

Annual Workshop of the Populism Working Group of the German Political Science Association (DVPW)

In collaboration with the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, Freiburg; and Institute for Research on Far Right Extremism (IRex), University of Tübingen

Current Perspectives on Populism in Authoritarian Regime Contexts

With a keynote by Petra Guasti, Charles University Prague

25-26 September 2025, University of Freiburg

This workshop responds to the pressing need for up-to-date analysis of fast-paced political developments worldwide by bringing together current perspectives on populism in authoritarian regime settings. Over the past decade, much has been written on populism in relation to authoritarianism and “democratic backsliding,” from Hungary and Poland to India and the Philippines. As ever, the boundaries between democratic and authoritarian regimes have become porous and elusive, with authoritarian ruling practices coexisting alongside formally democratic institutions in so-called hybrid regimes or “diminished subtypes” that have been widely discussed in the literature (from competitive authoritarianisms to defective democracies). How is populism being used today within authoritarian regime contexts of all stripes around the globe by regime and oppositional actors alike against the ongoing backdrop of wars, trade disputes, and protests? In placing this line of inquiry at the forefront, the workshop explores aspects of growing current relevance such as the following:

- 1) *Populism and authoritarian regimes at war:* How and to what extent is populism used as a domestic mobilizing resource for authoritarian regimes in their wars – such as Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and Azerbaijan’s recent wars in Nagorno-Karabakh – and/or for opposition forces operating under conditions of heightened wartime repression?
- 2) *Populism and new opposition challengers to authoritarianism:* What is the role of populism in the emergence of new challenges to authoritarian rule – from the Tisza Party in Hungary to heightened anti-regime protests in Serbia and Turkey – as well as regime responses to them?
- 3) *Populism and new “backsliders”:* What role does populism play for recently elected governments with authoritarian tendencies such as the current Trump administration in the United States? What similarities and differences to other, more established cases of democratic backsliding can be identified?

Organizers:

Seongcheol Kim (local host)
University of Freiburg

Sabine Volk
University of Tübingen

Schedule (overview)

Location: Peterhof (Niemensstr. 10, 79098 Freiburg), room R 2

Wednesday, 24 September 2025

20.00 *Dinner (for those around, Harmonie Flammkuchenhaus, Grünwälderstr. 16)*

Thursday, 25 September 2025

9.00-9.30 Welcome and introductions

9.30-11.00 Panel session 1

11.00-11.30 Coffee break

11.30-12.30 Presentation of the Horizon doctoral network IDEoPOP
Stephan Fouquet, University of Freiburg

12.30-13.20 Lunch (UC Café, Niemensstr. 7)

13.20-13.50 Short tour of the KG 1 tower

14.00-15.30 Panel session 2

15.30-16.30 DVPW working group members' meeting and election of new convenors (all participants are welcome)

16.30-17.00 Coffee break

17.00-18.30 Keynote speech on populism and authoritarianism in Central and Eastern Europe (online)
Petra Guasti, Charles University Prague

18.30-19.30 Free time / joint walk in Freiburg's Old Town

19.30 Dinner (Hausbrauerei Feierling, Gerberau 46)

Friday, 26 September 2025

9.00-10.30 Panel session 3

10.30-11.00 Coffee break

11.00-12.30 Panel session 4

12.30-13.00 Closing remarks and goodbye

Panel sessions

Panel session 1 (Thursday, 9.30-11.00): Backsliding, war, and contentious politics

Vlad Bujdei-Tebeica & Henry P. Rammelt: “Populism in the Streets: Comparative Protest Dynamics in Romania and Moldova (2020–2025)”

Seongcheol Kim: “For the war, against the regime? Analyzing the wartime communication of the Left Front and the Club of Angry Patriots in Russia”

Bernadett Lehoczki: “Populists and the War in Ukraine: Populist Rhetoric in Hungary”

Svitlana Shcherbak and Jared Sonnicksen: “From Populism to Authoritarianism? Trump and the Republican Party in comparison with the Russian and Ukrainian Cases”

Panel session 2 (Thursday, 14.00-15.30): New “backsliders”

Lia Tsuladze: “Instrumentalization of Populist Discourses During Three Phases of the Authoritarian Turn in Georgia”

Ignacio Lasheras: “Populist Politicization of Foreign Policy: Italy and Poland”

Paulina Lenik: “Trusting again? Tracing electoral attitudes to PiS 2012-2024”

Panel session 3 (Friday, 9.00-10.30): Theoretical perspectives

Alessandro Volpi: “What is ‘populist’ in ‘populist authoritarianism’?”

Sabine Volk: “Anti-feminism in far-right politics”

Aristea Paraskewopoulos: “Populists in the Global South and patterns of LIO contestation”

Panel session 4 (Friday, 11.00-12.30): Regime practices and transnational linkages

Teresa Jopson: “Populisms and Wars on Drugs in Southeast Asia”

Sophie Maier: “Global Populist Networking: Analysing the BJP’s influence in Great Britain and Germany”

Younes Qirou & Sami Soda: “Environmental and Migration Discourses as Populist Levers of Authoritarianism in Morocco”