Introduction

Thinking Fascism and Populism in Terms of the Past

Representing a historian's inquiry into how and why fascism morphed into populism in history, this book describes the dictatorial genealogies of modern populism. It also stresses the significant differences between populism as a form of democracy and fascism as a form of dictatorship. It rethinks the conceptual and historical experiences of fascism and populism by assessing their elective ideological affinities and substantial political differences in history and theory. A historical approach means not subordinating lived experiences to models or ideal types but rather stressing how the actors saw themselves in contexts that were both national and transnational. It means stressing varied contingencies and manifold sources. History combines evidence with interpretation. Ideal types ignore chronology and the centrality of historical processes. Historical knowledge requires accounting for how the past is experienced and explained through narratives of continuities and change over time.

Against an idea of populism as an exclusively European or American phenomenon, I propose a global reading of its historical

itineraries. Disputing generic theoretical definitions that reduce populism to a single sentence, I stress the need to return populism to history. Distinctive, and even opposed, forms of left- and right-wing populism crisscross the world, and I agree with historians like Eric Hobsbawm that left and right forms of populism cannot be conflated simply because they are often antithetical.[1] While populists on the left present those who are opposed to their political views as enemies of the people, populists on the right connect this populist intolerance of alternative political views with a conception of the people formed on the basis of ethnicity and country of origin. In short, right-wing populists are xenophobic.

Emphasizing the populist style rather than its contents, most historians have rejected the most generic, transhistorical dimensions of the many theories of populism that minimize historical and ideological differences. By questioning definitions of populism as either exclusively left or right, I stress how populism has historically presented a range of possibilities, from Hugo Chávez to Donald Trump, maintaining essential social and political distinctions between left and right but without losing its key illiberal attributes in its varied historical manifestations. And against the commonplace idea of populism as a new political experience without a deep history—namely, a new formation that was born out of the turn-of-the-century fall of Communism—put forward a historical analysis of populism as equally rooted in the three other global moments of the past century: the two world wars and the Cold War.[2]

From the European right to the United States, populism, xenophobia, racism, narcissistic leaders, nationalism, and antipolitics occupy the center of politics. Should we brace ourselves for an ideological storm similar to the one fascism precipitated when it first appeared a little less than one hundred

years ago? Some actors and analysts of world politics believe so, and the recent surge of racist populist politics in the United States, Austria, France, Germany, and many other places around the globe seems to confirm it. But few agree on what fascism and populism actually are, and scholars of fascism and populism have often been reticent about entering the public discussion about the uses of the terms. By absenting themselves from public debates, they have left the uses of fascism and populism basically devoid of historical interpretation. Whereas fascism and populism seem to be all over the place, many current actors and interpreters are not aware of their actual histories.

THE USES OF FASCISM AND POPULISM

Fascism, like populism, is often used to denote absolute evil, bad government, authoritarian leadership, and racism. These uses of the terms take away their historical meanings. The problematic belief that history merely repeats itself has traveled the Global North and the Global South, from Moscow to Washington, and from Ankara to Caracas. After the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the connected Ukrainian crisis, Russian officials referred to the government in Ukraine as the outcome of a fascist coup. Hillary Clinton, secretary of state at the time, described Russian president Vladimir Putin's actions with respect to Ukraine as something like "what Hitler did back in the '30s." Far from the Black Sea, the Venezuelan president, Nicolás Maduro, that same year used the threat of fascism to justify his imprisonment of an opposition leader. The same problematic claims were, and are, made by those opposed to Latin American experiments with populism. Similar epithets are commonly used for the Middle East and Africa. In 2017,

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan described Europe as "fascist and cruel." Almost identical characterizations of both government and opposition as fascist crisscross the Global South and North from Argentina to the United States, where Donald Trump faced this very serious accusation during his successful 2015–16 presidential campaign and where he himself as President-elect accused intelligence agencies of having engaged in Nazi practices against him. Trump symptomatically asked, "Are we living in Nazi Germany?"[3]

Like the term *fascism,* the term *populism* has been abused equally as a condensation of extremes from right to left. It has been inflated or conflated with anything that stands against liberal democracy. For example, politicians like Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto or the former British prime minister Tony Blair (notably, after the British "Brexit" of 2016) charged that populism was standing against the neoliberal status quo that they so passionately represented. In fact, this tendency to paint populism as an unproblematized negative take on democracy reveals a simplistic, and often self-serving, identification of democracy with neoliberalism. These positions replicate the us versus them totalizing views of populism. Moreover, these views void democracy of any emancipatory potential. In this context, when confronted with its neoliberal enemies, sectors of society (from right to left) that feel they have been left aside by technocratic elites find populism even more appealing. Populism and neoliberalism can be seen as equally undermining democratic diversity and equality, but neither is a form of fascism.

Populism and neoliberalism do not enable meaningful political decision making by citizens. Nonetheless, they are part of the democratic spectrum, and especially after 1989 they have been causally connected and have often succeeded each another.

On a global scale, populism is not a pathology of democracy but a political form that thrives in democracies that are particularly unequal, that is, in places where the income gap has increased and the legitimacy of democratic representation has decreased. As a response, populism is capable of undermining democracy even more without breaking it, and if and when it does extinguish democracy, it ceases to be populism and becomes something else: dictatorship.

Historically, the populist responses to these contexts (right or left) are distinctive and have been framed within varying national situations and political cultures, but they generally go in the direction of authoritarianism. This is mainly because populism, like fascism before it, understands its own position as the only and true form of political legitimacy. The single truth of populism is that the leader and the nation make up a whole. For populism, the singular will of the majority cannot accept other points of view. In this regard, populism is like fascism in being a response to liberal and socialist explanations of the political. And also like fascism, populism does not recognize a legitimate political place for an opposition that it regards as acting against the desires of the people and that it also accuses of being tyrannical, conspiratorial, and antidemocratic. But this refusal to recognize the opposition's legitimacy does not generally go beyond the logic of discursive demonization. The opponents are turned into public enemies but only rhetorically. If populism moves from this rhetorical enmity to practices of enemy identification and persecution, we could be talking about its transformation into fascism or another form of dictatorial repression. This has happened in the past, for example, in the case of the Peronist Triple A during the beginning of Argentina's Dirty War in the 1970s, and without question it could happen in the future. This morphing of populism back into

fascism is always a possibility, but it is very uncommon, and when it does happen, and populism becomes fully antidemocratic, it is no longer populism. While fascism celebrates dictatorship, populism never does so. Fascism idealizes and practices raw forms of political violence that populism rejects in theory and, most often, in practice. Talking about populism and fascism as though they are the same is thus problematic, as the two are significantly different. Populism is a form of authoritarian democracy, while fascism is an ultraviolent dictatorship. The terms are genealogically but usually not conceptually or contextually connected. Properly historicized, populism is not fascism.

Why then are populism and fascism used without reference to their histories? Are we really witnessing the return of fascism, the ism that marked the first half of the twentieth century with steel and blood? Generally, fascism is not approached as a specific historical experience that had very traumatic outcomes but is, rather, considered an insult. Thus, populist parties and leaders that generally represent authoritarian understandings of democracy, but ultimately are not against it, are wrongly equated with fascist dictatorial formations. After 1945, for the first time in its history, populism finally morphed from an ideology and a style of protest movements to a power regime. This was a turning point in its conceptual and practical itineraries, and the historical relevance of this turning point cannot be stressed enough. Likewise, fascism became truly influential only when it transitioned from ideology and movement to regime. In this sense, as the first populist leader in power, Perón played a role similar to the one enacted by the fascist leaders Mussolini and Hitler. When populism became a regime, it finally crystalized as a new and effective political form for ruling the nation. In doing so, populism reformulated fascism, and to that extent, as in the

famous case of Argentine Peronism, it became a fully differentiated ism: one that was, and is, rooted in electoral democracy at the same time that it displays a tendency to reject democratic diversity.

FASCISM RETURNS

Fascism as a term has the uncanny ability to absorb any new event in a way that obscures its meaning and history. We are not far from the time when US president George W. Bush presented Al-Qaeda as an Islamo-fascist entity. Fascism is part of our political vocabulary, but has it really returned from its 1945 grave? Has it returned as populism? Significant differences exist between fascism as discursively invoked and its more bifurcated continuities in the present. As a regime, fascism never returned after the end of World War II, and in fact the absence of fascist regimes defined the second half of the last century. Liberalism and communism united to defeat the other ism of modern politics. Once they defeated fascism, they often fought and competed against each other, creating the Cold War. Modern populism as we know it today emerged in this new context. Many historians agree that the Cold War was in fact very hot in the Global South (from Vietnam and Indonesia to the Guatemalan genocide and the Argentine Dirty War), but it never reached the record global "hotness" levels of the fascist violence that led to the Holocaust and World War II. In any case, after 1945, most actors believed that fascism had been defeated for good. From then on, few antidemocratic politicians, from Juan Perón to Marine Le Pen and Donald Trump, associated themselves with terms such as *fascism,* but this does not mean they were fully dissociated from fascism in theory and practice. *Populism* is the

key term for understanding the fascist soundings of events and political strategies that reformulated the legacies of fascism for new democratic times.

In the guise of postfascist forms of antiliberal democracy, fascism continued its legacy through various combinations of populism and neofascism. The truth is that, despite the predominance of populism, many neofascist groups remained and continue to exist. Actual neofascist movements that, unlike the populist ones, want to flatly invoke and replicate the fascist legacy are on the rise in Europe. Countries like Greece, with its extreme right-wing movement Golden Dawn, or Norway, where a solo, fascist mass killer, fed by transnational neofascist readings, slaughtered seventy-seven people in 2011, have provided these societies with measured doses of fascist political violence and death that exemplify what neofascism stands for. Sometimes neofascists are fellow travelers of populism. Populists differ from neofascists in their desire to reshape democracy in authoritarian fashion without fully destroying it, but like the neofascists, right-wing Euro-populists identify "the people" with an ethnically conceived national community. In Germany, the Alternative for Germany (AFD), and especially the Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West (Pegida) Movement straddle right-wing populist authoritarianism and the neo-Nazi legacies of German fascism. These populists reduce democracy to the predominance of a majoritarian ethnic group and claim that this type of democracy is being attacked by outsiders. Similarly, populist movements in France and the Netherlands are partly rooted in a xenophobic reclamation of the fascist past, at the same time that they reject it.[4] In Ukraine, the street protests of 2014 were crowded with Ukrainian radical rightists, but this does not mean that fascism is ruling Ukraine or that France or Germany are at

risk of witnessing a fascist resurgence. The same pattern goes for the European populism of the right and extreme right as a whole, as well as for North American populism.

TRUMPISM IN HISTORY

During the 2015–16 US presidential campaign, Donald Trump, and significant sectors of the American right, featured populist forms of racism, especially against Mexican immigrants, and discrimination against religious minorities as key parts of their programs. These forms of populism were also supported by neofascist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and others, but this does not mean that Trumpism was a form of fascism. As in Europe, neofascist fellow travelers supported what in fact was a constellation of right-wing populisms that defined the Trumpist campaign.[5] As a result of the predominance of xenophobic moments in the campaign, including some cases of violence against critics and protesters, a new legitimacy for these views emerged. The extreme right-wing side of Trumpism at the white supremacist "alt-right" website, *Breitbart,* argued in its famous "A Manifesto for the 60 Percent: The Center-Right Populist-Nationalist Coalition" that the politics of populism stood between national salvation and a new civil war. Only a "strong and far-seeing leadership" could save America from a war from within. Electoral decisions were part of this populist formula, but they were linked to the idea of Trump as representing what the people wanted even before they voted. As the American populists argued, "That's populism in a nutshell, taking the people's side against the power elites who clearly do not have our best interests at heart." They claimed "populism" made "a resurgence in America and indeed in increasingly significant pockets across Europe because it puts our people

first, FIRST. That is why it is winning. That is why the elites hate it so much, and it's ultimately the root of why they hate Donald Trump." The former CEO of Breitbart Steve Bannon, who was also one of Trump's closest advisors and the CEO of his campaign, especially stressed the populist nature of the rise of Trump in American history. His alt-right, white supremacist supporters stated that Trump belonged to the tradition of American populism, which they differentiated from fascism.[6]

From a historical perspective, Trump clearly sounded like a fascist, and he bridged the gap between what he represented—namely, a radical extremist populist candidacy—and what fascism has stood for. But he was still inscribed in the postwar authoritarian ways of populism rather than in "classical" fascist politics. Like many other populist leaders, from Juan Perón in Argentina to Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, Trump repeatedly stated that he acted in the name of the people, while he also pushed the limits of democracy. Even though he introduced himself as the "law and order" candidate, he questioned respect for the rule of law and the separation of powers. Trump was especially antidemocratic in his attempts to downplay the autonomy of the justice system. He used race as a political tool to attack the judiciary when he accused an American judge of acting against him because of that judge's Mexican heritage. In the campaign, Paul Ryan, the Republican speaker of the house and the second most powerful Republican politician at the time, characterized Trump's comments about the judge as "the textbook definition" of racism. In turn, Trump resorted to the populist playbook, declaring his candidacy was the unspoken expression of what "the people" wanted: "The people are tired of this political correctness when things are said that are totally fine."[7] Trump saw himself as the unrepressed voice of the people's desires. In turn,

he saw his opponent, Hillary Clinton, "as running against all of the American people and all of the American voters." Trump believed he represented the people of the entire country, and Clinton was antithetical to the American people and the nation. Fascist-sounding conspiratorial views abounded in Trump's authoritarian message. He said that Clinton had met "in secret with international banks to plot the destruction of US sovereignty." Having won his own party's primaries, Trump understood that he had received a "mandate from the people," which justified his antagonistic populist style, but he remained far from fascism's dictatorial ways.[8]

The ideas presented in the Trump campaign had clear fascist and racist undertones. As noted historian of fascism Robert Paxton argued, while there are significant differences between the interwar context that gave rise to fascism and the present day, "echoes of fascism" could be heard in Trump's themes in 2015 and 2016, especially in the candidate's concern for national regeneration and fear about decline, as well as in his "style and technique." However, he concluded that Trump was not a fascist. Paxton referenced Trump's xenophobic proposals, which clearly linked the candidate with Hitler and Mussolini, and identified Trump as a protofascist in the making. He represented "a sort of populist quasifascism" that had not yet developed into fascism.[9] If Paxton as a historian used populism as a prefascist stage to historically analyze the fascist soundings of Trumpism, other interpreters of fascism and populism refused to view Trump through the lens of fascism. Stanley Payne, a famous conservative historian of fascism, stressed that Trump was not a fascist but a reactionary. Violence and nationalist revolutionary trends were absent in Trump, who was part of a "right-wing populist movement." Similarly, for Roger Griffin, a renowned historian of fascist studies, "You can be

a total xenophobic racist male chauvinist bastard and still not be a fascist." Griffin did not see in Trump the fascism that he identifies with his own theory of fascism: "There has to be a longing for a new order, a new nation, not just a reformed old nation." For Griffin, Trump was not yet fascist: "As long as Trump does not advocate the abolition of America's democratic institutions, and their replacement by some sort of post-liberal new order, he's not technically a fascist."[10]

These scholars did not stress the historical links between fascism and populism.[11] Mostly absorbed with the West, neither significantly considered the transnational dimensions of these phenomena. In other words, their Euro–North American approach to fascism and populism did not meaningfully place Trump in a global context beyond the United States and Europe. At best, global examples acted as mere additions to what was and is for them basically a North Atlantic story. What sounded like echoes of the past were part of the historical explanation of the present. In contrast with these arguments, I would argue that fascism and populism, while linked in history, belong to different contexts and became very different historical global experiences. Fascism and populism are different chapters in the same transnational history of illiberal resistance to modern constitutional democracy. Trumpism is part of that history. From fascism to populism, many things changed in the world, including the fact that fascist regimes were left behind in the dividing waters represented by the allied victories in 1945 and the subsequent Cold War between them. Fascist regimes were part of the past, but populist regimes thrived after the defeat of fascism. While there are important links between fascism and populism, one historical experience cannot be subsumed under the other. Hitler and Mussolini were indeed different from Perón and

Trump, but historically meaningful connections exist between Peronism, or American populism, and fascism.

All in all, most of these populist movements and persons distanced themselves from classical fascism, but they nonetheless were often labeled as such. Most historians, myself included, are allergic to these generalizations. These public uses of fascism and populism need to be confronted, not simply denied or ridiculed. Presently, pundits and politicians use fascism to loosely describe not only populism but also authoritarian regimes, international terrorism, or repressive stances by the state, or even street protests by the opposition. This laxity is historically problematic, as such careless uses of fascism demonize populism but don't account for its historical causes. The conflation of fascism and populism often leads to proffering the status quo as the only alternative to populist choices.

In Latin America, for example, these ahistorical uses of populism and fascism often conflate populist leaders (either in the government or the opposition) who aggressively used mass politics with the dictatorial leaders who used criminal means to suppress them. They collapse essential distinctions between the populism of the left and the right, when in fact populism can be distinctively leftist or rightist or an amalgamation of both. They also conflate democratically elected regimes or democratically engaged citizens with military dictatorships that destroy democracy. In conceptual terms, the use of the adjectives fascist and populist is a serious problem. In light of the way the terms *fascism* and *populism* have been used and abused, the time has come to place both in their historical contexts. Only then can we assess the movements and situations presently taking place in Latin America, Europe, Africa, the United States, and elsewhere. The present cannot be understood in isolation from its

many genealogies, and fascism and racism are clearly among them. Fascism is not only a blurry ghost from the past but also a once-defeated historical ideology that has clear populist and neofascist repercussions today.

Overall, this book provides a contextual reading of primary sources, historiography, and political theory that is highly attentive to how and why fascism often turned into populism. It offers a historical critique of the pathways from fascist to populist ideologies, movements, and regimes. Moving away from the public uses of the terms, this book studies how and why fascism and populism emerged in history.

FASCISM AND POPULISM IN HISTORY

After Mussolini and the Italian fascists adopted fascism as the name for their antidemocratic revolution, and especially when fascism became a power regime in 1922, the word *fascism* became a global marker of a renewed anti-Enlightenment, antidemocratic tradition. Going beyond national contexts and restricted Eurocentric theories, I put forward a historical understanding of fascism as a traveling political universe, a radical nationalism affected and, to some extent, constituted by transnational patterns.[12]

In history, fascism was a political ideology that encompassed totalitarianism, state terrorism, imperialism, racism, and, in Germany's case, the most radical genocide of the last century: the Holocaust. Fascism in its many forms did not hesitate to kill its own citizens, as well as its colonial subjects, in its search for ideological and political domination. Millions of civilians perished across the world during the apogee of fascist ideologies in Europe and beyond.

In historical terms, fascism can be defined as a global ideology with national movements and regimes. Fascism was a transnational phenomenon both inside and outside Europe. A modern counter-revolutionary formation, it was ultranationalist, antiliberal, and anti-Marxist. Fascism, in short, was not a mere reactionary position. Its primary aim was to destroy democracy from within in order to create a modern dictatorship from above. It was the product of an economic crisis of capitalism and a concurrent crisis of democratic representation. Transnational fascists proposed a totalitarian state in which plurality and civil society would be silenced, and there would increasingly be no distinctions between the public and the private, and between the state and its citizens. In fascist regimes, the independent press was shut down and the rule of law was entirely destroyed. Fascism defended a divine, messianic, and charismatic form of leadership that conceived of the leader as organically linked to the people and the nation. It considered popular sovereignty to be fully delegated to the dictator, who acted in the name of the community of the people and knew better than they what they truly wanted. Fascists replaced history and empirically based notions of truth with political myth. They had an extreme conception of the enemy, regarding it as an existential threat to the nation and to its people that had to be first persecuted and then deported or eliminated. It aimed to create a new and epochal world order through an incremental continuum of extreme political violence and war.[13]

In my own work, I propose analyzing fascism as a transnational ideology with important national variations. A global ideology, fascism constantly reformulated itself in different national contexts and underwent constant national permutations.

Fascism was founded in Italy in 1919, but the politics it represented appeared simultaneously across the world. From Japan to Brazil and Germany, and from Argentina to India and France, the antidemocratic, violent, and racist revolution of the right that fascism presented was adopted in other countries under different names: Nazism in Germany, *nacionalismo* in Argentina, *integralismo* in Brazil, and so on. Fascism was transnational even before Mussolini used the word *fascismo,* but when fascism became a regime in Italy in 1922, the term received worldwide attention and acquired different meanings in local contexts. This is not to say that the Italian (or the French or later the German) influences were not important for transnational fascists. But there were few imitators. Transnational fascists tailored fascist ideology to fit their distinct national and political traditions. As the Brazilian fascist Miguel Reale argued, "fascism is the universal doctrine of the century," and as such it transcended Mussolini's Italian version insofar as from the beginning "The creature was bigger than its creator." Reale concluded that fascism in Brazil was superior to that in Europe. Similarly, Argentine fascists claimed that theirs was better precisely because it was not restricted by European problems.[14]

Across the globe, fascists conceived of political violence as the source of political power. Against a shared liberal and communist idea of power as being the result of the state's monopoly on violence, fascists equated power with the exercise of political violence, not its suppression. Fascists believed that unleashing violence created and increased their power. They envisioned violence as the source of a new authoritarian society in which nationalism, racism, and (centrally planned) capitalism could be integrated. Fascists saw the state's restrictions on violence as being opposed to political power. They also believed that a free

press and an open public sphere acted against their interests. In fascist regimes, civil society had no place. Dissent was not permitted. Fascism identified the pacification of national and international spaces with political weakness. At the same time, fascists conceived of their own violence as "sacred." Nationalist myths inspired and legitimized violence as a key dimension of the fascist political religion. According to fascist ideology, these myths preceded and transcended historical time. Central to this conception was the messianic leader as a warrior who would lead the people into holy contests against internal and external enemies. Brute force was deemed fundamental to opposing those who were perceived to be against the fascist trinity of people, nation, and leader. On a global scale, this fascist brutalization of politics created and legitimized the conditions for extreme forms of political repression, war, and genocide. Fascism theorized an existential enemy that it would subsequently identify and repress. To recapitulate, fascism proposed dictatorship, a mythical idea of the leader, a social-nationalist take on capitalism, and a radical idea of the enemy as the foundation of modern politics.

These historical features of fascism, especially the stress on the mythical leader of the people and his authoritarian rule, the third way between liberalism and socialism, and the idea of an enemy that must be responded to with total war have clear continuities with the right-wing forms of prepopulism that preceded fascism. Like previous forms of racism, xenophobia, and imperialism, this prepopulist side of fascism cannot be ignored. In turn, fascist ideas of the community of the people, the leader, and the nation have been foundational elements of modern populism since World War II, but populism often reformulated or even at times rejected these features, especially those related to

fascism's extreme political violence and its totalitarian overthrow of democracy.

Fascism came in different colors that carried different meanings. As the historian of Japanese fascism Reto Hoffman observes, fascism was "donning a rainbow of shirts"—steel gray in Syria, green in Egypt, blue in China, orange in South Africa, gold in Mexico—and these variations spoke volumes about the distinctive national adaptations of what clearly was a global ideology.[15] To this connection between ideology and fashion, one could add the now classic brown in Germany and, of course, black in Italy, blue in Portugal and Ireland, and green in Brazil. As a global rejection of universal democratic values, fascism displayed an ideological palette clearly located on the extreme right of the political spectrum. In contrast, populism was shirtless. As epitomized in Argentine Peronism, the first populist regime in history and thus one of the more significant cases of modern postwar populism, the lack of shirts of the followers (the *descamisados*) explicitly rejected fascism and established populism as postfascism.[16] The historical example of the lack of coloration in populism also works as a metaphor for the ideological crossings of populism and explains why populism, unlike fascism, was not a united front against liberalism. Linking, once again, extreme nationalism with social concerns and an intolerance of the people, modern populism did not restrict itself to the political right. This expanded populism's reach but voided a transnational, ideological consensus on its anti-Enlightenment meanings, as had also been the case for global fascism. In different historical postwar experiences, in which even the rejection of liberal forms of democracy took a democratic form, populism contested both liberalism and fascism. The existence of a previous fascist regime was not a necessary precondition for the rise

of postwar populism. Populist movements and regimes emerged without national fascist interludes in countries like Brazil, the United States, Peru, or Venezuela, but a central tenet of these new populisms was that fascism was no longer an option for global authoritarians. Along these lines, in the United States, Senator Joseph McCarthy's post-1945 populism was very different from the interwar fascism espoused by a fellow traveler like Father Charles Coughlin. And the authoritarianism of Getulio Vargas in Brazil changed when his dictatorship ended in 1945. It had undergone a populist transformation by the time Vargas was elected president in 1951. More important than the global impact of Peronism after 1945, or Varguism later on, was the way each exemplified how democracy and authoritarianism could coexist. To these and other global authoritarians, populism provided a successful example of a new electoral road to power. After fascism and its constellations of fascist-like coups, anticommunist dictatorships were no longer viable political options in most of the world. In this new context, and especially in Latin America, populists engaged with the world of constitutional democracy, polluting its foundations but not causing them to crumble. As populism struggled with the fascist and liberal pasts, it adopted elements of both and mixed them with other popular traditions from the left and the right.

This new modern populism's ascent to power after World War II was the unintended result of fascism. In a new age of liberalism, it replaced fascism as the most significant challenge to liberal democracy. Like fascism, populism was and is hard to pin down. Even more than fascism, postwar populism created coalitions that crisscrossed the traditional boundaries of the political spectrum, incorporating sectors that had hitherto been opposed to each other. This history explains why

conventional categories and schemes do not explain its different looks. Is it right? Is it left?

Echoing the title of historian Zeev Sternhell's major book on fascism, *Neither Right nor Left,* I find that populism is conceptually neither.[17] But I would say that historically, as an intolerant understanding of a democracy in which dissent is allowed but is portrayed as lacking any legitimacy, it has been both. More often than not, the differences among populisms have been immense in the ways they push and combine forms of participation and exclusion. In fact, a defining characteristic of modern populism is the fluidity of its transitions from right to left and vice versa.

Populism is an ideological pendulum, but some central features nonetheless remain constant: an extreme sacralizing understanding of politics; a political theology that considers only those who follow an illuminated leadership to be the true members of the people; an understanding of the leader as being essentially opposed to ruling elites; an idea of political antagonists as enemies of the people, who are potentially (or already) traitors to the nation but yet are not violently repressed; a charismatic understanding of the leader as an embodiment of the voice and desires of the people and the nation as a whole; a strong executive branch combined with the discursive, and often practical, dismissal of the legislative and judicial branches of government; continuous efforts to intimidate independent journalism; a radical nationalism and an emphasis on popular or even celebrity culture, as opposed to other forms of expression that do not represent "national thought"; and finally an attachment to an authoritarian form of antiliberal electoral democracy that nonetheless rejects, at least in practice, dictatorial forms of government.[18]

Despite the recurrence of academic references to the volatility of populism as a concept and experience, populism is no mystery to historians reading the sources. In fact, I would argue that it is not that we lack clarity in defining the term, but rather that our theories of populism lack history. Needless to say, the reverse is also true. Historians often neglect the contributions of theoretical approaches to populism. The result is a lack of understanding between history and theory.

A new understanding of populism needs to address the postwar democratic context for the emergence of the first modern populist regimes in history—namely, that populism was originally reconstituted in 1945 as a postfascist response to the left. However, it was not a radical break with the past, and populism was not engendered outside a historical continuum. From the end of the nineteenth century to the interwar years, pre- and protoforms of populism emerged in places as far apart as the United States, Russia, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and France. These movements and leaders spoke in the name of the people as one single entity. From the left and the right, they opposed oligarchies and elites, but they did not generally contest liberal democracy tout court.

The contestation of democracy came after World War I, when fascism fused prepopulist tendencies of left and right with a radical antiliberal and anticommunist ideology that led even some noted historians to talk about fascist-populist dictatorships. After 1945, in a radically changed context, modern populism returned to its prefascist roots, but without forgetting the lessons it had learned from fascism. For historians this historicity is clear, but outside the field, populism is often regarded as a transhistorical phenomenon. In other words, it is viewed as happening without a historical context. As postfascism, populism

emerged as a form of authoritarian democracy for the Cold War world: one that could adapt the totalitarian version of politics to the postwar hegemony of democratic representation. This transformation was first predominant in Latin America, after the global fall of fascism, and much later became widespread in Europe after the fall of real socialism.

Populism started with the recognition that fascism was now part of the past rather than the present. For General Perón, the leader of the first modern populist regime in history, fascism was "an unrepeatable phenomenon, a classic style to define a precise and determined epoch." As much as Perón mourned the loss of "poor Mussolini" and his fascism, he did not want to imitate the defeated past. He wanted to free Peronism from the charge of fascism, and the result was a postfascist, authoritarian, and antiliberal version of democracy.[19] Many years later, Italian neofascists arrived at a similar conclusion. Thus, Gianfranco Fini, the Italian leader of the neofascist Movimento Sociale Italiano, in attempting to morph it into a populist formation, argued in 1993 that fascism was irreversibly consigned to the past: "Like all Italians we are not neo-fascists, but post-fascists."[20]

Similar moments of recognition first occurred in Latin America in the 1940s and 1950s and much later in other European contexts, where, for example, Lepenism started its ambivalent transition from neofascism to populism in the 1980s. While Bolivian and Ecuadorian populists renounced their links with fascism during the early part of the Cold War, Austrian neofascists practically did so when they became part of a government coalition in 2000. This situation generated outrage and repudiations in Europe, but Italian postfascists had preceded the Austrians when they formed their first power coalition with Silvio Berlusconi in 1994. In the Berlusconi coalitions that followed, their postfascist leader Fini subse-

quently became deputy prime minister, foreign minister and later president of the Italian chambers of deputies. In a spectacular U-turn, Fini even said in 2003 that Mussolini's participation in the Holocaust meant that "fascism was part of absolute evil."[21]

Though populism often curtailed political rights, it at times expanded social rights while limiting the more radical emancipatory combinations of both. This specific postfascist historical dimension of populism is often lost in the various theoretical reconfigurations, including those approaches that favor or oppose the populist phenomenon.

As a contemporary concept and case, populism has a specific modern history. In other words, it is not a concept outside history. The nonhistorical view of populism reduces it to a transhistorical metaphor for something else, whether it be the constitutive problems of representative democracy, the empty or filled spaces of the political, technocracy, or politics as such. In sharp contrast with those views, I propose viewing populism as the outcome of a modern historical process, in other words, as part of an ongoing history in which the limitations and intrinsic problems of formal democracy meet the interwar and postwar history of democracy being contested from within and without. This book stresses the place of fascism and its legacy in the foundation of modern populism.

By exploring the intimate historical and theoretical links between the fascist and populist experiences, this work analyzes the centrality of global practices, styles, and concepts, and of the postwar memories of political violence for thinking through these connections. Fascism and populism are forms of nationalism, but they also present supranational links and commonalities.

Part of a new transnational trend in the study of fascism and populism, this book expands the understanding of both by way of

their transatlantic, and global, repercussions in the postwar period, especially the populist rejection of fascist violence. Violence, its conception and more importantly its practices, divides the waters between fascism and populism. Violence, and its legacy of repression and extermination, defines the contrasting global experiences of fascism and populism as ideologies, movements, and regimes. as well as their subsequent reformulations in our new century.

Focusing on the legacies of fascist violence allows us to better grasp fascism's historical global implications after 1945. I want to overcome the opposition between antitheoretical approaches to fascism and populism and those focused solely on the theoretical dimensions of fascist and populist phenomena. The emphasis on fascist violence on a comparative and cross-national scale overcomes the dichotomy between history and theory. My main point is that fascism's emphasis on political violence, repression, and genocide has remained a significant dimension of its place in the memories of fascists and antifascists, and of populists and antipopulists, after 1945. This traumatic memory of violence has also engendered both neofascist movements and postfascist forms of populism. Thus, this book's perspective integrates the fields of conceptual history and political theory, especially with respect to European and Latin American history but also to instances of fascism and populism in Africa, Asia, and beyond. The interconnected histories of global fascism, populism, and political violence offer particularly meaningful cases for the analysis of the interactions among ideology, antidemocracy, and politics

MAPPING FASCISM AND POPULISM

Overall, the emphasis here is on the transnational and national dimensions of historical experience at the center and at the

periphery, but thinking comparatively about the ideology and politics of modern antidemocratic practices across contexts and beyond historical and theoretical commonplaces is also important. Fascism and populism are two historical formations that are contextually connected, and the fact they are not generally analyzed together by historians and theorists is puzzling. This introduction, like the book as a whole, reconnects and analyzes histories and theories of fascism and populism. Chapter 1 provides a conceptual and historical working explanation of fascism and stresses the central role violence and genocide play in fascist ideology and practice, especially in its global dimensions. It establishes a dialogue between different historical interpretations that often avoid talking to each other. In this context, I insist on the need to analyze the history of fascism as a form of political violence that contrasts sharply with populism, in order to contextualize the key distinctions between the two. The chapter also addresses how historians have interpreted fascism, from an early focus on its national variants to one emphasizing generic theories of fascism that downplay national distinctions. I critically engage with these historiographies, especially with their refusals to study fascism outside Europe. Against a Eurocentric view of fascism, I stress the contributions of the new transnational turn in its history. Overall, the chapter forwards a reading of fascism as a critical subject of global history (from Europe to Latin America to Asia and beyond), at the same time that it deals with fascism's ultimate and most extreme realization, the Holocaust.

Most historians of the Holocaust have rejected the notion of fascism as a causal explanation for its origins. At the same time, many historians of fascism present the Holocaust as a particular event that is not central to fascist historiography. Chapter 1

underlines how the Shoah, when viewed in a global rather than national context, poses significant challenges to the transnational history of ideology and politics. Finally, this chapter addresses the "populist" dimensions of fascism in history and theory. The chapters that follow analyze how these dimensions affected the novel postwar experience of populism in power, precisely because it marked an ambivalently democratic rejection of the legacies of fascism, genocide, and dictatorship.

Chapter 2 deals with the emergence and development of modern populism. Eurocentric and US-centered versions of the populist phenomenon prevail in the analysis. Against these ethnocentric tendencies in history and theory, and the challenge they pose to theories of populism as a sort of pure form of democracy, I put forward a more global and critical reading of populism, taking a critical stance toward contemporary interpretations that use history merely to illustrate theory. I provide a working definition of populism in history, and show what historians and theorists can gain by considering populism in regard to fascism. In short, the chapter presents a historical explanation of what populism is, from the early populisms of Russia and the United States to the protopopulisms of Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil. While the former were incomplete populisms, in the sense that they were only opposition movements and not regimes, the latter were in power but were not fully engaged with the populist fusion of antiliberalism and electoral democracy. The chapter also explores the adventures of populism from the "classical" postwar populists in power to neofascist, neoliberal, and left-wing, popular-nationalist forms of populism, especially in Latin America and Europe but also in the United States, Africa, and Asia.

Populism stands in clear opposition to the fascist version of dictatorial rule that preceded the Cold War, decolonization, and

different transitions to democracy on a global scale. In other words, populism has been a form of antiliberal democracy that reproduced, but also often reformulated and at times even rejected, the political antinomies of fascism. Populism was and is defined by its contextual postwar rejection of fascist dictatorship and extreme violence, while it continues to reflect some of fascism's ideological premises.

Dictatorship is one of the historical foundations of modern populism. Yet populism is not dictatorship. In fact, in the context of the early Cold War period, modern populism represented a democratic renunciation of dictatorship. In this context, chapter 3 argues that "mass dictatorship" is central to the genealogy of populism. More specifically, the fascist dictatorial experience was one of the reasons behind the emergence of the first populist movements and regimes, but it also helped define them in opposition to their dictatorial origins. Later on and in other contexts, especially in its Southern European, African, and Latin American left-wing variants, populism took on forms of nationalism that explicitly rejected fascism, imperialism, colonialism, racism, and dictatorial rule. This rejection has historically been more ambiguous in right-wing and extreme right-wing cases of populism, which sometimes adopted neoliberal forms.

In dialogue with, but also in contrast to, a literature that makes a binary distinction between fascism and populism, I stress the need to understand the ambivalent, democratic nature of the authoritarian populist experience, including the more recent issues of the new media landscape, "macho-populism," and "Islamic populism."

Born out of the dictatorial defeat of fascism, postwar populism historically became an authoritarian form of democracy. Yet nothing prevents its future relapse into its past fascist foundations.

Few but significant historical examples of the relapse of populism into fascist violence range from neofascist Peronism in the 1970s to the Golden Dawn in Greece and to other European movements of the extreme right. Even if it does not renounce electoral democratic procedures, populism as a movement becomes neofascism when it transitions from a homogenizing conception of the people to one that posits its ethnic identification with the national community, while simultaneously switching from a more or less generic rhetoric of an unidentified enemy (the elites, traitors, outsiders, etc.) to the articulation of an identifiable racial or religious foe who is met with political violence. Similarly, as a regime populism becomes dictatorship (fascist, neofascist, or nonfascist) when it voids its association with its defining democratic features. To put it differently, when elections are finally banned or are no longer free, when the intimidation of the independent press leads to its suppression, when dissent is not only deemed illegitimate by those in power but is also prohibited and punished, when undermining the separation of powers morphs into unifying them under the leader, and last but not least when the populist logic of polarization is translated into actual political persecution, populism loses its historical elements and, in many ways, ceases to be populist. In these cases, the populist tendency to corrupt constitutional democracy leads to its elimination. If populism reverts fully to its classical, dictatorial, and antirational roots, it is no longer populism—a resolution of the populist ambivalence between dictatorship and democracy that is always possible, but historically has not been the most common one. More generally, populism as an antiliberal democratic response to modern politics straddles these two opposing poles. This foundational historical tension in populism emerged in the early Cold War and was reinforced after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the rise of new twenty-

first-century nationalisms. In 1919, in 1945, and in the early years of our new century, the contexts were very different. While fascism was born in 1919 out of the interwar crisis of liberalism, and was then reinforced by the deep economic crisis of the 1930s, modern populism emerged in 1945 out of the crisis and defeat of fascism. It did so in the context of the world powers' economic recovery. The new surge of contemporary xenophobic populism is happening in a context that is more similar to the 1920s and 1930s, the period that witnessed the rise of fascism. In this new century, in the context of the Great Recession, democracy is confronting challenges that are similar to those it encountered during the Great Depression.[22] We are witnessing a new global slump and a new crisis of representation in which democracy is once again being tested by populist forces.

History does not repeat itself, but genealogies are important for understanding the present. The new populism of the right is very different from that which accepted the torch from the fascists after World War II. In fact, it is directly related to the affirmation of neoliberalism in Europe and in the rest of the world after 1989. As neoliberalism solidified after 1989, Europe, West and East, saw the rise of invigorated nationalisms, which often looked to the interwar authoritarian past as a precedent for the liberal triumph over communism. Nationalism worked in tandem with neoliberalism. As opposed to claims that the new populisms of the right and the extreme right are unidimensional products of 1989, and thereby have no significant links with the past, connecting these populisms to their authoritarian genealogies both inside and outside Europe is important. Populism and neoliberalism are parts of the same process that the leading political theorist of populism Nadia Urbinati suggests is a disfigurement of democracy.[23] This new American and European

populism in many ways is less defensive about its nationalism and racism. It remains close to the interwar past, offering old, undemocratic solutions to new problems.

Globally, populism is particularly attractive for sectors that have perceived of themselves as excluded from the political system, and as unrepresented by existing democratic institutions. Populist leaders equate their desires with the needs of the people and the whole nation. They stand for a homogeneous society that never existed. Populists push nationalist proposals intended to exclude the other and to integrate followers, while remaining deeply suspicious of difference.

As in the past, contemporary populism offers authoritarian answers to the crisis of democratic representation. Populism constantly changes, but the fundamentals remain. Since its postwar ascent to power, populism has asserted a democratic third way between liberalism and socialism. In that context, fascism became populism in history.