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Page 1 / 20

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INTRODUCTION

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Limits of autocratisation: actors and institutions of democratic resistance and opposition

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ABSTRACT

As autocratisation gains global momentum, research on democratic resistance has expanded significantly. This introductory article to *Limits of Autocratisation* examines the actors, institutions, and practices that challenge, resist, or inadvertently enable autocratisation. It develops a framework for understanding opposition(s) across political, civic, and transnational dimensions. Rather than viewing autocratisation as linear, we conceptualise it as an uneven and contested process in which opposition actors navigate multiple constraints to hinder, disrupt, or potentially reverse autocratic advances. The article explores key questions guiding this volume's case studies from countries at various stages of autocratisation: Which actors and institutions seek to limit autocratisation? What structural, institutional, and agency-related barriers do they face? How do they strategise to overcome these challenges? Rather than proposing universal solutions, we advance a nuanced theorisation of opposition(s) and resistance that accounts for structural conditions, timing, and strategic agency in shaping responses across divergent contexts. The article cautions against simplistic definitions of success or failure when theorising resistance and opposition to autocratisation, emphasising the fluid, contested, and ongoing nature of autocratisation. Ultimately, we propose a context-sensitive yet versatile framework for studying autocratisation's limits by integrating regional contexts, interdisciplinary and comparative insights, and historical trajectories.

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At the time of writing this introductory article for the volume *Limits of Autocratisation: Actors and Institutions of Democratic Resistance and Opposition*, recent events cast a sobering light on the global state of democracy and authoritarianism. In the United States, the election