

## 29 Populism and the Principle of Majority

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### Abstract

What puts populism and democracy in tension although they rest on the same principle of majority and claim to be government by the people? The answer is that when it seeks to implement its agenda through state power, populism enters a direct competition with constitutional democracy over the meaning and expression of the people and puts into question a party–democracy’s conception of representation because it is impatient with the tension between pluralism of social interests and unity of the polity that electoral representation triggers and channels. Hence although ingrained in the ideology of the people and the language of democracy, populism as a ruling power tends to give life to governments that stretch the democratic rules toward an extreme majoritarianism.

**Keywords:** [representation](#), [political party](#), [majority rule](#), [demagogy](#), [social conflict](#), [constitutional democracy](#)

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