

policy outlook and strategy of each of its members, something that Stuenkel does only in part for Brazil. Above all, the elephant in the room is China, and it is left alone. Behind all the references to the group's economic power, to its spectacular growth in recent years, to the huge expansion of its trade, and to its potentially system-changing impact lies the Chinese giant. The widely—and perhaps wrongly—perceived marginality of most of its members is left unchallenged and even unmentioned: Russia is quickly declining, India is still waiting in the wings, while Brazil, and especially South Africa, simply do not yet have the heft or the consistent economic performance needed to shake global governance. Is there really something to the BRICS beyond China?

In the end, the book looks like a missed opportunity. For once, an edited volume by a disciplined group of country specialists sharing a basic analytical framework was really called for. Stuenkel does his best, but given the task, it is simply not enough.

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Carlos de la Torre, ed., *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015. Table, index, 484 pp; hardcover \$80, paperback \$30, ebook \$30, web pdf \$30.

In the 1980s, apocryphal proclamations about the demise of populism, particularly in Latin America, were commonplace. Three decades later, evidence suggests otherwise. Today, populist leaders, movements, and political parties straddle the globe, from Hugo Chávez in Venezuela to Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Syriza in Greece, the Front National in France, and Michael Sata in Zambia. Despite the proliferation of different varieties of populism in different parts of the world, the study of populism still remains largely confined to particular geographical regions. Populism in Latin America is studied separately from populism in Europe, which, in turn, is studied separately from populism in Africa, and so on (there are one or two exceptions; e.g., Mudde and Kaltwasser).

As a consequence, the literatures often speak past each other. Those interested in Latin American populism tend to focus on macro-level structural factors, such as political institutions, party structures, or income distributions, in order to explain variation in the electoral success of populist politicians. In contrast, those interested in European populism have focused mostly on the micro-level determinants of populist support, rooted in postmodern identity crises and economic insecurity as a consequence of increased market integration.

Carlos de la Torre's recent edited volume is a welcome corrective to this trend. Together with a series of theoretical and empirical chapters, the contributions attempt to synthesize the study of populism across very different regions and to broaden "the comparative study of populism to Africa, Australia, Thailand, the United States, Europe, and Latin America" (2). Central to this synthesis, and to the volume as a whole, is the concept of the people, which is treated as a discursive con-

struct (3). What becomes important, then, and what enables comparison across very different cases, is how and by whom the people are defined and constructed, relative to political elites and in association with the political institutions of the state.

The book is divided into two major parts. The first part, including the introduction, consists of eight theoretical chapters. Some of these chapters are more normative in their theorizing than others. For example, the chapters by Paulina Ochoa Espejo and Andrew Arato warn of the authoritarian dangers inherent in populism, in contrast to the chapter by Benjamín Arditi, which highlights the potential emancipatory power of populist understandings of the people as representation. Others still offer a more traditional social scientific theoretical frame for understanding the emergence of populism in Latin America and Europe (e.g., the chapters by Kenneth Roberts, Robert Jansen, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser).

There are some real gems in these theoretical chapters. For example, Ochoa Espejo warns us that in our efforts to avoid issues of political morality when we study populism as social scientists, we inadvertently ascribe normative judgments to the phenomenon by accepting the distinction between populism and democracy (60). So very true. De la Torre, in his well-framed and comprehensive introductory chapter, suggests that populism lies somewhere along the continuum between totalitarianism and democracy. However, because populists assume that they embody the will of the people and that the will of the people is always right, this means “they might have a hard time accepting that they could lose popular elections” (13). Witness the protests led by Andrés Manuel López Obrador after the 2006 elections in Mexico. It is this aspect of populism that might undermine representative democracy.

Jansen proposes a conceptualization of populism that conceives of populist mobilization as a political project (167), allowing for populism to operate in two domains, a mobilizational and a discursive domain. In this way, Jansen provides something of a bridge between definitions of populism that are centered on political strategies or mobilizations by political elites (*à la Roberts*) and definitions that are rooted in discursive strategies (*à la Rovira Kaltwasser*).

Two chapters in particular stand out. Rovira Kaltwasser provides an impressive synthesis of existing explanations for the emergence of populism in the Americas and in Europe that will be of use to scholars and students alike. This discussion produces a neat typology of existing theoretical approaches, divided according to demand- or supply-side explanations and national and international variables, which allows us to identify the particular catalyst in each case for the division of society into the antagonistic camps of the “pure people” and the “corrupt elites” (191). For those interested in explaining how populism emerges and how it intersects with political parties, civil society, and social movements, Roberts’s chapter is perhaps one of the best places to start. This chapter, prefaced with a wonderful discussion that argues that “populism without sociopolitical mobilization can be little more than empty rhetoric” (142), provides a framework for understanding the variation in the success of populist parties across Latin America as a consequence of a crisis of representation following the introduction of neoliberal market reforms by left-wing and left-of-center governments. This framework, however, is not confined

to Latin America. Echoes of this dynamic can be seen in the emergence of Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece.

The richness of these theoretical chapters is one of the strengths of this volume but also one of its major weaknesses. The purpose of this theoretical section is to provide a unifying theoretical frame for the subsequent seven empirical chapters, but this is never quite achieved. This is not to undermine the quality of the empirical chapters. They provide detailed and insightful analyses of populism (and “the people”) from Africa to Western Europe to the United States to Latin America, but nevertheless, the theoretical and empirical sections just seem a little too disconnected. Part of this stems from the fact that all the studies use different definitions of populism. Some, for example the Roberts chapter, employ political definitions of populism, while others use a minimal discursive definition of the concept that pits populists and elites in a Manichean struggle between good and bad. Others still, such as Jansen, seek some form of middle ground between both. Employing different definitions to study and explain the same concept can have advantages. For one, if many studies use different definitions and operationalize populism in a variety of ways, it can reduce measurement error. On the other hand, it also means that different dependent variables will lead to the identification of different causal variables and underlying mechanisms.

This all means that the theoretical chapters at the beginning do not provide a complete common, unifying frame. They make some very important and interesting points, but they do so from quite contrasting perspectives. Instead of a coherent whole, the volume reads like quite disparate takes on populism in different parts of the world jumbled, as opposed to knitted, together. Which, in a way, brings us back to the difficulty of synthesizing the study of populism across very different regions, which was the volume’s original motivating principle.

However, this is a relatively minor criticism. For students and academics interested in the study of populism from both a theoretical and an empirical perspective, this volume is a valuable resource indeed. I, for one, shall be assigning it in my graduate-level seminars.

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