The Rise of Populism: A case study of Donald Trump and Narendra Modi

Muhammad Waseem Yousaf
PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science & IR, University of
Sargodha, Sargodha
Email: wazim2846@gmail.com
Rasib Lal
PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science & IR, University of
Sargodha, Sargodha
Email: rasibgondal14@gmail.com
Prof. Dr. Asia Saif Alvi
HOD, Department of Political Science & IR, University of Sargodha, Sargodha
Email: asia.saif@uos.edu.pk

Abstract

This research article delves into understanding multifaceted effects of populism in politics of contemporary world. By applying comparative case study methodology emphasizing on administration of Narendara Modi in India and Donald Trump in USA. The purpose of research is to in-depth analysis of techniques and strategies adopted by these two leaders in order to enhance their popularity in the common masses. This study is designed to understand the effects of populism on governance and international relations.
Keywords: populism, contemporary politics, Trump, Modi, governance, rhetoric, policy decisions, societal impact, international relations

Introduction

The rise of populism in contemporary world has changed the way states interact with each others. Populism is a philosophy why directed to the needs of the common people and put more emphasis on equal distribution of resources wealth and power. Generally, populism revolves around problems of common man, more focus on national interests and requirements as compare to international issues. furthermore, populism is somehow share grounds with tendency of nationalism, as later also focus on supremacy of national interest over the interests of international community. Both philosophies sets new trends in interactions of states. (Cox: 2018).

The concept of populism reflects a suspicious role of establishment as most of populists leaders thinks that Elite class of country do conspiracies against common people instead of doing good for common peoples. Moreover, populists leaders are nationalists by natures so they look with suspicions over the role of Foreign actors in internal matters of any states. The fact that populism is not a political ideology rather than it is strategy to get power and retain power by using various techniques to rule over the emotions of

peoples. In contemporary world, digital revolution, weak economies, threatening international peace and security boost notion of populism in recent times. Globalization and socio-economic factors are cornerstone of Rise in populism in contemporary world

Populism is not a new Phenomena, in fact, history is full of examples of populists politicians, parties and movements. In the 20th century and early 21st century, politics of Latin America such as Brazil and Argentina are clear examples from the Middle of 20th century. Furthermore, in early 21st century, rise of Donald Trump in USA and Narendra Modi in India are most recent examples of rapid growth of populist politics in global system. The way these two leaders transformed the entire outlook of political systems of their respective country shows that populism is on a track of fast growth and common people are more attached to these leaders as compare to liberal democrats. (wagner& Meyar: 2017).

Populism is a complex political phenomena characterized by various elements that make it different from other political ideologies. Populists leaders use various techniques such as anti-establishment sentiments, appeal to common people, producing simple solutions of complex issues. Moreover, charismatics leadership and more vocal to national interests, use of media are majors tools of populists to preach their ideology. (wagner& Meyar: 2017).

Literature Review

Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt explore the rise of populism in established democracies in their book " How Democracies Die " and provided comprehensive insights of downfall of liberal democracies and norms and traditions of settled political systems. They further discussed the reasons of rise in populism with specific reference to Rise of Donald Trump in United States of America. How Trump use different populists techniques to gain power and influence over common masses. (Levitsky: 2018).

Christophe Jaffrelot wrote a book " The Hindu Nationalist Movement And Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s" Offers a historical perspective on the rise of Hindu nationalism and its impact on Indian politics. The Author laying the ground for understanding core reasons behind Hindu nationalism and explore relations between nationalism and populism with reference to Rise of Narendra Modi brand of populism in India. Furthermore, how Modi got success by using common technique's attract large number of people to acknowledged his version of populism. (Jafferlot : 1996).

Populism: A very short Introduction By Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser: Offers a concise overview of populism as a political ideology and its manifestations in different contexts, including Modi and Trump. Authors explores the various links to understand whether populism is a general philosophy or its out shore of political ideology. Populism is basically not a ideology but its approach to get power. (Muddy: 2017).

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart wrote a research journal : The Populists ziest" and discuss the global tise of populism and forces behind rise by using different research techniques such as surveys from various big democracies such as United States and India as well. The main purpose of this resesrch was to explore why liberal democracies moved toward downfall and paving ways for populism. (Norris: 2017).

"Populism and the Erosion of Horizontal Accountability in Latin America and Eastern Europe" by Kurt Weyland is a journal article explores the drawbacks of populism suxh as institutional checks and balances. The main purpose of this research article to address the challenges pose by rise of populism liberal democracies in context like political setup in India and the United States.(Kurt: 2017).

 "Comparing Media Systems and the Rise of the Populist Right" by Joshua Tucker et al. Is research article examines the role of media in shaping populist narratives and mobilizing support for leaders like Modi and Trump. The main theme of this research to understand how these populists leaders such as Narendra Modi in India and Donald Trump in America use latest mode of communication like social media to enhance their popularity and reach to maximum people in order to strengthen their populists thoughts. (Joshua: 2020).

The Rise of Populist Movements and Parties: Lessons for Democratic Governance and International Cooperation" by the Brookings Institution: Provides policy recommendations for addressing the challenges posed by populism to democratic governance and global cooperation, drawing on case studies from around the world. (Report: 2021).

"Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?" by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Analyzes the drivers and implications of populism in different regions, offering insights into its impact on democratic institutions and political stability. (Carnige: 2022).

Causes of Rise in Populism

The recent rise of populism is not a natural phenomena. But in fact, multiple reasons which pave grounds for rise of populists thoughts and ideology. One of the major reason is economic disparities, gap between elite and poor class, changed occurred thorough globalization and digital revolution. Cultural factors also important forces behind rise of populism. Last but not least the failure of policy to foster general welfare globally and locally.

 Firstly, economic factors such as low growth, rising inequalities, and unemployment are prevailing reasons of rise of populism in recent times. These factors are result of 2009 financial crises which not only affected week economies but in fact, all the major economies of the world are badly affected by financial setbacks of recent past. Eventually major powers are unable to resists protectionists. Meanwhile unemployment had reached to

record high level in few countries up to 50 percent. These economic crises contributed enough in victory of populist leaders such as Donald Trump with his slogan "America First" and Modi claim to make India a major economic power in the world. The rising inequalities among individuals but also in different regions is driving force behind populism. (Aigninger: 2015).

Secondly, in addition to economic factors, cultural changes in play also important role in bringing populists leaders in powers. Variations in values systems in western societies ans clash of different cultures due to rapid globalization are somehow making environment suitable for growth of populism. Common people showing great resistance to culture diffusion and a fear of losing identify further intensify the thoughts of populist leaders.

Thirdly, populists movements rely heavily on digital world such as use of media as a communication tool to engage with their audience. Because populists leaders don't have much resources and lack of organizational means to enhance their reach. In results, media such as electronic and social media become major sources of populism. The rise in digital anf globalization further contributed in populism. Digital revolution bring multiple changes for these populists leaders, it become major communication tool.(Muis : 2017).

Fourthly, global policies and strategies fail to bring general welfare at global level. Theoretical its seems idealistic but practically, international system only helps to enhance military, economic positions of great powers which further highlight gap between rich and poor countries. Eventually, populists leaders get more opportunities to criticize world system and expansionist mindset. In results, common masses are inclined toward politcal ideologies of populists leaders.

Core Elements of Populism

Populism is a complex political phenomena characterized by various attributes that make it distinguish from other prevailing political ideologies. Elements such as Anti establishment sentiments, appeal to common people, simplistic solutions of complex issues are associated with populism. Furthermore, Nationalism, media populism and anti intellectualism are some other core attributes of Populism.

Firstly, populists leaders generally emphasis on powerful elite in politcal system which allegedly control the structure of power. Populists believe that they are not part of such system and they are here to challenge existing system by replacing it with more systematic structure of politics.

Secondly, populism mostly targets common people. Problems associated with common masses are key determinants of populism. They highlights common issues such as inequalities, unemployment, identity issues to target more audience in order to intensify their political ideology.

Thirdly, populists leaders presents a simple solutions of complex issues by making thing more simple. As their targes are common people, so they make simple solutions of their issues in order to make more popularity.

Fourthly, philosophy of populism backed by such charismatics leaders who have strong following in common masses. Their strong personality attributes make them more popular in people. Eventually its leads toward more emotional attachment by masses toward these leaders.

Fifthly, nationalism is another weapon used by populist leaders to further enhance their positions in masses. Slogans based on nationalism remains more practical in Populism. Their strategies and policies always bases on national interests instead of global.

Sixthly, economic disparities, inequalities, unemployment, poverty are main tools of populists leaders to gain more popularity in common people. They severely criticize the gap between elite and poor class.

Seventhly, populism always remain anti-intellecualism as its based on emotions instead of logic and reasoning. So populists leaders consider intellectual people as serious threats to their ideology.

Rise of Donald Trump And Narendra Modi

The rise of prime minister Modi in India and President Donald Trump in America is most recent example of populism and its effects on liberal democracy. Before moving toward discussion hoe these leaders gain power, its essential to explore fundamental principles of Populism. Here five basic hypothesis of populism:

A) Populism and Nationalism
B) Bilateralism and Multilateralism
C) Transnational "People"
D) Foreign Policy Actors
E) Innovative communication techniques

All above mention are core hypothesis of populism, the entire philosophy of populism revolves around these fundamental principles. Here discussion on each principle with reference to rise of Trump and Modi in American and Indian politics respectively.

Populism and Nationalism:

The notion of populism is more likely to align with concept of nationalism. The one of the vital principle of populism is problem of common man. Therefore, both philosophies are interlink with each other. Nationalism too emphasis on national goals and interests instead of giving more attention to global affairs. Both leaders Trump and Modi categorically raise voice for common masses.. For instance Donald trump slogan "America First" and indian prime minister Modi slogan " Great Hinduism" is clearly justifying this principle that populism and Nationalism both share some similar grounds. Narendra Modi always consider Hinduism as superior civilization based on ancient traditions. (Sullivan : 2014).

Modi enrish his political party Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) with new elements such as great Hinduism, anti-elitism, anti-corruption and focus on good governance for the people. While on the other hand, Donald Trump too apply similar techniques which make both leaders more popular in common masses.

Bilateralism vs Multilateralism

The Modi government has been notably active in term of bilateral diplomacy from 2014 to 2018, as prime minister Modi managed 65 visits abroad. (MEA: 2018). These stats show how Modi administration engaged with other nations on bilateral grounds to ensure own interests. For one abonding global institutions and agreements is more easy for great powers such ss USA. Donald Trump exactly did the same while unilaterally withdrawal from nuclear agreement with Iran. Furthermore changing position on climate change agreement and WTO. These moves clearly depict intentions of both leaders. For populist leaders, intellectualism doesn't matter, instead they focus on comparative emotional statements. (Myamal : 2019).

Populism and Foreign Policy

The relationship between populism and foreign policy is key topic of discussion through out last decade of 20th century and earlier period of 21st century. For instance, 45th President of America, Donald Trump has more vocal and skeptical about global affairs in his slogan to make "America Great Again" and "America First". Foreign policy of America witnessed centralization of decision making. Its show how Trump made decision to justify his motives manifesto. Same approach adopted by Modi in Indian politics to use hindu nationalism as tool to gain popularity in common masses. Interestingly, these approaches are entirely backed by people. Trump and Modi used securitization and protective policies to justify their actions in foreign policy. Furthermore, Modi and Trump centralized the foreign policy by keeping decisions in their own hands. (Handey : 2023).

Elites and Others

The phenomena " people vs elite and others" gained much popularity under the umbrella of populism. In case of Donald Trump and Narendra Modi in America and India respectively adopted harsh stance on status of elite class. The BJP party in India presents a clear conception of Indian people as Hindu and rejecting all other anti- national who are not sharing such narrative. Trump also regarded common masses as virtuous and homogeneous people attached to its traditions and above from all elite and consider elites dangerous for common people. The right wing populists views of American president Trump under banner of " American first" and more specifically American white people. These peoples seem to be more patriotic and real and considering all other anti- national. (Mcdonnel : 2019).

Innovative Communication Techniques

The right wing populists leaders such as Donald Trump' and Narendra Modi aggressive use of communication tools for preaching specific ideology make

them more popular leaders among common masses. The digital revolution brings more innovative techniques to engages with people like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and alother means of social and electronic media. New communications tools are easily accessible for most of people. So both leaders use communication means to enhance their popularity. The excessive use of twitter under trump Era clearly depicts this principle.

Conclusion

The rise of populism in contemporary politics has had profound impacts globally, with important case studies such as Donald Trump in the United States and Narendra Modi in India. Through an analysis of their political approaches, strategies, and governance, this research article has provided insights into the mechanisms and dynamics fueling populist movements.

The analysis highlights that both Trump and Modi capitalized on socio-economic anxieties, cultural grievances, and perceived inequalities within their respective societies to mobilize support. Utilizing populist approach centered around nationalism, anti-elitism, and promises of restoring greatness, they successfully appealed to suppressed segments of the electorate.

Moreover, the article underscores the role of media, particularly social media, in amplified populist messages and changing public opinion. The manipulation of information, dissemination of misinformation, and the proliferation of echo chambers have contributed to the polarization and fragmentation of societies, enabling populists to consolidate power.

However, the impacts of populism extend beyond electoral victories. The decline of democratic norms, attacks on institutions, and polarization of societies have raised vulnerabilities about the long-term sustainability of democratic governance. Moreover, the neglect of minority rights, erosion of civil liberties, and exacerbation of social divisions have heightened social tensions and threatened social cohesion.

The case studies of Donald Trump and Narendra Modi highlight the complexities and challenges associated with the rise of populism in contemporary politics. While populism may offer a voice to marginalized groups and address legitimate grievances, its authoritarian tendencies, divisive rhetoric, and erosion of democratic institutions pose significant risks to democratic governance and societal harmony.

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