



Elitism, Populism, and European Politics

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In the 1990s there has been an increasingly widespread sense that the governing elites are losing touch with their peoples. leaders are no longer able to count upon the acquiescence of their citizens to which they were accustomed. The disenchantment has resulted in the loss of public support for the political institutions of both the individual European nation states and of the European Union.

Taking elitism and populism as the opposite poles between which the political leaders need to steer, the contributors successively consider why there appears to have been a degeneration in the quality of elite leaders, with civil societies turning against their governments and the elite mediators between the powerless and the powerful. The agenda-setting role of the media, the rival appeals to representation and referendum, the problems encountered by political parties and organised interests, and the tensions between public demand and economic constraints are all discussed. The chapters suggest that the need to lead from the front rather than from behind remains indispensable in elitist democracies.



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