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Populism and Its Impact on Democratic Institutions: An Analysis

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Abstract: In order to find trends of institutional decline under populist governments, this study looks into how populism impacts the stability and operation of democratic institutions. Because populism has become more popular worldwide and regularly deviates from established democratic norms, it is crucial to look into how it affects institutional integrity and governance. A comprehensive analysis of legal, political, and institutional changes was conducted, along with a comparative analysis of populist regimes in various regions using qualitative case studies. It is recommended that civic education be encouraged, the balance of power be reinforced, and international cooperation be expanded to safeguard democratic values and counteract populist inclinations. According to the findings, populism often jeopardizes the long-term sustainability of democratic institutions by undermining judicial independence, eroding civil liberties, and expanding executive power.

Key Words: Democratic Institutions, Governance, Institutional Deterioration, Judicial Independence, Civil Freedoms

Introduction

Today, populism is one of the most powerful political forces in the world, engaged in public and governmental democratic procedures. The formula that makes all of this possible is claiming to speak for "the people" instead of "the elites," and providing several assurances of restoration to regular people who reclaim their positions from the mainstream political establishment. Often, populist movements throughout the world have brought attention to issues like government inefficiencies, economic injustice, and corruption. This powerful public dissatisfaction will force required adjustments and challenge government complacency just by being heard. However, although populism may be a very positive aspect of change, it paradoxically poses many questions about the integrity and permanence of democratic institutions.

There are cases where populist leaders try to damage democracies. Once in power, many populists tend to weaken institutions that check their power, such as the judiciary, the legislature, and the media. Populism operates on the fringes of legitimizing a series of breaches against the opposition by changing legal frameworks and abolishing institutional checks and balances. This pattern also tends to significantly divide political and social realms, as it thrives on the attitude of "us versus them," the ordinary people against political elites, immigrants, or any other imagined foes. The perception of separation can clog the functioning of democratic governance, resulting in instability, an authoritarian tendency, and possibly the denial of essential rights and freedoms. Populism erodes the fundamental structures that maintain democracy over time by using these unrestrained techniques.

Populism and its influence on democratic institutions have been harmed in terms of their prevalence and the various repercussions of different policies. In certain connected jobs, positive roles are played in the spirit of democracy, involving abode involvement and government upkeep. However, in this situation, the route of the authorization's duties,

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in which the heads of the institution use their responsibility as a powerful institution in their hands. The complex's repercussions might be significant, since it has resulted in democratic collapse, a constitutional crisis, and societal unrest. He studies your effects that may allow their creation and destroy the institutions to consider the popular fuel space by balancing public complaints and integration maintenance, the issues that arise as a result of corporations failing to follow basic principles may be reduced. Thus, comprehending populism is more than an academic service; it is a prerequisite for protecting democratic sovereignty as a final political activity.

Literature Review

In numerous nations, populist movements, parties, and leaders have grown in power, upending long-standing party rivalry patterns, casting doubt on the validity of democratic systems, and occasionally purposefully undermining or deteriorating governmental capacities. Populists have posed several challenges to the growth and even upkeep of liberal democracy by drawing a stark line between the desire of the people and the interests of the entrenched elites and promoting straightforward policy solutions that disregard the rights of minorities. The focus of social scientists on populism has increased quickly, despite some discipline-specific fragmentation. There are still many unanswered questions are the causes of populism cultural or economic? Local or national? Does liberal democracy face a danger from populism? What type of threat, if any? And how can it be addressed? This multidisciplinary book employs a variety of conceptual toolkits and methodologies to critically and empirically explore the most prevalent diagnoses of populism's sources, effects, and policy countermeasures (Velasco & Bucelli, 2022).

Populism is a philosophy that changes the connection between the public and political elites by dividing society into a "pure people" and "corrupt elite" duality. Populist parties have emerged as a result, posing a threat to democracy. This essay seeks to comprehend populism's workings in global politics and investigate its profound effects on democracies throughout the world. Populism is the study's independent variable, and its dependent variables are sub-variables such as social media use, threat to democracy, and division of people. The findings point to a troubling worldwide trend toward populist politics, its erosion of democratic standards, the emergence of authoritarian tendencies, and its growing threat to democracy. By controlling the media, enacting sensible redistribution laws, and maintaining deliberative democracy, populism may be stopped from growing. In order to counter populism, mainstream political players can also lessen political division and mould public opinion using democratic norms (Thapa, 2025).

The emergence of populism and its effects on democratic institutions by comparing worldwide patterns with a qualitative approach grounded in library research and literature reviews. Populism has been more popular in a variety of political contexts in recent years, impacting both established and developing democracies. It is distinguished by its anti-elite rhetoric and appeal to "the people." The research looks at how populist movements and leaders undermine fundamental democratic values including media integrity, judicial independence, and the separation of powers. Utilizing case studies from throughout the globe, including the US, Europe, and Latin America, the research identifies similarities in populist governance, particularly in the erosion of institutional confidence and mechanisms for accountability. This study also investigates how populism appeals to the masses by exploiting economic disparity, political disenfranchisement, and cultural issues. According to the study, populism poses a significant threat to democratic institutions, but the long-term effects differ depending on the strength and resilience of a country's legal and institutional structure. This research closes with recommendations for preserving democratic government in the face of growing populist movements, with an emphasis on strengthening democratic norms, improving civic education, and guaranteeing institutional openness (Nurdin et al., 2024).

Populism has emerged as a serious threat to democratic government because its leaders want to consolidate power and destroy checks and balances. This comprehensive assessment of the literature examines how populist movements endanger democratic institutions in many locations, with an emphasis on the decline of media freedom, parliamentary scrutiny, judicial independence, and human rights. Populist leaders consolidate power, influence legislation, and utilize social concerns to undermine democratic values.

This study focuses on case studies from the United States, Brazil, Turkey, and Hungary. Populist speech typically presents democratic systems as exclusive and disconnected from the interests of the "real people," so justifying measures that concentrate executive power and limit accountability. Global government and international legislation are affected, and this effect extends beyond state lines. (Al Wario et al., 2024)

In reaction, the media, academics, international organizations, civil society, and independent judiciaries all play vital roles in upholding democratic principles and fostering resistance to populist incursions. Countering populist dangers requires tactics including improving legal protection, encouraging civic education, fortifying oversight organizations, and reorganizing election processes. This study emphasizes the necessity of a comprehensive strategy to safeguard democratic institutions and address the underlying factors that contribute to populism's appeal. To create strong defenses against the deterioration of democracy, further study should examine how populists use digital media, the efficacy of opposition tactics, and comparative analysis across geographical boundaries (Al Waroi et al., 2024).

Populism has become a transformative force in modern politics, especially in emerging democracies where political institutions are still developing. This study explores the complex relationship between populism and democratic stability, focusing on how populist movements can either energize democratic participation or contribute to democratic backsliding. While populist leaders often claim to represent the "will of the people" against elite corruption, their governance can undermine democratic norms by restricting civil liberties, limiting executive power, and using nationalist discourses to solidify their rule. Nevertheless, the study also identifies instances in which populism has sparked political engagement and upended the hegemony of established elites, demonstrating the ambivalent impact of populism on democracy (Hossain, 2024).

In politics, populism has spread around the world and now controls the political landscape in many nations. The long-standing democratic system is seriously threatened by this phenomenon. Political populism is a term used to characterize a collection of rhetorical and tactical approaches that frequently use straightforward promises and speedy fixes to appeal to the masses, frequently by placing the blame on particular groups or governmental organizations. Because populism seeks to address social issues like racial discrimination and economic inequality, it is a powerful force that is hard to overcome, according to this article. In worldwide political conflicts, right-wing parties frequently deploy populist themes while continually demonstrating concern for social issues. To better comprehend current events, this study used qualitative research approaches in natural settings. It was done by combining pre-existing research approaches, such as literature evaluations of books and journal articles about global populism. This essay seeks to explain how populism might jeopardize the robustness of democratic institutions across nations and to pinpoint several approaches and fixes that can be put forth to fortify democracy against populism (Rizky et al., 2024).

Strong public discussions were sparked by populism's rise to power in a number of liberal countries around the globe. With the expectation that populism will become authoritarian if it gains power, academics, politicians, and commentators. In worldwide political conflicts, right-wing parties frequently deploy populist themes while continually demonstrating concern for social concerns. To better comprehend current events, this study used qualitative research approaches in natural settings. It was done by combining pre-existing research approaches, such as literature evaluations of books and journal articles about global populism.

The threats populism presents to democracy and its institutions. Some contend that populism under administration is not intended to last but rather to become ingrained in the political and party structures, while others see it as a characteristic of the opposition alone. This chapter, the literature on populism in power is critically reviewed, with a focus on the prominent theoretical frameworks in the field of so-called populist studies. It talks about the many different paths populist players throughout the world could take as they go from opposition to power. Depending on circumstance and ideology, it finds that different kinds of populist actors have different effects on democracy (Venizelos & Markou, 2024).

The emergence of populism as a worldwide phenomenon has drawn scholarly interest and sparked worries about how it may affect democracy. One may see the development of significant cumulative knowledge on the link between

populism and democracy as a result of the increasing scholarly agreement on an ideational definition of populist. Political science has been at the vanguard of this progress, and this symposium aims to examine blind spots that future research should strive to solve as well as provide state-of-the-art knowledge on the subject (Kaltwasser & Taggart, 2025).

Since the term's development as an analytical tool in the 1950s, several conceptualizations and meanings have emerged, making populism one of the most studied subjects in political science. However, the idea of populism is elusive and contentious in spite of this broad study program. Additionally, term has been used historically for a variety of geographically distinct occurrences in both politics and science. As a result, the phrase is used to describe a wide range of things, including parties, movements, proponents of certain laws, and viewpoints. Although populism has been associated with negative normative connotations, term is also occasionally employed in politics to disparage rival figures. We contend that a reevaluation of populism is long overdue, particularly with respect to its appropriateness and relevance in the scientific discourse (Oswald et al., 2021).

Important benefits of a formalized discourse approach to populism involve showing that popular logic may be employed to promote radically divergent political objectives, ranging from progressive to regressive or from the extreme left to the right. Additionally, it aids in our understanding of crucial topics that are otherwise unclear and muddled. With potentially important ramifications for critical management and organization studies as well as other fields, this essay presents specific questions and "rules of engagement" intended to further our knowledge of the role populism may and should play in the current political context. For example, it enables us to distinguish between the populist and nativist elements in the rhetoric of Trump, the Front National (FN), and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). However, our approach to populism also highlights the need to address the discourse around populism, which is a neglected field of critical study. By considering populism as a signifier rather than just a notion, we emphasize the need to pay attention to how and by whom the term "populism" is used, as well as its intended application and outcome. We contend that this calls for us to consider academia's relationship to populism and anti-populism more critically and to give anti-populism and "populist hype" more methodical consideration (De Cleen et al., 2018).

It has frequently been said that populism poses a serious danger to Western democracy. It should come as no surprise that scientific studies and comments on populism have become especially popular and, in fact, vital at a time when populist actors are significantly increasing in both Europe and the US. This article's goal is to provide a succinct but thorough summary of the current discussions in an effort to challenge the alleged "imminent threat" of populism in light of recent changes to the political structures and social structures of developed democracies, particularly during times of crisis. According to my understanding, populism is a certain kind of speech and, as such, one method of conducting politics and winning over certain demographics. As a result, I draw attention to the several paths that populist movements may follow, contingent on the sociopolitical context in which they emerge and the intellectual traditions with which they are strongly associated. Finally, I connect the "populist surge" to post-democracy debates (Katsambekis, 2017).

Research Methodology

The approach used in this study is qualitative. The analytical technique is used to carry out this research and reach its results from the secondary qualitative data that was gathered. For this article, the researcher used secondary sources of information. Texts, books, and other sources found in libraries and online are used to gather secondary data. The purpose of the study on populism and its influence on democratic institutions is to examine how populist leaders, movements, and ideologies affect the stability, effectiveness, and legitimacy of democratic government. The study aims to define populism, discuss its different forms, and examine the reasons for its emergence, including economic, social, and political forces. It analyzes the impact of populism on central democratic institutions, such as the judiciary, legislature, media, and civil liberties, and whether it makes democracy stronger by enhancing political participation or weaker by introducing authoritarian elements. The study also seeks to offer policy recommendations to assist in protecting democratic institutions while meeting the genuine issues that propel populist movements.

Populism

A range of political viewpoints known as populism emphasizes the idea of the ordinary "people" and usually contrasts them with a perceived "elite." It is usually associated with anti-political and anti-established sentiments. Since its inception in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the term has been used, usually negatively, to characterize a wide range of politicians, political parties, and social movements. In politics and other social disciplines, populism has been defined in a number of ways, and some experts recommend that the term be dropped completely (Berman, 2021).

As populism grows, the study is very important because it might have long-term effects on democratic governance. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, financial crises, and growing inequality, populist narratives have gained traction in both new and old democracies. Though their methods of governance usually compromise democratic norms like press freedom, judicial independence, and checks and balances, populist leaders usually present themselves as defenders of "the people" against dishonest elites. These efforts not only undermined institutional protections but also reduced public trust in democracy, highlighting the need to examine populism's impact on democratic institutions.

A study on populism has provided significant insights into the characteristics and rhetoric of movements that are popular, emphasized populism's ideological flexibility, allowing it to appear in both left- and right-wing forms, as well as its anti-pluralist inclinations, which dispute the diversity of opinion inherent in democratic countries. Populism has swept the globe in recent decades, transforming the political and economic landscapes of both established and emerging democracies. Populism, defined as its appealing nature to "the people" and animosity toward perceived elites, is frequently presented as a solution to corrupt or ineffective political institutions. Populist leaders typically claim to represent the actual will of the people, placing themselves against institutions such as the judiciary, media, and legislatures, which they allege are skewed in favor of elite interests. This resistance to institutions is a distinctive feature of populism, and it presents serious dangers to the integrity of democratic transparency (Nurdin, Setiawan & Nugraha, 2024). Because they contain the procedures, structures, and standards that permit citizen participation, representation, and government, democratic institutions are fundamental to democracy. Upholding democratic values and guaranteeing accountability depend heavily on these institutions, which include the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; electoral processes; and the preservation of civil freedoms.

The Constitution's division of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial departments ensures a system of oversight and accountability, which is the foundation of the United States' well-established democratic institutions. Lately, there's been a lot of chatter about stuff like voter suppression, gerrymandering, and how money plays into politics. It's got people worried about how strong our American democracy really is.

Canada now takes a somewhat different approach. Similar to the UK, they have a parliamentary system in which the legislative and executive departments collaborate closely. Despite its lengthy history as a democracy, Canada continues to face its own challenges, such as discussing election reform to ensure that all voices are heard more effectively.

A variety of democratic systems may be found throughout Europe. Because of their social democratic heritage, nations like Germany and countries in the Nordic area have proportional representation and coalition administrations. However, many are becoming concerned about how strong these democratic institutions actually are as populist groups gain traction in some areas. Just take a look at Poland and Hungary, where the rule of law and journalistic freedom are being threatened.

Africa presents a rather contradictory picture, with each nation having its own unique narrative. Consider South Africa, which has a functional democratic system but yet faces issues with maintaining political stability, holding fair elections, and defending the rights of minorities. Nigeria and Botswana demonstrate how diverse the democratic experience may be. In many locations, issues like corruption and electoral fraud continue to impede progress.

In the twenty-first century, populism, globalization, and technological breakthroughs are some of the major threats to democracy. We are witnessing efforts to subvert the rule of law and the dissemination of false information on the

internet. The international community must take the initiative to address these urgent problems in order to support democratic institutions

Populism is a Political Phenomenon

Stands out for appealing to the "common people" against an allegedly dishonest elite. It simplifies complex issues into a tale of decent common people vs a dishonest elite. Populist leaders promote themselves as anti-establishment champions who reflect the will of the people. Populism's impacts on democratic institutions are of scholarly interest because it may either draw attention to legitimate grievances or erode institutional checks and balances that are necessary for a functioning democracy (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017)

The Media's Role in Populism

The media has a significant impact on how populism affects democratic institutions. Using media strategies, populist leaders disparage opponents and propagate their ideas. Because of concentrated media ownership and misinformation propagated through social media, a divided information environment may make it more difficult for individuals to make informed decisions (Akman, 2019)

Impact on Minority Rights and Democratic Principles

Populist leaders may exploit public sentiment to pass legislation that marginalizes or discriminates against minority groups. This puts in jeopardy the diverse and inclusive values that are essential to a robust democratic system.

Populism and democracy have this tricky relationship.

Populism has the potential to both cause issues and serve as a check on democratic principles. Policymakers, scholars, and ordinary citizens must all have a thorough understanding of populism if we are to grasp these problems and promote a strong democracy.

The Impact of Populism on Democratic Institutions

Populism seriously disrupts the functioning of democracies. You know, populist politicians typically target key issues like press freedom, an independent judiciary, and the separation of powers. By placing their allies in influential positions, restricting the media's speech, or omitting some crucial legislative actions, they may attempt to undermine the checks and balances. These actions have the potential to seriously disrupt the mechanisms that are meant to protect democracy from authoritarianism, which would facilitate the challenge to democratic ideals. Just take a look at Hungary and Turkey to see how populist regimes may gradually undermine democratic institutions.

However, the impact of populism differs depending on a country's democratic processes and political culture. Populist leaders face significant pushback from independent structures, the press, and public sentiment in countries with robust legal frameworks and a vibrant citizenry, such as the US and numerous Western European states. In contrast, in nations with weaker institutions or a history of authoritarianism, populism has the potential to destabilize democratic balances, culminating in democratic backsliding or tyranny. As populism spreads, the long-term impact on democracy remains a significant issue in global politics (Nurdin et al., 2024).

Results and Discussion

Populist politicians typically utilize crises to consolidate their authority. According to their examination of the COVID-19 pandemic's consequences, populist politicians leveraged the crisis to expand presidential power and undermine institutional checks and balances. Using disasters to consolidate power is a common technique among populists who believe that traditional democratic procedures are too onerous or ineffective for dealing with crises. Therefore, populist politicians used the epidemic as an excuse to reduce judicial scrutiny and circumvent legislatures to further erode democratic institutions.

Cultural factors have a major role in the growth of populism. His results show that populism is only motivated by concerns with economic concerns, but is even compressed in response to modern, precocious immigration in the

national identity. These cultural relocations have populists in Europe and America because the popular policies have used the fears of cultural decline to attract a sultry. In these circumstances often pursue it translates as pluralism because rulers refuse the variety in favor of a homogeneous national identity.

Economic disparity is also a significant element influencing popular support. Many academics believe that one of the primary reasons for popular movements is economic failure, which creates no distinct groups. This is especially relevant in today's global world, when widening disparities between job classes and others have resulted in widespread unhappiness. Popular leaders, such as Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Donald Trump in the United States, were able to benefit from the misfortunes of the economy. This tendency is consistent with the theoretical paradigm of democratic institutions, which are more prone to disrupt the public when economically deprived.

According to Mueller (2016), The anti-pluralist stance of populism is a serious threat to democratic governance since it goes against the fundamental democratic tenet of protecting the rights of minorities and promoting a range of political opinions. consolidate power in ways that undermine institutional balances of power and cause a democratic backslide. This trend is especially alarming in areas where democratic institutions are already insecure since populist administrations have the power to overthrow independent courts, weaker legislatures, and media-restricted settings. You know, populists often claim they really represent the people, making it tough for anyone to disagree with them. Because of this, we see places like Poland and Turkey where populist governments have tightened their grip on the courts and limited what the press can say, which totally messes with democratic values. When these kinds of groups fall apart, it can have lasting effects on democracy in those countries, making it harder to keep leaders in check and maintain a balance of power.

Populism is a complex concept. It may appear to be an indication or even a cause of democracy's difficulties. Indeed, anger frequently arises when people are angry about issues like economic disparity or feeling excluded from political life, but the leaders typically exacerbate the situation by dismantling the same institutions that may aid in resolving such issues. Although populism is sometimes viewed as a remedy for constitutional defects, it ultimately compromises the viability of a democracy. Particularly in areas where democratic underpinnings are already precarious, it's rather alarming. Populist regimes have the power to stifle the media, undermine legislatures, and destroy independent courts.

Democracies must address the underlying cultural and economic problems that give rise to populism in order to counteract the allure of populist movements. Civic education that upholds democratic principles, defends press freedom, increases judicial independence, and fortifies our institutions should be our main priority. In addition to embracing the diversity and responsibilities that make democratic government function, policymakers and experts should put forth great effort to ensure that democratic institutions continue to be responsive to the needs of all citizens. The growth of populism is currently one of the largest challenges to political institutions. Numerous studies demonstrate that populism's style of governance frequently erodes the basis of democracy, even if it stems from genuine problems that people are confronting. It interferes with checks and balances, undermines judicial independence, and tampers with media freedom. These results highlight how crucial it is that if we want democracy to endure globally, academics and policymakers concentrate on strengthening safeguards and tackling the root causes of populist unrest (Nurdin et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study demonstrates how populism has emerged as a serious global danger to democracy. Populism emphasizes the concept of a single "will of the people" and frequently criticizes the elite, which has the potential to seriously undermine democratic principles like separation of powers, press freedom, and judicial independence. The results show that populist leaders frequently cause political unrest, cultural reaction, and economic suffering in order to undermine democratic norms by interfering with checks and balances.

Populism can hasten the transition to dictatorship or authoritarian governance in nations with weak institutions, such as Hungary. However, depending on how a democracy is structured, populism can have different outcomes. The strength of its democratic institutions will determine just how much it can take over. For instance, robust legal systems,



vibrant democratic institutions, and a free press have all served to lessen some of the more severe consequences of populism in powerful democracies like the US and other Western European nations.

However, populist leaders have been known to strain these institutions even in even stable nations, underscoring the necessity of ongoing reform and attention to detail. Populist dictators frequently use crises such as a worldwide epidemic or economic disparity—to defend their authoritarian policies. Future studies should focus more on the ways in which populism interacts with certain institutional arrangements and political environments.

To address the distinct difficulties populists encounter in emerging democracies as opposed to those in developed ones, we require additional regional research. Additionally, we ought to look into measures to improve democracy, such as addressing economic inequality, increasing institutional accountability, and encouraging civic education. If we wish to preserve democracy in this more fragmented world and reduce the attraction of populism, these actions are essential.

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