The Radical Right Goes Global (and Local)

David Art, *Tufts University*
David.Art@tufts.edu

Radical Right Populism in Germany: Afd, Pegida, and the Identitarian Movement. By Ralf Havertz. New York: Routledge, 2021. 193p. $144.00 cloth, $51.99 paper.

Restrained Radicals: Populist Radical Right Parties in Local Government. By Fred Paxton. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023. 285p. $110.00 cloth.

Right-Wing Populism in Latin American and Beyond. Edited by Anthony Pereira. New York: Routledge, 2023. 319p. $39.99 paper.

Twenty years ago, there were around 80 million people—mostly Italians—living in a democracy where right-wing populists governed nationally. By 2020, that number had grown to 2.5 billion with right-wing populists in power in the largest (India), second largest (United States), fourth largest (Brazil), and sixth largest (Philippines) democracies in the world. As Cecilia Lero writes, "countries in the Global South, and the Philippines and Brazil in particular, have not had recent large waves of immigration or notable demographic shifts and have experienced real income growth across all classes over the past 15 years" (110). Thus, the rise of right-wing populists like Rodrigo Duterte and Jair Bolsonaro in "two countries previously considered relative success stories of democratization in their region" is puzzling and one of the key themes of *Right-Wing Populism in Latin American and Beyond*, edited by Anthony Pereira. Although half of the contributors are based in Brazil, and nearly all work in the country, the volume is truly comparative, as populism in Columbia, Peru, Italy, India, the Philippines, the United States, and Venezuela is covered in some depth. Substantive themes include right-wing populist responses to COVID—including "medical populism" and the creation of a transnational "Hydroxychloroquine Alliance"—along with standard chapters on theory, political economy, and institutions. It is one of the first books to chart the largest change in right-wing populism over the last decade: its rise to governance in democracies in the Global South.

Ralf Havertz's *Radical Right Populism in Germany: AfD, Pegida, and the Identitarian Movement* charts a second profound change in right-wing populism. Germany, long a case of radical right party failure, became at least a partial success as of 2017 when the Alternative for Germany (AfD) became the first far-right party in postwar Germany to win representation in the Bundestag. Germany matters profoundly not only because of its history, but also its central—some might say commanding—role in the European Union. The AfD was founded during the Eurozone crisis in 2013 and radicalized during the European Migration Crisis of 2015–2016. In the European Elections of June 2024, the AfD came in second nationally to the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and beat the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). And although the AfD does disproportionately well in eastern Germany, it is now a national party with strong factions in Bavaria, Hesse, and Lower Saxony. Yet for the time being no party will work with the AfD at any level—national, state, or local—and Havertz's ideological profile of the AfD helps explain why. His study contextualizes events like the November 2023 meeting in Potsdam where AfD (as well as several CDU) politicians heard the Austrian neo-Nazi Martin Sellner outline a plan for "remigration" of German citizens with migration backgrounds.

Fred Paxton's *Restrained Radicals: Populist Radical Right Parties in Local Government* analyzes a third profound change in right-wing populist politics over the last decade: their capture of local governments. This has been primarily, though not uniquely, an Italian phenomenon following the electoral victories of the Lega and the Brothers of Italy (FdI) from 2016 to 2019 in 33 Italian cities of over 25,000 inhabitants. Paxton, however, gets additional leverage from the fact that right-wing populist parties also controlled three cities in France, two in Switzerland, and one in Austria during the period of his study. Using these cases, Paxton explores the issues that right-wing populist parties raise locally. To what extent do they follow through on radical policies? How do they handle the boring stuff, like the budget and infrastructure? The title is consistent

doi:10.1017/S1537592724001609

with the thesis—right-wing populist parties cannot always put their ideas into practice—but Paxton also shows enough cases of local radicalism to warrant further research into municipal-level variation, particularly as right-wing populists make local gains elsewhere.

This review essay considers how these books have framed these three changes in right-wing populism—that is, its local influence, the end of German exceptionalism, and its rise in the Global South—as well as three larger theoretical debates. The first is the degree to which the "thin" ideological element of populism adds to the "thick" ones of nativism and authoritarianism. Reading these recent books, "radical right" or "far right" appear as more appropriate adjectives to me than "right-wing populism" to denote the politics of Bolsonaro and Duterte, as well as of the AfD and the Lega. Second, I consider variations in the politics of law and order in the Global South and Western Europe. Whereas the radical right in Europe is rhetorically committed to law and order, nativism has always dominated authoritarian ideological underpinnings (i.e., a strong state and constraints on personal liberties) in its electoral appeal. Put another way, radical right politicians in Europe have campaigned mostly on the theme of anti-immigration and only secondarily on law and order. Not so in Latin America, where far-right politicians like Bolsonaro, Duterte, Alberto Fujimori, and Álvaro Uribe succeed electorally in large part because they provide security at the cost of mass repression. Finally, I consider how these books conceptualize the relationship between populism and democracy before suggesting a Linzian alternative.

1. All Politics Is Local?

Right-wing populism is not a new phenomenon in any of the four countries central to *Restrained Radicals*: Austria, France, Italy, and Switzerland have all had successful radical right parties for over three decades and the radical right has governed nationally in each aside from France. Nevertheless, Herbert Kitschelt noted in 2018, "the record of radical right wing government participation is still too thin to draw firm conclusions" about their overall policy influence (Herbert Kitschelt, "Party Systems and Radical Right-Wing Parties," in Jens Rydgren, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, 2018, p. 15). Paxton's literature review similarly reports scattered findings on right-wing populist policy influence at the national level. But what about the local level? Here the research has been even thinner, so there is no obvious answer to Paxton's central question of whether entry into local government "tames," or moderates, populist radical right (PRR) parties (136)?

One of Paxton's core findings is that despite being "relatively consistent in the radicalism of their aims," PRR parties encounter "restraints upon their realization when the parties lead local government" (212). He offers both a conventional and a novel explanation for this restraint. The conventional one is embedded in the historically consociational democracies of the alpine cases. Paxton finds that "in the consensus systems in Austria and Switzerland, the PRR parties have needed to form alliances with other parties in the process of gaining local power, which incentivized moderation" (100). The evidence that institutions matter is compelling, even if it was expected. Paxton's explanation for variation in majoritarian systems at the local level is more inventive. Municipal politics, it turns out, is not truly local when national parties want to use local electoral strongholds to either signal moderation or to brandish their far-right credentials for a national audience. One of the four central cases in Paxton's study is the municipality of Hénin-Beaumont, where the far-right National Rally (RN) has governed since 2014. It is also the political base of Marine Le Pen, whose policy of the *dédiabolisation* (de-demonization) of the RN has involved ejecting her father from the party, changing its name, and generally seeking political respectability. The RN behaves accordingly, as if by direction, in its bailiwick of Hénin-Beaumont. According to Paxton, the goal of the far right in this "moderation showcase" is to "demonstrate a more competent image through a pragmatic style and moderate policy" (19).

"Radical laboratories," by contrast, are "cases of highly radical governing output with a high degree of central party involvement." For example, the Italian commune of Cascina, which has a population of 45,373 and is just outside of Pisa, has been governed by a Lega mayor since 2016 and national party leaders "frame the city as a laboratory of radicalism and a tool of regional expansion" (188). Lega mayors have been able to implement their policy preferences locally on immigration and policing to a large degree, and their radicalism was reinforced when the Lega became part of a national government in 2018. Lega's Minister of Interior, Matteo Salvini, rewarded the local party in Cascina by doing what he had not accomplished on the national level: he shut down the local migrant reception center that had been spontaneously created in 2016 during the height of the asylum crisis. Paxton makes good use of 57 qualitative interviews throughout the book, and a potential follow-up article could use more of that material to flesh out these multilevel dynamics within the radical right. Altogether, *Restrained Radicals* brings the study of right-wing populism both back to its roots—the "first wave" of the radical right in the 1980s was a local as well as a national phenomenon—and offers a look into a very plausible future where the radical right governs not in tens, but in hundreds, of cities across Europe.

2. The German Case

The AfD is far and away the most successful radical right party in postwar Germany. The party's name derives from a critique of Chancellor Angela Merkel's claim that she had no alternative to supporting the Eurozone during

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592724001609

the sovereign debt crisis. AfD co-founder Bernard Lucke and other economists argued that the "alternative" should be a return to the Deutschmark and the party contested the 2013 European Elections with an ordoliberal program. The party radicalized during the Migration Crisis of 2016 when Merkel allowed over one million predominantly Muslim refugees into Germany with the slogan *Wir Schaffen Das* (We will manage it!). The AfD won a string of victories in the former East by campaigning virtually exclusively on the migration issue before its 2017 national breakthrough.

As Havertz documents, the AfD is now the party of (1) historical revisionism (2) islamophobia (3) conspiracy theories of the "Great Replacement" and (4) anti-gender politics. The first ideological component was not part of the original party program but became increasingly important to the party's ideology as it radicalized. Björn Höcke, the leader of the AfD in Thuringia, once claimed that the Germans are "the only people in the world to plant a monument of shame in the heart of their capital," in reference to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin (David Art, "The Afd and the End of Containment in Germany?" *German Politics and Society*, 36(2), 2018, p. 217). Havertz rightly notes that "if the AfD ever comes into power, for instance, as a junior partner of a government coalition, changing the memorial culture of Germany regarding the Nazi period and rewriting history books that are used in schools would be at the top of the party's political agenda" (156). Islamophobia was core to PEGIDA—a transnational movement that was founded in Germany and stands for Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West—as well as the Identitarian Movement and remains the most salient issue within the AfD's broader Volkish ideology. The Great Replacement is a conspiracy theory that posits that:

> The elites in Western countries are allegedly involved in this scheme of a "population exchange," which is in Germany also known as "*Umvolkung*," because they prefer a population that is more supple and easier to exploit in a globalized economy. The two main means of this conquest are the immigration of Muslims to the countries of the West and the relatively high fertility rate of Muslims in the respective countries of Europe (155).

One of the strengths of Havertz's analysis, which is reminiscent of Cas Mudde's (2000) first book *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, is showing how the ideas fit together. Islamophobia and conspiracy theories are mutually reinforcing in the AfD's world view. So too are "anti-gender" politics and anti-immigration. One of the most refreshing parts of Havertz's analysis is the prominence it gives to gender politics within the radical right. Scholars have long demonstrated a gender voting gap for radical right parties of around 20% (meaning that 60% of the radical right electorate are men and 40% are women). Havertz finds that the AfD is no exception and that the gender gap grew as it radicalized: from a 21-point gender gap in 2013 to a 30-point gap in 2019 (136).

Even more interestingly, Havertz finds that family policy and anti-gender policies are salient, not peripheral, issues for the AfD. No issue was mentioned more often than "family" in AfD party programs. There is a widespread assumption in the literature on the radical right that such parties do not care about gender issues or raise them only so far as they connect to core issues of nativism or authoritarianism. Without additional cases, it is difficult to say whether the AfD is an outlier or a trailblazer in this regard. According to its party program: "The AfD wants the family policy of the federal and state governments to be based on the image of the family of father, mother, and children." Furthermore, the party rejects "all attempts to extend the meaning of the word 'family' to other communities" (126). The party program of 2016 calls for "more children instead of mass immigration" (123), and Havertz generally finds that "the party is strongly involved in a bio-political discourse which is focused on demographic trends in Germany" (140).

The AfD's "anti-gender" politics represents more than natalist policies in service of nativism. Pegida demonstrations in Dresden included signs to "Stop Gender Madness" and the AfD has amplified this rhetoric. Höcke refers to gender mainstreaming as a "mental disease" and has professed deep concern about the "atrophied male self confidence" in Germany (130). Thus, it is not just family policy in service of demographic change that has made "gender and sexuality… central to the agenda of the AfD" (133). Havertz argues that the AfD is again an outlier among radical right parties by railing against "gender madness," but perhaps vanguard is more accurate. Voters in Hungary, Italy, Poland, and the United States are now used to such appeals. Such positions have less resonance in northern Europe, but that does not mean they won't resonate in the future.

Havertz's book reminds political scientists why studies of ideology are still fundamental to the discipline. In 2018, Höcke called for a "large-scale remigration project for Muslims in Germany" (57). Five years later, the AfD became involved in its largest controversy to date when some of its members met to further develop this idea. On November 25, 2023, the Austrian right-wing extremist Martin Sellner spoke at the Adlon Mansion in Potsdam, Germany, to a group of citizens and politicians from the AfD and CDU. The invitation, which included a suggested donation of 5,000 EUROS, introduced Sellner's "master plan" for "remigration." The meeting would likely have remained unknown had it not been for an undercover journalist of the journal *Correctiv*, which covered Sellner's master plan, including the forced removal of "non-assimilated" German citizens. The article noted that a handful of AfD and several CDU politicians attended,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592724001609

including Roland Hartwig, advisor to AfD co-leader Alice Weidel. The journalist also highlighted the significance of the location: the meeting took place only five miles from the site of Wannsee Conference where the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question" was decided. The German Association of Judges and German Lawyers' Association released a joint statement that identified the remigration plan's anti-democratic nature: "What was conjured up in a small circle in Potsdam in November is more than just a horrifying vision. More specifically it is an attack on the constitution and the liberal constitutional state" (The Guardian, 2024).

In January and February of 2024, millions of Germans responded to Sellner's ideological presentation at Adlon by publicly protesting against the AfD. The party went immediately into damage-control mode as Hartwig resigned and Weidel denied any knowledge of the conference. The details of the remigration plan also restarted a simmering debate about banning the party, an extreme but legal move according to Germany's Basic Law. The controversy has certainly not helped the AfD: it was polling around 22% before the publication of the *Correctiv* story but managed only 16% in the June 2024 European Elections. While the AfD is likely to continue winning large vote shares, particularly in the East, the party is further from moderation or respectability than ever. The "permanent movement to the right" within the AfD that Havertz documented from 2013 to 2020 has only continued.

3. "Thick" versus "Thin" Populism

Each of the books reviewed in this essay contains the word "populism" in their titles, or subtitles, and each contains some discussion of the standard objections to the term's utility. Havertz argues that populism meets most of W.B. Gallie's criteria for an "essentially contested concept" (8–10) that creates "endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users" (Gallie, W.B. "Essentially Contested Concepts," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 56, 1956, p. 169). He claims that populism meets the specific criterion of raising "the level of quality of arguments in the dispute" (193) because scholars have reached a consensus on Mudde's 2007 definition of it as a "thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, the 'pure' people' and 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people" (Cas Mudde, *Populist Radial Right Parties in Europe*, 2007). Populism can be attached—and nearly always is—to a "thick" ideology of nativism or social redistribution Many of the contributors to *Right-Wing Populism in Latin American and Beyond* similarly critique Mudde's definition before using it as framing device.

Yet after finishing these books, I am not sure that the reader will conclude that populism adds much to our understanding of what are essentially far-right parties and leaders. Stacey Hunt, for example, makes a compelling case that American academics in particular lavished asymmetric attention on the left-wing variant of populism in Latin America—the "Chavez phenomenon"—and ignored right-wing populists like Fujimori and Uribe long before the election of Bolsonaro. The defining features of Fujumorism, however, were neoliberalism and authoritarianism, not populism. Katerina Hatzikidi writes similarly that "while Bolsonaro's militarism and authoritarian inclinations are long-standing, his populism is arguably circumstantial and opportunistic" (63–64). Bolsonaro came to power through a group of conservative supporters and gained a crucial alliance with business by promising a return to the neoliberal policies of the 1990s (Avritzer and Renno). Christophe Jaffrelot characterizes Narendra Modi less as a populist and more as "a pure product of the Hindu nationalist movement whose ideology presents Hindus as the descendants of the original people of India" (172). Modi's populism derives largely from his membership in a "backward caste" and was long part of his rhetorical weapon against the Brahmins, a powerful caste in the Congress Party.

Nor is there much evidence of populism in local government outputs in Western Europe in the sense of "institutional reforms that seek to undermine the existing representative form of democracy in favor of more participatory and/or plebiscitarian forms" (Paxton 214). I think Paxton is correct when he speculates that perhaps this dearth owes to the fact that "the ideas of populism, unlike those of nativism and authoritarianism, do not so readily translate into a set of (policy) aims in themselves" (214). Right-wing populist parties also have little time to create more local participatory mechanisms, even if they were so inclined, because they are consumed with infrastructure and budgets. In this sense, it is not surprising that "a populist call to alter the existing form of representative democracy is absent" in most places (104). The Lega-controlled cities in Italy are partial exceptions as they seek to increase citizen engagement, though primarily by empowering citizens volunteers to help with policing and surveillance.

The Alternative for Germany lacks a populist origin story. Indeed, what could be less populist than a party of ordoliberal economists offering highly technical solutions for a return to the Deutschmark while preserving the European Union? Havertz makes a good case that the party had radicalized by at least the time of the European Migration Crisis in 2015–2016, but did that mean it also became more "populist"? There is some evidence from other studies that the AfD takes grassroots participation seriously and is more deliberative than other radical right parties (Valerija Kamenova, "Internal democracy in populist right parties: the process of party policy development in the Alternative for Germany," *European Political Science Review*, 13(4), 2001), but Havertz does not pursue this

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592724001609

line of argument. Rather, he makes a persuasive case that a "Volkish nationalism" which involves a mystification of "the people" is the core ideology of the AfD. This ideology might masquerade as populism with its emphasis on "the people" versus the elites, but it derives from a thick nativist ideology that produced the Holocaust.

4. Law and Order across Cases

Mudde was clear that the key ideological feature of what he termed populist radical right parties was nativism, with authoritarianism being an important—but secondary—component (Cas Mudde, *Populist Radial Right Parties in Europe*, 2007). Right-wing populist parties in Europe have traditionally tried to raise the salience of crime—particularly crime committed by immigrants—in support of increased state action in private life through policing and surveillance. According to Paxton, right-wing populist parties "propose stronger action against crime: more police, more right to self-defence, tougher laws and increased sentences" (28–29). However, these are minor themes, at best, in his study, which is not surprising as immigration has always dwarfed law and order in both the radical right's own messaging and in the scholarly literature. One reason for this should be obvious: most European states with large radical right parties also have low crime rates—and very low violent crime rates—compared to most other regions of the world.

If there is one lesson to draw from comparing the far right in the Global South with the far right in Europe, it is that law and order politics in the two regions are profoundly different. In cases like Peru, Colombia, and the Philippines, insecurity is not solely a product of very high crime rates but also the failure of the state, during some periods in recent history, to establish a monopoly on legitimate violence in their territory. Fujimori's repressive response to the Shining Path left-wing guerilla movement—and the government's spectacular capture of its leader in 1992—was popular among Peru's middle and upper classes. Uribe claimed that he brought Colombia out of "a collective kidnapping" (24). Hunt finds an essential similarity between Fujimori and Uribe in that: "these populists consistently advocated law and order policies, using their acute security…crises to justify tough-on-crime *mano dura* policies that consistently framed political insurgencies—not elites—as terroristic threats to the country, to resounding approval" (29). In this sense, they were not so much populists railing against the rise in petty crime as law-and-order providers amid state breakdown.

Duterte's rise to the presidency was also based on his law-and-order credentials. "As the mayor of Davao City," Lero writes, "Duterte earned a reputation for employing death squads to eradicate petty criminals" (114). This made him more, rather than less, popular with the electorate. In fact, he campaigned on criminality and even put up $65,000 bounties on drug lords: "I'm not saying to kill them, but the order is 'dead or alive.'" During the height of the war on drugs under Duterte, police and vigilante groups killed six times the number of citizens as during the war on drugs in the United States.

Higher education levels correlate with approval for Duterte and Bolsonaro (113). Both draw support from what Lero terms a "new middle class": "those who have risen out of poverty and joined the ranks of the lower middle class, gaining access to disposable income in the last two decades." Their economic gains are real but precarious: the theft of small consumer durables like a car or computer could drive them back into poverty. The police rarely solve such cases, but nevertheless "the new middle class depends on [them] for protection, and so is particularly receptive to promises the state will make drastic changes to address crime and safety, even if this means the state would act violently toward illegal criminals" (119).

Renato Sergio de Lima's chapter "Bolsonaro's Brazil: National Populism and the Role of the Police" offers further reflections on middle-class tolerance for police brutality, justified by hyper-aggressive law and order policies. Writing as a Brazilian citizens, he admits that "We have not created a public ethic that prohibits violence as an everyday practice and we have not freed ourselves from the antidemocratic idea that civil, political, human, and social rights are only meant for a portion of the population considered 'deserving'" (197). Turning to India, Jaffrelot claims that Modi and the police are "partners in crime in two different ways." First, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government rewards officers who demonstrate communal bias during riots and punish those who had not. Second, the number of "fake encounters" has increased under the BJP. A "fake encounter" is a term used in India "as a shorthand for dubious police actions resulting in the killing of person(s) whom the police allege to be criminal(s), but where police narrative of exchange of firing and self-defense appear to be prima facie unbelievable" (173). Overall, Jaffrelot argues that Modi has extended the "Gujurat Model" (from the communal riots of 2002) to riots in North East Delhi of 2020 to "establish a form of majoritarian cultural policing" (172).

The politics of law and order in the Global South more resemble those in the United States than in most states in Western Europe. Indeed, preserving and reinforcing "majoritarian cultural policing" became a key point for Richard Nixon's "Silent Majority" during the 1968 elections and thereafter to the Republican party's Southern strategy. Duterte offered a hyper-charged version of the American war on drugs that, until very recently, also involved the dehumanization of drug users. During the height of the war on drugs in the United States in 1990, the homicide rate was 9.8 percent per 100,000 while the homicide rate peaked at 10.7 percent in the Philippines in 2016, the year of Duterte's election. While both the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592724001609

United States and the Philippines have become dramatically safer in recent years, Brazil and Colombia remain dangerous places with homicide rates of 23 and 25 per 100,000 citizens, respectively, in 2022. By contrast, Germany's homicide rate was 0.8 percent per 100,000 in 2022, which is close to the European average and helps explain why law and order has rarely, on its own, been a core theme for the European radical right.

5. Populists or Semi-Loyal Democrats?

Each of the three books reviewed here explores the relationship between populism and democracy. Most of the essays on the Global South conclude that populism constitutes more of a "threat" than a "corrective" for democracy, while Paxton argues that democracy—particularly consensual forms of democracy—acts as a corrective on populists themselves by restraining their radicalism. Yet particularly in the Latin American cases, it is not a populist orientation that matters for democracy so much as the degree of democratic loyalty of the political leadership. Juan Linz's tripartite distinction between loyal, semi-loyal, and disloyal political actors in democracy is more useful here than any hypotheses concerning populism (Juan Linz, 1978. *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, 1978). In Hunt's view, Uribe and Fujimori were semi-loyal democrats at best who then—in Viktor Orban-like fashion—perverted existing democratic institutions to consolidate power:

> Once in office, both leaders consolidated power in the presidency… to astonishing degrees, bypassing or subordinating existing democratic institutions, eliminating institutional counterweights to executive power, attacking oversight organizations, and governing from the top down to such a degree that it fundamentally distorted the democratic balance of power in Peru and Columbia alike (22).

Bolsonaro's attempts to discredit the 2022 election and his role in a violent assault by his supporters on government buildings in Brasilia are not covered in Pereira's edited volume, other than the observation that Bolsonarismo is becoming a "source of disloyal opposition to the government" (304). The term "disloyal" is crucial. As with Trump in the United States, the Brazilian president's behavior during what was supposed to be a hallmark of democratic politics—the peaceful transfer of power—have brought his "semi-loyalty" to democracy into full view.

Many of the contributors writing about Brazil anticipated Bolsonaro's challenge to Brazilian democracy. Leonardo Avritzer and Lucio Renno chronicle Bolsonaro's rise amid corruption crises and anti-corruption demonstrations by the Brazilian middle class that led to impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff. They report that: "in March 2018 for the first time in a few decades, the percentage of Brazilians who thought certain circumstances would justify a break with democracy was slightly above 50%" (248). Four years later, and in line with former President Trump's playbook, Bolsonaro made preemptive allegations of election fraud before the first round of elections. When he lost the presidency to Lula in the second round, Bolsonaro claimed the electronic voting machines had malfunctioned.

Although Bolsonaro was out of the country at the time, his supporters—in an apparent imitation of the January 6 Capitol Riot in the United States—launched an assault on the buildings of the Brazilian Congress and Supreme Court in Brasilia on January 8, 2023. Their goal was to create the pretext for a military intervention that would overthrow Lula, who had been inaugurated on January 1. Bolsonaro has denied any part in the violence of January 8. Much like Trump and the Make America Great Again movement refused to call January 6 an insurrection, Bolsonaro denies that January 8 was a coup attempt. "What is a coup?" Bolsonaro rhetorically asked a reporter. "It is tanks on the street, weapons, conspiracy. None of that happened in Brazil." Bolsonaro is unable to run again until 2030, but Bolsonarismo remains a potent anti-democratic political movement in Latin America's largest democracy.

Deliberately provoking a military coup is an odd strategy for a populist movement or leader, as an alliance with the deep state is anathema to their "thin-centered" ideology. However, it is perfectly consistent with the politics of far-right and semi-loyal democratic actors. It is becoming increasingly clear that the basic orientations that Linz articulated toward democracy—loyalty, disloyalty, and semi-loyalty—are as relevant to understanding contemporary political fault lines as they are to the scholarly investigation into the breakdown of democracy in interwar Europe. Populism also does not appear to amount to much in terms of everyday local politics: the Lega is not nearly as committed to improving grass roots democracy through citizen input as it is to nativist policies. The overall, if somewhat unintended, message of these three books is that the search for populism globally has again demonstrated the "thinness" of its ideological component.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592724001609