



The **Populism Research Group** together with the **Political Behavior Research Group** cordially invites you to a discussion on:

Party Colonization of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe

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ABSTRACT

Why are the media as they are? Why are the media different in different countries? Students of comparative media systems argue that media are mainly shaped by the political systems within which they operate and explain media system differences as a function of political system differences. This presentation looks specifically at the media systems of Central and Eastern Europe in an attempt to answer the questions of 1) what explains a lower level of media freedom in Central and Eastern Europe compared to Western Europe, and 2) what explains variations in media freedom in and across the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. First, it suggests that political parties in Central and Eastern Europe are poorly embedded in society and are therefore lacking the means needed for party building and organization. In an attempt to compensate for this weakness, they colonize media and exploit various media resources for their own benefits. Second, it suggests that different patterns of media colonization in and across the countries of Central and Eastern Europe—such as one-party colonization leading to lower levels of media freedom and multi-party colonization leading to comparatively higher levels of media freedom—are explained by different government configurations and party structures. Veto points in the government and in the governing parties tend to decrease the likelihood of one-party colonization. As a general rule, the stronger the government, the weaker the media, and the weaker the government, the stronger the media.

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