



# LIBERALISM VERSUS POPULISM: HOW CAN LIBERALS WIN?

21 January - 02 February 2024

Gummersbach, Germany

## Abstract

### TOPICS

The rise of populism is often portrayed as a revival of nationalism, white identitarianism or even conservatism - so basically as a revival of old ideas. And while there certainly seems to be some validity to this analysis, there also seem to be severe shortcomings with reducing populism to just a modern-day version of right-wing ideology. In fact, when looking at political realities, it is often not at all clear where we should locate populists on the political spectrum: On the one hand, Marine Le Pen represents a socially and economically conservative agenda - which advocates against abortion and in favor of economic regulation, tariffs, and the strengthening of worker rights at the same time. On the other hand, Nigel Farage shares Le Pen's anti-immigration stance but otherwise favors a laissez-faire capitalist system - so a socially conservative and economically liberal agenda. Similar problems arise when attempting to place political leaders, such as Viktor Orbán, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Narendra Modi, Julius Malema, recently elected Brazilian president Lula or even Donald Trump on the classical left/right spectrum. And what makes them different from traditional authoritarian leaders that we associate with the faces of Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping. These examples show that "populism" seems to escape our traditional ideological frameworks and hence demands further conceptual clarification and investigation.

This seminar will attempt to deconstruct populism in a holistic manner: We will analyze populism from the perspectives of its philosophical foundations, its political strategy through international case studies to ultimately its current-day political communication strategy. Hence, we will mix theory with practice...with a particular focus on the aspect of political storytelling. Because at the end of the seminar, participants will be able to let their creativity go wild and draft a counter-story to the attacks on liberalism that we see all over the world.

### TARGET GROUP

The seminar mainly aims at liberal thinkers and political strategists from political parties, think tanks and NGOs who are currently facing populist forces in their respective countries.

## METHODOLOGY

Besides input session from the facilitators and experts, the seminar will aim at best-practice sharing and active exchange between participants. In order to enhance the learning experience and to emphasize the practical dimension of the workshop, the seminar will rely on non-formal education methods, such as simulations, case studies, and role plays.

## OBJECTIVES

The seminar aims to fulfill the following objectives:

- to establish a thorough theoretical understanding of liberalism and of populism
- to develop tools and senses that help to detect populism
- to develop strategies and measures to counter populists
- to develop guidelines and strategies that can be disseminated in the respective organizations/parties

## Facilitators



**Sven Gerst**

Sven Gerst is a PhD Student in Political Philosophy at the Department of Political Economy at King's College London. His research mainly focuses on matters of global justice, democratic responsibility, and individual accountability. At King's College London, Sven also teaches courses on political and economic philosophy, environmental economics, meta-ethics, and contemporary issues in applied ethics. He holds a M.Sc. in Philosophy from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), as well as a M.Sc. in Management from the University of Mannheim. Previously, he also studied at Harvard University, St. Petersburg State University and at National Taiwan University. Sven has already designed and facilitated a number of seminars for IAF.



**Radu Magdin**

Radu Magdin is a global analyst, consultant and trainer, passionate for power, strategy and communications. He focuses on helping individuals and organisations lead, compete and communicate. He worked as a honorary advisor to the Romanian Prime Minister (2014-2015) and advised the Moldovan PM (2016-2017) on a range of strategic issues, from political strategy and global communications to reforms implementation and external affairs. Radu, a frequent event speaker himself, has also helped Speakers of Parliament, MPs and MEPs to campaign successfully and deliver once in power. He works to make mainstream politics popular again and combat populism. He is keen to help empower girls and women around the world, and has worked on a variety of leadership and empowerment trainings together with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the European Women Academy.

# The Foundation

We, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, promote individual liberty, free and open societies and free markets in Germany and throughout the world. To us freedom is the guiding principle in policy making. We believe that free and open societies are the only societies that allow human beings to decide for themselves what is best, to develop their full potential and to pursue their dreams. This is what we mean when we claim to value human dignity. And it is freedom that produces prosperity. Together with our counterparts – who all share a similar set of values – we support initiatives in Germany and abroad that serve to enhance respect for the rule of law, private property and human rights, that foster tolerance and that strengthen economic freedom rights and democracy.

The programmes of the Foundation's International Academy for Leadership (IAF) form an integral part of our international work and offer Liberals from all parts of the world opportunities to engage in dialogue, an exchange of ideas, networking and mutual cooperation. We aim to inspire.

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**Venue:** **International Academy for Leadership (IAF)**  
Theodor-Heuss-Straße 26  
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Germany

**Language:** English

**Registration:** 20 October 2023

**Registration fee:** 270.00 €

