

## The Politics of Antagonism - Populist Security Narratives and the Remaking of Political Identity

*Thursday, 19 June 2025 13:15 (1h 30m)*

Participants of this roundtable will debate the identity performing role of nationalist populist security narratives and their impact on voter mobilization and policy legitimization in the USA and beyond, based on the recently published monograph 'The Politics of Antagonism'. The book argues that populist rhetoric primarily appeals to voters' insecurities and emotions, remaking the concepts of Us and Them in the process. Going beyond existing research on populism and security narratives, the book links insights from political psychology on collective narcissism, blame attribution and emotionalization with research in political communication on narrative and framing. Populist security narratives have labelled progressives, political opponents, immigrants, racial justice activists, and key institutions of liberal democracy collectively as 'enemies of the people'. This security imaginary threatens the ideational and institutional foundations of democracy by reframing politics as an existential struggle and perpetual culture war against an internal Other. The political identity and legitimacy of democracy are simultaneously reframed and parochialized around the specific vulnerabilities, anxieties and insecurities of a core constituency of White working-class and non-college educated voters in the 'heartland'. A particular focus of the roundtable will be on the conceptual implications of these research findings for the study of identity in IR.

**Track Classification:** US Foreign Policy Working Group