



ECPS

EUROPEAN CENTER for
POPULISM STUDIES

Fifth Annual International Symposium
***Reforming and Safeguarding Liberal Democracy: Systemic Crises,
Populism, and Democratic Resilience***

Date: April 21–22, 2026

Online Event | All Sessions in Brussels Time (CEST, UTC+2)

Day One

April 21, 2026
(13:00-19:10)

Opening Remarks

(13:00–13:10)

Irina von Wiese (ECPS Honorary President)

Keynote Speech

(13:10–14:00)

“*The Chicken-and-Egg Dilemma: Systemic Crises and the Rise of Populism,*” by
Staffan I. Lindberg (Professor of Political Science, University of Gothenburg,
Founding Director (2012–2025) of V-Dem Institute).

Coffee Break

(14:00–14:10)

Panel 1

***From Grievance to Radicalization: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the International Politics of
Populism***

(14:10–15:40)

Moderator

Guri Rosén (Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of
Oslo).

Speakers

“*Driving On the Right’: Analyzing Far-Right Rhetoric,*” by **Ruth Wodak**
(Distinguished Professor and Chair in Discourse Studies, Lancaster University;
University of Vienna).




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“The Theocratic Blueprint of Christian Nationalism, Reconstructionism, the New Apostolic Reformation, and Catholic Integralism Behind Trump’s Agenda,” by **Julie Ingersoll** (Professor of Philosophy & Religious Studies and Religious Studies Program Coordinator at the University of North Florida).

“International Organizations in Times of Populism,” by **Stephan Klingebiel** (Head of the Department of Inter- and Transnational Cooperation at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)).

“Humiliation, Elite Impunity, and the Anti-System Gamble: Weimar-Type Mechanisms in Contemporary Grievance Politics,” by **Benjamin Carter Hett** (Professor of History, Hunter College & The Graduate Center, CUNY).

Break

(15:40–15:50)

Panel 2

Institutions Under Pressure: Rule of Law, Executive Power, and Democratic Defense

(15:50–17:20)

Moderator

Yavuz Baydar (A blogger with Mediapart and a columnist with Svenska Dagbladet).

Speakers

“Democratic Resilience Under Pressure: Institutions, Accountability, and the Return to Robust Democracy,” by **Susan C. Stokes** (Tiffany and Margaret Blake Distinguished Service Professor and Director of the Chicago Center on Democracy at the University of Chicago).

“To Resist a Coordinated Attack, We Need a Coordinated Defense,” by **Robert Benson** (Associate Director for National Security & International Policy, Center for American Progress (CAP)).

“The Law and Politics of Fear: Executive Power in 2026,” by **Barry Sullivan** (The Raymond and Mary Simon Chair in Constitutional Law and the George Anastaplo Professor of Constitutional Law and History at Loyola University).



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"Democracy, the Rule of Law, and Regime Change: An Evolutionary Perspective," by **Stephen E. Hanson** (Lettie Pate Evans Professor of Government, William & Mary (USA)).

Coffee Break
(17:20–17:30)

Panel 3
Normalizing Authoritarian Populism: Institutions, Algorithms, and Fascist Drift
(17:30–19:00)

Moderator

Werner Pascha (Emeritus Professor of Economics, Duisburg-Essen University, Institute of East Asian Studies (IN-EAST)).

Speakers

"The Arc of Authoritarian Populism in the US under Donald Trump, How Far It Has Progressed, and the Prospects of Reversing It," by **Larry Diamond** (William L. Clayton Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution; Mosbacher Senior Fellow in Global Democracy, Freeman Spogli Institute (FSI); Bass University Fellow).

"The Institutional Enablement of American Populism," by **Bruce Cain** (Professor of Political Science, Stanford University; Director, Bill Lane Center).

"Algorithmic Populism in the Age of the Deep-Fake," by **Ibrahim Al-Marashi** (Assoc. Prof. at The American College of the Mediterranean, and the Department of International Relations at Central European University).

"From Populist Capture to Democratic Belonging: Multicultural Nationalism as an Alternative to Exclusionary Nationalism," by **Tariq Modood** (Professor of Sociology, Politics and Public Policy at the University of Bristol).

Wrap-up
(19:00–19:10)

Day Two




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April 22, 2026
(13:00-17:15)

Opening
(13:00–13:05)

Keynote Speech
(13:05–13:50)

“Democratic Resilience in Europe: Can It Be Effective?” by **Richard Youngs** (Professor, Senior Fellow at Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program at Carnegie Europe).

Panel 4
Comparative Regional Pathways of Democratic Backsliding and Far-Right Mobilization
(13:50–15:20)

Moderator

Reinhard Heinisch (Professor of Comparative Austrian Politics, University of Salzburg).

Speakers

“Building an Authoritarian Edifice Step-By-Step,” by **Henri J. Barkey** (Cohen Professor of International Relations (Emeritus), Department of International Relations, Lehigh University).

“Populism and transnational ties of the far right in East Asia: Recent developments in South Korea,” by **Hannes B. Mosler** (Professor, Universität Duisburg-Essen, Institut für Politikwissenschaft (IfP), Institute of East Asian Studies (IN-EAST)).

“The Geopolitics of Right-wing Populism in a Post-hegemonic World Order,” by **Edward Knudsen** (A doctoral researcher in international relations at the University of Oxford and an Affiliate Policy Fellow in European political economy at the Jacques Delors Centre in Berlin).

“Populist Narratives and Democratic Backsliding: Perspectives from Latin America,” by **María Esperanza Casullo** (Professor at the Institute of Political Science, Faculty of History, Geography and Political Science, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile).



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Coffee Break
(15:20–15:30)

Panel 5

Democratic Resistance in a Hardening World: Civic Capacity, Strongmen, and Economic Coercion
(15:30–17:00)

Moderator

Jocelyne Cesari (Professor and Chair of Religion and Politics and Director of Research at the Edward Cadbury Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion at the University of Birmingham, and Senior Fellow at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs).

Speakers

"Structural Pressures Behind Strongman Politics," by **Jack A. Goldstone** (The Virginia E. and John T. Hazel, Jr., Professor of Public Policy at George Mason University, and a Senior Fellow of the Mercatus Center).

"Changing Democracy's Address," by **Steven Friedman** (Research Professor of Politics, University of Johannesburg; former Director, Centre for the Study of Democracy).

"The Return of the Strong Men," by **John Pratt** (Emeritus Professor of Criminology, Victoria University of Wellington).

"Weaponized Trade Policy: Tariffs, Industrial Policy, and the Future of Global Economic Governance," by **Kent Jones** (Professor Emeritus of International Economics, Babson College).

Closing Remarks
(17:00-17:15)

İbrahim Öztürk (ECPS, Senior Economic researcher, Professor of Economics, Duisburg-Essen University, Institute of East Asian Studies (IN-EAST)).



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