Populism in Politics is a Global Phenomenon and a Challenge to Democracy

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Abstract. Populism in politics has become a global phenomenon that dominates the political stage in various countries worldwide. This phenomenon presents a serious challenge to the democratic system that has long been upheld. Political populism describes a set of rhetoric and strategies that often appeal to the masses with simple promises and quick solutions, often by blaming specific groups or government institutions. This article discusses how populism is a mass-based force that is very difficult to shake because its approach is aimed at solving social problems such as economic inequality and racial discrimination. In global political controversies, there is a tendency to use populist themes in right-wing parties, consistently showing concern for social issues. This research used qualitative research methods using natural contexts to interpret current phenomena. It was done by combining existing research methods, such as literature studies from books and journal articles discussing Global Populism. This paper aims to provide an understanding of how the phenomenon of populism can threaten the resilience of democratic systems in various countries and to identify various strategies and solutions that can be proposed to strengthen democracy in the face of populism.

Keywords: Populism, Democratic Resilience, Global Politics.

1   Introduction

Populism has become one of the most striking phenomena in global politics in the last decade. The term is often used to describe political movements that assert themselves by claiming to represent "the people" against "elites" and promising simple solutions to complex problems. Populism has influenced countries worldwide, from Latin America to Europe, Asia, and Africa. This phenomenon has significantly impacted the political, economic, and social order in various countries and has sparked deep debate about the future of democracy.

Anti-establishment populism sees society as victims of the hard work of the state carried out by special interests from outside parties, who are the political elite. Based on the author's data, he has identified 46 (forty-six) populist or political party leaders who have occupied executive positions in 33 (thirty-three) countries from 1990 to the present. They found that:

From 1990 to 2018, the number of populist figures in power worldwide increased fivefold, from initially only 4 (four) people to 20 (twenty). This number includes not only countries in Latin America, China, and Eastern Europe, where populism has traditionally been most popular, but also Asia and Eastern Europe.

The most prominent political events of recent years: the election of President Donald Trump in the United States, the Brexit vote, the success of the Italian Five Star Movement in the elections, Brazil's sudden shift to the right with the election of President Jair Bolsonaro, who increased his support for populist parties across Europe, has taken the word "populism" out of academic journal entries and newspaper headlines (Martin, Yascha, Limor, 2017).

The election of Donald J. Trump as the 45th President of the United States in 2016 and the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union in the same year were two events that occurred that gave birth to the term Populism, which became very popular (Corbett 2016; Kaletsky 2016). In Indonesia, in 2014, Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla were appointed the 7th (seventh) President and Vice President, replacing Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Budiono. Based on data from the General Election Commission (KPU) on July 22, 2014, out of a total of 133,574,277 votes, Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla received up to 70,997,833 votes or around 53.15%, while his competitor, Prabowo Subianto-Hatta Rajasa, received 62,576. 444 votes, or 46.85% (Otniel, 2014).

The characteristics of populism vary from one political context to another, but several general characteristics are often found. Populists tend to criticize political elites who are considered corrupt or do not care about the people's interests. They often use rhetoric that is simple and appeals to the masses, targeting foreigners or minority groups. Populism can also be a response to social discontent and economic inequality.

Populism is a mass-based force that is very difficult to shake because its approach is aimed at solving social problems such as economic inequality and racial discrimination. In global political controversies, there is a tendency to use populist themes in right-wing parties, consistently showing concern for social issues. The problems raised by many populist parties have caused political disintegration and instability in several countries, including Indonesia.

Broad democratic freedoms also reduce morality and ethics in the world of politics. They used all possible means, including mobilizing populist forces, to achieve clean power. This situation creates political vulnerability by using violence and strengthening sectarianism in various democratic countries.

The democratization process in various parts of the world since the last century has not always brought good news for its development. According to a study conducted by Sarah Repuci (FreedomHouse.org, 2020), over the last 13 (thirteen) years, democracy throughout the world has experienced setbacks. Populism is often a force that is difficult to shake because of its approach that targets social problems such as economic inequality and racial discrimination.

Simple and emotional rhetoric that can speak directly to the people. Messages that appeal to people's everyday feelings and concerns have strong appeal and can mobilize the masses. Populists often identify and highlight social problems that many people, such as economic inequality or racial discrimination, deeply feel. Populist leaders often claim that they are the only ones who truly represent "the people" and fight against

"elites" or "establishment" who are seen as not paying attention to the interests of society.

Based on the background above, the author formulates several problem formulations, namely regarding how populism can threaten the resilience of democracy in various countries and what solutions can be proposed to strengthen democracy in dealing with this phenomenon. In this research, the author aims to provide an understanding of how the phenomenon of populism can threaten the resilience of democratic systems in various countries and identify various strategies and solutions that can be proposed to strengthen democracy in the face of populism.

2 Research Methods

The author uses qualitative research methods, namely methods that use natural contexts intending to interpret current phenomena, and is carried out by combining existing research methods such as literature studies originating from books and journal articles discussing Global Populism (Albi 2018). This research method aims to discover and explain narratively the phenomenon and the impacts it causes.

In this research, the author uses data collection techniques in the form of literature studies to obtain and examine information related to democracy and populist movements in the world, especially through academic journals and books, using data analysis techniques to draw conclusions and conduct reviews by constructing possibility, causality, identifying impacts—concreteness of populism in the world.

3 Result and Discussion

Populism is a concept developed by scientists to explain political and democratic phenomena that occurred in the 20th and 21st centuries. This is increasing again in many countries, especially in the 21st century, in Western Europe and Indonesia. However, no leader or political party can publicly admit or state that they use Populism (Goodhart 2017).

Mudde (2004:543), a political scientist, stated that Populism tends to rely on other ideologies such as nationalism, fundamentalism, conservatism, and socialism. Because of its flexible, pragmatic, and changeable position, populism has often been nicknamed a chameleon, a type of animal that can change the color of its skin depending on the environment in which it finds itself.

Apart from that, according to Mudde, populism tends to see society into two opposing and homogeneous camps, namely "clean society" and "corrupt elites," and they argue that polity must be a reflection of the expression of the desires of a disgruntled society, not of a corrupt elite.

Meanwhile, Wodak and Norris (2019), who see populism as political discourse and rhetoric, view populism worldwide without geographical or other political boundaries. The differences in conceptual approaches to populism can be seen in more detail in the table below.

Table 1. Comparison of conceptual approaches to populism

	Ideational/Ideological	Strategy	Discourse
Is populism a binary or gradient concept?	Binary	Gradational	Gradational
Is populism seen as an attribute or practice	Attribute	Practice	Practice
Scholar	Mudde, Rovira Kaltwasser, Hawkins, Canovan, Muleer	Weyland, Roberts, Jansen, Kenny	Laclau, Mouffe, Wodak, Norris, Ostiguy
Study area	Eropa, Amerika	Amerika Latin, Afrika, Asia	Global

Source. Benjamin Moffit (2020)

The populist group in power seeks to build a systematic understanding of the long-term impact of populism on politics, economics, and international affairs. Populist understanding often arises from severe and legitimate concerns about the quality of political institutions and representation in a country. Populism can also emerge in severe economic failure when the economic system requires disruptive transformation to generate broad-based growth.

While understanding populism and its impacts is critical to resisting its appeal, building this understanding in various social, economic, and political contexts requires a comprehensive consideration of when and where populist groups gain power.

Most notable is the rise of populism in large, systemically important countries. Although populism in power used to be the prerogative of new democracies, populism now reigns supreme in strong democracies such as the United States, Italy, and India. Given the dramatic increase in populist votes, it is perhaps not surprising that populist candidates are also starting to gain power (Cas Mudde, 2015).

Eva Morales, Bolivia's longtime president, has expanded the rights of indigenous farmers to grow coca. Rodrigo Duterte, the outspoken President of the Philippines, has launched a brutal war on drugs, ordering police to kill suspected drug dealers. Silvio Berlusconi, three times prime minister of Italy and a rising political magnate, changed Italian media laws to increase the share of the national media market that an individual could own, thereby allowing him to maintain Italian control over the national media market (CNN, 2003). Thaksin Shinawatra, the first elected leader in Thai history to complete a full four-year term, launched the 30 (three) baht program, which provides subsidized health services to all Thai citizens at a cost of only 30 (thirty) baht or less. $1 per visit (Joel Sawat, 2011). Jeroslaw Kaczynski, leader of Poland's ruling Law and Justice party, banned the use of the term "Polish Death Camps" and claimed that the refugees brought "parasites" (Washington Post, 2018).

The term "populism" emerged in the 19th century and was first used in a political context. The term comes from the Latin word "populus," which means "the people" or

"the multitude, and their message is to "get rid of" the plutocrats, aristocrats, and all other politicians, put the people in power, and everything will be fine (Margaret Canovan, 1999). This term first appeared in the United States in the context of agrarian politics in 1891 when groups of farmers and workers called themselves the "Populist Party."

The Populist Party of the United States, also known as the Populist Party or Populist Party, was one of the early political movements that portrayed itself as representing ordinary people, particularly farmers and workers, in confrontation with elites and existing powers. They protested against economic inequality and corruption in politics. Although the Populist Party did not survive long as an independent political party, "populism" remains an important part of the global political vocabulary and describes political movements with similar characteristics that have emerged in various parts of the world. Since then, the term has evolved and been used in multiple political contexts around the world to describe movements and leaders who claim to represent "the people" against "elites" or the "establishment."

The second movement immediately associated with the term populism was the Narodnichestvi in Russia in the 1860s and 1870s, a student and intellectual revolutionary movement that idealized rural peasants and believed that they should create the foundations of a revolution aimed at overthrowing tsarist power (John Allcock, 1971). They denounced the existing feudal system and sought to help the peasants, who comprised most of Russia's population at that time. Narodniki viewed peasants as a revolutionary force that could change Russia.

In the 1950s, the phenomenon of populism was seen in various countries, especially in Latin America, where populist movements reached the peak of their popularity. Juan Domingo Perón, who had served as president of Argentina since 1946, continued to lead a strong populist movement during the 1950s. Perón established a significant mass base with the support of the working class and minority groups. His inclusive economic and social policies won the support of many Argentines, while he identified himself as a leader of the people against the "oligarchy." Seymour Martin Lipset, a leading modernization theorist, explains populism as a political expression of the anxiety and anger of those who want to return to a simpler, premodern life (Seymour Martin Lipset, 1963).

In 2004, Mudde put forward a definition of populism that laid the foundation for a careful and extensive analysis of the topic (Cas Mudde, 2004). He further argued that Populism is a "fragile ideology" with two components: the idea of a clean society versus a corrupt elite and the belief that politics should be an expression of the people's will.

3.1. Threats to the Resilience of Global Democracy in the Dynamics of Populism

To understand the populist movement, at least three approaches show the development of the populist movement in the world, including anti-establishment, authoritarianism, and nativism (Alwi Ritonga 2019). These three views are the characteristics of the populist movement to realize its populist ideals. Pelfini (2006) revealed that the populist movement mobilizes the masses by proposing ideas to challenge the power structure with the dominant values they believe in, with the aim of provoking change in the name of the people.

The dynamics of the development of populist movements in various countries result from implementing liberal democracy. Tight political competition means politicians have to look for loopholes to gain power.

The spread of democracy can refer to the development of democracy in Latin America in the 1990s. Almost every government then used the term populist, which was an ideal movement (Grigera 2017). This corresponds to the increasing wave of populism in Latin America, which became three waves in the 1950s and 1960s, a second wave in the 1990s (pink tide populism), and a third wave in the 2000s (neopopulism).

Table 2. List of Populist Leaders in Latin America

Populist Leaders According to Waves of Populism					
Wave I		Wave II		Wave III	
Country	Country	Country	Country	Country	Leader
Argentina	Argentina	Argentina	Argentina	Argentina	Kirchner
Brazil	Brazil	Brazil	Brazil	Brazil	Lula
Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Mexico	Venezuela	Chaves

Populists often seek to identify themselves as true representatives of the people and "common people." They presented themselves as populist figures who could feel and understand the daily lives of ordinary people. This also led to frequent criticism of political and economic elites, and they railed against the establishment they held responsible for social discontent and economic inequality. Although populism has no economic or social doctrine, it has, according to political scientist Jan-Werner Muller, "a set of claims and. . . inner logic" (Jan-Werner Muller, 2016).

According to Brubaker, several threats could undermine the resilience of global democracy in the context of populism. People are portrayed as "morally good people." They struggle economically, are hard workers, family-oriented, plain spoken, and have common sense" (Roger Brubaker, 2017). Brubaker highlights how populism often fuels polarization in society. When populists divide society into "us" versus "them," this can destroy the consensus and social unity necessary to maintain a strong democracy. Increased polarity can trigger social tensions and conflicts that have the potential to undermine democracy. Populists often use manipulative tactics, including fake news campaigns, to influence public opinion. This could threaten the integrity of the democratic process.

From there, populists attribute the Common Good to society: a policy goal that cannot be debated based on evidence but originates from society's common sense (Jan-Werner Muller, 2016).

There are several reasons why global democratic progress is declining, namely:

- No progress lasts forever, and it is inevitable that as freedom and democracy develop to unprecedented levels throughout the world, it will decline in some countries and regions, areas with structural and historical conditions that protect freedom and democracy the weakest (low-income countries, highly ethnically divided countries, countries living in poor environments, such as Russia's periphery).
- During the third wave of democratization, the commitment of Western democracies, especially the United States, efforts to promote democracy and

support democratic parties and civil society actors have played an essential role in promoting democratic change and preventing setbacks to democratic progress. The failure of America's intervention in Iraq weakened America's domestic commitment to democracy, thereby pushing liberal democracies (and most of the United States) down the rankings of democracy promotion in foreign policy and foreign aid.

- The financial crisis of 2008 had a longer-lasting impact in some countries than we expected as pressure on the real incomes of the working class and middle class contributed to prolonged economic stagnation, and the economic uncertainty that impacted them became significant. Voters in the United States and many European countries are more receptive to appeals from nativist, populist, and illiberal groups than established political parties.

- Increasing globalization, the movement of capital, goods, services, and people across national borders is growing anxiety among many voters who feel the sovereignty and integrity of their countries and the EU are under attack. The crisis is being exacerbated by the influx of immigrants fleeing the Syrian civil war to Europe, as well as increasing immigration pressure from Africa and the Middle East. Europe is less able to withstand these pressures than the United States because the United States has historically been a country of immigrants. But as William Galston and others have argued, the percentage of foreign-born residents in the United States is now near its highest level since the Civil War (currently about 13.5%, compared with rates below 15% in 1890 and again in 1910). and periods of high Immigration tend to generate strong nativist and populist reactions.

- Lastly, social networks have proven to be a fertile medium and tool for polarizing democratic societies (whether they realize it or not), sowing doubts about democracy and mobilizing dissatisfied citizens into new populist and anti-disability movements and calls. As a result, we are entering a new period in world history where the erosion of freedom and democracy is becoming more extensive and powerful. There is even a growing feeling among observers that liberal democracy may be facing its most serious challenge since the radical upheavals of the mid-1970s. This is done by creating a historical context for the period in which we live now.

Populism becomes a threat to the resilience of Global Democracy When populism is culturally exclusive (not to mention racist) When states give in to their hegemonic claims and show hatred towards pluralistic ideas that essentially respect differences and contradictions, and of course, When they try to limit basic freedoms of the press, freedom of association, etc. However, because populism is essentially about majorities and referendums, it also poses a threat to democracy, even if populism does not spread prejudice against minority cultures. This can be exacerbated by populism's distrust of established institutions and its tendency to ignore or blow up these institutions. Populism presents several dilemmas for democracy, and one of them is that sometimes democracies become boring and closed and require reform, but if the spirit of populist reform is uncontrolled, it can damage existing institutions and thus disrupt the stability of democracy itself.

The more inclusive (of the five characteristics above), the more extreme, uninhibited, and uncompromising the version of populism is, the more excellent the opportunity for populism to become a threat to the resilience of democracy.

But the test is what populist groups do when they have power, especially when, as in Hungary and Turkey, a populist party has power and one-party control of the government. So it's important to pay attention not only to what populists say but also how they wield their power.

Most of the failures of democratic resilience in recent democratic recessions did not happen suddenly through old-fashioned means, such as military coups or classic "auto coups," when elected presidents like Alberto Fujimori declared a state of emergency, suspended the constitution and closed Congress government. On the contrary, things happen in a process of slowly creeping authoritarianism, where elected rulers gradually eliminate political plurality and the system of checks and balances until they reach the irrevocable minimum conditions of democracy, namely the ability of the people to change their leaders and free elections. Freedom and justice are lost in this scenario, and the country slowly experiences a decline from a democratic regime to an authoritarian regime.

3.2. Strengthening Democracy in the face of the threat of Populism

The weakening of democracy due to the populist movement is far from over. Populism is about destroying democratic principles, destroying the majority of the people, and glorifying a few people through their leaders by taking advantage of the support of the populist masses (Urbinati 2019).

Democracy is not like a story that only has a single lesson or knowledge but rather a multitude of understandings that are based on the conceptions and ideals of different countries and audiences. Populism and its simple stories and stormy rhetoric have gained popularity in various countries. Populist leaders often force public dissatisfaction and discomfort to gain power. They want to abandon democratic ideas that embrace dialogue, compromise, and respect for the rights of minorities. Instead, they pursue an approach that undermines democratic institutions and undermines civil authority, oriented toward social conflict and crisis.

In fighting the threat of populism, strong and sustainable action is needed. Initially, it is very important to strengthen free democratic institutions and support the principle of balance of power between the executive, legislative, and judiciary. This step was taken to prevent excessive accumulation of power in the hands of individuals and political parties.

In addition, priority should be given to protecting freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and political participation. Encourage the public to participate actively in the political process and obtain a fair opportunity to obtain controlled information. Education and knowledge also need to be improved by understanding democratic values, being critical of propaganda, and understanding the importance of dialogue and co-compromise.

Apart from that, international cooperation is also essential to overcome threats to democracy. For this success, countries must support each other and work together to promote democracy and strengthen protection mechanisms from populism. Regional

and multilateral cooperation is able to build a strong framework structure to enhance democracy and limit the interference of authoritarian governments.

It is also essential to increase public awareness regarding the threat of populism. Educating the public about the risks of extremism and the dangers of failing democratic values can be helped by appropriate education and information campaigns. With a deeper understanding of the political system and democratic values, citizens can actively engage and apply democratic principles in their daily activities.

An essential step in overcoming the threat of populism is empowering civil society, including NGOs and advocacy groups. Civil society acts as an independent observer in the struggle to fight for democratic values. In the fight against populism, we need to acknowledge and address the roots of existing social dissatisfaction. In many cases, populism arises from disappointment with social, economic, and political justice. By implementing inclusive and sustainable policies, people will benefit from a democratic system and feel more involved in making decisions that impact their lives.

In short, populism can pose a serious threat to democracy. However, this threat can be overcome, and a strong democratic foundation can be built by taking appropriate actions, such as strengthening democratic institutions, protecting civil rights, increasing public awareness, and empowering civil society.

Strengthening democracy from the threat of populism is a challenge that requires joint efforts from civil society, government, and other stakeholders. Some things can be done to strengthen democracy from the threat of populism, namely increasing political education and media literacy among the public, which is an essential first step. Building a culture of active political participation can help reduce public dissatisfaction, which is often exploited by populists, and carry out international cooperation closely with other countries to promote democratic values.

4   Conclusion

The threat to the resilience of global democracy in the dynamics of populism is a reality that cannot be ignored. Populism, as a political phenomenon that has spread to various countries worldwide, poses a severe challenge to the basic principles of democracy. Populist anti-elite rhetoric often undermines people's trust in traditional democratic institutions. This can affect political participation and erode the authority of these institutions. Populism is not an issue limited to one country or region. This phenomenon has spread globally and impacts international cooperation and relations between countries.

Strengthening democracy in the face of the threat of populism is an urgent task that requires commitment and joint action from various parties. Increasing public understanding of democracy, politics, and media literacy is an essential first step. This will help society recognize and criticize populist rhetoric and better understand the political process. Populism is a cross-border phenomenon, so close international cooperation in promoting democratic values is crucial. Countries and international institutions need to work together to understand, prevent, and overcome populism.

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