Editor's Introduction: The Troubled State of Populism

By Alexandra W. Lough

Introduction

The 2016 U.S. presidential campaign and election was bizarre for several reasons, aside from the outcome. From accusations of Russian interference to the increasingly strange and unconventional behavior of the candidates—remember when Donald Trump gave out Senator Lindsey Graham's cell phone number?—the campaign produced a seemingly endless sequence of head-scratching moments that are unlikely to be erased from public memory anytime soon, especially as the nation moves into a new presidential election cycle.

For all its oddity, one of the strangest occurrences in the 2016 campaign, particularly to American historians, was the use of the term "populist" to describe then-candidate Donald Trump *and* Senator Bernie Sanders. How could the same label possibly describe Trump, a self-described billionaire with his promises to build a wall along the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border and to also repeal Obamacare, *and* Sanders, who called for universal healthcare and stricter economic regulations? As Charles Postel (2016), a preëminent historian of populism in the United States noted: "Pairing Sanders and Trump indicates just how flexible the term populist has become and poses the question as to whether populist has any useful meaning and if so, what it might be."

After speaking with multiple political scientists, Uri Friedman (2017) of *The Atlantic* suggested that "the moral dimension of populism" explains why a member of the gilded elite like Trump can adopt the populist label. "He doesn't argue, 'I am as rich as you'," Friedman explained. "What he argues is, 'I have the same values as you. I'm also part of the pure people.'" According to its modern usage, populism is

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"more a political logic than a policy program or sincerely held belief system." Thus, Trump can claim he represents the interests and values of ordinary Americans without actually proposing reforms that will improve their lives.

Based on this interpretation and in light of recent political events, it is tempting to dismiss populism as yet another bankrupt political label. But doing so might be a mistake. Although he failed to secure the Democratic nomination, Bernie Sanders advanced a form of what many pundits have labeled "economic populism" that shared many similarities with the Populists of the 1890s (Salam 2018; Molyneux 2017; *The Telegraph* 2016). "Like Sanders," Postel (2016) explains, "the Populists called for a political revolution—using the electoral process to create a more humane and equitable society." The similarities go deeper:

> [Populists] pushed for a progressive income tax to make the wealthy shoulder more of the tax burden. They demanded public control and regulation of banking, railroads, and other key industries. They advocated for government investment and currency expansion to stimulate the economy, create jobs, build infrastructure, and provide relief to debtors. They wanted more public colleges and universities and to have them better serve the needs of working people. (Postel 2016)

Sound familiar?

Populism *did*, and in some manifestations, *continues* to stand for something. For reasons explored later in this introduction, after 1955, populism was reduced to a shell of its former meaning. Rather than the comprehensive program supported by the Populists of the 19th century, scholars and the media began defining populists by what they protested and by the "us-versus-them" rhetoric many of them adopted. As a result, populism was frequently attached to movements on the far right of the political spectrum.

By examining populist movements of the past in the United States and around the globe today, this issue seeks to re-inject meaning into populism. Utilizing a variety of social scientific approaches, the authors in this issue provide alternative and sometimes competing definitions of populism. They seek to explain and evaluate such disparate events as Jacob Coxey's 1894 march to Washington, DC that protested high unemployment and the 2016 decision by British voters

to leave the European Union (the Brexit vote). In analyzing the various ways populism has surfaced as an ideology, movement, and term used in recent political discourse, the articles in this issue contribute to a richer and more disciplined interpretation of populism.

While this issue's exploration reveals stark differences in contemporary and historical applications of the term "populism," it also uncovers several commonalities. One commonality includes leadership by political "outsiders"—candidates who emerge without the support of mainstream political parties or who hold and promote more extreme views than those historically accepted by their party. A second similarity is the tendency of populist leaders and political candidates who adopt the populist label to make direct appeals to "the people," who they claim have been left behind or marginalized by current policies that favor the elite or other minority groups. The articles examining recent populist leadership in South America and Great Britain particularly highlight these commonalties.

A third connection, more closely analyzed in the articles looking at the origins of populism in the United States, includes the promotion of policies designed to reward or encourage those who *produce* wealth, rather than non-producers—those who merely manipulate or control wealth. As historian Walter Nugent (2008: 23) writes, the Populists of the 1890s were among the first reformers in the United States to "articulate a reasoned critique of corporate capitalism" that excoriated land speculators, monopolists, and creditors who made their living exploiting the labor of others. Jerry Prout's exploration of Coxey's march and David Geisen's analysis of the Farmers' Alliance in the 1890s in this issue emphasize the producer-based origins of populism in the United States, while the articles by Claudine Pied, William Patenaude, and Joshua Murphy demonstrate just how far today's "conservative populism" has strayed from these roots.

The Hofstadter Problem: A Historiography of Populism in the United States

The 2016 presidential election in the United States was not the first time the media misused the term "populism." Pundits in 2004 described then presidential candidate George W. Bush's folksy appeal

among voters as "populist." Before that, they applied the label to politicians all over the ideological spectrum, including Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan, and Boris Yeltsin (Wiener 2006; McGrath, et al. 2008: 22). Tindal (1972: 501) noted decades ago how far the contemporary definition of populism had drifted from its historical association with the People's Party of the 1890s. "Now it has become more complicated," he wrote, "and some of us are as mystified as the father in a recent cartoon who thought populism was a new liberation movement for pops."

Tindal located the origins for much of this confusion in the seminal work by historian Richard Hofstadter (1955): *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* Before Hofstadter, most historians accepted the interpretation first proffered by John D. Hicks (1931) that Populists were proto-Progressive heirs of Jacksonian democracy who organized and lobbied for political reforms they believed would improve their livelihood in an increasingly industrialized world. Hicks's Populists were not the primitive prairie farmers who Frederick Jackson Turner (1893) romanticized as stuck in an "earlier stage of development." On the contrary, Hicks's Populists, as historian Robert McMath (2008: 3) writes, included farmers who were "*in the market*" and "empowered to act on their own behalf" in large measure because they keenly understood the challenges of the new industrial economy and the opportunities such a system could offer them.

Whether intentionally or not, Hofstadter (1955: 4–5) buried Hicks's interpretation beneath his description of Populism as but one expression of a popular impulse "endemic in American political culture" to resist economic and cultural change. While the Populists of the 1890s possessed legitimate economic grievances—what Hofstadter called the "hard side" of Populism—he overshadowed the legitimacy of these grievances and the political solutions they proposed to address, by emphasizing the so-called soft side of the movement.

Borrowing heavily from sociologist Max Weber and his theory of social stratification, Hofstadter (1955: 7, 62) argued that Populists held a "conspiracy theory of history" that painted themselves as the victims of a new "money power" bent on destroying America's yeoman traditions:

> [T]he American was taught throughout the nineteenth and even in the twentieth century that rural life and farming as a vocation were something sacred. Since the beginning the majority of the people were farmers ... A certain complacency and self-righteousness thus entered into rural thinking, and this complacency was rudely shocked by the conquests of industrialism. A good deal of the strain and the sense of anxiety in Populism results from the rapid decline of rural America.

Hofstadter's (1955: 62) Populists located the solution to their problems in an idealized past:

> The Populists looked with longing to the lost agrarian Eden, to the republican America of the early years of the nineteenth century in which there were few millionaires and, as they saw it, no beggars, when the laborer had excellent prospects and the farmer had abundance, when statesmen still responded to the mood of the people and there was no such thing as the money problem.

This "soft side" accounts for the tendency of Populists and their Progressive successors to support discriminatory social policies designed to stem immigration and the perceived breakdown of America's racial and religious homogeneity. The competing sides of Populism account for what Hofstadter saw as the movement's tendency towards incoherence and ideological instability.

Hofstadter's (1955) analysis of populism stood largely unchallenged in the academic world until Lawrence Goodwyn (1976) published *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America*. In contrast to Hofstadter, who believed Populists proposed overly simplistic solutions to complex economic and social problems, Goodwyn argued that Populism presented the last viable alternative to the corporate-style capitalism that came to dominate America's political economy. Goodwyn gave serious consideration to the sustainability of Populists' cooperative experiments, such as the Texas Farmers' Exchange and national subtreasury plan—a bold initiative that called for the creation of a network of government-owned warehouses stocked with non-perishable agricultural goods and equipment available on loan to farmers at low interest rates. Whereas Hofstadter emphasized the movement's tendencies toward paranoia, racism, and conspiracy theories, Goodwyn stressed the movement's "spirit of egalitarian hope."

According to Goodwyn (1976: 542): "As a movement of people, it was expansive, passionate, flawed, creative—above all, enhancing in its assertion of human striving. That was Populism in the nineteenth century."

Goodwyn's fresh look at Populism inspired a new wave of scholarship on the movement. Rather than focus on a new "grand synthesis," however, historians tended to localize their studies, concentrating on regional expressions of the Populist movement. Few of these studies posed any real challenge to Goodwyn's analysis. Steven Hahn (1983), however, published a regional study of Populism that questioned Goodwyn's interpretation in interesting ways. In particular, Hahn reprised Hofstadter's description of Populism as a movement stuck in the past by locating the origins of Populism in Georgia's upper piedmont region where farmers, clinging to pre-capitalist practices of the antebellum era, protested the encroachment of the burgeoning market society.

Unlike Hofstadter, however, Hahn sympathized with the Populists' desire to preserve certain anti-capitalist values and practices. Hahn (1983: 2–3) explained that as late as the 1880s, southern Populists represented "strains of preindustrial republicanism" that "linked "freedom and independence with control over productive resources and portrayed the state as defender of the public good, as protector of communities of petty producers." Prior to the vast expansion of railroads and the market economy in the post-Civil War era, farmers in this region benefited from a quasi-barter economy that supplied goods they could not produce and from lax fencing regulations that encouraged open-range grazing on public land. It is understandable that the largely white, yeoman farmers who profited most from this system were willing to fight to hold onto it.

In stressing the republican-producerist origins of Populism, Hahn (1983: 3) complicated traditional narratives about the rise of capitalism in the United States:

> With no vestiges of a feudal past to dismantle, most historians argue, capitalism encountered only technological barriers; the formation of a national economic system hinged upon the advance of transportation networks, the accumulation of financial and material resources, and the advent of

> labor-saving machinery. Whether emphasizing consensus or conflict as the central theme of our history, these historians take a capitalist framework as their starting point.

As Hahn demonstrated through his study, there was nothing inevitable or pre-ordained about America's transformation into an industrial capitalist nation. Hahn's depiction of Populists as both anti-capitalist and pro-producer, however, implies the two systems are inherently incompatible. In this sense, Hahn confirmed Goodwyn's thesis that the Populist moment posed the last serious challenge to the triumph of the industrial, corporate-style capitalism that has since permeated every aspect of American culture.

More than 20 years passed before another historian seriously contested this claim. In his award-winning *The Populist Vision*, Postel (2007) argues that rather than protest the arrival of industrial capitalism, Populists accepted and operated within this new economic system as they sought structural reforms that would make it more responsive to their needs. Populists embraced an optimistic and highly cooperative vision of industrial America located in the future, not a halcyon version of the past. As Postel (2007: 132) makes clear:

> Theirs was not a warm and fuzzy cooperativism of neighborhood mutuality or communal interdependence. Their cooperation did not stand for the small-scale, face-to-face world of tradition against the world of impersonal relations. Rather, Populist cooperativism took inspiration from the gigantism and dynamism offered by steel rails, steam power, telecommunications, and bureaucratic organizational technique.

Postel shows how Populists learned from and applied modern business practices for their own benefit. They established regional producer alliances with salaried officers and lobbyists to negotiate grain storage rates, food transportation prices, and to secure low-interest loans for their members. They did so within a staunchly capitalist, pro-producer mentality.

In addition to their forward-looking mentality, Postel's Populists—the men and women who participated in the People's Party and its auxiliary groups—were intellectuals. They embraced Enlightenment ideals of knowledge and progress. They formed reading circles,

attended university, and incorporated the latest scientific and technological discoveries to their own lives. "A firm belief in progress gave them the confidence to act." Populists were optimistic about the future in large measure because they believed their economic suffering was an "aberration, a deviation from the natural working through social progress" (2007: 4, 104). The belief in a beneficent natural order was one of many ideas that Populists adopted from Henry George.

The Impact of Henry George on Populist Thought

Although Populists pulled from a variety of intellectual sources, George's (1879) bestselling treatise, *Progress and Poverty*, informed and motivated Populist thought in profound ways. In particular, Populists drew from George's diagnosis of the problems of inequality and economic instability and his remedy. Writing in the wake of the nation's worst economic disaster to date—the "long depression" of the 1870s—George sought to understand and explain what he saw as the "greatest enigma" of the era: "the association of poverty with progress." As he explained:

> [That association] is the central fact from which spring industrial, social, and political difficulties that perplex the world, and with which statesmanship and political philanthropy and education grapple in vain. From it come the clouds that overhang the future of the most progressive and self-reliant nations. It is the riddle which the Sphinx of Fate put to our civilization and which not to answer is to be destroyed. (George [1879] 2017: 59)

So long as great technological and industrial progress engendered poverty and inequality, George ([1879] 2017: 59) argued, "progress is not real and cannot be permanent."

George's powerful description of the problem resonated with millions. His explanation of its *cause* particularly spoke to small farmers saddled with debt and workers stuck in low-wage jobs. Although born and raised in Philadelphia, George lived in California during the transformative decades of the 1860s and 1870s. During this time, the nation's first transcontinental railroad was completed, connecting western and eastern markets. The state's population jumped by

nearly 50 percent. The increase in population and business activity in California increased the value of land, leading to rampant speculation and monopolization. The California Board of Equalization (1872) reported that in 11 counties, 100 individuals or corporations controlled 5.4 million acres of land—equivalent to more than twice the amount of cultivated land in the entire state, or, put another way, roughly the land area of New Jersey.

Land monopolization fostered artificial scarcity of land and contributed to the increased cost of living for the majority of those who rented the land upon which they worked and lived. More importantly to George, private land monopolies rewarded and encouraged rent seeking—the use of one's resources to amass profits without adding to the nation's wealth. In the 1870s, the resource mostly commonly and successfully exploited for "rent" was land. As George ([1879] 2017: 260) explained:

> Land being necessary to labor, and being reduced to private ownership, every increase in the productive power of labor but increases rent—the price that labor must pay for the opportunity to utilize its powers; and thus all the advantages gained by the march of progress go to the owners of land, and wages do not increase.

Land, George believed, did not solely constitute the soil; land included all resources provided by nature—water, forests, oil, and minerals. Those who held these resources controlled access to the means of production. Thus, by allowing and encouraging the privatization and monopolization of land, the nation rewarded non-producers at the expense of producers.

George's solution to this problem was deceptively simple: a "single tax" on the value of land irrespective of improvements. Building on the analyses of such classical economic giants as Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and John Stuart Mill, George ([1879] 2017: 353, 355) reasoned that the "best tax" was one that bore lightly on production, was easily collected, was certain, and equal "so as to give no citizen an advantage or put any at a disadvantage." The single tax on land values met all criteria while also eliminating the motive for private land monopoly—the cause of so much suffering:

> [T]he simple yet sovereign remedy, which will raise wages, increase the earnings of capital, extirpate pauperism, abolish poverty, give remunerative employment to whoever wishes it, afford free scope to human powers, lessen crime, elevate morals, and taste, and intelligence, purify government and carry civilization to yet nobler heights, is—*to appropriate rent by taxation*.

A tax on land values would prevent individuals from owning more land than they could put to productive use. Similarly, it would deter speculators from withholding land from the market while they waited for an increase in value.

While other historians have dismissed the impact of George's single tax on Populist thought—Goodwyn (1976: 308), for example, referred to the idea as "radical flotsam"—Postel (2007: 229) neatly captured the appeal of the single tax to the various Populist constituencies:

> For the urban entrepreneur, it offered tax relief for investing in new buildings or industrial facilities. For the urban worker, it offered jobs, better housing, and the possibility of home ownership on suburban parcels liberated from the grasp of real estate speculators. For the farmer proprietor, it offered incentive to build barns and drain and irrigate fields. For the land-poor or tenant farmer it offered the hope of opening new lands to settlement and the chance of ownership. For each of these interests, the Single Tax pointed to unfettered development and progress.

Populists joined Single Tax Clubs around the country and Single Taxers joined and held leadership roles in the People's Party. During congressional debates over the tariff, Jerry "Sockless" Simpson, the Populist Congressman from Kansas, joined five other Single Taxers in having George's *Protection or Free Trade* (1886) entered, in full, into the *Congressional Record*.

Like George, Populists believed the single tax would go a long way towards preventing economic instability, reducing wealth inequality, and perhaps most importantly, rewarding those who actually produce wealth, rather than merely control it. Unlike George, however, Populists advanced the single tax as part of a larger political program that included elements that George opposed. As a result, George never formally endorsed the People's Party. Still, the impact of

George's vision for a more just and productive world left an indelible mark on the Populist imagination that has yet to fully be explored.

Populism in Perspective: Article Summaries

It is too early to determine whether Postel's (2007) revision of populism will replace Hofstadter's (1955) critique in contemporary political discourse. In the meantime, scholars can help bring clarity and meaning to populism by evaluating the origins, uses, and outcomes of populist movements. The articles in this issue address this challenge from three perspectives: a historical view that examines populist uprisings in America; an international perspective that evaluates populist leadership in South America and Great Britain; and a sociological lens that analyzes the rise and impact of "conservative populism" in contemporary American politics.

Populism in American History

In "Populism and the Populists: The Incoherent Coherence of Coxey's March," Jerry Prout argues that Jacob Coxey's infamous 1894 march to Washington, DC reflected the process by which Populism emerged from a wide range of disparate and seemingly incoherent social and intellectual positions. Prior to 1894, the movement was little more than a conglomeration of state and local alliances advocating a jumbled hodgepodge of demands. By 1894, however, during a national recession, Populism had become a national movement with a unified set of goals. Similarly, Coxey's March, which started in Ohio on March 25, 1894 as an "innocuous protest march led by a cranky businessman," was transformed by April 30 when the march reached the nation's capital into something more organized and significant. Prout argues that Coxey's "bold public works plan," which was aimed at helping the nation's producers, was instrumental in bringing coherence to the march and by extension to Populism.

Despite the initial coverage of their march, Coxey and his followers more closely resembled the rational, forward-looking Populists of Postel's (2007) analysis than the disgruntled farmers of Hofstadter's (1955) study. Prout focuses the ideological evolution of Coxey, the owner and operator of a large iron and glass manufacturing plant in

Ohio, and how he became an advocate for a massive public works program that would eradicate unemployment. Prout argues that Coxey's demands reached a diverse audience in large measure because they animated the producerist mentality of the nation's working class:

> Coxey's bold idea spoke to the plight of producers, whether financially strapped farmers beset by middlemen who imposed usurious interest rates on agricultural supplies or beleaguered factory workers clinging to jobs precariously tied to the vagaries of distant owners. Coxey's idea, like so many other producerist reforms, spoke to the dignity of hard-working producers in a society still lacking a social safety net.

Like the reporters who covered the event, historians have too often focused on the antics and oddities of Coxey's March and, as a result, fail to appreciate its significance to the history of Populism in the United States. As Prout concludes:

> In its brief moment, Coxey's Army may be viewed as the appropriate expression for the many dimensions of an intense producer rebellion in the late 19th century. Although it might have appeared incoherent in its many representations, at its core it promised economic and social justice for hard-working people. It was the essence of progressive populism.

In "The Nevada Water Law of 1913 as a Populist Response to Progressivism," Richard A. McFarlane provides another case study through which to better understand the diverse and often contradictory elements of populism, and how the movement was eclipsed by progressivism. In contrast to Prout, McFarlane draws heavily from Hofstadter's (1955) depiction of populists, writing that "populism was a conservative, or even reactionary, movement that rejected modernity, and embraced government intervention as a means to protect and restore a nostalgic and vanishing status quo." To survive in the arid West, McFarlane argues, populists were forced to give up "their notions of individualism derived from the Jeffersonian ethic of the early 19th century and adopt progressive communitarian practices in order to provide water by means of irrigation."

In Nevada, this transition from populism to progressivism was hastened by key events and conditions, such as the exhaustion of silver

and gold mines in the 1890s and the monopolization of water resources. By 1900, McFarlane writes, the "every-man-for-himself" brand of populism gave way to the "we're-all-in-this-together" aspect of progressivism. Furthermore, in a detailed look at the various legislative attempts to enact some sort of comprehensive state water policy, McFarlane shows the emergence of another key aspect of progressivism: rule by experts.

In "Agrarian Populism in the 19th Century: Four Sources of Partial Success," David Giesen examines four essential features that contributed to the success—albeit short-lived—of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party, the political arm of the populist movement. The first of these features consisted of a "shared theological understanding of human dignity." As Giesen aptly notes, the large majority of the men and women who participated in the Populist revolt were "resolutely Christian" and ordained ministers comprised nearly half of the leadership corps of the Farmers' Alliance. In Hofstadter's (1955) analysis, Populists' commitment to Christian teachings accounted for the movement's tendency towards excessive emotionality and antisemitism. Following in the path of Goodwyn (1976) and Postel (2007), however, Giesen demonstrates the ways Populism's religiosity helped farmers understand and protest the conditions that led to their economic predicament.

The second element that enabled small-scale southern farmers to join forces in their battle against the nation's financial system was their common economic experience. Wall Street provided them a common economic enemy, one that used a restrictive money supply and a near monopoly on credit to dispossess millions of farmers of their land. Giesen points out that in 1869, there was $77 in currency for each resident of Rhode Island but only $1 in Arkansas. Money lenders took advantage of that situation to exploit farmers and drive them into bankruptcy and virtual serfdom. Rather than simply allowing their spirits to be crushed by these conditions, the farmers joined force to promote more equitable credit policies.

The third cultural feature that contributed to the success of the People's Party in the 1890s, according to Giesen, was "a coherent and inclusive communication system." An effective communication

system is imperative to the success of any political movement. For the Populists, this system included a network of regional newspapers and, more importantly, the appointment of a traveling lecturer within the Farmers' Alliance who educated poor farmers with limited literacy in the intricacies of Populist economic proposals. This component of populist communication strategy, Giesen argues, was both innovative and essential to its partial success.

The fourth aspect of the organizational structure that enabled the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party to survive hardship was the property-owning status of the leaders. Without that economic security, the all-volunteer leadership of both organizations would have faltered under pressure from banks, railroads, and suppliers. Many of the members of populist organizations were in danger of being pushed beyond the margin of self-sufficiency into a state of economic dependence from which there was generally no return. The fact that the leaders had independent means of support as lawyers, ministers, and moderately wealthy farmers was the factor that enabled the populist farmers to sustain their energy and organizational tenacity for more than a decade.

Whereas Prout, Giesen, and, to some extent, McFarlane tend to side with Postel and other historians who have emphasized the "hard side" of Populism, Nathan Jessen traces one of the key aspects of the movement's "soft side" by looking at the uses of conspiracy theories and "countersubversive narratives" by populist uprisings throughout American history. Whereas Hofstadter likened Populists' conspiratorial attitudes to the paranoia of the 1950s, Jessen argues that the closed, two-party structure of the American political system required the use of these tactics by third-party and outsider political groups as the most effective way to influence policy and political discourse. In "Populism and Conspiracy: A Historical Synthesis of American Countersubversive Narratives," Jessen examines the use of these tactics by leaders of the American Revolution, anti-slavery activists in the 1830s, and the Populists of the 1890s. In each of these historical episodes, Jessen argues, the use of countersubversive narratives and conspiracy theories have "helped explain how, in a government that was supposed to represent the will of the people, the few could overpower the many."

Populism Abroad

The recent tendency by the media and political pundits to classify almost any type of popular protest movements as "populist" is not solely a U.S. phenomenon. In fact, the use of the term "populism" has been bandied about in South America for nearly a century, as Robert Nyenhuis writes in his evaluation of populist presidential candidates in South America between 2011 and 2015. In an attempt to restore some meaning to the term, Nyenhuis puts forth a new "political strategic definition" of populism in his article "Populism in South America: Democratic Panacea or Pitfall?" that accounts for leaders' political style, relationship with followers, political organization, and political history. He then evaluates the political legacies of two of South America's longest serving populist leaders—Evo Morales of Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador—and reaches important conclusions about the impact of populism on democracy and civil liberties.

In contrast to the view of populism as a movement, Nyenhuis sees populism in South America as a political strategy with four key components: the use of rhetoric that "presents politics as a struggle between the 'good' people and the evil elites;" the formation of a direct relationship between political leaders and the masses; reliance on institutions that employ "top-down mobilization" strategies; and the promotion of candidates with little political experience. Nyenhuis used this criterion to identify and assign a "populist score" to presidential candidates in South America between 2011 and 2015. Using data collected from Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, the Latinobarometer project, and the World Bank, Nyenhuis evaluates the impact of the populist candidates who were elected on the quality of democracy, traditional political institutions, and the quality of life for the most marginalized citizens of their countries.

The impact on democracy, political institutions, and quality of life in Bolivia and Ecuador is a mixed bag. Nyenhuis's analysis found that Morales and Correa had a positive impact on the economic performance and the quality of life for the most marginalized people of their countries. These gains, however, were offset by a considerable expansion of executive power, new restrictions on the freedom of the press, and increased accusations of electoral fraud. Nyenhuis

concludes that further research, including a comparison with Costa Rica's Luis Guillermo Solís, might provide more concrete answers on the lasting impact of populist leadership in South America.

On the other side of the world, Joshua Murphy traces the origins of British populism in its current and most extreme manifestation—the success of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in securing the Brexit vote of 2016. In his article "British Populism and Stories of Decline," Murphy connects Brexit and the rise of the UKIP to "lingering attitudes" of imperialism stemming from the breakup of the British Empire after World War II. Murphy notes that British populism has traditionally been a right-wing phenomenon most closely associated with nationalism and Euro-skepticism—extreme opposition to the European Union. Since the early 1990s, Murphy shows how populism has gained a foothold in mainstream politics. Similar to Nyenhuis's analysis of populist presidential candidates in South America, Murphy attributes the recent electoral success of populism in Britain to increased polarization and a decline in party strength, both of which, he notes, are present in contemporary American politics as well.

The Rise of "Conservative Populism" in America

The victory of Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election inspired new scholarship in a variety of social scientific disciplines on populism in America and its relationship with the voting behavior of the white working class. As Claudine Pied points out in her article "Ethnography and the Making of 'The People': Uncovering Conservative Populist Politics in the United States," much of this new work focuses on the rise of "conservative populism" and its ties to globalization, economic insecurity, racism, and anti-immigrant sentiment. Although Pied does not directly address this in her article, this new scholarship assumes, much like Hofstadter (1955), that there are two sides of populism—one that is right-leaning and conservative and another that is left-leaning and liberal. What Pied does address, however, is the need for sociological research into the meaning populist leaders and their supporters assume when they refer to "the people" in juxtaposition to "the other."

Pied attempts to remedy this gap by conducting an ethnography of populism in central Maine. In doing so, she shows that "populism is more than a discourse manipulated by political leaders; populism draws from the ongoing process of race-making, nation-making, and interactions with other forms of identity." While reminiscent of Hofstadter's "status politics" framework, Pied comes to a different conclusion about the role of race and racism in the populist imagination, at least insofar as the concept of "the people" is understood by those in central Maine. For this region, which is 98 percent white, populist attitudes are significantly shaped by local, taxpayer politics. In this case, hardworking and taxpaying are qualities assigned to "the people" who suffer at the expense of policies designed to support welfare-receiving, non-taxpaying "others." Both groups are white.

Interestingly, Willis Patenaude comes to a similar conclusion regarding the role of race and racism in the rise of conservative populism at the national level. In "Modern American Populism: Analyzing the Economics Behind the Silent Majority, the Tea Party and Trumpism" Patenaude examines the relative roles played by economic anxiety and racial resentment in the election of conservative populist leaders. Using data provided by the American National Election Studies (ANES), Patenaude conducts a statistical analysis of voters who supported Richard Nixon in 1972, Tea Party candidates in the mid-term elections of 2010, and Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election. Patenaude concludes that although economic anxiety largely explains why voters—from a variety of economic positions—supported Nixon, it fails to account for the outcomes in 2010 and 2016. Instead, Patenaude finds that voters' support of the Tea Party in 2010 and Trump in 2016 stemmed from a mixture of economic uncertainty and resentment toward racial minorities, who they blame for the increased competition for jobs, wages, and resources. Since at least the civil rights era of the 1960s, Patenaude argues, economic anxiety has bred racial resentment, which, in times of severe economic downturn, has led voters to embrace populism.

Voters' belief that their economic insecurity is somehow connected or caused by recent gains by racial minorities largely reaffirms the concerns of U.S. historians that Hofstadter's (1955) analysis continues to inform modern conceptions of populism. That said, Patenaude sees

room for the rise of a more liberal, less-polarizing concept of populism in the United States through "an honest conversation about what led to the [economic] crisis or what is causing the anxiety." The biggest obstacle preventing this "honest conversation," however, is that those most affected by economic instability tend also to be the most politically marginalized and left out of the conversation. Perhaps, then, the timing is right for a resurgence of a left-leaning, producerist-based "Populist Moment" as described by Goodwyn (1976) and Postel (2007).

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