

Special Committee 1

Addressing the implications of the
global rise of populism



Forum	Special Committee 1
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Student Officer:	Fede Everts
Position:	President of Special Committee

Introduction

In the last century, populism has swept across Europe, United States and Asia. Each day, populists grow in support and popularity through vague and general statements attacking current politicians, establishments and governments. Populists claim that our governments are corrupt and do not represent what is best for “the people”. However, populism is not a new term or ideology. Populism was present in Germany during the early 20th century, while simultaneously being present in countries such as Russia, United States, and even India.

Now, more than ever, populism is booming in Europe. This phenomenon can be credited to the significant influx of migrants, overall economic insecurity, increase in inequality: the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, the complexity in social constructs has increased, and collective frustration and anxiety. Ultimately, at the root of all populist movements there is a ‘delineation between normal fold and the elite’.

Definition of Key Terms

Populism

There are indeed various definitions for the term ‘populism’. There are many attempts and interpretations of this concept, and numerous attempts to determine what falls into this category. Influential writer and philosopher Cas Mudde outlines the theory as ‘a loose set of ideas that share three core features: anti-establishment, authoritarianism, and nativism’. Overall, populism is understood as a philosophy that stresses faith in the wisdom and virtue of ‘ordinary people’ over the so called ‘corrupt establishment’. Populism represents the resentment towards existing authorities (School, IESE Business.)

Populist



A populist is ‘a person, especially a politician, who strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups.’ A populist ‘characteristically displays authoritarian leanings, favoring the personal power exerted by strong and charismatic leadership which is thought to reflect the will of the people’. Examples of populists include: Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, Norbert Hoffer, Nigel Farage, and Geert Wilders.

Nationalism

According to the Cambridge dictionary, nationalism is defined as the ‘identification with one’s own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations’. Since the rise in populism, right wing politicians have been using nationalist views and feelings to gain support. Many right-wing populists hold strong nationalist views and ideologies and similarly promote ‘cultural and social homogeneity’.

Economic insecurity

Economic security or financial security is the condition of ‘having a stable income or other resources to support a standard of living now and in the foreseeable future’. Many supporters of populist views, are seen as ‘economic insecure’. These citizens search and seek for this security and populists promise growth by labeling current economic practices or institutions as ‘corrupt’.

Elections

Elections are defined as a ‘formal and organized by choice vote of a person for a political office or other position.’ It is essential to highlight the importance of elections in the global rise of populism.

General Overview

Although populism is not a new ideology, it slowly continues to rise and emerge in society throughout the last few centuries.

History of Populism

The term ‘populism’ first appeared in the early 20th century. The term originated as a form of ‘self-designation’ and was mainly used by members of the People’s Party in the United States. Around the same period, the Russian Empire contained a group which went



by the name 'Narodniki', which directly translated means populist. Then, by late 1920 the term was present in the French language, being used to describe writers showing sympathy towards 'ordinary people'. While the term began as a 'self-designation', confusion surrounded the term and when it was applicable to entities, seeing as rarely political figures openly described themselves as a populist. Political scientists Margaret Canovan highlights "there has been no self-conscious international populist movement which might have attempted to control or limit the term's reference, and as a result those who have used it have been able to attach it a wide variety of meanings".

Reasons for global rise of populism

While the current rise of populism can be credited to many reasons, there are 3 main competing accounts. Firstly, editor of magazine "Foreign Policy", Moises Naim, argues that populism is beginning to be taken seriously, while it maintains no intellectual coherence. Naim argues that populism is merely a rhetorical tactic that blames the problems of the ordinary person on the existing 'corrupt' establishments to continue to gain power and hold on to it. Naim notes "the fact is that populism is not an ideology. Instead, it's a strategy to obtain and retain power. It has been around for centuries, recently appearing to resurface in full force, propelled by the digital revolution, precarious economies, and the threatening insecurity of what lies ahead". (Naim) Moreover, Naim highlights that populism 'thrives on conspiracy' by finding enemies and scapegoats to blame all current problems on.

Secondly, Tony Giddens proposes a second, more significant, reason for the rise in populism. Giddens views populism as a means to understand and search meaning in our ever-changing world. Furthermore, Giddens argues that people see populists as the answer to the problems constantly appearing and a sense of control in our complex world. In this case, Giddens highlights that rapid globalization and economic insecurity play a role in the attraction to populists. Lastly, Arvind Subramanian argues that modern populism is 'less the result of an identity crisis as such' and more a result of "hyperglobalisation". Subramanian argues that this modern version of globalization truly took off in the 1990s and continued to accelerate thereafter until late 2008. At that point, wealth began to grow as the world GDP went up, poverty was reduced and overall human welfare increased. However, the majority of this wealth became concentrated in the hands of the few, the previously wealthy. Now, the middle-class income has stagnated while the working class was left jobless and in search for help and answers.

Does populism pose a threat to globalization?



This is a very significant question as it is important to understand and assess the effects of populism on the rapid globalization around the world. When analyzing the facts when measuring indicators such as: cross-border financial flows, international tourism, and foreign direct investment, there seems to be not alterations or massive changes in the rate of globalization. The world is not 'de-globalizing' nor will it begin to do so.

Major Parties Involved

United States of America

In 2016, current United States President, Donald Trump, used the popular slogan of "Make America Great Again", to win one of the most unpredictable elections in history. The elite real-estate agent ran for president with the promise of solving America's pressing economic issues and make life easier for the ordinary citizen. By using the slogan, "Make America Great Again", Trump sought to bring justice to the citizens by undoing any agreements that he felt has damaged the growth of his nation. Trump further sought to "curb" immigration and take an aggressive stance against other nations and organizations, such as the United Nations.

United Kingdom (UK)

Similar to the United States, populism is on the rise in the United Kingdom. According to the new Coface Political Risk Index which was published in 2017, the United Kingdom is the most populist nation in Europe with a score of 73%. The rise in populism has been most evident in the last 5 years within the UK with the completely unexpected win for the leave campaign, also known as "Brexit". Regardless of the threat of economic insecurity, large banks and companies vacating the UK, British politicians continued with the campaign to leave the European Union.

France

According to the new Coface Political Risk Index which was published in 2017, France is the second most populist country in Europe with a score of 70%. Political scientists believe that this increase of populism can be credited to the "discourse about public order and national identity as well as distrust of multiculturalism". Moreover, since Trump's election last year, political scientists argue that France's elections and government will be a test to confirm whether or not Trump's victory will boost an "anti-immigration rhetoric, xenophobia and populist parties in Europe".



India

In the last few centuries, India has been a melting pot of various types of populism. For instance, during the 1960s, India had a rise of peasant populism, an idea that aimed to rid class differentiation to promote the divide between the rural and urban areas. In May 2014, Narendra Modi, a member of the right leaning populist Hindu movement “*Bharatiya Janata Party*” inspired by fascists and Nazis, was elected Prime Minister. Modi’s rise can be attributed to immigration problems, demonizing minorities and various tactics to gain popularity. Now, Modi was re-elected for a second term during the 2019 elections, beating the congress party in India.

Philippines

In 2016, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte won the election. Many suspected that Duterte was unlikely to win at the beginning as he was a direct parallel of Donald Trump. To gain support and influence, Duterte used social media to appeal to urban and middle-class voters.

Hungary

In the 1990s, Viktor Orbán founded a new party, *Fidesz*, which openly support democratic elections, however, Orbán quickly shifted from a liberal politician to a right-wing populist. Since 2010, the right-wing populist style has begun to run the country. Political Scientists argue that this increase in populism can be credited to the basic decline of the “master narrative of the transition period”. While Hungary aimed to catch up to the developing and fast-growing West, it lacked the necessary materials. Moreover, Orbán’s radical stance on refugees, anti-immigration, anti-elitism has helped him remain power in 2010.

Timeline of Key Events

Major events in the global rise of populism:

Date	Description of event
	First Populist Party formed in the United States.
1892-1908	Right Wing Populist Austrian Freedom Party (FPO) founded and formed.



1955	
1990s	The first inflow of asylum seekers in Europe, more specifically Germany, brings forward feelings of xenophobia resulting in the development of far-right populist parties.
1990s	The 1990s saw some moderate conservative populism with the presidential campaigns of Ross Perot winning 18.9 percent of the popular vote in 1992 and 8.4 percent in 1996.
3 September 1993	In the United Kingdom, the Independent Party was formed. Within the Austrian elections, the FPÖ was the second largest party and received more votes, emphasizing a growth in populist views.
1999	During the 2000s, there was biggest burst of populism in the 21 st century.
2000s	French Populist, Jean Marine Le Pen, of the FN, gets to the second round of the French elections for the first time ever.
2002	
2016	Former senator, Bernie Sanders, launched an unexpectedly vigorous challenge with a platform of tackling economic inequality, though he ultimately lost.
2016	Real estate developer, Donald Trump, won the presidency using the most vigorous populist platform in years.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Although there have not been any United Nations resolutions released or written about the rise of populism, Secretary General, António Guterres, said “we are increasingly seeing the perverse phenomenon of populism and extremism feeding off each other in a frenzy of growing racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hatred and other forms of intolerance”. Guterres highlights that while the UN has not taken an immediate response or stance, the growth of populism is slowly increasing and becoming more visible and noticeable in our societies.



Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

As witnessed in the last century, populism is not likely to disappear anytime soon. In the past, democrats, businesses and government officials have tried to fight off populist views or attack with simply maintaining similar policies and not listening to the complaints of the people. Similarly, the European Union tried to fight the populist government by placing sanctions, such as in 2000, when the Austrian government began to include the right populist Freedom Party. This policy was known as ostracism, where the sanctions aimed to 'limit political and diplomatic contacts with the country'. However, this policy quickly failed as many populist parties have recently joined the government. After this, the EU has continued to employ methods of isolation, constantly resulting in failure and the continued growth of populism.

Possible Solutions

As mentioned earlier, the global rise in populism is not affecting the rate or success of globalization, however, this problem should we attacked. In populism, populists thrive when they are able to blend both types of resentment 'cultural and economic' in order to create a sense of tension or corruption. Thus, the support populists like Donald Trump or Marie Le Pen is rooted in the perception of a critical threat to one's status. In order for democratic politicians and parties to win back votes, the parties must simply "stop reacting to the analyses and solutions offered by the right-wing populists, and regain the initiative in the public debate" (Mudde). For this to work, democrats will need to come with more attractive ideas and convincing solutions to the problems people and voters are confronted with. Democrats must realize that previous systems will no longer work. Moreover, before every election, citizens must be informed of the true intentions of politicians and political parties. Such measures can be done through pamphlets, radio broadcasts, commercials or documents posted online to encourage people to be educated before each election.

In order to truly tackle and address the implications of the global rise of populism, one must analyze the reasons for why populism is increasing in the first place. Firstly, populism has risen due to the feelings of social injustice and resentment. Governments must work on giving their citizens the feeling of greater involvement and contribution to overall welfare. Populists thrive when they can attack existing establishments to instill fear and insecurity within ordinary citizens, and if politicians are able to control this, populism growth would decrease. Furthermore, populists take advantage of crises such as immigration to further



instill fear and insecurity ultimately leading to the notion that migration is causing issues and problems within the nation. In general, governments and companies need to increase the transparency between them and their citizens and consumers.

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