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### Book review

**Lussier, Danielle N., Constraining Elites in Russia and Indonesia. Political Participation and Regime Survival. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016**

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Lussier, Danielle N., *Constraining Elites in Russia and Indonesia. Political Participation and Regime Survival*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, xiv + 313pp., £64.99 h/b.

Democracy's survival or failure remains a timely topic even after almost half a century passed since the third wave of democratization. The literature on democracy-supportive and democracy-inhibiting factors has developed significantly in recent decades with extensive empirical evidence from across the globe. The book by Lussier is a refreshing attempt to approach the democratic theory from a new angle. The author takes two deviant cases under scrutiny – post-Soviet Russia and post-Suharto Indonesia – as sound examples where common theories of democracy cannot explain the observed trend. The central question postulated in the book is why Russia, despite having relatively high social-economic levels of development and long history of independent statehood rolled back to authoritarianism after a short period of democracy, whereas Indonesia with much lower social-economic attributes and short post-colonial history nourished its democratic experience. The author applies agent-centric approach and micro-level analysis. The answer revealed indicates that political participation is the key, more specifically its type: elite-enabling participation (e.g. contacting public officials and supporting incumbent party machines) puts democracy's survival at risk; elite constraining forms of participation (e.g. demonstration, protests) on the contrary - help to preserve democratic norms and procedures. The author in essence refers to the well known two models of political participation: conventional (elite-enabling) and unconventional (elite-constraining) and looks at them from a different perspective - namely their potential effect on the elite.

According to Lussier there are three main factors that determine the type of political participation in the given countries: engagement in civil society, sense of political efficacy, trust in political institutions. In regards to civic engagement both countries deviate dramatically from the global average: Russia demonstrating the absolute lowest level of sociability and Indonesia - the absolute highest sociability scores. Moreover, Indonesians, in general, feel more confident about their ability to influence politics and perceive elite-constraining actions as more efficacious, while Russians tend to see elite-enabling participation as such. The level of political trust is correspondingly higher among Indonesians, however, both societies trust more individuals than institutions.

The writer provides very detailed insights into the history of both countries and delineates the opposite trends. In Russia since Putin's so called course of 'dictatorship of the law' through 'guided democracy' inter alia media was put under state control, United Russia became basically a hegemonic party, the Duma no longer poses constraints to the president's actions; popular election of local governors was abolished, requirements for registering political parties were raised, NGO's autonomy in fundraising were tremendously limited and dramatic increase in fines for participating in unsanctioned protests were introduced. The opposite trend is observed in Indonesia: legislative body was granted more power, president's power was reduced and direct elections for the presidency was introduced. As a result, Indonesians enjoyed greater political and civil liberties throughout the post-transition period than Russians at any point in their post-Soviet history. The author posits that the differences on the

micro-level behaviour between Russians and Indonesians display macro-level effects on regime type. But the book stops short where it should ideally begin: the question why particularly these attributes play a decisive role in the democratic history of the country remains unrevealed.

One of the first legitimate questions that comes to a reader's mind would be why at all to compare Russia and Indonesia? Very seldom two countries can be as different as the ones chosen by the author – in terms of history, culture, religion, geopolitics. Admittedly, certain similarities are present: they both belong to one of the largest states in the world with a diverse ethnical composition and economies that are heavily dependent on natural resources and experienced authoritarian regimes in the 20th century. Having stated this, it remains unclear, why not to compare Russia with Ukraine or Georgia, the countries with lower GDPs, same legacy but different trajectory of development. That would allow the more nuanced study of deviant cases controlling for geographic and cultural proximity.

One merit of the book lies in its detailed study of the key dimensions. The author combines primary (interviews) and secondary (surveys) data for a more comprehensive approach. However, the fact that public opinion surveys for cases under analysis were conducted in different periods might be seen as an impediment for comparisons. For Indonesia the World Values Survey (2001 & 2005) and East Asian Barometer (2006) were used; in case of Russia inter alia the data from Russian Election Study was considered (1995/6, 1999/2000 and 2003/2004). The author complemented the survey data with in-depth interviews: in each country 50 interviews with citizens and 70 expert interviews with scholars, journalists, representatives of political parties, NGOs and civic organizations were conducted. However, when presenting the results from the interviews the author does not differentiate explicitly between the two types of interviews and does not provide a separate 'citizen' vs. 'elitist/expert' perspective. Furthermore, why two provincial capitals in each country were selected - Kazan and Krasnoyarsk in Russia and Surabaya and Medan in Indonesia is not totally clear. The population in capitals is on average ten times larger than in the chosen cities that could have an implication in terms of the social-economic attributes of respondents and maybe even their general perception of the situation in the country.

On the whole, this book represents a valuable contribution to the field of political science, offering a new perspective with well elaborated concepts and in-depth historical analysis of countries. Moreover, it provides insights into lives of ordinary citizens and transmits their values and views relevant for democracy studies. It is an interesting and memorable piece of work that is highly recommendable not only for political scientists but everyone who is curious about the complex phenomenon of democracy and its layers.