliminated.
Manufactured legitimacy	Legitimacy is constructed through ideological justification, propaganda, or performance narratives.
Structural transformation potential	Authoritarian regimes may evolve into totalitarian systems or transition to democracy depending on institutional conditions.
Extensive propaganda use	Both systems rely heavily on propaganda, information control, and media manipulation.

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All authors equally contributed to this study.

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The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

### Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

### Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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