

Authoritarian Backsliding

Preliminary Abstracts (as of January 23, 2017)

Workshop Duke University, April 21-22, 2017

Ali Çarkoğlu and Kerem Yildirim, Koç University

TITLE: Media Consumption and Editorial Decisions: An Account of Democratic Backsliding in Turkey

Abstract: Only a couple of years ago Turkey was being used as a role model for the Muslim world with its flawed but resilient and vibrant democracy negotiating for EU membership and making advances towards a settlement of its long-lasting ethnic conflict with its Kurdish minority. Democratic backsliding has slowly reached a point where the question as to whether Turkey is still a democracy is being posed frequently in many circles. We address the recent deterioration in the Turkish democracy from the perspective of its media sector. Since 2002, a single party dominated the electoral politics in the country and numerous international reports indicate that the Turkish media is struggling with increasing levels of authoritarian tendencies and cartelization as well as imprisonment of journalists. We first present a historical account of these developments in the Turkish media and present a time-series profiling of the newspaper readership for the major nation-wide circulation dailies with data from the Turkish Election Studies (TES) between 2002 and 2015. We show how the readership profile changed over time and media consumption became a mere echo chamber for most of the voters as levels of polarization increased. We also show how this increasing level of polarization is reflected in what the media covers and how their coverage content has changed over time. Our results show how the Turkish media as an institution became highly dysfunctional, accelerating the democratic backslide in the country. In addition to the TES data for the general elections between 2002 and 2015, we employ extensive content analyses of the major daily newspapers for the relevant election campaign periods. Our results provide mirror images of democratic backsliding from both the demand (newspaper readership) as well as the supply (newspaper content) side of the media market. We provide an in depth analysis of editorial choices that shaped the newspaper content and how competing issue content areas changed over time and partially in response to shifting preferences on the demand side.

Michael Coppedge, University of Notre Dame

TITLE: Eroding Regimes: What, Where, and When?

Abstract: Deciding what counts as an erosion of democracy depends on decisions about which kind of democracy changes, which aspect of democracy changes, from what initial level, by how much, over what period of time. This paper proposes some reasonable criteria for such judgments using Varieties of Democracy data. Deciding which of these changes were unlikely requires further assumptions about where democracy was likely to survive. Some simple models make it possible to take a systematic inventory of the least expected and most dramatic erosions of democracy over the past century.

Robert Kaufman, Rutgers University

TITLE: Democratic Decline? The United States and Backsliding in Venezuela, Russia, Turkey, and Hungary

Abstract: The paper explores the definition and dynamics of political deinstitutionalization. It will focus on the erosion of norms of political competition and horizontal accountability, and examine the way these processes are affected by inequality and long-term economic stagnation. Empirical reference will draw on contemporary experiences in Latin America and Central Europe as well as historical cases of breakdown in the 1920s and 1930s.

Ozge Kemahlioglu, Sabanci University and currently Duke University

TITLE: Voters in the Transition to Authoritarianism

Abstract: Limitations in electoral competitiveness typically played a critical role in the recent backslides from democracy to authoritarianism. In this paper, I explore the preferences and voting behavior of the (swing) voters in order to understand under what conditions popularly elected politicians and parties resort to authoritarianism (and limit competition) to maintain their hold on power. I especially focus on (re)distributive policies and analyze the factors that shape (swing) voters' preferences on (re)distribution.

Herbert Kitschelt, Duke University

TITLE: Bilateral Opposition and the Authoritarian Temptation

The benefits for a democratic incumbent to succumb to the authoritarian temptation are large, when small manipulations in political competition will substantially improve its probabilities to be reelected. This is the case for dominant parties, in a sense defined in the paper. The costs of such a move will be lowest, if the dominant party faces bilateral political opposition. The government incumbent will experience little temptation to introduce authoritarian regime changes, however, when bilateral party competition without single-party dominance prevails, or the whole party system is highly fragmented. The paper probes empirically into this argument by reviewing a large number of cases. It also suggests a political economy theory to endogenize the probability that dominant parties with bilateral opposition will arise, but it does not test this argument.

Radoslaw Markowski, ISSPAN, Warsaw

TITLE: Supply Side Revolution? On the Development of a Clientelistic Authoritarianism in Poland

Abstract: In Poland the destruction of the democratic foundations came – quite unexpectedly – not from the allegedly politically unsophisticated and democratically unprepared ordinary citizen, but from part of the elites. In October 2015 in a free and fair election, rather accidentally, the 18.6% of the eligible (or 37.5% of active) voters, due to 17% of wasted votes, turned out to be enough to form a single-party parliamentary majority. Considerable part the remaining majority of Poles were fairly satisfied with most aspects of their lives and Poland's development since 1989. Irrespectively of this PiS government has embarked on a "cultural revolution" aimed at socializing significant (rather lower strata, excluded etc.) part of the Polish society to anti-European, illiberal, statist, nationalistic and authoritarian values. The ultimate goal being a creation of their "own" new middle class. The paper focuses thus not so much on citizens' preferences – the demand side of the democratic linkage, but on the mechanisms of the authoritarian "accomplishments" of PiS government. The most characteristic feature of which is creation of a widespread set of clientelistic linkages with their electorate via a number of social institutions, most notably the Catholic Church. The clientelistic "carrot" is not served alone, it is accompanied by a sophisticated repertoire of blackmailing practices in the public domain against real and imagined enemies.

Rob Mickey, University of Michigan, Steven Levitsky, Harvard University and Lucan Way, University of Toronto

TITLE: Is American Democracy under Threat. The United States in Comparative Perspective.

Abstract: Many observers worry that American democracy is imperiled in the Trump era. Is this a reasonable concern? This paper demonstrates that key elements of democratic rule in the U. S.—including full adult suffrage, full freedoms of association and other civil liberties, an impartial policing apparatus, and widespread democratic norms—are barely a generation old. Thus, claims about the longstanding nature of stable American democracy provide less reassurance than we

would like. We then highlight three key vulnerabilities: voter suppression; weakened protections of civil liberties, including news media; and the use of law enforcement to intimidate and monitor political opposition.

Pippa Norris, Harvard University, and Ronald Inglehart, University of Michigan

TITLE: The Enemy Within: The Populist-Authoritarian Challenge to Western Democracies

Abstract: Rising support for Populist-Authoritarian parties has disrupted the politics and undermined the democracy of many Western societies. What explains this phenomenon? Two theories are examined here. Perhaps the most widely-held view of mass support for these parties -- the *economic insecurity* perspective--emphasizes the consequences of profound changes transforming the workforce and society in post-industrial economies. Alternatively, the *cultural backlash* thesis suggests that support can be explained as a reaction against cultural changes that threaten the worldview of once-predominant sectors of the population. Cosmopolitan-Liberal values have gained most among Millennials. But Populist-Authoritarianism receives strongest support from the Interwar generation, who are also a disproportionate share of the voting electorate deciding the outcome. To consider these arguments, *Part I* outlines the theoretical framework. *Part II* of the study defines the concept of Populist-Authoritarianism and draws on the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) to identify the ideological location of 268 political parties in 31 European countries. *Part III* employs the pooled European Social Survey Rounds 1-7 (2002-2014) to examine the cross-national evidence for the impact of the economic insecurity and cultural values as predictors of voting for Populist-Authoritarian parties. The conclusion in *Part IV* summarizes the key findings and considers their implications. Overall, we find consistent evidence supporting the cultural backlash thesis

Annibal Perez-Linan, Pittsburg University (and Scott Mainwaring, Harvard University)

TITLE: Backsliding and Semi-Democratic Fragility: Evidence from Latin America

Abstract: Semi-democratic regimes are more likely to break down than full democracies. Why is that the case? And what explains the establishment of semi-democracies in the first place? Our analysis shows that radical political actors block the emergence of robust democracies or produce their erosion, leading to semi-democratic regimes. In turn semi-democracies unleash spirals of increasing conflict that ultimately lead to democratic breakdowns. To separate the effects of semi-democratic rule from the effect of other, unobserved sources of democratic erosion, we test this argument using a treatment selection model with a sample of 20 Latin American countries between 1945 and 2010.

Graeme Robertson, UNC Chapel Hill

(Co-)Constructing Dictatorship in The Twenty First Century

Abstract: Most contemporary theories of authoritarian durability focus up how dictators manipulate elections and institutions and use repression to remain in power. While this focus has been highly productive, it ignores the rather obvious fact that some contemporary authoritarians are actually highly popular and govern with the enthusiastic consent of key constituencies. In this paper, we outline a theory authoritarian rule that takes this support seriously. We focus on how publics and dictators interact to co-construct dictatorship in the contemporary world, looking at the way top-down and bottom-up politics interact. In doing so, we integrate classical work on totalitarian rule with the contemporary science of political psychology.

Milan Svobik, Yale University

TITLE: Democratic Civic Culture or Cheap Talk? The Questionable Behavioral Relevance of Survey-based Indicators of Support for Democracy.

Abstract: The paper critiques the existing, survey-based approaches to the measurement of support for democracy as naively accepting costless survey answers as indicators of costly real-world behavior and proposing an alternative, still survey-based framework. So I would fit very well under the "Public Opinion and Backsliding" topic in the workshop outline. The paper will

rely on preliminary evidence from a survey conducted in Venezuela and a model & research design to do more in the US and India via AmTurk in the next few months.

Milada Vachudova, UNC Chapel Hill, and Marko Zilovic, George Washington University

Party Positions and State Capture in the Western Balkans

Abstract: The last fifteen years have been a time of dramatic change in the positions of important political parties across the Western Balkans. The purpose of this article is to see how well the adapting model explains political change in the region. There are two broad types of party systems. In Serbia and Croatia, as the model predicts, office-seeking parties have responded to strong incentives to moderate their positions in order to become EU-compatible. In Bosnia and Macedonia, however, political competition is structured almost entirely on identity, with parties hardly taking any distinct positions on managing the economy and public services. We show how parties in Bosnia and Macedonia have in fact adopted positions over the last five years that are less and less consistent with the project of qualifying for EU membership. These party systems have been captured by small groups of elites who profit from the status quo; to protect it, they keep the EU at bay, and use nationalism and chauvinism as a strategy to deflect attention from rampant corruption and abysmal governance. We use data from the three most recent rounds of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey on the positions of political parties that have included the Western Balkan, including the latest round that concluded in 2015.

Lucan Way, University of Toronto

TITLE: Has Democracy Declined?

Abstract: This paper assesses the extent to which democracy has declined in the world since 2000. I find that despite widespread pessimism in the democracy promotion community, very few stable democracies have transformed into authoritarian regimes. At the same time, a number of fourth wave democracies have transformed into what Guillermo O'Donnell called "Delegative Democracies" that remain procedural democracies but suffer from increased concentration of power in the executive.

Chris Welzel, Leuphana University, Lüneburg, Germany

TITLE: Democracy Misunderstood: Authoritarian Notions of Democracy around the Globe

Abstract: A puzzling paradox consists in the fact that widespread support for democracy coexists frequently with the very absence of the latter. Addressing this puzzle, we show that wherever it exists, most people misunderstand democracy in authoritarian ways that defy its emancipatory core. Such authoritarian notions of democracy (henceforth: ANDs) lend legitimacy to non-democratic regimes, which explains why they persist. Testing multiple explanations of ANDs, we find that cognitive mobilization and moral liberation—which we call "enlightenment forces"—provide the most powerful anti-dote against ANDs, stronger even than lasting democratic traditions. Moreover, ANDs do not represent fear-induced false preferences but are real. Finally, ANDs provide a better indicator of authoritarianism more broadly speaking than is true for openly expressed preferences for authoritarian rule.

Steven Wilkinson, Yale University

TITLE: Authoritarian Backsliding without an opposition: India since 2014

Abstract: The BJP government of Narendra Modi elected in May 2014 has been accused by its domestic critics of centralizing power in the executive and person of the Prime Minister, using state power and an aggressive media strategy to victimize political opponents, and gradually enforcing its Hindu Nationalist ideology on important parts of the education system, cultural institutions, and even the army. The BJP's freedom of political movement has been greatly assisted by the possibly fatal weakness of the main opposition party Congress, and the lack of coordination among other potential opposition

parties.

This paper surveys the evidence for claims of authoritarian backsliding in India. I argue that the checks within India's bicameral federal system, the sprawling nature of India's bureaucracy and state, several recent missteps by the government, as well as decades' long popular suspicion of executive overreach have the potential to help rein in any authoritarian trends. But one big question is whether India's opposition political parties can coordinate in larger alliances and around one or two prime ministerial candidates before the 2019 elections.

Elizabeth Zechmeister, Vanderbilt University

Title: Public Opinion and Democratic Decay in Latin America

Abstract: The quality of democracy in Latin America has decayed in recent years, to a grave degree in a number of countries. In cases of democratic recession, is the mass public a complicit partner, critical observer, or ambivalent bystander? Under the first scenario, public support for democratic values erodes in tandem with the dismantling of liberal democratic institutions. Under the second, the public observes with dissatisfaction a growing deficit in the supply of liberties. Under the third, the average citizen is insensitive to deficits in democratic quality and/or is willing to make a calculated trade-off of basic liberties for economic returns. This paper assesses the relationship between public opinion and democratic decay in Latin America with data from LAPOP's AmericasBarometer, 2004-2017. Using the case of Nicaragua, where freedom of the press is particularly low and declining, I focus attention on the extent to which individuals are willing to trade-off basic freedoms – such as freedom of the press – for positive economic returns. The two primary dependent variables are presidential approval and satisfaction with democracy. The key independent variables are evaluations of the supply of basic liberties and economic performance. I assess the extent to which the direct and conditional effects of these variables have shifted in the period before and after the election of President Daniel Ortega into his current three-consecutive term presidency, and I consider the extent to which the liberties-for-economy trade-off framework is relevant to other Latin American countries and beyond.