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OVERVIEW OF CROSS-CONTINENT RISING POPULISM AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TWO SELECTED AFRICAN STATES

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Abstract
This study examines the implications of rising populism cross-continent, especially in Europe and America on two selected African states, Nigeria and Kenya. Populism, marked with distinct characteristics such as anti-elitist rhetoric and a focus on the people has significant traction globally, far beyond its traditional Western strongholds. The research explores how these global populist trends affect Nigeria and Kenya.The study employs a qualitative approach, relying on secondary data sources to analyze such effects of populism on democratic institutions, economic policies, foreign policy and international relations of Nigeria and Kenya. Findings indicate that populism in Nigeria and Kenya has both positive and negative impacts. On the one hand, it mobilized significant portions of the population, attracting attention to corruption, economic inequality, and political disenfranchisement. On the other hand, it has contributed to increased political polarization, weakened democratic institutions, and challenged traditional governance structures. The research highlights the complexity of populism as a political phenomenon. It can serve as a catalyst for reforms, but poses risks to the stability of emerging democracies. The study further identifies the need for effectively managing the influence of populism. Overall, study broadens discourse on populism by providing insights into local manifestations, particularly in the African context. The findings offer valuable implications for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners interested in understanding and navigating the complex dynamics of populism in Nigeria, Kenya, and beyond.

Keywords: Populism, Nigeria, Kenya, Democracy, Governance, International Relations

Introduction

Somehow unexpectedly, populism has become a significant political force across Europe and America in recent years. Consequently, populism comes and trends with many questions profusely begging answers: Is populism a new form of democracy? Is populism a replacement for democracy? Is populism just a populism a complement or an antagonist of democracy? Is populism some subtle extremism? More importantly, is it a threat to global polity and politics, a mere placebo, or an antidote to global political crisis? Leaders and movements advocating populist ideologies have gained sudden recognition and great following, as they emphasise nationalism, zero-globalization, and scepticism toward traditional political institutions. Populism attracts more and more scholarship, including in Africa, and in Nigeria, specifically, as populism contacts old and new states, existing democracies and emerging ones, small and large states, developed and underdeveloped countries alike. This surge and upsurge in populism is noticeably driven by multifarious factors where it exists across the globe, of which economic inequality, migration crises, and dissatisfaction with existing political structures are most prominent (Firi, Febriani, &Qurroti, 2023). This paper seeks to answer some of the not-yet-fully-answered questions concerning populism in relation to the international system. In particular, what populism does to, for or against Nigeria's polity, politics, and democracy, as well as those of Kenya is the primary concern of this paper.

The paper ultimately wants to look at the outcomes of populism contacting structures in the named countries. Does it harm or promote people and relevant structures in these independent

states? Understanding the implications of this phenomenon on African states is crucial, particularly in the context of governance, international relations, and development. Rooted in this background, this study seeks to explore how the rise of populism in Europe and America has influenced, affected or infected Nigeria and Kenya. It will examine the ways in which these African states are navigating the shifting geopolitical landscape, focusing on the implications for governance, economic policy, and international relations.

Nigeria in West Africa, and Kenya in East, both prominent in their respective regions, have faced significant political, economic, and social challenges in recent years that are examined in this paper. These challenges are compounded by the influence of external factors, including the changing dynamics of global politics.

Statement of the Problem

While much scholarlyattention has been given to the rise of populism in the West, there is a noticeable gap in cognate literature regarding how this phenomenon manifests in African states like Nigeria and Kenya. Precisely, the gap this work fills is the evaluation of the nature of populism within these countries, particularly in the context of their most recent political history. The paper examines how populist Nigeria and Kenya are, while addressing this gap by analysing the extent to which populist rhetoric and policies have influenced the political trajectories of both countries. It will explore the nature of populism in these states, the factors driving its rise, and the potential consequences for their political and economic futures. By doing so, this research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on populism, offering insights into how this global trend is playing out in the African context.

In Nigeria, the political landscape has been marked by a growing disconnect between the government and the populace. Similarly, Kenya has witnessed a rise in political movements that echo populist sentiments, particularly around issues of corruption, electoral integrity, and ethnic representation. The paper fills the gap of limited understanding of these developments.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aimed at providing incisive review, and specific assessment of the subject matter, using two major objectives and corresponding research questions, as follows.

1. Examine the possibility of populism promoting or impeding democracy and its tenets in Africa.
2. Identify and rationally analyse notable effects, both positive and negative, of populism on Africa; that is, examine the aftermath of populism on African politics, especially Nigeria and Kenya.

Research Questions

1. How much possibility of populism exists at promoting democracy and its tenets in the two selected African states?
2. What is the degree of effect or damage populism has done on African politics?

Scope of the Paper

The study focuses on Nigeria and Kenya on account of their significant geopolitical roles within Africa and their distinct political histories that provide valuable insights into the manifestation of populism on the continent. Furthermore, the study is confined largely to the last twenty years, a period that marks the rising visibility of populist ideologies, especially within the context of the blossoming era of globalisation. This time frame allows for a focused examination of how recent global political shifts have influenced domestic politics in Nigeria and Kenya, and how these states have responded to the challenges and opportunities presented by populism.

Methodology

The paper used secondary data sources, particular attention is given with a view to ensuring only cognate literature was researched and analysed to arrive at some valid and reliable outcomes, justifying the adoption of the research instruments. The research design adopted is descriptive and analytical, utilizing secondary data sources to explore the impact of rising populism in Europe and America on Nigeria and Kenya. This design is suitable as it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of existing information, enabling a comprehensive examination of the research problem. The task involves a critical examination of these sources, using content analysis to identify patterns, trends, and correlations that shed light on the influence of populism in the selected African states.

Review of Literature

Description and Emergence of Populism

The term "populism" originates from the Latin word populus, meaning "people." Populism underlies the concerns, emotions and interests of the general populace, or so-called ordinary people, while it sets “the people" against "the elite," by constructing politics as a battle between "us" (the people) and "them" (the elite), (Firi et al., 2023).

It is a multifaceted phenomenon that mobilises the masses through charismatic leadership, simplistic rhetoric, and the narrative of representing the "voice of the people" against entrenched power structures. This dynamic is often exploited by populists, who rally support by exploiting and exploring grievances and fears for an advantage.

As noted by Lazar, populism frequently manifests as movements or leaders who depict a stark divide between a virtuous, unified populace and a corrupt, homogeneous elite (Institut Montaigne, 2021). Populists assert that the sovereignty of the people must be expressed through direct democracy, often positioning this as superior to liberal and representative democratic systems.

Within the social sciences, populism is often considered ideational, defined as an ideology that contrasts the morally good "people" with the corrupt "elite." The definition of "the people" varies across different populist movements, ranging from class-based, ethnic, or national identities. Populists generally portray elites - including political, economic, cultural, and media establishments - as a monolithic group that prioritizes its own interests, often at the expense of the broader population.

Populist movements are typically led by charismatic figures who present themselves as the true "voice of the people" (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). These leaders often blend populism with other ideologies, such as nationalism, liberalism, or socialism, leading to both left-wing and right-wing populism. Further, populists not only define who the "real people" are but also exclude those who do not conform to their narrative, regardless of nationality or citizenship (Mueller, 2019).

Some Basic Distinguishing Features of Populism

First of, populism, as a political approach, is characterised by several distinct features that marks it out from other political ideologies. These features often manifest across various populist movements worldwide, despite differences in context and leadership styles. Some of such points are highlighted and briefly discussed hereunder (Karlson, 2024).

Secondly, there is simplification of the Society: Populism often advances a dual-angular perspective and simplistic understanding of society, by categorizing it into two opposing groups: "the people" and "the elite." This deliberate dichotomy promotes populist rhetoric, such that it portrays the populace as united, while portraying the elite as otherwise, disconnected and corrupt. The simplicity of this division allows populists to appeal to a broad base by compounding socioeconomic issues between both groups.

It promotes and thrives on opposition to the elites in society: Following the divisive line already established, criticism of the elite is fundamental to a populist discourse, as populists accuse elites, whether they are politicians, business leaders, or intellectuals, of being out of touch with ordinary people and serving their interests at the expense of the public. This antagonism helps populists mobilise support against the stigmatised public enemy.

Furthermore, populism lays claims to being the custodian to the truth about the will of the People: Populists assert that they have a unique ability to understand and articulate the true will of the people, thus, positioning them as the only legitimate representatives of the populace, disregarding opposition as being incapable of representation, in order to legitimise their leadership and policies.

Stemming from the last-mentioned point, populism underlines the centrality of the people in the society: In populist ideology, the people, reflecting the will of the majority, are portrayed as the rightful holders of power and sovereignty. This majoritarian approach can lead to tensions within democratic systems, where pluralism and institutional safeguards are valued.

Further, it perceives the people as a homogeneous entity: Populists often view the people as a monolithic group with shared interests and values, with no regards for internal differences such as class, ethnicity, or ideology, which promotes a strong sense of collective identity among supporters, notwithstanding the disadvantages of marginalization of minority groups and the suppression of dissent.

It usually declares a serious crisis as tool or anchor of its own emergence: Populism, like populists, often declares that society is facing an existential crisis, which only populists can resolve. This sense of urgency is used to justify radical measures and to rally support for their cause, by creating a narrative of imminent danger.

It deploys anti-establishment rhetoric or discourse to gain sympathy of the people targetted: Populists frequently employ anti-establishment rhetoric, positioning themselves as outsiders challenging the status quo. This discourse appeals to voters who feel disillusioned with traditional political parties and institutions, and it helps to cultivate an image of authenticity and rebellion against a corrupt system.

It is further characterised by Anti-Intellectualism: Anti-intellectualism is another common feature of populism, where populists reject expert opinion and complex analysis in favour of simple, emotive appeals. This stance resonates with segments of the population that feel alienated or dismissed by intellectual elites, and it reinforces the populist narrative of the elite being out of touch with the realities faced by ordinary people.

In all these fundamental features are instrumentalised by appealing to the emotions, fears, and aspirations of the populace.

A Cursory Look at Populism across Countries

Populism, though often viewed as a modern phenomenon, has deep historical roots stretching back to ancient civilizations (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024). The seeds of populist sentiment can be traced to leaders like Pericles in Athens and Julius Caesar in Rome, who sought to align themselves with the broader populace rather than just the elite. These early instances, however, did not fully develop into a distinct populist ideology as we understand it today. Different countries have diverse populism experiences as follows.

Ancient Rome

Beyond the United States, the roots of populism can be identified in various historical contexts. In ancient Rome, the Gracchi brothers -- Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus -- advocated for land reforms to address economic inequality and empower the common people (U.S. Department of

State, 2024). Their populist rhetoric and policies were aimed at challenging the entrenched power of the Roman elite, although their efforts ultimately led to their downfall.

The United States of America

The first formally recognised populist movements emerged in the late 19th century. In the United States, the Populist Party -- also known as the People's Party -- was established in 1892 in response to the economic and social crises affecting farmers and labourers, particularly during the Great Depression· (Northern Illinois University, 2016). The party's populists demanded greater governmental control over the economy, using the creation of a national bank and the regulation of rail-roads, alongside political reforms like the direct election of U.S. Senators and the establishment of a graduated income tax. The Populist Party's rhetoric often framed politics as a struggle between the "people" and the "powerful," positioning the populists as the defenders of the common man against the corrupt and privileged elite (Hawkins & Kaltwasser, 2017). In the 19th century, Andrew Jackson's presidency in the United States reflected a populist approach, with policies, such as the expansion of suffrage and opposition to banks and corporations. The goal was to dismantle the influence of political elites and promote the interests of ordinary citizens (U.S. Department of State, 2024).

Argentina

In Latin America, Juan Perón's rise to power in Argentina during the mid-20th century marked a significant chapter in the history of populism (McGann, 2024). Perón's movement, which combined elements of nationalism, authoritarianism, and welfare-state policies, resonated with the working class and rural poor while challenging the traditional power structures of the Argentine elite. Perón's populism was characterized by a strong, charismatic leadership style and a direct appeal to the masses, which became a model for subsequent populist leaders in the region.

Spain: The emergence of Vox in Spain adequately represented growing influence of populism within democratic processes. Vox's roots lie in a faction of disillusioned members of the Popular Party (PP), driven by dissatisfaction with the leadership of Mariano Rajoy (Barrio et al., 2021). By positioning itself as the "voice" of conservative voters who felt overlooked by mainstream parties, Vox effectively tapped into this sentiment.

Vox's political agenda, emphasises traditional values, economic conservatism, and a strong Spanish identity, and showcases how populist parties can shift the political discourse to the right, particularly by compelling the PP to adopt more hard-line stances on moral, fiscal, and national identity issues.

Germany: In Germany, AfD was founded by former Christian Democratic Union (CDU) members. The populist party AfDcapitalised on growing dissatisfaction with Germany's political establishment, particularly on issues such as immigration and national sovereignty. The AfD's success illustrates the principle of political pluralism, offering a platform for those disillusioned with mainstream politics, exemplified by the party's ability to secure 12.6% of the vote in the 2017 elections, resulting in representation in the Bundestag, is a testament to its appeal among voters who feel alienated by traditional political parties (Vanguard Think Tank, 2014).

Portugal: Chega's, led by André Ventura, emerged in Portuguese politics, and exemplified populism capacity to disrupt established political norms. Ventura, a former member of the

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Social Democratic Party (PSD), leveraged populist rhetoric to gain traction among voters who felt disconnected from mainstream politics (ECPS, 2024).

Chega's focus on issues such as immigration and national security resonated with segments of the population who perceived the political elite as indifferent to their concerns. Chega's success in rapidly gaining parliamentary representation and increasing its influence in subsequent elections partly stemmed from its appeal to themes of national identity and anti-establishment sentiment.

France: Under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen and later his daughter Marine Le Pen, the Rassemblement National (RN), formerly called the Front National, was formed, and provided a compelling case of populism's enduring appeal. The party has consistently pushed a populist agenda centred on nationalism, anti-immigration policies, and protectionism (Stockemer &Barisione, 2016). The success of Rassemblement National (RN) in the 2002 presidential elections, marked a significant shift in French politics. Jean-Marie Le Pen advanced to the second round, signalling the growing resonance of far-right populism. This strategy has solidified RN's place as a major player in French politics, reflecting the deepening of populist currents in Europe.

Greece: Greek Solution was founded in 2016. It tapped into nationalist sentiments, particularly opposition to the Prespa Agreement, to build a strong electoral base in Northern Greece. The party's platform, which emphasises national sovereignty and critiques of the political establishment, aligns closely with the broader agenda of populist radical right. Greek Solution's success in securing parliamentary representation and influencing political discourse highlights the resilience of populist movements, particularly in countries facing economic and social challenges.

Italy: Fratelli d'Italia (FdI), led by Giorgia Meloni, represents another significant example of populism's rise in Europe. Emerging from a split within Silvio Berlusconi's Popolo della Libertà, FdI initially struggled to gain traction. However, the party's fortunes changed with the 2019 European elections, where it secured 6.5% of the vote, signalling a shift in Italian politics. FdI's populist rhetoric, which focuses on national identity, sovereignty, and opposition to the political establishment, resonates with voters disillusioned by Italy's traditional parties. Meloni's leadership and the party's consistent opposition to mainstream coalitions have solidified FdI's position as a major force in Italian politics, reflecting broader trends of populist surges across Europe.

Sweden: The Sweden Democrats (SD) presents a unique case of populism within the democratic framework. It was founded in 1988 from the ethno-nationalist and white supremacist movement, and has evolved into a significant political force by appealing to voters dissatisfied with mainstream parties' handling of immigration and integration. SD's growth, from 3% in 2006 to 17.5% in 2018, highlights the effectiveness of its populist message. Despite attempts by establishment parties to isolate SD through a cordon sanitaire, the party's resilience and growing influence have forced a shift in Swedish politics. The collaboration between SD and other right-wing parties in passing a joint budget marks a significant moment, indicating the increasing impact of populism on governance in Sweden.

France:
In Europe, the rise of populist parties like France's National Rally, Italy's Lega Nord, and the United Kingdom's BREXIT campaign has not only redefined but reshaped the political landscape, challenging the foundations of liberal democracy (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Similarly, in the United States, the election of Donald Trump as president in 2016 marked a significant shift towards populist rhetoric, with his "America First" agenda resonating with large segments of the population who felt left behind by globalisation and economic change.

Contrasting Democracy and Populism
Both democracy and populism are rooted in the need to please the people. Democracy is a political system that centres on the empowerment of the populace. It operates on the fundamental principle that the authority to govern, shape policies, and enact laws resides with the people. Democracy is characterised by key elements such as popular sovereignty, political equality, civil liberties, and the rule of law (United Nations, 2015). **While popular sovereignty** promotes the notion of the people being the real source of authority, **political equality** guarantees equal opportunities to engage in the political process. Such sovereignty is seen in how citizens elect representatives to govern on their behalf, as practised in the US, whereas in Switzerland, referendums is used to allow direct citizen participation in decision-making. As an indication of political equality, elections are inclusive of all adults, in India, and in New Zealand, where citizens have the right to vote and stand for election, regardless of their financial capacity. **Civil liberties** provide protection for individual inalienable rights, while **rule of law** is deployed to prevent abuses of power, by ensuring all persons regardless of status are subject to the law.

Populist movements may emerge when these concerns are ignored, or undersized. These movements often emerge when there is a perceived disconnect between the interests of the elite and the broader population. Populism, fundamentally, is a democratic impulse that highlights the grievances and needs of the populace that have been overlooked by established political institutions. It serves as a corrective force, urging political elites to address the concerns of the broader population. ….

Right-Wing and Left-Wing Populism
Populism in European countries manifests primarily through right-wing and left-wing ideologies. In both Western and Northern Europe, where right-wing is deeply rooted, it is the most prominent form of populism and basically characterized by nativism, which views "the people" from ethnic or cultural lens. The so-called 'virtuous natives' are believed to be threatened by immigration and its elitist proponents cum supporters. A great number of the right-wing movements trace their origins to post-fascist parties (Chatham House, 2021). Some of these parties or movements include France's the Rassemblement National (RN), formerly named the Front National, led by Jean-Marie and Marine Le Pen, Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ), Belgium's VlaamsBelang, the Freedom Party (PVV) in the Netherlands, Italy's Lega, and more recently, the Alternative for Germany (AfD). However, while these parties share a common ideology, their foreign policy positions have varied over time. During the 1980s, the RN and FPÖ supported the United States as part of their anti-communist stance during the Cold War, after the Cold War ended, these parties shifted to an anti-American position, viewing the U.S. as a global hegemon threatening their countries' economic, political, and cultural sovereignty. As a result of their new position, they opposed the North Atlantic Treaty Organisations and U.S.-led military interventions. This opposition to American power is somewhat similar to the left-wing populist stance, though right-wing populists generally frame

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their opposition within a narrowly defined national interest rather than the internationalism typical of the left.

Yet, the stance of right-wing populists across Europe is not uniform. For instance, in the 2000s, the Danish People's Party and the Dutch populist right both prioritized concerns about Islamic influence in Europe and therefore supported the U.S.-led "war on terror," whereas, Right-wing populism, which gained significant traction after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, typically emphasises nativism, nationalism, and conservative values. An anti-elitist stance combined with strong nationalist sentiments forms the core of right-wing populism, often resulting in exclusionary policies against immigrants and minority groups.

On the other hand, left-wing populism, contrasts sharply, as it adopts and absorbs traditional concerns such as class struggle, opposition to capitalist elites, and resistance to globalisation. Although both left and right wings have an anti-elitist stance in common, left-wing populism focuses on inclusive civic nationalism rather than ethnic nationalism. The struggle is primarily against economic elites rather than foreign populations, emphasising the need for social and economic reforms to address inequality. In Germany, left-wing populism emerged strongly after the unification of East and West Germany, where dissatisfaction with the unification process led to the rise of parties like Die Linke, representing the former East German left. For example, the RN in France maintained its anti-interventionist, anti-U.S., and anti-NATO stance, opposing Western intervention in Libya in 2011. Some right-wing populists in France and Austria also expressed support for Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, (which just collapsed in December of 2024, making him flee Syria for Russia, where Putin offered him asylum).

The election of Donald Trump as U.S. president further complicated the relationship between right-wing populists in Europe and the U.S. Trump was seen as an ideological ally by many, with leaders like Geert Wilders and Marine Le Pen hailing his victory as the start of a global "patriotic spring." Despite this, Trump's presidency presented a dilemma for far-right parties that had historically opposed American power, such as the RN. Following Trump's defeat in 2020, these parties may revert to their traditional anti-U.S. stance, while adopting Trump's rhetoric about elite hostility and election integrity issues.

Another critical aspect of right-wing populism in Europe is the close relationship many of these parties have developed with Russia, especially after 2010. For instance, the AfD in Germany has established strong ties with Russia, including cooperation agreements with Putin's United Russia party and engagement in pro-Russian policy positions, such as advocating for a new Reinsurance Treaty between Germany and Russia and opposing sanctions against Russia.

In summary, while right-wing populism in Europe is united by a shared 'nativist' ideology, its positions on foreign policy, particularly concerning the U.S. and Russia, are diverse and have evolved significantly over time.

In opposing American power, some left-wing populists in Europe, similar to some of the right-wing, have expressed sympathy towards Russia, perceiving it as a counterbalance to US influence. For instance, Die Linke in Germany advocates for a 'collective security system in Europe' that includes Russia, opposing German military deployments abroad and calling for Germany's withdrawal from NATO, which it argues has 'outlived' its purpose.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Research Questions 1: How much or well does populism promote democracy and its tenets in the two selected African states?

This rising populism in Western democracies has not only influenced domestic policies but also has far-reaching implications for global politics. The impact of populism extends beyond the borders of Europe and America, affecting diplomatic relations, trade policies, and international development aid.

Populism in Nigeria

From the most recent instance of populism to the remotest, Nigeria has experienced notable instances of populism in its politics in the last one decade.

On the positive side, populism has some historical capacity for activating and enhancing desired reforms in the polity. Even in the course of Nigeria's relatively stable democracy, the military interregnum masterminds appealed to populism sentiments to kick out civilian administration that they labelled 'corrupt, whether real or perceived notwithstanding. The December 31st 1983 coup in Nigeria, which terminated the Second Republic did cast the president, Alhaji Shehu Shagari and his administration as being corrupt. The Buhari-Idiagbon military regime lived on the anti-corruption populism narrative and goodwill from the people until it was toppled by an insider, the Chief of Staff, Major-General Ibrahim Babangida.

Secondly, it is capable of breaking entrenched or institutionalised monopolies, thereby contributing to economic and institutional changes. Recently, populism challenged godfatherism, personality cultism, and the well-established political power of incumbency in Lagos state, Nigeria's most populous and economically viable state, in the 2023 presidential election, when the so-called 'third force', and a dark horse in that election, Labour Party beat the All Progressives Congress.

In some way, populism serves as a catalyst for addressing and redressing injustices, besides redistributing power as well as income. Further, populism promotes grassroots political engagement. Populism straightens democratic processes by bringing new `energy and perspectives, especially in moments of stagnation and/or dissatisfaction with traditional politics.

Research Question 2: What is the degree of effect or damage populism has on Nigeria and Kenya politics?

African states like Nigeria and Kenya, with their historical ties to the West, are particularly vulnerable to the shifts in foreign policy driven by populist governments.

Populism does not pose the same threat to democracy as extremism did in the early 20th century, and is doing now. However, it fundamentally challenges key institutions and values of liberal democracy, particularly minority rights, pluralism, and the separation of powers (The Andrea Mitchell Center for the Study of Democracy, 2023).

Populism has considerably significant positive and negative effects on Nigerian and Kenyan politics, and polities.

It often drives increased political engagement and mobilisation; it breeds conflict and political instability, thus promoting polarisation of the polities; it deepens societal polarisation ultimately which undermines national cohesion and stability.

Populism weakens democratic institutions, such as the electoral umpire.

Practical populism disregards the rule of law by sometimes bypassing legal norms and processes to achieve set objectives, such as populist politician's (attempt at) extension of term in office.
Economic disruption is another consequence of populismwhich is capable of undermining investor's confidence. Populism, even if inadvertently prioritises short-term gains over long-term economic stability.
Considering tax as an extension of economic disadvantage, populism led togovernment's losing revenue, arising from tax policies, which is not economically viable or sustainable, and compelling national indebtedness. This is the experience with Kenyans' rejection of a proposed tax policy.
The effect of populism on governance and its accountability is also asserted from the study,in promoting politicization of anti-corruption efforts and undermine genuine reform, against or despite its noble goal of championing anti-corruption and accountability reforms.

Further, populism also poses significant risks, as it often undermines democratic norms by concentrating power in the hands of a single leader or movement, marginalising dissenting voices, and eroding institutional checks and balances. In Nigeria, the rise of populist figures like Peter Obi and Muhammadu Buhari highlights these dynamics.

Table 1: Effects of Populism on Democratic Processes in Nigeria

Populist Event/Movement	Year	Key Populist Strategy	Striking Events	Effects on Democratic Processes
#EndBadGovernance Protest	2024	Right to Protest	Protest-turned-crime in the North; peaceful in the South	System now tolerant of peaceful protest; law enforcement agent friendlier, central government became sympathetic with teenage suspects, granted amnesty
General Election	2023	Appeal to economic freedom, and security	Upset of two leading parties, especially in Lagos state and Abuja	Underdog and dark horse in politics had a fair chance
#ENDSARS	2020	Appeal to demography and rights protection	Peaceful initially, state-terrorism inflicted, extra-judicial killing, and state denial of such.	Dignifying and improvement in culture and act of legitimate protest
Gubernatorial Election	2015	Appeal to the people as genuine godfathers	Upset of deeply rooted godfatherism	Godfatherism was tamed, incumbency bent to adventurism

			in Nigerian politics	
Occupy Nigeria Movement	2012	Socioeconomic right to halt fuel subsidy	Peaceful; led by activities (now in government today) government compelled to comply	Organised mass protest improves domestic policy, central government arm-twisted, so will of the people prevailed., as Jonathan rescind decision to remove subsidy on petrol, PMS
General Election	2011	Appeal to poverty and grassroots neglect	Candidates without parental influence, with qualification in education won presidential election	Grassroots improvement, and importance of unknown factors in politics

Researcher's Compilation and Content Analysis, 2024

Populist Influence on Democratic Processes in Kenya

Populism in Kenya has also played a crucial role in shaping the country's political landscape and democratic processes. These notable instances of populism are represented in the table below.

Table 2: Notable Effects of Populism on Democratic Processes in Kenya

Populism Figure/Indications	**Year**	**Major Strategy Adopted**	**Immediate Outcome of Strategy**	**Effects on Democratic Processes**
Raila Odinga's campaign	2007	Mobilisation of ethnic groups; anti-corruption stance and **emphasis on electoral justice,**	Nine million votes (69.26% votes) garnered from huge voter turnout	Significant turnout among youths and ethnic communities resulted from ethnic mobilisation
	2013	**In 2013 and 2017 elections, Odinga focused on land reforms and socio-economic inequality, emphasising**	5.3 million votes representing 43.7% obtained	Increased engagement leading to constitutional reforms

		grassroots mobilization and public accountability.		
	2017		15.6 million votes , that is, 78.91% from remarkable voter turnout	High turnout in opposition strongholds showing huge regional political impact
Uhuru Kenyatta's campaign	2013	Appeal to unity	12.3 million votes, 86%	Coalition of ethnic groups which strengthened Kikuyu-Kalenjin relations and high turnout
	2017		40% of votes cast by electorates aged from 18-34 showing improved youth engagement	Ethnic Coalition and Consolidation of political base and high voter turnout resulted
William Ruto's campaign	2022	Dignifying decent labour using 'Hustler nation' narrative	65.4% Voter turnout, 14.2 million votes in number	Increasing youth involvement producing 7 million new entrants
			7.1 million votes 50.49%	AShift of focus to class-based politics
Tax reform protests	2024	Opposition to tax hikes, and soliciting economic justice	Increasing rights demand with thousands participating in protest nationwide; 97 riots recorded	Government was forced to respond with policy concessions, besides increasing protests and violence
'Maandamano' protests	2023	Electoral justice	Extensive international attention attracted	Widespread protest in major cities and significant youth involvement
Constitutional referendum	2010	Push for constitutional reform	12.7 million votes (71.15% turnout)	Referendum result: 67% in favor of new constitution
Saba Saba movement	1990	**Populist-driven** pro-democracy protests	Large-scale mobilization leading to political liberalization or	Democratic gains: Introduction of multi-party politics

			reform, advocating multi-party democracy and political	
Anti-tax protests (2024)	June-July	Anti-tax bill, demands for broader change	Demonstrations spread in 43 of 47 counties; 28% increase in violence	Policy revisions, cabinet reshuffle,
Violence and repression	June-July	Violent responses to protests	Casualties: 13 killed, 120 injured on June 25; riots: 97 incidents	Impact:Increased scrutiny on government response and allegations of human rights abuses

Researcher's Compilation and Content Analysis, 2024

Summary of Research Findings

The study revealed that the rise of populism in Europe and America has significantly influenced political dynamics in Nigeria and Kenya. The political landscape in these African states has experienced increased polarisation and challenges to democratic norms, as populist rhetoric and strategies have been adopted by various political movements. Populism, while effective in mobilising large segments of the population and addressing issues such as corruption and economic inequality, has also contributed to political instability and the weakening of democratic institutions in both countries.

Additionally, the research highlighted how the global populist wave has impacted the foreign policies of Nigeria and Kenya. There has been a noticeable shift towards more assertive and nationalist foreign policies, influenced by the populist movements in Western countries. This shift has affected Nigeria's and Kenya's interactions with Western nations, particularly in terms of trade and international aid. The economic consequences of populism are also evident, as populist leaders often prioritize national interests over global cooperation, which can have implications for the economies of Nigeria and Kenya. Overall, these findings underscore the complex and multifaceted impact of global populism on African states, particularly in the realms of governance, political stability, and international relations.

Recommendations

Policymakers in Nigeria and Kenya should strengthen democratic institutions in order to manage the influence of populism. This includes ensuring judicial independence, safeguarding electoral processes, and promoting transparency.

There is need to promote civic education which is crucial to helping citizens understand both the positive and negative aspects of populism, in order to critically engage with populist movements.

Further, there is need for the governments to focus on reducing economic inequalities and creating opportunities for economic growth, as populism often thrives on economic discontent, so addressing these root causes is germane to curtail it.

In addition, fostering inclusive and open dialogue between political groups, including populist movements, can lead to more inclusive policy making.

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