

Heinisch | Holtz-Bacha | Mazzoleni [Eds.]

Political Populism

Handbook of Concepts,
Questions and Strategies of Research

2nd Edition



Nomos
Handbook

International Studies on Populism

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Reinhard Heinisch | Christina Holtz-Bacha
Oscar Mazzoleni [Eds.]

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Questions and Strategies of Research

2nd revised and extended Edition



Nomos
Handbook

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PREFACE

Reinhard Heinisch, Christina Holtz-Bacha and Oscar Mazzoleni

This Handbook is part of a series of works devoted to the study of political populism published by Nomos. The three editors of this volume also share overall responsibility for the entire series and view this Handbook, which has been revised and updated, as a conceptual introduction to the different questions and topics related to populism that are featured in the aforementioned series. We opted specifically for the title ‘political populism’ to demarcate the subject matter in this Handbook from the literature devoted to the study of cultural manifestations of populism, including popular religious beliefs. Thus, many of the concepts, issues and empirical cases analysed in this work should be viewed as calls for further research and, more broadly, an invitation to engage in scholarship on populism as it relates to political actors, political mobilisation and political institutions, as well as political discourse and style.

A project of this magnitude and range necessitated the collaboration of scholars from different disciplines – most notably political scientists, scholars of communication, historians and sociologists. In all cases, the authors were asked to bear the following points in mind when approaching their respective contributions. First, they were expected to use their own expertise and judgement to identify the pivotal issues, controversies and new directions in their respective areas of scholarship. Thus, contributors had considerable freedom to present their particular approaches. However, they were also asked to reflect on the core idea that populism can be conceived as a response to a crisis of conventional politics or, more precisely, a crisis of legitimacy that established institutions, mainstream political actors and the business of politics as usual have encountered. Second, due to the diversity of disciplines and research traditions, it was important that the Handbook would not present a uniform conceptualisation of and perspective on populism. Instead, the purpose of this Handbook was to introduce readers to a range of ideas. However, all contributors were asked to focus on current debates, discuss the dominant approaches to and the most prominent conceptualisations of the subject, and present shortcomings and criticisms in their respective areas of research.

While this Handbook includes chapters from different disciplines, it centers core aspects in political science and communication. These are arguably two disciplines whose insights into political populism are central to understanding the phenomenon and whose respective works most complement one another. Political scientists are keenly aware that media and communication play a significant role in the process of understanding populism’s appeal and impact, but they often lack the analytical tools to examine populism’s communication dimensions. Similarly, the rapidly growing political science literature on populism still has not yet had the impact on communication and media studies that one may expect. Thus, despite the increasing specialisation in the social sciences, it is necessary for scholars of different fields to also talk to one other and draw on each other’s ideas. Therefore, this book aims to foster a closer relationship between these two strands of scholarship.

Another goal of this Handbook is to focus on both empirical scholarship and current issues. As such, we do not present populism as a settled concept, but instead show the tension be-

tween different approaches and highlight the controversies and new directions that characterise activity in this research community. At the same time, we did not want to prevent the Handbook to become too eclectic. Therefore, the authors discuss several of the most widely used conceptualisations of populism but also highlight their respective shortcomings. In addition, this updated version includes new chapters on issues and policy areas that have since become relevant in populism studies.

The Challenges of and Opportunities Offered by Populism Research

Scholarship on populism has made substantial progress in the last two decades. After mostly historical and descriptive work from 1945 to the 1980s, which was focused on historical continuity, the 1990s saw an infusion of social science theories in the study of populism. Subsequently, after 2000, scholars began concentrate both on demand-side and supply-side aspects of radical right-wing populist politics and more clearly on populist parties, their representatives and supporters. In contemporary research works, goes to go beyond the narrow themes and policy issues, such as immigration, that have often characterised publications on populism and embrace the phenomenon in its entire complexity, especially that have been under researched. This also means dealing with emerging global issues, such as climate change, the coronavirus pandemic, and the development of digital politics and social media.

Populism's rise in popularity has presented scholars with various opportunities and problems. As research on populism has moved to the academic mainstream, securing project funding and presenting relevant research has become easier. At the same time, the term populism is almost universally employed to describe a large number of different political phenomena, political actors, policy decisions and regimes that often have little more in common than the label. The growing attention to populism has also increased the pressure on social scientists to come up with clear and easily communicable answers that satisfy the curiosity of people trying to understand the political changes unfolding from the Americas to Europe and beyond. The enormous interest in populism is drawing in new scholars who were not part of this previously close-knit research community. This development is highly welcome because it incorporates fresh perspectives and new insights. However, it also means that several ideas about populism that were once believed to be settled are now being called into question once again, renewing the impression that little has been learned thus far. At the same time, other scholars, for whom the question of conceptualisation is indeed settled, have embarked on the next phase of scholarship by no longer treating populism as an outsider or protest phenomenon, but as one that has taken hold in the centres of political power. As a result, scholars have begun in studying the impact of populism on governments, party systems and policymaking.

Despite the clearly global nature of political populism, research communities are still fairly segregated and remain reluctant to take issue with each other's approaches or draw on each other's insights and conceptualisations. For a long time, Western European researchers all but ignored decades' worth of works on Latin American and North American populism. These different ways of approaching the subject matter were also rooted in different research cultures and epistemologies. In fact, even within the European context, achieving more successful integration of the scholarship on populism in Western Europe, the Nordic countries, Central and Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean would be desirable. An even

bigger challenge has been the effort to overcome disciplinary boundaries, such as those that exist between political science, history, sociology and communication. It is with these challenges and opportunities in mind that we approached the design of this Handbook. It presents a snapshot of social science scholarship on populism, which is both on the verge of new research agendas and in need of greater transdisciplinary and international cooperation.

Our Objectives

Handbooks seek to be as comprehensive as possible. While we agree that such a work needs to reflect a substantial number of different issues and geographic areas, selectivity and focus also matter: First, a Handbook is not an encyclopaedia but should rather point to those areas of research and discussions in the field that are most promising or most controversial. Thus, we have asked our authors to show why these topics matter within the overall debate and to identify the major controversies in their fields of research. Our contributors were also invited to demonstrate directions of progress and suggest where scholarship in their different areas might turn next. This was important, because we also wanted this Handbook to be especially useful for scholars just entering the populism research. Second, the Handbook is selective not only in its concentration on theory and empirical application, but also in its focus on contemporary expressions of the phenomenon. Thus, the various aspects of party-based populism in Europe form the core of the analysis. In addition, there are also extensive sections devoted to populism in the Americas and other novel manifestations of populism. Third, an important aspect is the focus on communication and the goal to bridge scholarship between communication and political science. Following the rise of populist parties, communication researchers have only recently taken up the topic. This coincided with the emergence of the internet and social media networks, which provide political actors with direct access to the electorate, thus shaking up the political communication process and the role of the traditional mass media. To emphasize the interconnectedness of political science and communication in understanding populism, this book combines their respective fields and presents the different types of analysis alongside each other.

We hope that the readers will take away a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges of populism research. We also trust they will appreciate our intention not to convey definitive answers but rather to maintain a degree of openness towards different theoretical approaches, which are each elaborated with their respective strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, it is for the readers to decide which ideas seem most persuasive and what avenues of enquiry they want to pursue. We hope that this Handbook will make a significant contribution to this process.

This new edition includes revised and updated versions of the chapters provided in the first edition and ten new contributions. Populism is an ongoing and open field of research, with growing numbers of publications every year on both traditional and new topics. This new edition intends to reflect this growing trend by presenting both consolidated and emerging issues. The Handbook consists of 34 chapters organised in four parts. The first one covers theories, approaches, conceptualisations and measurements in relation to political populism. The second part presents populist manifestations in Europe and the Americas; the third part is devoted to political communication; and the fourth part focuses on emerging phenomena and new

research agendas. While it was not the book's intention to provide a geographically comprehensive account of populism and its manifestations, an effort was made to cover as many different cases and variations of populism in Europe and the Americas as possible. Throughout the Handbook, the focus lies on empirical research, and thus the conceptualisations and theoretical accounts introduced in the first part provide the tools for empirical analysis, either for cross-national comparisons or individual case studies in the subsequent chapters. The chapters generally end with a consideration of various unanswered questions and discuss topics for potential further research.

A Handbook is a collaborative endeavour and we, the editors, want to thank the many contributing authors for their dedication and commitment to the project. The deadline for submitting the chapters coincided with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are grateful to the authors for managing to meet their deadlines and submit their chapters in these difficult times.

Apart from the editors and authors, we are especially grateful to Cecilia Biancalana, a post-doc researcher at the University of Lausanne, for corresponding with the authors and managing the texts during their various stages of development and review. We also wish to thank our many colleagues whose counsel and helpful comments on various chapters have helped improve them and have enriched this Handbook's content.

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INTRODUCTION

Reinhard Heinisch, Christina Holtz-Bacha and Oscar Mazzoleni

Here to Stay: Populism in the Spotlight¹

At the time when the first edition of this Handbook was published in 2017, the populist challenge to democratic government was a dominant subject in the media worldwide. The election of Donald Trump and Brexit had prompted *The Washington Post* to call 2016 ‘the year of populism’. Since then the success and endurance of populist politicians and parties have scarcely been the surprise they once were. In Europe, there are no longer countries that can be considered ‘safe’ from successful populist parties. Whereas, for example, Germany was once considered relatively immune to far right populism because of its history and the UK was thought to have a barrier against resurgent third parties in the form of its first-past-the-post electoral system, these expectations clearly no longer apply. The Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD) has since established itself as a potent political force throughout Germany. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and its successor, the Brexit Party, were major forces behind Britain’s decision to leave the European Union and the post-Brexit process. Even the Nordic countries – often admired for their efficient and transparent political systems, corruption-free governments, extensive welfare states and high living standards – have each developed formidable populist parties. In Denmark and Norway, these parties have served in public office and helped shape national policy. Also, Southern Europe saw the emergence of radical left and right populist protest parties, several of which have since entered the government in Greece, Spain and Italy. In fact, in various EU member states, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain, more than one radical populist party has become an important political player on the national stage.

Yet, the years that followed also delivered setbacks to populists. In Austria, the candidate for the presidency supported by the Green Party (Die Grünen – Die Grüne Alternative) unexpectedly beat the candidate of the radical right populist Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ). Again in Austria, the conservative far right coalition government formed in 2017 collapsed after fewer than two years in office when a videotape surfaced showing the leader of the Freedom Party of Austria Heinz-Christian Strache in a highly compromising political situation. In France, Marine Le Pen’s quest for the presidency was unsuccessful in the end, when, unexpectedly, a new political figure, Emmanuel Macron, beat both the establishment parties and the populist far right. In Italy too, the populists initially triumphed, forming a government consisting of the populist leftist Five Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle, M5S) and the far right League (Lega, previously Lega Nord, LN), whose leader Matteo Salvini became minister of the interior and dominated Italian government politics. When he overreached by trying to trigger new elections, his erstwhile coalition partner switched sides and formed a government without Salvini. In Germany, the Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD)

¹ This research received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the grant agreement n. 822337 (Project ‘PaCE’).

performed well in national elections, coming in third in 2017. It subsequently became the largest opposition party and entered the regional parliament in every German state. Yet, it too seems to have plateaued and continues to be divided between its extremist wing and its more far right, conservative orientation. In Denmark, the far right was soundly beaten by the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterne) in elections in 2019. The 2020 US elections saw the defeat of Donald Trump at the hands of a politician who embodied the polar opposite in terms of persona and political sentiment. Although Brexit became a reality, its torturous process and the upheaval it caused in the UK made other populist parties think twice about making similar demands (Heinisch et al. 2020). Lastly, in Greece, the populist party SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left – Progressive Alliance) was voted out of office.

However, despite these setbacks, populism is clearly here to stay. The Austrian far right was beaten back in part because the Conservatives adopted much of the rhetoric and policies of radical right-wing populists. Also, the victorious Social Democrats in Denmark often sounded themselves more like the far right. In France, the erstwhile popular Macron has been battling unpopularity, large-scale protests and one crisis after another. In the US, even the defeat of Donald Trump seemed to some like a victory for populism given that he continues to have a lock on his Republican Party and defied expectations and poll numbers by further increasing his support among voters. In Italy, it may just be a matter of time before Salvini can return to government. In other countries, radical populists continue to govern, among others, in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, and as part of coalitions in Italy and Spain. Taken together, the vote share of parties generally considered populist by empirical scholarship grew in Europe from 11.81 per cent in 2000 to 27.26 per cent in 2019. Of these formations, 15.11 per cent can be classified as far right and 5.31 per cent as far left populist, whereas a further 6.84 per cent were other types of populists (ParlGov and PopuList data). Even at EU level, the growth of populism over the past two decades has been extraordinary. There, the vote share of populist parties assembled in the European Parliament for the period 2019-2024 stands at 30.6 per cent (Stockemer and Amengay 2020, 3). This constitutes an enormous growth if we consider that, prior to 2004, the percentage of Members of the European Parliament (MEP) had been only 5.1 per cent (of which 4.3 per cent were right-wing populists), with their combined vote share increasing to 14.2 per cent in 2004 and to 17.8 per cent in 2009. It is noteworthy that, initially, left-wing populists grew more quickly and were able to more than triple their presence (1.2 per cent to 4.1 per cent). Subsequently, it was the far right's turn as they increased their vote shares from 13.5 per cent to 20.9 per cent in 2014 and to 26.4 per cent in 2019 (Stockemer and Amengay 2020).

As these lines were written, the world was in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic, the implications of which for populism and its continued success were not yet clear. However, early trends suggested that populism stands to benefit in various ways. People feeling negatively affected by coronavirus-related policy decisions taken by experts and political elites, chafing under lockdowns and mask-mandates, seeing their livelihoods at risk as businesses are shut down, or perceiving liberal democracies as too technocratic and ineffective to deal with a health and economic emergency may have nowhere else to turn but to parties outside the mainstream. It seems clear that both the coronavirus crisis and many aspects associated with it are being increasingly politicised and will continue to shape ongoing trends in democratic regimes (e.g. Bobba and Hubé 2021).

Understanding Populism as a Complex Phenomenon

Aiming to understand political populism, scholarship tends to begin with a common starting point: the people who embody ‘the heart of democracy’ (Akkerman et al. 2014) and are viewed as sovereign and virtuous. People would constitute a silent but often ignored majority, forming the basis of a good society (Canovan 1981; Mény and Surel 2002; Mudde 2004). ‘The people’ in populist diction are the ‘plebs’, the ‘underdogs’, the ‘heartland residents’, the ‘natives’, the ‘forgotten’, the ‘true’ majority, the ‘non-outsiders’ (Taggart 2002; Laclau 2005; Urbinati 2019a; 2019b). As populists call upon ‘real’ people to vote for them, this too can refer to authentic as in ‘salt of the earth’, ‘deeply rooted’ and ‘middle of the country’, or it can have a strong ethnic and nativist dimension in the sense of non-immigrant and non-minority. In leftist populism, the concept of ‘real’ or authentic may have a class or social connotation, referring to working people. Thus, the construct of ‘real people’ can have different meanings for different populist actors in different contexts. The construction of ‘the elites’ also strongly varies. Although they are generally seen as ‘arrogant, selfish, incompetent, and often also corrupt’ (Rooduijn 2015, 4), they represent a much wider variety of entities. These comprise, for example, ‘the others’ and/or ‘dangerous others’ (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008); out(side)-groups (Heinisch 2003); the political establishment and the mainstream media (Jagers and Walgrave 2007); sub-national, national and/or supranational entities (Mazzoleni 2005); bankers, large companies, secret societies, intellectuals, academics and writers (Brubaker 2017; Blokker and Anselmi 2020). Beyond their common references to the people and the elites, different strands of populism represent varied legacies. These have been associated with both class divisions and centre–periphery cleavages, and the dialectic processes resulting from this. Populism’s provenance is the ‘heartland’, a euphemism for the hinterland, where people feel imposed upon by far-off elites in the central cities. The common thread populism represents in its various manifestations is the rejection of societal and political elites. And one of the central arguments in this book is that political populism is largely a response to a fundamental crisis of legitimacy of political institutions and actors.

When populism surfaced as a broader trend in Western Europe some three decades ago, it was initially perceived as a new phenomenon despite political precursors such as *Qualunquismo* in Italy in the 1940s and Poujadism in France in the 1950s. In the Americas, by comparison, populism has had a long tradition and rather different ideological associations. The term populism is inseparably linked to the word *populus* – the people –, from which it partly derives its meaning. It is also closely connected to the adjective ‘popular’, with which it shares operative logic. Populists must first and foremost remain popular to maintain credibility and legitimacy. Like the *populares*, pre-imperial Roman senators who stood in opposition to the *optimates*, the senatorial aristocracy, populists may be politically self-serving, but they need to be perceived as serving above all the interests of ordinary people. Akin to ancient Rome, where these populist senators were associated with the plebs, the unsophisticated ‘common folk’, the populists of today tend to find their voters especially among the ranks of blue-collar workers, those without university level education, and people from small towns and rural areas.

The etymology of the term populism in Anglo-Saxon and Western European usage, as Damir Skenderovic suggests in Chapter 1, is closely associated with the history of populism in the US, which arguably began with the ‘Jacksonian revolution’. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Andrew Jackson styled himself as the advocate of the yeoman farmers, the simple home-

steads and frontiersmen, whose support carried the outsider Jackson to the presidency. His followers had lost patience with the policies and posturing of the coastal elites and wanted to wrest power away from big business and the Jeffersonian ‘aristocracy’ in office in Washington. In the European context, Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (1969) were among the first to draw attention to populism as a problem that, in their view, superseded even that posed by communism. In an important collection of essays edited in 1969, Ionescu and Gellner paraphrased Marx and Engels by using the opening words ‘A Spectre is haunting the world – Populism’ and demanded that scholarship devote more attention to its study. About a decade later, the influential political theorist Margaret Canovan made an important contribution to the growing scholarship with her major work *Populism* (1981), in which she developed research strategies that would later prove significant for empirical scholarship. Whereas populism is a relatively recent phenomenon in most European countries, it has much longer roots in Latin America. There, charismatic political figures like Juan Perón and Getúlio Vargas, who pursued authoritarian leadership styles, were early but influential subjects of study, spawning an extensive and rich scholarly tradition (Weyland 2001; 2017). There, the influential Marxist philosopher Ernesto Laclau (1977; 2005) noted the connection between populism and bouts of modernisation pressure, which the political system was unable to channel into a stable democratic institutional development. In its absence, charismatic personalities created a popular hegemonic bloc through their discourse, through which these populist leaders could mobilise support and use it to their political ends.

Although it is easy to observe and even measure the segments of the population that support populism, the ‘people’, as evoked in populist rhetoric and imagery, are often vague and ill-defined. ‘What people?’ Alfio Mastropaolo asks in Chapter 2 on populist representation, since populism often chooses to be purposefully ambiguous about the people it wants to represent. However, not every form of protest by or every electoral success of a far left or far right party is attributable to populism. One engages in problematic oversimplification if all manners of unconventional or unexpected political developments are subsumed under the label of ‘populism’. Crucially, there is often the conflation of the everyday use and media notion of the term ‘populism’ with the way the concept is understood in the social sciences. The first tends to mean a garish or folksy style politicians adopt to appear provocative or polemic so as to appeal to certain voter segments. However, this is quite different from the way much of the social sciences understand populism, as will also become clear from this book.

Ideology, Discourse, Style

Nearly as ubiquitous as articles and commentaries on populism is the assertion that it is difficult to define. Accordingly, populism is believed to have a complicated history and to be closely connected to various belief systems. In relation to this, Dietmar Loch writes about ‘Conceptualising the Relationship between Populism and the Radical Right’ in Chapter 3, where he discusses the party families to which radical right-wing populist parties belong. His contribution also focuses on their core agenda of advocating nativist protectionism in a globalised world. Indeed, in the field of populism research, there have been numerous conceptualisations, which are themselves derived from several fundamental approaches that differ, as has already been mentioned, in their ideas on whether populism is primarily ideational, discursive, stylistic

or strategic. While the details of this debate, along with a more nuanced conceptualisation, will be discussed throughout this book, it is important to understand that these differences in approach have much to do with the way populism has been concretely experienced in distinct historical, political and social contexts. In Europe, the most influential approach in empirical research to date was put forth by the Dutch Scholar Cas Mudde (2004). In ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’, he defines populism as ‘an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people’. This conceptualisation forms the basis of what is often called the ideational approach to populism (Hawkins et al. 2018). It conceives of populism as a ‘thin’ ideology or set of ideas that can be activated in people and which can be combined with ‘thick’ ideologies to form radical right-wing and radical left-wing populism.

Other scholars have conceived of the concept quite differently, such as Aslanidis (2016a) (*populism as a discursive claim*), Moffitt (2016) (*populism as a political style, performance and representation*) and Takis (2019) (*populism as illiberal democracy*), who all provided their own alternative accounts. This echoes significant criticism that the application of the ideational model may be too reductionist, which especially concerns scholars working on populism outside Western Europe (Aslanidis 2016; de la Torre and Mazzoleni 2019). Even Michael Freeden (2016) himself, whose work on thin ideologies inspired the appropriation of this concept in theorising about populism, distanced himself from the notion that populism is a thin-centred ideology. In his view, it is ‘too thin’ to be meaningfully conceived as an ideology. As a result, less restrictive versions of the ideational approach think of populism in terms of degree, whereas in its strict form, populism is categorical. For empirical scholarship, this matters less because quantitative indicators generally measure the extent of a phenomenon, not the absolute. Building on these approaches and criticism of the ‘dominant paradigm’ in Chapter 5, Reinhard Heinisch and Oscar Mazzoleni suggest, for instance, a finely grained framework for empirical research that seeks to bridge existing conceptualisations by conceiving populism as both a discourse and a practice. This framework emphasises aspects of populism that the ideational approach deemphasised, but which may help explain its success and widespread discursive practice. Populists aim primarily at responsive politics and thus often make intrinsically ambivalent claims that challenge the status quo in favour of people’s empowerment and elite change. Populism’s affinity to eschew dogma and adapt its message to what is popular, its propensity for incongruous or contradictory claims, and its frequent ambiguity in position-taking on most but their core issues, in short populism’s chameleonic quality, sets it apart from its radical and extremist rivals as well as from its consistent mainstream competitors.

Leadership, Protest and Organisation

Populism is not only a matter of discourse or ideology. Some authors identify organisational patterns in it, arguing populism expresses strategic linkages with unorganised followers through personalistic leadership (Weyland 2017; Barr 2018). This approach has some advantages in that it highlights the relevance of populism as a relationship with and within a heterogeneous constituency. This highlights the role of the ‘charismatic’ leader in shaping the ‘true’ people, the relevance of emotions and certain forms of mobilisation in the pursuit and preser-

vation of power. Populism capitalises on and exploits social grievances in society through leaders and certain repertoires of action (Jansen 2011). Within this perspective, one might, for example, focus on social roots and the link between political parties and social movements, as Carlo Ruzza suggests in Chapter 4.

Although movement specialists and party scholars regrettably do not collaborate with each other very often, we should not lose sight of the many affinities between the phenomena they each study. First, a movement perspective may allow us to understand the foundational moments of a populist insurgence, as was the case with the AfD in Germany (Berbair, Lewandowsky and Siri 2015). Second, often the difference between a party and a movement may be more a function of a scholar's need to categorise and make distinctions than with a manifest empirical cleavage. While protest parties, including populist ones, have embraced repertoires of action and frames of social movements to mobilise networks of individuals, such as employing social media (Kitschelt 2006; Aslanidis 2016b), many social movements have developed forms of institutionalisation and professionalisation, as has been shown by resource mobilisation theory (McCarthy and Zald 2002). Third, social movement perspectives, along with a strategic conceptualisation of populism, provide a way to move beyond a Western European focus, which seems particularly relevant for understanding the activism behind the Trump phenomenon in the United States. Formally, Donald Trump's more ardent grassroots supporters are counted among the Republican base and clearly play a role in that party's primaries. However, like their Tea Party predecessors, the Make-America-Great-Again or MAGA activists have more in common with a movement and remain beyond the control of the formal party. They have also made clear their intention and ability to break with the Republicans and create their own electoral platform should the former distance themselves from Trump. Whether or not populist parties are characterised by low institutionalisation and unmediated relationships between authoritarian leaders and followers, such as in the US, depends on the context and political legacy. In Western Europe, where mass party legacies and formal grassroots party membership endure, successful populist parties have been able to survive their founder leaders precisely because of developing strong institutionalisation and party organisation (Heinisch and Mazzoleni 2016).

Party Systems, Liberal Democracy and Populist Regimes

The surge of populism has to be seen in relation to changes in political parties and political systems. It is specifically connected with modernisation, its impact on both established and new democracies and how established parties reacted to these changes. If we regard modernisation as having contributed to a 'silent revolution' (Inglehart 1977), which we elaborate on further below, the growth of populist and other outsider parties constitutes something of a (not so) silent 'counter revolution' (Ignazi 1992). Mainstream parties have tended to manage such change by offering technocratic policy solutions that are often indistinguishable from those of their establishment competitors, which in turn provides opportunities for outside actors to present themselves as agents of radical change. Populism itself and the emergence of populist actors as influential political figures have increasingly come to shape national and international politics. Thus, a recent wave of populism research is centred more closely around its effects on and consequences for party systems and democratic institutions. An important

initial strand of this literature deals with the interaction between populist and mainstream parties, with specific attention paid to policy influence (Akkerman, de Lange, Rooduijn 2016; Albertazzi and Vampa 2021; Bale and Rovira Kaltwasser 2021; Pereyra Doval and Souroujon 2021). In many countries, especially where populists are not in a dominant position, mainstream parties have pushed back, employing several strategies that range from selective exclusion to full accommodation. In some cases, such as in Belgium, the radical populists were effectively isolated in a political *cordon sanitaire*; in other countries mainstream parties adopted populist ideas or ‘parroted the pariah’ (van Spanje and van der Brug 2007) in an effort to steal back their voters.

Another major strategy entailed ‘defanging’ the radical political actors by bringing them into government, as was tried by the Austrian Conservatives in 2000, when they formed a coalition with the FPÖ and broke a taboo of sorts among member countries of the EU at the time. As we move away from the long-consolidated party systems of Western Europe to political systems in (post)transition or that have been formed relatively recently, such those as in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, the complexity is even greater as the distinction between mainstream and radical political outsiders becomes murkier (Minkenberg 2010). Since strong populist parties, in particular right-wing formations, have become dominant actors within political systems, increasing attention has been devoted to the impact of authoritarian tendencies on liberal democratic norms and practices. The concept of a populist regime seems to be called into question when principles of liberal and representative democracy are attacked, not only from outside but from within the state and its leading political exponents.

In general, the literature on democracy and populism has consisted of two camps. One has generally argued that despite all its problems, populism may mitigate what scholars have called a growing crisis of representation (Mair 2002; Taggart 2002; Kriesi 2014). As populist parties succeed in breaking up sclerotic political structures and drawing previously marginalised or depoliticised population groups into the political process, populist mobilisation may in fact improve the quality of democracy. Few have tackled this question empirically on a large scale, especially by comparing Latin America and Europe. In this sense, Chapter 6 by Robert A. Huber and Christian H. Schimpf is an exception as they provide a comprehensive theoretical debate on and detailed empirical analysis of the relationship between populism and democracy. A second strand of literature underscores the relevance of populism as a regime that differs from democracy and related polity dimensions (Chapter 7, Carlos H. Waisman). Thus, populism is seen as threat to liberal democracy and the rule of law (Blokker 2019; Urbinati 2019a; 2019b;). According to this view, instead of accepting checks and balances, powerful populist actors demand majoritarian voting and/or plebiscitary forms of political decision-making, which are better suited to the mass mobilisation strategies in which populists excel. Moreover, by suggesting that established parties are all alike, populists engage in ‘de-differentiation’ (Schedler 1996, 295) and deny pluralism and the representative function of other parties. Divisions among members of the community are seen instead as the result of outsider meddling so that compromises designed to resolve differences are seen to serve the interests of outsiders and are often regarded as less than fully legitimate (Müller 2018).

Demand-Side Perspectives

Which perspective an investigator chooses will depend on their research question and the level of analysis. At the individual level, when it comes to voters and politicians, the ideational school can offer important insights into the relationship between attitudes, preferences and behaviour and thus readily provide plausible causal explanations for the success of the phenomenon. At the level of party systems or political systems, other frameworks may be more helpful, such as when examining the effect of a decline in antagonism in politics and its consequences (Mouffe 2000; Müller 2002; Enyedi 2016). In this context, it is worth noting that cultural norms and values underlie democratic regimes. To the extent that citizens fear losing control over important political and economic decisions which affect their lives, they become receptive to the promise of returning to a stable order in which everyone has a clear place. Populism, in combination with radical right notions such as authoritarianism and nativism, becomes attractive to voters who feel abandoned or ignored by the established political parties. Its emotional appeal lies in recreating a community that seems to have been lost to modernisation (Bauman 2001). Trump's slogan 'Make America Great Again' captures this populist appeal perfectly by promising to obtain in the future a past that seems to have been lost in the present. The idea of restoring sovereignty to the people may be seen as a central political demand in populism (Basile and Mazzoleni 2020).

At the same time, the rise of the new middle class, growing levels of education and the increasing importance of new technologies has not only resulted in economic changes but also established new political orientations that have increasingly shaped political contestation. What Inglehart (1977) had termed the 'silent revolution', a noticeable shift in the 1970s and beyond towards green, liberal and postmodern value orientations, subsequently triggered a backlash (Norris and Inglehart 2019). Ignazi (1992, 3) labelled the electoral response by people alienated by the trends of modernisation a 'silent counter revolution'. He also noted that, in part, the emerging radical right parties were not connected with the old far right with their 'fascist imprint' but new formations benefiting from changes in the cultural domain and in mass beliefs favouring radicalisation and system polarisation (*ibid.*, 3). Thus, the challenge for scholarship is both a theoretical and an empirical one. In quantitative approaches, major obstacles to empirical research on populism had long been the lack of relevant and reliable data on key indicators and on a wider selection of countries. Another problem was the frequent use of proxy and partial measures, which continually raised questions of internal and external validity. Yet, this situation has improved in recent years as new comprehensive data sets with valid measures have become available, as will be discussed by Martin Dolezal and Marco Fölsch in Chapter 9 in this Handbook. Within the ideational approach, Chapter 8 by Teun Pauwels presents methods of operationalising and measuring populism empirically. On the so-called demand side, referring to the political preferences of voters, surveys can determine citizens' attitudes, whereas on the supply side, analyses of party manifestos and leaders' speeches can detect the populism contained in party programmes and policies. This does not mean all issues related to the link between supply-side and demand-side approaches can be easily fixed without a truly relational perspective (Ostiguy, Panizza and Moffitt 2021, 7–8).

Regional Variations

Despite its commonalities, populism boasts a varied history on different continents each with its different contexts of time and culture. This heterogeneity of legacies across regions is made more complex by the growing number of political systems and circumstances affected by populism, and the ability of populist parties to adapt to local circumstances has added new layers of complication if we try to understand populism's causes and effects. These developments have presented obstacles to a universally shared understanding of the phenomenon and thus a coherent conceptualisation of it. The variation in the way in which populism has been perceived at different stages and in different localities has shaped how it is understood by the public and also by scholars.

The Western European Populist Right: From Protest Politics to Migration and Identity

In Western Europe, radical populism first appeared as a major phenomenon after the Second World War in the form of Poujadism, which referred to a movement of 'common man' populism led by Pierre Poujade. In the 1950s, his forceful blend of anti-intellectualism, xenophobia, antisemitism and anti-parliamentarism combined an anti-dirigiste tax revolt with a socio-cultural agenda in which state bureaucrats and ethnic others were the villains and small shopkeepers the heroes. Populism resurfaced in the 1970s and 1980s mainly in the form of radical anti-system protests. In 1972, the former Danish lawyer Mogens Glistrup founded the Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet) to protest against his country's high taxes. Its enormous popularity soon made his party the second largest in Denmark and spawned a sister party in Norway. Whereas taxes and an overbearing (welfare) state were fuelling protest sentiments in Scandinavia, excessive forms of insider politics and *partitocrazia* were stoking the anger of citizens in parts of continental Europe, such as Austria, France and Italy. The perception that mainstream parties had a monopoly on power, used to engage in extensive clientelism and were often implicated in high profile cases of political corruption prepared the ground for political outsiders and new formations to take on the political establishment. The National Front (Front National, FN) in France (now the National Rally, Rassemblement National, FN) and the aforementioned FPÖ are two early examples. In other instances, populist parties sprang up in the context of secessionist protests against 'corrupt' or 'non-responsive' national governments, such as the Flemish Block (Vlaams Blok, VB) in Belgium and the LN in Italy. Protests against the erosion of national sovereignty through accession to the European Union was another factor in the rise of populist protests, as exemplified by the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP), an early champion of the anti-European cause, which ran several referendum campaigns that contributed to keeping Switzerland outside the EU. Another motivating factor for anti-European populists in the richer Western European and Nordic member states was the accession of poor countries from Eastern Europe and the Balkans to the EU, given that this required significant subsidies from the wealthier members and caused substantial labour migration across Europe.

As populist parties mutated from middle-class protest parties into parties for voters who felt threatened by modernisation and internationalisation, especially men with lower levels of education in traditional and non-professional occupations, populists adapted their agenda accord-

ingly. The fact that radical right-wing populist parties were less dogmatic than other far right formations, which were more attached to their ideological principles, was an advantage in the electoral marketplace. The current strength of populist parties in Europe raises the question of its electoral basis, which is examined by Gilles Ivaldi in Chapter 11, which probes the motivations of voters in supporting such formations. The politics of identity, anti-immigration positions, Euroscepticism, criticism of globalisation and free trade, as well as law and order became fixtures in the programmes of nearly all populist parties across the continent (Minkenberg 2001; Mudde 2007, 158–98; van Spanje 2010; Rooduijn et al. 2014). The European financial and economic crisis only deepened these sentiments. However, no agenda has been more important to populists in recent years than the issue of refugees, migration, security and also Islam, which has resonated across Europe but has been especially salient in Austria, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Denmark, Switzerland and Norway (see, for example, Marzouki et al. 2016). As a consequence of electoral success, one of the most recent transformations of populism in Western Europe is its increasing role in public office either by supporting minority governments or entering government office outright. However, government participation always exposes populist parties to mainstreaming and potential change. The complex effects of this step on the parties themselves and on policy are examined in Chapter 12 on ‘Populist Parties in Power and Their Impact on Liberal Democracies in Western Europe’ by Tjitske Akkerman. Nonetheless, the clearly defined pattern of populist outsider opposition versus insider mainstream government may be breaking down as a result of these developments, something that has already happened in Eastern European countries.

Identity Politics in Post-Transition Societies: Populism in Central and Eastern Europe

In Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the Balkans, populism, as discussed by Sergiu Gherghina, Sergiu Miscoiu and Sorina Soare in Chapter 13, seems to be ubiquitous. In these regions, it is not merely an oppositional phenomenon, as is mostly the case in Western Europe, but appears to be an attribute of the major parties and even some governments. Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary are most often associated with it and each have competing groups with similarly radical right-wing and populist programmes. However, the chameleon-like nature of far right and populist parties (Taggart 2000), along with the fluid character of the political systems across the region, also makes it more difficult to identify and classify political actors as being clearly populist. As a result, there has been much debate about whether political leaders like the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his party Fidesz (Hungarian Civic Alliance) should be labelled populist or simply conservative nationalist. The same can be said of the various Polish governments controlled by the Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS). In Chapter 14, Vlastimil Havlík and Miroslav Mareš discuss socio-cultural legacies in post-transition societies and the emergence of a ‘crowded world of populist politics’ (Heinisch 2008, 29), in which populist actors need to differentiate themselves from each other by adopting a variety of positions. The variability of populism also means that in relatively stable party systems, new populist parties can suddenly appear and thrive. Reinhard Heinisch and Steven Saxonberg highlight such a case in Chapter 15, showing how populism can also manifest itself in the ‘radical centre’, as exemplified by the Czech party Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (Akce nespokojených občanů, ANO) and its leader Babiš. This Central Eastern European case is one of several prominent examples elsewhere, from Silvio Berlusconi to

Ross Perot and Donald Trump, where an electorate supports businesspeople who claim that what they can do for their successful business, they can also do for the country. However, an essential difference to populism in Western Europe is the fact that all parties in post-communist societies stand in some relation to the previous regime or the transition and its effects. This forms a subtext in which populist agenda items such as anti-capitalism, anti-Western rants, ethnocultural identity politics (for example, the Slavophile devotion to Russia, as is the case with the Ataka party in Bulgaria) on the one hand and anti-communism on the other take on a meaning distinct from that in Western Europe, where such experiences are absent.

A history of distrust of the state and its officials, a long tradition of insider politics and significant corruption all reward political outsiders who appear decisive and promise to deliver change. Instead of appealing to liberal political traditions and new democracy – a system more often viewed as flawed than is the case in Western Europe –, appeals to ‘the nation’ or ‘the people’ and its destiny as a grand historical project are the more common approach and also provide an emotional glue that connects populist leaders and their supporters. Whereas Western European populists want to recover a supposedly purer version of the political system – hence, with slogans such as taking the country back to its truer form and promoting forms of direct democracy –, Eastern European populists often aim to take the country in a new direction based on some claim of historical destiny (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). This is because most countries in the area cannot connect to a previous system as they were (parts of) communist, fascist or imperial states. Moreover, many Western populist parties have descended from libertarian economic and anti-dirigiste roots, which often leads to contradictory policy positions when protectionism, welfare chauvinism and anti-globalisation rhetoric is mixed with liberal economic positions and criticism of regulations. In Central and Eastern Europe, radical populism seems to have ceded this liberal economic agenda to mainstream parties, which, in response, have also begun mobilising their supporters around protectionism and identity. The fact that Central and Eastern Europe has long been dominated by outside empires and only became fully independent after the end of the Cold War makes these countries especially wary of external influences. At the same time, their integration into the Western economic system, along with their transformation and modernisation, has brought to the surface repressed or dormant socio-cultural divisions that can be readily exploited by new political parties. Thus, fears of outside domination, unresolved ethnic conflicts and competing claims of victimhood can be easily used for political gain (Heinisch 2017).

Mediterranean Populism

An influential factor in the European academic reception of populism was that in major research communities, such as those in the UK, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Germany, attention was paid to the populist radical right rather than the left. As a result, there was initially a significant debate in academic literature as to what extent these parties were in fact populist rather than merely new versions of the old far right (Betz 1994; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Ignazi 1996; Koopmans 1996; Betz and Immerfall 1998). However, in the southern countries of Western Europe, a growing interest has been devoted to left-wing or progressive populism. The Italian Five Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle, M5S) is descended from a virtually left-wing protest movement. It shares a strong disdain for the country’s economic depen-

dence on European institutions with Greek and Spanish leftist populism and thus rejects outside interference in domestic affairs, especially in formulating economic policy. The strength of the Five Star Movement at its peak was also a reflection of the low credibility of Italian political institutions and parties. As such, the party primarily mobilised its supporters against national and European elites, which it considers to be corrupt and incompetent. From the beginning, it has been difficult to pinpoint the party's ideological orientation as it does not fully fit the profile of either a right-wing or a left-wing party. In response to its rivalry with the radical right Lega, which evolved from a regional into a national party, M5S became increasingly regarded as a leftist party. As such, it eventually formed a coalition government with the centre-left Democratic Party. In Chapter 16, titled 'New Populism', Maria Elisabetta Lanzzone analyses new populist parties in detail, such as SYRIZA, Podemos and M5S, which have emerged from social movements and protest groups.

To some extent, contemporary populism in the Mediterranean countries of Greece and Spain appears to have similarities to manifestations of populism in Latin America, as they share some ideological traits in their leftist ideological orientation and the ways in which they take issue with liberal internationalism and global capitalism. This Southern European form of populism strongly favours national autonomy in economic decision-making, pursues a redistributive agenda and rejects the interference of European and global institutions and international corporations in national policymaking. Its rather recent emergence is clearly linked to the economic and financial crisis in Europe, but it is also a consequence of the decline of domestic party systems, especially of the traditional left, which has seen its support eroded (in Spain) or plummet (in Greece). Leftist Mediterranean populism is not only the most recent addition to the populist 'family' in Europe, but it is also distinct in its emergence out of protest movements. Moreover, beyond the right and left divide, what specifically concerns European parties, both in the north and the south and the west and the east, is their relationship with the European Union. Their hostility stems from the fear that unaccountable transnational elites and opaque Brussels institutions are usurping national and popular sovereignty. It also results from an apprehension about the liberal and universalist normative framework undergirding the European project. However, not all populists are opposed to transnational (McDonnell and Werner 2020) forms of cooperation or even demand that their countries leave the EU (Heinisch et. al 2021). In our Handbook, Fabian Habersack and Carsten Wegscheider tackle the thorny issue of the relationship between populism and Euroscepticism in Chapter 10.

Nativism and Rural Populism: The United States and Elsewhere

On the other side of the Atlantic, from early on, American populism has also been strongly connected with claims for popular sovereignty and criticism against elites, which was vividly on display in Donald Trump's campaign rhetoric and is a common feature of populist parties' discourse from Austria to Bolivia. Trump ties in with a right-wing populist legacy that deals with nationalism, xenophobia, ethnocentrism and racism (Chapter 17, Carlos de la Torre). While American populism has frequently mobilised the native population against poor immigrants especially, such as the Irish and, later, Jews, Eastern Europeans and Italians, as well as more recently Latin Americans and Asians, populism in the contemporary US of Donald Trump finds expression in the wall on the border to Mexico or the 'tearing up' of free trade

agreements and the associated order of liberal internationalism, which was expressed in Jackson's time through the idea of a free land grab, supported by 'manifest destiny', running all the way to the Pacific coast. US populism also taps into the long-standing narratives about American exceptionalism, which is weary of international entanglements and has periodically boosted US isolationism, aspects of which we can discern in Trump's foreign policy. Another feature of populism in the US is its connection to religion and the idea that Americans are righteous and chosen people, who are in danger of being corrupted and contaminated by cosmopolitan ideas and foreign influences.

Not unlike Trump's supporters, who relish the idea of 'draining the swamp' in Washington, the Jacksonians also wanted to curb the power of the central state in favour of greater local control (Bonikowski 2019). The urban modernisation propagated by American business and supported politically by the Whigs remained anathema to Jackson and his support base (Benson 1961; Decker 2000, 139). In the end, Jackson, who was a polarising figure like Trump and sought to communicate with people directly in a straightforward manner, reshaped America by expanding the power of the presidency and turning the nationalism of south-western frontiersman into the central ideational framework that has defined the country ever since. Whereas the Founding Fathers appeared to be more like accidental revolutionaries, who otherwise resembled English country gentlemen and were treated in popular narratives as an exalted and saintly group, the heroes in Jacksonian and post-Jacksonian America were different: the new mythology celebrated rugged individualism and the 'common man' doing uncommon things. It is this radical break with the elites and the positioning of the common person at the centre of America's story that makes Jackson the precursor to populism in the US, as the man who laid the foundations of its positive future image. Following the Civil War, the US underwent yet another period of tumultuous societal and economic change to which – not unlike today – the established political system failed to respond adequately. The increasing concentration of economic wealth, the growing power of industry, the economic decline of rural populations, especially in the south and the enormous influx of immigrants crowding into urban areas led to the formation of political movements that embraced the ordinary white native-born male American as the central figure in national mythology. Often these movements were strongly xenophobic and, especially in the south, overtly racist. In urban and industrial areas, similar pressures resulted in the emergence of radical leftist political currents with syndicalist and anarchist tendencies. Common to both was the idea that simple hard-working people were threatened by a conspiracy of powerful elites and their economic interests. These elites were said to have betrayed the foundational ideals of the US, which is reminiscent of Donald Trump's theme that America needs to be taken 'back' to an earlier, better place.

The idea of conspiracies and backroom deal-making by unaccountable insiders permeates populist discourse the world over. It is this very notion that, in the eyes of populists, has given representative democracy a bad name as it is often associated with trading off general interests for special interests and, thus, making undue compromises and engaging in deception behind the people's back. Frustrations with the political order in the US culminated in the foundation of the Populist Party (1892-6), which sought to establish itself as a third force in politics. The central figure at the time was William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925), an advocate of small-scale farmers against big industry. Ultimately, the Populist Party did not survive the political embrace by the Democrats, who offered Bryan the opportunity to run as their joint presidential candidate in 1896 and 1900. However, the memory of the Jacksonian revolution, the Populist

Party and the Progressive Era that followed these phenomena has given populism a more positive image in the US – even President Obama referred to himself at one point as a populist – than it attracts in other countries, where populists generally reject the label.

Whereas Bryan's influence waned and populism became a minority faction in the Democratic Party in the early 20th century, Trump's electoral success and the transformations of the Republicans into a party voted by the working class may indicate that populism is likely to remain a much bigger factor in that party. As these lines were written, it was too early to tell which consequences the storming of the US Capitol by mobs professing loyalty to Trump, the second impeachment and the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic would have on American politics. Before Trump, populism in the US was largely a third party phenomenon, such as in the case of Henry Agard Wallace and Ross Perot, who ran for the presidency as third party candidates in 1948 (Wallace) and 1992 as well as 1996 (Perot) respectively. By contrast, Trump's ascent to the White House shows, as Chapter 18 by Sandra Vergari explains, how it is that a person as controversial and conventional as Trump could become so popular and why an established party was taken over by what was once thought to be an outsider phenomenon. Moreover, recent election results indicate that against all odds and predictions, Trump was able to mobilise more than 70 million voters in his favour and demonstrated the popularity of his political brand and agenda (Bonikowski 2019). If we take populism to be a rural answer to capitalist modernisation and industrialisation, as has been suggested by the historian John B. Allcock (1971), then the Russian *Narodniki* also deserve a mention, who, as approximate contemporaries of the American populists, organised themselves in traditional village communities in the pursuit of an idealised, simple rural life. However, the futility of the Russian populists' efforts to change society persuaded other radicals to pursue another direction. For the Marxists, it was not the rural villagers but the industrial proletariat who was to become the agent of transformation.

Presidentialism and Social Mobilisation: Latin American Populism

Whereas in Europe, the United States and Russia, populism remained at the margins of politics for a long time, it has often been at the centre of political change in Latin American history. In fact, when Europeans began grappling with what they considered to be a novel phenomenon, Latin America was already moving from its second wave of populism, also known as neo-liberal populism, to a third associated with the leftist regimes of Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia. Latin America's presidentialised political systems have been far more receptive to personalities and leader figures who purport to be the saviours of the people than the parliamentary and party-based systems that prevail in Western Europe. Representing a tradition going back to the colourful strongmen or *caudillos* in the nineteenth century, these figures have shown disdain for established and often corrupt elites, styling themselves as men of action on behalf of ordinary people. María Esperanza Casullo and Flavia Freidenberg show in their Chapters (19 and 20) how, in the twentieth century, spurts of modernisation resulted in political mass mobilisation. However, under conditions in which the political institutions were insufficiently developed, such movements could often not be channelled in order to implement the necessary political changes. As a result, charismatic leaders, like the Argentine president Juan Perón, sought to bypass traditional politics and insti-

tutions by turning directly to the masses to push for political reforms. Whenever economic developments brought about popular mobilisation that could no longer be absorbed and directed by the existing political system, a new wave of populist leaders rose to prominence such as Juan and Eva Perón, Carlos Menem and Néstor and Cristina (Fernández de) Kirchner in Argentina, Getúlio Vargas in Brazil, Lázaro Cárdenas and Andrés M. López Obrador in Mexico, as well as Juan Velasco Alvarado, Alberto Fujimori and Alan García in Peru.

In recent decades, Hugo Chávez and Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, among others, have become the leading exponents of leftist populism. What this latest group of populist politicians share with their predecessors is the presentation of themselves as charismatic agents of change who want to deliver, especially for poorer people, the kinds of political achievements the previous system could not. Right-wing and left-wing populists the world over now share a disdain for liberal internationalism and globalisation in favour of national autonomy. The claim of being able to deliver for the poorer strata of Latin American society rests on the argument that populism has boosted the representation of the lower classes in the institutions of government, thus creating a more inclusive and also more democratic model of society. Chapter 21 by Saskia P. Ruth and Kirk A. Hawkins tackles this question, and they find that populism does indeed do better in terms of descriptive representation, such as in the inclusion of ethnic minorities, than other forms of representation.

Europe, the US and Latin America

This short overview of the different manifestations of populism shows why the understandings of populism in the European and American traditions have varied. This has also influenced debates in scholarship about whether populism should be seen as a discourse, ideology, frame, strategy or mobilisation (Madrid 2006; Roberts 2006; Subramanian 2007; Madrid 2008; Stanley 2008; Barr 2009; Hawkins 2010; Jansen 2011; Aslanidis 2016a; Weyland 2017). Whereas Trump may fit the mould of European-style radical rightist populists much better given his propensity for nativist claims and authoritarian attributes, the American business leader and erstwhile third-party candidate, Ross Perot, may be a better example of what one might call the populism of the radical centre typical of North America. In both the western parts of Canada and especially the US, inherent egalitarianism, a concomitant strong anti-elitist bias and a certain degree of populist rhetoric, especially during political campaigning, are not only tolerated but even welcome as an antidote to the elitism associated with coastal regions and major metropolitan centres. Consequently, populism in North America has come to be regarded as more of a style, strategy or ethos designed to reach ordinary people, appeal to commonly held beliefs and convey anti-metropolitan sentiments, and, until the era of Trump, less as an ideology in itself.

In Latin America, where there has been a long tradition of popular strongmen promising political change and where personalised presidential political systems have dominated, populism is often seen to express itself through the rhetoric leaders employ to reach the people (Weyland 2001; Madrid 2008; Hawkins 2009; Levitsky and Roberts 2011). Populism has also been regarded as a discourse designed to attract and channel the sentiments of politically orphaned classes or societal groups mobilised by economic modernisation (Filc 2010). Charismatic fig-

ures, either those already in government or in opposition, employ discursive strategies designed to appeal to voters through appeals to nativism and nationalist narratives. Both the Latin American and Eastern European models suggest that populism occurs along a continuum where political actors engage to varying extents in making populist claims. Traditionally, in Western Europe, where one major populist outsider party often confronts the entire political mainstream, the perception of populism is more binary. Although this perspective is less clear in some cases, Western European scholarship has often taken a dichotomous approach, viewing populists as supposedly distinct from mainstream parties. Moreover, the centrality of political parties in European politics compared to the much more personalised American system has also turned populism into a party-based phenomenon. Moreover, the focus has been on populism as a system of ideas and defined political orientations that manifest themselves in voter preferences for certain parties and party programmes, at the heart of which is the antagonism between (virtuous) people and corrupt elites (Carter 2005; Norris 2005; Mudde 2007; Ivarsflaten 2008; Art 2011; Berezin 2013).

Communication Perspectives

Aside from political science, no area has been more important and continues to be more central to understanding the spread and effectiveness of political populism than communication. In fact, populism's affinity for new media and new forms of communication is impossible to understand without thoroughly appraising the ongoing research in communication science. What critics consider to be the echo chambers of social media and the ability of populists to gain unfiltered access not only to their activist base but also to much larger receptive audiences have been causes in the successes of populist campaigns. 'Post-truth' politics, declared Oxford Dictionaries' 2016 word of the year, has been associated particularly with major events like the Brexit campaign and the 2016 presidential election in the US. Compared with political science, communication is a latecomer to the populism bandwagon. This has changed with the rise and success of populist parties in Europe and, at about the same time, the emergence of a new media environment. The overall growing importance of the media in fostering understanding within society has also made politics more and more dependent on the media for addressing citizens and legitimising its decisions. This dependence, and the attempt to nevertheless keep the power of definition, set the agenda and frame the discourse, has led to the increasing mediatisation of politics, in the sense that the political arena has continuously adapted to the logic of the media. The development of the internet, and social networking sites in particular, has thoroughly redrawn the communicative map and opened new ways for political actors to speak to citizens directly without the uncomfortable interference of journalists.

Populism as a Style

From a communication point of view, populism primarily presents itself as a certain world view that comes along with a specific communicative style. Taking a communication perspective on populism stands for, as Lone Sorensen (Chapter 22, original emphasis) succinctly puts it, 'a shift in focus from *what populism is* to *what it does* and *how it does it*'. This shift opens

the way for a broader view on populism and at the same time acknowledges the constitutive role of communication in the political field. How populism does it not only refers to its style and how populism is enacted but also encompasses how populism relates to the media and how it reaches the people through the media and with what effect. Empirically, research is mostly based on content analyses of populists' discourse and the media, on interviews with the actors involved in the populist communication process or on experimental settings mainly to assess how people deal with and react to populist performances. In their seminal study, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) developed a concept for measuring the degree of populism in populist discourse that can be applied to all kinds of political actors and all forms of populism. At the core of their concept lies a 'thin definition' that considers populism to be '*a political communication style of political actors that refers to the people*' (Jagers and Walgrave 2007, 322, original emphasis). Appealing to the people, identifying with the people, and purporting to speak in their name is the 'master frame' (ivi) that underlies and constitutes populist discourse. Thin populism becomes thick populism if appeals to the people combine with an anti-establishment/anti-elitist position and the exclusion of certain groups from what is conceived to be a homogeneous people (ibid., 323–5). By developing indices for measuring not only the proportion but also the intensity of thin and thick populism in political party broadcasts from Belgian elections, the authors go beyond a binary approach and establish populism as a graded phenomenon.

Political Discourse and the Media

The aforementioned study acted as an initial spark for research from a communication perspective and provided the standard reference for studies assessing populism in political discourse and in the media. The employment of a graded instrument for gauging the degree of populism makes it possible to demonstrate that populist elements are not an exclusive characteristic of the performances of those who are commonly referred to as populists, but that they also, and sometimes even to a greater extent, appear among those who are usually referred to as non-populists (e.g. Bos and Brants 2014). Yet another step in the study of the communication aspects of populism was taken by widening the perspective from case studies to cross-country comparisons. Comparative research, particularly when the same methodological instruments are applied, allows overarching developments and contextual factors that provide for and explain differences among countries to be assessed. While much research has been done on individual countries and various aspects of populist political communication in recent years, which, put together, allows, if at all, tentative generalisations only, the studies presented in the edited volumes by Aalberg et al. (2017) and Reinemann et al. (2019) are based on multi-country comparisons and a common methodological approach and therefore portray a comprehensive picture of populist political communication in Europe from different perspectives and under different conditions.

The surge of right-wing populist parties in Europe directed attention onto their relationship with the media and, in particular, raised questions about the role media play in the spread and growth of populism. Their coalescence and intertwined nature are reflected in terms such as 'telepopulism' (Taguieff 1997; Peri 2004) and 'media populism' (Mazzoleni 2003). The relationship between the media and politics, journalists and politicians unfolds against a backdrop

of ongoing profound changes in the media environment. As Franca Roncarolo emphasises in Chapter 23, mediatisation has reshuffled the cards in a relationship of mutual dependence and left the traditional media with increasing influence *vis-à-vis* politics. Right-wing populists maintain an ambiguous and somewhat paradoxical relationship with the media (e.g. Krämer 2018; Fawzi 2020). On the one hand, and as Lone Sorensen ascertains in his own chapter, because they are ‘fundamentally opposed to all forms of mediation’, populists display a hostile attitude towards the so-called mainstream media, which is based on the anti-elite stance of populism and finds its expression in delegitimising and disparaging attacks (Fawzi 2019; Van Dalen 2019; Bhat and Chadha 2020). Name-calling ranges from *fake news* to *Lügenpresse* (lying press) and seems to successfully undermine trust in the news media. At the same time, populists accuse the media of being biased against them and of thus betraying the interests of the people. Apart from allegations of complicity with the established political forces and a one-sided view, populist criticism laments the way the media deal with certain topics – a complaint that in recent years has focused primarily on reporting on migrants. Krämer (2018, 453) calls this side of the populists’ ambiguous relationship with the media ‘anti-media populism’.

The Media Policy Impact of Populism

Not much research has so far been done on how populists’ attitudes towards liberalism and the media translates into their media policy and impacts them on a structural and systemic level. However, authors discussing the relationship between populism and democracy usually also point to the ramifications of this for freedom of speech and press freedom (e.g. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012; Waisbord 2018). Basing his analysis on data from 91 countries and a time span of 35 years, Kenny (2020) found that populist rule is more often than not associated with a decline in press freedom. Specific cases of populist media policy have been addressed in country studies (e.g. Ellinas 2010; Liebhart 2018; Holtz-Bacha 2020). In Europe, Hungary and Poland have recently provided cautionary tales with respect to restrictive media policy (e.g. Batorfy 2019; Klimkiewicz 2019). At the same time, the West European model of public service broadcasting, which is supposed to be independent of the state and particularly dedicated to pluralism, has come under fire from populists who often join forces with neo-liberal forces (Holtz-Bacha 2021). In Chapter 24, Philip Kitzberger analyses the media policies of Latin America’s wave of leftist populist governments but draws the conclusion that politicisation is their only common characteristic.

While cultivating their anti-media attitude and despite the availability of the social networking platforms that allow them direct access to their supporters, populists, like any political actors, are dependent on and seek the spotlight of the big stage of the mainstream media. Therefore, populists attempt to harness the media to their advantage by exploiting journalists’ professional routines, thus breeding what Esser et al. (2017, 367) classify as populism through the media. This is facilitated by the media offering ‘favourable opportunity structures for populist actors’ (ibid., 370). These arise out of political and commercial interests, the dependencies of media owners and certain characteristics of media logic. Freedman (2018) calls ‘media policy failures’ to account for the normalisation of right-wing populism. He identifies failures to control concentration of ownership, regulate tech companies, safeguard an effective fourth estate

and support independent public services as reasons that help to explain easy access for right-wing populist movements.

Communication Strategies

The reference to media logic hints at journalists' selection and production routines and specifically their preference for conflict and strategic framing. Frames are interpretative patterns of media reporting that emphasise certain aspects of an issue, attribute causes of and responsibilities for problems, and suggest solutions to them. Thus, frames can influence the interpretation of issues and events by the media audience and guide their attention towards certain elements, direct the ways in which the news is processed and, in this way, may have an impact on the audience's attitudes. The term 'conflict framing' identifies the media's use of a conflict perspective in its coverage of an issue. Strategic framing is employed to steer the audience in a desired direction, as is done, for instance, with poll reporting. Populists and non-populists alike tailor their communication style to meet the media's attention criteria. Their strategies extend to all kinds of verbal, visual and non-verbal expressions. While elements of the populist style can be found in everyday populism in the media and the communication of political actors who are not deemed populist, populists excel in provocation through the permanent transgression of social and political norms and, with it, the infringement of moral boundaries. Drawing on analyses of populist discourse (e.g. Wodak 2014; 2015; Moffitt 2016), Christina Holtz-Bacha shows in Chapter 25 that populists rely on a number of provocative strategies that play well on the media's appetite for conflict and crisis and secure them the public attention deplored by their opponents. Thus, in their handling of populism journalists get caught between the fronts. In view of populist electoral successes, and most distinctly on election nights, they have to put up with accusations from established parties of paying too much attention to populist actors, granting them visibility and, in this way, fostering populism. How the media respond to anti-media populism and react to populist strategies of capturing media attention is, however, very much dependent on (national) context (Herkman 2017; de Jonge 2019; Goyvaerts and De Cleen 2020; Koliska et al. 2020; Krämer and Langmann 2020).

In addition to populism through the media, Esser et al. (2017, 367) identify populism by the media, which corresponds to Krämer's (2014, 42) assessment of 'media populism as a distinct phenomenon: populism among the media themselves and independent of any relationship to populist movements'. The media share the anti-establishment attitude and an inclination to align with and represent common citizens with populism (Esser et al. 2017, 370). In the case of the media, this derives from their control and criticism function with respect to the political powerholders that the press has in democratic systems. Therefore, the media inevitably, but mostly unwillingly, support the cause of populism, establishing the paradoxes that are also elaborated by Benjamin Krämer in Chapter 26. Several authors have linked media populism to the increased commercialisation of the media industry, and the prevalence of 'commercial imperatives [...] produce content that caters to the tastes and needs of vast and largely undefined audiences' (Mazzoleni 2014, 49) and have brought about the popularisation of style and content. The attribution of a specific responsibility for the proliferation of populism to the tabloid style media (Mazzoleni 2003, 8), however, did not hold empirically (e.g. Akkermann 2011).

New Communication Technologies

The development of new forms of communication and the ensuing changes to the media environment played out in favour of populism (e.g. Engesser et al. 2017; Ernst et al. 2017; Krämer 2017). Political newcomers and outsiders often face a barrier in the media to getting the visibility they need to address voters and increase their electoral support. The internet and social networks allow political actors to circumvent the gatekeepers in the traditional media and address their target groups directly and often hidden from public scrutiny. In Chapter 22, through reference to three sites of mediation, Lone Sorensen demonstrates the closeness of populism to the new communication technologies. Based on the argument that social networks have acquired a role as ‘the people’s voice and the people’s rally’ for populist movements, Gerbaudo (2018, 745) speaks of ‘an elective affinity’ between social media and populism. Jacobs et al. (2020) show that populists employ the most important platforms (Facebook, Twitter) as a ‘double barreled gun’ for different strategies. In Chapter 27, Giuliano Bobba proposes reflection on the role of digital media in the success of populism, and disentangles the concept of ‘digital populism’ from the triple perspective of populist actors, the media and citizens. Because of their distrust of the traditional media, populists have also resorted to alternative media (Figenschou and Ihlebæk 2019; Holt et al. 2019), whose spread was fostered by digital communication technology. Once reserved for the political left, alternative media more recently emerged among populists on the (extreme) right side of the political spectrum. Alternative media such as Breitbart.com present themselves as ‘a self-perceived corrective’ of the legacy media and professional journalism (Holt et al. 2019, 862). Social networks have also brought about the proliferation of disinformation and conspiracy beliefs, which have proved to be associated with populist attitudes (e.g. Castanho Silva et al. 2017; Bergmann 2018; Van den Bulck and Hyzen 2020).

Research on the effects of populist communication at the individual level has only taken off recently. Exploring this missing link, that is, the impact that populist communication has on attitudes, emotions and cognition, is crucial in explaining its success with citizens. Drawing together knowledge from the field of political communication, Alberg and colleagues (2017, 386) outlined a model of populist communication effects that incorporates the macro, meso and micro levels and considers intervening factors at all levels. Theoretical considerations and a review of an increasing number of studies on how populist messages are received and used finally led to a specified individual-level model of populist communication effects (Hameleers et al. 2019). Findings from empirical research demonstrate that, in addition to individual predispositions, the national context plays an influential role in the effects of populist communication, thus rendering any generalisations difficult.

Consolidated and Emerging Topics

Without a doubt, the study of populism has benefited enormously from the contributions made by research in political theory, sociology, psychology and economics. Yet, these important new insights have also resulted in additional factors to be considered and additional explanations to be contemplated. As an area of research, populism has clearly moved to the centre of social science research, given the number of scholars from all subfields that have devoted

themselves to the study of this phenomenon. In past years, it would have been rare for researchers in environmental politics, international relations, trade, and welfare politics to consider the role of populism in their respective research areas. Not long ago, even in the community of mainstream electoral behaviour scholars, one often encountered the opinion that populism was little more than old wine in new bottles and could be effectively traced through indicators of political trust, anti-elitism and authoritarianism. This has clearly changed if we consider the large number of publications, conferences and conference panels in recent years devoted specifically to populism. Research on populism has also attracted increased attention from funding agencies and public officials. In its recent funding cycle, the European Commission financed no fewer than three multimillion Euro Horizon 2020 projects devoted to the study of radical populism and potential counter strategies to it. There is now even a Brill's journal, *Populism*, dedicated to this phenomenon. Some innovative research is using artificial intelligence, computer simulations and deep text analysis to push the boundaries of current research. New qualitative research has been trying to deepen our understanding of the complexities and contradictions of people's attitudes, especially if they support populists that advocate policies which seemingly running counter to the interests people express (e.g. Hochschild 2016).

As much as both populism itself and the reasons for its emergence present us with important theoretical challenges with respect to its conceptualisation and hypothetical causes, populism has encouraged a set of new research agendas related to traditional and new topics. A frequently mentioned question, but one which has still not been fully explored empirically, asks to what extent the conditions that give rise to contemporary populism are grounded in a distinct socio-economic situation. This approach reminds us that populism is also a sociological phenomenon. Wolfgang Aschauer tackles this question from a sociological perspective in Chapter 28, titled 'Societal Malaise in Turbulent Times', in which he seeks to understand how globalisation and unresponsive political systems have contributed to precarious economic conditions and increased people's fear of declining social standards and diminishing economic opportunities. Many more empirically unresolved puzzles concern 'The Gender Dimension of Populism'. These are identified in Chapter 29 by Sarah C. Dingler and Zoe Lefkofridi, who discuss populist parties' ideologies, leaders, candidates, members and electoral support from a comparative and empirical perspective. The question of the leader, beyond his or her discourse, is also crucial. In Chapter 30, Paula Diehl argues that the body has a particular function in populism through its activation of emotions and as an object of identification. In terms of religion and populism, the most important relationship is arguably that between radical populism and Islamophobia. Right-wing populism in both Europe and the United States draws on and promotes Islamophobia. Especially in conjunction with the refugee crisis and the spread of international terrorism, the fear of Islam and Muslim immigrants has arguably become the most important stance of populist parties in many countries. In current electoral campaigns across France, Germany, the Netherlands and the US, the question of Islam is a central issue as it affects both the dimension of individual identity, national character and values, as well as personal security. The aforementioned Hans-Georg Betz tackles this question in Chapter 31, titled 'Populism and Islamophobia'.

A growing body of research literature is devoted to the connection between populism and different policy areas. The influence of radical right-wing populists on shaping immigration policy (Shehaj et al. 2021) is well established. Another area of research is radical right populism's

curious connection between its common man ethos and right-wing policy stances. Deviating from other rightist parties, radical right-wing populists often distance themselves from neo-liberal positions and adopt a welfare chauvinist approach by advocating social protection for deserving segments of the native population. In other instances, they seek to blur their true positions (Rovny 2013) as radical populists need to appeal to population segments in the working and lower middle classes who benefit strongly from the social safety net (Ennser-Jedenastik 2016; 2020). An emerging policy area is represented by ‘law-and-order’ issues and, more broadly, by dimensions related to populism’s opposition to an institutionalised order, such as the rule of law, to which research by political theorists, sociologists, political scientists and criminologists have made important contributions. In Chapter 32, Manuel Anselmi, Paul Blokker and Oscar Mazzoleni provide an account of the literature on constitutional challenges, the politicisation of the judiciary and the populist use of penal justice, bridging concerns about polity, policies and politics.

The environment and climate change have become another policy area of increasing importance for radical populists. Their inherent opposition to liberal internationalism, globalisation and commercialism initially turned the radical right into supporters of conservation, tradition and protection of national resources *vis-à-vis* foreign commercial interests. However, environmental and climate policy initiatives fuelled by urban protests and the rising influence of green parties has been met with hostility by voters that typically support populists, which in turn has affected the direction of the parties themselves. The policy changes pursued by climate activists affect not only the lifestyle (sustainable farming, meat consumption, carbon footprint) of the working class, lower middle class and rural base of these parties, but also their jobs and thus their livelihoods. This has pushed radical populists to embrace climate scepticism, which is thoroughly explored by Robert A. Huber in Chapter 33. A closely related area appears to be the coronavirus pandemic, during which populists initially demanded strict policy measures (a strict lockdown, police enforcement of rules, border closures). However, whereas populists in government have largely kept to their restrictive policies to combat the virus, populists in opposition have subsequently gravitated towards supporting coronavirus deniers, vaccine sceptics and opponents of lockdowns by blaming ‘elite’ scientists for engaging in scaremongering and by accusing mainstream politicians of wanting to establish a police state. In Chapter 34, Cecilia Biancalana, Reinhard Heinisch and Oscar Mazzoleni examine the relationship between populism and the COVID-19 pandemic.

This introduction hopes to have made a compelling argument, as the book in its entirety also hopes to do, for why populism, in its various facets, is possibly the most important political concern of our time. It permeates all political dimensions and has the potential to shape all policy areas from war and peace to trade, to European integration, and all manners of domestic politics. Much about the story of populism and its various dimensions has not been written. This work intends to provide an impetus, foundation and intellectual tool for those willing to delve into this critically important subject area.

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PART I:
Defining and Analysing the Concept

CHAPTER 1:

POPULISM: A HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT

Damir Skenderovic

Introduction

‘There can at present be no doubt about the *importance* of populism. But no one is quite clear what it *is*,’ write Ghita Ionesco and Ernest Gellner (1969b, 1; emphasis in original) in the introduction to the influential anthology, *Populism. Its Meanings and Characteristics*, which appeared in 1969. While the current relevance of populism has led to a revival of interest in the almost forgotten populist movements of the nineteenth century, as Ionesco and Gellner go on to state, the question arises as to whether ‘populism’ is ‘simply a word wrongly used in completely heterogeneous contexts’ (Ionesco and Gellner 1969b, 3). More than forty years later, Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2012a, 1; see also 2017, 1–2) make a similar critique that, ‘one of the most used and abused terms inside and outside academia is undoubtedly populism’, and point out that there have been repeated calls to simply abandon the term and that the academic debate is some distance away from reaching a minimal consensus on the definition and meaning of populism.

The history of the concept ‘populism’ has been accompanied by scepticism over its definition and reservations over its phenomenology, which have not only led to the stimulation of regular academic debates, but also continually reflected strong concerns about the common and everyday political usage of the term. The lack of semantic precision and ambiguity with regard to content has led to it being used for very different phenomena and developments in politics and society, which has resulted in doubt over its heuristic and explanatory value. In addition, the term ‘populism’ is normatively loaded in political and academic language and thus always includes statements and findings on the state of democracy. Even the core idea of the term that populism speaks, as the etymology of the word implies, in the name of the people, rather than the elites, power blocks and privileged special interest groups, is rooted in normative dichotomies.

Conjuncture and Controversy in Politics and Academia

Despite these substantial weaknesses, in the course of the last fifteen years, there has been a striking increase in the use of the concept of ‘populism’ in the public media as well as in the everyday political life of Europe, and particularly in the context of the increase and consolidation that has been seen in recent years among parties on the right-wing margins of the European party system. The expression ‘(right-wing) populist’ has established itself as the descrip-

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tion for a number of parties, such as the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ), Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD), the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP), the National Rally (Rassemblement National, RN; previously National Front, Front National, FN) in France, the League (Lega; previously Lega Nord, LN) in Italy, Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang, VB) in Belgium, Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz) in Hungary or Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) in Poland. At the same time, the term is applied on a global scale to powerful political leaders, such as Narendra Modi in India, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Donald Trump in the USA. However, 'populism' is not only used specifically for parties, tendencies and politicians, but is also often used much more generally, whereby it is seen as a supposedly new way in which politicians and parties seek to woo their supporters and, in the process, to employ new means of communication and strategy. On the whole, the term 'populism' has been widely established in terms of language and the media, and for some it even seems to fulfil the claim of contributing to raising and nurturing awareness of various social and political developments at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

In the vocabulary of politicians and parties, too, 'populism' as a political catchword has experienced a pronounced boom. In its function as a negatively connoted battle cry, it is primarily used in politics to disavow the opponent, serving as a reproach and attack, as denunciation and accusation. With the use of the term 'populist' in political day-to-day events, it is suggested to the adversary that he or she responds to complex facts with phrases and simple formulas, and ultimately pursues the goal of polarising society in order to take advantage of instantaneous moods and make unscrupulous political capital. Something that also contributes to the pejorative understanding of the term is the long shadow cast by the plebiscitary mass politics, demagogic mobilisations and the invocation of the so-called 'will of the people' by leaders who have caused historical catastrophes in Europe. Basically, the political and public debates about populism are constantly concerned with the dangers it may pose to democracy and its cornerstones of freedom, plurality and representation (Müller 2016; Urbinati 2019).

In recent years, therefore, the controversy surrounding the issue has intensified in academic debates over the question of whether populism should be seen as a threat or a corrective to democracy and whether, alongside its negative impacts, it might also have positive influences on the function and legitimation of democracy (Canovan 2002; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012b). Many authors suggest that populism has an ambivalent relationship with democracy, which is built on the population participating as broadly as possible, but is also characterised by a complex, partially opaque decision-making system, which is associated with the representative and delegating character of (parliamentary) democracy. It is suggested that populists seek to exploit a lack of transparency and immediacy and the resulting dissatisfaction with political institutions in order to promote a return to 'true' democracy, which must be realised beyond intermediary institutional settings and political elites. It should not be forgotten, however, that populists do not reject the principle of representation, *per se*, but rather those who are, in their eyes, the wrong representatives. Consequently, there is no doubt that there can be '[p]opulism without participation' (Müller 2016, 29). It is emphasised, furthermore, that populist actors insist on the indivisible power of the majority, thereby undermining not only liberal democratic principles, such as minority rights and the division of power, but also important democratic practices, such as the principle of checks and balances or the search for political consensus solutions.

There has also been a marked increase in interest in the subject of populism in empirical research (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017a). In countless social science studies, the wide variety of contemporary political movements and parties has been examined and their affiliations and organisational structures analysed, along with their parliamentary and programmatic work, their political and institutional opportunity structures, and their social framework conditions. There is also a lively debate over the question of the analytical and operational uses of the concept of ‘populism’. On the one hand, there is a group of authors who primarily seek to identify certain characteristics of movements and parties as conceptual criteria, while on the other, there are those who view stringing together characteristics as an insufficient means of working out a concise conceptualisation of ‘populism’, and therefore call for more generally valid core elements of the kind that are useful for a broader comparative analysis (Taguieff 2007a). In the root cause analysis, there has been a growth in explanatory approaches, in which many interpret the recent upswing of populism as a side effect of globalisation and Europeanisation, and the medialisation and personalisation of politics (Jörke and Selk 2017; Eatwell and Goodwin 2018). It is also often argued that the reasons behind the examples of successful populist mobilisation are a crisis of political legitimacy that the system of democratic representation created, and not least, as Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson (2012) argue in connection with the Tea Party in the USA, that in the decline of traditional political participation, such as electoral turnout and party membership, populism is, as it were, a new form of political engagement. For many, it does not seem to be surprising that in times of an increased sense of crisis among parts of the population, there should be a call for the soothing and assuring responses of politics, to which populist actors respond with offers of interpretations and solutions in which community feeling, cohesion and orientation are central references.

In view of the inflationary, but often historically amnesic, use of ‘populism’, it is all the more important to cast a historical look at its academic conceptualisation. As Federico Finchelstein (2014, 467f) has remarked, ‘at worst, populism appears as a concept without history’ and this view reduces populism ‘to a transcendental (or trans-historical) metaphor of something else’. More recently, as a historian, he has started to study how populism and fascism have been ‘connected historically and theoretically’ and has emphasised how ‘[m]odern populism was born out of fascism’ (Finchelstein 2017, xii). The study of continuities and changes in populist phenomena, as well as central moments in academic debates, makes it possible to show certain denominational characteristics and analytical categories that have proved to be sustainable in the definition of ‘populism’. In addition, the epistemic negotiations on concepts, meanings and definitions – and this is often forgotten today – involved representatives from a number of different disciplines, including history, social anthropology, economics, political science and sociology, with the result that meanings have also been generated on the basis of specific empirical foundations and methodological approaches. As a consequence, the conceptual history of ‘populism’ is strongly linked to the study of concrete historical phenomena and conditions; heuristic findings have resulted from the fact that structural analogies and functional equivalences have been produced, and different contexts and framework conditions considered. In a history of what is meant by ‘populism’, it is also a question of acknowledging the historicity of the concept, which thus contributes to the historicisation of the academic approaches and interpretations that accompany the historical development of an important key concept of political and academic language (Steinmetz 2011). To a certain extent this is how, at the forefront of

theory formation, a mixture of linguistic and material history emerges, which is concerned with social and academic rules and seeks to expand the interpretative horizons of ongoing public and academic debates that mainly focus on the present.

Lexical History of the Concept

A look at the dictionaries, lexicons and encyclopaedias that are important indicators of knowledge production and are among the central function carriers of knowledge transfer illustrates the relatively late onset of the problematisation of the concept of 'populism'. Until the 1990s, the lemmata for 'populism' were concerned almost exclusively with concrete historical phenomena, without discussing 'populism' as a concept or establishing the content of its meaning. The earliest entries deal with the political movements in Russia and the USA in the nineteenth century, with the People's Party and the Narodniki, both of which, despite being created in completely different contexts, were long regarded as the epitome of populism. Thus, in 1922, in the 26th volume of the Spanish language *Enciclopedia universal ilustrada europeo-americana* (1922, 451), at the time by far the most extensive reference work in the world, a brief entry describing the American movement was to be found under the heading *Populista*. The *Encyclopaedia Americana* (1919, 560f), which was published three years earlier, also contained longer articles on the 'People's Party' and 'Populists', but contented itself with a brief presentation of the history of the party, like that which can be found in the most recent edition, published in 2000 (*The Encyclopaedia Americana* 2000, 413f).

In France, the term *populisme* was first introduced to French dictionaries in 1929, and denoted a literary trend based around Léon Lemonnier and André Thérive, which stood as a counter-current to the tendencies of the literature of the time, which was perceived as being bourgeois, exclusive and detached (Hermet 2001, 20). The authors were concerned with writing down-to-earth texts that were close to the everyday life of the simple man. Until the 1990s, the French language lexicons also limited themselves to naming historical examples in literature and politics, in which it is noticeable that significantly more space was dedicated to the Russian Narodniki than to the American farmers in the *Dictionnaire d'Histoire Universelle* (1986, 1706f), for example, or in the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique d'histoire* (1986, 3760), where talk was of the 'rather vague' ideology of the Narodniki, which was described as having 'a messianic foundation, a belief in the privileged faith of the Russian people'. It is also the case that under the keyword 'populism' in the German language *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie* (1972, 813), there are, until the 1980s, only brief references to the French literary movement, whose aim it was to portray 'the life of the common people'.

From the beginning of the 1990s, there has been an accumulation of entries that give 'populism' both an analytical and a heuristic function. It seems that a change in the experience of contemporary politics and strong journalistic interest led to a rise in the demand for explanatory and interpretational lexical knowledge, with the result that, to a certain extent, 'populism' grew from being a descriptive to an elucidating concept. Accordingly, an entry on *populisme* can be found in the ninth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (published since 1992 and accessible online), which lists the usual historical examples, but also interprets the term in a broader context of political action. Populism is here described as an 'often pejorative attitude, as the behaviour of a person or a political party, which, in opposition to the

ruling elites, act as defender of the people and as a mouthpiece for its aspirations, putting forward ideas that are most often simplistic and demagogic'. In the 19th edition of the *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie* (1992, 364), too, the definition of 'populism' is now extended and is briefly described as an 'opportunistic, demagogic form of politics', which 'seeks to win the approval of the masses (with regard to elections) by overstating the political situation', before being described in a longer entry in the last published edition (2006, 75) as 'a strategy used by political elites and individual leadership personalities to mobilise and secure consensus'.

A similar development can be seen in the specialist social science lexicons which reflect the exponential increase in the number of studies, articles and research projects on populism since the 1990s. In the meantime, substantial contributions on 'populism' have appeared in the important encyclopaedias of sociology and political science, which not only contain research summaries, but also take a position on ongoing academic debates and thereby make a contribution to improving the conceptual awareness and analytical operability of the term (for example, *International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* 2015; *Lexikon der Politikwissenschaft* 2010; *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology* 2007). This tendency is also reflected in the fact that renowned, sometimes controversial scholars in the field have acted as the authors of contributions, for example Torcuato S. Di Tella, who appeared in *The Encyclopaedia of Democracy*, published by Seymour M. Lipset in 1995, Pierre-André Taguieff in the *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, which came out in 2008, or more recently Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, which was edited by Michael Freeden and Marc Stears and published in 2013. In the wake of the recent large growth in scholarship on populism, specialised handbooks on the subject have been published in English (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017b; de la Torre 2019), as well as in French (Dard et al. 2019b).

While, for example, *Das Politiklexikon* (2016, 244) operates on the basis of the instrumentalisation thesis, and thereby postulates that populist politics use 'the emotions, prejudices and fears of the population for its own purposes', the contribution in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary Of Politics* (2009, 422) speaks more generally of 'populist beliefs' that involve the 'defence of the (supposed) traditions of the little man against change seen as imposed by powerful outsiders, which might variously be governments, businesses, or trade unions'. On the whole, this broad entry into the specialist lexicons of knowledge transfer emphasises the boom in the reception and the use of the concept of 'populism' in academic research and in the social sciences in particular, while the respective explanations also show the fundamental difficulty that there is when it comes to meeting certain theoretical requirements and generalising about conceptual proposals for the analysis of populism as a political and social phenomenon. Accordingly, the detailed contribution on 'populism' in the *International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2015, 611) arrives at the somewhat sobering fact that the 'difficulty in pinpointing exactly which actors are populist or not has added to the concept's unsystematic use and the more general conceptual confusion surrounding the term'.

The Founding Forms of Populism

The conceptual genesis of 'populism' is strongly influenced by the use of specific historical case studies which served as the subject for the diagnosis of populism and which were mainly re-

searched by historians (Rioux 2007; Finchelstein 2014). Their focus lay above all on classic populism, or, as Guy Hermet (2001) called it, the ‘founding populisms’. By this he meant the American farmers’ movement with its party-political arm, the People’s Party and the Narodniki in Russia, both of which were formed in the second half of the nineteenth century. For Anglo-Saxon and Western European conceptions, dealing with the American populists was central. As neologisms, ‘populism’ and ‘populist’ entered the vernacular and everyday political circulation in the USA at the beginning of the 1890s (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 1989, 128). This was, to a certain extent, the birth of the political and journalistic debate on ‘populism’, in which the expression simultaneously found itself being used as the actors’ self-designation, a political slogan and an analytical concept, thus transgressing the boundaries between political and construal use. The starting point was the founding of the People’s Party in 1891, which was also known, significantly, as the Populist Party, and which developed out of a number of farmers’ alliances in the South and the Midwest of the USA over the course of the 1870s and 1880s. Consisting mainly of farmers, the lower middle classes and agricultural workers, the party made financial and economic policy demands, such as the nationalisation of the railways, the abolition of the national banking system, a progressive income tax and increased money supply, on the one hand. While, on the other hand, it also demanded reform of the political system, including the direct election of senators, the limiting of the presidential term and the introduction of direct democratic means (Postel 2007).

The research history of the American farmers’ movement illustrates in an exemplary way how controversial discussions have been when it comes to the assessment of populists, as well as to the content and meaning of the notion of populism, and how interpretations and conceptual understanding have changed over time within the field of the historical research. The central question in all of this was whether it was a reactionary, backward-looking and authoritarian movement, or whether it had a progressive, social-reformist and grassroots orientation (Canovan 1981, 46–51). The idea that long dominated the research on the People’s Party and its agrarian precursor movement was that populism was to be seen as a democratising and socially progressive phenomenon, a point of view that was mostly inspired by the influential work *The Populist Revolt*, published in 1931 by the social historian John D. Hicks. In the book, Hicks presented the farmers’ movement as the expression of an agrarian proletarian protest that had rightly drawn attention to the grievances of agrarian capitalism and the corruption in American politics. From this standpoint, populism is also mainly to be viewed in terms of its reformist effect on the political and economic system of the USA. Such a positive use of the term ‘populism’ was increasingly questioned in the 1950s, to the point that it is possible to talk of a ‘revisionist turn’ in the American research debate. Not least against the backdrop of the emerging McCarthyism, which, with its paranoid, anti-intellectual and ostracising features, was seen by many contemporaries as a new form of American populism, US historians began to re-evaluate the farmers’ movement, adding additional meaning to the concept of populism. While emphasising the ideological dimension of populism, Richard A. Hofstadter highlighted nativism, anti-Semitism and conspiracy theories as the hallmarks of the farmers’ movement in his work *The Age of Reform* (1955). On the side of the sociologists, too, critics, such as Edward Shils (1956), who spoke of an ‘ideology of resentments’, or Wilhelm Kornhauser (1959), who, in his work on the so-called *Mass Society*, described populism as a rejection of social pluralism, and as the maintenance of uniformity in reaction to increasing levels of social differentiation.

A new twist in the interpretation of the term can be determined in the 1970s and can be seen in the context of the spread of radical participatory issues and the associated movements for grassroots democracy. Once again, ‘populism’ was now being given a positive connotation when linked with the broad forming of political opinion, direct participation in democratic decision-making processes and socially progressive ideas. Of particular influence was Lawrence Goodwyn’s *Democratic Promise* (1976), which emphasised the direct experience of democratic politics and cooperative collaboration as being central to the farmers’ movement. As he noted, it was crucial for the mobilisation of the time that ‘the Populists believed they could work together to be free individually’ (Goodwyn 1976, 542). It was this combination of the individual and the collective, the fulfilment of the individual through collaboration in the movement that produced the movement’s strength and solidarity. While Hofstadter had particularly emphasised the conspiracy theory elements in farmers’ political and economic criticisms, Goodwyn was now largely content to reproduce the movement’s assessments, namely that the concentration of financial and economic power lay in the hands of a few large companies.

Essentially, according to Goodwyn’s core statement, as critics and reformers, the populists pointed the way to the democratic organisation of industrial society, harking back to the ‘democratic promise’ of the founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson. For Goodwyn, it was also a question of broadening the notion of populism, rather than just being a party-political phenomenon: ‘Self-evidently, the People’s Party was a political institution. But it was also “Populism” – that connotes something more than a party, something more closely resembling a mood or, more grandly, an ethos’ (Goodwyn 1976, X). Until today, therefore, in American debates, populism has been widely interpreted as a reaction to centralist Statism and the omnipotence of public officials and experts, and therefore stands as a symbol of federalism, local autonomy and direct democracy (see also Kazin 1995). To a certain extent, populism is also a part of a democracy’s horizon of experience, and thus also stands as proof of democratic participation in politics. However, the rise to power of Donald Trump has again produced a switch in the interpretation of populism, since his presidency bluntly shows the radical right-wing version of American populism that builds on authoritarianism, racism and conspiratorialism. In addition, it has triggered a renewed research interest in modern media and new forms of communication, which are at the core of his populist strategy (Kazin 2016; Winberg 2017; Jutel 2019).

The Russian Narodniki constitute a second incarnation of the founding forms of populism. The movement consisted mainly of intellectuals and students who began to move from the cities to rural areas in the early 1870s – in some way ‘going to the people’ (*narod* means people) – in order to live with the peasant population and to carry out revolutionary educational work in the countryside. Inspired by pioneering thinkers such as Alexander Herzen and Nikolai Cernyševskij, they saw a social model capable of posing a challenge to emerging agricultural and industrial capitalism in the archaic Russian village community and its collective, cooperative traditions. In their romanticised notion of Russia’s peasant population, the Narodniki firmly believed that there was revolutionary potential in the rural population and in the traditions of the Russian peasantry (Venturi 1960). From 1875, in an attempt to describe this current and its ideas, the term *narodničestvo* emerged, translated into English as ‘populism’ (Pipes 1964; Ionescu and Gellner 1969b, 2), while the terms *Volkstümlertum* and *Volkstümler* were to be found in German as translations for Narodniki (Breitling 1987, 28). In French, a Russian émigré used the term *populisme* to describe the Narodniki movement in a book that was pub-

lished as early as 1912 (Dard et al. 2019a, 11f). In *narodničestvo*, a social revolutionary self-image was expressed, which was based on the idea that the revolution not only corresponded to the interests of the people, who became a revolutionary subject, but that the revolution was actually in direct accord with the will and the desire of the people. Among Marxist theorists, *narodničestvo* increasingly took on an economic significance because it showed the potential for realising a socialist order in Russian society without having to go through a phase of capitalism (Berlin 1960; Pipes 1964; Walicki 1969).

Among French historians, too – to a certain extent *ex post* – the founding forms of populism of the late nineteenth century also include *Boulangisme* (Boulangism) among their number (Hermet 2001; Winock 2007). Thus, *populisme* became, as it were, a kind of substitute term in French, replacing other terms such as *Césarisme* or *Bonapartisme*, which had been used by contemporaries as well as by historical literature for Boulangism. The use of the notion of ‘populism’ is intended to help develop continuities in certain forms of thought and action in French politics. Factors that are seen as being indicative of the populist character of Boulangism include its radical rejection of the ruling *classe politique*, the plebiscitary credo and the call for a strong president, but also the marked cult of personality, as well as the communicative and media marketing and self-presentation of the movement (Passmore 2012). These are also characteristics that were identified in a series of twentieth-century movements and parties, from the interwar *Ligues* to Jean-Marie Le Pen’s National Front. There are also contextual factors, such as the lack of reform of the Third Republic, and constitutional revision with little democratic improvement and rampant corruption, which led the *Boulangistes* to see themselves as a movement of the discontented, who were waiting for their saviour. Furthermore, Boulangism cannot be filed away within the French political dualism of republicans and monarchists at that time, but was rather the expression of the opposition between oligarchs and democrats, and combined forces from both the left and the right (Hutton 1976; Garrigues 1992; Prochasson 1994).

It is noteworthy that this belated designation of Boulangism as an early expression of populism took place in literature at a time when, in connection with the rise of the National Front, the term ‘populism’ experienced a remarkably increased use in French academic language (Dupuy 2002; Taguieff 2007b). Originally published in 1979, the book by the historian Pierre Birnbaum, *Le peuple et les gros*, can be taken as evidence of the, presumably also profitable (for the publishing industry), use of the concept of ‘populism’, which appears in its 2012 reissue under the revised title: *Genèse du populisme. Le peuple et les gros*. While Birnbaum shows in his book how, since the end of the nineteenth century, the assumption that ‘the good people’ have been worn down by leading figures in economics and politics has had a striking continuity in the political life of France, his analysis does not deal with the concept of ‘populism’, despite what the new title might suggest. The same can be observed in the research on Pierre Poujade and his *Union de défense des commerçants et artisans* of the 1950s. In the classical study by Stanley Hoffmann (1956), the movement is by no means described as ‘populist’, yet it is declared some forty years later by Alexandre Dorna (1999, 75) as a ‘paradigm of French populism’. This not only gives Poujadism a precursor role in post-war right-wing populism in Western Europe generally, and particularly in France, but highlights once again the effectiveness of using ‘populism’ as an analytical concept.

Transnational and Transdisciplinary Expansion

Despite the wide variety of application fields for ‘populism’ already described, it was relatively late on that the concept began to be discussed from a cross-national perspective. From the mid-1960s onwards, the use of the concept began to intensify across national and disciplinary boundaries and to circulate within the international academic community. In the sense of Mieke Bal’s (2002, 24) notion of a ‘travelling concept’, ‘populism’ increasingly began to travel ‘between disciplines, between individual scholars, between historical periods, and between geographically dispersed academic communities’. The question thereby arose as to whether there was a ‘populist minimum’ that would make it possible to capture past and present phenomena of populism and enable a journey through space and time with the concept. It was also shown that while it had previously been historians who were primarily interested in populist movements, they were increasingly being joined by social scientists, and issues concerned with the contemporary social and political framework were more and more the focus of research into their causes.

From the middle of the 1960s onwards, the entry of the concept of ‘populism’ into research on South American movements and regimes (Dix 1985; Conniff 1999; de la Torre 2010, 2017) can be seen as the first indicator of this transnationalisation and transdisciplinarity. Sociological studies, especially those of Gino Germani (for example 1955), on the respective regimes of Getúlio Vargas in Brazil (1930–1945) and Juan Perón in Argentina (1946–1955) were the starting point. In an article published in 1965, it was Torcuato S. Di Tella – a sociologist and a student of Germani – who subsequently imported the concept of ‘populism’ when he first applied it against the background of the specific socio-economic and political situation in South America. In contrast to Europe, neither liberal nor socialist currents had great influence here, which made the social and political space more open to populist movements. The specific nature of the Latin American variety of populism is also linked to the region’s late industrial modernisation and its subsequent economic crises. What is characteristic of populism in South America is, on the one hand, its anti-status quo agenda and its nationalist and anti-imperialist features. On the other hand, it was able to draw on relatively broad support among different social classes, and the subsequent lack of organisation proved beneficial for the installation of populist regimes (Di Tella 1965).

Ultimately, the marked influence of personalism played a much more central role in many Latin American examples of populism (Weyland 2001) than the historical examples of the *Narodniki* and the American farmers’ movement. The examples from South America have greatly contributed to the fact that questions over the structure of leadership as well as the style, appearance and personality of leader figures have been incorporated into the definitions of ‘populism’. The leadership of South American populist movements was highly individualised and personalised, and the connection between the leader and the supporters usually took place directly and immediately, without intermediary organisations. Leaders such as Perón and Vargas also exerted an authoritarian style of leadership, acting like people’s tribunes and casting themselves as representatives of the people and defenders of the popular will. To their followers, they were attributed – in the sense that Max Weber uses the term – with a charisma, which in turn decisively contributed to the cohesiveness of the supporters (Craig 1976; Conniff 1999; Roberts 2006).

A second caesura in recent populism research came in the form of an international conference staged at the London School of Economics in 1967 and organised by the journal *Government and Opposition*, and the resulting, aforementioned anthology, *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, which was edited by Ghita Ionesco and Ernest Gellner (1969a), and which Paul Taggart describes as ‘the definitive collection on populism’ (Taggart 2000, 15; emphasis in original). On the one hand, the conference, which was attended by political scientists, sociologists, historians, social anthropologists and economists, highlighted the strong interdisciplinary interest in the subject. On the other, there was the intention to subject ‘populism’ to a kind of conceptual and theoretical examination, and to test its reach as a comparative concept, with a broad scope of focus in terms of time and geography and encompassing a wide spectrum of example countries. Although Isaiah Berlin was somewhat laconic in his concluding comment to the conference, saying that all the participants agreed ‘that the subject was much too vast not merely to be contained in one definition, but to be exhausted in one discussion’ (Berlin et al. 1968, 179), he identified a range of characteristics and circumstances that had arisen from the case studies presented: a specific notion of community, or *Gemeinschaft*, as a coherent and unified society; speaking in the name of the majority; a basically apolitical stance, since society is favoured over the state; the transfer of values from the past to the present; the evocation of enemies and threats that menaces the united, integral group; the belief in an ideal, unbroken man who is neither oppressed nor deceived by anyone; and the transitional edge of modernisation as the framework conditions favourable for populism (ibid. 173–75).

These two important moments in the history of scholarship on populism were due not least to the academic interest in the ongoing processes of decolonisation and the strengthening of the liberation movements, which were accompanied by mobilisation or led to the establishment of regimes whose formation could be understood with the analytical categories of ‘populism’. They were also the starting point for a new methodological dynamic, which was characterised by globally comparative perspectives, but did not lose sight of the heterogeneity and contextuality of the phenomena investigated. Margaret Canovan made a significant contribution to this search for comparative, practicable criteria in her book *Populism* from 1981, when, on the basis of a typology, she designed a historically and spatially comprehensive outline of populism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her aim was to refine the notion of ‘populism’ by detailing ‘different functions of the term as well as the different phenomena to which it can refer’ (Canovan 1981, 300). Proceeding phenomenologically, Canovan distinguished between two main types of populism, the agrarian and the political, whose central commonality was their appeal to the people and the mistrust of the elite.

Canovan subdivided agrarian populism into rural radicalism (with the Farmers’ movement in the USA, the agrarian movement in Germany of the 1890s and the Canadian Social Credit Movement of the 1930s serving as examples), intellectual agrarian socialism (represented by the Russian Narodniki and various twentieth-century movements in Algeria, Tanzania and Bolivia), and the peasant movements in Eastern Europe of the early twentieth century. According to Canovan, populist dictatorships, such as the regime of Juan Perón, were also a part of political populism, as well as populist democracies, where the call for direct democratic means was particularly strong, as the impression prevailed that certain groups and interests were over-represented in a dominant representative democracy. In addition, there was reactionary populism, among whose ranks Canovan included the Governor of Alabama, George Wallace, with his

segregated racial policy, the British politician, Enoch Powell, with his anti-immigration policy, and the so-called ‘politicians’ populism’, which was, according to Canovan, characterised by the fact that it was built on a non-ideological coalition that came together by means of an appeal to the people. Essentially, however, Margaret Canovan found it difficult to filter out a nucleus of populism, and she limited herself to creating a taxonomy of populism by means of the case studies discussed. This is reminiscent of the understanding of ‘populism’ as a syndrome, as Peter Wiles (1969) described it when he identified a number of characteristics and factors whose common occurrence was essential to populism. Canovan (1982, 551) also conceded, therefore, that the types of populism she identified ‘do not really look like seven varieties of the same kind of thing: on the contrary, some of them seem quite unconnected with others’.

Populism as a Strategy or Ideology?

A central discussion that continues to characterise definitions of ‘populism’ even now revolves around the question of whether, first and foremost, the concept encompasses the strategies and forms of politics of movements and parties, or whether it is more of an ideology, a world view (Aslanidis 2016; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017, de la Torre and Mazzoleni 2019). For example, Pierre-André Taguieff (2008, 457) insists that today a rigorous use of the term can only be a limited one, that ‘populism’ can only denote a dimension of ‘political action and discourse’ and is not epitomised by a ‘defined type of political regime’, or by its ‘specific ideological content’. In this understanding, populism is seen as a political method, a discursive means and a rhetorical style, and its appeal to the people is primarily about political communication and performative repertoires (Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Moffitt 2016). If populism is to be understood as a political strategy, then there is a need to examine the incentives for gaining support, the way in which it is positioned with respect to the political system, and the links between citizens and political actors. Depending on the context, populists use their rhetorical means to differentiate between different target groups, such as farmers or workers, while the anti-attitude towards the establishment remains constant (Barr 2009). All populist movements therefore pursue a policy of negation, opposition and protest in keeping with their anti-elite self-understanding and anti-establishment attitude. So it is hardly surprising that the so-called ‘protest-voter thesis’ is particularly popular in electoral research on populist parties, as they see mistrust and resentment of the political and social elites and institutions as being the central voting motives for adherence to these parties (Bergh 2004; Schumacher and Rooduijn 2013).

Overall, the dominant conviction in these positions is that the notion of ‘populism’ primarily covers functional and strategic aspects and makes no kind of statement about ideological quality and content (Aslanidis 2016). This is also supported by the assessment that populist movements lack their own comprehensive, theoretically oriented programme, as well as by the fact that there are hardly any populist theorists (Betz 1994). Thus, Paul Taggart (2000, 4) writes of the ‘empty heart’ of populism, for since it contains no core values and no great visions, populism is marked by its ideologically empty interior. According to Karin Priester (2007, 13; emphasis in original), it is this kind of interpretation of the concept that has led to the fact that in recent literature on populism ‘there has been a lot of research into *how* populists act and communicate, but too little, by contrast, into *what* it is they actually have to say’. On the other

hand, there are authors who stress that the concept of 'populism' is less an indication of strategic, instrumental aspects, but rather a question, first and foremost, of ideological dimensions (for example, MacRae 1969; Rensmann 2006), which some have recently started to label as an ideational approach (Mudde 2017; Hawkins et al. 2019). It is not so much about the way in which ideology is mediated and introduced into politics, but rather the content of the ideology and the ideas and perceptions that lie behind it. In the search for a 'populist minimum', the Manichaean image of the world and of society, in which society is divided into two antagonistic and homogeneous groups, the 'true people' and the 'dishonourable elite' (Mudde 2004) comes to the fore. However, 'the people' in populism are regarded, according to Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (2007, 6), as 'a homogeneous and virtuous community', and any divisions among the people are described as inappropriate, as something created and nurtured by the intellectual and political elites. In fact, these lines of conflict could easily be bridged, 'as they are of less consequence than the people's common "nature" and identity' (ivi.). This also has the effect, as Jan-Werner Müller (2014, 487; emphasis in original) notes, that 'according to the populist *Weltanschauung*, there can be no such thing as a legitimate opposition'. Thus, the populists, with their understanding of a homogeneous 'people', end up in an ideological conflict with pluralistic conceptions that originate from a heterogeneous society consisting of different groups, individuals and interests (Müller 2016). The populist base narrative is also continually determined by the same line of conflict that places the people in opposition to the elite. With this comes fundamental scepticism towards representative democracy (Canovan 1999). Politics must, from a populist perspective, not only always be the expression of a *volonté générale*, but it is also crucial that the people are ultimately sovereign, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau emphasised, and that they themselves exercise their sovereignty without delegating it.

In order to fathom the conceptualisation of 'populism', the question also arises as to which notions of the 'people', the central reference value of populists, are used in it. Are there differences – not least because the notion of 'the people' is one that only appears in its respective equivalents in different national languages, and its conceptual history is therefore shaped in each case by a different interpretative culture (Koselleck 1992, 142)? For example, in Anglo-Saxon language usage, 'the people' can mean both singular individuals and a collection of individuals, a political collective, particularly in the sense of a sovereign people. It is therefore not surprising, according to Margaret Canovan (2005, 86), that 'anglophone political discourse [...] makes it easy for populism and liberalism to share common ground', because they can each bring different notions of people into play. This also explains the dissent in the American debate over the interpretation of populism. By contrast, in French language usage since the French Revolution, *peuple* has largely been intended to refer to the whole community of citizens, a collective as a whole, so to speak (Julliard 1992). In the conceptual tradition of continental Europe, the individual disappears into the communal to a much greater degree, especially in the French term *peuple* and in the German term *Volk*. It is also clear that the semantic amalgamating of *Volk*, *people*, *peuple* or *narod* with the notion of the nation is central to populist movements from the right, for example, where the shift from *demos* to *ethnos* is decisive. In the ideology of right-wing populism, the emotionally charged and symbolically stylised image of the people is combined with the idea of a clearly definable homeland, or 'heartland' (Taggart 2000). Membership of the national community and absolute loyalty towards the people as a nation constitute the defining frame of reference for action in politics and society. Ac-

cording to Yves Mény and Yves Surel (2002, 6), this also illustrates how ‘classic democratic orthodoxy uses ‘the people’ as an abstract construction [...], while the populist ideology or rhetoric may add other dimensions and also perceive “the people” as a community of blood, culture, race and so forth’.

Since populism can certainly not be considered one of the ‘big’ ideologies, such as liberalism, socialism and conservatism, and is too one-sided to be approached only on a strategic and rhetorical level, adopting the ‘thin ideology’ approach offers a kind of middle way of identifying the central aspects of the concept of ‘populism’. In line with Michael Freeden (1998), from this perspective, populism is to be understood as a ‘thin-centred ideology’ because it has no elaborate, comprehensive doctrine at its disposal (Mudde 2004; Rovira Kaltwasser 2011). Or, as Ben Stanley (2008, 95) formulated it, ‘its thin nature means that it is unable to stand alone as a practical political ideology: it lacks the capacity to put forward a wide-ranging and coherent programme for the solution to crucial political questions’. Accordingly, populism needs additional ideological set pieces and connects effortlessly with other world views. The thin ideology approach also proves fruitful in defining the populism of the right since the 1990s. It is a characteristic of right-wing populism that the anti-pluralist populist reference to ‘a normatively idealised and homogenised “people” is directed not only, on the vertical level, towards the “corrupt” elite (against “those above”), but also, explicitly, on the horizontal level, towards the outside’ (Frölich-Steffen and Rensmann 2005, 7). In right-wing populism, therefore, the ‘anti-elitist (vertical) affect’, as it is generally found in populism, in addition receives a ‘xenophobic (horizontal) affect’ (Pelinka 2002, 284). Starting out from the assumption of natural inequality among human beings, it is the exclusionist and anti-egalitarian elements of ideology that are predominantly determinant in right-wing populism. Through the attribution of national, ethnic and cultural characteristics, differences are marked and used as legitimisation of inequality and exclusion. Thus, it is a characteristic of right-wing populist actors that nationalist and xenophobic attitudes are expressed in their agendas and politics.

Finally, in populism from the left, which, not least, received theoretical attention in the analyses of the Latin American cases conducted by Ernesto Laclau (1977; 2005) and was thereby presented as a driving force in democratisation processes, its claim to social egalitarianism and criticism of power is at its forefront. In addition, it often has specific historically determined features, as is the case with the social revolutionary Narodniki in Russia or the radical reform movements in Latin America, where romanticised ideas of the peasantry or anti-imperialist ideas played an important role. In left-wing populism, the ‘corrupt elite’ is primarily associated with the social, economic and financial power of the bourgeoisie, while in the understanding of ‘people’, the classless society serves as a utopian vision (Priester 2012). Here, too, the constitutive populist element is that little space is set aside for dissent, opposition and pluralism, and it is ultimately assumed that something like a people exists as a central political subject. According to Yannis Stavrakakis (2014, 506), therefore, democratic politics can hardly be imagined without populism, that is, ‘without forms of political discourse that call upon and designate the people [...] as their nodal point, as a privileged political subject, as a legitimising basis and symbolic lever to further egalitarian demands’. In recent years, this perspective has been applied in research on various political movements and parties from the left that emerged after the crisis of 2008 in European countries such as Greece, Spain and France (Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis 2019; Agustín 2020).

Conclusions

The history of the concept of 'populism' goes hand in hand with disagreements over its definition, methodological scepticism and lively academic debates. As a travelling concept, 'populism' represents a story of varying degrees of intensity in terms of intellectual interest and academic output, of transfer between disciplines and changing spheres of academic communication, but above all of changes in the subject of investigation. Since the 1960s, it has constantly been a question of trying to enable a general conceptual application of 'populism', as well as a means of comparing concrete phenomena, in order to increase the analytical capacity and the empirical reach of the concept, that is, one which is not merely dedicated to describing populism's phenomena, but also to achieving a certain degree of abstraction. These challenges lie, as it were, within the nature of any conceptualisation; they are a part of the work on concepts, terms and categories, and are inherent in the search for linguistic conceptualisations and generic concepts. In the case of 'populism', however, some aspects that play an important role in the intriguing history of the concept and the controversies that continue to persist today end up in the foreground.

It must be noted, first of all, that the concept of 'populism' is characterised by a marked degree of hybridity. This can be seen in the malleability and adaptability of its definition, and is reflected in its varied, often woolly semantic content, with the result that a multitude of historical phenomena and political movements are, as it were, absorbed within it. Semantic elasticity and changes also mean that in research language 'populism' regularly takes on a substitution function, as the case of Boulangism has shown. The porous semantics, furthermore, make it tempting for various different phenomena to be equated with or, to a certain degree, explained as identical manifestations, which is the case with the example of right-wing populism and right-wing extremism, which is popular in contemporary academic and public debates. In addition, the desire for schematic analytical frameworks and functionalist models, which the social sciences are particularly fond of, also seems to lead to the fact that variability, changeability and historicity have appreciably been lost sight of, and approaches are preferred 'that replace the theory and history of populism with a more quantitative descriptive, and self-proclaimedly pragmatic approach' (Finchelstein 2014, 472).

One of the most intriguing aspects in the debates about populism is the often normatively asked question of whether populism represents a threat or a corrective to democracy. According to this logic, when it comes to establishing the significance of the concept of 'populism', democratic ideals are always also considered and negotiated; populism is explained as a symptom of serious dysfunctions in democracy. Or, as Nadia Urbinati (1998, 116) has put it, 'the debate over the meaning of populism turns out to be a debate over the interpretation of democracy'. While in public and political understanding, populism serves, to a certain extent, as a means of measuring the pulse of democracy, from a democratic theoretical perspective, it is seen as a gauge of democracy. One of the questions that then arise is whether the opportunity for individuals, for all individual citizens, to participate and engage is sufficiently guaranteed to ensure that democracy functions. Or is it not the actual engagement and participation of as many people as possible that determine a functioning democracy? From this perspective, participation and representation are seen as crucial elements of democracy and the emergence of populism is interpreted as a democratic warning sign, whereby the selective, opportunistic and ultimately contemptuous manner in which populists treat representative and participatory