

# ProtoSociology

An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research

ration ist seit E. Durkheim, den wir als einen Begründer des Faches Soziologie einstufen, ein relevanter Schwerpunkt des Faches Soziologie. Um dabei die Weichen richtig zu stellen,

## Populism and Globalization

Edited by Barrie Axford and Manfred B. Steger

ziologie nimmt einen besonderen Ansehnt vor, der zu überdauern ist, da soziale Integration als eine Differenzierung von Mitgliedschaftsbedingungen eine bestimmte allgemeine Theorie voraussetzt. Unter „Ordnungen“ sind dabei die Regelung der Mitgliedschaftsbedingung und damit die Teilnahme an Kommunikationssystemen in der Ausübung von bestimmten Rollen und Statuspositionen zu verstehen. Die Mitgliedschaftstheorie fasst die System-Umwelt-Relation nicht als sinkonstitutiert (Niklas Luhmann), sondern als die selbstreferenzielle Entscheidung über Mitgliedschaftsbedingungen und ihre Selektion, die keine Ressource in der nicht-sozialen Umwelt hat. Der Verwehungsprozess von Sinn, wenn wir das einmal unterstellen, ist in diese Differenzstruktur einzuordnen. Gehen wir von der Mitgliedschaftstheoretischen Selbstkonstitution sozialer Systeme aus, so sind soziale Systeme souverän. Damit geht einher, dass die soziologische Theorie die folgenden Annahmen aufgeben sollte:

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Populism and Globalization

*Edited by Barrie Axford and Manfred B. Steger*

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## EDITORIAL

# THE GLOBALIZATION OF POPULISM

*Barrie Axford and Manfred B. Steger*

The narrative of populism as a “rising tide” has enjoyed currency at least since the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the success of the “Leave” campaign in the UK referendum on membership of the EU earlier in that year. And yet, on the eve of what proved to be President Trump’s election defeat some four years later, the British journalist Nick Cohen felt able to muse “(w)e’re endlessly told why populism works. Now see how it might fail” (October 10, 2020). So, one might be forgiven for thinking that what goes around must eventually come around.

However, things are not that simple, and the runes are harder to read. Trump duly lost the 2020 Presidential election and handed control of both Houses of the U.S. Congress to the Democrats, but at the same time harvested the votes of over seventy-four million of the U.S. electorate. While significantly less than the over 81 million votes garnered by Joe Biden, Trump’s yield at the ballot box turned out to be larger and more diverse than liberal wishful thinking could entertain. The even more sobering fact is that many of his supporters seem in it for the long run; or at any rate they presently say that they are.

Following the scenes of insurrection and mayhem on Capitol Hill on January 6 2021, a *YouGov* poll canvassed that forty-five per cent of Republican voters supported storming the Capitol Building, shrinking to eighteen per cent in the cold light of the next day. Thirty-two per cent of all voters did not see such actions as a threat to democracy. A month later a poll conducted by the same organization found that fifty four per cent of Republicans would vote for Trump in 2024 if he were to be acquitted in his second impeachment trial. Leaders of the far-right in Europe—the AfD’s Tino Chrupalla, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and the Italian Lega’s strongman Matteo Salvini, condemned the actions of protestors, but fell short of pillorying Trump himself. In Hungary, Viktor Orbán uncharacteristically decided to hedge his bets by keeping his views to himself. Meanwhile, and out of quite another

# DEFINING POPULISM AND FASCISM RELATIONALLY: EXPLORING GLOBAL CONVERGENCES IN UNSETTLED TIMES

*Paul James*

## *Abstract*

*What is the relationship between right-wing populism and contemporary fascism? How has fascism changed since the 1920s? And how do the answers to these questions concern a global shift that can be called the Great Unsettling—including a postmodern fracturing of prior modern ‘certainties’ about the nature of subjectivity, political practice and meaning, deconstructing the consequences of ‘truth’? This essay seeks to respond to these questions by first going back to foundational issues of definition and elaborating the meaning of populism and fascism in relation to their structural ‘moving parts’. Using this alternative scaffolding, the essay argues that right-wing populism and an orientation to postmodern fascism represented by Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro have converged. The context of this convergence is a globalizing shift that now challenges democratic politics.*

What rough beast is this thing called ‘populism’? And how, if at all, does it relate to authoritarian nationalist movements and fascisms? If we can immediately say that like those far-right phenomena, contemporary populism gains strength from civic conditions of upheaval and uncertainty, then a further question arises. What are the particular global-local uncertainties that now give rise to contemporary right-wing populism and fascism? Some commentators have turned back to W.B. Yeats’ poem ‘The Second Coming’ (1919) to register the momentousness of the widening upheaval: ‘And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?’ However, even this slumping evocation does not help directly. Yes, Yeats was writing during the civil chaos of his homeland and in the wake of the first global war, but his primary lament is the modern assault on the stability of tradition, faith and truth. Yes, just as the ontological form of classical fascism was modern, contemporary populism has a modern constitutive layer, but confounding any simple characterization, contemporary populisms at

# VICO AND POPULISM: THE RETURN TO A 'BARBARISM OF REFLECTION'

*Rico Isaacs*

## *Abstract*

*This essay brings Italian political philosopher Giambattista Vico's thought to bear on the issue of contemporary populism. Contemporary populism can be reflected in Vico's cyclical philosophy of the three ages of civilisation: the divine, heroic and human ages (corso e ricorso). Contemporary populism represents a return to the barbarism of the heroic age through the descent into individualism and private interest, the return of divinely ordained rulers and the recourse to myth, violence and morality. Humankind's reason has become corrupted by the complexity of highly developed society, releasing the destructive forces of contemporary populism and a descent into a 'barbarism of reflection'. Corsi e ricorsi illustrates how contemporary populism remains but a stage in the Vichian cycle, alluding to how it represents an essential form of political life throughout history.*

## Introduction

Contemporary populism is often understood and explained as a modern malady with its antecedents located in 19<sup>th</sup> Century populist movements. Since then, populism has developed in waves possessing slightly distinctive characteristics in different regions in the various periods in which it has appeared. Yet, populism has a much longer heritage than most accounts give it credit for. The fundamental idea at the heart of populism of there being a division between 'the people' and 'the elite' can be observed in historical writings of the politics of ancient Greece and Rome (Plato 2007, Vico 1999). This suggests that populism has the potential to be an essential element of political life rather than being a phenomenon which is a specific modern malady. Given the deeper historical resonance of populism as an essential element of political life, it is curious there has been little effort to situate contemporary populism within a broader philosophy of history. This essay is an attempt to do just that by bringing Italian political philosopher Giambattista Vico's thought to bear on the issue of contemporary popu-

# POPULISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM AS A UNITARY STRUCTURE OF GLOBAL SYSTEMIC PROCESS: NOTES AND GRAPHS

*Jonathan Friedman*

## *Abstract*

*Populism is discussed here in terms of the larger global systemic matrix in which it occurs. It is suggested that it is not, as has been claimed so often, recently, somehow related to what is labelled as right-wing extremism. It is an expression of an aspiration to sovereignty, control over one's conditions of existence and its links to either left or right are based on that aspiration. And, of course, right and left are themselves terms that have shifted or even been inverted over the past 30 years. The core argument is that populism and cosmopolitanism form a complementary opposition that has emerged as a product of the hegemonic decline of the West.*

Populism has been a burning issue for the past decade in Europe and the United States. It is certainly not a phenomenon of self-identification, but is, on the contrary, part of the discourse of certain elites. And while there was an air of mere disturbance about it at first it has now become true hysteria and a category with ever expanding scope. In the following I have made explicit use of graphic representations as an attempt to correctly focus on the larger parameters involved in the emergence of this current extreme polarization. And the examples from Sweden and the US merely highlight the more general nature of the processes involved.

Do some people actually believe that Trump should have been impeached to prevent him ever running again? This must imply that the people who supported Trump should be cancelled (90 million followers on twitter)! In a world of pre-defined categories and no linkages between them other than simple association in time and/or space this might be understood as standard democratic politics.

The editor-in-chief of *Dagens Nyheter*, one of Sweden's establishment newspapers stated in a critique of Swedish Television that journalists should NOT be impartial since they have a more important purpose:

Det fins en tendens at ta ett steg tillbaka och vara opartisk för man

# NO GOING BACK? LATE MODERNITY AND THE POPULISATION OF POLITICS

*Simon Tormey*

## *Abstract*

*This paper takes up the challenge posed in recent commentary concerning the nature or ontology of populism. I suggest that we need to take a sociological approach that seeks to locate populism within the wider processes and tendencies associated with late modernity in order to fully capture not only what populism is, but also why we are seeing a greater prevalence of populism around the world. I locate populism in relation to five dominant tendencies: The decline of traditional authority structures; the rise of individualisation; the growth of bureaucracy and complexification; the intensification of globalisation and the emergence of a new media ecology. These processes together are creating enormous strains on representative democracy, leading to “democratic grievance”. Those who are represented become uncoupled from their own representatives, leaving a vacuum which is increasingly filled by populist initiatives. Populism thus needs to be read as a symptom of an intensifying crisis of democracy, as much as a cause of it.*

It's not often that the ontology of a concept comes to be questioned but amongst the myriad debates concerning what populism is, as well as what it is not clearly lies a deeper question taking us beyond the analytical demand for precision. Populism is elusive as a concept, not just because we find it difficult to pin down in terms of key attributes or characteristics, but also because we don't seem to be able to find agreement on what kind of “thing” populism really is (Moffitt 2016, Pappas 2019). What's going on?

“Populism studies” is dominated by comparative political scientists who see populism as a distinct regime, political system, party or movement (Moffitt and Tormey 2013). This is to say they see populism in terms of certain features or characteristics, which when taken together constitute the object in question. They include typically an ideology that talks about The People as a single homogenous entity in opposition to elites, a charismatic leader, and a repertoire of behaviours such as contempt for various minorities, and a vitriolic approach to addressing

# NEOLIBERALISM AND NATIONALIST-AUTHORITARIAN POPULISM: EXPLAINING THEIR CONSTITUTIVE AND CAUSAL CONNECTIONS

*Heikki Patomäki*

## *Abstract*

*Can the rise of nationalist-authoritarian populism be explained in terms of neoliberalism and its effects? The first half of this paper is about conceptual underlabouring: in spite of significant overlap, there are relatively clear demarcation criteria for identifying neoliberalism and nationalist-authoritarian populism as distinct entities. Neoliberalism has succeeded in transforming social contexts through agency, practices and institutions, with far-reaching effects. The prevailing economic and social policies have also had various causal effects such as rising inequalities, progressively more insecure terms of employment, and recurring economic crises. I argue that these have led to discontent with globalization and various political responses, including those of nationalist and authoritarian populisms. Finally, by juxtaposing constitutive and causal explanations, and by stressing the history of national-authoritarian populism, I raise questions about geo-historical specificity of different formations. The standard Karl Polanyian interpretation of Trump, Brexit and such like phenomena is misleading, yet a partial historical analogy especially to the interwar era populism is valid if understood in a subtle, processual, and sufficiently contextual way. The Polanyi-inspired historical analogy can be explored further. While the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century working class movement emerged from a variety of socio-economic conditions, socialists who believed in its world-historical role actively made it. Since the 1970s the working class has been largely unmade both as a result of impersonal processes and deliberate attempts to undermine it. Only a learning process towards qualitatively higher levels of reflexivity can help develop global transformative agency for the 21st century.*

## Introduction

Can the rise of nationalist-authoritarian populism be explained in terms of neoliberalism and its effects? It has often been noted that neoliberalism is ‘used to characterize an excessively broad variety of phenomena’ (Boas & Gans-Morse 2009, 137) and as such its capacity to explain

# POPULISM AND WORLDWIDE TURBULENCE: A GLOCAL PERSPECTIVE

*Roland Robertson*

## *Abstract*

*This contribution consists in an attempt to make sense of one central aspect of the present worldwide turbulence, one which might well be called the contemporary, perfect, global storm.<sup>1</sup> A pivotal problem that will be interrogated is the issue of the circumstances that have produced this phenomenon in most parts of the world, although it should be emphasized that the term populism is, more often than not, applied to the Western world rather than the East or, for the most part, the global South. However, this reservation does not amount to a severe caveat, since all the contemporary signs are that what is here called populism is sweeping across the entire world as a whole, even though it is not necessarily given this name in non-Western regions. To this generalization it should be added that there are, rather obviously, parallels to what has become known as populism in the West. Examples of this are anarchism in nineteenth century Russia and the movement known as the Long March under the leadership of Mao Zedong in the years 1934 and 1935 particularly, as well as al Qaeda and its various offshoots.*



A glocal approach is here adopted, involving the idea that it is the local that enables the global to work, meaning the global is—and indeed *has* to be—facilitated by the local. In contrast, it can also be said that it is the global that is made possible by the local—better, localities. This is particularly important in the present context because anti-globalism is a pivotal feature of contemporary populism. It is in this sense that we may appropriately call ours a glocal perspective (e.g., inter alia, Robertson, 1992, 1995, 2007, 2014, 2016, 2020, Giulianiotti and Robertson, 2004). Another particularly significant early user of the glocal was Eric

1 I am extremely grateful to my wife, Judith Velody, for her help.

# GLOBALIZATION, COSMOPOLITANISM AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY POPULISM

*Victor Roudometof*

## *Abstract*

*The contemporary debate on 21<sup>st</sup> century populism centres on a term (“populism”) that can be filled with multiple meanings. It provides the social sciences with a “meta-concept” that offers coherence to disciplinary discourses. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, globalization and cosmopolitanism are often viewed as an irresistible force by intellectuals, with advocacy of cosmopolitanism becoming commonplace. For the most part, the academic community has only belatedly and reluctantly decided to address the electoral success of political parties that reject the political consensus of the post-1989 “New World Order”. In sharp contrast to the intellectuals’ stance, the empirical evidence suggests that it is localism (and not cosmopolitanism) that has been on the rise in recent decades. Glocalization is connected to the formation of varied collective responses and representations, thereby giving rise to the mutually defined pair of cosmopolitanism and localism. The cosmopolitanism–localism binary relationship is a result (or outcome) of glocalization. However, the majority of social-scientific perspectives do not give proper consideration to the notion of “local”. The notions of localization and de-globalization as part of post-Great Recession trends are discussed. The extent to which these can rectify shortcomings in current theorizing is explored.*

Populism is a rather amorphous term that can be and has been filled with multiple and often contradictory meanings; after all, to be popular or against the elites is part of the very notion of democracy. Most importantly, the term has, or at least used to have, different connotations in different languages and/or within different national contexts. In the US, for example, populism did not used to have a negative connotation—although a case can be made that this is no longer the case, especially in the aftermath of the 2016 US presidential election. Elsewhere though such a negative connotation has long been present. In academic discussions, populism conventionally operates as a “meta-concept” that offers coherence to several disciplinary discourses mostly in Political Science and Political Sociology (for an overview, see Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013).

# THE FIVE ORIGINS OF EUROPEAN POPULISM: THE “OLD CONTINENT” BETWEEN FIXING TECHNO-WARS AND A GLOBAL ORDER IN THE RE-MAKING

*Roland Benedikter*

## *Abstract*

*This essay deals with the five origins of European populism. It touches upon a number of themes in the lexicon of re-globalization and the changing warp of populist globalization as a process. It carries a lively normative message, principally as to the required comportment of the European Union during a period of global change and dislocation, which prefigures, or may give rise to a post-populist era.*

## Introduction

After the U.S. presidential elections of 3 November 2020 and with the start of the Biden administration on 20 January 2021, similarly to the U.S. and the global alliance of democracies, Europe finds itself in uncharted territory. Since in the watershed year of 2016 two largely populist-driven historical events—Brexit (June) and Trump (November)—broke continuities on both sides of the Atlantic and within Europe, populism has taken a steady foothold on the “old” continent, too. While there were predecessors of national populisms such as Silvio Berlusconi in the 1990s and early 2000s, today’s picture between the populists in the UK in the West, those in Turkey in the Southeast and (proto-) populist governments in the Center-East, with relatively strong populist movements and representatives in most other European democracies, is largely unprecedented. By the means of their core mechanisms of “state capturing” and “Caesarean politics”, populisms contradict Europe’s basic values and its democratic post-WWII traditions. As a result, contemporary Europe presents a complex, often contradictory and sometimes unsettled picture. Nevertheless scholars have identified some basic strategic trajectories with forward potential, at least with regard to selected avant-garde sectors, such as the strengthening of high-tech

# “BUT HOW IS SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS POSSIBLE?” HÖLDERLIN’S CRITICISM OF FICHTE IN “JUDGMENT AND BEING”

*Jürgen Stolzenberg*

At first glance it may be odd to turn to Friedrich Hölderlin in order to discuss problems of self-consciousness. Hölderlin, you may say, was a poet and not a philosopher. Of course, Hölderlin was a poet, but nevertheless he was very well acquainted with the philosophical problems of his days.<sup>1</sup> What is more he played an important role within the post-kantian philosophy, especially within the advanced discussions about self-consciousness—more precisely concerning the problem of defining the logical structure of the concept of self-consciousness and its role as a grounding principle of philosophy.

Our source is a text by Hölderlin which was edited by Friedrich Beißner in 1961. Beißner baptized it “Über Urteil und Seyn”—‘On Judgment and Being’, following the keywords at the beginning of the two sections of the text.<sup>2</sup> In the following, I will not deal with the special historical circumstances of this text.<sup>3</sup> I rather want to show its systematic importance with regard to the concept of self-consciousness, especially with regard to recent theories which understand self-consciousness in

- 1 Cf. Dieter Henrich: *Der Grund im Bewusstsein. Untersuchungen zu Hölderlins Denken (1794–1795)*, Stuttgart 1992 and Violetta Waibel: *Hölderlin und Fichte. 1794–1804*, Paderborn u.a. 2000.
- 2 The text is to be found in *StA (Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe) IV*, pp. 216–217, see also J. Ch. F. Hölderlin: *Theoretische Schriften. Mit einer Einleitung herausgegeben von Johann Kreuzer*, Hamburg 1998, S. 7–8. A translation into English is to be found in Friedrich Hölderlin, “Über Urteil und Seyn.” Trans. H. S. Harris, in H. S. Harris: *Hegel’s Development: Towards the Sunlight 1770–1801*, Oxford, 1972, pp. 515–516. Johann Kreuzer gives a detailed commentary of the philosophical content under the head of “Seyn, Urteil, Modalität (1795)” in *Hölderlin-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, Stuttgart/Weimar 2002, pp. 228–232.
- 3 Cf. Dieter Henrich: *Hölderlin über Urteil und Sein. Eine Studie zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Idealismus*, in: Dieter Henrich: *Konstellationen. Probleme und Debatten am Ursprung der idealistischen Philosophie (1789–1795)*, Stuttgart 1991, pp. 46–63.

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