

How Have Populists Come to Dominate the Political Landscape in the 21st Century?

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Abstract. In the 21st century, one of the defining features of contemporary politics, populism, has attracted widespread attention with the rise of populist leaders and populist movements. This paper gives a definition of populism, introduces the history of populist Nazism and how populism evolved into a political ideology. It briefly analyzes the differences between left and right populism and continues to explore the reasons why populist politics has been able to rise in recent years. These include unequal social development, globalization and the effects of global migration. Through theoretical and factual analysis, this paper summarizes some key characteristics of populism and puts forward relevant case analysis. The paper also discusses the role of populism in elections and the advantages and disadvantages of populism. In addition, the paper presents reflections on the impact of populism on national policies and the challenges its emergence poses to the contemporary political environment. Based on a series of historical evidence and theoretical verification, this paper comprehensively analyzes why populism has become so dominant in the political arena of the 21st century, helping scholars to better understand the causes of this phenomenon and the changes in the composition of contemporary society. Finally, this paper argues that the rise of populism is a reaction to structural changes in the global political system and the shortcomings of the existing political system, and that the fundamental reform of the economic and political system is a very possible way to deal with populism.

Keywords: Populism; economy; political parties; international policy; socialism.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Definition and History about Populism

The etymology of Populism comes from the Latin: *populus* (meaning people or masses, or in ancient Rome, Roman citizens with citizenship), which means "a political movement or idea that advances the interests and views of the common people." The two core propositions of populism are anti-elitism and anti-pluralism. Populism is a political ideology that emphasizes the needs and interests of ordinary people, often in opposition to elites and the system [1]. At its core, populism appeals to the concerns of ordinary citizens by offering simple and straightforward solutions to complex problems. In the social decision-making process, the populist theme refers to the absolute obedience of decision makers to the opinions supported by the majority of the people, whether they are correct or rational. Populist movements often emerge in times of social and economic upheaval, and they are often driven by charismatic leaders who claim to represent the voice of the people.

The origins of populism can be traced to the late 19th century in the United States, when it emerged as a response to the economic and social challenges of the time. The populist party, also known as the People's Party, was founded in 1891, drawing support from farmers, laborers and other groups who felt marginalized by the political and economic system. The party advocates a series of reforms, including nationalising the railways, directly electing senators and introducing a tiered income tax [2].

Since then, populism has developed in various forms and spread to other countries around the world. In Europe, for example, populist movements have gained traction in recent years, with parties such as Germany's Alternative Party and France's National Rally gaining significant support. Populists are also politically dominant in some countries. In the Philippines, for example, populist leaders such as Rodrigo Duterte has been in power for a long time.

Populism is often criticized for oversimplifying complex issues and exploiting the fears and frustrations of ordinary citizens for political gain. Still, it is a powerful force in contemporary politics, and it is likely to remain active on the political scene for years to come.

1.2. The Difference between the Left-wing Populism and Right-wing Populism

The left-wing populism tends to directly accuse the common people of the exploitation of the elites. The policies of left-wing populism advocate more commitment to the pursuit of social equality and political participation. It opposes the elites and the powerful class internally, and stresses patriotism and holds high the banner of opposing imperialism, colonialism and globalization externally. Right-wing populism, on the other hand, focuses on anti-immigration, emphasizes local identity and ethnic identity, and has a strong xenophobic ideology. In recent years, right-wing populism in Europe has also been tinged with extreme nationalism, xenophobic racism and xenophobia. Left-wing populists are more socioeconomic focused, more inclusive and less extreme than right-wing populists [3].

2. The Raise of Populism in the 21st Century

2.1. Contributing Factors

Some of the factors leading to the rise of populism include: first, the unequal development of the economy: many people feel left behind by globalization and technological change, increasing unemployment of workers and stagnation of industrial development, popular dissatisfaction with society and the existing living environment, and the gap between rich and poor is too large. The populists take advantage of this mentality to propose some populist policies that make the public yearn for the future blueprint drawn by the populists, thus winning the support of a large number of voters. Second, there is political polarization: in many countries, the gap between left and right is growing, resulting in increased conflicts and divergent interests, with little possibility of compromise or cooperation between left and right, and populism, with its focus on the masses at large, has created a new faction within the left-right party divide to profit from. People's disillusionment with traditional politics is also an important reason for the rise of populism: against the background of frequent confrontation between political parties, a large number of people feel that existing politicians have lost touch with the needs of the people and only focus on their own interests, while the concept of fighting for the interests of the people proposed by populism fits perfectly with the needs of contemporary people and thus becomes the mainstream trend of contemporary political development. The rapid development of social media also facilitates the spread of populism: social media provides a platform for populist leaders to break the restrictions of traditional media and other factors, break the barriers, communicate directly with their supporters, spread the ideas of populism, and achieve a wider range and better effect of communication and publicity. The failure of this traditional intermediary mechanism expands the penetration and influence of populist discourse and helps populists attract more voters' attention. Global immigration is also the trigger for the development of populism: immigration has become a controversial issue in many countries, and populists, taking advantage of some native people's belief that immigrants will pose a threat to their cultural identity, economic well-being and society, put forward policies such as exclusion of immigrants and "native people first" to attract people. This too often coincides with the idea of nationalism.

3. Characteristics of Populist Movements

3.1. Key Characteristics of Populist Movements

Majority legitimacy: Populism believes that the majority of people make the right and reasonable decisions. The views of minorities, such as elites, should never carry more weight in political decisions than those of majorities, such as the people.

Anti-elitism: Populist movements often portray themselves as representing the interests of ordinary people against corrupt and out-of-touch elites.

Nationalism: Populist movements often emphasize national identity and culture, reject foreign cultures and people, and may be hostile to immigrants or other groups perceived as threatening the state.

Simple or emotional rhetoric: Populist leaders often use simple, emotional language that resonates with their supporters rather than complex policy proposals or nuanced arguments [4].

Charismatic leadership: Populist movements often revolve around a charismatic leader who is adept at seizing the opportunities of the political environment, who is seen as embodying the will of the people and who is able to mobilize supporters through personal charm and appeal. It also advocates over-promising people and casting political opponents as traitors who actively undermine the country.

Anti-establishment: Populist movements often reject traditional political parties and institutions, identifying them as elitist and corrupt and detached from the purpose of meeting the needs of ordinary people.

Direct democracy: Populist movements often advocate direct democracy, in which citizens have a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives.

Conspiracy theories: Populist movements may be associated with conspiracy theories or other forms of anti-intellectualism in which established facts or scientific consensus are rejected in favor of a populist narrative or other interpretation.

3.2. The Example of Populist Leaders and Movements

Marine Le Pen opposes economic globalization and adheres to the concept of "France first", still advocates the withdrawal from the euro zone, and still adheres to extreme concepts such as the exclusive immigration policy. It advocates transforming the EU into a loose mode of cooperation among countries: no longer have the euro, no border zone, EU budget rules and EU laws take precedence [5].

After the European debt crisis broke out in 2009, the economic recovery was slow, and the economic growth was weak. The French economy is facing the dilemma of high debt rate, high unemployment rate, high deficit and low growth rate. Around 2015, the refugee crisis and the frequent terrorist attacks in Europe intensified the social contradictions in France. Marina Le Pen took advantage of the situation and launched an attack on the welfare and immigration policies of the ruling party. She promised that if elected, she would guarantee the social security system of all French, give priority to the work and housing problems of French, and exclude foreign residents or illegal immigrants.

Extreme populism is the fundamentalism of populism and the political creed that Marina Le Pen has always adhered to. It is mainly reflected in two aspects: first, it opposes representative democracy, supports direct democracy, and calls for the massive use of referendum to determine national priorities. Revise the Constitution to make it easier to organize the referendum, especially to establish the referendum initiated by the people. Revise the Constitution through a referendum. Once 500000 citizens express their willingness, they can organize a referendum. The second is to pretend in the name of the people and exaggerate the opposition between the people and the elite. Marina Le Pen portrayed herself as the representative of the ordinary French people, representing the forgotten working class that has suffered from globalization, and fighting for the rights of the ordinary people. Oppose the international and domestic elites, and advocate reducing the number of members of parliament and reducing the spending of political elites.

However, we have sufficient reasons to doubt the authenticity of the implementation of these policies put forward by Marie Le Pen, because populism is idealistic, and populism does not focus on the people themselves, but on them as a whole with the same rights, and individuals are not involved in populism. And is the policy of benefiting the people put forward by Marine Le Pen a strategy to attract people's votes? I think that Marine Le Pen is a nationalist and wants to achieve the

goal of promoting national status and developing national interests through populism. In the face of the negative impact of globalization, Le Pen's prescription is to withdraw from the European Union, the Scavenge Agreement, the euro zone and other integration organizations; Oppose economic globalization, advocate trade protectionism, give priority to French companies, and impose high tariffs on imported goods.

Donald Trump is an American politician and businessman who is widely regarded as a populist. Mr Trump's populist appeal lies in his ability to tap into the grievances of working-class Americans who feel left behind by globalized economic developments and the political establishment. He also frequently criticizes the Washington elite and the media for being out of touch with the needs and concerns of ordinary Americans.

The hallmark of Trump's populist message is its simplicity and directness, and his statements tend to appeal to emotion rather than facts. He uses social media to communicate directly with his supporters across traditional media and elites.

During his presidency, Trump has pushed through policies that benefit working Americans and protect American jobs, such as tax cuts, deregulation and protectionist trade policies. He has also advocated a crackdown on illegal immigration and tighter controls on legal immigration.

Despite his controversial policies and rhetoric, Mr Trump has achieved significant electoral success in the US. He rose to political prominence in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, which he won against the odds by successfully appealing to working-class voters with his populist rhetoric and promise to "make America great again." Even though he lost to Joe Biden in the 2020 election, he still has the support of millions of Americans.

In conclusion, Donald Trump is widely considered a populist because of his ability to tap into the grievances of working Americans and advocate policies that put the interests of the people before the elites, resonating with a large segment of the American electorate [6].

Rodrigo Duterte is a Philippine politician who is widely regarded as a populist and campaigned on a platform of fighting crime, corruption, and drug addiction. Mr Duterte's populist appeal lies in his hardline, anti-establishment rhetoric and his promise to act swiftly and decisively to solve the country's problems. He cultivated an image as a "man of the people", using language that resonated with ordinary Filipinos and positioning himself as an outsider un beholden to the traditional elite. But one of the most controversial aspects of Duterte's presidency has been his "war on drugs", which has led to thousands of extrajudicial killings of suspected drug dealers and users. While the policy has been criticized by human rights groups and the international community, it has also been welcomed by many Filipinos, who are also frustrated by the government's perceived inability to tackle the drug problem.

Duterte is also known for his provocative and often inflammatory statements, including derogatory remarks about women, journalists and political opponents. His brash style earned him a reputation as a maverick leader. Despite his controversial policies and rhetoric, Duterte remains popular among many Filipinos, especially those who believe he is delivering on promises to improve the country's infrastructure, create jobs and fight crime and corruption. In 2016, he was elected the 16th president of the Philippines.

In summary, Rodrigo Duterte is widely regarded as a populist because of his tough talk, anti-establishment rhetoric, his focus on acting quickly to solve the country's problems, and his willingness to challenge the norms and conventions of traditional politics [7].

4. The Impact of Populism on the Political Landscape

4.1. The Advantages and Disadvantages of Populism

Populism also risks polarization and division. Due to the natural conservative, anti-intellectual and xenophobic tendencies of populism, populists think that they can always represent all the people, so they hate opinions and propositions different from their own and suppress or even eliminate these propositions. Therefore, populists precisely elect authoritarian populist rulers who are more

hegemonic and corrupt than the ruling elites they oppose. Populism often leads to stagnation or even retrogression of social, cultural and technological development. At the same time, populism can have destabilizing consequences for the economy. Populist policies that put domestic interests ahead of global economic integration can lead to economic instability and potential consequences such as inflation, unemployment and reduced international trade. In addition, xenophobia and intolerance of immigrants are among the risks that populism can pose. Populist movements, which often emphasize national identity and the supremacy of indigenous people, may lead to intolerance and discrimination by indigenous people against minority groups, including immigrants and refugees, resulting in social unrest. Populism can also lead to the rise of authoritarianism [8]. Populist leaders may seek to concentrate power in their own hands, leading them toward authoritarianism or narrow democracy. Populism could cause a backlash against globalisation. Populist movements often reject the idea of a globalized world and focus instead on national identity and sovereignty, leading to a strong backlash against international institutions and agreements. Populist movements have emphasised the importance of economic nationalism, which prioritises domestic economic interests over global economic integration. This has led to policies such as protectionist trade policies, restrictions on immigration, and tax cuts for middle- and working-class Americans [9].

However, the populism can also improve the quality of life of indigenous people: Populism's focus on the lives and interests of ordinary people may address the unmet needs of marginalized communities and people. Second, populism can promote economic development within countries. Populism believes that national interests come first, so local citizens have more relevant living conditions and economic development space to promote the rapid development of the internal economy of the country. What's more, populism can strengthen national identity. Populism can strengthen national identity and promote cooperation among citizens within countries, which can lead to greater social cohesion and resilience. In addition, citizens could be given more oversight. Populist movements can empower citizens to participate in and monitor the political process and may improve the executive and efficiency of political institutions. This makes governance more transparent and responsive and reduces the possibility of corruption among those in power. The power that populism gives citizens is another way of monitoring the populists' ability to carry out their election promises. Populism also has an impact on policy. Populist movements may push for policy changes more in line with their worldview, such as restrictions on immigration, protectionist trade policies or increased welfare spending [10].

In short, populism brings risks and benefits to individuals, communities and wider society. While it can address the livelihood concerns of sections of the population and strengthen national identity, it can also lead to polarization, economic instability and xenophobia.

5. Final Thoughts about the Raises of Populism

Populism has become a global phenomenon: the growth of populism is no longer confined to a particular region or country; With the emergence of populist leaders and movements in countries from the United States to Brazil, Hungary to India, it has become a rapidly spreading global phenomenon.

The rise of populism is a response to dissatisfaction with existing policies. The fundamental reason populism has been able to gain such rapid growth is that populists have seized on popular discontent with existing political environments and institutions, such as immigration and corruption. Populist leaders have tapped into the anger and frustration of citizens who feel abandoned by political and economic elites to paint a vision of a better future. This paper argues that the fundamental solution to the rise of populism is that the contemporary government should actively solve the existing problems, implement new remedial policies and improve people's satisfaction with the living environment [10].

Populism also challenges the existing political environment. Populist movements push radical and controversial policies to challenge the status quo, and populist leaders often oppose established norms and institutions, which can lead to instability and uncertainty in the existing political environment.

Populism has both benefits and risks. Populism can bring about positive changes, such as increased transparency and accountability and more welfare policies for people, but it can also lead to negative results, such as unstable economic development and increased polarization.

Populism is a complex phenomenon that has also had a significant impact on political discourse and policy priorities in countries that have experienced populist uprisings. Populism is not a single movement; it takes many different forms and many different expressions. Understanding the diversity and complexity of the populist movement and analyzing the core and common points of the populist movement are crucial to developing effective strategies to deal with it.

In short, populism is an important force in 21st century politics, reshaping the political landscape in many countries. This is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that presents both challenges and opportunities for policy makers, civil society organizations and citizens. A nuanced understanding of populism and its drivers is essential to promoting democratic values and ensuring a more inclusive and equitable society.

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