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A comparative analysis of the impact of authoritarian and democratic political systems on addressing global challenges

Abstract. This study aimed to identify the differences in approaches and effectiveness of various political systems in responding to global challenges, as well as to assess their ability to provide long-term sustainable solutions. This research analysed how different political systems – authoritarian and democratic – influence countries' responses to large-scale challenges such as economic, environmental, health, technological, and social crises. The article employed comparative analysis and case studies to identify key differences between authoritarian and democratic systems, particularly in the context of their ability to mobilise resources, implement innovations, ensure public support, and implement sustainable policy solutions. The primary focus was analysing responses to economic crises, environmental threats including climate change, global health, and reactions to rapid technological changes. The research findings demonstrated that authoritarian regimes can rapidly mobilise resources and make centralised decisions, which is advantageous in urgent crisis situations, but often suffer from a lack of flexibility and long-term public support. Conversely, democracies are characterised by greater transparency and public participation in decision-making, which fosters more sustainable and acceptable solutions, although it may slow down the response process in times of crisis. The article examined examples of countries such as the USA, Sweden, Norway, Germany, South Korea, China, Iran, and others to analyse the effectiveness of different political systems in addressing global challenges. The results of this study can be used by governments and policymakers to develop more effective strategies for responding to global challenges, taking into account the characteristics of different political systems. Furthermore, these findings can serve as a valuable resource for international organisations and researchers in the fields of politics and governance seeking to understand the impact of political structures on the effectiveness of addressing global problems

Keywords: political governance; global stability; environmental security; healthcare; technology; adaptation

Introduction

In modern world, global challenges such as climate change, economic inequality, and pandemics necessitate a comprehensive approach to their resolution. Given the diversity of political systems worldwide, a question arises as to which are more effective in combating global issues. Authoritarian and democratic regimes offer different approaches to governance and crisis response, impacting their ability to tackle global challenges. The relevance of this research lies in the need to assess how these various political systems can provide effective solutions in an environment of constant change and crises. While authoritarian systems can rapidly mobilise resources and implement decisive measures, democratic systems ensure accountability and transparency, fostering long-term sustainability. Understanding the effectiveness of each system is crucial for developing policies that enable governments to respond more successfully to global problems.

Authoritarian systems are characterised by the concentration of power in the hands of a single individual or a small group, allowing for swift decision-making without discussions or consultations with the wider population (Mauk, 2020). This can be effective in emergencies where speed of response is critical. However, such systems often face problems of legitimacy and a lack of accountability, which can lead to abuses of power and disregard for citizens' interests (Wiebrecht, 2021). Democratic systems, on the other hand, are based on the principles of citizen participation in decision-making, accountability, and transparency. Although the decision-making process in democracies can be slower and more complex due to the need for consultations and consensus-building, these systems have the advantages of greater government legitimacy and accountability, which contribute to more sustainable and inclusive solutions to problems (Schmidhuber *et al.*, 2020).

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The effectiveness of different political systems in addressing global challenges is a subject of active research in the academic literature. Notably, the studies of L. Helms (2022) and W. Merkel & A. Lührmann (2021) have provided valuable insights into the advantages and disadvantages of each system. Existing research on this topic has primarily focused on identifying short-term responses to crises in individual countries, with less attention paid to the long-term consequences of such political strategies. Researchers such as A.J. Nathan (2020) and C. Welzel (2021) have concentrated on theoretical aspects of the impact of political systems on state development, but their research is often limited to theoretical analysis without a specific comparative dimension. D. Sallai & G. Schnyder (2021) offered an interesting perspective, examining the characteristics of authoritarian capitalism and highlighting how state-owned business systems blur the lines between the private and public sectors, leading to the integration and interpenetration of power and business. Researchers AM. Roccato *et al.* (2020) and A.A. Kharazi (2021) have shown how the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic crisis have influenced support for anti-democratic political systems. The authors analysed the correlation between experiencing the pandemic, economic uncertainty, and the growth of sympathy for authoritarian solutions in democratic societies. Addressing the global climate crisis is another pressing challenge. Researchers R. Willis (2020) and R. Willis *et al.* (2022) have examined the role of democracy in addressing the climate crisis, analysing its potential for creating effective solutions. The authors explored how inclusive and informed discussions can contribute to the development of effective and equitable climate policy.

This research aimed to identify and compare the mechanisms for addressing global challenges in authoritarian and democratic political systems, as well as to analyse their effectiveness and sustainability in the context of the modern world. To achieve this aim, the study addressed the following issues: the mechanisms employed by authoritarian and democratic political systems for addressing global challenges; the factors that influence the effectiveness of these mechanisms; the short-term effectiveness but long-term instability of authoritarian systems; and the capacity of democratic systems to foster more inclusive and sustainable solutions to global problems. In line with these issues, the objectives of the research included analysing the existing mechanisms for addressing global challenges within different political systems; identifying the factors that influence the effectiveness and sustainability of these mechanisms; compare the effectiveness of authoritarian and democratic systems in addressing global challenges based on specific examples; and formulate recommendations for improving mechanisms for addressing global challenges, taking into account the specific characteristics of different political systems. Thus, this research was aimed not only at expanding theoretical knowledge about the impact of political systems on addressing global problems but also at developing practical recommendations for improving policy and governance in the modern world.

Materials and Methods

To achieve the aim of this research, a comprehensive analysis of various sources and data was conducted to

illuminate the specific functioning of political systems in the context of global challenges. The research involved collecting, analysing, and synthesising information from reliable academic sources. At the preliminary stage, a list of countries with authoritarian and democratic regimes was determined. The criteria for selecting countries for the study were their political structures, historical conditions of regime formation, and the current state of their political systems. The list of authoritarian regimes included countries such as China, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Belarus, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Turkmenistan, North Korea, Uganda and Venezuela. Democratic regimes were represented by countries such as the USA, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Canada, Canada, Finland, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. This selection allowed for the creation of a representative sample for further analysis.

The next stage of the research involved collecting data on the effectiveness of addressing global challenges in each of the selected countries. The primary data sources included analytical materials from leading academic journals. Particular attention was paid to global challenges such as climate change, economic crises, pandemics, and cybersecurity. A comparative analysis of the collected data was then conducted. For this purpose, criteria were developed to evaluate the effectiveness of political systems in addressing global challenges. These included: speed of response to crises, level of resource mobilisation, transparency of decision-making, level of government accountability, and respect for human rights and civil liberties.

Subsequently, an analysis of specific cases of successful or unsuccessful resolution of global challenges was conducted. Concrete examples were examined, such as China's response to the 2008 financial crisis, the actions of Germany and South Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic, Denmark's renewable energy policy, and cybersecurity measures implemented by the USA and the European Union. Each case was analysed in terms of the measures implemented, the results achieved, and their impact on society. Following this, the collected data was summarised, and conclusions were drawn regarding the impact of political systems on addressing global challenges. The results of the analysis were presented in tabular form for clarity and ease of understanding. Based on the summarised data, the main advantages and disadvantages of authoritarian and democratic systems in the context of addressing global problems were identified.

The next stage involved developing recommendations based on the findings. Suggestions were made for democratic countries to maintain and strengthen accountability and transparency mechanisms, and for authoritarian regimes to integrate elements of accountability to reduce the risk of corruption and abuse. Areas for further research were also identified, which could include a more detailed study of the cultural and historical factors that influence the effectiveness of political systems, as well as research into the impact of globalisation and technological change on political structures. The final stage involved considering the limitations of the study. This study also acknowledges the rapid pace of change in political systems and the global environment, which may necessitate updating the results in response to new challenges and circumstances.

Results

Authoritarian political systems are characterised by the concentration of power in the hands of a single individual or a small group of people who maintain political control without adequate accountability to the public and without genuine competition. These regimes typically restrict political freedoms, control the media, repress opposition, and manipulate electoral processes to ensure their long-term dominance. A key feature of authoritarian systems is the strong centralisation of power (Williamson & Magaloni, 2020). Often led by a dictator or authoritarian leader, these regimes appoint key positions in government, security forces, and the judiciary, allowing them to effectively control all aspects of governance. The use of force to maintain order and suppress any dissent is typical of such regimes. Another important feature of authoritarianism is the restriction of political freedoms. This includes censorship of the press, control over the information space, the prohibition or strict regulation of assemblies and demonstrations, and the restriction of the activities of independent political parties and organisations. Authoritarian governments often use propaganda to create a positive image of the ruling regime and discredit the opposition (Slantchev & Matush, 2020; Zürn, 2022).

Elections in authoritarian countries may take place, but they often do not meet international standards of fairness and transparency. Electoral processes are frequently manipulated, allowing authoritarian leaders to remain in power. Such elections are typically accompanied by widespread vote rigging, persecution of opposition candidates, and sometimes intimidation of voters (Nathan, 2020). Authoritarian regimes may also exert significant control over the economy through state monopolies or strict regulations that limit free enterprise. Economic management in such states is often used to consolidate political power, favouring loyal businesses and entrepreneurs. The judiciary in authoritarian regimes is also subject to significant political pressure, ensuring government control over justice. Laws and their application can be selective, and trials can be politicised, making fair justice impossible. Authoritarian regimes often have different forms and degrees of control, but they share a common feature of concentrating power and restricting civil liberties. For ease of understanding, examples of countries with authoritarian governments are presented in table 1. These examples highlight the wide range of authoritarian practices and their impact on the political and social life of nations, often leading to human rights abuses and restrictions on fundamental freedoms.

Table 1. Examples of countries with authoritarian political regimes

Country	Leader or authority structure	The main characteristics of regime
China	Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping	Strict control over all aspects of life, censorship, mass surveillance, and repression of opponents.
Russia	Vladimir Putin	Restrictions on press freedom, persecution of political rivals, manipulation of electoral processes.
Belarus	Alexander Lukashenko	Repression against opposition and media, election fraud.
Venezuela	Nicolás Maduro	Political repression, economic crisis, social instability.
Saudi Arabia	Royal family	Absolute monarchy, restrictions on political freedoms, control over public and political assemblies.
Iran	Supreme Leader and Islamic clerics, Ibrahim Raisi	Control over the military, judiciary, and media, tight regulation of public and political spheres.
Zimbabwe	Robert Mugabe (until 2017)	Human rights violations, repression of opposition, economic collapse.
Turkmenistan	Serdar Berdimuhamedov	Cult of personality, limited access to information, strict control over all aspects of life.
North Korea	Kim Jong Un	Isolated country, complete control over political, economic, and social life, suppression of any opposition.
Uganda	Yoweri Museveni	Manipulation of elections, persecution of opposition leaders, media bans.

Source: compiled by the author based on M. Tudor & D. Slater (2020), E. Sinkkonen (2021), and S. Repucci & A. Slipowitz (2022)

Democracy is defined as a political system based on the principles of popular sovereignty, where power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or through elected representatives. The foundation of democracy lies in free and fair elections, which enable citizens to choose their representatives and hold them accountable through legislative processes. Democratic countries are also characterised by the rule of law, which ensures that everyone, including the government, is subject to the law (König & Wenzelburger, 2020). In democracies, power is divided among different branches of government, such as the legislative, executive, and judicial, to prevent abuse of power

and ensure a balance. This system of checks and balances is considered critical to preventing authoritarianism and guarantees that no individual or group can hold absolute power. Democracies are also distinguished by their transparency in government operations, which includes open government sessions, public access to documents and information, and freedom of the press. Civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, assembly, religion, and privacy, are fundamental in democracies and allow individuals to express their views, assemble, and organise communities without fear of government interference or repression. Minority rights are protected in democracies – less

represented groups have the opportunity to participate in political life and have their voices heard.

Democracies around the world have their own unique characteristics, but they share a common foundation of freedoms, rights, and the principles of popular rule. The United States of America is one of the most prominent examples of democracy, where democracy is underpinned by strong institutional structures, ensuring civil rights and political pluralism. Canada, another country with a robust democracy, places a strong emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity. The Canadian political system is structured in a way that ensures a high level of inclusion and protection for all groups of people.

Norway is one of the most stable and progressive democracies in the world, renowned for its high standard of living, extensive social safety net, and active civil society. Norway's political system is based on the principles of parliamentary democracy, ensuring broad representation of various political forces and effective governance. Sweden is also an example of a successful democracy that emphasises human rights, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. The Swedish government actively supports social welfare, ensuring a high quality of life. The Netherlands is a country with a long tradition of democracy, known for its liberal approach to civil rights and social issues. The Netherlands is famous for its tolerance

and openness to innovation in public administration. Denmark is another Scandinavian country with a high level of democratic freedoms. Denmark is known for its government transparency and high standards of living. Finland has one of the highest levels of press freedom and a high degree of public trust in government. Finland is also renowned for its education system and innovative approach to social welfare. Switzerland is famous for its unique democratic system, which includes direct democratic instruments such as referendums and popular initiatives, allowing citizens to directly influence legislation. Germany has a stable democratic system based on the principles of federalism, ensuring a balance of power between the federal government and the states. Germany is also actively promoting international democratic cooperation. These are just a few examples of countries that demonstrate that democracy is not a static system but adapts to the cultural, social, and economic contexts of each country. However, a common commitment to the ideals of freedom, equality, and openness remains key to the success of any democracy. These countries showcase a variety of democratic practices and approaches to governance, confirming the universality of democratic values regardless of cultural and regional differences. Further examples of countries with democratic systems of government are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Examples of countries with democratic political regimes

Country	Leader	The main characteristics of regime
USA	President Joseph Biden	Free and fair elections, separation of powers, freedom of speech and press, government accountability
Germany	Chancellor Olaf Scholz	Federalism, strong institutions, rule of law, freedom of assembly and expression, government accountability
Sweden	Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson	Parliamentary democracy, high level of social protection, gender equality, environmental sustainability
Norway	Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre	Parliamentary system, high standard of living, developed civil society, government transparency
Canada	Prime Minister Justin Trudeau	Parliamentary democracy, multiculturalism, minority rights, government transparency, freedom of the press
Finland	Prime Minister Petteri Orpo	High level of press freedom, strong education system, public trust in government, innovative approach to social welfare
Australia	Prime Minister Anthony Albanese	Parliamentary democracy, government accountability, freedom of speech and press, active civic participation
Netherlands	Prime Minister Mark Rutte	Parliamentary democracy, liberal values, protection of human rights, government transparency, openness to innovation
New Zealand	Prime Minister Chris Hipkins	Parliamentary democracy, minority rights, environmental policy, government transparency, civic engagement
Japan	Prime Minister Fumio Kishida	Constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system, free elections, rule of law, freedom of the press, and high level of citizen participation in political life

Source: compiled by the author based on L. Schmidhuber *et al.* (2020), R. Willis (2020) and C. Welzel (2021)

The analysis of the impact of authoritarian and democratic political systems on addressing economic challenges, such as global recession and inequality, provides new insights into their effectiveness and adaptability in responding to economic crises. These challenges require complex solutions and approaches that can vary depending on a country's political structure. A global recession is a period of significant economic decline that affects many

countries simultaneously. Responses to such recessions are influenced by domestic and foreign economic policies shaped by the government. Democratic countries typically respond to economic downturns through expansionary fiscal and monetary policies, which involve tax cuts, increased government spending, and lower interest rates. The United States' response to the 2008 financial crisis, where the government implemented a stimulus package

to boost lending and investment, serves as an example of this approach. In contrast, authoritarian regimes may react to recessions by swiftly implementing decisive, albeit often opaque, measures. For instance, in response to the 2008 crisis, China implemented a large-scale economic stimulus plan focused on infrastructure projects and supporting key industries (Nützenadel, 2021). While such measures can be effective for rapid recovery, they are often criticised for a lack of attention to long-term consequences and the potential for increased corruption.

Economic inequality is another significant challenge often exacerbated during global crises. Democratic governments typically implement measures such as raising taxes on the wealthy, increasing social benefits, and investing in social services to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. Scandinavian countries like Denmark and Sweden are renowned for their successful equality policies, which ensure a high standard of living for the majority of the population through strong social safety nets and progressive taxation (Dai *et al.*, 2024).

Authoritarian systems may have limited capacity for discussing and implementing policies that reduce inequality. In such systems, wealth concentration often occurs among a narrow elite with close ties to the government. Russia, for instance, exhibits a high level of inequality, which is partially attributed to a controlled economy and a political system that restricts competition, thereby facilitating the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a limited number of individuals (Schimpfössl, 2024). Overall, addressing global economic challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes not only immediate crisis response measures but also long-term development strategies. While democracies may offer greater transparency and flexibility in addressing such challenges, authoritarian regimes often rely on centralised planning and rapid policy implementation, which can be effective in the short term but lead to problems with long-term sustainability and fairness.

Environmental challenges such as climate change and pollution pose global problems that require complex and innovative solutions. Responses to these challenges vary significantly depending on each country's political system, which can affect their effectiveness and resilience to environmental change. Climate change is a global issue that requires the participation and cooperation of all countries. Democratic states often approach this issue through transparency, public participation, and multilateralism. For example, the European Union actively promotes climate policy through its directives, such as the Green Deal, which outlines a comprehensive set of measures to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 (Willis *et al.*, 2022). These measures include investments in energy efficiency and transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources.

In democratic countries like Germany and Denmark, governments are promoting the development of wind and solar power. Denmark, in particular, is recognised as a global leader in wind energy and aims to achieve 100% renewable energy consumption by 2050 (Lund *et al.*, 2022). Authoritarian states such as China are also taking significant steps to combat climate change, implementing large-scale renewable energy projects and setting strict limits

on carbon dioxide emissions (Wu & Han, 2022). However, China's political structure can sometimes limit public participation in shaping environmental policy, leading to less transparency and restrictions on open discussion.

Pollution is another critical environmental issue, particularly in industrialised and rapidly growing economies. Democratic countries, such as the United States, have historically involved public and non-profit organisations in the process of regulating pollution through legislation such as the Clean Air Act (1963) and the Clean Water Act (1972). These laws set environmental quality standards and emission requirements for factories and other major polluters. In countries with authoritarian regimes, like Russia, environmental laws may also exist, but their implementation is often hindered by corruption and inefficiency. The lack of transparency and limited opportunities for public oversight make it difficult to effectively address pollution problems, which can lead to environmental disasters.

The impact of political systems on addressing global health challenges and pandemics, particularly COVID-19, highlights significant differences in the effectiveness of various governments worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic tested many countries' ability to respond quickly to crises, coordinate large-scale public health and safety measures, and ensure access to healthcare (James & Alihodzic, 2020). Democratic countries generally approached the pandemic with a focus on transparency and mobilising public resources through open communication and civic engagement. For example, Germany excelled in efficient testing, early and widespread mask use, and social distancing, helping to slow the spread of the virus in the initial months of the pandemic. The German government also provided extensive support to healthcare institutions and strengthened workplace health and safety regulations (Flinders, 2021). South Korea is another example of a democratic response to the pandemic, where rapid mass testing, contact tracing, and strict quarantine measures helped to control outbreaks without completely shutting down the economy. The government actively used digital technologies to inform the public and provide access to essential information (Kye & Hwang, 2020).

Authoritarian regimes, such as China, where the virus first emerged, demonstrated a different approach. China swiftly implemented strict measures, including a severe lockdown in Wuhan and other regions, tight control over the media, and the use of state resources to rapidly build new hospitals. While these measures were effective in curbing the spread of the virus, they also raised concerns about human rights and freedom of speech (Wu *et al.*, 2021). Another example of an authoritarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic can be seen in Iran. The Iranian government initially downplayed the severity of the coronavirus outbreak, leading to delays in implementing quarantine measures and restrictions on public gatherings, which resulted in the rapid spread of the virus among the population. When the coronavirus situation in the country spiralled out of control, the Iranian government tightened quarantine measures, including closing schools, universities, and public places. However, critics argue (Sajadi & Hartley, 2022) that the initial lack of transparency and restrictions on press freedom hindered effective

public information about the risks and necessary safety measures. The government was also accused of concealing the real statistics on the number of infected and deaths, making it difficult for the international community to understand the true situation in the country. This example demonstrates how authoritarian regimes may respond to crises using methods that can limit the accuracy and accessibility of crucial information, impacting the public's ability to adequately respond to public health crises.

Technological challenges, such as cybersecurity, have become a critical component of national security and economic development. The modern world, with its reliance on digital technologies, has faced significant challenges related to data protection, infrastructure security, and the privacy of citizens. Different countries respond to these challenges based on their political structures, which influences their ability to adapt to and respond to cybersecurity threats. In democratic countries, cybersecurity is often viewed through the lens of protecting civil liberties and privacy. For example, the United States of America actively develops legislation and technologies to combat cybercrime and protect critical infrastructure. American government agencies, such as the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), coordinate efforts between the government and private sector to protect essential networks and systems. The USA also has a National Cybersecurity Strategy, which includes measures to protect the personal data of citizens and corporations from cyberattacks (Dedeke & Masterson, 2019). The European Union has also taken steps to enhance cybersecurity, including the adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which sets strict rules for the processing and protection of personal data (Anagnostakis, 2021). These measures demonstrate the commitment of democratic states to ensuring information security and privacy protection while maintaining openness and transparency.

Authoritarian regimes may approach cybersecurity from a more controlling perspective. For example, China has one of the most stringent systems of internet surveillance and control in the world. Cybersecurity laws in China include mandatory internet censorship and restrictions on access to international web resources (Huang & Tsai, 2022). China also uses artificial intelligence and algorithmic analysis to monitor large amounts of data and detect potentially harmful or destabilising online activity. These measures are aimed at maintaining political stability and preventing potential threats to the government.

Iran is also known for its strict control of cyberspace (Curato & Fossati, 2020). The Iranian government imposes severe restrictions on access to internet resources and the use of social media to control the flow of information and prevent the organisation of opposition or destabilising activities. While authoritarian regimes may have more capacity to implement strict measures to control cyberspace, they also often face criticism for human rights violations and restrictions on freedom of expression.

Social challenges such as migration and human rights take on particular significance when comparing authoritarian and democratic political systems. These systems approach global issues differently, influenced by their governance structures, legislative mechanisms, and civil society. In democratic systems, where freedom of speech and press are guaranteed, issues of migration and human rights are often openly debated. The public can express their opinions and influence the political situation through elections and other forms of democratic participation. Such an environment facilitates the adaptation of laws and policies to reflect societal needs, including the protection of the rights of migrants and minorities. In contrast, in authoritarian regimes, where power is often concentrated in the hands of one individual or a small group, centralised control can allow for rapid decision-making. However, such decisions are rarely subject to public debate or criticism, which can lead to the neglect or violation of human rights, especially in the context of migration crises. Migration, as a global challenge, can be addressed with harsh measures in authoritarian systems that often disregard the rights and needs of migrants. For example, the use of force to control migration flows often leads to international criticism and can undermine international relations. In democratic systems, migration policies can be more flexible and inclusive, aimed at integrating migrants into society. Human rights and other social challenges are viewed through the lens of laws and international agreements, obliging governments to be accountable to their citizens and the international community. Thus, while both authoritarian and democratic systems can effectively address some challenges, their approaches to migration and human rights often differ significantly, with significant implications for international stability and the humanitarian situation worldwide. For clarity, Table 3 provides some examples of how authoritarian and democratic regimes address global challenges.

Table 3. Examples of responses to global challenges by authoritarian and democratic regimes

Type of challenge	Regime	Country example	Measures and actions	Outcomes and consequences
Economic	Authoritarian	China	Large stimulus package (USD 586 billion) for infrastructure and innovation	Rapid economic recovery, stimulated growth
Economic	Democratic	USA	Stimulus package in response to the 2008 crisis	Economic support, prevention of a major economic downturn
Social	Authoritarian	Russia	"Foreign agents" laws, restrictions on the right to protest	Control over opposition, reduction of public dissent
Social	Democratic	Germany	Migrant integration policies, active civic participation	Effective integration of migrants, support for social stability
Environmental	Authoritarian	China	Investments in renewable energy, reduction of coal dependence	Increased share of renewable energy, decreased emissions

Table 3. Continued

Type of challenge	Regime	Country example	Measures and actions	Outcomes and consequences
Environmental	Democratic	Denmark	Leading country in wind energy, renewable energy policy	Transition to 100% renewable energy by 2050
Healthcare	Authoritarian	China	Strict lockdown in Wuhan, stringent movement restrictions	Effective containment of COVID-19 spread in early stages
Healthcare	Democratic	South Korea	Rapid testing, contact tracing, early quarantine measures	Effective control of virus spread, preservation of economic activity

Source: compiled by the author based on A. Grzymala-Busse (2020), A. Malka *et al.* (2022), and C. Chen *et al.* (2023)

Authoritarian and democratic systems have different approaches to addressing global challenges, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. Authoritarian regimes are known for their ability to mobilise resources and implement decisions quickly. For example, Singapore has effectively implemented comprehensive government support programs for the elderly, thanks to its strong centralised authority (He & Tang, 2021). Similarly, Vietnam has undertaken large-scale infrastructure projects, such as the Hanoi metro development plan, demonstrating the capabilities of centralised planning (Nicolaisena, 2023). However, authoritarian regimes often face issues such as a lack of transparency and openness. The Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine is an example of the catastrophic consequences of the Soviet government's concealment of information (Bertelsen, 2022). Moreover, the political repression and corruption observed during the 2020 presidential elections in Belarus highlight the potential for abuse in such systems (Bedford, 2021).

On the other hand, democratic systems foster civic engagement and protect human rights, which can lead to greater social stability and support for government policies. Sweden, renowned for its commitment to sustainable development and social welfare, is a prime example of effective citizen involvement. Canada is also known for its multicultural policies, which promote integration and protect the rights of minorities. However, democracies often face slower decision-making due to the need for consensus, as seen in the US healthcare reform attempts. Additionally, political polarisation can hinder governance and decision-making, as witnessed in Brazil during the political crisis that sparked mass protests and scandals. Overall, each political system has its strengths and weaknesses in addressing global challenges. It is crucial to understand that there is no one-size-fits-all solution; each country must leverage its structural advantages to respond to challenges most effectively.

Discussion

Analysis of research into the impact of authoritarian and democratic political systems on addressing global challenges reveals different approaches and effectiveness for each system in various contexts. These findings are crucial for understanding how political structures can influence a state's ability to address complex issues that require swift and effective action. Authoritarian political systems are characterised by the concentration of power in the hands of a single individual or a narrow group of people who maintain political control without proper public accountability or real competition. These regimes restrict political freedoms, control the media, repress opposition,

and manipulate electoral processes. Strong centralisation of power allows them to effectively control all aspects of government. The use of force to maintain order and suppress dissent is typical of such regimes. They often employ propaganda to create a positive image of the ruling regime and discredit the opposition. Democratic systems, on the other hand, are based on the principles of citizen participation in decision-making, accountability, and transparency. While the decision-making process in democracies can be slow due to the need for consultation and consensus, these systems have the advantage of greater legitimacy and government accountability, which contributes to sustainable problem-solving. Democracy is defined as a political system based on popular sovereignty, where power is elected by the people and serves their interests. The foundation of democracy is free and fair elections, the rule of law, and the separation of powers. The results of this research underscore the importance of considering political structures when developing strategies to address global challenges. Different approaches and governance mechanisms affect the effectiveness and sustainability of measures. This knowledge can be used to formulate more balanced and comprehensive policies that take into account the strengths and weaknesses of each political system.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a stress test for various political systems, revealing their strengths and weaknesses in responding to global crises and directly impacting governments' ability to effectively address large-scale challenges. For instance, S.C. Greitens (2020) examined how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced surveillance and security practices in liberal democracies. She concluded that the pandemic acted as a catalyst for expanding government surveillance and control, which could lead to long-term changes in the balance between security and civil liberties. The author cautions that such changes could have serious consequences for liberal democratic institutions if not properly regulated and limited. Comparing these findings to the results of this study, several key observations can be made. Similar to S.C. Greitens (2020), this research indicates that democratic countries have leveraged the COVID-19 crisis to implement new security and surveillance measures. However, unlike authoritarian regimes, democratic governments have sought to ensure greater transparency and accountability regarding these measures. The author cautions against the potential for prolonged restrictions on civil liberties resulting from the expansion of state surveillance. For example, in China and Iran, there were severe restrictions on freedom of speech and access to information under the guise of combating COVID-19. While the author highlights the potential threats to democracy, she also acknowledges that some

surveillance measures can be effective in controlling the pandemic. This research supports this viewpoint but also notes that authoritarian systems, despite their short-term effectiveness, often face long-term problems due to a lack of transparency and public trust. S.C. Greitens (2020) drew attention to how increased surveillance in response to the pandemic could impact international relations and the reputation of liberal democracies. This research expands on this aspect, demonstrating that authoritarian regimes can use the pandemic as a pretext for justifying repressive measures, which can worsen their international image and exacerbate global conflicts.

A. Sinpeng (2020) examined how authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia utilise digital media and control the internet to consolidate their power. The author concluded that these regimes actively implement technologies for monitoring and censorship, restricting freedom of speech and access to information. Simultaneously, they employ digital platforms for propaganda and manipulation of public opinion, allowing them to control the population more effectively and suppress opposition movements. These findings align with the results of the current study, which demonstrate that authoritarian regimes actively employ digital technologies to strengthen their control. For instance, China extensively utilises mass surveillance systems and internet censorship, enabling the effective suppression of any form of dissent and protests. Both studies highlight the role of digital media in disseminating propaganda. Authoritarian regimes employ social media and other online platforms to cultivate a positive image of the government and discredit the opposition. Russia serves as a case in point, where the government controls the mainstream media and actively uses the internet to manipulate public opinion. A. Sinpeng's (2020) conclusions about restrictions on freedom of speech and access to information align with the findings of this study, which demonstrates that these limitations are typical of authoritarian systems. In countries like Iran, the government tightly controls the media landscape and employs censorship to suppress criticism. Conversely, the results of this study highlight a different approach to digital media and the Internet in democratic countries. Democracies provide greater freedom of speech and access to information, which promotes government transparency and accountability. For example, governments in Germany and Sweden actively support free internet access and the protection of citizens' privacy. It is also worth noting that despite the challenges, democratic systems have mechanisms to prevent the misuse of digital technologies. For instance, the USA has the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which sets strict rules for processing and protecting personal data. This contrasts with authoritarian regimes, where data protection laws are often absent or only nominally enforced.

In their research, M. Lavrič & F. Bieber (2021) analysed changes in support for authoritarianism and democracy in the Western Balkans. They concluded that the region is experiencing a growing support for authoritarian tendencies, linked to disillusionment with the effectiveness of democratic institutions, economic instability, and external influences. The research results also indicate that younger and less educated segments of the population

are more likely to support authoritarian ideas, while older generations and more educated citizens are more inclined to support democratic values. These findings align with the results of this study in that economic instability and social crises can strengthen support for authoritarian tendencies. Both studies emphasise the importance of external influences on political systems. The authors note that support for authoritarianism in the Western Balkans is reinforced by the influence of countries like Russia and China. This study also points to the role of external factors in supporting authoritarian regimes, such as through economic aid and political support. However, the results of this study suggest that democratic countries can provide greater stability and resilience through their institutions and civil society. For example, in Germany and Sweden, the effectiveness of democratic institutions contributes to the support of democratic values, even during times of crisis. This contrasts with the conclusions of M. Lavrič & F. Bieber (2021), who argue that the weakness of democratic institutions in the Western Balkans undermines trust in democracy.

Therefore, an analysis of the research results indicates that authoritarian political systems are capable of rapidly mobilising resources and making decisive decisions, but this is often accompanied by restrictions on civil liberties and transparency. Democratic systems, although slower in decision-making, ensure stability and accountability through public engagement and the functioning of independent institutions. Various global challenges, including economic crises, environmental issues, and technological challenges, have highlighted the need to balance efficiency and freedom in both systems.

Conclusions

The results of this study confirm the hypothesis that different political systems have unique approaches and effectiveness in addressing challenges such as economic crises, environmental issues, pandemics, and cybersecurity. It was found that authoritarian systems are capable of rapidly mobilising resources and implementing decisive actions in response to crises. For example, China quickly implemented a large-scale economic stimulus plan during the 2008 financial crisis and strict quarantine measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this ability to act quickly is often accompanied by restrictions on civil liberties, media control, and the suppression of opposition. In contrast, democratic systems demonstrate greater resilience and transparency in addressing global challenges. They ensure public involvement in decision-making and promote government accountability. For instance, democratic countries like Germany and South Korea effectively implemented measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic through transparency and public participation. The findings highlight that the effectiveness of addressing global challenges largely depends on a country's political system. Authoritarian regimes may be effective in the short term, but their methods often lead to long-term problems such as corruption and abuse of power. Democratic systems, although slower in decision-making, provide more sustainable and inclusive outcomes due to transparency and the involvement of civil society. The results of this study suggest that democratic countries should continue

to develop mechanisms for accountability and public participation, which will contribute to long-term stability. It is also crucial for authoritarian regimes, where possible, to integrate elements of transparency and accountability to mitigate the risks of corruption and abuse.

This research is limited by the lack of accessible information about the internal policies of authoritarian regimes, making a comprehensive analysis of their methods and outcomes difficult. Given the diversity of democratic and authoritarian systems worldwide, generalising results can be challenging. Moreover, considering the rapid changes in political systems and the global environment, the research findings may require updates in response to new challenges and circumstances. The study found that most existing research focuses on specific aspects or case studies, leaving gaps in a comprehensive comparative analysis of authoritarian and democratic systems. Despite the significant contributions of these studies, questions remain about the role of cultural and historical factors in influencing the effectiveness of political systems in

addressing global challenges. Further research is also needed into the long-term sustainability of decisions made in different political systems and their adaptability to external influences such as globalisation and international relations. Therefore, to fully understand the impact of political structures on global governance, further research is needed to cover these important but understudied aspects. Future research should also focus on examining the influence of cultural and historical factors on the effectiveness of political systems in addressing global challenges. A crucial area of research is how changes in the global environment, such as technological advancements and international politics, affect the ability of authoritarian and democratic regimes to respond to crises.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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