

Frank A. Stengel, David B. MacDonald
and Dirk Nabers (eds.):

**POPULISM AND WORLD POLITICS:
EXPLORING INTER- AND
TRANSNATIONAL DIMENSIONS.**

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The book, titled *Populism and World Politics: Exploring Inter- and Transnational Dimensions*, is a new addition to populism literature. The book's editors deserve appreciation for their bold and timely attempt not just to explain the term 'populism' but also to try to understand its hitherto little explored use in International Relations. They have done a wonderful job of including examples from diverse regions of the world to account for the differing use of the word 'populism' in myriad contexts, and to help untangle the enigma surrounding the usage of the term. This work uniquely distinguishes itself from the plethora of recently churned out accounts of populism by producing an account of populism from international perspectives specifically to understand the reasons for the emergence of movements like the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, and DIEM 25, which defy national boundaries in multiple senses.

While a lot has been written on populism, and in particular recently there has been a spurt in populism literature, this work by Sangel, MacDonald and Nabers finds an exceptional place amidst the available literature both for the novelty of the theme as well as the quality of argument which is proffered to explain the theme. This is arguably the first work of its kind to attempt to 'explore the inter- and transnational dimensions of Populism and the

World Politics'. It broadens its appeal by keeping the canvas of its exploration quite wide – from examining Populist trends in countries like New Zealand, Canada, India, Spain, the United States etc., to applying a multiplicity of approaches from empiricism to theories of anthropology and sociology etc., to help explain the growing rise of populism in different regions of the world.

Meticulously divided into three parts, this volume carries twelve academically enriched chapters as well as an excellent Introduction and a crisp Conclusion. The Introduction very nicely sets the tone of the work by giving a theoretical accounting of the importance of understanding populism's inter- and transnational aspects in a more systematic manner. It particularly highlights the increasingly more observable characteristics of international politics, of late, in terms of 'the denationalisation of political rule' complemented with the 'politicisation of international authority' and 'cross border interaction between populists' (p. 7). Moreover, the success and the failure of populist parties and movements, as we see, are more and more often contingent upon transnational interactions.

The first part of the book, titled 'Theoretical Issues in Global Populism Research', which contains three chapters, attempts to underline the theoretical approaches to understand populism and global politics. As populism gains sway the world over, there arises the consequent need to study populism beyond the confines of national borders. In their chapter, Chatterjee, Doody and Crilley forcefully analyze the connection between populism and the global media to underline the significance of looking at populism as a 'transnational communication logic'. They organize their study by analyzing 'three different types of actor utilising populist communication logics in a range of communicative settings: a tabloidized online offshoot of the UK's legacy media,

the Indy100; the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (NSC) on Facebook; and Russia's state-funded international broadcaster and intended soft power instrument, RT (formerly Russia Today)' (p. 75). The other two chapters similarly explain populism by emphasizing populist leadership and populist use of media.

The second part of the volume, 'Populism and Foreign Policy', contains six chapters each explaining the tactics of populist leaders in different countries. Of critical interest in this part is the chapter by Brian Budd, which explores the failed populist campaign of Canadian Conservative MP Kellie Leitch. Budd explains how the form of populism that became successful in the United States failed to find takers in Canada because '... the diffusion of populism from one country to the next is contingent on distinct political culture'. Cases from Latin America, New Zealand and India are incisively discussed in successive chapters to further buttress the point.

'Populism and International Politics', the third part of the book, consisting of three chapters, emphasizes the global and international dimensions of the rise of populism. In his chapter, Patman proffers the idea that the rise of populism has, in fact, resulted in intensifying the spirit of the liberal order to address its shortcomings, like rising civil conflicts, environmental decline, and increasing inequality. Markowitz posits the idea that the rise of populism owes much to the 'socio-material phenomenon' and not just the employment of rhetoric by populist leaders. Building his argument on the rancorous issue of 'genetically

modified organisms' in the European Union, he shows how material, natural and technological forces play their parts in sustaining the issues. The chapter by Skonieczny brings forth the critical role of emotions in populist discourse by deeply analyzing the debate surrounding anti-trade protectionism related to the Trans-Pacific Partnership and trade between China and the United States.

Finally, the conclusion – a combined take by Stengel, MacDonald and Nabers – succinctly summarizes the entire argument of the book by outlining a three-point agenda for studying the connection between populism and world politics. This includes analyzing the specific ideologies and foreign policy positions of the populists, taking account of their respective domestic opportunity structures, and of course the nature of the prevailing international context. Offering suggestions for future research on populism and international relations, the editors propose issues such as the organization of populist leaders in transnational networks, involvement of foreign powers in domestic elections, the common intellectual roots of the populists etc.

Overall, 'Populism and World Politics: Exploring Inter- and Transnational Dimensions' is a very well-timed and extremely welcome addition to the literature of International Relations and Populism studies, to understand the relationship between the two. This volume fills a vital gap in the available literature related to populism.

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