

Opposition Parties and Social Movements in an Age of Democratic Erosion

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In this workshop we propose an interdisciplinary approach to the study of opposition actors by bringing together scholars from political science, international studies, and sociology disciplines to highlight the importance of contentious politics. Democratic backsliding has been widely discussed in political science and sociology. In recent years, scholarly attention has gradually turned to the efforts of opposition parties to reverse autocratization trends and seek democratic transition through pre-electoral alliances. Since social movements appear at the backdrop of these debates, the relationship between parties and civil societal groups remains unexplored in cases that experience democratic erosion. Juxtaposing social movement studies with research on party politics helps us capture the politics of emotion that remains at the forefront of populist politics and reactions against it. This focus on social movement enables us to explore reactionary responses of citizens who are disillusioned with party politics and ties forged between civil society and party politics during periods of democratic erosion.

This workshop on opposition in the context of democratic erosion focuses not only on how anti-incumbent movements & parties react to autocratization and try to prevent it but also explores how other actors may strengthen these regimes. Under these extra-ordinary circumstances, movements, and parties on the left and right faced with new opportunities, limitations, and threats as movements learn from the failures and victories of their counterparts in different countries, and political contexts. We especially focus on the reciprocal relationship and symbiotic relationship between parties and movements and counter-movements going beyond framing analysis of ideological positions and party organizations. This research mat also have implications for opposition politics in the context of hybrid regimes.

Bringing together experts in social movement studies, comparative politics, and political sociology of institutions, this workshop seeks to further our stock of theoretical and empirical knowledge on social movements and party politics. We include a diverse set of cases including but not limited to Tunisia, United States, Montenegro, Hungary, Poland, Brazil, and Turkey.

This includes questions such as;

- Under which circumstances and using which tactics do social movements mobilize in favor of democratic backsliding?
- What factors impede the ability of opposition parties to mobilize against authoritarian incumbents?
- What determines the nature of alliances between more radical movements pushing for democratic backsliding with mainstream right-wing parties?
- How does counter-mobilization dynamics work in resistance to democratic backsliding?
- How do social movements adapt to changing political environment when democratic backsliding occurs?
- What type alliances do political parties and civil society actors build to resist democratic backsliding and what are the outcomes of these alliances?