

experienced significant political uncertainty throughout the first few decades of the postindependence period, Elischer makes the case that regimes chose to regulate Salafi activities only when they saw Salafism as a threat to the regime, as was the case in Chad, Niger, and Uganda. In those instances, regimes created national Islamic associations that were empowered to control the religious sphere. Where states did not view Salafism as a threat (Kenya) or even saw it as a resource (Mali and Mauritania), they did not establish effective control. These decisions formed a critical juncture that placed the respective countries on different paths.

The empirical core of the book traces the abilities of the states to manage the growing threat of jihadi Salafism in the decades following the critical juncture of the 1970s. Elischer relies on extensive interviews with clerics, academics, and civil society leaders, in addition to rich secondary sources, to chronicle each country's response to the growing threat. In Chad, Niger, and Uganda, the state was able to use the structures that it created to act as a gatekeeper of the religious sphere and to monitor and contain rising threats, acting as a "demobilizer." In Mali, Mauritania, and Kenya, the state lacked this critical tool of regulation and, in the case of Kenya and Mauritania, it further radicalized Salafi groups by using indiscriminate repression. Elischer is clear that his theory is largely inductive, derived from these six cases. He then uses four additional shorter case studies of Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Ghana to subject his theory to an out of sample test.

The book's biggest contribution is in analyzing the agency that even weak states have in managing the growth of religious extremism. Elischer's case selection allows him to hold many factors, such as state weakness, constant, and explain how otherwise similar states are better or worse equipped to address challenges of religious fundamentalism. The extensive fieldwork and data collection make an important empirical contribution in their own right. The book offers very readable and thoughtful accounts of the rise of jihadi activity in the different countries. *Salafism and Political Order* is clearly written and the arguments it presents are logical and compelling. It is ambitious and has clear relevance, given the toll that jihadi terrorism has taken in Africa. Much of the material is summarized with helpful charts and tables, emblematic of Elischer's methodical approach.

The sheer empirical ambition of the book—with six core cases and four additional cases—also presents some challenges. Covering so many cases over a span of several decades leaves a few instances where more evidence or discussion would be helpful. For example, while the book embraces process tracing as an empirical strategy, sometimes the processes need to be more fleshed out with more explicit links between cause and effect. More attention could have been paid in the case studies to the timing dynamic of state regulation of Salafism, which

is so central to the argument. The discussion of Niger reveals that it is a nuanced case with significant "evolution of state-led Islamic associations" (p. 179). This case deserved perhaps more space to unpack change over time, as it was more complicated than readers might have expected based on its characterization as a successful case of deradicalization.

The four cases used for theory testing are much more limited than the original cases. The discussion of Senegal (pp. 177–82) seems to end much earlier in time than the other cases, shedding less light on the more recent period. While this is understandable given the already ambitious scope of the book, there are limitations to how much these additional cases can truly test the theory. The author also conceded that Ghana is not the most instructive case given the absence of *attempts* to create jihadi cells. Elischer generally sourced evidence very well and paid a great deal of attention to detail but there are a few instances when more specific information about sources would have been helpful to the reader when, for example, tables are labeled "author's own compilation" (pp. 38, 174) or "based on media coverage" (p. 146) without further elaboration.

Finally, the choice to group cases by outcomes—cases of successful regulation of Salafism are discussed together and cases of failed containment are grouped in a separate chapter—does not present explicit comparisons and requires the reader to do so. Side-by-side comparisons (e.g., Mali vs. Niger, or Kenya vs. Uganda) would offer clearer contrast between the cases.

Yet, these are ultimately minor quibbles that do not detract from this impressive piece of scholarship. Elischer amassed a wealth of qualitative evidence to present a compelling theory of the state's role in managing the religious sphere. This book offers keen insights into the incidence of religious extremism in Africa, as well as relations between the political and religious authority in weak states, making it of interest to a wide audience.

Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century. By Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman. Princeton:

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In *Spin Dictators*, Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman lay out a blueprint for understanding the modern dictatorship: In short, autocrats today look disturbingly similar to democrats. Classic tyrants who dressed in military uniforms and ruled by fear, such as Adolf Hitler or Josef Stalin, have largely become a relic of the twentieth century. The "new and improved" dictator of the twenty-first century (such as Vladimir Putin or Recep Tayyip Erdoğan) wears suits, skillfully adopts a veneer of

democracy, and focuses “more on shaping public opinion than on violent repression” (pp. 11–12).

According to Guriev and Treisman, spin dictators rely on five strategies to win over everyday citizens. First, they meticulously manage their approval ratings and are often quite popular. “When the facts are good, they take credit for them; when bad, they have the media obscure them when possible and provide excuses when not” (p. 15). Second, they weaponize institutions to consolidate their power (i.e., constitutional changes, court packing, and gerrymandering). Third, like a wolf in sheep’s clothing, they pretend to be democratic, “[embracing] the vogue for freedom” (p. 17). Fourth, they open up their countries to the world, often inviting foreign investment and joining international institutions. Fifth, and most importantly—spin dictators avoid violent repression, keeping this option in their back pocket only as a measure of last resort.

Spin Dictators does a marvelous job at providing a much-needed upgrade to our perceptions of modern-day dictatorships. Regimes, such as North Korea, that remain closed off and rely primarily on repression, have become outliers in the world of autocracies today. Fear has (largely) been traded for spin, and autocrats such as Putin, Hugo Chávez, or Lee Kuan Yew, are often genuinely popular due to their media savvy and ability to project an image of competence. Limited censorship and coercion are reserved only for regime opponents that possess a real threat and are often carried out under the guise of legal proceedings. Putin, for instance, frequently uses defamation lawsuits to silence journalists. Of course, we should not forget that he also resorts to poisoning his perceived enemies at home or abroad, or having them shot on Moscow bridges.

Nevertheless, a huge contribution of this book is that it highlights the fact that modern dictators have become extremely skilled at co-opting the language and institutions of democracy. The lines between regime type have become incredibly blurred. Guriev and Treisman explain how the end of the Cold War brought about the rise of a liberal international order: Foreign aid was withheld from regimes with blatant human rights violations and the old model of dictatorship was ostracized on the global stage. To survive the post–Cold War era, autocratic leaders adapted by trading in coercion for institutions and information manipulation.

However, this shift is dangerous for two reasons. First, as the book highlights, the emphasis on persuasion and approval ratings often results in *more durable* dictatorships, simply because many autocratic leaders have large support bases and are genuinely popular with everyday people. Second, adopting the language and institutions of democracy provides dictators with *legitimacy*. Most modern autocratic governments hold *and win* multiparty elections. It is critically important that everyone, including scholars and policy makers, understand what the new model of

dictatorship really looks like, and that modern autocracies may be highly durable.

This book also introduces some big remaining questions that scholars of autocratic regimes should continue to tackle. *Spin Dictators* is written largely from the perspective of the autocratic leader: The book’s analysis focuses on the choices and actions of the regime. What does the story look like from the perspective of everyday people living under this new breed of dictatorship? Are they *persuaded*, and do they believe the spin, or are they effectively cowed into submission by the threat of repression and thus afraid to speak their minds, preferring instead to mouth support? Do spin dictators remain in power because they have successfully convinced their citizens that the regime is managing the state well, or is it because these leaders have successfully weakened and neutralized potential opposition forces?

Another remaining question is the future of spin. In the conclusion of the book, Guriev and Treisman speculate that the future of autocracies will depend on whether modernization and globalization continue. The familiar story is that as citizens become wealthier and more educated, they may agitate for political reform. However, recent research shows that a college degree does not necessarily result in a desire to oust the dictator. A recent book by Bryn Rosenfeld (*The Autocratic Middle Class*, 2020) demonstrates that college-educated professionals—teachers, doctors, and white-collar workers—will often *not* support democratization or regime change, especially when their employment is tied to the state.

In fact, scholars should rethink, more generally, the assumption that everyday people always *want* democratization, or that citizens inherently value democracy over dictatorship. The real story seems to be much murkier. In a recent study, Matthew Graham and Milan Svobik (“Democracy in America? Partisanship, Polarization, and the Robustness of Support for Democracy in the United States,” *American Political Science Review*, 114[2], 2020) find that voters are willing to trade off democratic principles for partisan interests—even in the United States. In fact, as Thomas Pepinsky aptly notes: “Life in authoritarian states is mostly boring and tolerable” (*Vox*, January 9, 2017)—and this is even more true as autocracies generally cease to rely on repression and coercion.

Spin Dictators focuses on how autocratic leaders neutralize threats from below and maintain support from the masses. Because the vast majority of autocracies now hold multiparty elections, maintaining support from everyday people has become an important dimension of regime stability. However, challenges from *within* the regime remain a huge threat to leader survival. In 2021, leaders were ousted from power through military coups in Mali, Guinea, Sudan, and Myanmar. Coups were also attempted in several other countries, such as Nigeria.

Autocrats continue to face a persistent threat from their own regime elites and military officials. Modern-day dictators, therefore, can stay in power only if they successfully manage the intricate dance of neutralizing threats from above *and* below.

Political Conflict in Pakistan. By Mohammad Waseem.
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Since its emergence as one of the two successor states after the end of the British Indian Empire in 1947, Pakistan has been riven with political conflict. The sources thereof, in considerable part—as the political scientist Maya Tudor has demonstrated in her masterly study, *The Promise of Power* (2013)—can be traced to the structure, ideology, and organization of the Muslim League, the principal political organization that was responsible for the genesis of the country. The party, although deft in pressing its case for a Muslim homeland, had given scant attention to any blueprint for governance after attaining its chief aim: the creation of a separate state based on religious identity.

The problems that came to the fore shortly after the creation of Pakistan have been analyzed with care in the works of the political scientist Khalid bin Sayeed, most notably in his book *Pakistan: The Formative Phase* (1968). The issues that the nascent state had to deal with included sectarian and ethnic differences, questions of regional identity, and the maintenance of political order. The post-independence Pakistani political leadership was mostly not up to these challenges, and in 1958 the country saw its first of many military coups. Since then, the military establishment has emerged as an entity that is *primus inter pares* in Pakistan's politics, a subject ably dealt with in Aqil Shah's *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan* (2014).

Despite this insightful body of scholarship on the evolution of Pakistan's politics, no book has provided an overarching account of the sources and persistence of a range of political conflicts in Pakistan. Mohammad Waseem, a widely published scholar on the contemporary politics of Pakistan, has taken on this substantial task in his new book *Political Conflict in Pakistan*.

Waseem's work is worthy of admiration at multiple levels. At the outset, unlike a great deal of scholarship on Pakistan, which is mostly descriptive, Waseem locates his analysis in a corpus of literature drawn from the fields of sociology and comparative politics. To that end, he turns his attention to the institutional design of the Pakistani state and how it promoted conflict along various dimensions. Specifically, he demonstrates that two competing forces emerged in the wake of partition: (1) the state's bureaucracy, the military, and the upper echelons of the

judiciary and (2) the landed elite in the country working in concert with elements of a professional elite. These two forces have colluded, on occasion, to protect certain professional and class interests and at other times have clashed, resulting in considerable societal tension and conflict.

Unlike other works on Pakistani politics that adopted a mostly chronological approach, Waseem's book relies on a thematic focus. Not surprisingly, he starts his analysis with a detailed discussion of partition's impact on Pakistan. This episode, one of the most cruel and callous turns in the history of the twentieth century, witnessed the transfer of more than 10 million individuals across newly and poorly demarcated national borders. It also resulted in the deaths of at least a million individuals.

In this section, Waseem carefully evaluates a very substantial oeuvre of literature on the subject before turning to the actual mechanics of partition and its disastrous consequences for at least three major religious communities: Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. In discussing the process of partition, Waseem highlights that the partition boundaries drawn by Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the British barrister, left a bitter legacy in Pakistan. These resentments stemmed, in considerable part, from a belief that Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last British viceroy, had browbeaten Radcliffe to favor India when drawing those boundaries.

Despite this assumption, one that continues to animate a significant segment of Pakistani elite opinion, a far simpler explanation can be found in the noted poet W. H. Auden's evocative poem *Partition*. As Auden brilliantly highlights in the poem, Radcliffe—who had never set foot in the subcontinent—was mostly clueless about the task with which he had been entrusted. That said, the assumption of possible British bias and perfidy, Waseem argues, contributed to a long-standing grudge in Pakistan against India.

Waseem also devotes a considerable section of the book to a discussion of the “master narrative” of Pakistan and how it has contributed to endemic conflict. The key elements of this dominant cultural theme focus on certain fundamental and shared assumptions: a deep-seated, conspiratorial view of India; the importance of Islam as the foundation of the Pakistani state; the fraught question of Pakistan's language policies; and the country's irredentist claim to the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir. All four concerns have contributed to conflict at various levels since the inception of the Pakistani state. Having spelled out these central tropes, Waseem proceeds to provide ample evidence of how they have played out at various junctures in Pakistan's politics over decades. In doing so, he demonstrates an extraordinarily granular grasp of the complexities of Pakistan's politics and discusses key turning points while weaving in theoretical insights.

In his discussion of the troubled fate of democracy, Waseem again demonstrates his supple grasp of the extant