

Policy-Making in the Age of Populism

A preliminary glance of the relationship between the populist regime and policymakers

ABSTRACT

With the rise of populist regime and its implicative tendencies around the world, we need to understand that institutional delegitimization is on the rise. The third pillar of democracy, i.e. the executive, has steadily shown a dualistic reaction of reconciliation and antagonism alongside systematic changes in perception about populism. The case studies on the populism are a preliminary analysis of the political conditions which give rise to populist leaders and their regime, it actually hints at the tumultuous conditions which are brought from its inceptions like in cases of Central European, Asian and Latin American countries.

Populism seems to be stronger the more intellectuals criticize is.

-Pierre-Andre Taguieff

We are living in the age of populism. Over the past two decades, we have witnessed the rise of right-wing populist parties across the world. Such an emergency hasn't been confined to Europe but is a global phenomenon as evinced by electoral triumphs of Narendra Modi in India in 2014 and that of Recep Tayyab Erdogan in Turkey as early as 2003. Most theoreticians believe that the alarming nature of "new populist" is a threat to liberal democracy. They agree that "populism's understood as a pathological form, pseudo- and post-democratic, produced by the corruption of democratic ideals."(ibid., p.9) It's been seen mainly as a "normal pathology" of western democracies. (Brubaker, 2017)

There is a complex relationship between the cataclysmic age of populism and the recalcitrant policy regime. Two salient features of contemporary politics of democracies are: firstly there is a growing concentration of power in the hands of a set of unelected "regulating bodies" drawing their legitimacy primarily from their technical competence and administrative expertise. (Malone 1996; Scharpf 1999, Fischer 2009; McDonnell 2013), and secondly, the emergence of a variety of so-called populist movements and parties, appealing directly to 'the people' to mobilize opposition against established institutions and elites (Mudde 2004; Taggart 2000; Ardit 2005; Albertazzi 2008).

There is a complex relationship between the cataclysmic age of populism and recalcitrant policy regime

There is another side to this complexity, that of complementarity between technocracy and democracy. This emerges from the notion that technocracy is amongst the various kinds of representative mechanisms that Pierre Rosanvallon (Rosanvalln 2011: 9-11) discusses as an end of obtaining a more adequate representation of the common good. There are two commonalities between these two forces of the political system i.e., Legitimacy of identification with generality corresponding to the idea of an independent bureaucracy as a separate pillar of democratic legitimacy and legitimacy of impartiality whereby these two represent a certainty of deliverance without bias or arrogance.

In this essay, I bring in a descriptive analysis of the meaning of populism, its characteristics and its types in the contemporary period. This is substantiated by selective case study analysis of populist regimes inter-regionally i.e. Latin America, Europea, South Asia, Central Asia, and Africa with a systematic brief on the findings. The second part of the essay is the historicising relationship between democracy and the rise of populism, following world and Indian trajectories. The third part solely focuses on the responsive analysis of policymaking in the age of the populist regime. The sole purpose of this analytical essay is to undertake a preliminary glance at the rise of populism and its effect on policymakers i.e. the technocracy.

Defining the Incomprehensible

In popular opinion, there are two dominant characteristics of the term populism, highly socio-politically catalytic and negative. The etymological origin calls out populism as the politics of the "pub" i.e., highly emotional and simplistic discourse that is directed at the gut feelings of people and sharpens opportunism intending to please the people. As clearly pointed out by Ralf Dahrendorf perceptively that "one person's populism is another person's democracy and visa versa". It's defined by political binaries like "democracy and opportunism" and "elitism and pluralism". Elitism wants politics to be about the views of the oral elite instead of the amoral people. Pluralism, on the other hand, rejects the homogeneity of both populism and elitism, seeing society as a heterogeneous collection of groups and individuals with often fundamentally different views and wishes.

"One person's populism is another person's democracy and visa versa".

It can be theoretically argued that the concept of populism is a "thin ideology" as compared to the "thick ideologies" like communism which are visionary and more organized (Mudde, 2010). In this context, it's important to unravel the mystery of populist governments deconstructs their which is based on two fundamental claims. First, elites and "outsiders", work against the interest of the "true people". Secondly, since populists are the voice of the "true people" nothing should stand in their way (Friedman, 2018).

It's important to contextualize these two outlining characteristics of populism. The first characteristic is defined in terms of "The Othering", processes by which one set of the population identifies itself as "morally decent, economically struggling, hardworking, family-oriented, plain-spoken, and endowed with public-spiritedness". While many studies define populism as an essential conflict between the marginalised and the elites. In India, we see a similarly important division on caste-class lines. The populist regime utilise three strategies to aggravate this insider versus outside division which includes: stylisation of the leader based on the insider's characterisation (Narendra Modi's "chai-wala" stroke), the delegitimization of the outsiders (National Registration of Citizenship in Assam) and a rhetorical of crisis that elevates the conflict between insiders and outsiders to matter to nations emergency (Revocation of Article 370 in Kashmir on the context

The "othering" process convinces the citizenry of this "thin ideology" of populism confirming their "thick ideology" of communalism.

of national destabilisation threat from separatist or the instance of demonetisation as a war on the corrupt elite). The second strategy popularises that “ *Nothing should constrain the will of the people*”, this requires strong leadership, the actual policies that populists make or present to address a crisis are typically simplistic and glosses over the many complexities of policy making. The real challenge rests on convincing the supporters and less about answering the problem, which can be only solved by their supreme leaders. In many countries, there is also a tendency of the populist leaders to project themselves as heroic embodiments of historical importance. The concepts popularised by these leaders like the concept of the heartland helps the people in the populist propaganda are neither real nor all inclusive , but are mythical and constructed sub-set of the whole population , and "Imagined Community". (Anderson, n.d.)

Historicising Democracy and Populism

Democracy as we know it today has developed over a longer period drawing from different experiential preferability. There were significant forms of democratic political practices in Ancient Greece, from the sixth century BC, even though they involved only a minority of adult male citizens (women and slaves were excluded). Since then there have been minuscule attempts across the world to establish democratic local governance in a number of countries like India, Persia, and Bactria, more than two thousand years ago. Gradually the trajectory of democratic governance can be traced back to - the English Magna Carta in 1215, to French and the American Revolutions in the 18th century, Europe and North America in the 19th century and early 20th century. This promulgated the spread of the conceptual framework for the functioning of democracies like franchise, rights, and liberties of citizens, the concept of citizenship, deliberative participation in the decision making the process and many more. There still exist a continuum that ushers the countries to practice democracy, and every age adds uniqueness to its principles.

In his book, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, Ramchandra Guha divided the history into several distinct periods. He sees the first two decades after Indian Independence as a period of constitutional democracy, followed by two decades of variable transitory processes ushering 'Populist Democracy', with political pressure

impacting constantly on governance. The implicative constitutional democracy was followed in the Nehruvian Era, but the disarray and deviations from it, became evident in the 1970s particularly with the declaration of Emergency by Indira Gandhi's government. Her regime had started under the principled symbiosis of populism with socialism she and constructed a new political identity of the 'poor', which she argued had to be protected from the corrupt rich. Her striking sloganeering, “ *garibi hatao*”, was inspired by anti-elitism and entirely based on the politics of redistribution pursued through radical economic policies. The Dutch political scientist, Cas Mudde, defines populism as "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups , the pure people and the corrupt. Populist leaders unlike the dictators or communists, have attained sovereignty via legitimised means and circumvent the institutional establishments to project themselves as people's sole representatives. In terms of philosophical dispensations, the concept of populism poses a grave threat to liberal democracy- a system which is premised on twin objectives of respective popular will and valuing individual rights.

Cases Of Populism:

The term populism was first used in the 19th-century political movements. This was particularly to do with the agrarian movements in the US in the 1890s that eventually became the People's Party. The movement was formed to oppose the demonetization of silver and championed skepticism of railways, banks, and political elites. Then it wasn't until the 1950's that populism came into broader use, it became attached to varied movements supporting charismatic leaders like in Latin America, military coups in Africa championing social revolution and McCarthyism in America. Seymour Martin Lipset on populism and modernisation explained a new phase where populism became a political expression of the anxieties and anger of those wished to return to a simpler and pre-modern life. (Lipset, 1960)

There are three types of populism, which have been described by stalwarts of political-economy like Cas Mudde. The first pertains to ***Cultural Populism***, which incorporated nativist populism, majoritarian populism, and legalistic populism. A central aspect of this form of cultural populism is welfare chauvinism, it systematically rides on the pretext of creating a utopian welfare-ridden politics and orienting policy towards it. The second type of populism is ***Socio-economic Populism***, which has been about bringing previously excluded segments of

society into politics for the first time, however it's been tapering off since the countries have been hard hit crisis like the 2007-08 crisis. Economic good times may create the fiscal space for statist and redistributive political projects, opening up opportunities for socio-economic populism(Rammer 2012). The third type pertains to *Anti-Establishment Populism*, in this politics was directed against proponents of state intervention; populists promise to save their countries through market reforms. The charisma of populist leaders helped generate public support for tough economic reforms.

Based on these distinctions the report identifies 46 populist leaders or political parties that have held executive offices across 33 countries between 1990 and today. It finds that many between 1990 and 2018, the number of populists in power around the world has increased a remarkable fivefold, from four to 20. This includes countries not only in Latin America and in Eastern and Central Europe—where populism has traditionally been most prevalent—but also in Asia and Western Europe. Secondly, it was once found primarily in emerging democracies, populists are increasingly gaining power in systemically important countries. Finally, anti-establishment populism was once most prevalent, but cultural populism is now the commonest form of populism across the globe. The indexing is done by the following parameters:

1. Region-wise characterization of countries with a focus on both the leaders and parties that can be classified as populist.
2. Time: 1990 to 2016
3. Inclusion on only: populist who either attained executive office in the least democratic countries, reached the presidency or prime ministerial position and exclusion of minority coalitions or partnerships of populists.
4. Use of Archigos database of political leaders going back to the year 1875. (Goemans et al., 2009)
5. Pre-requisites: debatable definitions of populism and characteristics of the populist regime and certain imperfections in exactions of representation.

Three types of populist tendencies are prevalent in the world : Cultural, Socio-economic and Anti-establishment.

TABLE 2 : SELECTIVE POPULIST REGIME CASES SINCE 1990 -

REGIONS	Countries	YEARS	POPULIST LEADER	POPULISM TYPE ADOPTED
1. Latin America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brazil Ecuador Venezuela 	1990-1992 1996-1997 1994-2013	Fernando Collar de Mello Abdala Bucaram Rafael Caldera and Hugo Chavez	Anti-Establishment Socio-economic Socio-economic
2. Central Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turkey Israel 	2003 onwards 1996 onwards	Recep Tayyib Erdogan Benjamin Netanyahu	Cultural Cultural
3. Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greece Italy Hungary 	2015 onwards 1994- 2013 1998-2010	Syriza Silvio Berlusconi Victor Orban	Socio-economic Anti-Establishment Cultural
5. Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zambia South Africa 	2011-2014 2009 -2018	Micheal Sata Jacob Zumba	Socio-Economic Socio-Economic
4. South Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India Sri Lanka 	2014 onwards 2005 onwards	Narendra Modi Mahinda Rajapaksa	Cultural Cultural

European countries and Populism:

The intensity of populist regimes in Europe has relatively remained less as compared to other parts of the world. At present, populist parties hold government responsibility in Italy with the formation of the Government of Change Coalition composed of Five Star Movement and the League, and secondly in Greece under Syriza Party in 2015 (Right-wing populist party). One important cause of this is the prominence of the “Presidential systems over the Parliamentary system of governance”. The direct presidential elections allow for charismatic leaders or candidates to forge direct relationships with the people, whereas in Europe with consistent

parliamentary indirect election populist leaders aren't able to rise to that extent. The parliamentary system also requires consistent populist efforts, adherence to evolving voter interests and forge coalitions whenever in power. However, we find one such populist tendency growing in the United Kingdom, under the influence of United Kingdom Independence Party forcing 2016 referendum on Britain's membership in the EU, while exacting only 13 percent of the vote in parliament. ("Election 2015 - BBC News," n.d.)

Latin American trends of populism: Populism has been a crucial political force in Latin America since at least the 1930s with figures such as Argentina's Juan and Eva Person and Brazil's Guetilo Vargas domination the political landscape. By the 1990s populism had consistently reached its helm with the rise of redistributive social policy, implementing domestic industry protection and eschewing foreign aligned elites. Following this we see a period of intense economic crisis where the brunt was borne by the common people, this opportunity was seized by the rise of anti-establishment populist groups in Argentina and Peru especially. Then from the mid-2000s populism was growing alongside Neo-liberal economic policies favouring capitalist tendencies, where the once again the commoners saw the rise of classist division in society. This gives rise to a wave of socio-economic populism. Latin American socio-economic populist groups across the region, like Hugo Chavez, monopolised the situation and gained prominence in the political sphere. In Venezuela we see a similar trajectory of socio-economic populism evolving into 20 years of authoritarian populism, till 2018, under the regime of Nicolas Maduro.

Asia's 40 percent population is governed by Populist: The rise of populism in Asian countries have had a differential trajectory as compared to the Eastern European and Latin American countries. Historically, a type of inclusionary populism has been more prevalent in these countries than exclusionary populism. More importantly, it has revolved around "ant-establishment" populism in which leaders have defined the "othering" conflict in terms of the common people who have undertaken strenuous work versus the established elite class. For Instance, cultural populism is on the rise in Asia, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi has relied on nationalist and religious ideals to muster popular support, while Rodrigo D tente uses the law-and-order rhetoric to appeal to his voter base. While both these leaders have successfully used the tactics of cultural populism, they have been longingly pushing for socio-economic reforms since they have come to power. Under the watch of these sovereigns,

we have a rise in the numbers of majoritarian mob-lynching, inter-religious riots, and extra-judicial killings. The

A Paradoxical Relationship:

The urgency of growth in developing countries is semi-focused on development initiatives against poverty. Liberalization stood as one of the main harbingers of pulling out developing countries from the vicious circle of debt-ridden poverty. In many countries following democratic principled governance, there has been a decline of confidence in institutions, posing grave threats towards policy-making processes. The new rules of spreading information and communications are now dependant on a league of "*Policy Monks*" ("*Policy-Making in an Age of Populism [Audio] by London School of Economics / Mixcloud,*" *n.d.*), who comprise of executives of state, business entrepreneurs, civil society organizations and non-governmental organization. There has gradually been an insinuation of a newly trained generation working in the policy domain, as we see demand by the millennials for accountability from democratic institutions.

In his book "*Technocracy and democracy are antithetical*" Professor Bobeau, strongly re-establishes the difference between the populist leader and an expert. He explains that if the expert becomes the protagonist of the society, it rules out the role of the ordinary citizenry, these citizens start blaming the technocrats or experts of causing all socio-economic depravities in society. He further elaborates on an emerging class of "*Expertocracy*", not similar to technocrats, who have started occupying the public domain alongside populist leaders to channelized the political sensibilities of the leaders into realistic strategies for the development of the country. This is systematically initiating a process of *dis-intermediation of experts* from across the board which has ramifications in a variety of areas including public policy. Mathematical analysis can explain economic policies of the good from bad, however, the thought experiences can ascertain their instrumentation adding to its unpopularity. Therefore, making policies on immigration, though economically sound for a growing economy unpopular. Similarly, the social safety nets professed under the Obama administration, which is important for the socio-economic sustainability of the masses, acted as counter-productive politically making him loose in the western constituencies.

As we know the "*Politics of confrontation*" is on the rise, which disregards the group of technocrats and their solutions, and puts them in loggerhead with the others in the eternal fight between economic policy and the socio-cultural policy-making processes. For instance, the "Theory of Economic Insecurity" reiterates that the way to solve problems for developing and developed countries are different. It bases its argument that economic insecurity leads to the rise of populism. However, it gets disproved like in the USA it was thought that people were voting for the "*status-quo*" problem. (*us versus them*) interlinked with the concept of "*white-supremism*" and unacceptability of emigration as opposed to the experts' predictions on voting against the economic depravity condition independently. This was clearly shown the shift in the voting patterns in 2016 in favor of Republican candidates like Donald Trump. Similarly, the populist lobbyist tried to mobilise people in the United Kingdom along the lines of educational disparities and demographic instability in contravention to the finance and public administration-centric lobbyists who raised predictions along the lines of trade, employment rates, and budgetary implications, during the Brexit debate.

The populist trends are rising in countries with strong economic growth performances, which is entirely opposed to the abovementioned "theory of economic insecurity", which is suggestive of the fact that populism trumps liberal democratic processes. The New York Times, in their analysis of Brazil's populist trends and regime contrarily re-established that "Populism is a by-product of economic successes", even though right-wing populism fails to improve the distribution of incomes worldwide. This also portrays the inefficiencies caused by the

The policy makers' reaction to populism has been varied. Over the course of recent developments, there have been three trends which are deterministic of their relationship with trends of populism across the world. *Firstly*, they have a go-with-the-flow attitude, consistently we see that policymakers within their respective institutions have initiated an astounding flexibility in the devaluation of principles and an increase in the amount of self-flagellation among people they serve. These policymakers believe that if people do not respect liberal democracy and its functioning then there is no point running governments on democratic principles, it is rather easier to run after the people's preferences. They no longer serve the interests of the rule of law and instead adhere to populist principles like hate-mongering. *Secondly*, there is a trend of assimilation, in part beneath the political turmoil, there have been

under-currents of transitions and replacements of executives by populist leader preferred personnel. This creates a class of officials whose sole purpose is to cater to the needs of the political agendas set forth by their respective regimes. Creating a dismemberment of the bureaucracy or permanent executive, who have been consistently working to uphold the long-standing institutions of governance. For instance, the concept of lateral entries initiated by the BJP-Modi Government in 2015-16, to infiltrate the ranks of the Indian Administrative Services. *Thirdly*, there was a slight move towards counter-reactionary pressurization by the bureaucracy. It's been observed by our political class and bureaucracy, that any form of counter-reactionary measure against the populist principles can turn dangerous. Our current society is deeply corrupt principally and has compromised on the ideal of liberal democracy. These imperfections in our system, cannot be reformed but instead requires a wave of new reflexivity from within the institutions and organizations.

CONCLUSION

With the rise of the populist regime and its implicative tendencies around the world, we need to understand that institutional delegitimization is on the rise. The third pillar of democracy, i.e. the executive, has steadily shown a dualistic reaction of reconciliation and antagonism alongside systematic changes in perception about populism. The case studies on the populism are a preliminary analysis of the political conditions which give rise to populist leaders and their regime, it hints at the tumultuous conditions which are brought from its inceptions like in cases of Central European, Asian and Latin American countries. The democratic institutions must live up to the expectations of the people they serve, including the illusioned fiefs of the administrative machinery. They should conform to institutional memory and continuance in the delivery of public goods and services for stabilizing the fears of people, by eliminating the permanent inertia. Additionally, creating accountability platforms that are decentralized in nature, for giving voice to the marginalized and "othered" groups, so that they feel safe in the realm of populism.

Reference:

- I. Anderson, B. (n.d.). *Imagined. Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.
- II. Brubaker, R. (2017). Why populism? *Theory and Society*, 46(5), 357–385. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-017-9301-7>
- III. Election 2015 - BBC News. (n.d.). Retrieved November 15, 2019, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/election/2015/results>
- IV. Friedman, U. (2018). What Is a Populist? - The Atlantic. Retrieved November 9, 2019, from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/02/what-is-populist-trump/516525/>
- V. Goemans, H. E., Gleditsch, K. S., Chiozza, G., Bueno De Mesquita, B., Fazal, T., Heger, L., ... Slantchev, B. (2009). SPECIAL DATA FEATURE Introducing Archigos: A Dataset of Political Leaders*, 46(2), 269–283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343308100719>
- VI. Lipset, S. M. (1960). Political man: the social bases of politics :: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/politicalmansoci00inlips>
- VII. Mudde, C. (2010). The populist radical right: A pathological normalcy. *West European Politics*, 33(6), 1167–1186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2010.508901>
- VIII. Policy-Making in an Age of Populism [Audio] by London School of Economics | Mixcloud. (n.d.). Retrieved November 9, 2019, from <https://www.mixcloud.com/lse/policy-making-in-an-age-of-populism-audio/>