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Conclusion: Populism, Foreign Policy, and World Politics

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This edited volume has called for an improved dialogue between populism researchers and IR scholars. In the individual chapters, a carefully selected group of international experts has outlined some of the benefits of cooperation, and has sketched out the potential contours of an international study of populism. The contributors have outlined theoretical approaches to the study of populism and global politics in Part I, scrutinized populist foreign policies with a broad range of comparative case studies and theoretical reflections in Part II, and discussed the global and international dimensions of the rise of populism in Part III. In this conclusion, we will briefly sketch a preliminary agenda for studying the nexus between populism and world politics. We propose a three-step model consisting of an analysis of (1) populists' specific ideologies and foreign policy positions, (2) their respective domestic opportunity structures, and (3) the international context.

First, any systematic attempt to assess the impact of populism on world order should begin with a typology of different populist parties and movements (their specific ideological views), and their foreign policy positions. In contradistinction to claims that populism as such might be a universally negative phenomenon, populism scholars in this volume stress the importance of drawing distinctions between populists and their movements.1 Populism as a

thin-centered ideology can be combined with a number of different ideological elements,2 and these elements can engender distinct foreign policy positions. While it is certainly true that populists in general often criticize various aspects of international cooperation and integration, it is important to note differences if one wants to explain and analyze populists' foreign policy positions. This is even more important when it comes to problematizing to what extent populists are a danger to "the West," world order, the European Union, etc. Thus, while left- and right-wing populists both often oppose the EU, the right frequently does so through the lens of nationalist (and nativist) ideologies, while the left's Euroscepticism is generally motivated by the EU's neoliberal policies.3 Right-wing populists with nativist conceptions of the people tend to be more skeptical of international cooperation, and less inclined to support supranational governance arrangements like the EU, which infringe on the people's self-government.

Similarly, more exclusionary forms of populism tend to be less open to multinational cooperation. Nevertheless, a careful contextual analysis is always necessary, as even right- and left-wing populists are not united by a unified and coherent ideology. For instance, although both are examples of right-wing populism, Trump advocates protectionism,4 while the German Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) explicitly argues in favor of free trade and multilateral trade agreements.5 Moreover, populist positions will also depend on where parties are based and on how selected international issues impact on their society. Some will oppose a world economic order that advocates free trade and is built on IOs such as the World Trade Organization and the World Bank, others will oppose (some) political aspects of world order, like sovereignty, self-determination, or the assumption that liberal democracy should form the normative basis of international politics.

Second, to what extent populist policy positions are adopted as official state policy depends on domestic structure and institutional opportunities and constraints. Here, researchers can draw on IR studies of domestic politics and liberalism.6 While political parties in general can influence policy through agenda-setting, populists in government have a higher chance of being able to push through their agendas. At the same time, even populists in government are not free to act as they please, especially if they are in a coalition government, where they will be constrained by coalition agreements and the desire to maintain functional and productive relationships with their governing partners. Even in the United States, where the government is not hampered by coalition partners and the president is more influential in matters of foreign policy than in many other countries, (s)he is significantly constrained by Congress, which controls taxation and determines funding for all federal departments and agencies. Trade agreements and treaties must also be ratified by Congress.7 Research on intergroup dynamics8 and bureaucratic politics9 suggests that even in strong presidential systems, heads of state/government face significant constraints by other players. Moreover, a veto player like an independent judiciary can provide a significant obstacle to the implementation of foreign policy goals.10 Trump learned this the hard way in his attempt to close the US borders to people from Muslimmajority countries. In addition, an incumbent can be constrained by past decisions, for instance international treaties or trade agreements. These factors have to be taken into account when assessing the potential impact of populism on both domestic and world politics.

Third, foreign policies do not necessarily translate directly into international effects. International repercussions, for instance effects on regional or world orders, also depend on the international configuration of state preferences in specific settings. Liberal IR theory suggests that whether the assumption of government power by populists leads to conflict or

cooperation depends precisely on this configuration.11 Thus, while it might be true on average that rightist parties will be more conflict-prone than leftist ones,12 things might prove to be more complicated.13 Indeed, given the already existing transnational cooperation between different right-wing populists, it is reasonable to assume that once in government they might be inclined to continue cooperating within their group (the same might apply to populists on the left).14 What this suggests is that more research will be needed to see how and under which conditions populists in government support or undermine multilateralism or maybe even establish some forms of "regularized intergovernmentalism".15

Trump's presidency offers, for good or ill, an excellent laboratory to examine whether and to what extent the assumption of government power by populists translates into foreign policy change. Given the radicalness with which Trump and other populists differ in their foreign policy positions from mainstream parties, populism provides a good test case to examine whether personalities, ideologies, or structural factors (systemic as well as domestic) matter most to the making of foreign policy. Trump and other alleged populists in power would provide interesting test cases to see to what extent foreign policy does actually change if someone with radically different views enters office. Research on leadership styles, personality traits, and ideology would likely suggest it will,16 while, say, bureaucratic politics (let alone realist) approaches might expect little change.17 To be sure, one would have to still analytically distinguish between effects of Trump's personality and action that is the result of (populist) ideological positions. To that end, populism and IR scholars should work together in a new research program on comparative populist foreign policy.

In terms of further research, different strands may be pursued on the basis of these findings. As will have become clearer throughout this volume, a number of international or even global dimensions can be seen as constituting populist success. These include globalization, the

expansion and depoliticization of global governance, and regional integration.18 So far, these studies have treated the relationship between international developments and populism as relatively straightforward and causal. However, as authors from different theoretical perspectives have argued,19 political reality should be better understood as a social/discursive articulation. Any "reaction" to international developments is more the result of a specific discursive framing or production than to an unmediated reality. To view globalization as a force which objectively exerts particular types of pressures on governments to adapt is far too simplistic. 20 As such, it is certainly worth exploring how a specific discursive production contributes to the resurgence of nationalist discourses and demands for unilateralism. Here, the discursive approach to the analysis of populism has already gained a head start.21 So far, these studies have mainly focused on theoretical questions such as how social movements emerge and how certain discourses become hegemonic. However, they could also make a contribution to analyzing how international developments are articulated in discourse and are linked to policy demands (for instance for protectionism or unilateralism).

Finally, populism scholars and IR researchers could analyze how populist actors organize in transnational networks. As noted by some researchers, populist actors are often united by common intellectual sources and connected in transnational networks. This aspect remains underexplored in the literature on populism, yet could be extremely important in understanding the success of some parties, through, for example, Russian financial aid for European right-wing populist parties. A special case might also be the active intervention by foreign actors into the domestic politics of another country.22 Although the full extent of the Russian involvement in the 2016 U.S. presidential election still remains to be uncovered, it is undoubtedly true that Russian actors tried to influence elections in favor of Trump via a targeted social media strategy. Moreover, while populism researchers have focused some

attention on populist contagion,23 they could certainly profit from increased exchange with IR scholars interested in transnational advocacy coalitions and transnational networks more generally.24 Here, again, domestic opportunity structures come into play as an important limiting factor.25 Thus, IR scholars would do well to take populism research into account, for scholars outside IR have spent a significant amount of time theorizing the phenomenon, distinguishing it from related issues, and systematizing different forms of populism. Researchers outside IR will benefit by engaging with issues related to global politics, which can contribute to a better understanding of the rise of populism. This volume aims at closing at least some of the existing research gaps while signaling new directions for populism studies and IR into the future.

Notes

1. Zeemann (this volume), March (2017), Verbeek and Zaslove (2015, 2017).

2. Mudde (2007).

3. Chryssogelos (2017), Stavrakakis and Katsambekis (2014), but see Halikiopoulou et al. (2012).

4. Tierney (2016).

5. AfD (2016).

6. Bueno de Mesquita (2002), Bueno de Mesquita and Smith (2012), Moravcsik (1997).

7. Milner and Tingley (2015: ch. 4), Ray (2013: ch. 5).

8. Hermann and Hermann (1989).

9. Allison and Zelikow (1999).

10. Tsebelis (2002).

11. Moravcsik (1997).

12. Kaarbo (2012).

13. Switzer (2016).

14. For instance the Greek leftist party Syriza and its Spanish equivalent Podemos share the same intellectual roots (McKean 2016), namely the work of the late Argentinian political theorist Ernesto Laclau (2005).

15. Krotz (2010).

16. Inter alia, Bell (2002), Byman and Pollack (2001).

17. E.g. Allison and Halperin (1972), Allison and Zelikow (1999).

18. Chryssogelos (2017), Verbeek and Zaslove (2017), Zürn (2004).

19. E.g., Jervis (2006), Mintz and Redd (2003), Nabers (2015), Sylvan (1998).

20. Watson and Hay (2003).

21. Stavrakakis (2017).

22. Verbeek and Zaslove (2017).

23. Rydgren (2005).

24. Bloodgood (2011), Keck and Sikkink (1998), Madsen and Christensen (2016), Pierce and Hicks (2017), Slaughter (2004). See also Stengel and Baumann (2018).

25. Risse-Kappen (1995).

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