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Forum: Populist Radical Right & Illiberal Foreign Policymaking

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Abstract: What makes current radical right populists different from other historical radical right leaders of the 20th century? Are there more differences or similarities among populist radical right (PRR) in the Global South regarding how they perform foreign policy? How does the context – marked by contemporary globalization, regional interdependencies and power (geo)politics – influence their perceptions about their own capabilities and interests, but also about the international liberal order, its values and multilateral mechanisms? This forum addresses questions like these, offering theoretical, historical and contextual insights with concrete examples and case studies situated out of the Anglo-American spectrum. Different from traditional approaches to foreign policy analysis, the authors advance reflections about current phenomena such as illiberal foreign policymaking, anti-cosmopolitanism, religious nationalism and its transnational ties, and the re-personalization of sovereignty in the figure of the PRR. Therefore, it enriches the study of populism, radical right and foreign policymaking in IR, bringing to the debate the erosion of the liberal international order and the necessary questioning of Western-led globalization.

Keywords: Populism; radical-right; religion; foreign policy analysis; sovereignty; cosmopolitanism.

Introduction

The forum *Populist Radical Right and Illiberal Foreign Policymaking* engages with the main question 'how has the rise of populist governments to power impacted the research field of foreign policy analysis?'. By bringing to the debate the richness of contributions from the fields of History, Political Theory, International Relations and Political Science, the authors seek to shed light on how populism, and particularly its contemporary radical right strand, affects the way foreign policy is made, what conceptual/normative elements

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it brings to the fore, and how it plays out with the liberal international order. This forum adds a conceptual layer to a growing body of research on the interplay between populism and foreign policy, which has mainly focused on country-specific (Plagemann and Destradi 2019; Casarões and Farias 2022; Casarões and Magalhães 2021; Guimarães and Silva 2021), regional (Varga and Buzogány 2020; Wajner 2021; Wehner and Thies 2021; Wajner and Wehner 2023), or cross-regional studies (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013; Destradi, Cadier and Plagemann 2021).

Thanks to the overlapping waves of populism and radical right movements worldwide, scholarly attention has been directed toward the particular (and potentially disruptive) phenomenon of radical right populism and how it affects the very logic of international relations. We explore this overlap by looking at paradigmatic cases located in the Global South – this being a general category, we pursue a movement of inquiry towards the transnational ties that are created and diffused among Southern PRR leaders based on similarities and perceptions they encounter despite regional differences. The focus on the Global South is due to two main reasons: first, we identified religion as an important component to explore in cases where we observed religious-ethnic-patriotism, a recurrent phenomenon among Latin American and Asian PRR mandates. Second, perhaps due to the still growing interest of scholars in understanding the specificities of PRR in the South, we seek to engage in the discussion on statehood/sovereignty and cosmopolitanism/globalization in order to see how they operate these binomials through foreign policy.

Epistemologically, the forum advances the understanding of the interplay between populism, culture, religion, and radical right politics, as well as dynamics of recognition in foreign policy and how they affect the cosmopolitan project that undergirds the liberal international order. Although we acknowledge that contemporary populist leaders, often seen as 'strongmen', may attach to different ideologies (left or right), we have chosen to investigate the challenge to foreign policymaking specifically posed by radical right populists. Unlike left-wing populists, who tend to be suspicious of the dynamics of economic globalization but generally adhere to multilateral organizations and operate internationally within the framework of international institutions, radical right populists openly reject multilateralism and cosmopolitanism – often resorting to particular cultural and religious elements to justify the personalization of sovereignty and the unwillingness to cooperate globally.

The first piece, by Ayse Zarakol, offers a discussion on the global rise of strongmen, defined as advocates of a thin, highly personalistic form of populism who see the state merely as a vehicle for the advancement of their person, their family, and their inner circle. The author argues that such strongmen move to centralize sovereignty around themselves, with important consequences for foreign policy.

The piece starts with a historical assessment of the modern state. It contends that the emergence of the state as we currently know it – providing the grounds for the Westphalian international order – has been marked by the de-personalization of sovereignty, transferring it to institutions and communities. Against modernity, however,

the contemporary rise of a particular type of 21st-century strongmen re-personalizes sovereignty and consequently undermines the logic of the state and of international relations more broadly.

Finally, the author moves to discuss three possible scenarios for theory and practice of foreign policy. In scenario one, while there may be a global trend towards the re-personalization of rule, the nation-state itself will persist as long as nationalism remains a primary ingredient for populist legitimation. In scenario two, as sovereignty gets re-personalized, national attachments to sovereign states will weaken and wane, with dramatic implications for foreign policymaking and relations among states. In the third scenario, we may witness some hybrid outcome where expectations about foreign policy derived from the 20th-century international order (or even from the pre-nation-state era) will hold true, even in a context where sovereignty becomes ever more personalized.

The second piece, by Guilherme Casarões, engages with the first scenario sketched in the first piece and raises an explanation of 'religious nationalism' as an emerging ideology within radical right movements worldwide. It argues that such ideology bears the two-pronged function of legitimizing populists at home and justifying a foreign policy strategy abroad. Drawing upon Benjamin Moffitt's (2016) concept of populism as a political style, the contribution looks at how religion (in the all-encompassing form of religious nationalism) has become an integral part of the foreign policy performances of radical right populists.

The author's argument is twofold. First, populists usually embrace a set of foreign policy performances that is at the same time sovereigntist (unwilling to make bilateral concessions or to engage in multilateral cooperation), personalistic (projecting the leader as the authentic spokesperson of the people at the expense of democratic institutions and specialized bureaucracies), and reactive (fomenting crises, threats, and breakdowns, often through conspiratorial narratives, to which the leader has to respond with absolute powers).

Second, radical right populists, in particular, tap into religious nationalism in constructing and performing foreign policy. By entangling religious values and nationalist sentiments, such populists reinforce the sovereigntist rhetoric on the world stage, justifying their unwillingness to cooperate in pluralistic and cosmopolitan settings. Populists also use religious nationalism to strengthen their personalistic approach to foreign policy, which not only runs counter to bureaucratic and institutional dimensions of policymaking, but also shuts any possibility of civil society participation in policy debates. Finally, religious nationalism exacerbates the sense of crises and threats coming from the outside world, as long as it enlarges the array of enemies that allegedly are willing to undermine religious values and the national character at home.

Finally, the third piece, by Carolina Salgado, engages with the other two by reflecting on why and how the exercise of sovereignty in foreign policymaking is done in a way to contest cosmopolitanism from the start. Understood as an open project, cosmopolitanism is 'of our making' in the constant re-negotiation and deliberation about what the universal is about. The piece starts by looking at the social basis of populist

radical right leaders, advancing the comprehension of the link between economy and culture as the root cause to popular contestation and opposition to liberal ideals defended by democratic, progressive and multilateral actors.

Cultural divisions and economic inequalities that have been intensified by neoliberal globalization are articulated by Jair Bolsonaro and Narendra Modi – who are the PRR leaders from the South examined in the article – in a way to reinforce natural inequalities, being them economic, cultural or religious. The understanding of an anti-cosmopolitan performance in foreign policy draws on the explanatory potential of what Adler-Nissen and Zarakol (2021) call 'struggles for recognition' in the core and on the semi periphery of the liberal international order (LIO). Anti-cosmopolitanism happens due to a resentment by those leaders with their own position within a Western-led international society that they accuse of being 'globalist'.

Globalist is the PRR denomination to the whole LIO and its claims to universality. Globalism can be considered the grammar structure under which PRR performs reactionary internationalism (de Orellana and Michelsen 2019) in foreign policy. Both keep main bureaucracies under control (Finances, Army and investigative authorities) through financial privileges, support of local security forces and a discourse of religious-ethno-patriotism.

In Brazil, Bolsonaro and his clan translate countries, international organizations, norms and peoples into enemies of the national interest on behalf of self-determination and freedom: for instance, *Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela* and *China* are enemies for being communist; regional organizations such as *the European Union* are antagonized for representing a global force for integration, multilateralism and democracy; the *UN Human Rights and Environmental regimes* are seen as nothing more than spaces for manipulating rhetoric in the service of foreign interests and for the intervention of powerful mainstream actors.

In India, Modi relies on *Hindutva* to justify his foreign policy performance, devoting the greatest efforts to identity and religious diplomacy that are seen as instruments of normative entrepreneurship especially in Asia. Here, the piece engages with Wojczewski (2019,2020) in his effort to discuss the role of identity in Modi´s foreign policymaking, also showing how he uses foreign policy as a site for representing his own understanding of nationalism (through the *Hindutva*), which is different from the Western reading of nationalism. For the BJP (*Bharatiya Janata Party*), which is Modi's political party, the foreign Other is inside India, personalized in Muslims and Christians. Therefore, *Hindutva* is not a simple anti-cosmopolitan discourse, but a reaction to the Western attempt to universalize what nationalism should be.

All perspectives are connected around the critical reflection upon the future of liberal democracy in the face of threats motivated by governments that claim to be the defenders of individual liberties. The impacts on foreign policy made by cultural, ideological and religious instruments mobilized by PRR to erode the LIO in the service of a 're-personalized sovereignty' and anti-cosmopolitanism is the overarching contribution of the forum.

Rise of "Strongmen"? Possible Unforeseen Implications for Foreign Policy[1]

Ayşe Zarakol

Introduction

So-called 'strongmen'[2] seem to be everywhere these days. All around the world, we find leaders who have pushed for changes to their political systems, eliminating the institutional checks and balances on their personal power. This global trend does not discriminate according to the logic of our usual political science categories: leaders grabbing seemingly unlimited power can now be found in parliamentary democracies, one-party regimes, presidential systems, monarchies. They can hail from any ideological background and can be encountered on every continent. Recent studies have aimed to account for the rise of such strongmen, pointing to populism, and economic or identity grievances, explanations often varying depending on the regional context. Others aim to forecast the durability of such regimes and/or the staying power of such leaders. In this short piece, I will explore a different side of this global trend that has been overlooked until now: its impact on our understanding of foreign policy, and more specifically, the recognition dynamics of foreign policy.

Those who subscribe to linear notions of modernisation and development have long equated strongmen with political backwardness – until recently, if a country was ruled by such a ruler, that was seen as evidence of its lack of political maturity. History was supposed to end with liberal democracy, after all. The fact that strongmen (or aspirants to the same) are now increasingly found in Western democracies has spoiled many such certainties. It may be helpful therefore to consider that strongmen, whenever and wherever they emerge in modernity, always flirt with a type of personalised sovereignty that almost every region in its history has considerable experience with, including Europe. De-personalisation of sovereignty throughout the globe – to a considerable extent even in authoritarian contexts – has been one of the greatest achievements[3] of modernity. And since that became the norm, there have always been attempts to re-personalise sovereignty, including in the 20th century.[4]

Whereas 20th century personalisers of sovereignty at the very least played lip-service to the state and various substantive ideologies that need the state, however, our strongmen are more naked in their ambitions to centralise sovereignty around their person only. Their populism is even thinner; most see the state merely as a vehicle for the advancement of their person, their family and their inner circle. This suggests a further move towards re-personalisation of leadership, and by extension, sovereignty, in the 21st century than was the case in the previous one. If we are indeed experiencing a global trend toward re-personalisation of sovereignty, that cannot but have a discernible impact on foreign policy dynamics, and what such a future may look like has not been well-theorised.

This brief essay proceeds in three parts. First, I discuss how de-personalisation of sovereignty changed foreign policy dynamics throughout the modern international order. Second, I explain why we have reasons to think that the current trend towards 'strongmen' is a move towards the re-personalisation of sovereignty. Third, I sketch out some possible implications of such a trend on foreign policy and the nature of international relations. Space does not allow for a deep treatment of the causal mechanisms at play, but hopefully I can at least convince some readers that this is an area worth looking into further.

The foreign policy impact of the de-personalisation of sovereignty

Let us start with the observation[5] that 'states' approximating the Weberian definition[6] did not really exist until relatively recently in a macro-historical sense. This is both true because power and authority was often decentralised and thus lacking a monopoly (e.g. in medieval Europe) or centralised (at least in theory) and/or not really attached to community and/or territory subject to rule (e.g. in early modern Asia). Before the modern state, to the extent that centralised sovereignty could be found, it rested not with people but individual rulers, dynasties, or houses[7]. In such a world, 'foreign policy' in our sense of the word did not exist, and diplomacy concerned relations between rulers, or between houses.

Thus, from a foreign policy perspective, it bears remembering that the emergence of the modern state is also a story of de-personalisation of sovereignty and its gradual transfer from persons and families to institutions and communities. We know the trajectory of this transition in Europe fairly well – first comes centralisation of authority (and the sublimation of the power of the church to the crown), but, especially in a region where authority has long been fragmented[8], the idea that the monarch as sovereign should have so much centralised authority and power needed legitimation. The first step in that direction was the development of absolutist theory which posited a union, 'that of a *universitas* or community of people living subject to the sovereign authority of a recognised monarch or ruling group' (Skinner 2009: 327). Even those who argued for the divine right of kings had a notion of a body politic.

The presence of communities in Europe where people governed themselves challenged and expanded that particular legitimation claim. In the seventeenth century

> [W]e begin to encounter the broader claim that, under all lawful forms of government—monarchies as well as republics—the rights of sovereignty must remain lodged at all times with the *universitas* of the people or (as some begin to say) with the body of the state (Skinner 2009: 337).

Gradually, the idea that rulers are representatives because the state cannot act in its own name emerged: 'By the mid-eighteenth century, the idea of the sovereign state as a distinct *persona ficta* was firmly entrenched in English as well as Continental theories of public and international law' (Skinner 2009: 354). The idea that the state itself is a

person that is distinct from the person of the ruler spread around the world[9] with the nation-state model, as, by the nineteenth century, '*universitas of* the people' had become equated with 'the nation' and sovereignty with the national right to self-determination.

To sum up, within the historical trajectory of the modern international system, thinking about sovereignty evolved from it being understood as primarily (if not exclusively) internally driven and being in the purview of the political ruler alone, to it becoming abstracted from the person of the monarch to institutions, to it then becoming associated with the general will of the community – i.e. the 'nation' – and finally, territorialised[10]. Around the same time that sovereignty became nationalised and territorialised in the nineteenth century, external recognition started to play a much larger role in its constitution, eventually surpassing, in most parts of the world – i.e. for those deemed 'savage' or 'barbarous' – any internal constitution of statehood. The modern state thus has a different relationship to its citizens than sovereigns of other historical periods (broadly speaking) (Zarakol 2011, 2017, 2018). In other words, in modern international order sovereignty became extremely contingent on external recognition. The eventual outcome of this evolution was the emergence of the universal law of sovereign equality in the second half of the twentieth century. This gradual (and globally uneven) de-personalisation of sovereignty[11] took diplomacy and grand strategy out of the realm of elite concerns and married it in the 20th century with recognition dynamics that affect the average person, who, unlike his/her ancestors, was by now a 'citizen' of a 'nation' with 'foreign policy'[12].

When sovereignty lies with the ruler alone, as opposed to institutions, the people or the state, whoever is the ruler is recognised by his subjects. In such historical settings, when an enemy ruler was defeated in battle, they and their people were often enslaved or absorbed. Outsiders thus became insiders. Rivals often became secondary (noble) houses within a hierarchical network of domination. Their recognition was especially important. Peacetime 'recognition' gestures from 'sovereign' rulers who remained outside (or peripheral to the internal network of recognition) in the form of emissaries, tributes, gifts etc, were probably meaningful to the ruler receiving them, but less so in comparison to the recognition of 'insider'[13] networks of elites and subjects. There are exceptions to this rule, especially in post-Chinggisid Asia,[14] but we can still generalise that external recognition was at best a secondary concern for most sovereigns before the emergence of the modern state and the modern international order.

By contrast, after the emergence of the territorial, national, centralised state, external recognition by other sovereign states becomes much more important. It is in such a world that international relations and foreign policy matter a lot more than they did in previous eras, and for a lot more people. I have speculated elsewhere[15] that this development may be linked to the fact that, by contrast to (most) pre-modern sovereigns, the modern state has all sorts of penetrative, extensive powers that need further legitimation, that the modern state got those powers in return for all types of ambitious projects, not the least of which is to meet the recognition needs of each citizen who are now members of a 'nation' marching through history, towards civilisation and progress, rather than subjects of a ruler. And because marching through history, to civilisation, to progress are

inherently unattainable goals, their deliverance must be simulated for the average citizen. Therefore, external recognition (and by extension its place in the international order) matters so much for the modern state and for its people. It is also why status hierarchies between sovereign states have been such a significant feature of the modern international order: modern state sovereignty simulates its march towards unattainable promises by comparisons with others. It delivers something reminiscent of recognition to its citizens when it bests other states in various status games.

In many ways then, foreign policy (and international relations) as we know it in the modern era is linked to the particular shape of the modern sovereign state. The de-personalisation of sovereignty, its institutionalisation, the linking of its legitimation with nationhood and citizenship has elevated the importance of foreign policy (and international relations) in sovereign legitimation in modernity (in comparison to most other historical periods). This suggests that we should at least consider that re-personalisation of sovereignty may have a similar impact, but in the other direction. But before we get to that, let's first consider whether the current global trend towards 'strongmen' may indeed be seen as a sign of a re-personalisation of sovereignty.

'Strongmen': re-personalisation of sovereignty?

As noted in the introduction, the domestic politics of countries both inside and outside the traditional core of the international system are stressed because they are increasingly defined by strongmen leaders sceptical of existing political institutions, both within their specific national context and often also internationally. Space does not allow for a systematic study of this phenomenon, but the trend is global (even if its staying power can be questioned). Furthermore, these 'strongmen' have not all emerged at the same time. Interestingly enough, many had been in power for a long time before they turned toward centralising power. The variability of their paths to increased power is also notable.

To give some examples, many 'strongmen' are figures who were elevated to office in this decade: e.g. Jair Bolsonaro (President of Brazil: 2019-2022), Imran Khan (Prime Minister of Pakistan: 2018-2022), Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud MBS (Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia: 2017-), Aleksandar Vučić (Prime Minister: 2014-2017; President of Serbia: 2017-), Donald Trump (President of the USA: 2017-2021), Bhumibol/Vajiralongkorn Rama X (King of Thailand: 2016-), Rodrigo Duterte (President of the Philippines: 2016-2022), Andzrej Duda (President of Poland: 2015-), Narendra Modi (Prime Minister of India: 2014-), Uhuru Kenyatta (President of Kenya: 2013-), Xi Jinping (President of the People's Republic of China: 2012-), etc. Others have been in office much longer, but moved during this decade in an authoritarian direction: e.g. Vladimir Putin (President of Russia 2000-2008; Prime Minister 2008-2012; President: 2012-); Tayyip Erdoğan (Prime Minister of Turkey 2002-2014; President 2014-2018; Executive President: 2018-); Viktor Orban (Prime Minister of Hungary 1998-2002; Prime Minister: 2010-), Benjamin Netanyahu (Prime Minister of Israel 1996-1999; 2009-2021; 2022-); Hun Sen (Prime Minister of Cambodia: 1985-); Hugo Chávez/Nicolás Maduro (Chávez - President of Venezuela 1998-2013; Maduro

- President: 2013-), Paul Kagame (President of Rwanda: 2000), etc. This is not an exhaustive list but illustrates rather well what many see as the spirit of contemporary world politics in the 21st century.

Adding to the variability, the list above contains leaders from countries wildly different in geographical location, culture, economic strength, and political system. Many are prime ministers, others are presidents; there are even a few royals in the mix. Some of the 'strongmen' listed are not (yet or still) particularly strong. In some cases, de facto power lies somewhere other than the official position of leadership: 'strongmen' are not even in office. Some of the aforementioned countries have (or did until recently) what political scientists would label 'consolidated democracies' (for a definition, see e.g. Linz and Stepan 1996), others are (or were until recently) semi-democracies, yet others would have only qualified competitive authoritarian systems during the best of times (see e.g. Levitsky and Way 2011). Some of them are in countries that are in the traditional Western core of the international system, and many others are not.

Many of these leaders were elected to office, yet others inherited their positions or were appointed to them. Some are just beginning their tenure, while others have weathered many challenges. Some of them have successfully consolidated their power, others are still facing resistance. Some have already been ousted, but there are fears that they will return. Many would be described as 'right-wing', but there is no grand ideology that binds those on the right or the left. Many of them have come to power after the Global Financial Crisis and are understood to be riding the wave of economic discontent the crisis produced, but others were bolstered by the flood of cheap credit available to 'emerging markets' and have consolidated their power by using redistributive policies.

I think there is an argument to be made that this variability itself is telling. It may indeed point to the fact that we are witnessing a global trend towards a re-personalisation of sovereignty; what we have been calling a wave of populism is in fact a global trend consisting of attempts to move towards a sovereignty model that used to be more common in history. It will be objected that the 20th century had its share of 'strongmen' as well, and this trend is not new. It is a fair objection, but the absence of substantive ideological justifications (or the revolving door of substantively contradictory symbols and positions) and the comparatively less significant role played by party infrastructures at least suggests that we may be looking at something different now, or at least a more naked attempt[16]. Our strongmen see the state more as their personal vehicles than many of their 20th century predecessors, and their followers are more likely to see these strongmen as *the* salvation. This may have something to do with the fact that the 20th century *zeitgeist* was one where political theology across the ideological spectrum placed a lot more faith in the state and what it can do. In the 21st century, even 'the fascists' do not worship the state.

Implications of the re-personalisation of sovereignty: some scenarios

Let us now at least entertain the possibility that we are witnessing a trend toward re-personalisation of sovereignty. What does that imply about our global practice of foreign

policy and international relations? At least three scenarios are possible: (1) that this will not change much about foreign policy; (2) that this signals a return to an arrangement where foreign relations were secondary for sovereign legitimation; and (3) that we are headed somewhere unpredictable. There are good arguments for each supposition.

The argument for scenario one is that while there may be a global trend towards the re-personalisation of rule, the nation-state itself is very much alive and kicking because nationalism remains a primary ingredient for populist legitimation[17]. It could be argued that as long as children continue to be socialised into a world of nation-states globally the 20th century international order will keep reproducing itself, even if one of the core factors of its emergence reverts back to a previous historical norm. The fact that the discipline of International Relations assumes the nation-state system to be unchanging and thus is mostly indifferent to larger structural trends potentially undermining its core building blocks is itself a piece of evidence in favour of this argument.

The argument for scenario two is that as sovereignty gets re-personalised, national attachments to sovereign state will start withering, and rule will have to be legitimated (or coerced) in alternative ways. We do see some evidence of this in settings where 'strongmen' have polarised their societies; members of the opposition in such settings often feel torn about the international conduct of their states precisely because they associate it with personalised rule. It is not hard to imagine that over time this will erode even strongly socialised attachments to the state. If sovereignty becomes re-personalised, demands of nationhood may become unbearable: certainly at least some individuals among the Russian exodus of the recent months must feel that the state no longer represents them. On the other hand, there is no reason to suppose that even in such a scenario citizens will stop caring about international comparisons that have an impact on their daily well-being.

All of that points to yet a third scenario: some hybrid outcome where our expectations about foreign policy either as derived from the international order of the 20th century or the pre-nation-state era hold. What does foreign policy look like in a world where strongmen increasingly bypass ministries of foreign affairs and equate their personal relationships with other strongmen with statecraft (as the old times), yet have to maintain the fiction of nationhood with all of its recognition demands for average citizens? Additionally, re-personalisation of sovereignty also potentially opens the door for other individual actors to meddle in world politics: in such a global arrangement of personalised sovereignty, not much would or could separate Elon Musks and Peter Thiels from Donald Trumps and Tayyip Erdoğans. What would foreign policy look like in such a world? In order to figure out where we are headed, then, we need better typologies of sovereignty models and the types of 'international' orders (as well as foreign policy approaches) they produce. Our theories have been generalised from a very limited time period and selection of nearly identical cases. We need to do better.

Religious Nationalism and the Populist Style of Foreign Policy

Guilherme Casarões

Introduction

Although the phenomenon of populism is not new, we have witnessed a significant growth in populist governments across the world, with relevant implications for research and analysis on politics and foreign policy. In this short piece, I investigate the role of religion in shaping populist performances of foreign policy. More specifically, I ask the following question: how is religion incorporated into the repertoire of populists in their relationship with the world? This paper's argument is twofold. First, based on Benjamin Moffitt's (2016) definition of populism as a political style, I contend that a populist foreign policy performance builds upon rhetoric and practices that are sovereigntist, personalistic, and reactive. Second, by taking religious nationalism as an emerging ideology within radical right movements, I show how it has been mobilized by radical right populists once in power to strengthen and legitimise their approach to foreign policy. The next sections will elaborate on this argument.

Populism as a political style is a particular approach to the phenomenon that sees it as a set of 'repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performances' that politicians deploy when addressing audiences, either to win elections or to govern (Moffitt 2016: 46). It adds to, and goes beyond, well-known formulations as Mudde's (2017) by taking populism not as a binary variable (i.e. the presence or absence of populist thin-ideology) but as a continuum of strategic possibilities. In other words, populism may manifest not only in many different points along the ideological spectrum, but also in various degrees or intensities. When thinking about the intersection of religion and politics, we prefer the populism-as-performance approach over populism-as-ideology mostly because populists rarely have a purely theological or ideological take on religious values. Instead, they weaponize religion, merging it with varying concepts of 'the pure people' (Wojczewski 2019) according to their electoral or governing interests.

As political style, populism bears three key characteristics: (1) the appeal to 'the people' and the subsequent dichotomic division of society between 'the people' and 'the elite' – or other related signifiers, such as 'the Establishment' or 'the system' – a divide that is acknowledged throughout the majority of contemporary definitions of populism; (2) the coarsening of political rhetoric and a disregard for political correctness, which often involve the use of 'bad manners' – slang, swearing, calculated displays of ignorance and sometimes aggressive behaviour – as a means to connect with the people; and (3) the evocation and occasional induction of crises, breakdowns or threats, through dramatization and performance, to generate demands for immediate and decisive action – which only the populist can offer, usually by bypassing or disregarding institutional and legal constraints of modern policymaking. In this sense, the populist political style

is antithetical to the technocratic one, which favours technical expertise, contained and proper language, and stability and progress as indicators of political success (Moffitt 2016: 51-55).

Being a policy area where political correctness, moderate gestures and technocratic behaviour are the norm, foreign policy did not seem entirely compatible with the populist style. However, the picture has changed in recent years: in an interconnected world, populists have increasingly incorporated international elements into their rhetoric to enthral domestic audiences, often through grandiose and colourful performances that involve the promise of rescuing the greatness of the nation and the dignity of the people. This movement has stirred academic interest in the relationship between populism and foreign policy: if the perceived success of foreign policy was considered a function of form and style as much as of substance, then what happens when we witness a radical change in the way foreign policy is performed?

Populism and foreign policy

Studies aimed at understanding the impacts of populism on foreign policy have grown considerably over the last few years (Hadiz and Cryssogelos 2017; Verbeek and Zaslove 2017; Wehner and Thies 2021; Destradi, Cadier and Plagemann 2021; Wajner and Wehner 2023). The common thread between those works is that populists may diverge considerably in terms of foreign policy, despite similar styles, strategies, or discourses. For one, by comparing populist experiences in Europe and Latin America, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013) have demonstrated that left-wing populisms – more common in Latin American politics – tend to be inclusionary as they embrace a broad and transnational category (workers, the poor, the oppressed), whereas radical right populisms, more common in Europe, are generally exclusionary, as they conceive the people based on singular traits, as ethnicity, nationality, religion – and even local identities.

However, except for analyses of historical cases that look at previous waves of populism (particularly in Latin America), the general focus on the political platform of populist parties has been an obstacle for a broader understanding of the behaviour – and therefore the foreign policy style – of populists in power. The reduced number of countries ruled by populists did not allow for rigorous and radical reaching comparative studies. The general interest on populism and foreign policy has nonetheless grown in recent years, thanks to the experiences of the radical right governments in the United States (Wojczewski 2020), Israel (Casarões and Magalhães 2020), Brazil (Guimarães and Silva 2021; Casarões and Farias 2022; Barbosa Jr. and Casarões 2022), India (Plagemann e Destradi 2019; Wojczewski 2019), and Poland and Hungary (Varga and Buzogány 2020), which combine elements of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde 2017). This new trend is indeed alarming, but it makes it possible to test some general hypotheses on the international behaviour of populists as they get into office (Destradi, Cadier and Plagemann 2021).

Drawing on the case of Indian prime-minister Narendra Modi, Plagemann and Destradi (2019) derive five general hypotheses on populism and foreign policy: (1)

populists in power will be less likely to make concessions on costly global governance issues as compared to non-populist governments; (2) populists in power are likely to privilege bilateralism over multilateralism; (3) populists in power will be more likely than their non-populist counterparts to develop a transnational understanding of their 'people' and to engage such a transnational audience in their foreign policy; (4) the decision-making process in the foreign policy of populists in power will be more centralized and personalistic with fewer formalized opportunities for alternative viewpoints than under a non-populist leadership; and (5) populists in power will be more likely to adopt unconventional ways of directly relating their foreign policy to 'the people,' including, in particular, via social media (Plagemann and Destradi 2019: 286-288).

Because the above hypotheses focus on behaviour as much as on ideas, they converge with Moffitt's assessment that populism should be treated as a political style, which includes specific foreign policy performances. Performing foreign policy as something intrinsic to the relationship between the leader and the people has become a core strategy of populists in power. By incorporating the international into the domestic, populists have been able to transform international issues otherwise considered distant into 'authentic' domestic narratives with considerable appeal to the broader public (Lacatus and Meibauer 2022).

As part of such performances, the traditional approach to diplomacy – ridden with technocratic, moderate, and politically correct language – is abandoned in favour of rhetoric and practices that are at the same time (1) sovereigntist, not admitting concessions to external actors and casting suspicion on collegiate solutions typical of multilateralism (see Basile and Mazzoleni, 2020); (2) personalistic, projecting the leader and his/her government as the only legitimate representations of the people, thus bypassing democratic institutions and diplomatic processes and even generating new patterns of international alignments (Destradi, Cadier and Plagemann 2021); and (3) reactive, based on the permanent creation of crises, threats, and breakdowns, generally through conspiracy theories and generic accusations against internal and external agents strategically disseminated on social media (Eberl, Huger and Greussing 2021; Balta, Rovira Kaltwasser and Yagci 2021).

Religious nationalism, populism, and foreign policy

Now that I have defined a populist foreign policy (style) for this paper's purposes, let me zoom in on the role of religion – and, more specifically, religious nationalism – in sustaining the narratives of populists in their international relations. But before moving on to the argument, some caveats are in order. First, even though religion is no stranger to International Relations scholarship (Huntington 1993; Kubalková 2000), especially considering the growing interest in religious-driven terrorism and post-secular politics after 9/11 (Barbato and Kratochwil 2009; Toft, Philpott and Shah 2011; Brown 2020; Haynes 2021), the role of religion in foreign policy analysis is still underappreciated, mostly focusing on religious soft power (Haynes 2008; Rees 2021).

Second, religious nationalism stands out as a particular manifestation of religion in political life that deserves a separate discussion. The phenomenon was first identified by Juergensmeyer (1993) as the trend of religious actors across the Third World to merge religion and the nation-state, against the Western paradigm of secular nationalism, by offering an alternative model of political organization – or an 'ideology of order' – in which religious loyalties become as important as (or even more important than) ethnic, racial, or even territorial bonds. Simply put, religious nationalism is an ideology that defines the nation in terms of religion. It has become particularly intense in response to modern developments associated with Western liberal ideas and practices, such as globalization, privatization, and consumerism (Kinnvall 2004).

Third, the relationship between religious nationalism and the nation-state is not linear not straightforward. While it seems clear that the resurgence of faith in politics has benefitted from the forces of democracy, technological modernization, and globalization, religious movements are not equally (or at all) committed to such forces. The politics of religious actors across the world are influenced by their political theology and by the degree of independence between religious authority and political authority (Toft, Philpott and Shah 2011). Moreover, the political capacity of religious groups largely depends on pre-existing political and social dynamics in a given state (Soper and Fetzer 2018).

Fourth, and finally, religious elements are not universally used by populists, irrespective of their thick ideologies, being much more common on the right of the political spectrum, and particularly visible in the radical right (Zúquete 2017; De Hanas and Shterin 2018; Yilmaz and Morieson 2021). Although religion is not a defining characteristic of radical right populists, some of their traditional ideas about culture, as opposed to left-wing/liberal progressive or cosmopolitan values, tend to be religious in essence, even when dubbed as 'conservative' or purely 'nationalist'. Religion serves as the master frame for radical right populists to take their nativist, authoritarian, and populist platforms into the political mainstream, bypassing traditional parties and partisan discourses (Minkenberg 2018).

Religious nationalism and populist foreign policy performances

As the final part of this argument, I turn to a more specific discussion on how radical right populists tap into religious nationalism in constructing and performing foreign policy. To this end, I draw on the previously formulated concept of populist foreign policy style – sovereigntist, personalistic, and reactive – to investigate how radical right populists exploit religious nationalism, and how this ideology benefits their international performance.

1. **Religious nationalism reinforces the sovereigntist rhetoric of populist foreign policy.**

   Even though sovereignty is the cornerstone of the modern nation-state and, consequently, of the international order, what it means for international relations has changed considerably with the advent of globalization and interdependence. Radical right populists often denounce the current liberal international order, fraught with

values such as multiculturalism, secularism, and liberal democracy, as a potential threat to their countries' national and cultural identities (De Orellana and Michelsen 2019). Some even go so far as to claim that there is an actual conspiracy – plotted by billionaire capitalists, big techs, progressive movements and politicians, and United Nations bureaucrats – to destroy organized religion, subvert centuries-old civilizations, and implement a totalitarian, 'globalist' regime across the planet (Araújo 2019). Religion, therefore, provides radical right populists the elements for an alternative to the globalist-driven international order. In their view, the world should be organized around ethno-political communities, better enabled to preserve their national and cultural identities, and oftentimes having faith as an indissociable part of national self-determination (Barbosa Jr. and Casarões 2022). Most importantly, religion can spread and legitimise the otherwise controversial radical right ideal of ethnopluralism by turning the focus away from race and towards civilization – individuals and nations bound together by shared cultural and spiritual foundations (Drolet and Williams 2018).

2. **Religious nationalism legitimates the populist's personalistic approach to foreign policy.**
   Despite the growing relevance of personal diplomacy to the global strategies of states, foreign policy remains a policy area dominated by career bureaucrats – or technocrats – who typically do not act along partisan or ideological lines and are frequently resistant to change (Hermann 1990). As a result, disruptive foreign policy behaviour coming from the top, particularly when it involves breaking with long-standing traditions and changing the course of widely accepted strategies, must be legitimised outside of the realm of political institutions and elites (Drezner 2019). Religious nationalism therefore grants political leaders a special form of charismatic legitimacy, where the messianic role of religious figures is fused with the demotic qualities of national martyrs (Zúquete 2017). Through a religious-nationalist charisma, spontaneous or manufactured, radical right leaders appeal to their special relationship with the 'sacred people' to justify new international positions, whose implementation often involves fighting against the foreign policy establishment – or 'deep state' (Michaels 2017; Sá e Silva 2020; Horwitz 2021). By pitting the people against diplomatic elites, populists pave their way to antagonise global 'others' more freely with popular support as well as to forge new patterns of international alliances based on religious values (Caiani 2018; Tjalve and Holm 2020).

3. **Religious nationalism exacerbates the sense of crises, breakdowns and threats coming from the outside.**
   Not every country that elects a populist leader faces real and tangible international threats. Since populists nurture from sentiments such as hate and fear (Palaver 2019), they want to stimulate a sense of siege and insecurity that may strengthen their power at home. What religious nationalism does is to amplify and widen the sense of external threat to encompass broader categories – religion and civilization – beyond, and combined with, the one of nation. Not surprisingly, radical right

populists have often invoked the 'clash of civilizations' argument in their own constructions of a global crisis with local implications. To them, the Judeo-Christian (or Western) civilization is under attack by the forces of Islamic fundamentalism, China-driven atheist Communism, and nihilist globalism (Carvalho 2013; Araújo 2017; Stewart 2020). The case of Christianity is particularly interesting in this regard: not being circumscribed by territorial or national boundaries, it provides some degree of discourse consistency on a transnational level (Lamour 2022). The Christian faith has allowed radical right populists to cooperate and converge in several issues, from human rights to religious freedom, as in the case of Alliance for Religious Freedom and other initiatives at the United Nations spearheaded by radical right governments (Haynes 2020).

Final remarks

This paper has sought to contribute to the ongoing debate on religion, populism, and foreign policy in two simultaneous fronts. First, by offering a definition of populist foreign policy as a style centred on sovereigntist, personalistic and reactive narratives and performances, I have attempted to take the discussion beyond the notion of populism as an ideological toolkit and towards a predictable repertoire that may be employed by populists across the political spectrum. Second, by elaborating on religious nationalism as an emerging ideology of the radical right, I have explored the multiple ways through which religion, nationalism, and populism become entwined in the foreign policy of populist leaders, from Jair Bolsonaro to Donald Trump, from Viktor Orbán to Narendra Modi. The next step in this endeavour is empirical and involves comparing and contrasting the use of religion and religious nationalism in the foreign policies of those and other radical right populists, both in terms of style and of substance.

Contested Cosmopolitanism in Populist Radical Right Foreign Policy

Carolina Salgado

Introduction

Cosmopolitanism is an open project. I share Seyla Benhabib´s understanding of cosmopolitanism as 'a normative philosophy for carrying the universalistic norms of discourse ethics beyond the confines of the nation-state […] [It is] then a philosophical project of mediations, not of reductions or totalizations' (2006: 18-20). Hence, cosmopolitanism does not start from the idea that we already have and know *the universal*, that which *is* the cosmopolitan. Rather, being about mediation, cosmopolitanism is 'of our making' in the constant re-negotiation and deliberation about what the universal is about.

In other words, cosmopolitanism is not the universal anchor that totalizes *ex ante* human encounters – it is an emergent property of the process of these encounters. Starting from this position, just as little as we can know the cosmopolitan before encounters take place, we cannot know about its impossibility, either. Then, if one believes in democratic values, the better position to assume is the one with better normative implications: being agnostic about the outcome (which would be cosmopolitanism itself) but give communication and deliberation a chance, throughout the encounters; or assuming its impossibility from the start by proposing sovereigntist and nationalist closures? It is the latter which becomes the reductionist or totalist move that is difficult to defend normatively. It is the PRR performance in foreign policy which renders cosmopolitanism impossible – not the other way round[18].

In Brazil, India, the Philippines, Hungary and Poland, to mention just a few, the set of norms and principles derived or embedded in core Western countries is contested. PRR leaders perceive the liberal international order (LIO) as hierarchical, interventionist and neo-colonialist. Seyla Benhabib says that 'every interaction involves making sense of an authoritative original in a new and different context' (2006: 48). It is precisely the Western nature of the LIO as an 'authoritative original' that nationalist and illiberal leaders are contesting.

The 'authoritative original' is the condition of possibility to think about cosmopolitanism since we cannot deliberate about just anything – there needs to be some core around which the deliberation takes place. But, just as cosmopolitanism is an open project, the terms of deliberation are too. It seems that they are more dissatisfied with these terms – which mainly emerge from Western countries, organizations, and mechanisms of multilateral governance – than with the very idea of exchanging experiences and negotiating new terms, namely, cosmopolitanism itself. By contesting core values and principles of the LIO (which still constitute the 'authoritative original') they hollow cosmopolitanism from the start, adopting a nationalist and isolationist foreign policy.

So, what is at stake in the PRR contestation? For Adler-Nissen and Zarakol, for instance, 'the root causes of discontent with the LIO lie beyond pure economics, and are largely driven by dissatisfaction with it as a *recognition* order' (2021: 612, emphasis found in the original). That is, late comers in the LIO such as almost all Southern countries are attracted by 'a desired identity label: "Western" or "First World" or "developed" versus its undesirable corollaries' (2021: 621). The scholars underline that at stake is the very LIO discourse of disavowing hierarchies,

> and precisely because it puts such emphasis on politics being based on notions of equality, rights, and rationality, the LIO is seen as *hypocritical* by those who are discontent with it. […] Frustrated authoritarian and quasi-authoritarian regimes in the semi-periphery, and status-losing groups in the core, find common cause in one enemy: the cosmopolitan liberal elite that had promised material and symbolic equality with the LIO (2021: 615-616, emphasis found in the original).

By facing the challenge of proposing another order or, alternatively, managing to invert the priority of the values on which global deliberations are guided – individual freedom, self-determination, non-interference, sovereignty, conservatism and neoliberal market-based economics *coming before* democracy, human rights, environmental protection, gender equality, social policies, welfare state and the rule of law – PRR leaders are united in global ideological and digital networks among which 'what binds these coalitions together is a shared internationalism; the belief that the sources of problems are international, and that solutions necessitate restructuring international norms to liberate birth-culture´s innate potential' (de Orellana and Michelsen 2019: 758). At these networks of *reactionary internationalism*, they manifest their discontent with the LIO 'as a recognition order' by reacting to the perceived hypocrisy of its core values.

In the following sections we see the social basis for their, so to speak, successful foreign policy performance and, thereafter, how they mobilize cultural and economic transformations to manifest discontent with the LIO and its promise of cosmopolitanism. I discuss such anti-cosmopolitan performance in the foreign policy of two PRR leaders in the South – Jair Bolsonaro from Brazil and Narendra Modi from India. First, I look at how cultural divisions and economic inequalities that have been intensified by neoliberal globalization are articulated by them, eroding the potential of cosmopolitanism and democracy – and, so I argue, it happens due to a resentment with their own position within a Western-led international society. I aim to understand precisely the logic behind the link between economic and cultural forces driving popular discontent with liberal ideas and values *and* the subsequent blind support to radical right leaders that resort to regimes of authoritarian violence as a logic of engagement and contestation. Second, my concern is to reflect precisely on what these translations did and what they have been producing in terms of anti-cosmopolitanism in foreign policy.

Understanding the link between economy and culture as the root cause to popular contestation for the LIO

Consider the statement about 'globalization and converging values' on the World Values Survey (WVS) website:

> In fact, analysis of data from the World Values Survey demonstrates that mass values have not been converging over the past three decades. Norms concerning marriage, family, gender and sexual orientation show dramatic changes but virtually all advanced industrial societies have been moving in the same direction, at roughly similar speeds. This has brought a parallel movement, without convergence. Moreover, while economically advanced societies have been changing rather rapidly, countries that remained economically stagnant showed little value change. As a result, there has been a growing divergence between the prevailing values in low-income countries and high-income countries.

Latin America

As we all know, in addition to rapid technological advances and integrated capital markets that characterise the phenomenon of globalization worldwide, in Latin America it is mostly marked by the intensification of economic inequalities and cultural divisions. Latin America is a predominantly middle-income region despite the fact that, according to CEPAL in its website, 'the poverty rate reached 32.3% of the total population of Latin America, while the extreme poverty rate was 12.9%.' The contribution of the WVS is to empirically explain the link between the two components I mobilise – economy and culture – which, I argue, lie in the causes to popular contestation for the liberal script in the semi periphery.

In brief, the WVS shows the cultural map below:

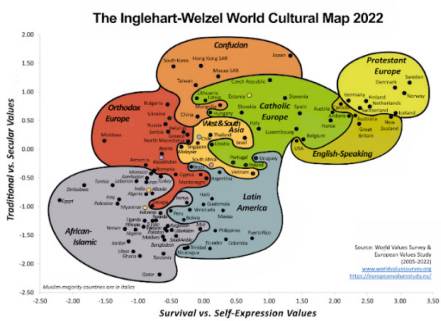

Figure 1: Cultural map available in World Values Survey website

We see that Latin America is completely located within 'traditional values' and has a low score in 'self-expression values', with countries such as Nicaragua and Peru already being part of the 'survival values' group. The WVS explains that 'As long as physical survival remains uncertain, the desire for physical and economic security tends to take higher priority than democracy. When basic physiological and safety needs are fulfilled there is a growing emphasis on self-expression values.' It means that Latin American citizens are, overall, too busy struggling to guarantee their physical, psychological, economic and safety needs which, according to their perceptions, remain uncertain. And this feeling strongly influences how they perceive and react to democracy and the LIO.

Under such terrible socioeconomic circumstances, material precariousness and psychological vulnerability, what do leaders do? Based on the Brazilian and Indian cases (and isolating domestic specificities of each country), I contend that the more a leader is located at the extreme-right of the political spectrum, the more he will explore the need to embrace traditional and survival values as an easy answer to people´s dissatisfactions and complex demands for real changes.

> *Traditional values* emphasize the importance of religion, parent-child ties, deference to authority and traditional family values. People who embrace these values also reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide. These societies have high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook […] Although the people of traditional societies have high levels of national pride, favor more respect for authority, take protectionist attitudes toward foreign trade, and feel that environmental problems can be solved without international agreements, they accept national authority passively: they rarely discuss politics (World Values Survey website, section 'Findings and Insights', emphasis found in the original).

India

According to the Pew Research Center, in a report 'based on a face-to-face survey of 29,999 Indian adults fielded between late 2019 and early 2020', 74% of Indians say religion is very important in their lives. Among the six most representative religions (Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains), only '*among Buddhists (57%) and Sikhs (54%) do more than half of adults express a preference for a democratic form of government*', indicates the report (emphasis added by the author). Hindus make up 79.8% of India's population and, not surprisingly, in the 2019 Parliament election, 49% of Hindus voted for the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP), the ruling party of Modi. Overall,

> slightly fewer than half of Indians say that the country should rely on a democratic form of government to solve the country's problems (46%). The other half say that it would be better for the country to have a leader with a strong hand (48%)

, it concludes (Sahgal et al. 2021:123). Modi and his clan are not interested in changing the context but benefit from it. A convincing narrative is therefore necessary to make people understand, agree and support his strategy. So, those indicators matter to the extent that national politics condition foreign policy.

In this way, it is not surprising that, within a radical right regime, politics gradually boils down to polemics over traditional values. On the domestic side, the PRR reinforces natural inequalities, being them economic, cultural or religious – just like nations are naturally different, citizens are too. Reinforced by an ultra-individualistic socio-economic approach as a feature of neoliberal policies against state intervention in welfare, these differences will naturally benefit some more than others. Therefore, the exercise of violence becomes a logic of engagement – between state and society and between members of the same nation (de Orellana and Michelsen 2019: 756). On the international side, the radical right movement uses traditional values as amplifiers, or populist tools, to exercise its reactionary disposition against the LIO in a global network of 'norm entrepreneurs' based on identity and economics.

How? Ideology and religion in the service of anti-cosmopolitanism

PRR critique of the West or of liberalism hides the underlying challenge to the idea of a comprehensive world order as such, and cosmopolitanism comes in since this is a process in which those PRR must attack the LIO so as to 'prove' that no comprehensive order is possible. To see how it happens, I zoom in on the most recurrent agenda each of them perform in foreign policy – an anti-globalist ideology in Brazil and religion in India – combined with their respective global symbols of contestation.

Brazil

The LIO is at the core of the globalism critique. In foreign policy, this is done in reaction to 'globalism', that is, "the term refers to an 'anti-human and anti-Christian system' that has been 'driven by cultural Marxism' threatening the sovereignty of countries like Brazil", according to the definition of Bolsonaro´s first Foreign Minister, Ernesto Araújo, as mentioned by João Paulo Charleaux (2019). This globalism fought by Araújo is

> concretely expressed in international norms (on climate change and immigration, for example) and in international institutions (whether NGOs or regional organizations like the European Union) which, according to him, impose Marxist standards that do not completely correspond to Brazilian interests (Charleaux, cited in Nexo Jornal 2019).

Bolsonaro contests the LIO, diverging from Western core countries on the basis of misrecognition he and his team of Ministers perceive regarding Brazil´s own identity position in international society. Such contestation encompasses a supposed sovereign right to exercise self-determination by proposing sovereigntist closure in foreign policy,

and by constructing ideological and conspiratorial concerns to justify such option to the population. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to keep people busy with his cause and, to do so, contestation needs to be translated into the easiest terms possible to be understandable for the masses. The national support is as crucial for domestic as it is for foreign policy in radical right governments, as we could see over the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil (Kalil et al 2021). Most importantly, he articulates expressions of contestation for international norms to national interests.

Here are some examples of his translations: activists and non-governmental organizations such as *Greta Thunberg* and *Greenpeace* for their climate and environmental activism; contesting the *UN climate and human rights regimes* as an ability to resist the influence of others, 'as the Westernization of the planet has represented an imperialist movement fed by the desire to erase all otherness by imposing on the world a supposed superior model invariable represented as progress' (de Orellana and Michelsen 2019: 762); *Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela* and *China* for communism; regional organizations such as *the European Union* for representing a global force for integration, multilateralism and democracy; *the WTO* for regulating global trade and acting as a buffer to nationalist onslaughts and to achieve nature-given economic potential; *the WHO* for having claimed the inexistence of an early treatment against Covid-19, on behalf of the right to survive and to secure individual liberties; *indigenous* and *migrants* for representing a financial burden for the public expenditure; *LGBTQIA+ people* for being against the traditional family; *science* and *media* for attacking traditional values and being in the service of the Left. There are more. My concern is to understand precisely what these translations did and what they have been producing in terms of anti-cosmopolitanism in foreign policy.

India

In India, nearly half of the population (which is nearly 80% Hindu) prefers a leader with a strong hand, and the BJP is a Hindu-based party. So, many sources refer to Modi´s religious diplomacy, which is seen by the BJP, as India's soft power. He introduced the Hindu nationalist tradition of thought (*Hindutva*) in his performance towards India's neighbours and southeast Asian countries. Ian Hall says that

> Whether Modi's version of religious diplomacy pays off is a moot point. The core problem it faces is credibility. Modi's message that Hinduism and India are models of religious tolerance has been undermined by episodes of communal violence, including those perpetrated by Hindu nationalists aligned with Modi's party against members of India's Muslim minority, and accusations that religious freedom has come under threat during this time in office (Hall 2018: 14).

In a text published in 'The Nation' in November 2019, the Indian award-winning writer Arundhati Roy adds that 'Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been a member of

the RSS since he was 8 years old. He is a creation of the RSS,' which is the Hindu supremacist organization called *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, founded in 1925 – the mothership of the ruling BJP. 'What we are living through now, in addition to the overt attack on religious minorities, is an aggravated class and caste war', she completed.

India is the best example of how 'the nation' can be an ideological gadget to move people's attention away from the degrading economic situation to focus on the cultural-religious war that 'defines the true Indian'. *Hindutva*, which is a common Indian identity based on masculine Hindu values, equates

> [B]eing Indian with being Hindu, arguing that Hindu identity ran deeper than religious belief. Hindu identity entailed membership of a distinct race with collective civilizational links to those occupying a common Hindu polity or *rashtra*. From the perspective of *Hindutva,* India, commonly referred to as *Hindustan* or *Bharat*, is the 'fatherland' of all Hindus and considered holy (Barron 2020: 3).

Its confrontational nationalism goes starkly against Nehru´s pluralism and Gandhi's pacifism as guiding notions of the Indian state. Consequently, *Hindutva* ideologues are primarily concerned with insulating India from foreign influence although with little success, as 'India's foreign and security policy decision making is shaped by an amalgamation of systemic, domestic, and individual-level factors, and is therefore, unlikely to ever be exclusively driven by ideology' (Barron 2020: 5). This way, we see that while *Hindutva* is mostly materialized in domestic matters, it is a source of justification for Modi´s foreign policy performance according to each of his geopolitical interests.

Therefore, different from mobilizing *Hindutva* as an anti-cosmopolitan discourse in foreign policy, Modi embodies Hindu nationalism as a source of reaction to the Western reading of how and what nationalism should be. Although the BJP presents itself since the 1990s as a party of national unity, as explained by Wojczewski, 'the Hindu nationalism discourse equates India with Hinduism by making only those who regard India both as fatherland *and* holyland as full and loyal members of the national community and thus represents Muslims and Christians as foreign Others' (2019: 9). In other words, Modi does not locate the foreign Other in India´s outside, as Western nationalism does in its historical reading of inside/outside or Self/Other (Walker 1992; Campbell 1998; Diez 2005), but 'within the confines of the Indian state and within the political establishment in particular' (Wojczewski 2019: 11).

For Modi´s geopolitical interests, in turn, *Hindutva´*s ultra-masculine, intolerant, aggressive and segregationist components not only impair long standing Indian positions and perceptions as a reliable and consistent partner at the global level, but also amplify old tensions such as the dispute with Pakistan over the contested region of Kashmir, and the Indo-Chinese relations, as explained below:

> Since Xi Jinping launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, China has gradually encroached upon what India considers its traditional sphere of influence. Arguably the most significant

> point of contention in this regard is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is the largest project of the BRI, and cuts through Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Modi's decision to boycott the Belt and Road Forum in May 2018 reflects his disapproval, but also indicates to his *Hindutva*-electoral base that the BJP-led India is strong and independent (Wojczewski 2019: 11).

Overall, Modi and Bolsonaro promote resistant political subjectivities to act against the LIO, securing popular support to their anti-cosmopolitan foreign policy strategy: culture and religion (through terms such as birth-culture, traditional values, identity liberation) were systematically used as instruments to polarise society in the name of a purifying religious-ethno-patriotism, the nation's freedom from the universal indifference, and national (conservative) values as expression of distinctiveness. They have set the link between economy and culture through their religious-ethno-patriotism based 'on the assumption that all identities seek the same at the expense of one another: a struggle for (primarily economic) survival, a "fair cause" that necessitates lifting the international norms that prevent its pursuit' (de Orellana and Michelsen 2019: 761).

Conclusion

When we look at globalization as a process of sharp interdependence which impact 'has been strongly shaped by those with the power to make and enforce the rules of the global economy' (Woods, cited in Held and McGrew 2003: 465), one can see that rule-enforcement requires an increase in participation and cooperation of the rest. And the rest have no longer been willing to cooperate in silence. These two leaders examined here, Bolsonaro and Modi, clearly contest the LIO´s corollaries – multilateralism, international treaties, sustainable development, democracy, popular representation, the rule of law, human rights – refusing to accept them as 'the authoritative original' of cosmopolitanism. By doing so, they hollow cosmopolitanism from the start in a totalist move reflected in their nationalist closures.

Important for grasping the whole discussion about an anti-cosmopolitan performance in the foreign policy of PRR are the agendas mobilized by Bolsonaro and Modi in foreign policy, which became strategically and discursively feasible only in the scope of cultural and economic transformations in global governance over the process of globalization. On the one hand, global governance has been happening exclusively under the LIO since the 1990s, but during the Cold War core Western countries have widely spread it already. On the other hand, such transformations produced global covenants about 'how to deal with it' that many leaders do not (entirely) legitimise as such – for example, the Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2030, Paris Agreement, Global Compact for Migration, the World Bank Green Neoliberalism Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the WTO Doha Rounds, and so on and so forth. This was the background for the emergence of radical right leaders and coalitions, 'against everything that is there.' Through translations, symbols and new covenants, PRR

leaders contest the LIO and its cosmopolitan confidence – without questioning neoliberal capitalism itself.

Notes

1 This essay relied on support from the RCN project CHOIR, led by Halvard Leira.

2 The term 'strongman' is obviously gendered, but it works for a short essay because (1) the lay usage is popular and (2) the meaning is relatively unambiguous compared to other terms that could be used in its place. But I am not claiming that all 'strongmen' are men.

3 'Achievement' from the perspective of modernity.

4 Totalitarianism as mobilised by individual leaders can certainly be seen in that light, especially in Arendt's (1951) description.

5 Space constraints push me to be provocatively unnuanced in my historical generalisations, but I hope the reader can indulge me a bit on the way to our larger point.

6 Weber (1918): a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.

7 For more on this see Keene (2013) and Zarakol (2022).

8 Put differently, in previous eras and other geographies rulers with absolute power would not have to say '*L'État, c'est moi*'; the point would not have to be made (or there would be no state to speak of).

9 There are also reasons to think that other parts of the world would have come here on their own anyway. This transition has to be unpacked more outside of the European trajectory; see Zarakol (2022).

10 Obviously, this is a generalisation. There have been other sovereignty models in the past where external recognition played an important role of legitimation of the ruler. I focus on such a model in Zarakol (2022).

11 For more on the depersonalisation of sovereignty, see Bartelson (1995, 2001, 2011) and Skinner (1989, 2002).

12 If lucky a citizen, but citizen or not, nobody escaped the impact of these dynamics in the 20th century.

13 What is inside/outside is very hard to determine before the emergence of the modern state, which is precisely my point. Before, that recognition was a matter of hierarchy and networks.

14 See Zarakol (2022). In fact, extreme personalisation (centralisation) also requires external recognition.

15 See especially Zarakol (2017) and (2018) for an extended version of this argument.

16 Furthermore, de-personalisation of the state was unevenly achieved on a global scale, some of former 'strongmen' of the 20th century were themselves vestiges from the past. Historical generalisations always have exceptions.

17 On the relationship between populism and nationalism, see Heiskanen (2021).

18 I am indebted to Stefano Guzzini for some of the ideas and formulations regarding this discussion on cosmopolitanism.

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A Direita Radical Populista e a Elaboração Illiberal da Política Externa

Resumo: O que torna os atuais populistas da direita radical diferentes de outros líderes históricos da direita radical do século XX? Existem mais diferenças ou semelhanças entre a direita radical populista (PRR) no Sul Global com relação à forma como executam a política externa? Como o contexto - marcado pela globalização contemporânea, interdependências regionais e (geo)política de poder - influencia sua percepção sobre suas próprias capacidades e interesses, mas também sobre a ordem liberal internacional, seus valores e mecanismos multilaterais? Este fórum aborda questões como essas, oferecendo percepções teóricas, históricas e contextuais com exemplos concretos e estudos de caso situados fora do espectro anglo-americano. Diferentemente das abordagens tradicionais de análise de política externa, os autores apresentam reflexões sobre fenômenos atuais, como a formulação de políticas externas iliberais, o anticosmopolitismo, o nacionalismo religioso e seus laços transnacionais e a repersonalização da soberania na figura do PRR. Portanto, ele enriquece o estudo do populismo, da direita radical e da formulação de políticas externas nas RI, trazendo para o debate a erosão da ordem internacional liberal e o necessário questionamento da globalização liderada pelo Ocidente.

Palavras-chave: *Populismo; direita radical; religião; análise de política externa; soberania; cosmopolitismo.*

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