
REVIEW ARTICLE

**Simon Tormey, *Populism: A Beginner's Guide*,
Oneworld Publications, 2019**

Ayesha Qadeer*

The concept of populism is very much into the academic discourse since last many years. The purpose of the book is to explore the different dimensions of emerging concept of populism. Also it embarks on the journey to see Europeans increasing interest in populist approach. The book also presents comparative analysis of different political ideologies with populism.

As it is the introductory chapter for discussing about ideology of populism so it talks about the emergence of the terminology which took place in 1960s, when at that time many anti-colonial movements were running and people were more concerned about their independence, suffering from identity crisis and were also securing their cultural heritage.

The example of Rodrigo Duterte was discussed was selected as the President of Philippines. His ideas were depicting populist thoughts in 2016 in which his policies were anti-adherent to the world powers. He believed to make Philippines strong and without any external influence. Also he stressed upon the idea that Philippines should find other parties who could make it a secure space for its native people.

During Brexit in UK June 2016 displayed a populist approach because not only Britain wants to exit from EU for the sake of its economic reasons but there were many reasons including cultural concerns. This lead to rocky membership of Britain in European Union.

Another example of populism was about American president Donald Trump. His whole elections show extreme populist thoughts because he was stressing the fact that how immigrants have been a burden to America and also the fabric of their culture has been distorted due to Muslims and

* Ms. Ayesha Qadeer is a Visiting Faculty at the Bahria University, Karachi.

Islamisation. And that's why his approach of making America clean from all these people was supported by many people. Furthermore the Dutch general elections in which far right party secured much recognition by the Germans, they also aimed to reverse policies which are lenient towards immigrants and de-islamization. Germans depicted nativist approach and more inclined towards correcting the national identity crisis which must be taken care of.

The world is growing rapidly in terms of economics, politics and societal norms and values so different ideologies are emerging to define people and their approach towards world. As per the norms of sociological liberalism, people tend to identify themselves with different ideologies and societies rather than only staying associated with states. With the emergence of liberal political thoughts now people have explored the potential to transform societies into magnanimous being in which petty issues must be over ruled. However, on the one hand liberal democrats have taken lead and on the other same orthodox approach which focuses on conventional school of thoughts to determine the identity of people are still strengthening their roots.

Simon Tormey, talks about the term "populism" which has emerged from 2016 to lead the people in the direction of nativism, there are many political scientist who have defined it to understand its depth and scope. Like Margaret Canvan argues in her classic study that "populism is a kind of political movement and ideology that places the idea of unified people at the core of its vision".

As populism emerged in year 2016, during elections in Philippines in which Rodrigo Duterte won as President. This elucidates the populism such an ideology which likes to unite the people who have similar cultural ground and they must be free from all kind of alien influences.

American elections are also the biggest example of rising populism in America where Donald Trump used the slogan "make America great again" which was not only a simple slogan but a slogan to tell the world that Americans will rule America and all the immigrants coming to America will be pulled away.

Dutch elections also show us great examples of reviving natives, de-islamising Holland and revision of immigration policies. Germans AFD party also promised to send back refugees. Preservation of national identity and culture was emphasized during elections including nativist approach remained highlighted. Germany has open its gates for refugees of Syria and this has created an unrest among the common German people because they believe that Syrian are not only burden on the economy but also contaminating the culture and values of Germans.

In 2017 when the era of liberal cosmopolitanism was coming to end that was the time when Populist revolutions emerged in Europe. These populist movements were opted by parties which are radical and extremist. Trying to send the people back to their home i.e. they denoted to anti-immigration policies. One of the slogans which became common at that time was “send them back to zoo”.

The chapter illustrated many definitions of Populism and tried to clarify the ambiguity present in the term. Cas Muddle said “populism is not really a fully-fledged ideology like socialism or liberalism but a weak ideology like authoritarianism or nationalism.

Jan Muller mentioned about populism as “intolerant regime injurious to liberal democracy” the perceptual differences of Ben Moffit illustrated “Its a politics associated with bad manners”.

These definitions explain that populism is an ideology which has negative connotations and it is not like Marxism, liberalism or constructivism.

The author has also explored the characteristics of Populism which are mentioned below:

- It sees the fundamental antagonism in society as one between the people (good) and elites (bad).
- Frames the political context in terms of a crisis that highlights the inadequacy of political establishment.
- Offers a redemptive vision rather than a policy-driven, technocratic or problem based approach
- Caters on charismatic figure who claims to possess extraordinary power of leadership.

- Deploys a blunter, more confrontational, more direct use of language of plain speaking.

These features of populism show that the ideology refers to people who are in majority and are ruled by the elites which are incapable. When the elites are incapable, they are unable to run society properly thus creating anxiety and sense of dis-membership among citizens. Means such circumstances have been created where people felt far away from their true sense of identity and feel lost. Populism gives them strength to reunite. When people reunite they turn against the corrupt elites who are making them fool. The leader which runs populist movement will be free from the ills of exploitation and corruption. When society can be formulated free from distinctions. A monist and unified collective approach will surpass all the previous petty ideologies.

The author has discussed the life of Russian Norodniks which he considered as a classic example of populism and movement was a populist movement. It began in Russian in 19th century. The literal meaning of the word Narodnik means people of middle class individuals who were swayed by the romantic description of peasant life. Moreover they were God-fearing monarchists and had strong sense of autonomy, created a movement which leads to uprising against autocracy.

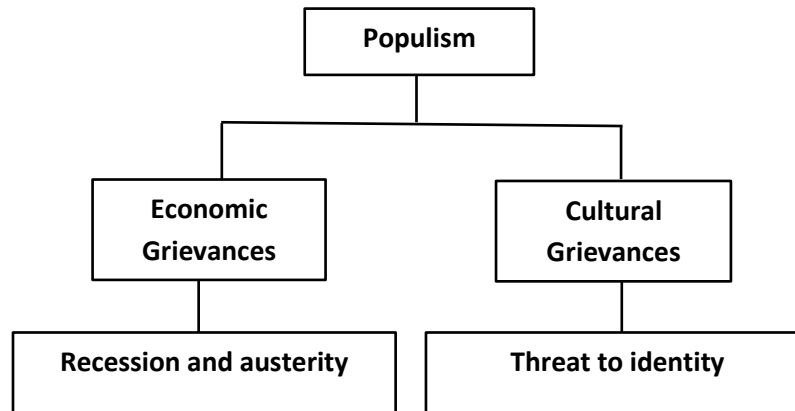
The chapter also highlights with the historical perspectives of populism and the author brings into notice that it has neither historical lineage nor traces of origin. The book has also dealt with an important matter about populist movement which shows their urgency to eradicate Islam from Europe and the impact it will bring from de-Islamization. Populism calls for the people to bring radical change in societies because due to these threats it's a time of crisis and can only be subsided by radicalism. According to populist activist "Let's build a big beautiful wall". Many critiques of populism says that incivility lies in populism. Trump's statement about Hilary Clinton that "Lock her up" shows how uncivil populism can become. That is why it is assumed more prone towards war and it shows it's undemocratic behaviour. Populist stance towards world fastest growing religion is also negative. Europe has large number of Muslim population, so as America, populist leaders are totally against their existence in their states.

The focus of chapter three is on the creation of new society that raises questions whether the populist system is in alliance with democratic ideals or not. Simon Tormey has created a debate among two. Democracy is a system in which demos (people) are the ones who should take the reins of the rule and should actively take part in the government. According to the history of Greek Empire the people used to give many ideas about politics but elites always opposed to those ideas. The political elites always opposed to the ideas of common men and that's why the rivalry became engrossed between two. Though populism emerges when it goes against the elites which are corrupt but also emergence of one nation or preserving one nation is its major component rather democratic ideals accommodates everyone in the system. So it is established that populism does not denotes to the ideology of democracy.

Populism is taking its roots in the crisis of cultural identity where far-right parties in Europe are promoting to the idea of preserving European culture and also emphasizing upon the increasing number of Muslim migrants from different parts of the world which are promoting their own cultural values and thus overriding Europe's culture. That is why Europeans consider Islamization as a threat to their national identity and anxious about it.

Wilders is a well-known critic of Islam who supported the ban of Quran and closing of Mosques in Netherlands. Populism pertains to the feeling of urgency to resist Islamisation, this shows its anti-democratic nature.

Simon Tormey has also tried to find out reasons of rise of populism. In these reason two different categories were formed. One is economic grievance theory and second is cultural. Economic reasons can be of major concerns but it is noted that cultural reasons are main factor behind populism like in Brexit many voted for pursuing cultural identity, to control immigration, restoration of British identity.



Populism is now regarded as a bacterium that has infected the body. It invokes people to follow extremist ideals which lead to anti-democratic movement. But if elites are not working on the right directions so populism become favorable to an extent yet it will create further grievances among people of different nationalities living in many countries. Now the question is how to deal with this looming threat of 21st century which can be the dividing factor in many nations. Like Hitler did in Germany when being Arian became the privilege and other identities were to be eradicated because they were like parasites and were of no use.

The chapter 4 has highlighted populist leaders as red cheeked demagogues hurting and abusing their opponents while they crave admiration from their followers. This seems that today's populist leaders like Trump or Pen have emerged to be uncivilized and blunt behaving in absolutely ill-mannered way. Similarly like the leaders which are the representatives of authoritarianism and fascism.

The chapter takes its critical turn and brings democracy and populism right in front of each other and presents comparative analysis of both terms that how they are contradictory or similar to each other. For understanding both the terms we need to assess both that how both ideas work. The reason behind the Populism claims that people need to reclaim power and sovereignty from the elites. Trump said in many of his speeches that Washington has neglected the working class for their own interests. Farage accuses British establishment of being in cahoots with EU, leaving the people powerless in the face of overwhelming bureaucracy. Pen, also accuses elites being out of touch with the sentiments of citizens confronted

with the ride of Muslims immigrants that is steadily diluting the sense of France as a Christian and European Nation.

In contemporary guise, democracy is about the management of differences among people yet populism joins people with similarities. More specifically democracy is about how we manages differences of opinion, viewpoints and ideologies in complex settings. But modern liberal democracies are about majoritarianism which poses question that is the democracy will of all the people?

Populism don't seek to disentangle opinions from that of "the people", they don't recognize differences of opinion, ideology or personal preferences as being fundamental to understanding. So populism is at odds with liberal democracy. It also want "the will of the people" to prevail but it doesn't support equality.

While concluding driving from above discussion the author opined that populism is undemocratic because it refuses to acknowledge that difference of opinion, philosophies or ideologies. Thus they ignore the minority rights. Writer has posed many thought provoking questions in which are: Is democracy about the will of all the people? Are we becoming playthings for powerful interest seeking purposes? Is new era undermining democracy and leading ways towards populism?

Chapter five focused on populism related to post-truth politics? Populism has created a combative style of politics that not only challenges arguments and rival positions but also claims that are untrue. For instance the leave campaign in the Brexit referendum notoriously emblazoned claims across advertising hoardings and buses about the money that would be brought back from EU.

The politics now after the influx of new theories or ideas will be post truth politics. Post truth describes a world in which anyone can say whatever they want if it serves the need of certain group. Post-truth politics says that populist leaders have not created recession or austerity rather they are the ones who will save the people from what elites have done to them. The reason post-truth has become the need of time because elites have ruined the system for their own benefits according to populist leaders that is why

new ideas are desirable and gaining recognition and acceptance from the wider segment of the societies.

The chapter six is about the nature of populism that must be recognized as antagonistic. People are in radical approach to put the governing class in their right place. So populism is not the cause of current crisis but its an effect. The chapter is concluded on the note that representatives and represented are disconnected and elites have manipulated the world. So renewal of democracy may indeed be an unsettling prospect, but if this is what is needed to halt its slow downward spiral into the void, it will be a price worth paying.

While concluding the book Simon Tormey tried to erase the contradictions between democratic and populist ideals and how both are related when it comes to elites behavior with the citizens. However populism can be opted when there are only conflictual ideologies but still it is least favored because of its nature. So to deal with populism we need to understand that it can become the greatest threat of time. As for the thesis of clash of civilizations represented that world will be divided into civilizations so populism is stepping towards endorsing the thesis of Samuel P. Huntington and thus clash will also become unavoidable. Also we can't deny the current situations of six million North African in France striving for their cultural heritage, likewise Trumps ideas of banning and eradicating Islam from America. Also similar sentiments are arising in Holland because of Muslims refugees. Also falling democracy can be witnessed in these areas due to populists who claimed others to be outsiders.

Yet many populist theorist believe that populism in itself is not against democracy and it talks about demos working in politics but here we must remember that still populism supports the idea of antagonism which is totally contradictory to democratic approach.

For further categorical understanding, populism can be understood by a Venn-diagram of two circles, one area labeled populism and the other labeled authoritarianism. Where the two intersect we find authoritarian-populism. To one side is non-authoritarian populism which could complement the existing form of democratic governments.

So populism is such a change which is unavoidable and the reason lies in democracy and globalization too. This phenomenon many create unsettled citizens which leads them to be the follower of populism to correct the system and eliminate the political elites. To manage the world politics now leaders must take steps to address issues which have been emerged because of global world order and this way populism can be tackled. Yet seeking atrocious and antagonistic means to maintain rule is not favorable for world and will only create lines which will be on fire. The book is good addition regarding the concept of populism.