

**Democracy and Autocracy Section
Best Fieldwork Award Honorable Mention 2024**

Ozlem Tuncel, PhD candidate from Georgia State University, for her dissertation titled “Pre-Electoral Coalitions in Electoral Authoritarian Regimes.” Ozlem’s dissertation examines the possibility for cross-ideological coalitions among opposition parties in a hegemonic context – Turkey under the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Her submission employs a comparison between multiple election cycles to understand why opposition parties are sometimes able to coordinate their electoral strategies. Ozlem conducted site-intensive qualitative research during the 2023 elections, which included archival research, interviews with party strategists and politicians, shadowing MP candidates, and participant observation of meetings where the opposition parties gathered.

The committee was impressed by Ozlem’s timely and entrepreneurial fieldwork design. Ozlem developed unique access to actors and spaces that are often off-limits to researchers. Interviewing and observing political candidates during the election cycle allowed Ozlem to develop a nuanced set of theoretical observations about their behaviors, and to gather real-time material that supports these conclusions. In this way, the work provides an excellent example of theory-building through site-intensive methods. We also laud Ozlem’s analytic transparency in the extensive discussion of how she established necessary contacts and how she collected and analyzed relevant interview and documentary materials. Her dissertation will make a significant contribution to the study of Turkish politics and elections under authoritarianism more broadly.

Prize Committee: Chantal Berman (Georgetown University), Emilia Simison (Queen Mary University of London), and Elvin Ong (Chair)(National University of Singapore)