

Semuhi Sinanoglu

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Short Bio

I am a researcher at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). I completed my PhD in Political Science at the University of Toronto. I study how autocrats employ co-optation, repression, propaganda, and polarization to drive support for their regime and policies. I am also a political risk consultant leveraging big data to predict protests and forecast elections. Previously, I co-founded two social impact initiatives, based in Istanbul and Montreal, respectively.

Education

Degree programs

University of Toronto, CA PhD in Political Science	2018-24
Koc University, TR MA in International Relations	2014-17
Bogazici University, TR Double Major with Political Science & International Relations & Economics	2009-14

Non-degree programs & training

University of Michigan, USA ICPSR Summer Program (EITM-certified Bayesian training)	Summer 2019
McGill University, CA Graduate Research Trainee	2017-18
Harvard Kennedy School EE, USA Executive Education: Leadership, Organizing, and Action	Spring 2017
Columbia University, USA Exchange Program	Spring 2013

Professional Experience

German Institute of Development (IDOS), DE Researcher • I work on a project that focuses on the global trends of autocratization and polarization.	2024-current
Maidan, CA Co-founder • We forecast elections and protests using big data.	2019-2023
CityInclusive, CA Co-founder • Canada's Smart Cities Challenge presented an opportunity for cities to make themselves socially inclusive. On our digital platform, we documented the works of Canadian cities as they went through the process of developing applications for the Challenge. CityInclusive team was also recognized as futurists in residence at the Concordia University's Institute for Urban Futures .	2017-19
Co-Opinion Network, TR Founding President • Co-Opinion is a policy-oriented network that mobilizes more than 30 stakeholder institutions in six countries across the Middle East & North Africa to tackle unemployment in the wake of 4th Industrial Revolution. The network achieved cross-sectoral collaboration between the region's several business associations and youth-led NGOs. The network organized capacity development workshops in Belgium, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey, with support by established organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Open Society Foundation.	2015-17
Development Analytics, TR Social Policy Researcher • I assisted with quantitative and geo-spatial analysis, and desk reviews for two policy reports delivered to the World Bank and COMCEC.	2014-15

Academic Research

Peer-reviewed publications

2024. Out of sight, out of mind: The impact of lockdown measures on sentiment towards refugees. [Journal of Information Technology & Politics](#) 21(2): 166-75 (with Amir Abdul Reda and Amine Aboussalah).
2024. Mobilizing the masses: Measuring resource mobilization on Twitter. [Sociological Methods and Research](#) 53(1): 153-92 (with Amir Abdul Reda and Mohamed Abdalla).
2022. Containing ethnic conflict: Repression, co-optation, and identity politics. [Comparative Politics](#) (54)5: 765-86 (with Ceren Belge).

Under review

2024. Climate disasters exacerbate polarization. [Could cross-partisan outreach help?](#) (with Michael Donnelly).

- 2024. Autocrats and their business allies: The informal politics of co-optation and defection.
- 2024. The cost of co-optation: Tax audit as authoritarian financial repression during debt crises.
- 2024. Taming a paper tiger? [Public support for the repression of the business elite](#). OSF Preprint.
- 2024. Divided at home, divided abroad? [Affective polarization and political tolerance among migrants](#) (with Selin Kepenek).

Working papers

- 2024. Sultanist and Militarist Soft Propaganda, and Support for Security Operations (with Michael Donnelly).
- 2024. The prosecution of heads of state and democratic backsliding (with Seva Gunitsky).
- 2024. Can businesses safeguard democracy? (with Lucan Way).

Work in progress

- 2024. The sources of democratic resilience in an age of backsliding (with Lucan Way and Steve Levitsky, funded by [SSHRC](#)).
- 2023. The determinants of defection in civil wars: [Survey experiments with rebel groups in Myanmar](#) (with POSTCOR).

Selected presentations

- 2024. Sultanist and Militarist Soft Propaganda, and Support for Security Operations. [VWAR Workshop](#) (with Michael Donnelly).
- 2024. Climate disasters exacerbate polarization: Could cross-partisan outreach help? [CEU Democracy Institute DRD Annual Workshop: Breaking the Dynamics of Political Polarization](#); [APSA Annual Conference, Montreal](#) (with Michael Donnelly).
- 2021. Divided at home, divided abroad? [APSA Annual Conference, Seattle](#); [ECPR General Conference, September](#) (with Selin Kepenek).
- 2019. Containing ethnic conflict: Repression, co-optation, and identity politics. ISA, Toronto (with Ceren Belge).
- 2014. A typology of welfare regimes in the Middle East and North Africa. ECPR General Session, Warsaw.

Other research experience

- 2022. Preventing civil war recurrence (with [POSTCOR Lab](#)).
- 2020. Protests, resource curse, and economic diversification (with Jacques Bertrand).

Research Grants

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| 2023 | Research Grant by the IHS for online survey experiments in Turkey | <i>Virginia, USA</i> |
| 2022 | Hayek Fund by the IHS for my research on the business support for autocracies | <i>Virginia, USA</i> |
| 2022 | Travel, Research, Engagement Grant by POMEPS to fund my research on depolarization | <i>DC, USA</i> |
| 2021 | Priority Theme Small Grants Fund by EGAP to fund my research on depolarization | <i>Berkeley, USA</i> |

Fellowships and Affiliations

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| 2024- | Member , Global Relations Forum | <i>Istanbul, Turkey</i> |
| 2022-23 | Regional Manager at the Digital Society Project | <i>ND, USA</i> |
| 2022-23 | Graduate Associate at the POSTCOR Lab | <i>Toronto, CA</i> |
| 2022-23 | Trudeau Centre Fellow in Peace, Conflict, and Justice at Munk School | <i>Toronto, CA</i> |
| 2022 | Oskar Morgenstern Fellowship by the Mercatus Center | <i>Virginia, USA</i> |
| 2019-22 | Non-resident Junior Fellow at Massey College | <i>Toronto, CA</i> |
| 2017-18 | Resident Junior Fellow at Jeanne Sauvé Foundation | <i>Montreal, CA</i> |
| 2016 | Human Rights & Governance Fellowship by the Open Society Foundation | <i>Budapest, HU</i> |
| 2012 | Young Scholar at the Global Relations Forum | <i>Istanbul, TR</i> |

Awards and Scholarships

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| 2023 | Outstanding TA Award by the University of Toronto | <i>Toronto, CA</i> |
| 2021-23 | Mary H. Beatty Scholarship by the University of Toronto | <i>Toronto, CA</i> |
| 2022 | M. W. Donnelly Fellowship in Political Economy by the University of Toronto | <i>Toronto, CA</i> |
| 2020 | Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) by the Province of Ontario | <i>Toronto, CA</i> |
| 2020 | The Morimitsu Inaba Doctoral Scholarship by the University of Toronto | <i>Toronto, CA</i> |
| 2019 | The Ranjit Kumar Graduate Scholarship by the University of Toronto | <i>Toronto, CA</i> |
| 2019 | ICPSR Scholarship by the EITM | <i>Ann Arbor, USA</i> |
| 2014 | Graduate Scholarship by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey | <i>Ankara, TR</i> |
| 2009 | Outstanding Success Scholarship by the Turkish Educational Foundation | <i>Istanbul, TR</i> |

Other Selected Publications

- 2024. [Countering information pollution to protect democracy](#). Bonn: German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS).
- 2024. [Post-conflict Democratization: A Review](#). Prepared for the National Democratic Institute by the Comparative Autocracy Network (April).

2021. A time of crisis and opportunity: [Digitizing SMEs in Turkey](#). Istanbul: Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation & CIPE.
2021. [COVID Impact Assessment Report](#). Istanbul: Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation.
2021. Otoriter rejimlerde bürokrasi: Sadık mı layık mı? [Bureaucracy under authoritarianism: Loyal or competent?] [Daktilo1984](#), February 15.
2019. We need a new conservative party in Turkey for regime transition. [The Jerusalem Post](#), March 31.
2018. Memlekete dönmek [Returning home]. [Birikim](#), November 12.
2018. Building a policy school that has real social impact. [Policy Options](#), February 28.
2018. Socially inclusive Fourth Industrial Revolution: Fostering youth employment in the Middle East and North Africa. In [Realizing Youth Potential in the Mediterranean: Unlocking Opportunities, Overcoming Challenges](#), edited by Lorenzo Kamel & Asli Selin Okayay: 101-12. Rome: IAI Research Studies.
2018. Op-eds published on civil society in Turkey on [Civic Pages](#).
2017. Death & politics: the burial of a Kurdish woman in Turkey. [openDemocracy](#), October 4.
2017. Review of Steven Cook's False Dawn: Protest, Democracy, and Violence in the Middle East. [Turkish Policy Quarterly](#) (Summer): 107-11.
2017. Parti ebed müddet: Bir siyaset teknolojisi olarak Yeni Osmanlı TRT dizileri [The eternal party: New Ottomanist TV series as a political technology]. [Birikim](#), March 30.
2016. 5 disturbing facts about living under occupation. [Middle East Monitor](#), August 22.
2016. Tackling the Syrian refugee crisis: Prospects & challenges. [Turkish Policy Quarterly](#) (Spring): 123-30 (with E. Arslan & I. Taner).
2015. Development Analytics. [Improvement of basic services delivery for the poor in the OIC member countries](#). Ankara: COMCEC.
2014. Development Analytics. [Supply and demand for child care services in Turkey](#). Washington, DC: World Bank.
2011. Youth who make the future. [openDemocracy](#), September 23.
2009. Ein kristallener leuchter ist die zeit am Istanbul Lisesi: 125 jahre mit dokumenten (1884 -2009). Istanbul: IEL Educational Foundation (with L. Deniz & I. Buyukkal).

Teaching Experience

University of Toronto, CA

2020 - 2024

Course Instructor

- [The political economy of economic crises](#)
- [Autocrats of the world: International politics of authoritarianisms](#)
- [Politics in the Middle East](#)

University of Toronto, CA

2018 - current

Teaching Assistant

- [Comparative Politics](#) | Democracy, Dictatorship, War and Peace; Democratization in Modern Europe; State, Society and Power
- [Political Economy](#) | Politics of Development; Global Political Economy: Policy and Analysis; U.S. Government and Politics
- [Methods](#) | Introduction to Quantitative Reasoning ; Using Data to Understand Politics and Society; Public Opinion and Voting; Thinking Through Research Design (grad-level); Statistics for Political Scientists (grad-level)

Trinity College, CA

2019 - 2022

Academic Don

Koc University, TR

2014-2016

Teaching Assistant

Public Speaking

2022. ChatGPT Hayatimizi Nasıl Etkileyecek? [How will ChatGPT impact our lives?]. Istanbul: [TUIC](#) (December).
2019. Podcast: Görsel Kültürün Politikası [The Politics of Visual Culture]. Istanbul: [Medyapod](#) (February).
2018. Future of Turkey's Youth in a Time of Turmoil. Washington, DC: [Middle East Institute](#) (December).
2018. Middle Powers: Saudi Arabia. Toronto: Global Citizens Dialogue (November).
2018. On Spaces and Rights: Refugee Settlement Policies in Lebanon & Turkey. Montreal: McGill University (March).
2018. Socially Inclusive Fourth Industrial Revolution. Rome: Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (March).
2017. Youth Cooperation under an Authoritarian Regime. Istanbul: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (April).

Selected Trainer Experience

2024. Understanding the Gridlock: Measuring and Responding to Polarization. UNDP Global Policy Centre for Governance (November).
2024. [An introduction to R](#). Toronto: Munk School of Global Affairs (January).
2023. The politics of authoritarianism: [A short introduction](#). Toronto: University of Toronto (October).
2021. An Introduction to [spatial Analysis using R](#). Toronto: University of Toronto (March).
2017. Organizational Development & Management: Digital Security in the Age of Hyper-Surveillance. Istanbul: Co-Opinion (April-June).

2017. Design Lab: Preventing & Countering Violent Extremism. Istanbul: Co-Opinion & Hollings Center for International Dialogue (April).

Selected Events and Trainings

2023. IHS Discussion Colloquium: Polarization, Pluralism, and Democracy. VA: Institute for Humane Studies (May).
2021. IHS Discussion Colloquium: Polarization and Contemporary Political Life. VA: Institute for Humane Studies (November).
2018. Making Powerful Brand Storytelling; Business Model Canvas; Theory of Change & Design Thinking; VOX Method: Public Speaking; Social Impact Assessment; Making Persuasive Business Recommendations. Montreal: Jeanne Sauvé Foundation.
2017. Leadership Academy: Strengthening NGOs. Germany: Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (March).
2017. CDN Study Session. Budapest: Council of Europe (January).
2016. Middle East & North Africa Regional Meeting. Nicosia: PUGWASH (November).
2016. Prospects for Job Generation in the Middle East. Italy: Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center (October).
2016. Young Peacebuilders Forum. The Hague: UNOY (September).
2016. ChangemakerXChange. Lisbon: Ashoka Foundation (August).
2016. Sulaimani Forum. Sulaimani: American University of Sulaimani (March).
2015. T-20. Antalya: TEPAV (November).
2012. Winter School. Ankara: Center for Strategic Research (January).

Service

- 2023 **Reviewer**, APSR, JITP
2022 **Search Committee for Middle Eastern Politics**, grad. rep. at the University of Toronto.
2020-23 **Quantitative Methods Research Cluster**, co-organizer at the University of Toronto.
2022 **APSA General Conference**, discussant & panel organizer.
2021 **APSA General Conference**, discussant.
2019 **Search Committee for Quantitative Methods**, grad. rep. at the University of Toronto.
2019 **The Khashoggi Killing and the Future of US-Saudi Relations**, event organizer.
2018-20 **Comparative Autocracy Research Cluster**, organizer at the University of Toronto.

Skills

- Language:** Turkish (native), English (fluent), German (Sprachdiplom-C1-2009), Arabic (beginner)
Software: R, Qualtrics, Java, STATA, ArcGIS, Python, Premiere Pro
Gallup Clifton Strengths: Developer, Individualization, Input, Learner, Empathy