



POPULISM AND THE EROSION OF DEMOCRATIC NORMS IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the connection between the decline of democratic norms in contemporary politics and the rise of populism. It investigates the characteristics of populist movements, their appeal to voters, and their challenges to established democratic practices and institutions. The article examines how populist leaders undermine the rule of law, weaken checks and balances, and contribute to the polarization of societies through case studies from various nations. The article closes with a conversation on the ramifications of populism for the eventual fate of a majority rules government and expected methodologies for defending popularity based standards.



KEY WORD: democratic norms , democratic practices , polarization of societies.

INTRODUCTION

Because it challenges conventional democratic structures and norms, populism has emerged as a significant force in international politics. To appeal to voters who are dissatisfied with the status quo, populist leaders frequently present themselves as defenders of "the people" against a corrupt elite. However, concerns have been expressed regarding the impact of populism on democratic institutions and the rule of law. This article looks at how populist movements affect democratic norms and what this means for democracy's future.

1. UNDERSTANDING POPULISM:

A political philosophy known as populism places an emphasis on the distinction between "the people" and "the elite." Populist leaders frequently employ anti-establishment, anti-pluralist, and nationalist rhetoric to make the claim that they represent the true will of the people. The following are the primary characteristics of populism:

- **Anti-Elitism and Anti-Establishment Sentiment:** Populists frequently criticize established political, economic, and cultural elites, claiming that they are unaffected by the issues that everyday people face. Voters who feel marginalized by globalization, economic inequality, and cultural shifts will relate to this narrative.
- **Nationalism and Identity Politics:** Populists frequently employ nationalist rhetoric, emphasizing the significance of national sovereignty and frequently advocating for policies that exclude people on the basis of their ethnicity, religion, or nationality. Minority groups may be marginalized as a result, and multiculturalism may be rejected as a result.

- **Charismatic Leadership:** A charismatic leader who presents themselves as the embodiment of the people's will is typically at the center of populist movements. Traditional party structures and institutions are frequently bypassed by this personalistic leadership style, reducing the power of established political parties.
- **Simplistic Solutions to Complex Problems:** Egalitarian pioneers frequently propose clear, in some cases oversimplified, answers for complex cultural issues, interesting to electors' cravings for handy solutions. Policy deliberation and compromise, two essential components of democratic governance, may suffer as a result of this.

2. THE EROSION OF DEMOCRATIC NORMS:

Democratic norms, particularly those pertaining to the rule of law, checks and balances, and political pluralism, are directly threatened by the rise of populism. This part investigates how egalitarian pioneers sabotage these standards:

- **Attacks on the Judiciary:** Independent judicial systems are frequently viewed as obstacles by populist leaders. As a consequence of this, they might try to undermine the judiciary by appointing loyalists to key positions, reducing the independence of courts, or discrediting decisions made by the judiciary that are in their favor. The rule of law and the protection of individual rights are weakened by this erosion of judicial independence.
- **Weakening of Checks and Balances:** In democratic systems, checks and balances are put in place to prevent one branch of government from having too much power. However, populist leaders frequently attempt to consolidate power by reducing the influence of civil society organizations, compromising the independence of the media, and weakening legislative bodies. The mechanisms that hold leaders accountable are weakened by this concentration of power.
- **Erosion of Political Pluralism:** Populism is innately hostile to pluralist, as it will in general oddball the authenticity of resistance groups, free media, and different voices that challenge the egalitarian account. Dissent can be silenced, minority groups marginalized, and democratic debate weakened by this erosion of political pluralism.
- **Undermining Electoral Integrity:** By manipulating electoral laws, restricting voter rights, and discrediting electoral outcomes that do not favor them, populist leaders may also seek to undermine the integrity of electoral processes. These actions may result in a decrease in voter participation and a loss of public faith in the democratic process.

3. CASE STUDIES:

This section presents case studies from different countries to illustrate how populism has contributed to the erosion of democratic norms:

- **Hungary:** Viktor Orbán, the prime minister of Hungary, has systematically undermined democratic institutions ever since assuming office in 2010, transforming the country into an "illiberal democracy." Orbán's administration has subverted legal autonomy, limited media opportunity, and adjusted discretionary regulations to incline toward his party, Fidesz. A stark illustration of how populist leaders can consolidate power by weakening democratic checks and balances is the erosion of democratic norms in Hungary.
- **Turkey:** Turkey's democratic standards have significantly declined under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Erdoğan's administration has utilized state ability to stifle resistance, limit press opportunity, and debilitate legal autonomy. The massive crackdown on civil society that saw the arrest of thousands of political opponents, journalists, and activists was predicated on the failed 2016 coup attempt. Turkey has gone from being a democracy to being a de facto one-man state as a result of Erdoğan's increasingly authoritarian rule.
- **United States:** The administration of Donald Trump featured the difficulties that populism postures to popularity based standards even in lengthy laid out majority rule governments. Concerns about the erosion of democratic norms in the United States were raised by Trump's attacks on the media, the judiciary, and the electoral processes. His refusal to acknowledge the aftereffects of the 2020

official political decision and the ensuing State house uprising on January 6, 2021, highlighted the risks of libertarian way of talking in subverting public confidence in fair organizations.

- **Brazil:** Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro has taken a populist approach to governance, which includes targeting political opponents, the judiciary, and the press. Political polarization in the country was further exacerbated by Bolsonaro's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was marked by misinformation and disregard for public health measures. Both his words and deeds have contributed to Brazil's weakening of democratic norms and rise in social tensions.

4. THE CONSEQUENCES OF POPULISM FOR DEMOCRACY:

The development of populism has significant repercussions for democracy's future. The potential long-term effects of populist movements on democratic governance are discussed in this section:

- **Increased Polarization:** In environments where society is divided into "us" versus "them," populist leaders frequently thrive. Social conflict can worsen as a result of this polarization, making it more challenging to reach an agreement on significant policy issues. Polarization has the potential to weaken the social fabric over time and make democratic governance more difficult.
- **Erosion of Public Trust:** Libertarian pioneers frequently exploit public disappointment with existing establishments, further dissolving trust in those foundations. As confidence in just foundations declines, residents might turn out to be more vulnerable to dictator choices or withdraw from the political cycle by and large.
- **Democratic Backsliding:** Under populist regimes, the erosion of democratic norms may result in democratic backsliding, in which nations gradually shift away from democratic governance and toward authoritarianism. Particularly if populist leaders are successful in consolidating power and undermining institutional checks and balances, this process may be difficult to reverse.
- **Challenges to International Norms:** The ascent of populism has additionally tested worldwide standards and organizations. In order to undermine international cooperation on issues such as human rights, climate change, and global security, populist leaders frequently adopt nationalist and isolationist policies. This pattern can debilitate the worldwide liberal request and make it more hard to address transnational difficulties.

5. SAFEGUARDING DEMOCRATIC NORMS:

It is essential to think about ways to protect democratic norms in light of the dangers posed by populism. The following are some ideas for preserving democratic governance and bolstering democratic institutions:

- **Strengthening Institutions:** Majority rules systems should fortify the autonomy and strength of key foundations, including the legal executive, the media, and electing bodies. This can be accomplished through legitimate changes, expanded financing, and global help for majority rule foundations.
- **Promoting Civic Education:** Instructing residents about equitable qualities and the significance of pluralism, resistance, and law and order is essential for building strength against egalitarian manner of speaking. Metro schooling can assist residents with perceiving the risks of populism and the significance of safeguarding popularity based standards.
- **Fostering Political Pluralism:** For democratic governance to continue, it is essential to support a vibrant civil society and promote political pluralism. The rights of opposition parties, minority groups, and independent media should be protected by governments, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations.
- **International Cooperation:** To combat the global rise of populism and authoritarianism, democracies should work together. Supporting democratic movements in other nations, imposing sanctions on democratically unconstitutional regimes, and advocating for international standards that uphold democracy and human rights are all examples of this.

CONCLUSION:

The ascent of populism presents a critical test to majority rule administration, undermining the disintegration of popularity based standards that are fundamental for the working of a majority rules government. The future of democracy appears to be becoming increasingly uncertain as populist leaders undermine the rule of law, weaken checks and balances, and contribute to polarization. Democracies, on the other hand, have the ability to stem the tide of populism and preserve the values that underpin democratic governance by bolstering institutions, encouraging civic education, and encouraging political pluralism. The struggle to preserve democracy will necessitate vigilance, perseverance, and a renewed commitment to democratic governance principles.

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