



From Trump to Bolsonaro: The Rise of Populism in Global Politics

Article

Populism is a political ideology that has gained traction in recent years. It is a type of politics that appeals to the "common people" by portraying them as the victims of a corrupt elite. Populist leaders often promise radical change and attack the political establishment, tapping into people's emotions and fears to mobilize support. The rise of populism has led to the election of leaders such as Donald Trump in the United States and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil.

The factors driving populism vary from country to country. Economic inequality, corruption, and social exclusion are just a few of the issues that can contribute to populism. In the United States, Trump's appeal to voters was built on his platform of job creation and economic growth, which he promised to deliver by renegotiating trade agreements and reducing regulations.

In Brazil, Bolsonaro's appeal was rooted in his opposition to leftist politics, which he portrayed as corrupt and harmful to the country's interests. His strong stance on crime and his promise to restore order also resonated with many Brazilians who were frustrated with high levels of violence in their country.

However, Bolsonaro's recent defeat in Brazil's presidential election provides insights into the phenomenon of populism. Populist leaders often lack experience and make avoidable mistakes that undermine their position once in office. They tend to polarize countries and mobilize their opponents, making it difficult for them to sustain their popularity and win re-election.

While defeating authoritarian populists through democratic means offers hope for preserving democratic institutions, the threat from such leaders remains. They continue to command significant support and may make a comeback in the future. The decline of populist regimes does not suggest that populism is on the retreat. Populists will remain relevant in mainstream politics as they still enjoy considerable support from the masses.

Populism will remain active in various regions and continue to re-emerge in new shapes and forms, especially where such movements are pushing for more political engagement of citizens and challenging the contours of traditional politics with assertiveness. Populism thrives on emotions rather than reason and logic, and it is difficult to predict when and where it will emerge.

While populism can be seen as a response to the failures of mainstream politics, it also presents challenges to democratic institutions. Populist leaders often appeal to people's emotions, making it difficult to have a reasoned debate on issues. They also tend to undermine the rule of law, and their attacks on democratic institutions erode the checks and balances that are essential to democratic



governance. Populism can lead to a decline in human rights, freedom of speech, and the media's independence, as seen in countries such as Hungary and Turkey.

The rise of populism in global politics is a complex phenomenon that presents both opportunities and challenges. Populism can be seen as a response to the failures of mainstream politics, and it highlights the need for greater political engagement and reform. However, populism also presents challenges to democratic institutions and human rights.

It is essential to understand the causes and consequences of populism to strengthen democratic institutions and uphold human rights. Populists will remain relevant in mainstream politics, and new forms of populism will continue to emerge. Academics, politicians, and citizens must continue to engage in debates and discussions to understand the phenomenon of populism, its causes, and its effects.

Agenda

Populism

- A political ideology that appeals to “common people” by portraying them as victims of a corrupt elite and promising radical change
- *“The recent election of populist leaders such as Trump and Bolsonaro in the US and Brazil respectively has highlighted the rise of populism in global politics.”*

Democracy

- A system of government where power is held by the people or their elected representatives
- *“The threat of populist leaders to democratic institutions is concerning as their attacks on democratic institutions erode the checks and balances that are essential to democratic governance.”*

Authoritarian

- A form of government characterized by strong central power and limited political freedoms
- *“Populist leaders tend to polarize countries and mobilize their opponents, making it difficult for them to sustain their popularity and win re-election, which can lead to authoritarianism.”*

Human Rights

- Basic rights that are inherent to all human beings, including the right to life, freedom of speech, and freedom from discrimination



- *"The decline of human rights, freedom of speech, and media independence can be seen in countries ruled by populist leaders such as Hungary and Turkey."*

Political Engagement

- Involvement in political activities and decision-making processes by citizens
- *"Populism thrives on emotions rather than reason and logic, making it difficult to have a reasoned debate on issues, but it can also lead to greater political engagement and reform."*

Polarize

- To cause people to become divided into groups with opposing views or beliefs
- *"Populist leaders tend to polarize countries, making it difficult for them to sustain their popularity and win re-election."*

Reform

- The process of making changes or improvements to a system or organization
- *"Populism can be seen as a response to the failures of mainstream politics, and it highlights the need for greater political engagement and reform."*

Checks and Balances

- A system of government where branches have the power to limit the powers of the other branches
- *"Populists can undermine the rule of law and erode the checks and balances that are essential to democratic governance."*

Elite

- A small group of people who hold a disproportionate amount of power or influence
- *"Populism appeals to common people by portraying them as victims of a corrupt elite."*

Freedom of Speech

- The right to express one's opinions without censorship or retaliation
- *"Populists' attacks on democratic institutions erode the checks and balances that are essential to liberty, including freedom of speech."*

IGM Session

2023-06-11T08:42:48.000Z

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Discussion

1. What are the root causes of populism in different countries? How can politicians and policymakers address these causes to prevent the rise of populist movements?
2. How can democratic institutions and human rights be protected in the face of populist leaders who often undermine the rule of law and attack democratic institutions?
3. Is there a way to engage with supporters of populist leaders in a way that promotes respectful dialogue on issues while avoiding emotional appeals and fear-mongering? How can we promote reasoned debate in the face of emotionally-charged populist rhetoric?

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