

Editorial

The first half of the 20th century was marked by the rise of the Communist and Fascist/National Socialist dictatorships. A goodly number of observers therefore even speak of an “age of totalitarianism”,¹ an “age of tyrannies”,² and an “age of dictatorships”.³ After a breathtaking spread of democracies, most of all in the last decade of the last millenium, a number of experts see a wave of de-democratization of political systems plough toward the world in the 21st century.⁴ Even though actually only a stagnation and not a reduction in the number of democracies has so far been determined, overly optimistic individuals ought to recall that autocracies have accompanied the history of mankind and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

Autocracy research was, is, and will remain a central field of historical and political science for a long time to come. In political thought, the questions regarding democracy and autocracy as well as their differences and effects are based on the fundamental question about the best political order.⁵ These questions are of general human relevance and, hence, they also are of major interest to those who are not social scientists.⁶ Nevertheless, the research interest of political science in autocracies fell far behind that of democracies. Not until the last few years has the distance of importance between democracy and autocracy research diminished in political science on an international level – most of all in American political science – as a number of excellent researchers devoted themselves to this field of topics.⁷ German political science has of late also been seized by autocracy research having gained importance on an international level. So the group “Comparative Research on Dictatoships and Extremism” (formerly “Political Extremism“) of the “German Political Science Association” is placing

1 Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die totalitäre Erfahrung*, München 1987, p. 14.

2 Raymond Aron, *Das Zeitalter der Tyrannenien*. In: Ditto, *Über Deutschland und den Nationalsozialismus. Frühe politische Schriften 1939–1939*, Opladen 1993, pp. 186–208.

3 Hans J. Lietzmann, *Politikwissenschaft im „Zeitalter der Diktaturen“*. *Die Entwicklung der Totalitarismustheorie* Carl Joachim Friedrichs, Opladen 1999.

4 See et al. Larry Diamond, *The Democratic Rollback*. In: *Foreign Affairs*, 2 (2008), pp. 36–48.

5 Cf. Manfred G. Schmidt, *Vergleichende Analyse politischer Systeme*. In: Herfried Münkler (ed.), *Politikwissenschaft. Ein Grundkurs*, Reinbek 2003, p. 173.

6 Cf. See as to this point also the argumentation by James Mahoney, *Knowledge Accumulation in Comparative Historical Research: The Case of Democracy and Authoritarianism*. In: Ditto/Dietrich Rueschemeyer (ed.) *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge 2003, p. 131 f.

7 Overviews of the latest research literature are offered by: Steffen Kailitz (*Stand und Perspektiven der Autokratieforschung*. In: *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, 19 (2009), pp. 437–488) and Patrick Köllner (*Autoritäre Regime – Ein Überblick über die jüngere Literatur*. In: *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*, 2 (2008), pp. 351–366).

one focus of its work on dictatorship research. Further, the “German Institute of Global and Area Studies“ (GIGA) in Hamburg has created a work group, from whence there have come forth a number of studies in the meantime. Through its cooperation with the group “Comparative Research on Dictatorships and Extremism“ of the “German Political Science Association” and with the GIGA workgroup “Authoritarian Systems”, the Hannah Arendt Institute for the Research on Totalitarianism is also integrated into these research links.⁸

Examining the latest development of autocracy research, there are also a few drawbacks, apart from the many positive aspects. The more recent autocracy research in comparative political science almost exclusively has its eye on the present and, thus, on multi-party-autocracies. It tends, in part, to dismiss ideocracies (totalitarian and post-totalitarian regimes) yet also military regimes as a meanwhile irrelevant phenomenon of the past.⁹ Altogether, there looms the threat of a problematic loss of the historic dimension of the analysis in the autocracy research of political science (see hereto the contribution by Werner Patzelt in this issue). If comparative autocracy research in Germany has concentrated too strongly on the ideocracies until now, international political science autocracy research is in danger of concentrating too much on the institutional development of dictatorships and of neglecting the importance of the kind of power legitimation (e.g. through a Communist or Fascist/National Socialist ideology). When comparative dictatorship research is addressed in Germany, the impression arises from time to time particularly in the science of history and history of ideas perspective up to now, as if an autocracy comparison could just be limited to the Communist and Fascist dictatorships of the past. Thereby, the belief seems to be prevalent that in the Modern Age – and at least from the 20th century on – only the totalitarian and post-totalitarian autocracies in Europe were of actual relevance and that other forms of autocracy were an expiring model in neglectable world religions such as Latin America, Africa, and Asia had been. The research about autocracies thus threatens to fall increasingly apart into two hardly communicating worlds.¹⁰ Different prevailing methods in both strands of autocracy research add to the communication problems (see hereto the contribution by Werner Patzelt). In the dictatorship research of historical science the work is carried out in a more case-oriented way, at best a two or three country comparison is undertaken. In comparative political science, on the other hand, the discovery

8 At present, two projects about “Types of Autocracy“ (Uwe Backes) and about “Varieties of Autocracy and the Reasons for their Stability and Instability“ are being worked on at the Hannah Arendt Institute for the Research on Totalitarianism.

9 As for this problem see Richard Snyder, *Beyond Electoral Authoritarianism: The Spectrum of Non-Democratic-Regimes*. In: Andreas Schedler (ed.), *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*, Boulder 2006, pp. 219–231.

10 The drifting apart of the two research worlds is mirrored in the completely different layout of the following two books: Paul Brooker, *Non-Democratic Regimes. Theory, Government and Politics*, Houndmills 2000; Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann, *Diktaturen im Vergleich*, Darmstadt 2002.

of the influence of certain variables is striven for beyond the cases (e.g. that of the modernization level unto the regime type). Today's researcher, perhaps with the exception of the specialists for certain regions and countries, tends to "learn flying in order to view the world of all things political from a distance, which will allow him to make generalizable statements."¹¹ The scientific historian, on the other hand, rather tends to investigate the extremely diverse and shimmering details of the phenomena on the ground as a land surveyor. Due to the different perspectives, each side perceives things that threaten to remain hidden from the other side. Neither one of the two perspectives is superior to the other. A steady exchange of pilots and land surveyors is therefore not only productive but absolutely essential.

This issue is also meant to prevent the dialogue between the pilots and the land surveyors from breaking off. A recurring topic in the essays of this issue is the emphasis of the continuing importance of the power legitimization of political regimes (see hereto the contributions by Uwe Backes, Steffen Kailitz and Gert Pickel) on the one side, but on the other side also that of the institutions (see hereto the explanation by Steffen Kailitz and, most of all, the contributions by Werner Patzelt and Andreas Schedler). Active comparative autocracy research can neither take only the present nor only the past, neither only Europe nor only parts of the rest of the world into consideration, and neither work only case-oriented nor only variable-oriented. Certainly, when taking all this into consideration, researchers do not only compare apples with pears but also with mangos and bananas. From this, researchers learn more about why a certain type of autocracy (or a certain type of fruit) prevailed at certain times or in certain regions while the expansion areas of other autocracy types (types of fruit) concentrated upon totally different areas and times.

In his contribution, Werner Patzelt works out basic problems of comparative autocracy research from the perspective of the theory of cognitive science and of the sociology of science. According to him, comparative autocracy research suffers from unclear ideas about its topic, insufficient cooperation between political scientists and historians, a too close connection of research to political interests, a "democracy bias" in determining the research agenda, typologies without historic depth, unprecise ideas about the similarity and dissimilarity of phenomena and lacking "algorithms" of recognizing patterns in authoritarian structures. The problem diagnosis is followed by an innovative prescription for systematically structured cumulative and interdisciplinary research about authoritarian regimes. It is based on the "evolutoric institutionalism"¹² developed in Dresden under Werner Patzelt's leadership as a new variant of historic institutionalism.

11 Detlef Jahn, *Einführung in die vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*, Wiesbaden 2006, p. 33.

12 Cf. Werner Patzelt (ed.), *Evolutorischer Institutionalismus. Theorie und empirische Studien zu Evolution, Institutionalität und Geschichtlichkeit*, Würzburg 2007.

As a common foundation of thought for productive cumulative comparative autocracy research, a systematically structured regime typology by which the researchers can orient themselves, appears essential. In particular in three of the contributions for this issue (by Uwe Backes, Steffen Kailitz, and Jørgen Møller/Svend-Erik Skaaning), this aspect is given extensive consideration. Only when different variants of autocracy have been differentiated systematically and understandably, can then, in examinations, the autocracy form (e.g. ideocracy) be treated as an explanatory or to be explained phenomenon.

In his essay, Steffen Kailitz presents the view that, irregardless of any merits, the most systematically developed classification of regimes into liberal democracies, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes by Juan Linz proves to be insufficient for the present. For the most part this is caused by the category of the authoritarian regimes being too extensive and heterogenous whereas the category of totalitarian regimes has been an empty container already since the late 1970's due to the popular classification of the Communist regimes as post-totalitarian (and thus authoritarian). In the essay, an alternative regime typology is developed which classifies the political regime forms firstly according to the regime legitimation and the kind of ruler and secondly according to the regime support and the form of the power transfer. The essay lends fundamental importance to the differentiation into non-participatory, personalistically oriented and weakly institutionalized regimes on the one side and modern participatory and institutionalized regimes on the other. The here introduced typology differentiates between the basic types of the absolutist monarchy, patrimonialism, military dictatorship, ideocratic and neo-patrimonial one-party autocracies, hybrid and autocratic multiparty regimes as well as diverse mixed forms. In examining political regimes, Kailitz deems it necessary not to begin from the pole of democracy, only. Much rather, democracy as well as autocracy would need to be clearly defined in order to measure up to reality. On this basis the regime types are classified into a property space between democracy and autocracy by means of three dimensions: 1. participation, 2. competitiveness, and 3. freedom and concentration of power. Finally are compared of the spread of the types of autocracy in 1972 and 2008.

Jørgen Møller and Svend-Erik Skaaning base their contribution on the research of the past years for the differentiation of the types of democracy.¹³ They plead for differentiating authoritarianism and totalitarianism on the basis of popular definition traits of democracy, concrete political participation and foundation on the rule of law. For this, they employ the regime rating of Bertelmann's transformation index. Thus, Møller and Skaaning resume the method propagated by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan¹⁴ in order to distinguish authoritarian and totalitarian regimes by means of the rating of political and civil rights of free-

13 Cf. David Collier/Steven Levitsky, *Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research*. In: *World Politics*, 49 (1997), pp. 430–451.

14 Cf. Juan Linz/Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore 1996.

dom. Accordingly, the totalitarian autocracies are defined as extreme autocracies located the farthest from the liberal democracies. Based on their typology, Møller and Skaaning classify all the states of the world for the year 2008. In addition, they group the regimes also according to the kind of regime support into personalistic regimes, party regimes, military regimes and traditional monarchies.

In his contribution, Uwe Backes systematically distinguishes four fundamental types of autocracies on the basis of their regime legitimation: despotism, absolutism, authoritarianism, and ideocracies. Hereby, he sees the politics of history as the core element of the legitimation strategies of autocracy. On this typological basis Backes characterizes the different history of politics of the regime types using for cases in point Turkmenistan (despotism), Saudi-Arabia (absolutism), Belarus (authoritarianism), and the Soviet Union under Lenin and Stalin (ideocracy). According to the results of the study, an important dividing line runs through the ideocratic and non-ideocratic autocracies. A politics of history on the basis of a chiliastic ideology is thusly founded on an all-encompassing claim for power, omitting no sphere of life, whereas a non-ideocratic history of politics would not aim at mobilization and radical cleansing of society on the basis of an ideology. In the sample cases, some deviations from the ideal types are noticed. So the Lenin and Stalin cult would show analogies to the patrimonialism of czarism, standing in opposition to the ideocratic regime legitimation. In the religious purity dogma of the Saudi-Arabian wahabidom, however, an ideocratic-totalitarian potential would show up. Different opinions advance the progress of the science. Such controversial positions are also mirrored in this issue. So, for example, does Werner Patzelt belong to the critics of a “democracy bias“ in autocracy research. “Democracy bias“ means that, firstly, researchers depart from a development toward democracy and, secondly, position themselves clearly in favor of democracy as the best regime form. In his contribution, Gert Pickel expresses his objection to the critics of a “democracy bias“ by stating that the number of democracies has actually grown consistently in the last few decades and that party dictatorships, monarchies, and military regimes have frequently developed toward limited more-party systems. A further central topic of current international autocracy research is the exploration of the question which factors provide the stability and instability of autocracies. In his contribution, Gert Pickel sees the essential causes in the socio-economic success of the regimes and an ideology, whereby he uses the term ideology rather broadly. Political ideologies, irregardless whether they are rooted in nationalistic, religious, socialistic or even democratic ideas, can therefore be a strong legitimation resource for political regimes. The lack of socio-economic success and an ideologic basis thus endanger the stability of a political regime. However, at the concrete point in time of the collapse of a regime, it would decisively depend on the behavior of the actors.

Apart from the question about the stability and instability of autocracies, an important focal point of current autocracy research is the examination of the im-

portance of institutions in autocracies. Andreas Schedler, who was instrumental in stimulating and advancing the social science discussion of the importance of institutions in autocracies on an international level,¹⁵ gives a brilliant overview of the “new institutionalism” in comparative autocracy research in his contribution, which takes seriously, and systematically examines, institutions with a “democratic” leaning such as parties, parliaments, courts, and elections in non-democratic systems. Schedler, who created the term “electoral authoritarianism” for autocracies that carry out elections, hereby offers an analytical synthesis of four core areas of the institutionalism analysis in authoritarian regimes: first, research about the functional logic of authoritarian institutions, second, research about the institutional basic options of autocracies, third, research about authoritarian control strategies in different institutional fields, and, fourth, research about the tension between regime-stabilizing and regime-destabilizing effects of nominal “democratic institutions” in autocratic regimes.

In addition to the focus of the topics in this issue, Michael Salewski devotes himself to the further development of the instruments of military deterrence during the Cold War between the ideocratic one-party autocracies in the East under the leadership of the Sowjet Union and the liberal democracies in the West under the leadership of the USA. This contribution comes from the Hannah-Arendt-Forum regarding the question “Did the atomic stalemate prevent a Third World War?” Salewski examines and evaluates the then prevalent deterrent scenarios. For Salewski, the dialectics of deterrence which developed during the Cold War are not transferable to the current multipolar world of states. Hence he argues that the club of the established nuclear powers would need to remain exclusive. The atom bomb in the hands of actors not schooled in dialectics – terrorists, for instance – might thus trigger a catastrophe.

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Steffen Kailitz

15 Cf. et al. Schedler (ed.), *Electoral Authoritarianism*.