

10 The Dynamics of Populism in the United States

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the specter of populism has crept into the United States. Populism not only puts pressures on political institutions and tears apart societies, but it also has a huge impact on Western democracies. This paper will focus on the rise of populism in America and explore the dynamics of populism from multiple perspectives. The root cause of populism is the growing economic inequality which has triggered a series of social crises. Resentment is the fuse of populism. Trump's populist campaign pushed American populism to a climax. At the same time, the new Internet media is a combustion engine driving populism, and it will have spillover effects on other countries. Populism has had different effects in the United States in different periods. This paper will closely examine the complexity and challenging factors of populism in evolving sociopolitical environments.

KEYWORDS

America, Populism, Dynamics

Populism advocates for the rights of civilians and emphasizes the role of the people in the development of social history, opposing traditional elites, existing systems, and mainstream politics. As a barometer of democratic politics, populism highlights the interaction between the elite and the masses, the people and politics. The original ideal of populism is to fight against traditional elites that monopolize the political arena. However, in recent years, the specter of populism creeping into the United States overshadows democracy, tears apart societies, brings new risks to the United States and the world, and endangers Western democracies. Populism is a long-standing tradition of American politics and it is rooted in some long-existent political or economic crises in society. Looking at the rise of American populism and exploring the dynamics of populism from multiple perspectives, it is not difficult to discern that the root cause of populism is the growing economic inequality that has triggered a series of social crises, and resentment is the fuse of populism. Trump's populist campaign pushes populism to its peak. The new Internet media is a combustion engine driving populism, and it will have spillover effects on other countries. These dynamics of populism have had different effects in the United States in different periods.

THE SOCIAL ROOTS: THE ECONOMIC DEPRESSION CAUSED SOCIAL CRISES

The social crisis caused by the economic depression is the root of populism in the United States. The financial crisis not only caused heavy losses to the US economy, but also greatly undermined people's confidence in the economic prospects and weakened the legitimacy of power and wealth for policy makers and financial elites. In recent years, the disparity between rich and poor in American society has approached the highest level in history since the 1929 economic crisis. According to the US Census Bureau, the Gini coefficient of US household income in 1970 was 0.353, and after that, it climbed all the way to 0.48 in 2014. This far exceeded the internationally recognized warning line of 0.4. As of 2010, the wealth of the top 10% of the population exceeded 70%, while the wealth of the top 1% was close to 35% (Piketty 2014, p. 358). Social wealth has accelerated its roll toward the elite, and the polarization between rich and poor has intensified. The widening gap between rich and poor has aroused the general public's dissatisfaction with the elite and the desire to change the status quo.

In addition, the domestic economic situation in the United States has continued to deteriorate in recent years, and economic development has been difficult. The labor market is volatile, the unemployment rate is rising, and the effective adjustment of social equity cannot be achieved. The income gap has been widening, and the concentration of wealth has intensified. The distortion of the income distribution system has led to the shrinking of the middle class, and the proportion of the middle-income population in the total population has continued to decline. The number of poor people has been increasing, and social polarization is severe. The huge income gap curbed the consumption of low-income and middle-income groups, resulting in the shrinking of consumer demand to stimulate economic growth and development. As a result, the ordinary people's standard of living has declined and they are excluded from public policy making. The monopoly power of capital, the polarization of income distribution, and the weakening of social class mobility have all led to a sharp increase in social conflicts in various fields. In this context, people generally question the prospects of economic development, worrying that "the future generation will be worse," and the "American dream" will debilitate. People are dissatisfied with the political system of letting too few people have too much, and too many people have too little (David Catanese 2018). Dissatisfaction is spreading in society, triggering a series of social crises and breeding populist soil. In the context of increased economic inequality and demographic changes that are not conducive to the traditional dominance of whites, the political rift between the middle, lower classes of whites, and elites has deepened, and the sense of frustration and relative deprivation in the white blue-collar class has never been stronger. It is widely believed that public discourse and policy formulation controlled by the political elites can not represent the interests of people, allowing populism to rise.

The United States is an olive-shaped social structure characterized by a "large middle and small two," with the middle representing the middle class and the two representing the wealthy and low-income groups. The huge middle class effectively guarantees the mobility of American society and helps to restrain radical or extreme political movements. It can be said to be the "stabilizer" of American society. But in recent years, the size of the middle class has continued to shrink, and it has fallen into an unprecedented predicament. The middle class is under tremendous economic pressure, and some middle class people are even falling into the low-income class. It is increasingly difficult for those at the bottom to advance to the middle class through hard work. Faced with such a social status quo, the middle and lower classes have shown strong dissatisfaction and anger and have become increasingly extreme in their politics.

THE FUSE: RESENTMENT AND DISSATISFACTION

The resentment and dissatisfaction of the people is the trigger for the rise of populism in the United States. In the face of the domestic economic recession and the declining standard of living, the people at the bottom are struggling, and dissatisfaction

spreads in society. People feel that they have been abandoned by the world economy in the process of globalization, betrayed by established politicians and bankers, and overwhelmed by pressure from the competition brought about by the large number of immigrants. The rise of populism in the United States is closely related to the impact of globalization on the distribution of domestic wealth. On the one hand, ordinary people do not enjoy the benefits of economic globalization and trade liberalization, and the government is unwilling or unable to reform the income distribution policy, thus people feel betrayed by the elites and squeezed out by immigrants. On the other hand, populists attack immigrants for taking away jobs in the United States with their cheaper labor. As a result, these people hate economic globalization, resent the competition for resources and pressure of competition brought by immigrants, and wrongfully shower the blame for many complex domestic problems on immigrants and refugees. For a time, nativism and anti-elite sentiment spread in society and there was a rising sentiment against globalization.

The public's feelings of being unequally treated are unprecedentedly magnified, causing class resentment in society, and populist sentiment spreads. The middle and lower classes are reluctant to "sacrifice" for the elites and the wealthy class, and they are willing to seek change in an extreme way. But the vested interests want to maintain the status quo, the rich and the poor are opposed, and the gap between the "grassroots" and the elites is deepened. As Samuel Huntington said in *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, there is a gap between the policies of the government agencies controlled by white elites and the people's interests in populism (Huntington 2017, p. 6). For example, the political elites in the Democratic Party focus on promoting the socioeconomic status and identity of ethnic minorities, while ignoring those of the middle and lower-class whites. Feeling themselves living in relative deprivation, the labor class, especially the white blue-collar group, consider themselves as the "loser of globalization," thus becoming the main force of populism.

With the aging of the white population and their low fertility rate, whites will lose their traditional dominant position as the main ethnic group. Coupled with the influx of immigrants and the changes in the demographic structure of the population, the dominant position of whites is facing unprecedented challenges. The continued increase in immigrants has sparked dissatisfaction and panic among the middle and lower class, and triggered a further rise of right-wing populism. Primarily, immigrants have deepened white groups' anxieties about safety. The 9-11 incident and the successive terrorist attacks in Europe in recent years have led to a sharp rise in the fear of immigrants, especially extremists. In addition, most immigrants have low salary requirements and work hard, and they are more likely to get job opportunities. They have seized jobs that were originally classified as belonging to middle and lower class whites, increasing employment pressures. Finally, from the perspective of demographic structure, the proportion of ethnic minorities in the total population continues to rise, while the proportion of whites continues to decline. In this context, the middle and lower class white groups believe that they are the losers in globalization, and they firmly support Trump and regard Trump as the last hope for reinvigorating the superiority and hierarchy of the white race. They believe that "Make America Great Again" means "let the United States turn white again" (Charles Blow 2018).

Ordinary people care about domestic economic conditions, social security, national security, and sovereignty, while elites are concerned with supporting international trade and population movements to promote US participation in international affairs. There are huge differences of opinion between ordinary people and elites on issues such as employment, immigration, and international trade. We have seen that the people attach great importance to the value of borders and nationalism, while the elites privilege transnational identity and globalism, and in this way, the gap between the people and the elites has been enlarged in recent years. Since the political elites are separated from the ordinary people, the appeals of the ordinary people are not effectively responded to, so the public is strongly dissatisfied with the government, and the trust in the government continues to decline. The people no longer think that the government can represent their vital interests, and they worry that the government will only represent the interests of powerful. They launched a series of demonstrations to oppose capital monopoly power and accuse the political manipulation of the government. In the final analysis, people expressed their dissatisfaction with the process of elite politics excluding the interests of the people from the process of wealth distribution.

In the face of the prolonged troubles of the refugee crisis, the American people believe that immigrants have taken their jobs, leading to rising unemployment and declining quality of life. At the same time, the immigrants are believed to have also squeezed into public resources, which negatively affected the public security, welfare, medical care, and education interests of the American people. Coupling this with frequent terrorist attacks, people's sense of insecurity increased. The refugee problem caused strong dissatisfaction, became the "straw that broke the camel's back," and ignited the raging anger of populism. Populism is prone to simplify complex issues, emotionalize important issues, and resort to extreme measures to resolve conflicts. Under the influence of populism, traditional elites, refugees, and immigrants have become the "scapegoat" of various social conflicts in the United States. Trade protectionism has become a slow-moving measure to ease the pressure of domestic reforms in the United States. With the rise of right-wing populism on a global scale, populism has increasingly become a tool for passing on social conflicts and shirking responsibilities. Throughout history, when the economy is in a downturn and there is social unrest, populism often flourishes. Edward Shils notes that whenever there is widespread resentment for the long-established ruling class, the class that monopolizes politics, property, education, and culture, populism arises (Edward A. Shils 1956, p. 100–101).

THE CLIMAX: TRUMP'S POPULIST CAMPAIGN

In previous presidential elections in the United States, candidates often use their populist forces to create momentum for themselves and used populist electoral strategies to win support from voters. Populism contains three core elements: elevating the people, opposing the elite, and advocating policies representing ordinary people's will (Müller 2016, p. 19–20). Populism is often colored with protectionism. It pursues anti-intellectualism, believes in intuition, promotes moral judgment. It is prone to conspiracy theories, and to demonize and oppose its opposing groups to trigger public emotional resonance. Right-wing populism often targets foreign immigrants and ethnic minorities, and it advocates policies tinged with nativism and nationalism. Trump used populist strategies to push blue-collar resentment and anger against the political elites to a climax. Through the rhetoric of populism, he practiced exclusionism, carefully constructing the binary opposition between "we" and "they," successfully converting a considerable number of low-income, low-education white blue-collar workers into his own "ticket warehouse." Under the influence of populism, a great number of American people were coaxed into thinking that this election was the last chance to prevent the decline of the United States.

In the face of fiercely contested elections, traditional political parties had a low level of political achievements, and they lost the trust of the people. Coupling this with economic crisis, public rebellion and extremist emotions were unprecedentedly high. People opposed tradition, opposed the mainstream, and opposed the elite, and they urgently called for a new strong leader to bring a new look to the United States. Trump made good use of populist strategies for his political election. As a newcomer to the political arena, he criticized the traditional political elite, claiming to represent the middle and lower classes, to recapture the United States for the disadvantaged groups. He constantly emphasized crisis and deepened the anxiety of the people. He intensified the people's dissatisfaction with their living conditions and successfully led them to resent the traditional political elites.

There is no systematic and theoretically rigorous thinking in the minds of these people. They only care about their relative deprivation and by their votes, they express their resentment and dissatisfaction. They are easily mobilized by mere emotional slogans. Trump shouted, "Drain the Swamp" and "Lock Her Up," blaming the real social problems on the former Washington elites and slamming them for arrogance, corruption, and self-expansion to incite voters' dissatisfaction with them. Trump broke through "political correctness" by his slogan "Build the Wall," wrongfully linking the complex conflicts in American society with illegal immigration, and thereby won a large number of voters. Populist political mobilization has successfully used the blue-collar middle class's anxiety and dissatisfaction with demographic changes and

the economic problems caused by immigration and social changes in recent years. Taking advantage of the white people's anxiety about the American social demographic structure and mainstream culture, Trump has firmly attracted white voters among the elderly, blue-collar workers, rural people, and the low-educated. Trump constantly reproduces anti-elite, anti-immigration, anti-globalization sentiment, pursues the concept of "America First," and vows to "Make America Great Again" in the name of the "people." Trump won the hearts of the people with his extremist remarks, his image as a "people's spokesperson," and as one outside the traditional political arena. He was successfully elected with his practice of populist strategies. Cas Mudde points out that the direct communication between the political leaders and people, though not a fundamental feature of populism, actually promotes populism and is inseparable from its political success (Mudde 2004, p. 545). Rather than Trump's personal victory, it is better to say that it is the victory of populism. Since the election, Trump has often been called a populist, but some researchers believe that Trump is actually an elitist who is incapable of truly embracing populism. Populism is only a tool for him to win votes (Friedman 2017).

THE COMBUSTION ENGINE: THE NEW INTERNET MEDIA

New media generally refers to any interactive medium that uses computers and networks. The introduction of computers and the Internet has brought a complete overhaul to the media. It involves all aspects of production, storage, manipulation, and dissemination, as well as text, images, and video animations (Manovich 2001, p. 5–6). The media has always played a role that cannot be ignored in American politics. There is still debate about whether the media can directly change the public's view of something, but what is certain is that the media can shape public opinion to some extent by controlling the information received by the public. The innovation of the media is an important factor in promoting political changes in such realms as elections, supervision, and expressions of public opinion. The emergence of new media has brought about changes in the political ecology of the United States. In 2015, Obama launched the US President's official Twitter account "@POTUS." In the 2016 US presidential election, social media continued to be a battleground for candidates to compete. Trump won the election with the advantage of "Twitter Governance." After winning the election, he has continued to use Twitter to communicate with the public. He publishes several posts a day, and at his most productive, he published more than 200 tweets per week. In addition to publishing important information and statements, he is more likely to express his personal views in an attempt to draw public closer to him.

All along, American elites had mastered discourse power and dominated public opinion by controlling the traditional media. Ordinary people could only passively receive information, and it was difficult to voice their own opinions. Even if they were heard, their voices were usually overwhelmed by mainstream discourse. The development of the Internet and social media has broken the elites' traditional pattern of controlling the mass media. The elites have lost their monopoly on information privilege (Zhao 2017). Online social media not only provides a platform for ordinary people to express their opinions, but also expands the channels for ordinary people to obtain information. With the help of online social media, all kinds of extremist speech and populism can quickly spread. Online social media united originally isolated social individuals into a whole, innovated methods of mass mobilization, and thus played an indispensable role in the rise of American populism. We have seen that the launching, mobilization, and information release of the Tea Party Movement and the Occupy Wall Street Movement have fully utilized online social media such as Twitter and Facebook.

New media such as Twitter has constructed a public domain for people to participate in politics, providing a virtual community for people to gather and discuss hot topics in society to achieve political participation (Habermas 1991, p. 30). In fact, Twitter has become a social platform for the American people to discuss people's livelihood and participate in politics. Topics cover social hotspots such as immigration, medical insurance, and gun control. From the ordinary people to the political elite, people from different classes participate in the discussion, with a strong populist color and extensive

social influence. Compared with the “public sphere” of traditional politics, Twitter has greatly reduced the cost of people’s participation in politics. People don’t have to be present, there’s no need to pay, there’s no time or space constraints, and they can freely express their opinions and communicate in real time. It broke the monopoly of traditional politics on the right to speak and raised the enthusiasm of ordinary people to participate in politics. The public can even form a political force that cannot be ignored by virtue of its quantitative advantages, and that can exert influence on government decision-making. We have found that the middle layer existing in past exchanges between state leaders and the public has ceased to exist on Twitter. With the help of Twitter, public opinion can reach the top level, and politicians can directly mobilize ordinary people. The new Internet media has made possible direct interaction between the public and the elite, changing the asymmetry between the civilians and the elite in the political arena. From this point of view, the new media itself has a strong populist color, in line with populist needs to reach out to the public.

Although Twitter users are not representative of the majority of the US population, the Twitter community includes almost all political parties, election candidates, public officials, the media, journalists, and a large number of people who care about politics. It plays a pivotal role in American politics. Therefore, some people believe that Twitter has developed into an important force for promoting grassroots political dialogue, and even changed the top-down political leadership model and political thinking in the United States (Newkirk 2016). Decentralization is a major feature of Twitter. Compared with traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television, Twitter users are no longer merely passive recipients of information, but can actively participate in the process of information production and dissemination. Users can customize the source of information, publish original content, and fully grasp the initiative of the information dissemination process. At the same time, the Twitter mode also reduces the threshold of creation. Tweets don’t have to pay too much attention to the quality of the text. Users who are not good at writing can also choose other methods such as pictures, audio, and video. In this way, everyone has the right to speak, and everyone can become a news editor. People are no longer limited by the information publishing platform of professional institutions in the past. People enjoy great convenience and autonomy in the field of information and discourse communication, and they can successfully bypass the monopoly of traditional media. Interactivity is another major feature of Twitter. On traditional media, users more passively accept information, and the degree of inequality between users and information publishers is higher. Twitter enables real-time interaction between users. This real-time interaction provides a convenient channel for directing public opinion. On Twitter, anyone can directly contact the president, and the president can directly see the views of the people. All the intermediate links in the traditional feedback process for political public opinion have been omitted, and there is only the distance of one mobile phone between the ordinary people and the president.

The new media represented by Twitter is a good channel for Trump to have direct dialogue with the people. Populism is based on the confrontation between the people and the elite, so it is necessary to constantly incite and maintain this kind of confrontation. Kellner pointed out that creating a “media spectacle” to increase exposure, to further incite public sentiment, and achieve social and political effects is the hallmark of populism in the new media era (Kellner 2016, p. 1–3). Using the new media to win over the hearts of the people and to control public opinion through pleasure politics is a new form of populism. Today, new media has become a compulsory course for American political elites. The 2016 presidential election symbolizes the shift from a full-scale propaganda of “air warfare” to “ground war,” then to a new battlefield called social media (Gelman and Azari 2017). Unlike in any previous era, populism in the new media era has its own unique, moving chapter. Information technology and new media platforms have expanded the reach of populist discourse to help it rise. Various social networking sites are the best way to expand populism. Trump is very good at using social media. Though his views are extreme and his speech controversial, he is popular among young voters. Compared with the rigor of the traditional political elite, Trump, who is active in the new media, dares to challenge the traditional elite, and expresses his dissatisfaction with reality. He often expresses his true temperament, more grounded, and more like a people’s

spokesperson. His speech is inflammatory and still won the support of a large number of voters on social networking sites. The use of new Internet media has made Trump even more powerful. Trump's passionate speech mobilization, controversial extremist claims, and unique personal charm make his "strongman leader" image deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and it eventually helped him to win the election.

For many people, populism becomes a natural goodwill and is close to the new Internet media. Compared with traditional media, new media is often considered to hold a neutral position that is not manipulated by elites, and it can objectively express public opinion. Moreover, the direct interaction model of new media is in line with the source of populist legitimacy. In terms of content, the new media discourse is short and popular, characterized by emotional expression more than rational analysis, and thus coincides with features of populist discourse. As a result, populists tend to rely more on new media represented by social media than mainstream politicians (Manucci 2017, p. 475). It is the new media that has changed the political ecology of the United States and constructed a Trump model with populism.

Moreover, the spillover effect of populism cannot be ignored. Looking at the world political map in recent years, "black swan" incidents occurred frequently. A new wave of populism has risen, which has profoundly affected the political situation in the world. When populism meets the Internet age, it spreads easily from one country to another. For a time, the populist concept was prevalent, the American people who were disappointed with the traditional political parties and resentful of the political elite were affected by other populist trends, and they regarded the traditional political elite as the "culprit" of the economic and social crises. Thus, this populist popular rebellion made the newcomers in politics not only a perfect attack against the traditional elite, but also made them another channel for the spread of populism in the United States, which resonated with the populism of other countries or regions.

FAR-REACHING INFLUENCE

Behind the rise of populism in the United States is the separation between the people and the elite. Because populism pursues short-term effects and ignores the long-term sustainability of policies, it is easy to move toward irrationality (Fukuyama 2018). A Chinese proverb says, "Water can carry a boat, and it can also overturn a boat." Populism is like flowing public opinion. It has no fixed watercourse and is full of variables. Once it merges with radical thought such as extreme nationalism, it is very dangerous, and it has had a profound impact on the political situation in the United States and the world.

Impact on the United States

First, the rise of populism will exacerbate the opposition and division of American society. Since the financial crisis, various crises and multiple conflicts have continued to foment, and the degree of opposition and division in American society has deepened. The elite and ordinary people have become two opposite social classes, and the conflict between white groups and ethnic minorities such as Latinos and Muslims has escalated. The right-wing populist forces represented by Trump and the Tea Party target traditional political elites, immigrants, and ethnic minorities. The left-wing populism represented by Bernie Sanders and the Occupy Wall Street movement is in direct opposition to the capital elite. The rise of populism has intensified the opposition between the two sides and has torn apart society. Indeed, the opposition between classes stems from the inherent conflict within the capitalist system and is the inevitable result of capital manipulation. Without institutional adjustments and reforms, the serious political and economic inequalities between the two sides will not change. The "anti-elite" slogans advocated by populism will only lead to a growing rift between ordinary people and

elites without adequate solution. Furthermore, as an immigrant country, opening to immigration is its political tradition. In the spirit of white supremacy, right-wing populism advocates anti-immigration and anti-ethnicity, and is breaking this tradition. After taking office, Trump signed administrative order with distinctive xenophobia, such as building a wall at the US-Mexico border and restricting the entry of Muslims. Undoubtedly, this will further intensify the conflict between ethnic minorities and whites. The combination of populism with xenophobia and extreme nationalism intensifies the division and conflicts within American society.

In addition, the rise of populism will affect the economic development and social stability of the United States. It should be recognized that populism is a global phenomenon and a traditional cultural force that emerged during the transition of the country's domestic political economy. The populist concept of people first is itself against representative democracy. Once merged with nationalism, it can quickly grow into an anti-institutional force, threatening the current US system and mainstream politics. Although populism originated from the grassroots, Trump's election allowed him to raise it to the national level and penetrate into national decision-making. Under the influence of Trump, US diplomacy and politics show a trend toward protectionism, jungle conflict, and strongman dictatorship. While objectively promoting the rise of global nationalism, it also directs the tone of international affairs from the rule of the East and the West to the clash of civilizations. Under this circumstance, the alliance will be the first victim of the concept of "America first," and the current international order and global governance will face enormous challenges. Under the influence of populism, emotions overcome rationality, ideals overcome reality, and both the state and the people are extremely vulnerable to making extreme choices. This coupled with the fact that populism is not constructive and blindly exclusive, makes it easier to trigger more complex social problems.

Finally, the rise of populism will also change the political ecology of the United States. First of all, the political practice of the United States has always had a profound tradition of elitism, and the rise of populism will directly impact this elite political model. A minority of elites have always governed the US, and most political, economic, and social decisions are made by a few elites, not the general public (Dye, Zeigler, Schubert 2016, p. 2). In the past, the election has been a confrontation between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, or the liberal and the conservative political elite. No matter which party and which camp the winners are in, they are always a member of the political elite group, which guarantees the elite's rule over the country. But the rise of populist forces has completely subverted this tradition. Trump's victory in the election marked a major victory for populist forces, indicating that the political monopoly of the elite has been shaken, which to some extent reshapes the domestic political structure.

The rise of populism will exacerbate the political polarization of the United States. The homogeneity within the Democratic Party and the Republican Party is growing, but the heterogeneity between the two parties is growing. The differences between the two parties in policy advocacy and ideology are growing, leading to increasing competition among political parties. After Trump was elected, many candidates in the US mid-term elections in 2018 hit the "Trump card." Since populism can make Trump successful in the White House, it can also be a tool for other candidates to win elections. The problem is that various conflicts still exist, social problems have not been fundamentally resolved, and populist sentiments in the United States have always existed. The development of new media continues to reshape the relationship between politicians and voters, and the opinions of ordinary people are becoming increasingly important. The new media era means that the more extreme the emotional content, the easier it is to respond to it (Hindsliff 2016). In this post-truth era, politicians have made extreme remarks in order to attract attention, and this will make the political ecology more populist. Last but not least, the rise of populism will push American politics to the right. Historically, American politics have been swaying between the left and the right and maintaining a dynamic balance. But now with the rise of right-wing populism, especially Trump's presidency, the right turn of American politics will become a predominant trend in the future.

Impact on the World

The specter of populism wanders around the world. No one can stay out of it, and no country dares to turn a deaf ear. Populism is extremely inflammatory and contagious, and it spreads easily from one country to another. The Brexit and Brazil elections indicate that the impact of the Trump phenomenon is far from being confined to the United States, but it affects Europe, Latin America, and the other parts of the world. We must be wary that populists are impatient with the complex political process, and the only thing they find useful is the direct approach such as referendum and election (Crick 2005, p. 626). The rise of American populism will boost the wave of populism in the world. Throughout history, the wave of populism in the world has appeared three times. In the late 19th century, the first wave of populism was represented by the Russian Narodniks and the American People's Party Movement. The second wave of populism appeared in the 1960s and 1970s, the most typical example being that of Latin American countries, such as Peronism. At the end of the 20th century, after entering the era of globalization, populism in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and North America once again became a hot spot of concern and set off the third wave of populism (Yu 1997). After the 2008 financial crisis, a new wave of populism emerged on a global scale. Various populist parties in Europe have sprung up, such as the French National Front, the UK Independence Party, the Italian Five Star Movement, the Spanish Podemos, and the Freedom Party of Austria. They have made breakthroughs in elections, profoundly affecting and changing the political situation in Europe and the world. Coupled with Trump winning the 2016 election, populism has won a huge victory, likely to boost the fourth wave of global populism.

At the same time, we should also see that the rise of American populism will affect the development of globalization. The United States was the biggest winner in the process of economic globalization, but the huge benefits brought by globalization were extremely unbalanced in domestic distribution. The elites represented by Wall Street bankers and corporate executives were the biggest beneficiaries, while the ordinary people represented by the blue-collar workers were the losers. They had no real economic benefits, but had to face increasing employment pressure and unemployment risk. Anti-globalization has become one of the propositions of American populism as a result. In the 2016 presidential election, both Trump and Sanders clearly put forward the anti-globalization policy. After Trump was elected, he pursued an "America First" agenda, and his concepts of anti-globalization and anti-free trade were embodied in a series of policies. The trade protectionism pursued by the United States has brought a huge impact on the globalization process, leading to the rise of economic protectionism worldwide, which has brought enormous challenges to the globalization process. The spread of populism has made Europe turn to conservatism and xenophobia. The world has shown a trend of counter-globalization, which weakened traditional political forces and increased the uncertainty of world politics and the global economy.

CONCLUSION

Rethinking the Western democratic system, we should not blindly criticize populism, but should instead treat this political phenomenon objectively. In a sense, populism is neither the highest form of democracy nor the darling of democracy. To be precise, it is a mirror image of democracy, and democracy uses it to discover its own shortcomings and thus perfect itself (Panizza 2005, p. 3). Faced with complicated social conflicts and crises, populism takes advantage of the logic of simplification of complex problems, emotionalization of important issues, and extreme treatment of contradictions, and hosts a populist carnival, promoting political party reform and government improvement. However, it does not fundamentally solve the problem, nor does it apply to democratic politics in the era of globalization. Populism advocates

direct democracy and, to a certain extent, demands more democracy than conventional democracy, even overstressing democracy. However, due to the vague concept of populism itself and the hollowing out of the core, its core values are not stable and are often attached to different political ideas. It realizes disparate political demands in the name of the people. Populism appeals to the “people” and opposes the established power structure and the value of mainstream ideas in the name of people. Populists claim to represent the interests of the people, always stand with the people, and live at the center of the legitimacy of power. But populism is not equal to democracy. Populism stems from the “democratic deficit,” it is the shadow cast by democracy itself (Canovan 1999). As Fareed Zakaria once pointed out, if a country’s political elites fail to listen to and resolve the public’s concerns, other political forces will incite fear and prejudice, causing populism to rise (Zakaria 2016). As a cyclical recurring social and political trend, populism is bitter, but never a good medicine for the disease. It promotes democracy, is born of democracy, and wanders because of democracy, but it is ultimately distorted democracy and deeply hurts democracy. Whenever and wherever populism is prevalent, it often heralds democratic crisis. In the development of human civilization, how can we deal with the conflict between the political division of the world? How can we harmonize the interests of a regional sovereign state and its globalization in technology and economy (Toynbee 2001, p. 725)? How does Western democracy get out of the woods? What kind of democratic politics is needed in the era of globalization? These are all worthy of further thinking and research.

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