

The Populist Democratic Backsliding Model

By Samantha Ramana

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INTRODUCTION

The Populist Democratic Backsliding Model, or the PDB Model, has been developed to illustrate a connection between populism and democratic backsliding. This is explained through the lens of securitization and populism's role within the external context of the securitization process. The PDB model argues that the use of a populist political style indicates a greater risk of democratic backsliding.

Description of Model:

A flowchart diagram with three sections. The first section is a circle demonstrating the securitization containing the

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an existential threat. If the audience (containing "the people"), influenced by the context of the populist style, feels that this declaration of an issue as existentially harmful is relevant to them or relevant to the leader that alone can protect them, they are more likely to accept it. The populist leader then has the ability to acceptably carry out extraordinary measures to combat this successfully securitized threat.

A HIGHER RISK FOR EXECUTIVE AGGRANDIZEMENT AND DEMOCRAT



position and the crises presented by pushing the "America first," "populist sovereignty" narrative.

Securitization Moves

While he was still running for president in April of 2016, Trump set the stage for a populist narrative. On April 27, 2016, he gave a speech where he relayed his approach to foreign policy. He claimed that American foreign policy had become weak after World War II and in the face of a more globalized international system. His primary emphasis was putting America and the American people first: "My foreign policy will always put the interests of the American people and American security above all else. It has to be first. Has to be"



2019 and January 9, 2019, his total approval rating was raised and his total disapproval rating

The combination of the securitizing move and the audience acceptance creates a successfully securitized issue. Once an issue is securitized, extraordinary measures can be put in place. In the case of the border crisis, Trump laid out what these measures ~~would be~~, which

willingness to implement a foreign policy that runs in direct contrast to the international norms and principles" (Magcamit, 2017). Such a limitation on immigration would have violated various treaties the United States ratified (Magcamit, 2017). Because of the securitization process, though, with the successful securitization of the issue legitimized by the populist narrative, these extreme measures ~~would~~ have been more accepted if seen as crisis mitigation.

Executive Aggrandizement

As argued above, the easier access to these emergency measures that are not accepted without the securitization of an issue, can lead to executive aggrandizement. Trump has been identified as a world leader who attempted executive aggrandizement (Laebens,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Samantha Ramay is an undergraduate student in history at Webster University in St. Louis, USA. In the Lab, she is researching Iran's conflictual relations with Israel and assessing policy scenarios. She is also researching the effects of populism on democracy and populist leaders' contributions to democratic backsliding.



