

Forum: Special Conference (SPECON) on Rediscovering Diplomacy in an Era of Political Instability

Issue: Countering the influence of populism in diplomatic discourse

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TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Populism is a phenomenon in politics where, in times of a crisis, leaders propose easy solutions to complicated problems, discourage tolerance for diversity among citizens of different nations, promise progress, economic growth, change without any particular plan or method, and, lastly, support the idea that a nation can thrive without the help of alliances or any other international cooperation. The key detail of populism is to address the public and attempt to persuade them into believing such narratives.

Populist narratives are the ideas and beliefs that a populist party supports and encourages. They often propose the building of trust between the “common people” and the “society’s elite,” and this is usually the most effective way for populist parties to rise to power. Commonly, populist narratives are recognizable by the very general and absolute character of their statements and by the presentation of pseudoscientific theories as absolute fact. They are usually characterized by an anthem and an easy-to-remember slogan or phrase in order for people to adopt their ideas with ease.

Populist narratives mostly develop in nations in which the majority of the population is less educated and thus more likely to be persuaded to follow populist parties and leaders. Their ideas are easy to understand, and they propose solutions to problems that the majority can relate to, such as a lack of opportunities for economic growth and being neglected by the government. What subsequently makes populist parties attractive to the majority is mostly the idea of being heard and solutions that work immediately. In addition, they are usually used by extremists, either left or right-oriented governments/parties and leaders, since their main rationale is absolute and aims to divide the communities to assist them in gaining power. Other less economically developed countries (LED's) are also deeply affected by populist narratives since they have a large number of citizens who are less able to recognise the consequences of populist action, since they may not have been provided with essential knowledge on the topic, which leads to them affecting the outcome of the elections. Finally, it is very common that populist narratives have the strongest influence after or during a national crisis. It is then that people have the need for a leader who they think will make immediate changes and aim for the quickest and most sustainable decisions for the crisis-ridden nation. That's exactly how populism has such a significant impact in nations that are in a crisis, or that have just overcome one.

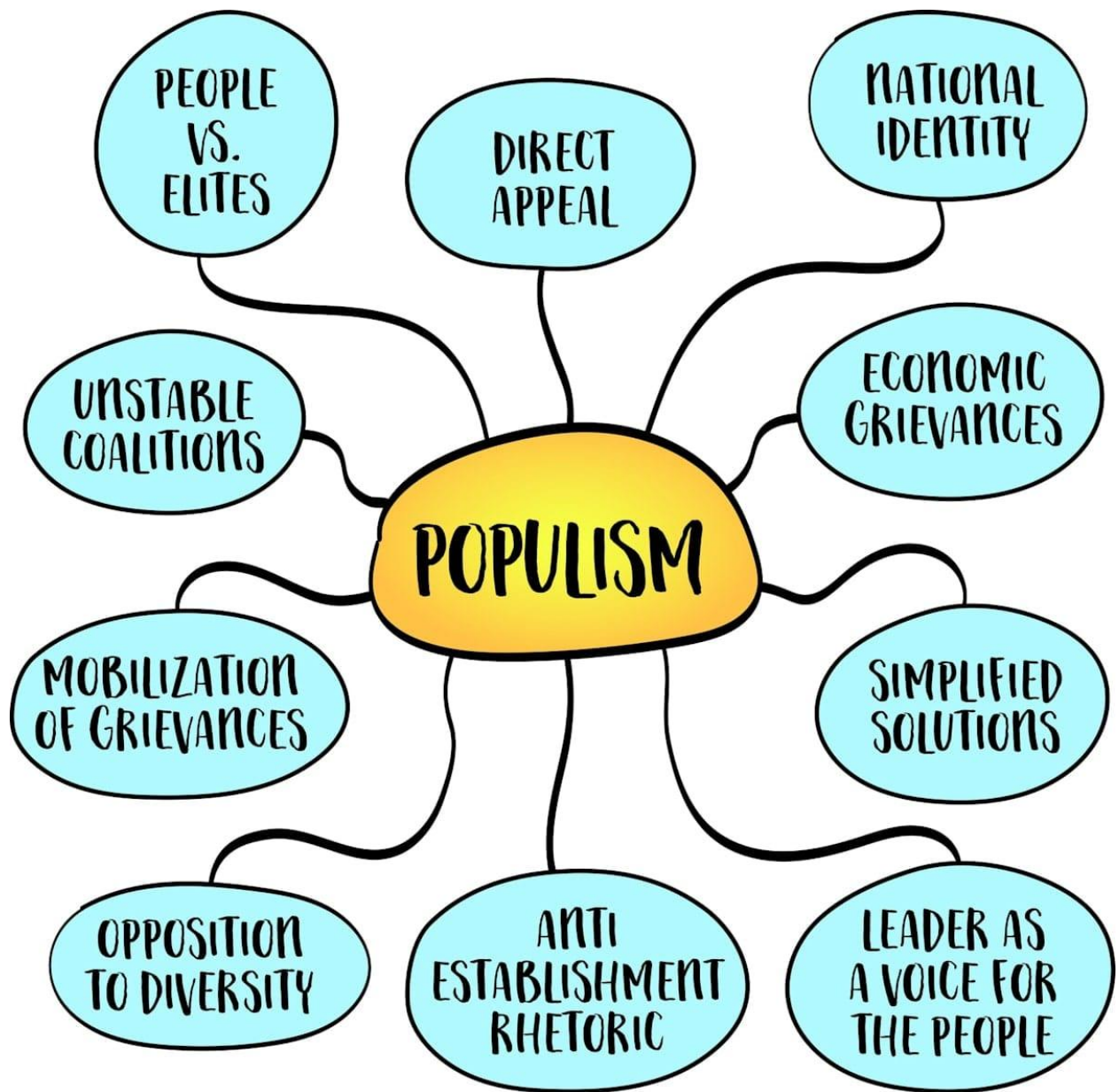


Figure1: Most important populist ideas¹

This topic would be of utmost importance to counter since it assures voters will exercise their constitutional right to vote based on true and realistic expectations and will not be misled in order for populist parties or leaders to get to power positions. It will also promote giving all citizens of the country a fair chance at being voted in the next elections. Furthermore, it ensures the problem-solving processes if states remain realistic and don't mislead the public. Nations should be open to alliances and cooperations which will boost the evolution of our respective nations. Lastly, solving this global issue will encourage the creation of individual and critical

¹ Carreira da Silva, Filipe, and Julius Rogenhofer. "Populist Things. A Study on the Materiality of Political Ideas." *Sociology Compass*, vol. 17, no. 3, 13 Jan. 2023, 10.1111/soc4.13066.Figure 1

thinking for the general well-being and the evolution and prosperity of the nations, as well as try to prevent the division of societies into elites and common people.

Since the theme of this year's DSAMUN Conference is "Rediscovering Diplomacy in an Era of Political Instability", it is of great importance to address such a topic to ensure that we will reach a stage where we can achieve a world that is organized by diplomacy and peaceful cooperation, as well as relations between states without being misled and based on realistic facts and information. By solving this issue, we can prevent having any other populist leader elected in future elections, which will boost the people's trust in their leaders and assist in individuals' understanding that every decision made by their politicians is for their country's progress. Solving such an issue that is constantly changing our well-structured diplomacy system and discourages personal opinion and the chance to think for yourself, as well as preventing others from forming harmful ideas that influence politics in such ways, is crucial and a way to avoid the risk of getting influenced by misconceptions and false statements. Therefore, it is of great importance to discuss and find solutions for crucial issues like the one at hand and keep evolving through diplomatic cooperation and decisions.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Populism

Populism is "a political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups. Populism has been a part of politics for a long time but the meaning and terminology are still being debated since populism includes many different beliefs, such as "people vs elites", anti-establishment rhetoric, simplified solutions, opposition to diversity etc"².

Populist narratives

"Populist narratives are the ideas and visions, as well as the beliefs, that are publicly advocated by populist political figures who aim to win the trust of the public and obtain political power. Those narratives are the key to convincing the public since they carry all the populist messages and encourage citizens to follow the same mindset. Populist narratives are the start of a political wave that is based on populism"³.

Political parties

²Populism. 22 July 2026, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/populism.

³Sarsfield, Rodolfo, and Zacarías Abuchanab. "Populist Storytelling and Negative Affective Polarization: Social Media Evidence From Mexico." *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol. 66, no. 2, Apr. 2024, pp. 102–31, doi:10.1017/lap.2024.7.

Political parties are organized groups of individuals that share the same ideologies and beliefs and exercise political power. They often have a structured organization and leadership, as well as members of the group that support their candidates. Political parties play a crucial role in the governance of countries, influencing public policy and participating in the electoral process.

Propaganda

Propaganda “is a systematic effort to try to manipulate other individuals’ beliefs, attitudes, or actions by using slogans, rumors, ideologies, and misinformation. There is a difference between a normal exchange of ideas and beliefs since propaganda relies on manipulation, distinguishing propaganda from casual conversation or the free and democratic exchange of ideas”⁴.

Fact-based debunking

A strategy that counters false claims by providing evidence, correcting inaccuracies, and explaining the truth. Fact-based debunking is a method that can reveal the truth to the public through conducting research.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Origins of Populism

Populism is a political and social phenomenon that arises when a country’s citizens are dissatisfied by their government’s choices, actions or their state’s contribution and attempts to fulfil the promises made to the public beforehand. It is often strengthened by opportunity and wealth gaps, only having “elite members of society” as political leaders, governments not working efficiently for them, and perceived cultural threats from those with different values within the country and from outsiders. Only “elite members of society” being elected as leaders could be because of their wealth and their resources, because running a political campaign requires a certain budget to actually be able to promote themselves and a strong network of people, and have a chance at being elected. It could also be due to their education and networking since donors, influential groups, etc., often support candidates they already know and trust, and education of some kind is of utmost importance since they will need knowledge on decision making, public speaking, and international relations. Lastly, the rise of the “elite members of society” can lead to traditional political parties that have traditional ideologies and try to spread populist values such as national identity and “people vs elite”, being unresponsive, which brings dissatisfaction to many populist parties.

⁴Smith, Bruce Lannes. ‘Propaganda’. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 21 Jan. 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/propaganda>.

In addition cultural, national and financial crises are often the reason for the raise of populist ideas and parties, since the citizens feel threatened either by new cultures being integrated and thus altering the existing one, or financial period of instability leading to economical crises and uncertainty which populist rhetoric take advantage of in order. All these reasons are why the “elite members of the society” are being chosen more frequently as leaders for nations and exactly what is concerning the other not so privileged candidates. They have strong beliefs that economic inequality is increasing, as well as the government prioritising wealthy or powerful interests and neglecting the other parties with less economic or political influence.

Populist leaders are mostly confrontational rather than collaborative and often exclusive rather than inclusive. Consequently, these differences often occur between different parties and opposing factions, both within countries and between countries. A result of populism within a country is usually the economically and socially left versus the right.

Major Characteristics of Populism

Populism often causes clashes between the left and right wing which leads to coercion, strikes, and protests. Influencing and, in some cases, controlling the media typically becomes an important aspect of engaging in the political conflicts that may happen during certain time periods. There have been cases⁵ in which such conflicts have led to civil wars, such as the Spanish Civil War in 1936–1939, where political leaders on both the right and the left wing used highly populist rhetoric, claiming to represent the “true people” against corrupt elites or dangerous enemies. In the Spanish Civil War, the nationalists ended up being victorious, led by the infamous General Francisco Franco against the Republican government of Spain. The Nationalist received aid by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, while the Republicans received aid from the Soviet Union and the International Brigades. The War had a profound impact on Spain and served as a prelude to the Second World War (WW2), revealing ideological and political tensions.

Such conflicts and strikes have led to democracies becoming dictatorships, because populist leaders’ natures are more confrontational than cooperative, and because conflicts with other countries help to unify support for the leadership within their countries. Populist narratives have significantly influenced global political developments in recent times by allowing the rise of populist leaders who often rely on simplified explanations and promises that may be difficult to fulfil⁶.

Populist narratives spread such rumors or promises that lead the public to only acknowledge the positive aspects of a specific government and persuade them to believe that all their problems can be very easily solved by only supporting that certain party. There are also other negative consequences to populism that have been proven to have serious consequences

⁵Thomas Hugh’s book “ the Spanish Civil War; <https://WorldfromNationalistsSecondNationalistsfrom.com>

⁶Marciel, Rubén. ‘Populist Bullshit: A Normative Theory of Populist Communication’. Res Publica, Oct. 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11158-025-09744-9>.

in the past, such as misleading citizens who have little political knowledge and are thus unable to see the whole picture and evaluate information appropriately. The support of the public in favor of politicians who aim to only propose solutions that will not make a difference in the long run, as well as they may never act on those promises, and use populist narratives in order to be elected and get political power. Also, following the belief that complicated decisions always have easy solutions will make the public search for something ideal and will not vote according to their beliefs, but according to which politician proposes an easier solution. Lastly, it will lead to states having serious internal political problems, which will eventually be reflected on their relations with other countries.

Populist Narratives' Influence on Politics

Populist narratives clearly influence politics since they are one of the main reasons why in the last decades, we have various populist leaders who try to influence the democratic discourse even on a global level, such as the implementation of tariffs against states that don't follow their populist agenda⁷. Some of the actions taken by populist leaders of various countries are isolating their nations, constructing literal or figurative barriers, and making promises they are most likely unable to fulfil. Populist narratives spread such rumors or make such promises that lead the public to only acknowledge the positive aspects of a specific government and persuade them to believe that all their problems can be very easily solved by only supporting a certain party.

Populism often influences politics in multiple ways. First and foremost, it creates an “us versus them” view of politics. It divides the public and creates conflicts between people. It affects society by weakening democratic checks and balances and polarising various community groups against each other. Very frequently, populist narratives also terminate international alliances and lead to the isolation of countries.

Causes of and motivations behind populism

Throughout human political history, populism has always existed and was not identified as such. Misleading statements and unrealistic political promises led voters to question the simplified problem-solving proposed as an answer to issues of utmost importance, provided by populist political leaders aiming to obtain high political positions through that. Populism is a very old concept and was present in ancient civilizations as well, such as Cleon and the Athenian Demagogues (5th Century BC, Classical Athens), who appeared as a major political figure after the death of Pericles, leader of Athens during the early Peloponnesian War. Cleon was apparently from a newly wealthy merchant class rather than the traditional aristocracy. He used the opportunities provided by his political influence to attack wealthy elites for corruption and adopt an aggressive, populist foreign policy that resonated heavily with the poorer,

⁷Yi, Zhu, and Thomas Gaskin. 'Populist Narrative Power in a Globalised Infosphere: A Cross-Language Analysis'. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, vol. 12, no. 1, Oct. 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05976-5>.

working-class Athenians who served in the navy, since populism's main characteristic is to mislead the public in such a way as to obtain political power, usually having no other goal than to serve their personal interests.

The main causes of populism worldwide and throughout time were economic and/or political, national, cultural, or religious identity crises, as well as social inequalities. Under these conditions, leaders with a desire for greater power and positions take advantage of the feelings of panic and desperation of a usually less sophisticated and educated public, which is not in a position to understand more complicated rational solution concepts that require some detailed knowledge and experience, and who fall for easy and nicely presented populist narratives.

What caused populism to become more widespread was, at first, globalization and trade. Working-class communities in More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) often suffer from job losses as well as wage stagnation due to increased international trade, automation, and industrial shifts. Another reason would be immigration and identity. Many countries, due to increasing immigration numbers, have started acknowledging the problem of a nation's identity loss, the neglect shown to local traditions, and social cohesion. There is also the rapid spread of misinformation, which is making it easier for populists to spread false information in the media, and, due to the speed of social media platforms, it will be much easier for the populist narrative to spread. Lastly, there is also the algorithm-driven amplification, meaning that social media algorithms usually prioritize content that leads to emotional reactions, such as fear or sadness, which most of the time has more visibility than well-balanced, research-based content. In today's world, populist politicians use social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, etc. Through all these platforms, they influence a big part of the population because they allow politicians to bypass traditional media. They have unlimited access to internet platforms, forums, fora, and applications where they can easily spread populist narratives and at the same time be harder to track and properly countered by scientific opinionated and legitimate counterarguments on the web. There is also the strategy of telling the people what they want to hear. This begins by addressing existing concerns and then framing them politically.

Historical Overview of Populism

19th-Century American Origins

The term “populism” was first used in the United States of America during the 19th century when farmers suffered from facing bankruptcy, railroad monopolies, and crushing debt⁸. At this time, the first People’s Party, also known as the populist party, was formed (1891)⁹. The peoples party is a local political action group known as Farmers' Alliances that sprang up among Midwesterners and Southerners, who were discontent because of crop failures, falling prices,

⁸ Populist Movement | Definition & Goals | Britannica

⁹ Alegsa, Leandro. ‘People’s Party (United States) — the Populist Movement of the 1890S’. AlegsaOnline.Com, Leandro Alegsa, 13 Nov. 2022, <https://en.alegsaonline.com/art/75679>.

and poor marketing and credit facilities. They had made demands to their leaders asking for eight-hour work days, a progressive income tax, and a direct election of senators. All these amendments were later codified in US law. The People's Party won some significant regional victories, but the alliances generally proved politically ineffective on a national scale.

20th-Century Latin America

By the 20th century, populism was connected with strong charismatic leaders like Juan Perón in Argentina and Getúlio Vargas in Brazil, who gained the support of unsatisfied workers for opposing foreign economic influence and wealthy elites. They expanded social welfare and strengthened labor unions while maintaining control over the government. Latin America had three eras of populist evolution¹⁰. The first era was between 1930–60 led by Juan Peron and Vargas¹¹. In this era, populist leaders used the public of urban workers to push for industrial growth. The neoliberal era, 1980–1990. Populist narratives started to appear, supposedly helping to adjust to market shocks, privatisations, and economic restructuring. In the late 90s to the beginning of the 21st century (1999–2013), Latin America's most emblematic populist socialist leader of recent times was Hugo Chavez. Chávez reinforced his populism by a socialist-statist ideology that sought to build institutions of direct democracy as an alternative to liberal representative democracy.

The 21st-Century Global Resurgence

Over the last two decades, global populism has experienced a remarkable resurgence. Driven by the fallout from the 2008 financial crisis, globalization, and immigration, both left-wing and right-wing populist figures gained power across Europe, the Americas, and Asia.

Case studies

Argentina (Libertarian Populism)

President Javier Milei is a modern example of populism. He has been continuously supporting a much smaller government and has been strongly opposing political and economic elites. It gained support because of high inflation, currency crises, declining purchasing power and distrust in traditional political parties¹². This government presented unrealistic ideas and continuously failed to upkeep their promises and visions.

¹⁰ 'Old and New Facets of Populism in Latin America - ECPS'. ECPS, 20 Mar. 2024, <https://www.populismstudies.org/old-and-new-facets-of-populism-in-latin-america/>.

¹¹ Conniff, Michael L. 'A Historiography of Populism and Neopopulism in Latin America'. History Compass, vol. 18, no. 9, July 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12621>.

¹² Heinisch, Reinhard, et al. 'Libertarian Populism? Making Sense of Javier Milei's Political Discourse'. Social Sciences, vol. 13, no. 11, Nov. 2024, pp. 599–99, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13110599>.

India (Nationalist Populism)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gained political influence due to his direct approach, meaning that he started communicating with the public directly through social media and other platforms and due to him willing to talk himself with them, which appeared more persuasive, and his support of the development of traditional cultural values, which often compare India's heritage with older political establishments, he had a lot of political influence¹³.

Donald Trump (President of the USA, current)

Donald Trump is a very recent example of a populist leader that has affected today's politics. As most of us might have read in articles and seen in the news, he has based his public speaking, both during pre-elections speeches and during his governing of the USA, on very populist, sometimes racist¹⁴ and nationalist narratives, presenting himself as the only leader able to solve global issues and tensions, such as his announcement to buy Greenland, and oversimplifying international conflicts in various conflict zones, which have been for decades zones of diplomatic interest and conflict resolution (e.g. Middle East) Another example of such populist initiatives started by the American president is the construction of the Trump wall at the Mexico border which would supposedly eliminate illegal immigration coming from Mexico.

Adolf Hitler (Leader of Germany, 1933-1945).

Before Hitler became a leadership figure in Germany in 1933 he actually had won the public's favor. He had promised to make the nation strong again and fix its economic "issues". That won the public's trust and led to him being the leader of a state. As we notice in this example, the populist politician had promised the citizens development and power, and instead he delivered chaos, death, fear and destruction. This shows how much influence populist narratives actually have in politics, especially in a period of deep economic and identity crisis.

Alexis Tsipras (Prime Minister of Greece, 2015–2019)

Alexis Tsipras is also another politician who is considered a populist since he also promised Greece economic growth, stability, and that he would avoid entering Greece into a memorandum with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European Central Bank (ECB), and thus avoid austerity measures. To the contrary, the country was in such a dire financial crisis that he had to abandon his populist narratives of Greece leaving the EU and being independent with its own currency and no EU guidelines, which was a very powerful slogan at that time, one that inspired a lot of Greeks to believe in a strong and financially independent Greek state. Even during the Greek referendum to exit the EU in 2015, the Greeks voted in favour of it, whereas the Tsipras government finally surrendered and stayed in the EU and had to accept all austerity measures for almost a decade.

¹³Raychaudhury, Proma. 'Narendra Modi: India's "Vulnerable" Strongman Populist Leader'. The Loop, 19 Apr. 2023, <https://theloop.ecpr.eu/narendra-modi-indias-vulnerable-strongman-populist-leader/>.

¹⁴<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://academic.oup.com/book/45686/chapter-abstract/398080529?redirectedFrom%3Dfulltext&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1785692054670445&usg=AOvVaw0qGSRE6TIHPrS60T0wcV-3>.

Some governments in the past first tried to listen to the complaints of the public and to why they were rioting, and tried to control them by making amends. Some examples for such actions would be the United States (1890s–1910s), where citizens complained about monopolies, banking power, and railroad abuses. In 1900 - 1920, the progressive era, the government took serious action on this issue. One of the first steps was strengthening democratic institutions after times of war to prevent the abuse of uncontrolled power. There were also complaints about civil society organizations, free media, and independent courts.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America (USA)

There were complaints about mainstream politicians, media organizations, and established parties for underestimating the influence populist narratives had at a certain time, which led to the election of Donald Trump, who led with anti-establishment and anti-elite messaging.

Hungary

Scholars have argued that democratic opposition parties struggled to counter populist narratives advanced by the ruling Fidesz government, allowing illiberal and anti-elite rhetoric to become dominant in public discourse¹⁵. During his presidency the Orbán and his Fidesz-led government, in office from 2010 to 2026, took Hungary to a very authoritarian direction. To the contrary, in 2014, Orbán himself argued that Hungary was to build a liberal state and the EU in 2022, publicly stating that Hungary no longer constituted a full democracy and labeling it an “elected autocracy”. His regime was shifting to right-wing populism and Christian nationalism. During this period, Fidesz, in coalition with the smaller Christian Democratic People’s Party (KDNP), controlled a two-thirds majority in Hungary’s National Assembly. This enabled the government to introduce significant constitutional amendments, many of which attracted international criticism. Controversial legislation enacted under Viktor Orbán also brought Hungary into repeated conflict with the European Union, prompting the European Commission to initiate legal proceedings on several occasions. These disputes concerned, among other issues, judicial reforms, restrictions on civil society organisations, and Hungary’s refusal to implement certain EU migration policies.

¹⁵ Fella, Stefano. ‘Hungary Under Viktor Orbán: Developments and EU Reaction Since 2022’. House of Commons Library, 7 Apr. 2026, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10612/>.

Greece

After the global financial crisis of 2008, Greece faced a severe debt crisis. The country faced austerity measures, high public debt, unemployment, and extreme declining living standards, which all resulted in Greece having a crisis that resulted in many businesses closing down due to bankruptcy, and many debts taken by citizens from the bank that they are still trying to pay back.

Germany

The Alternative for Germany (Alternativ für Deutschland, AfD) party was founded in 2013 as a Eurosceptic party that mostly opposed eurozone bailout policies during the European financial crisis. Despite this, after 2015, the party increasingly focused on refugees, national identity, immigration, and also on criticizing Germany's political establishment. In the regional election of 06.09.2026 in the region of Saxony-Anhalt, AfD reached a polling of around 41% because the mainstream political parties refused to create coalitions¹⁶. At the national elections of 2025, AfD won a vote of 20,8% and became the second and biggest opposition party, almost doubling its vote percentage¹⁷. Although not being able to form a governance the high percentage achieved by this right-wing populist political party, especially in the country of Germany with its WW history, made AfD the winner of these national elections, creating serious concern in the public's eye.

Tony Blair Institute

The Tony Blair Institute¹⁸ is an institute that publishes extensive policy frameworks and strategic guides or manuals for mainstream political parties on how to counter and repel populist narratives.

Das Progressive Zentrum

¹⁶ 'Germany's AfD Eyes Saxony-Anhalt Win as First Step Toward Federal Power'. Reuters, 23 Aug. 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/germanys-afd-eyes-saxony-anhalt-win-first-step-toward-federal-power-2026-08-23/>.

¹⁷ Zeier, Kristin, and Gianna-Carina Grün. 'German Election Results Explained in Graphics'. Dw.Com, Deutsche Welle, 27 Feb. 2025, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-election-results-explained-in-graphics/a-71724186>.

¹⁸ Meyer, Brett. 'Repel and Rebuild: Expanding the Playbook Against Populism'. Institute.Global, Tony Blair Institute, 5 Jan. 2023, <https://institute.global/insights/politics-and-governance/repel-and-rebuild-expanding-playbook-against-populism>.

The so-called “Progressive (political) Centre”¹⁹ is a German foundation promoting liberal democracy, which sponsors toolkits and educational workshops on countering regional populist movements.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
1994	Silvio Berlusconi the former Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, at the beginning of his political career, started interacting with the masses in the media and on other platforms to connect with the public, promising to challenge the political establishment and attract the attention of the “ordinary italians” ²⁰ .
1999	The establishment of many social programmes by Hugo Chavez was facilitated, which provided healthcare, housing, education etc. To the poor, which also led to these programmes promoting the division between “elites” and “common people”, one of the main populist ideas ²¹ . To be more exact, amongst the main programmes established were the Drafting and Ratification of the 1999 Constitution ²² and the Early Bolivarian Social Programs ²³ .
2016-2026	The ultra-nationalistic rhetoric, which includes religious appeals, opposes multiculturalism and represents anti-immigration ideas ²⁴ , was established. These ideas were introduced by Kyriakos Velopoulos, a Greek politician, journalist, authour and TV presenter and president of the right-wing party “Greek

¹⁹ Fröhlich, Paulina, et al. ‘Countering Populism in Public Space: Non-Governmental Organisations - Das Progressive Zentrum - EN’. Das Progressive Zentrum - EN, 12 Feb. 2019, <https://www.progressives-zentrum.org/en/publication/countering-poplitaliansinulismintalians-in-public-space-nichtregierungsorganisationen/>.

²⁰D’Ignoti, Stefania. ‘Italy’s Berlusconi, “the Knight” Known for Scandals, Dies At 86’. Al Jazeera, 12 June 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/12/berlusconi-the-knight-known-for-scandals-dies-age-86>.

²¹ BBC News. “Profile: Hugo Chavez.” BBC News, 18 Feb. 2013, www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-10086210.

²²‘Venezuela: From Human Rights Transgressions to Constitutional Paradox’. Harvard.Edu, 9 Feb. 2021, <https://journals.law.harvard.edu/hrlj/2021/02/venezuela-from-human-rights-transgressions-to-constitutional-paradox/>.

²³ España, Luis Pedro. ‘The Social Policy of the Bolivarian Revolution: Mission Tricks’. ReVista, 17 Sept. 2008, <https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/bilingual-the-social-policy-of-the-bolivarian-revolution-mission-tricks/>.

²⁴‘Kyriakos Velopoulos’. Grokipedia, 14 Jan. 2026, https://grokipedia.com/page/Kyriakos_Velopoulos.

	Solutions” 2016. During the 2009 elections and further during the Greek financial depression, he participated in the right-wing party of LAOS, which, with its nationalistic populist narratives, was pleading for national sovereignty and anti-immigration policies.
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RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/56/268 (2002)

digitallibrary.un.org/record/458728/files/A_C.3_56_L.86_Rev.1-EN.pdf

The specific resolutions focus on emphasising personal growth, recognising various goals that have been achieved, but also acknowledging the ones that have not. It aims to counter problems such as political division, misinformation to the public, which is a very common issue when trying to counter populism, distrust in institutions, which is caused by numerous promises made by populist politicians, social inequality, and the tendency to view complex issues as a simple conflict between “the people” and “the elites.” It is focused on preventing the spread of neo-Nazi ideology, racism, xenophobia, and violent forms of nationalism, while protecting human rights and democratic values.

UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/58/159 (2003)

[File:United Nations General Assembly resolution A-RES-58-159.pdf - Wikimedia Commons](#)

This document has similar goals and beliefs as the above, but it also highlights the problem of organizations and political movements using racial or national prejudice to divide societies, marginalize particular groups, and weaken democratic institutions. Altogether it hopes to achieve promoting a more inclusive society where ideological divisions and political disagreements do not become racial or xenophobic exclusion.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Fact-based debunking strategy

There have been many previous attempts to limit the influence of populism in democratic discourse, such as the fact-based debunking strategy²⁵. Fact-based debunking strategy belief in false claims. It is most effective when the misinformation is specific and verifiably false. This system proposed that we should rely solely on data, expert consensus, and fact checks to counter populism. It proved to be ineffective because populist narratives were deeply emotionally rooted, and any solution proposed by such parties deeply affected the public. Even though the first solution didn't succeed, political actors still kept trying to find a way to counter

²⁵Lewandowsky, Stephan, et al. 'Misinformation and Its Correction: Continued Influence and Successful Debiasing'. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, vol. 13, no. 3, 2012, pp. 106–31, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100612451018>.

populism, and they came up with the idea of technocratic governance arguments. This solution proposed that the best way for a government to function properly was through technocratic governance, which quickly backfired because it supported the idea populist were feeding to the public that the elite were disassociated, dismissing the issue the working class highlighted in its governance.

Lastly, they thought of dismissing the “vulnerable audience”, basically groups of people who are more susceptible to being attracted by populist messages or more affected by the problems populists highlight (Working-class communities who feel economically neglected or left behind, people experiencing unemployment, job insecurity, or declining living standards or citizens who feel politically excluded). It was based on the concept that the populist voters were often the uneducated parts of a society and that this was the reason the elections concluded with results in favor of populism. That also didn't work because it neglected the agency of voters and started treating them as victims of propaganda rather than rational actors expressing legitimate discontent with the status quo, which didn't help in getting the support of the country's citizens.

New legislation reforms

Reforms aiming to reestablish public trust between citizens and governments through new legislation. This solution failed to counter populism, firstly because trust cannot be built just by amending old ones and drafting new legislation. If the public has already seen that the governing party is corrupt and unorganised, legislative changes will have little to no immediate effect. Furthermore, such legislation formed and based on political elites' ideology and beliefs may seem like trying to make themselves be portrayed by populist leaders as efforts to protect the status quo.

A country that tried such legislation and it didn't work was Poland during 2023–2026, because during their 2023 election, legislative and governmental efforts to reverse and fight national populist policies faced severe setbacks and mainly failed due to existing presidential vetoes, internal fighting in the coalition, and the resurfacing of right-wing opposition (multi-party governing alliance). When, after multiple years of the public not trusting the government, they tried to regain their trust by restoring judicial independence, reforming public media, strengthening the rule of law, and finally improving transparency and accountability.

Counter-narratives

Building political counter-narratives. Many countries that have a democratic government have attempted to respond to populism by offering alternative narratives, such as explaining problems that might seem complex more accurately. They also tried to acknowledge citizens' concerns, which was one of the most important points of this attempt. Lastly, they promoted

cooperation rather than division. An example of such a counter-narrative would be to acknowledge that all those problems mentioned by populists are real, but the solutions proposed to them are unlikely to solve them. As effective as this attempt seemed, it failed to counter the influence of populism in democratic discourse since populist ideas, solutions, and ideologies were often simpler and more emotional. The public still preferred to follow the easier but unrealistic solution, and that is why this well-thought-out strategy unfortunately failed.

Media-organized discussion panels

Media-organized discussion panels countering populist attacks in nations that are currently influenced by populist leaders. These panels were organized by the media, trying to expose the populist narratives presented by their governments. This idea was not widely adopted since it didn't succeed from the beginning. The first reason for its failure would be political polarization. People will always doubt the media since some speeches and sayings can always be slightly altered, and they do not have a reliable source. It would be possible that they align with their existing beliefs, reducing exposure to opposing viewpoints. Lastly, it had a very limited audience reach since viewers who already distrust mainstream media may avoid these programs altogether. That way, the public could not simply trust the media that exposed their chosen politician and characterised them as populists, due to the possible alterations that might have happened. An example would be CNN, which frequently hosts journalist-led public panels (debates) to discuss the rise of populist movements and how to counter populism. Extra panels such as "Fareed Zakaria GPS," which is hosted by CNN and provides inside politics, where the Indian-born journalist and political commentator Fareed Zakaria examines democratic and political strategies against populism.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Setting Priorities and Conducting Further Research

Increasing government responsiveness to local communities would be a great way to cover all the needs of the unsatisfied individuals of a state that has been influenced by populist narratives and parties, since it would limit the chances of someone getting influenced by populist narratives, such as not being heard by the government or feeling less relevant than the "elites". We should strengthen government initiatives to do further research on populist phenomena and create direct links of communication with social groups that focus on combating populist behaviour and ideologies by political leaders in order to proactively counter the specific populist agendas and inform and educate citizens to see through the populist narratives.

Educational Programs Focusing on Countering Populist Narratives

Creating educational programmes for all the UN Member States that will explain to all generations currently involved in politics, especially older ones, about the negative effects of populist narratives and how they influence democracy, to better our chances at persuading the citizens to change their mindsets and have a result in the next elections that will combat populism. Also, a way to ensure that all states will be following these programs is to make them known to the public. This will help to strengthen the critical thinking of the citizens influenced by populism. By promoting this programme, we give the citizens of populist governed countries the opportunity to stop being so easily influenced by populist ideas and show them what democracy looks like without populism influencing democratic discourse.

Spreading Awareness through the Media

Proposes the creation of social media accounts to directly communicate with the masses to have an immediate reaction, since today's society has unlimited access to informative sources, but still prefers to choose social media as a source of information. This way, we can at least provide them with some reliable sources in the media. The accounts will be checked regularly by mechanisms that will be programmed to trace any populist message, if any, to ensure that the right information is being provided to the public and any post by those accounts has legitimate information about the effects of populism and how to counter its influence in democratic discourse. Of course, populists will have the freedom to post and spread their ideologies as well, since they have the freedom of speech, but through those accounts that will be opened will be able to spread awareness more efficiently.

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