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The link between the spread of social media and the recent surge of populism around the world remains elusive. A global, rather than Western, theory is required to explore this connection. Such a theory would need to pay particular attention to five questions, namely, the roots of populism, ideology and populism, the rise of theocratic populism, social media and non-populist politicians, and the embedding of social media in larger systems of communication. In this essay, I draw from a range of cross-cultural examples to argue that social media are inextricable from a dense web of highly diverse online and offline communicative practices. Like most other forms of political communication, populism is twice hybrid, in that it entails the ceaseless interaction between old and new media as well as between online and offline sites of communication. Populists never operate in a vacuum or indeed in a filter bubble: they share hybridly mediated spaces and arenas with other populists and with non-populists. Over time, these varied political actors have co-evolved media strategies and tactics in full awareness of one another's existence.

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