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# Populism: A Threat to Democracy

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posed by populism to democracy

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b) Expands political clientelism

→ case study of Hugo Chavez

c) Gommers political polarization

→ Ref: Political Conflict in  
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d) Silences civil society groups  
→ Example of Turkiye

e) Enhances the capacity of populist leaders to stay longer in office  
→ Modi has been elected for third term

f) Diminishes checks and balances for executive  
→ Populist leaders pursue constitutional amendments

g) Targets democratic institutions  
→ Solivia Berlusconi, Italian chancellor,  
"courts are unelected bodies"

h) Promotes fascism  
→ Case study of Sheikh Hasina

i) Undermines the true essence of democracy

→ gathers support for populist

leader and undermines fair playground

#### 4- Strategies for mitigating the threats of Populism to democracy

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→ Describing the far-lasting impacts populist leaders such as Hitler

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→ Liviu Dragnea, Romanian populist leader, sent to jail due to protests

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## The Essay

During a political rally, a mighty woman, wearing eye glasses was addressing the public with zealous voice. She was loudly speaking that "I can make Bengal Asian tiger?"

The woman was no other Sheikh Hasina Wajid, former prime minister of Bangladesh. She was gathering support by using populist rhetoric for securing her win in the upcoming elections. However, in reality, she was threatening the true foundations of democracy in her country due to her populist appeal. Due to her populist appeal, opponent will not get proper political support. This is against the basic norms of democracy. Similarly, populism poses serious threats to democracy. It manipulates voter behaviour, expands political clientelism, and garners political polarization. Furthermore, it silences civil society,

enhances the rule of leaders, and diminishes the checks on executive. Targeting democratic institutions, promoting fascism, and undermining the true ess democratic essence are the negative impacts of de populism. However, certain practical steps can reduce these threats of populism to democracy. The steps like educating the masses, regulating media, and protesting against populist leaders can proved to be really effective. Consequently, Populism poses significant threats to democracy. However, some practical steps can also reduce these threats significantly. Unless the threats of populism are resolved, the true democracy can not prevail.

Before delving into the explanation of threats of populism to democracy, it is necessary to understand the relationship between both. The relationship between both is based on negative premises. More elaborately, populism

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Undermines the democratic process and restrict it to prevail completely.

A renowned political scientist Jean-werner Muller has argued that populism poses a direct threat to the democratic process of a country [What is Populism?]

Therefore, the relationship between both ends in negative terms.

To begin with, Populism manipulates the behaviour of voters.

The voters are considered a backbone of a democratic process, having the authority to build and demolish the rule of democratic leaders. However,

the populism gathers the voter support in the favor of a populist leader.

As it is evident in Indian and Turkiye.

where populist leaders dominate every time Indian prime minister Modi, is

a classic example of getting power on the basis of populism. This collection

of support in the favor of single leader demolish fair democratic process. Therefore,

populism threatens democracy by manipulating

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voter behaviour.

Similarly, populism expands political clientelism. Under political clientelism, the supporters favor only a single leader. For instance, Pakistanis are supporting Imran Khan despite its accusation of corruption charges.

Unfortunately, this political clientelism is dangerous for democracy. In this regard, the case study of Hugo Chavez is pertinent. Hugo Chavez, a Venezuelan president, has gathered a mass support for him by marginalising other leaders. This led to the concentration of power in the hands of Hugo Chavez. And the concentration of power in single hand refers to authoritarianism.

Hence, the populist appeal poses a direct threat to democracy by promoting political clientelism.

Additionally, <sup>populism</sup> it garners political polarization. It divides the public opinion in the favor of populist leader and against the leader.

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Consequently, this divergence of opinion leads to political polarization. A famous author M. Lalaseem has claimed that the populist appeals have enhanced political polarization in the Pakistan. [Political Conflict in Pakistan]. The political polarization destroys true democracy. Consequently, the populist rhetoric threatens democracy by expanding political polarization.

Apart from this, populism silences civil society groups. These groups pose serious troubles to populist leaders. In reaction to this, the populist leaders take grave actions against these groups for curbing their dissent. For instance, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a populist leader of Turkey, has banned many civil society groups like trade unions and women unions. Moreover, he has jailed many prominent journalists [Al-Jazeera]. Therefore, populist leaders threaten democracy by silencing



civil society groups.

Another threat of populism is that it enhances the rule of populist leaders. It assist populist leaders to capture power again and again. This is evident in the case of Narendra Modi, current Indian Prime minister. Mod currently, Modi has captured power for the third - time due to his populist appeal. This longevity of populist leaders in the office is also against the democratic norms. ~~of~~ Hence, because others leader remain deprived. Hence, populism undermines democracy by enhancing the rule of populist leaders.

Building on the previous ideas, Populism diminishes checks and balances on executive. The checks on executive in democracy is necessary for stabilising democracy. However, the populist leaders minimize these checks in order to expand their political power. For instance, Imran Khan

has initiated constitutional amendments for increasing the retiring limit of Chief of Army Staff. In this way, populist leaders become authoritative leaders by impacting democracy. Therefore, populist leaders undermine democracy by diminishing checks on executive.

Despite this, populist leaders target democratic institutions. They target these institutions for expanding their power. Judiciary is considered as a backbone of democracy because it maintains democratic process. Many populist leaders attack judiciary for overlooking democracy. For instance, Silvio Berlusconi, Italian Chancellor, has claimed that "courts are unelected bodies". This statement reveals the bad intention of Italian Chancellor against judiciary. Therefore, populism poses a grave threat to democratic institutions.

The most lethal threat of populism is that it promotes fascism. The populist rhetoric of populist leaders

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assist them capturing power. This lust of capturing power makes them fascist leaders. For example, Sheikh Hasina Wajid, Bangladesh prime minister, has pursued fascism before elections. She has unleashed state violence against her political opponent for securing her victory. This fascist tactics tactic of populist leaders overrule democracy. Consequently, populism destroys democratic process by inciting fascism.

The last but not the least threat of populism is that it undermines the true essence of democracy. It manipulates voter behaviour, promotes fascism, and silences civil society groups. Moreover, it diminishes checks on executive, expands the rule of populist leaders, and targets democratic institutions. Arundhati Roy, an Indian author, has claimed that populism "eradicat[es] the basic democratic norms." [The Indian Express]. Therefore, populism destroys the true essence of democracy.

Although, populism poses severe threats to democracy, it does not mean that these threats can not be mitigated. Some practical steps can significantly reduce the threats of populism.

Firstly, providing education to masses can reduce the threats of populism. Educated people will not easily appeal to populist slogans. Resultantly, the influence of populism will begin to fade swiftly. Moreover, the negative impacts of populist leaders should be provided to people. For instance, the people should know the Holocaust initiated by populist Hitler. This information can change the mind of people regarding supporting populists. Therefore, educating the masses is necessary for reducing the threats of populism.

Secondly, the regulation of media is also necessary for restricting the circulation of populism. The populist

leaders utilize media for propagating their ideology. The campaigns of Modi and Erdogan aptly evidence this.

Hence, media should be regulated for not spreading populist rhetoric. Jean-Werner Muller, a political scientist, has argued that the regulation of media can restrict the propagation of populism. Therefore, the regulation of media can minimize the threats of populism.

Thirdly, initiating peaceful protest against populist leaders can also undermine the rise of populism. Peaceful protests will reassure the populist leader that people are not in favor of him. Consequently, the true democracy will prevail. Many countries have undermined populism by adopting the strategy of peaceful protests. For instance, peaceful protest against Romanian populist leader Liviu Dragnea has sent him to jail. Therefore, peaceful protests against

Populist leaders can restrict populism and let democracy to prevail.

To conclude, it becomes abundantly clear that populism is a direct threat to democracy. It poses severe threats like promoting fascism, undermining democracy and prevailing authoritarianism. However, some practical steps can also reduce the threats of populism to democracy. These strategies include educating the masses and regulating the media. It is necessary to eradicate populism for ensuring social democracy. Unless the threats of populism to democracy are mitigated, it is difficult for democracy to prevail. Hence, the complete eradication of populism can ensure the prevalence of true democracy. The day is not far enough when world will experience true democracy by without the threats of populism