

Comparative Workshop on Mass Protests

13-14 June 2014, LSE

Organiser: Tomila Lankina, CIS Management Committee

The workshop was co-sponsored and co-organized by the LSE International Relations Department, LSE Centre for International Studies, LSE Ideas, and the Middle East Centre.

The workshop brought together leading scholars from Europe and North America to comparatively analyse the recent wave of mass protests and political regime responses to protests in various settings. Speakers included Professor Mark Beissinger (Princeton), Dr David Patel (Cornell), Elizabeth Plantan (Cornell), Professor Joshua Tucker (NYU) and Dr Ola Onuch (Oxford). Interviews with some of the participants are available below.



[Revolutions & Roundabouts: The Spread of Protest in the Arab Spring](#)

David Patel

Cornell University



[Social Media and Social Networks in the EuroMaidan Protests](#)

Olga Onuch

Nuffield College, Oxford University

Joshua Tucker

New York University



[Mass Protests and Electoral Fraud in Russia](#)

Tomila Lankina

LSE

Rodion Skovoroda

Nottingham University



Rationale for the Workshop

Among the defining characteristics of the first decade and a half of the 21st century has been the rise of politically transformative street protest activism. This phenomenon has become truly global in nature, as is illustrated by the recent dramatic mobilizations in contexts as diverse as Venezuela and Egypt, Thailand and Ukraine. While their repertoires, mobilized resources, and declared goals may have parallels with those of the earlier waves of mass contentious politics, in many ways, the nature of, and contexts in which the recent protests are occurring, are different. The concentration in, and the sophisticated leveraging of, urban spaces; the use of online social media—the “hashtag” revolution phenomenon; the mobilization of religion to advance citizens’ democratic aspirations; the uncertain nature of the post-Cold War international order and fluid nature of regional alliances as a factor shaping protests and external and domestic responses to them; the emergence of authoritarian regime “diffusion proofing” toolkits against external protest spill-over effects; the rise of the global human rights regimes and, at the same time, by some accounts, the erosion of the moral leverage of the West; and, most importantly, the highly uncertain implications of mass contention for states’ democratic prospects—these are but some of the facets of the “rebellious 21st century” that scholars are beginning to grapple with.

The workshop is part of this emerging comparative research agenda. The workshop papers covered various parts of the world—from Ukraine and Russia, to China, Egypt, Turkey, Greece, and Brazil. The first day of the workshop (June 13th) was dedicated to comparative analysis of protests across both space and time. On the second day (June 14th), scholars presented and discussed papers on Russia—its failed electoral revolution of 2011-2012, authoritarian regime diffusion proofing, and regional strategies of mobilization proofing and counter-mobilization, particularly in light of the 2013-2014 events in Ukraine.