

Lenin emerges here as a flexible strategist, albeit one concerned always with how political struggle might be waged most effectively in the political and material context of Russian reality. In this light, Loginov's treatment of his subject's well-known, bitter ruptures with the so-called "economic Marxists" and with old comrades like Georgii Plekhanov and Petr Struve take on a new and fresh cast.

Despite some typographical missteps (Valentinov's name is spelled three different ways in as many pages), Lewis White's translation is fluid and crisp and Swain's introduction does an excellent job of positioning Loginov's work in the long trajectory of Lenin biographies. This book will be read with great interest by students of the Russian Revolution and would pair well with Tariq Ali's recent *The Dilemmas of Lenin* (Verso, 2017). We can only hope that the publishers will make the remaining volumes of Loginov's trilogy available to an English-reading audience.

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Igor Torbakov, *After Empire: Nationalist Imagination and Symbolic Politics in Russia and Eurasia in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Century*. Stuttgart: *ibidem*-Verlag, 2018. 347 pp.

In *After Empire*, Igor Torbakov questions the characterization of modern-day Russia as a Westphalian nation-state. Drawing on scholarship from the fields of linguistics, history, geography, and international relations, Torbakov's political analysis of Russian nationalism demonstrates how imperialist institutions still shape the Russian imagination and the affairs of the modern Russian elites. To do so, he analyzes the various concepts of Eurasia, the entangled histories of Russia and Ukraine, and the politics of history in the Russian sphere of influence.

To establish the initial framework supporting his position, Torbakov employs the premise of "Eurasianism," a theoretical

movement developed amidst the turmoil of the Russian Empire's disruption and the rise of nationalisms in the republics within Russia's borderlands. Arising mainly out of the yearning for identity on the part of émigrés from the "Russian World," Eurasianism aimed to reshape the imperial space into a supranational, unifying multiethnic entity that would prevent the fragmentation of Eurasia. Its proponents defined Eurasia as a cohesive landmass bound by geography, culture, and history, whose borders roughly coincide with those of the Russian Empire.

Assuming that arguments over identity and nationhood are relevant to the study of international relations, Torbakov correctly observes that the lack of national identity of the Russian elites and the rise of nationalism in the minority lands in the Soviet Union became Old Russia's Achilles heel. On their way to power, Bolsheviks legitimated the empire's national minorities, their identities and their right to self-determination, all the while promoting Sovietization. Later, heavy-handed Soviet propaganda prompted by the threat of World War II, exacerbated the paradoxical identity quest: how to be a national of a minority group and a Soviet at the same time? To resolve this paradox, Eurasianists interpreted Soviet nationalism as an imperial arrangement imbricating local and supranational identities. Despite the dual nationality policy in the Soviet Union, it was the ethnic Russians themselves who did not possess a firmly established identity of their own but instead had their subjective identities subsumed into Soviet patriotism. Torbakov uses this identity paradox to argue that the institutional practices promoted in the Soviet Union were imperialist in nature and that they fueled the non-Russian nationalist movements that, among other factors, led to the Union's internal fracture.

The demise of the Soviet Union finally brought an opportunity for ethnic Russians to build an all-Russian nation. The present-day Eurasianists, however, see contemporary Russia as incomplete, and long for restoration of the empire. According to Torbakov, the ethnonationalists, who stand opposed to the Eurasianist normativism, agree that imperialist-like institutions have nonetheless influenced contemporary national and identity

policies. Torbakov analyzes Russia's 1993 constitution, the role of democracy, migration flows, and Moscow's aim to control regional affairs in the borderlands to corroborate his argument that contemporary Russia is simultaneously neither a fully developed nation, nor a fully developed imperial polity. Torbakov theorizes that the Russian people *per se* are not imperialist, but that Russian institutions forged by the elites under the tsarist nobility and the *nomenklatura* were, and that contemporary Kremlin's *Macht* institutions and elites are likewise imperialist.

If Russian foreign policy derives from Russian nationalism, then the lack of national-minded elites in Russia makes the country's empire-like national pursuits rather anachronistic. Moscow's urge to expand the Eurasian Economic Union is interpreted by elites as a tool to enable fair competition with the world's economic powers and as a trigger for Russia's active participation on the global and regional stage in its role as a quasi-imperial entity. Meanwhile, using the concept of "Island Russia" developed by Vadim Tsymbursky, Torbakov recognizes that contemporary Russia should nowadays be seen not as the whole of Eurasia, but rather as the region's central component. With Russia defined thus, Russian national interests should be apparent and include, among other objectives, attaining Russian influence over the Eurasian peripheral nations and striving to frustrate a full-blown *Pax Americana* in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Contemporary Russian-Ukrainian relations and Russia's dilemma with the European Union are likewise troublesome. If the institutional framework of identity did not change significantly during Russia's three reinventions (as the Russian Empire; the Soviet Union; and the present-day Russian Federation), there seems to be a consensus among scholars that the diplomatic institutions dealing with the former Soviet republics had to be newly constructed from scratch. Nonetheless, Russian and Ukrainian elites did not change. For Torbakov, their different discourses of identity and historical imbrications shaped the newer form of relations within the Pan-Russian world. Whereas in Russia the demise of the Soviet Union was seen by

Eurasianists as Moscow's loss of genuinely Russian territory, in Ukraine, state sovereignty became the principle through which Kyiv explicated its proximity to the European world. In short, Ukraine's defection to the West meant both the disruption of the *Russkii Mir* narrative, and the weakening of Russia's strategic sphere of influence. Simultaneously, Torbakov adds, Europe's successful enticement of Ukraine in 2014 condemned Great Russia, that of the Empire, to be forever incomplete. Not surprisingly, Russia's relations with the European Union lapsed once more into deterioration as a result. Having lost the geopolitical competition over Ukraine to Brussels, Moscow interprets the European Union as an empire of a new type—one that does not conquer by force but attracts nations through the expansion of its institutions.

Moreover, when European norms, practices, and values reached the former Soviet realm and were welcomed by Ukraine, Torbakov correctly concludes, Russian and European Union principles naturally clashed, bringing about reinterpretations of the rhetoric of the politics of history and the symbolic features of their shared historical ground. For most Eastern European nations, this clash served to undermine Soviet Russia's legacy of "greatness." Although the politics of history is key for understanding post-imperial Russia, Torbakov's efforts to comprehend the role of the Red October commemorations over the course of a century and the dangerous interplay between politics and religion read as somewhat out-of-place here; they contribute little to his main arguments about the empire-mindedness of Russian elites. Instead, they shed light on Russian history and identity as targets of manipulation, where historians are not given the right to write the country's history, and the Russian Orthodox Church is seen as a puppet institution.

Given his heavy reliance on historical and contextual political analysis, it is not surprising that Torbakov argues that Russia's institutions of national identity and foreign policy remain quasi-imperial: if path-dependence is a crucial factor for institutional behavior, and the elites are yet to be threatened in their control of power—as argued by Serhii Plokyh in the foreword

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.

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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.