



Call for Papers

Do Populists in Power Undermine Liberal Democracy? Comparisons between Europe and the Americas

Research workshop in Ottawa, 25-26 September 2025

Populism is both a longstanding feature of politics and a contemporary global phenomenon. In the 21st century, we have witnessed a surge in the popularity and electoral fortunes of populist parties and leaders in established democracies, particularly in Europe and the Americas. Nationally, populists have reached the pinnacle of power in countries as diverse as Brazil, Argentina, the United States, Italy or Hungary. In many more countries on the two continents, populists are in power at lower levels of government. For this research workshop and publication project, we call for contributions looking at the relationship between populism and democracy with a particular focus on the extent to which populists in power undermine (liberal) democracy. We are interested in both comparative research designs and country case studies. In particular, we call for fine-grained analysis which could help answer the following questions:

- Which factors (political, institutional, cultural, etc.) influence whether, or how (much), populists in power undermine democracy? Which aspects of democracy are most at threat? What determines whether, or to what extent, damage to democracy can be repaired after a populist government has left office?
- Do populists in power constitute a lesser threat to democracy at lower levels of government, compared to the national level? Does it make a difference for the quality of democracy if a populist party is the junior or senior coalition partner, or if it is a leftist or a rightist populist party?
- How do mainstream parties position themselves towards democracy when populists are in power? Under which conditions will their support for key democratic principles also dwindle? Can the presence of a strong populist opposition trigger similar kinds of democratic backsliding?
- How has the presence of populist governments in key member states, and the role of their nominees in the European Commission, affected governance and democracy in the European Union? How do populist governments act within other regional or international settings? How does their international posture affect democracy?

The Workshop will be held in Ottawa on September 25th and 26th, 2025. We invite established and emerging scholars working on populism in Europe and the Americas to submit extended abstracts of roughly 500 words to the two workshop convenors Achim Hurrelmann

(achim.hurrelmann@carleton.ca) and Daniel Stockemer (dstockem@uottawa.ca) by February 1st, 2025. We plan to invite 8 to 10 scholars to this workshop and will cover travel, accommodation, and meals of all participants. We plan to publish the papers selected for this workshop in a special issue, and by submitting an abstract, authors agree to include their paper in the special issue.

This workshop is organized jointly by the Centre for European Studies (Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence) at Carleton University and by the Konrad Adenauer Research Chair in Empirical Democracy Studies at the University of Ottawa.

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