

29 Populism and the Principle of Majority

[Get access >](#)

Nadia Urbinati

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803560.013.31> Pages 571–589**Published:** 06 November 2017

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](#)

Subject: [Political Behaviour](#), [Politics](#)

Series: [Oxford Handbooks](#)

Collection: [Oxford Handbooks Online](#)

You do not currently have access to this chapter.

Sign in

[Get help with access](#)

Personal account

- Sign in with email/username & password
- Get email alerts
- Save searches

Institutional access



Sign in through your
institution

[Sign in through your institution](#)

- Purchase content
- Activate your purchase/trial code
- Add your ORCID iD

Sign in >

[Register](#)

[Sign in with a library card](#)

[Sign in with username/password](#)

[Recommend to your librarian](#)

Institutional account management

[Sign in as administrator](#)

Purchase

Our books are available by subscription or purchase to libraries and institutions.

[Purchasing information](#)