

A Study of the World Wide Consequences of Populism on Democracy

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Abstract - This article explores the profound and far-reaching consequences of populism on democracy across the globe. Populism, characterized by its appeal to the masses and vilification of established elites, has become a potent force in shaping political landscapes worldwide. Through an interdisciplinary lens drawing on political science, sociology, and economics, we analyze how the rise of populism challenges the fundamental pillars of democracy. We investigate its impact on democratic institutions, governance structures, and political culture, highlighting its tendencies to exacerbate polarization, erode trust in democratic processes, and undermine the rule of law. Moreover, we examine the economic ramifications of populist policies, often marked by protectionism and short-termism, which can destabilize economies and exacerbate social inequalities. Additionally, we explore the implications of populism for international relations, including its potential to disrupt diplomatic norms and alliances. By synthesizing empirical research and theoretical insights, this article provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted consequences of populism on democracy, offering insights for policymakers, scholars, and concerned citizens seeking to safeguard democratic principles in an era of populist resurgence.

Keywords- Populism, Democracy, Challenges.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The political philosophy of populism prioritises the needs and desires of common people over those of the privileged. Growing mistrust of traditional political parties and institutions has been a defining feature of its ascent in recent times. This mentality has allowed populist politicians like Matteo Saline, Jair Bolsonaro, and Donald Trump to win power. Populism has many different and intricate causes. A number of important elements have led to the global growth of populism, including political disillusionment, economic instability, and cultural alienation. People have been venting their grievances to populist politicians because they feel left behind by other economic and societal developments, such as globalisation. Although populism represents the interests of common people and encourages their involvement in politics, it also carries a number of serious concerns that should be taken into consideration. In addition to rejecting democratic norms and ideals, populist politicians frequently take on an authoritarian leadership style. Additionally, they often encourage polarisation and division in society, undermining the fundamentals of democracy, and write off opponents as members of the elite.

Furthermore, populism may have a big effect on the global order. Populist leaders put their country's interests ahead of international collaboration, which can cause multilateral institutions to collapse and the

rules-based system to deteriorate. This may have long-term effects on economy and security worldwide.

It is crucial to investigate how the emergence of populism has affected democracy and the international order globally in light of these developments. This essay looks at populism's many facets and the threats it presents to both the democratic process and the international order based on norms.

- **Historical Origin of Populism: from the People's Party to Modern-Day Populism**

The Populist Party, which was founded by American farmers and labourers in the late 19th century, is where populism first emerged historically. The party was founded to speak for common people's interests against those of the ruling political class. It supported measures including nationalising railroads, enacting a progressive income tax, and increasing the money supply by using silver. Despite its brief existence, the Populist Party left a lasting legacy in the form of contemporary populist movements. In reaction to political polarisation, economic inequality, and globalisation, populism has returned in recent years. A increasing sense of resentment and rage among those who feel left behind by the social and

economic developments of the last several decades has been exploited by populist politicians.

Populist groups in Europe have become increasingly nationalist and anti-immigrant. Leaders like Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and Marine Le Pen in France have pushed for stronger border restrictions and an opposition to diversity. Populist politicians in Latin America, including Evo Morales in Bolivia and Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, have supported nationalising enterprises and implementing social welfare programmes. Current populist groups are similar to the original Populist Party in certain ways, even if their backgrounds and ideologies are distinct. They prioritise the concerns of the people over those of the prevailing political elites. They also frequently want a return to a more basic way of life and are anti-globalization and anti-establishment. The fact that populism has historical origins shows that it is not a recent development. But what sets out this populist wave of the present is how widespread it is and how much of an influence it has on well-established democracies. It remains to be seen if the difficulties populist movements have in governing effectively will eventually cause them to lose ground or if their influence will only increase.

- **Economic Insecurity, Political Disenchantment, and Cultural Alienation: the Drivers of Populism**

A multitude of causes have contributed to the complicated phenomenon known as the rise of populism. The three most significant of them are cultural alienation, political disillusionment, and economic insecurity. Those who feel left behind by the changes over the last several decades are feeling frustrated and angry because of these forces. One of the main causes of populism is economic insecurity. Global competition and technological advancement have resulted in job displacement and stagnant wages, especially for the working and middle classes. Because of this, people are feeling unsure and anxious about the future, which populist politicians have taken advantage of by proposing easy fixes for difficult issues.

Populism also has political disillusionment as a catalyst. Since they believe that conventional political parties and organisations are corrupt and disconnected from the concerns of the people, many people are disillusioned with them. Leaders of the populist movement frequently present themselves as outsiders with the ability to alter things and give the people's voice back in the political system. Populism's main cause is also cultural alienation. There is a feeling of displacement among certain populations as a result of immigration and globalisation, especially in North America and Europe. As a result, there has been an increase in nationalist and anti-immigrant sentiment, with some populist politicians posing as guardians of culture and identity.

These interrelated populist forces have cultivated an environment that has been favourable to the growth of populist movements globally. By providing straightforward and often contentious answers to difficult issues, populist leaders have been able to capitalise on these motivations. As a result, political discourse has become more divisive and public confidence in democratic institutions has declined. In order to confront populism's influence on democracy, it is imperative to comprehend its motivations. Populist movements are likely to become more powerful and a threat to democratic norms and ideals if the fundamental causes of populism are not addressed.

- **The Methods of Populist Leaders: Polarisation, Anti-Expertise, and Authoritarianism**

In recent years, populist leaders have arisen all across the world; they are frequently distinguished by their authoritarianism, hostility to experts, and divisive language. By presenting themselves as the only representative of the people and painting political rivals as enemies of the country, these leaders frequently disregard established democratic norms and institutions. The authoritarian inclinations of populist politicians are among their most distinctive traits. They frequently assert that they are the only ones who can reflect the will of the people, centralising authority and undermining checks and balances. In order to keep control and solidify their authority, they may also employ strategies like coopting independent institutions, restricting civil rights, and undermining the free press.

The rejection of intellectualism and knowledge by populist politicians is another defining characteristic. They may disregard the viewpoints of professors, scientists, and other specialists as elitist or out of touch with the general public, and they frequently portray themselves as outsiders who are not subject to the system. Populist leaders may find it challenging to handle complicated policy issues as a result of their anti-expertise posture, which might result in policies that are more ideologically driven than factual or empirically supported. Lastly, polarising speech is a common tool used by populist leaders to enlist the support of their followers and demonise their rivals. They could speak in a controversial or provocative manner, appealing more to feelings than logic. This may exacerbate social and political division and cause the political dialogue to break down even further.

All things considered, democratic institutions and norms are seriously threatened by populist politicians and their strategies. The health and stability of democratic societies are threatened by their rejection of democratic values and acceptance of authoritarianism, anti-expertise, and polarisation. However, their growth may be explained by justifiable complaints and concerns held by some sections of the populace.

- **Optimist Prioritisation of National Interests and Multilaterated Institutions: Difficulties for the International Order**

The international order is under more and more problems as a result of the growth of populist groups and leaders. Populists frequently oppose multilateral organisations and agreements and place a higher priority on national interests than international collaboration. The impact on the global order is both favourable and unfavourable. The possibility of more sovereignty and autonomy for individual countries is one benefit of the populist prioritisation of national interests. Populist leaders frequently prioritise preserving the economic and security interests of their nation, which can give them more influence over domestic policy choices.

But putting too much emphasis on national interests can also have unfavourable effects, such as decreasing international engagement and cooperation. It may be more difficult to solve global challenges like pandemics, climate change, and nuclear proliferation under populist governments since they are less likely to participate in international organisations and accords. The rejection of multilateral organisations like the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations is another problem associated with populism. Populist politicians may want to dismantle these institutions because they frequently consider them as dangers to national sovereignty. The international rules-based system, which depends on state collaboration and coordination, may collapse as a result of this. Rejecting international institutions can also result in a lack of openness and accountability. Populist leaders could be less inclined to take part in international fora and more likely to act alone when making decisions, without talking to other countries or getting advice from civil society.

- **The Future of Populism and Democracy**

The dangers to democracy and the international order posed by the emergence of populism are substantial. Populist movements and their leaders have frequently fostered anti-establishment sentiment, opposed multilateral institutions, and placed a higher priority on national interests than on international collaboration. In addition to eroding democratic institutions and norms, this has increased polarisation and divisiveness. Increased civic participation and engagement should also be encouraged. Encouraging increased engagement in civil society organisations and broadening voting access are two ways to do this. We may contribute to the development of a better feeling of community and shared responsibility, which can lessen polarisation and division, via encouraging more civic involvement.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Burlyuk et. al. (2023) This article introduces a Special Issue dedicated to exploring the challenges confronting international democracy promotion amidst

the backdrop of declining democratic values and the ascent of populism in donor countries. It offers an overview of the topic and the thematic focus of the contributions, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between populism and democracy promotion. Drawing from discussions on populism's impact on democracy and foreign policy, the article delineates three pathways through which populism may influence democracy promotion: through individual states, international organizations, and civil society. It synthesizes the main findings of the contributions to the Special Issue, draws general conclusions, and suggests avenues for future research, underscoring the imperative of understanding and addressing the complexities posed by populism to international democracy promotion efforts.

Miriliias (2020) the focus of this article lies in examining the influence of populism on democracy, encompassing various key perspectives including political, socio-cultural, and ideological dimensions. It highlights the absence of a singular definition within populism studies and underscores the existence of differing evaluations—negative, positive, and neutral—regarding the nature of populism. Drawing from analyses of prominent scholars such as B. Ardit, H.-G. Betz, M. Canovan, E. Laclau, K. Mudde, S. Mouffe, K. Rovira Kaltwasser, N. Urbinati, among others, the article delineates the multidimensional impact of populism on liberal democracy. Contrary to solely negative assessments, the article argues for a nuanced understanding, acknowledging both positive elements, such as advocating for the interests of the "silent majority" and mobilizing marginalized groups, as well as negative aspects, including the rejection of representative democracy and parliamentary systems.

Emmanouil (2018) this paper seeks to explore the intricate relationship between populism and democracy, a crucial inquiry in contemporary political discourse. It begins by examining populism and democracy through the lens of political theory, aiming to elucidate their conceptual underpinnings. Thereafter, it endeavors to dissect the inherent ambiguity of populism through a conceptual analysis. Despite ongoing scholarly debate, there remains a lack of consensus regarding the democratic implications of populism. While democracy is generally regarded positively, populism's association often carries negative connotations, complicating the assessment of its impact on democratic principles. The paper acknowledges the challenge of delineating a clear boundary between populism and legitimate democratic discourse, as both influence and is influenced by each other. It acknowledges the centrality of populism's appeal to "the people" while endeavoring to delineate the fundamental distinctions between populism and democracy. Moreover, it aims to scrutinize populism's potential positive contributions to democracy, while critically examining arguments suggesting it serves as a

corrective force within democratic systems. Keywords: populism, democracy.

3. THE CONSEQUENCES OF POPULISM ON DEMOCRACY, BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

Among populism's positive consequences on democracy are:

1. **Enhanced engagement:** Individuals who are disillusioned or alienated with the current political structure sometimes gravitate towards populist groups. Populism may boost voter turnout and promote more engagement in the political process by galvanising these groups.
2. **Accountability:** The political elite is frequently criticised by populist leaders for being corrupt or disconnected from the concerns of the common people. Populism may contribute to increased openness and a decrease in the power of special interests by making politicians answerable for their deeds.
3. **Social justice:** Populist movements frequently place a high priority on matters pertaining to inequality and social justice, including workers' rights, healthcare, and education. Populism may assist in addressing the concerns of marginalised people and advancing a more fair society by concentrating on these issues.

Among populism's negative consequences on democracy are:

1. **Polarisation:** Populist movements frequently favour identity politics and appeals to feelings above reasoned discussion and compromise. Finding common ground and advancing significant problems might become more challenging as a result of the heightened polarisation and division this causes across society.
2. **Authoritarianism:** Claiming to speak for the people, populist politicians frequently disparage autonomous establishments like the media, courts, and civil society. This may result in the loss of human rights and freedoms as well as a weakening of democratic checks and balances.
3. **Democracy vs. Populism:** Populist movements aim to restrict civil freedoms and human rights in the name of "the people" and may put the interests of the majority above the rights of minority. This may cause a rift between democracy and populism, with the latter being viewed as an impediment to the realisation of popular will.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the rise of populist groups has presented serious challenges to both democracy and

the international system. These movements and their leaders have frequently rejected multilateral organisations, prioritised national interests above international cooperation, and taken advantage of anti-establishment feelings. As a result, democratic institutions and ideals have been undermined and polarisation and fragmentation have increased. In the future, it will be crucial to address the fundamental causes of populism, such as economic disparity, social marginalisation, and insufficient representation. By addressing these problems, we can strengthen democratic institutions and lessen the allure of populism. In the end, combating the threats that populism poses to democracy and the international order necessitates a comprehensive and well-coordinated strategy that includes tackling the underlying roots of populism, encouraging accountability and transparency, and boosting civic involvement. By working together, we can build a more democratic and resilient society that is better equipped to serve everyone's needs, both now and in the future.

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