Title of proposed Workshop: The legacy of authoritarian regimes – Political culture, institutions, and democratisation

Outline of topic:

Democratisation is mainly understood as a transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic political system. However, periods of dictatorship shape the political institutions, the elite structure, and civil society of a country. It is still disputed in the literature whether the experience with dictatorships leaves a long-term mark on a country even after their existence. This workshop invites research that investigates these legacies of authoritarian regimes on political institutions and on civil society. The key question explored in this workshop is how authoritarian regimes affect the subsequent democratisation process. More specifically, we thereby pose the questions whether periods of authoritative rule have a lasting impact on a country’s political structure and culture and what the nature of this impact is. Further, there is still a gap in the literature that compares the legacies of different types of authoritarian regimes. For example, do one-party rule and military regimes differ in their long-term impact on society and political institutions?

Though the study of authoritarian regimes is growing, we still know little about the legacy of dictatorships on their citizens and how this legacy might influence the development of a democratic political culture, which is central for democratic consolidation. We argue that previous research has not paid enough attention to the long-term impact of citizens’ formative experiences in non-democratic systems on individual political attitudes, values, and behaviour, as well as on the prospects of a democratic political culture in transitioning societies.

Research on the interplay between the characteristics of authoritarian regimes as well as the development of democratic political institutions and political culture, will shed new light on the process of democratisation.

Relation to existing research:

This workshop relates to two academic debates that are usually not in dialogue: (1) Authoritarian regimes and democratisation and (2) political behaviour and public opinion.

Firstly, this research topic relates to the rich literature in comparative politics on varieties of authoritarian regimes, and on the different types of authoritarian breakdown and democratisation (Bermeo 1990; Welzel 2006; Welzel & Inglehart 2008; Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán 2014). One problem when studying the legacy of dictatorships is the variety of regimes in terms of their institutional structure, political openness and their interconnectivity to the outside world (Ezrow & Frantz 2011). There are various attempts to classify different types of authoritarian regimes, focusing mainly on characteristics such as the source of power (drawn from different societal groups), procedures of decision-making, and leader succession (Geddes 1999: 121). New research further emphasises the role of the legitimacy of the regime (Gerschewski 2013) and the structure of the elites (Frantz &
Ezrow 2011). These differences in how authoritarian regimes function has an important impact on the breakdown of these regimes which may be the result of a variety of factors: popular protest (Bratton & van de Walle 1992, 1994; Collier & Mahoney 1997; Bermeo 1997), pacts between elites (Burton et al 1992; Karl 1990), geographic diffusion (Beissinger 2007). Even more importantly from the perspective of our workshop, the variations in authoritarian breakdown could affect the legacy of these regimes in the aftermath.

Related to the research on authoritarian regimes is the work on democratisation. The literature on democratisation has largely focused on institutional change and economic performance on the transition to and the consolidation of democracy (Lipset 1959; Hanson 1995; Linz & Stephan 1996; Boix 1999; Przeworski et al. 2000; Mousseau 2000; Acemoglu & Robinson 2001, 2005; Epperly 2011). There are some studies that explicitly focused on the role of citizens’ attitudes in sustaining democracy (Linz & Stepan 1996; Diamond 1999; Cho 2014). However, this work largely ignores the possible legacy effects of dictatorships that might persist in the population even after these regimes collapsed, which is partly due to the fact that the work usually only focuses on one specific region that shares the experience of very similar regimes (for example Central Eastern Europe; see Bernhard & Karakoc 2007; Mishler & Rose 2007; Neundorf 2010; Pop-Eleches & Tucker 2013, 2014). We are aware of only one recent study by Fuchs-Schündeln and Schündeln (2015) that investigates the legacy effect of regime experience on the development of democratic culture. The results confirm that there is a clear legacy effect and that experiencing dictatorships suppresses the development of pro-democratic beliefs. However, the authors only distinguish between the experiences of democracies versus non-democracies, bundling all the diverse dictatorships together.

Lastly, this workshop builds on research in public opinion and in particular the theory of political socialization, which suggests that political attitudes central to citizenship are formed early in life and are hardly subject to change in later life (Alwin & Krosnick 1991; Sears and Funk 1999; Miller & Sears 1986). This research very much emphasises the time of adolescence, when political attitudes and preferences are formed (Bartels & Jackman 2014). Young citizens, it is believed, are not yet set in their political ways and are subsequently more easily influenced by external factors (Jennings 1989; Alwin & Krosnick 1991; Sears & Valentino 1997). The research on political socialization is however mainly conducted in advanced democracies and focuses on the parents as the main source of socialization (Jennings & Niemi 1966; Jennings et al. 2009; Kroh & Selb 2009). This workshop extends this research in two ways. First, by including papers that study political socialization in developing and non-Western countries and secondly, by treating the political regime as a possible socialization context. If the political regimes has a formative impact on the political preferences and values of whole generations, we would expect the impact of dictatorships to continue through this channel.

**Likely participants:** Likely participants include comparativists interested in authoritarian regimes, democratisation, political institutions, and political behaviour, as well as, political sociologists, and political economists.

**Type of Papers required:** Over the course of the workshop, we aim to discuss the legacies of authoritarian regimes, bringing together a range of scholars working broadly on the following categories:
- Democratisation
- Typologies of authoritarian regimes
- Political intuitionalism
- Public opinion and civil society
- The development of a democratic political culture

The workshop is welcoming to a methodological plurality and invites studies that fit within the following research designs:

- Large-N, global analysis
- Cross-national, comparative analysis
- Regional studies
- Case studies

**Funding:**

This workshop is related to a project funded by the British Economic and Social Research Council that would cover two participants.

**Biographical notes:**

**Anja Neundorf** is an Assistant Professor in Politics and Research Methods at the University of Nottingham. Generally, her research applies advanced statistical methods to substantially research questions with the aim of testing and refining theories of political socialization and public opinion. Thereby, she is mainly interested in how individuals form and retain political attitudes and identities over time and across different political systems. Her research has been published in the Journal of Politics, Public Opinion Quarterly, Social Forces, and the British Journal of Political Science.

**Grigore Pop-Eleches** is Associate Professor of Politics and Public and International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University. While his earlier work focused on institutional legacies of communist regimes, he has recently worked primarily on studying political attitudes in both authoritarian and post-authoritarian regimes, including late-communist Poland, post-WWII Germany and several former Soviet republics (including Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.) He has recently completed a book manuscript (with Joshua Tucker from NYU) on the effects of communist legacies on post-communist political attitudes. His articles have appeared in the Journal of Politics, World Politics, Comparative Political Studies, Comparative Politics, the Quarterly Journal of Political Science and Journal of Democracy.

**References:**


For further information, please contact: Marcia Taylor, Conference Coordinator, ECPR Central Services, Harbour House, 6-8 Hythe Quay, Colchester, CO2 8JF, United Kingdom.