BOOK REVIEW

Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian Populism

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(NORRIS, Pippa and INGLEHART, Ronald**.** *Cultural Backlash. Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian Populism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019)

The book on which this review is based is one of the most recent in the study of the development of 21st century populism. In it, the authors advance a general theory that explains how a revolution in values has been the trigger for support for populist-authoritarian forces in Europe and the United States, something that had not previously been done for such a wide range of countries.

To do this they establish the fundamentals for understanding how and why populism and its rhetoric is being used to legitimise the style of governance of some (such as Trump), while promoting authoritarian values that will threaten the liberal norms of the democracies of Europe and the United States. By studying recent major events, such as Trump's triumph in the US White House or Brexit in the UK, the authors study the growth of authoritarian-populism in the world regions mentioned, and explain it with a new theory, named Cultural Backlash Theory.

I would first like to point out an important aspect for understanding the theoretical extension and empirical implications of this study. It provides a broad empirical vision that explains in depth the relationship with the rise of populist/authoritarian parties and examines the social and political framework in which certain events have taken place that have had a greater or lesser impact on societies, such as the Brexit process.

However, it is also geographically limited, since it is focused on Western Europe and the United States. This restricts the theoretical generalization capacity of the study, since it leaves all the other democratic countries out. It is therefore important to be aware that it is not possible to extrapolate it to other countries where it would be interesting to study this phenomenon, such as the case of Brazil with Jair Bolsonaro or Nayib Bukele in El Salvador, amongst others.

In order to situate ourselves conceptually in the study, it should be noted that Norris and Inglehart (2019) begin by establishing the definitions of 'populism': a style of rhetoric reflecting first-order principles about who should rule, claiming that legitimate power rests with 'the people' not the elites; and 'authoritarianism': a set of values that prioritise collective security at the expense of individual freedom. With these definitions, we will be able to understand what they mean when they speak of 'authoritarian populism'. They provide examples of each of them, based on the campaigns in favour of Brexit, when the leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) used populist rhetoric during the Brexit campaign such as "this will be a victory for real people, a victory for ordinary people, a victory for decent people" (NORRIS and INGLEHART, 2019, p. 05); or the 2016 US elections which Donald Trump won.

This leads to the central part of this work, focused on Cultural Backlash Theory. It combines three interactive pillars, based on a demand for values, supply-side institutions, and governance (concerning the consequences when parties and leaders gain votes and are elected to office), and explains why the populist-authoritarian parties across Europe and the US are increasing their power in all social institutions. Central to their theory is the idea of a 'silent revolution', which is strongly associated with a process of change in the demographic structure of societies since the second half of the twentieth century, a confrontation based on an opposition between those born and who lived most of their lives in the twentieth century and their values (the inter-war and the Baby Boomer generations) and the values of new generations (Generation X and the Millennials) (NORRIS AND INGLEHART, 2019, p. 288).

Regarding the first pillar, they argue that the demand for values engenders a 'silent revolution' of attitudes in society, which due to the variables of economic

grievance and issues of diversity and immigration have led to social-conservative conventions that reflect authoritarian perspectives.

The second pillar focuses on supply-side institutions. It explains that people in these more conservative sectors, drawing on the new logic of reasoning about key issues, use the mechanisms offered by institutions, such as electoral rules and party competition, to vote for populist and authoritarian parties in elections.

This brings us to the last pillar of the theory of cultural reaction, governance. This is subject to the seats obtained by populist parties in representative chambers which gradually condition the democratic system and the political agenda, and also slowly transform civic culture in society.

It is also emphasized in the book that studying populism is complex, since it does not exist as something singular. Rather there are variants of this concept, since political leaders and their parties may or may not present certain characteristics in their rhetoric, constituting these variants. Among the characteristics they examine are the value of loyalty, social conformism, and the primacy of collective security. The differential presence (or absence) of these in the rhetoric of each party constitute the variant of populism. This modulates the degree to which a party is populist and authoritarian. When looked at empirically, a sense of the definitions offered by the authors can be acquired, as well as the idea of each concept in general terms.

In the previous paragraph the complexity of the concepts of 'populism' and 'authoritarianism' was mentioned, as well as the presence of certain rhetorical characteristics that lead to varieties in each concept. Related to this, using data from the 'World Values Survey' and the 'European Social Survey', the authors empirically demonstrate which characteristics are most important for those in liberal democracies who contribute to the rise of populism/authoritarianism. They use these databases to compare different answers to questions, used as indicators of the above mentioned characteristics to show the most important characteristics whose positioning in the population favours authoritarian-populism, namely: the contrast of values between generations from the inter-war period and younger generations and the prevalence of social issues over other issues. These cultural

'cleavages' increase the weight of party competition and the influence of these parties on the public agenda.

Related to the first pillar, demand-side values, the authors show that economic globalization is relevant here, since it has generated 'losers', those whose jobs have disappeared due to technological innovation, and who worked in industries that did not require a high level of education, and were carried out manually. These will adopt authoritarian and populist attitudes (MUDDE, 2014). On the other hand, in the long term, they claim that there are no significant fluctuations in values between the young, with a strong post-materialist perspective, and the older generations, with a materialist vision, i.e. each generation is respectively 'anchored' on the values they have always defended. They study whether these authoritarian and populist values have strength in places where they are focused; they conclude that they do and add that the poorest regions also distrust political institutions such as parties or parliaments.

Another relevant topic, also related to the first pillar, one that is becoming increasingly important in the study countries, is the influence of immigration. The authors study the view of the population of Western states towards terrorism, unemployment, and national identity in the face of this issue. They show that authoritarian values are related to anti-immigration attitudes, even more than the defense of national economic interests, and that those who perceive immigration as a problem - something which should not be underestimated - are those who most support populist-authoritarian parties.

Having seen characteristics related to individuals, it is worth mentioning the mechanisms by which values are converted into votes and to what extent these votes become parliamentary seats through the institution of political parties.

They start by classifying political parties. This classification is based on three dimensions: a left-right ideological axis, authoritarianism-libertarianism, and populism-pluralism.

After establishing the classification, they study the voter profile of these political parties, focusing on social conditions and electoral rules. They show that the generation from the inter-war period, those with a low level of education, and those living in rural areas are more likely to support these parties. Religion has very

little strength in relation to voting for such parties. The tendency to the ideological right is related to a contagion of those citizens who place themselves in the centre-right, and this causes political parties located in this area to adopt thematic and policy positions such as immigration control and Euroscepticism (ROODUIJN, DE LANGE and VAN DER BRUG, 2014). Electoral pressure on these parties favours their position themselves in this way.

With regard to their representativeness, states have electoral systems, as part of any of the three variants of the electoral system discussed (majoritarian, proportional, and mixed hybrid systems), which underrepresent parties with little citizen support, as is the case of these parties. They do not obtain a relevant representation. However, they should not be underestimated, Norris and Inglehart argue, because they can condition the state's political agenda (NORRIS and INGLEHART, 2019, p. 322). As an example, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) was an influential political actor in setting the public agenda for a referendum on the UK's permanence in the European Union. Nevertheless, more people vote for right authoritarian-populist parties than for the left because the older generations have more weight, as they vote more frequently in electoral processes than younger generations, which favours the greater representation of these types of parties. This also largely explains, along with the context and the variables cited, why populist-authoritarian political parties have increasing weight in Western societies and why their support may be increasing.

In the final chapters of the book, they explain that the consequences of this cultural reaction are produced by an erosion of 'civic culture', which has been underway since the mid-twentieth century, the loss of confidence in institutions, and the decline of the values of tolerance and individual freedom. Moreover, the clash of the intergenerational values that has made politics more heterogeneous than ever since the end of the Second World War, and its aggravating factors for society as a whole, such as the economic crisis of 2008 and the refugee crisis in Eastern Europe, have reaffirmed the values of the social-conservative groups, who have seen in the populist-authoritarian parties a solution to this instability in Europe and the United States, "the centre-right electorate has been infected" (NORRIS and INGLEHART, 2019, p. 435).

Is it possible, the authors ask, to reverse this cultural reactionism and its consequences in the liberal democratic systems? The answer is clear: it is up to states and their governments to promote a reaction to opposing cultural values, so that pluralism and libertarianism prevail over populism and authoritarianism. Reducing economic inequality, providing strong electoral opposition, and giving answers that manage to revert the social havoc that have generated the successive crises mentioned above, in order to stimulate a reduction in opposition to immigration, racism, and xenophobia. The tool for achieving this will be public policies. The state must be resilient.

Reviewed by Eoin Portela

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