

## Democratic Respect

Commentators often interpret the resentment of supporters of populism as blindly emotional and unconnected to facts and principles. *Democratic Respect* argues instead that we should approach the populist politics of resentment as a struggle for recognition based on moral experiences that are intimately connected to people's factual and moral beliefs. By associating populist resentment with alleged violations of democratic principles, we can discuss what citizens and governments owe one another in terms of recognition and respect. Populism advances a unique interpretation of democracy and recognition, which Rostbøll confronts with the notion of democratic respect. How democracy should recognize the people is shown to be connected to debates over the meaning and value of democratic procedures, rights, majority rule, compromise, and public deliberation. The book builds a bridge between empirical research and philosophical analysis, while providing insights relevant to a public grappling with the challenges many democracies face today.

Christian F. Rostbøll is Professor of Political Theory at University of Copenhagen, and he holds a PhD from Columbia University. He is author of *Deliberative Freedom* (2008) and numerous articles on political and democratic theory, as well as co-editor of *Compromise and Disagreement in Contemporary Political Theory* (2018).

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# Democratic Respect

*Populism, Resentment, and the  
Struggle for Recognition*

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Christian F. Rostbøll

*University of Copenhagen*



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To the memory of my mother

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## Acknowledgments

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As many others, I started thinking seriously about populism in 2016 after the election of Donald Trump and the Brexit referendum. For a political theorist who has written on democratic theory as well as the concept of respect, populism raises some pressing questions. The rise of populism seems closely connected to widespread feelings of disrespect and at the same time (and relatedly) it presents a competing view of what democracy is and should be. Thus, I became interested in the question of how democracy should, and perhaps should not, recognize the people. The following pages are a result of my reflections on that question.

Many colleagues, friends, and family members have helped me along the way. A large part of the book was written during the Covid-19 pandemic, which meant both more time for solitary writing and new forms of academic exchange with colleagues. We have learned to share ideas online, which is sometimes less personal and less fun but at least the impact on the climate is smaller than flying across and between continents. I thank all the people who have provided comments and feedback both online and in person.

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Chapter 6 draws on my article "Populism, Democracy, and the Publicity Requirement," *Constellations* (2022): 1–14 (e-publication ahead of print). At different points, I have also used ideas from my article "Second-Order Political Thinking: Compromise versus Populism," *Political Studies* 69.3 (2021): 559–576.