ABSTRACT

Polarization of Populist Movements and Its Impact on American Politics

Populism, by its traditional definition, is a political rhetoric or philosophy that aims to defend the interests of the common people against entrenched, self-serving or corrupt elites. The latter part of the 19th century carrying into the first quarter of the 20th century saw the emergence of the populist movement and Progressive Era in the USA. During the 1950s right-wing populist movements appeared as a counter power against left wing movements and then populist movements have been extremely polarized based on political ideological spectrum as well as political issues. Recently populist movements, whether left-wing or right-wing, become more radical with the sentiment of anti-government. By reviewing historical development of populist movements and activities, this study tries to grasp the relationship between polarization of populist movements and American politics. Today the traditional division between left and right has lost some of its significance. They all express a sense of estrangement from their political institutions. So populist movement

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is often motivated by a sense of disengagement and a mood of anti-politics. It frequently expresses a revolt against the values upheld by the political class and its institutions. It also results from the political masters’ selective strategy for their political success.

Key words: populist movement, populism, polarization, left-wing populist movement, new left, far left, right-wing populist movement, new right, far right, hate group, terrorist group