

Panellists:

Emmanuel Macron and the Two Years that Changed France in Europe **Alistair Cole**

This paper presents arguments drawn from the recently published book *Emmanuel Macron and the Two Years that Changed France* (Manchester University Press, 2019) and applies them to the broader question of France in Europe. The period covered by the book (centred on the transition from the Hollande to Macron presidencies, 2016–18) witnessed the apparent collapse of the old partisan order, the rescue of the political institutions, the rise (and possible taming) of populist and left-wing challenges to the Republic, in the context of a Europe in turmoil as a result of Brexit, the migrant crisis and territorial challenges to the state. The paper considers Macron's political leadership as a three level game; specifically it focuses on the ideational and instrument use of Europe as an instrument of domestic and European politics. It forms part of a broader discussion of Macron's leadership as part as an enterprise of disruption. The danger with the hollowing out of traditional left-right politics, in France and to a lesser degree in Europe, is what might be put in its place. What would happen if the central space itself became hollowed out in a reaction to modernizing French society and the failure to re-shape European integration?

Alistair Cole is Chair Professor of Politics, Head of Department of Government and International Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University. A graduate of LSE and Oxford University, he has published extensively on French and European politics. His latest book - Emmanuel Macron and the re-making of France – was published in May 2019.

Germany's 'reluctant leadership' and its consequences for the EU **Roland Vogt**

Over the last decade and a half, Angela Merkel's Germany emerged as a pole of stability and predictability in Europe. But as her government draws to a close, the foundations of German political stability are beginning to erode. The sources of Germany's economic power are being tested by technological innovation and foreign competition alike, electoral behaviour is transforming and the tone of German political debate is hardening. Faced with an increasingly hostile global political and economic environment, Germany is increasingly drawn into a problematic form of 'immobilisme' that has profound consequences for the EU. This paper analyses the dichotomy between what is expected of Germany on the European and global level and what its electorate is willing to deliver. The paper sheds light on the growing bureaucratisation of German politics and illustrates how this reduces the leadership incentives for Germany at a time when the EU requires a sustained strategic commitment by its largest constituent power.

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A Crisis Theory of (European) Authoritarian Populism? **Chris Man-kong LI**

A dominant understanding of European populism is that the populist movements are typically based on a thin-centered ideology, which depicts the society as divided between “the (pure) people” versus “the corrupted elites”, and claim that they represent the people’s will. Populist movements are then depicted as a reaction of the marginalized or repressed to the crisis of democratic legitimacy, to the globalization or even to modernization. Yet, it is typically denied that the populist movements can be considered as a form of class struggle: it is argued that as an empirical fact populists and their supporters come from all classes. This study challenges the accepted view by arguing that populism can be understood as a class movement in response to the systemic crisis of capitalism. Drawing on empirical studies from Central European countries, especially from Hungary, I argue that the middle-class is indeed the organizing force of authoritarian populist movements. They thereby also imprint their character on the authoritarian populist discourse. I argue that this also explains why certain type of political leadership, which the political economist Wolfgang Streeck coined ‘Trumpist’, is favored by the authoritarian populist movements. The theory I invoke here, I argue, indeed follows a Marxian tradition long overlooked by even the Marxists: namely a strategic conception of political theory as Marx set out in 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. I then close this brief study by asking whether this theory that is based on European experience travels to Hong Kong.

Man-kong Li is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science, Central European University. His research interests include normative foundations of socialism and contemporary liberalism, disputes in democratic theories and distributive justice, as well as the political economy of Central-Eastern Europe.

The End of Communism in 1989 in the Eyes of Chinese Specialists **Kenneth Ka Lok CHAN**

This paper examines how a group of specialists in China perceived the end of Communism in Europe. A series of essays published in 1990 “for internal reference only” showed how China struggled to make sense of the collapse of the communist regimes and, more importantly, who to blame for the crisis and what communists should have done to avert their demise. It is shown that the Chinese perspective on Europe 1989 has contributed to not only an ingrained hostility towards civil society, dissidents, liberal democracies and western values, but also a sharp learning curve as to how to prevent the country from following the footsteps of its European counterparts.

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