

Journal of Political Science

(A Peer-Reviewed, Open Access Journal; JPPS Star Ranked and Indexed in NepJOL)

ISSN 2362-1273 (Print); ISSN 2773-8132 (Online)

Volume 25, February 2025

<http://ejournals.pncampus.edu.np/ejournals/jps/>

Published by

Department of Political Science, Prithvi Narayan Campus, TU, Pokhara, Nepal

Email: polsc@pncampus.edu.np; URL: www.pncampus.edu.np

The Populist Surge: Analyzing its Global Dimensions and Implications for Democratic Governance

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/jps.v25i1.75780>

Submitted 1 Nov. 2024; Reviewed 12 Dec. 2024; Accepted 9 Dec. 2024; Published 15 Feb. 2025

Abstract

Populism is an ideology that reshapes society into a binary of "pure people" and "corrupt elite," reshaping the relationship between the masses and political elites. This has led to the rise of populist parties, which have challenged democracy. This paper aims to understand the operational dynamics of populism in international politics and explore its deep impacts on democracies globally. The study uses populism as an independent variable and sub-variables like division of people, use of social media, and threat to democracy as dependent variables. Data was collected from a Google survey among 123 respondents from various ages, professions, regions, and genders. The results reveal a disturbing global shift towards populist politics, its erosive effects on democratic norms, the rise of authoritarian impulses, and its increasingly prevalent threat to democracy. The rise of populism can be prevented by regulating media, implementing effective redistribution policies, and ensuring deliberative democracy. Mainstream political actors should also reduce political polarization and shape people's perceptions with democratic norms to combat populism.

Keywords: Authoritarianism, developing democracy, hate politics, political ideology, populism

Introduction

The 20th century was a period of global advancement for democracy, which succeeded in expanding rights and ending colonialism in various parts of the world. However, in the 21st century, there has been a marked decline in public trust toward traditional political parties and democratic institutions, (Freedom House, 2023) and a deterioration of democracy (Abramowitz, 2018) alongside the rise of anti-political sentiments and an anti-establishment ethos, frequently expressed through the rhetoric of charismatic leaders who claim to

represent the interests of ordinary citizens due to the rise of populists.

Historically, the term "populist" was associated with the People's Party in the United States during the 19th century (Allcock, 1971). According to Urbanati (2013), populism makes a distinction between 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite' (Mudde & Rovira, 2017). It is similar to demagoguery which gains popularity by exploiting the will of the crowd, arousing people against elite groups, and political opportunism. To Urbanati, (2013). Populism is a strategy to acquire power quickly, without waiting for increasing popularity through times and electoral competitions, keeps a hostile character to the principles of liberalism and is parasitical to democracy. According to, Berman, (2019) they often represent self-interest and alienation from the average citizen and are characterized by sentiments opposing traditional political structures and an anti-establishment orientation (Glaser, 2018).

Populism, thus, is a strategy to gain power quickly, without waiting for increasing popularity through times and electoral competitions. Populism keeps a hostile character to the principles of liberalism and is parasitical to democracy (Urbanati, 2013). Nils Karlson mentions three major characteristics of populism. First, the populist seeks unserious and illogical policies to deal with complex socio-economic issues. Second, polarizing society with the political strategies of distinct rhetoric. Third, populism focuses on an autocratic institutional approach (Karlson, 2024). They exist appear in left-wing and right-wing political environments (Milner & Judkins, 2004).

Similarly, Bram Spruyt, Gil Keppens and Filip Van Droogenbroeck mention that populism comprises the existence of two similar groups 'the people' portrayed as virtuous and 'the established elite' portrayed as denigrated which are in hostile relationship to each other and seeks popular sovereignty to gain power (Spruyt, Keppens & Van Droogenbroeck, 2016). Populists are people-centric and look for popular support to raise complex socio-economic problems and defame the elites for not being able to solve the people's problems. The populist with the few and several charismatic leaderships seeks to impose the will of the people for their political victory. Currently, populist parties exist around twenty-seven European states, the voting the populists is also observed to increase around the world, and populists are adopting right-wing radicalization resulting in populism as a threat to democracy globally (Otto, 2022).

As a strategy, populism seeks to gain power rapidly, often circumventing the traditional electoral processes that require gradual popularity building. It is fundamentally antagonistic to liberal democratic principles, posing risks to democratic structures. Nils Karlson identifies three key features of populism: it often presents irrational solutions to socio-economic issues, employs divisive rhetoric to split society, and is associated with a tendency toward autocratic governance. The relationship between these two groups is contentious, with populism promoting popular sovereignty as a means to gain power (Karlson, 2024). Spruyt et al. (2016) highlight the contrast between "the people" and "the established elite," with the former often depicted as virtuous and the latter as corrupt or ineffective. This antagonistic relationship is central to populist ideology, which promotes popular sovereignty as a means to power.

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Economic insecurity, the growing gap between haves and halves, regional inequalities and the future fears of social and economic decline have degraded the quality of democracy and helped to raise populism in the present (Nam, 2024). The populist government hinders economic growth and weakens the democratic institutions of the nation. The mainstream political parties should prevent the rise of populism by ensuring deliberative democracy, introducing effective redistribution policies and regulating digital platforms, especially social media (Guriev, 2024).

In recent decades, populist parties and movements have swept across the world, and are associated with charismatic leaders who mobilize the citizens or mass. Muller in his book 'Democracy Rules' keeps Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Polish political leader Kaczynski, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former US president Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro in one political family who shared a common strategy of the art of governance that is authoritarian-populist (Muller, 2021). The rise of populism has led to a decline in public support and trust in traditional political parties and their leaders leading to a threat to democratic institutions. They emerge due to "growing dissatisfaction with democracy" (Berman, 2019).

According to a report by the 'Tony Blair Institute of Global Change' (2018) has identified that 46 populist leaders and political parties held executive power between 1990 and 2018 in 33 different countries, which was a time of fivefold increment. The Institute also claims that populism was increased primarily in developing democracies, especially in Latin America, Eastern and Central Europe and Asia (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2018). The 2020 report of IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Help) also shows that the number of populist parties and politicians has increased because of a decline in support for mainstream political parties, weakening nation-state policy/autonomy, societal change, economic and cultural globalization, and a polarized digital public sphere (IDEA,2020).

In the twenty-first century, liberal democracy is challenged by the rise of populism because of democratic erosion and democratic pluralism has provided a favorable environment for the rise of populism (Mirza & Azhar, 2022). The change in leadership and political system led to erosion in pluralism and tolerance in society, which are the beauty of democracy for health democracy, degradation of the quality of democracy. Populism has been posing a challenge to democratic institutions and governance, also devaluing democratic norms and practices and finally threatening democracy globally. Hence, this paper aims to understand the perception of academicians of different sectors, the root cause of the rise of populism and suggests ways to strengthen democracy.

Methods

The main objective of the study is to understand the perceptions of the people and to find out the root cause of the global rise of populism, the challenges posed to democracy by the

rise of populism, and the measures to prevent the rise of populism for the broad implication of democratic governance. For this purpose, the primary data was collected through a Google survey questionnaire using a random sampling method for three weeks.

A survey was conducted among 123 respondents, primarily political science students at Ratna Rajya Campus and Tribhuvan University, focusing on various ages, professions, regions and genders. The sample distribution of the respondents based on age, gender, education and residing provinces illustrates a greater representation. A survey involved 99 males and 24 females, with 78 master's degree graduates and 24 MPhil students, with 30 respondents from Bagmati province and 3 from India. The secondary data are collected through various related literature on populism, especially books, news, and journal articles.

Literature Review

There is a debate among scholars about whether populism represents a genuine expression of democratic will or a damaging force that subverts democratic norms. The main objective of this section is to discuss the debate among scholars.

Kaltwasser (2012) suggests that populism can address democratic issues by exposing corruption, challenging elites, and increasing political engagement by mobilizing disengaged citizens. Doyle, Longo, & Pin A. (2019) similar view argue they provide valuable insights into the structural issues of liberal democracy. They tackle democratic issues by exposing corruption, challenging elites, and increasing political engagement by mobilizing disengaged citizens, while also addressing populace concerns and challenging established elites. However, it is the nature of populism that determines whether it is a threat or a corrective.

Oliver Schmidtke views that populists primarily focus on 'sovereign people' and portray themselves as guardian to restore the will of the people. Populist always proclaims the support of the silent majority and represents the real will of the general people. Populist adopts people-centric ideas, claim the representation of the voice of the people, and challenge democracy to bring political change. Populist raises the issue of the 'will of people' very strongly and challenge democracy in the name of sovereignty (Schmidtke, 2023). Galston (2018) argues that populism accepts popular sovereignty and majority rule while rejecting constitutionalism and individual protections (Cole & Schofer, 2023).

Les Green opines that populism highly focuses on the will of the people as a legitimate political means. Populists believe that the will of the people should be respected and political elites should be responsible towards the people. Populist raises the voice of the people as a political means. Populist strongly believes that people are sovereign and directed to control the people (Green, 2018).

Patrick Liddiard views that mainstream political parties always try to prevent the rise of new parties through the exploitation of media and financial election campaigns. The existing political parties are found less responsive towards the will of the people. Populists claim more representative democracy, especially focusing on the will of common people rather than focusing on the interest of elites. Populists can re-politicize politics focusing on the will of the people. However, populists lack the traits required for politics and good governance (Liddiard, 2019). Jan-Werner Müller in his book 'What is populism?' views that the populist rejects pluralism and claims that only the populist represents the people and their will.

Cas Mudde states that populism has become an important political phenomenon in Europe. Populism is a thin-centered ideology that divides people into 'the pure' and 'the corrupt'.

Populist always claims the representation of the pure people. The hegemony of neoliberalism left limited political options and closed the political space that motivated populism to rise as an illiberal democratic response to liberal democracy. Populist political parties secure the political space and pose a threat to existing mainstream political parties in the election process (Mudde, 2021).

Yves Meny and Yves Surel considered populism as a catchword mostly used in media to define neonatal social as well as political movements that particularly challenge the existing democratic values (Yves & Yves, 2002). Populism is a political ideology that opposes elites, divides society into "pure people" and "corrupt elites," emphasizes national identity, culture, and sovereignty, and is led by charismatic leaders (Vittori, 2021).

Larry Diamond at the Stanford University conference on global populism dated 3rd to 4th November 2017 acknowledged anti-elitist, anti-institutionalist, plebiscitary and majoritarian as key essence of populism. He also tried to differentiate good populism and bad populism. Populists mobilize socially and economically marginalized populations. The anti-pluralist (rejects democratic pluralism), illiberal (who restricts the freedom of the people) and nativist (marginalizing immigrants) populists are considered a threat to democracy. He discussed the twelve-step programs of autocrats and linked the geo-political context to populism. From the geo-political perspective, populism will be a threat to democracy when another powerful form of political system exists (Diamond, 2017).

Kurt Weyland states personalistic plebiscitarian leadership helps to upsurge populism. He considered populism as a political strategy with rapid mutations showing the adaptability to achieve success in the electoral process. Therefore, populism is temporary. The inherent essences of populism; personalistic and plebiscitarian pose a threat to democracy. However, the probability of democracy being replaced by competitive authoritarianism seems not higher. The threat of populism to democracy is limited (Weyland, 2024). Dr. Saskia P. Ruth-Lovell & Sandra Grahn, they too argue that populists, who claim to represent the will of the people, misuse the electoral system and advocate suspicion of traditional elites,

According to the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (2018) populist governance whether right or left, populism is a threat to the integrity of the political system. The report shows the decline in press freedom, and civil and political rights under the rule of populist leaders. Populism is considered a danger to democracy (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2018). Hence, the study stresses the urgent need to address the challenges posed by populists to safeguard democratic values.

Populism in Europe, especially in Hungary, Poland, and Italy, poses a substantial threat to both the rule of law and democratic governance (Bugarič and Kuhelj, 2018) and the implemented policies that contradict the fundamental principles of democracy, as noted by Albertazzi and Mueller (2013). Populism undermines democracy (Schäfer and Zürn, 2024) and challenges its quality and effectiveness (Schmidtke, 2023).

To reduce populism Taylor & Nietzsche (2020) suggested minimizing political polarization and shaping public perceptions with democratic norms. Cas Mudde (2018) proposes four strategies to counter populism strengthening inclusive political parties, equal treatment for all citizens, fact-based social media regulation, and stakeholder participation in decision-making, aiming to promote hate-free debates and deliberative initiatives. To prevent populism, democracy must be strengthened through institutional reinforcement, civic engagement, addressing populism's root causes, rule of law reform, electoral reform, and maintaining diversity (Fournier, 2019; Waroi, Riyanta, & Rustam, 2024; Gerim, 2018).

The reviewed literature shows that populism is primarily people-centric which divides the

people for their own vested political interest. Populists claim themselves as only the representatives of the will of the people and promote people's participation in the political process. Populism is temporary. Populism is also taken as a limited threat to democracy. While populist leaders are in power there will be negative effects on various models of democracy, therefore populism is considered as a threat to democracy. Populism is taken as an independent variable and democracy as the dependent variable.

Data Presentation and Discussion

Perceptions of Academicians

The financial crisis in Europe has increased the frustration of the people, which was grabbed by the new political parties and leaders as their attractive agenda. Globalization and technological advancement tend to the massive use of social media, which has raised populism as a global phenomenon (Tabellini, 2019). The following table shows that populism has been trending globally.

Figure 1

Response to the Global Trending of Populism

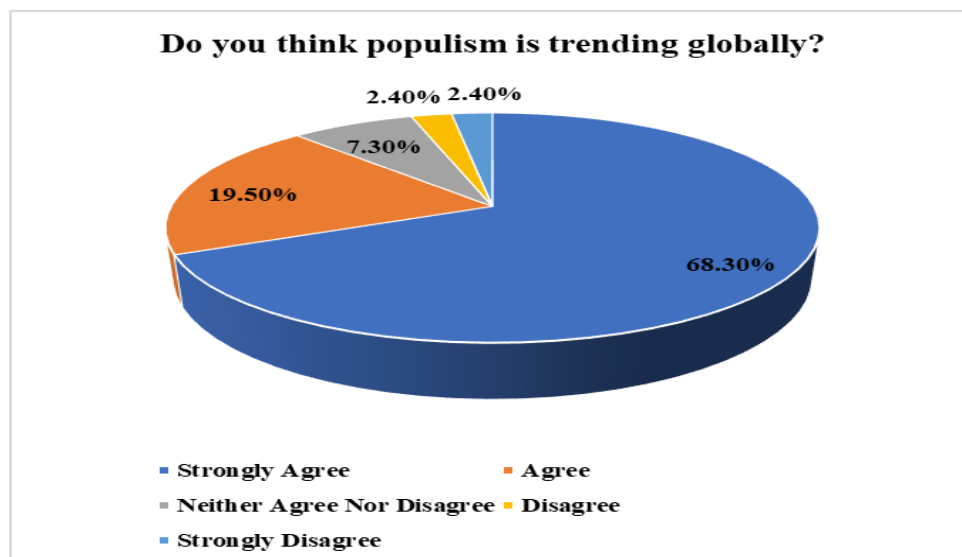


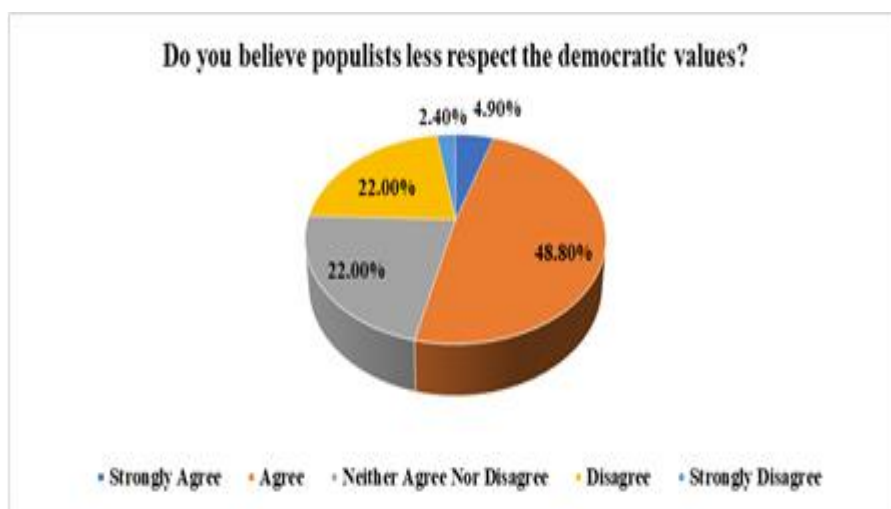
Figure 1 shows the responses of the respondents regarding the global trend of populism. 68.3% of the respondents agree on the global trending of populism whereas 19.5% of the respondents strongly agree. The 7.3% of respondents neither agree nor disagree on the rise of populism. Another 2.4% of respondents disagree, and the remaining 2.4% of respondents strongly disagree with the trending of populism globally. The survey also supports the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change Report 2018 that the number of populists has increased five-fold from 1990 to 2018 across the world. Donald Trump, Narendra Modi, Marine Le Pen, and Viktor Orban also adopted a populist strategy. The survey shows that populism has been trending globally.

Respect for Democratic Values

Sheri Berman views that populism devalues and ignores the democratic values of liberal democracy (Berman, 2021). Populists also challenge the principles of political pluralism. Populist accepts majoritarianism and popular sovereignty but is doubtful towards individualism, liberalism and constitutionalism (Galston, 2018).

Figure 2

Response with Less Respect to Democratic Values



Source: Google Survey, 2024

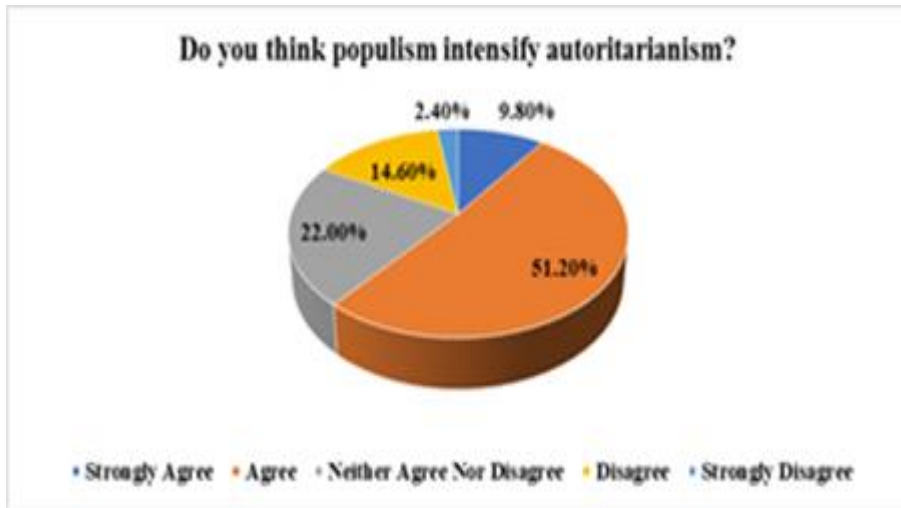
Figure 2 shows the response regarding populist's respect to democratic values. 48.8% of respondents believe that populists less respect democratic values, whereas 22% of the respondents show their disagreement with the respect of democratic values of populists. Another 22% neither agree nor disagree on the issue, whereas 2.4% of respondents strongly disagree and the remaining 4.9% strongly agree on populist respect to democratic values. The survey shows populists are less respectful to democratic values which are likely to constrain liberal and individual rights. Therefore, the study also strengthens Galston's views that populists accept majoritarianism and popular sovereignty but are doubtful about individualism, liberalism and constitutionalism.

Populism Intensifies Authoritarianism

Tom G. Palmer mentions the rise of Hugo Chávez, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Donald Trump as a terrifying rise of authoritarian populism (Palmer, 2019). In the American context, the degradation of the trust in political institutions, government and leaders, and authoritarian populism is increasing, which declines the strength of American democracy (Rohac, Kennedy, & Singh, 2018).

Figure 3

Response to Populism Intensifies Authoritarianism



Source: Google Survey, 2024

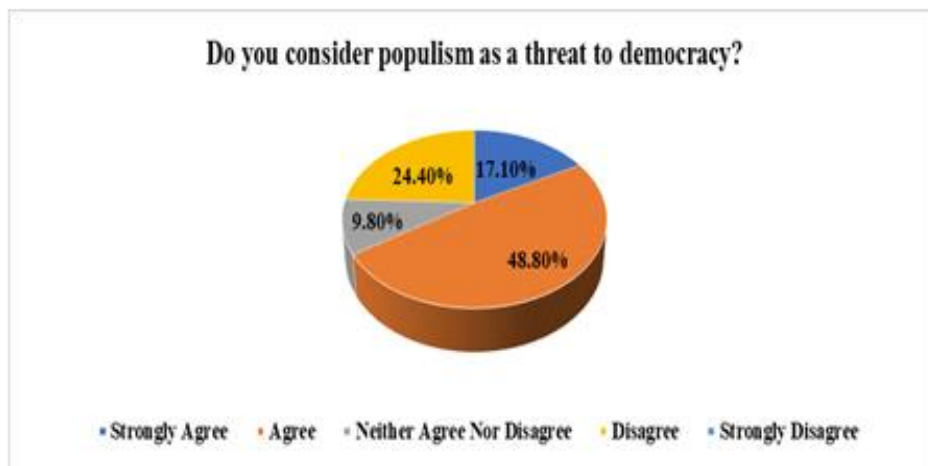
Figure 3 shows the response to whether populism intensifies authoritarianism or not. 51.2% of respondents view that populism intensifies authoritarianism and 9.8% strongly agree with that. 22% of respondents neither agree nor disagree whether populism intensifies authoritarianism or not. The survey verifies that populism intensifies authoritarianism. Populists on the base of majoritarianism and mass mobilization grab political opportunities, paralyze political institutions, and target political oppositions undemocratically which intensifies authoritarianism.

Populism Threats Democracy

In comparison to non-populist leaders, populist governments diminish democracy and individual liberties of the populist government (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral, 2020). Populist leaders are found less accountable than non-populist leaders when they hold the executive offices. Similarly, populists also undermine the institutional checks and balances which threatens democracy (Liddiard, 2019)

Figure 4

Response to Populism Threats Democracy



Source: Google Survey, 2024

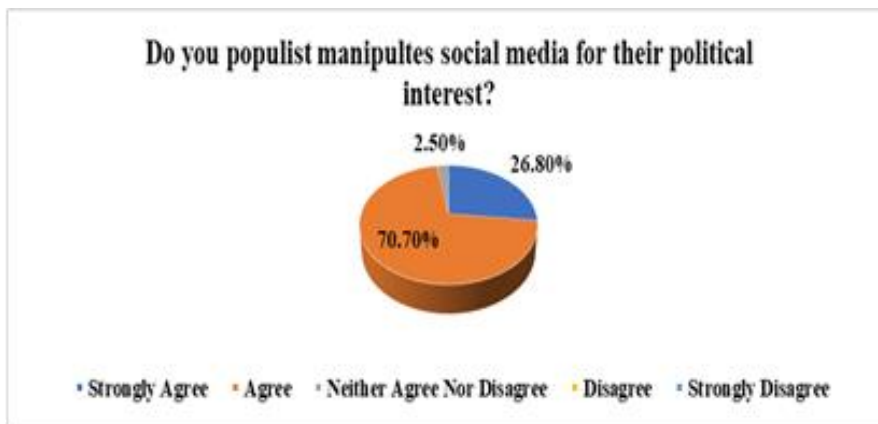
Figure 4 shows the response to whether populism threatens democracy or not. 48.8% of respondents agree on populism's threats to democracy and 17.1% of respondents strongly agree with it. Whereas, 24.4% disagree that populism threatens democracy and 9.8% of respondents neither agree nor disagree on this issue. The study also strengthens the report of 2020 by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral that populists undermine democracy. It also supports Patrick Liddiard's views that populism threatens democracy. The study proves that populism threatens democracy.

Populist Manipulates Social Media

Social media plays an important role in shaping the political perception of the people. It proliferates unfiltered political messages in unprofessional ways. The facts and truths are overlooked and unchecked on social media. The political parties have identified the power of social media and used it as their tool in their political campaigns, which has converted social media into a key ally of populists and crime partners (Jacob, 2024).

Figure 5

Response to Populist Manipulates Social Media



Source: Google Survey, 2024

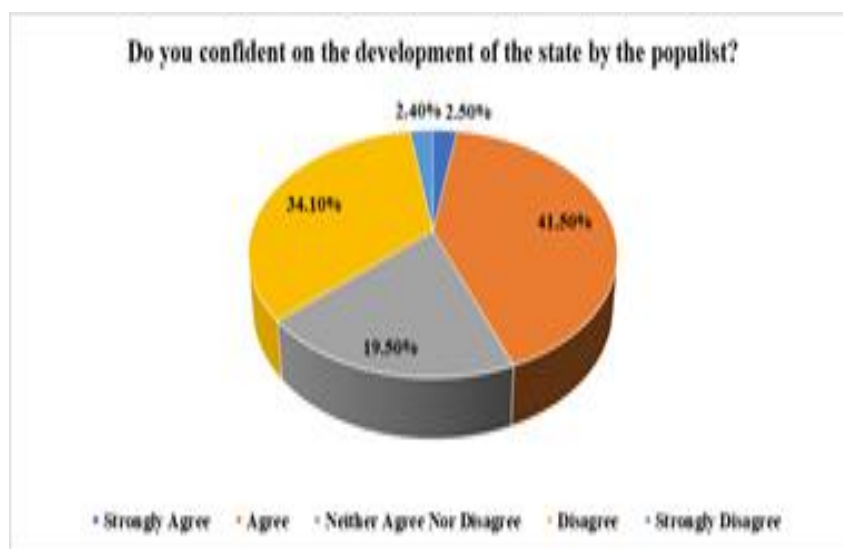
As Figure 5 shows, the response to populism manipulates media. 70.7% of respondents agree and 26.8% strongly agree that populist manipulates media (print, social and broadcast) for their political gains. The reviewed literature also shows that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, and former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro exploited the media, including social media unethically for their vested political interests. The study shows that populist manipulates media as a strategic means of communication to gain political opportunities.

Development of The State by The Populist

The populists especially focus on development during the election campaign to gain political opportunities and it is necessary to evaluate the delivery of the populists regarding the development of the state (Baru, 2023). Populism challenges the development policy of the World Bank because it doesn't respect the basic values (Gauri, 2017).

Figure 6

Response to The Development of The State by The Populist



Source: Google Survey, 2024

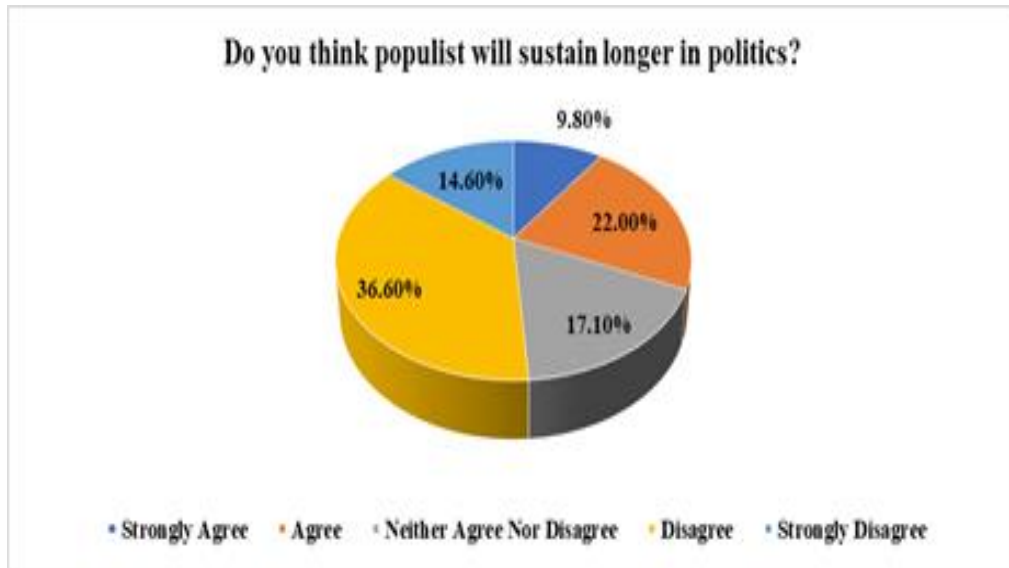
Figure 6 illustrates public opinion concerning the development of the state under populist leadership. According to the survey, 41.5% of respondents believe that populists positively contribute to state development, while 34.1% disagree with this notion. 19.5% of respondents expressed neutrality, showing that they neither agree nor disagree. The literature suggests that populists should be evaluated based on the developmental agendas they promised during elections. However, the survey reveals a divided perspective among respondents regarding the effectiveness of populist governance in promoting state development.

Populists Are Less Sustainable in Politics

The US President Donald Trump was defeated in the presidential election in 2019 while he was running for his consecutive second term. However, Donald Trump was reelected in 2024 as US president with a populist agenda. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi enjoyed the full two terms of his Prime Ministership, whereas his party failed to achieve a clear majority in the 2024 election.

Figure 7

Response to Populist Sustainment in Politics



Source: Google Survey, 2024

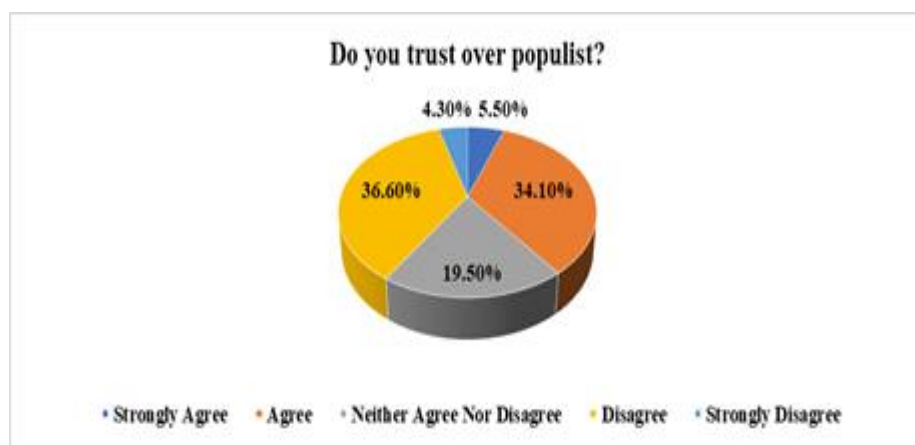
Figure 7 shows the sustainability of the populists in politics. 36.6% of respondents disagree 14.6% of respondents strongly disagree on the sustainability of the populist in politics and 22% of respondents agree on the populist's sustainability in politics. 17.1% of respondents neither agree nor disagree and 9.8% of respondents strongly agree with the sustainability of the populists in politics. The uneven rise and fall of the populists are observed in the global politics. The survey shows populists are less sustainable than other mainstream political leaders in the politics.

Trust Over Populist

The trust of the citizens towards their political leaders is the most essential element in democracy. It is observed that the populist leaders enjoyed the trust of the people initially and they are losing the trust of the citizens gradually. The Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP) emerged as a populist political party in Nepal, which won 20 seats in a House of Representatives in 2022 and 1 seat in a by-election in Tanahu 1 in 2023. However, RSP lost the by-election of Ilam-2 and its candidate failed to secure a minimum of 10% votes and lost its security deposit as well.

Figure 8

Response to Trust Over Populist



Source: Google Survey, 2024

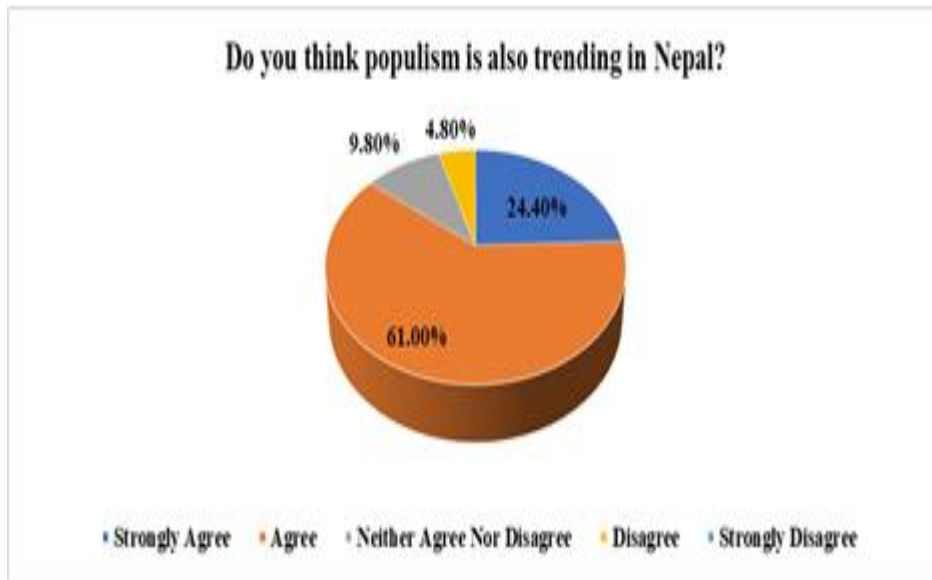
Figure 8 shows the response to trust over populists. 36.6% of respondents do not trust populists and 4.3% of respondents show their disagreement on the trust over populists. Whereas 34.1% of respondents show their trust in populists and 19.5% of respondents neither agree nor disagree on the issue. The survey shows respondents are divided on the trust over the populist. Therefore, it is observed that populists enjoy the trust of the people at the beginning of their political agendas, and also lose popular support quickly.

Populism in Nepal

The Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP), led by Rabi Lamichhane, has become the fourth largest party in Nepal's parliament, holding 21 seats out of 275 and joining the coalition government led by Prachanda, with its mandate to act as a strong opposition. The RSP's eagerness to join the government shows that populist parties often prioritize political opportunities over the people's issues.

Figure 9

Response to Populism in Nepal



Source: Google Survey 2024

Figure 9 shows the response to populism in Nepal. 61% of respondents agree and 24.4% strongly agree with the trend of populism in Nepal. 9.8% of respondents neither agree nor disagree, whereas 4.9% do not agree on trending populism in Nepal. The newly formed political party RSP and the non-political actors are introduced with their populist agenda in the politics of Nepal. The survey clearly shows that populism is also trending in Nepal.

The respondents during the survey viewed that populism manipulates social media, divides people and weakens democratic institutions. It proves that the rise of populism diminishes democratic norms and values and follows the path of authoritarianism, which is a direct threat to democracy. Therefore, the rise of populism has adverse implications for democracy.

Inherent Ingredients of Populism

Populism, an ancient political phenomenon, has gained global prominence in recent years. Its core components are consistent, making understanding its core components crucial for contemporary politics. Populism is less about specific policies and more about a particular mode of political engagement, framing the world with anxieties and aspirations. Key inherent ingredients are as follows;

Division of people

The most common ingredient of populism is the division of people into two distinct categories. The populists divide the people into pure/common people and corrupt/dominant elites. Donald Trump, former President of the USA, mentioned illegal immigrants as animals in his speech during election campaigns in Michigan in April 2024 (Nathan, Gram, & Tim, 2024). Formerly, Trump also used to mention the Americans as a pure people and immigrants as a threat. It divided American society severely into immigrants and Americans and whites and non-whites to some extent. Similarly, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

and his party BJP (Bhartiya Janata Party) strongly adopted Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) which has polarized Indian people threatening minority Muslims and other communities (Krutika & Sheikh, 2024). French far-right political leader Marnie Le Pen and her party believed in the several categories of French people and people are especially categorized into French origin and French of foreign origin (Lesueur, 2024). In Nepal, the Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP) was established just five months before the election by popular TV anchor Rabi Lamichhane highlighted the ‘No Not Again’ campaign targeting elderly political leaders and polarized Nepali people into deprived youth and corrupt old leaders (Niazi, 2023). Analyzing the statements of the political leaders, it is proved that populist leaders create division among the people for their vested political ambitions.

Use of media

The dissemination of information with news, opinions, and views by the media to the people plays a significant role in shaping the mindset and perception of the people. The study has identified that populists excessively use social, print and broadcast media to influence and exploit people and grab political opportunities. Ravish Kumar, a senior Indian Journalist called Godi media (Lapdog media) for the unethical exploitation of the media by the BJP government led by PM Narendra Modi (Ayyub, 2020). Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, a former comedian who acted as president on the TV show ‘Servant of the People’ also exploited media during the election campaign by nonstop replaying the show before the day of the election while there was an official ban on political advertising (Muller, 2021). Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro had 5.2 million Facebook followers, which made his presence strong and influential in people (Wallenfeldt, 2024). Nepali populist leader Rabi Lamichhane is followed by 656 thousand people on Facebook and 3.8 thousand people on Instagram. Similarly, the Mayor of Kathmandu metropolitan city Balendra Shana (aka Balen), another populist leader of Nepal has 2.5 million followers in Facebook and won the local level election by launching an excessive campaign on social media using media groups like Routine of Nepal Banda and Men’s Room Reloaded (Paudel, 2022). The study proves that social media and other forms of media are effectively used for the fulfilment of populist political agendas.

Political opportunity

The commonality which is found in populism is the political opportunity. The populists are strongly targeting a political victory and gaining power. If the populists are holding power, then they aim for its expansion. PM Narendra Modi has assumed the office of prime minister for the consecutive third term and has not completed his successor as well. The Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP) led by populist leader Rabi Lamichhane, became the fourth largest party in the parliament of Nepal with 21 seats out of 275 and joined the coalition government led by Prachanda (Nepali Times, 2023). However, the mandate of the people to RSP is to act in strong opposition in the parliament. The outset of the RSP from the government and the party’s hurriedness to join the government again proves that populist seeks political opportunities rather than the people’s issues. Donald Trump, Viktor Orbán, Narendra Modi, Jair Bolsonaro, Janez Janša, Rodrigo Duterte, Kaczynski, and Rabi Lamichhane enjoyed executive power with populist ideology. The study shows that populist

leaders are always destined to gain political power and rule the people.

Hate politics

Hate politics is also found common in populism. The populist leaders are targeting their opponent political leaders with hateful words and slogans. Jair Bolsonaro's response to the accusation of a female member was very intolerable (Wallenfeldt, 2024). Donald Trump said, "Unstable Hillary Clinton lacks the judgment, temperament and moral character to lead this country—and I believe that so strongly" (Diamond, 2016). A petition case was filed in the Supreme Court of Nepal against the mayor Balen Shah after he said of the refusal of Patan's High Court order to allow Indian movies in Kathmandu city (Online Khabar, 2023). Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippine President, once called US President Barack Obama a 'son of a whore' (BBC News, 2016). It shows that the populists use hateful words and slogans against their opponents and devalue political culture.

Mix character

The ideational approach observes populism is combined with other ideologies like consumerism, socialism, capitalism, liberalism, and nationalism (Huber, Jankowski, & June 2022). Professor Dani Flic mentions that the division of people into pure people and corrupt elite does not explain populism. Populism has wide complexity, relatively 'thin' ideology focuses on the mass mobilization against the establishment (Flic, 2023). It shows that populism poses a mixed character of other political ideologies, therefore it is also considered as a 'thin' ideology in the realm of political science.

Implications of Populism on Democracy

The impact of populism on democracy is detrimental to the foundational principles of democratic governance. This phenomenon has had many implications, one of the biggest being the inherent erosion of trust in democratic institutions. Populist leaders often style themselves as outsiders who conflict with the ruling political elite, and they often turn the institutions seen as traditional—the judiciary, media, and election authorities—into part of the elite, declaring them corrupt or incapable (Mounk, 2018). Such rhetoric can undermine public trust in the institution itself, possibly creating a populace paranoid or cynical enough to loathe it. The erosion of social trust can be used by populists to concentrate power and use that power to dismantle checks and balances ignore democratic norms, and challenge the democratic order itself. Examples include populist state actions such as the diminishing of judicial independence and freedom of assembly in Hungary and Poland, often grouped under the label of democratic backsliding and threatening to slide into authoritarianism (Ágh, 2016; Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

Indeed, populism divides the people and sowing the seeds of more political violence and

social division (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017). Such binary framing creates an "us against them" mindset, ramping up intolerance toward opposing political players and making it ever more difficult to reach and maintain a meeting point. Such polarization is detrimental to political discourse, where not only are dissenting opinions demonized, but collaboration highly discouraged because of the corrosive nature of such polarization on the political discourse (Norris, 2017). Here, populism not only reconfigures the political domain but also disrupts the capacity of democratic institutions to respond to urgent social problems. The emergence of populism presents a danger to the global stability and resilience of democratic systems, forcing a reassessment of how democracies can or need to respond to these challenges to protect democratic values and principles (Rodrik 2018). Resulting in a rise of leaders who challenge traditional democratic norms and institutions but profess to be the voice of the people. Populism is a response to economic inequality, political alienation, and social fragmentation, taking advantage of discontent born from globalization, economic crises, and cultural anxieties. Such a shift has led to fears about the degrading of democratic values and the rule of law, with populists often undermining democracy by attacking the independence of the judiciary, the media, and civil society organizations (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). The resurgence of populism can be interpreted as symptoms and at best causes of the challenges faced by modern-day democracies.

Populist governments have also been accused of bucking democratic trends by implementing reforms that centralize power and undermine dissent (Ágh, 2016), as has been the case in Hungary and Poland, for example. It threatens twofold democratic governance and global stability, the latter of which is terribly at risk when populist leaders implement their nationalist policies that challenge international cooperation and multilateralism, creating an increasingly fragmented global political landscape.

Besides national politics, rising populism also poses a challenge to international politics. With populist movements appearing around the world, worldwide, a climate of uncertainty and instability is incited as the international relations based on dialogue and cooperation shatter. Second, the rise of populist nationalism has reverberated around the globe as a backlash against globalization, multilateralism, and the international institutions and agreements forged over the past half-century, with many countries conducting a partial retreat into some form of protectionism (Rodrik, 2018). This complete change in outlook makes it even more difficult to tackle some of the most critical challenges facing the world today, from climate change to migration to economic inequality—problems that cannot be solved without multilateral cooperation. As such, the emergence of populism does not merely transform domestic political situations, it also makes the already complex global governance environment even more challenging, calling for a reconsideration of how democracies are to evolve and deal with these new challenges.

Discussion

The main theme of the study is to analyze populism in the global context and its implications for democracy. It studies the rise of populism in the liberal democracy. This paper aims to understand the perceptions of the people and to find out the root cause of the global rise of populism, the challenges posed to democracy by the rise of populism, and the measures to prevent the rise of populism for the broad implication of democratic governance. The study focuses on the inherent ingredients of populism. It analyzes how

populist leaders erode democracy while they hold executive power. It aims to realize how these movements threaten or even erode democratic standards and governmentality on the societal level by exploring populist approaches and their outcomes.

During the survey, 68.3% of respondents agreed on the global trend of populism, which supports the report of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change Report 2018 regarding the rise of populism in the world. The 70.7% of respondents agree populist manipulates media, which verifies the claim of Jan Werner Muller regarding the exploitation of media by populists. The survey supports the idea of Ronald F. Inglehart, Pippa Norris, and Rodrik regarding the respect of populists towards democratic norms and values. The survey verifies the idea of Attila Agh about intensifying authoritarianism because of the rise of populists. The 65.9% of respondents' views that populism as a threat to democracy which supports the views of Larry Diamond, Yves Meny & Yves Surel, Dr. Saskia P. Ruth-Lovell & Sandra Grahn, and Dani Rodrik. The survey also supports the claim of Kurt Weyland regarding populism's temporary nature.

Populism has become a key factor in contemporary global politics, and the rise of populism has threatened democracy in many nations by challenging established institutions and practices. Often, populist movements avoid political discourse, rallying the greater discontent of the electorate to an emotional experience that portrays society divided between "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite" (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). It signifies that division of the people is one of the root causes of populism. The study identifies the use of media and hate politics are other root causes of populism is also reinforced by the articles of Jeff Wallenfeldt and Jan Werner Muller. Robert A. Huber, Michael Jankowski and Christina-Marie Juen claims populism holds mix character.

Populism highlights anti-establishment sentiments that appeal to disgruntled voters as evidence of the weakening of trust in existing political institutions and the deepening of polarization in societies (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Such a shift has raised questions about the dilution of democracy and the rule of law because populists undermine the impartiality of the judiciary, media, and non-governmental organizations (Ágh, 2016). Populist governments in nations such as Hungary and Poland have enacted measures to centralize power and suppress opposition, causing concerns over the erosion of democratic institutions. Rodrik (2018) notes that this trend threatens liberal democracy and can have far-reaching impacts on global stability, as populist leaders frequently pursue nationalist policies that erode international cooperation and multilateralism, creating a more fractured global political system.

The rise of populism has, and will probably rise in the future, affect global politics. Populist movements seem to sprout up across the globe, creating an atmosphere of chaos and unpredictability and attacking the very foundations of international relations: conversation and collaboration. Right populism has made nationalism great again, which resulted in the revenge on globalization as many states are backtracking their trade agreements (Rodrik, 2018). That makes it a lot harder to tackle urgent challenges like climate change, migration and economic inequality that are only solvable through collective action and cooperation. Thus, the new populism not only distorts the domestic political landscape but also makes

difficult an already complex system of global governance, demanding a rethinking of how democracy can accommodate and respond to such challenges that are here to stay for the time being.

The major cause of the rise of populism is the unfulfillment of the promises and lack of deliveries to the people by the political parties and their leaders as it is promised. That always provides an opportunity to look for new options in democracy, which provides political space to the populist. Populists manipulate media bring division on society and launch campaigns against the establishment. Therefore, it is highly recommended that political leaders and parties fulfil their promised commitments to the people and prevent the rise of populists. Populism can be prevented by regulating media, implementing effective redistribution policies, and ensuring deliberative democracy. Similarly, mainstream political actors should reduce political polarization and shape people's perceptions with democratic norms to combat populism (Taylor & Nietzsche, 2020).

The positive side of populism is that it raises corruption, campaigns for good governance, and includes marginalized, minority and gender-related issues and it motivates the political participation of the people. It undermines democracy and establishes autocracy, polarization, controversy and conflict inside and outside the country. Hence, democracy needs a party. Without it, democracy as democratic ideals, democratic institutions, and democratic practices cannot be achieved. Thus, restricting the political parties, strengthening democratic institutions, promoting inclusion, and addressing inequality and service delivery helps to flourish democracy around the world.

Conclusion

Populism is a thin ideology which poses a mixed character and is followed by the leaders' following ideologies of far-right, far-left, liberalism, realism etc. Populist especially brings division in society, manipulate the media, influence the targeted population and gain political opportunities. Populists disrespect democratic values and exercise executive power in an authoritarian module. The populist government hinders economic growth and weakens the democratic institutions of the nation. The populist leaders have shown their disrespect towards democratic values and handling political issues as authoritarian. The previous studies of various institutes and the present survey prove that populism has been trending globally, devaluing democratic norms, weakening democratic institutions, intensifying authoritarian regimes and posing a direct threat to democracy. The mainstream political parties should prevent the rise of populism by ensuring deliberative democracy, introducing effective redistribution policies and regulating social media. Similarly, mainstream political actors should reduce political polarization and shape people's perceptions with democratic norms to combat populism.

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