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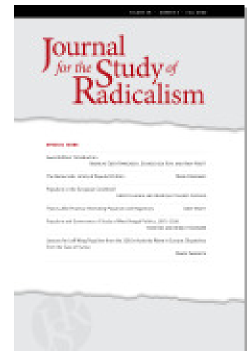

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Populism or the European Condition?

EMMY EKLUNDH AND HENRIQUE TAVARES FURTADO

Introduction

Ten years after the movements of the squares, we are reminded of how the popular surge of activism shook the foundations of European politics. The ensuing appearance of new political parties—envisioned as carrying the torch of popular participation—has led to recurrent claims that the European "peoples" would be better represented by challenging a depoliticized, unpopular, and technocratic mainstream. Populism is depicted as a force that has reawakened the political spirit of ordinary people, for better or worse. In the wake of these empirical developments, populism, and its relation to the mainstream must be interrogated. The field of populism studies has different approaches to how populism relates to mainstream politics and democracy itself. Some would like to argue that it is a complete exception and a danger to democracy, whereas others make the claim that it is an intrinsic part of a democratic society.

This article investigates the literature on populism studies, paying particular attention to the spectrum of descriptions of populism along two axes: (1) normal and exceptional forms of political participation; and (2)

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inclusionary and exclusionary forms of politics. These two axes are found to constitute the central themes in the contemporary literature on populism, namely the question of whether populism poses an external threat to liberal democracy and whether progressive movements can successfully appropriate the populist form. Avoiding the usual pitfalls of opposing populism to an idealized version of liberal politics (often associated with the proper, European way of civilized political representation) the article investigates the elements of coloniality[1] and the myth of civility[2] sustaining populism studies. In other words, it contends that the debates in populism studies can only make sense in an absence of considerations about the links between the historical experience of colonial conquest and the constitution of modern forms of political subjectivity. This determines which forms of politics are to be considered normal or exceptional. This article will draw on the interfaces between Laclau's work and decolonial thought (using the latter to complement the former). It proposes a framework and sets an agenda for a thorough recognition of the problems of modern subjectivity—its relationship with coloniality and civility—in populism studies. The article develops a radical critique of populism studies and argues that any emancipatory break always carries vestiges of the order it wishes to overthrow[3] and that this needs to be recognized to a higher degree in the field.

This article will be laid out as follows. The first part introduces the concepts of coloniality and civility—the guiding principles of our analysis of the field of populism studies—and relates them to the exceptionalist thesis, or the idea that populism poses an external threat to democracy. The second part engages with critical approaches to populism that do not subscribe to the exceptionalist view but remain oblivious to the question of coloniality. We argue that this omission, to different degrees and with very different political undertones, is responsible for the inscription of the myth of civility as the "cipher" of their analysis of populism. In response to this, the third part proposes a research agenda that attempts to bypass the field's debates and refocus scholarly attention on the reproduction of colonial/Eurocentric forms of political subjectivity as a central problem of democratic theory.

Coloniality, Civility, and the Exceptionalist View of Populism

The first step is to clearly define the concepts that will guide our investigation: coloniality and civility. The concept of coloniality was coined by late Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano in a series of historical responses to the celebrations of the quincentennial of 1492 and quickly became one of the central pillars of contemporary decolonial theorizations (such as Walter Mignolo's modernity/coloniality group at Duke University). Coloniality, as defined by Quijano, referred to the expression of political and economic power under European colonialism in terms of systems of control of labor based on the assignation of different forms of economic exploitation and political subjugation as the natural relationship between fictive human groups, called ethnicities or races. The racialization of slavery in plantation societies of the Global South was the prime example of such systems that represented "la codificación de las diferencias entre conquistadores y conquistados en la idea de raza" [the codification of the differences between colonizers and colonized through the idea of race].[4] Quijano was a pioneer in terms of introducing considerations about race in the Latin American *dependestista* tradition (emphasizing that dependency could only be explained via the racial patterns of allegiance cutting across national identities). His neologism was supposed to transcend the categories of colonization and colonialism, both seen as a process or practice with a clearly defined beginning and an end. For Quijano, *coloniality* was open-ended; the forms of power, the racial stereotypes, and the relations of oppression that constituted colonialism endured well into the postcolonial era.

The second concept, civility, refers to the critique of the founding mythology that characterizes much of Western liberal thought. The concept, in the form used in this article, comes from the work of Cameroonian political theorist Achille Mbembe. His work proposes a critique of the commonplace association between liberal democratic forms of political participation and peaceful, nonviolent institutional responses to conflict in society. The theme of civility, which finds its biggest exponent in Elias's idea of the civilizing process, as well as in much of mid-century political science,[5] presupposes a stark opposition between democracy and violence. Modern pacified democracies, the assumed forms of proper political participation,

are imagined as the result of a set of organic, intra-European historical developments that led to the internalization of forms of self-control by rational individuals and social groups during the transition from the Middle Ages to Modernity.[6] This myth has two central consequences for modern political thought and practice: first, it distorts the historical record, erasing the ways in which conflict, violence, and cruelty were part and parcel of the European colonial experience and were institutionalized in the plantation societies that founded the modern, democratic revolutions. Second, in a *coup de grâce*, the association between democracy and civility (as the proper and normal way of politics) renders forms of conflict that cannot be internalized by modern democratic structures of representation as lacking in civility, rationality, and self-control. Superimposed on the structures of coloniality, the myth of civility orders the world according to the divisions between proper and improper politics, modernity and barbarism, the West and "the rest."

The most common and cited works on populism are often the ones that, in line with the myth of civility, clearly identify populism as a threat to democracy. When discussing populism in public and academic debates, Jan-Werner Müller often surfaces as one of the first names mentioned. Müller has come to define the field of populism studies, even though his definition of the phenomenon is highly contested. Müller begins with the assumption that populism is a negative development for liberal democracies. He argues that populist leaders play on the fears of voters, and is a particular moralistic imagination of politics, the shadow of democracy where there is a strong quest for unity and anti-pluralism.[7] In Müller's eyes, there can be no doubt about the suggested remedy: the annihilation of the populist tidal wave, and a return to a politics that treats institutions with respect. Müller is not alone in his proposition to label populism as an essentially negative development. Norris and Inglehart, in their recent book,[8] argue that although populism can be seen as a symptom of a larger crisis of democracy, their definition also carries negative connotations. Populism is primarily treated as the symptom of malaise and is the expression of a sick society and not of a healthy democracy.

There are many other, more nuanced takes on the populist phenomenon. The perhaps most widely used in academic circles is that of Cas Mudde, who has argued that populism is a so-called "thin" ideology that can be paired with a more "thick" ideology, such as conservatism or socialism.[9] Mudde's

definition has become commonplace and is used widely in research that wishes to understand how parties on the left and the right use common tropes (representing the "pure" People against a morally corrupt Elite) in order to gain electoral advantages. Such studies include studies both on parties on the Right[10] and the Left.[11] Nonetheless, populism, in this interpretation, still signifies a challenge to the mainstream. In Mudde's view, populism comes as a wish for something which is beyond the present, and that can provide a better form of politics. This perspective, however, has been challenged by a large portion of critical populism studies, which identify populism as an internal component of democracy. Katsambekis has challenged the focus on morality arguing that there is an implicit understanding of mainstream politics as somehow freed from moralistic discourse, whereas populists are seen as overly moralistic.[12] This can be transposed into similar thinking around the rational mainstream that is part of civic culture.

Populism as the Symptom of Democracy

There is also a burgeoning portion of the literature that contends that populism is, and always has been, part and parcel of democratic politics. Populism is not an anomaly, but the very expression of popular sovereignty. Arditi argues that populism is a symptom of democratic politics, and is closer to Rancière's understanding that politics is the enactment of disagreement.[13] However, this symptom is not a direct reflection of democracy (or disagreement) but should be thought of as an "internal foreign territory,"[14] or an internal periphery of the democratic order. The concept of symptom, in this sense, comes from Žižek's reinterpretation of Lacanian thought through Marx as "a particular element [of a structure] which subverts its own universal foundation."[15] Populism, accordingly, would be characterized as a crucial part of democracy (its very core) but should not be equated with a pristine homogeneity of democratic practice, as Arditi encourages us to consider how populism, albeit internal to democracy, can also bring unwanted consequences (as a decentered core). There is, according to him, a gap that separates populism from democracy, and there is a constant potential pivot to authoritarianism within populism, as embodied in the charismatic leader.[16] Thus, democracy, for Arditi, cannot be equated with populism, because the latter carries with

it "a fantasy of a unity without fissures" and this "is present in the populist temptation to confuse the government with the state, which amounts to a perversion of representation."[17] For Arditi, it seems as though a version of democracy that is freed from a "fantasy of unity" exists. At the same time, there seems to be a concept of political representation that is different from populist representation. This representation, wherever it exists, does not seem to be subject to the exclusionary patterns of its populist equivalent—real representation is not subject to authoritarian tendencies. Arditi thus supports the figure of the double bind of populism: one democratic and one undemocratic. Throughout Arditi's work, there is a commitment to a democratic ideal that is tightly intertwined with civility, and that does not sufficiently acknowledge the undemocratic and authoritarian practices of European democracy.

There are, however, scholars that are more inclined to argue that the distance between the European versions of liberal and mainstream democracy and populism is not that great. Like Arditi, Panizza contends that "populism reminds us of the totalitarian ghosts that shadow democracy."[18] Nevertheless, he also argues that all modern democratic societies are a compromise between democratic and nondemocratic forces, thus recognizing that there is an inherent *problematique* in the European democratic ideal. Like Arditi, Panizza's work moves towards the collapsing of the opposition between the internal and external forms of democratic practice, which is an advantage compared with the crude exceptionalist view. But neither of them fully elaborates how the concept of populism—imaged as the decentered core of modern democracy—relates to the commitment to the myth of civility that accords contours of coloniality to modern European political thought. Both theorists search for ways in which the core of democratic representation could be recentered, avoiding the drawbacks of the populist ghost, labeling much of European populism as the opposite of the mainstream.

A similar issue, but with a markedly different political undertone, can be detected in Canovan's work. In her widely renowned book *The People*, Canovan masterfully draws out the essence of populism in many ways, explaining the intricacies of popular power. Canovan impresses on us that populism is indeed how we renegotiate the power of the People, where such power may seem insufficient.[19] The account of how populism has been a key feature of democracy for centuries is compelling, but the argument,

much like others in populism studies, still suffers from significant blind spots caused by the overt or tacit adherence to the Eurocentric myth of civility. Although populism is far from being equated with extremism in Canovan's work, there is a lingering notion that the form of liberal democracy presented in the Western world is unequivocally just, even though it may exhibit, as she terms it, a "privileged boundedness" in the construction of "The People." The privileged boundedness refers to the fact that the People are not universal and always signifies a certain political community that is excluding others. Canovan, for instance, sees the United States as one of the least ethnic forms of nationalism globally: "The most civic and least ethnic of all is of course American nationhood, in which a population drawn from remarkably diverse ethnic and national origins is united in a collectivity of formidable solidarity."[20] Further, she contends that the United States has a "remarkable capacity to integrate diverse ethnic groups."[21]

Canovan here betrays a remarkable sense of positivity regarding American nationhood, which is surprising but not uncommon. The social contract of the Americas, in the United States and elsewhere, cannot be seen without recognition of who this contract was intended for. As eloquently explained by Mills and Eze, not only do we need to recognize the injustices committed against the Native population of the Americas, but we need to subsequently understand how the social contract and nationhood were reliant upon these injustices.[22] The "formidable solidarity" described by Canovan seems less obvious when looking at how native Americans and African Americans have been treated as less human, and to this day remain disenfranchised due to both political and economic inequality. Canovan, a few pages later, is not oblivious to this fact, as she also explains how the definition of the People is by default exclusionary.[23] Drawing on Rousseau, she explains how "this privileged boundedness, which seems so offensively inconsistent with the universal principles professed by liberal democrats, is at the same time the political precondition of those universal principles themselves."[24] Canovan here beautifully illustrates how the distance between the exception, the exclusionary populist, and the supposedly inclusionary mainstream liberal democrats, is nothing but a chimera. The argument comes to its full conclusion when Canovan describes how demographic change through migration, "a sudden influx into (say) Australia of twenty million people from a non-democratic political culture would certainly

cause violent conflict and might destroy democracy altogether."[25] As such, Canovan supports the argument that populism is part of the mainstream, but she is also acutely aware and supportive of the exclusionary underpinnings of the mainstream, relying on the concept of democratic culture as a civic culture. However, she does not elaborate on how the colonial experience has been central to the formation of modern forms of political subjectivities, nor does she engage with how this historical heritage limits the notion that populism is an exception.

In more recent literature, there are significant empirical studies on how left populism is different from right-wing versions, and how this affects the discussion on populism as the exception or as part of democracy. In particular, in studies on the new left-wing populism in Southern Europe, there is growing consensus around the specificities of the left-wing populists, and how their politics focuses on protecting the People from an oppressive elite. This can be seen in studies on the Spanish party Podemos, where scholars have argued that Podemos stands for an inclusionary form of populism that resists neoliberal globalization and promotes equality.[26] We can also see it in studies on the Greek Syriza.[27] Likewise, Mouffe specifies how the populist logic can (and must) take the shape of a left-wing alternative to right-wing populism, and that the articulation of the people cannot be left to an exclusionary ideology of the right.[28]

Left-wing populism, for Mouffe, is simply a way of reconfiguring a system whose principles are sound. The basic tenets of liberal democracy and other democratic thoughts (such as popular sovereignty) are not questioned per se, but the problem is seen as one of implementation. What is needed is a creation of a new hegemonic order, but "it does not require a 'revolutionary' break with the liberal-democratic regime."[29] There is also a reliance on the narrative that liberalism itself need not be the main problem; the problem is the neoliberal cousin that has destroyed the economic prospect for many of the European middle classes. The "radical" break envisioned here by Mouffe is thus less concerned with questioning the foundations of modern political subjectivities.

Mouffe's work is thus embedded in civility and coloniality. Mouffe argues that although right-wing populist demands are many times dangerous, the right-wing populist voter should be rehabilitated. We must, according to Mouffe, "recognize the democratic nucleus at the origin of many of their

demands,"[30] framing the question as if the problem was to be found in the form (incivility) of the demands, rather than the content itself. Although Mouffe does not agree with the demonization of immigrants, she nevertheless argues that "the struggle to recover democracy needs to start at the level of the nation state,"[31] and that it is "qua citizens that a social agent intervenes at the level of the political community."[32] She is thus reinforcing the very structures that make migrants the excluded parts and furthering the strength of the European nation-state—a format pioneered via the colonial experience[33] and therefore entangled in the symbolic tapestry of coloniality—as the preferred societal order.

Other theories come closer to recognizing the essential links among the exclusionary European political subject, populism, and mainstream democratic practice. For Laclau, every political identity, whether class or an ideology, is not a given circumstance that simply has to be accepted, but an articulation. An articulation, contrary to a Marxist idea of class, is a fluid construct that cannot be predetermined. It is important to note, however, that the conclusion that identities are fluid does by no means indicate that they are happenstance; identities are contingent upon their historical constructions, and always work in contexts, never in a vacuum. Furthermore, the relation between identities and the wider contexts is not neutral. Laclau argues that identities are always constructed in an antagonistic fashion. Taking cues from psychoanalysis, all identities (whether on an individual or collective level) are examples of the Lacanian split subject.[34] Lacan's influence pushes Laclau to see societal relations in general, and not only populist ones, as built on division. The division is ingrained in any political subject due to a constitutive lack; there is always an empty space in a political subject that cannot be filled, but the desire to entirely fulfill one's identity is never fading. However, Laclau's concept of antagonism is more complex than simple ideological differences. He argues that identities are always comprised of what he terms logics of equivalence and difference. Collectives are formed in spite of the differences of certain groups, and the equivalence among them is all based on what they are lacking.

Laclau's concept of hegemony can help us better understand how populism is the generalizable form of politics in modernity, but also how we must question its violent underpinnings. According to Laclau, the universal presence of the constitutive lack makes any political identity potentially

populist. It is important to note that this also means that the difference between populists and nonpopulists is only present temporarily, and as an ever-changing challenge against the status quo. Similar to Panizza and Arditi, Laclau argues that populism is both a threat to the current order and a possibility for something new to be born; it is both subversive and a radical reconstruction.[35] It is crucial to note, though, that "populism never emerges from an absolute outside and advances in such a way that the previous state of affairs dissolves around it, but proceeds by articulating fragmented and dislocated demands around a new core."[36] This makes it essential to query and recognize the vestiges and contingencies of the colonial heritage for this new that is yet to be born, but that so often resembles the old status quo. It is vital to acknowledge that both populism and mainstream politics are subject to this contingency. In conclusion, this section has demonstrated that the myths of coloniality and civility are either not addressed or reproduced in some of the central figures of populism studies across several theoretical traditions.

Decolonizing Populism Studies: The European Condition

That populism is the generalizable form of politics in modernity is one of the central and most important lessons that can be drawn from Laclau's work.[37] If taken to its logical conclusion, the incompleteness of the social and the desire that emanates from this essential lack (captured by empty signifiers) remove any notion of exceptionalism from what is usually dubbed "populism." Populism is not an external threat to the security and stability of liberal European democracies. It is their very historical and practical foundation, and the expression of the articulation of sovereignty in an age still defined by the ever-unfulfilled promises of what Lefort called the democratic revolution.[38]

If populism is the generalizable form of politics in modernity, then it can only become intelligible when contrasted with modern forms of subjectivity that are reliant on, and productive of, colonial history. Populism studies must take heed of what Walter Mignolo—and an entire tradition of Black radical thought and postcolonial studies before him—has described as the other side of modernity.[39] This is something Laclau hints at but never fully

accomplishes.[40] Laclau's concept of radical breaks is helpful here, because it points to how any new order is always contingent upon former institutions; there is no complete rupture. However, Laclau's theory has not been used to sufficiently interrogate how the study of populism is steeped in a colonial order. Closing this gap becomes ever more pressing when it comes to the possibility of articulations of popular identities in Europe, and the unavoidable relationship this practice has with the historical connection between ideas of liberty, equality, and civility and a certain conception of Europeanness. It is in this sense that the often-neglected question of (de) coloniality enters the scene and becomes indispensable. The existence of the colonial question represents the ground—something Foucault would describe as the grid of intelligibility—that provides both the meaning and the limits of (populist) articulation in contemporary Europe. It is important to note that this holds equally true for the populist articulation as well as for any mainstream European political identity. Modern European subjectivity must be contrasted with its double: the colonial world, a mirrored dimension that offered the geographical, political, and imaginary milieu in which the emancipation of European subjects first took place.[41]

The appearance of the democratic revolution in the historical scene is directly related to Europe's overseas expansion and the encounter with a world that emerged, in every sense of the term, as a "new world" in the minds of European settlers. In many regards, the experience of life in the Americas offered the promise of an emancipatory reality in a multiplicity of forms. According to Hannah Arendt, the so-called "new world" seemed capable of redefining the relationship among labor, toil, and survival, and even the questions of famine, long seen as a misfortune one could not escape from, was reduced to a problem to be solved.[42] The encounter with the originary peoples (the indigenous populations of the Americas) also helped to redefine what was conceived of as politically possible. The stories and tales about "masterless societies" beyond the seas influenced new forms of thinking in the emerging "masterless classes" of Europe.[43] From the propaganda of the Portuguese crown (mobilizing the old medieval myths about the existence of the earthly paradise and greatly exaggerating the fertility of the new land) to the writings of More, Montaigne, Hobbes, Lock, and Rousseau, the Americas took to the center stage in the thinking and practice of politics.

It is against the American (Amerindian) and the African Others that the Peoples of Europe will historically constitute themselves.

The so-called populist articulation must be seen in the light of a preexisting praxis (a concrete historical experience) that molded the emergence of modern subjectivities. It is in this sense that the work of decolonial scholars can be useful for furthering the state of populism studies. The connection between political subjectivity and historical practice is the central thesis of decolonial writers such as Enrique Dussel, Sylvia Wynter, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres. For them, colonization marks in history a long process of substitution and replacement that defined the emergence of Man as a political subject in the European social and political imaginary.[44]

For Wynter, Dussel, and Maldonado-Torres, the process of demystification of the world, which will inevitably revolutionize prior schemes of social and political life, is indistinguishable from the de facto experience of control and domination that characterized the early and late colonial enterprises.[45] In their view, it was not the Enlightenment, seen as the natural development of universal values and secular reason within the borders of Europe, but the fact of colonial conquest and the subsequent efforts of the administration of the non-European world, that paved the way for a break in the medieval order of knowledge and forms of subjectivity.

Dussel provocatively states that one of the purported pillars of modern subjectivity, the logical emergence of the Cartesian *ego cogito* ("I think, therefore, I am") is inconceivable outside of the fact of conquest. He contends that Descartes's move of finding a secure foundation for knowledge in what amounts to a retreat to soliloquy (or dialogue with oneself) could only happen from a geopolitical position—the metropolitan Amsterdam of the seventeenth century—that had already internalized the de facto experience of militaristic rule and control over the "entire world." Dussel's point is to superimpose Descartes's philosophical move (which he attributes to much of the Western canon) to the *inward turn* that constitutes the foundations of Eurocentric thought (reimagining the Ego/Europe as the very core of human experience). The Cartesian act of reaching for ontological foundations in the interiority of thought and the Eurocentric tradition, the equation between the *telos* of humanity and Europe, both share the form (if not the content) of an act that universalizes its particularity, unduly magnifying its reach while covering its provincial origins. In the end, neither Descartes's body

nor Europe's borders pose relevant barriers to the universalizing nature of the thought they can produce.

What Dussel claims as the most important legacy of the conquistadores could be described as the mythology built on the backs of their *probanzas de mérito*, the thousands of letters sent to the crown boasting of military achievements and petitioning rewards.[46] Dussel argues that the Cartesian *ego cogito* is preceded and conditioned by the colonial *ego conquiro*, or a form of subjectivity that can only relate to itself and to the surrounding world in terms of militaristic expressions of violation, domination, and control. Here, Maldonado-Torres becomes illustrative of the relationship that Dussel points out. Building on Dussel's work via Fanon's masterful exploration of the lived experiences of the colonized, Maldonado-Torres describes the results of colonial conquest as a process whereby Europeans eventually came to seize, de facto, the experience of *dominus mundi*, the *de jure* attribute of the Holy See in premodern Europe. The process of emancipation that will constitute the definitive break from medieval worldviews and incur the promises of the democratic revolution cannot be dissociated from this important act of replacement, which Sylvia Wynter described as the epochal shift. The so-called late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century series of "discoveries" that enlarged the medieval cosmography—the universe of "thinkable" things—to the point of no return, paving the way for the development of modern science (as well as the morality of *propter nos*, that the world was made for humanity's taking) had a double side.[47] The premodern assumption regarding the heterogeneity between heavens (perfection) and earth (corruption) was displaced onto the emerging discourses of natural heterogeneity between the conquerors and the conquered. To use Dussel's wordplay, the *descubrimiento* (discovery) leads to the *encubrimiento* (the concealment) of the humanity and agency of the colonized.[48]

The point is not to ask whether Wynter's, Dussel's, or Maldonado-Torres' schemes are flawless from a historiographical perspective; see, for example, Dussel's uneasy engagement with Gunder Franks's *Re-orient* thesis.[49] Nor are we calling for greater attention to their writings on populism.[50] The most important point is that their exploration of the question of emancipatory/decolonial politics provides a framework for linking the emergence of emancipated forms of subjectivity in Europe to the exclusionary boundaries of articulation, or what Canovan deems the "privileged boundedness" of the

People. In other words, they connect instances of articulation of the People to a praxis of domination and violation of what lies beyond the frontiers of this subjectivity: what remains uncaptured by the experience of a "Free, White, European Man." They also invite a special awareness to the violent conditions that followed and continue to follow this form of subjectivity into being. Their reflections enable us to reshape the vision of populism as opposite to well-established liberal democratic forms of conviviality, reconnecting it to the very *nomos* of Europe conceptualized as the possibility of a truly universal, cosmopolitan form of subjectivity. Instead of simply offering a critique of populist movements and their illiberal traits or advocating an acceptance of populism as the Žižekian symptom of democracy, this framework invites an exploration of how populist articulations relate to and confirm the exclusionary violent boundaries of political subjectivity.

The phenomenological experience of the conquest, once transposed into the cultural background of European political subjectivity as its foundational mythology and organizational principle, results in three elements: (1) the privilege attributed to the dimension of *Polemos* (conflict) over ethics[51] that infused the militaristic framing of the relations between the members of a polis as relations of enmity,[52] or the Schmittian legacy of according heuristic privilege to antagonism which is central in much of populism studies; (2) the wish for congruency, expressed in terms of homogeneity between the community of birth and the political community (State/Nation form) as the geopolitical affirmation of coloniality;[53] and (3) the continuous search for processes of differentiation (racialization/culturalism) that render political and economic hierarchies of human groups as the natural outcomes of their ontological differences (the translation of subalternity into subalterity).[54]

Populism is not an exceptional threat to liberal democratic politics. As described above, works on populism, even the more nuanced ones, still demonstrate an attachment to traditional understandings of the term. This attachment can be traced to three fundamental elements: first, the labeling of populism as simultaneously democratic and undemocratic hides the undemocratic foundations of European subjectivity and the birth of freedom through dominance. Second, the populist wish for congruency, and Mouffe's assertion that the nation-state and citizenship are key to any (progressive) populist agenda showcases the geopolitical affirmation of coloniality. Third, the focus on civility, and in particular Canovan's claim that 20 million

immigrants would make democracy unworkable in Australia, illustrates the culturalist foundations of contemporary scholarship on populism. As such, what we are used to calling populist politics could equally be called, considering its extended historical context and its actual praxis, the political (re)making of Europe, on the ground of its past mistakes.

Conclusion

We have argued that instead of seeing populism as the European exception, it should be treated as the European condition. More important than asking if "populists" are external or internal to democracy is the question of whether forms of political articulation are reproducing or countering the three elements that have come to infuse senses of European(ized) identities. The field of populism studies needs further development to recognize the problematic histories and legacies of the concepts of civility and coloniality. Populism, it seems, cannot only be analyzed as the shadow of an ideal democracy but must be seen against the historical record of how the democratic revolution was constituted and what the emancipation of Europe meant for most of the world.

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54. Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*.