



SRII SPRING LECTURE

April 10, 2018, 19:00

Istiklal Caddesi 247 (Beyoglu – Tünel)

Dr.

Jonas Draege

Harvard Kennedy School

The Rise of Street Politics in Turkey: The Gezi Protests and the Failure of the Opposition Parties

Draege will present an early version of the book manuscript he is currently finishing. The book analyses the behavior of Turkey's political opposition parties during the last decade's democratic backsliding. With the 2013 Gezi protests as a starting point, the book discusses how and why opposition parties, most notably the CHP and BDP/HDP, failed to capture and realize the historically unprecedented momentum that the protests created. Drawing upon a wide array of quantitative and qualitative original and secondary source material, I argue that the Gezi protests not only constituted a unique opportunity for these two parties to reinvigorate the electoral opposition to the AKP government, but that the demands in the Gezi protests also reflected preferences in the wider voting population that the opposition parties hitherto had not fully embraced. As such, it represented an opportunity for Turkey's opposition parties to capture the momentum the protests raised, and propose a political programme that would capture a bigger electoral share in subsequent elections. However, as both parties responded ambiguously and reluctantly, this opportunity was largely lost. I show that the Gezi protests received a great deal of attention from the CHP and BDP/HDP, but both parties framed the protest demands in the direction of pre-existing platforms, and their responses were not accompanied by major changes in party platforms in the four competitive elections of 2014 and 2015. Challenging prevalent narratives of Turkey's authoritarian turn as a deterministic gradual process, I thus argue that until the failed coup d'état in 2016, the opposition had opportunities to make much more out of their situation than they did, and even curb AKP dominance. With an in-depth study of the domestic politics of such a pivotal regional and global power as Turkey, in such a crucial period in the country's history, the book contributes to our understanding of the interaction of civil society and political parties, and the role of opposition parties in times of increasing authoritarianism.

Jonas Bergan Draege is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Belfer Center's Middle East Initiative at the Harvard Kennedy School. His research focuses on contentious politics, party politics, and electoral behaviour in the Middle East. He is currently finishing his book manuscript on opposition parties in Turkey under AKP rule.

Admission only after registration to event@sri.org.tr !