

to the book—Russian ethnonationalists are most likely doomed to see their predictions sink and the theories of Eurasianism prevail. Notwithstanding, the Eurasianist approach to Russia, as presented by Torbakov, could be enhanced by the development of game theory models to explain the reasoning of the elites and other important players over the three shapes of Russia, with a less normative focus on what Russia national identity—and all it encompasses—should be.

VINÍCIUS SILVA SANTANA

PhD candidate

Graduate Program in Political Science

Federal University of Pernambuco

Andrea Cassani and Luca Tomini, *Autocratization in Post-Cold War Political Regimes*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. XV, 146 pp.

The academic debate in comparative political regime studies shows that, worldwide, the state of democracy has deteriorated over the last twenty years, leading to an unprecedented transition to authoritarian regimes (Diamond *et al.* 2015). While classic works have studied regime transition based on the notion of democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996; Anderson 1999), more recent contributions overcome the dichotomous distinction between democracy and autocracy, shedding light on the extensive variation that exists also among authoritarian regimes (Geddes 1999; Gandhi 2007; Levitsky and Way 2010; Diamond 2002).

With their book *Autocratization in the Post-Cold War Period*, Andrea Cassani and Luca Tomini brilliantly place themselves in the lively academic debate on processes of autocratization and contribute to it by identifying a clear and concise concept of autocratization, unpacking the forms and modes of autocratization that took place in the post-Cold War period and providing empirical evidence of different paths of autocratization across regions and time.

The book is divided into six chapters. The Introduction serves as a guide for the reader to navigate among the myriad of concepts used to define autocratization processes. The second chapter develops the two research questions that animate the book—what is autocratization? How many forms could it take?—and the theoretical framework. Chapters Three to Five are devoted to the empirical analysis. In Chapter Three, the authors provide a global sample of all relevant cases of autocratization that occurred between 1990 and 2015, while in Chapter Four, they use a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to identify the “core” modes of autocratization. Finally, Chapter Five presents four in-depth case studies that are representative of different paths of autocratization. The last chapter sums up the empirical findings.

One of the greatest contributions of the book is the shift in the perspective from the notion of democracy to the concept of autocracy and the autocratization process. The authors define contemporary processes of autocratization as “regime changes opposite to democratization” but they use the term “autocratization” as an umbrella concept in order to refer to different cases of regime changes towards autocracy. The analytical framework builds on Dahl’s definition of political regimes and specifically on the notion of political participation and public contestation (Dahl 1971). However, the authors use a third dimension—executive limitation—to capture the difference between liberal democracy and defective democracy. Participation, contestation, and executive limitation thus constitute the three institutional dimensions of regime variance. Based on the type of regime in which autocratization initially occurs (point of departure), the type of regime that results from the autocratization process (point of arrival), and the institutional dimension involved, they identify six forms of autocratization. This classification has the advantage of overcoming the dichotomy between democracy and autocracy although it raises questions on the institutional setting as the only dimension used to identify distinct political regimes. Over the last decades in fact,

the literature on authoritarian regimes has demonstrated that in addition to the level of institutionalization, autocracies may also differ in the type of the ruling elite and decision-making process (Geddes 1999; Gandhi 2008); the size of the winning coalition (Bueno de Mesquita 2003); and their legitimization structure (Kailitz 2013).

The empirical analysis is structured in a cumulative way since each empirical chapter builds on previous findings. By triangulating descriptive statistics, Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and in-depth case studies, the authors successfully provide evidence of different trends of autocratization across geographical space: full autocratization is more common in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia; partial autocratization is more widespread in Latin America and among post-communist countries; the most frequent forms of autocratization have been transition from defective democracy to electoral autocracy and transition from electoral to closed autocracy; transition from liberal to defective democracy is a more recent but increasingly relevant phenomenon. The decision of using of QCA perfectly suits the aims of the book since QCA allows researchers to explain why a change happens in some cases but not others (Ragin 1987). The authors, in fact, use QCA to identify the “core” modes of autocratization across multiple cases. One of the drawbacks of using QCA is that not all of the identified cases are explained with the identified configurations of modes, while some other cases that do not fit in the classification are instead included. From a theoretical point of view, these results raise questions about the relation between the three institutional dimensions and the five different modes of autocratization that the authors identify. At empirical levels, the choice of selecting 40 out of the 1.245 cases of regime transition recorded by V-Dem—and thus excluding some cases from the analysis—could have been more fully explained. Overall however, the triangulation of methodology provides consistent evidence of the empirical results, showing that: post-Cold War processes of autocratization

unfold through a combination of multiple modes although each form of autocratization is systematically linked to one “core” mode. Finally, in-depth case studies shed light on the type of actors that initiate the process of autocratization.

To sum up, in this book, Andrea Cassani and Luca Tomini successfully answer the following questions: What is autocratization? And how does autocratization unfold in post-Cold War political regimes? The authors develop a new theoretical framework, one which builds on classical studies of political regimes but distances itself from the dichotomous typology of regime types. By using the term “autocratization” as an overarching concept, they provide evidence of the relation between forms and modes of autocratization in a very comprehensive and concise way. In the empirical analysis however, the authors simply relate the presence of modes of autocratization to the distinct forms without taking into account that each mode is characterized by a combination of actions that may be different in magnitude.

Overall, *Autocratization in Post-Cold War Political Regimes* provides significant contributions to the literature on comparative political regime studies and the debate on the state of democracy. Hopefully, the book will pave the way for future research on patterns of regime transition using an authoritarian perspective.

ANGELO VITO PANARO
Scuola Normale Superiore

Petar Cholakov, *Ethnic Entrepreneurs Unmasked: Political Institutions and Ethnic Conflicts in Contemporary Bulgaria*. Stuttgart: *ibidem*-Verlag, 2018. 223 pp.

In our post-democratic times, the challenges faced by democracy, including the rise of populism and the reappearance of nationalism, are placing political institutions under rising