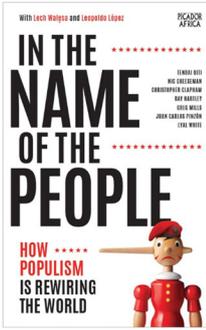




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In the name of the people: How populism is rewiring the world



AUTHORS:

Tendai Biti, Nic Cheeseman, Christopher Clapham, Ray Hartley, Greg Mills, Juan Carlos Pinzón and Lyal White

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REVIEWER:

Johannes Machinya¹

AFFILIATION:

¹Department of Sociology, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

EMAIL:

joemachinya@gmail.com

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A comprehensive analysis of populism: *In the Name of the People*

In the Name of the People: How Populism is Rewiring the World is a collaborative work from a diverse group of contributors with different expertise and perspectives on populism: Tendai Biti is a prominent politician and former finance minister of Zimbabwe, Nic Cheeseman is an accomplished scholar of African politics, Christopher Clapham is an esteemed expert on political history, Ray Hartley is a seasoned journalist, Greg Mills is an accomplished author on political economy, Juan Carlos Pinzón is a former ambassador of Colombia to the United States and a member of the Brenthurst Foundation’s Advisory Board, and Lyal White is an independent researcher specialising in political economy issues in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The book offers a comprehensive exploration of how populism, which at some point in time was associated with dysfunctional political formations in Latin America, has morphed into a global political phenomenon.

In the Name of the People draws on different case studies across diverse continents and historical contexts – from the old-style populist movements in Latin America, to Africa’s liberation-movement populist formations, to new-order populist movements around the world – to underscore the diverse and common properties of populist movements in different contexts, highlighting what constitutes populism, its origins and causes, its strategies, and impact on society. As a result, the book gives a rich and widely researched account of populism that not only demonstrates its complexity but also its paucity of generalisations. This is because, as one understands from the book, populism does not embody a distinctive political regime and is not ideologically confined, or a mere transient political trend. The book shows that, despite some populists leaning towards one or another style of populism, populism in general adopts a language, style, or content that is shaped by the political culture of the society in which it emerges. This makes populism an adaptable political style for political parties and actors on all sides of the political spectrum, from the right to the left, giving it no particular ideological content. But despite populism’s lack of conceptual and definitional clarity, the book shows that the political phenomenon is deeply rooted and possesses the power to reshape the political landscape in many countries around the world. With this offering, the contributors of this book avoid falling into the trap of oversimplifying the populist political phenomenon. Instead, they give a nuanced analysis and acknowledge the variations of populism that emerge in different contexts.

While highlighting that there are different flavours of populism, *In the Name of the People* also provides valuable insights into the strategies employed by populist leaders to gain and maintain power, and the consequences that such actions have on democracy and the economy. The authors show that populism’s political rhetoric is less/not grounded in ideology but rather gives reference to ‘the people’ whereby it evokes latent grievances and appeals to emotions that resonate with broad segments of the population. This political rhetoric mobilises the idea of ‘the people’ that separates ‘the people’ from an enemy ‘other’, whereby the ‘other’ is constructed as posing an existential threat to ‘the people’, thus creating a Manichean divide between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The classic populist strategy is rooted in anti-elitism, which sets the people against an enemy elite. Depending on the context, the enemy of the people can be constructed as a corrupt political or ethnic elite, opposition political formations, or former colonial powers, as in the case of liberation-movement populist formations. However, substantial populist energy today in Europe, North America, and other parts of Africa is being directed against a demonised foreign ‘Other’, the (‘illegal’ migrant). By looking into this populist strategy – which in many cases evokes a politics of fear, fear of the enemy ‘Other’ – the book is able to point to the reason why populism can be so appealing to large sections of society. The book further underlines the deleterious effects that populism has on society: it results in the hollowing of democratic institutions and abuse of human rights; corruption thrives under populism, and the economy ultimately crumbles, plunging many people into political and economic misery.

Beyond its captivating analytical approach, *In the Name of the People* is an accessible text which makes the book an important and comprehensible resource beyond the academic and policymaking circles.

All in all, *In the Name of the People: How Populism is Rewiring the World* makes an invaluable contribution to the subject of populism that is accessible to a wider readership. The book provides a thorough analysis of the origins of populism, its strategies, and its impact, not only on democratic governance but also on the wider society. The book is highly recommended to anyone curious to understand the phenomenon of populism and how it is reshaping the political landscape around the world.