

Cambridge Elements

Elements in the History and Politics of Fascism

edited by

Federico Finchelstein

The New School for Social Research

António Costa Pinto

University of Lisbon

POPULISM AND FASCISM

Carlos de la Torre

University of Florida



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-52899-3 — Populism and Fascism
Carlos de la Torre
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit
of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009528993

DOI: 10.1017/9781009528979

© Carlos de la Torre 2025

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009528979

First published 2025

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-009-52899-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-52898-6 Paperback

ISSN 2977-0416 (online)

ISSN 2977-0408 (print)

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

For EU product safety concerns, contact us at Calle de José Abascal, 56, 1º, 28003
Madrid, Spain, or email eugpsr@cambridge.org.

Populism and Fascism

Elements in the History and Politics of Fascism

DOI: 10.1017/9781009528979
First published online: January 2025

Carlos de la Torre
University of Florida

Author for correspondence: Carlos de la Torre, delatorre.carlos@latam.ufl.edu

Abstract: The elections of Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro, as well as the strengthening of the radical right globally, brought back debates about the similarities and differences between populism and fascism. This Element argues that fascism and populism are similar insofar as they construct the people as one, understand leadership as embodiment, and perform politics of the extraordinary. They are different because there is a consensus that fascism occurred at a particular historical moment, and what came after was postfascism. There is not such an agreement to restrict populism to a historical moment. These isms also differ in the use of violence to deal with enemies, and in how they construct their legitimacy using elections or abolishing democracy. Whereas fascism destroys democracy and replaces elections with plebiscitary acclamation, populists promise to give power back to the people. Yet, when in power, the logic of populism leads to democratic erosion.

This Element also has a video abstract: www.cambridge.org/delatorre

Keywords: populism, fascism, charismatic leadership, violence, extraordinary politics

© Carlos de la Torre 2025

ISBNs: 9781009528993 (HB), 9781009528986 (PB), 9781009528979 (OC)
ISSNs: 2977-0416 (online), 2977-0408 (print)

Contents

Preface	1
1 Introduction: Fascism or Populism?	2
2 Defining and Explaining Fascism and Populism	11
3 Similarities	24
4 Differences	35
5 Fascism, Populism, and Democracy	46
6 Conclusions	56
References	60