

# ***Research on the Comparison of Populist Practices in Latin America and Europe***

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**Abstract:** Populism has increased in Western societies in recent years. As a political tool, Populism is often used as a solution to the democratic political dilemma of modern societies. In other words, Populism often erupts because political construction does not meet the public's need for participation. Therefore, only by analyzing the causes of Populism everywhere can this paper better accommodate the demands of different social groups to eliminate the downside of Populism. Hence, this paper will analyze Populism in a different area with a cultural variety. The main areas that will focus on today are Latin America and Europe. Those two areas represent and reflect the desires that most people focus on. There is a great difference between the demand of citizens, especially the effect and damage caused by World War Two. The European countries usually represent the winner and did not lose as much as those third-world countries in Latin America, which had been exploited for hundreds of years.

**Keywords:** comparison, populist practices, Latin America, Europe

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Research Background**

Populism is the political and economic ideas espoused by the populists. It supported the control of politics by commoners and opposed the control of history by elites or aristocrats. For twenty centuries, Populism has gradually appeared on the global political stage because of the awakening of independence among the public. Unlike other political regimes, one characteristic of Populism is that it is not conceptually certain [1].

It is a commonplace that there are different opinions about whether Populism is meaningful among different social groups. Also, uncertainty sometimes comes from the fact that it is always changeable. It lacks a specific ideology compared with other political regimes and inspiration. They usually focus on more than one core value, such as equality, freedom, and social justice. Therefore, Populism is used in different political positions and usually corporate with other ideologies. Compared to the core value itself, Populism seems more like a tool that can be used by nationalists and dictators, the lifting party but only the right party. The combination of randomness and diversity makes each specific case in different areas unique. As a popular political ideology nowadays, there might be many new party convert or support Populism to be their core inspiration in the future. Therefore, it is necessary for people to analyze the process and results in previous cases in different areas to best utilize them in the future.

## 1.2. Literature Review

The practice of Populism in many countries has been analyzed by many scholars before. Zhang proposed that the gradual strengthening of the populist forces in Europe in the 1980s was due to the demand for a return to the traditional lifestyle and conservative values based on the background of lifestyle diversification brought by globalization [2]. The success of the populist forces in Europe mainly lies in socio-cultural psychology. In other words, one of the similarities of the populist party in Europe is that they are opposite to the political ideas which are mainstream nowadays. Against anything that they see as threatening or damaging to the well-being of their people. In populist discourse, the threat can come from the political elite at the top and outside forces of dissent. The main threats of the Populists in Europe are from other nations and countries. According to globalization, this integration makes the public feel insecure and afraid. Unlike Populism in Europe, Populism in Latin America will focus more on the anti-establishment demands of the public. In Li's research, "establishment system" means the constitutional legal system and the norms, norms, and decision-making procedures in social and political life. Therefore, the anti-establishment doctrine is a thought and behavior that seeks to break the existing establishment system from political, economic, social, and other levels to achieve a specific goal [3]. Although Latin American countries have made great progress in the democratization process after realizing democratic transformation, the consolidation, quality, and governance of the democratic political system in Latin America still face multiple difficulties and challenges. These are embodied in the prevalence of corruption, bureaucracy, and patronage relations in social life. As a result, the Latin American people are dissatisfied and disappointed with the operation of the current democratic system. Turnout in some Latin American countries fell to record lows, and many marginalized people took to the streets to vent their frustration.

Commonly, many scholars such as Li and Zhang focused on the developing progress and origins of Populism based on a similar social and economic situation of the public. However, it is seldom for people to make a comparison between different countries with huge differences in history and social culture.

## 1.3. Research Framework

Hence, this paper will analyze Populism in a different area with a cultural variety. The main areas that will focus on today are Latin America and Europe. As we mentioned, those two areas represent and reflect the desires that most people focus on. There is a great difference between the demand of citizens, especially the effect and damage caused by World War Two. The European countries usually represent the winner and did not lose as much as those third-world countries in Latin America, which had been exploited for hundreds of years.

## 2. Method

In the research, this paper will analyze the case in Latin America and Europe using comparative methods. The comparative analysis method is an analysis method that compares two or more things or objects to find out the similarities and differences between them. Through overall observations, the method is mainly applied to three different perspectives. The comparison will include the origins and historical reasons that triggered the growth of Populism, how the leader practiced it and what results and progress they made.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1. Origins**

As mentioned before, one of the key factors that caused the success of Populism in Europe is the change in social and cultural psychology. Both external and internal chaos weakened the sense of unification among Europeans. This let the governor and EU leaders spend a lot of effort tackling those problems. Overcoming the consequences of the crisis is far from. Several reasons caused the raised of Populism in Europe.

##### **3.1.1. Inequality in Economy**

The liberal economy believed in the free market and encouraged free capital accumulation [4]. Neoliberal economic policies have widened the income gap between social classes, leading to the concentration and unequal distribution of wealth. These have increased economic inequality in Western societies. At the same time, neo-liberal economic policies emphasized individual independence and private ownership of property and opposed social welfare policies, which increased economic inequality among different social classes. The poor economic situation has intensified long-standing social tensions and made various groups of people suffering from globalization's benefits the social basis for Populism [4]. Domestic blue-collar workers have become the driving force behind anti-globalization. Once the public's sense of loss and discontent explodes, it will inspire a strong populist social thought.

##### **3.1.2. The Failure of Democratic Institutions**

Some scholars point out that since 2008, when the financial crisis began, many voices have declared that the Western system is on the verge of collapse [5]. Contemporary democracies exclude vast swathes of ordinary democracy from important political processes, preventing people from realizing their interests through normal access. People gradually lost faith in traditional politics when the existing political system could no longer meet their demands.

##### **3.1.3. Cultural Clash**

There is a general identity crisis among the supporters of populists in Europe. As the status of minorities in developed countries has risen, the relative decline in the status of white communities has led to a sense of racial and cultural crisis. This sense of crisis is particularly strong when faced with the large population and conflicting religious beliefs of the Muslim community. Two years after France's large-scale religious extreme violence and shock, Europe is in a vortex of extreme Islamist terrorism and, inevitably.

##### **3.1.4. The Intensification of Social Conflicts**

In addition to the direct pressures on employment, health care, and education, most Western populations have had to endure the impact of social shootings and terrorist attacks. This makes people feel uneasy and anxious about the security and safety of society and foreign immigrants. At the same time, the stability of the social middle class is declining. The financial crisis has worsened the employment situation of the middle class in a globalized form with huge income disparities and unfair distribution of wealth. They feel anxious because of the decline in income and the regression of their status. The social stability role of the middle class has faltered. In recent years, European politics have been in turmoil. Russia's conflict in Ukraine threatened eastern European security. As one scholar has pointed out, "From these two events of opposing public opinion and interweaving party

politics, people are surprised to see the first general outbreak of the populist wave in the 21st century" [6]. After the second world war, the biggest impact of the influx of European countries was being unable to get effective control.

In those situations, the social background provides a realistic basis for the anti-immigrant propaganda of (extreme) right-wing populists. Benefiting from the backdrop of the crisis, far-right populist parties in Europe show a dangerous growing trend.

The origin in Latin America is quite different. The rise of Populism in Latin America has benefited from two aspects.

### **3.1.5. Loss of Civilian Rights**

Latin American countries have made greater progress in democratization after achieving democratic transition. The consolidation, quality, and governance of Latin America's original democratic political institutions still face multiple difficulties and challenges, as evidenced by the prevalence of corruption, bureaucracy, and patronage ties in social life [7]. A pattern of rule by oligarchic elites is gradually emerging in Latin America. An elite with a very low percentage of the population monopolizes the country's economic resources. They also have strong political influence but lack a sense of responsibility for the country's development. The majority of the population is marginalized in the national political and economic system. They have neither the power to participate in politics nor the opportunity to share in the fruits of the economy and access to social security. After Latin American countries gained independence, the political elites of the new regimes chose to continue the colonial period's political and social order to preserve their class's privileges. The ruling class worked to preserve the interests of transnational capital and oligarchs, and not only were Indians, blacks, peasants, and miners excluded, but even workers, intellectuals, and urban middle-income groups had difficulty achieving political participation [8].

For this reason, Latin American people have become more dissatisfied and disillusioned with the functioning of the current democratic system. This has driven turnout to historic lows in some Latin American countries, and many marginalized people have taken to the streets to vent their frustrations. The populists' anti-establishment demands to break the existing political landscape have met the needs of the Latin American public.

### **3.1.6. Disconnection Between Populists and the Population**

After independence, most Latin American countries established representative democracy with liberalism as a core value by transplanting, imitating, or copying European and American political systems. Some Western scholars believe that "Latin America has never got rid of the shadow of" superficial democracy", and the defects of the political system increase the risk of political failure. Because of the widespread existence of "low democracy" and the lack of full democracy, there is disappointment in the operation of democracy in almost all Latin American countries!" [9]. The limitations of representative democracy have been exposed in the democratization process in Latin America, the most important defect of which is the neglect or distortion of public opinion by Latin American political elites in an indirect democracy. In this process, it is difficult for ordinary people excluded from the political and economic system to gain political representation in representative democracy, thus further deepening their distrust of democracy.

### **3.1.7. Instability in Economy**

Economic instability in Latin America increases the risk of a crisis in the political establishment. The development model of Latin American countries is highly dependent on external countries, and their economic development is vulnerable to the influence of the international environment. Their fiscal

discipline is loose, their monetary policies are inappropriate, and the combination of internal and external factors has led to drastic economic fluctuations. Between 1981 and 1991, the Argentine peso depreciated at an average annual rate of a staggering 1,346 per cent. In 1985 alone, inflation was 672 per cent. In Venezuela, which relies on oil for more than 90% of its state revenues, the collapse in international crude prices in the 1980s caused a rapid economic decline [10]. Amid social demands for change, the Venezuelan government initiated democratic reforms in 1989. But instead of saving Venezuela from crisis, democratization has made things more volatile.

### 3.2. Practice

Based on the social conditions full of external and internal chaos, the continuing changes in European society have increased the insecurity and fear of ordinary people, who feel that their quality of life is greatly affected. In this situation, Populism had the trend of becoming right-wing. This provided people a suitable way to release the resentment opposite to the main steam political idea about peace and globalization. In the name of being the people's voice, the populists in Europe are campaigning against mainstream politics and against anything that threatens or harms the people within their definition. This threat can come from elites at the top or outside forces. To this end, they not only oppose the arrangement of the existing political order for the people, as well as all mainstream ideas concerning political correctness but also continuously create nationalist public opinion and oppose the invasion of any external forces.

Populist, left-wing parties focus more on the issue of distributional inequality and the gap between rich and poor. They have also shown great opposition to the austerity policies imposed on their citizens from the top down by the "dictators" of the EU. However, far-right populist parties in Europe have shown a dangerous growth trend compared to left-wing parties that have benefited from the background of the crisis. Populist forces in Europe vary in their organizational form, political views, and degree of polarization. These political forces are either strictly organized political parties or loosely organized social movements that oppose the Islamization of the West. Extremist parties such as Golden Dawn in Greece openly use Nazi symbols and military slogans, while more populists are adamantly opposed to being labeled as extreme political forces. Regarding politics, populists in Europe have a mix of positions, not necessarily anti-establishment. But certainly skeptical and anti-political status quo, ranging from anti-immigration, anti-Islam, anti-Semitism, and anti-Roma to Euroscepticism and anti-European and local separatism. For example, regarding attitudes toward Europe, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the French National Front (FN) call for their countries to leave the EU. The Alternative for Germany (AFD) is not anti-EU but anti-euro, and the Austrian Freedom Party is not even opposed to the euro.

Take Germany as an example. Since 2015, anti-immigration and anti-Islam forces have been growing in Germany. The Alternative for Germany (AfD), which started as an anti-euro party, rocketed into the European Parliament last year and entered three eastern state parliaments with about 10 percent of the vote. In 2015, it entered the western state parliaments of Hamburg and Bremen. Since its internal split in July 2015, the party has increasingly leaned toward right-wing Populism, calling for Chancellor Angela Merkel to step down because she has no ceiling on refugees and demanding tighter external border controls and tougher asylum laws. In late November, the party polled at 9 percent. At the grassroots level of society, right-wing populist forces, starting with the creation of anti-European, anti-immigrant sound bites and anti-Western Islam and the anti-immigrant-themed Patriots Against the Islamization of Western Europe (hereafter referred to as the Pegida movement). This has endorsed "angry citizens" across the country who echo the Alternative for Germany party, which spreads fear and loathing of Islam and all Muslims.

The case in Latin America will be the Populism in Argentina. Argentina faced an economic crisis in the 1940s. The ruling party at the time was a conservative government, which maintained its rule



through electoral fraud. The Great tackled the problems of the Depression of the 1930s by increasing government control over the economy. But in the 1940s, the social disruption of World War II and the crisis in relations with the United States created new problems for the government. In 1939, he visited Italy and saw how Mussolini's rule demonstrated the labor movement's power. In this situation, Peron has won support from the poor and unions through wage increases, rent freezes, and recognition of unions. It helped him greatly, allowing him to be elected president successfully with 56% of the votes. Most of the voters are the poor and the workers.

After taking office, Peron created the single party of the Revolution, the so-called Peronist party, and let the Secretariat Labour become the country's sole source of collective bargaining. He increased his control by putting pressure on industrialists through charitable funds controlled by Evita, raised funds for distribution to the poor, and implemented many welfare policies and redistributive schemes. He won the support of the workers by building a cross-class coalition through redistributive policies. In addition, it is also important to focus on his Peronism slogan: social rectitude, economic freedom, and political independence. It is the description of Justicialismo, which is about social morality. He tried to improve the situation of the working class and give them more rights. He wrote these into the Constitution and emphasized the concept of solidarity.

Based on the analysis, it is noticeable that there is a great difference between the basic needs of the public that the populism party is pursuing. As a European country has controlled the world's rules for centuries, their desire to pursue the idea opposite to the mainstream political idea is because of the threats from an external party. They have a sense of fear and have become more and more right-wing. However, Latin Americans have been changing from their corrupt system by exploiting the triangular trade since the 17 century. They won't be controlled by those elites anymore but will pursue the basic needs of the public.

#### 4. Conclusion

In general, Populist countries still have communalist in their conduct. They are still known for pushing people who represent the underclass of their societies. The difference is that the power sought by the public in different countries are varies. As mentioned before, since the Populism is lacks of spiritual core, it is more like a means rather the ends. In this situation, the ends become especially important. Based on the study, the populism in both Latin America and Europe had became more and more right-wing in recent years. In Europe, a segment of citizens rejects immigrants from non-developed countries, illegal aliens, refugees and the impact they bring to their societies. In the case of Latin American counties, the class system left by primitive societies is still not well intergrated with democracy and even makes the regimes more extreme. The populist in different countries often shows their ultimate concern for the common people of the lower and middle classes. They know how to combined and utilized the sense of anti-establishment and hatred of officials, wealth and elites from the public with their control and power. Populism often arises when democracy fails to solve social problems. The legitimacy of liberal democracy is questionable if liberalism only benefits the victors.

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