



BOOK REVIEW

Radu Carp, *Tehno-populism: Politica identitară și tentația democrației iliberale*, Târgoviște: Cetatea de scaun, 2026

Cătălina Maria Georgescu



Professor Radu Carp's *Tehno-populism: Politica identitară și tentația democrației iliberale* speaks about one of the greatest challenges to liberal democracy in the context of the new digital technologies and information dynamics: the alteration and remodelling of democratic processes, political participation and communication.

The paper makes an important contribution to political science by proposing a systematic interpretation of political processes reconstruction under the new forms of digital information technologies: the analysis of populism and “techno-populist” themes during elections against the backdrop of the rise of AI, social networks algorithms and micro-targeting.

Through the main research question addressing the roots of the threats to liberal democracies, the analytical framework is built around the central thesis according to which

“the erosion of representative democracy is a phenomenon further accelerated by citizens’ engagement with social media” (p. 8).

The book builds its arguments on the established theories of democracy but reaches further by paying attention to the way the new digital technologies of mass-communication turn into politically transformative means.

Professor Radu Carp develops the argument in three stages: first, by explaining the role of identity politics in the emergence of new political cleavages; second, by exploring the dimensions, forms and rhetoric of populism and illiberal democracy; and finally, by studying the rise of “techno-populism” and the spread of disinformation, propaganda and polarisation.

Through these lenses, the book not only unveils the way political movements and political actors employ new means of information and communication technology but rather allows the author to explore beyond the rise of populism and its newer form “techno-populism”. Consequently, the book provides a new interpretation of the way the new digital arenas have altered the political landscape. The analysis offers perspectives for the exploration of techno-politics and its effects on liberal democracy. The theoretical framework enlists an analytical perspective of genuinely comparable cases ranging from the rise of populist political movements to the dynamics of electoral campaigns. Digital technologies are employed to directly connect political actors to their electorate, while citizens might consider them as more democratic means of communication, mobilisation and problem-solving tools.

At the same time, the analysis concentrates on the way digital technologies can become instruments that spread false information which erode democratic institutions and processes. Following an extensive literature review, the arguments are strongly supported through the exploration of phenomena such as “astro-turfing”, “filter bubbles” and “micro-targeting”, “techno-politics”, “immediacy” and “hyperconnectivity” of online networks. Moreover, the arguments are employed to depict the way intensive technological connectivity boosts social interaction, information, communication and political participation, while, at the same time, might amplify disinformation, polarisation and alter democratic processes (p. 58).

The book also contributes to the scholarly debate around identity politics and its role in political mobilisation by adding value to explanations on the formation and dissemination of imagological attributes that shape and legitimise political groups’ images and actions. Further, it shows how identity politics can be transposed in the discourse of populist movements and how these themes could be disseminated online.

Subsequently, the book makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the weaknesses and threats to liberal democracy by pinpointing the definition and scope of “illiberal democracy”. The analysis shows the processes and mechanisms through which illiberal political movements gain attention and electoral support further threatening the rule of law and fundamental human rights.

To sum up, Professor Radu Carp’s *Tehno-populism: Politica identitară și tentația democrației iliberale* makes an important contribution to the study of liberal democracy by highlighting that political participation, transformation and political outcomes cannot be studied autonomously from the determinants of political dynamics. Its primary intellectual advancement to the literature is the unitary understanding of the new communication and information technologies, the use of constructed images and imagology for political purposes and the functioning of democratic institutions and mechanisms.

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