

Iran, Russia, Turkey: Some Comments on the Anti-democracies of the 21st Century

Hamit Bozarslan (EHESS, Paris)

“illiberal democracies”, “competitive authoritarianisms”, “authoritarian democracies”, “populism”... During the last decade, a series of concepts have been used to qualify the newly emerged radical right-wing or sovereignist regimes in the Western countries. While fully recognizing the heuristic importance of this conceptual profusion, in a monography published in summer 2021 I have used the concept of “anti-democracy” to define the Erdogan, Khamenei and Putin regimes in Turkey, Iran and Russia.

Obviously, these three regimes are not the only anti-democratic ones that exists in the contemporary world. But while the Venezuelan, Nicaraguan, Cuban and North Korean regimes can be defined, at least partially, as the reconfigured reminiscences of the Cold War and/or of the so-called “socialisms of the 21st Century” as Hugo Chavez has imagined it, these three are emerged as radical, nationalist and “virile” alternatives against the liberal democracy. They obviously share some features with the Hungarian, Polish and Indian regimes, but in addition, they are more or less openly irredentist and are involved in a variety of wars in their near or remote peripheries. They project themselves in the future as hegemon powers as China does, but while the Xi Jinping regime deems that his country has taken its revenge over the humiliating past and thus can impose itself as a global power, they remain as frustrated former empires and are certainly not in peace with their recent history.

Bio

Hamit Bozarslan (PhD in history 1992, and in political sciences 1994) teaches at the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris. He has published extensively on the Kurdish issue, Turkey and Middle East. His current research is focused on the formation of the modern anti-democratic systems in Iran, Russia and Turkey, as well the state of violence in the Middle East.