Democratization

ISSN: 1351-0347 (Print) 1743-890X (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/fdem20

The frenemy within: populism's dual role in democratization

Yaprak Gürsoy & Toygar Sinan Baykan

To cite this article: Yaprak Gürsoy & Toygar Sinan Baykan (01 Aug 2025): The frenemy within: populism's dual role in democratization, Democratization, DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2025.2536214

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2025.2536214

Published online: 01 Aug 2025.

DEMOCRATIZATION
https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2025.2536214

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

The frenemy within: populism's dual role in democratization

Yaprak Gürsoy [a] and Toygar Sinan Baykan [b]

[a]European Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), London, UK;
[b]Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Kırklareli University, Kırklareli, Türkiye

ABSTRACT

Different approaches to democracy and populism lead to varied conclusions about their relationship. Some see populism as a threat to democracy, while others argue that it can contribute to democratization by giving a voice to excluded groups. This article provides a multifaceted view and regards populism as a "frenemy" of democracy based on theoretical discussions and historical evidence from around the world. As a friend, populist parties and leaders help integrate underprivileged classes into the political system in authoritarian settings and revitalize politics in liberal democracies that have become unresponsive to ordinary citizens. However, as an enemy, populist actors in power undermine liberal institutions in already unstable contexts, especially when they remain in government for extended periods. We argue that the importance of competitive elections for populism underscores democracy's normative resilience over the past 50 years. Given the evidence of global populist governance so far, the danger of populism is potentially exaggerated compared to totalitarian ideologies in the First Reverse Wave. Perceiving populism only as an enemy stems partly from its conflation with far-right ideology, which obscures another danger: the erosion of political freedoms by non-populist incumbents through illiberal means in the name of protecting democracy itself.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 24 January 2025; Accepted 15 July 2025

KEYWORDS Populism; liberal democracy; autocratization; authoritarianism; fascism; first reverse wave

Introduction

The Third Wave of democratization that began in the 1970s coincided with the rise of populist parties, leaders, and movements. Since 1990, the number of populists coming to power increased almost fivefold globally,[1] "with populists leading almost one third of all democratic governments worldwide since 2010".[2] The surge became notable, especially after 2006, overlapping with a new wave of autocratization,[3] giving the impression that populism is the main culprit behind democratic erosion.

CONTACT Yaprak Gürsoy y.gursoy@lse.ac.uk European Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE, UK

In this article, we review the literature on the relationship between populism and democracy and argue that populism is a "frenemy" of liberal democracy. Populist leaders, political parties and voters want to continue their relationship with democracy, and especially elections, because they benefit from it, particularly in legitimizing themselves. In that sense, populist actors are critical allies that expose the current weaknesses of liberal democracy in representation and addressing the grievances of majorities. Yet, populist actors are also an enemy because their intentions are unclear, and their actions often undermine the very democratic institutions they claim to support. This distinction is important: if populism is regarded only as an enemy, it becomes a force that needs to be stopped. However, if populism is understood as a critical friend, it can revitalize democracy by increasing participation and broadening the range of issues addressed, contributing to democratic resilience.

Guiding our interpretation of this dual relationship between democracy and populism is the understanding that populism is a multifaceted phenomenon. With the rise of global populism, the literature on it has also grown, with four clusters of analysis developing around the ideational[4], political-strategic[5], discourse theoretical[6] and political style or socio-cultural approaches.[7] The literature in the 2000s successfully established the minimal definition of populism as the construction and representation of the general will of the homogenous and pure people, who must be defended against the corrupt elite, by a leader or group of leaders.[8] Despite this conceptual clarification, continued studies within the discourse theoretical and performative approaches led to an emphasis on the cultural, economic, administrative and social ramifications of populism, in addition to the minimal definition.[9] For a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between populism and democracy, we also advocate approaching populism as a complex phenomenon that serves as a mode of linkage between parties, leaders, and citizens.[10] Populism encompasses ideational, mobilizational, and stylistic features, and can also be seen as a governmental practice with tendencies towards personalism, clientelism, and informality.[11]

This complex understanding allows us to combine and appreciate different understandings of populism as beneficial and detrimental to democracy. This is an important exercise since different approaches to populism have given different answers to its relationship with democracy.[12] For example, the discourse theoretical approach highlights possible positive impact, while the political-strategic perspective stresses negative consequences of populism for democracy. Usually, scholars who work within the ideational approach sit somewhere in between and argue that populism can have detrimental or beneficial effects.[13]

The antagonistic nature of populism that juxtaposes the people against the elites unites these perspectives. Most significantly, in Laclau's theory, politics (and by extension, populism) cannot exist without antagonism, which distinguishes it from mere administration.[14] Like Schmitt, who defines the political through the distinction between friend and enemy,[15] Laclau views the political as emerging only in exceptional moments of conflict. Yet in contemporary politics, populism has become a more enduring feature rather than an exceptional one. Populist leaders and parties are now well-entrenched in many countries, including in Western democracies. As a result, they offer solutions to diverse societal problems while their antagonism coexists with administrative governance. This places them in a liminal role between friend and enemy of democracy. Similar to Mouffe's concept of "agonistic politics",[16] this liminal view of populism emphasizes its role within democratic systems as a form of adversarial

engagement rather than outright opposition. Populist actors thrive in tension with their "other" non-populist competitors, relying on their presence to remain politically meaningful. Although one foot of populist actors is always slightly outside the shared institutional realm of democracy, well-entrenched populist parties, either in power or opposition, engage in various informal governmental practices, ranging from clientelism to pork-barrel politics, haphazard social assistance to tactical policy preferences, benefitting and appealing to majorities.[17] As such, populist actors blur the line between governance and contestation, making a comprehensive approach essential to grasp their dual impact on both democratization and autocratization.

The rest of the article develops these arguments and is organised into three main sections. First, we discuss how populism can be understood as an enemy to liberal democracy. Second, we examine how it can also be perceived as a friend. In the third section, we evaluate responses to populism and their consequences for democracy before concluding with an emphasis on the dual nature of populism.

Populism as an enemy to liberal democracy

The relationship between populism and liberal democracy is a contentious one, with many scholars arguing that populism poses a significant danger to liberal democratic principles through democratic backsliding,[18] potentially leading to electoral democracy, competitive authoritarianism, or even full authoritarianism.[19]

Liberal democracy is distinguished by its balance between, on the one hand, popular sovereignty and majority rule, and on the other hand, individual liberties and minority rights.[20] In order to ensure that majority rule does not infringe minority interests, liberal democracy relies on institutional guarantees, such as fair and free elections, as well as freedoms of expression, information and organisation. The rule of law and constitutional guarantees also protect these institutions, typically accompanied by a system of checks and balances to limit the concentration of power.[21]

Populism targets these institutions mainly because of its antagonistic understanding of politics as a struggle between the good people and corrupt elites. This lens leads populists to view their opponents as rivals who need to be defeated and repressed at all costs.[22] As a result, they delegitimize their opponents,[23] create new cleavages in society, intensify polarization, and make coalition governments or cooperation between different views more difficult.[24] This heightened polarization undermines the foundational values of liberal democracy, which rely on pluralism, compromise, and the peaceful coexistence of diverse perspectives.[25] The erosion of these principles can lead to a breakdown in liberal norms, fostering an environment where authoritarian tendencies can thrive.

In addition to the degeneration of liberal democratic values and norms, the governing practices of populists directly attack liberal democratic institutions, as comprehensively argued by Müller.[26] Populists often try to take over the state and control key institutions such as courts, political parties, media, and security services. This practice endangers the rule of law, as well as fundamental freedoms. Furthermore, populists undermine the rule of law by applying laws in discriminatory ways to protect themselves while attacking their opponents.[27] They engage in mass clientelism, dividing society into those deemed worthy of support and those who are not, working against the interests of opposition voters and the minority. They suppress civil society groups and independent media to create a homogeneous populace, which

further infringes on freedom of speech. In public administration, populists tend to rely on an unprofessional team of public servants who are loyal or easily controlled, allowing power to be centralized in the hands of the executive and the populist leader.[28] They rely on extraordinary decrees rather than deliberation with other institutions, which erodes the system of checks and balances.[29]

If evidence from a variety of countries, such as Venezuela, Hungary and Türkiye, that have seen the demise of their democratic regimes in recent years, provides empirical proof of the dangers of populism to liberal democracy, the follow-up question is to understand the underlying reasons as to why and under what conditions populism is a threat. Here, the literature can be grouped under three main perspectives.[30] We will analyse each of these perspectives in detail in the following sections.

Populism as an inherent danger to liberal democracy

Advocates of this argument, such as Müller, assert that populism poses a threat to liberal democracy because of its anti-pluralism.[31] For populists, there is one homogeneous and morally righteous people, exclusively represented by the populist leader(s). Anyone opposing their views is not part of "the people", leading to the claim that those who disagree with the populist leader(s) are also against "the people". In contrast to populism, liberalism rejects the notion of a monolithic people, viewing the majority as consisting of diverse parts and not subscribing to a single general will.[32] In this sense, populism is against liberal democracy by its nature.[33]

Following from its anti-pluralism, populism disfigures liberal institutional norms in two ways, resulting in the attacks described above. First, populists distort the idea of free and fair elections because for them, majorities produced by election results demonstrate the existence of homogeneous people. While in liberal democracies, the will of the majority changes from one election to another and is not permanent, in populism, as Urbinati argues, the majority does not have this temporary quality.[34] Populism does not acknowledge elections as a demonstration of changing majorities and sees them merely as a mechanism to ratify the preconceived general will.[35] Thus, elections become "rituals of political confirmation".[36]

Second, the belief that there is one homogeneous people means that minorities do not exist, or their interests cannot hold the majority hostage. While being a significant threat to minority rights, this perception is also against checks and balances that constrain the executive. Because the populist leaders are claimed to represent the true people, any institution, including the courts, media or opposition parties that disagrees is seen as an enemy. Populists attack liberal guarantees against the tyranny of the majority and dismantle institutions that protect individual liberties.[37] However, this is not only a threat to minority rights. As argued by Albertazzi and Mueller, populism leads to "a dramatic loss of freedom for *every* citizen, including those who presently happen to agree with the political majority of the day on most issues, since they would be prevented from ever changing their minds".[38] In this way and others, in the words of Mounk, populism becomes a "prelude to autocratic rule"[39] because of its intrinsic characteristics.

Forms of populism and contextual factors that endanger liberal democracy

In discussing the potential dangers of populism to liberal democracy, some scholars argue that the extent of the damage is conditional on various factors and not always

as severe as commonly perceived. The type of political regime is particularly significant: as we shall also argue below, in closed or authoritarian systems, populism can have democratizing effects.[40] In such contexts, populist movements can empower marginalized groups, enabling them to voice their concerns and push the regime towards greater democratic representation. Thus, populism is not inherently an enemy of liberal democracy.

Building on the argument that regime type is a crucial condition, populism in liberal democracies becomes a danger, especially in weak party systems and in unconsolidated democracies. In these contexts, liberal democratic values, such as respect for the rule of law, civil society and media, are not fully developed, making them more vulnerable to populist attacks. In such settings, populists are more likely to win the elections, dismantle institutions, rewrite constitutions and undermine liberalism.[41] It is not surprising that countries like Türkiye and Venezuela, which experienced democratic demise due to populism, were already unstable before populists came to power.[42]

Evidence also suggests that presidential and parliamentary systems differ in how they enable or constrain the erosion of democratic institutions, though neither system is inherently more resistant to populism. Presidential systems, particularly in Latin America (e.g. Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru), have often allowed populist leaders to consolidate power due to the direct election of presidents and the concentration of executive authority. A similar dynamic is unfolding during the second Trump administration in the United States, despite the presence of institutional checks and balances. This suggests that presidential systems may be especially vulnerable to executive aggrandizement.[43] In contrast, parliamentary systems typically rely on party discipline and coalition-building, which can constrain populist influence. However, this restraint vanishes when a populist party secures a legislative majority, as seen in Hungary under Fidesz, enabling control over both the executive and legislature and facilitating sweeping institutional changes with minimal opposition.[44] Thus, depending on electoral outcomes, democratic institutions may erode more rapidly in parliamentary systems than in presidential ones, where power is more fragmented. In this sense, as Norris argues, "the real culprit may be pre-existing structural flaws in constitutional designs rather than populism per se".[45]

Not just regime types, but also the duration of populists in power is a significant criterion. The longer populists remain in power, the greater their chances of damaging democracy. However, the question of when populists leave power might also depend on the political and social context, as well as the strength of liberal values. While populists may leave power due to contingent factors, such as internal conflicts within parties and movements, there is considerable evidence to suggest that in consolidated democracies, voters become disillusioned with populists who fail to fulfil their promises, govern effectively, or who become the very elites they once criticized when in opposition.[46] This might explain why in some European countries, such as Greece and Spain, populists were voted out of office where they were the majority and minority coalition partners respectively, without causing significant reversals to the liberal democratic regime.

In addition to contextual factors, the type of populism also matters, and the distinction between inclusionary and exclusionary populism, as Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser highlight, is particularly relevant.[47] Inclusionary populism, exemplified by parties such as SYRIZA in Greece and Podemos in Spain, can advance liberal democracy even when in power by giving voice to marginalised groups, such as lower classes

and minority groups. According to Norris and Inglehart, for example, social and political cleavage lines can intersect with a libertarian form of populism in contrast to "authoritarian populism", which combines values of security, conformity, and obedience with populism.[48] Although more progressive variants of populism can also cause an indirect threat by fuelling a backlash of authoritarian values, in terms of their norms and values, "libertarian varieties of populism arguably pose more ambiguous risks".[49]

Populism becomes a danger to liberal democracy when in power

In a similar vein to the argument presented above, this perspective on the dangers of populism emphasizes conditional factors rather than inherent issues. Specifically, as argued by Caiani and Graziano "it is not populism per se but populism in government that can be at odds with (liberal) democracy".[50] Conversely, populism in opposition can act as a check on the ruling government by highlighting issues that resonate with the public and advocating for reforms.[51]

In addition to what has already been mentioned above, populist rulers in government may find themselves at odds with liberal institutions in two further ways. First, support for populist leaders can wane while in government, partly due to their inability to fulfil promises. To counteract deteriorating support and the possibility of losing power to their opponents, populists repress other contenders of power by directly attacking opposition parties, media and civil society. Populist leaders may also attempt to strengthen their direct linkages with voters through polarizing politics and propagating non-compromising extreme positions, with the hopes that they can generate feelings of positive in-group and negative out-group bias. These feelings of belonging and polarization are expected to reverse dwindling support for populists. In other words, as Weyland argues, when in power, especially if they are not backed by strong parties, populists create enemies and attack liberal institutions to maintain and strengthen their support base.[52]

A similar argument by Levitsky and Loxton posits that populist leaders, often outsiders to the political system, lack the experience and expertise to effectively work with pre-existing institutions. If they do not secure a clear majority in parliament, their outsider status and refusal to negotiate with opponents create tensions within the legislature. Coupled with the support they receive from the electorate to dismantle the established system, they confront institutions, thereby undermining the pillars of liberal democracy, such as the judiciary, legislature, and political parties.[53] A primary example of this process is Alberto Fujimori's *autogolpe* (or self-coup) in Peru in 1992. Faced with opposition, Fujimori closed Congress and reorganized the judiciary, effectively bringing an end to democracy.

In summary, populist actors' anti-pluralism and tendency to undermine institutions make it a significant danger to the foundations of liberal democracy. This is more likely if prolonged populist rule is coupled with already weak party systems and democratic institutions. Under such circumstances, populists find greater chances to distort the meaning of free and fair elections, disregard minority rights, and erode the checks and balances essential for democratic governance.

Populism as a friend of democracy

In an age marked by democratic backsliding, often attributed to the rule of personalistic and populist leaders, the argument that populism can be an ally of democracy may

be met with understandable scepticism. While it is undeniable that populism has negative consequences for the "liberal" component of liberal democracy, any empirical analysis of the relationship between democracy and populism must consider a broader historical context. This context reveals that populism's impact on democracy, both in opposition and in power, has been less than straightforward.

From a theoretical perspective, there are three compelling reasons to view populism as compatible with democracy and even an essential element of it. First, at its core, democracy requires the involvement of the common people, a principle that populists, regardless of their ideological leanings, have consistently championed. From this representative point of view, democracy and populism have common elements: both claim the importance of the people's participation and involvement in governance. Second, when democratic politics is understood not only as a process of consensus but also as an unending process of dissensus,[54] legitimate adversity,[55] and even conflict,[56] populism is certainly closer to democracy than liberalism. As we argued in the introduction, in line with Mouffe's definition of agonism, populist actors usually "recognize the legitimacy of their opponents … [as] 'adversaries' not enemies".[57] Finally, as implied by Laclau, when it comes to constructing the "us" against the oligarchic "other", populists need to build coalitions that bring together diverse groups and demands.[58] In this respect, while populism is conflictual towards the "other", it seeks consensus within the "us". Counterintuitively, this leads populism to align with the consensual orientations of liberal democracy at least by contradicting what is identified as "polarized pluralism",[59] where extreme divisions and fragmentation lead to system-level failures.

With these underlying theoretical perspectives in mind, we will develop our conceptualization of frenemy by arguing below how populism can be a driver of democratization, revitalizer of representation in liberal democracies, and even possibly a contributor to the resilience of democracy in the current era.

Populism as a driver of democratization

Populism, by definition, aims to give voice to marginalized people. This representative character of populism can increase political participation among those previously excluded in a relatively orderly manner, particularly in closed authoritarian regimes. By challenging unresponsive establishments, populist leaders who are often outside the political establishment can drive democratization by helping unorganized and underprivileged sectors concentrate their forces. This dynamic has been observed in various authoritarian regime types, such as objections to authoritarian oligarchic rule, military dictatorships, and hegemonic party regimes. Thus, as Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser argue, populism can play a crucial role in democratization "by giving voice to the people, attacking the authoritarian establishment, and pushing for the realization of free and fair elections".[60]

This inclusive impact of populism has been more visible in Latin America, where at least since the 1930s, populism has served as the vehicle that incorporated the previously excluded and oppressed groups into the newly democratizing political systems in material, symbolic, and political terms.[61] As de la Torre underlines, in Latin America, "populism expanded the franchise, and through mass rallies and demonstrations gave a symbolic sense of inclusion and dignity to the poor and the marginalized".[62] This inclusionary impact of populism was especially notable in Argentine

Peronism, which helped working classes to get incorporated into the political system, a feat that had been unattainable in the decades preceding the 1940s.[63] Additionally, a second wave of populist parties in Latin America sought both formal and informal solutions to the inequalities created by neoliberal policies throughout the 1990s and 2000s, marking a second wave of incorporation.[64]

Another striking example of populism incorporating the underprivileged groups into democracy is the case of Greece. Transition to democracy in the mid-1970s in Greece was followed by the rise of populist PASOK to power in the 1980s. Although its detrimental impact in terms of governance can hardly be ignored,[65] populism and many formal and informal redistributive practices associated with it (most notably "bureaucratic clientelism" as termed by Lyrintzis) benefited broad social sectors.[66] During the critical phase of consolidation, PASOK anchored parts of Greek society to the democratic political system and reversed years of scepticism towards the state generated by the Civil War and military rule.[67]

While it has often been thought that such inclusive orientations were unique to left-wing populists,[68] recent comparative research highlights that some types of right-wing populism can be inclusive in symbolic, political, and material respects, as well.[69] Türkiye in the 2000s is a good example. In its initial phases of rule, with the significant backing of its electoral supporters, Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) removed the tutelage of elite veto players, namely the high judiciary and military, which had prevented further democratization. These years were widely hailed as Türkiye making "impressive progress in democratic political reform, economic liberalization and serious commitment to European-oriented reforms" while its "prospects for continued democratic consolidation" were regarded as "promising".[70]

Populism as a revitalizer of democracy

Populism can also be seen as a reaction to the failures of representation in liberal democracies. After the end of the Cold War, Western democracies arguably became morbid by generating a broad policy consensus among seemingly ideologically opposing forces.[71] This type of collusion, rather than competition, has led to party system cartelization, which went hand in hand with technocratic governance[72] and orthodox neoliberal solutions[73] to economic and social problems. The consensus on pragmatic neoliberal rationalism, guarded by administrative states and mainstream politics, including the EU in Europe, generated feelings of representational deficit in well-established Western liberal democratic regimes, particularly among blue-collar and less well-off white groups.[74] In some contexts, populism has become a response to the rise of "post-democratic politics",[75] and as Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser assert, populism is some form of "democratic extremism … particularly suspicious of all kinds of unelected bodies, which are becoming increasingly powerful today".[76]

When seen from this perspective, the rise of populism appears as a democratic reaction to the pacification of contestation. Populisms on the right and left have given the opportunity to reject the depoliticization of policy decisions in critical realms. As Merkel notes in his contribution to this special issue, one major area that has been depoliticized is economic policy that benefits the rich and burdens the lower strata.[77] Depoliticizing neoliberal economic policies is unsustainable for protecting liberal democracy and is electorally fatal if issues like LGBTQ + rights are prioritized

while wealth distribution is downplayed.[78] Changes in economic policies would also have positive effects on tensions around immigration in the West. Thus, populism's tendency to start new discussions over some of the dogmas of what Nancy Fraser called "progressive neoliberalism"[79] (in particular on issues related to the economy and immigration) could be seen as part of democratic revitalization, regardless of the sometimes-disturbing proposals by populist actors.

Furthermore, populism brought back emotions to the realm of politics, which may be seen as anathema from a liberal democratic perspective. However, as Saward's work draws attention, representative demands do not need to be confined to a framework of rational material interests and programmatic expectations.[80] In democracies, voters should find representatives who look, speak and act like themselves on affective grounds. This has been one of the shortcomings of liberal democracies based on rationalist principles since they turned politics into administration and politicians into bureaucrats, as the logic of neoliberalism and party system cartelization drifted parties and politicians away from the unprivileged masses in socio-cultural terms.

Increasing concerns about the rise of populism also pushed mainstream parties to reconsider their positions on issues, such as immigration, and adopt some of the policies proposed by populists.[81] The consequences may not be considered liberal and pluralist, but re-politicization of such critical policy issues for democracies helped sustain a feeling among voters and citizens that they have a say in their nations' affairs. The impact of populists also extends to the relationships among non-populist parties. In fact, populism (or the danger it posed to liberal mainstream politics) consolidated some democratic practices such as consensual coalition building (see more on this point below).[82]

There are additional indicators that populists have revitalized democracies. Although conclusions vary from one analysis to another and more research is needed,[83] there is empirical evidence to suggest that the presence of populist forces in the parliament contributes to voter turnout in elections, especially in Central and Eastern Europe.[84] In Western European democracies as well, research demonstrates that populist radical right parties trigger increased participation among higher-educated and more politically interested citizens.[85] Similarly, populist parties may have a positive effect on the equality of participation in Europe through encouraging the electoral mobilization of underprivileged segments of the population.[86]

Beyond quantitative indicators regarding the positive impact of populism on electoral participation, there is also qualitative evidence which demonstrates the revitalizing impact of populism on grassroots activism. As Roberts asserts, for example, Chavismo remarkably improved grassroots participation in Venezuela, at least in its initial phase.[87] In Belgium, Lange and Akkerman argue that "the VB [Vlaams Blok] manages to reach out to […] citizens by campaigning actively in neighbourhoods in which the established parties are not or no longer present, but also by organizing a wide variety of party activities, such as barbeques, music festivals, and party congresses".[88] In this way and others, populism brings new energy into established liberal democracies.

Populism as a contributor to democratic resilience

Populism's role in driving and revitalising democracy should also be thought in line with populist actors' efforts to legitimize themselves through elections, which demonstrate the resilience of democracy as a global norm. Based on Merkel's study in this

special issue we define democratic resilience as "the capacity of a democratic regime to absorb external challenges and internal stressors and to dynamically adapt to the changing … conditions … without falling into regime change and abandoning or damaging democracy's defining principles, functions and norms".[89] Considered from this perspective, twenty-first century populism in established democracies of the West can be regarded as an "immune system reaction" or a "fever" that saves the patient from the worst outcome of total democratic collapse, as seen in the twentieth century. Despite all the rhetorical bravado and stylistic transgress, populist actors, especially in well-functioning and institutionally robust democracies,[90] have remained within the boundaries of the democratic system so far. Arguably, populists even helped democratic systems struggling with representation crises to absorb the challenges they encountered. In the past couple of decades, populists have channelled the grievances of many economically marginalized and culturally disappointed lower and middle classes away from ideologically extreme anti-systemic alternatives and incorporated them into political options within the boundaries of the democratic electoral system.

Unlike the First Reverse Wave, where fascist regimes or their decadent forms, such as corporatist dictatorships, rose to power through elections and subsequently abandoned the electoral process, contemporary populism is not readily compatible with extreme forms of authoritarianism or dictatorship.[91] The ideological thinness of populism, which does not go further than its emphasis on the general will of the ordinary people and majorities, leads to ambiguity in political ideals. This puts populism at odds with totalitarianism, which has a clear ideological doctrine that is forcefully and often violently imposed on society. Similarly, populism's anti-establishment claims and anti-bureaucratic governmental practices contradict bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes that were prevalent in Latin America during the Cold War.[92] This is not to say that fascism and populism do not have any common elements.[93] Indeed, they have a strong emphasis on the leader and seek consent through mass mobilisation and support. Majoritarianism and anti-pluralism are common features, with many contemporary populist parties, such as those in Austria, France, and Italy, having roots that trace back to the fascist era. Yet, as argued by Finchelstein and Urbinati "fascism destroyed democracy after having successfully used its means, while populism undermines democracy without destroying it".[94] The existence of elections as a form of legitimacy rather than other "theological forms of sovereignty"[95] and the global discrediting of fascism's extreme violence[96] demonstrate the resilience of democracy as a norm in the Third Wave of democratization following the Second World War.

Further distinctions also need to be made between populism and personal dictatorships. While populism often features personalistic leadership,[97] not all dictatorships are populist. The two are sometimes conflated due to populism's threats to liberal democracy and authoritarian leaders' use of populism as a tactical tool to undermine the opposition,[98] as in the cases of Putin's Russia or al-Sisi's Egypt.[99] However, personalism in populism is constrained by the need to appeal to the electorate and maintain mass support. In contrast, dictatorships rely on narrow elite networks and repression, where clientelism becomes favouritism to exclusive groups without a collective mass character.[100] Historically, Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Duvalier in Haiti and Ceauşescu in Romania exemplified such "sultanistic" regimes characterised by narrow social bases, repression and favouritism at the expense of majorities.[101] In the twenty-first century, Maduro's Venezuela stand out as a case that has started with populism but turned into a similar dictatorship. Erdoğan's recent imprisonment

of opposition leaders, including the mayor of Istanbul, may signal that Türkiye is also on the threshold of transitioning from populism towards a purely autocratic personalist regime by eliminating electoral pressures.

The fact that there are affinities between populism, fascism and authoritarianism makes the claim for the resilience of democracy as a global norm sound like an empirical contradiction. However, we agree with Lührmann and Lindberg that the Third Reverse Wave is slower, and "while democracy has undoubtedly come under threat, its normative power still seems to force aspiring autocrats to play a game of deception".[102] The current characteristics of autocratization in many contexts seem to be the relatively gradual erosion of democracy leading to hybrid regimes, such as competitive authoritarianism,[103] rather than clear forms of abrupt transition to closed or hegemonic authoritarianism. This slow pace is due not to the resilience of liberalism, which has been eschewed, but to the resilience of the democratic component of liberal democracy.

The normative strength of democracy is reflected in the societal importance placed on voting and the empowerment that contested elections provide to underprivileged groups. The importance of democracy has been reinforced by populist discourse and practice, emphasizing the ballot box and political contestation.[104] Moreover, extant empirical studies demonstrate that supporters of populism are by no means against democracy in its core and essential meaning (majority rule based on competitive elections), but to its actual practice in liberal democracies which is inclined to be deeply mediated and highly institutional.[105] In summary, populism has contributed to the resilience of democracy (but not liberalism) through its focus on electoral participation and political representation, which is its most important difference from fascism and authoritarianism.

Evaluating responses to populism and their implications for democracy

The enemies of democracy in the twentieth century, such as military coups, dictatorships, bureaucratic-authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, required conflictual strategies to establish, save or restore democracy. The rise of populism and the ambiguous dangers it poses have diminished this clarity of strategies for protecting democracy. As demonstrated in the previous section, populism can drive democratization by incorporating masses into the political system and revitalize representation in liberal democracies. As a result, it can be considered a critical friend of democracy.

Furthermore, where populism acts as an enemy in cases of its extended rule, the continuation of elections makes it difficult to identify successful coping strategies. While holding elections under unfair and unfree conditions can lead to authoritarianism, elections still provide an opportunity, however challenging, for opposition forces to recapture power during the transition period. As long as elections continue with opposition parties participating, pluralism cannot be entirely eliminated.[106] This explains why there are instances where populists have lost elections despite undermining the judiciary and the rule of law. For example, in 2023, both Poland's governing party Law and Justice (PiS) and Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro were defeated by non-populist candidates. Another significant example is the 2024 Turkish municipal elections, where Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) was defeated by the opposition, which secured more votes for the first time in over two decades. Hence, successful responses to populism should be more nuanced than conflictual strategies or "fighting fire with fire" which usually benefits populists more.[107] In the

following part, we review various responses to populism and discuss their consequences for democracy.[108]

Different electoral strategies against populism and their implications for democracy

In considering electoral responses to populism, distinctions can be drawn between long-standing consolidated democracies and hybrid regimes. In electoral democracies or competitive authoritarian regimes of the Global South, populists usually lack the same kind of financial and institutional resources as the former establishment parties. In order to circumvent this challenge, populist rule generally accompanies the building of robust grassroots organizations. Yet, former elite groups typically cling to their past resources and continue to use the media and political marketing strategies in a top-down manner. This does not provide them with electoral advantages. Furthermore, this top-down approach confirms that they are out of touch with ordinary citizens. As Van Dyck argues with regard to the Andes, if anti-populist forces do not establish robust grassroots organizations, the result will be the extended electoral predominance of populists.[109] The feeling that populists cannot be beaten at the ballot box might also lead to the use of extra-electoral methods, such as coups.

The likely scenario in consolidated democracies is different. While populists long remained at the peripheries, mainstream centrist parties in long-running liberal democracies have opted for electoral and political means to counterbalance them as their influence grew. These strategies have ranged from forming coalitions against populists to including them in governing coalitions. For example, after the recent Portuguese elections, the strategy of a "cordon sanitaire" successfully kept the rising far-right party *Chega* out of the governing coalition.[110] Although this method did not necessarily curtail *Chega's* electoral growth, evidence suggests that including populists in government coalitions in Europe reduces their appeal at the ballot box.[111] One such case is Austria, where accepting the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) into governing coalitions proved effective.[112] This effectiveness may not stem from populists becoming more responsible in coalitions[113] but from their struggles as inexperienced actors within a governing coalition. This dynamic often undermines the populists' strength and unity.[114]

In long-standing liberal democracies, as mentioned in the above section, mainstream parties also increasingly address issues raised by populists and adopt some of their policies, tactics, styles, and discourses to protect their electoral share.[115] For example, mainstream parties in some European democracies embrace the anti-immigration rhetoric or "welfare chauvinism" of populist parties.[116] It seems that such strategies have yielded some good results and curbed the advance of populists with radical right-wing ideologies by taming these actors to some extent and revitalizing European democracies.[117] This outcome aligns with the view of populism as a "frenemy" of democracy by pointing out issues that should not be neglected. Similarly, it highlights populism's potential in contributing to democracy's resilience in a world facing global challenges such as immigration, climate change, geopolitical conflict and war, and financial crisis.

Extra-electoral interventions to populism and their implications for democracy

Political actors' perception of populism informs their strategic responses to it. When populism is seen as the enemy of a democratic order or when it is conflated with

the far-right, the responses tend to be extra-electoral or "militant".[118] Faced with the populist challenge, elites embedded in state apparatuses can deploy anti-democratic methods with the backing of political and economic elites previously occupying critical executive, legislative, and social positions. Especially in Latin America, coups d'état and other violent tactics, such as assassinations, mass repression and massacres, were used against populism in the twentieth century. The quintessential example of this is the traumatic history of Peronism with coups in 1955 and 1976.[119] However, "anti-populist coups d'états"[120] are not only confined to the twentieth century, as Venezuela (2002), Thailand (2006 and 2014), and Türkiye (2016) signify the continued use of this anti-democratic method in an attempt to curb the power of populists.

Other examples to bring down populist parties and incumbents include the use of less violent and more legal instruments, such as impeachment and party closure cases. For example, Abdala Bucaram was accused of lacking the sanity required to lead the country and was impeached by the Ecuadorian congress.[121] In another example, the ruling AKP in Türkiye, alongside being threatened by a military memorandum and a coup attempt, faced party closure cases in its initial years, largely run by judicial elites backed by anti-populist politicians. In France, the leader of the National Rally (RN) Marine Le Pen was banned from running for public office for five years due to corruption charges in March 2025. In other cases, international courts overturned populist decisions in order to protect pluralism and liberalism in policy areas such as property rights or civil liberties.[122]

Although judicial methods utilizing existing domestic checks and balances or international commitments can be considered legitimate, the involvement of courts, especially through unjustified cases, damages democracy by consolidating the majoritarian tendencies of populists. Such strategies validate populist narratives that elites use their institutional power against the will of the people, making any extra-electoral intervention more harmful than beneficial to democracy. Similarly, decisions against populist policies by international courts lead to backlashes against tribunals such as the European Court of Human Rights and result in the mobilization of domestic support against "international elites". A similar process of supranational pressure reinforcing populist narratives and mixed effectiveness is discernible in the case of EU responses and sanctions to populists in member states.[123]

A particularly problematic aspect of the relationship between populism and democracy is the populist proclivities of the contemporary far-right. When radical right parties define "the people" as a specific ethnic or racial group, they pose significant threats to liberal democracy, reminiscent of the First Reverse Wave during the interwar period. This definition also makes it difficult to distinguish between populism and the far-right, leading to a tendency among intellectuals to conflate the two. However, as De Cleen et al. suggest, it is crucial to focus on the far-right content of populist radical right parties rather than their populism when assessing their impact on democracy.[124]

There is an undeniable overlap between populism and the radical right based on examples from European experiences and the minimal definition of populism, which emphasises the pure and homogeneous people.[125] However, a broader view that considers global contexts highlights the cross-class and cross-group character of populism. Populist leaders often construct "the people" from a heterogeneous supporter base, as seen in the experiences of Latin America's left-wing populists and, for example, in Türkiye, where even right-wing populism includes voter segments with different economic resources and ethnic origins. In contrast to these heterogeneous

constructions, the radical right's defence of homogeneous ethnic majority politics can easily transform into intolerant identity politics, which is a danger to any democratic regime. This is the core problem with the populist radical right, which poses a real threat to liberal democracies in the West, stemming not from their populism per se but from their exclusionary ideologies.[126]

The conflation of populism with the far-right results in problems when devising strategies to cope with populists. Extending measures against the far-right to be applied to populism in general and putting all the populists into the same basket with the radical right is unhealthy. As Merkel notes, this could be considered as "militant democracy", which "is today seen by the left in Germany as a legitimate policy against the populist right. Nevertheless, it runs the risk of fostering an illiberal state-oriented 'culture of observation and prohibition'".[127]

The militant democracy approach that sees populism purely as an enemy has a two-fold negative impact. First, as already mentioned above, it reinforces the conviction among populist supporters that the establishment and institutions are against the general will. This would lead to perceptions that they are living under a "neoliberal dictatorship",[128] controlled and manipulated by political and cultural elites.[129] Every time repressive measures are applied through coups, judicial trials or party closures, they feed more grist for populism's mill. They provide only temporary solutions, and they ultimately backfire.[130] Second, extra-electoral measures weaken the liberal claim that freedoms of expression and organization should be preserved at all costs because liberal democracy would only prevail under such circumstances. In other words, a militant democracy approach to populist parties sets off an illiberal vicious cycle. Populism's challenge to liberalism leads to increasingly illiberal measures in the name of protecting liberal values, which further fuels populist illiberalism.

Conclusion

In this article, we have argued that populism plays a dual role as both a friend and an enemy of democracy. We showed that populism poses significant threats to liberal democratic principles, leading to democratic backsliding and, potentially, authoritarianism. Populists target the rule of law and checks and balances while delegitimizing opponents and intensifying polarization. However, we also demonstrated that populism can be an ally of democracy by increasing political participation and giving voice to marginalized groups. Populism challenges elitist tendencies in liberal democracies and revitalizes representation by addressing issues neglected by mainstream parties. Furthermore, populism's focus on elections and political contestation reinforces the resilience of democracy. This dual nature of populism's relationship with democracy is similar to what others have also emphasized, such as Mouffe's understanding of agonistic politics and Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, who have argued that populism can be both a "corrective and a threat to democracy".[131]

Although our analysis of the relationship between populism and democracy is not entirely new, we extended this exercise to a comparison with democracy's enemies in the First and Second Reverse Waves, including fascism, personalistic dictatorships, and bureaucratic-authoritarianism. Through this assessment, we highlighted that populism on its own is not an enemy at the same level. Assuming that it is and conflating populism with the far-right can lead to illiberal strategies that backfire and strengthen populists while undermining liberal democracy directly. By extension, we argued that

strategies such as forming coalitions against populists, including them in governing coalitions, or being more attuned to the issues raised by populists to the extent that they address the grievances of voters can be more effective.

In summary, our approach combines different perspectives to highlight the dual nature of populism, suggesting that some non-populist actors can be more dangerous to liberal democracy than populists. By understanding populism as a "frenemy", we can develop more nuanced and effective strategies to strengthen democratic resilience in the face of global challenges.

Notes

1. Kyle and Meyer, *High Tide?*
2. Benasaglio Berlucchi and Kellam, "Who's to Blame," 823.
3. Lindberg, "Fifty Years."
4. Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist."
5. Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept."
6. Laclau, *On Populist Reason*.
7. Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism*; Ostiguy, "Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach."
8. See Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist" and Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept," as well as Hawkins, *Chavismo and Populism* and Kenny, *Why Populism*.
9. Panizza, Ostiguy, and Moffitt, eds., *Populism in Global Perspective*.
10. Diehl and Bargetz, eds., *The Complexity of Populism*; de la Torre, "Differentiating Populism." For a similar approach also see Woods, "Many Faces of Populism."
11. Our understanding of populism views it as an ideology, discourse, strategy and style involving leaders, political parties, movements, voters, and their relationships. This is why when we refer to "populism" or "populist actors" throughout the paper, we mean all of these together, rather than listing the different components separately each time.
12. We agree with Van Hauwert and Huber that "scholars should give specific attention to the dimensionality of both populism and democracy," see "Populism and Democracy on the Individual Level," 1.
13. Hawkins and Mitchell, "The Effect of Populist Incumbents;" Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart, "Populism and Democracy: The Road Ahead."
14. Laclau, *On Populist Reason*.
15. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*.
16. *Agonistics*.
17. Baykan, *Populism*.
18. Bermeo, "On Democratic Backsliding."
19. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism* and Lindberg, "Fifty Years."
20. Mudde and Kaltwasser, "Populism and (Liberal) Democracy."
21. Schmitter and Karl, "What Democracy Is … And Is Not."
22. Muno and Pfeiffer, "Populism in Power," 263–4.
23. Rummens, "Populism as a Threat," 562.
24. Mudde and Kaltwasser, "Populism and (Liberal) Democracy."
25. Roberts, "Populism and Polarization."
26. *What Is Populism?*, 44–5.
27. Weyland, "The Threat," 23-25; Muno and Pfeiffer, "Populism in Power."
28. Peters and Pierre, "Populism and Public Administration;" Bauer and Becker, "Democratic Backsliding," Baykan, *Populism*.
29. Muno and Pfeiffer, 265.
30. Note that these approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In other words, those who argue that populism is inherently anti-liberal can also claim that its damage to democracy is more extensive under certain conditions.
31. *What Is Populism?*
32. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism;" Albertazzi and Mueller, "Populism and Liberal Democracy."

33. For this reason, populism can be considered as "illiberal democracy." See, Pappas, "Populists in Power."
34. *Me the People*.
35. Müller, *What Is Populism?*
36. Finchelstein and Urbinati, "On Populism and Democracy," 23.
37. Albertazzi and Mueller, "Populism and Liberal Democracy," 348.
38. Ibid, 347.
39. Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy*, 35.
40. de La Torre and Peruzzotti, "Populism in Power."
41. Huber and Schimpf, "Populism and Democracy;" Enyedi and Whitefield, "Populists in Power."
42. Weyland, *Democracy's Resilience to Populism's Threat*.
43. Linz, "The Perils of Presidentialism;" Bermeo, "On Democratic Backsliding."
44. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism*.
45. "The Populist Challenge," 553.
46. For an overview of the impact of populism in power on public trust and satisfaction with the democratic system, see Norris, "The Populist Challenge," 554–5; Muis, Brils, and Gaidyte, "Arrived in Power."
47. "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism."
48. *Cultural Backlash*.
49. Norris, "The Populist Challenge," 549. Also see Huber and Schimpf, "Populism and Democracy."
50. "The Three Faces of Populism," 576.
51. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism: Corrective *and* Threat."
52. "Populism and Authoritarianism," 320.
53. Levitsky and Loxton, "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in the Andes."
54. Rancière, *Dissensus*.
55. Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*.
56. Laclau, *On Populist Reason*.
57. *On the Political*, 20.
58. Laclau, *On Populist Reason*.
59. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*.
60. "Populism and (Liberal) Democracy," 17.
61. Conniff, ed., *Populism in Latin America*; Auyero, *Poor People's Politics*; Vilas, "Participation, Inequality, and the Whereabouts;" Hilgers, ed. *Clientelism in Everyday*; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism;" Filc, "Latin American Inclusive."
62. de la Torre, "Populism in Latin America," 209.
63. Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties;* Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*.
64. Silva and Rossi, eds. *Reshaping the Political Arena*.
65. Pappas, *Populism and Crisis Politics*.
66. Lyrintzis, "Political Parties in Post-Junta Greece."
67. Gürsoy, *Between Military Rule and Democracy*.
68. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism."
69. Selçuk, *The Authoritarian Divide*.
70. Freedom House, *Turkey in Transit*, 5.
71. Mair, *Ruling the Void*.
72. Scanni, "Opposites but Similar?"
73. Mouffe, *On the Political*; idem., *For a Left Populism*.
74. Moffitt, *Populism*.
75. Crouch, *Post-democracy*.
76. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism: Corrective *and* Threat," 208.
77. Merkel, "What Is Democratic Resilience."
78. Ibid.
79. Fraser, *The Old Is Dyin*g.
80. Saward, *The Representative Claim*.
81. Wolinetz and Zaslove, eds. *Absorbing the Blow*.
82. Selçuk and Hekimci, "The Rise of the Democracy;" Riera and Pastor, "Cordons Sanitaires."
83. Hawkins and Mitchell, "The Effect of Populist Incumbents."
84. Leininger and Meijers, "Do Populist Parties Increase Voter Turnout?"

85. Immerzeel and Pickup, "Populist Radical Right Parties."
86. Huber and Ruth, "Mind the Gap!"
87. Roberts, "Populism and Democracy in Venezuela,"153.
88. Lange and Akkerman, "Populist Parties in Belgium," 43.
89. Merkel, "Democratic Resilience."
90. Weyland and Madrid, eds., *When Democracy Trumps Populism*; Weyland, *Democracy's Resilience to Populism's Threat*.
91. Finchelstein and Urbinati, "On Populism and Democracy."
92. O'Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism*.
93. de la Torre, "Fascism and Populism."
94. Finchelstein and Urbinati, "On Populism and Democracy,"16.
95. Ibid.
96. Finchelstein, "Fascism and Populism."
97. Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept."
98. Frantz, Kendall-Taylor and Wright, *The Origins*, 47–50.
99. Gurganus, "Putin's Populism;" Khamis and Fowler, "Taming the People."
100. Van den Bosch, *Personalist Rule*.
101. Chehabi and Linz, *Sultanistic Regimes*.
102. Lührmann and Lindberg, "A Third Wave of Autocratization," 1108.
103. Levitsky and Loxton, "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in Latin America," 160.
104. See, for example, the importance attached to "democracy" or the ability to "choose … leaders in free elections" by the majority of Turkish people, revealed in the latest World Values Survey data.
105. Van Hauwert and Huber, "Populism and Democracy on the Individual Level."
106. de La Torre and Peruzzotti, "Populism in Power," 52.
107. Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism and the Question."
108. For a summary of responses to populism and their critiques, see Malkopoulou and Moffitt, "Responses to Populism."
109. Van Dyck, "Why Not Anti-Populist Parties?," 364.
110. Santana-Pereira and Nina, "Resilience of the Cordon Sanitaire."
111. Riera and Pastor, "Cordons Sanitaires."
112. Fallend and Heinisch, "Collaboration as a Successful Strategy."
113. Mair, *Ruling the Void*.
114. Fallend and Heinisch, "Collaboration as a Successful Strategy."
115. Schwörer, *The Growth of Populism*.
116. Schumacher and Van Kersbergen, "Do Mainstream Parties Adapt?"
117. Akkerman, Lange and Rooduijn, eds., *Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties*.
118. Malkopoulou and Moffitt, "Responses to Populism."
119. Biglieri, "Peronism and Its Legacy."
120. Baykan, Gürsoy and Ostiguy, "Anti-Populist Coups d'État."
121. de la Torre, *Populist Seduction*.
122. Voeten, "Populism and Backlashes."
123. Scheppele, "How Viktor Orbán Wins;" Scheppele and Morijn, "Money for nothing?"
124. de Cleen, Glynos and Mondon, "Populist Politics." Also see a similar conclusion by de Lange and Böckmann, "Populists in Opposition."
125. Mudde, "Populist Zeitgeist."
126. Moffitt, "Liberal Illiberalism?"
127. Merkel, "What Is Democratic Resilience."
128. Madariaga, "Neoliberalism."
129. Roberts, "With Trump's Win."
130. Baykan, Gürsoy and Ostiguy, "Anti-Populist Coups d'État."
131. Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism: Corrective *and* Threat." See also Moffitt, *Populism*, for a similar position.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Yaprak Gürsoy is Professor of European Politics and Chair in Contemporary Turkish Studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). Her research on civil-military relations, regime change, populism, and foreign policy has been widely published in leading academic journals. She is the author of *Between Military Rule and Democracy: Regime Consolidation in Greece, Turkey, and Beyond* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2017)

Toygar Sinan Baykan is an Associate Professor of Politics at Kırklareli University, Türkiye. He is the author of *The Justice and Development Party in Turkey: Populism, Personalism, Organisation* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) and *Populism as Governmental Practice: Spatial, Operational and Temporal Dynamics* (Routledge, 2024). His articles and reviews have appeared in *Third World Quarterly*, *Party Politics*, *Political Studies Review* and *Mediterranean Politics*.

ORCID

Yaprak Gürsoy http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8909-6819
Toygar Sinan Baykan http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7385-5873

Bibliography

Akkerman, Tjitse, Sarah L. de Lange, and Matthijs Rooduijn, eds. *Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe*. London: Routledge, 2016.

Albertazzi, Daniele, and Sean Mueller. "Populism and Liberal Democracy: Populists in Government in Austria, Italy, Poland and Switzerland." *Government and Opposition* 48, no. 3 (2013): 343–71.

Auyero, Javier. *Poor People's Politics*. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2001.

Bauer, Michael W., and Stefan Becker. "Democratic Backsliding, Populism, and Public Administration." *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance* 3, no. 1 (2020): 19–31.

Baykan, Toygar Sinan. *Populism as Governmental Practice – Spatial, Operational and Temporal Dynamics*. London: Routledge, 2024.

Baykan, Toygar Sinan, Yaprak Gürsoy, and Piere Ostiguy. "Anti-Populist Coups D'État in the Twenty-First Century: Reasons, Dynamics and Consequences." *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (2021): 793–811.

Benasaglio Berlucchi, A., and Marisa Kellam. "Who's to Blame for Democratic Backsliding: Populists, Presidents or Dominant Executives?" *Democratization* 30, no. 5 (2023): 815–835.

Bermeo, Nancy. "On Democratic Backsliding." *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 1 (2016): 5–19.

Biglieri, Paula. "Peronism and Its Legacy." In *Research Handbook on Populism*, edited by Yannis Stavrakakis and Giorgos Katsambekis, 84–94. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2024.

Caiani, Manuela, and Paolo Graziano. "The Three Faces of Populism in Power: Polity, Policies and Politics." *Government and Opposition* 57, no. 4 (2022): 569–88.

Chehabi, H. E., and Juan J. Linz, eds. *Sultanistic Regimes*. London and Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Collier, Ruth Berins, and David Collier. *Shaping the Political Arena – Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement and Regime Dynamics in Latin America*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009.

Conniff, Michael L. ed. *Populism in Latin America*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999.

Crouch, Colin. *Post-Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity, 2004.

De Cleen, Benjamin, Jason Glynos, and Aurélien Mondon. "Populist Politics and the Politics of 'Populism': The Radical Right in Western Europe." In *Populism in Global Perspective – A Performative and Discursive Approach*, edited by Pierre Ostiguy, Francisco Panizza, and Benjamin Moffitt, 155–77. London: Routledge, 2020.

De la Torre, Carlos. "Differentiating Populism – The Complex Constructions of the Leader and the People." In *The Complexity of Populism*, edited by Paula Diehl and Barbara Bargetz, 36–52. London: Routledge, 2024.

De la Torre, Carlos. "Populism in Latin America." In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, edited by Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, 195–213. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

De la Torre, Carlos. *Populist Seduction in Latin America*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010.
De la Torre, Carlos, and Enrique Peruzzotti. "Populism in Power: Between Inclusion and Autocracy." *Populism* 1, no. 1 (2018): 38–58.
De la Torre, Carlos. "Fascism and Populism." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Populism*, edited by Michael Oswald, 163–76. Springer International Publishing, 2021.
de Lange Sarah, L., and Larissa Böckmann. "Populists in Opposition: A Neglected Threat to Liberal Democracy?" *PS: Political Science & Politics* 58, no. 1 (2025): 72–76. doi:10.1017/S1049096524000313.
Diehl, Paula, and Brigitte Bargetz, eds. *The Complexity of Populism – New Approaches and Methods*. London: Routledge, 2024.
Enyedi, Zsolt, and Stephen Whitefield. "Populists in Power: Populism and Representation in Illiberal Democracies." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Representation in Liberal Democracies*, edited by Robert Rohrschneider and Jacques Thomassen, 582–98. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
Fallend, Franz, and Reinhard Heinisch. "Collaboration as a Successful Strategy Against Right-Wing Populism? The Case of the Centre-Right Coalition in Austria, 2000–2007." *Democratization* 23, no. 2 (2016): 324–44.
Filc, Dani. "Latin American Inclusive and European Exclusionary Populism: Colonialism as an Explanation." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 20, no. 3 (2015): 263–83.
Finchelstein, Federico, and Nadia Urbinati. "On Populism and Democracy." *Populism* 1, no. 1 (2018): 15–37.
Finchelstein, Federico. "Fascism and Populism." In *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism*, edited by Carlos de la Torre, 307–18. London: Routledge, 2018.
Frantz, Erica, Andrea Kendall-Taylor, and Joseph Wright. *The Origins of Elected Strongmen: How Personalist Parties Destroy Democracy from Within*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024.
Fraser, Nancy. *The Old Is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born – from Progressive Neoliberalism to Trump and Beyond*. London and New York: Verso, 2019.
Freedom House. *Turkey in Transit: Democratization in Turkey*. Accessed December 07, 2024. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/Turkey%20in%20Transit.pdf, 2008.
Gurganus, Julia. "Putin's Populism Trap." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, November 21, 2017. Accessed December 07, 2024. https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2017/12/putins-populism-trap?lang=en.
Gürsoy, Yaprak. *Between Military Rule and Democracy: Regime Consolidation in Greece, Turkey and Beyond*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017.
Hawkins, Kirk A. *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
Hawkins, Kirk A., Ryan E. Carlin, Levente Littvay, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, eds. *The Ideational Approach to Populism: Concept, Theory, and Analysis*. London: Routledge, 2018.
Kirk A., Hawkins, and Grant A. Mitchell. "The Effect of Populist Incumbents on Democracy." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 58, no. 1 (2025): 77–81. doi:10.1017/S1049096524000453.
Hilgers, Tina, ed. *Clientelism in Everyday Latin American Politics*. New York: Palgrave, 2012.
Huber, Robert A, and Christian H Schimpf. "Populism and Democracy—Theoretical and Empirical Considerations." In *Political Populism: A Handbook*, edited by Reinhard Heinisch, Christina Holtz-Bacha, and Oscar Mazzoleni, 329–44. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/londonschoolecons/detail.action?docID=5519112.
Huber, Robert A., and Saskia P. Ruth. "Mind the Gap! Populism, Participation and Representation in Europe." *Swiss Political Science Review* 23, no. 4 (2017): 462–84.
Immerzeel, Tim, and Mark Pickup. "Populist Radical Right Parties Mobilizing 'the People'? The Role of Populist Radical Right Success in Voter Turnout." *Electoral Studies* 40 (2015): 347–60.
Kenny, Paul. *Why Populism – Political Strategy from Ancient Greece to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023.
Khamis, Sahar, and Randall Fowler. "Taming the People: Comparing Protests and Populism in Arab and American Politics." *Frontiers in Communication* 6 (January 2022): 1–11.
Kyle, Jordan, and Brett Meyer. *High Tide? Populism in Power, 1990–2020*. London: Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2020.
Laclau, Ernesto. *On Populist Reason*. London and New York: Verso, 2005.
Lange, Sarah L., and Tjitse Akkerman. "Populist Parties in Belgium: A Case of Hegemonic Liberal Democracy." In *Populism in Europe and Americas – Threat or Corrective for Democracy*, edited

by Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 27–45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
Leininger, Arndt, and Maurits J. Meijers. "Do Populist Parties Increase Voter Turnout? Evidence from Over 40 Years of Electoral History in 31 European Democracies." *Political Studies* 69, no. 3 (2021): 665–85.
Levitsky, Steven, and James Loxton. "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in Latin America." In *Populism in Europe and Americas – Threat or Corrective for Democracy*, edited by Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 160–81. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
Levitsky, Steven, and James Loxton. "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in the Andes." *Democratization* 20, no. 1 (2013): 107–36.
Levitsky, Steven. *Transforming Labor-Based Parties in Latin America: Argentine Peronism in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
Lindberg, Staffan I., "Fifty Years of Third Wave(s): –from Democratization to Autocratization." *Democratization* (this issue).
Linz, Juan J. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy* 1, no. 1 (1990): 51–69. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/225694.
Lührmann, Anna, and Staffan I. Lindberg. "A Third Wave of Autocratization Is Here: What Is New About It?" *Democratization* 26, no. 7 (2019): 1095–1113.
Lyrintzis, Christos. "Political Parties in Post-Junta Greece: A Case of 'Bureaucratic Clientelism'?" *West European Politics* 7, no. 2 (1984): 99–118.
Madariaga, Aldo. "Neoliberalism Has Always Been a Threat to Democracy," Jacobin, Accessed November 19, 2024. https://jacobin.com/2021/06/neoliberalism-democracy-populist-right, 06.02.2021.
Anthoula, Malkopoulou, and Benjamin Moffitt. "Responses to Populism: Militant, Tolerant, and Social." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 58, no. 1 (2025): 91–95. doi:10.1017/S1049096524000234.
Mair, Peter. *Ruling the Void – The Hollowing of Western Democracy*. London: Verso, 2013.
Merkel, Wolfgang. "What Is Democratic Resilience." *Democratization* (this issue).
Moffitt, Benjamin. "Liberal Illiberalism? The Reshaping of the Contemporary Populist Radical Right in Northern Europe." *Politics and Governance* 5, no. 4 (2017): 112–22.
Moffitt, Benjamin. *Populism*. Cambridge: Polity, 2020.
Moffitt, Benjamin. *The Global Rise of Populism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016.
Mouffe, Chantal. *The Democratic Paradox*. London: Verso, 2000.
Mouffe, Chantal. *On the Political*. London: Routledge, 2005.
Mouffe, Chantal. *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. London: Verso, 2013.
Mouffe, Chantal. *For a Left Populism*. London: Verso, 2019.
Mounk, Yascha. *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018.
Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, eds. *Populism in Europe and Americas – Threat or Corrective for Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America." *Government and Opposition* 48, no. 2 (2013): 147–74.
Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. "Populism and (Liberal) Democracy: A Framework for Analysis." In *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?*, edited by Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 1–26. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. "Populism: Corrective *and* Threat to Democracy." In *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?*, edited by Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 205–22. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
Mudde, Cas. "The Populist Zeitgeist." *Government and Opposition* 39, no. 4 (2004): 542–63.
Muis, Jasper, Tobias Brils, and Teodora Gaidyte. "Arrived in Power, and Yet Still Disgruntled? How Government Inclusion Moderates 'Protest Voting' for Far-Right Populist Parties in Europe." *Government and Opposition* 57, no. 4 (2022): 749–78.
Muno, Wolfgang, and Christian Pfeiffer. "Populism in Power—A Comparative Analysis of Populist Governance." *International Area Studies Review* 25, no. 4 (2022): 261–79.
Müller, Jan-Werner. *What Is Populism?* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.
Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Norris, Pippa. "The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracies." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Representation in Liberal Democracies*, edited by Robert Rohrschneider and Jacques Thomassen, 544–62. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
O'Donnell, Guillermo. *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966–1973, in Comparative Perspective*. Translated by James McGuire and Rae Flory, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
Ostiguy, Pierre. "Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach." In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, edited by Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, 73–97. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
Panizza, Francisco, Pierre Ostiguy, and Benjamin Moffitt, eds. *Populism in Global Perspective: A Performative and Discursive Approach*. London: Routledge, 2021.
Pappas, Takis S. "Populists in Power." *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 2 (2019): 70–84.
Pappas, Takis S. *Populism and Crisis Politics in Greece*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
Peters, B. Guy, and Jon Pierre. "Populism and Public Administration: Confronting the Administrative State." *Administration & Society* 51, no. 10 (2019): 1521–45.
Rancière, Jacques. *Dissensus – On Politics and Aesthetics*. London: Bloomsbury Press, 2016.
Riera, Pedro, and Marco Pastor. "Cordons Sanitaires or Tainted Coalitions? The Electoral Consequences of Populist Participation in Government." *Party Politics* 28, no. 5 (2022): 889–902.
Roberts, Kenneth M. "Populism and Polarization in Comparative Perspective: Constitutive, Spatial and Institutional Dimensions." *Government and Opposition* 57, no. 4 (2022): 680–702.
Roberts, Kenneth. "Populism and Democracy in Venezuela Under Hugo Chávez." In *Populism in Europe and Americas – Threat or Corrective for Democracy*, edited by Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 136–59. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
Roberts, Kevin D. "With Trump's Win 'Ordinary' Americans Declared Independence from the Elites." *The Heritage Foundation*, Accessed November 19, 2024. https://www.heritage.org/conservatism/commentary/trumps-win-ordinary-americans-declared-independence-the-elites, 11.11.2024.
Rovira Kaltwasser, Cristóbal. "Populism and the Question of How to Respond to It." In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, edited by Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, 489–507. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
Rovira Kaltwasser, Cristóbal, and Paul Taggart. "Populism and Democracy: The Road Ahead." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 58, no. 1 (2025): 96–100. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096524000842.
Rummens, Stefan. "Populism as a Threat to Liberal Democracy." In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, edited by Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, 554–70. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
Santana-Pereira, José, and S. Rogeiro Nina. "The Relevance and Resilience of the Cordon Sanitaire in Portugal: The March 2024 Legislative Elections." *South European Society and Politics* 29, no. 2 (2024): 243–268. https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2024.2413857.
Sartori, Giovanni. *Parties and Party Systems*. Colchester: ECPR Press, 2005.
Saward, Michael. *The Representative Claim*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
Scanni, Francesco Maria. "Opposites But Similar? Technocracy and Populism in Contemporary European Democracies." *Administration & Society* 55, no. 5 (2023): 1007–1029.
Scheppele, Kim Lane. "How Viktor Orbán Wins." *Journal of Democracy* 33, no. 3 (2022): 45–61.
Scheppele, Kim Lane, and John Morijn. "Money for Nothing? EU Institutions' Uneven Record of Freezing EU Funds to Enforce EU Values." *Journal of European Public Policy* 32, no. 2 (2024): 474–97.
Schmitter, Philippe C, and Terry Lynn Karl. "What Democracy Is … and Is Not." *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 3 (1991): 75–88.
Schumacher, Gijs, and Kees Van Kersbergen. "Do Mainstream Parties Adapt to the Welfare Chauvinism of Populist Parties?" *Party Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016): 300–312.
Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political: Expanded Edition. Translated and with an Introduction by George Schwab*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
Schwörer, Jakob. *The Growth of Populism in the Political Mainstream – The Contagion Effect of Populist Messages on Mainstream Parties' Communication*. Cham: Springer, 2021.
Selçuk, Orçun, and Dilara Hekimci. "The Rise of the Democracy – Authoritarianism Cleavage and Opposition Coordination in Turkey (2014–2019)." *Democratization* 27, no. 8 (2020): 1496–1514.
Selçuk, Orçun. *The Authoritarian Divide – Populism, Propaganda, and Polarization*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2024.
Silva, Eduardo, and Federico M. Rossi, eds. *Reshaping the Political Arena in Latin America – From Resisting Neoliberalism to Second Incorporation*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018.

Urbinati, Nadia. *Me the People: How Populism Transforms Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019.
Van den Bosch, Jeroen J.J. *Personalist Rule in Africa and Other World Regions*. London: Routledge, 2023.
Van Dyck, Brandon. "Why Not Anti-Populist Parties? Theory with Evidence from the Andes and Thailand." *Comparative Politics* 51, no. 3 (2019): 361–88.
Van Hauwaert, Steven M., and Robert A. Huber. "Populism and Democracy on the Individual Level: Building on, Yet Moving Beyond the Supply Side." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 58, no. 1 (2025): 82–86. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096524000301.
Vilas, Carlos M. "Participation, Inequality, and the Whereabouts of Democracy." In *The New Politics of Inequality in Latin America – Rethinking Participation and Representation*, edited by Douglas A. Chalmers, et al., 3–42. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
Voeten, Erik. "Populism and Backlashes Against International Courts." *Perspectives on Politics* 18, no. 2 (2020): 407–422.
Weyland, Kurt. "Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics." *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 1 (2001): 1–22.
Weyland, Kurt. *Democracy's Resilience to Populism's Threat: Countering Global Alarmism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024.
Weyland, Kurt. "Populism and Authoritarianism." In *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism*, edited by Carlos de la Torre, 319–33. London: Routledge, 2018.
Weyland, Kurt. "Latin America's Authoritarian Drift: The Threat from the Populist Left." *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 3 (2013): 18–32.
Weyland, Kurt and Raul L. Madrid, eds. *When Democracy Trumps Populism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
Wolinetz, Steven, and André Zaslove. *Absorbing the Blow – Populist Parties and Their Impact on Parties and Party Systems*. London and New York: ECPR Press – Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.
World Values Survey. "Online Data Analysis. World Values Survey Wave 7: 2017–2022, Country: Turkey." Accessed November 26, 2024. https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp.
Woods, Dwayne. "The Many Faces of Populism: Diverse But Not Disparate." In *The Many Faces of Populism: Current Perspectives*, edited by D. Woods and B. Wejnert, 1–25. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2014.