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Review of Inclusive Growth and other Alternatives to Confront Authoritarian Populism

Abstract. Our world has gone through myriad forms of administrative and economic ideological eras, some of which helped positively and others contributed regressively. Recently, the rise of authoritarian populism as an alternative path to mainstream democracy stems from the failure of inclusiveness in the political and economic institutions especially in the rural world. Due to extractive capitalism, nowadays, rural areas are characterized by persistent poverty, deep inequalities, marginalization and exclusion, fractured identities and loss of self-esteem, which in turn engenders a regressive politics dubbed 'authoritarian populism'. It endangers our future unless we confront it and it has gained momentum by winning national elections in some countries. Alternatively, inclusive growth that would successfully share benefits to the rural people via inclusive political and economic institutions could be able to transform the rural poor. Endorsing and supporting this option with emancipatory rural politics, therefore, saves globalization from a looming collapse and ultimately culminates the world to a new level of civilization.

Key words: authoritarian populism; emancipatory politics; inclusive growth

JEL Classification: A10, P16, D72

Introduction

The world has gone through myriad forms of political and economic ideological eras, some of which helped positively and others contributed negatively. Recently, the rise of authoritarian populism as an alternative path to mainstream democracy stems from the failure of inclusiveness in the political and economic institutions, especially in the rural world (Fraser, 2017). Due to extractive capitalism, nowadays, rural areas are characterized by persistent poverty, deep inequalities, marginalization and exclusion, fractured identities and loss of self-esteem, which in turn engenders a regressive politics dubbed 'authoritarian populism'.

The nexus between authoritarian populism and inclusive democracy is a matter of some confusion in contemporary political analysis. However, from a pragmatic point of view, authoritarian populism is essentially a strategy of political mobilization using a typical style of political rhetoric, which undermines the established institutions and constitutional democracy in favor of outrageous nationalism movement. Authoritarian populism further manifests itself by preferring nationalism over regional or global integration, by portraying misogynist, xenophobic and other discriminatory behaviors. It endangers our future unless we confront it and it has gained momentum by winning national elections in some countries.

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Alternatively, inclusive growth that would successfully shares the benefits to the rural people via inclusive political and economic institutions could be able to transform the rural poor. Adopting and supporting this option saves globalization from a looming collapse and ultimately culminates the world to a new level of civilization. Therefore, I would argue intuitively that the mainstream political and economic institutions are failing to include the rural world and to benefit from the fruit of capitalism and globalization. This argument answers the question why the rural world is adopting authoritarian populism and how this ideology is getting ground as an alternative political system. In this paper, I would explore the potential of strengthening inclusive institutions, both political and economic to subside the authoritarian populism. Moreover, the interaction between rural areas and regressive national politics will be discussed intrinsically, and other alternatives like emancipatory rural politics will also be discussed. This paper seeks to use the term 'authoritarian populism' in a politically neutral way focusing on its features, its background and alternative pathways. The aim of this paper is to review the main reasons of the rise of authoritarian populism in the rural world and to forward some alternative paths needed; like inclusive growth. To achieve this, I applied qualitative analysis as a method and recently published papers in the area (most suitable to my aim) are included as data sources.

Overview of Authoritarian Populism

My concern in this part is not to provide an overarching historical background of authoritarian populism but rather to synthesize my own understanding of the process.

During the period between the two world wars, as articulated by Heinö (2016), authoritarian parties were highly successful in the fragile European democracies. Weimar-Germany was of course the evident frame of reference in this respect. In the last free election in November 1932, democratic parties won less than 50% of the votes: the Nazis got 33% and the communists took 17%. This pattern could be seen in large parts of Europe at the time, where both the right and the left split into democratic and anti-democratic factions. In terms of popular legitimacy, both social democrats and conservatives were challenged by anti-democratic alternatives. When the democracies on the continent gradually collapsed this was only in part against the will of the people.

The Second World War put an end to this. Since the end of the war democratic parties have won overwhelming majorities in practically all elections. Liberal democracy has become a super-ideology, uniting parties with roots in both socialism, conservatism, and liberalism, Christian democratic parties as well as green parties. The lowest point for the challengers of democracy was reached in 1987, when only 9.5% of European voters voted for a totalitarian or authoritarian leftwing or right-wing alternative. In the 1980s Britain, for instance, leftist thinkers in the UK and Europe fashionably considered Margaret Thatcher as an eminent authoritarian populist, and 'Thatcherism' as an authoritarian populist ideology (Sanders *et.al.* 2016). However, following her resignation in 1990, debates about authoritarian populism waned.

Today, faced with new kinds of authoritarian populism, rural–urban divides are increasingly framed in racial or ethnic terms. After the recent contributions of Ian Scoones *et al.* (2017), the idea of authoritarian populism and the rural world is getting the embodiment as an initiative. Reclaiming authoritarian populism, with the rural focus, is the main discussion point of these researchers. Although there are significant differences in

how this is constituted in different places, one manifestation of the new moment is the rise of distinct forms of authoritarian populism. What is being observed is the rise of politicians, movements and spaces where these political-economic dynamics are playing out, with connections between them; scholars name these dynamics and these features authoritarian populism.

Currently, populism is becoming the main agenda of political discussions in Europe and the US. More ironically, some populist leaders like Donald J. Trump are winning national elections, which in turn supposed to shift the power dynamics and looms the failure of constitutional democracy. These populist leaders are based on the resentments of different sections of the society and they are not mainly based up on rational political assumptions. One powerful man with rhetoric who claims restoring the country to its former greatness epitomizes populism leadership.

A reaction against immigration and cultural change is the main common theme of populist authoritarian parties on both sides of the Atlantic. Economic factors such as income and unemployment rates are surprisingly weak predictors of the populist vote. Thus, exit polls from the U.S. 2016 Presidential election show that those most concerned with economic problems disproportionately voted for Clinton, while those who considered immigration the most crucial problem voted for Trump. Authoritarian populist support is concentrated among the older generation, the less educated, men, the religious, and the ethnic majority – groups that hold traditional cultural values.

During the influx of immigrants from Syria and other war-torn regions to Europe, populist authoritarian parties got the encouragement to organize and lead xenophobic movements. Moreover, these parties motivated again to participate in national and regional electoral processes and ultimately some of them won the unprecedented amount of votes. One of the most successful nationalist party families in Western Europe is the populist radical right. Parties such as the French *Front National* (National Front), the Austrian *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Freedom Party of Austria), the Italian *Lega Nord* (Northern League), the Belgian *Vlaams Belang* (Flemish Interest), the Danish *Dansk Folkeparti* (Danish People's Party) and the Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Freedom Party, PVV) have, in their most successful years, obtained between 12 and 27% of the votes (Rooduijn, 2014).

According to Inglehart and Norris (2017), support for populist authoritarian parties is motivated by a backlash against the cultural changes linked with the rise of Post-materialist and Self-expression values, far more than by economic factors. The proximate cause of the populist vote is anxiety that pervasive cultural changes and an influx of foreigners are eroding the cultural norms one knew since childhood.

The Reasons for the Rise of Authoritarian Populism in the Rural World

Different scholars in the field tried to define authoritarian populism but I adopted the definition of Hall (1985, 1980), which is probably the best. It refers to 'a movement towards a dominative and "authoritarian" form of democratic class politics – paradoxically, apparently rooted in the "transformism" of populist discontents'. Essentially, it refers to changes in the "political and economic dynamism". However, there is no a definitional consensus within the scholarly community as one can apparently check it by revisiting the existing literature.

Authoritarian populism, as defined by Ian Scoones et al. (2017), is a subset of populism, a capacious and at times problematic category (a political struggle between 'the people' and unfairly advantaged 'Others') that the political right and left perceive it differently. Moreover, these researchers asked what features of authoritarian populism are evident. At a time of increasing inequality between rich and poor, rural and urban, labor and capital, the following features seem particularly relevant: the rise of protectionist politics and the embrace of nationalism over regional or global integration, whether in trade blocs or international agreements for instance, the Trump rhetoric to withdraw from the NAFTA; highly contested national elections, resonant with broad-brush appeals to 'the people', in which candidates are rewarded for 'strong man' talk that pits insiders against outsiders of different colors, religions and origins; growing concern over the 'mobile poor', including refugees and migrants whose presence seems to threaten a shrinking resource base; appeals for security at the expense of civil liberties; a concerted push to increase extractive capitalism at all costs; and, finally, a radical undermining of the state's ability to support the full range of citizens, while utilizing state powers to increase surplus for a minority.

The above situations are not evident everywhere as explained by different researchers, nor are they necessarily evident in their entirety anywhere (Hall and Kepe, 2017; Badiou, 2016). At the same time, many are actively working to counter these elements and nowhere is any single political approach absolute.

According to Levitsky and Way (2010), different authoritarian populisms range from 'competitive' regimes that allow some political space for opponents to 'non-competitive' ones that in extreme cases border on absolute dictatorships. Therefore, contemporary populist politics are far from uniform and are often contradictory, often exacerbated by religious forces in the US, Europe and Africa (Hasan, 2016).

Authoritarian populism can further be classified as right wing and left wing populist authoritarians. Populist radical right parties in Europe, for example, share a core ideology of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism; all these three features have a strained relationship with liberal democracy (Mudde, 2007). The political right has often used the term 'populism' as a synonym for demagoguery. Left-wing authoritarian populism, on the other hand, is manifested in the political movement of Latin American countries. In this respect, they have used the term to attack even progressive or anti-imperialist governments with a multi-class base that claimed to defend 'popular' or national, rather than solely working-class, interests (Svampa, 2015). Authoritarian populism, whether of the left or the right, is thought to be a threat to democracy.

To reiterate and emphasize the idea of authoritarian populism and its rural roots, one shouldn't overlook the contribution of Ian Scoones et al. (2017). Nowadays, rural areas everywhere are characterized by deep inequalities, persistent poverty, marginalization and exclusion, fractured identities and loss, giving rise to a regressive politics. These aspects of the contemporary moment are shaped by prior transformations in rural society and economy and they portend even more dramatic and usually negative changes for rural areas. Other former contributions should also be emphasized (e.g., Rancière, 2016; Mudde, 2007; Edelman, 2003; Hall, 1985).

According to Li (2010), massive exclusions and dispossessions in the process of resource extraction hit rural areas. Austerity measures taken due to the recent capitalism's upheaval and the associated worst impacts of the withdrawal of public services have been felt in rural areas.

Deindustrialization, a product of both automation and robotics in the US, for example and of companies moving abroad, famously hit rural areas hard, leading to the near disappearance of jobs that paid adequate wages. Moreover, small town Main Streets, historically populated with family-owned businesses that provided both off-farm income and employment for farm households and sites of human contact and thick social networks, withered as malls and big chain stores were located in nearby areas. These changes against the rural world forced the rural people to adopt some sort of authoritarian politics.

At the same time, a global economy based on a voracious, unsustainable use of natural resources has devastated many rural areas. Almost half of the world's population makes a living from the land, and yet this resource base is being depleted through various forms of extractivism (Conde and Le Billon, 2017; Veltmeyer and Petras, 2014). Because of this reason, industrial economies fail to provide employment opportunities they once did (Monnat, 2016). This prompted the rise of regressive politics in the rural world.

On the other side, patterns of migration – including both an exodus of young people from rural areas and an in-migration of both short-term agricultural workers or herders and formerly urban elites – are affecting rural politics, across generations and classes (Gusterson, 2017). Hence, this situation has played its own role for the rise of authoritarian populism. However, how patterns of migration worked out and the consequences of such rural transformations in diverse settings need to be explored.

Overview of Alternative Paths

To suggest possible alternatives, one should understand the roots of the discontent culpable for the rise of populism in the rural world. Nowadays, the situation of peoples dwelling in rural areas is worsening. Feeling of isolation from the mainstream economic and political institutions is growing, losing the trust that global capitalism is well functioning, growing inequalities, and ultimately persistent poverty. These features of the rural world gave rise and encouraged the movement of populism. More dramatically, the authoritarian populism, which opposes the establishment of constitutional democracy, originated because of extractive economic and political institutions. Economic history tells us nations fail and go regressively when inclusive institutions turn to their extractive counterparts. In exploring alternatives to authoritarian populism, we must know what experiments in rural solidarity economies are emerging that offer rural employment and new livelihoods, providing the base for a new politics.

To restore growth and stability, adopting and supporting inclusive economic and political institutions is indispensable. Some countries perform far better than others because of the way their institutions, both economic and political, shape the incentives of businesses, individuals, and politicians. Each society functions with a set of economic and political rules created and enforced by the state and the citizens collectively. Economic institutions shape economic incentives: the incentives to become educated, to save and invest, to innovate and adopt new technologies, and so on. It is the political process that determines what economic institutions people live under, and it is the political institutions that determine how this process works out (Robinson and Acemoglu, 2012).

However, inclusive growth is insufficient to address many challenges (De Haan, 2014), during an epoch of social revolution. Instead, a more radical transformation needs to be imagined, rooted in mutualist, embedded forms of organization of life and economy,

ones that are simultaneously local and transnational, yet attuned to class difference and identity. Therefore, any alternatives must reclaim the ‘public sphere’ (Fraser, 1990), reinventing citizenship, drawing on new forms of communalism and solidarity, and linking to a broad front of resistance.

Emergence of such politics that is not just bottom-up, but also horizontal, connecting across class, gender, racial, generational and ideological divides and transcending geographic boundaries called 'emancipatory politics' is more phenomenal (Ian Scoones *et al*, 2017). Following Bookchin (1998), the fostering of autonomous, local, decentralized, participatory democracies, based on inspirations from ‘social ecology’, are the best route to emancipation. Therefore, emancipatory rural politics is an alternative to confront authoritarian populism by bringing rural people together who also struggle in small, often isolated ways, able to understand a particular situation and engage in collective action.

Conclusion

In exploring rural politics, we therefore must understand, but not judge, the social base, and its class, gender, ethnic and cultural-religious dimensions, which gives rise to regressive and exclusionary, sometimes violent, political movements. Forms of dislocation, prolonged and widespread neglect, challenges to identity and the undermining of rural communities and livelihoods have been widely documented as the root causes for the rise of authoritarian populism.

In order to confront authoritarian populism, alternatives are needed. There are plenty of experiments with alternatives – around long-term challenges, sectoral interests and society-wide visions – but they will be more profound and long lasting if they are better understood and connected. An emancipatory politics, for example, requires an understanding of the current regressive trends – the things to be ‘resisted’ – and a vision of a better society and ways to move towards it. In confronting authoritarian populism, I recommend the adoption of inclusive growth via inclusive institutions to culminate the world for further prosperity. In this view, a new emancipatory politics must therefore address many challenges together, rather than in piecemeal fashion. But to know how the interaction of different emancipatory alternatives plays out, it needs further investigation.

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