



SUMMER SCHOOL IN GLOBAL POLITICS, DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY 2021

Nationalism and the far right

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Date: June 28 – July 2

Time: 9.00 am – 11.00 am (CEST, Barcelona time)

Format: online

Few would disagree today that liberal democracy is in crisis under the pressure of nationalism, populism and identity politics. Yet the consensus crumbles once we move past this rather banal observation and start discussing the nature of this crisis and how to best respond to it. For some, this is a crisis of liberalism marked by (depending on where you stand on the Left-Right spectrum) the rise of authoritarian nationalist populism or divisive identity politics; for others, it is a crisis of democracy caused by neoliberal globalism and the concomitant erosion of national sovereignty.

The point of departure of this course is the argument that what we are witnessing today is more a question of retreat from liberalism than anything else, for procedural democracy and elections are still the only game in town, however contested they may be. In fact, as the vast literature on democratization shows, most problems associated with what political scientists call “democratic backsliding” (e.g. electoral manipulation, voter apathy, institutional tinkering, the dismantling of rule of law and checks and balances) are either directly caused by or intrinsically related to the retreat from liberalism and the rise of nationalism.

Even a cursory list of issues with which we are grappling today would be sufficient to expose the nature of the challenge these trends pose: the growing appeal of populist discourses and strategies and their reflection on mainstream politics, in particular on issues related to security, immigration and austerity; the simultaneous and seemingly paradoxical fragmentation of the European project and its further consolidation as a nation-state writ large with ever-changing “others”; the rise and, at least according to some, the fall of multiculturalism; the changing nature of sovereignty, citizenship, territoriality—among others.

This course will seek to understand our current political predicament, reflecting on the nature of nationalism today, and its relationship with kindred concepts such as populism, nativism and racism. It will also explore its thorny connection with far right politics, both theoretically and empirically, focusing on a few selected case studies.

Session 1. Nationalism and Populism: Concepts, Definitions

What is nationalism and what is populism? Are contemporary populist movements across Europe and the West comparable, or is populism just a buzzword used to describe disparate phenomena? What is the relationship between nationalism and populism? Are populists necessarily nationalist?

Required reading:

Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovinsky Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, Chapter 1.

Jan-Werner Müller, *What is Populism?*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016, Introduction and Chapter 1

Recommended reading:

Andreas Wimmer, “Why Nationalism Works and Why It Isn’t Going Away”, *Foreign Affairs*, 98 (2), 2019, pp. 27-35.

Jan-Werner Müller, “The Myth of the Nationalist Resurgence”, *Foreign Affairs*, 98 (2), 2019, pp. 35-42

Session 2. The Populist Challenge: Economy, Immigration and Culture

How can we account for the inexorable rise of populism? Is populism a reaction to neoliberal globalization and growing inequalities of wealth and income? How do

immigration and rapid demographic change contribute to populist politics? To what extent is populism a “cultural backlash” against the real or perceived loss of national sovereignty?

Required reading:

William A. Galston, “The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy”, *Journal of Democracy*, 29 (2), 2018, pp. 5-19.

Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin, *National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy*, London: Pelican, 2018, Introduction and Chapter 1.

Recommended reading:

David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics*, London: Hurst & Co, 2017, Chapter 2.

Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom is in Danger and How to Save It*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018, Chapters, 4, 5 and 6.

Session 3. The Far Right: Ideology, Membership, Voters

What are the key ideological features of the far right? Who are the members of far right parties? Who votes for far right parties and politicians? Are all supporters of far right parties “fascists”?

Required reading:

Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today*, London: Polity, 2019, Introduction, Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 10.

Recommended reading:

Silke Baer, Oliver Kossack and Anika Posselius, “Gender Might Be the Key. Gender-Reflective Approaches and Guidelines in Prevention of and Intervention in Right-Wing Extremism in Europe”, in Michaela Köttig, Renate Bitzan, Andrea Petö (eds), *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 351-68.

Paula Biglieri and Luciana Cadahia, *Seven Essays on Populism*, Cambridge: Polity, 2021, Essay 7.

Session 4. The Far Right And Liberal Democracy

Does the far right pose a threat to liberal democracy? Are populists illiberal and anti-democratic? How can we contain the far right threat and strengthen liberal democracy?

Required reading:

Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom is in Danger and How to Save It*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018, Introduction.

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die?*, New York: Crown Publishing, 2018, Chapter 4.

Recommended reading:

Simon Tormey, *Populism*, London: Oneworld, 2019, Chapter 4.

David Renton, *The New Authoritarians: Convergence on the Right*, London: Pluto, 2019, Introduction, Chapter 2 and 6.

Session 5. A Crisis of Liberalism or Democracy?

Is democracy in decline? How can we explain the crisis of liberal democracy and the concomitant rise of hybrid or authoritarian regimes? Are we already in a “post-liberal” age?

Required reading:

Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die?*, New York: Crown Publishing, 2018, Introduction.

Nancy Bermeo, “On Democratic Backsliding”, *Journal of Democracy*, 27 (1), 2017, pp. 5-19.

Recommended reading:

Marc F. Plattner, “Is Democracy in Decline?”, *Journal of Democracy*, 26 (1), 2015, pp. 5-10.

Larry Diamond, “Thinking about Hybrid Regimes”, *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2), 2002, pp. 21-35.

Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism”, *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2), 2002, 51-65.