

International Workshop

Competing for Power in Southeast Europe: Strategies and Approaches



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Date: 22 – 24 November 2023

Conference Venue: Bildungshaus Retzhof, Dorfstraße 17, A-8435 Wagna

Organisers:

Southeast Europe Association, Munich

Centre for Southeast European Studies, University of Graz

Conference Language: English

Topic

Dominant parties monopolising power is a feature widely shared across Southeast Europe. In many countries, governments are or have been shielding opposition parties off public and private resources and acted as gatekeepers of relations with the external world. Oftentimes dominant parties cultivate patronage-based linkages with their constituencies and coalition partners, fuelling dependency cycles which are difficult to escape. In response, opposition actors have opted for a variety of strategies to compete on a fundamentally skewed playing field – with varying degrees of success.

The aim of this workshop is to comparatively assess opposition strategies in Southeast Europe and to scrutinise the factors that either have contributed to the opposition's success or failure. Bringing together both academic and activist expertise, the workshop will attempt to derive some general lessons learned from the opposition strategies in Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Moldova, Hungary, Turkey, and Kosovo.



ATTENTION

The conference will take place under **Chatham House Rule** in order to facilitate an unrestricted and open exchange of views and ideas. When a meeting is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed. Chatham House Rule aims to increase the openness of discussion.

PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2023

20:00

Opening of the Workshop / Welcome Dinner

Location: Deli Lounge Cafe Restaurant, Dorfstrasse 18, 8435 Wagna (located next to the Bildungshaus Retzhof, [see location here](#))

THURSDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2023

09:00 – 09:15

Introduction

09:15 – 10:00

GROUP DISCUSSION: What are the Challenges of Competing Against a Dominant Party?

Group 1: Material and immaterial resources of the incumbents

Group 2: Institutional advantages of the incumbents

Group 3: Shortcomings of the opposition

10:00 – 10:30

Presentation and Discussion of Results

10:30 – 10:45

Coffee Break

10:45 – 12:15

PANEL 1: Broad Opposition Alliances: Preconditions and Chances for Success

Turkey

Salim Çevik: Intra-opposition cooperation in Turkey in 2019 and 2023: Which factors accounted for the different outcomes?

Hungary

Daniel Hegedüs: The paradox of realist adaptation: Challenges to opposition strategies in competitive but non-democratic regimes – A case study of Hungary

Montenegro

Claudia Laštro: Opposition coordination in the wake of Montenegro's 2020 Elections

Serbia

Vujo Ilić: Intra-opposition coordination in Serbia

Commentator:

Mélody Gugelmann, PhD Student, University of Fribourg

12:15 – 13:30

Lunch Break (lunch served only until 13:00)

13.30 – 15.00

PANEL 2: Institutional and Extra-Institutional Opposition Strategies: What is the Way to Go?

Serbia

Dušan Spasojević: Choosing the lesser of two evils – Serbia's opposition between participation and confrontation

Kosovo

Agon Maliqi: Institutional and extra-institutional strategies of Vetëvendosje

Moldova

Gian Marco Moisé: Institutional and extra-institutional strategies of the opposition in the hybrid regimes of Moldova in the past years

Turkey

Berk Esen: Institutional and extra-institutional strategies of Turkey's main opposition alliance – and why they failed

Commentator:

Magdalena Solska, Assistant Professor, University of Fribourg, Switzerland

15:00 – 15:15

Coffee Break

15.15 – 16.45

PANEL 3: Creating Momentum: The Role of Civil Society

North Macedonia

Lura Pollozhani: The relationship between party and non-party actors: Insights from the Colourful Revolution

Serbia

Jelena Vasiljević: Ne davimo Beograd: The evolution from a civic initiative to a social movement to a political party

Turkey

Derya Özkaya: The politics of urgency: Organisation and co-optation of hope for change under Turkey's authoritarian transformation

Montenegro

Bojan Baća: Reclaiming civil society: The role of social movements and contentious politics in Montenegro's democratisation

Commentator:

Vedran Džihčić, Senior Researcher, Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip)

16.45 – 17:15

Reflection on Findings of Day 1

18:00

Dinner

FRIDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2023

9.00 – 10.00

PANEL 4: Changing the Equation: What Makes Newly Formed Parties Succeed?

Moldova

Victor Gotișan: How to explain the success of the Party of Action and Solidarity?

Kosovo

Donika Emimi: Lëvizja Vetëvendosje: From a political movement to Kosovo's largest party

Commentator:

Ana Nenezić, Director, Institute for Socio-Political research Analitico, Podgorica

10:00 – 10:15

Coffee Break

10.15 – 11.15

PANEL 5: What Role do External Actors Actually Play in Changing the Equilibrium?

Hungary

Sonja Priebus: Strategies of internationalisation of Hungary's opposition

Moldova

Denis Cenusă: How the EU and Russia matter for the success of the opposition

Montenegro

Jovana Marović: The role of external actors in Montenegro's 2020 elections

Commentator:

Zdravko Veljanov, PhD Candidate/Visiting Fellow, Central European University (Vienna) and Centre for Southeast European Studies (Graz)

11:15 – 12:00

Feedback and Next Steps

12:00 – 13:00

Lunch Break

End of the Conference

Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft e.V.

Widenmayerstr. 49
80538 München
Tel. +49 89 2121 540

Fax +49 89 2121 5499
E-Mail: info@sogde.org
www.sodge.org



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