



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Arizona Center
for Turkish Studies

ANTI-POPULISM AND POPULISM IN TURKEY:

Radical Cynical Responses to Populist Mass Politics

Friday, April 22 | 12:00 PM AZ Time | Zoom Event

RSVP: <https://arizona.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0td-GqqjMvHdalxas-O8reSALHy3L4Aln66>

We now have a solid idea of how populists and their supporters see and depict themselves, political and social settings surrounding them and their enemies. There are deep-rooted socio-cultural divides in Turkey that gave rise to the brand of populism that Erdoğan and the AKP elite skillfully deployed. When populism is seen as an appeal/style that is deeply related to the socio-cultural divides in a given society, it becomes easier to understand the broader dynamics underlying Turkey's political conflicts in recent decades. When we analyze voter profiles as well as a few critical events during the AKP years, we see the profound impact of populist appeals and mobilization on political outcomes in Turkey. This illustrates the relevance of a very salient high–low divide in Turkish politics and consolidates the argument that it is neither the left–right nor the secular–religious divide but the anti-populism–populism divide that provides the best lens through which to understand the appeal of Erdoğan's AKP among the underprivileged majority of Turkey. But we still have a very poor grasp of how the enemies of populism discursively and performatively constitute and locate themselves in public life and political arena in contradistinction to what is deemed “low-brow”, “popular”, “tasteless”, “improper” and “populist”. What are the discursive and stylistic characteristics of anti-populism in Turkey at the elite and mass level? Can we define a distinctly anti-populist discourse and style in Turkey or should we talk about various different forms of anti-populism? By focusing on the construction and historical evolution of anti-populist discourses in Turkey, this presentation aims to contribute to a better understanding of the sources of resentment and social pain embedded in populist politics and discourses of our age.



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