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The phenomenon of information autocracy: content and features

Abstract: The theory of information autocracies was invented by a Russian economist Sergei Guriev and an American political scientist Daniel Treisman. It describes the modern development of regimes in which the power is held by a monopoly on information, censorship and co-optation of the information elite. The study in this context applies to the countries of Eastern Europe, Middle East and Latin America. In this article, the author aims to trace the development of the phenomenon of information autocracy both in the territory of Eastern Europe (Russia and Belarus), as well as to identify certain characteristics of this concept in some countries of the European Union.

Key words: Information autocracy, Russia, Belarus, European Union, media, authoritarianism

Purpose and hypotheses of the work

The purpose of the work is to identify changes in the concept of information autocracy.

Work hypotheses:

1. Information autocracies carry out massive repression and create media constructs that have replaced ideologies.
2. Elements of informational autocracies exist not only in the countries of the second world, but also in the institutionally developed states of Western Europe and North America.
3. The left-wing agenda, like the right-wing one, is currently a tool of manipulation and propaganda that contributes to the emergence of information autocracies.

The concept of “information autocracy”

Informational autocracy is a type of authoritarian political regime that emerged at the beginning of the 21st century, in which power is held

by censorship, suppression or marginalization of independent media, co-optation of the information elite, and equipping police and intelligence services with information systems to suppress attempts at rebellion. The theory of information autocracies was developed by Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman.

The transition of authoritarian models from the old (highly concentrated and centralized government power maintained by political repression) to the new type, according to S. Guriev and D. Treisman, is due to several reasons. Firstly, it is the end of the Cold War. Previously, Western countries supported many non-democratic regimes, explaining this by the struggle against communism. Nowadays it is unnecessary to oppose communism, and dictators ceased to receive support, which led to the weakening of their regimes. Now the same situation is observed with dictatorships opposing Islamism. Some countries (for example, Russia, China, Iran) **are also trying to support them, explaining this by opposition to radical ideas**, but the scale is not comparable to that in the days of the bipolar world. The second reason for the transition to a new type of autocracies are the processes of globalization and technical development. Previously, the country could develop without being open to the world. Today, as we can see from the example of North Korea, such isolation leads to a serious lag behind the developed countries. Therefore, modern autocracies are open to the world. But in these circumstances, mass violence is much more difficult to hide and modern technologies can be used as a tool for propaganda. The third reason is that ideologies disappeared after the end of the Cold War and without it, it can be difficult to justify mass repression. The difference between information autocracy and old-style dictatorships lies in the fact that such regimes are disguised as democracies. The leaders of such regimes are trying to retain power, as did the authoritarian leaders of the past. This is not due to fear and violence, but due to popularity. If they use violence, they do secretly. They build their popularity on the fact that they tell people that only they can effectively manage the state processes, and any politician who replaces them will be significantly worse. To promote such an idea, the leaders of information autocracies need to have control over the media. Censorship, however, is not enough to retain power. There are always people in society who do not believe propaganda. S. Guriev and D. Treisman call this part of society the elite. This elite is made up of more informed citizens who understand how the system works. In order to remain in power, an autocrat needs to use propaganda to convince the majority that he or she

is competent and to ensure that the minority does not tell the majority that this is not so and does not convince the majority of the benefits of a potential change in power (Guriev, Treisman, 2015, pp. 5–21).

The principles of information autocracy on the examples of Putin's Russia and Lukashenko's Belarus

The examples of Russia and Belarus were not chosen by chance. Both countries are personalist information autocracies in which power is vested in an expanded unelected bureaucracy and enforcement agencies, the main goal of which is the self-preservation and survival of the system. Political elites of these countries proceed from the following principles:

1. An administrative resource is equated to goods. The owner of such a resource has power, money, and is above the law. For subordinates, there is a substitution of rights (a tool of free individuals) to privileges (a tool of controlled people that can be taken away at the will of the proprietor).
2. Democratically elected persons lose their political subjectivity and are replaced by appointees.
3. Attempts to control public space and media space are growing.

Information autocracy, according to S. Guriev and D. Treisman, is based on the following principles:

1. Lack of massive repression. As soon as the regime begins to use massive repression, it becomes clear to the majority of the population that all so-called democracy is a simulacrum. The author of this study believes that it is a principle that has undergone a significant change since the invention of the theory of information autocracies. It was violated in Belarus in 2020, where mass beating of civilians for political reasons by the state forces outrage civil society mostly (*Thousands...*, 2020). Initially, the outrage was rigged by elections by the unpopular Alexander Lukashenko (Zahorski, 2020, p. 1). Violence against peaceful protesters was also used in Russia in January–February 2021 (*They...*, 2021; *Moscow...*, 2021), but on a smaller scale.

2. Lack of ideology. In modern information autocracies there are no such large-scale and all-encompassing ideologies, such as, for example, Stalin's communism or Hitler's national socialism. At the same time, in addition to the theory of S. Guriev and D. Treisman, we can note the invented media structures that deeply penetrate public values. In Putin's

Russia, such constructions are the following topics: public anti-LGBTQ+ policy (Udensiva-Brenner, 2020, p. 2), “interference of the countries of the collective West in the internal politics of Putin’s Russia and those countries that the Kremlin considers in its zone of influence” (State Duma, 2019), active celebration of the Victory in World War II (Teslova, 2020), restoration of the Russian Orthodox Church and fear of 1990s.

Thanks to homophobic themes, individualism in public relations and the division of civil society in Russia are achieved, which is beneficial to the Kremlin for the purposes of governance. After all, if one group of the population can be declared “enemies”, then it will be easier to do this with another group. If at first the representatives of the LGBTQ+ community were the “enemies”, then at the moment the opposition and other groups have been added to them.

Due to the so-called “interference in the internal affairs of Putin’s Russia”, it is possible to carry out repressions against non-systemic opposition without image losses in the eyes of a significant part of the population. At the same time, “the danger of orange revolutions tripled by the collective West” allows one to influence financially or militarily on those territories that the Kremlin considers to be its sphere of influence. In addition, it is known that the emergence of democratic neighboring countries strengthens democratic tendencies in autocratic countries, which is disadvantageous to modern Russian political elites.

Thanks to military PR, Russian society is now quite militarized and aggressive. Every year on May 9th, children are dressed up in military uniforms (*Russia’s...*, 2015), tanks drive through the streets, and military aircrafts fly in the sky over the capital. Playing on the feelings of Russians about the victory of the Red Army in World War II, modern Russian political elites use these sentiments in their political campaigns, which often forces people to abandon rational actions in favor of normative ones. In addition, the Russian audience is regularly told about possible upcoming wars with Ukraine (*Military...*, 2020) and NATO (Melnikov, 2019) countries. This is accompanied by historical and conspiracy parallels. This happens due to the lack of real achievements of the country and an attempt to divert the attention of society from urgent problems, for example, urban studies.

Thanks to the restoration of the Church and the discourse about its place in the structure of society, the state has the opportunity to conduct pro-state religious political campaigns (Knorre, Kharish, 2018, pp. 365–383) and fight the opposition (for example, through the law on “insulting

religious feelings” (*Holy...*, 2017)). The modern Church in Russia is a political actor who actively lobbies for its interests. Also it is a large land and property owner. At the same time, there is a contrast between believers within the Russian elites in comparison with Russian society. There are more believers in the Russian elites (including those who observe shamanistic rituals like Epiphany ice bathing (Putin, 2021), which is not an Orthodox Christian tradition (*Epiphany...*, 2020)). This is combined with the luxurious lifestyle of the Church elites (*New...*, 2020) against the background of the poor life of Russians, which meets with widespread public condemnation. At the same time, the Church behaves as if tens of millions are behind it. However, despite the intrusive advertising in public places (the call to prayer can be heard even on Red Square) and the Kremlin’s attempt to control the minds of Russians through the Church, modern Russian society is secular (Shulman, 2017).

Due to the fear of the return of bloodcurdling conditions of the 1990s to Russia (Bracho, Lopez, 2005, p. 2), when a large number of Russians had significant financial difficulties, the Russian propaganda succeeds in shaping the image of President Vladimir Putin as the man who saved Russia from this state of affairs (Ioffe, 2016). Not everyone understands that the growth in prosperity took place in the 2000s because of the rise in energy prices, the effective reforms of Mikhail Kasyanov, as well as large investments in the economy due to low wages. As a result, in the event of a change of power, Russian propaganda promises a loss of “stability, prosperity, security” and a return to the terrible 1990s (Kiselyov, 2020), which are associated with the dominance of “liberal ideas and Western European agents” in Russia, on whom all the blame is placed.

It should be further added that many Russians are perfectly aware that the news is faked: the Kremlin’s power is entrenched not by trying to persuade people that it is telling the truth, but by making it clear that it can dictate the terms of the “truth” and thus enhance its aura of power. It is also part of the existing media structures in Russia.

3. External attributes of democracy, such as courts, elections, multi-party system, parliament. On the example of Russia and Belarus, it can be determined that the very fact of the existence of elections does not mean anything. Opposition candidates can be prevented from entering the elections (Glazunova, 2020, p. 130), they can be prevented from campaigning (at the same time an information campaign can be conducted against them) (*Navalny...*, 2021), and finally, the results can be simply faked (Zahorski, 2020, p. 1).

4. An interesting feature of such regimes is their desire to show that their democracy is the most correct and real. As examples, we can offer the concept of “sovereign democracy” by Vladislav Surkov in Russia (Averre, 2007, p. 176), as well as Lukashenko’s statements about “the superiority of the Belarusian democracy over the American one” (Lukashenko, 2020).

5. Modern autocrats are very concerned about their own popularity. In such countries, there are conducted many surveys which may not fully reflect the picture of public opinion. In addition, due to the control of the media in such regimes, the majority of the population does not notice alternative leaders. With this, Putin’s high rating (Statista, 2021) in the absence of real achievements in the country’s domestic policy during his term of office is associated.

6. The carrot and stick method for the media. To form the “correct” public opinion, state-controlled propaganda media should be supported by private ones. So that they do not interfere with bringing the “only correct” image of a leader to a society, they must be bribed or restricted by censorship. In Putin’s Russia, as an example of a purchased channel, one can name, for example, the Telegram channel “Mash”, which published a statement by Putin’s oligarch Arkady Rotenberg that the palace near the Russian city of Gelendzhik discovered by the Anti-Corruption Foundation (Navalny’s organization) belongs to him, not V. Putin. It should be noted that such cases are met with outrage from the civil society. So, after the publication of this material, the deputy chief editor of the channel left his post. Additionally, “Mash” has lost 40,000 subscribers (*People...*, 2021). At the same time, numerous laws help the Kremlin implement political censorship that plagues opposition media. It is worth noting that there exist numerous laws on “fake news”, “disrespect for the authorities” (Moyakine, Tabachnik, 2021, p. 1), as well as the “sovereign Internet” (Domańska, 2019, p. 1). Recently, the Kremlin has been increasingly assigning the status of a “foreign agent” to unwanted media outlets, which significantly complicates their work to attract funding (Kolpakov, 2021).

7. The carrot and stick method for the elites. To control the part of people who does not believe propaganda, modern dictatorships use the carrot and stick method, targeted repression and bribery of these people. The purpose of such regimes is not to intimidate the masses, but to neutralize and discredit opponents. So, before the protests in modern Russia on the issue of political persecution of Alexei Navalny in 2021, most of the heads of his structures were brought to the police departments (Baklanov,

2021; *How...*, 2021). Such acts of violence, as a rule, are hidden and justified. Modern dictators do not want to look like dictators, they want to look like democrats. If their opponents die or something bad happens to them, the leaders of such regimes distance themselves from such events and try to pretend that someone else was behind it. There are political murders and poisonings that have taken place in Russia in recent years, for example, the poisoning of A. Navalny and the murder of Boris Nemtsov. This is the big difference between information autocracies and classical dictators, who performed demonstrative executions on their opponents. After the poisoning of A. Navalny, many hypotheses and rumors were invented by Russian political strategists in order to divert the attention of the majority from the fact of the use of chemical weapons on the Russian territory (Kramer, 2020). Several Chechens were accused of murdering B. Nemtsov, but the Kremlin categorically denied any involvement in this case and blocked the investigation who might have ordered the murder (Cederfelt, 2020).

8. Relatively short terms of imprisonment. Current dictatorships use tactics such as short periods of imprisonment for their political opponents. For example, instead of being imprisoned for a long period of 10 years, some politicians are sent to jail for several days or months. Administrative terms, in comparison with criminal ones, seem frivolous to most. So, in 2018 journalists calculated that since 2011 A. Navalny was sentenced to administrative arrest 10 times. He spent 192 days in detention center. And this is not counting the 242 days of total arrest (*In...*, 2021). It was a year in total. However, the Kremlin recently violated this principle, giving A. Navalny 2.5 years in prison.

9. Persecution “not for political activity”. There are always other reasons for political persuasions. A striking example is the Russian case of Yuri Dmitriev, who was tried for pedophilia, but his real “fault” is that he investigates the crimes of Stalinism (Gullotta, 2020, p. 3). Another example is that some activists are detained not for slogans at rallies, but for the fact that they “violate the rules of demonstration conducting” and do not ask permission to hold anti-government rallies from the authorities against whom they are going, which directly contradicts Article 31 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation (*The Constitution*, 1993).

10. Co-optation of elites. This is a method of knowledgeable citizens neutralizing, which consists in integrating the elite into the political system. In this case, people are promised good jobs, given positions where they can take bribes, steal public resources and enjoy the benefits. The

regime can provide so much that it outweighs the long-term gains from power turnover and economic growth that could be achieved in a democratic system. Therefore, in autocratic regimes, corruption is not a special case, but the principle of governing the country. In the 1990s Alberto Fujimori was the president of Peru. He is considered one of the first informational autocrats to practice bribery of elites. The money was received by judges, officials, senators, deputies, oppositionists. After the inevitable end of this regime, documents that were found indicated the amount of bribes. Thanks to this, it became possible to calculate how much was spent on whom. It turned out that the biggest amount of money was received by journalists. A. Fujimori believed that this is the most important thing. If an opposition politician does not take a bribe and remains oppositional, then it's not a problem if no one finds out about it (McMillan, Zoido, 2006). This example shows how important controlled media are to information autocracies. However, there is not enough money to bribe everyone due to the lack of real economic growth. That is why non-democratic leaders are interested in the disgruntled elite to leave the country. They are even squeezed out on purpose by creating such conditions for them that they themselves want to leave. Authoritarian leaders prefer to spend less money on bribery and on harassing and killing disaffected people. This is how Russia (Wemer, 2019; Episova, 2019) and Belarus (*More...*, 2020) lose thousands of educated people and high-quality specialists every year.

Certain properties of the concept of information autocracy in the EU countries

Some properties of information autocracy can also be observed in several countries of the European Union.

Hungary is a prime example of the invention of a “better” kind of democracy. In 2014, the Prime Minister Viktor Orban stated that he sees the future of Hungary as an illiberal state that does not reject the values of liberal democracy, but does not accept them as a central element of the state organization (Bíró-Nagy, 2017, p. 1). As examples, the politician named Russia, Turkey and China (Bos, 2010), which, given the existing repressions, cannot be called democracies. Since 2010, Hungary has chosen a course towards sovereignty (which is often used to explain authoritarian reforms, as in Russia and Belarus) from Brussels, there was a restriction

on the activities of the media (which can be fined for violating moral norms and unbalanced coverage of events), and the role of the state in the economy has also increased significantly (Sadecki, 2016, pp. 16–36). As a result, **the country has high corruption rates and the power is concentrated** in the hands of V. Orban and the Fidesz party (Sata, Karolewski, 2019, p. 217).

Some researchers believe that Poland is a successful country due to the fact that smart reforms were carried out before the PiS party came to power. After 2015, the party began to seize state-owned enterprises, the media (Kerpel, 2017, p. 69) and courts (Sadurski, 2019, pp. 63–84) in order to monopolize finances and information. All this, just like in Russia and Belarus, is taking place under the slogans of the protection of the “traditional values” (Stanleys, 2020, pp. 385–389), as well as the inflated image of an “external enemy”, which in this case is Russia. However, there are many positive factors that distinguish Poland from its eastern neighbors. There is opposition in the Parliament, the media remain relatively independent, there is a periodic change in power. PiS seems to be alone in its desire to imitate the Hungarian regime (Sata, Karolewski, 2019, p. 206), as Poles are now much better educated and much more secular (*Report...*, 2019).

In France, during the yellow vest protests, the country’s authorities, through a number of mainstream media (for example, Mediapart, BFM, LCI, TF1), manipulated public opinion and lowered the actual number of protesters. The protesters picketed editorial offices and even fought with correspondents of some TV channels. They reproached public and private media in France for censoring and distorting information. During the broadcast of the RT Ruptly video agency from Paris, a poster of one of the protesters was caught in the frame, which called on the local media to be more attentive to the numbers and not to be puppets of the government (*Media...*, 2019).

As for the ideology of a new type (invented media constructions), we can also cite the policy of “equality” in Western Europe, diametrically opposed to the homophobic policy of V. Putin, as a result of which the media concentrate on certain social groups, which often turns into serious psychological, economic and political problems of other social groups (Waintraub, 2018). The media focuses on LGBTQ+, **feminists and migrants**, while keeping silent about the concerns of white heterosexual men, for instance. Also, in the EU, there are some events and educational programs in which only women can take part in (*Helmut...*, 2019; *Com-*

munications..., 2020; *Student Event*, 2020; McKinsey, 2021). There are no similar programs for men.

As with information autocracies, there is persecution in some EU countries. Harassment is one of the reasons for such persecution. It seems to us that there should not be a financial punishment for sexism (Boffey, 2018). This phenomenon should cause public disdain, and not be backed up by heavy fines and prison sentences. Otherwise, it can be used for selfish interests (Law, 2018; Slatz, Davison, 2019; Chrisafis, 2019; Patterson, 2020). In addition, these people can become even more aggressive after such negative sanctions.

Another type of persecution is commercial. People who critically study, for example, feminism or riots perpetrated by blacks (for whom in the US the special term “looting” was invented instead of “robbery”), are deprived of contracts and monetization (My Gap, 2021). As a result, due to political correctness, the truth is often lost. Because of the authoritarian platform rules, people begin to censor themselves, which paves the way to authoritarian autocracies.

In many ways, the current state of affairs is associated with a generation of political elites born in 1950–1960s who witnessed unfair oppression of the rights of LGBTQ+ people, women and black people while growing up. We must think that a real policy of equality, taking into account the interests of white heterosexual men, will be respected in the EU countries with the arrival of a new generation of politicians. Now, due to gender quotas, a new form of segregation, many talented people are unable to work where they will be of great benefit to society. Some people are persecuted for their position in relation to the LGBTQ+ (*IKEA...*, 2019), feminism (*Defending...*, 2020) and migration movements (*Swedish...*, 2018). It should be noted that these movements in the EU countries often have political interests, and some political forces do use them in their own selfish interests to change the political and economic landscape. It seems that the fight should be for *human* rights, not for the rights of white or black men, women, LGBTQ+, etc. This is the only way to avoid new conflicts that occur when someone’s voice is not taken into account, repressed or blocked in Twitter. There is no need to divide people once again.

The real nightmare for democratically minded inhabitants of authoritarian countries will be the coalescence of information autocracies and leftist agendas promoted in the countries of Western Europe and North America. A striking example of this is the revocation of A. Navalny’s

status as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International in connection with his position on illegal migrants in Russia 15 (!) years ago (Albats, 2021). In this case, Russian propaganda enthusiastically wrote about the new European norms and found support from part of the liberal public, which ultimately helped the Putin regime to partially relieve itself of responsibility for persecuting the opposition.

There is also propaganda in the EU countries that distracts people from real problems and creates an image of the enemy. As such, for example, we can consider the resolution of the European Parliament, in which the blame for unleashing the Second World War is equally placed on Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (*European Parliament...*, 2019). In addition to the fact that this agenda is irrelevant (there are more important issues) and artificially spoils relations with residents of the CIS countries, it is not objective, since it is known that the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 was the last document of a European country with Adolf Hitler. Prior to this, the Polish-German agreement of 1934, the Franco-German declaration of 1938, the Munich agreement of 1938, the Dusseldorf agreement of 1939 and others were signed. In 1938 Great Britain, France and Poland approved the Anschluss, the annexation of Austria by Germany. By annexing Austria, A. Hitler received a strategic foothold for the capture of Czechoslovakia and a further offensive in Southeast Europe and the Balkans, sources of raw materials, manpower and military production. Then the partition of Czechoslovakia by Germany and Poland took place. Here it is worth noting the 1919 Versailles Treaty, humiliating for Germany, due to which revanchist sentiments began to develop in the country, on which A. Hitler received support. The above, of course, does not whitewash the crimes of communism. However, in matters of national historical memory, it is necessary to be able to recognize objective facts and mistakes of all sides, and not to seek an interpretation that is beneficial for oneself. Otherwise, it will lead to ethnic hatred. In addition, the Russian and Belarusian authoritarian regimes use this agenda of the EU countries for their anti-Western propaganda, which attracts the support of millions of Russians and Belarusians.

The same ambivalent position can also be noted with regard to Kosovo independence precedent and the reunification of Crimea with Russia. In relation to Kosovo, where the majority of the population at the end of the 20th century were Albanians (*Fact Sheet...*, 1999), the expression “the right of the people to self-determination” is used (Levrat, 2017, p. 1–2). In relation to Crimea, where the majority of the population in 2014 were

Russians (*Facts...*, 2014), the word “annexation” is used (Katchanovski, 2015, p. 85). It is worth noting here that a referendum was held in Crimea, according to which 97% of the inhabitants of the peninsula voted for the reunification of Crimea and Russia (*Official...*, 2014). It also should be pointed out that, unlike in Kosovo in 1999 (*15 years...*, 2014), not a single bullet flew in Crimea in 2014. It hardly looks like an occupation. Currently, the Kiev authorities have deprived the Crimeans of water because of their choice (*‘Can...*, 2021). It is difficult to find an article in the EU media explaining this approach, because there is a unified information policy.

In addition, in the EU countries, there is a modeling of information policy based on financial interests (one of the key tools of information autocracies). For example, this clearly manifested itself in the course of the Syrian conflict, when the public opinion of EU residents was dependent on Aljazeera and other countries of the Persian Gulf, as well as some human rights organizations, backed by Qatar and Saudi Arabia. According to this paradigm, Basharal-Assad is a dictator, and also poisons his citizens with chemical weapons. It is hard to argue with the first statement. The second is most likely not true. Swedish independent medical associations conducted their own investigation into this matter and studied the photographic and video materials presented as evidence (*White Helmets Video...*, 2017). They came to the conclusion that, most likely, the terrorists themselves killed the Syrian citizens in order to pass them off as victims of the chemical attacks allegedly carried out by B. Assad. In addition, according to official UN data, since 2013 B. Assad has not had chemical warfare agents and infrastructure for this production (Trapp, 2017). At the same time, the improvised chemical laboratories of the Islamic State were found by both the Americans in Iraq and Russian troops in Syria. However, in the information field, this does not matter. Only a few people read the reports of narrow specialists and specialized organizations, and millions of people have seen the heartbreaking footage released by Aljazeera. Qatar and Saudi Arabia are actively promoting in Western public opinion that in addition to two absolute evils, B. Assad and the Islamic State, there is a certain third force in Syria, a “moderate democratic opposition” (*Guide...*, 2013). This idea is convenient for every side. The countries of the Persian Gulf, the largest investors in the economy of both the EU and the US. At the same time, they are a huge market for many Western-made goods: from military equipment to luxury goods, not to mention the influence of Qatar (Piebalgs, 2009, p. 6; Girgin, 2020) and Saudi Arabia (Kottasova, 2018) on the world economy as the

most important oil exporters. Even the bloodcurdling executions of political opponents and homosexuals, iniquitous discrimination against women and the violation of civil rights in countries, from the point of view of most developed countries, are not worth spoiling economic relations with them. No sanctions against Saudi Arabia were imposed even after the brutal murder of the independent journalist Jamal Khashogi in the Saudi diplomatic mission in Istanbul (Milanovic, 2020, p. 1).

The same approach has been adopted with regard to environmental policy. It is well known that the main factors of environmental pollution are animal agriculture and fish destruction. Worldwatch in 2009 reported that livestock causes 51 percent of greenhouse gas emissions and the whole transportation system around 13 (Cowspiracy). However, this is rarely reported in the media.

The same purely financial decision will most likely be made by the German authorities, which have not yet abandon the Nord Stream2 project jointly with Russian Gazprom (Fischer, 2016, p. 1–4; Wesolowsky, 2021), despite all the words of support regarding the imprisoned A. Navalny and the violation of civil rights in Russia. There is also no big desire in Brussels to impose harsh sanctions against the closest circle of V. Putin, thanks to which large sums of money are being withdrawn into the EU. This position threatens the safety of not only the residents of Russia and Belarus, but also the citizens of the EU, as demonstrated by the hijacking of the Ryanair plane on the direct order of A. Lukashenko in May 2021 (Troianovski, Nechepurenko, 2021).

Conclusion

Thus, at the end of this study, it seems possible to assert that the goal – to identify changes in the concept of information autocracy – has been generally realized. The results of the analysis confirm the hypotheses presented at the beginning of the study. The theory of informational autocracies needs to be completed. First, at this stage, some informational autocracies are using massive repression to maintain their existence. Also, information autocracies need media constructs (that replaced ideologies) to govern society. Second, certain features of the theory of information autocracies are applicable to some countries of the EU. First of all, this is the desire to show a greater level of democracy, the carrot and stick method for the media and elites, and, especially, the creation of dominant

media structures. Third, the left-wing agenda is currently one of the forms of public opinion manipulating that creates the preconditions for the formation of information autocracy.

The optimistic conclusion offered by the theory of informational autocracies is that progress cannot be stopped, and all types of dictatorship will sooner or later degenerate into informational autocracies, and informational autocracies will turn into democratic countries. This is purely for practical and economic reasons. An important indicator is the size of the elite, the number of educated people in the country. Sooner or later, the size of the educated elite becomes so large that it becomes too expensive to bribe and censor them. This is exactly what is happening now in Belarus, which is on the path of transition from an information autocracy to a democracy. Sooner or later Russia will also become a democracy. The countries of the European Union have set a good standard. It will be better if they also get rid of some of the features of information autocracies.

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Zjawisko autokracji informacyjnej: treść i cechy

Streszczenie

Teoria autokracji informacyjnej została stworzona przez rosyjskiego ekonomistę Siergieja Guriewa i amerykańskiego politologa Daniela Treismana. Opisuje rozwój współczesnych reżimów, w których władzę sprawuje monopol informacyjny, cenzura i kooptacja elity informacyjnej. Badanie w tym kontekście dotyczy krajów Europy Wschodniej, Bliskiego Wschodu i Ameryki Łacińskiej. W artykule autor dąży do prześledzenia rozwoju zjawiska autokracji informacyjnej zarówno na terenie Europy Wschodniej (Rosja i Białoruś), jak również do zidentyfikowania pewnych cech tego pojęcia w niektórych krajach Unii Europejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: autokracja informacyjna, Rosja, Białoruś, Unia Europejska, media, autorytaryzm

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