

Taking Populism Seriously: A Focus on Global Economy and the International Organizations

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.803005>

Received: 13 February 2024; Accepted: 23 February 2024; Published: 27 March 2024

ABSTRACT

The focus of this article is to explore the role of populism as a defining feature of the geo-political landscape in the 21st century. This review article examines the theories of populism exclusively and investigates the effects of populists' backlash against the global economy and international organizations. By engaging in an in-depth review of the literature on the subject, this essay analyzes the various forms of populist backlashes against international organizations. First, I observed the various conceptualizations of populism and adopted the use of Qualitative Data Analysis software to analyze the contents of speeches and political statements of some populist leaders around the world. Second, this essay developed three ideal types of populism and illustrates the condition under which each of these typologies can exist or co-exist. Third, I assess the current literature on the populist backlash against international organizations and argue that although nationalism plays an essential role in the right-wing populist parties and governments in Europe, it is insufficient to explain the backlashes against the global economy and international organizations. Fourth, I combined the theories of populism with the literature on the backlash against international organizations and proposed three forms of backlash available to populist governments. Lastly, I developed a framework for the interaction between the three typologies of populism and these forms of backlashes. I concluded that compliance problems have increased in the face of the current waves of populism.

Keywords: Populism. Backlash. International Organizations. Geo-political landscape.

INTRODUCTION

A common trend in the literature on populism is that the global rise of populist movements has become a defining feature of the global political landscape in the past decades. Branded by its appeal to the grievances and anxieties of the masses, populism has challenged established norms and institutions in various domains, with significant implications for the global economy and the international liberal order. Scholars often distinguish between left-wing and right-wing populism and explore how populist movements emerge within the existing party systems or as independent entities, for instance, populism in Europe and Latin America (see, for example, Betz, 1994; Ignazi, 2003; Mudde, 2007; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012; Taggart, 2017; de la Torre, 2017).

According to J.F Fuentes (2020), “the academic definitions of the concept of populism usually stress the pejorative sense of the term, the manipulative nature of the phenomenon, and its aversion to political and intellectual elites.” In other words, this “thin-centered” ideology as observed by Mudde (2004) has captured the attention of scholars, policymakers, politicians, and observers worldwide without much consensus on the exclusionary and inclusionary nature of the concept. This is most visible in the seminal work of Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser (2012), which examined the contemporary European exclusive right-wing populism and

Latin America inclusive left-wing populism. They argued that exclusionary populism is based on resentment towards elites, minorities, or foreigners, while inclusionary populism is based on solidarity with the common people against perceived threats or injustice.

This Manichean view of the notion of the “people” in the definition of populism has placed so many ambiguities on the conceptualization of the term. Canovan (1984) posits that the flexibility of the term “people” has two important implications: “In the first place, the term’s specific ambiguities make it a kind of common currency into which the concerns of most brands of politics can be converted, thereby providing politicians with a fund of rhetorical devices. Secondly, however, the term’s range of senses also allows it to draw together a set of political views that are populist in the more substantial sense of forming an ideological complex distinct from familiar and institutionalized ideologies” (pg. 314). In sum, the ambiguous use of the term “people” serves as a versatile tool for politicians, both in terms of rhetorical style and in forming substantial ideological views that differ from traditional political ideologies. Although, much has been written on the “people” (see, for example, Canovan, 1984; Canovan, 2005; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018), extensive works are yet to be done in distinguishing between the different types of “corrupt elites”. It’s necessary and germane to our understanding of populism and its rhetorical styles to recognize which elites are being referred to by which populist.

Kaltwasser et al. (2017) state that the elite is “the anti-thesis of the people.” This distinction emphasizes the important role of the elite in the definition of populism, but this distinction is not clear as to who comprises the group called “the elites”. A good example adopted by these authors is that “American conservative populists pit the common people against the “latte-drinking, sushi-eating, Volvo-driving, New York Times-reading, Hollywood-loving liberal elite” (pg. 33). This distinction blurs the line between which group of people belongs to the elite. I shall argue that further clarification could be made by distinguishing between political and economic elites to recognize which type of “the elites” populists are referring to in their rhetoric. This distinction sheds light on the proper usage of this term and its implication for understanding populism.

In essence, the literature on populism is expansive, though the concept remains largely contested among scholars. The interdisciplinary discourse on populism extends far beyond a single academic field. Economists like Dani Rodrik (2018) once examined the ways and manners in which populism can be both a driver and response to economic challenges. Likewise, international relations scholars such as Copelovitch and Peve house (2019) attempted to “disentangle the rise of populism and a resurgence of nationalism as distinct processes and concepts.” While they observed that the rise of populist nationalism presents a form of challenge to international institutions, Benjamin De Cleen argued that “including elements of nationalism in definitions of populism hinders the application of the concept to other (non-nationalist) forms of populism” (De Cleen, 2017. Pg. 342). This clarification and distinction are germane to our understanding of what populism is and what is not. He further defined populism in a way that distinguishes it from nationalism. According to De Cleen, “Nationalism is a discourse structured around the nodal point nation, envisaged as a limited and sovereign community that existed through time and is tied to a certain space, and that is constructed through an in/out (member/non-member) opposition between the nation and its outgroups”. This definition stresses the notion of shared identity and national interest, and this helps to distinguish it from populism.

Arguing further, De Cleen sees populism as “a discourse centered around the nodal points ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’, in which the meaning of ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’ is constructed through a down/up antagonism between ‘the people’ as a large powerless group and ‘the elite’ as a small and illegitimately powerful group” (2017: 345). While there could be overlaps and instances where nationalism and populism coexist, it’s important to note that there are sharp distinctions between these two. Nationalism on the one hand can exist alone without populism (see, for example, Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983; Abdelal, 2005), on the other

hand, it's impossible to have populism without a nation or nation-state. As De Cleen noted, "most populist politics operate within a national context" (2017:347) but not all. Hence, this distinction between nationalism and populism is essential to our understanding of populists' strategies and techniques whenever they appeal to national identities or sentiments through the formula of an "us versus them".

Additionally, political theorists like Ernesto Laclau (2005) have delved into the ideological underpinnings of populism and its influence on democratic processes. To grasp the full significance of this concept and its impact on the global context, it is imperative that we take this multifaceted ideology seriously, and particularly explore its consequences for the global economy and international organizations. In this pursuit, this essay explores the intersection between populism and global economic trends, the populist backlash against IOs, and the broader international liberal order. By examining its impacts on trade policies, financial systems (such as WTO, IMF, and World Bank), and international organizations (such as UN, EU, ICJ, and ICC). I shall argue that the salience of populism in this "century of populism"¹ poses a vital threat to the survival of the current global order. Following Colgan & Keohane (2017); Krieger (2019); Copelovitch & Peve house (2019); Patman (2019); Voeten (2019), and Pollack (2023), this essay seeks to advance the contemporary literature on populism and its backlashes against international organizations and help shed light on the multifaceted challenges posed by populism in the 21st century.

General Overviews

This essay proposes to examine the salience of populism by engaging in an in-depth review of the current state of the literature on the subject matter. Although, it's impossible to do justice to all that has been written on this topic in this essay, nevertheless, this essay engaged the literature on populism and examined its dynamics within the context of the global economy and international organizations. Following the conceptualization of populism according to notable populism scholars such as Ionescu & Gellner, 1969; Stanley, 2008; Mudde, 2009; Taggart, 2000; Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013; Müller, 2016; Kaltwasser, et al. 2017; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018; Fuentes, 2020, this essay offers a brief overview of the literature on the subject. It advances our understanding of what we know about populism and proposes a clarification of the term. How should we theorize populism? What can be called populism and what cannot? How should we distinguish between real populists and those who were merely branded as populists (and perhaps others who are never called populists, never call themselves populists, and yet still might be populists)? And how do we understand populism "techniques and their moral justifications"?² These are questions that scholars have tried to examine and considering this, further engagement and explanation are required. This essay proceeds to engage these questions succinctly and at the same time, fill the void in the existing literature on populism.

To answer these questions, this essay adopts the use of Qualitative Data Analysis software (NVIVO) to analyze the speeches and political statements of notable populist leaders around the world and examine the pattern in which they use populist rhetoric and sentiments in their political statements. This endeavor can help us trace and identify similar patterns in the speeches and political statements of other leaders around the world. I argue that by adopting content analysis, one can measure and identify populism through its anti-elite rhetoric, direct appeal to the "pure people", and anti-establishment stands. Similarly, following Mudde & Kaltwasser's (2012) core necessary and sufficient conditions for defining populism, I developed three typologies of populism: political cum cultural, socioeconomic, and anti-establishment or anti-status quo populism. Basing my theoretical argument on these three typologies allows for a minimal definition of populism that seeks to avoid "conceptual stretching"³ and at the same time captures the contemporary definition of populism.

Following the theories of populism, the second section proceeds to conceptualize the international liberal order and its offshoots (global economy and international organizations). This essay seeks to understand and explain the intricate relationship between domestic politics and international affairs by probing populist backlashes against international organizations. Following Ikenberry's (2018) powerful work, *The End of*

Liberal International Order?, Von Borzyskowski & Vabulas (2019), Voeten (2020), Lake, Martin & Risse (2021), Walter (2021), Pollack (2023), this essay carried out a comprehensive review of the literature and argues that in recent years, more and more backlash politics have challenged the stability of the international organization through the force of populist movements.

This section focuses on the impact of populism on the global economy (such as the IMF, World Bank, and WTO) and international organizations (such as the UN, ICC, EU, and ICJ). The paper aims to examine and survey the various ways through which populism has undermined the stability of the current international liberal order and its offshoots. I analyze and advance Copelovitch and Pevehouse's (2019) typology of how and when a state might decide to object to rules, renegotiate rules, or withdraw from international cooperation and organizations in the face of populist and nationalist backlash. By differentiating between populism and nationalism and holding populism constant, this essay traces the causal linkage between populism and the issue of backlashes against international organizations. It shows that although nationalism could be a significant factor contributing to the end of the liberal international order, it is in no way a sufficient condition.

In the next section, I combine the theories of populism and its impacts on IOs with what we know about the current state of the field. At the same time examines the different cases of the effects of populism on the global economy and international organizations and how it has contributed to the recent backlashes against these liberal institutions. I propose a framework under which we would observe either anti-globalization (threaten to exit), rule rejections, renegotiation, or exit from IOs in the face of a populist government. These cases are not limited to the case of former US president Donald Trump or Brexit in the UK but also extended to other parts of the world where scholars and observers have observed different cases of backlash against international organizations such as international courts, World Bank, IMF, EU, UN, and other international cooperation. By reviewing and engaging different literature on the waves of populist movements around the world in the past decade (Betz, 1994; Voeten, 2020; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012; Alter, Gathii, & Helfer, 2016; Patman, 2019; Pollack, 2023), this section serves as the empirical section for this essay and provides results for the relationship between populism on the IV side of the equation and its impacts on the global economy and international organizations on the DV side.

The last section engages the question: Have compliance, bargaining, and commitment problems in international cooperation and organizations become more severe in the wake of rising populist movements? In conclusion, I observed that the international liberal order has suffered greatly from the waves of populist movements around the world in the past decades. These waves are not limited only to Europe or Latin America but extended farther to Africa, America, Asia, and the rest of the world. It's imperative to note that this essay in no way argues that the liberal international order is dead or that populism is the end of the liberal international order, instead, I offer the need for more nuanced clarification on the subject matter and suggest that we might as well take populism seriously if it's indeed a spectre haunting the world and the global order.

THEORIES OF POPULISM

This section seeks to examine the different definitions of populism and engage in an in-depth review of the current state of the field on the subject. The "thin-centered ideology"⁴ has generated considerable interest and endless controversy from scholars in political science and social science at large. The lack of consensus among scholars studying this concept cannot be overemphasized. Following Fuentes's (2020) review of the literature, populism "has been described, more than defined, as a 'dirty political word,' 'a conceptual mirage,' 'a syndrome,' 'a variable geometry concept,' 'a conceptual overstretch,' 'a conceptual slipperiness,' 'an imprecise term,' 'a notoriously vague term,' 'a cloud of loathsome associations,' and 'a rather dismissive term, due to its connotation of unpleasant, untidy, brutal things'" (pg. 48). These terms

demonstrate the different meanings scholars have attributed to the concept of populism.

Scholars usually follow Mudde's (2004) definition of populism as "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (2004: 543). This generally accepted definition of populism illustrates a dichotomous and Manichean view of society, a sharp distinction between "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite". Surprisingly, the notion of "the people" versus "the corrupt elite" or the "us versus them" formula is one of the only consensus shared by scholars on the definition of populism. Another important idea in Mudde's (2004) conceptualization of populism is the notion of populism as a "thin-centered ideology" that can always be attached to other broader ideologies such as nationalism and democracy. In this review essay, I followed De Cleen (2017) to clarify the distinction between populism and nationalism and then examine the two facets of populism—exclusive or inclusive—as discussed in the literature.

Contrary to others, De Cleen (2017: 343-345) goes as far as to disentangle the relationship between "the concepts of nationalism and populism." The question becomes why is there so much theoretical confusion between populism and nationalism? He argues that "a first group of nationalist demands that has prominently been articulated with populism revolves around the exclusion of certain groups of people from the nation, from the nation-state and from political decision-making power. A second group of nationalist demands that has been formulated in populist terms is about the sovereignty of the nation and its right to its own nation-state, as against larger state structures, colonizing forces, and supra-national political bodies" (pg. 348). In this sense, nationalists' demands in terms of identity, interests, and sovereignty have been articulated and adopted by populists in order to appeal to the sentiment of the people included in the "us" against "them". The radical right-wing populist parties in Europe such as in the case of Austria, France, Netherlands, Denmark, Bulgaria, and Italy are prime examples of the exclusionary nature of populism. As Rosenberger (2004) argued, "Issues related to national identity are among the top campaign issues for right-wing populist leaders across Europe" (pg.22). In other words, this shows the salience of identities among the right-wing populist parties in Europe even though there are other issues.

Populism and Nationalism

This focus on "national identities" and the idea of a "homogenous group" cause confusion and conflation between populism and nationalism. Hence, distinguishing between the two becomes problematic because populists in these contexts leverage nationalists' claim to preserve their national identities against the group of people they regard as "foreigners." In this sense, exclusionary populism derives its meaning from this because the homogenous society is considered to be exclusively regarded to be for the "pure people" (us) against them (immigrants or foreigners). This is consistent with Rosenberger's (2004) argument that "To build an 'us' as a nation-based group, one must first identify which groups are targeted by populist parties as 'them'" (pg.23). The immigrants or foreigners are being referred to as "them" in this context. Furthermore, De Cleen (2017) posits that "the conceptual disentanglement of populism and nationalism and the focus on the articulation of the two also helps clarify the distinction between *exclusionary* (or exclusive) and *inclusionary* (or inclusive) populism" (pg. 351). It is as a result of this articulation that one can understand populist strategies and techniques, particularly exclusionary populism when it's combined with nationalist demands.

Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2013) empirically examined the exclusionary and inclusionary nature of populism by focusing on four cases in Europe and Latin America between 1990-2010. They observed that "while most literature on Latin America speaks of the inclusive capacities of populism, and virtually all literature on Europe emphasizes the exclusive character of populism, few authors are particularly clear about the exact nature of the inclusion/exclusion" (pg.158). Basing their clarification of exclusive and inclusive populism on three dimensions — material, political, and symbolic — they argued that the populist

governments in Latin America (Chávez and Morales) promoted economic inclusion of the poor while in Europe, the populist parties (Freedom Party of Austria and French Front National) focus on the exclusion of “the outgroups rather than on the inclusion of (parts of) the ingroup” (2013: 160). Under this economic dimension, the inclusive left-wing populist governments in Latin America favor the inclusion of the “ordinary” people against the “corrupt elites” whom they see as the antithesis of the “true people”. The exclusive right-wing populist parties in Europe exclude the “outsider”, as they are considered to be the source of their woes. In this sense, the populists view the immigrants as outgroups and shouldn’t be allowed to enjoy the benefits of the welfare state.

The arguments for the political and symbolic dimensions follow the same logic. The inclusionary populism in Latin America professes more inclusion and political representation of the “outgroups” that the “corrupt elites” have discriminated against. The European populists on the other hand stress that the “Brussels bureaucrats” have made their society polarized, and the solution is to exclude the “outgroup” (immigrants and foreigners) and limit their integration into the society by advocating for various policies that directly target these groups of people. In this instance, the populist government usually adopts slogans like “own people first” to connote the exclusion of the perceived “outsider”. Similarly, under the symbolic dimension, the Latin American inclusive populism according to Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013) “are prone to develop a discourse that frames the establishment as an enemy of the ‘the people’ that should be eradicated” (pg.165). This connotation illustrates how the populist government identifies with the “ordinary people” against the “corrupt elites” and manages to show a symbol of solidarity with “the people” against “the corrupt elites”. The radical right-wing populist parties in Europe on the other hand, usually claim to only represent the “pure people” and exclude the “non-native” groups. By advocating for “the French people” or “the Austrian people”, they symbolize their aversion for the outgroups and create a distinction between the “real people” and “the alien”.

This notion of the inclusiveness and exclusiveness by left-wing and right-wing populism begs for a much closer examination of the groups involved in exclusion or inclusion. I examined the various ways in which scholars have explained these groups: “the people” and “the corrupt elites”. Given the concerns of these two groups, I analyzed the different definitions in the literature on populism for “the people” and advanced contemporary understanding of “the corrupt elite”. I argue that a further clarification can be made to distinguish between “political elites” and “economic elites”.

The People versus The Elites

Canovan (1984) and (2005) discussed extensively the meaning of the people as usually used by populists. I draw on Ron & Nadesan’s (2020) work to unpack the different conceptualizations of “the people” as usually used by scholars and offer a clear understanding of the various uses of this concept. According to these scholars, the concept of “the people” in the literature on populism is usually used as “an identity group, as a social class, and as a political unit” (2020: 6). They argue that although the usage of these “three images”⁴ often overlap, each of these images poses different questions for scholars of populism. In the first image, “the people” is often used to connote an identity group. People who share similar identities and this shared identity shape their political interests. This is consistent with Canovan’s (1984) arguments that viewing “the people” as a nation allows populists to use words such as “the French people,” “the People’s Party,” “the people of Argentina” and so on. She further argued that “right and left alike conceive of the people in collective terms as a community of one sort or another, even though they disagree about the boundaries of that community” (1984: 316).

The second image of “the people” as discussed by Ron & Nadesan (2020) is as a social class, “the plebs”.⁵ “The people” in this sense are classified as a social group that shares similarities in economic and social status. They are considered to be at the disadvantage of the economic elites and have the objective of mobilizing against this subgroup of “the corrupt elites”. According to Ron & Nadesan, “what distinguishes

‘the people’ is their marginal social position vis-à-vis the elite” (2020:6). The group of people in this social group could belong to different identities or political groups. Still, they share the same economic and social status, and this shared “imagined community”⁶ allows populists to appeal to their sentiments and interests. In some cases, these groups of people are classified as the losers of globalization and therefore always have a negative stand against the economic elites whom they perceive to be the beneficiaries of globalization.

The third image as discussed by these scholars is “the people” as a political entity. Given the people in this context, the populist leaders usually rally the support of the people against the other group of “the corrupt elite”, the political elite. The issue of legitimacy, power, and sovereignty is always called into question here. This is common in the radical right-wing parties in Europe and among the newly formed populist (military) leaders in Africa. The major concern to this third image of the people usually involves the right to rule and the legitimacy of the political elites. In the European populism context, the right-wing populist parties believed the political elites and the Brussels bureaucrats supported immigration policies that undermined the authenticity of the “pure people”. In other words, “the people” as a political entity align against the “political elites” and seek to change the power dynamics of the state to become more representative of the “true people”.

These distinctions between the three images of the people can help us better understand the symbolic and material meanings populists attached to the usage of this term. At the same time, it allows for a more nuanced understanding of what populists refer to when they claim to represent the people. It’s important in this sense to know which group of people they are making claims to represent. In the same vein, it’s also essential to establish the distinction between the political and economic elites.

As briefly noted above, there is a sharp distinction between the political elites and economic elites. Although most literature on populism always categorized both groups as “the corrupt elite”, this distinction is crucial to our understanding of how they affect “the people” indifferently. Nevertheless, the general overlap in the usage of “corrupt elites” made this distinction less relevant to most scholars. I argue that political elites pose more political and legitimacy threats to “the people” than the economic elites. In the case of the right-wing populist parties in Europe, the political elites made up a big chunk of the “corrupt elites” since they comprise the groups that formulate policies and laws that affect the European identity and aggravate the division between “us” and “them”.⁷ Furthermore, “the people” as a political entity, as discussed above, tend to antagonize “the corrupt political elites” more often than the economic elites. The populist parties project “the people’s” concerns through a political lens and therefore clamor for more political representation and support for themselves as the only true and legitimate government. Similar instances can be observed among the populist governments in some parts of Africa. Recently, the waves of military coups in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso attest to this fact. These populist (military) leaders relied on the support of “the pure people” to seize power from other political leaders they tagged illegitimate due to their ethnic identity. Figures 2 and 3 show the word clouds for the survey of these populist (military) leaders’ speeches and political statements. Their incessant appeal to the people and constant use of populist rhetoric pits them side by side with other populist leaders around the world.

Meanwhile “the economic elites” face more opposition from the populist government in Latin America than their counterparts in Europe and Africa. While it could be argued that the economic elites are the beneficiaries of globalization according to the left-wing populist government in Latin America, the nexus between political elites and economic elites makes it difficult to study this subgroup of “the corrupt elites” alone. The people as identity, social, and political entities alike hold the economic elites responsible for their economic woes. The economic condition of “the people” usually makes it easy for populist parties or leaders to direct their frustration towards the economic elites. Further clarification can be made between the political elites and the economic elites; however, this dichotomy is not always perfect because the line between these two is blurry. Both right-wing and left-wing populists prefer to use the general categorization

of “the corrupt elite” instead of making a distinction between the two.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 show the pattern of the political statements and speeches of some randomly selected populist leaders around the world. This exercise is carried out to observe a pattern in the speeches of populist leaders around the world. By observing the nature of their use of populist rhetoric and appeal to people, we can develop a template to analyze other political leaders’ speeches. I argue that, by their speeches, we can know them and know how to deal with them.

Measuring Populism

Scholars have adopted various methods to map and measure populism. In this essay, I examined the three populist techniques and “moral justifications” proposed by Müller (2016) to measure populism. In this endeavor, I employed the use of Qualitative Data Analysis software to analyze the contents of the speeches of some populist leaders around the world. Following Müller, the first technique or strategy usually adopted by populists is “to colonize or ‘occupy’ the state. Müller argued that populists sought to control the state apparatus and transform it to create “a state to their own political liking and in their own political image” (2016: 45). They tend to openly reshape the state by leveraging on their claim to represent the people. Related but distinct from this technique is the populist use of mass clientelism.

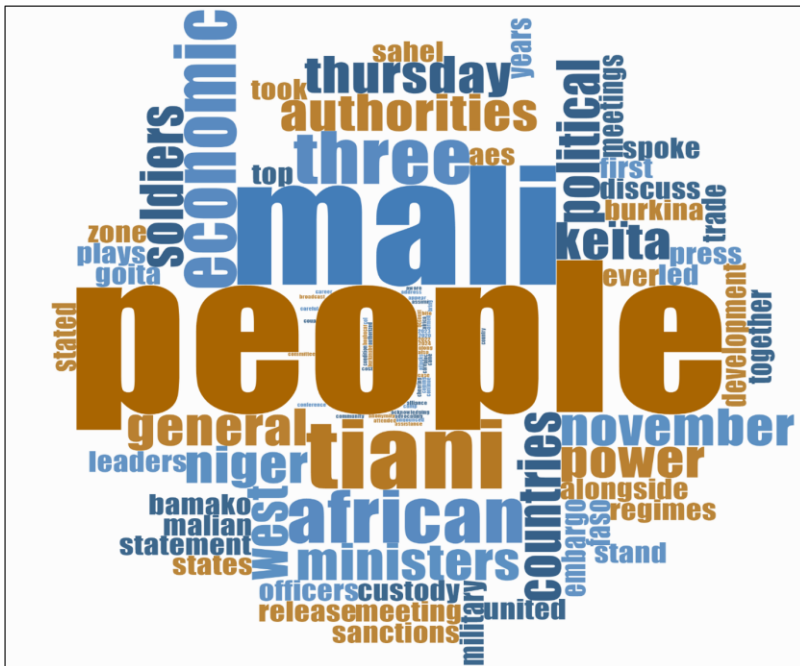
According to Müller, this second technique is not exclusive to populism but “what makes populists distinctive, once more, is that they can engage in such practices openly and with public moral justifications” (2016:46). Hence, this strategy is intrinsic to populism since it’s based on the notion that “the people” are at the disadvantage of the corrupt elite. And, that the state resources should be made available to the “true people” in whatever means they can, be it clientelism. The third technique involves the use of “discriminatory legalism”. Müller (2016) observed that populist governments usually posit that only the “true people” should benefit from enjoying the full protection of the law. The “corrupt elites” are considered to be the enemy of the state and therefore should not benefit from the protection of the law. As Ionescu and Gellner (1969) argued, “populism worships the people” (pg.4). These techniques emphasize the distinction between “the people” and “the corrupt” elites and that only “the true people” should benefit from the resources of the state.

In Figure 1, I analyzed the contents of the political statements, speeches, and campaigns of the former US president, Donald Trump, as documented in the newspapers and news articles. By adopting Qualitative Data Analysis software (NVIVO), this article was able to capture the various keywords in his 2016 campaign speeches and other political statements. His constant use of “the people” and his anti-establishment stands are consistent with what other scholars have observed in the past. In this context, it made sense to analyze a well-known populist like Trump because it gives room for comparison with other populist leaders around the world.

In Figure 2, the data obtained shows the word cloud for the speeches of the new populist (military) leader in Mali. Col. Assimi Goita seized power on May 28, 2021, and ever since then has been appealing to the people’s sentiment and support. By identifying with the people and claiming to be the true representative of the authentic people against the corrupt political elites, this study pits him side by side with other populist leaders around the world. Hence analyzing his speeches and political statements proves best for identifying populist rhetoric in his speeches. I drew on his documented speeches in local newspapers and other news articles, then analyzed it using the content analysis software, the result shows a similar trend in his constant use of “the people”. The use of the term “National Committee for the Salvation of the People” as the supreme military council in the country illustrates the extent to which the military (populist) leaders identified with the people.

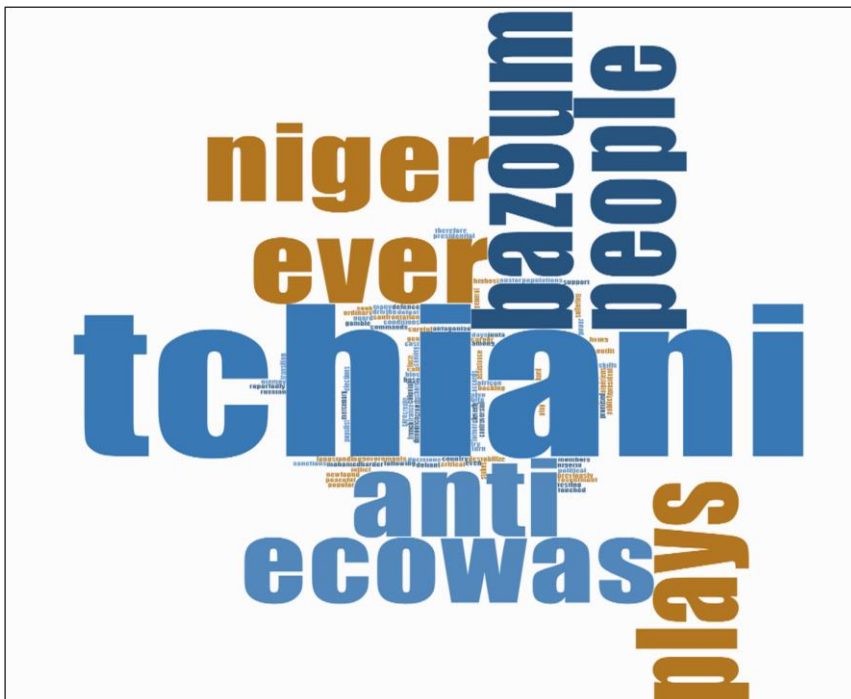
Figure 3. shows the word cloud for the contents of the new Nigerien military(populist) leader’s political

Figure. 2



Sources: AP News, BBC, NPR, and Local Malian newspapers

Figure. 3



Sources: AfricaNews, local Nigerien newspapers, and BBC

The Three Typologies of Populism

Indeed, as Gidron & Bonikowski (2013) argued that “it is hard to find a common ideological denominator that connects the various ostensibly populist movements” (pg. 5). This review article seeks to find “common

ideological denominators” by categorizing the various forms of populism as examined by scholars into three broad categories. These ideal types are consistent with Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser’s (2013) dimensions but different in terms of their generalizability. I observed that to avoid “conceptual stretching,” to borrow Sartori’s (1970) words, one can group populism under three broad types —political cum cultural, socio-economic, and anti-establishment or anti-status quo. Although these typologies may not be well defined along a full spectrum, we can always observe more of one or less of the others when examining populism. I build on the theoretical arguments that populism can be defined as a political ideology (see, for example, Mudde 2004, Stanley 2008, Kaltwasser et. al. 2017) or political style and strategy (see, for example, Rosenberger 2004, Laclau 2005, Bonikowski and Gidron 2015), and propose that categorizing populism under these three typologies allows for minimal conceptualization of populism that is consistent with the contemporary definitions.

The Political cum cultural typology

This type of populism focuses on the nature of the policies and perceptions of the populist parties or government. In the context of the right-wing populist parties in Europe, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013) observed that the parties opposed extending political rights to the “alien” and sought to formulate policies that limit the integration of immigrants and foreigners into their political landscape. The populist parties claim to be representative of the “true people” and exclude the other groups they label as “them”. In essence, under the political cum cultural typology of populism, the emphasis is on the ethnic and cultural background of the people above every other political debate. For instance, immigration policies and anti-European integration laws are usually at the forefront of the policies proposed by populist governments or parties under this typology. The populist parties in this context build an “us” as a nation-based group against the “them”, the minority groups or foreigners and immigrants. The true common people alone are expected to benefit from the welfare state since the non-ethnic groups are considered to be detrimental to the cultural well-being of the society.

The socioeconomic typology

Similar to the political cum cultural typology, the socioeconomic typology of populism emphasizes the economic and social status of the common people. This classification is consistent with Ron and Nadesan’s (2020) second image of the people. This typology stresses the social and economic class of the people and puts the corrupt economic elites at the center of the causes of the economic woes of the people. As argued by Mudde and Kaltwasser (2018), the “losers of globalization” or the “underdogs” tend to aggregate their feelings and sentiments against the corrupt elites. The tension here is that the increasing influence of globalization and the global market only benefits the economic elite, hence, populist parties or governments in this context tend to propose protectionist policies and other measures that could curtail the influence of globalization. Unlike the other typologies, this typology places much emphasis on the economic situation of the society and not the demographic composition.

The anti-establishment or anti-status quo typology

This typology is one of the most commonly observed forms of populism as most populists tend to always antagonize one form of established norms or the other. From the populist movements in Europe to Latin America and Africa, populist parties and governments usually oppose established institutions and norms. As argued later in this essay, the waves of anti-establishment or anti-status quo forms of populism have hit the global political landscape, and most international organizations are facing backlashes from populist governments around the world. From Brexit in the UK, the US withdrawal from UNESCO, Trump’s delegitimation⁸ of the Appellate Body (AB) of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the backlash against regional courts in Africa and international courts, to the recent anti-status quo stands of the new regimes in West African countries, populist anti-establishment and anti-status form have infiltrated the geopolitical

landscape in last few decades.

In sum, grouping the different forms of populism under these three categories helps to observe the ways populism works and know how to deal with it. The next section of this review essay examines the various populist backlashes against the global economy and international organizations. I build on the different works by scholars on the populist backlash and its effect on international organizations. At the same time, I followed Cope lovitch and Peve house's (2019) typology to develop a framework for when states would choose to threaten to exit, reject rules, renegotiate, or outrightly exit from international organizations in the face of a populist government.

THE GLOBAL ECONOMY AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The main focus of this section is to understand the relationship between domestic politics and how it translates into international politics. International relations scholars have examined how the domestic structure shapes foreign policies and how in turn the structure of the international system affects the decisions of the state. Gourevitch (1978) probed the links between domestic and international politics and argued that “two aspects of the international system have powerful effects upon the character of domestic regimes: the distribution of power among states, or the international system; and the distribution of economic activity and wealth, or the international economy” (1978: 883). This is consistent with realist arguments that both economic and political power shape the behavior of the state (see, for example, Morgenthau 1967, Waltz 1959).

Furthermore, Gourevitch (1978) argued that a state's regime type and coalition patterns are important variables that explain the pattern of foreign policy. This argument focuses on how regime types and coalition patterns affect the decisions of the state in the international system. As I argued in this essay, the effects of populism on the domestic politics of a state influence the nature of the foreign policies adopted. This is consistent with Gourevitch's argument that both regime type and collation pattern have impacts on the economic and the international state system. He concluded that “the international system is not only a consequence of domestic politics and structures but a cause of them” (1978:911). This “second image reversed” helps us to understand how different structures of the state —regime types and coalition pattern — shapes the nature of foreign policy and in turn affects the international system. According to Waltz (1959), there are three images of international relations, the first image is human behavior, the second image is the internal structure of states themselves and the third image is the anarchical nature of the international system. Going by this logic, the second image can be shaped by both the first and second images. The behavior of the different political actors in the state can influence the behavior of the state in the international system. Likewise, the anarchical nature of the international system also affects how the state interacts and behaves with other states in global politics.

This essay examines how the second image impacts the nature of international regimes. Krasner (1982) defined regimes as “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations” (pg. 186). This definition highlights the necessary conditions for international regimes as the set of rules and norms around which actors' expectations and behavior converge. In this essay, I examine the conditions under which states decide not to comply with these sets of rules and norms. As Krasner further argued, “regime-governed behavior must not be based solely on short-term calculations of interest” (pg.187). This suggests that although states might consider the cost and benefits calculus of joining an international regime, they must also note that their joining must not hinge on short-term calculations. In this regard, what explains the recent backlashes against international organizations? Why are some states threatening to exit or exit international organizations? And under what conditions do states withdraw from international organizations?

Populist Backlashes against International Organizations

According to Von Borzyskowski and Vabulas (2019), “Recent events have brought heightened attention to these questions” (pg. 336). Brexit in the UK, the US withdrawal from UNESCO, Trump’s delegitimation of the Appellate Body (AB) of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the backlash against regional courts in Africa and international courts, and other events have attenuated the research in understanding the factors driving these retreats and backlashes. As observed by these scholars, “While nationalism may have driven some recent IGO withdrawals, we question whether nationalism may provide a broader explanation of withdrawals over the long term” (Von Borzyskowski and Vabulas, 2019: 336). As already established in this essay, nationalism could be a significant factor contributing to these cases of backlashes and withdrawal from international organizations, but it’s insufficient to explain the causes. In Ikenberry’s (2018) seminal work, he argued that “Global order is giving way to various mixtures of nationalism, protectionism, spheres of influence and regional Great Power projects” (pg.8). The influences of nationalism and populism in this crisis against the liberal institutionalism cannot be overemphasized. The growing backlashes against the institutions of the liberal international order have been examined by various scholars (see, for example, Voeten 2020, Pollack 2023, Lake, Martin & Risse 2021, Alter et al. 2015, Copelovitch & Pevehouse 2019). This essay aims to review some of these works and examine the different factors aiding these backlashes and why backlashes occur.

To understand and explain the factors aiding populist backlashes against international organizations, I examined Voeten’s (2020) theories of backlash where he observed that the rising implementation costs and a reversal in democratization are the two plausible causes. Voeten argued that “Government should be more likely to trigger backlashes when the cumulative implementation costs increase so much that they exceed the benefits of staying inside the regime” (2020: 409). This argument of cost and benefits calculus can be observed in the actions of populist parties and governments in European countries, Latin America, and Africa where states weigh the cost of belonging to an organization over its benefits. The anti-immigrant sentiment in the right-wing populist parties in Europe and the current anti-western stand among some West African countries are examples of this theory. Hence, the cost of implementation plays a significant role in the backlash against international organizations. When states observe that the economic and political costs of implementing judgments by international organizations are high, they follow the pathway of backlashes against such international organizations.

The other theory Voeten (2020) proposed is the reversal in democratization. Voeten argued that “If democracy and democratization were responsible for commitments to international courts, then more recent democratic reversal may be responsible for backlash” (2020: 411). In general, the norm of democratic backsliding and the waves of populist movements around the world can be associated with backlashes against international organizations. Although Voeten (2020) observed that “this is an ideological rather than an institutional explanation” (411), I argue that one can better understand this through both ideological and institutional lenses. The logic of my argument follows that while populism is a “thin-centered ideology” (Mudde 2004), populists aim to control the political institution in order to change the structures that benefit the corrupt elites. Hence, the institutional conflicts and the strive for political power to control the resources of the state are central to populist mobilization. Similarly, populist governments tend to be openly and directly mobilized against the structures or establishments that support the elites, mostly international organizations. As Voeten argued, “Governments that rely strongly on populist mobilization should be more likely to initiate backlashes” (2020: 414).

As articulated above, the trigger for populist backlashes comes from international organizations’ judgments or policies that directly affect the states’ national identity or the distribution of resources. Alter et al. (2015) note that the backlashes against the regional courts in West, East, and South Africa stemmed from the decisions of the court that directly affect the distribution of properties and human rights judgments. Also, in

the most thorough study of the WTO appellate body, Pollack (2023) analyzed the politics behind Trump's delegitimation of the WTO appellate body. According to Pollack, "the Trump administration's primary institutional tactic at the WTO was both simple and consistent across four years" (2023:7). By vetoing the appointment of any new AB members, Trump was able to cripple the appellate body just as Mugabe did to the regional court in southern Africa. These instances showcase how far populist backlash against international organizations can go.

Not surprisingly, the backlashes against global economic institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, and WTO have boomed in the face of the waves of populist movements around the world in recent years. Walter (2021) examined how the increasing protectionist, isolationist, and nationalist policies threatened the survival of international organizations and resulted in compliance problems. Walter (2021) argued that to understand this increasing contestations and backlashes against globalization, we must examine the backlash in political behavior. The trend of populist mobilization has a significant implication for civil society as well as the "ordinary people" who are considered the "losers of globalization". Walter (2021) noted that "By emphasizing issues such as immigration, national sovereignty, or European integration as core components of their party programs" (pg. 426), populist parties mobilize the support of the people to successfully challenge globalization and its established global economic international organizations. Through their anti-establishment stands, populist parties and governments oppose any international organizations that are considered to exhibit support for the corrupt elites.

To understand these increasing backlashes against the global economy and international organizations, I argue one needs to examine the supply side of the issue. Scholars argue that material concerns are the prime driver of these backlashes (see, for example, Hays et al. 2019, Betz 1994). At the same time, several studies show that noneconomic factors such as identity, concerns about sovereignty, and cultural concerns are more germane to the backlash against globalization (see, for example, Mansfield and Murtz 2013, Hainmueller & Hopkins 2014). However, Walter observed that "there is evidence for both material and nonmaterial causes of globalization backlash" (2021: 430). For instance, Hainmueller & Hopkins 2014 focused on the public attitude toward immigration and argued that sociotropic effects of anti-immigration policies can both be cultural and economic. This is consistent with Lapinski et al. (1997) experimental study that "As the United States went into recession in the early 1980s, restrictive attitudes towards immigration jumped" (pg. 357). In other words, economic factors influence the nonmaterial causes of globalization backlashes.

The Constructivists' View on Populist Backlashes against International Organizations

To better understand the relationship between domestic politics and international relations, one can adopt constructivist arguments to probe the growing backlashes against international organizations. By considering the supply side of the backlash, that is, the populist parties and governments, one can observe how populist mobilization triggers backlashes against these international organizations from the perspective of a constructivist. Barnett and Finnemore (1999) developed a constructivist approach to explain the propensity of dysfunctional and pathological behavior of international organizations. These authors account for how international organizations are permeated by their environment and defined in "both material and cultural terms" (1999: 717). The constructivist argument on the effects of social norms, ideas, values, and beliefs comes into play here (see, for example, Wendt 1999, Risse 2000, Johnston 2001), as well as the social construction that stimulates people's behavior and attitudes towards international organizations.

Following Wendt's (1987) scholarly work on the agent structure problem, I argued that the populist backlash against international organizations can be explained through the relationship between the social structure and the international organizations. The nature of the individual state's social relations plays an important role here. When the social relations in a state are defined by a tension between "the people" and "corrupt elites," the populist parties or government can easily and successfully mobilize against the influence of international organizations by capitalizing on backlashes. As Wendt rightly argued, "Social

structures are the result of the intended and unintended consequences of human action, just as those actions presuppose or are mediated by an irreducible structural context” (1987:360). The political context and the power structures of individual states constitute the condition under which states result in backlashes against international organizations. If the state social structure is not characterized by a strong tension between “the people” and “elites,” then states would rarely engage in backlashes against international organizations.

In sum, by observing the social structure of a state, one can better understand the conditions under which states withdraw or threaten to withdraw from international organizations or reject and renegotiate international laws. This section observes the various arguments for populist backlashes against international organizations. In the next section, I examine the cases of populist backlashes against the global economy and international organizations. I concluded by developing a framework, similar to but distinct from Copelovitch and Pevehouse’s (2019) typologies of the potential effects of populism and nationalism on international organizations, to explain when might decide to go by rule rejection, renegotiation, threaten to exit, and outright exit.

COMBINING THE THEORIES OF POPULISM WITH POPULIST BACKLASH AGAINST INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS.

In this section, I propose to examine the different cases of populist backlashes against international organizations and develop a framework that explains the conditions under which states would result in the use of any of these strategies. Having reviewed the theories of populism and the conditions under which populist backlash occurs, I followed various scholars to explore the impacts of populism on the global economy and international organizations and consider the effects of the waves of populist movements around the world.

Different scholars have examined the cases of populist backlashes against various international organizations (see, for example, Betz, 1994, Alter et al. 2016, Krieger 2019, Voeten 2020, Walter 2021, Pollack 2023). Muis and Immerzeel (2017) and Betz (1994) extensively examine the effects of radical right-wing populist parties and movements in Europe. Muis and Immerzeel (2017) argued that the causes and consequences of the populist radical right-wing parties (PRR) implementing immigration and integration policies can be observed through the citizens’ attitudes and behavior. Particularly, they posit that “the PRR’s emergence and success might affect citizens, in the sense that they shift their views toward anti-immigration and authoritarian positions or change their political behavior” (2017:919). The French Front National (FN), the Alternative for Germany, (AfD), the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), and the Danish People’s Party, all place the issue of national identities at the forefront of their struggle, hence, anti-migration policy and globalization are the consequences of these right-wing parties.

International organizations such as the United Nations, European Union, International Courts, and World Bank have suffered backlashes from these populist parties. In a comprehensive study of populist backlashes against International Courts, Voeten (2020) observed the cases of backlashes against international courts since 1990 and found that issues related to human rights, immigration, and property rights are among the major causes of backlashes against the courts. In a similar study, Alter et al. (2016) examined the cases of backlashes against the regional courts in Africa and argued that the role of community secretariats, civil society, and sub-regional parliaments play an important part in the success or failure of the backlashes against these courts. However, this argument does not apply to the examples of the military regime in some parts of Africa. A better way to understand these current backlashes from these countries is to draw insights from the theories of populism and its typologies and examine when states will engage in different forms of backlash.

Furthermore, the extensive research on the issues of backlash against the global economic institutions is

well documented by Frieden (2018). He argued that “The United States is by far the most important locus of this backlash against globalization, given America’s size and centrality to international economics and politics” (pg.45). His argument that Donald Trump is explicit with his antagonism against foreign trade and investment is consistent with Pollack’s (2023) views on the way the United States paralyzed the WTO Appellate body. Pollack (2023) maintained that “The United States, for its part, was unapologetic, placing the onus of reform on other members” (2023: 8). The US decision in this context rendered the appellate body paralyzed and it would take the efforts of another administration and other members to reform this body. The future of this body is yet to be decided. These observable backlashes can also be found in the critique against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This was examined to a large extent by Waibel et al. (2010). Their analysis of the increasing backlash against this investment regime contends that the critique against NAFTA can be divided into categories: “procedural and substantive” (pg.2). The arguments against this investment regime are majorly about its lack of accountability and “the conflicts of interests at play in the world of international arbitration” (2010:3).

No doubt that the backlashes against international organizations are real. As examined in this review essay, the waves of populist parties and governments around the world as increased in the last few decades. Hence, this essay suggests that we might as well take populism seriously. Table 1 illustrates the condition under which different forms of populism would use different forms of backlash. I proposed that when there’s a high level of political cum cultural populism in a particular state, the most suitable form of backlash for such populist government is rule rejection or renegotiation. Instances can be found among the European right-wing governments. In the case of socioeconomic populism, populist governments tend to threaten to exit whenever the concerns are majorly related to socioeconomic issues. Such is the case in most Latin American left-wing governments.

Table. 1

| | Political cum cultural populism | Socioeconomic populism | Anti-establishment populism |
|--|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Rule rejection or Renegotiation | ✓ | | |
| Threaten to Exit | | ✓ | |
| Exit | | | ✓ |
| Populist backlash strategy | | | |

Lastly, under anti-establishment or anti-status quo populism, the notable form of backlash available to such populist government is outright exit. Examples include Trump, Mugabe, Zambia, and the new military government in Africa. It’s important to note that in a situation where one observes the high frequency of each of these typologies, we can expect a populist government to choose among these forms of backlashes depending on the intensity of any of the types of populism.

CONCLUSION

This review essay examines the literature on populism as well as the populist backlashes against international organizations. In this endeavor, I employed the use of Qualitative Data Analysis software (NVIVO) to analyze the content of the speeches of some populist leaders around the world. By examining the contents of their speeches, one can observe the pattern in these speeches and use it as a template for other leaders around the world. To understand populist sentiments, one can examine the use of anti-elite rhetoric and constant appeal to the sentiments of the people.

Furthermore, this essay argues that compliance and commitment problems have increased in this “century of populism”. By exploring the different cases of populist backlash against the global economy and international organizations, this review essay notes that populist parties and governments tend to employ different forms of backlash. From rule rejection to threatening to exit and outright exit, populist governments have weakened the stability of the current international liberal order. Although this essay did not posit that populism is the end of the liberal order, it only argues that, with the waves of backlash against international organizations, populism needs to be taken seriously. This essay concludes by suggesting that future research can help widen our understanding by carrying out a cross-national content analysis of the political speeches and statements of leaders around the world. This endeavor can help highlight the various rhetoric used by these leaders and understand when they are appealing to the sentiments of the people. Further research can also engage in an in-depth analysis of the consequences of populist backlashes against international organizations.

FOOTNOTES

1. This phrase was borrowed from “The Populist Century: History, Theory, Critique” by Pierre Rosanvallon, translated by Catherine Porter, 1. Edition October 2021, 220 Pages, Wiley
2. According to Müller, there are three populist techniques, see Müller, J.-W. (2017). *What Is Populism?* Penguin Books Limited.
3. Sartori defined conceptual stretching as a phenomenon that occurs when a set of concepts is applied to new cases that are not comparable to the original set. SARTORI, Giovanni (1970). “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics.” in *American Political Science Review*, 64, no 4 (December): 1033-105
4. In Ron & Nadesan, the concept of the people was examined by categorizing it into three images: an identity group, social groups, and political entity. Ron, A., & Nadesan, M. (2020). *Mapping Populism: Approaches and Methods*. Routledge.
5. Ron & Nadesan employ the use of “plebs” as consistent with Niccolò Machiavelli’s usage in *The Prince*
6. This term was borrowed from Benedict Anderson to depict a nation as a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who are perceived as a part of a group. See, for review, Anderson, B. (2008). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. In *The New Social Theory Reader* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
7. See, “The Populist Century: History, Theory, Critique” by Pierre Rosanvallon, translated by Catherine Porter, 1. Edition October 2021, 220 Pages, Wiley
8. This term was used on the issue of WTO appellate body see, Pollack, M. A. (2023). *International court curbing in Geneva: Lessons from the paralysis of the WTO Appellate Body*. Governance.

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