

# Why Populist Sentiment Spread Worldwide After 2008?

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## ABSTRACT

Populist thought has spread around the world in recent years, especially after the 2008 economic crisis. It is fair to think that populism has gradually changed from the popular trend of thought to the means and guiding ideology of some government party elections. Since 2008, Some populist political parties have gradually come to power, and social movements named populism are also breaking out continuously in some countries or regions. Obviously, populism sentiment and thought have impacted contemporary political life, finding the reasons for the recent rise in populism is an effective way to address concerns. This paper selected 16 academic papers from 2008 to present related to the causes of populism from Google Scholar, the reasons for the proliferation of populist sentiment will be obtained by summarizing the viewpoints. There are totally four reasons that the paper illustrates: Ideological basis, Political reasons, Economic reasons, and Cultural reasons. A meaningful conclusion about reasons of populism in recent year will be presented through the research of this paper. At the same time, it will provide a valuable reference for scholars in related fields in the future.

**Keywords:** Populism, Populist sentiment, Reasons of populism, Economic crisis

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, the populist sentiment was propagated by politicians, Social activists, and media. After the 2008 economic crisis, many people, especially at the lower level express a negative emotion about the democratic political system and the economic model of capitalism. The starting points of populism are regularly followed to the late nineteenth century, while developments calling themselves egalitarian emerged in both the United States and the Russian Empire [1]. But, after the economic crisis, populism is on the rise again in the contemporary world. And it is obvious that the latest and biggest populist backlash is Donald Trump's leadership of the world as US president and it triggered volatile emotional responses to issues such as trade and immigration in the US, even in the world [2]. So, many scholars attempt to find reasons for the recent flood of populist sentiment. And they already have relevant research results. Most scholars believe that economic uncertainty is the main reason for populism. The political consequence of economic globalization is populism. Economic globalization stimulates unequal economic distribution and widens the gap between the rich and the poor, which leads to populism becoming the final political product [3].

In more detail, economic globalization and trade inequality has intensified contradictions, especially trade with China, which breeds political polarization and populism [4]. In the perspective of party elections, some data show that Regions that are highly associated with trade are more supportive of populist parties and candidates. This directly proves that economic globalization has made international trade unequal, which has led to populist political counterattacks [5]. There are other scholars who prove the relationship between cultures. Global shocks at the play of culture and identity are driving pressure on populist movements. Correlation between voters' attitudes toward globalization and the 2006 U.S. election results suggest that some anti-globalization voters will be more inclined to vote for Trump [6]. At the same time, contemporary political propaganda relies on the media, and media reports are increasingly emotional, especially offensive expressions, which make voters fall into persistent anxiety, especially voters who are dissatisfied with globalization, so they are more likely to choose a populist to protect them [7].

This paper aims to find the reasons for the spread of populist sentiment around the world after the 2008 economic crisis. the mainstream answers of the reasons

are only forced on economic aspect and cultural aspect. The political reasons have been added to these two reasons or not been involved. At the same time, current mainstream research does not systematically collate the causes of recent populism and they rarely look for the logical basis of populism.

Therefore, this paper uses “Populism and the 2008 Economic Crisis”, “Causes of Populism”, “Populism and Trump”, “Reasons of Populism” as keywords, and searches Google Scholar for articles from 2008 to the present. After screening, there are a total of 16 articles were included.

**2. REASONS OF POPULISM**

Populism is inherently a controversial concept, as scholars have even questioned the nature and usefulness of the concept [8]. This article will use the definition from Encyclopedia Britannica to establish the points. Populism is a political program or development that bosses, or claims to advocate, the normal individual, typically by differentiation with an elite or saw first-class or foundation [9]. The widespread populism around the world has become a recognized fact in recent years. There are many reports, political propaganda, and even social movements are named populist sentiments. It is obvious that populism as a political emotion has influenced the daily life of modern people. So, this article will trace the causes of this phenomenon based on the premise of the prevalence of populist sentiment in society. By analysing the opinions of other scholars recently, the author summarizes the specific reasons in four aspects: ideological basis, political reasons, economic reasons, and cultural reasons. Table 1 will clearly show the reasons and related paper references.

**Table 1.** Analysis of 16 papers of populism

No. of papers	Reasons of populism	References
1	Ideological Basis	[10]
5	Political Reasons	[11], [12], [13], [14], [15]
3	Economic Reasons	[16], [17], [18]
7	Cultural Reasons	[19], [20], [21], [22], [23], [24], [25]

**2.1. Ideological Basis**

In the West, since the time of the Greek philosopher Plato, people have tried to separate logic from emotion and emphasized the superiority of logic over emotion. After the formation of a way of thinking over a long period of time. The duality of logic and emotion becomes an important premise of western mainstream values. This theory brings the gospel of thought to western people like the ability of rational thinking, but the neglect of

emotions and the emphasis on logic lead to the overflow of emotions and loss of control. Therefore, western people are not good at dealing with emotional problems in terms of thinking patterns. Recently, the way people think and behave has become emotional, the most important reason is the advancement of technology and the prosperity of the media industry. Emotionalism is often more evident in eastern philosophy, so the trend of populism can be understood as the way of thinking and behaviour of western people is approaching Asia. This phenomenon can be called "Asianization". This means that populism has become a flood of emotions in recent years due to the solidification of logical thinking and the lack of emotional thinking [10]. So, populism becomes a social emotion is a realistic manifestation of the logical basis of the binary opposition between reason and emotion.

**2.2. Political Reason**

The political causes of populism mainly focus on the inequality and hegemony of political rights. From an international relations perspective, populism is often equated with hierarchy. When populists bring populism into foreign policy, they do so by fighting the “corrupt elites” of the international order while trying to create “pure people” across borders. Populists tend to question the “elite” and leadership of these “elites” and the international order and its institutions, the “system”, that these “elites” represent in their discourse and actions. At the same time, populists are accustomed to rebelling against the control of the “elite” from the perspective of the masses [11]. From the perspective of class conflict, the recent trend of white supremacy has led to a gradual coalition of other races into a class named after the underprivileged. So, white supremacy and subordination of other races lead to populism [12]. And, it is obvious that inequality is an essential point of the reason of populism from a historical perspective. For example, In June 1892, in Omaha, Nebraska, a group of radical farmers launched a movement that would run for elections the next year. Their formation has morphed into a full-fledged party - the BJP - and has been referred to by others as a “populist” organization. The social movement exposed one of the causes of populism: class inequality. The BJP unites workers and peasants in a broad coalition of “producers” against the elite who come from the upper-level class [13]. In addition, Ernesto Laclau in *On Populist Reason* shows that hegemony is the medium through which populism unfolds and that it is often difficult to distinguish them [14]. In a context of extreme individualism and harsh repression, populist parties are often associated with control of speech and thought [15]. So, inequality of political rights, both in terms of international relations and class, is a political factor for populism to flourish, while authoritarianism and hegemony are another reason that cannot be ignored in the study of the political reason for populism.

### **2.3. Economic Reason**

The globalization of the economy has led to deindustrialization, accelerated inequality and dramatic economic restructuring, political instability, and a rise in populism. These trends intensified during and after the 2008 financial crisis, leaving many around the world dissatisfied with the world order [16]. More than a decade after the major crisis of the capitalist world economy in 2008, the political landscape of many nation-states has undergone a major shift to the right, increasingly attracted by authoritarian forms of conflict resolution and bigoted ideologies such as racism and anti-Semitism [17]. Outright populism, right-wing populism, and left-wing populism votes were affected by a new measure of economic uncertainty, the World Uncertainty Index (WUI), which indicated that economic uncertainty fuelled a populist boom, the data showed [18]. Therefore, economic fluctuations will lead to the proliferation of populist sentiments. Obviously, many populist social movements appear in economically unstable countries or regions, and protesters are often dissatisfied with the economic environment in which they live. So, fluctuations in the economic situation of a country, class and individual become the reason for the prevalence of populism.

### **2.4. Cultural Reason**

There are totally three aspects of cultural reason: social media, leadership temperament, and religion. The study found a positive correlation between people's populist attitudes and the increased use of social media to consume news, driven largely by individuals' engagement with news that reflected their people-centered, anti-elite understanding [19]. Meanwhile, the personal traits and styles of national leaders can also lead to populist tendencies. Former US President Donald Trump is the typical representative of populist leaders. Donald Trump's inflammatory rhetoric has shaped U.S. politics and the international system since 2015. Trump has gained support from the least privileged in rural areas by supporting white supremacy, Christian conservatism, and populism [20]. Specifically, he used Twitter to spread the word to convince people that a certain action was necessary and then bypassed formal policy-making bodies for [21], and he uses populist propaganda to personally undermine the political and socioeconomic voices of African Americans and women of colour. [22] Some scholars even recognize that voter sentiment correlates with leader charisma. Trump is good at using emotions, especially anger, to build mutual feelings between him and his followers, and to shape his personal charm [23]. Besides, the current President of the Philippines, Rodrigo "Rody" Roa Duterte, is another good example of populist national leadership. His populist attitude with his personal views on women's rights, immigration issues, thereby inspired right-

leaning thinking among ordinary people [24]. And, religious fanaticism can also lead to a flood of populist sentiment. For example, the BJP used Hindu teachings to build an understanding of populist discourse on the Twittersphere during the 2019 election. By framing the people and us and them, they encouraged exclusion, promised Hindu reform in the new India, and built charismatic political leaders and voter votes through history, myths, and rituals [25]. So, the cultural reasons focus on political propaganda in the media and populist leaders using the media, religious traditions, and personal temperament to gain public attention and votes.

## **3. CONCLUSION**

There are totally four aspects of the reasons for the spread of populist sentiment around the world after the 2008 economic crisis. There are ideological basis, political reasons, economic reasons, and cultural reasons. Specifically, this paper combined with the emotional trend of the media in recent years and exposed the media's incitement to make the general emotion of the society tend to be perceptualized. And, it also reflects the inability of people, especially westerners to deal with emotional problems reasonably. For political reasons, inequality and hegemony are the main aspects of reason in politics. Inequality can lead directly to populism, whether analyzed from within or outside a country. In general, hegemony and populism are also strongly correlated. These two definitions are inversely related. hegemony will lead to the counterattack of populism, and populism will lead to centralization, especially the tyranny of the people. In general, hegemony and populism are also strongly correlated. For economic reasons, after the 2008 economic crisis, the world economy was in a slump. Economic globalization has exacerbated the outbreak of this adverse consequence, causing economic fluctuations around the world and involving many countries. Therefore, disappointment and anxiety about globalization have led to populist political thought. Different reasons are a manifestation of the prevalence of contemporary populism.

Therefore, the result of this paper can inform future research and make theoretical contributions to research in the reason of populism. In the research field of populism and democracy, the results of this paper will provide some explanation of the origins and logical premise of populism. In the research field of populism and political party, this paper can give a clear idea of the reasons for populism in political aspects, which will help the related scholars to do the research of political party elections in various countries or regions.

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