How to Fight Back against Populism – Left and Right

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1985 to 2010

The End of History

- Francis Fukuyama - 1989

"What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."
Today...
Charting democracy’s ups and downs, 2006 to 2023
(Global average Democracy Index score; 0-10 scale)

Source: EIU.
Sharp Decline in Global Economic Freedom

Fraser Institute 2023
Populism – defining characteristics

1. Unserious and ill-founded policies
2. A rhetorical style and discourse frame
3. Autocratic institutional orientation
1. Unserious and ill-founded policies


“Most populist experiments go through five distinct phases that span from euphoria to collapse. Historically, the vast majority of populist episodes end up badly; incomes of the poor and middle class tend to be lower than when the experiment was launched”


”We identify 51 populist presidents and prime ministers from 1900 to 2020 and show that the economic cost of populism is high. After 15 years, GDP per capita is 10 percent lower compared to a plausible nonpopulist counterfactual. Economic disintegration, decreasing macroeconomic stability, and the erosion of institutions typically go hand in hand with populist rule.”
2. A rhetorical style and discourse frame

1. An appeal to the "true" people, anti-establishment
2. The ‘Us vs. Them’ logic, deliberate polarization, trigger tribalism
3. Emotional, non-rational argumentation
4. Narratives that ‘construct’ the people and its different enemies
5. Attack "fake news", media, experts, courts, demonize opponents
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The ‘people’</th>
<th>The ‘elite’</th>
<th>The ‘others’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morales</td>
<td>Neoliberals, experts, right-wing media, right of center political parties, capitalists, IMF, World Bank</td>
<td>Big business, capital owners, foreign companies, actors on the global markets, US, EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iglesias Turrión</td>
<td>Academics, experts, liberals, left-wing media, established parties, international organizations, EU, cosmopolitan elites</td>
<td>Migrants, non-natives, ethnic and religious minorities, Muslims, Jews</td>
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<td><strong>Key themes</strong></td>
<td>Neoliberalism, anti-capitalism, anti-globalization, discrimination, exploitation, protectionism, anti-Americanism, inequality, redistribution</td>
<td>Nationalism, cultural identity, anti-immigration, traditionalism, religion, law and order, anti-globalization, national sovereignty, protectionism, restore welfare systems</td>
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3. Autocratic institutional orientation

- Ultra-majoritarian, volonté general
- Anti-constitutional, anti-checks-and-balances, anti-pluralist
- Successive attacks on courts, electoral manipulations, limiting minority rights etc.

- An enemy from within democracy itself

- Deeply illiberal
Explaining populism and autocratization

- Institutions and policies ($t_1$)
- Economic and social conditions
- Populist ideas, beliefs, and values
- Charismatic leaders and policy entrepreneurs
- Interest and identity of the 'people'
- Autocratizing institutions and policies ($t_2$)

Globalization
Immigration
Policy failures
etc.

Social media
A collectivistic identity politics

- The ‘us-versus-them’ logic offers a sense of belonging, to the nation, class, history, or religion
- Provides meaning and a purpose – to defend the people against allegedly corrupt elites and threatening others
- A politics of resentment and recognition
The liberal potential

Three dimensions of classical liberalism

1. The liberal institutions
   - Limited government. constitutional democracy, the rule of law, private property rights, civil liberties, etc.

2. The liberal economy and society
   - Market economy, civil society, voluntary cooperation, clubs, families, open society, etc.

3. The liberal spirit
   - Rejoice in individual development and self-authorship, in entrepreneurship, in diversity and tolerance, in free speech and rational discourse in voluntary cooperation, moderation, etc.
Four categories of liberal strategies

1. Expose the populist strategies and their consequences
2. Defend and develop the liberal institutions
3. Embrace and promote the liberal spirit
4. Develop liberal statecraft
Requires the revival of classical liberalism itself