

## **THE ROLE OF POPULIST LEADERS IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS: PROS AND CONS**

*Ключові слова: популізм, дипломатія, мир, переговори, конфлікт.*

*Keywords: populism, diplomacy, peace, negotiations, conflict.*

Populist leaders have increasingly become central figures in global politics, often emerging in times of economic distress, social unrest, and political dissatisfaction. Their leadership style, characterized by direct appeals to “the people” against perceived corrupt elites, can reshape the dynamics of peace negotiations in both constructive and destructive ways [12]. The involvement of populist leaders in peace negotiations raises questions about their ability to foster lasting stability, as their emphasis on popular support and nationalist rhetoric can either unlock new diplomatic opportunities or deepen existing divisions [4]. Understanding the role of populist leaders in peace negotiations requires examining how their political strategies, leadership styles, and public appeal interact with the complex processes of diplomacy.

One of the defining characteristics of populist leaders is their tendency to challenge established institutions and norms [2]. In the context of peace negotiations, this can be both an asset and a liability. On the one hand, their willingness to break with convention can allow them to propose creative solutions that traditional diplomats might overlook. Traditional diplomatic efforts often involve prolonged discussions that can become bureaucratic and slow-moving. Populist leaders, by contrast, frequently employ a no-nonsense, results-driven approach that can accelerate negotiations. On the other hand, their rejection of institutional checks and balances can undermine the legitimacy of peace agreements, particularly if they disregard democratic processes or sideline opposition voices [7]. This approach may result in fragile agreements without broad-based support, thereby heightening the likelihood of future conflict.

Moreover, their ability to connect directly with the public through social media and other communication platforms allows them to bypass bureaucratic obstacles, generating momentum for peace agreements that might otherwise be stalled by political inertia. This direct engagement with the masses can create a sense of urgency around peace processes, particularly in societies where public fatigue with prolonged conflicts is widespread [3].

Also, the appeal to ordinary people enables populists to frame peace negotiations not merely as technical or strategic processes but as moral struggles that resonate with popular sentiment [13]. By presenting themselves as the authentic voice of the people, populist leaders can generate widespread support for peace deals that might otherwise face resistance. This dynamic can be particularly effective in deeply divided societies, where traditional political elites are often seen as disconnected from the realities of ordinary citizens [14]. However, this populist strategy also carries risks, as it can oversimplify complex conflicts into binary narratives of good versus evil, making compromise more difficult.

Despite their potential to facilitate breakthroughs, the unpredictability of populist leaders can introduce an element of instability into peace negotiations. Their inclination toward unilateral decision-making and their aversion to expert advice mean that they may enter negotiations with an inconsistent or erratic approach [9]. This unpredictability can unsettle both allies and adversaries, making it difficult to sustain meaningful peace efforts. Besides, their focus on short-term electoral gains often leads them to abandon diplomatic initiatives once they no longer serve their immediate political interests. This can create a cycle of broken agreements, leading to renewed conflict and distrust [6].

Additionally, populists' preference for spectacle over substance in diplomacy can lead to superficial agreements that lack depth or enforceability. Their reliance on personal charisma and media-driven narratives often prioritizes symbolic victories over concrete, enforceable resolutions [15]. In some cases, peace negotiations led by populist figures have resulted in vague agreements that ultimately collapse due to a lack of institutional backing. Peace agreements become vulnerable to political instability or leadership changes when they lack the foundation of robust institutions and long-term commitment [10].

Notably, populism thrives on an "us versus them" mentality, which can be detrimental to the process of reconciliation and compromise. Populist leaders often frame their political opponents, both domestic and international, as enemies of the people [11]. This adversarial approach can make it difficult for them to engage in the kind of mutual concessions necessary for lasting peace. Furthermore, populist leaders often rely on strongman tactics, which can contradict the principles of diplomatic negotiation [8]. They may use coercion, threats, or aggressive posturing to extract concessions from opponents, rather than engaging in genuine compromise. This approach can be effective in the short term, but it often damages long-term diplomatic relationships and creates resentment among other political actors [1].

Likewise, populists tend to personalize foreign policy, making peace negotiations more about personal relationships between leaders rather than institutional frameworks. While strong personal relationships between leaders can sometimes lead to breakthroughs, they also make agreements highly vulnerable to changes in leadership. When peace deals rely heavily on the rapport between two individual leaders rather than systemic diplomatic structures, the departure of either leader can lead to the unraveling of previously agreed-upon terms [5]. This lack of institutional continuity poses a serious challenge to long-term stability.

At the same time, populist leaders often exploit peace negotiations as a means of consolidating their power rather than genuinely seeking conflict resolution. By portraying themselves as the sole figure capable of delivering peace, they marginalize opposition groups, limit pluralistic dialogue, and create conditions where peace efforts are seen as extensions of their personal rule rather than national reconciliation efforts [3]. In some cases, this approach can lead to the weaponization of peace processes, where agreements are designed to serve the interests of the populist leader rather than to establish fair and lasting solutions to conflicts. When peace talks become performative rather than substantive, they risk exacerbating tensions instead of resolving them.

Another crucial factor in assessing the role of populist leaders in peace negotiations is their relationship with international organizations. Many populist leaders adopt an anti-globalist stance, portraying institutions such as the United Nations or the European Union as meddling bureaucracies that undermine national sovereignty [6]. While this approach can strengthen their domestic political standing, it often isolates them on the international stage, limiting their ability to form broad coalitions necessary for enforcing peace agreements. Their reluctance to engage in multilateral diplomacy can weaken the implementation of negotiated peace accords, particularly in conflicts requiring sustained international cooperation [8].

In conclusion, the involvement of populist leaders in peace negotiations presents a complex duality, marked by both opportunities and risks. On one hand, their unorthodox leadership styles, direct appeal to the people, and willingness to challenge traditional diplomatic norms can provide fresh momentum and create breakthroughs in stagnant negotiations. On the other hand, their unpredictability, reliance on personal charisma, and tendency to prioritize short-term political gains over long-term stability can undermine the very peace they seek to broker. While populist leaders have the potential to engage public sentiment and frame negotiations in ways that resonate with ordinary citizens, their adversarial approach, rejection of institutional processes, and tendency to focus on spectacle rather than substance may weaken the foundations of lasting peace. Ultimately, the success of populist-led peace efforts depends on their ability to balance popular support with a commitment to genuine compromise, institutional continuity, and multilateral cooperation. Without these elements, their involvement in peace negotiations may risk deepening divisions rather than fostering reconciliation.

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## **ЦИФРОВА ДИПЛОМАТІЯ В КОНФЛІКТНОМУ ВРЕГУЛЮВАННІ**

*Ключові слова: цифрова дипломатія, конфліктне врегулювання, міжнародні комунікації, публічна дипломатія.*

*Keywords: digital diplomacy, conflict resolution, international communication, public diplomacy.*

У сучасному глобалізованому світі цифрова дипломатія стає невід'ємною частиною міжнародних відносин, особливо в контексті конфліктного врегулювання. Вона охоплює використання сучасних технологій для ведення дипломатичних переговорів, формування міжнародної політики та налагодження комунікації між країнами.

Дослідження потенціалу цифрової дипломатії не є новим, але якщо у 2020–2022 рр. основна увага приділялася технічним і безпековим аспектам, пов'язаним з обмеженнями у зв'язку з пандемією COVID-19, то сьогодні здебільшого аналізується її вплив на реалізацію державних стратегій і багатосторонні відносини загалом. Науковці Т. Краснопольська, І. Милосердна, В. Рашица у своїх роботах розкривають роль цифрової дипломатії як напряму публічної. Сьогодні важливо зрозуміти, як цифрові технології можуть доповнювати традиційні дипломатичні методи та сприяти більш ефективному міжнародному діалогу. Саме тому *метою цієї статті* є виявити значення цифрової дипломатії в сучасних міжнародних відносинах, зокрема її ролі у врегулюванні конфліктів.

Цифрова дипломатія – це форма нової публічної дипломатії, яка використовує інтернет, нові інформаційно-комунікаційні технології (ІКТ) і соціальні мережі як засоби зміцнення дипломатичних відносин. Основні відмінності від класичної публічної дипломатії полягають у ширшому доступі до інформації, кращій взаємодії між окремими особами та організаціями та більшій прозорості [4, с. 77].