

ICDD Workshop on Authoritarianism from a Comparative Perspective

World politics is shifting to the right. Putin in Russia, the rise of right-wing populism in Germany, and the power of Modi in India can all be listed as known examples of a lurch toward the right. Many scholars have devoted their time and energy to understanding the reasons behind the right-wing turn – what is generally called authoritarianism or hybrid authoritarian regimes– in individual cases. They explore the factors and actors driving authoritarianism in different sites. Further, the question of whether authoritarianism is the new normal has vastly occupied the academic and political debate. In addition, the certain sets of rights’ (e.g., universal suffrage, check and balances) has become a central question in several discussions.

Gathering a team of scholars from the fields of political science and global political economy, who have expertise on case studies across the Global South and North, the International Center for Development and Decent Work organized an online workshop entitled “Authoritarianism – a term we cannot define”. More than 40 participants pondered very central questions: What is authoritarianism? How does one differentiate it from other types of state (democracy, totalitarianism, populism, fascism, etc.)? What are the drivers of authoritarianism?

What has been relatively understudied up to now is comparative perspectives on authoritarianism. The speakers in the workshop cover different places and specialties/backgrounds, and their work relates to authoritarianism in one way or another. From Texas, USA to Brisbane, Australia, scholars from different corners of the world joined the discussion to make sense of recent changes to the global political landscape.



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