Edited by Rosana Pinheiro-Machado and Tatiana Vargas-Maia

The Rise of the Radical Right in the Global South

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN FASCISM AND THE FAR RIGHT

THE RISE OF THE RADICAL RIGHT IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The Rise of the Radical Right in the Global South is the first academic study—adopting an interdisciplinary and international perspective—to offer a comprehensive and groundbreaking framework for understanding the emergence and consolidation of different radical-right movements in Global South countries in the twenty-first century.

From deforestation and the anti-vaccine movement in Bolsonaro's Brazil to the massacre of religious minorities in Modi's India, the rise of the radical right in the Global South is in the news every day. Not long ago, some of these countries were globally celebrated as emerging economies that consolidated vibrant democracies. Nonetheless, they never overcame structural problems including economic inequality, social violence, cultural conservatism, and political authoritarianism. Featuring case studies from Brazil, India, the Philippines, and South Africa, and more generally from Africa and Latin America, this book analyses future scenarios and current alternatives to this political movement to the radical right. It proposes a shift of focus in examining such a trend, adopting a view from the Global South; conventional theoretical tools developed around the experience in Global North countries are not enough. The authors show that the radical right in the Global South should be analysed through specific lenses, considering national historical patterns of political and economic development and instability. They also warn that researching these countries may differ from contexts where democratic institutions are more reliable. This does not mean abandoning a transnational understanding of the radical right; rather, it calls for the opposite: the chapters examine how the radical right is invented, adapted, modified, and resisted in specific regions of the globe.

This volume will be of interest to all those researching the radical right and the politics of development and the Global South.

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INTRODUCTION

A new radical right in the global South?

Tatiana Vargas-Maia and Rosana Pinheiro-Machado

This book arose from the identification that we need fresher perspectives to explain the rise—or resurgence—of the radical right in countries from the global South. Recognized scholarship that responds to the recent populist and authoritarian wave makes little differentiation between global North and South specificities, relying primarily on analysis of the Euro-American parties and movements (i.e., Brown, Gordon, and Pensky, 2018; Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018; Hawley, 2017; Hermansson et al., 2020; Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Mondon and Winter, 2020; Mudde, 2017, 2019; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2018). The result is a limited—yet universalizing—repertoire that focuses on processes that account for affluent countries' recession, the collapse of the welfare state, migration issues, impoverishment and resentment of the working class, de-democratization, and revolt against liberal democracy.

Nevertheless, the context of several countries in the global South is different. As Sud and Sanchez-Ancochea (forthcoming) conceptualized, the South is a territory of the postcolonial world, encompassing Asia, Africa, and Central and South America, marked by the perpetuation of economic and social inequalities. Southernness implies "a set of relationships premised on difference" in which "race as a primary marker. People of colour breach/ed the boundaries of the North as slaves, labour, migrants and refugees, with their southernness and difference more or less intact." Structurally, the South is also a periphery of the northern nations that maintain dominance over the financial flows and technological innovations. Nevertheless, the region is also a place for resistance and collective action against structural oppressions, generating solidarity across peripheral countries. We assume that the global South is not a single, homogenous entity, but a diverse and plural region of the world, displaying significant

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disparities across regions. Consequently, both the radical right and its counter-insurgency occur at different paces and intensities.

Bearing these primary principles in mind, we must inquire about the social, economic, cultural, and political context in which the radical right (re) emerges—and a look at some emerging economies is revealing in this regard. When Narendra Modi (in 2014 India), Rodrigo Duterte (in 2016 Philippines), and Jair Bolsonaro (in 2018 Brazil) came to power, these countries were not collapsing in any previous form of a welfare state; the poor were leaving the poverty line, and authoritarianism was not a novelty, but rather the opposite: it was a great promise. India and the Philippines were continually maintaining high levels of economic growth. Although Brazil elected Bolsonaro amidst a recession, the resurgence of the radical right occurred alongside its peak of economic development (Rocha, 2018). These countries did not face the so-called refugee crisis, where immigrants would supposedly take the job opportunities of the population. Instead, they were dealing with its racialized "internal enemies".

As Bianchi and Melo point out in the opening text of this volume, the global North enumerates the features and measures that define Fascism, for example. Scholars have a hard time adapting these recipes to tick the boxes in the South. Therefore, the reappearance of the radical right in colonized and peripheral parts of the globe—marked by persistent authoritarianism, conservatism, precarity, and coloniality—cannot be explained by an undifferentiated theoretical framework that was originally developed from Euro-American-Western lenses. In an insightful decolonial critique of the academic discourse on the radical right, Masood and Nisar (2020) suggest that a comprehensive analysis of far-right populism must account for the heterogeneities of these movements across the global North and the global South.

Nevertheless, we do not suggest that the global North's experience should be dismissed. The 2008 global economic recession, the 2016 Brexit in the United Kingdom, and Donald Trump's election in the United States were pivotal events in generating contagious waves of authoritarianism worldwide and creating contextual incentives and opportunities for such movements. Global North countries exercise power over the South and continuously export extremist ideologies. In addition, digital social media, an interconnected global economy, transnational networks of power, and conspiracy theories are some of the elements that make the authoritarian populist wave global. The contributions of the book, therefore, do not refuse global perspectives but highlight the importance of investigating the historical, economic, social, political, and cultural singularities of the existence—whether prolonged or new—of the radical right in global South countries as part of such broader political wave.

Although the study of authoritarianism and populism in the global South has a long tradition, the scholarship on the new radical right took time to notice and encompass countries like Brazil and India as part of the same analytical phenomenon. The book *The Populist Radical Right, A Reader*, edited by Cas Mudde in 2017, is primarily regional because it focuses mainly on Europe but is perceived as

universal. The Bolsonaro phenomenon attracted global attention. However, the epistemological route of this process seems to be dominated by colonized forms of knowledge production that persist in Academia. Now, Brazil was incorporated in several projects on the new radical right as a case study from the South, and the same analytical tools are applied to it. Agreeing with Masood and Nisar (2020), we believe that this route should be turned upside down: some of the clues of the current global phenomenon arise precisely from the South's unfinished or hybrid modernity.

Although a vast body of literature has analysed the causes and the social conditions that led to the resurgence of populist rightists in southern countries, our understanding of the phenomenon remains narrow and fragmented because it lacks a framework that explores why several emerging democratic powers turned into—again—authoritarian politics. By focusing on southern experiences, we aim to recalibrate the lenses through which we understand the experience of colonized countries, expanding conceptual ranges and limits (more than denying them). The authors of this volume invert an analytical perspective to interrogate: What is *new* in the new right? (For example, what are the similarities and differences between Bolsonaro's or Duterte's authoritarian populism and the past dictatorship regimes?) What kind of lessons can the global North grasp from countries that have long been marked by expressions of extreme politics? We adopt the term *radical right* in the title of this book broadly to refer to a spectrum that encompasses political manifestations from the radical right to neofascism. These renewed forms of extremism and authoritarianism are combined with harsh neoliberal rationality amidst social precarity and manifested through new technologies that enhance—and mainstream—populism in the twenty-first century.

Towards the end of this book, the reader may conclude that the radical right is similar in North and South—and the main difference is eventually a matter of intensity and scale. In our view, it is precisely such intensity and scale that must be studied and contextualized within historical particularities. For example, Trump and Bolsonaro may express similar intolerable statements through the same social media channels, relying on identical dog-whistle tactics. However, the effects of equal hateful attitudes will be utterly different in countries that present uneven degrees of economic development and democratic consolidation of their institutions. Most scholars of the far-right exhaust the analysis of similarities among populist authoritarians, but it is equally important to pay more attention to the fact that a crusade against gender and sexual rights in the South will be much more visceral—and therefore harmful—than in the North. For these reasons, we believe that the contributions collected in this volume are unique to reflect on the causes and consequences of the radical right in southern countries.

On the pages to follow in this introduction, we compile key features that we consider central to account for the singularities of the South. We focus on (1) economic recession and political subjectivity; (2) the legacy of dictatorship

and strongmen, everyday police violence deriving from military ethos; (3) the nuances of nationalism in global South countries; and (4) religious, moral conservatism in non-secular democracies and their counterreactions.

Economic development and political subjectivity

Many scholars recognize the 2008 recession as one of the pivotal turning points in the emergence of the new right as a global phenomenon in the twenty-first century (for example, Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018; Kalb and Halmai, 2011; Mudde, 2019). The crisis did not inaugurate an era of impoverishment provoked by neoliberalism or invent authoritarian populism. Nevertheless, it certainly deepened these phenomena, constituting a window of opportunity to give voice to extremists who found a fertile ground to spread their ideology worldwide. Mouffe and Laclau's (2014; also Laclau 2005) influential analysis saw populism as means to reintroduce class conflict into the social fabric. From this perspective, the radical right opportunistically co-opted legitimate grievances and frustration of the working-class or impoverished sectors of populations through an anti-establishment narrative. Instead of radicalizing toward the left—which would be a logical reaction against corrupted political elites or the mainstream economic system—the ordinary voters revolted against the false promises of liberal democracy.

Paradoxically, the remedy against a global trend of neoliberal de-democratization—and its subsequent employment precariousness and discontentment—was to enhance the anti-democratic feeling and neoliberal rationality (Brown, 2018). The solution is to weaken the State and reinforce the role of individuals and the family in the reconstruction of the economy (Brown, 2018; Cooper, 2017). In this depoliticized context, the *politics of the enemy* becomes a norm, anchored on racism and moral conservatism that blame the vulnerable groups for the malaises. The year 2016 was paramount in these worldviews when British people voted for the Brexit, the US population voted for Donald Trump, and scholars evaluated the weight of the economy (hardship) and culture (prejudice) in the support for authoritarian populists (Fetzer, 2018; Smith and Hanley, 2018; Womick et al., 2019).

In this new context, a field of inquiry interrogates the political subjectivity of ordinary people who support the radical right. Among others, the reedition of Kimmel's (2018) *Angry White Man* is paradigmatic to define an ideal type of impoverished and enraged male voters who engage in what has been called "politics of resentment" (Bonikowski, 2017; Cramer, 2016). While resentment and the politics of the enemy, resolved around masculinity, is a global phenomenon observed from the UK to Brazil, a fundamental aspect that we must note from a southern perspective is to discern political and economic subjectivities in disparate contexts. The figure of an enraged white man is a crucial prototype for defining a pattern that recalls masculinity and racism in reactionary democracy (Mondon and Winter, 2020).

In this book, we do not let aside the overall argument around the recession, de-democratization, and reactionary subjectivity. Neoliberalism—the capture of the State by the financial logic that destroys welfare policies and expands itself into people's rationality—is a global trend, as well as the spread of extremist ideology. These facts are essential pillars to understanding the ground through which the radical right arises, but we hope to nuance this debate, paying attention to the existing complexity in differing contexts in countries that have experienced uneven development paths, which do not follow the same order of global North's steps. Several Euro-American hegemonic nations experienced certain phases of development, which cannot be replicated elsewhere because they are inherently linked to imperialism, wealth, and the grounds of liberal democracy. The problem is that the scholarly understanding of the rise of the radical right widely accepts—or even imposes—these steps as universal. This model assumes that a welfare state and an organized working class coexisted in post-World War II during processes of democratic consolidation. The deepening of neoliberalism and market rationality in the post-Thatcher-Reagan era would depoliticize constituencies, replacing "sociation by politics" with "sociation by consumption", emptying the political and democratic fabric (Streeck, 2012).

Obviously, these events are not absent in southern countries, but the order now is shuffled. We must bear in mind that, in the second half of the twentieth century, several countries were fighting for independence, facing civil wars or bloody dictatorships while capitalism continuously tried expanding markets, reaching minds and souls. Chile and India are exemplary cases where neoliberal and authoritarianism/far-right have long collaborated (Biebricher, 2020; Masood and Nisar, 2020). It is not wrong to affirm that deep democratization and de-democratization have occurred side-by-side in many nations. The same could be said about waves of economic growth, state shrinking, and neoliberalisation that have coincided with the expansion of welfare policies. Either social prosperity or hunger has coexisted with the rise of civil society and new forms of activism. It would be more accurate to say that citizens and consumers have arisen simultaneously than to assume that citizens have become consumers.

When the radical right constituencies' political subjectivity is portrayed in the literature, a decadent scenario of working-class frustration prevails, focusing on reactionary emotions, such as nostalgia, resentment, anger, and hate (see Pinheiro-Machado, Marins, Combinido, and Malini, this volume). However, as we argued elsewhere (Pinheiro-Machado and Vargas-Maia, 2017), nostalgic slogans like "make America great again" may not make sense in countries that have maintained around 50 per cent or more of their population in the informal economy and, therefore, a working-class identity has been mostly absent. If an idealized past of prosperity is a common feature in the fascist fantasies, an idealized future of prosperity is likely a more accurate idea to describe millions of people who were removed from poverty and encouraged to embody the individual ideal of entrepreneurship in emerging economies. While nostalgic feelings about military dictatorship persist in Latin America, the new populist right in

Brazil (although governed by the military) mobilizes individual and family aspirations towards the future, not rarely engaging the youth. In this way, what makes the emergence of the rise of the radical right so powerful and explosive in emerging economies from the global South is precisely this combination of a global trend of intensification of individualizing neoliberal and illiberal ideology with national manifestations of masses of workers' active (not reactive) emotions in contexts that lack the legacy of the warfare state and working-class identity.

Persistent authoritarianism and democratic backsliding

Studies regarding authoritarianism in the twenty-first century tend to be set against a recent background of democratic optimism, a scenario that seemed to indicate the dismantling of dictatorships in regions that were historically plagued by these regimes, accompanied by a weakening of anti-democratic parties and movements in established democracies (Bernhard and O'Neill, 2018). However, this sense of triumph did not last until the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century. Following the terrorist attacks of 2001, 2004, and 2005 (New York, Madrid, and London, respectively), as well as the economic crisis of 2008 (Castells 2018), a quick wave of attacks directed toward democratic institutions swept the world, granting space for right-wing populist parties ad movements to exert their appeal over fragilized populations.

In this context, the debates regarding the emergence and consolidation of a new radical right have coincided, as one might expect, with the discussions about democratic backsliding. In the global North, these seem to be co-constituting phenomena (Pappas, 2019; Przeworski, 2019; Runciman, 2018), predicated, as we have mentioned before, on the collapse of the welfare state, as well as the impoverishment and resentment of the working class. This argument, however, is lacking and insufficient when it comes to characterizing similar processes taking place in the global South, mostly because explanatory variables such as the demise of the welfare state are hardly found in this region of the globe—mainly because the welfare state itself has never properly taken roots in global South countries.

What we observe in the South is not necessarily a revival of authoritarian ideas and practices but actually the persistence and strengthening of these features. The legacy of authoritarian regimes in the global South is not only a recent heritage, with some of the democratization processes occurring in the late 1980s, as in the case of Brazil, but also an enduring feature of its political systems. To observe a persistent authoritarianism in global South countries is to recognize that most of this region went through a period of unconsolidated democratic rule, with the absence of effective state institutions such as impartial bureaucracies and police forces (Bellin, 2004; Bernhard and O'Neill, 2018).

This volume explores different access routes to explain the strengthening of fascist-like tendencies in global South countries. One crucial argument here that represents a clear cut from tendencies observed in the global North is the

history of civilian-military relations in global South countries. As Sanahuja, López Burian, and Vitelli explore in their article, this legacy imposes strong roots in the way governments are composed and the active participation of high-ranking armed forces officials in policy-making. Therefore, when dealing with the upsurge of anti-democratic movements in contemporary politics, it is necessary to differentiate the contexts in which these trends occur. For the Global South case, it means recognizing the constraints that these young democratic regimes still endure.

The nuances of nationalism for the radical right in the global South

The mainstream literature on the new right emphasizes ethnonationalism as one of the core elements of the radical right ideology, which provides new right movements with the central tenets of their political discourses (Bar-On, 2018; Minkenberg, 2000). According to this argument, an ethnically based conception of the nation grounds the radical right claim to societal homogeneity and national supremacy (Blank and Schmidt, 2003), which, in turn, instantiates some of their key mobilizing issues, such as the threats posed to cultural and national identity by the influx of immigrants, xenophobia, and racism, the centring of conspiracy theories around the presence of foreigners in the domestic territory (as well as the more common sense linkage between the presence of foreigners and problems of criminality and unemployment), as well as the disaggregating dangers of supporting multiculturalism.

Nonetheless, this framework for understanding the role of nationalism in new right movements through an emphasis on racial purity and supremacy is not necessarily a universalizable explanation. The myth of ethnically homogeneous nations finds more traction within the global North, especially in Europe, rather than in other regions of the globe. As several authors have pointed out, the pathway to nationhood is not always organic as ethnic conceptions of the nation may imply, and such a variety of paths result in different expressions of nationalism across the globe (Aminzade, 2013; Brubaker, 1992; Ferguson, 2006). Although both racial supremacy and patriarchy are two common features of the fascist-like radical right, an analysis of colonized countries should consider the more complex entanglement of race, gender, and class features and how these social markers of difference interact with each other in order to compose national narratives. Therefore, where more traditional renditions of nationalism may highlight dynamics of national belonging, with particular attention to those who are excluded from such dynamics (i.e., immigrants), nationalistic discourses in the global South emphasize cultural themes (such as religion) as well as a need for global recognition (Balta, 2021).

Moreso, nationalism, as an ideology, operates both at the domestic and international levels. Therefore, to better understand how nationalistic discoursed of the new right vary from the global North to the global South, besides considering

domestic variables (such as those listed before), it is essential to consider the positionality of nations within the international system. Countries situated in the global South face different sets of social, political, and economic challenges in the global arena, and therefore it is fair to expect the new right movements in global South countries to weaponize such issues in a different way than those observed in Europe or North America. This is especially relevant for issues regarding economic nationalism: nationalists in the global North seem to eagerly espouse protectionist measures, while those in the global South cannot afford isolationist propositions.

For example, in the cases of both India and Brazil, a religious subtext has flourished within the nationalistic discourse in these countries, supported by the strengthening of a particular mix of authoritarianism, conservatism, and religious fundamentalism. If in India we see a resurgence of Hindu nationalism (as Roy highlights in his article for this volume), in Brazil, we observe a consolidation of the neopentecostal rhetoric associated with an anti-corruption agenda. This explosive mix has managed to unite different segments of the Brazilian population around a promise for the nation's moral and material reconstruction. In this volume, we seek to consider how specific contexts shape and inform the varieties of nationalism observed in the global South during the first decades of the twenty-first century and, in turn, how new right movements in these countries appropriate, develop and weaponize such discourses.

Conservatism and its reactions

In 1999, Amartya Sen wrote a well-known article entitled "Democracy as a universal value". The self-explanatory title anticipates an argument that saw democracy as a global trend, placing India as an exemplary case of the biggest democratic country in the world. Two decades later, when Namenda Modi was already in power, Sen revisited some of his considerations and concluded that Indian politics had overlooked a commitment to secular democracy.[1] India is not an isolated case but part of a hybrid reality of democracies in the process of consolidation where religion has played a central role in politics, forming what Cowan (2021) has recently coined as "moral majorities". Fundamentalism has been the backbone of the national political agenda under Modi's and Bolsonaro's macro and micro agenda and political mobilization, interfering in all levels of everyday governmentality and policy-making.

A rampant moral paternal crusade that evades and corrodes politics is a contemporary phenomenon of the radical right in the global South, mobilizing religious leaderships and doctrines in new ways. In the Philippines, where Catholicism is a significant force, sexual rights are deeply hindered by the influence of the Vatican in politics. Although Duterte is in conflict with the Vatican, it is also known that the church values, anchored in anti-drugs moral discourse, benefitted him, constituting a core emblem of his administration. In the end, the relationship between the State and the church remains stable and robust (Batalla and

Baring, 2019; Cornelio and Lasco, 2020). Brazil, in its turn, has historically been a pivotal country in the exportation of the "Christian right", fomenting religious thinkers, leaders, and activists who influence the rest of the world (Cowan, 2021). At present, anti-gender campaigns centred around counteracting "gender ideology" in Brazil are a good example in which Christian fundamentalism is pervasive from Bolsonaro's speeches to social media propaganda to city-level schooling legislation (see Teixeira and Bulgarelli, this volume).

It is especially interesting when discussing issues of conservatism, reactionarism, and the religious influence in contemporary global South democracies, to highlight that both Brazil and India share the fact that while electoral rights were showing healthy democratic results in emerging economic phases, the influence of religious sectarianism and "conservatism from below" (Hatzkidi and Dullo, 2021) in politics has never diminished but kept operating backstage. In the twenty-first century, the reboot of Hindu nationalism has effectively operated a fundamental shift in India's political culture. This reorientation emphasizes religious belonging (in this case, affiliation to Hinduism) as a critical factor for participation in the country's political life (George, 2016). Since 2014, Modi has been weaponizing Hindu religious references as a way to oppose and marginalize the muslin population in India, framing them as "foreign conquerors" that became, throughout Indian history, internal enemies (see Roy in this volume).

All these facts are not new, let alone exclusive to the global South, as the Vatican or evangelical organizations, for example, have notoriously acted through transnational networks from the Philippines to Poland to the United States to attack gender and sexual rights (see Baden and Goetz, 1998; Cowan, 2016). In addition, the "cultural backlash" against liberal values is a phenomenon firmly anchored in consolidated democracies that now fosters cultural divides (Inglehart and Norris, 2016). The novelty, therefore, is how fundamentalist forces became mainstream and hegemonic in macro politics, mediatic discourse, and everyday life. Again, the issue of intensity is crucial to our argument: sectarian religious politics will find a more fertile ground to disintegrate democracy in countries when secularism is still an unfinished project. The consequences of cultural wars, and the interference of religion in politics in countries where democratic and civil rights are fragile, result in normalized forms of religious persecution and criminalization against civil society.

The strengthening of conservatism and religious fundamentalism, however irresistible they might seem at the beginning of the twenty-first century, is not a single or fatal movement in the global South. Instead, these reactionary forces are resisted by expressive waves of social movements and mass protests that emerged in the global South, especially in Latin America. In particular, feminist demonstrations in defense of sexual rights have been booming and achieving significant success in a traditionally regressive scenario (Htun, 2003). The decriminalization of abortion in Argentine (2020), followed by Mexico (2021) and Colombia (2022) are expressions of persistent mass mobilizations that have succeeded not only in their demands that directly clashes with core conservative

principles but also—and more importantly—in capturing youth's subjectivity and, therefore, revitalizing hope throughout the continent and worldwide.

A note on the book confection

Finally, we would like to add a note about producing knowledge on/from the global South. Several authors had to delay their submissions while editing this volume under a global pandemic because their beloved ones were dying without receiving proper medical care in countries like Brazil and India. This book was conceived amidst suffering, loss, and uncertainty that reflected the consequences of being governed by populist denialists in countries where the poor did not have a grave to be buried. An author, who had produced an original and brilliant piece on gender under Modi's administration, requested to withdraw the chapter because of the risk that it would pose to his/her family, considering the escalating political violence in India. After two years of intense work, this was a drastic attitude for an early-career student who was deeply involved in this publication. We would like to express our respect, gratitude and best wishes to this author.

The confection of the book is paradigmatic of what we are arguing here: the radical right's narratives and practices may be equally manifested worldwide, but their consequences are differently applied to bodies in less developed and less democratic parts of the world. This is not a novelty for researchers from the global South who have been violated in several ways. For example, they are harassed in the classroom and on social media, have their research visas denied, are investigated and arrested by national authorities, and, finally, are humiliated and bullied by far-right supporters. Such brutal human rights violations have been normalized as civil rights are ignored. This book reflects the malaise and tension of situated scholars who write on the rise of the global South as they are impacted by it.

The structure of the book

The various contributions to this book examine the phenomenon of the emergence and consolidation of different radical right movements in Global South countries in the twenty-first century, as well as future scenarios and current alternatives to this political movement. As such, they explore five key issues: 1) the development of fascist movements in (and from) the global South; 2) comparative case studies that seek to establish similarities and differences among the experiences in countries such as Brazil, India, the Philippines, and Uruguay; 3) the notion of an Online Populism; 4) the emergence and development of anti-rights movements; and finally 5) resistance initiatives that attempt to counteract the consolidation of radical right movements in the global South.

The first part of the book, dedicated to analyses of the expressions of Fascism in the global South, is composed of three different articles. In "Fascism: A view from the South", Bianchi and Bezerra de Melo conduct a rigorous analysis of

the literature tracing conceptual discussion regarding Fascism, presenting the tensions that a view from the South imposes on a concept of generic Fascism and emphasizing the importance of a closer analysis of this ideological movement's manifestations on capitalism's periphery. In the chapter "India's fascist democracy", Roy documents the key political and policy practices of Narendra Modi's rule in India to reflect on alternative formulations that have been deployed to describe the ascendance of the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party in the country. Finally, in "Left, right, left: Moving beyond the binary to think Fascism in Africa", van der Westhuizen examines the case of Fascism in Africa, urging us to move beyond ideological binarism in our consideration of authoritarianism in the Global South.

The second section of the book, dedicated to comparative case studies, encompasses three different texts that seek to identify similarities and differences in the experiences of new right-wing movements in the global South. The first text of this section, authored by Pinheiro-Machado, Martins, Combinido, and Malini, seeks to comprehend the rise of the extremists in the Global South from the perspective of emerging economies' singularities and their development contradictions, arguing that the understanding of the rise of the radical right should take into account the specific junctures and development contradictions of emerging economies from the global South, such as rapid economic growth, slight social mobility, and harsh labour precariousness. In their article, "Populist foreign policies in the global South: comparing the far-right identity-set between Brazil and India", Mongelli, Guimarães, Silva and Mello analyse how far-right populists design their foreign policy identity-set in the global South. In "The rise of the new far right in Latin America: crisis of globalization, authoritarian path dependence and civilian-military relations", Sanahuja, López Burian, and Vitelli highlight how Latin America's authoritarian legacy, as well as its experiences with military governments, condition and shape the new right in this region.

The third part of the book focuses on the development of Online Populisms, specifically exploring the cases of Duterte's and Modi's governments in the Philippines and India, respectively. In "Populism and media in Duterte's Philippines", Talamayan and Pertierra explain the national historical dynamics that have led to Duterte's success as an authoritarian populist in the digital age. The authors provide two examples of media's role in expanded forms of populism and authoritarianism in the twenty-first century: the closure of the leading television station ABS-CBN and the legal battles faced by news website Rappler and its founder journalist Maria Ressa. The second chapter in this section, "Political mobilization in an era of 'post-truth politics': disinformation and the Hindu right in India (1980s–2010s)", by Amogh Sharma, explores the elements that have enabled the radical right, especially the Hindu nationalist movement, to disproportionately benefit from media technology, and disinformation campaigns have been its ability (and determination) to deftly conceal the elaborate infrastructure through which it produces and distributes its propaganda.

The fourth section of the book explores anti-right movements, focusing on gender in Brazil. In "Gender and sexuality (still) in dispute: effects of the spread

of 'gender ideology' in Brazil", Teixiera and Bulgarelli present and explore the composition of the discourse and the political structure that articulates the anti-gender and education agendas in Brazil.

This volume's fifth and final section examines neoliberalism and projects that offer resistance against new right-wing movements. Roque, in "Denialism as government: trust and truth in a post-neoliberal era", advances two points: first, that denialism is a tool with which the far-right governs a crisis of trust that already existed; second, that neoliberal forms of government have nurtured this crisis of trust, that is, by the apolitical tones with which decisions have been disguised as choices derived from technical tools. In "Archives of neo-fascism: charting student historical debt in a Neoliberal University in South Africa", Kisubi Mbasalaki investigates the "Rhodes Must Fall" and the "Fees Must Fall" movements within the South-African student movement, analysing how these movements expose the collusion of a neoliberal university with (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism, and whether the neoliberal university can be decolonized. Last, Gago and Giorgi, in "Notes on the expressive forms of the new rights: a dispute over the subjectivity of the majorities", suggest that a dynamic between hyper-individual affirmation and discursive and affective intensification is what is combined in the forms of reactive transgression that populate the landscape of these new rights and is what differentiates them from previous forms of conservatism and even prior forms of Fascism.

Note

1 *New Yorker Magazine*, 06/10/2019. www.newyorker.com/news/the-new-yorker-interview/amartya-sens-hopes-and-fears-for-indian-democracy

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1

FASCISMS

A view from the South

Alvaro Bianchi and Demian Melo

Among scholars of Fascism, it is common to regret the uses that the concept has acquired in current political language and specialized academic contexts. Polysemy is typical of political concepts. There are probably as many definitions of Fascism as there are of socialism, liberalism, or conservatism. However, unlike the other categories, Fascism designates an ideology, a movement, or even a personality type, with which, after 1945, very few people would like to be publicly identified. What was originally the name of the political movement that first met on March 23, 1919, in Piazza San Sepolcro in Milano has become a prosecution category. For this reason, often in public debate, Fascism has become a catchphrase to attack one's opponent, whoever that may be. In 1944, even before Mussolini was executed by a group of partigiani (partisans) and Hitler committed suicide in his bunker, George Orwell wrote:

> It will be seen that, as used, the word "Fascism" is almost entirely meaningless. In conversation, of course, it is used even more wildly than in print. I have heard it applied to farmers, shopkeepers, Social Credit, corporal punishment, fox-hunting, bull-fighting, the 1922 Committee, the 1941 Committee, Kipling, Gandhi, Chiang Kai-Shek, homosexuality, Priestley's broadcasts, Youth Hostels, astrology, women, dogs and I do not know what else.
>
> *(Orwell, 1968: 113)*

It is reasonable, therefore, to ask oneself about the usefulness of such a concept. Despite the misuse and the polysemy inherent in political ideas, a growing community of researchers has considered that Fascism is not only a valid concept to describe certain political phenomena but may also be used to describe contemporary political movements. It is no exaggeration to say that the academic

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interest aroused by Fascism has never been greater. Indeed, the emergence of new authoritarian governments, some of which have similar features to interwar Fascism, has fueled interest in this subject. In the 1960s, Ernst Nolte could unpretentiously claim about Fascism that "it cannot be said to have real significance" and that, therefore, "the very subject of this study precludes any reference to events of the present-day" (Nolte, 1966: 18). Unfortunately, we can not feel so secure about it nowadays, and Fascism is emerging as a political issue again.

Political reasons are not the only motives that have fueled the new wave of studies. This trend has also been assisted by the discovery or simply by the use of archival sources, by a more serene and rigorous historical exploration, and by an internationalist turn that affected the object of research and broadened its research community. Fascism is no longer an object of study solely by Europeans, and its research is no longer restricted to the Italian and German cases. Researchers have identified fascist movements and ideas in the Global South before and after World War II. Particular attention has been paid to Latin American far-right organizations, which existed during the interwar period. Those movements not only were more numerous, but also had more evident ties to European fascisms.

The new studies on fascisms in the Global South have raised significant problems for previously consolidated interpretations of this phenomenon. These interpretations considered the German and Italian cases as ideal types with which exemplary definitions were constructed, enumerating more visible characteristics and creating a measure of Fascism to which non-European fascisms were rarely suited. Many stuck to these exemplary definitions who wanted to see in the fascisms of the Global South a mere copy of what took place in Europe, confiscating all originality from national political experiences.

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the diversity, originality, and particularity of fascisms in the Global South and, at the same time, to question some hegemonic definitions. The first two sections present the cultural and international turn of studies on Fascism, which allowed the consolidation of a concept of "generic fascism" from which a self-proclaimed consensus was established. The following two sections question this consensus and present the challenges that fascisms in the Global South, particularly Latin America, have brought to hegemonic interpretations. Finally, the last sections explain the relevance of the idea of transnational Fascism to understand the processes of the international circulation of ideas, resources, and activists among far-right organizations from all over the world, and the political and cultural translation of experiences in vastly different national contexts than the original ones.

The cultural turn

The revival of studies on Fascism has occurred since the late 1960s. Two researchers stood out and can be considered protagonists of this revival: the Italian Renzo De Felice and the German Ernst Nolte. De Felice, the author of a monumental biography of Benito Mussolini, introduced issues debated until

today, such as the consensus obtained by the fascist regime, and supported the thesis that it had a revolutionary character (cf. De Felice, 1965, 1966, 1974, 1990, 1995). Nolte, in turn, located the ideological origins of Fascism in the French context before the First World War, particularly in the Action Française (French Action) of Charles Maurras (see Nolte, 1966).

Their approaches were quite different. While De Felice strongly emphasized empirical research, which avoided even presenting a concept of Fascism, Nolte anchored his investigation in a metapolitical and strongly philosophical conception of Fascism. What these authors had in common was a tendency to study Fascism "empathetically," that is, to look at its culture, ideas, and ideology, reconstructing from primary documents its self-image. This trend continued in authors such as George Mosse (1966b, 1975, 1999) and Zeev Sternhell (1976), who emphasized the doctrines and ideas of fascisms, identifying their antecedents, as Nolte had done for France at the end of the nineteenth century. George L. Mosse's research consolidated the cultural turn that his precursors had initiated. In an article summarizing his preliminary investigations, Mosse defined Fascism as "an 'attitude toward life,' based upon a national mystique which might vary from nation to nation" (Mosse, 1999: 42, 1966b: 19).

Zeev Sternhell's (1976) research followed the trail opened by Nolte. For Sternhell, fascist ideology appeared before the fascist movement, combining socialist and conservative intellectual tendencies, the anti-materialist revisionism of Marxism proposed by Georges Sorel, an exponent of revolutionary unionism, and the anti-democratic nationalism that emerged in the 1890s, represented by Charles Maurras and the Action Française. The hypothesis that guided his research was provided by the definition of Fascism coined by Georges Valois, a former member of Action Française and founder, in 1925, of Le Faisceau: "Nationalism + socialism = fascism" (Sternhell, 1976: 321).

Maintaining an emphasis on ideology, Stanley G. Payne later incorporated other features into the definition in an influential typological description of Fascism from three sets of issues: its denials; ideologies and objectives; and style and organization (Payne, 1980: 7). In a later version of this outline, Payne defined Fascism as

> a form of revolutionary ultranationalism for national rebirth that is based on a primarily vitalist philosophy, is structured on extreme elitism, mass mobilization, and the Führerprinzip, positively values violence as end as well as means and tends to normatize war and/or the military virtues.
>
> *(Payne, 1996: 14)*[1]

The internationalist turn

Nolte saw Fascism as a historically circumscribed phenomenon, an era of Fascism that would have had its place in Europe (Nolte 1966: ch. 1). In a similar direction, Renzo de Felice considered that Fascism was "a European phenomenon

that developed within the limited time span of the two world wars" (De Felice, 1995: 254). In turn, the definition constructed by Sternhell, which conceived the existence of a fascist ideology practically finished before Fascism arose, compelled him to exclude Nazism itself and all movements that did not take place in Europe from the concept of Fascism (Sternhell, 1976: 317). Mosse also restricted his argument to what he called "European fascism" and, even more strictly, stated: "Germany and Italy will dominate the discussion" (Mosse, 1999: 1).

In the same sense, Payne limited the fascist phenomenon temporally and spatially. His definition was excessively detailed and made it challenging to include non-European ideological and political forms in the concept. According to this author, Fascism "was a historical phenomenon primarily limited to Europe during the era of the two world wars" (Payne, 1980: 176). Moreover, Emilio Gentile went even further and considered that "a definition of the fascist phenomenon, understood as a supranational phenomenon, should start from the definition of Italian fascism" (Gentile, 1996: 20). Among the authors of this generation, the exception seems to be Juan Linz. In addition to highlighting the political and organizational characteristics of the fascist movement, he coined a concept of Fascism that encompassed political phenomena that took place outside Europe. According to Linz:

> We define Fascism as a hypernationalist, often pan-nationalist, anti-parliamentary, anti-liberal, anti-communist, populist and therefore anti-proletarian, partly anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois, anti-clerical, or at least, non-clerical movement, with the aim of national social integration through a single party and corporative representation not always equally emphasized; with a distinctive style and rhetoric, it relied on activist cadres ready for violent action combined with electoral participation to gain power with totalitarian goals by a combination of legal and violent tactics.
> *(Linz, 1976: 12–13)*

Contesting the limits of the previous approaches, from the 1990s onwards, the idea of "generic fascism" gained strength, which would allow international and comparative approaches to the fascist phenomenon. One of the leading proponents of this idea was Roger Griffin, who criticized definitions like Linz's that highlighted what Fascism was opposed to, and sought to present a positive concept of Fascism, that is, a definition whose independent variables were not simply negative, like anti-liberalism and anti-communism. Griffin defined Fascism as "a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism" (Griffin, 1991: 26).

Griffin used the idea of palingenesis to highlight the strong presence of myths of rebirth and regeneration in the fascist political ideology, which expressed the repeated aspiration to create a new world, leaving behind a period of decline and decay (Griffin, 1991: 32–33). Populism was, according to this author, the characteristic of political forces whose legitimacy is based on "people's power." Finally,

ultranationalism referred to forms of nationalism that rejected liberal political institutions or the Enlightenment humanism they would derive (Griffin, 1991: 36–37).

A Fascism definition must at least define the interwar Italian and German cases. Griffin's concept is approved summa cum laude in this test. It also allowed the interpretation of fascist political phenomena such as Cornelio Codreanu's Garda de Fier (Iron Guard) in Romania; the British Union of Fascists, led by Sir Oswald Mosley in England; Lapuan liike (Lapua Movement), in Finland; and Le Fasciau (The Fasces) of Georges Valois and Parti Populaire Français (French Popular Party) of Jacques Doriot, in France. At the same time, the concept proved to be useful in distinguishing fascist movements such as the Movimento Nacional-Sindicalista (National Syndicalist Movement) of Francisco Rolão Preto in Portugal and the Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (Spanish Phalanx of the Councils of the National Syndicalist Offensive) of José António Primo de Rivera and Ramiro Ledesma, in Spain, from the authoritarian regimes led in those countries by António de Oliveira Salazar and Francisco Franco. According to Griffin, the ideology of the Franco and Salazar regimes was not ultranationalist and palingenetic; what predominated in both were authoritarian and reactionary political forms – parafascists – that would not assume a "revolutionary" shape as in Fascism (Griffin, 1991: 120–124).

Griffin's concept proves to be very robust when applied to European cases. However, it loses momentum when its object is the political movements of the Global South; it becomes excessively restrictive, despite the fact that this author opposes Payne's thesis and considers that "fascism is not intrinsically a European phenomenon" (Griffin, 1991: 147). In analyzing political processes in Latin America, Griffin seems to resort to ad hoc criteria to exclude political movements and regimes from the scope of Fascism. Thus, the Afirmación de una Nueva Argentina (Affirmation of a New Argentina), of Leopoldo Lugones, would not be fascist because it did not create a "paramilitary or mass movement necessary to live up to the palingenetic promises of its name." In contrast, the Acción Revolucionária Mexicanista – Camisas Douradas (Revolutionary Mexicanist Action – Gold Shirts) created paramilitary groups like the Nazi SA, "but lacked the palingenetic vision needed to rank as anything more than a counter-revolutionary and Anti-Semitic terrorist group" (Griffin, 1991: 149) and the Unión Nacional Sinarquista (National Synarchist Union), also from Mexico, despite asserting itself as a crusade against anarchists and conceiving of themselves as "the first stage in a heroic national rebirth," would not be fascist due to the "centrality of the Christian faith to its vision of the new order" (Griffin, 1991: 149). Thus, few movements that could be defined as fascists would remain, such as the Movimiento Nacional Socialista (National Socialist Movement) in Chile, and, most importantly, the Ação Integralista Brasileira (Brazilian Integralist Action) (Griffin, 1991: 150), precisely the two most similar to German Nazism and Italian Fascism, respectively.

However, when the object of study moves to fascist and similar movements after World War II, Griffin's criteria seem to become more flexible, identifying a large number of them, creating categories and subcategories to account for the variety – "Nostalgic Fascism/Neo-Nazism"; "Mimetic Fascism/Neo-Nazism"; and "Neo-fascism," which in turn is divided into "Revolutionary Nationalism," "Crypto-fascism," "Revisionism," and "Conservative Revolution" (Griffin, 1991: 161–169). This operation allows him to bring together political parties with electoral expression, groups of extra-parliamentary activists, think tanks, intellectuals, publishers, newspapers, magazines, blogs, and websites under the same umbrella, many of which have only a virtual existence. However, all of them were based on some form of "ultra-right palingenetic myth" (Griffin, 1991: 161).

Nevertheless, despite substantially expanding the concept of Neo-fascism, Griffin is reluctant to use it to describe certain political phenomena in the Global South, such as Islamic terrorism. According to Griffin, Fascism "remains a secular force and thus remains distinct from Islamist terrorism, which represents an extreme form of the politicization and secularization of a religion which can be traced back to the origins of Islam itself" (Griffin, 2018: 97–98). The fact, noted by Griffin himself, that influential German neo-Nazi leaders have recently converted to Islam would not invalidate the exclusionary character of Fascism and Islam. Where there is one, the other could not exist.

Breaking the consensus

A few years after publishing The Nature of Fascism, Griffin celebrated the influence of his approach and, in a preface to an anthology of primary and secondary sources on Fascism, affirmed the existence of a "consensus" in this field of studies (Griffin, 1998: 15; 2002). The alleged consensus would be expressed in the tendency to understand Fascism as a political ideology of the same complexity as other political traditions of modernity, such as liberalism, conservatism, and socialism "rather than as a special case defined primarily in terms of its negations (anti-liberalism, anti-socialism, etc.), organizational forms (paramilitary formations, leader cult, corporatism, etc.), or style (ritual politics, mass parades)" (Griffin, 2012: 6). Roger Eatwell (1996) had already observed the existence of this consensus, but criticisms would soon emerge that called this perspective into question.

Some criticisms are eminently theoretical and seek to refute the bases of support of the cultural turn. By emphasizing an "empathic" approach to Fascism and summarizing it as an ideology, culturalist historiography tended to reduce this political phenomenon to the self-image that it had constructed. The most pronounced case is that of Sternhell (1975: 321), since his view of Fascism, as seen, was based on the definition of the movement that the French fascist Georges Valois had coined. A concept of Fascism, however, could not simply reproduce uncritically the discourse it had about itself. On the other hand, as Robert Paxton

warned, the consensus adherents tended to consider fascist ideology as homogeneous, without considering the fluidity of the discursive conceptions of Fascism throughout its development process, from the initial phase as a movement to the advanced dynamics of fascist regimes (Paxton, 2005).

Authors such as Renton (1999), Traverso (2008), and Woodley (2010) objected, in a similar sense, that scholars aligned with the consensus approach tended to overestimate fascists' anti-liberalism and anti-conservatism, aligning these trends with anti-communism, as if they all had the same historical strength. The asymmetry between these denials is, however, significant for a better understanding of Fascism. Opposition to liberalism and conservatism did not prevent fascists from reaching agreements with these traditional political forces to come to power, while squadrism, prison, exile, and extermination were reserved for the left (Traverso, 2008: 310). In this sense, Renton pointed out that "fascist anti-conservatism was different from fascist anti-communism, and that when the two principles came into conflict, it was the latter that won out" (Renton, 1999: 25).

The emphasis on fascist ideology also led some interpreters in line with Griffin's consensus approach to highlight its anti-bourgeois character, strongly present in the early years of the Italian fascist and German Nazi movements. This excessive emphasis prevented these scholars from considering any kind of relationship between these phenomena and capitalism. In this sense, we can agree with the assessment that: "Presenting fascism as a coherent anti-bourgeois ideology obscures the way the fascist myth of unity and identity restructures subjective dispositions adequate to the reproduction of capitalist social relations" (Woodley, 2010: 8). This new criticism, strongly inspired by Marxism, tends, however, to reject simplistic definitions such as the one approved by the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1933, according to which "Fascism is the open, terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital" (ECCI, 1965: 309). According to Ernest Mandel, this was a characterization "which completely misses the independent, mass character of the fascist movement" (Mandel, 1971: 24).

The objections were directed at the treatment given to fascist ideology by the adherents of the consensus perspective. Emilio Gentile, for example, criticized the fact that supporters of "generic fascism" neglected the organizational dimensions – linked to the movement, the party, and its social and institutional base – regarding the set of new institutions created by Fascism after it came to power (Gentile, 2005: 197–202, 231–235). And Michael Mann objected that the consensus authors did not give due importance to the centrality of violence and paramilitarism, proposing an alternative approach that revalued studies on the social bases of fascist movements while incorporating some arguments from the cultural turn (Mann, 2004). Finally, critics of the consensus explanation have recently insisted on the transnational dynamics of Fascism, highlighting the importance that fascist movements and ideas in the Global South played in shaping the phenomenon (Finchelstein, 2010, 2017; Banaji, 2013; Zachariah, 2014, 2015). The latter emphasized the international circulation of ideas,

activists, and resources among different national organizations highlighting the particularities that Fascism could assume in different political and cultural contexts.

Fascism outside Europe: Latin America

Apart from the studies that took place predominantly in Europe and the United States, an important, but often neglected reflection on Fascism took place in Latin America. The appeal to the epithet of Fascism by opponents of regimes such as that of Getúlio Vargas in Brazil and Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina had also generated heated debates in the academic world.[2] The discussion on Fascism took on new shapes in South America during military dictatorships in the 1960s and 1970s. Several nationalist and Marxist intellectuals and many political organizations on the Latin American left considered these dictatorships variants of Fascism. Still, in the 1960s, Hélio Jaguaribe (1967) assumed that the Brazilian military dictatorship implanted with the 1964 coup was a form of "colonial-fascism," while Marxists, immensely impacted by the violence of the Chilean military regime after the 1973 coup, such as Theotônio dos Santos (1977), Agustín Cueva (1977) and René Zavaleta Mercado (1979) coined notions such as "dependent-fascism," "creole-fascism," or "authoritarian dictatorships with a fascist project" as more suitable terms for understanding South American political regimes. The words "colonial," "dependent," "creole," and the like sought to explain the particularity of these supposed fascisms in the structural conditions of South America, highlighting the underdeveloped or dependent character of their economies and the absence in the alleged Latin American fascist dictatorships of "a base of popular support, that is, to sustain itself in some mass movement" and a "nationalist type policy" (Cueva, 1977: 475 and 476; Zavaleta Mercado, 1979: 83ss). However, as pointed out by other researchers, such as Atílio Borón (1977), these readings neglected the very concept of Fascism and reduced the phenomenon to a "terrorist dictatorship," making such formulations very fragile (e.g., Cueva, 1977: 471 and Santos, 1977: 179).

In the specific context of Brazil, an essential chapter in the criticism of those who considered the dictatorship to be a fascist regime appeared with the publication of the book by the Marxist philosopher Leandro Konder, Introdução ao fascismo (Introduction to Fascism) (1977). By presenting a careful look at the particularities of Fascism concerning other expressions of political conservatism, resuming both contemporary analyses and academic historiography, this philosopher offered subsidies for the current debate in left-wing organizations, among which his own Brazilian Communist Party (PCB). Borón and Konder's argumentative procedures were similar. They involved a reconstruction of the concept of Fascism in the classics of Marxism, such as those by Clara Zetkin, Leon Trotsky, Antonio Gramsci, Palmiro Togliatti, and so on, to subsequently oppose the indiscriminate uses of the term Fascism among opponents of Latin American military dictatorships, demonstrating that in these uses all the main

features of Fascism as a political movement and as a specific regime of exception were neglected.

Although they raised essential points for more consistent use of Fascism, Borón and Konder leaned toward a Eurocentric and dated concept of Fascism, defining it as an experience corresponding to a specific time, at a certain stage of capitalist development in particular social formations. Different was the attitude of Liliana de Riz (1977), who criticized particular uses of the concept of Fascism, insisting on the need to "abandon simple deterministic hypotheses" and promote "comparative studies of a historical nature that allow the illumination of the concrete characteristics of our societies," that is, investigations that specify "the concrete conditions that the forms of political domination assume in relation to the trends of the accumulation process in these societies" (de Riz, 1977: 166–167).

The concept of authoritarianism, and not that of Fascism, proved to be more influential, at least as a starting point, among social scientists to understand South American military dictatorships. The analysis of Latin American authoritarianism was part of an international research agenda, driven by the decisive contribution of Juan Linz, and his concept of authoritarianism elaborated for the understanding of the Franco regime (Linz, 1964). Another crucial theoretical source was the work of the Greek Marxist political scientist Nicos Poulantzas, who, in the scope of his research on the capitalist state, presented in his book *Fascisme et dictature* (*Fascism and Dictatorship*) (1970) a contribution to the debate on the nature of regimes of exception, becoming an essential reference among Latin American Marxists. Latin American authors such as O'Donnell (1973), Cardoso (1975), Trindade (1983), and Tzeiman (2019) followed these leads and produced a literature of great analytical density.

However, despite some overly broad and inappropriate uses of the concept, the idea that Latin America could not have witnessed fascist phenomena is outdated today. A new emphasis on the study of fascist movements and ideas, not just political regimes, allowed for a better understanding of fascisms in the Global South. Here, it is worth highlighting the role of Latin American social scientists who produced innovative research in the same context in which studies on Fascism gained new impetus internationally in the 1970s. This is the case of Hélgio Trindade's thesis in political science on Brazilian Integralist Action (Trindade, 1971, 1979), incorporated into international literature by Juan Linz (1976). Even so, despite strong historical evidence and new research, Alistair Hennessy went so far as to categorically affirm the impossibility of Latin American Fascism (in an apparent confusion between fascist regimes and movements), concluding that the structural conditions of the region made the solution for their challenges to be translated into populism (Hennessy, 1976). In his influential *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (1980), Payne reiterated this same assessment of Hennessy.

In the early 1990s, researchers gathered at the International Political Science Congress (IPSA) in Buenos Aires organized a global project interested in answering the question: Was there Fascism outside Europe? The result was published at the beginning of the twenty-first century in the volume Fascism

outside Europe (Larsen, 2001), in which it is possible to observe some advances and problems in studies on Fascism in the countries of the Global South. In a long concluding chapter, Larsen (2001: 705–824) established that countries that had already experienced levels of political liberalization (but were still in the process of modernization) were more fruitful terrains for Fascism, while already modernized countries were immune. Larsen's conclusions seem to reproduce aspects of modernization theory that had already been questioned by Latin American theories of dependency in the late 1970s and early 1980s, demonstrating the difficulty of establishing an effective dialogue between research conducted in Europe and that which occurs in the Global South.

Despite collecting the contribution of scholars on the Brazilian (Trindade, 2001) and Chilean (Sznajder, 2001) cases of Fascism, the absence of Asian cases, mainly India, is noteworthy in the volume, as well as the persistence of very outdated theses, such as the affirmation of the supposed fascist nature of Peronism (Spektorowski, 2001). Reflecting a more pronounced turn in studies on Fascism in the Global South and the influence of the post-colonial approach, years later, a scholar of the phenomenon in India would also observe that the compilation organized by Larsen remained in the Eurocentric confines expressed in the notion of diffusionism (Zachariah, 2014: 87). Issues arise when one interprets fascisms outside Europe as a mere "import" of an Italian or a German political phenomenon. The particular forms that Fascism took in the Global South, as well as the agency of social subjects that in various latitudes of the planet gave rise to fascist movements with varied roots in social formations with different degrees of liberalization and modernization, are neglected in such perspective.

Despite these difficulties, since the 1970s, and especially in the new century, monographic studies have greatly expanded our knowledge of Latin American fascisms. This is the case of research on Brazilian Integralist Action (Bertonha, 2000, 2014; Calil, 2001, 2010; Gonçalves, 2017a, 2017b; Caldeira Neto & Gonçalves, 2020); investigations into the National Socialist Movement in Chile, known as nacismo (Potashnik, 1974; Sznajder, 1993, 2001; Etchepare & Stewart, 1995; Klein, 2001, 2004a, 2004b); Peruvian Fascism (Ciccarelli, 1990; Morales, 2006); the Mexican examples, Meyer (1979), Gojman de Backal (1988), Hernández García de León (2004) and Losfeld (2015); the Colombian case (Arias Trujillo, 2007); the Paraguayan example, Seiferheld (2016); fragmented Argentine Fascism (Finchelstein, 2002, 2010); comparative studies on the region (Deutsch, 1999; Bertonha & Roggero, 2013; Savarino, 2009; Trindade, 2004); in addition to research on the activity of European fascists in Latin American countries (Bertagna, 2007; Bertonha, 2001, 2017; Biermann Stolle, 2001; Cassigoli, 2013; Gertz, 1987; Newton, 1992; Savarino, 2010; Seiferheld, 2016;). These studies posed essential problems that remain unresolved within the scope of Eurocentric approaches. We will highlight three of these problems: 1) the relationship of fascist movements with non-secular or even anti-secular phenomena such as Catholicism; 2) the relationship between fascist movements and political

and economic liberalism; 3) and the relationship between fascist movements and imperialism.

One of the problems faced by researchers of Fascism in the Global South stems from the fact that the European approaches that constitute the supposed consensus have insisted that the secularization of politics in the cultural environment was a decisive variable in the effectiveness of such a phenomenon. Griffin himself, even admitting the existence of fascist movements outside the European continent, stated that "where traditional religious culture has substantially resisted Westernization … could not engender fascism because there was no basis for the historical consciousness, the populist ultra-nationalism or the phoenix myth which fascism presupposes," and thus discarded political experiences from regions such as the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, Central and Far East Asia and Indonesia (Griffin, 1991: 157).

In this approach, Latin American political phenomena are no longer defined as fascists. A scholar of Argentine Fascism and one of the leading proponents of the transnational approach, Finchelstein noted that "Fascism crossed the Atlantic and adopted extreme clerical-fascist dimensions that were not as prevalent in Europe" (Finchelstein, 2017: 61). Also, according to this author, "In what eventually would become India and Pakistan, fascism adopted Hindu or Muslim undertones, while in Argentina, fascists put forward 'Christian fascism'" (Finchelstein, 2017: 62). In a clear process of cultural circulation, Finchelstein observed how leaders of the Spanish Phalange – for example – were inspired by the centrality of Catholicism present among Argentine fascists (Finchelstein, 2017: 63–64).

Some scholars on European fascisms had already suggested the hypothesis of a "Catholic-fascism" as a way of defining a current that was formed from the coincidence between the proposition of corporatism present in the social doctrine of the Church and Fascism (e.g., Collotti, 1989: 40). However, this, which in Europe seems to be the exception, has become almost the rule in Latin America. It should be noted, for example, that the largest fascist movement in Latin America, Brazilian Integralism, had in the Catholic milieu one of its primary recruitment environments, and its chief leader, Plínio Salgado, sought to reinvent his past by rebuilding himself as a Catholic thinker after the World War II (Calil, 2001, 2010; Caldeira Neto & Gonçalves, 2020; Gonçalves, 2014). It was not a unique case. In Peru, the black shirts of local Fascism saw their project as "holy crusades" (Morales, 2006).

It is worth highlighting here the already mentioned case of the National Synarchist Union, which mobilized half a million activists in a Catholic, anti-communist, and, mainly, anti-anarchist mass movement in Mexico with important implantation in the rural environment. After Brazilian Integralism, it was the largest Latin American movement of the far-right during the interwar period. Some authors like Jean Meyer evaluated that, despite presenting external signs of Fascism, synarchism did not resort to the systematic use of violence, nor did it seek to seize power in any way, thus lacking some of the fundamental

elements of Fascism's phenomenology (Meyer, 1979). Furthermore, the closer relationship with Catholicism led Payne, for example, to frame synarchism as an example of the far-right (Payne, 1980: 16), while Griffin claimed:

> However the centrality of the Christian faith to its vision of the new order classifies it as a radical form of political Catholicism rather than fascism, while the absence of a para-military dimension condemned it in any case to fade into an ineffectual right-wing pressure group, eventually superseded by the conservative Acción Nacional.
>
> *(Griffin, 1991: 193–194)*

As we have already pointed out, the transnational approach considers that the relationship of these movements with religious traditions does not prevent their framing as fascist movements, yet many scholars still reproduce Meyer's argument (Hernández García de León, 2004; Martínez Villegas, 2013; Savarino, 2009; Trindade, 2004: 50–51). However, it is already possible to observe that Meyer's thesis has been challenged by studies that demonstrate important episodes of brutal violence by the Mexican synarchists and transnational articulation with fascists in Europe and the United States. Contributing to this reevaluation, Zermeño and Aguilar (1988) considered Meyer's work to be a specimen of "official history" of synarchism, and more recently, Losfeld (2015) also pointed out Meyer's embarrassing sympathy for synarchism, which, according to him, explains the comparison that this author made between the Mexican movement and Gandhism in India, or, even worse, having considered it a kind of protoform of Christian democracy. Losfeld finds the particular current of Salvador Abascal as fascist (Losfeld, 2015: 158). He was the creator and leader of the movement until 1941, when the attack on Pearl Harbor led to a moderation of synarchism and a leadership change. In dialogue with Gojman De Backal's (2000) research on anti-Semitism in Mexico, Losfeld pointed to the transnational articulation of synarchism with fascists in the United States, in particular with the circle of Father Charles Coughlin. Evidently, as part of a reaction to the government of Lázaro Cárdenas – who had sympathized with the Spanish Republic against the coup of General Francisco Franco, supported by fascist powers – the transnational articulation of fascisms was a component of the formation of the National Synarchist Union (Losfeld, 2015: 157). In any case, the intervention of this author reopens the debate (or at least questions a certain consensus) and contributes to a reassessment of old certainties about what may or may not be classified as Fascism in Latin America.

The second problem that is highlighted here concerns the anti-liberal character of Fascism, emphasized by the self-proclaimed consensus. The warning that some Marxists made becomes even more pertinent since fascisms have acquired a much more markedly anti-communist, anti-socialist, and anti-anarchist character in the Global South. In a way, the authors who saw Latin American dictatorships as forms of dependent Fascism had already realized that in this continent, "fascist

ideology was installed in the combined power and even subordinated to conservative forces with liberal-authoritarian nuances" (Santos, 1977: 174). This combination was not, however, exclusive to military dictatorships. The very development of liberal thought in colonial-slave-holding or dependent contexts has led it to assume unequal contours outside Europe and to be frequently combined with conservative, authoritarian, and even fascist ideas. Furthermore, the institutions that gave rise to these ideas were also often amalgamated through anti-democratic political devices.

It is this unequal and combined character of liberalism in the Global South which allowed the Brazilian Integralist Action, for example, to maintain an ambiguous relationship with it before World War II and to have received the support of liberal oppositionists to the uprising it promoted in 1938 against the government of Getúlio Vargas (Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto, 2020: 61–66). Later, Plínio Salgado sought to reconcile Integralist ideology with aspects of liberal thought and defended a "Christian concept of democracy," which would allow for granting "all freedoms to citizens," except those who would use these freedoms against the "fundamental principles" of Christianity (Calil, 2016). After the war, the Popular Representation Party (PRP), founded in 1945 by remnants of the Integralist movement, made repeated democratic professions of faith while promoting electoral alliances with liberal and conservative parties, supporting the presidential candidacies of General Eurico Gaspar Dutra and Brigadier Eduardo Gomes, and integrating national, state, and municipal governments headed by other parties. Apart from the communist and socialist parties, the PRP promoted, in its first years of existence, alliances with all existing Brazilian parties (Calil, 2010: 61; Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto, 2020: 82–83).

In the field of economic thought, this ambiguity also manifested itself. Hélgio Trindade had already stated in his classic study on integralism that the movement's position in relation to the "capitalist system presented a fundamental ambiguity" (Trindade, 1979: 234). While the texts of the leading integralist theorists presented strong anti-capitalist rhetoric, "the economic organization proposed by the ideology does not question the principles of the system" (Trindade, 1979). Neither the principle of private ownership nor the appropriation of profit was questioned. This ambiguity would become even more pronounced in the post-war period when the corporatist ideology that had marked the movement in its early years lost strength. In the 1950s, Plínio Salgado and the PRP integralists campaigned against "state interventionism," expressed their opposition to the creation of a state-owned oil company, and even quoted and reproduced Friedrich Hayek's arguments in defense of the free market (Calil, 2011).

Finally, a third problem concerns the relationship between fascist movements in the Global South and imperialism. In Eurocentric approaches, nationalism is a central component of fascist ideology. Latin American fascisms, however, pose some critical difficulties for this thesis. The idea of dependent Fascism advanced by Theotônio dos Santos warned about these problems. Indeed, it is possible to find in Latin American fascisms a criticism of American imperialism, combined

with denunciations of "Jewish imperialism," as a rule, identified with "Soviet imperialism." This is quite evident in the discourse of the Brazilian Integralist Action, although this movement had, at the same time, defended the role of German imperialism (opportunely excluded in the definitions of imperialism in the Integralist discourse) (Rago Filho, 1989). Plínio Salgado, during his exile in Portugal, came to work at the beginning of the global conflagration as a pro-Axis agent (Bertonha, 2018; Caldeira Neto & Gonçalves, 2020: 82–85). Nevertheless, there are also cases where these fascisms established political relations with European fascist movements and regimes and, at the same time, with political forces that defended American imperialism.

This is the case, for example, of the Gold Shirts, which the members of the Revolutionary Mexicanist Action (ARM) came to be known, an anti-communist and extremely anti-Semitic organization, led from 1933 to 1940 by Nícolas Rodrigues and significantly influenced by Nazism, including having formal relations with the Third Reich (cf. Gojman de Backal, 1988, 1995, 2000). One of the most common practices of the Gold Shirts was the violent attack on workers' movements and xenophobic campaigns for the expulsion of Jews from Mexico. Trained in opposition to the project of President Lázaro Cárdenas, the Gold Shirts had to bear the government expulsion of Rodriguéz himself in August 1936, giving rise to a new phase of the movement. From exile in Texas in the United States, the head of the Gold Shirts promoted significant articulations with fascist movements in the United States, such as the Silver Shirts (Silver Battalion) of Henry Allen and in England with the British Union of Fascists led by Oswald Mosley. It also maintained relations with oil capitalists in the United States, who financed ARM in sabotage operations during the nationalization of the petroleum industry carried out by the Cárdenas government.[3] Although it had less of an impact than synarchism, especially in terms of recruitment capacity, the Gold Shirts were relevant participants in the Mexican political process, articulating with the leaders of the opposition to Cárdenas, particularly with General Saturnino Cedillo, and were an essential force in interwar politics.

Cases like these in Brazil and Mexico, to which we could add others, allow us to think about the existence of fascist movements on the periphery of capitalism that combine a highly xenophobic nationalist discourse with political activity aligned with the interests of international capitalism or foreign powers. This often required a re-elaboration of discourse and important lexical modulations using expressions such as cosmopolitanism, plutocracy, and international capitalism, which often contained a strongly anti-Semitic connotation and designated the main enemies.

Transnational Fascism

As we noted, in the new century, studies of fascist movements outside Europe advanced from a research agenda that invested in the extra-European circulation of Italian, German and Spanish fascisms (especially among communities of

descendants in the Americas), but also in the translations that Fascism received in different national contexts, giving rise to original political movements. Scholars like Finchelstein (2010, 2017) and Zachariah (2014, 2015) are committed to breaking with methodological nationalism and valuing the dialectic between a global phenomenon and its national particularities. As Finchelstein wrote: "Understanding the Italian case is central to the general understanding of fascism, but fascism as a term and a reality refers to a transnational network of shared ideological subjectivities" (2010: 27).

It is worth noting that the understanding of Fascism as a transnational phenomenon does not imply the application of a "European category" to a different context, as in this approach the very European view of the phenomenon is being questioned. This argument is based on an empirical observation: countries such as China, India, South Africa, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil have seen their streets filled with parades by fascist militias, and even without reaching power, some of these movements have come to play a relevant role in the political dynamics of their countries. Furthermore, as transnational historians note, a particular repertoire of fascist ideas circulated among such movements, at the same time as they translated these ideas into their local cultures, producing new symbolic repertoires, markedly national ideologies, and very different political practices than in Europe.

Complementarily, fascist ideas in different countries around the globe were present in various movements, parties, and governments identified with the right or far-right, especially in the 1930s. In that decade, the influence of these ideas on local political elites meant that contemporaries mistakenly considered Perón's regime in Argentina and that of Vargas in Brazil as "fascists." However, despite the exaggerations, it is not possible to deny that ideas from the fascist repertoire were present in such experiences. Furthermore, although so-called corporatism was not exclusively a fascist proposal and since the end of the nineteenth century it had been promoted by the Catholic Church as a third way between socialism and liberal capitalism (Costa Pinto, 2017: 4), it is undeniable that Italian Fascism was an essential propagandist of this way of regulating the social conflict in capitalist societies, influencing corporate dictatorships such as those of Dollfuss in Austria, Salazar in Portugal and Vargas in Brazil.

It would be possible to include in this perspective those ideas that, in the opposite direction, derived from the traumatic experiences of the Global South and influenced Fascism, such as the themes linked to imperialism and European neocolonialism and its ideological corollaries – social Darwinism, racism, eugenics, Orientalism, and so on – that provided an essential part of the raw material of the fascist repertoire. This circulation of ideas in the counter-current had already been pointed out by Aimé Césaire in his famous Discours sur le colonialisme (Discourse on Colonialism) (1955) when he observed that the violence of Europeans against colonial peoples had been applied by fascists against Europeans themselves, an idea also present in Frantz Fanon, who a few years later asked: "But at the level of the individual and human rights what is fascism but

colonialism at the very heart of traditionally colonialist countries?" (Fanon, 2004 [1961]): 48) In this sense, it is worth noting the renewed interest in such an issue in the last decade, the result of the elaboration of an epistemological approach that seeks to consider the debate on Fascism from the perspective of the Global South (Salvati, 2016).

Finally, and not least, the most successful fascisms themselves – in Italy and Germany – also sought internationalization processes, even though the proposal for a Fascist International failed. This did not prevent them from promoting the international circulation of their ideas, encouraging and promoting related organizations and political movements. Nevertheless, the circulation of these ideas cannot be understood without considering the process of their cultural translation in other countries and, in particular, in the Global South. Even the actions of Fasci all'Estero (Fascists Abroad) and Auslandsorganisation (Foreign Organization) had to deal in Latin America with people who had immigrated several decades before and were already part of a culture quite different from that of the original, especially in large urban centers. This is not a simple process of cultural diffusion. Local agents were active characters in this process, combining these ideas with regional political traditions and producing original ideological and political configurations.

Conclusion

Studies in the Global South on Fascism must be attentive to the ethnocentric trends that are manifested in the so-called consensus approach. This perspective overemphasizes certain ideological aspects of European movements, like anti-liberalism and secularism, and as a consequence coins a restrictive definition of Fascism. A critical and cautious attitude toward concepts of generic Fascism can contribute to a richer understanding of local political phenomena, highlighting their diversity and originality. A transnational perspective, strongly anchored in a methodological internationalism, while protecting against the dangers of ethnocentrism, can also enrich the understanding of Europe's historical fascisms, be it by reconstructing the movements of ideas, intellectuals, and activists that went from the South to the North or by identifying original configurations that could illuminate contradictory aspects of European fascisms.

A transnational approach would make it possible to understand in a more nuanced way the relations between Fascism and secularism, liberalism, and imperialism. As we discussed above, Latin American political phenomena are interconnected to official religions, liberal political and economic institutions and ideas, and foreign powers that do not fit the announced consensus. Note that anti-secularism and anti-liberalism pointed in opposite directions in Europe. While secularism could be a typically modern movement, anti-liberalism would embody a political vocation in the opposite direction. From these opposing tendencies, an endless debate arises about the modernist or traditionalist character of Fascism. The reconciliation of Latin American fascisms with Catholicism,

with a strongly authoritarian liberalism and often with imperialism gives rise to dependent, anti-secular fascisms in favor of restricted liberalism. This historical experience of political and cultural hybridity may illuminate the understanding of contemporary political phenomena, such as the convergence between religious fundamentalists and authoritarian and ultranationalist politicians or the links between fascist movements in the Global North and South. However, it could also contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the ambiguous relations that historical Fascism and Nazism maintained with the churches, with liberalism, and with the different competing imperialisms. For researchers in the Global South, more important than finding a "minimum fascist," as hegemonic theories insisted, is the empirical research of concrete political processes, highlighting their multiple and contradictory forms, and the relationships between these diverse political processes. Contrary to what has been believed for a long time, these processes cannot be studied by restricting them to national political realities. Fascism, since its origins, was an international, ultranationalist movement, and it remains one. Revealing the transnational character of the fascist movement does not imply dissolving all national experiences in a European model. On the contrary, it implies dissolving all models into multiple and interconnected national experiences.

Notes

1 As we will see below, this new definition is strongly influenced by the studies of Griffin (1991), in particular the idea of fascism as "the form of revolutionary ultranationalism for national rebirth."
2 In the fifth chapter of his famous *Political Man*, S. M. Lipset characterized Peronism as "left-wing fascism" (Lipset, 1960), due to its relationship with the working class. However, the Latin American social sciences would look to the concept of populism as the best explanatory key for Peronism and similar phenomena in the region (e.g. Germani, 1978; Ianni, 1975).
3 What allowed this contradictory relationship was the predominance of isolationist positions regarding the European conflict between the great American capitalists, some of whom, like Henry Ford, were openly sympathetic to the Third Reich.

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2

INDIA'S FASCIST DEMOCRACY

Indrajit Roy

Introduction

Soon after his election as India's 14th Prime Minister in May 2014, Narendra Modi took the unprecedented step of celebrating his victory on the banks of the River Ganga in the holy town of Varanasi. Of course, Varanasi was the parliamentary constituency that elected him, so it was to be expected that he would thank his voters. However, the spectacle of the Prime Minister, accompanied by senior colleagues who would go on to assume key cabinet portfolios, unapologetically flaunting his Hindu nationalist credentials was a clear break with the past. To be sure, India's heads of government – even when personally agnostic – frequented places of worship on key occasions and regularly greeted the country on religious occasions but the political association with religion as an *inaugural act* was rare. A few weeks further, addressing India's parliament for the first time as Prime Minister, Modi referred to "1200 years of servitude" that Indians had suffered, making a not-so-subtle reference to the presence of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent and associated accounts of conquest, plunder, and domination by invaders of the Islamic faith.

Modi's words and deeds within the first month of his election as Prime Minister set the stage for a fundamental reconfiguration of politics in India. As a long-term activist of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Modi is of course committed to his party's electoral dominance in the country. Under Modi, the BJP secured 281 of 543 seats in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of India's parliament. Together with its coalition partners, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) enjoyed a comfortable majority in the Lok Sabha. Over the next five years, the NDA extended its electoral domination over India's States, thereby obtaining key leverage over not only the formulation of policy but also implementation. In 2019, Modi was re-elected Prime Minister with an even more

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stupendous majority. The BJP increased its seat share in the Lok Sabha: with 303 legislators, the NDA now enjoys a crushing majority in that body.

In this chapter, I first document the key political and policy practices of Narendra Modi's rule in India. In the second section, I reflect on alternative formulations that have been deployed to describe the ascendance of the right-wing BJP in India. While each of the prevailing approaches offers useful insights, I advance and defend the conception of "fascist democracy" (Roy, 2020) to pinpoint attention to the ways in which India under Modi has entwined fascism with democracy to not merely consolidate its hold over Indian politics but to instigate a fundamental reorientation of political culture in India. In the third section, I situate the emergence of India's fascist democracy in its ideational context: the dynamic interplay between the ideas of social justice, Hindu nationalism, and economic liberalisation. The fascist strands of Indian democracy may be analysed as a reaction to the first ideational theme, a consolidation of the second and in ambivalent relation with the third. I find it analytically useful to deploy fascism as an adjective rather than a verb or a noun: as Berezin (2019) notes, this grammatical shift nudges us towards a methodological direction that encourages social analysts to direct attention to institutional contexts in which constellations of features typically associated with fascism arise in different historical moments.

Modi in power

Contrary to expectations that Modi's ascendance would usher in a period of stability and development, the BJP lurched from one crisis to another during his first term in office. Much of his and ministers' efforts were spent campaigning in one State after another to achieve electoral victory. Early in 2016, less than two years into office, the BJP was accused of stirring up "war hysteria" ahead of 2017's elections in key States. The government recently announced that it had attacked terrorists based in Pakistan to avenge the murder of Indian soldiers in the border State of Jammu and Kashmir. While functionaries of India's ruling BJP gloated, several opposition politicians questioned the truth of the government's claims. Nationalist passions were whipped up again on the eve of the 2019 elections. Terror attacks on military personnel in Jammu and Kashmir killed 40 soldiers during February 2019. India retaliated through much-publicised attacks on alleged terror camps in Pakistan-controlled territory of Balakot, killing 300 terrorists affiliated with the dreaded Jaish e-Mohammed group. Modi's approval ratings soared by as much as 7 per cent (Times of India, 2019)[1] after these events, suggesting that nationalist fervour may have contributed to his emphatic win in the subsequent election held through April and May.[2]

The BJP's rule witnessed the proliferation of "cow protection vigilantes" across the north and west of the country. Various people accused of slaughtering bovines or eating beef were harassed, humiliated, beaten and even killed since 2015. Most of the victims were from Muslim or Dalit communities, both of which depend on cows for their livelihood and sometimes food. A horrifying

episode of lynching was unveiled in September 2015 when Mohammed Akhlaq, a Muslim man in Dadri village of western Uttar Pradesh, was lynched on the suspicion that he had stored beef in his fridge (Indian Express, 2015). The allegations were later found to be false, as the meat stored in the fridge was not beef but goat: the attackers were taken into custody not because they killed Akhlaq but because they killed him for the wrong reason. Another ghastly episode emerged in July 2016, when seven Dalit labourers who were carrying cattle carcasses in the village of Una were rounded up by cow protection vigilantes, stripped, dragged through the streets, and thrashed with iron rods. In a telling measure of the impunity they enjoy, some of the vigilantes filmed the entire episode and uploaded it on social media as a warning to all those who slaughter cows and eat their meat.

Complementing such vigilantism were BJP-affiliated student organisations, such as the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), who took the battle to India's university campuses. In 2015, high-caste ABVP students at the University of Hyderabad complained about a Dalit student at the university, Rohith Vemula, who regularly organised readings and seminars on social justice and human rights. Vemula was involved in a campus beef festival and funeral prayers for a terrorist convicted of the Bombay blasts of 1993. His activities got him suspended from the university along with three other Dalit students, and he eventually killed himself in January 2016.

Consolidating power

Since its re-election in May 2019, the BJP under Modi has sought to make good on several key promises it has made to constituents over the last three decades. These promises resonate with views of Indian society and polity held dear by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, 2012), which strives to organise society in accordance with and ensure the protection of the Hindu Dharma, or way of life. The RSS, the BJP's parent body, was set up in 1925. In 2019, the BJP claimed to have 85,000 *shakhas* or cells where members are trained in physical combat and RSS ideology (on shakhas see Anderson and Damle, 2018; Kanungo, 2002; Noorani, 2019), and over 15 formal affiliates, including the ABVP, and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), which are the largest student and workers' unions in India, respectively. While the RSS has traditionally drawn on "upper-caste" Hindus, motivated not just by anti-Muslim hate as fear of defiance by the "lower-castes" (Basu et al., 1993) in recent years, it has expanded its outreach among these latter groups.

In August 2019, barely three months after returning to power on the back of a landslide electoral win, Modi's government abolished Article 370 of the Indian constitution, which guaranteed a semi-autonomous status for the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir. Politicians across the state, including supporters of its accession to India, were placed under house arrest, the internet was suspended and people were placed under a lockdown that continues even as this goes to

print. Even as critics challenged the new law as unconstitutional, the nationalist overtones of the move promised to unite the country behind a single idea of India where there is no special dispensation for different areas. This found support not only from the BJP's allies but also political parties that had bitterly opposed the BJP during the 2019 elections.

The BJP government further burnished its credentials of uniformist nationalism in September 2019 when it successfully spearheaded the abolition of the triple *talaq*, which had hitherto permitted Muslim men to divorce their wives through mere verbal instruction. Long a subject of contention, not least by Muslim women themselves, the practice was retained under successive postcolonial governments wary of being seen as interfering in Islamic religious customs. The bill was passed without much opposition in parliament. While critics pointed to the Hindu nationalist undertones that accompanied official narratives, supporters (again, not all of whom may have been BJP voters) hailed the move as a step towards the attainment of uniform civil code across India.

In November 2019, the BJP's Hindu nationalist agenda received a major fillip when India's Supreme Court proclaimed in their favour while announcing a verdict on the 150-year-old dispute in the northern town of Ayodhya. The dispute was over a tract of land claimed as the birth-place of Rama, hero and deity to many Hindus. A mosque had been built on that land by a Mughal general back in 1528: Hindu nationalist mobs exhorted by BJP leaders had pulled the mosque down in 1992. The Hindus claimed the tract of land as theirs and proposed to build a grand temple to honour Rama, while the Muslims claimed it as theirs so they could rebuild the demolished mosque. Through its ruling, the Court effectively legalised mob vandalism against the mosque, while handing over a carte blanche to the Hindus. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court responsible for the verdict was subsequently rewarded by being nominated as a BJP nominee to India's upper house of parliament.

Riding on a wave of successful legislation with little resistance in parliament, the Modi government legislated the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) the following month (December 2019). Under the provisions of the Act, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Christians, Sikhs and Zoroastrians from its Muslim-majority neighbours Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh would now find their applications for citizenship fast-tracked. By explicitly omitting Muslims, Jews, Bahais, and atheists from its purview, the CAA introduced a religious filter that struck at the heart of the secular principles enshrined in the constitution. Home Minister Amit Shah promised parliament as well as audiences during political rallies and press conferences that the Amendment will be followed by the enumeration of a controversial National Register of Citizens (NRC), adding to popular anxiety. Indians would now have to prove their citizenship by providing certain documents so they could be enlisted in the NRC: failure to do so could result in detention as "illegal immigrant" and possibly deportation. It is here that the CAA kicks in. India's 200 million Muslims (the second largest Muslim community in the world), not covered under the ambit of the CAA, could find

themselves disenfranchised and stateless if they are not able to prove their citizenship.[3] While several State governments protested against the imposition of the draconian law without broader public consultation, a poll in December found many Indians were sympathetic to it. Yet, recognising the threat posed by the CAA to the basic structure of the Indian constitution, millions of people across class, caste, religious, and gender divides took to the streets in protest. At least 50 people were killed in violence in Delhi in February, several hundreds injured and many thousands displaced.

By March 2020, the COVID-19 crisis exploded in India. Modi announced the world's largest lockdown with four hours' notice. The worst hit were the country's estimated 140 million migrant workers, many of who lost their jobs and were evicted. Several million of them began journeying back to the villages they call home, often on foot since public transport was suspended. India's opposition parties demonstrated their utter ineptitude by failing to mobilise to ensure dignity and justice for the millions of migrant labourers. The stringent lockdown provided convenient cover for the BJP to muzzle the growing dissent against the CAA. As protestors wound up their campaigns in keeping with social distancing regulations, police in Delhi erased protest graffiti, presumably to remove any trace of the protests. Dissidents were rounded up and imprisoned under draconian colonial-era laws. The respected scholar-activist Anand Teltumbde being one case in point. Student-protestor Safoora Zargar another. Although India's thriving civil society protested vociferously, it was effectively curtailed to online forums.

On 5 August 2020 – exactly one year after the Indian government repudiated the autonomous status of the State of Jammu and Kashmir – the Prime Minister personally consecrated the Ram temple in Ayodhya. In a spectacular ceremony televised across the world, he performed the *bhumi poojan*, a ritual to worship the land on which the temple was planned to be constructed, led by Hindu priests and accompanied by other legislators, including the Chief Minister of the Uttar Pradesh, the State in which Ayodhya is located. The sight of the Head of Government of a secular democracy performing foundational rituals at a religious site that had been the bone of contention between the country's principal religious communities exemplified the distance India has travelled away from being a liberal democracy. From hereon, India's democracy – nominally secular not because it enforced a strict separation between religion and state but because it maintained equidistance between the state and the country's numerous faiths – was firmly distancing itself from its liberal pluralistic roots towards a more explicitly ethnic orientation.

In September 2020, the government introduced three legislations that collectively aimed at liberalising agriculture in India from state-guaranteed protections.[4] Together, the legislations signal the Indian government's long-standing attempt to liberalise agriculture, perhaps the most protectionist sector of the Indian government, one that has been relatively untouched due to the exigencies of mass politics, as Ashutosh Varshney noted almost two decades ago. In response,

over 30 farmers unions mobilised their members to sit-in peacefully at protest sites on Delhi's borders since the end of November. They were met with tear gas shells and water cannons. Although a 24-hour nationwide general strike, involving 250 million workers in support of the farmers, passed without incidence, the government was obviously rattled. Fearing a broader popular upsurge, it looked for ways to discredit the protestors, a large number of whom were of the Sikh community in Punjab. Pro-government blogs started floating conspiracy theories linking the farmers' protests with Pakistani machinations to support an independent Khalistan, invoking memories of the bitter Hindu-Sikh conflict that rent Punjab asunder during the 1980s. Tactless remarks by individual protestors, from which the unions quickly distanced themselves, were marshalled as supporting evidence.

Matters came to a head on Republic Day (January 2021), when a small section of protestors clashed with the police and sought to occupy the iconic Red Fort. Ignoring the largely peaceful protests, India's pliant media lost no time in condemning the entire swathe of protestors, accusing them of conspiring to defame India and to damage the country's reputation. TV anchors outdid one another to shame the farmers and their allies, urging the government to take strict action against all protestors. Middle-class consumers of such news and views, who also tend to be pro-government, denounced the protests as damaging to law and order. Some actively encouraged police to beat and even shoot the protestors. Even as the farmers pressed on with their peaceful protests, state repression continued. Internet connections were disrupted in the vicinity of Delhi. War-like fortifications were installed in the vicinity of Delhi. Journalists covering the protests face charges and arrests if they are known to be sympathetic to the farmers. As the Modi government continued to criminalise dissent and condemns global solidarity with such neologisms as "foreign destructive ideology", its authoritarian tendencies were further exposed.

Conceptualising the rise of the Right in India and beyond

The emergence of the BJP can be understood in the context of a global shift to the Right, without of course undermining the specificities of India's political trajectories and configuration of social forces. In line with the global literature, the rise of India's Right has been conceptualised as a turn towards authoritarianism (Chacko, 2019); the resurgence of populism (Gudavarthy, 2018; Evans, 2020); and the emergence of fascism (Bhatty and Sundar, 2020). Some have pinpointed attention to the exclusionary aspect of the BJP's political imagination that seeks to not only exclude religious minorities but also Hindus that are not considered "proper" (Mander, 2020a; Chatterjee, 2019). Others have sought to emphasise the framework of democracy within which the political and social changes wrought by the BJP must be embedded: in this vein, the category of "ethnic democracy", innovated by Sammy Smooha (1997) to describe the case of Israel, has been deployed to emphasise the political salience of ethnicity

in determining membership in India's political community (Jaffrelot, 2017; Adeney, 2020). Drawing on these insights, I have offered the formulation of "fascist democracy" (Roy, 2020) to reflect on the ways in which the BJP under Modi entwines key elements of fascism with democracy to not merely consolidate its hold over Indian politics but to instigate a fundamental reorientation of political culture in India. Each of these perspectives offers valuable insights into theorising the emergence of the Right not only in India but elsewhere in the Global South (and arguably beyond).

Authoritarianism

Despite serious disagreements about theorising the rise of the Right as populist, fascist or exclusionary, there is some consensus about its authoritarian tendencies. In the Indian context, scholars have not only documented the well-known authoritarian strains in the working of the BJP government (see Ruparelia 2015; Manor 2015) but also in civil society (Doron, 2016; Gooptu, 2016). There are resonances with projects of "authoritarian statism" (Poulantzas, 2014: 193; also see Jessop, 2016) that entail "intensified state control over every sphere of socio-economic life combined with radical decline of institutions of political democracy and draconian and multiform curtailment of so-called formal liberties". Such state control becomes imperative to deal with the fallout of "neoliberalisation", the processes of regulatory restructuring of the state to promote international competitiveness and market principles (see Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010). Rather than involving the withdrawal of the state or diminishing its influence, processes of neoliberalisation require active state intervention to, for instance, create and sustain markets and facilitate the transnationalisation of domestic capital.

Situating the emergence of authoritarianism in India in a broader political economic context, Priya Chacko (2018) directs attention to the neoliberalisation of the Indian political economy since the 1990s. The processes of neoliberalisation have led to "jobless growth", cuts to public spending, and the growth of the informal sector, thereby leading to the weakening of existing modes of political incorporation such as the accommodation of labour and welfare programmes (also see Chacko and Jayasurya, 2018). The Congress Party's agenda of "inclusive growth" sought to accelerate neo-liberal reforms while ameliorating the negative effects of neoliberalisation through the creation of new welfare programmes targeted at the reincorporation of its traditional supporters among the poor. The inclusive growth agenda, however, gave rise to an authoritarian statist political regime that was simultaneously technocratic, depoliticised, and dealt with challenges to neoliberalisation through coercive institutional and legal mechanisms.

Chacko (2018) argues that the Congress Party's failure to address long-term structural problems, such as inequality and jobless growth, or prevent the rise of new problems such as corruption scandals, created the context for the

consolidation of authoritarian statism and the election of a new government with tendencies towards authoritarian *populism*. The notion of authoritarian populism considers "the ways in which popular consent can be so constructed … as to harness to its support some popular discontents, neutralize the opposing forces, disaggregate the opposition and really incorporate some strategic elements of popular opinion into its own hegemonic project" (Hall, 1985: 118). In power, the BJP consolidated the authoritarian tendencies of its predecessor and innovated populist politics of its own.

A populist resurgence

Although populism has been defined in a number of ways (Weyland, 2001), the significance of "top-down mobilization of mass constituencies by personalistic leaders who challenge elite groups on behalf of an ill-defined *pueblo*, or 'the people'" (Roberts, 2007: 5) cannot be emphasised enough. In this vein, the success of Modi's personal charisma in mobilising an amorphous "people" against "elite groups", variously constructed as liberals, leftists, intellectuals ,and religious minorities such as Muslims (and, to a lesser extent Christians), that are considered to be "appeased" by such elites, resonates with accounts that emphasise the role of Duterte in the Philippines (Garrido, 2020), Zuma in South Africa (Hart, 2014), and Bolsanaro in Brazil (Evans, 2020).

An important explanation for the widespread support to populism in India has sought to emphasise its social base. Ajay Gudavarthy (2018) notes the ways in which the BJP has appropriated the idioms of equality and dignity fashioned by social justice movements and presented itself as an anti-elitist force out to defend a morally pure conception of the "people". The liberalisation of the Indian economy has unleashed aspirations among what he calls the "mezzanine classes". These mezzanine classes are drawn from high-status "upper caste" groups who nevertheless find themselves unable to improve their material condition. As they "feel like subalterns but think like elites", the attraction of a grand national narrative of recognition offered by Hindutva is not difficult to understand, reflecting simultaneously the failure of left-liberal forces to mobilise alienated constituencies. A somewhat different explanation is offered by Patrick Heller (2020) who emphasises the *success* of left-liberal politics in introducing policies of protective discrimination and social protections that enabled historically oppressed people to better their social, economic, and political condition. Drawing on the interpretation of the BJP as signalling an "elite revolt" (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000) against the growing assertiveness of subaltern groups, Heller argues that the BJP under Modi has a "relatively well-defined project of rolling back expansions of social rights and asserting traditional sociocultural hierarchies" (2020: 592). Comparable to developments in Brazil, India's "retrenchment populism" signals the political anxieties of a newly-minted (largely Hindu, in this case) middle class threatened by political mobilisation from below.

Exclusionary regime

A related approach is offered by scholars who emphasise the ways in which new right-wing regimes in countries as far afield as India, Brazil, and the Philippines have sought to restrict membership in the national community. As Evans (2020: 581) notes, "specifics varied but designating substantial segments of society as unworthy of receiving the social support owed to 'genuine' citizens was a shared agenda". Undermining standard "liberal democratic" rights and norms that afforded protections for contestation and mobilisation by the excluded was the necessary complement. Socially and economically marginal groups were easy targets and scapegoats. In some cases, religious minority groups – most dramatically Indian Muslims – were energetically persecuted. Where racism could be brought to bear, it was. Patriarchal misogyny gained ascendance in political culture. Reinforcement of traditional hierarchies of all sorts was the obvious companion of exclusion. All of this was more perplexing because it was accomplished largely within the shell of transitions that followed the formal rules of electoral democracy.

In this vein, attention has been pinpointed to the exclusions fomented by the BJP since gaining power in India. While such exclusions were by no means innovated by the BJP and could be traced back to earlier regimes, in power the party has energetically pursued exclusionary agendas. Scholar-activist Harsh Mander's (2015, 2018, 2020b) poignant documentation of the exclusionary regime perfected by the BJP-led government under Modi demonstrate the different ways in which such groups as the poor, labour (both formal and informal), homeless people, inter-State migrants, Dalits, and Muslims are sought to be excluded from social support. Such exclusions find policy expression in laws that have diluted labour protections, demonetised large swathes of the cash economy crucial to the livelihoods of the poor, enforced restrictions on the cattle trade on which poorer Dalits and Muslims depend, and – most dramatically – introduced a religious filter to India's citizenship laws that targets Muslims.

Ethnic democracy

The anti-Muslim thrust of the BJP and its unapologetic orientation towards what it calls Hindu interests has led scholars such as Christophe Jaffrelot (2017: 59) to argue that India is on "the path to becoming an ethnic democracy" (see also Jaffrelot, 2021). Jaffrelot draws on the leads offered by sociologist Sammy Smooha who defines ten conditions that can lead to the establishment of an ethnic democracy: 1) The core ethnic nation constitutes a solid numerical majority; 2) the noncore population constitutes a significant minority; 3) the core ethnic nation has a commitment to democracy; 4) the core ethnic nation is an indigenous group; 5) the noncore groups are immigrants; 6) the noncore group is divided into more than one ethnic group; 7) the core ethnic nation has a sizeable and supportive diaspora; 8) the noncore groups' homelands are involved; 9) a transition

from a nondemocratic ethnic state has taken place; 10) ethnic democracy enjoys international legitimacy.

In India, as Katherine Adeney (2020) demonstrates, the bulk of these conditions exist. Most saliently, Hindu nationalists define the ethnoreligious majority as eternal India's heir while rejecting minorities – which are themselves divided along religious and social lines – as outsiders. Some Hindutva activists condemn India's Muslim minority in particular as a "fifth column" for Pakistan, and a large section of the Hindu diaspora backs or at least tolerates their anti-Muslim rhetoric. Hinduism continues to enjoy a favourable international image as a religion that professes pacifism and pure spirituality. Indeed, this is one of the sources of Indian "soft power". India increasingly demonstrates a key feature of an ethnic democracy and associated two-tiered citizenship, with the Hindu majority enjoying more *de jure* and *de facto* rights than the Muslim minority (Jaffrelot, 2019: 42).

Fascism

Another term that has been invoked, somewhat controversially, to denote the newly ascendant right-wing governments is fascism. Although the term's frequent usage by political opponents to disparage one another makes academics wary of using it, a growing number of scholars are beginning to recognise that we ignore the term at our peril. Increasingly, as scholars challenge Euro-centric formulations of fascism, the call for *global* understandings of fascism – in historic (Hedinger, 2017) and contemporary (Gandesha, 2020) contexts – have become stronger. Against conventional studies that tended to exclusively focus on interwar Europe, these studies have insisted on uncovering the colonial (Traverso, 2019; building on Césaire, 1950), Asian (Clinton, 2015; Yoshiaki, 2015), and American (Stanley, 2018) manifestations of fascism.

It has been argued that fascists attack opponents within democracy that may present a source of opposition to the politicians who would use it (Stanley, 2018). Thus, fascist demagogues are likely to attack the university system, the press, even knowledge itself as they seek to establish their possession of state power. Whether it is the division of the population by fanning hatred against immigrants, people of colour, or gay people; or attacking the free press as the "enemy of the people", fascism seeks to delegitimate any potential source of resistance by characterising it as the "other" or an out group. Jason Stanley suggests that fascism offers its own form of truth to supplant facts; it propagates conspiracy theories that see insiders plotting against their country; it seeks to replace a loyalty to the government with a loyalty to the entity it identifies as the "nation"; and it builds itself on the back of the patriarchal family in which men are both the breadwinners and the head of the household. In contexts such as the US, fascism uses misogyny, homophobia, racism, and xenophobia to peel away unity, but more importantly, to emphasise that ethnic supremacy and masculinity are the sources of all legitimate power.

Historians of fascism have alerted us to distinctions between "fascism as a movement of power" and "fascism that has captured the state" (Zachariah, 2020). In the Indian context, the RSS, the ideological fount of the BJP, approximates what scholars have called "ur-fascism" or "proto-fascism" (Ahmed, 2017; Banaji, 2017). The educational model promoted by the body has been analysed as fascist: in schools promoted by and run by the RSS and its affiliate bodies, Nandini Sundar (2004: 1605) reports an "active manipulation of historical evidence in order to foster hatred for and violence against minorities". Drawing on the literature that carefully distinguishes fascist curricula from other conservative curricula, she notes the tendency in the former towards identifying and denigrating internal enemies (as opposed to denigrating people from other countries, which is a hallmark of the latter).

Indeed, the RSS' commitment to enforcing the Hindu Dharma across India at the expense of religious minorities is clear from a reading of its "vision and mission statement" that is publicly available on its website. Invoking the words of its founder, the statement declares:

> *The Hindu culture is the life-breath of Hindusthan. It is therefore clear that if Hindusthan is to be protected, we should first nourish the Hindu culture. If the Hindu culture perishes in Hindusthan itself, and if the Hindu society ceases to exist, it will hardly be appropriate to refer to the mere geographical entity that remains as Hindusthan. Mere geographical lumps do not make a nation. The entire society should be in such a vigilant and organised condition that no one wuld dare to cast an evil eye on any of our points of honour.*
>
> *Strength, it should be remembered, comes only through organization. It is therefore the duty of every Hindu to do his best to consolidate the Hindu society. The Sangh is just carrying out this supreme task. The present fate of the country cannot be changed unless lakhs of young men dedicate their entire lifetime for that cause. To mould the minds of our youth towards that end is the supreme aim of the Sangh.*
>
> *(RSS, 2012)*

The RSS' vision and mission statement endorses their founder's reference to India as "Hindusthan", a cultural term to refer to the land of the Hindus. Of course, this use of spelling cleverly manipulates the more common use of the term "Hindustan", which is of Persian origin and also refers to India as the "land of the Hindus" but in a geographic rather than cultural sense. The Hindu culture is celebrated as the "life-breath" of the country, thereby privileging it over other cultural influences that have shaped the country. The statement goes on to identify Muslims and Christians as potential threats to the Indian nation.

> Conjointly with Independence, parts of Punjab, Bengal, Sindh and the Frontier areas [a reference to Muslim-majority areas that were awarded to Pakistan under the terms of India's violent Partition] were sundered from Bharat [the Sanskrit term for India]; and, four and a half decades after the

> nation's attaining freedom, [Muslim-majority] Kashmir remains a thorn in the flesh.
>
> Continuous efforts have been there to make Assam a Muslim majority province. Likewise, no-holds-barred efforts to proselytize by Christian missions continue unabated. Even armed revolt has been engineered (e.g., in Nagaland) to carve out independent Christian provinces. Such activities receive ready support and unlimited funds from foreign countries and agencies keenly interested in destabilizing Bharat for their own ends.
>
> Sangh's alone has been the voice of genuine patriotic concern amidst the cacophonous, politically inspired shibboleths of undefined secularism, etc.
>
> *(RSS, 2012)*

A fascist democracy

The useful literature underscoring the fascist dimension of right-wing politics nevertheless posits fascism as antithetical to democracy. Fascism is feared (or celebrated, depending on one's political orientation) for the threat it poses to democracy. In such readings, the consolidation of fascism entails the eventual emergence of authoritarian regimes that would eventually suspend democracy. However, while such a formulation may well have been true for the interwar European regimes, it may not be very illuminating to analyse the dynamics of the contemporary right in the Global South. In this chapter, following Berezin (2019), I find it useful to think of fascism as an adjective rather than a verb or a noun.

India under Modi illustrates the emerging contours of a fascist democracy. As we have seen, nationalism pervades political discourse, to the extent that internal enemies are as extensively targeted – if not more – than external ones: not only do Muslims and (to a lesser extent) Christians find themselves at the receiving end, but anyone who does not conform to the image of a good Hindu can find themselves singled out as the internal enemy. In recent years, the list of internal enemies has come to include Dalits who have been historically oppressed as "untouchable"; liberals and leftists; activists who have raised issues of the environment and human rights; and anyone else perceived to be "anti-national". Such internal enemies are demonised and vilified. The recent constitutional amendments have initiated a process that critics fear may well culminate in eventually stripping Muslims of their citizenship. People leading lifestyles not approved by the law and society are lynched. Dissent is muzzled, increasingly through official edicts: the list of people incarcerated on one pretext or the other include 80-year-old human rights activist Varavara Rao and Disha Ravi, a 21-year-old environmental activist among others.

However, such fascist tendencies are entwined with democracy, as the Indian case illustrates. There appears no immediate or even longer-term threat of democracy being formally suspended in India. Modi does not tire of proclaiming India's democratic lineage, unlike interwar European fascist demagogues who

pointedly rejected democracy. Indeed, the Prime Minister has gone on to extol India as the *mother of all democracies*. It is unlikely that his utterances are strategically oriented towards western audiences that might be worried about a democratic recession in India. Rather, the forums at which he has repeated claims of democracy being a quintessentially Indian ethos – election rallies, the houses of parliament – suggest an internal rather than an international audience for such narratives. The BJP has respected the mandate of the provincial elections they have lost since their 2019 spectacular re-election to power in Delhi. Modi has declared himself at the service of his people rather than proclaiming himself as the equivalent of a *Fuhrer* or *Duce*. He remains committed to the RSS' Hindutva agenda. Modi's BJP-led government is subjected to checks and balances by its ideological fount. Indeed, such checks and balances are likely to prevent even as charismatic a leader as Modi from assuming absolute power.

Checks on personal concentration of power are key to the functioning of democracy. In this respect, the RSS exerts a degree of accountability over Modi and his cabinet colleagues (Pandey and Arnimesh, 2020) to which few European fascists would be subjected. Of Modi's cabinet, 38 of 53 members have a background in the RSS in Modi's second government. That proportion has increased from the first government, when 41 of 66 cabinet members were drawn from the RSS. An example of the perverse accountability of the government to the RSS was displayed when Modi criticised cow protection squads that lynched Muslims and Dalits over 2015–16. Modi's criticism invited prompt rebuttal from the RSS who spoke out in favour of the squads: the Prime Minister was compelled to back down and dilute his criticism of the cow protection squads (cited Jaffrelot, 2019: 63). Modi's subservience to the RSS exemplifies the ways in which fascism and democracy are entwined, making it even more dangerous than situations of a forthright clash between fascism and democracy.

A fascist democracy, such as the one being fashioned in India under Modi, thus blends key elements of both fascism and democracy. Such a blend makes it difficult for opponents to mount a frontal challenge since defenders of the regime can easily emphasise the democratic aspects and deflect attention from its fascistic characteristics. Indeed, as Theodor Adorno famously put it, "I consider the survival of National Socialism *within* democracy to be potentially more menacing than the survival of fascist tendencies *against* democracy." Noting the similarities and differences between interwar Europe and the contemporary USA, Holocaust historian Christopher Browning suggests that fascism today is more likely to involve an incremental and subtler suffocation of liberal democracy rather than the rise of organised, disciplined mass-based fascist movement. In India, while the RSS does provide the core of an organised, disciplined mass-based fascist movement, it is far more likely to nudge India away from a liberal democracy than to categorically reject democracy as such.

Indeed, the Modi regime has so far respected the mandate of the numerous provincial elections held across the country since its ascendance to power, including the ones where the BJP was routed (Delhi in 2015 and 2020; Bihar

in 2015; West Bengal, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu in 2016 and 2021; Jharkhand and Maharashtra in 2020). Although it has manipulated legislative rules to outmanoeuvre opponents and install friendly governments in States (Bihar in 2017; Madhya Pradesh in 2019), it has by and large respected electoral mandates even when results have been unfavourable. This tenuous coexistence of fascism and democracy is likely to remain a feature of Indian politics for the foreseeable future.

Ideational themes underpinning democracy in India and Bihar since 1989

The emergence of India's fascist democracy may be better appreciated when situated against the decisive transformations that shaped India's democracy more broadly since 1989.[5] Key to this decisive transformation was the erosion of the centrality that the Congress Party enjoyed in Indian politics during the first four decades after Independence. Three major ideational themes underpinned this decisive transformation.[6] One ideational theme pertains to the claims of "social justice" signalling demands for substantive equality in respect of India's historically oppressed communities. A second competing ideational theme refers to the claims of "Hindutva" emphasising that the country's Hindu majority be accorded political and social privileges over other religious groups. A third ideational theme, in some tension with the other two, underscores the "liberalisation of the economy" and withdrawal of the state as the preeminent actor in the country's development. The fascist strands of Indian democracy may be analysed as a reaction to the first ideational theme, a consolidation of the second and in ambivalent relation with the third.

Social justice

The ideational theme of social justice received a major fillip with the election as India's seventh Prime Minister of Vishwanath Pratap Singh, the president of the newly-minted Janata Dal. Singh headed a motely coalition of anti-Congress political parties that comprised communists, socialists, and Hindu nationalists aligned together for the sole purpose of defeating the Congress Party. Nevertheless, despite his short tenure (less than one year), Singh fundamentally transformed the country's political landscape by announcing protective discrimination policies[7] for Other Backward Classes (OBCs), a cluster of communities that had historically been oppressed as "low caste". These policies were *additional* to the protective discriminations enshrined in India's constitution for the cluster of Dalit and Adivasi communities marginalised respectively as "untouchable" and "primitive". Singh's proposals, announced in August 1990, were vehemently opposed[8] by "high-castes", collectively called Savarnas, across India.[9]

The Hindu nationalists, led by the BJP, were particularly vocal in their opposition since Singh's proposals threatened to unravel the putative unity of

the "Hindu majority" that they sought to promote.[10] In counter-mobilising against protective discrimination for the OBCs, the Savarna leadership of the BJP latched on to an ongoing campaign for the demolition of a sixteenth-century mosque in northern India and the construction of a temple dedicated to the Hindu deity Ram. Eventually Singh backed off implementing the proposals and it was not until 2008 that a Congress Party-led government successfully began to "reserve" seats for OBCs in educational institutions. The introduction of protective discriminations for OBCs, who account for 40–60 per cent of India's population (figures vary from State to State) alarmed the "high-caste" Savarna communities, arguably setting the stage for the consolidation of their support for Hindu nationalism.

Hindu nationalism

Hindu nationalism has endured as an ideational theme in Indian politics since the 1980s under the rubric of the term Hindutva. Introduced to the country's political lexicon in 1923 by the Hindu ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the term aims to encapsulate "Hinduness" as constituting the essential idea of India.[11] However, it was not until the BJP appropriated this theme in 1989[12] that Hindutva became a potent weapon in the arsenal of the Hindu Right. Throughout the 1980s, encouraged in no small measure by the crumbling Congress Party's careful cultivation of Hindu votes, organisations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Confederation), a body independent of the RSS but with close fraternal links, began asserting Hindu supremacist views in public discourse. Religious violence between Hindus and Muslims increased rapidly, often fomented by Congress politicians seeking to consolidate their own dwindling popularity by polarising their voters.

The north Indian temple-town of Ayodhya rapidly became the focal point of their assertions: the VHP led a concerted campaign for the construction of a temple in this town to honour the Hindu deity Ram. But that was not all: underpinning their campaign was the demand to destroy a sixteenth-century mosque that was alleged to have been built over the ruins of an ancient Ram temple by the Mughal emperor Babur. Lending political support to this campaign, the BJP insisted on undertaking a *Rath Yatra* (literally, "chariot pilgrimage") across India, culminating at Ayodhya in September 1990, just a month after Singh announced his proposals for affirmative action. The *Yatra* was led by no less a dignitary than the BJP's national president LK Advani. Although Advani was halted before he could reach Ayodhya, the *Yatra* left a trail of bloodshed and rioting in its wake, rending asunder the social fabric of communities on its route. The ideational theme of Hindutva has continued to pervade India's political landscape. The mosque in Ayodhya was demolished in 1992, the BJP went on to form governments in several States as well as led a coalition government at the Centre from 1999 to 2004. Hindutva's ascendance rose even further when

Narendra Modi was elected to head India's Government with a massive mandate in April 2014.

Economic (neo-)liberalisation

India's economic liberalisation has supplied the third ideational theme underpinning the country's politics since 1990. Although economic reforms were successfully kept apart from electoral discourse (Varshney, 1999; Jenkins, 1999), they facilitated the emergence of "development" as a narrative to which politicians across India must subscribe (Sinha, 2016). Commentators have remarked on the near-consensus among politicians across party lines for the adoption and implementation of economic reforms once in power, even if they might oppose such policies while in opposition. Nevertheless, even as they are averse to outlining strategies for liberalisation in the electoral arena, Indian politicians regularly invoke platitudes towards ensuring the "development" of their respective constituencies. Over the last few decades, such invocations have shifted from survivalist appeals of *roti*, *kapda aur makan* (literally: bread, clothes and house) to such infrastructural claims as *bijli*, *sadak aur pani* (literally: electricity, roads and drinking water).[13] These claims signalled an understanding of development in terms of infrastructures to which common people could relate. They drew on earlier understandings of development that hinged on the supply of material resources but departed from these understandings in that they were no longer hinged on public provisioning of such resources. Rather, private sector provisioning was welcomed and encouraged.

The political viability of private sector-led development, to which domestic and foreign capital was crucial, became obvious during the electoral campaign of 2014. During this campaign, the BJP enumerated the successes of the so-called "Gujarat model of development", hinged on private sector participation in the construction of infrastructure; provisioning of basic services such as potable water, health and education; and the facilitation of corporate-friendly special economic zones (SEZs) and foreign direct investment (FDI). By styling himself as "vikas purush" (literally: development man), the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi claimed to personify development. Such development, it bears emphasis, hinged on the liberalisation, deregulation, and privatisation of the economy. To be sure, the state remained central to the development process (Kohli, 2005; Sinha and Dorschiner, 2009), but with a greater commitment to facilitate the transnationalisation of domestic capital (Chacko, 2018).

Material consequences

A direct consequence of the (neo-)liberalisation of the Indian economy was the increase in economic and social inequality (Roy, 2018). Himanshu and Sen (2014) point to growing inequality in both rural and urban areas. Sainath (2013) notes a decade of rural distress that fomented outmigration from rural

to urban areas. Vakulabharanam (2014) shows that the increase in consumption expenditures of the urban elite between 1993–4 and 2004–5 outstripped the increase in consumption expenditures by other classes. Despite the overall decline in poverty rates, the proportion of Dalits and Adivasis living in poverty actually increased during this period, demonstrating the disproportionate burden of poverty and inequality that members of these communities bear. The top 1 per cent incomes are rapidly on the rise since at least 1982–3 (Bannerjee and Piketty 2005). Data from the financial company Credit Suisse suggests that wealth shares owned by the top 1 per cent have been steadily rising from 40.3 per cent in 2010 to 49 per cent in 2014 and 58.4 per cent in 2016. By contrast the bottom half of the Indian population shares a mere 2.1 per cent of the national wealth.

The widening inequalities should not blind us to the very real improvements in the political, social, and even economic status of historically oppressed populations in India since the 1980s. Yogendra Yadav (1999) reports an "electoral participatory upsurge" through the 1990s when people at the lower end of the socio-economic hierarchy were more likely to vote in elections than their wealthier counterparts. Notwithstanding numerous shortcomings in redistributing resources, democracy in India has entailed a redistribution of dignity (Kaviraj, 2005; Gupta, 2012; Roy, 2021). Such redistribution of dignity has been made possible by vibrant "new social movements" (Omvedt, 1993), a "silent revolution" ushered by sub-national political parties that have increased the representation of historically oppressed populations such as Dalits, Adivasis, and OBCs in parliament (Jaffrelot, 2003) and "egalitarian protocols" (Guru, 2005) enforced by them in public spaces. Indeed, as a consequence of the "politics of the poor" (Roy, under review), the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance which ruled India from 2004 to 2014 was compelled to introduce a number of social policies (Manor and Jenkins, 2017) which collectively lifted over 270 million people out of poverty (Alkire, Oldiges, and Kanagaratan, 2019).

These apparently confounding trajectories together constitute the social basis of India's fascist democracy. It is of course tempting to follow scholars who find a fertile social soil for the flowering of fascism in the heightening of inequalities under the (neo-)liberalisation of India's economy, rural distress, and urban alienation, and growing socio-economic insecurities at the *lower end* of Indian society (Gudavarthy, 2018). If this were true, we could expect the BJP to draw electoral support from poorer people of the historically oppressed communities who face the brunt of growing inequalities. However, as I have demonstrated elsewhere (Roy, 2023), electoral data does not fully warrant such a conclusion: electoral data suggests consistent support for the BJP from elite social groups- those of "high caste" Savarna communities as well as better-off classes. The BJP draws its support from the *higher end* of Indian society, lending support to the contention that status improvements among members of historically oppressed communities

have increased anxieties among privileged caste groups, especially poorer people from among these groups. While the privileged classes were responsible for the BJP's ascendance to power in 2014, it is the *precarious* classes – those who inherit "high caste" privilege but experience poverty and inequality- who powered its re-election in 2019.

Conclusion

This chapter drew on Berezin's (2019) insights that fascism is more analytically useful when deployed as an adjective rather than a verb or a noun. This grammatical shift enables us to reflect on the institutional contexts in which features associated with fascism flower in different historical circumstances. India under Modi illustrates the emerging contours of a fascist democracy. Nationalism pervades political discourse, to the extent that internal enemies are as extensively targeted – if not more – than external ones. In recent years, the list of internal enemies has expanded from religious minorities such as Muslims and Christians to historically oppressed communities such as Dalits and Adivasis who demand social equality; liberals and leftists; rationalists; and environmentalists; and indeed anyone perceived to be "anti-national". However, such fascist tendencies are entwined with democracy. Unlike interwar demagogues in Europe, Modi takes great pains at emphasising the Indic roots of modern democracy and styles himself as being in the service of the population. However reluctantly, the BJP government has respected the mandate of provincial elections in which the BJP has been routed. Personally committed to the RSS' Hindutva agenda, his government is subjected to checks and balances by its ideological fount. Indeed, such checks and balances are likely to prevent even as charismatic a leader as Modi from assuming absolute power.

The chapter situated the emergence of India's fascist democracy against the decisive transformations that shaped India's democracy more broadly since 1989. Three major ideational themes underpinned this transformation. One ideational theme pertains to the claims of "social justice" signalling demands for substantive equality in respect of India's historically oppressed communities. A second competing ideational theme refers to the claims of "Hindutva" emphasising that the country's Hindu majority be accorded political and social privileges over other religious groups. A third ideational theme, in some tension with the other two, underscores the "liberalisation of the economy" and withdrawal of the state as the preeminent actor in the country's development. The chapter analysed the fascist strands of Indian democracy as a reaction to the first ideational theme, a consolidation of the second and in ambivalent relation with the third.

A fascist democracy, such as the one being fashioned in India under Modi, thus blends key elements of both fascism and democracy. As Adorno warned his audience soon after the end of the Second World War, fascism entwined with

democracy and embedded in it is far more menacing than fascism against democracy. India's fascist democracy aptly illustrates this menace, not just for India or even the wider Global South but for the world at large.

Notes

1 See news item here: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/post-pulwama-pm-narendra-modis-ratings-rise-by-7-to-52-poll/articleshow/68350217.cms. During polls conducted in January, Modi enjoyed an approval rating of 45 per cent against 30 per cent garnered by opposition leader Rahul Gandhi. Polls conducted in February, after the attack, suggest Modi's approval ratings increased to 52 per cent.
2 Commentator Milan Vaishnav (2019) went on to assert that nationalism would be the biggest theme in the Indian elections. See the full interview here: https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/02/11/nationalism-not-hindutva-will-be-big-theme-for-2019-pub-78344
3 If such a circumstance were to pass, the world would then be witness to the largest crisis of social exclusion, statelessness, and citizenship ever in world history – potentially dwarfing the crisis in Europe on the eve of the Second World War.
4 The Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill aims to dismantle the trade and distribution monopoly enjoyed by the state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) and the Agricultural Product Market Committees (APMCs), thus allowing farmers to deal directly with the markets. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill allows farmers to engage in contract farming and opens up agriculture to domestic and global corporates for investment. Finally, the amendment to the Essential Commodities Act of 1955 deregulates items such as cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onions and potatoes.
5 Yadav, Jaffrelot, Corbridge and Harriss, Jayal, Jenkins, Michelutti, Witsoe.
6 Jayal, in Great Transformation.
7 Mandal Commission recommendations.
8 www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/19900915-decision-to-implement-mandal-commission-report-threatens-to-tear-india-fabric-apart-812994-1990-09-15
9 The Savarna communities occupied the apex of India's caste hierarchy, while the Dalits were at its base. The OBCs populated the in-between ranks.
10 Cited Jaffrelot, 1996: 415.
11 Savarkar, https://ia800609.us.archive.org/19/items/hindutva-vinayak-damodar-savarkar-pdf/hindutva-vd-savarkar.pdf
12 www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2125/stories/20041217006712900.htm
13 Jayal (2007) in Ksmeshwar Chaudhury; Narayan (2007) in Sudha Pai.

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3

LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT

Moving beyond the binary to think fascism in Africa

Christi van der Westhuizen

Introduction

The global surge in populism in the 21st century has reactivated scrutiny of this 'ambiguous politics', as Comaroff (2011: 102) calls it – ambiguous because it is an 'intense, confusing amalgam of the progressive and the proto-fascist' (p. 102). Africa is largely absent from these analyses, despite decades of authoritarianism, at times fuelled by populism. Such an inquiry becomes urgent with democratisation remaining a struggling enterprise on the continent. In the 2000s, anti-democratic populism is again a political feature in Africa (Resnick 2019), but the literature on African populism remains notably scant. This is particularly the case in relation to fascism as a form of authoritarianism that frequently exhibits populist features. The reason is partly because leftist academics analytically confine fascism to versions of radical right nationalism, particularly in the Global North, or as imbricated with imperialism, and therefore, a phenomenon not applicable in states that historically pursued African socialism or anti-imperialist nationalism.

Scarnecchia (2006) points to the difficulties arising from such a restrictive approach in his examination of Zimbabwe in the 2000s. Zimbabwean nationalist repression of political opposition was 'misread' (p. 221) due to 'a binary understanding of anti-colonialism … in sub-Saharan Africa' (p. 230). This binary understanding is based on the race-defined, anti-colonial rhetoric that African nationalists had adopted in the 1960s to gain global support for their independence efforts. Overlooking 'the realities of political power as exercised in Zimbabwe' (p. 223) and lured by Mugabist anti-colonial rhetoric, some African Studies scholars misinterpreted the Zimbabwean crisis in the 2000s as the 'delayed fruition of a pan-African vision' (p. 236). In fact, Zimbabwe in the 2000s (and arguably in the present) exemplified the use of fascist strategies

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by a 'conservative elite' to maintain their privileged control of the state and the economy (p. 236).

Such leftist misinterpretation may again be taking place in relation to neighbouring South Africa, in regard to the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a relatively new political party that has grown to become the third largest in the country. The EFF and its leader, Julius Malema, provoke divergent analyses. Some insist that its politics represents radical leftism or left populism (Fogel 2013; Mbete 2016) as a defence against critics that diagnose it as a form of fascism (Duncan 2011; Habib 2020a, 2020b) or predatory populism (Southall 2014). Following Miller-Idriss' (2019: 18) argument of populism as 'less an ideology than a rhetorical strategy', and Mudde's highlighting of populism as a 'thin ideology' that easily attaches itself to other ideologies (2004: 544), this chapter offers a reading of the EFF to argue against a binary logic that inhibits the confrontation of fascism in the African context. The structure of the chapter is as follows: the next section examines authoritarianism and populism in Africa before homing in on versions of African fascism in Uganda and Zimbabwe. African fascism is then briefly considered in relation to some salient observations on fascism elsewhere. The discussion then moves to an analysis of the EFF in relation to the features of African fascism in Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Authoritarianism in Africa

'The colonial state in Africa was an authoritarian bureaucratic apparatus of control and not intended to be a school of democracy' (Berman 1998: 329). Therefore, while democratisation was frequently proffered as rationale for anti-colonial resistance, soon after African colonies achieved independence from European states, political elites moved to a position of regarding democracy as hindering development. Democracy as ideal was replaced by 'the doctrine of the mass single party as the vanguard of African progress', with a focus on ending neocolonial economic control (Young 1999: 17). Southall (2014) argues that the African nationalist goal was in fact self-determination that became conflated with democracy. While leaders emphasised freedom in their anti-colonial rhetoric, unity at the expense of checks on power was more urgent for fledgling states with incoherent colonial borders, histories and ethnicities (Cheeseman 2015). The civic and cosmopolitan aspects of African nationalism were replaced with 'monolithic national' identities without popular bases, provoking the emergence of competing populisms (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009: 67). The inability of developmental nationalism to address material deprivations saw a reversion to cultural nationalism and nativism, with control asserted over populations by reinterpreting inequality as cultural difference (p. 67). Shaped in response to colonialism, African nationalism also wielded race and racism (Chen as cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009).

Neopatrimonial autocracy became the norm (Young, 1999). Some leaders resorted to 'unchecked personal tyranny': by the 1970s, developmental dictatorship

was exposed as a 'convenient cover for political monopoly for the leader [and] a poorly concealed instrument for predatory extraction for the subject' (p. 19). The postcolonial African state is 'carnivorous' and its conditions akin to living death (Mbembe 2001: 201). Without an economic base outside of the state, political classes' precariousness made them unwilling to allow electoral competition, instead pursuing personal styles which turned less on policy and principle and more on patron-client relations and access to state resources (Hawthorn 1993: 336). Hawthorn (p. 344) contends that the political community crucial for the development of democracy was not allowed to form. Mbembe (2001: 75) and Cheeseman (2015) differ: the struggles against colonialism, combined with limited but extant examples of democratic practice, relations of reciprocity in patron-client arrangements and citizens' delineation of legitimate social control, even in one-party milieux, created forms of community and accountability.

In the 1990s, democratisation swept across the African continent, spurred on by diminishing resources for patronage due to the debt crisis of the 1970s and the externally imposed structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s (Young 1999: 21–22). Despite poor indicators for democracy, including high levels of inequality and poverty, about a quarter of African states were politically liberalised by the mid-2010s (Cheeseman 2015). But disillusionment with democracy has prepared the ground for populism. Again, similar to other 'neo-democracies' in Latin America and Eastern Europe that have transitioned from authoritarian regimes, the reason for this disappointment is to be found in 'a clear discrepancy between the relative effectiveness of the institutional forms of democracy as a regime and their inability to meet the demands of social and economic reform' (Taguieff 1997: 23). These neo-democracies are described by O'Donnell (1994: 59–60) as 'delegative democracies', which rest on the presumption that the elected president should govern as s/he 'sees fit', as the 'embodiment of the nation and the main custodian and definer of its interests'. While Taguieff points out that these delegative democracies are not synonymous with populism, some represent 'neo-populisms' of which the centring of the leader is one prominent feature.

Africa features two postcolonial generations of populists: in the 1980s and in the 2000s (Cheeseman 2016). Both permutations of African populism feature strong undemocratic and even anti-democratic tendencies (Resnick 2019). Cheeseman (2016) and Resnick (2010) as recently prolific authors on populism in Africa analyse it as a political mobilisation of economically excluded constituencies. Cheeseman (2019) also brings in the idea of ethnopopulism with which politicians seek to bridge the urban/rural divide by conjuring both class and ethnic identities for electoral mobilisation. This hints at the complexity which this chapter grapples with. While economic redress might be a primary plank in populist appeals in Africa, African populisms construct 'the people' as a singular political unit without internal differentiation. Class, gender and other differences are suppressed within, while the racial dynamics of colonialism are reproduced, frequently in xenophobic form (Carbone 2005). The incorporation of identities

is therefore determined along racial and ethnic lines, drawn to create new political and national insiders and outsiders (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009; Vincent 2011; Müller 2016). In South Africa, a circular logic kicks with the ruling African Nationalist Congress (ANC), projecting its interests through a great leader at the top as embodying the will of the people, the will of the people in turn as equivalent to democracy and dissent against the liberation movement therefore as amounting to disloyalty to the people, as personified by the liberation movement and its leader (Southall 2014: 95; Vincent 2011). Opposing elites represent alien others threatening the material and cultural well-being of the people (Van der Westhuizen 2016: 91–95).

Turning to fascism, the literature does not yield much on Africa. This may in part be due to the prominent ideologies adopted in postcolonial Africa being regarded as left-wing: in particular, state socialism and radical, anti-imperialist nationalism (Young 1999: 17). Black radical authors such as Du Bois and Césaire link fascism with colonialism, with hyper-violence and ideas of racial supremacy fingered as similarities between these two formations (Kelley 2000: 19–21). Colonialism's imbrication with fascism is also shown in overlapping colonial racism and anti-Semitism in French colonialism in Algeria (Carroll 2004). Another explanation has to do with the weakness of the African state. Cheeseman (2019) asserts that, while authoritarianism was most common in 20th-century Africa, Africans rarely allowed the exercise of absolute or totalitarian power (pp. 2, 3, 17). The coercive power of the state was structurally limited, and African leaders largely acceded to public expectations for the sake of legitimacy, rather than resorting to force. But Petras's (1980) analysis of neofascism in postcolonial Asia and Latin America finds resonance in some African examples: regimes turned fascist as they deployed extreme violence against populations to force their collaboration with neocolonial multinational capital.

Further to Petras's analysis, two cases are identified as 'fascist' in the literature which prove useful for this discussion: Uganda under Idi Amin (Mamdani 1983) and Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe (Scarnecchia 2006). Both analyses focus on fascism as it appears in the exercise of state power, which may pose a difficulty for this discussion, given the focus on the EFF as a party that is yet to occupy national government. However, Scarnecchia draws on Paxton (2004: 23), who detects five cycles of fascism: creating movements; rooting them in the political system; seizing power; exercising power; and the *long durée* in which a fascist regime opts for either radicalisation or entropy. Paxton contends that a fascist movement does not have to achieve all of these cycles, and may also not fulfil them chronologically. This observation is useful in discerning fascist features even before a party gains control of the levers of state.

Scarnecchia (2006) diagnoses silences in African Studies in support of the liberation struggle and the post-independence regime in Zimbabwe: these 'silences … are produced by our own intellectual and academic narrow-mindedness. This crisis has also silenced a debate in African Studies as we continue to defend older positions of solidarity and progressive politics' (p. 236). Instead of inventing

new terms, he argues for an investigation of Zimbabwe's retreat into authoritarianism that will insert the country but also Africa into more encompassing global understandings of fascism (p. 236): '[W]e must perpetuate an academic tradition of naming fascism and developing a better understanding of the comparative nature of fascism across national histories' (p. 237). Similarly, Mamdani (1983: 44) admonishes 'learned professors' who seek to separate the individual aspect of fascism from its institutional dimension: fascism in Uganda depended both on 'class violence in defence of the state, and individual violence for personal gains. Both modes of violence were unleashed by the same individuals, and both were made possible by the manner of organisation of fascist instruments of terror'. To separate these violences 'is not only to become an unconscious apologist for Amin's fascism, it is also to apologise in advance for every future fascist regime, thus paving the way for it' (p. 44). Mamdani also points out that theories as to the national conditions necessary for European fascism to arise had been proven contradictory. These ranged from 'backwardness' and a majority peasant population (Italy) to the necessity of industrialisation (Germany). Instead, fascism 'is really a product of imperialism in crisis' (p. 35). The violent conflagration of World War II was caused by the re-division of imperialist interests, he argues. His examination of Uganda is a study of the emergence of fascism in neocolonial African conditions as an attempt to contain and redirect popular discontent, due to social and economic crises, towards the overarching goal of the predatory exploitation of the working masses.

Mamdani's analysis spans the period after Uganda had gained independence from Britain in 1962, Amin's coup in 1971, through to his ousting in 1979. Mamdani cautions against a teleological reading of fascism: Amin and his coterie had no 'ready-made plan' for fascism (p. 35); rather, it was aimed at retaining power as popular demands rose amid a crisis. Several features of 'neocolonial fascism' emerge in Mamdani's inquiry. First, the political and military elite's anti-colonial nationalism did not problematise either Western imperialism in Uganda or the inherited structure of the colonial state, leading Mamdani to typify Uganda after independence as a 'neo-colony' (p. 37). Second, revolutionary and anti-imperialist slogans were used to gain support and harness the popular groundswell in response to multiple crises while hiding 'the true character' of the political and military class (p. 36). The promises included liberal-democratic elements such as multi-party elections and the rule of law, alongside security, economic progress, lower prices and lower taxes. 'The Move to the left' in 1970 involved changes to foreign policy, monetary policy and nationalisation, but the latter were planned to be in partnership with foreign monopolies. A national bank was created to try and control monetary policy. Third, the political elite's primary goal was to amass wealth, which played out in factional competition for predatory accumulation. The 'Economic War' was touted as building 'black millionaires' (p. 39). Fourth, this factional competition involved the opportunistic mobilisation of racial and ethnic identities. The regime drove anti-imperialism into 'narrow nationalist channels', 'inflam[ing] historically

ingrained prejudices with its racist rhetoric' by casting 'exploitation as a racial attribute, not a class relationship' (p. 39). Kenyan workers were the first victims of expulsion; an 'Economic War' was declared in 1972 with Asians expelled and their assets and capital seized to reward supporters of the regime.

> The demand for Africanization had nothing to do with the control of foreign monopolies, only with the hiring of local personnel; it was not a call for an end to foreign exploitation, only for local capitalist participation in it. Africanization was a scheme to promote the upper petty bourgeoisie who aspired to become compradors, and was irrelevant to workers and peasants, who were already Africans.
>
> *(p. 27)*

With the upper petty bourgeoisie gaining entry into accumulation, a new class of people was created, the *mafutamingi* ('get rich quick') whose

> lifestyle … was marked by incessant and conspicuous consumption. They lived like a declining nobility, determined to make as big a show of their wealth as possible. Each competed with the other to deck 'his' women with the most expensive jewellery around, to drive the latest and slickest car available, and to own the most spacious mansion. Show-off decadence and waste – these were the hallmarks of *mafutamingi* life.
>
> *(p. 53)*

Fifth, violence was inherent to these factional accumulation processes: 'Under fascism the gun moves through all structures of the state and society, from the repressive forces, including the police and intelligence services, to the courts, the civil service and the economy' (p. 36). The violence happened at both the individual and institutional levels, provided the 'framework for quick enrichment' (p. 39), and was normalised in public utterances by Amin and other regime leaders, targeting specific groups as working against the best interests of the country.

Ugandan fascism was bolstered with populism, wielding its discursive style in representing Amin as 'the common man' and the coup as 'the people's coup'. Amin promised 'everything', with the regime shifting continuously and in contradiction of previous decisions. After the initial pledge of multi-party democracy, political opposition was criminalised and parliament dissolved, with the intention 'to cajole the people into leaving politics as an activity fit only for their rulers, while concentrating their attention on production' (p. 46). Unions were systematically undermined, the position being that workers should regard their managers as 'brothers in arms' (p. 54). As the regime's position became more precarious, collaboration with Israel and diplomatic appeals to apartheid South Africa were replaced with a focus on Arab states and support for Palestine. Amin was heralded as the 'vanguard commander of a liberation army of Africa' (p. 39).

In Scarnecchia's (2006) discussion of the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), a number of similarities with Ugandan fascism are notable. First, the shift into fascism was in defence of a conservative elite's hold on state power in the face of rising democratic demands due to a social and economic crisis. ZANU-PF 'melded the political weapons of previous white-minority governments with the divisive and violent African nationalist politics of the 1960s' (p. 263). This included strengthening colonial-era laws towards political repression, while disenfranchising groups such as city dwellers and farm workers who were associated with the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change. State aid was withheld from 'un-Zimbabwean' opposition supporters. Second, an anti-imperialist discourse was mobilised, invoking Britain as former colonising power, as well as the previous white-minority Rhodesian regime of Ian Smith.

> Perhaps the most dangerous anachronism of the current ideology, associated with the ZANU-PF leadership by some observers, is its invocation of an older pan-African opposition to racial oppression. This extends the liberation war's logic into a global context where British Prime Minister Tony Blair, in particular, is recast as representing a foreign white ruler bent upon keeping Zimbabweans from achieving their full realisation of independent nationhood.
>
> *(pp. 234–5)*

Third, the regime's defence was specifically of the political elite's access to the state as a form of accumulation, including transferring wealth to party insiders and rewarding supporters with state largesse. '[T]he Zimbabwean political and business elite used the violence of the veterans and militias to protect and expand their ability to accumulate and also to defend their *right* to accumulate within a historically inclusive ideology' (p. 233, original emphasis). This accumulation ranged from the seizure of farmland and real estate, to imperialist military ventures for 'personal economic activities' of army and political leaders (p. 233) into Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As in the Ugandan case, the economic crisis was even exploited for benefit: 'the chaos of hyper inflation has been profitable for party insiders with access to hard currencies and the central bank' (p. 229). Fourth, violence was central to this fascist defence, particularly the use of paramilitarism to suppress political opposition. 'The rhetoric of war dominates official policy even when the only enemies left are the urban poor and those in the informal sector' (p. 235). War veterans served as a 'fascist cadre' in return for promises of land and jobs (p. 232), enlisted to execute public beatings and humiliations of political opponents, including attacks and expulsions of white farmers and black farmworkers. War veterans, argues Scarnecchia drawing on Mann, link 'military and ideological power' (p. 226): in Zimbabwe, the use of war veterans conjured 'the imagery of a country still at war with internal and external enemies' (p. 226) – hence, the war veterans assisted

in reactivating the myth of the anti-colonial 'liberation war' in justification of the violence. This fitted with a discourse invoking the 'unpatriotic' threat of persons with ostensible links to the Smith regime. Fifth, the political elite wielded race and ethnicity towards an organically imagined national identity that excluded non-ZANU-PF Zimbabweans, deploying an inflammatory discourse against these new enemies within. An 'indigenisation' policy, ostensibly in support of rural Zimbabweans but profiting the political elite, formed part of a 'sons of the soil' discourse that enabled 'fascistic solidarity' (p. 223). Mugabe accused the white people of Britain, America, New Zealand and Australia of 'leading in the fight against Zimbabwe, the fight of resisting the completion of the independence process that began in 1980' (p. 235). Zimbabweans suspected of supporting the MDC were accused of collaboration with white foreigners, including informal traders who were likened to 'maggots' by the head of police (p. 235). The ever-expanding range of enemies included 'whites, gays, foreigners, opposition parties, human rights activists, independent press and genuine black entrepreneurs' (Raftopoulos and Compagnon 2003: 28).

Left, right, left

From the discussion so far, it is useful to consider the Uganda and Zimbabwe cases in relation to theoretical observations on populism and fascism. Populism is an '"ism" with only very minimal content' (Taguieff 1997: 11). As a concept, it 'makes the most sense when used as a modifier, as an adjective to explain the strategic frames, schemata, and discourses used by particular ideological movements (such as nationalism or socialism)' (Miller-Idriss 2019: 19). As 'a rhetorical strategy to help achieve ideological goals' (p. 18), populism served as a vehicle for fascism in the Uganda and Zimbabwe cases. Populism was coupled with forms of African nationalism that had turned fascist to rhetorically enable and defend elites engaged in predatory accumulation. The utility of populism as a discursive style primarily involves the pitting of an elite against 'the people'. It is in the method (violence trumping politics) and the boundaries of the construction of 'the people' that fascism becomes apparent as the driving ideology in these cases. Populism was wielded to create a continuously adjusted 'people', dominated through regime terror, as ever more categories of enemies were generated from among the ranks of 'the people'. This leads Mamdani to describe the Ugandan form as a cover for a rapacious elite with a profoundly 'anti-people' politics (p. 28). The eventual violent targeting of the most vulnerable members of the populace in both countries – those engaged in the survivalist economies of the informal sector – show the true face of the political elites in all its horror.

Suvin (2017: 290) questions the contemporary use of the phrase 'right-wing populism' for obfuscating 'fascistisation'. A similar concern arises with leftists' equivalence of fascism with solely 'right-radical ultra-nationalism' (Geyer with Fitzpatrick 2009: 4). The reason for this leftist assignment partly derives from the competition between fascism and communism as two forms of totalitarianism in

the first half of the 20th century. In contrast to fascism, totalitarianism is understood to encompass both right and left political positions. Populist features are also discernible across the left-right divide in Stalinist and Nazi totalitarianisms: social division into two camps of mortal foes, mass mobilisation, charismatic leadership and the radical exclusion of certain categories of persons (Geyer with Fitzpatrick 2009). The difference creeps into the exclusion being mostly on the basis of either biology (Nazism) or ideology (Stalinism). These two markedly had in common the 'subordinat[ion] of politics to violence' (p. 30). Violence as shared method again challenges the leftist distinction between left-wing and right-wing totalitarianism. In the cases of Uganda and Zimbabwe, the racialisation and ethnicisation of 'the people' echo Nazism. The use of anti-imperialist rhetoric conceals this fascistic dimension, rendering African fascism more reminiscent of Stalinism with its focus on ideological purity.

While African elites' stance towards vested capitalist interests should assist in disentangling the ideological threads, the paradox continues. The leftist distinction between leftist authoritarianism and fascism is in question: namely, that fascism aims at safeguarding the capitalist status quo. Laclau (1977) debunks the idea that capital is a necessary partner for fascists. Suvin (2017: 272) agrees that the alliance between capital and fascists is 'uneasy' but that capital 'gladly' accepts mass mobilisation in its defence. This is achieved by fascism splitting 'the people' from the working class to prevent class struggle (Laclau 1977: 121). Subjects are instead interpellated (hailed) by a discourse of racialisation. Class is still invoked, but not class-based politics. As an example, the Nazi subject was constituted as both a German and a worker, but the working class was not deemed to be the carriers of German historical interests (p. 121). This dynamic is clearly at work in the Ugandan example, with Amin admonishing workers not to see their interests as apart from those of managers. In Zimbabwe, specific sectors of the working class were subjected to the campaign of fascist terror in the name of rooting out 'un-Zimbabwean' elements.

The EFF: Just a jump to the left?

There can be no gain-saying that the postapartheid project of constitutional democracy is in crisis. The transition to democracy in 1994 replaced the parliamentary sovereignty of apartheid with constitutional sovereignty. Technocratic governance experienced as a restraint on the popular will spurred on populism, as elsewhere in the world. The ruling ANC has since fluctuated between, on the one hand, neoliberal, proceduralist governance, and on the other, populism as it increasingly decries the fetters of constitutional safeguards against crude majoritarianism (Van der Westhuizen 2016). One of the highest Gini coefficients in the world, postapartheid policies that produced a black middle class but kept some 50 per cent of the population mired in poverty, and a technocratic government that grew distant from ANC party structures paved the way for the ethnopopulism that catapulted Jacob Zuma into the presidency in 2009

(Mathekga 2008; Resnick 2010). Both the neoliberal and populist factions in the party failed to bring about substantive redistribution, despite the democratic constitution's innovative expansion of the usual liberal, individualistic rights framework to include socio-economic and collective entitlements (RSA 1996). With official estimates of between 26 to 52 billion euro siphoned off during the 'lost decade' of 2009–2018 by 'state capture', as the grand-scale corruption during the Zuma presidency is commonly called, more South Africans subsisted on state welfare grants (18 million) than enjoyed employment (16.3 million) before the Coronavirus pandemic struck the country in March 2020, with another three million jobs subsequently lost (Bisseker 2020). The postapartheid social compact has arguably collapsed, with heightened social polarisation, shrinking electoral turnouts, worsening education and health service delivery and higher levels of violence (including politically motivated) as state structures weaken. As voter turnout shrinks, community-based protest has grown to a 'rebellion of the poor' (Alexander 2010).

Malema entered this national landscape as leader of the ANC Youth League in 2008, an indispensable support to Zuma's presidency. His ambition threatened the ANC tradition of generationally transferring its top posts, and he and his coterie were expelled from the ANC in 2012. Malema founded the EFF, which managed to attract 6.35 per cent of the national vote in 2014. In the 2016 local government election, the EFF collected enough votes to decide governing arrangements in three large metropolitan municipalities, including the capital Tshwane and the economic centre Johannesburg. In the last national election in 2019, the party almost doubled its support to 10.8 per cent.

The EFF is here analysed against the primary features of African fascism as identified in Mamdani and Scarnecchia's inquiries into Amin's Uganda and Mugabe's Zimbabwe, respectively. These are: the populist discursive style of anti-imperialist rhetoric, racialisation in the definition of 'the people' and its enemies, violence as method eclipsing politics and economic predation.

Populist discursive style of anti-imperialist rhetoric

African nationalism is characterised by changeability of its normative content (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009: 64). Even during apartheid, political divisions among African nationalists had more to do with organisational competition for influence than with ideological differences, which were subject to shifts if and when opportune (Heffernan 2016). The EFF's (2019: 7) rhetorical call for 'economic freedom in our lifetime', also reflected in the name of the party, first surfaced as an ANC Youth League slogan in 2010. While the notion of economic freedom might conjure Hayekian freemarketeerism, the party's founding manifesto was replete with claims to leftism, as in the description of the party:

> [the EFF is a] radical, leftist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist movement with an internationalist outlook anchored by popular grassroots formations

> and struggles. The EFF will be the vanguard of community and workers' struggles and will always be on the side of the people … The EFF draws inspiration from the broad Marxist-Leninist tradition and Fanonian schools of thought.
>
> *(EFF 2013: 6)*

Hence the much-vaunted vanguard party of authoritarian African politics is invoked, emulating similar ANC rhetoric. Notably, however, socialism does not yet feature explicitly in the above list of claims. By 2019, socialism was centre stage, with the party's national congress themed 'Consolidating the ground towards socialist power'. Malema's earlier interpretation of what the 'ground towards socialist power' would look like, is instructive. As ANC Youth League leader, Malema announced:

> I might have houses. I might have watches. That's what the economic system dictates now. But when we've got an economic system that says everything we have we need to … share … I will be the first one to surrender. I have no problem with socialism. I've got a problem with socialists who want to hijack the ANC and without giving this phase of our revolution a chance to unfold. They want to take us immediately to socialism. That will have serious consequences.
>
> *(Forde 2011: 118)*

In this quotation, Malema is referencing the schema of a 'two-stage revolution', devised by ANC-ally the South African Communist Party (SACP), and adopted by the ANC. Phase one, the 'national democratic revolution', involves destroying white economic and political power, while phase two is to establish a socialist society (Slovo 1988). Malema therefore threatened 'serious consequences' if the capitalist phase was not allowed to 'unfold'. The 'socialists' referred to is the SACP, which Malema increasingly targeted in public attacks, leading the SACP to be the first to accuse him of fascist politics that aims to connect failing black capital with alienated youth (Nzimande 2009). This conflict contains echoes of the stand-off between communism and fascism in the early 1920s. In Halisi's (1998) discussion of South African populisms, while he does not pronounce on fascist potential, he points to a contradictory contention between black nationalist populism and socialist populism. While socialist populists contend that racial and social justice cannot be achieved in a capitalist order, black nationalist populists frequently support anti-capitalist solutions while, paradoxically, being opposed to socialism. They may aspire towards 'an accessible people's capitalism' (p. 426).

The demarcation of the EFF's version of 'the people' sheds further light on this confrontation, as discussed below. Relevant for this discussion of anti-imperialist discourse in relation to authoritarianism is its adaptation of the

borrowed Leninist goal of a 'dictatorship of the proletariat': the EFF's constitution (2014: 2) states that it aims to 'overthrow the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie' and replace it with a 'dictatorship of the people'. Therefore, its aim is a dictatorship of 'the people', which denotes more than the working class but not the whole population. This fits with Halisi's (1998) description of black nationalist populism as a 'reduc[tion] of class differences to assertions of national, racial, multiracial, or even ethnic solidarity' (p. 426). The use of 'dictatorship' can be read in relation to Halisi's analysis of black nationalist populism as sceptical about liberal democracy, particularly its rights emphasis. Taguieff's (1997) remarks on popular disillusionment in neo-democracies about democracy's limited effectiveness in relation to socio-economic inequalities are apt in the South African context. Halisi (1998) points out that the limited impact of democratisation on black people's livelihoods adds grist to the mill of black populist doubts about democracy.

Racialisation in the definition of 'the people' and its enemies

The EFF's 'people' is constituted from

> the working class, South Africans who do not own the means of production, the dejected masses, the homeless, hopeless youth, the rural and urban poor, the informal settlement dwellers, the unemployed and underemployed population, the discriminated and undermined professionals of all races,

with an emphasis on 'the black majority, and Africans in particular' (EFF 2013: 22). The appeal is therefore to the economically marginalised in combination with both the working class and 'professionals', with an overall racial criterion. Malema's public utterances underline this proviso. Already as league leader, he utilised race as a 'mechanism for seeking to disqualify from full insider status' some members of the population (Vincent 2011: 7). Race was even 'more ruthlessly deployed against political opponents' who were 'routinely viciously discredited on racial grounds' (p. 7). Posel (2014: 49) concurs that Malema's rhetoric is 'angrily confrontational and brazenly racializing'.

In another instructive move, he undertook a public visit to Zimbabwe in 2010, amid years of violent repression of the opposition in that country, as described above. He lauded Mugabe as his mentor and praised the latter's forceful expropriation of white-owned farms (Posel 2014: 41). At a subsequent press conference in South Africa about the trip where Malema mocked the opposition MDC, he evicted a British journalist for his 'white tendency', calling him a 'bloody agent' (Smith 2010). At the time, the court found Malema's singing of the song *Dubul' iBhunu* (Kill the Boer/Farmer) at mass rallies to constitute hate speech, after which he undertook not to sing it in public. However, EFF supporters sang the song at a gathering at a rural court in 2020, led by Malema. He conjured the

apartheid era in ways reminiscent of ZANU-PF's evocation of the Smith regime. In a media interview, responding to concerns that clashes between farmers and EFF supporters could lead to a 'civil war', he declared:

> Why should we be scared of retired soldiers when we were not scared of them when they were soldiers when they legitimately carried guns to kill black people. We confronted them with stones. Let history repeat itself. Let us confront the same people our parents confronted, if that [civil war] is going to be the case, let it be.
>
> *(Madisa 2020)*

Notably, while the EFF enjoys little rural support, it later explicitly expanded its appeal to traditional leaders by assuring them of their control of land and that 'western notions' of democracy should be adapted to 'African culture' (EFF 2019: 29, 83). Traditional leaders here refer to unelected rural-based customary leaders, as per Mamdani's (1996) description of colonialism's decentralised despotism, the continuation of which into the democratic era is a bone of contention.

The discourse of racialisation was explicitly extended to white people, most notoriously in 2016 when he propounded that '[w]e are not calling for the slaughtering of white people – at least for now' (Haffajee 2019). At a court hearing involving the murder of a white farm manager, Malema announced that white people may be regarded as South Africans and allowed to live in the country 'as long as they appreciate and accept that we are the rightful owners of South Africa and they are visitors in our country and visitors must behave like visitors do' (Motha 2020).

The year 2020 saw targeted actions by the EFF to provoke direct racial standoffs between black and white people. Supporters were called on to demonstrate at shopping centres against a retailer for 'racist' advertising and bused into a rural town to confront 'white terrorists' (farmers) who had gathered after the murder of a white farm manager (Mathe 2020). Assault and damage to property ensued at a Cape Town high school for hosting a 'white' year-end party.

The other racialised grouping in the crosshairs was the 'Indian Cabal', with reference to Indians in the ANC, several of whom were also members of the SACP. This followed a clampdown on the corrupt activities of a network linked to Malema in his home province of Limpopo, and the seizure of his properties by the South African Revenue Services (SARS) for the repayment of outstanding tax of R16 million. SARS was headed by a prominent Indian member of the ANC, Pravin Gordhan, who later as finance minister was accused by the EFF of waging a campaign against the party. In echoes of Uganda, Malema told a crowd of supporters:

> Here, in Durban, here in KwaZulu-Natal, everything strategic is given to Indian families. Everything, big tender, is given to Indian families. They are the ones who are owning strategic things here, in KwaZulu-Natal.

> We don't have a problem, we are saying to them, 'share, with our people'. We also want to call upon our fellow Indians, here in Natal, to respect Africans. They are ill-treating them. They are treating them worse than [the] Afrikaners [indistinct]. We don't want that to continue, here in Natal. This is not [an] anti-Indian statement. It's the truth.
>
> *(Van Onselen 2017)*

Violence as method eclipsing politics

As has been seen, the EFF utilises a rhetoric of violence which has, over time, progressively sparked violence. As with fascist parties elsewhere, the party promotes violence as political praxis alongside its legitimate activities in parliament. After a transition to democracy marked by political violence and countered with a national discourse of peace, speech promoting violence reappeared during Zuma's ascent to the presidency, exemplified by his signature song at the time, *Umshini Wami* ('(Bring me) my machine gun') (Gunner 2008). The EFF took this up, openly legitimising force as a valid political tool. This approach is a continuity from Malema's ANC Youth League days when he infamously insisted that he would 'kill for Zuma', and agitated for an 'economic war' (Posel 2014: 41, 43), another direct resonance with Uganda and Zimbabwe. Conferences of the league, including when Malema was first elected, degenerated into violence.

However, when the EFF entered parliament in 2014, it seemed that the party would use unconventional but non-violent parliamentary tactics such as filibustering and silent protests. Its approach at the time could be understood as 'an unexpected expansion of the possibilities for deliberative democracy's aim to bring discourses from the public sphere into the institutional space of policy-making … reactivat[ing] parliament as political space' (Van der Westhuizen 2016: 99–100). But, as seen elsewhere on the continent, including in the case of Amin as discussed above, EFF espousal of constitutionalism transpired to be instrumentalist (Southall 2014). A hint of what the party might do if it ever was elevated to government is given by its proposal to postpone the local government elections in 2021. Since then, particularly Malema invokes violence as a matter of course, starting with the party's militarist presentation.

For the EFF's brand of a 'politics of spectacle' (Posel 2014: 48), Malema visited Venezuela in 2010 and copied the Chavist beret and colour red: EFF parliamentarians wear red berets and gendered uniforms in the form of workers' overalls or domestic workers' outfits. Military titles were adopted: Malema is 'commander in chief' and the party has women and youth 'commands'.

Rhetorically, the EFF constitution (2014: 2) states as goal 'the complete overthrow of the neoliberal anti-black state as well as the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes'. In the 2016 local elections manifesto, the commander in chief asserts that the 'EFF's contestation of political power through elections should, however, not be mistaken with our revolutionary determination to remove the

current government by other revolutionary means' (Mbete 2016: 599). Since then, the use of force has escalated, including with violent protests at the retail outlet H&M in 2018 and threats against Gordhan for interfering with EFF rent-seeking. Criminal cases brought against Malema and others include hate speech against journalists investigating alleged corruption by party leaders, assaults of a police officer and a journalist, instigation of land invasions and Malema firing an assault rifle at an EFF rally.

Economic predation

As with the examples of Ugandan and Zimbabwean fascism, the political ends to which violence and anti-imperialist and racialising rhetoric are deployed, most confirm fascist intent – as opposed to the correction of historical injustice. Similar to Uganda's *mafutamingi* and the corrupt elite enrichment in both Uganda and Zimbabwe, Malema et al. have been implicated in ill-begotten gains shortly after their rise to national prominence. Malema's expulsion from the ANC is attributed to his rent-seeking interfering with that of the Zuma patronage network (Bhorat et al. 2017: 14–15). His alleged corrupt activities have been constricted by law enforcement after his departure from the ANC, with pending fraud charges and state recuperation of his tax debt. During Malema's time as youth league leader, he was suspected of corruption with state tenders in his home province of Limpopo (McCain 2019). Since then, investigative journalists have produced evidence that EFF leaders including Malema are implicated in the illicit extraction of large sums from a bank holding mostly monies from poor municipalities, again in Limpopo, to the extent that the bank collapsed (Van Wyk 2019).

Malema exemplifies a 'racial politics of conspicuous consumption' (Posel 2014: 47):

> If we are going to refuse the youth to drive [fancy] cars, it means they are only good for white youth. Ours will never drive those cars. So we must sit and appreciate the good things by whites and not by one of our own. That's what we are trying to break.
>
> *(Malema as cited in Du Preez and Rossouw 2009: 23)*

He has a 'penchant for designer labels, fancy cars, expensive champagne and lavish partying' (Posel 2014: 44), which he regards as 'a mark of distinction that he learnt from the ANC itself' (p. 46). His position has remained defiant over time: 'Louis Vuitton and Gucci, I don't wear it now, I have always worn them, I make no apologies for that' (Sehloho 2019).

In summary, the EFF discourse privileges race over class, confirmed with phrases such as the 'race/class struggle' (EFF 2014: 16). An EFF subject *may* be a worker but *is not firstly* a worker, despite the left revolutionary discourse. It reminds one of Laclau's observation that Nazism drew on class, but its historical

agent was 'the people'. The EFF's version of 'the people' is unequivocally racialised as black. Thus, the opposing camps that the EFF divides the social into are not capitalists versus workers, but white people versus black people. Economic freedom is promised through the assertion of blackness, with violence as politics by other means. At face value, this may be read as simply confirming Halisi's analysis of black nationalist populism. The similarity with the Nazis' biologically defined 'people' would then not be understood as fascist exclusion on the basis of phenotype but as an anti-colonial response against white supremacism. The replacement of the word 'proletariat' with 'the people' in the phrase 'dictatorship of the people' would then also not be understood as anti-democratic, but a response to the disillusionment with continuing inequalities despite democratic governance, with a view to 'deepening' democracy beyond liberal strictures. However, when analysed against the examples of Ugandan and Zimbabwean fascism, which display similar features, the question that must be asked is, 'what *purpose* does the anti-imperialist discourse serve?' And: 'To which ends is violence incited?' The answer does not point to social justice or even racial justice but to the displacement of apartheid's white oligarchy with a black oligarchy bent on self-enrichment at the expense of most (black) South Africans. Here another correspondence with the Ugandan and Zimbabwean examples is notable: infighting in the dominant African nationalist bloc, as factions spar for access to state resources while staving off increasing democratic demands amid simultaneous social, political and economic crises. The EFF's division of 'the people' therefore serves not as a mobilisation of previously excluded groups towards an anti-capitalist advancement of democracy and social justice but as an opportunistic gathering of forces through socialist sloganeering towards predatory accumulation.

Conclusion

In African Studies, authoritarianism also in populist forms is hardly ever considered to be fascist. This is in part due to leftist academics defining fascism as a right-radical phenomenon. With African states mostly engaged in either anti-imperialist nationalism or state socialism, and with the alignment of colonialism with fascism, the latter seems immediately disqualified as an analytical lens. Two studies, on Uganda and Zimbabwe respectively, buck the scholarly trend. Scarnecchia in his study of Zimbabwean fascism shows how a binary understanding based on the race-defined, anti-colonial rhetoric that African nationalists had adopted in the 1960s prevent African Studies scholars from confronting the realities of political power as exercised under Mugabe. Both Scarnecchia and Mamdani, the latter in his careful dissection of Ugandan fascism under Amin, show how anti-imperialist populist rhetoric served as a cloak for devastating anti-people politics, violence and brutal exploitation. Reading South Africa's EFF against the features of African fascism identified by Mamdani and Scarnecchia, the following is found:

Populism as a 'thin' ideology that amounts primarily to a discursive style allows the EFF to deploy leftist revolutionary sloganeering to paradoxical ends. The first of these is a construction of 'the people' which meshes class with race, with the effect that unequal capitalist relations are obscured while race emerges as the most pressing category of domination to be addressed. Indeed, success in capitalist terms, as demonstrated by conspicuous consumption, is held up as the hallmark of black empowerment to which the EFF's version of 'the people' must aspire. The construction of 'the people' as black situate white and Indian others as its enemies. War against these enemies will deliver 'economic freedom' to black people. In the method of violence displacing politics and the drawing of the boundaries of 'the people', fascism becomes apparent as the driving ideology in these cases. But the decisive indicator is the ends to which 'the people' are mobilised and violence unleashed. For the EFF, 'economic freedom' means amassing great wealth. Where EFF rhetoric meets practice, the amassing of wealth is through predatory accumulation. The party does not occupy government (yet) but the harbinger of its intent of predatory accumulation is the mounting evidence of corruption against EFF leaders.

This analysis therefore shows that a binary ideological understanding of 'left versus right' foregrounds anti-colonial discourse at the expense of confronting the devastating anti-people violence and exploitation behind the discourse. Indeed, it would be more fruitful to confront these violences as forms of African fascism or, at the very least, right-radical populism.

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4

POPULISM IN EMERGING ECONOMIES

Authoritarian politics, labour precariousness, and aspirational classes in Brazil, India, and the Philippines (BIP)

Rosana Pinheiro-Machado, Cristina Marins, Pamela Combinido, and Fabio Malini

Introduction

At the beginning of the 2000s, emergent economies were promising bastions of global democracy. Yet, democratic consolidation faces significant challenges as Brazil, India, and the Philippines (BIP) elected populist authoritarian politicians in the 2010s. In a period of four years, Narendra Modi was elected in India in 2014, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines in 2016, and finally Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil in 2018.

In consonance with this volume's purpose, we seek to comprehend the rise of the extremists in the Global South from the perspective of emerging economies' singularities and their development contradictions. In this regard, it is noteworthy that emerging economies' economic growth fostered new aspirational classes amidst labour precariousness. Several figures show that the so-called 'new middle classes' supported authoritarian politicians in the BIPs. We examine why and how this occurs. A key problem in the scholarship on radical right supporters is to rely exclusively on reactionary emotions of anger, hate, resentment, and nostalgia in contexts of impoverishment and recession. In contexts of growth, reactive emotions must be understood alongside active drivers of aspirations and self-fulfilment stimulated by the neoliberal entrepreneurial ideal.

First, we analyse some key aspects of emerging economies' development models, such as economic growth, new out-of-poverty aspirational classes, and the maintenance of high levels of labour precarity and informality. Second, we look at debates on class subjectivity to understand how and why low-income precarious workers, who belong to these emerging strata, support the far-right. Finally, we discuss the importance of understanding the workers' aspirations beyond conventional analyses focused on the politics of resentment. We argue that the entrepreneurial dream, coupled with class anxiety, leads masses of the

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precariat to identify itself with upper classes' political values – and this ideological process is facilitated by new technologies and platforms that reinforce individualistic, authoritarian, and conservative political values.

Aspirations amidst precariousness

In the 2000s, BIP economies were growing fast while the world's economic situation declined. While the world average annual GDP growth rate dropped from 2.98 (1981–2000) to 2.84 per cent (2001–2013), Brazil's average annual GDP growth rate rose from 2.10 in the 1980s and 1990s to 3.28 from 2001 to 2013. Over the same period, India's average GDP growth rate went from 5.58 to 6.51. Philippines' average went from 2.34 between 1981 and 2000 to 5.06 from 2001 to 2013.[1] Several studies identified that this period of economic growth fostered new middle classes in Brazil, India and the Philippines. In Brazil, nearly 29 million people entered the new middle class between 2003 and 2009, meaning that it comprised 50.5 per cent of the total population (Neri, 2011). In India, the new middle class (namely the fraction of the population spending between $2 and $10 per capita per day) doubled in size between 2004 and 2005 and, by 2012, was amounting to nearly half of India's population (Krishnan and Hatekar, 2017). In the Philippines, a decade of rapid economic growth has supported upward mobility and the expansion of the middle class, according to the World Bank.[2] The middle class increased from 6.7 million people in 2006 to 9.3 million in 2015, and the economically secure increased from 24.2 million to 35.3 million.

At present, there is a vast body of scholarly literature that critically examines the imprecision of these numbers and class definitions (for example, Klein, Mitchell, and Junge, 2018; Krishnan and Hatekar, 2017) and the contradictions of such a socio-economic phenomenon has been centred around consumer and entrepreneurial values (Kravets and Sandikci, 2014; Lange and Meier, 2009). As a result of BIP's economic growth, these new strata experienced an improvement of the living standards, became new consumers, obtained financial inclusion, and developed aspirations for social mobility amid intensive governmental propaganda that fostered the idea that 'it is time to shine' (Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco, 2022). As Lero (forthcoming) suggests, these strata emerge from both rapid and unequal economic growth and state policies that led to the development of this new sector characterised by frustration, since this segment has resources to purchase more valuable goods but it is still economically insecure, making them sensitive to crime, for example.

Current research developed by Pertierra and collaborators – in the Philippines, Brazil, Mexico, and China[3] – seeks to coin a new conceptualisation that, through the lenses of mass consumption, overcomes the now-insufficient notions of 'urban poor' or the 'new middle classes'. Both concepts do not account for the reality of low-income groups who are not below the poverty line but could barely be classified as middle classes if we consider the precariousness of their livelihoods. Recognising such a limit, we opt here for adopting the category of 'aspirational

classes' to designate these strata that are the immediate result of the economic boom. The rise of aspirational classes could be understood as one of the political effects of development models that stimulated social inclusion through consumption and entrepreneurial activities. It refers to individuals from countries that have thrived economically in the first years of the 21st century and saw themselves climbing the social ladder. Despite the positive economic conditions that allowed upward mobility in the BIPs, individuals who make up aspirational classes perceive it mainly as a result of hard work and individual effort.

Concerning the BIPs countries, data from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) show that informal employment represents 56 per cent of the Filipino economy in 2017 and 80 per cent of non-agricultural economy in the Indian economy in 2013.[4] ILO numbers also suggest that the Brazilian share of informality reached 45.0 per cent in 2016.[5] Thus, emergent economies fostered masses of people's 'capacity to aspire' (Appadurai, 2004) to a better life and incentivised entrepreneurial policies and imaginaries amidst various forms of labour force's informalisation, precarisation, instability, and contract flexibilisation. Although the desire for a better future is not exclusive to more affluent and powerful groups, it is shaped by social, cultural and economic experiences, and it is not equally distributed (Bok, 2010).

Since the 1970s, informality has been perceived as unregulated, unprotected, unregistered, and/or undeclared economic activities that are not part of a segmented or marginal market (Castells, Portes, and Benton, 1989; Chen, 2007; Hart, 1973; Maloney, 2004). In the 21st century, the concept of informality becomes increasingly imprecise as profound transformations occur in the nature of work. First, informalisation, in the sense of flexible contracts or unstable work conditions, became a transversal phenomenon across social classes and developing and developed countries alike (Hart, 2015). Parallelly, (precarious) self-employment entrepreneurial lifestyle is becoming a norm vis-à-vis formal labour contract. This process stems from entrepreneurial rationality through which individuals transfer the responsibility of their success or failure to themselves – and not to the economic system (Dardot and Laval, 2014). Both phenomena result in persistent levels of labour informalisation and the formation of what some scholars name the new *precariat* to designate workers under flexible, temporary, part-time, and unstable contracts. They are exploited inside and outside the workplace, but they don't develop occupation identity (Banki, 2013; Meardi, Simms, and Adam, 2021; Siegmann and Schiphorst, 2016; Standing, 2011, 2013, 2014; Swider, 2015; Van Oort, 2015).

The most drastic reorganisation of labour in the 21st century is provoked by technology, digitalisation, and more specifically, *platformisation*, which refers to businesses that rely upon information technology, data, and the internet for their business models (Srnicek, 2017). Digital technologies and online platforms mediate individual suppliers and buyers of labour through 'algorithm management' that trace and disciplines workers in the absence of health, and security regulations (Lee et al. 2015; Hauben, 2020; Tucker, 2020; Vandaele, 2018).

Platformisation also means that businesses adopt the logic of interactivity and high visibility from the social media platforms as a way to promote their products and services, forcing a working-class shift that transform workers into digital influencers themselves, whose values are based on sending and receiving scores to maximise engagement with a platform, creating a sense of community regulated by algorithmic systems (Bucher, 2018). As detailed in the next sections, we look at platform workers because the literature suggests platformisation tends to engulf long-standing forms of labour (Huws et al., 2018; Kenney and Zysman, 2016; Scholz, 2016), which is becoming accelerated in COVID times.

Platformisation is a global phenomenon that sparks the increasing interest of scholars (Vandaele, 2018) and institutional bodies (European Parliament, 2020) to evaluate and predict, for example, its impacts on Europe. Yet, we follow Soriano's (2019, 2020) argument that it is necessary to understand digital workers from a Global South perspective, observing how persistent forms of informality and precariousness are now transmuted into exploitative and self-exploitative platform sweatshops amidst a new entrepreneurial aspirational imaginary of success and flexibility. There is much room to investigate the political consequences of transmuting the former massive marginality into an ideal of modern and high-tech labour. Will the 'platform workers of the world unite', as some scholars question (Cant and Mogno, 2020; Wood, Lehdonvirta, and Graham, 2018)?

Turning right? Class and political subjectivity

Evidence from polls and academic works show that aspirational classes supported right-wing parties and candidates in Brazil (Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco, 2020; Richmond, 2020), India (Jaffrelot, 2015; Kaur, 2014), and the Philippines (Caspile, 2016; Heydarian, 2018; Teehankee and Thompson, 2016). In Brazil and the Philippines, for example, Lero (forthcoming) argues that this phenomenon is related to class insecurity that led these segments to support the anti-establishment candidates that defended a more punitive approach to violence.

Emerging scholarly literature that investigates aspirational classes' support for the right-wing leaders in previous elections indicates how political interpretations relate to individuals' everyday experiences, frustrations, and aspirations. Urban low-income votes for Bolsonaro in 2018, for example, seem to be directly linked to a perception of inability and unwillingness of the political class to address issues such as squeezed incomes, poor public services and urban insecurity (Richmond, 2020). Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco's (2020) interlocutors were Uber drivers who resented the fact they were not poor enough to receive social benefits and felt that the supposedly corrupted government did not value those who, like them, worked around 15 hours a day. Evangelical voters, in particular, massively supported Bolsonaro, combining features of moral conservatism and the pursuit of economic prosperity (Almeida, 2019; see also Teixeira and Bulgarelli, this volume).

In India, Modi's ability to attract large sections of the emerging 'neo-middle class' born out of the economic growth of the previous decade, that 'aspire to a higher status, security, and respect for authority' have been decisive (Capelos and Basu, 2021; Jaffrelot, 2013, 2016; Sridharan, 2014). Modi's campaign featured promises of rapid economic development, together with the idea of 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance' (Ruparelia, 2015). Skilful use of media, including social media, is often referred to as one of the crucial components of Modi's victory and consolidation in power (Pal, 2015; Rao, 2018; Sinha, 2017; Srivastava, 2015). Ideological inclination of the BJP towards Hindu nationalism (see Roy, this volume; Chatterji, Hansen, and Jaffrelot, 2019; Harriss, 2015; Sud, 2020; Wojczewski, 2020), a political project that claims that India's nationhood is based on Hindu cultural-religious traditions, is suspicious of the non-Hindu communities and manifests an express animosity towards Muslims (Palshikar, 2015) also plays a central role in the Indian context.

In the Philippines, Duterte strongly appealed to aspirational classes who felt excluded from the Philippines' previous economic gains (Casiple, 2016; Heydarian, 2018; Teehankee and Thompsons, 2016). Teehankee and Thompsons (2016) describe Duterte's rise to power as 'not a revolt of the poor … [but] the angry protest of the wealthy, newly rich, well off, and the modestly successful new middle class (including call centre workers, Uber drivers, and overseas Filipino workers abroad)'. One reading of Duterte's popularity among aspirational classes is that the Corazon Aquino administration's reformist agenda focused on providing conditional cash transfer to the poor and forging public-private partnerships contracts to the benefit of the rich. The new middle classes – who became slightly better off after years of economic growth – were, however, left to suffer from lack of access to social services (like the conditional cash transfer), shameful airport and traffic situation, perceived breakdown of peace and order, and rampant corruption (Teehankee and Thompson, 2016).

Duterte's politics of 'I will' captured the anxieties as well as demands of the aspirational classes (Curato, 2016; Teehankee and Thompson, 2016). For example, Duterte's war on drugs brought to the centre their 'latent anxieties' about the situation of peace and order in the Philippines (Curato, 2016). It is not accidental that Duterte first gained popularity among the new middle class voters in urban centres (Curato 2016), like the call centre agent who feared for her safety going to work in the middle of the night because her community is a hotbed of crime, or the domestic worker abroad who feared that their children may fall prey to drug pushers (Cornelio and Medina, 2019). Indeed, these are latent anxieties in so far as these are everyday concerns that are not spectacular enough to merit the national government's attention (Curato 2016, p. 99). But Duterte met these anxieties with a promise of certainty and ambitious calls for a brutal and immediate implementation of 'law and order', backing his promise with evidence of his more than two-decade leadership in Davao City that became one of the richest and peaceful cities that new middle classes aspire to live in.

Unlike the figure of the impoverished, 'loser of globalisation', left-behind, and nostalgic citizen who supported Brexit in the United Kingdom or Donald Trump in the United States, aspirational classes in the Global South have been experiencing a real or imagined sense of upwards mobility as a result of economic growth. As Kaur (2014) puts it, they are hungriest for change, proud of not being poor, having gained some educational background and hoping for an entrepreneurial future. To understand how these aspirations impact political subjectivity, our research project looks at the nexus between labour precariousness and far-right adhesion. In relation to the former, we tend to focus on platform workers, as platformisation is a global trend in the post-COVID world.

The literature on the politics of both precariat and platform workers focuses on possibilities of unionism, class solidarity, and collective action organisation, not rarely in terms of class struggle. Braga (2017) discusses the precariat's rebellion. Standing (2011, 2013, 2014) extensively writes on 'dangerous classes'' political potential for 'primitive revolts', an idea that shares some similarities with the concept of multitude, that is, political subjects capable of political action (Negri and Hardt, 2009). Studies of new platform workers, in their turn, explore their forms of resistance and agency (Cant, 2019; Cant and Mogno, 2020; Woodcock, 2021), unionism (Tucker, 2020; Vandaele, 2018; Wood, Lehdonvirta, and Graham, 2018) and solidarity (Soriano and Cabañes, 2020). All these works play a key role in investigating grounds for fairer labour as well as identifying emergent and/or vanguard forms of collective organisation in the platform labour era.

In this chapter, our argument is somehow different but complementary to these efforts. As important as researching political *mobilisation* is to identify the forces that produce *demobilisation*. In the understanding of the rise of the radical right in emerging economies in the Global South, it is vital to look at possible anti-democratic and anti-rights political subjectivity – and its political ambiguity – that emerges among precarious platform workers.

From an anthropological perspective, Pinheiro-Machado's work (2008, 2017) in Brazil has shown a great deal of ambiguity and contradiction in the informal workers' subjective political formation. In her ethnography conducted among street vendors at the turn of the millennium, traders already adopted an anti-progressive narrative and anti-working-class identity that blamed poorer traders for their problems, denouncing their peers to the police. A significant part of the traders rejected left-wing politicians because they portrayed the traders as marginalised or any other label that addressed notions of 'lack' or 'exclusion', such as informality, opting for representing themselves as entrepreneurs, and seeing themselves as part of a dynamic part of the economy. However, that intense individualism and competitiveness was not a totalising process and occurred hand-by-hand with several forms of group solidarity, mutual help, and even a working-class identity that could be activated according to the context. In a similar vein, Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco (2020, 2021), among Uber drivers who supported Bolsonaro, identified workers praised themselves as honest hard workers, victims of a corrupted political system, and supposedly lazy poor people

who received social benefits (e.g., the conditional cash transfer programme Bolsa Familia). Bolsonaro echoed these values, praising self-employed workers – 'the good citizens' – who would be valued in his government. Bolsonaro responded to a particular category of precarious workers' existential crisis.

Narenda Modi, by his turn, continuously highlighted during his 2014 election campaign that he was a self-made man who started from the lowest rungs of the social ladder and climbed to the top on the strength of his willpower and abilities (Torri, 2015). One illustration of Modi's success in winning support from informal workers is the so-called *chai wallah* (tea vendor) affair mentioned by Torri: when the well-known congressman and former minister Mani Shankar Aiyar made a mocking remark at Modi's past as a boy serving tea in his father's outfit and Modi replied by claiming that 'those who thrived on dynasty politics could not accept being challenged by somebody "whose mother used to wash dishes" '.

In the Philippines, informal workers' basis of support for illiberal and authoritarian politics is underexplored. While there are divergent interpretations of Duterte's popularity among different sectors of society, understanding the political subjectivity of informal workers has not been given enough merit the same way, for example, that overseas Filipino workers' vote has been long acknowledged as pivotal in mobilising electoral success (Aranda, 2021; Cook and Salazar, 2016). We argue that this is another area worth exploring given the rise of platform workers in the Philippines with the improvement of infrastructures that support their work and the Philippine government's recognition of them as the new 'modern heroes' (Soriano and Cabanes, 2019). Evidence from ethnography of disinformation work during the 2016 and 2019 elections have shown that some of these platform workers can be used as a 'stockpile of weapons' to achieve different political ends (Ong and Cabanes, 2018, p. 31).

Resentment and beyond

The politics of resentment, namely the logic of a common enemy in which 'us' are against 'them' (because 'them' threatens 'us') (see, for example, Stanley, 2020), is a persistent feature among far-right-wing supporters worldwide. Contemporary works on the global authoritarian turn have pointed that 'culture/bias/racism' has been a key motivation, over 'economy/hardship/austerity' in voters, to choose Donald Trump or Brexit (Fetzer, 2018; Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Smith and Hanley, 2018; Womick et al., 2019). When we look at labour precariousness, the dichotomy culture/economy fades away, as both dimensions are mutually constituted. The enemies are target groups that only make sense within a socio-economic context. In Brazil, the enemies of the 'decent families' are supporters of the Workers' Party, *vagabundos* (criminals), academics, LGBTQI+ and feminist activists (Almeida, 2019, Solano, 2018). Religious minorities are enemies in Hindu nationalistic politics in India (Kim, 2017), and criminals and human

rights defenders are the enemies of Duterte's war against drugs (Pernia, 2019; Thompson, 2016).

The literature on far-right political subjectivity among low-income and/or precarious workers worldwide has predominantly focused on reactionary emotions against the cultural, political and economic system, such as *resentment* (Betz, 1993; Bonikowski, 2017; Cramer, 2016), *anger* (Kimmel, 2017; Richmond, 2020; Smith and Hanley, 2018; Vasilopoulos, 2019), *hate* (Solano, 2018), *nostalgia* (Balthazar, 2017; Göpffarth, 2021; Richmond, 2020), *fear* (Rico, Guinjoan, and Anduiza, 2017; Wodak, 2015). and *moral envy* (Graeber, 2018). Most of these studies deal with voters who suffer the consequences of economic recession, cultivate nostalgic feelings about an idealised prosperous past, blame immigrants for their hardships or discredit consolidated liberal democracies. Although these emotions are also resent in the Global South, they do not represent the full picture of emerging economies – and that is the reason why we need to calibrate the lenses through which we frame low-income voters' support for authoritarian politicians in the South.

While we believe that is fundamental continue investigating reactive subjectivity, we argue that that such approach alone is insufficient in the context of the Global South, failing to capture the nuances of the emotional drivers that actively mobilise a large part of precarious self-employed workers' aspirations, sense of community, and motivations to move upwards. Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco (2020) ethnography among Bolsonaro voters suggested that focusing solely on negative emotions produces a reductionist picture of voters' subjectivity, obscuring the possibility of grasping such a complex phenomenon comprehensively. Their work showed that reactive emotions against enemies (the poorer and the criminals) are fuelled with active engagement and hope for a prosperous entrepreneurial future (Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco, 2020). Our ongoing research projects[6] on Brazilian low-income traders who enterprise on Instagram shows that finance or religious influencers spread motivational and hyper-meritocratic messages that promise rapid moneymaking through hardworking, faith, digital marketing, and stock exchange investment. In this digital context, the political lexicon of resentment is intertwined with an aspirational vocabulary related to positivity and success. These workers do not aspire to any labour rights and believe exclusively on the self-made venture.

While the public sphere denounces Bolsonaro's inability to put in practice preventive measures to curb the COVID-19 spread, a large part of these groups sympathised with the President's attitude, relying on a hyper-individualistic neoliberal governance style in which the state shouldn't intervene in any aspect of economic life. Looking at Bolsonaro's digital performance, for example, we note that he constructs 'alternative facts' that are in sync with the positive aspirations of his online social base. During the outbreak of COVID-19 in Brazil, for example, Bolsonaro did not adopt a policy based on social distancing and lockdown measures. On the contrary, he launched the digital campaign #BrazilCannotStop, with a strong emotional appeal that supported the idea

that the pandemic would kill more companies than individuals, which would liquidate the country's economy. This strategy took thousands of businessmen and micro-entrepreneurs to the streets in a movement against the lockdown that had been established by the state governors. Bolsonaro used the narrative of normality and resilience, leaving the vocabulary of fear restricted to those he labelled the #StayAtHome gang. At the end of 2020, no Brazilian governor managed to institute a lockdown under pressure from these local Bolsonarista entrepreneurs, leaving citizens vulnerable to 'flexibility measures', resulting in the death of more than half a million Brazilians by that time. The alternative fact (#BrazilCannotStop) transformed the demonstrations of #StayAtHome into a meaningless fact, as if it were a wish of privileged workers who could work from home.

Final remarks

The pandemic COVID-19 has transformed the world of work, especially towards platformisation and self-employment in the digital economy. Delivery apps expanded their activities and the number of informal digital businesses increased exponentially in several countries. In the BIP countries, urban street vendors, for example, started to enterprise on social media, like Instagram or WhatsApp, in an online environment where digital populists achieved political hegemony (Cesarino, 2019). While increasing precarisation could lead to workers' frustration with the government's lack of social welfare measures, it is also true that the relapse in attitude of BIP national authorities was finetuned with a large part of low-income precarious workers who aspire to a better life through entrepreneurship. During the pandemic – and also beyond – new authoritarian politicians have been skilful in spreading populist messages to these out-of-poverty segments, reinforcing the importance of workers' self-efforts to countries' development. To a great extent, these populists inverted the logic of informalisation as a *lack* of employment or labour rights by emphasising the full economic and moral value of self-employment, entrepreneurship, and meritocracy.

Such a forged populist direct link between authoritarian politicians and precarious workers is not exclusive to emerging countries, evidently. The singularity is the scale and magnitude of this process in which millions of people were emerging out of poverty as a result of economic growth, seeing themselves moving upwards in contexts where unstable democratic institutions and labour precarity prevailed. A vast part of these emerging segments does not have any previous memory of welfare state legacy or working-class unionism to regret. Even under precarity, these workers encountered in authoritarian politics a channel to boost their individual and family projects. This process takes place amidst class anxiety and ambiguity, marked by both the fear of losing the few new material acquisitions and the positive aspiration to move upwards.

Finally, this chapter drew on the main lines of inquiry of an emergent research project on labour precariousness and authoritarian politics in the BIPs.[7] We have

argued that the understanding of the rise of the radical right should take into account the specific junctures and development contradictions of emerging economies from the Global South, such as rapid economic growth, slight social mobility, and harsh labour precariousness. This perspective may help us to attain a more accurate account of both top-down broader structural factors that led to the emergence of authoritarian populists and bottom-up subjective forces that sustain this process from below.

Notes

1 Data from the World Bank DataBank, available at: https://databank.worldbank.org/
2 See World Bank. (2020). The middle class in the Philippines: An exploration of the conditions for upward mobility. World Bank, Washington, DC. World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34099
3 New Consumer Cultures in the Global South, funded by Discovery Grant, Australian Research Council (2019–2022). Prof Anna Cristina Pertierra; Prof Czarina Saloma-Akpedonu, Dr Rosana Pinheiro Machado; Dr Tingting Liu; and Dr Ahtziri Molina. www.westernsydney.edu.au/ics/projects/new_consumer_cultures_in_the_global_south
4 See International Labour Organization (ILO). Size of the informal economy in the Philippines. Available at www.ilo.org/manila/eventsandmeetings/WCMS_634914/lang--en/index.htm
5 See International Labour Organization (ILO). Statistics on the informal economy. Available at: https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/informality/
6 Malini and Pinheiro-Machado have conducted on Instagram and twitter on low-income traders, investiment, and politics. Marins is conducting a post-doctoral reseach at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro on the political subjectitity of carioca's platform workers.
7 ERC Consolidator Grant (2022–2017), WorkPoliticsBIP, Principle Investigator: Rosana Pinheiro-Machado.

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5

POPULIST FOREIGN POLICIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Comparing the far-right identity-set between Brazil and India

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Introduction

When Bolsonaro visited New Delhi in January 2020, the Brazilian President vowed that 'the strategic partnership between India and Brazil is based on similar ideologies and values'.[1] Brazil's former minister of foreign affairs, Ernesto Araújo, celebrated the fact that India does not follow 'those who say that nations should renounce their identities to be competitive'. 'It's just the opposite,' he said. For him, India's nationalistic foreign policy was inspiring: 'Only nations that recognize themselves as nations can aspire be something in the world. This is the lesson from India and also what Brazil is trying to give to the world.'[2] In a meeting between the leaders, Modi and Bolsonaro hailed the fact the George Soros, the nemesis of the extreme right worldwide, had criticized them in Davos calling Bolsonaro and Modi 'authoritarian' leaders. They enjoyed the idea of being criticized by Soros and the Brazilian media jokingly said they were 'dating'.[3]

However, and despite their similar far-right credentials, their foreign policy has striking differences. In this chapter, we analyse how far-right populists design their foreign policy identity-set in the Global South. It is common to assume that Global South leaders have a lot in common in terms of their foreign policy identity formation due to the necessity to overcome the obstacles of development and prosperity. They face the same problems so they must act and think more or less the same. It is even more expected when leaders from different Global South countries have the same ideological background. But this is not the case between Bolsonaro's Brazil and Modi's India. We compare Jair Bolsonaro's (2019–2020) to Narendra Modi's (2014–2020) foreign policy to show that, despite the tendency in the literature to see populists' national identities as something monolithically organized, there are important differences concerning the central identities of

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populist governments in the Global South. That is, while Bolsonaro's distinctive foreign policy identities—*anti-globalist*, *pro-Judeo-Christian civilization*, *anti-foe*, and *ultranationalist*—are in line with what is discussed in the literature of populism, Modi's most predominant identities—*domestic developer*, *emerging power*, *responsible stakeholder*, *civilizational power*, *anti-foe*, and *regional power*—are somewhat different from what is expected from populists'. The only exception is the *civilizational power* identity.

In our analysis, we speculate that such variation is related to India's foreign policy establishment that managed to withstand the pressure from domestic far-right populist movements very effectively, whereas in Brazil that was not the case. There are two interrelated reasons for this difference between Brazil and India. *First*, Modi's decision to follow the previous Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) government of Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998–2004), and its pragmatic foreign policy centred on geopolitics and South Asian strategic considerations, has put far-right ideological views on the sidelines in India. On the other hand, due to the decline of Brazil's position in the world during Dilma Rousseff's (2011–2016) administration, Bolsonaro systematically used in the domestic debate Rousseff's poor record in foreign affairs, igniting the local far-right's world views demanding for outright change in Brazil's foreign policy. And once in power, he brought the domestic debate to the foreign policy official narrative.

Second, while Bolsonaro's populist movement has been greatly influenced by the rhetoric of the far-right in the United States, enabling the imitation of Trump's narrative of 'Western Civilization under attack', India's Bharatiya Janata Party association to Hindu nationalism rejects classical Western identities and embraces *Hindutva* (Hinduness). While the far-right rhetoric imitated by Bolsonaro is an international narrative, in which the world is seen through the lens of religious and anti-globalist cleavages, the Hindu nationalism chosen by Modi is in tandem with India's traditional position as a developing country and responsible stakeholder in the multilateral system.

To compare these countries, we collected 383 foreign policy discourses from Jair Bolsonaro and Ernesto Araújo (Minister of Foreign Affairs) during the first two years of Bolsonaro's administration (from January 2019 to December 2020), and 1,188 foreign policy discourses from Narendra Modi, Sushma Swaraj (Minister of External Relations from May 2014 to May 2019), Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (Minister of External Relations from May 2019 to December 2020), and other members of India's Minister of External Relations during the last six years of Modi's tenure in India (2014–2020). We use human-coding textual analysis to reliably measure identity formations in large bodies of texts, considering that what we present in this chapter is, to date, the most extensive comparison of foreign policy documents between these two populist leaders.

The chapter is divided into four parts. First, we review the literature on populism and foreign policy to show the origins of populist foreign policy identities formations. Second, we review Bolsonaro's foreign policy and present its results, and then Modi's foreign policy. Finally, we conclude with conjectures about the

causes of the variation between Bolsonaro's and Modi's foreign policy identity-set despite their similar far-right populist rhetoric in the domestic arena.

Populist foreign policies in the Global South

In the last 20 years, populism has been widely studied in the social sciences. However, the international implications of populism remain relatively underexplored. As Plagemann and Destradi rightly argued (2019), populism researchers have mainly focused on theoretical and conceptualization issues, while International Relations scholars have largely elided the phenomenon. Many IR studies continued to treat populism as a monolith, with significant consequences, both analytical and practical (Stengel, MacDonald, and Nabers, 2019). In this sense, Saull, Anievas, and Davidson (2015) sustain that any analysis of populism should consider an ontology that emphasizes the international, in all its varied dimensions, and how different perspectives of the international give consistency to its meaning. In addition, many studies on populist foreign policy have been centred in the North and analyse how globalization has influenced the rise of right-wing political parties and their foreign policy in Europe and North America (Liang 2016; Drezner 2017; Verbeek and Zaslove 2017; Chryssogelos 2018; Biegon 2019; Wojczewski 2019b;).

After the rise of Donald Trump and a series of far-right electoral victories in Europe, many scholars paid attention to the international implications of populist movements that originated in the North, with apparently less enthusiasm when it happened in the South. Nevertheless, the scenario is changing with more studies focusing on Global South populism coming out. One can find recent studies on the personal profiles of populist leaders and their consequences in terms of foreign policy-making, including a few from the Global South (Ozdamar and Ceydilek 2019; Verbeek, et al. 2015). More recently, Burrier (2019) and Wajner (2019, 2021) have studied the political and economic implications of the long tradition of populist foreign policies in Latin America. Destradi and Plagemann (2019) analyse Modi's highly centralized and personalized populism and how the traditional foreign policy establishment, including the Ministry of External Affairs, has lost some of its previous authority. In a similar vein, Wojczewski (2019a) analyses the populist discourse of India's foreign policy discourse under Modi, who has promised to purify India from a corrupt elite and pursue an 'India first' policy.

Others have focused on populist leaders' choices in terms of identities and roles in the Global South. For example, Guimarães and Silva (2021) have analysed how a populist government in the Global South – Bolsonaro – has enacted its foreign policy identity-set mimicking Donald Trump's leading national roles. Likewise, Wehner and Thies (2021) used the concept of populism within a role theory framework to trace the foreign policy roles that populist governments play in the Argentina of Carlos Menem and Venezuela of Hugo Chavez.

In this context of burgeoning literature, what do the studies say about the most common national identities used in foreign policy narratives by populist

leaders? For example, is there any specific populist identity that only occurs in the Global South? Or do they all mimic their Northern counterparts? To answer these questions, one needs to look back at what the specialized literature says about the main populist identities formations.

The literature shows that populists leaders display two prevalent characteristics. The first tenant is the existence of two antagonistic poles: elite and people. According to Cas Mudde's well-known definition, populism is 'an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite," and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people' (2004, 543). For populists, the elite shares a Manichean worldview in which only its narrow interests are fulfilled by party and institutional politics at the expense of the 'true people'. The people in question are a homogeneous body related to a mythological foundation and tradition, with the elite corrupting the 'purity' of such chosen people.

The second characteristic is the authoritarian components of their narratives. For Norris and Inglehart (2019), these authoritarian aspects or values prioritize the importance of (1) security against risks of instability and disorder (immigrants are stealing our jobs); (2) the value of conformity to preserve national traditions (LGBTs are changing our families); (3) the loyalty towards influential leaders who protect the group customs and traditions. In such an imaginary, 'majorities act like mistreated minorities', and enemy images are kept alive so that 'governing [is] a permanent campaign' against the imaginary enemies of the people (Muller 2019, 42).

The two main traits of populism can be translated into *four ideational sources* from which populists design their national role conceptualizations: 'anti-globalism' sentiments, 'nationalistic' preferences, the supremacy of a 'Judeo-Christian civilization' over all other religions, and 'anti-foe' views in which 'enemies of the true people' are always behind the scenes manipulating political events in their favour (Destradi and Plagemann 2019; Guimarães and Silva 2021).

More precisely, the first common aspect of a populist's foreign policy is to see international agencies or famous entrepreneurs (e.g. George Soros) as global international conspirators. Since populist leaders aim to represent the true 'people' against corrupt 'elites' controlling international institutions, diplomacy represents an elitist and exclusive community comprised of unelected foreign policy bureaucrats. Their primary goal is to advance a political agenda antithetical to the true will of the 'people'. For populist leaders, international bureaucrats and their organizations represent a 'globalist' and 'multiculturalist' conspiracy undermining the 'natural' proclivities and aspirations of the people (Panizza 2005; Destradi and Plagemann 2019).

Second, far-right populists are strong supporters of national sovereignty. As Destradi and Plagemann (2019) and Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) have argued, populist leaders perceive international institutions as limiting their government's capacity to control much-valued national sovereignty. Therefore, populists try

to sideline such institutions as they do with national institutions domestically. Sharp criticism of an allegedly unresponsive elite and a corresponding demand for restoring the people's sovereignty is a critical feature of modern far-right governments. Thus, the bashing of 'elitist' international institutions in the name of national sovereignty becomes an essential instrument of domestic mobilization for populist leaders.

Third, populist leaders tend to use the idea of 'civilization under attack' by globalists, mainly the far-right. They share the authoritarian idea of 'nativism' based on religious nationalism. That is, nativism alludes to the notion that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ('the nation') and that non-native ('alien') elements are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 34). The representation of nativism in foreign policy is the defense of civilizations and its dominant religion as the primary core identity to be protected at all costs. De Cleen, Glynos, and Mondon (2021, 162) argue that the 'radical right's nationalism is clearly exclusionary, and is combined with a concern with the larger-scale territorially, racially, ethnically, and/or culturally defined identities. This identity is discursively constructed through nationalism but on the scale of nations, continents, religion, and civilizations.

Fourth, populist leaders feed on an oppositional image using a Schmittian friend/foe cleavage in international affairs. For Carl Schmitt (1932), every political community has a constitutive distinction between friends and foes or insiders and outsiders. It is a natural social phenomenon to have political rivals opposing each other aggressively. Thus, the authoritarian predilection for security against risks of instability and disorder allows far-right populists to create artificial and conspiratorial enemies to sustain their 'pro-national' narrative. The hostility against 'foreigners' or against a 'globalist conspiracy' that prevents popular identity from achieving its complete dominance is directed towards the enemy within and abroad in the attempt to divide the population into two camps of 'us' and 'them' (Panizza 2005; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017).

In sum, there are four types of sources for national identities used by populist leaders according to the specialized literature: the anti-globalist, the nationalist, the religious/nativist, and the anti-foe. Ideally, these four sources should find some expression in any populist foreign policy narrative. In the following sections, we discuss the national role conceptions found in the foreign policy narratives of Brazil and India in light of this debate.

As mentioned before, we use content analysis to depict Brazil and India's foreign policy identity formation. We have gathered 383 speeches from Brazil (2019–2020) and 1,181 speeches from India (2014–2020). We manually coded about 10 per cent of the total corpus according to each country's main identities found in the specialized literature. After that, researchers assigned weights for each identity present in the sample of speeches. After carefully assessing the speeches, we assumed that each speech is composed of six identities in India and four in the case of Brazil. In this way, each identity has a specific weight that adds

up to 100 per cent. If one identity completely dominates the speech in hand, it will weigh 100 per cent, while the others will be 0 per cent. If all are present in equal intensity in a given speech, each one will weigh 1/6 in India and 1/4 in the case of Brazil. The compositional approach technique corresponds to a type of supervised Machine Learning. Researchers provided some examples to the software to learn to code and generalize it to the corpus. Based on the results, we generated four different graphs (dominance, presence, Phi association, and Simpson graph) that will be explained further in each session.

Brazil's foreign policy identity under Bolsonaro

Many academics and pundits see Jair Bolsonaro's foreign policy as the most controversial in Brazilian history (Bastos and Franzoni 2019; Casarões and Flemes 2019; Spektor 2019). Although Bolsonaro's far-right roots can be traced back to the history of Brazilian conservatism, in which many political figures showed similar radical rhetoric (see Rocha 2019), it is the first time that such ideology has found political expression in the country's foreign policy.

Following the expectations of the literature on populism, there is considerable anecdotal evidence of the new far-right stance in Brazil's foreign policy narrative. For example, Ernesto Araújo – Brazil's foreign minister from January 2019 to May 2020 – openly sustained the existence of a global conspiracy hatched by 'globalists' against the true 'people' of Brazil.[4] Consequently, Araújo implemented an aggressive conservative agenda within his corporation – the *Itamaraty*. For him, Brazilian diplomats represented the 'globalist conspiracy working against the people'.[5] In the graduation ceremony at the diplomatic academy, Bolsonaro argued that diplomats should seek the creation of a genuinely Brazilian thought in foreign affairs and not something imported from global institutions.[6] Filipe G. Martins – Bolsonaro's foreign affairs adviser – also advocated creating a genuinely national intellectual identity that could help Brazil change its position and confront this globalist dilemma.[7]

During the campaign trail in early 2018, Jair Bolsonaro made clear his sympathy for Donald Trump and sought various moments to draw parallels between himself and the US President.[8] The future to-be Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo also argued in favour of Trump as the only political force capable to re-establish 'Western centrality in world affairs and stop the rise of globalists'.[9] Araújo's defense of the Judeo-Christian civilization and the centrality of the West, and the Christian faith in world politics, became a cornerstone of his speeches.[10] The religious nationalism can also be seen in Bolsonaro's justification for Brazil's new conservative stance at the UNHRC: 'We started voting at the UN, on Human Rights issues, according to John 8:32. Moreover, according to the truth, then, by coincidence, we started voting together with the United States and Israel, as well as other countries.'[11]

It is still not clear, however, whether belonging to a Western civilization was uncritically internalized by the Bolsonaro administration or whether there was

a process of indigenization, that is, adapting the concept to Brazilian idiosyncrasies. After all, what does it mean to be a Westerner living in South America? Initial evidence shows that there is an automatic internalization and lack of proper insight into what it means to be a Western country outside Europe or North America. The constant reminder of Brazil's Christian traditions in Bolsonaro's foreign policy speeches is just an example of seeking recognition among conservative Americans and Europeans. Thus, since Bolsonaro administration seeks first and foremost to be accepted by its Significant Others (far-right groups in the United States and Europe), it seems that the claim of defender of Western ideals function more as a mechanism for legitimizing its international position vis-à-vis the Western far-right than a true unique and distinctive Brazilian Western ideology. For Bolsonaro's supporters, Brazil is not the source but the consumer of Western ideals.

The nationalistic and pro-sovereignty rhetoric, based on the manipulations of enemies, is also ubiquitous in Bolsonaro's foreign policy narrative. Filipe G. Martins argued that the crucial dilemma of world politics was the struggle between global governance, which legislates to suppress national states, and liberal democracies that legislates for the local people.[12] An example of such a 'globalist' and anti-nationalist conspiracy happened during the fires in the Amazon in early 2020. As the fires began to get out of control, Bolsonaro's administration had to deal with growing international criticism from all sides, especially from the French President Emmanuel Macron. For Macron, the Amazon situation was an issue 'for the whole planet' and that 'we cannot allow you (Bolsonaro) to destroy everything', indirectly questioning Brazil's sovereignty over the region.[13]. Bolsonaro responded with a series of attacks against the French President and argued that 'globalist conspirators' aimed to weaken Brazil's sovereignty over the Amazon.[14]

It is important to mention that for Bolsonaro supporters and administration, a nationalistic stance has to do more with protecting Brazilian territorial sovereignty from foreign NGOs operating with native Brazilians against farmers and ranchers in the Amazon or Macron's desire of controlling the region through the territorial expansion of French Guiana than protecting the Brazilian economy against foreign influence. On the contrary, Bolsonaro's economic policy aims to denationalize and privatize rapidly most of state assets from petroleum exploration to electrical distribution. His economic views derive from aggressive ultraliberal ideas originated in the recent formation of the Brazil far-right movement (Rocha 2019). His nationalism is very much influenced by the conspiratory view among the Brazilian military that foreign powers rapaciously crave to control the Amazon (Hunter and Vega 2021).

In this context, is it possible to argue that Bolsonaro's foreign policy has systematically used specific identities in its foreign policy narrative? To answer these questions, we analysed 383 discourses from January 2019 to December 2020 of Jair Bolsonaro and Ernesto Araújo.[15] As predicted by the literature, we found four dominant identities in Bolsonaro's foreign policy narrative: *anti-foe*, *religious/nativism*, *ultranationalist*, and *anti-globalist*.

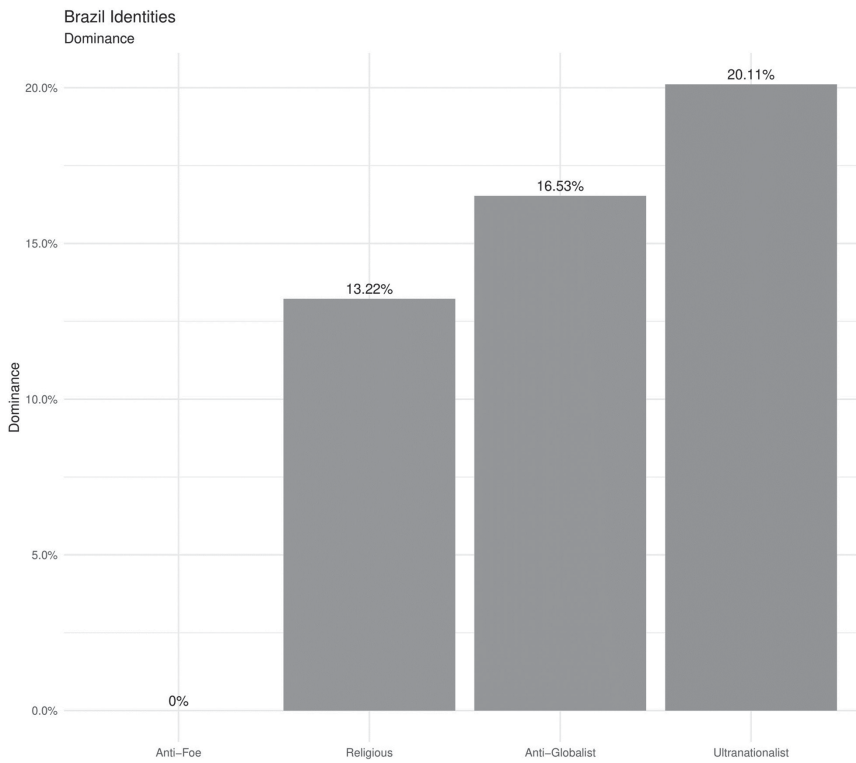

FIGURE 5.1 Brazilian identities' dominance within speeches

In Figure 5.1, we show the identities' dominance within speeches. We consider that an identity is dominant within a specific single speech if it weighs more than 50 per cent of its composition. The greater the dominance, the more this identity stands out concerning others within that given speech. In this sense, when we put all speeches together, the most dominant identity is ultranationalism, which dominates about 20 per cent of the total speeches. It is followed, respectively, by anti-globalism and religious. The anti-foe appears with a dominance of 0 per cent; that is, it does not dominate any of the analysed speeches (it is not greater than 50 per cent in any of the speeches analysed). The anti-foe identity tends to appear alongside others, but it never dominates speeches.

In Figure 5.2, we analyse the presence of each identity in the corpus of documents. All identities appear to be equally present. *Ultranationalism* is the most present, with almost 100 per cent of presence. The others also have a high presence and have very similar results.

When we compare Figures 5.1 and 5.2, it is clear that all four predicted populist identities are present in the corpus, with a clear dominance of ultranationalism. Although anti-foe does not dominate speeches, it is also always present with 80 per cent of occurrence. There are no other identity types – developing country,

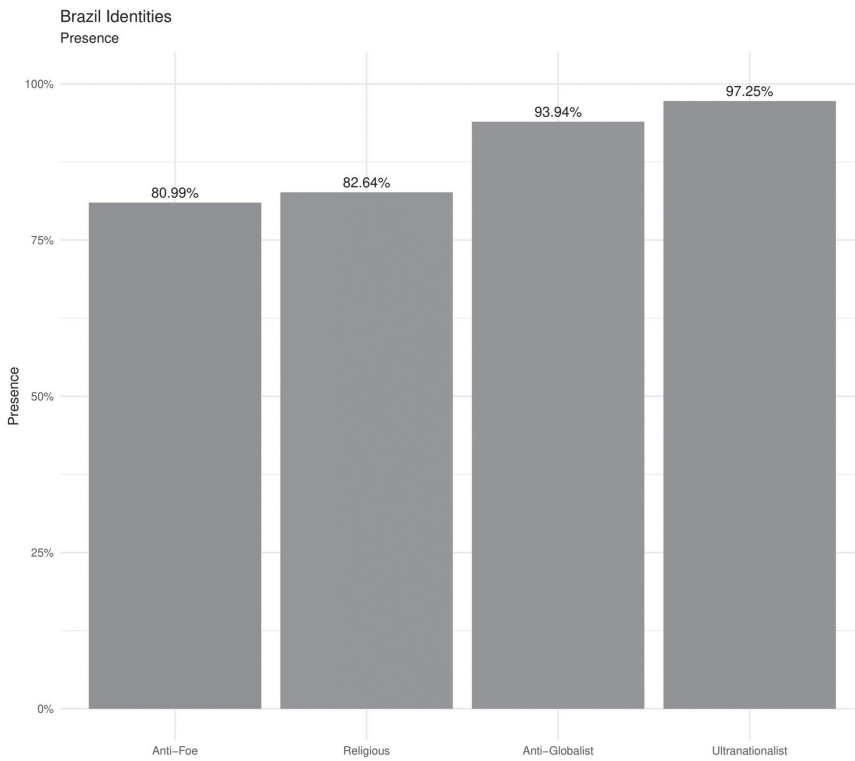

FIGURE 5.2 Brazilian identities' presence within the corpus

emerging powers, and so on – that appear with some significance in Bolsonaro's identity-set formation.

In Figure 5.3, we analysed the identities' proportionality strength. That is, it shows how much a given identity is associated with another. The darker, the more significant the positive association. The more purple, the stronger the negative association. Positive association means that two identities are strongly correlated. Negative association means the more one appears, and the less the other tends to appear. In this sense, the most relevant association is between anti-globalism and religion, but it was negative. In other words, the more anti-globalism appears, the less religious appears. The most substantial positive (but still weak) correlation is between anti-foe and religious. The others associations are unimportant, and so they appear to be independent.

Finally, in Figure 5.4, we show a diversity index (Simpson's index). It is also considered a dominance index. The closer to 1, the more one identity predominates over the others. If the index is 1, then one identity has a weight of 1 and the others 0, therefore, configurating a clear dominance relationship. On the other hand, the lower the index, the greater the diversity, which means that other identities appear

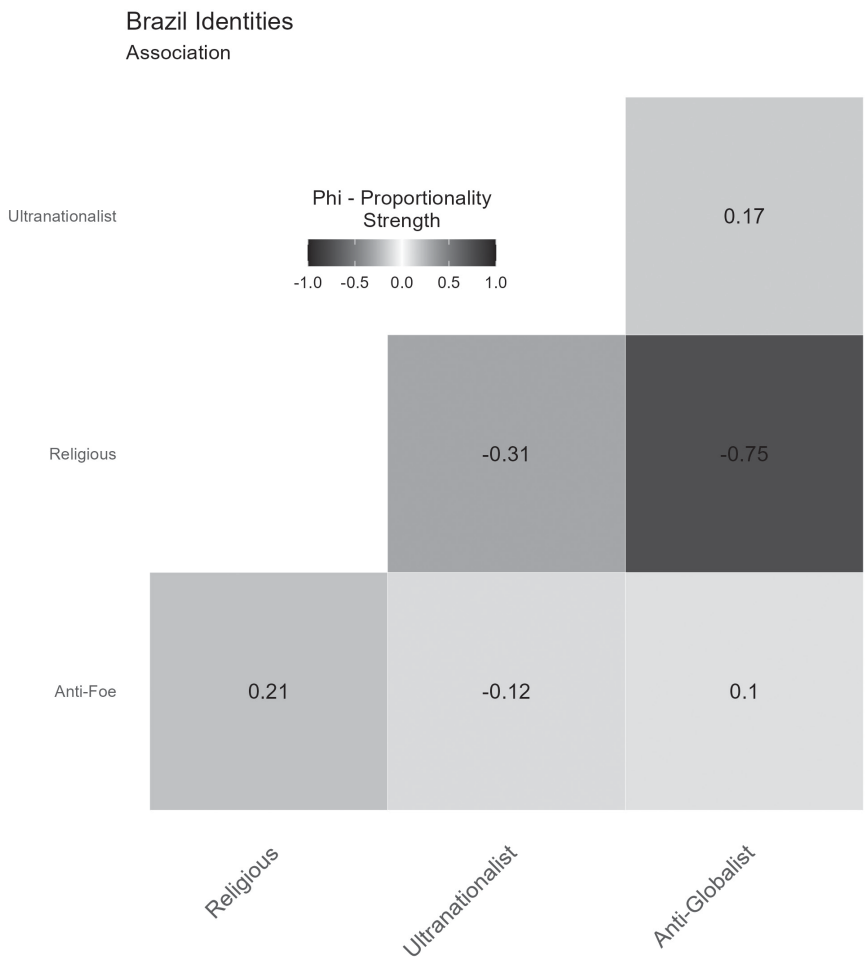

FIGURE 5.3 Brazilian identities' proportionality strength

with significant and similar weight. In this sense, there is an asymmetry on the right-hand side of the graph, revealing no dominance of one or two identities over the other. On the contrary, one can find a diversity of identities.

India's foreign policy identity under Modi

Contrary to the expectation of literature on populism, India's foreign policy has shown an impressive continuation from previous administrations, especially when compared to the administration of Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998–2004), the first Prime Minister member of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Moreover, many studies show that Modi's foreign policy has been more pragmatic than expected

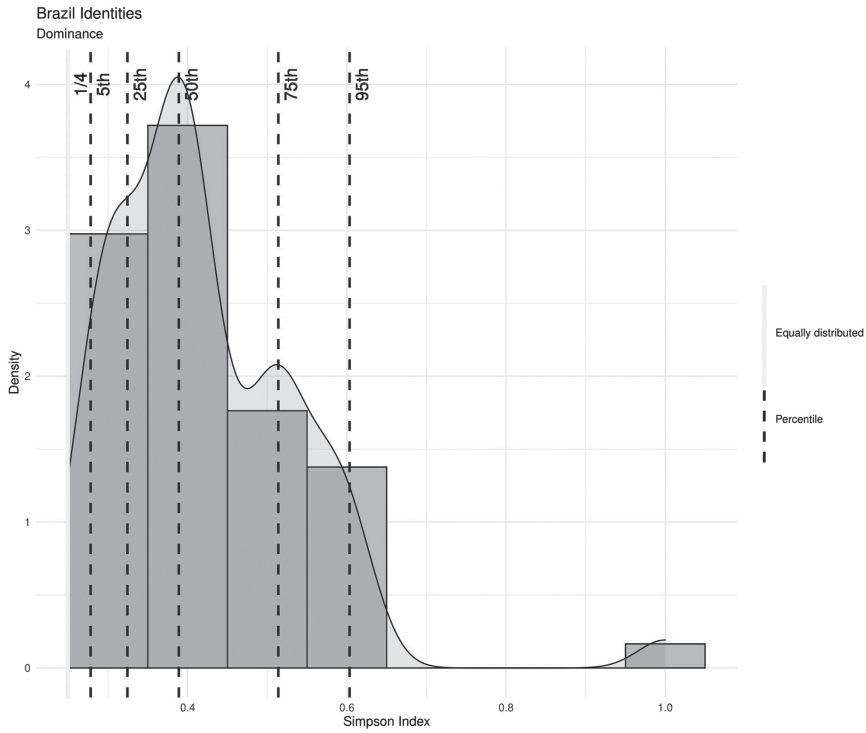

FIGURE 5.4 Brazil's diversity index

(Sullivan 2014; Ganguly 2015; Hall 2015; Basrur 2017; Miller and Sullivan 2017; Gupta et al. 2019; Plagemann and Destradi 2019).

However, the dominant perception among scholars out of his massive 2014 electoral victory was very different. At the begging of Modi's administration in 2015, there was some speculation as to whether the Prime Minister was going to give in to ideological and extremist narratives of Hindu superiority, often seen in his BJP party[16] or whether he would adopt a more pragmatic and power-oriented policy (Gupta et al. 2019, 4).

Hindu nationalism runs deep in BJP political movement. Hall (2019, 41) argues that, at the most fundamental level, the BJP's Hindu nationalism conceives international relations as a struggle among civilizations or cultures and not sovereign states. It often understands the sources of strength and vitality of cultures in racial and gendered terms. And it lambasts what it perceives as Westernized philosophies and practices – especially the dominant Jawaharlal Nehru's foreign policy paradigm – for its supposed failure to grasp the elements of an authentically Indian approach. However, in the early administration of Modi, Ganguly (2015) believed that Modi would be able to alienate the significant segment of his organization and political base that remains committed to an agenda of Hindu cultural and political agenda dominance.

In this sense, it is easy to find considerable anecdotal evidence that Modi's foreign policy has shown significant similarities with previous administrations, despite BJP's nationalism. Modi has never abandoned the 'power-oriented' or 'multilateralist' narratives of India's foreign policy once in power. In his inaugural speech at UNGA in 2014, Modi equated India's vision of civilization with a multilateral system. For him, 'every nation's world view is shaped by its civilization and philosophical tradition. India's ancient wisdom sees the world as one family. It is this timeless current of thought that gives India an unwavering belief in multilateralism.'[17] Sushma Swaraj, India's Minister of External Relations from 2014 to 2019, has focused her agenda on economic development and the security dilemma with Pakistan rather than on exaggerated nationalistic claims.[18] The same can be said about Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister of External Relations, since May 2019. Jaishankar has sustained that India's principal challenge was China's economic and military power rise and welcomed to strengthen India's strategic partnership with the US. In a summary of India's world vision under Modi, Jaishankar argued that India aspired to become a 'leading power' in a 'multipolar world', taking principled positions and shouldering burdens. At the same time, he claimed, Indian diplomacy was being reformed to play a key 'role in our national development', making 'full use of personal chemistry, narratives, culture, and our diaspora'.[19] There was no mention of a conspiracy theory orchestrated by the Chinese Communist Party to conquer the world through 'cultural Marxism'; something pointed out *ad nauseam* by Bolsonaro's thugs. Jaishankar's considerations seem to be purely power-oriented.

In this context, is it possible to argue that Modi's foreign policy has been predominantly similar to India's traditional foreign policy narrative of a developing country and responsible stakeholder? Or did Modi merge some of BJP's nationalistic propositions to Nehru's paradigm? To answer these questions, we analysed 1,181 speeches from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sushma Swaraj (Minister of External Relations, 2014–2019), Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (Minister of External Relations, 2019–2020), and multiple other members of the Ministry of External Relations from May 2014 to December 2020).[20] After a qualitative analysis of the corpus, we identified six identity sets: (1) *anti-foe*, (2) *civilizational power*, (3) *emerging power*, (4) *regional power*, (5) *responsible stakeholder*, and (6) *domestic developer*.

In Figure 5.5, we show the dominance of these identities within each discourse. The greater the dominance, the more this identity stands out concerning others within that given discourse. *Domestic developer* and *regional power* are the most dominant identities within selected speeches. They appear above 50 per cent within each discourse in more than 12 per cent of the total discourses. In turn, *civilizational power* dominated only 8 per cent of the documents in the corpus.

In Figure 5.6, we analyse the presence of each identity in the corpus. The *domestic developer* identity is the most prevalent, while *responsible*

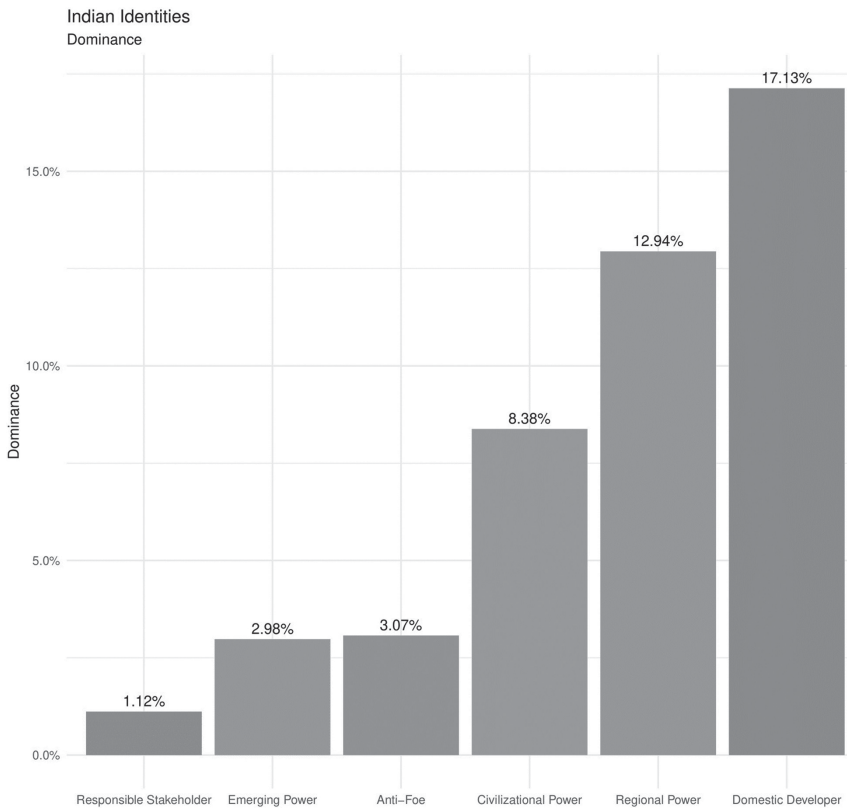

FIGURE 5.5 Indian identities' dominance within discourses

stakeholder, *regional power*, *anti-foe*, and *emerging power* are almost equally present. *Civilizational power* is the least present, but it is still present in almost 40 per cent of documents.

When we compare both figures, *the domestic developer* is the most dominant and present Indian identity. *Responsible stakeholder*, although not very dominant, is relatively present in the corpus as well. *Civilizational power* tends to carry more weight than other identities, and it also tends to have greater importance within speeches.

In Figure 5.7, about proportionality strength, the highest positive correlation is between *responsible stakeholder* and *emerging power*. In other words, the more *responsible stakeholder* appears, the more *emerging power* tends to occur together and vice versa. The highest negative correlation is between *domestic development* and *responsible stakeholder*. When *domestic developer* takes place, *responsible stakeholder* tends to appear less intensely. *Domestic developer* and *civilizational power* have the whitest association (closest to zero). They are independent identities, and there is no positive or negative association between them.

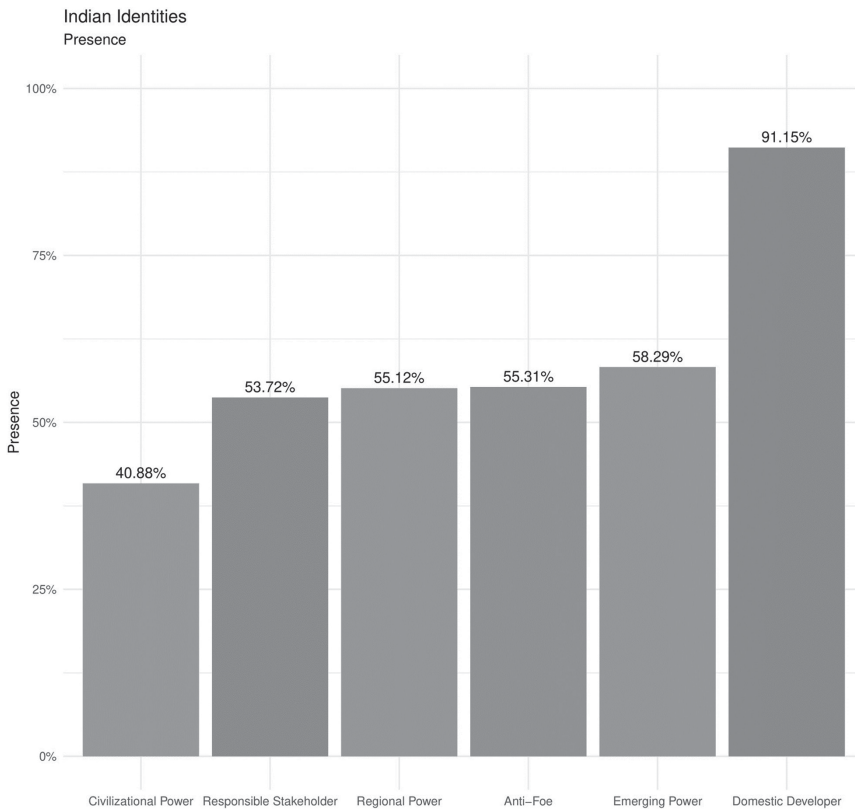

FIGURE 5.6 Indian identities' presence within the corpus

Finally, India's diversity index on Figure 5.8 shows no dominance of any identity since there is a concentration of the index at low values. In other words, the result indicates the high diversity of India's foreign policy identities. A curve to the left would have shown one or two predominant identities, which is not the case. The first dashed line represents the maximum diversity. The six identities have equal weight on India's foreign policy narrative.

Conclusions

This chapter analysed whether Global South populist leaders have the same foreign policy identity formation or whether they mimic populist leaders from the North. By comparing Jair Bolsonaro's and Narendra Modi's identity formation, we have shown that Modi's foreign policy aligns with the Indian foreign policy tradition of developing country and regional power. In contrast, Bolsonaro represents not only a break with the tradition of the Brazilian foreign policy but an imitation of the far-right populist identities observed in the

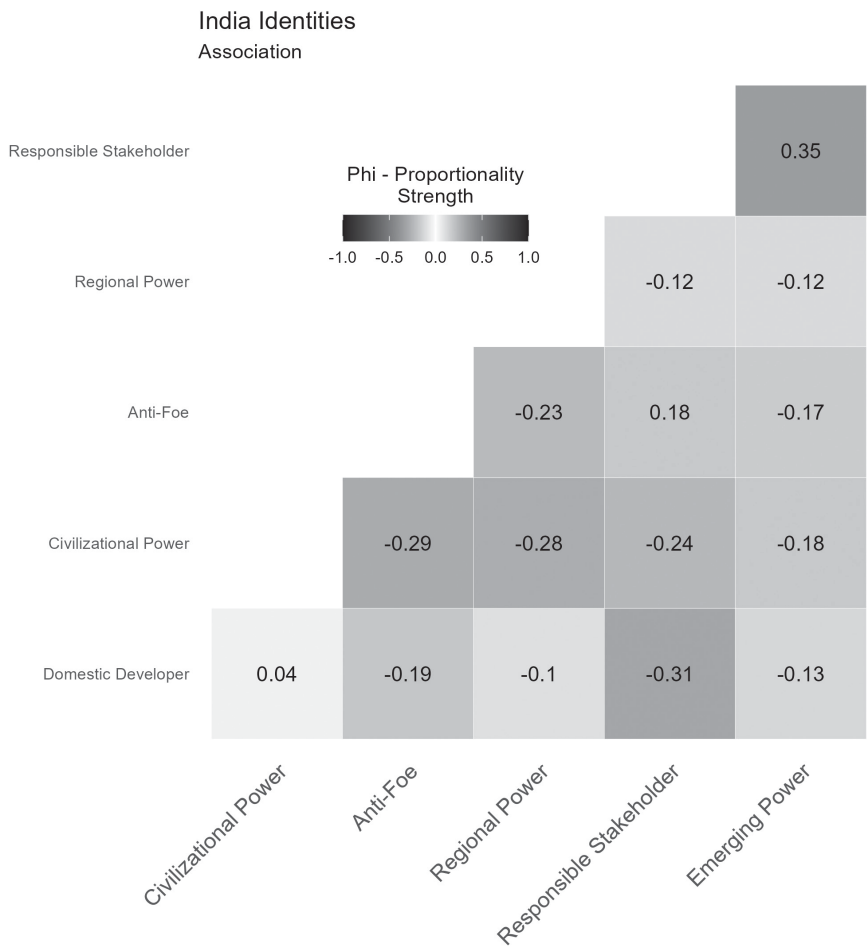

FIGURE 5.7 Indian identities' proportionality strength

North. Moreover, except for defending the Hindu civilization identity, Modi's foreign policy identity has shown typical considerations of developing countries interested in material power influence, rather than Manichean evaluations about the world and the role of conspirators of every order.

It is important to note that the four ideational sources from which populists draw their international identities belong to a predominantly European and North-American debate, even though Bolsonaro's government is heavily influenced by these Western-oriented notions. For the perspective of this book, however, it would be important to move away from these eminently Euro-centric definitions of populism and move towards more tailored conceptualizations for the Global South. In the other hand, a conceptualization on 'southern populism' should not solemnly fall within the long Latin American tradition of thinking

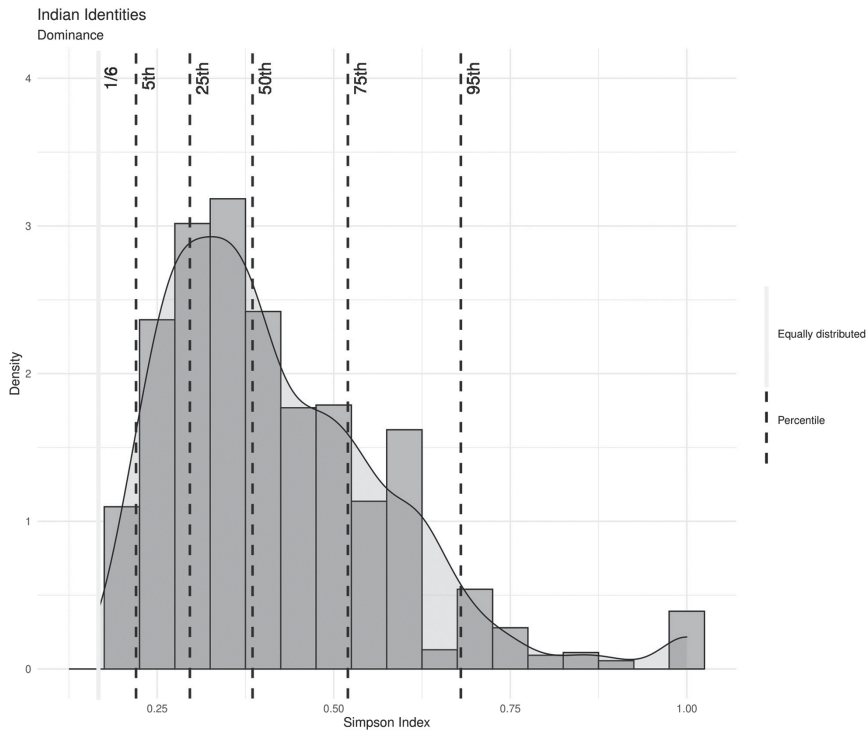

FIGURE 5.8 India's diversity index

about populism (Wajner 2019), a tradition that would not be useful to understand populism in countries like India or the Philippines, for example. Thus, the evidence presented on this chapter indicates that thinking about populism in the Global South requires an inclusive conceptualization in which countries as different as Brazil and India can have their populist ideologies explained by a single theoretical approach.

Based on the literature on Brazil and India's foreign policy, we argued that the reasons for such a difference reside in Modi's decision to not transform the foreign policy into the 'talk of the town' for electoral purposes once in power, as it happened in the 2018 election in Brazil. It is also related to his pragmatic stance following BJP's previous administration of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Even the defense of more traditional populist stances on the superiority of their civilizations or religions is not something unique to BJP's administration in India. There are many references to that effect on Nehru's foreign policy paradigm that dominated India's international relations during the administrations of the Indian National Congress, although with less emphasis than Modi's.

Our data suggests that it is plausible that the conservatism of Modi's administration is more autochthonous than Bolsonaro's far-right preferences. While Bolsonaro takes for granted the Northern-oriented narrative found in Donald

Trump's or Viktor Orbán's governments, in which there is a spiritual war between globalists and nationalists going on, Modi's orientation reflects India's long tradition of Hindu nationalism and the rejection of Western imperialist ideas. Bolsonaro, on the other hand, seems to embrace uncritically the Northern vision of what a conservative society must be, without inputting or merging it with native Brazilian conservative values.

More specifically, one can see that India's dominant identities are more regionally oriented, while Brazil has a more global outreach. Moreover, India seems to organize its main identity formation around its South Asian reality, while Brazil conveys that its South American credentials have lost predominance. Finally, it is also interesting that India's least dominant identity – civilizational power – is weakly related to *domestic developer* and *regional power*, two identities that should be the basis of any Hindu nationalistic expansion.

As for India's global identities, it is symptomatic that the strongest correlation occurs between *responsible stakeholder*s and *emerging power*, demonstrating India's historical position in favour of multilateralism and its perception of growing importance to establishing a multipolar world order. In India's view, one can only be an emerging power if it helps secure a responsible expansion of the multilateral and multipolar system. On the contrary, Brazil's highest correlation occurs between two anti-systemic identities: *ultranationalist* and *anti-globalist*. That is, Brazil's vision of how the world order should be is counterproductive to uphold a multipolar and multilateral system. Bolsonaro's foreign policy sees the current multilateral system as an enemy.

In this sense, the anti-foe identity is enacted differently between Brazil and India. When we coded the countries *anti-foe* identities, it became clear that they had different enemies. Although both countries often use this identity, Brazil's foes are imaginary, whereas India is Pakistan. Since India does not adopt the anti-globalist narrative, the 'enemy' on Modi's narrative is Islamabad and not international agencies or even China. For Brazil, the enemy is 'international agencies' and 'globalists' trying to impose 'cultural Marxism' through international law. The striking difference reinforces our original idea that Brazil mimics Northern far-right narratives and India adopts more autochthonous identity formations.

Finally, Brazil and India show asymmetry to the right in Simpson's graphs, which indicates an equal distribution of identities in these countries' foreign policy narratives. Nevertheless, Brazil's asymmetry is slightly greater, indicating how coherent the Western far-right rhetoric is in the Brazilian case.

Notes

1 Paulo Beraldo, Estadão, 'Bolsonaro: 'Parcerias irão nos potencializar e fazer mundo olhar diferente para nós', 25 January 2020.
2 Ricardo Senra, BBC News, 'Índia dá lição de nacionalismo ao mundo, diz Ernesto Araújo', 27 January 2020.

3 Patrícia Mello and Folha de S. Paulo, 'Viagem à Índia faz namoro de Bolsonaro e Modi engrenar', 27 January 2020.
4 Ernesto Araújo, 'Querer Grandeza', *Metapolítica 17*, 3 November 2018, Ernesto Araújo, 'Mandato Popular na Política Externa', Gazeta do Povo, 26 November 2018.
5 Ernesto Araújo, 'Querer Grandeza', *Metapolítica 17*, 3 November 2018, Ernesto Araújo, 'Mandato Popular na Política Externa', Gazeta do Povo, 26 November 2018. See Daniel Rittner 'Com guinada ideológica, Araújo abala as do Itamaraty', *Valor Econômico*, 23 June 2020.
6 Jair Bolsonaro Speech, '*Cerimônia de Formatura Da Turma Do Instituto Rio Branco 2019*', Brasília, 3 May 2019.
7 Filipe G. Martins, '*Governança Global e Autodeterminação Popular – FUNAG*'.
8 Thais Bilenky, 'Admirador de Trump, Bolsonaro tenta se aproximar da Casa Branca', *Folha de S. Paulo*, 21 June 2018.
9 Ernesto Araújo, 'Trump and the West', *Cadernos de Política Exterior 3*, 6, Fall/Winter, 2017, pp. 345–346.
10 Ernesto Araújo, 'Mandato Popular na Política Externa *Gazeta do Povo*, 26 November 2018; Ernesto Araújo, 'For a Liberal-Conservative Reset', *Blog Metapolítica 17 – contra o globalismo*, 3 January 2021. Ernesto Araújo, '*Aula Magna do Ministro das Relações Exteriores, IRBr*', 19 March 2019.
11 Juliana Castro, 'Bolsonaro diz que Brasil passou a votar na ONU segundo a Bíblia', *O Globo*, 11 April 2019.
12 Filipe G. Martins, Lecture, '*Governança Global e Autodeterminação Popular – FUNAG*', Brasília, 9 May 2019.
13 Biarritz, 'Macron calls Amazon an issue for the whole planet', *Associated Press*, 27 August 2019.
14 Tim Marcin, 'Bolsonaro espalha teorias conspiratórias sobre os incêndios na Amazônia', *ViceNews*, 22 August 2019.
15 The speeches were collected from various sources, from official websites (*Palácio do Planalto* – www.gov.br/planalto, Ministry of Foreign Affairs – www.itamaraty.gov.br) to Facebook and YouTube accounts.
16 The 2014 election manifesto of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) proclaimed a determination to 'fundamentally reboot and reorient the foreign policy goals, content, and process, in a manner that locates India's global strategic engagement in a new paradigm', a paradigm centered on India's exceptionalism. See Bharatiya Janata Party, Election manifesto 2014, p. 39, www.bjp.org/images/pdf_2014/full_manifesto_english_07.04.2014.pdf.
17 See Statement by H.E. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, General debate of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, September 2014.
18 See Sushma Swaraj's speech at the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly, September 2016; Sushma Swaraj's speech at the 72nd session of United Nations General Assembly, September 2017; and Sushma Swaraj's speech at the 73rd session of United Nations General Assembly, September 2018.
19 See Ministry of External Affairs (2015a) 'US-India joint strategic vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region', 25 January 2015; and Ministry of External Affairs (2015b) 'IISS Fullerton Lecture by Dr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary in Singapore', 20 July 2015.
20 The speeches were collected from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India (https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?50/Speeches__amp;_Statements). We downloaded all the documents available, ranging from speeches and statements to

Indian universities that refer to Indian foreign policy. These speeches were made by Prime Minister Modi and India's highest foreign policy officials: Dr. S. Jaishankar and Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Ministers of State for External Affairs – V. Muraleedharan, Secretary (CPV & Overseas Indian Affairs) – Sanjay Bhattacharyya, Secretary (Economic Relations) – Rahul Chhabra, Foreign Secretary – Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Secretary (East) – Riva Ganguly Das, Secretary (West) – Vikas Swarup.

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6

THE RISE OF THE NEW FAR RIGHT IN LATIN AMERICA

Crisis of globalization, authoritarian path dependence and civilian-military relations

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Introduction

The study of right-wing movements and, in particular, the new far right has aroused interest in different fields of social science. Debates among historians have focused on the question of to what extent this is a new phenomenon and how it relates to previous experiences around the world. For their part, studies made from the standpoint of political science, sociology, anthropology and international relations have tried to understand the similarities between these new far right movements all while analysing the specific characteristics of each case. This chapter engages those questions and offers an account of the new far right from the Global South, with a particular focus on Latin America.

We begin with a general explanation of the rise of the new far right, referred to herein as neopatriots, which we understand as part of the global phenomenon of globalization's organic crisis, understood as a historical bloc and a hegemonic order (Sanahuja, 2017a; Sanahuja and López Burian, 2021). Furthermore, we claim that in Latina America these political actors display unique characteristics in how they threaten democracy's stability and quality. In order to analyse Latin America's new far right's specific features, we argue in favour of a focus on the interplay of three different factors. One of them, as already mentioned, is of global nature: the crisis of globalization, understood as a hegemonic crisis which creates openings for the emergence of these actors. In contrast, the other two are national manifestations of regional historical tendencies: authoritarian path dependence and the political role of the military.

The first section of the chapter discusses conceptual approaches that have been used in an attempt to characterize this new far right. Drawing on this literature, we propose the term neopatriot as the way to refer to them since we believe in the centrality of the nationalism versus cosmopolitism/globalism cleavage to

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situate and characterize these political forces. This cleavage refers to reactions to globalization, manifesting itself as an ideological divide even when it takes on different socioeconomic manifestations.

The second section concentrates on analysing historical aspects which have added different and specific elements to the rise of the Latin American neopatriotic far right. Given its recent history of governments led by the armed forces, civil-military relations in Latin America cannot be separated from any analysis of political change. As will be mentioned, thus, we claim that one of their particular characteristics is the new far right's ties to the armed forces are one of their particular characteristics. What is more, this relationship can only be understood by looking at the history of the region and the institutional legacy still hovering over the quality and stability of democracy: the concentration and centralization of the power of presidential governments, even more so in countries with oligarchical elites who have historically allied with the armed forces in order to sustain the status quo.

To develop this argument, we approach regional processes with a *longue durée* (Braudel, 2002) lens all while non-systematically referring to three cases (Bolivia, Brazil and Uruguay). We conclude that this historical authoritarian legacy and the problematic interaction with the armed forces is a key factor for explaining the new neopatriotic far right in Latin America and the particular way in which they pose a threat to democracies in Latin America.

The neopatriotic far right: a global phenomenon

When analysing the rise of the contemporary new far right, historical analogies have often been made with interwar fascism. Such a comparison may be useful; however, given the unique and extraordinary nature of each historical period, resorting to the same analytical categories poses the risk of falling into anachronisms and an inadequate characterization of this phenomenon. Thus, thinking of Europe, historian Enzo Traverso (2018) suggests post-fascism as a category for the phenomenon of today's new far right. Early 20th-century European fascism was the authoritarian option that dominant elites used in different ways. However, Traverso claims that the new far right in the 21st century goes beyond classical fascism since it appears after the end of fascism's historical cycle and many in the far right do not claim fascist identities. Post-fascism, therefore, implies a mix of authoritarianism, conservatism, populism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and contempt for pluralism (Traverso, 2018, p. 12). In his analysis, the new far right lacks a clear opposition to communism and a project of utopic construction as right-wingers are nowadays markedly reactionary and presentist. Another relevant characteristic is the switch from anti-Semitism to Islamophobia. Key to this latter aspect is the construction of otherness as a result of the experience of colonialism (Said, 1978).

The use of these categories to understand the Latin American case is problematic. Although there are Latin American countries that showed clear expressions of

fascism such as the Brazilian integralism founded in 1932 (Pereira Gonçalves and Caldeira Neto, 2020), in the majority of the countries political and social actors attracted by the "magnetic field of fascism" were marginal phenomena (Bucheli, 2019). The historiography on late 19th- and early 20th-century Latin American right-wing movements warns us that these actors were diverse and the views dissimilar. Furthermore, the binding principles allowing them to transform into political actors were not always explicit beyond a convergence of authoritarian and anti-democratic discourses and practices in the face of the common perception of a risk or threat of a loss of privileges or power (McGee, 2005, pp. 22 and 26).

In short, the region did not have any genuinely fascist experiences in the past. The class-race cleavage and its colonial experience represents a sharp contrast from European experiences, accounting for distinct forms of racism and xenophobia. Therefore, grasping Latin American right-wing movements requires a different understanding of their authoritarian tendencies which focus more on maintaining social order based on differences in class and race and a fear of "anarchy" and populism.

Another part of the literature has highlighted the populist nature of the new far right. As pointed by Mudde and Rovira (2017, p. 3), the concept of populism in the region has been used very differently, covering everything from emancipatory and radical democratic conceptions to derogatory allusions with regard to how the macroeconomy should be managed as well as leadership styles based on direct ties with the masses. The definition for populism suggested by these authors, as a "thin ideology", highlights its discursive nature based on a dualism between the people and the elite all while denying pluralism. In all reality, it can be associated with the right and left.

Mudde (2007, 2017) also suggests the concept of the radical populist right which he characterizes by three defining elements: nativism (a combination of nationalism and xenophobia with a bit of ethnocraticism); securitizing and criminalizing authoritarianism; and populism, which brings the people up against the elite. This definition does not seem to completely fit with Latin American cases. Although these radical populist right-wingers have been hostile to globalization and multilateralism (Mudde, 2007, pp. 187 and 193), this rift does not appear to be one of their defining characteristics. To the extent this ideological cleavage between ultra-nationalism and cosmopolitanism is key, the proposal herein is to use the concept of the new neopatriotic far right as a more specific definition (Sanahuja, 2017a, 2019).

The Latin American neopatriotic far right is part of a global trend or cycle in the rise of the far right and extreme nationalism which questions liberal democracy, globalization and the international liberal order (Sanahuja and López Burian, 2021). In the words of Karl Polanyi (2007), the crisis of this international order, understood as the global configuration of power and wealth encompassing historically situated institutions and norms, reflects a "Great Transformation" of the economic and social bases which question the collective assumptions of social democracy and the legitimacy of the system. Neopatriots are leading a "counter-movement" in

this context against the impact, risks and uncertainties of a globalization in crisis. In order to characterize these neopatriots, they must be placed among two major rifts or axes: on the extreme right of the most traditional left-right axis; and on the one that nowadays defines the position adopted in the face of globalization – an axis that opposes cosmopolitanism and nationalism, the latter of which assumes a markedly anti-globalist discourse (Sanahuja and López Burian, 2020).

The rise of this new neopatriotic far right is associated with the 2008 financial crisis which marked the end of globalization – understood as a particular historical structure and a hegemonic international order. Further beyond a cycle, this crisis foreshadows structural changes in global production patterns, the international division of labour and, with expected national as well as a global North and South variants, more unequal and precarious societies, frustrated social expectations and a growing feature for the future. Along with these structural factors, the rise of the new neopatriotic far right can also be explained by agency factors: the rise of political entrepreneurs who, like Trump and Bolsonaro, have adopted a new political rhetoric and polarizing discourses, often in populist key, in order to appeal to that broad social discontent (Sanahuja, 2017b).

Although it is of a global scope, this structural transformation reflects dynamics and characteristics that are specific to Latin America. With the "commodities cycle", the region accelerated its entry into globalization which led to a phase of economic expansion and rising social expectations. The end of that cycle brought with it a more adverse scenario for Latin America in international trade and finance, thereby increasing its external vulnerability and slowing down economic growth. As a result, the social progress made possible by the expansive cycle with improvements in employment, the reduction of poverty, a slight reduction in inequality, greater social inclusion and the expansion of the middle classes came to a halt and, in some cases, deteriorated, even before the serious crisis propitiated by COVID-19.

Such setbacks generated unsatisfied social demands, less State capacity to face them and greater social discontent, including demands for political change. All of this has created a more favourable scenario for the emergence of the new far right in electoral processes and the public sphere of many Latin American countries. These forces are clearly nationalist as they are openly opposed to globalization and the international liberal order just like their peers in other latitudes. In such circumstances, the rise of the Latin American neopatriotic far right is part of a global trend, but as already mentioned, Latin American neopatriots have specific characteristics which can be explained by the particular evolution seen in the region. This is approached from a historical perspective in the next section.

Authoritarian legacies and civilian-military relations in Latin America

A *longue durée* reading of Latin America must take into account the authoritarian legacy that has marked the history of the region since its independence. The

processes of emancipation from overseas empires were led by elites that would later become oligarchies, with varying degrees of consolidation depending on their prior colonial experience. Landowners, the Church and the armed forces formed a triad which constitutes a key for an in-depth understanding of the region, particularly its conservative and authoritarian tendencies.

In terms of institutional design, the republics born out of the processes of independence opted for presidential systems, with the exception of Brazil, which until 1889 was a monarchy self-declared as an Empire. Such presidentialism resulted from the adoption of the US Philadelphia model, based on checks and balances among powers and different territorial units of government, yet with one key adaptation: reinforced presidential power (Negretto, 2013; Garcé, 2017).

The motivating factor behind this trend was elites' attitudes apprehension towards the possibility of "anarchy" and, therefore, a fear of an insurgency among subordinate sectors. Presidentialism could guarantee order and unity for elites (Wiarda, 2001, pp. 128–129), concentrating power in the hands of the Executive Branch. As for territorial decentralization of power, the logic was similar. Beyond formal institutions, practices favoured the centralization of power even in federal states (Wiarda, 2001, p. 131; Drake, 2009, pp. 98–99) with political dynamics cartelized by the most powerful territorial elites in some cases such as Brazil (López Burian, 2017). Although the region's political history was marked by the dispute between conservatives and liberals over the (de)concentration and (de)centralization of power (Wiarda, 2001, pp. 141–144), the trend towards concentration and centralization persisted.

This preference for centralization and concentration transcended the interests of the ruling classes during the independence period, extending to the Latin American process of conservative modernization. Barrington Moore (1966) characterizes this path to modernization by underlining that the elites sought to get through such a process all while maintaining the privileges inherited from previous eras. In this context of radical changes, the elites not only resorted to centralizing and concentrating institutions, but they also used their relationship with the armed forces – another element of the authoritarian legacy – to prevent the social and political transformations resulting from the inclusion of the masses in politics, the shift from the countryside to the city and industrialization from altering the traditional relationship of dominance.

The armed forces have been central actors since the processes of independence and the construction of national States in the region. Following the formation of these States, the military continued to intervene in various ways in the political processes of Latin American countries and most of the time it was on the demands of and in alliance with civilian elites. In some cases, this role was embedded in institutional prerogatives. One example can be found in the history of Brazilian political institutions where José Murilo de Carvalho (2019) identified a moderating role in the armed forces, leading him to claim Brazil is a republic under military tutelage.

Looking at the region as a whole, in the second half of the 20th century military intervention in politics changed its dynamics: while in the past the military had been limited itself to interrupting political processes by removing certain actors from power all while favouring others and then quickly returning government to civilians, a series of coups after 1960, often backed by the United States in the guise of Cold War bloc politics, inaugurated a new form of autocracy – military or "national security" regimes – characterized by an institutional and permanent presence of the armed forces in government (Brückner and Agüero, 2018). In such regimes, the military as an institution – although not without establishing alliances with the civilian elites – assumed control of the government, as occurred in Brazil (1964), Chile (1973), Argentina (1966, 1976), Uruguay (1973) and Peru (1968), just to name a few cases.

According to Loveman and Davies Jr. (1997), both expressions of the role of Latin American armed forces in politics – pre and post 1960 – must be understood as a consequence of the impact of anti-politics on the ruling classes – both military and civilian. The authors claim that the anti-political perspective consists of beliefs such as maintaining order as a priority, the need to direct and regulate economic relations and an organicist view of society. Under this perspective, politics and politicians are obstacles for development and the cause of instability and under-development of their countries. In contrast, the armed forces perceive themselves – and are perceived by their civilian allies – as actors that have no partisan interests and embody a higher ideal due to elements associated with military identity such as patriotism, self-sacrifice and a worship of nationalism. As a consequence, the organicist view of society makes them reject the existence of multiple conflicting interests against which the State must act as an intermediary without taking sides. The self-perception of actors who are above the vices of politics qualifies them as guardians of the nation's true permanent interests. This conceptualization makes them key actors in the reactionary alliances the right-wing in the region has historically formed as a way of maintaining the established order.

To this end, there is another common element between the two forms of intervention. In Latin America, the ruling classes turned to the armed forces to manage the tensions arising from the processes of the irruption of new actors in politics: from the questioning of the Creole elites against the colonial domination of the independence movements and the demands for transformation of the oligarchic regimes by underprivileged middle sectors and regional oligarchies to popular movements for the political and social inclusion of the working classes. It was in this period when the conjunction between two elements was most clearly seen: on the one hand, the right's traditional fear of the impact of a greater presence of the popular on its economic, political and cultural domination and the adherence of the armed forces to the order arising from that domination, and on the other hand, the economic transformations that occurred in the second half of the 20th century. It was this conjunction that Guillermo O'Donnell suggests gave rise to military regimes (1982).

For O'Donnell, the Latin American authoritarian regimes of the 1960s and 1970s originated upon the intersection between politics and economics, characterizing these experiences of military government as bureaucratic-authoritarian states which were a particular historical manifestation of the capitalist state. In the aforementioned countries, the disappearance of the oligarchic regime with the inclusion of popular sectors in political life in several different ways occurred in parallel to the process of the transnationalization of the world's economies in the broader context of the development of a capitalist society. A series of contradictions between both processes led to simultaneous crises in the political and economic realms which weakened the State as the guarantor of relations of domination. Thus, the bureaucratic-authoritarian states were simply a reaction by the dominant classes to the threat of political activation in the context of "dependent yet extensively industrialized societies" (1982: 14).

Faced with a need to "restore order" – understood as the survival of the asymmetric relationship between capital and labour – and "normalize the economy" – also pursuant to the interests of such relationship – the institutions most associated with the repressive function of the State assumed the process of normalizing and ordering an "undisciplined" society. It is worth adding that those processes were framed in the logic of the bipolar confrontation of the Cold War, which was configured as a legitimizing narrative and geopolitical framework that explains and gives coherence to this cycle of military governments beyond each specific national situation.

Other authors prefer to explain the specificity of the military regimes of the 1960s and 1970s by reflecting upon the characteristics of the military organizations at the time. For Stepan (1973), the process of professionalizing the military in the previous decades gave them confidence in their ability to govern. Professionalization modernized the officer corps while retaining their old mission and beliefs – to guarantee a certain political and social order – meaning the result of this professionalization was contrary to what had been expected, as occurred in Western Europe. Thus, as argued by Fitch (1998), as the military profession brought officers closer rather than further away from politics, their pre-existing military role beliefs as guardians of the interests of the homeland were only reinforced when officers began seeing themselves as intellectually ready to govern.

It has been widely observed that the transitions to democracy failed to completely eliminate those beliefs with regard to the role of the armed forces that underpinned authoritarianism. For Loveman (1994), the legacy of anti-politics persisted after the end of military regimes to the extent that the armed forces and their civilian allies managed to embed elements of autonomy and military protection into national constitutions and other legal instruments, thereby giving rise to what are known as "protected democracies". These are regimes that do not meet the basic criteria of the concept of representative democracy: when the armed forces retain the role of institutional guarantors, the military maintains veto power over the decisions of elected authorities.

The democratic transitions that began in the 1980s, still subject to the conditions of the Cold War, turned into protected democracies with a high degree of military autonomy in many countries. It was not until the 1990s, when this structural conditioning factor disappeared, that the countries in the region began making progress in subordinating the armed forces to civil institutions. Direct interventions by the military in domestic politics – such as military threats of rebellion or coups – became less and less frequent. However, the decrease in military coups and other less direct forms of tutelage did not always mean the eradication of high levels of military autonomy in terms of military prerogatives, an excessive presence in civilian government posts and the increasing use of the armed forces for internal missions which, in the eyes of many analysts, ended up bringing the military dangerously close to countries' internal politics. While in the past the role played by the armed forces in politics originated in their will to exercise political power, in most recent times it was civilian concessions that allowed military influence in politics.

The neopatriotic far right and the armed forces in Brazil, Bolivia and Uruguay

Latin American new neopatriotic far right – antagonistic of liberal democracy and the international liberal order – has been able to conflate various reactionary forces by fostering the perception of a potential loss of privilege or power. Among the region's right-wing political actors in the region, the repressive forces of the State and especially the armed forces have usually stood out. Their joint action is visible in several countries.

In this context, the presence of armed forces in neopatriotic right-wing movements relates to the involvement of the military in the management of crises that have risen following processes to include popular sectors during the "turn to the left". In Bolivia, for example, there was an unprecedented political and social inclusion of indigenous sectors, and the military, along with far right forces, were key actors in the fall of President Evo Morales. In Brazil, a clear social rise of the working class and, in particular, of the electorate from the traditionally poor Northeast region triggered a conservative reaction. The government of Jair Bolsonaro features a high number of military officers among its government officials. In Uruguay, neopatriots are part of the government coalition through a political party comprised of a significant number of members of military origin, vocally contesting the new rights agenda fostered by the Uruguayan left, all while calling for a "firm hand" and order under the slogan "playtime is over". They also oppose the policies of truth, memory and justice currently being promoted in relation to human rights violations by the military during the last dictatorship (1973–1985).

Among the new neopatriotic far right-wing movements, the Bolsonaro government is no doubt the case where the armed forces constitute one of the central actors of this group. The clearest indicator is the presence, as of mid-2020, of eight

military officers in the cabinet of ministers, including two who are still in active duty, and the more than 6,000 retired and active military personnel occupying positions in the administration (Lis, 2020). The armed forces' official discourse is that they are State institutions instead of government assets and, therefore, military ministers are simply fulfilling a mission assigned to them by the authorities. However, other indicators point to exactly the opposite. Just to give a few examples: Brazilian civil-military relations specialists have drawn attention to the fact that, since the end of 2014, after years of resistance, the authorities in the Army finally allowed Bolsonaro to participate in the graduation ceremony at the officers academy, an occasion used by the former captain to make electoral speeches to the graduates (Franco, 2020). On the other hand, it is widely known that a significant number of retired officers were part of Bolsonaro's campaign team, such as General Augusto Heleno, or publicly demonstrated in favour of his candidacy, such as General Santos Cruz.

Also worth considering is the fact that the political involvement of the Brazilian armed forces began some years before Bolsonaro's candidacy. During the period immediately prior to the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, tensions increased between the government and the armed forces partly due to the dissatisfaction caused by the Truth Commission's final report, which had been set up in 2012 to investigate – without any judicial power – the human rights violations committed during the military regime. The political activism of the armed forces continued during the presidency of Michel Temer, including the veiled warning made via social media by the Commander of the Army, General Villas Bôas, to the ministers of the Supreme Federal Court as the court was weighing in on a *habeas corpus* filed by former president Lula da Silva to reject his imprisonment after a second-instance conviction. This fact as well as others suggest that the armed forces were one of the actors involved in the "anti-PT" movement which includes Bolsonarism and is considered as a reaction to the social and political transformations undertaken by the governments of the Workers' Party (PT, as it is known by the Spanish acronym).

Neopatriots in Bolivia gained visibility in the context of the coup against President Evo Morales. Bolivian elites displaced during Morales' government supported the coup in which the armed forces and the religious right played a prominent role. The former "suggested" the President's resignation and the latter articulated an ultra-conservative discourse with references to the need to restore the social order that existed before the Movement for Socialism's (MAS) inclusion policies, a narrative that fits quite well into the ideological matrix of the neopatriotic far right, thereby endangering the secular and pluri-national state (Colanzi, 2019).

The image of Army Chief Williams Kaliman, surrounded by other senior officers, suggesting that their commander-in-chief resign from office was surprising not because Bolivia had managed to politically neutralize and institutionally subordinate the military to the democratic regime, but rather because specialists in civil-military relations had repeatedly warned of the political

assimilation of the armed forces carried out by the government of Evo Morales (Norden, 2013). For his critics, Morales had chosen to control the armed forces based on a model of "penetration" both ideologically and with material incentives. The delegation of the administration of state-operated companies, salary bonuses and promotions for officers with an ideological profile supportive of the government were all measures taken in parallel to attempts to align the doctrine of the armed forces with the political orientation of the MAS (as it is known by the Spanish acronym). One example of the latter was the creation in 2011 of a military training school for officers from the ALBA countries. The institution was renamed in 2016 as the "General Juan José Torres Anti-Imperialist Command School", maintaining the goal of "building an anti-colonial and anti-capitalist line of thought linking the armed forces to social movements and thus counteracting the influence of the School of the Americas" (Infobae, 2020). One indicator of the turn taken in the opposite direction leading up to the 2019 coup was the January 2020 reforming of the academy, which included its renaming to "The Heroes of Ñancahuazú" in reference to the Bolivian soldiers who participated in the murder of "Che" Guevara.

Cabildo Abierto (CA, as it is known by the Spanish acronym) represents the neopatriotic right in Uruguay. It has been a part of the government coalition led by Luis Lacalle Pou from the right-wing National Party since 2020. CA controls a relevant portion of Parliament and the ministerial cabinet. The party was created quite recently and is led by retired general and former commander-in-chief of the Army Guido Manini Ríos, who comes from a family of historically conservative politicians. Uruguay was among the countries which still need to make important changes in their military policies in order to achieve civilian control over the armed forces. However, it was not until the emergence of the leadership of Manini Ríos that serious episodes of military contestation and attempts to get the military involved in politics occurred, which makes the resurgence of the armed forces on the political scene in the context of the new far right quite noteworthy. In tune with the neopatriotic political forces, CA presents a punitive and security-based discourse that is conservative and hostile towards the new rights agenda promoted by the cosmopolitan left. Their participation in the government allows them to influence public policy seeking to particularly serve the "military family", in reference to people linked to the armed forces.

Conclusions

The new Latin American neopatriotic far right is part of a global phenomenon encompassing the emergence of these actors in the context of the current crisis of globalization, understood as a historical bloc and a hegemonic order. There are certain common elements in the socioeconomic causal factors and their reactionary positions regarding human rights, the concept of "law and order", gender and sexual diversity, the environment, migration and anti-globalist nationalism place them in the same ideological framework as those that have emerged in other

places in the world. However, they are different from their counterparts in the United States or in Europe. In Latin America, this new far right also reflects the authoritarian legacy of the right-wing movements preceding them. Additionally, the region's historical authoritarian legacy and military governments play a decisive role in their characterization in terms of path dependence. Perhaps the only case where analogies may be made is that of Vox, in Spain, which is also rooted in an authoritarian past and a central role for the military which this party readily clamours for, something that is not observed in other European far right parties.

This legacy explains this new Latin American neopatriotic far right's drive for the concentration and centralization of power as a response from some elites fearing "anarchy." On the other hand, their reactionary and antagonistic attitude towards liberal democracy and the international liberal order resonates with the armed forces' role beliefs. Latin American neopatriots arise in the context of civil-military relations embedded in a history of association between the military and conservative elites. An anti-political narrative unites them in a homogenizing nationalist rhetoric that postulates the military as "guarantors" of the "true interests of the homeland". As a result of this historical legacy, the neopatriotic far right in Latin America has one particular characteristic: their association with the armed forces, which reinforces their ability to weaken the quality and stability of democracy. The future will test this idea and the armed forces' degree of autonomy in relation to this new far right could be a key aspect in its historical evolution.

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7

POPULISM AND MEDIA IN DUTERTE'S PHILIPPINES

Fernan Talamayan and Anna Cristina Pertierra

Introduction

Since the 2016 election of Rodrigo Duterte as president, the Philippines appears to have reached a moment of peak authoritarianism. Despite standing out in the Asian region as a nation with strong traditions of liberal democracy, the Philippine political system has long been characterised by oligarchic or patrimonial dimensions. Since the Second World War the presidential office has swung between leaders of liberal vs illiberal persuasions, but across parties, regions and cities, many political offices are attained through personal or familial followings and 'strongman' leadership, dominated by networks of elite political family dynasties rather than an ideological commitment to left or right policies. Largely outside these chains of elite dynasties, active leftist movements have been built through labour and civil society organisations whose representation in the House of Representatives is facilitated through a party-list system. Beyond electoral politics, a spectrum of leftist organisations has included militant groups linked to the Communist Party of the Philippines, which despite a decline in numbers in recent decades, retains a guerilla presence in some regions.

Given this political landscape, Duterte's ideological positions are complex and have shifted over time; he differs from most previous presidents of the Philippines because he has publicly claimed to be left-leaning, and is regularly hostile to United States policies and leaders. In the early months of his presidency he built unprecedented alliances with the Communist Party by allocating positions in his first Cabinet to Communist-endorsed candidates. However, the relationship disintegrated rapidly and from 2017 onwards, Duterte's rhetoric and policies became increasingly anti-leftist. An additional complexity in Duterte's ideology is that he has long expressed goodwill towards the family of the former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, whose regime included widespread

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violence and the torture and killings of left-wing dissidents. Duterte's popularity has been built upon a rejection of the liberalism associated with the most famous opponents of Marcos, the rivalling Aquino family and their associates, who have been the dominant force in anti-Marcos politics since his overthrow in the 1986 People Power revolution. Duterte's immediate predecessor in the presidency was Benigno Aquino III ('Noynoy'), whose assassinated father had been Marcos' most famous opponent and whose mother then became the first post-Marcos president as a result of the People Power movement. These patrimonial dynamics of Philippine politics are so pervasive that, since at least the 1980s, the Filipino voting public has more often understood their electoral options as being between the rival Marcos and Aquino camps than being a choice between left or right policies and ideologies. Within this national context, we suggest that a straightforward assessment of Duterte as representing a radical right is problematic. It is illiberalism, more than a simple left/right dichotomy, that most strongly marks the political culture of Duterte's presidency (Thompson 2016). Illiberalism, populism, and authoritarianism can all be identified in his leadership.

This chapter seeks to explain Duterte's remarkable success as an authoritarian populist in two main ways: by understanding the historical national dynamics that have led to his popularity and focusing on the changing role of digitally enabled media as an explosive frontier for political consolidation. In the following sections, we assess the historical and sociopolitical conditions that allow Duterte's style of politics to thrive. Having provided an overview of Filipino and international literature that places him within a context of post-war politics, in the chapter's second half we focus on two case studies of tense relations between mass media and Duterte's administration, which exemplify the rise since 2016 of disinformation and media persecution as dimensions of public life. By bringing together our historical analysis of longstanding dynamics in Filipino politics and culture with the more recent scholarly attention to mass media and social media, we argue that the Philippines offers useful lessons to those who seek to understand contemporary political cultures in the Global South: the Philippines' Duterte era spotlights how earlier populist language and practices are continued and reinvented in developing nations trapped between global powers. The Philippines also exemplifies how the politics-media relationship is a central element in new or expanded forms of populism and authoritarianism in the twenty-first century.

Contextualising Duterte's indomitable popularity

Rodrigo Roa Duterte was for much of the 1990s and 2000s best known as the tough-talking Mayor of Davao City, the most populous city in the Philippines' southern region of Mindanao. Despite coming from a family of established politicians, and graduating with a degree in law from an elite university in Manila, Duterte's popular image is one of anti-elitism. He was credited by his supporters

for a transformative leadership of Davao City with his trademark 'strongman' style, featuring a 'law and order' strategy that is alleged to have made regular use of extrajudicial death squads. Duterte's unorthodox persona includes speaking in a vernacular style, often featuring expletives and misogynistic humour, and expressing a willingness to engage in violence to meet his political objectives. Prior to the 2016 elections, Duterte had a high profile in the Philippines, and was especially influential in the southern regions that are politically as well as geographically remote from the central hub of Manila. But he was not especially considered a frontrunner among the crop of candidates competing for election as president, and many polls only noted a late surge in popularity for his candidacy. Duterte was elected with a clear but unspectacular 39.01 per cent of the nationwide vote.

Typically, Philippine presidents experience a gradual decline in popularity after their election to the single six-year term permitted. But Duterte's popularity has been remarkable in that it grew once he assumed office and then accelerated to a record high of +72 net satisfaction ratings by the mid-point of his term in December 2019 according to a leading national survey company (Social Weather Stations, also known as SWS). Based on the SWS survey, the president received excellent scores across all geographic areas (Mindanao, +81; Visayas, + 79; Luzon, +66; and Metro Manila, +66) and socioeconomic classes (upper and middle classes, +76, working class, +72; and extremely poor, +71). Throughout 2020, despite blunders and inefficiencies by his government in managing long lockdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the president continued to enjoy rock-solid support among many Filipinos.

Duterte's popularity might seem curious given that it was achieved amidst allegations of corruption, controversial China-leaning foreign policies, chauvinistic and misogynistic remarks, numerous human rights violations, and increasingly authoritarian leadership. Scholars have sought to explain how Duterte has maintained popular support since his election despite allegations of crime and strong evidence of governmental failures. Ronald Holmes (2017) attributed Duterte's high trust ratings to the supposed fulfillment of his campaign promise of fighting criminality and illegal drugs (p. 63). Adele Webb (2017) ascribed Duterte's appeal to his 'subversiveness', as Duterte claims to represent and stand up for 'the people', signifying 'the refusal to continue the indignity of the past' (p. 139). Meanwhile, Nicole Curato (2016, 2017) argued that his popularity is driven by, among others, people's desire for a better tomorrow, as well as their collective frustration toward technocratic reforms. To Wataru Kusaka (2017), the widespread public support for Duterte is anchored in a 'social bandit-like morality', which he described as 'the coexistence of compassion and violence under a patriarchal boss who maintains justice outside of the law' (p. 49). Such approaches are important, but to better understand how and why Duterte's presidency has to date been so successful, we need to look further back. A historical approach to the topic can also help explain Filipinos' fixation with populism and authoritarianism.

Historicising Duterte: Populism in the Philippines, 1913–2016

While many regard Duterte's ascendance to power as the catalyst for such practices as idealising authoritarianism and normalising the culture of impunity and extrajudicial killings (EJKs), we argue that Duterte's presidency intensified rather than created a prevailing culture of cruelty. As this section will show, Duterte's populism adopted previous presidents' signification of 'the people' (poor and law-abiding Filipinos), while expanding their notion of 'the enemies of the people'.

Former presidents of the Philippines can be seen as setting in place many of the dynamics that have enabled the success of Duterte's populism. This is evident almost from the earliest establishment of local governance in 1913, when representative politics emerged with the widening of the national suffrage. In these early years, Manuel L. Quezon's *Nacionalista* party dominated the local political arena, whose government claimed to be of the people and for the people. However, in a continuation of political dynamics that had shaped the nineteenth century, the intentions and goals of the landed elite were poorly aligned with the urban and rural poor. According to Abinales and Amoroso (2005), the *Nacionalistas* 'paid little attention to landlessness, wages, and other problems of the rural and urban poor', resulting in a 'surge in popular protest' from millenarian movements in the 1920s and 1930s (pp. 147–148). To keep poor dissenters in line, political meetings of opposition organisations such as the *Sakdalistas* were restricted, and the Philippine Constabulary (colonial police) were mobilised to crush the *Sakdalistas* in armed confrontations in 1935 (p. 148). Quezon would later express anguish over being compelled to take such a drastic measure (Quezon 1936). He would also reassure the people that he remains committed to representing their will by rallying against 'selfish and greedy landowners' (Quezon 1940) and campaigning for a social justice program that addresses farmers' and labourers' demands.

Quezon set an example for future presidents as to how the people could be mobilised to advance an agenda. Quezon was able to appeal to the people by expressing sympathy for the poor and siding with them against their enemy (landlords). Presenting himself as the people's champion, he was able to justify the use of extralegal violence for the sake of life, liberty, and peace. He also managed to control 'both external relations with Washington and the country's volatile provincial politics' (McCoy 2017, p. 18).

The tenure of another high-profile president, Ramon Magsaysay (1953–1957) is also worth mentioning, as it set an example for Philippine presidents to successfully represent and deal directly with the people. Magsaysay's humble origins—a former bus mechanic from a provincial lower-class family—captured the popular imagination. Peasants received him as 'one of theirs', while the international media portrayed him as a 'carpenter's son' and a 'farm boy' (Cullather 1993, p. 307). He was also known as a reformer, representing nothing of the old politicos. Taking advantage of his popularity and U.S. backing, he strengthened

the central government by deploying both the military and social forces to combat people's enemies. Under his watch, however, the enemies were no longer just the landlords; they also included Communists and abusive politicians. Believing that poverty and underdevelopment fuel insurgencies, Magsaysay also employed the military for public works and economic advancement programs (Magsaysay 1954). He established presidential agencies to mobilise the people 'independent of local "political bosses" and landed elites' (Abinales and Amoroso 2005, p. 181).

The Philippines' most notorious populist president, however, is undoubtedly Ferdinand Marcos (1965–1986). Like many populists, Marcos claimed to understand people's sentiments and committed to end 'the monopoly of privileges and power by [sic] the old oligarchy' (Marcos 1973). He described graft and corruption as 'the nemesis of every development program' (Marcos 1973) and publicised his anti-graft and pro-development efforts. Like many other politicians, Marcos himself was regularly accused of corruption, but he deflected such allegations by exposing corrupt practices in government offices other than his own. In the early years of his term, Marcos was highly successful in simultaneously wresting control of the political system, while presenting himself to the public as offering something new that was an antidote to old styles of corrupt politics; echoes of such a strategy can be seen in similar proclamations made by Duterte in his public speeches.

The Marcos presidency also set an important precedent for Duterte in terms of promoting censorship and controlling access to information. A turning point in the Marcos presidency was the declaration of Martial Law in 1972, immediately after which he 'nationalised' key media businesses, effectively transferring their control to reliable cronies to prevent the use of media 'to undermine the faith and confidence of the people in our government' (Office of the President of the Philippines 1972a). Two commercial broadcast television stations and associated radio stations, owned by high-profile members of elite families—ABC (now TV5) and ABS-CBN—had licences revoked and properties seized by the Marcos government with accusations of disseminating 'subversive materials' and participating in 'a conspiracy to overthrow the government' (Office of the President of the Philippines 1972b). Newspapers and magazines were also shut down, and high-profile publishers and journalists were arrested and imprisoned.

The presidencies of Quezon, Magsaysay, and Marcos exhibited a continuation of a state- and elite-centred government across different political periods and ideologies. They claimed to represent the people by advancing political and economic reforms that appeared to champion historically marginalised populations over wealthy elites. All three presidents were also masters of domestic and geopolitical manoeuvring: they succeeded in monopolising control over political violence, taking advantage of the global political currents, and receiving the United States' approval and support. Magsaysay's and Marcos's brands of populism were particularly shaped by the real and perceived threat of communism. With the escalation of the Cold War, new democracies across the Asian region flourished under repressive and oppressive dictatorships. It seemed that in an

effort to 'preserve' democracy against the 'imminent' communist threat during the Cold War, democracy itself had to take a backseat.

The geopolitical dynamics that shape Duterte's own manoeuvres have taken on interesting new configurations: as mentioned earlier, his own relationship to leftist politics is complex, and unlike his predecessors, Duterte has consistently allied his government with Chinese interests over those of the United States. Yet the geopolitical game that shapes possibilities for Philippine presidents remains one in which perceived threats from foreign powers are deployed to national political ends, and the favour of a superpower (in Duterte's case, China) is sought to bolster economic deals and trade relations of questionable benefit to the average Filipino. Amidst the failure of successive post-independence administrations to adequately address the genuine needs of the people for economic development and human rights, Duterte is the latest in a long line of populists to promise Filipinos radical change, committing to restore faith in governments that have been plagued by corruption and injustice. A desire for *ginhawa* (well-being) and *ganap na kasarinlan* (absolute independence) makes populism appealing as a form of redemptive leadership. But in so doing, populists reinvented the political manoeuvring of their predecessors, encouraged social divisions, and utilised similar instruments of power.

Along with his distinctive relationship to China, a second departure of Duterte from his forerunners has been his capacity to harness newly available digital media technologies to efficiently connect to his constituents and forward the necessity of political will to end criminality and corruption in the country. In the next section we explore this defining characteristic of Duterte's populism and propaganda.

Populist expression and digital communication in the era of Duterte

Duterte's rise to power has prompted a broader rise in popular expression and propaganda that emulates his populist politicking style. Since the 2016 election, public debate in the Philippines has undergone extreme polarisation, with most pro-government propaganda generating a peculiar mix of anti-elite, anti-activist, and anti-*dilawan* vocabulary (*dilawan* or yellow refers to politicians, technocrats, and oligarchs associated with the former Aquino administrations, the Liberal Party, and their supporters). Duterte and his followers' populism regularly invokes the idea of *tunay na pagbabago* (genuine change) and 'popular' reforms. However, it is not a populism akin to that described in the United States as 'the idea of a genuine egalitarian left-wing politics' (Müller 2016, p. 8). Explaining the popularity of Duterte's promise of change with Filipinos, Curato (2016) argued that his call for radical change draws energy from people's 'latent anxiety', which is caused by various threats to peace and order, and discontent, inflamed by the failures of technocratic reforms in addressing the people's immediate concerns. In describing Duterte's campaign in 2016, Curato (2016) observed that Duterte's populist rhetorical style has allowed citizens to 'reclaim their esteem as citizens

who can take charge of their political destiny' (p. 103). While elections in the Philippines have long been plagued by vote-buying, political intimidation, and killings (Curato 2016; McCoy 2017), supporters of Duterte across all classes rallied for him and even willingly paid for campaign materials to express that they are one with Duterte's call for unity and change (Curato 2016). Supporting Duterte is equated here with supporting his call for drastic national change. Taking an active role by sacrificing for the general cause and Duterte's political goal was, in a way, a form of showcasing patriotism.

Such populism granted Duterte 'the status of both spokesman and defender' of the Filipino people—a status that permitted Duterte to effectively discredit such seemingly powerful entities as the United States government and the Catholic Church, to which a Filipino president would typically be held accountable (Webb 2017, pp. 129–130). A discursive space in which rudeness and violence are commonplace also has an effect of diminishing accountability, so that the banality of actual mass killings in the country, as an extension of rhetorical violence that is part of everyday political speech, becomes acceptable to many of his supporters.

What Curato (2016) has described as the reclamation of the democratic agency is evident in the online activities of Duterte's supporters. One example of online content creation that features in the current research of Fernan Talamayan (2021) is the YouTube presence of Mr Riyoh, an overseas Filipino worker (OFW) who works in the Middle East and is an avid supporter of Duterte and Marcos. Mr Riyoh 'voluntarily' creates videos to defend and promote Duterte and Marcos; his early videos stated that he does not receive compensation for his videos, although as we discuss below, there have been widespread allegations and growing evidence that many bloggers are paid for their Duterte and Marcos content. In contrast to some other channels in this genre, very few of Mr Riyoh's videos contain advertisements, suggesting that he does not receive significant income directly from YouTube. Mr Riyoh's channel and comments echo the promotion of Duterte's populist discourse, which goes hand in hand with revisionist narratives of the Marcos regime in the 1970s and 1980s. Mr Riyoh speaks directly to his audience as he responds to Duterte's and Marcos's critics. For instance, in his video entitled 'Real talk about MARCOS—Mr Riyoh' posted in June 2016, he initiated a debate with Lourd de Veyra, a famous anti-Marcos celebrity. Mr Riyoh countered established claims about Marcos family corruption, arguing that their family's wealth existed prior to the Marcos presidency, and that Marcos proclaimed Martial Law in 1972 to re-establish peace and order and propel the Philippine economy to greater heights. Numerous videos produced by Mr Riyoh associate both Duterte and Marcos with economic progress, stability, peace and order, patriotism, heroism, and hope.

Content creators and influencers who support Duterte and Marcos typically use the vernacular of the people and identify themselves as 'the people'. They use common street language that appeals to the ordinary Filipino, and often adopt Duterte's excessive use of expletives to manifest transparency and realness. Perspectives are presented as giving voice to views that have long been

marginalised by technocratic governments (Talamayan 2020, p. 136). Their videos typically employ an 'us-versus-them' narrative and prompt some followers to express the need to rewrite history, reclaiming it from the educated and landed elite (p. 136). While the us-versus-them approach in the populist rhetoric in the Philippines echoes Ernesto Laclau's (2005) notion of an underdog, with specific reference to the Philippines, Webb and Curato (2019) regard it as a hallmark of 'populist nationalism', in which the 'down/up antagonism' between richer and poorer citizens is harnessed by Duterte's supporters in ways that fit Duterte's campaign agenda (p. 52). This dynamic can take the form of the people against a small and powerful elite or as an underdog that has long been subject to the abuse of colonisers and local oligarchs (Webb and Curato 2019, p. 52). Popular discontent with the previous Aquino administration is a reaction to the failures of reformists and technocrats' promise of widespread economic growth, and the accumulation of unfulfilled expectations create an impression that it is only through drastic change that democratic reforms could be indeed achieved (Webb and Curato 2019, p. 54). Thus, Duterte's utilisation of the language of urgency paves the way to what Curato (2016) describes as the politics of hope, foregrounding the role of democratic agency, esteem, and collective aspiration (pp. 105–106).

Online debate among Filipinos has become an extremely important dimension of political life in the Duterte era. While content creators like Mr Riyoh have established their presence in blogging and vlogging platforms like YouTube, their content circulates in a much bigger ecosystem in which viral and social media spreads political commentary alongside celebrity gossip and entertainment media (Pertierra 2021). A key factor that made the rise of polarised and polarising expression so possible in the period of Duterte's election was the growth in widespread access to smartphones, social media, and the Internet among the vast majority of the 108 million Filipinos at home and the more than two million Filipinos working and living abroad. The Philippines has been well documented in both market and scholarly research as among the world's most vibrant markets for digital media and telecommunications; early years of mobile phone technology at the turn of the millennium saw a rapid takeup of texting in the Philippines. The use of communications technologies was fuelled in part by the economic resources and transnational family dynamics of overseas workers whose remittances contributed around 11 per cent of GDP over the past 15 years. Internet-enabled technologies such as smartphones, Internet cafés, tablets, and desktop computers have become a part of the landscape for all but the poorest or most isolated of Filipinos, and social media, particularly Facebook, has become a regular feature of everyday life (Soriano, Cao, and Sison 2018, Uy-Tioco 2019, Uy-Tioco and Cabañes 2021). Starting in 2013, Facebook piloted data-free access to a basic version of its platform, provided for free on major telecommunications carriers in the Philippines, allowing the country to become the first market in which Facebook became more accessible and more widespread than the Internet itself (Uy-Tioco 2019). Such projects initiated by platforms like Facebook in populous nations of the Global South, where large and often dense

populations have long histories of thriving public discussion despite and amidst fragile political institutions, have laid the groundwork for explosive digital public spheres in which digital expression—and digital disinformation—have an increasingly strong influence in political processes, including electoral outcomes.

The period leading up to the 2016 election of Rodrigo Duterte has been understood in retrospect as something of a milestone in the unrolling of digital disinformation as a decisive element in electoral campaigns—and it is important to note that not only Duterte, but many candidates in the Philippines, with a range of affiliations, appear to have engaged teams of digital campaigners to work with both overt and covert tactics to reach voters through social media and other digital communications. In 2019 data consultant Christopher Wylie, whose whistleblowing exposed the activities of the Cambridge Analytica political consulting firm and prompted international investigation, specifically described the Philippines as a 'petri dish' in which tactics and techniques for influencing political opinion have been tested out with minimal risk prior to rollout in markets of the Global North in which regulation is more robust (Occinola 2019). While global platforms created the infrastructure, and international consultancies developed new markets, at a local level, Filipino workers engage in the digital labour that creates and distributes viral political content. Important scholarship on digital disinformation in the Philippines suggests that organised digital campaigns, staffed by experienced advertising and public relations professionals, have employed large numbers of individuals to work under the radar producing viral content and engaging in 'trolling' activities to harass public figures whose political positions oppose their employers' interests (Cabañes and Cornelio 2017; Ong and Cabañes 2018, see also for context Soriano 2021).

The rise of digital political expression, which includes digital disinformation but to an as-yet unknown degree, has shifted the dynamics of public debate. The penetration of political commentary from newly influential voices into the everyday social media practices of the average Filipino voter challenges the dominance of traditional media players and organisations in shaping political debate. But an even bigger and more explicit threat to the established media landscape, in which ideals of a free press and liberal democratic debate have been imperfectly sought, can be seen in the hostile relations between the Duterte administration and high-profile sources of journalism and media content. While passionate vloggers, paid trolls, and everyday social media users have been variously engaged in public debate through Facebook, YouTube, and other platforms, the president's administration has also overseen a period in which independent journalism and critical current affairs have become marked as the enemies of the people.

Democratic backsliding in the time of Duterte: Tense relations with media

Following the conspiratorial logic of Duterte's populism, leading industry players in the Philippines' media landscape have, by virtue of their public commitment

to the liberal ideal of a free press, been targeted by direct and indirect government actions. Targets have included the respected English language broadsheet newspaper, Philippine Daily Inquirer, which was sharply criticised by Duterte in 2017 and sold under some pressure by the elite family that owned it. But in this section we focus on two longer running and higher profile examples of media players whose existence has become increasingly difficult: that of the major television network ABS-CBN, owned by the prominent Lopez family, and the online news service Rappler, co-founded and run by Filipino-American journalist Maria Ressa. The scale of these two media organisations differs greatly, with the former being the most extensive and longest running broadcasting network in the nation, overseen by one of the country's most powerful families, via a holding company with interests in media, telecommunications, energy, manufacturing, and real estate. The latter example of Rappler is much smaller in comparison, as an independent news website that was launched in 2011; yet the presence of Rappler as a critical and independent voice, backed by the credibility of its internationally experienced founders, quickly saw its occupying an influential niche in national political coverage.

The ABS-CBN media group is the Philippines' largest, and comprises interests across every kind of media, including digital, cable subscriptions, radio, and film. But it is the free-to-air television broadcasting network that serves as the corporation's lynchpin. Owned by the prominent Lopez family, the ABS-CBN television network actively cultivates a public image as having been at the forefront of the free press since the earliest days of Philippine television (Pertierra 2021). Such an image is reinforced by the public knowledge of the network's history of being sequestered under the Marcos government as one of the first acts of Martial Law. When the Lopez group reacquired ABS-CBN after the 1986 People Power revolution, which saw the Marcos overthrow, it was awarded an extended licence to broadcast which required renewal by Congress before May 2020.

Despite several years of attempts with sympathetic politicians to renew the franchise, a series of legal and political disputes allowed the franchise to expire. President Duterte's enmity for the television network was well known, and between 2017 and 2020 he made regular accusations against ABS-CBN, while his supporters in Congress delayed any possibility for franchise renewal. As a result, in May 2020, what had been the nation's largest and most powerful television stations ceased broadcast (Gutierrez 2020). In the months that followed, deals were struck so that many of the most popular and profitable programs could air through alternative stations (Elemia 2020). But at the time of writing it remains the case that the highest profile news and current affairs coverage that was historically the flagship of ABS-CBN broadcasting has been severely muffled at best. The years of struggle that have characterised the relationship of the ABS-CBN group and the Duterte administration echo the broader dynastic tendencies that shape both politics and media in the Philippines. While Duterte's aggressive stance towards the media company calls upon the legacy of the Marcos

family and symbolically aligns him to their anti-liberal political lineage, ABS-CBN itself is a product of the Lopez family dynasty, which has interests well beyond media and is a dominant player in other key industries including energy, infrastructure, telecommunications, and property. It is important, then, to bear in mind that even while ABS-CBN as an institution champions the liberal ideal of a free press, this commitment to liberalism is in itself an expression of particular Lopez family values, and therefore could be seen as a less authoritarian but no less patrimonial expression of the historically entrenched political dynamics described in earlier sections of this chapter.

Rappler's history in the media landscape of the Philippines is quite different, and much shorter. Established as a news website in 2012, Rappler was founded by a group of highly experienced journalists with former CNN and ABS-CBN veteran Maria Ressa at the helm. In comparison to more established nationwide news organisations, Rappler does not enjoy a readership that is as large. But as a website that focuses heavily on investigative journalism and invested early in digital engagement techniques, they have been able to establish a journalistic voice and impact that belies their relatively small size, breaking key stories that are subsequently reported in print and broadcast media by their larger competitors. Rappler's extensive reportage during the first year of Duterte's presidency of extrajudicial killings and their investigations into the rise of digital trolling are often described as having formed the catalyst for the government's particular dislike of the organisation's work (Hammer 2019). It is certainly the case that while Maria Ressa had reported on, and personally interviewed, Duterte for years before he assumed the presidency, it was only after the influence of Rappler's journalism on discussions of his administration grew that the organisation began to receive significant legal and political pressure.

The Rappler company is owned by several shareholders, with Ressa herself owning approximately 23 per cent (Media Ownership Monitor Philippines 2021). The constitution of Rappler's shareholdings is significant because allegations of foreign ownership have been one of the flanks of attack that have marked the news organisation's existence. Another flank of attack has been through the pursuit of a controversial legal case which attracted strong international interest: in June 2020, Ressa and another Rappler employee were found guilty in a Manila court of 'cyberlibel' with regards to an article published on the website in 2012 (BBC News 2020). The article alleged that a businessman, Wilfredo Keng, had links to crime while also having a close relationship with a Filipino judge. The article was published four months before the cyberlibel law came into effect, but had one typographical error corrected in 2014 which was argued as the basis for the validity of a guilty conviction. The cyberlibel case is one of 11 court cases that have been brought against Rappler and/or Ressa in recent years, and is perceived by Rappler's supporters as evidence of a Duterte-driven campaign of press persecution. But such legal controversies in the Philippines have had some additional consequences on the international stage, where Ressa's profile has steadily grown as a prominent advocate for press freedom.

Rappler does not sit perfectly within the family dynastic models of media and politics that the previous case study of ABS-CBN provided. But Rappler does call attention to another historical dynamic that has shaped the 'strongman' politics of Duterte: that of the geopolitics of international relations and the perception of foreign powers as a force against the people. Maria Ressa herself is often depicted by her detractors as representing foreign interests, spurred by her American upbringing and dual citizenship, and consolidated by the admiration and acclaim that her work has attracted in the international press, including TIME Magazine's Person of the Year award in 2018 (TIME 2020). The striking gulf between Ressa's largely positive public image in English language dominated international media circles, and the sharp criticism of her work and her person by Duterte and his supporters within the Philippines can be seen as ultimately fuelling Duterte's populist position of rejecting an elitism that appears to be both liberal in discourse and foreign in origin.

For both ABS-CBN and Rappler, the battles to remain open have been protracted and remain in flux at the time of writing. It is not hard to see why ABS-CBN and Rappler were so firmly in the crosshairs of Duterte's team: what these media networks share, in contrast to other local players who have not been direct targets of presidential hostility, is that they have published journalism and news commentaries that include criticism of Duterte's record on a range of issues, including the war on drugs, foreign relations with China, and his authoritarian tendencies (Heydarian 2020). Despite their differences in size and history, both ABS-CBN and Rappler have been described by Duterte and his supporters as either being run or influenced by 'yellow oligarchs' who favour the Liberal Party-led opposition. Painted as money-driven institutions, the media's 'greed' and 'biases' are alleged to manifest in reports that 'favor' the yellows. This framing has given the Duterte administration leeway to intimidate and attack journalists and media owners on many occasions, while using political and legal processes to seek the closure of both organisations. In both cases, even within a context of heightened authoritarianism, the processes and structures that can be mobilised to shut down television networks and websites are slow and inconsistent in their progress. Populist rhetoric that has been so clearly deployed across other areas of Duterte's political communication is also present in their battles with the media. The government touted ABS-CBN's closure as *desisyon ng taumbayan* or 'decision of the people' (Geducos 2020). Rappler's CEO, Maria Ressa, has been tagged as a fake news peddler and charged with cyberlibel numerous times by Duterte's political allies (Wanless 2020). Duterte's supporters accused the Philippine Daily Inquirer of 'unfair coverage, liberal bias, tax evasion, and even "swindling"' (Heydarian 2020).

In the subtitle for this chapter section, we have described this tendency of populist-fuelled antagonism towards journalism and media organisations as a sign of democratic backsliding. While backsliding often refers to the autocratisation and militarisation of a regime, in democratic regimes, it also refers to the systemic erosion of public confidence in institutions that guard and promote democratic values. In the cases presented in this section, the media's role as a

watchdog is undermined by destroying press credibility. By portraying ABS-CBN and Rappler as purveyors of fake news and enemies of the people, Duterte and supporters weaken a critical institution that helps sustain democracy in the Philippines. Duterte's claim that these media organisations are controlled by oligarchs, further bolsters his own public image as the people's champion.

Conclusion: Learning from Duterte

This chapter has sought to bring together a historical understanding of politics in the modern Philippines, with contemporary case studies from media and journalism, to explain key dimensions of the success that President Duterte has enjoyed and indeed increased in the first three years of his term of office. While Duterte's ideologically flexible politics do not fit very easily along a left-right continuum, across his various policies and alliances we argue that he is consistently authoritarian and populist, with an increasingly explicit hostility towards liberalism and some new variations of anti-elitism that accord with the changing geopolitical forces of the Asian region. Both populism and authoritarianism have clear precedents in the approaches of Duterte's predecessors; his strongman approach sits upon firm historical foundations. Paradoxically, his claims of anti-elitism and underdog status belie his keen understanding of the traditional dynastic and regional politics that have been practiced by political elites across the nation for over a century. Adding this dimension to our study of Duterte serves to explain how political and legal controversies that are currently unfolding stand upon older histories of media and politics in the Philippines. Even in a moment where digital disruption seems to have transformed elements of the media landscape, and where new possibilities such as digital trolling, social media campaigning, and cyberlibel cases have appeared, we can see that these new forms of political agitation themselves rest upon longer practices of populist discourse and dynastic competition.

There are of course many important controversies and debates that Duterte has provoked which we have had to leave mostly outside the scope of our discussion. These include the exponential rise of extrajudicial killings, increased military and police impunity, an overt hostility towards human rights advocacy, a limited public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a more detailed discussion of his unorthodox relations with China. But the observations that we have offered in this chapter may also be of use in thinking through these broader shifts in political culture that seem to have occurred in the Philippines since the election of Duterte in 2016. When cast in a historical light, many of Duterte's most distinctive characteristics can be seen as expressions of an authoritarian and populist orientation that has its roots in multiple presidencies, including but not limited to the precedents of the Marcos era.

The success of Duterte also offers productive possibilities for thinking through the rise of other populist leaders who are potentially constituting a kind of radical right in the Global South. The positioning of journalists and media organisations

as enemies of the people is a strategy that can be observed across many parts of the world, expanded in scope and scale by the widespread use of digital media. The important role of digital communication in electoral outcomes and public political debates is a clear example of how populous and digitally connected Global South societies have become the testing ground for new techniques and tools of political engagement. It is in places like the Philippines that we can look for groundbreaking innovations in social and digital media, including their impact upon political culture. Duterte's Philippines also reminds that while ideals of liberalism may seem under acute threat, in the Global South (and perhaps in the North as well), these very ideals have always operated in tandem with illiberal and authoritarian practices, often enacted by the political leaders whose regimes have enjoyed the support of global powers in the name of upholding liberal democracy. This observation in no way diminishes the gravity of challenges to the freedom of expression, to the cultivation of a diversity of voices, or to the physical safety of both high-profile and everyday people whose experiences may bring them into the crossfire of battles for authoritarian consolidation. On the contrary, it improves our understanding of how much and why populist authoritarianism can enjoy an expanded ascension in the context of the digital era.

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8

POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN AN ERA OF 'POST-TRUTH POLITICS'

Disinformation and the Hindu right in India (1980s–2010s)

Amogh Dhar Sharma

Introduction

One of the defining features of the rise of the far-right in contemporary politics around the globe has been the remarkable degree to which its discourse has permeated everyday life. Once existing merely in the fringes of mainstream politics, in the post-2000s period radical right-wing parties have rapidly come to occupy the center-stage in the democratic politics of different countries (Mudde 2019). To understand how such a change in the political equilibrium could have been affected in a relatively short period of time, many scholars have turned their attention to analyzing the mobilization tactics and techniques of political communication that have been employed by right-wing parties and politicians (and their affiliated social movements and media ecosystems).[1] Insights emerging from this growing literature have revealed how the proliferation of fake news, conspiracy theories, and 'computational propaganda' have provided a fecund arena for the rise of right-wing ideologies and reactionary subjectivities. It is noteworthy that many of these techniques first became apparent in the countries of the Global South—such as Brazil (Arnaudo 2019), India (Hussain and Menon 2020; Sharma 2015), Philippines (Ong and Cabañes 2018), and Turkey (Saka 2014, 2018)—before they came to acquire wider visibility in the politics of Western democracies. Before the 'Alt-Right' ecosystem in the United States or the Brexit campaign in the United Kingdom became a global *cause célèbre*, targeted misinformation had already made its strident appearance in Narendra Modi's prime ministerial campaign for the 2014 India General Election and in Erdogan repression of the Gezi Park demonstrations in 2013.

Even though the manipulation of public opinion through the use of disinformation campaigns and unethical data mining practices is becoming prevalent across the political spectrum, the right-wing has thus far outpaced its competitors

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in the use of these tactics in both scale and sophistication (Benkler, Faris, and Roberts 2018; Edelman 2021; Mudde 2019). The elective affinities between the current landscape of the media system and radical right politics are not difficult to fathom. For one thing, the nature of mediatized communication easily lends itself to the charismatic demagoguery that is a hallmark feature of right-wing politicians. For another, new media technology has facilitated the rapid circulation of xenophobic tropes and nativist mythologies that have traditionally provided ballast to right-wing politics. However, above all, as I seek to show in this chapter, what has enabled the radical right to disproportionately benefit from media technology and disinformation campaigns has been its ability (and determination) to deftly conceal the elaborate infrastructure through which it produces and distributes its propaganda. The significance of this observation is most strikingly apparent in the trajectory of the Hindu nationalist movement in India.

Recent interventions in the field of political communication have tended to carry a presentist bias insofar as the problem of disinformation has become increasingly tethered to social media technology. While scholars admit to the existence of conspiracy theories and misinformation that predate the Internet (e.g. Evans 2020; McKenzie-McHarg 2019), little attention has been devoted to analyzing the evolution of conspiratorial propaganda over time. This chapter suggests the potential benefits of adopting a medium-term time horizon in the study disinformation campaigns by focusing on two key moments for right-wing politics in India—the electoral ascendance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the late 1980s and 1990s and its subsequent resurgence under prime minister Narendra Modi through the 2010s. By juxtaposing these two time periods, this chapter shows that the propaganda of the Hindu right has been efficacious neither because its spinmeisters are inherently skilled at repackaging lies into truth nor because it has special technological resources at its disposal that its opponents lack. Rather, the Hindu right's potency—irrespective of the medium it uses and the message it communicates—is in its ability to impart a natural, quotidian, and effervescent quality to its propaganda. This has been achieved by deploying an elaborate machinery that carefully covers its own footprints and which invisibilizes the labor that is used to run it.

The energies of right-wing politics in India, as elsewhere, have frequently manifested themselves in instances of street-based demonstrations (Freitag 2005), performative rituals in the public sphere (Hansen 2001; Jaffrelot 1998), and violent conflagrations (Brass 2003). Yet, an equally important, if unacknowledged, element of its organizational strategy has been the need to keep its modus operandi shrouded in intrigue and secrecy—in other words, concealed from the public eye. It is usually assumed that this quest for secrecy and anonymity is a necessary cover that provides right-wing actors impunity for their legally dubious activities. However, I wish to argue that far more than its utility as legal indemnity, this quest for discretion is coded in the very substance of its ideology. Unlike their left-wing and centrist counterparts, right-wing ideologues ground their

authority and legitimacy not through their capacity to proselytize and win over the partisans of their opponents, but instead in their capacity to represent public sentiments that have historically been latent in society and gone unrepresented. For instance, in India the Hindu nationalists have championed themselves as not the purveyor of a new political theology, but as the representatives of the ordinary Hindu citizen that has historically been marginalized at the hands of global Islamism, on the one hand, and a liberal postcolonial elite, on the other. It is precisely to maintain this illusion of a pre-existing political consciousness, which then spontaneously springs forth in moments of heightened conflict and political flashpoints, that Hindu nationalists expend great effort to conceal the institutional edifice of its propaganda.

Hindu nationalism is an ethno-nationalist movement that seeks to assert India's identity as the rightful abode of the majority Hindu community, who are seen as the only legitimate autochthonous inhabitants of the land. Its central ideology of *Hindutva* (i.e. a politicized spirit of Hindu-ness) revolves around the mythology of a golden age of Hindu civilization that existed in ancient India and its subsequent destruction at the hands of foreign invaders—most notably, medieval Muslim conquerors and European colonialists. Over the years *Hindutva* has been championed by a diverse range of actors, the most significant of which is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a socio-cultural organization formed in 1925 with the aim of galvanizing a spirit of unity and cultural pride among Hindus. Since its inception, the RSS has given birth to a larger family of Hindu nationalist organizations known as the *Sangh Parivar*, which includes, inter alia, a political party (Bharatiya Janata Party), a religious front (Vishwa Hindu Parishad), and a labor union (Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh). Currently, the BJP holds the distinction as the world's largest political party in terms of party membership. However, until the 1980s, BJP (and its predecessor the Bharatiya Jana Sangh) enjoyed only small pockets of electoral strength throughout the country. This situation dramatically changed from the mid-1980s onwards with the onset of the Ramjanmabhoomi Movement.[2]

Media propaganda and the Hindu right in the 1980s and 1990s

The Ram Janmabhoomi movement (lit. Ram Birthplace movement) pertained to a controversy in the North Indian city of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh that, according to Hindu mythology, was the birthplace of Lord Ram, a popular religious figure in Hinduism. According to legend, Ayodhya was home to an ancient Hindu temple erected in honor of Lord Ram that was demolished by the Mughal Emperor Babur in 1528 to pave the way for the construction of a mosque, the Babri Masjid, at the same location. Since independence, Hindu nationalists had attempted to exploit this controversy multiple times albeit with limited success. A more concerted effort was witnessed in the 1980s when the Sangh Parivar actively patronized the cause of 'reclaiming' Ayodhya for the (re)construction of

a Ram temple at the disputed site of the Babri Masjid. The Movement reached its apogee on 6 December 1992, when a congregation of devotees (known as *kar sevaks*) demolished the Babri Masjid.[3]

A notable technique of mobilization used by the Hindu right in the lead up to the demolition of the Babri Masjid was the use of nationwide street procession (*yatras*) through which leaders from the Sangh Parivar toured the country to mobilize public sympathy for the movement (Assayag 1998; Jaffrelot 2009). The most prominent of these was the *Ram Rath Yatra* (lit. Ram Chariot Procession) led by BJP leader L.K. Advani that took place during September–October 1990. This procession took place in a Toyota van that has been redesigned to resemble a chariot (*rath*) and adorned with a corpus of symbols and imagery drawn from Hindu mythology. Advani's *rath yatra* was perhaps the most visible gambit employed by the Hindu nationalists in their quest for prominence and was successful insofar as it deepened communal polarization between Hindus and Muslims and subsequently yielded a rich dividend of votes for the BJP. However, the physical cavalcade represented by Advani's chariot was only a small part of what allowed a communal common-sense to permeate the wider political culture in India at that time. Davis (2005) has noted that the *rath yatra* often evoked a staid response among urban middle-class citizens in cities, who were ironically the core support base for the BJP. Instead, the core of the communal propaganda spread during the Ramjanmabhoomi Movement—which included vitriolic speeches, conspiracy theories about Muslims, and quotidian rumors—could be found in the emergent forms of mass media from that period.

The 1980s were a watershed moment for mass media communication in India. This decade saw a rapid expansion in the ownership of television, which soon emerged as a ubiquitous commodity in middle-class homes, and an expansion in national broadcasting facilities through the government-run Doordarshan channel (Mankekar 1999; Mehta 2008; Rajagopal 2001). However, given the then ruling Congress government's monopoly over the national broadcasting facilities, the BJP and the Sangh Parivar had to take recourse to more independent forms of media technology that lay outside state control. The humble audiocassette emerged as the lynchpin of this enterprise. Since their introduction in the late 1970s in India, cassettes had been heralded as a democratic 'people's medium' that was 'resistant to centralized control and conducive to grass-roots expression' (Manuel 2005, 134). As a decentralized and fairly inexpensive medium, cassettes could be a potent tool for insurgent political actors to spread their ideology—this was abundantly clear in the circulation of Ayatollah Khomeini's cassettes in the lead up to the Iranian Revolution and in Islamic reviavalist movements in Egypt (Hirschkind 2006).

When the audiocassette first entered the Indian market, their popularity was driven by the market of Hindustani and regional folk music (Manuel 2001). Subsequently, cassettes were employed in the election campaign of the Congress party and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in the 1983 legislative assembly elections in the state of Andhra Pradesh. However, the real untapped potential

of cassette technology was recognized by the RSS-VHP-BJP combine who quickly seized the opportunity to maneuver it in their favor. With the onset of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement, some of the most popular audiocassettes in circulation in north India were those containing communally inflammatory speeches by ideologues belonging to the Sangh Parivar (Basu et al. 1993; Manuel 2005). These cassettes contained emotionally charged and passionately delivered speeches that discussed the perceived victimhood of the Hindu community at the hands of a 'pseudo-secular government', the supposed radicalization of the Muslim community that posed a threat to national security, and frequently made open calls to violence. In particular, Uma Bharati and Sadhvi Ritambhara's speeches[4] with their fever-pitch tone, hectoring monologues, sudden voice modulations, and exaggerated emphasis were particularly efficacious in invoking sympathy towards the construction of a Ram temple at the disputed structure. Many other cassettes, however, were of dubious provenance and the identity of the speaker remained shrouded in mystery. Nevertheless, the Sangh Parivar, with its deep branches in different parts of the country, played an active role in their distribution. As Vivek, an RSS *swayamsevak* (volunteer) who belonged to family of Hindu nationalists and BJP politicians from Uttar Pradesh, recalled when I met him during fieldwork in 2017:

> I was very young when the Ram Mandir *Andolan* [agitation] started. When Babri Masjid was demolished I was around 10-11 years of age, but I was still conscious of what was happening … the entire locality was totally charged up. There used to be frequent curfews and there were these banned cassettes [about Ramjanmabhoomi] that needed to be distributed. Soon, it became my responsibility to distribute them discreetly in my locality.[5]

Interestingly, he later went on to assist the RSS in expanding its digital outreach in the 2000s and was also a key player in Narendra Modi's 2014 prime ministerial campaign (see below). Vivek represents one of thousands of *swayamsevaks* across the country who might have played such a role for the Sangh in this period.

Despite the central role that the Sangh Parivar's leadership had in political mobilization in this period, the use of cassettes had the counter-intuitive role of rendering Sangh's role invisible. This is because, as Basu et al. (1993) have noted, the power of audiocassettes lay in their self-effacing quality. This was achieved in principally two ways. First, the production and reproduction of these cassettes on a mass scale came at a relatively low cost and their portable nature meant that they could be transported and distributed to different parts of the country easily. The clandestine manner in which these cassettes would circulate helped obliterate the pre-planned and strategic nature of the media blitzkrieg that was launched under the aegis of the Sangh Parivar. The support for the BJP and sympathy for the cause of the Ram Mandir that these cassettes evoked could then be made to appear organic and spontaneous and not the result of a pre-planned conspiracy spearheaded by a political party. This ability

of Sangh's cassette propaganda to cover its own tracks was most apparent during the communal riots that emerged in cities through which Adavni's *rath yatra* happened to pass (Basu 2005; Basu et al. 1993; Rajagopal 2001). The sequence of events in many of these riots tended to be similar—residents would be greeted with sounds of loud screams, cries of help by women and children, and gunfire in their locality. This would then be followed by chants of '*Allah-o-Akbar*' ('Allah is the Greatest') and '*Jai Shri Ram*' ('Glory to Lord Ram'). The mystery and misperception surrounding these sounds would add to the sense of distrust and disharmony between Hindus and Muslim and would often be sufficient to spark off riots. Subsequently, the source of these sounds was usually found to be a discarded cassette player on rooftops or loudspeakers affixed on top of cars or behind scooters that would travel through the streets in the dark of the night.[6] Given the inability of a pirated cassette to be traced to its origin, the Sangh could disavow all responsibility and claim the riots were a natural upsurge of communal sentiments.

Second, the practice of listening to these cassettes together and playing them at public venues helped foment a sense of togetherness and unity among the audience overtime.[7] This subject matter of the cassettes would often be carried forward as a subject of discussion in the local communities where they were played and would linger on in the collective consciousness of the people. These audiocassettes could be played and re-played an infinite number of times, both privately and in front of congregations. This repetition provided a sense of familiarity and ubiquity with the content of the cassettes and its communal overtones (Basu et al. 1993). Many of these cassettes contained devotional hymns that had been adapted on the catchy tunes of popular Bollywood songs. This provided these cassettes not only a religious flavor, but also entertainment value. In this manner, the mixing of religion with elements of popular culture provided the Ramjanmabhoomi Movement a natural, commonplace, and everyday quality.

By the early 1990s, the visual medium became an additional weapon in the media arsenal of the Hindu nationalists—VHS cassettes, video rental parlors, mobile video vans (known as video *raths*), and cable TV operators came to supplement audiocassettes (Brosius 1999, 2005). The visual turn made the communal propaganda not only more emotive and appealing, but also opened up new possibilities of narrowcasting messages to segmented sections of voters. For instance, during the legislative assembly and municipal elections in Delhi, cable TV operators (who were the primary access point in the relay of TV broadcasting facilities to urban households in the 1990s) were made a formal part of BJP's publicity campaign and election strategy. BJP would distribute videocassettes with messages from party leaders to the cable operators, who would telecast them in the local residential area (Farmer 2005; Mishra 1999). Since cable networks operated within fairly circumscribed limits of a neighborhood, the content of the message could potentially be tailored to suit the sensibility of the local audience.

The Modi years: Social media 'trolls' and 'astroturfing'

The foregoing discussion illustrates that in addition to perfecting their message, Hindu nationalists devoted an equal amount of attention to the infrastructure through which they communicated with their audience. Both cassettes and cable television from the 1980s and 1990s reveal that the emergence of narrowcasting and disinformation campaigns targeting voters were not coeval with social media; it has had a long prehistory. Yet, few would disagree with the proposition that new media technology has added greater finesse to the propaganda machinery of the radical right around the world, including that of the Sangh Parivar. As a result, it has also become much harder for researchers to pierce behind the veil that conceals this propaganda machinery.

With Narendra Modi's ascendance in national politics, India's election campaigns have become (in)famous for their social media blitzkrieg, use of big data analytics, reliance on automated bots and 'troll farms', and acerbic hashtag wars. The roots of this phenomenon and the reason why BJP acquired a first-mover advantage in this area can be found in the confluence of two parallel trends that crystallized in the late 2000s. First, young RSS *swayamsevaks*, many of whom had been educated and trained as IT professionals, began using the Internet to disseminate and defend the ideology of Hindutva in online forums *suo moto*. While pro-Hindutva content and extremist hate-speech had lurked in the niche corners of the Internet since the 1990s, the ideology now made its appearance in more mainstream forums where their reach was more widespread. Much of this was the result of the affordance offered by nascent forms of social media that enabled a more dialogical and rapid exchange of opinions. Vivek, who I discussed in the section above, was one such IT professional who seamlessly transitioned from being a purveyor of illegal cassettes in his adolescence to creating pro-RSS and pro-BJP communities and fan pages on platforms such as the now defunct Orkut. Another *swayamsevak* recalled:

> In the 1980s and 1990s perception was built on the ground … I have been working for the BJP since the days of the *Ram Shila Pujan*. We would go from town to town, collecting bricks and donations for the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. Now we can do all of this online. You can plant the seeds on social media, and reap the benefits in the offline world.[8]

Many other tech-savvy *swayamsevaks* helped the RSS and its affiliates launch their official websites and social media accounts. Here was an emergent class of young professionals who were beginning to fashion themselves as the modern-day digital footsoldiers of Hindu nationalism on the cyberspace. While the Sangh was initially resistant to a public embrace of media and preferred grassroots face-to-face activism, they gradually expanded their outreach on the web and by integrating tools such as e-conferencing in their day-to-day functioning.

In its milder and anodyne form, these online forums simply allowed for older Hindutva tropes to be recycled. But soon an increasingly strident strain also manifested itself in the form of angry, belligerent, and abusive social media users who not only promulgated blatantly anti-Muslim rhetoric but also began 'trolling' those who were seen as the critics of the Hindu nationalist project. One liberal commentator dubbed them as 'Hindutva hate-mailers' given their proclivity to send death threats and abusive rejoinders to public intellectuals via email (Guha 2012). But the most enduring moniker that these users have self-identified with and around which they have collectively rallied is that of 'Internet Hindus' (Sharma 2015; Udupa 2015). By 2012, one could find this term appearing in numerous Twitter handles, Facebook pages, and YouTube channels. To self-identify as 'Internet Hindu' was to make a strident declaration of being a proud Hindu nationalist in the public sphere and to claim to be the representative voice of the angry Hindu citizen, shorn of political correctness.

In the early 2010s, there was a possibility that the emergent Internet Hindus would remain confined to mere 'slacktivism' and progressively fizzle out (pace Gladwell 2010). This outcome was, however, averted through the second trend that was emerging in the same period—BJP's attempt to capitalize on digital media for the explicit purpose of election campaigns. BJP was one of the first parties in India to launch an official website in the 1990s. By 2007, the party's national headquarters in Delhi had set up an Information Technology Cell (IT Cell) to act as the nodal point of all digital outreach activity undertaken by the party. In the lead up to the 2014 General Elections, the IT Cell assumed a central role in shaping BJP's campaign strategy and began hiring qualified professionals who had the technical skills to perform the requisite tasks. However, despite a core team of full-time party staffers, there was still a need for a larger standing army of volunteers who could act as the social media warriors for the party. This is the point where the two trends began to coalesce together.

In a series of public as well as closed-door conclaves, a number of prominent Internet Hindus who had built up a mass following for themselves were brought together under the umbrella of the BJP. In this nascent digital machinery, Internet Hindus were made key nodes through which BJP would distribute the message it intended to communicate to the wider electorate. Additional social media volunteers were amassed through an open recruitment drive named 'Operation *Vijay*' (lit. Operation Victory) and a digital platform called 'India272+'. With this machinery in place, the party's IT cell could create a large volume of content and pass it on to the discreet, and entirely voluntary, army of social media warriors who could disseminate it in their personal networks in creative ways. Thus, for instance, during the months of the 2014 election campaign, one frequently found photoshopped images of the skyline of Guangzhou being passed off as proof of *vikas* (development) that took place in Gujarat when Narendra Modi was the chief minister of the State. By the time of the 2019 General Elections, the major pivot in BJP's digital campaign was the use of local WhatsApp groups. Estimates suggest that during the 2019 elections, BJP had nearly 400,000 social

media convenors in different parts of the country, with each convenor managing multiple WhatsApp groups at the polling-booth level (Choudhury 2018; Uttam 2018). These BJP-run WhatsApp groups were not only more geographically decentralized—thereby offering greater opportunity of narrowcasting messages—they were also premised upon greater intra-personal trust and familiarity among group members, which imparted greater plausibility to the propaganda that circulated on them. Further still, the privacy offered by the platform and lack of effective regulation due to end-to-end encryption of messages effectively meant a *carte blanche* for the spread of anti-Muslim vitriol.

It would be facile, however, to believe that this propaganda machinery springs into action only during the peak cycles of an election campaign. Social media in the hands of the Hindu right-wing has become an instrument of everyday communal polarization. The first Modi government (2014–2019) was marked by repeated instances of bovine-related vigilante violence and lynchings directed towards Muslims and Dalits (see Roy, this volume). In nearly all of these cases WhatsApp was used to spread rumors about the presence of cow-smugglers and beef-consumption (widely seen as an affront to caste Hindus who consider the cow to be a sacred symbol) and spur local vigilantes to take matters in their own hands (Banaji et al. 2019). In more than one instance, Hindutva vigilante groups have also filmed themselves engaging in acts of violence, harassment, and arson and shared it widely through social media to fashion themselves as the proud defenders of Hindu nationalism. The older cassette culture that combined Hindu devotional hymns with Bollywood songs has made a re-appearance in recent years in the form of 'Hindutva pop music'. A new generation of folk singers such as Laxmi Dubey and Sanjay Faizabadi have accumulated a staggering fan base through their provocative songs that center on the themes of hyper-patriotism, Islamic terrorism, and Hindu pride and are replete with blatant reference of violence. These songs circulate not only through live performances and concerts in small-town India, some of which have been patronized and funded by BJP state governments, but most prominently on YouTube where they have raked in millions of views (Schultz 2019).

Equal effort has been devoted to keeping the popularity of Narendra Modi afloat against all odds. For example, anger against the widely unpopular and economically reckless decision to demonetize high-denomination currency notes in November 2016 was sought to be neutralized through a concerted digital campaign. One of the many conspiracy theories that circulated in this period extolled Modi's decision to introduce new currency notes that would have a 'GPS nanochip' that would help curtail corruption and money laundering (BBC 2016; Saldahna 2016). During moments of military escalations with Pakistan, dubious videos of the Indian army and airforce conducting cross-border strikes against terror groups in Pakistan have circulated with great gusto (Campbell-Smith and Bradshaw 2019; Times Fact Check 2019). The attempt to conceal the Modi government's catastrophic mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic also sent BJP's IT propaganda machinery into overdrive. Senior BJP leaders

and ordinary party volunteers alike have exerted great energy on social media to downplay the scale of the catastrophe—from disputing the news reportage on COVID-related case numbers and deaths to insinuating a global conspiracy to defame India (Chaudhuri 2021). In each of these cases, outpouring of support for the BJP on social media is repeatedly made to appear as the *vox populi* and, in the process, the highly orchestrated nature of the entire enterprise is sought to be concealed. These social media warriors are motivated not only by their commitment to help achieve the ideological hegemony of Hindutva, but also through material and pecuniary benefits. Many prominent self-style Internet Hindus have enjoyed unmediated access with Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders and many others have been recruited as private attaché and special advisors to cabinet ministers or been appointed on advisory boards of government-run enterprises.[9] As a result of such implicit and explicit incentives, after the initial investment in cobbling together an army of social media warrior, the maintenance and expansion of this infrastructure of disinformation has required very little effort on part of the BJP. Thus, much like cassette technology in the 1980s, social media in contemporary times acquires self-effacing qualities and naturalizing effects once set in motion.

Until recently, the very existence of BJP's IT cell was itself shrouded in mystery and intrigue. While the party has consistently denied the deliberate use of disinformation and troll armies as its modus operandi, piecemeal journalistic reportage and whistleblower accounts of the functioning of the BJP IT Cell have proven to the contrary (Chaturvedi 2016; Singh 2019). One of the key mechanisms through which the IT Cell conceals its own functioning is by sequestering the cell and its employees from the main parent party—both spatially and symbolically. At 11 Ashoka Road in New Delhi, which was until recently the BJP's national party headquarters, the BJP IT Cell was housed in a small building that stood apart and concealed from the rest of the party offices. As I discovered during one of my earliest research trips in 2014,[10] entry to the cell was not open to the general public, and access to its building was restricted to those in possession of an authorized ID card that needed to be presented during entry and exit. In contrast to the relatively open environment that characterized other parts of the party office, the IT Cell was characterized by a closed, secretive, and inconspicuous atmosphere. After securing access to the premises, I also found that those who worked there were uncharacteristically guarded and unwilling to share the details of their work with a third party. The full-time employees who work in this cell are not directly on the payroll of the party; remuneration and management of employees' contracts was outsourced to an external human resource management firm.[11] All of these were carefully controlled elements through which the existence of the Cell was sought to be concealed from the public eye and through which it effectively erased its own footprints and the labor it performed for the parent party.

Another example of self-concealing disinformation that was present in Modi's 2014 campaign, and which has hitherto received insufficient attention, was the

use of an 'astroturf' campaign[12] called 'Citizens for Accountable Governance' (CAG)—an ostensibly anodyne grassroots organization that was effectively a respectable facade for the BJP's election machine. The genesis of this organization began with a group of highly qualified, urban, young professionals working in the private sector who were enamored by Narendra Modi as a politician and wanted to see him as the next prime minister. Upon approaching Modi with an offer to assist in his campaign, they were put in touch with a man named Prashant Kishor, who was at that time working as a special advisor to Modi in the Gujarat Chief Minister's Office. Kishor was quick to realize the potential utility of a shadow campaign team and under his guidance these individuals were brought together under a newly established NGO called 'Citizens for Accountable Governance' in early 2013. During the 2014 Elections, CAG was responsible for some of the most memorable, high-tech, and visually dazzling campaign events including the use of 3-D holograms in public meetings, in addition to contributing to Modi's speeches and devising catchy campaign slogans (Sruthijith 2014). However, CAG's real power lay in what it could achieve by concealing its true identity and purpose.

Even though its *raison d'être* was to elect Modi as prime minister, in the initial month of its inception CAG described itself as a non-partisan organization and disavowed having links with any political party (CAG 2013a). Instead, it pitched itself as an independent NGO run by well-educated youngsters who wanted to 'build a substantive and purposeful engagement with various establishments… and engage the youth … to … strengthen accountable governance in India' (CAG 2013b). Despite its explicitly political mission and partisan bent, initially CAG appeared to be more concerned with issues of good governance and remained aloof from party politics. With the benefit of hindsight, however, we can see how these claims were blatantly misleading and how it was surreptitiously promoting Modi. One of the first events that CAG organized was called the 'Young Indian Leader Conclave' in Gandhinagar, Gujarat on 29 June 2013 where Narendra Modi was invited as one of the keynote speakers. A few months later, this was followed by an event called '*Manthan*'—a nationwide competition that invited university students to provide 'innovative solutions' to different socio-political problems in India. Manthan witnessed participation from more than 10,000 students from 700 colleges across India, and in the grand finale of the event Narendra Modi was once again one of the keynote speakers. In press reportage related to CAG's events, journalists often sang paeans to the 'youth power' that CAG supposedly embodied and took note Modi's positive reception among the audience (IANS 2013; Pratyush 2013; The Telegraph 2013).

By the second half of 2013, CAG had opened up regional branches in different cities and began a large-scale recruitment drive for volunteers interested in nation-building projects. Thus, well before BJP embarked on its official campaign, CAG had already begun promoting Modi in its public events and began assembling a parallel campaign team while maintaining a facade of neutrality.

CAG's volunteers, who were at one point estimated to be over 9 million (Ullekh 2015), were given to believe that they were joining an organization committed to promoting good governance. Had they known that they were joining what was in effect a shadow political campaign of the BJP, it is doubtful many would have come forward. It was only in early 2014 that CAG publicly announced its support for Narendra Modi's election campaign.

By concealing its true intentions from the public eye, CAG was able to amass considerable goodwill for itself. With help from mainstream media, it quickly emerged as a placeholder for the average aspirational, young Indian citizen who was yearning for political change. As a result, when CAG formally endorsed Modi's candidature it created a widespread perception that Modi had appeal among young voters because of the promise of development supposedly embodied by him. CAG became a big shot in the arm for the BJP both in symbolic terms as well as through the large human resource it made available in the form of volunteers. CAG's pretence of neutrality was important since it helped ensure Modi's popularity among voters appeared organic and spontaneous. In the process, what was forgotten and deliberately hidden was the pre-planned nature of the entire exercise.

Conclusion

Narendra Modi's rise since the 2014 General Election is a paradigmatic instantiation of the resurgence of right-wing politics around the world. This chapter has discussed how this was made possible by analyzing two key techniques of mobilization used by the BJP in this period—social media trolls who call themselves 'Internet Hindus' and the astroturf campaign run by Citizens for Accountable Governance. While the former allowed Modi to consolidate the BJP's core constituency of pro-Hindutva voters, the latter allowed him to cultivate an image of being a man of development and harbinger of pro-market economic growth. Taken together, it enabled the marriage of social conservatism and economic liberalism that has come to define right-wing politics in India.

I have chosen to preface the discussion on disinformation in the Modi years through a brief historical detour on the propaganda techniques used by the Hindu nationalists in this ascent to power in the 1980s. This historicization has served two purposes. First, it serves as a corrective to the fetishization of media technology that has become common in popular discussions on the use of misinformation by the radical right. Thus, we see that both cassettes and WhatsApp could play fairly similar roles in their respective time periods, albeit different in scale. In the case of CAG, disinformation was embedded not in any technological apparatus, but in the organizational structure of the campaign itself. Second, it reveals that while the key conspiracies and rumors that Hindu nationalists rely upon have remained largely the same, it has experimented with new techniques to popularize this conspiratorial thinking as part of the ideological common-sense.

The reason they continue to enjoy a comparative edge in this era of 'post-truth politics' is because they have continuously reinvented the mechanisms through which the propaganda machinery is concealed from the public eye.

The 'lie machines' (see Howard 2020) operated by the Hindu right are able to evade detection because it is able to present the propaganda it promulgates as latent desires and opinions that are already present in civil society—whether they are in the form of anti-Muslim animus harbored by the political Hindu community or aspirations of development of the urban youth. The upshot of this argument is that, in an era of post-truth politics, epistemic distortion impact not only our ability to adjudicate between the truth-falsity of facts, but they also produce a range of other obfuscations, such as: where does the party machinery end and the (non-partisan) civil society start? What is pre-planned and what is spontaneous in an election campaign? Who is a genuine social media user and who is a troll? The global battle against the radical right in India and around the world hinges in our ability to lift the veil of concealment that this chapter has identified and in so doing reveal how right-wing propaganda comes to acquire its familiar and quotidian qualities.

Notes

1 The literature in this field is extensive and rapidly growing. For an indicative discussion on media and right-wing politics in Western Europe and North America, see: Ellinas (2010); Hemmer (2016); Moffitt (2016); Simpson, Druxes, and Berlet (2015). For the use of media by the political right in India, see Chakravartty and Roy (2015); Udupa (2015); Sharma (2015); Therwath (2012).
2 The empirical thrust of this chapter draws upon Sharma (2015, 2020) where I have analyzed the use of political communication by the Hindu Right in greater detail. This research was based on data collection in New Delhi over the course of four fieldtrips between 2014 and 2019 and involved, inter alia, semi-structured interviews with key interlocutors in the Sangh Parivar who have contributed to the Sangh's communication machinery through different forms of mass media.
3 For further details, see Jha and Jha (2012) and Gopal (1993).
4 Uma Bharati and Sadhvi Ritambhara are two prominent female leaders from the Sangh Parivar.
5 Interview with Vivek (pseudonym), New Delhi, August 19, 2017.
6 For news reportage from the period, see Hasan, Ahmed, and Singh (1990); Mishra (1990); Mitta (1990); Thapa (1991).
7 Notwithstanding this affective response, I do not wish to argue that cassettes produced an undifferentiated, homogenous community of right-wing Hindus. Media propaganda could never fully suture the segmentations along the lines of caste and class that existed within the community. Thus, for instance, while the serialization of Hindu mythological epics (like Ramayana and Mahabharata) on television certainly helped consolidate a strident Hindu identity in the public sphere in the late 1980s (see Rajagopal 2001), the reception of these shows by viewers was always layered and multi-faceted (see Mankekar 1999).
8 Interview with Amitabh (pseudonym), New Delhi, August 13, 2014.

9 See for instance the case of Shilpi Tewari, a prominent pro-BJP Twitter user who went on to develop a close association with Smriti Irani, a prominent BJP politician. Tewari subsequently led Irani's election campaign in the 2014 elections in the high-profile constituency of Amethi and was subsequently also offered a consultancy contract when Irani became the Human Resource Development minister in the central cabinet. Tewari has also been found sharing doctored videos related to politically sensitive issues on Twitter (Mohan 2016). Many similar examples abound.
10 Fieldnotes, July 2014. Since 2018, BJP's national party office has shifted from Ashoka Road to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg.
11 Interview with BJP IT Cell member, New Delhi, June 5, 2017.
12 Following Howard (2006, 98–99), I define 'astroturfing' as the use of 'political organizations that have a membership with grievances but are actually founded and organized by professional lobbyists who consider the appearance of an aggravated public to be a useful tool in the service of a paying client'.

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9

GENDER AND SEXUALITY (STILL) IN DISPUTE

Effects of the spread of "gender ideology" in Brazil

Jacqueline Moraes Teixeira and Lucas Bulgarelli

Anti-gender activism as political pedagogy

"Attention, attention: this is a new era in Brazil. Boys wear blue, and girls wear pink!"[1] This phrase was said by Damares Alves, in January 02, 2019, after her inauguration as minister of the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights – an office created by the president, Jair Bolsonaro – in a video recorded by one of her advisors. In this scene, Damares is surrounded by her supporters. Though the protagonists of the video are all men, who appear at her side while one of them waves the Israel State's flag, we can hear the voice of women who, even if absent from the image, are present through the enthusiasm as they repeat the part "girls wear pink". This video went viral at the time, and it was published on the minister's social media, and republished by other profiles and Internet pages. The episode raised a strong mobilization both by supporters of Damares' agenda within the national public arena – such agenda involving a judicial activism which advocates for anti-abortion politics and religious liberty across the country – and by profiles of people who opposed Damares' phrase, declaring that gender identity cannot be defined by the color of one's clothes.

When questioned about the context of this scene, Damares Alves justified herself by asserting it was just a moment of relaxation and celebration, and her goal was not putting forward a formal declaration about her ministry's agenda. A pastor with a Pentecostal background, when taking office as the minister of the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights, Damares asserted in her inauguration speech: "The State is laic, but this minister is terribly Christian."[2] She also asserted the family as the base for Jair Bolsonaro's public policies: "All public policies in this country will be constructed with family as basis. The family will be considered in all public politics." Damares also emphasized that one of the

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challenges of the current government would be breaking with what was called "abuse of ideological indoctrination":

> The ideological indoctrination of children and teenagers is over in Brazil. In this government, girls will be princesses, and boys will be princes. Now you all know. No one is going to stop us from calling our girls princess, and our boys princes.[3]

Damares Alves' speeches highlight an important process that has taken place in Brazil especially in the last decade through which the expression "gender ideology" starts to be understood as a category capable of producing political engagement and action by placing the concept of gender in the center of a dispute over the legitimate way of operating the State's public policies. These disputes related to the idea of "gender ideology" allow us to think the expressions of a right-wing political language organized under a secular model common to Global South countries, which due to their colonial heritage have set up a State grammar that enables the action of religious subjects, and the civil representation of some religions. In the case of Brazil, this arrangement has been ensured by the Federal Constitution itself (Montero, Aramis, & Sales, 2018; Teixeira and Valente, 2021).

This text aims to reflect about a mode of public enunciation from a State's occupation grammar in which the anti-gender activism emerges as central. For this purpose, we selected a range of political strategies that start placing public education at the center of disputes for a political agenda. This process is directly related to the secular model established in the Global South countries allowing the action of religious subjects who specialize themselves in the language production for translating their theological frames into models of civil morality. As we will discuss in the following pages, such particularity is linked to the central characteristic of the Catholic grammar in producing a civil repertoire, a different process from what occurs in the Global North where one can sense more evident juridical mechanisms related to the separation of the Church and State within the institutions' framework. In this sense, the debates associated with movements that resist the sexual and reproductive rights agenda can be associated with the rise of ethical discourses about the necessity of protecting the school environment from political indoctrinations. This association can be understood as crucial once they allow us to fathom the Brazilian secularism out of the composition of a practical reason to why the school (and not the church) is understood as this place where it is possible to produce the necessary materiality and legitimacies to translate religion into civil morality (Montero & Girardi, 2019; Teixeira & Valente, 2021).

Though Damares Alves' words signal a public stance of the Federal Executive supporting the anti-gender activism agenda nationally, one can pinpoint the extension of this debate in other government's spheres. The promulgation of the expression "gender ideology" was capable to articulate a regulatory grammar of

the concept of gender. The use of the expression was directed specially to the Federal Congress, to State Congresses and to City Councils through bills aiming to regulate the teaching of sexual education in schools, and even withdrawing the category of gender from the national educational guidelines. The first of those was introduced by a congressman who is also a pastor from the Assembleia de Deus Church. The project intended to alter Brazilian Law for Education Guidelines and Foundation (LDB, in Portuguese), the core educational document used to base the pedagogic content which must be followed by public schools nationwide. To justify this, the document mentions the necessity of State institutions ensuring respect for beliefs, and moral and religious values of students and their families. The second bill introduced into the national legislative sphere to address the State's necessity to limit themes related to gender and sexuality studies in public schools was introduced by another pastor from the Assembleia de Deus Church. We are talking about Marco Feliciano, a congressman who became a key person in defending Bolsonaro's government from 2019. The bill introduced by him in 2015 aimed to prevent categories such as "gender", "gender identity" or "sexual orientation" from being used in any document issued by the federal government.

Supported by the aforementioned bills, the legislative power has become a crucial place for introducing anti-gender bills, promoting the concept of gender as a category of accusation associated with the expression "gender ideology". Even without national approval, the bills mentioning the expression "gender ideology" that have been processed in the federal legislative sphere in the last decade appear as an important political pedagogy by being a model thus allowing other projects with the same theme to be implemented within hundreds of other legislative municipal chambers across the country. Research compiled by the Frente Nacional Escola sem Mordaça[4] (School without Gag National Front) has shown that between 2014 and 2019, 121 bills containing the expression "gender ideology" have been passed in cities with different demographics.[5]

The constant introduction of anti-gender bills forced the Supreme Federal Court (STF), the last instance of the Brazilian Judiciary, to schedule a session in 2020 to analyze the constitutionality of laws prohibiting the use of the concept of gender in educational materials in some cities across the country. The law analyzed by the STF has been passed and implemented in the municipal sphere of the city of Nova Gama, a city with a population of 50,000 people and situated in the State of Goias, in the central-western region of Brazil. By the end of 2015, Nova Gama was the first city to implement a law prohibiting the use of the concept of gender in classes, courses or any other educational material used in the city-managed schools. The STF deemed the law unconstitutional by asserting the bill had opposed constitutional dispositives such as right to equality, separation of the State and the Church and plurality of ideas.[6]

Although the STF decision was important to set a jurisprudence regarding the inconsistences of the bills addressing the "gender ideology", in 2020 a new bill was introduced in the Federal Legislative Chamber intending to criminalize the

actions of those who may develop any educational activity involving the use of the concept of gender. The bill aims to include in the Brazilian Criminal Code a detention from 15 to 30 days for any individual who within the municipal, state and federal schools' premises may adopt, promote, carry out or organize educational politics, syllabus, mandatory, non-mandatory or supplementary subjects, or even cultural activities containing "gender ideology".[7] The bill's author, besides working as a federal congressman, is also a retired police officer and pastor of the Assembleia de Deus Church. He is part of parliamentary fronts such as the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, the Parliamentary Front Against Abortion and in Defense of Life and the Parliamentary Front for Lowering the Criminal Age of Responsibility. Such a bill arises from a set of proposals articulated through the Parliamentary Front for Fighting Against Pedophilia.[8]

Thus, bills addressing the regulatory processes for teaching gender themes in Brazilian public schools, calling such pedagogic practices "gender ideology", got increasingly stronger within the Brazilian political scenario since 2014, when the category of gender was removed from the Nacional Education Plan (Mello & Teixeira, 2021). The discussions leading to the prohibition of the use of the word gender in educational materials developed by the federal government had emerged a few years before. This debate allowed different groups to act as protagonists of the debate related to generating anti-gender politics for schools. The action of these groups was responsible for bringing to the center of national political power religious individuals who have found in the defense of moral agendas for public teaching an important place of public visibility by allowing a dispute about the definition of the State's politics for education and human rights.

Brief genealogy of the relations between religion and political activism in Latin America

In order to understand the composition of this political structure that articulates the anti-gender and education agendas, we consider as crucial reviewing the constitution of secularism in Brazil. Secularity as a juridical principle was proclaimed in Brazil in 1889, thus establishing the separation between State and religions which until then were on a large scale represented by the Catholic Church. The constitutional text approved at the time prohibited "the intervention of the federal authority and federal states in religious matters" recognizing, in this way, the principle of religious freedom by ensuring the "complete freedom of cult" (Cunha, 2017, p. 24). Such decrees were intended to prevent the State instituting, subsidizing and obstructing religious cults, and it had two functions once it revealed a partial rupture between the State and the Church while ensuring a reciprocal collaboration between them. This constitutional act was responsible for instituting religious freedom for all individuals, including within public venues. The defense of religious freedom described by the 1889 constitution has also established a relation between the State and religions by placing the federal sphere as the unit for recognizing Christian religious practices. By acquiring

recognition – and, consequently, free rights to cult – such religious started to establish partnerships, performing welfare activities and playing a significant role in the activities carried out by civil society organizations. The participation of religious institutions in the public sphere would intensify with the 1918's Criminal Code promulgation, which allowed State's recognized religions to act as civil society organizations. The same recognition was not extended, for example, to the African diaspora religions, which have suffered and are still being strongly persecuted (Giumbelli, 2009).

Though the word secularism was not included in the 1988 Magna Carta (the constitutional text indicating the process of redemocratization in the country after 21 years of suspension of civil and democratic pacts due to the military dictatorship), Brazil has some of these juridical marks that characterize it as a secular country. For example, the 5th article declares that everyone is equal before law, while the 19th prohibits any form of alliance between the State and religions. The fact remains that these articles share the same space with the constitutional principle of the State as an entity to ensure religious freedom as a civil right, thus allowing the representation of religious subjects within the power spheres. This particular notion of secularism is still mobilized nowadays and it constitutes a common political grammar to several Global South countries.

This model of religious participation in the State is constitutive of other government regimes in the Latin American context. In Argentina, for example, the colonizing grammar and the stimulus for European migration have established religious freedom as a civil liberty principle in the 1853 Constitution. Such a principle has emerged, in the Argentinian context, followed by a legislation assigning National Congress the responsibility to regulate the activities related to the religious conversion of indigenous people into Catholicism (Almeida, 2017; Vaggione, 2017). In the article "La Iglesia Católica frente a la política sexual: la configuración de una ciudadanía religiosa", Vaggione (2017) argues about some of the tatics mobilized by Catholic political actors to define agendas associated with legalizing abortion and the rights of LGBTQI+ population. The author calls this activism model "religious citizenship", and its shape would be the offspring of a process allowing religion to be present in the State, which is also denominated by the author through the concept of "strategic secularism".

Colombia is another example we may reference in the configuration of a political language and a secularism model through which Christians emerge as a constitutive grammar. Different to the Brazilian and Argentinian cases, the Colombian constitution promulgated in the first half of the 19th century did not recognize religious freedom as a core civil right. However, this did not prevent Catholicism remaining as a crucial reference in the production of the State's regulatory languages. From 1863, with the promulgation of what would be known as the political constitution of the United States of Colombia which has institutionalized the guidelines for *Regeneración* – a movement of conservative republicans bringing the motto: "one nation, one race, one God" – the overwhelming presence of this movement in the politics has resulted in a civil war.

This episode led the Federal Constitution, in 1887, to recognize the freedom of cults, and religion as constitutive parts of the State (Castellanos, 2020). Currently the participation of religious leaderships in the Colombian State is very similar to the Brazilian model, with an increasing representation of evangelicals. Two recent events have been indicated as crucial to signal this process: The Plebiscite for Peace, carried out in 2016, and the election of Ivan Duque Marquez, in 2018 (Pérez-Guadalupe, 2017; Castellanos, 2020).[9] Therefore, we can argue that, in the Latin American context, the religion presents itself as constitutive of a public debate in which the religious discussions directly affect the concepts of public and private spheres. In the Brazilian case, we consider it crucial to think the way the expression "gender ideology" has been instrumentalized in the production of mechanisms capable of ensuring the stability of religion's historical presence in national politics.

The use of an approach based on a strategic secularism (Vaggione, 2017) has mobilized different sectors interested in influencing State decisions from an anti-gender activism perspective. In order to make this approach feasible, the school has become a place for reproducing certain public problems that grant materiality to a set of moral discourses mobilized by Christian right-wing politicians against human rights agendas.

Some of the concepts that will be mobilized ahead, such as the concept of "public problem" and the concept of "problematic situations", seem relevant to think about some of the recent events that took plase in Brazilian's public sphere in the last few years. The regimens for circulating knowledge and meanings produced by religious subjects as the school becomes a place for the pedagogic exercise of moralities, redefine the borders of secularism by turning certain theological platforms into public problems, a topic we will discuss next.

Gender ideology in Brazil: The moral discourse as political technology

While the legislative debates surrounding sexual and reproductive rights have signaled that democracy emerged from the end of the civil-military dictatorship period (1964–1985), and we can identify some previous events. In the legislative sessions culminating in the promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution there was already political resistance (Câmara da Silva, 1993; Simões and Facchini, 2009) to the proposal of including the term "sexual orientation" in the constitutional article defining individual rights that would be ensured to all Brazilian citizens from religious actors. Despite the efforts of politicians and homosexual groups at the time, the resulting text of the Constituent Assembly does not present until now any mention to the constitutional right of non-discrimination from "sexual orientation" or "gender identity", in contrast with the protection of "religious creed" (art. 5th, VIII).

In the following years, the efforts by the movements advocating for sexual and gender diversity would allow the emergence of the first legislative proposals

aimed at regulating an agenda for equating rights, such as the case of the bill that since 1995 tried, without success, to regulate the homoaffective civil union.[10] Though such attempts were largely blocked even before being carried out, they allowed the debate of the reproductive and sexual rights to be presented to the Brazilian political agenda. Besides creating new bills, the debate also extended to elaborating public action and policies aimed at fighting discrimination and reducing violence related to gender or sexuality. This scenario for stablishing a language of rights helps us understand the construction of arguments that start to be part of the opposition's discourses against such rights (Aguião, 2018).

It is through the dispute for meaning and ownership of rights that we can contextualize the rise of the movement "Escola sem Partido" or ESP (School without Parties). Created in 2004 by the Catholic prosecutor Miguel Nagib, the movement originated with the goal of blocking what was perceived as a left-wing conspiracy operated mostly by teachers in the Brazilian schools. The defense by the ESP of an educational reform agenda excluding concepts deemed as "political" from the schools was slowly getting closer to the anti-gender agenda. This approach was stimulated and favored by infamous personalities from the extreme right-wing field such as the auto-exiled Olavo de Carvalho. Some of Ovalo's declarations became famous for advocating for the defense of the association between the increase in HIV/AIDS cases with homosexuals' promiscuity. He also insisted on promoting the false idea that the alleged weakening of sexual differences in contemporary society would be one of the steps of a communist domination project (Miguel, 2016; Tomaselli, 2018).

The education theme allowed the configuration and establishment of alliances between sectors organized to fight against the gender and sexuality studies and struggles as well as the prohibition of content and debates classified as political, partisan and/or ideological in schools. This cluster of demands had a direct impact on the influence obtained by the ESP (Miguel, 2016) in a way that the anti-gender perspective become the priority in the group's strategies (Tomaselli, 2018). Likewise, we can assert a significant part of the movement's success in the subsequent years was due to its capacity to recruit supporters and allies through its propositions. This process of political mobilization and engagement attained a new milestone in 2015, when Bill 867/2015 was introduced, a bill that, as mentioned earlier, aimed at instituting the ESP's guidelines in the national educational politics.

The debates leading to the approval of the National Education Plan (PNE 2014–2024)[11] did not finish the disputes around the subject in Brazilian's public sphere. The debates then moved to the states and cities, that were forced approve educational plans in a deadline of one year. Consequently, the governors and state congresspeople as well as mayors and city councilors were responsible for deciding about the insertion or removal of the gender and sexuality debate in their guidelines. This dynamic resulted in the state and city chambers being marked by the debate regarding the maintenance, insertion or removal of terms such as "gender", "gender identity" and "sexual orientation" from the documents

during the entire second half of the decade of 2010. Though it was possible to track in the beginning of the 2000s some crude debates about the regulation of gender education, it is during the PNE's process of evaluation and discussion that the theme becomes central (Aragusuku, 2018).

The action of the ESP and groups working to remove all traces about gender and sexuality rights in juridical texts has strengthened the thought that teaching themes about sexuality and sexual rights was slowly becoming a public debate, stimulating an environment of persecution towards teachers. As a channel to control and persecute, the ESP movement has articulated a crucial network of records and visibility to denounce, through videos and testimonies in social networks, mobilizing family movements against the so-called political indoctrination in schools. Episodes involving the ENEM (High School National Exam) regarding the presence of questions linked to contents related to gender were marked by protests and discourses in the National Congress. In response to these movements, an activism of teachers organized around the necessity of defending the freedom of discussing specific content in school started to make public the stories of persecution, lay-offs and poor mental health of teachers, such as the case with the creation of "Escola sem Mordaça" (School without Muzzles).

The debate around the necessity to strengthen sexual and reproductive rights emerges articulated with the rise of interpretations that were widespread in the public opinion about the necessity of protecting the school environment against political indoctrination. It is also a characteristic of this context the role of evangelical expansion in the Brazilian political scenario and the relation between some evangelical and Catholic leaders in promoting actions and campaigns opposing gender and sexuality rights and struggles. Thinking how the school emerges as central in the production of a public problem, we consider the assumption that religious groups and the promotion of bills about the school are part of a process of promoting a moral agenda against sexual and reproductive rights from the idea of a problematic situation.

Cefai (2017) presents a brief genealogy of the idea of problematic situations by quoting the publication *The Public and Its Problems*, written by John Dewey in 1927. The idea of problematic situation emerges when a certain issue is able to arouse feelings in the public opinion such as inquietude, skepticism and need for questioning and debating. These feelings are manipulated by organizations and leaderships capable of producing a certain engagement in defense of specific positions in increasingly larger arenas. The author states: "This collective dynamic makes emerge a problem and its audience at the same time" (p.188).

Thus the proposition of Bill 867/2015, which was intended to institute the program proposed by movement "Escola sem Partido", was a determinant for spreading the notion of "gender ideology" itself. Analyzing some of the legislative proposals created to fight what was perceived as "gender ideology", we understand the effects induced by the creation of such problematic situations. It is through the operation of distortions that one produces in the end an appearance of legitimacy to the revindications like the removal of the term "gender" from

the educational documents. The promotion of the idea that public institutions had been corrupted with anti-natural values and doctrines helps in this sense, granting urgency to those who seek to defend children. Some investigation (Mariano, 2017; Aragusuku, 2018) has been dedicated to analyzing the discourses of congresspeople regarding the "gender ideology" and have pointed out education as a privileged field of disputes. These researches identify an increasingly larger investment in the false notion that the public institutions would had been allegedly contaminated, which would justifiy the intense political activity of the congresspeople related to this theme. This was the dynamic that allowed a controversy to be created after the launching of the Escola sem Homofobia program in 2011 (Leite, 2019).

Established by the Ministry of Education in the Dilma Rousseff government (2010–2014), whose head was Fernando Haddad, teacher and former mayor of São Paulo, the program "Escola sem Homofobia" (School without Homophobia) envisioned the distribution of didactic material about diversity, intolerance and respect. The program was a product of actions discussed since 2004 in the scope of the School without Homophobia Program and the conclusions made together with Lula da Silva's government during the I Conference in 2008, which resulted in the National Plan for Promoting LGBT Citizenship and Human Rights in May 2009 (Aguião, 2018; Junqueira, 2018).

The government's announcement about the launch of the didactic material was heavily criticized, which resulted in the president's cabinet interruption of its distribution. This position taken by the federal administrations at that time were aimed at answering to the pression of the religious sectors that were already close to the president as government's political supporters at the time. From all the opposition, one person had a special emphasis: congressman Jair Bolsonaro. Already in 2011, Bolsonaro gained fame by criticizing the "anti-homophobia kit", material produced by the Ministry of Education under Dilma Rousseff's government. Calling the initiative pejoratively as "gay kit", the congressman at the time gathered visibility by denouncing the distribution of the didactic material, what he defined as an "indoctrination material" (Bulgarelli, 2020). Such event would bring relevant political benefits in the subsequent years and, above all, during the 2018 elections that elected him. The choice by Rousseff's government to cancel the program was not seen positively by the movements advocating for gender and sexuality movements, which in the period were heavily involved with the material's elaboration and with proposals of measures to fight prejudice and discrimination through education and teaching (Leite, 2016, 2019; Bulgarelli, 2021; Melo and Teixeira, 2021).

We may think the controversy around the launching of the School without Party Project (ESP) as well as the public rejections regarding the launching of the "School without Homophobia" program as crucial to the elaboration of the expression "gender ideology" as a public problem. By stimulating a mobilization and engagement beyond the State's border, the circulation of this category was used for the promotion of a collective sensation of moral risk and to update

a colonial grammar establishing the school as a salvationist project where the development of each individual is crossed by a Christian morality.

This process of constructing a civil morality associated with the Christian salvationist grammar led us to the concept of power from Anibal Quinjano (2002). Quinjano argues that coloniality was configured in the Global South a language of power based in mechanisms of racial segregation. In this language, the Christian language is central by offering a moral repertoire based on technologies of salvation encompassing strategies of evangelization and processes of recognizing humanity (Quinjano, 2022). In the Brazilian case, we see the school environment being affected by several ambivalences marked by the weight of its colonial background. Even if the State has been successful in making education its first public policy at the end of the 19th century, it has also kept itself as a privileged space for constituting a Christian civility through maintaining laws and regulations of religious teachings (Montero et al., 2019) and the constant presence of theological content in public education.. In this sense, it's possible to assume the category of "gender ideology" as a public problem. Its circulation within public opinion has been helping the maintenance of anti-gender activism networks in which the school is identified as a place of political dispute.

Final considerations

This text has constituted an analytical exercise for addressing the articulation of "gender ideology" in the Brazilian political scenario, considering who are the subjects that acquired public visibility by transforming anti-gender agendas in a strategy for occupying the State.

Intending to map such strategies, we have presented how "gender ideology" has become a legislative pedagogy appearing in discussions and bills introduced to Congress which, in turn, have been the basis for bills introduced in dozens of state and city chambers. This operation regimen has presented to us the necessity of introducing a brief genealogy about the process of constituting a political sensibility, something that crosses the concepts of nation-State and civil rights not only in Brazil, but also in other Latin American countries. Through the analyzed cases in the Argentinian, Brazilian and Colombian contexts, it was possible to think of the construction of a model of secularism as being constituted by the violent experience of colonialism. This heritage was mobilized to maintain a Christian grammar in the public opinion, placing religious freedom as a fundamental civil right. It also allowed the active participation of religious actors in the public debate, turning them into experts of the translation of theological concepts into ideas of civil morality.

To think of Christian grammar as constitutive of a certain secular regimen helps us understand the obstacles which appear when the State decides to amplify its writing to recognize sexual orientation and other rights and public demands claimed by the LGBTQI+ population, especially in the last two decades. Any right conceded by the State must have an elective affinity with

the way the freedom of cult appears in the constitutional documents as a natural, original right. Such mechanisms put the school as central in the dispute for the defense of this civil morality that directly conflicts with the State's public policies compromised with human rights and in recognizing diversity. It is in this context that the ESP movement and all mobilizations against the implementation of the Program School without Homophobia can be understood as key events in promoting "gender ideology" as a public problem, as they allow the promotion of anti-gender agendas beyond the legislative borders, allowing the political engagement of a population that starts to feel their families at risk.

Following the elaboration of the family as a political category is crucial to understanding the mechanisms of public visibility and occupation of the State articulated by right-wing and extreme right-wing movements in Latin America from the second decade of the 21st century. Though it is common that the category of "family" appears related to the Christian religious repertoire and to the political conservatism, it is important to understand this link through the notion of the coloniality of power (Quinjano, 2022). This concept allows us to comprehend the notion of family as an useful category for constructing the State in a republican matter (Costa, 1983), once it was inserted as a category encompassed in the activity of civil society organizations in the 1988 Constitution, which recognized the family as a social unity protected by the State.[12] The construction of a public validation of the idea of gender ideology lead us, therefore, to the necessity to highlight the extent of the public controversies created by right-wing and extreme right-wing groups. These controversies reconfigure the idea of political secularism that was developed in Latin American countries by which the State constitutes itself by ensuring religious freedom as a crucial civil right.

The concept of secularism developed by Talal Asad (2003) is central to the analysis of ascension or maintenance of the conservative groups in Latin America, as well as for the way such groups articulate a public repertoire for gender as a category of accusation. For Asad, secularism does not refer to only modes of producing the State, "it is a concrete enactment through which a political medium (the representation of the citizens) redefine and transcends differential practices of self articulates through the class, race, gender and religion" (Asad, 2003) 5). In this sense, secularism does not refer to the separation of the church and the State's institutions, but above all to the disputes of social subjects by the processes of social recognition, something that in the Latin American experience requires disputing the power by the State.

The formulation of the expression "gender ideology" has emerged in an international context. It became widespread through the creation of a political conservative discourse mobilized by the Vatican in the 1990s when the Catholic Church formulated answers against the civil recognition of women's rights and LGBTQI+ rights (Sales, 2020; Miskolci, 2017; Junqueira, 2018). However, it was the circulation of the idea of "gender ideology" in Latin American countries,

especially in the last decade, that enabled the construction of social technologies that permited the construction of political engagement of religious repertoires as we have demonstrated by analyzing the circulation of this political category across Brazil.

Notes

1 Diário do Centro do Mundo. Damares Alves, minister: "Atenção! Menino veste azul e menina veste rosa!" Available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUXdwdnogBM Accessed on 06/05/2021.
2 G1. 'Estado é laico, mas esta ministra é terrivelmente cristã', diz Damares ao assumir Direitos Humanos. Available at: https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2019/01/02/estado-e-laico-mas-esta-ministra-e-terrivelmente-crista-diz-damares-ao-assumir-direitos-humanos.ghtml. Accessed on 09/01/2020.
3 Damares Alves celebrates a "new era": "Boys wear blue, and girls wear pink": Último Segundo IG, January 3, 2019. Available at: https://ultimosegundo.ig.com.br/politica/2019-0103/damares-alves-veste-azul.html. Accessed on 08/08/2020.
4 This is a social movement founded in 2016 in the city of Rio de Janeiro which aims to build a national network of organized social movements against the advancement of the "School without Party Project", and other politics associated with persecuting teachers in public schools.
5 Manual de Defesa das Escolas. Available at: www.manualdedefesadasescolas.org/manualdedefesa.pdf. Accessed on 06/10/2021.
6 Setem, Gabriel. What the municipal laws related to gender ideology that awaits for the STF approval are asking. Gazeta do Povo. Available at www.gazetadopovo.com.br/vida-e-cidadania/o-que-pedem-as-leis-municipais-sobre-ideologia-de-genero-que-esperam-uma-aprovacao-do-stf. Accessed on 06/10/2021.
7 Deputados, Câmara dos. Projeto criminaliza promoção da "ideologia de gênero" nas escolas. Available at: www.camara.leg.br/noticias/699563-projeto-criminaliza-promocao-de-ideologia-de-genero-nas-escolas/. Accessed on 06/01/2021.
8 Within the working structure of the Legislative in Brazil, the Parliamentary Fronts are alliances of congresspersons from different parties aiming to promote, together with representatives from the civil society, government's public agencies, etc., the discussion and improvement of the State's legislation and public policies.
9 The Colombian peace agreement referendum was executed in October 02, 2016, in order to confirm the final agreement regarding the end of the Colombian conflict between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla, and has obtained 50.2 percent of contrary votes while 49.8 percent voted in favor. Castellanòs (2020) discusses the MIRA (Independent Movement of Absolute Renovation) centrality in this result, and the relation between the party and the Church Mission Carísmática Internacional, a church of neopentecostal tradition that has the majority of seats in the Federal Legislative Chamber.
10 The Bill 1195/1995 was introduced by congresswoman Marta Suplicy, and tried without success to regulate the homoaffective civil union.
11 The National Education Plan (PNE) is a Brazilian law establishing guidelines and goals for the federal, state and municipal development of education. The measures are planned for ten years, and during this time the federal institutions are forced to reach the educational goals and content defined by the plan.

12 The 1988 Constitution was innovated by recognizing in the aforementioned 4th article the monoparental family in the following terms: one can understand, also, as a family entity, the community formed by any of the parents and their descendents.

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10

ARCHIVES OF NEOFASCISM

Charting student historical debt in a neoliberal university in South Africa

Phoebe Kisubi Mbasalaki

Introduction

The 2021 academic year in South Africa opened in March with a yet another number of student protests. These protests were geared towards what has now been popularly known as 'historical debt' with reference to student university fees. Mobilized through social media and other channels, these protests started at University of Witwatersrand (Wits University) and quickly spread to other universities in the country, including the University of Cape Town (UCT). Usually, such student protests are met or countered with heavy policing as the main response to 'managing' the 'disorder'. It is important to note that the heavy-handedness is either through private security, a common phenomenon in South Africa or the state police. This time around, on 10 March 2021, as the police responded to clamp down on the student protests at Wits, a university student was shot dead. The shooting occurred in the midst of ongoing protests around the campus as students raised grievances about 'exorbitant' registration fees, a delay in National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding for 2021, first-year students not receiving funding status and accommodation woes (O'Regan, 2021). The student who was shot dead was a passerby and not 'actively' involved in the ongoing protests at that time. It is important to foreground that historical debt as holding back registration for the 2021 academic year was one the main drivers of this protest. As I will elaborate and argue in this chapter, both the 'historical debt' and heavy policing have characteristics of neofascist behaviours, which may not come off as salient but rather as undercurrents, which are very effective in their execution.

Historical debt is particularly of significant concern in post-colonial/apartheid South Africa. Indeed, NSFAS is supposed to cover qualifying student fees but sometimes doesn't cover the total. And therefore, historical debt is 'the

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portion of tuition the [NSFAS] students must pay on their own. It can also refer to the debt that students who don't quality for NSFAS accrue from year to year' (Moosa, 2021). With such debt, it implies students have to find ways of paying off the balance accrued. Otherwise, universities block them from registration at the beginning of the academic year to continue their studies until the historical debt is paid off. Moosa further notes how this mostly relates to student who started university before 2018 as the introduction of free education was supposed to have addressed this particular issue but it hasn't taken any effect yet. Moreover, a sectoral analysis from 2019 found students owed universities almost R10-billion, calculated after the Department of Higher Education and Training had paid almost R1-billion to settle debts incurred by more than 50,000 students funded by NSFAS (Nicholson 2021). This seems to have significantly increased over the last couple of years, exacerbated by COVID-19 in 2020. That's why one of the demands during the 2015–2016 #FMF protests, and again in 2021, is the call for all debt to be cancelled. Historical debt is debilitating to especially families and households who have been historically marginalised by colonisation and apartheid, which sometimes cannot be settled, resulting in dropping out of the university. Indeed, the current government of South Africa has implemented some measures to undo and redress some of the effects of apartheid and access to higher education. One such intervention, especially with reference to higher education, is the establishment of the NSFAS. NSFAS is an aid scheme that was founded in 1996 to support students from poor and working-class households (Moosa, 2021). The funding for this scheme is primarily from the government via the Department of Higher Education and Training. Prior to the #FeesMustFall (#FMF) protest that led to former President Jacob Zuma's announcement of free higher education for poor students in 2017, NSFAS offered bursaries as 'loans' that needed to be paid back once the student had found employment.[1] The eligibility for NSFAS funding is based on combined household income. Previously, prior to #FMF, the benchmark for admissibility to NSFAS was at an annual household income of less than R120,000 (Nicholson, 2021), where bursaries were offered in a form of a loan. However, the #FMF highlighted the plight of the 'missing middle', who are students whose family income fall above the NSFAS threshold for support, but below the necessary threshold to obtain commercial loans. The student eligibility based on annual household income was raised to up to R350,000 and the state agreed/promised to pay the historical debt for some of the students previously funded by NSFAS (Nicholson, 2021). Indeed, historical debt was one of the catalysts of the #FMF protests in 2015. This activism and effects of the #FMF protests still reverberate.

If we take a brief look back at the #FMF student activism, in mid-October 2015, management announced a fee increase of 10.5 per cent in the following year, prior to a national announcement by the Minister of Education that tuition fee increases at tertiary institutions not exceeding 6 per cent (Nicholson 2021). The #FMF led to a national revolution, with a complete shutdown of five key universities resulting in an emergency meeting of former President Jacob

Zuma, Minister of Education and university vice-chancellors as well as student representatives. This resulted in an announcement being made by the former President Jacob Zuma that there would be no tuition increase in 2016 and an increase of not more than 8 per cent for 2017 (Moosa 2021). However, the plight of the students continued and so did the protests in 2016, where the students took to the to the Union Buildings and Parliament. This student activism resulted in another announcement from former President Jacob Zuma, stating 'free education' for students from poor and low-income households in 2017, however, this is yet to materialise in its implementation, and one might question if it ever will. It is important to note that the #FMF protests, and national student activist movements were galvanized by the #RhodesMustFall (#RMF) campaign earlier that year in 2015. The #RMF protests, started at UCT about March 2015, catalysed in part by student protestor, Chumani Maxwele who hurled faeces at the statue of Cecil John Rhodes that stood in the centre of the university's main campus. Maxwele's performative act, motivated by persistent concerns around systemic violence and structural inequalities in higher education and society broadly. This campaign, under the social media hash tag #RMF, challenged white privilege and the decolonising of education across South Africa. The statue of Cecil Rhodes, which hovered over the main university compass at UCT has since been removed, as a result of this campaign. According to the Human Science Research Council, (2017), the term 'Fallism' became a way to identify the shared aims in the movements' political philosophies, both as a literal description of the collapse of the statue and the whiteness it upholds, but also as a call to dismantle all the oppressive vestiges of colonialism that have no place in, and are damaging to, contemporary life, that is, to topple in order to rebuild. Both the #FMF and #RMF were cracked down with heavy security and policing by both private university security companies as well as the state police. With tear gas cannons, rubber bullets and physical violence. This level of violence, which has several historical continuities from the system of violent policing instituted by apartheid and colonisation. I will argue that this violence/police brutality is situated in what I call the (colonial/apartheid) archive on neofascism.

If the university is considered a microcosm of society, it reflects the societal inequalities in its composition and operation. In South Africa, the glaring aftereffects of the (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism play out within the university setting. The above landscape points out the contemporary narrative of access to higher education in South Africa. The promise of democracy and redressing the ills of colonisation and apartheid remain aspirational, especially for university education which is heavily imbricated in what I will unpack as the archive of neofascism. And therefore, in this chapter, I ask these two-central questions: To begin with, in what ways do student protests in South Africa expose the collusion of a neoliberal university with (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism? And if so, can a neoliberal university then be decolonised? I will begin by 'doing' decolonial intellectual work of tracing the (colonial/apartheid) archive

of neofascism and its supporting discourses. I locate its supporting discourses in intuitional racism as imbricated in racial capitalism as well as police brutality. Second, as part of the decolonial project, I engage with what I call rebuilding to re-exist from the (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism. Where I offer two examples that speak to moments or eruptions within the neoliberal university of rebuilding to re-exist. After which I conclude.

Framing the (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism

The student protests discussed in the introduction put back in the spotlight the fact that colonialism and apartheid were one of the most violent systems in the world. Both rooted in promoting and privileging white supremacy – a key ingredient of fascism. For South Africa, these violent, extractivist, and exploitative processes carried on for nearly 450 years, thereby cementing the privilege and dominance of whiteness together with white supremacy. It would be a lie if not very cruel to say that these systems of privilege and dominance that have been in operation in a very calculated and sophisticated manner for 450 years would just disappear after 27 years of so-called democratisation in South Africa. Scholars like Edward Said (1993) and Gloria Wekker (2016) have given us the vocabulary to pinpoint such remnants that came with colonisation/apartheid where race is one of the main modes of the organising order – or the 'racial contract' as Wekker (2021) refers to it. This 'racial contract' takes the form of written and unwritten rules for the formally imperial states (ibid.) – noting South Africa is a settler colonial state – and therefore have formed what Edward Said calls a cultural archive. Said (1993) articulates this cultural archive as 'a storehouse in which certain knowledge structures of attitude and reference that structure affect have been deposited, which assign superiority and the right to dominate Others to whites and inferiority to blacks' (53). Wekker, who works with Said's notion of the cultural archive takes this argument further by suggesting that this cultural archive forms the 'toxic baggage that race has saddled us with, where whiteness got adorned with all kinds of privileges while black people [or people of colour] have to deal with the systemic features of inscribed inferiority' (Wekker 2021). This cultural archive is where we find white supremacy and its various modes of expression or supporting discourses, such as through the economy, the judiciary, security/militarism/police brutality, and so on, is still very much alive in post-apartheid/colonial South Africa. Where race is the organising order inscribed in society and its supporting discourses along the grammars of class, gender, sexuality and ableism. And I argue that this cultural archive retains the strong fascist behaviours and characteristics from the apartheid and colonial eras – albeit in a silent/hidden manner. Characteristics and behaviours such as white supremacy as imbricated in the economy or police brutality – this is what I am calling the (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism.

On an ontological level race is central to fascist ideals where in extreme cases, the brutal genocidal nature was to ensure the purity and superiority of one race is

preserved/maintained. This characterisation among others, we see in Feldman's articulation who argues that:

> Since it first emerged in the wake of World War One, fascism can be profitably conceptualised as a specifically modern form of secular 'millenarianism' constructed culturally and politically, not religiously, as a revolutionary movement centring upon the 'renaissance' of a given people (whether perceived nationally, ethnically, culturally, or religiously) through the total reordering of all perceivably 'pure' collective energies towards a realisable utopia; an ideological core implacably hostile to democratic representation and socialist materialism, equality and individualism, in addition to any specific enemies viewed as alien or oppositional to such a program.
>
> *(Feldman 2008: xviii)*

The tendency of modern scholarship on fascism or neofascism is to centre a (political) figure/individual with a following/or groups as opposed to a system. Here, I would like to propose a reticent but very effective system that is located in the (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism. Colonialism and apartheid may not neatly fit in the above description by Feldman (nor all individuals/groups falling under fascism or alt right) however, the key ingredients that relate to white supremacy and creation of a utopia of sorts for white people at the expense and brutalisation of black and people of colour in South Africa was evident. This firmly sits in institutional racism. A renowned South African political scholar William Gumede recently wrote an article in the *Mail & Guardian*, where he notes how recent studies point to the fact that

> although the formal colour bar was codified by apartheid, this situation remains mostly unchanged. Even when black people occupy senior positions, they usually earn less, and have fewer benefits and less responsibility than white people. Increasingly, black applicants are required to have higher qualifications for jobs once done by less qualified white people.
>
> *(Gumede 2018)*

Therefore, the manifestation of institutional racism is vast and appears in all spheres of life,[2] however for the purpose of this chapter, I will trace through two interrelated paradigms areas that relate to student protests and 'historical debt', to begin with, racialised capitalism and, second, militarisation/police brutality.

The first area that is emblematic of institutional racism as a facet of the (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism in South Africa is through racial capitalism and the current state of economy in South Africa. The (neo)fascist characteristic here being the ideological core that is implacably hostile to democratic representation and socialist materialism, equality and individualism (Feldman 2008). Racial capitalism was theorized in South Africa by anti-apartheid Marxist and

liberal scholars in the 1970s who saw apartheid as a direct consequence of capitalism. South African philosopher Mogobe Ramose, who unpacks racial capitalism as capitalist formalisation through land dispossession, posits that:

> The close connection between land and life [has] meant that by losing land to the conqueror, the African thereby lost a vital resource to life. This loss was aggravated by the fact that, by virtue of the so-called right of conquest, the African was compelled to enter into the money economy. Thus the so-called right of conquest introduced an abrupt and radical change in the life of the African. From the condition of relative peace and reasonable certainty to satisfy the basic necessities of life, the African was suddenly plunged into poverty. There was no longer the reasonable certainty to meet the basic necessities of life unless money was available … In this way, the African's right to life … was violated.
>
> *(Ramose 2002, 2)*

The (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism has therefore meant dispossession through land and livelihoods of the formally colonised, which has fostered social inequalities. Therefore, in Ramose's argument, we can read the mutual dependency between capitalism and racism as part of the neofascist archive and dispossession, all imbricated and playing out along the grammars of gender, sexuality, and ableism when intersectionality is applied. And hence manifesting as the economic legacy of apartheid and colonialsim, which places South Africa as one of the most unequal societies in the world. We see this in the income and wealth gap in post-apartheid South Africa. Oxfam South Africa (2020) reports that the richest 20 per cent of people in South Africa control almost 70 per cent of the resources. This report further points out that the economy is governed by a handful of companies that were founded in the colonial and apartheid eras, and continue to benefit from their stronghold during those eras as well as government assistance. In other words, the biggest share of income in South Africa is still allotted to the white minority.[3] This disparity becomes even larger when attributed to wealth, which is a combination of income and assets. According to Bruce-Lockhart and Cotterill (2019), about 1 out of every 10 South Africans own 90 per cent of the wealth, while about 9 out of 10 own 10 per cent of the wealth. Furthermore, Oxfam (2020), adds that

> despite what we hear about free markets and individual choice, the structure of South African wealth and income inequality looks more like a caste system, where one's social status is determined at birth, than a system of free association among people of equal value
>
> *(p. 41)*

This puts the spotlight on the economic dispossession of the formally colonised in South Africa and suggests that the majority of black South Africans and people of

colour live in poverty – a historical poverty brought on by colonisation/apartheid racialised capitalism. Against this backdrop, the realities of access to university education become clear. The dynamic of wealth and access is one that plays out at the university, where tuition, and cost of living is increasing every year. Whereas there's an increasing number of students from poor and working-class families entering university spaces, which were previously elite and exclusive/tended to students from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds (Wangenge-Ouma, 2021). The rising tuition and living costs imply students from working-class and underprivileged households are gravely disadvantaged. In part, aggravated by neoliberal policies. It is in this framing of dispossession that we see student 'historic' debt thrive for students from underprivileged or working-class households.

Increase in university tuition, which happens every further year exacerbates historical debt as well as financial exclusions. This was the main ethos of the #FMF, pointing out that these financial exclusions have been going on for decades, worsening with ANC neoliberal policies and cutbacks in university subsidies. These protests spoke to the fact that the public university has been remade into a quasi-private institution with a strong managerial ethos, all kinds of privileged hierarchies and enclaves tied into leveraging non-public finance but underpinned by cost cutting through outsourcing and increasing student fees. Indeed, the neoliberal university has become a place of reproducing inequality and ultimately racialized exclusion of black and people of colour. The above landscape forms the backdrop against which the student protests of #FMF and those on student historical debt at the beginning of this academic year. Tamale (2020) reminds us that contemporary neoliberal discourse has one fundamental blind spot, it treats the present as if the present has no history. In understanding the struggles of the student protests, histories such as those of racial capitalism need to be centred, as Tamale further notes an old saying that goes 'the past is never dead, it is not even the past' (p. 3). Hence, decolonization and decolonial projects demand an in-depth appreciation of the history of colonization and all its supporting discourses and how these ooze into the contemporary. Such as, how the historical privilege of the wealth gap which was established during colonialism and apartheid in South Africa that still abides. As presented earlier, there is no shift at all, if the top 10 per cent own 90 per cent of the wealth with the rest of the country – majority, people of colour, left to scramble for 10 per cent, has a huge bearing on who can afford access to the neoliberal university. This negates the notion of choice the neoliberal model fronts in relation to access to university education. When in fact, education is a commodity to be bought, with an especially high 'price tag' for the so-called ivy league or elite universities. In the South African context, the elite institutions are the formally white institutions such as UCT and Wits University. It is in this context, with high tuition fees and increase in cost of living that we see a rise in historical debt for students from working-class and under privileged households. A ripe condition that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic further aggravating the lines of access.

The second (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism can be traced in brutalisation of the non-white 'other', especially one who dares to resist. Brutality and oppression of the alien 'other' is one of the hallmarks of (neo)fascism (Feldman, 2008). The authoritarian, nationalistic, racist, and brutal regime of apartheid to non-white South Africans is well recorded, such as the Sharpeville massacre – a brutal act of police brutality that killed 69 black peaceful protestors and over 250 wounded (South African History, 2022). This system of police brutality is firmly imbricated within white supremacy and protecting of white capital. It is important to note that there is a long history of resistance and fighting for justice through student protests in South Africa. Notably, the 1976 student/Soweto uprising that saw between 3,000 and 10,000 high school students mobilize and protest against the introduction of Afrikaans as a compulsory medium of instruction in schools. Events that triggered the uprising can be traced back to policies of the Apartheid government that resulted in the introduction of the Bantu Education Act in 1953 (SA NGO PULSE, 2018). Bantu education ensured that funding of black schools became the condition on acceptance of a racially discriminatory curriculum. The ideology of Bantu education serviced the interests of white supremacy while denying black people access to educational opportunities and resources. According to Hartshorne (1992): 'Bantu education schools suffered terribly from government's neglect. Enormous disparities in funding between white and black schools and student-teacher ratios adversely affected the quality of education of black students' (p. 41). The heavily armed police response including live ammunition resulted in a 176 deaths (Alexander, 2018). According to Alexander, the 1976 Soweto uprising which lasted three days, a minimum of 176 students were killed at the hands of the state police, with some estimates ranging up to 700. Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was heavy military presence in black schools to repress student resistance. The relics of police brutality and heavy-handedness is still prevailing in post-apartheid South Africa. Since the democratic dispensation, the inability of the police to reform long-established traditions of colonial-style policing continues to threaten the transformation agenda (Brewer, 1994). As witnessed during the student protests that happened at the beginning of 2021, as well as the #FMF and #RMF protests. According to the Human Science Research Council (2017), at the height of the student protests, it was common to see an increase of police officers, private security, and armoured vehicles at various campuses. In an eerie echo of apartheid tactics, 'gatherings' of any sort were forbidden. Police employed tear gas, rubber bullets, water guns, intimidation, and detention with some students claiming police had attack dogs (a traumatic apartheid trope that recalls the 16 June uprising). They add that in an effort to quell the unrest, some universities hired private security companies, whose personnel were heavily armed. This level of police brutality, inherited from apartheid era the plays out in the contemporary then forms the archive of neofascism. Indeed, at the heart of these protests was the questioning of this university that enforces exclusions of previously underprivileged groups in South Africa. Given the student protests called

for a decolonised free education, one may ask, can a neoliberal university be decolonised? I offer some reflections in the next section.

Can a neoliberal university be decolonised?

Having laid out the one aspect of decoloniality – looking at how histories and their supporting discourses as the (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism collude with the neoliberal university to further exclude those who were previously colonised and marginalised – here I take a moment to engage with the second aspect, rebuilding to re-exist. To begin with, I think it is important to engage with what an imagined decolonised university would look like. Perhaps one that would foreground de-linking from coloniality to re-exist. According to Mignolo (2016), rebuilding to re-exist calls for

> growing [a] decolonial Spirit of delinking to re-exist (a basic decolonial move), [which entails] accepting that Eurocentric fictions in all spheres of life, but above all, racial and sexual fictions embedded in the economy (capitalism), politics (the State), epistemology (the university, museums, schools, the church) … manage and control emotions and sensing the world.
>
> *(2016, pxii)*

Delinking, therefore, works 'towards rebuilding the communal, engaging decolonial love, and turning our backs (delinking) from the radiations of [modernity/coloniality]' (ibid., xviii). Re-exitance calls for a radical shift from a neoliberal university that colludes with the (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism to serve the interest of capitalism towards a university that is in service of its community. Implying that the university would have to be rooted within freedom and justice and aims to see the world through the lens of the most marginalised/oppressed, which is what Connell West (2020) refers to as revolutionary love. Revolutionary love calls for centring the most marginalised students and the university working its way around that. This would be a way out from a neoliberal university from individualism to a communal engagement. A communal engagement may therefore call for increasing rather than cutting public funding towards higher education. This increase would support more students as well as cut the 'price tag' placed by certain universities on tuition fees that exclude students from the margins as well as resourcing of schools in peripheral communities. Rebuilding to re-exist may also call for addressing the wealth gap for instance through accelerated land redistribution.

However, all the above propositions would be a radical move, and given we are still heavily imbricated in the colonial/apartheid archive of neofascism, such a shift is close to impossible. And noting decolonial work happens on the border or locus of coloniality, and therefore manifests at political societal or grassroot level, which tends to be invisible. How then do we get to the point of the 'non-modern'

(Lugones, 2010)? For Lugones, non-modern would be 'knowledges, relations, and values, and ecological, economic, and spiritual practices (that) are logically constituted to be at odds with a dichotomous, hierarchical, "categorical" logic' (p. 743). This has to lie the locus of colonial difference (Mignolo 2016) – not necessarily counter to the modern machinery of the nation/state or public politics – but rather at a grassroot level. This is where I firmly locate what has been achieved through student protests and activism in South Africa. This makes part of 'chipping away' at the massiveness and all-encompassing nature of what the neoliberal university in collusion with the (colonial/apartheid) archive on neofascism is. For this kind of rebuilding to re-exist, I look at the collaboration of struggles between students with low paid and outsourced workers. This collaboration takes the form of community coalitions, both combined, an antithesis to neoliberalism and all its supporting discourses such as neofascim. According to Luckett and Mzobe (2016), outsourced workers joined protesting students at Wits University from the first day and by 'the end of 2015, students and workers in at least eighteen tertiary institutions in different parts of South Africa had participated in protest action' (p. 94). They however note that the struggle against outsourcing at universities was not new and had been going on for over 15 years, after UCT was the pioneer and engaged with extensive retrenchments and outsourcing of all support services such as cleaning, maintenance and catering, other universities followed suit. Firmly framed within a neoliberal model of cost cutting, a number of university employees moved from being employees with a relatively good wedge and some benefits to outsiders providing a service, with no benefits as well as on a lower salary. A very exploitative move.

> This reinforced apartheid-like social and economic divisions, as the 'skilled' administrators and academics who remained 'core' university employees were mostly white and middle class, while the 'unskilled' service workers, who were working class and almost all black, were redefined as 'non-core', despite the importance of the services they provided to the functioning of the university.
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> *(ibid,, p. 95)*

Therefore, the combined struggle of #FMF, #RMF and what became known as #outsourcingmustfall was for recognition of this support staff, most of whom were people of colour as insourced employees with benefits. Which was achieved. As employees, it meant that support staff could access the tuition discount for their children of the university they worked at. And hence opening up some small avenues for access to the university.

Second the very layered and complex story of tuition, which is likely to remain completely unresolved in a neoliberal university model in its collusion with the (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism, but the aspects discussed here are slowly puncturing those structural borders. Those punctures, through collective effort of student activism is what I am alluding to here. As discussed

earlier, the #FMF protests in 2015 led to a no fee increase in 2016 as well as an announcement in 2017 that education would be free for students from poor and working-class households. And at the beginning of this year, after the death of Wits student, the Minister of Education moved swiftly to rally a cabinet meeting to discuss the NSFAS shortfall in funding. For instance, Payne, O'Regan, and Egwu (2021) notes that at Wits, historical debt among 8,000 students stood at more than R1-billion. They add that the Minister for Higher Education together with cabinet had agreed to reprioritise funding (due to funding cuts made as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic) from the budget 'in order to ensure that all deserving NSFAS-qualifying students are able to receive funding support for the 2021 academic year' (ibid.). Indeed, individual institutions also moved swiftly to put remedies in place to ensure students with historical debt register as well as offer some funding support towards historical debt. For instance, UCT committed R30 million towards student historical debt, as stated in their press release (University of Cape Town, 2021). However, all this is 'a drop in the ocean' given the enormity of inequality and need as highlighted with the wealth gap.

In conclusion, the relics of apartheid and colonialism are very much alive in South Africa and play out with regards to access of the neoliberal university. This is not a blame game, but a lived reality as pointed out by the student protests. Indeed, South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world, it is not by chance, but by design through apartheid and colonial policies that have been inflamed by neoliberal policies with democratisation. Moreover, the neoliberal university also colludes with these legacies of colonisation and apartheid, which I have framed in this chapter as the (colonial/apartheid) archive of neofascism to further exclude the formally colonised. We see this in high tuition fees that take no cognisance of histories of racial capitalism as well as police brutality towards student protests who resist neoliberal university policies and coloniality of knowledge. So where does the choice lie for a student with historical debt? The probable outcome is exclusion from the university by being forced to drop out until one can find money to re-join the university. Choice then becomes a fallacy, as the student protests and activism have highlighted. But perhaps this is not completely doom and gloom. Indeed, the student protests and activism have shown some grassroot changes, such as moving from outsourcing of unskilled labour to insourcing. Perhaps, then, there is some hope of further puncturing of structural borders that bring about some change in a neoliberal university. However, equitable access to a university would call for a radical shift in addressing historical injustices that dismantle the wealth and income gap in South Africa.

Notes

1 Once the student found employment that paid R80,000 or more annually, they were then required to repay back the loan in instalments – as deductible from the salary. The student was not required to make the repayment if they were unemployed. And if the student dropped out of university of or college, the loan would have to be repaid.

2 Gumede further notes that 'institutional racism is an assault on the dignity of black people. It undermines their health, causes anger, and poisons personal relations. It causes black people to continue to distrust white people, destroying the brittle social cohesion and pushing black people to seek answers in the populism, such as calls for wholesale nationalism' (Gumede 2018).
3 The white minority are about 13 per cent of the entire country population of over 50 million inhabitants.

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11

DENIALISM AS GOVERNMENT

Trust and truth in a post-neoliberal era

Tatiana Roque

Denialism can be better defined as a struggle for regaining trust, rather than as a negation of truth. This article develops two arguments. First, denialism is a tool with which the far-right tries to govern a crisis of trust that already existed—and still exists—independently of whichever political trend is the strongest. In other words, denialism is not a creation by far-right political leaders and influencers. Surely, they attack established scientific statements (truths), but they do so as a strategy to conquer those who are losing trust (in science and its benefits). My second argument is that a *crisis of trust* has been nurtured by neoliberal forms of government, that is, by the apolitical disguise of decisions, which are presented as choices derived from technical tools, such as models, equations, graphs, rankings, or algorithms. This technocratic governance can be called a *government of experts*, and they are now in the hot seat. One of neoliberalism's key governmental strategy has been the management of the economy with tools intended to be neutral and laws disguised as natural. This form of governance, introduced with globalization, is based on a technical conception of the way the economy functions, which has been transferring decision-making power to experts. This elitism is strongly contested by the far-right, and denialism is a tool for refusing the scientific aura of type of governance.

In addition, I show that these problems differently affect the North and part of the Global South. This is not because people in one region are not as educated or informed as in the other. My hypothesis, based on global surveys, is that inhabitants of certain southern regions don't perceive science and technology to be of benefit to them or to people like them. These feelings add to a declining trust in the institutions that sustain the democratic pact.

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The neoliberal use of expertise to deny democratic power

After the end of the golden post-war period, a crisis of expertise affected a particular kind of science: the kind that has a direct impact on policies. In his book *The Crisis of Expertise*, Gil Eyal (2019) attributes this problem to a perceived decline in the social use of science, confirmed by numerous opinion polls. After decades of oscillating between "cyclamate causes cancer or does not cause cancer", and many other of these fluctuating statements, it is understandable that people express some skepticism towards regulatory agencies, such as the FDA (Foods and Drugs Administration). Debates on the use of nuclear technology have exacerbated the problem, as they highlight major risks. Since the 1980s and 1990s, more and more people have taken stock of the impacts of science and technology on modern life. Eyal's book is a landmark publication in the understanding of this phenomenon, as it highlights how skepticism and hesitation do not lead to a renunciation of science in general, but specifically of knowledge that directly serves the elaboration of policies and the persuasion of the public about its pertinence. Experts has been put in the position of legitimate mediators who inform and convince the lay public, and enjoy a certain privilege in the management of evidence. Drugs and vaccines need the approval of experts to be sanctioned and used; pollution control, deforestation and global warming depend on technical monitoring carried out by scientists; food and pesticides are regulated by specialized research. Today, distrust of expert positions on these issues has increased, and it is also for this reason that the far-right gains influence.

The above cited analysis of the crisis of experts is not specifically associated with neoliberalism. But the emblematic declaration of the British politician Michael Gove, made while he was advocating for Brexit, springs to mind: "people of this country have had enough of experts with organizations with acronyms saying that they know what is best and getting it consistently wrong".[1]

Development economists such as William Easterly (2013) have long been attacking technocratic views, especially those which claim that global poverty is a technical problem that requires expert solutions. Those solutions may have fixed immediate problems, but they've barely addressed the systemic political factors that created them. I'm not supporting the solutions this author proposes, but just recalling that a shortcoming of democracy has already been noted in connection with the strengthening of the government of experts, and this has especially affected the Global South.

A definite anti-neoliberal aspect of the far-right is its rejection of the government of experts or, more precisely, the recent sophisticated trend of occupying expert positions with staff who are aligned with their political ideas. So, it would be insufficient to explain denialism as a neoliberal manifestation on the grounds that it rebels against regulations and social values. The weakness of this thesis is that it starts from an imprecise definition of neoliberalism as a political approach based on minimal state intervention or the lack of regulation.

For some years now, an extensive literature has sought to decouple the definition of neoliberalism from characterizations about the size of the state or the absence of government. Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2013) have already highlighted the central role of the state in neoliberal constitutionalization. Wendy Brown (2015) has explained the unlikely convergences of neoliberalism and security authoritarianism. Maurizio Lazzarato (2014) has shown how the global government of market forces has always relied on equations, algorithms, rankings, statistics, and graphs, as a way to make government seems to make it appear that government stems axiomatically from naturalized principles. Moreover, groundbreaking historical approaches such as the analysis offered by Quinn Slobodian (2018), have shown that neoliberalism installed a specific form of global government in order to protect global markets from national sovereignty. This "encasement", as Slobodian calls it, was carried out by a sophisticated institutional and legal edifice, with the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as its ultimate manifestation. These contributions allow us to see neoliberalism as a body of thought, operated by different types of activism, which managed to implement a specific mode of governance and install a singular form of regulation—instead of the idea that neoliberalism is the radical other of any form of regulation or government.

The 2008 crisis called these governance strategies into question. It became evident that the technocratic action of global organisms and experts depends on states and governments to be successful. After 2008, they spared no effort to save global finance, resorting to "monetary activism", as Adam Tooze (2018) characterizes it, to contain the crisis and protect the banks. An innovation such as Quantitative Easing could only be implemented because of political decisions by the Federal Reserve or the European Central Bank. All in all, it was politics that controlled the crisis and regained an active stance.

The far-right explores the fragility of all the previous-to-2008 forms of government to question the ways in which democracy was already being misrepresented. In his provocative book, Salvatore Babones (2018) argues that, even before, democracy was being undermined by a quiet power grab, conducted by a class of liberal experts who proposed a global agenda which has diminished democratic decision-making. And they did so by reinforcing technocratic authority. His diagnosis is mostly correct, but from the author's point of view the far-right can be seen as a political flood that has really some potential to rejuvenate democracy. I think this is not true at all—but I will return to this point later.

To summarize the point of this section: the last four decades of neoliberal government have seen the escalation of feelings in the semantic field of mistrust—skepticism, suspicion, doubt, or hesitation. Against this background, denialism can be seen as a refusal of those neoliberal forms of government which assert themselves as apolitical, that is, as founded on technical statements that are above governments. From this point of view, denialism is not an incarnation of neoliberalism, but the refusal of one of its most insidious traits: the naturalization of

political options hiding behind technical statements, whose counterpart is the empowerment of a global elite of experts.

A crisis of trust in science

In order to support the diagnosis of a crisis of trust, we will cite a worldwide survey of trust in science, conducted by the Wellcome Global Monitor in 2018 (Gallup 2019), which helps to diagnose the problem and identify differences between the Global North and South. An important aspect of the methodology of this study is that it establishes a confidence index, to which different questions contribute. It is not, therefore, a matter of simply asking whether people believe in science or in scientists, as other studies have done. A key piece of data for the trust index is the respondents' perception of the consequences of science in their lives. Some people admire science or scientists but trust them less if they don't perceive the benefits of their work. A relevant example is the perception of the impacts of technology on the job market. If we subtract the percentage of those people who think that job demand will decrease because of technology, from the percentage of those who think job demand will increase, that leaves just 4 per cent in South America. In Eastern Europe, the index is negative, while in Asia the population seems extremely optimistic about the impact of technology on job markets. This is just one example of how trust in science is influenced by factors which are more complex than having admiration for scientists, which respondents may even feel compelled to respond positively to.

A third of the population in North and South Africa, South America, and Central America feels excluded from the benefits of science. South America is the continent with the highest percentage of skeptics: a quarter of its population. This category includes people who say that science does not benefit them, or society as a whole. In some parts of the African continent, the percentage of people who think that science does not benefit them is also high, but the percentage of respondents who think that it benefits society is growing in this region. Rather than skeptics, this category is called "outsiders". One explanation for this difference between South America and Africa is the fact that, in the latter region, there is a stronger perception that science is a Eurocentric enterprise, whose benefits are more enjoyed by the peoples of the North. In other words, decolonial awareness seems to be stronger in Africa than in South America, and this may explain why South America is more skeptical.

These results allow us to speak of a crisis of confidence in science. This is not to say that people discredit scientific results, nor that they view scientists negatively, but that the fruits of science and technology are being questioned. Add to this the low trust in institutions, and we have a fertile ground for the proliferation of denialism. This helps debunk the all too easy conclusion that little education and lack of information are the causes of the phenomenon. Obviously, these factors do have an influence, but they do not, in themselves, explain the skepticism, nor the

feeling of exclusion that the cited study verifies. These phenomena stem from a hesitant perception of the personal and collective benefits of science.

The cited study predates the pandemic, which allows us to review the epistemic environment in normal times. There is no evidence that, after the pandemic, the world will return to enlightened politics, to being governed by scientific facts and persuasive strategies, nor that these factors will once again take the place of emotion and mobilization. In late April 2020, a survey investigated opinions on the role of experts in nine European countries (Krastev and Leonard, 2020). The result is alarming: only 35 per cent of respondents think that the work of experts benefits them. In addition, 38 per cent think experts are instrumentalized, and suspect that their statements hide political positions. That is, the Europeans interviewed do not consider experts who express opinions based on scientific evidence as a source of objective and impartial truth. There is no reason to think that this impression will diminish with the pandemic. Another survey that gathered data on different pandemics in the past notes that the public image of scientists is often eroded (Aksoy, Eichengreen and Saka, 2020). Carried out within the scope of the Systemic Risk Centre of the London School of Economics and Political Science, this survey shows that in such periods, distrust increases, and doubts arise regarding the integrity and honesty of scientists. In fact, this skepticism only affects scientists as individuals, and leaves intact the general confidence in science as a human enterprise.

We can therefore speak of a crisis of trust in science that has a significant correlation with trust in governments and institutions. As there are traditionally low levels of trust in government and institutions in the Western Global South, especially in South America, it is justified to relate low trust in science to structural skepticism or a feeling of exclusion, which appear to be significant factors in this region.

The class struggle of experts

The crisis of trust just described is a fertile soil for a struggle to occupy power positions and gain scientific prestige. The goal of denialists is not to dethrone science; it is, instead, to occupy the power position that science gained in the last decades. As Keith Kahn-Harris (2018) suggests:

> Denialism, and related phenomena, are often portrayed as a "war on science". This is an understandable but profound misunderstanding. … Denialism does indeed represent a perversion of the scholarly method … but denialism does all this *in the name of* science. … Denialists are desperate for the public validation that science affords.
>
> *(Kahn-Harris, 2018)*

This quote pretty much sums up what I'm going to call a "class struggle of experts", to which denialism serves as a tool. When it reaches the government,

this tool helps to raise support for the occupation of key positions in the state structure, as seen during the pandemic, especially with the recommendation of medication without scientific evidence of its efficacy, and the manipulation of data about the pandemic.

India's health minister Harsh Vardhan attended the product launch of a supposed "evidence-based medicine for Covid-19": the Ayurvedic medicine called Coronil, which, according to the event's organizers, had been sanctioned by the World Health Organization (WHO) (The Indian Express, 2021). The WHO immediately denied this claim and the Indian Medical Association (IMA) contradicted the health minister (Menon, 2021). Pharmaceutical drugs without scientifically proven efficacy were widely used in Brazil during the pandemic. In Brazil, the actions of the president and his ministers were decisive in boosting the administration of drugs without scientifically proven efficacy, with the sad difference in relation to India, that the Brazilian Federal Council of Medicine endorsed the federal government's position. One of the speeches most harmful to the containment of the pandemic was the president's defense of the prescription of chloroquine and ivermectin. The president never stopped defending these drugs, even proposing an official measure by the Ministry of Health to authorize their prescription to the sick. Local politicians were thus encouraged to distribute miracle kits, supposedly to treat COVID-19 in its early stages. Analysing the arguments of Bolsonaro and his entourage, there is never an attack on science, but there is a claim to authority, to deal with scientific statements in his own way. The president insisted that regulatory agencies change the protocol and approve drugs without scientific proof of their effectiveness. In this case, the attempt to rig the organ officially responsible for approving the prescription of drugs failed. But the president never gave up on getting the Ministry of Health to recommend the drug, even replacing two ministers who refused to do so.

We need to take seriously the intention of these groups to produce scientific-style statements that are operational to their ideological beliefs. Therefore, it is useless for scientists to prove that the drugs do not work, even when they have the support of the largest television channels in the country. These certainties will always be weaker than recommendations based on doubt, a strategy largely used by deniers (Oreskes and Conway, 2010). During the pandemic, doubts were more prevalent than certainties. From the moment we enter such an epistemic environment, the most important thing is knowing who to trust, not who tells the truth. It is not a cognitive problem, but a social one. The social role of knowledge changes over time and varies according to where you live. We are not experiencing a crisis of truth, but a change in social knowledge: people are reevaluating whom to trust.

As Nietzsche predicted, talking about the future of science:

> we can almost certainly predict the further course of human development: interest in truth will cease, the less it gives pleasure; illusion, error, and fantasies, because they are linked with pleasure, will reconquer their former

> territory step by step; the ruin of the sciences and relapse into barbarism follow next.
>
> *(Nietzsche, 1996, p. 251)*

We know that Nietzsche is the philosopher of nihilism, and this concept is more and more used to understand what is jeopardizing Western democracies right now. Wendy Brown (2018) takes up nihilism to explain the neoliberal Frankenstein monster: the defense of authoritarianism in the name of freedom, a monster created by the far-right. Its propagators manage, in this way, to detach values from any connection with the social, making them "protean", as Brown points out. According to Nietzsche, nihilism does not arise from the elimination of values, but by detaching them from their origins and foundations. They thereby lose depth and become easily negotiable and instrumentalized; in this way truth and reason lose their grip, Brown adds, making twenty-first-century nihilism a fruitful breeding ground for fake news and conspiracy theories.

Perhaps this is where things work differently in the South, or at least in part of it. While Wendy Brown sees this disconnection from values as reactive, an attitude motivated by resentment, in the South another subjectivation may be at play. The hunger for power in the South is as reckless as that of any advocate of the far-right around the world. But where there is a class struggle of experts, as we have seen in Brazil, the extreme right cannot be said to be "unfettered by concerns with truth". Truth too becomes an important arena, and crowds of experts are formed to fight an epistemic battle. "Value-slinging in a nihilistic age", as Brown (2018, p. 74) characterizes the strategy of the far-right, is also truth-slinging.

Few countries in the Global South have had the experience of those gains the North is now losing: a welfare state, full formal employment, equal rights, and successful policies based on technocracy. The same may be said of the faith in progress which scientific advancement enabled. The conservative authoritarian in the South is as patriarchal and supremacist as his cousins from the North are, but he seems less nostalgic about old deals which never really existed.

What makes far-right experts so powerful is that they are reintroducing values—their values—into politics, even into politics based on science. Thus, we cannot beat them by speaking in the name of consensual truth. This resource has been used exasperatedly, at least in the last seven decades, to diminish the predominance of values in the political arena. Performing scientific truth in their race to power is a smart strategy of far-right influencers. That is why they are more experimental and optimistic in their struggle for expertise than any diagnosis of resentment may suggest. That is also why dishonesty and betrayal are perhaps their prime attributes.

In the South, the Frankenstein monster of authoritarian freedom is bolstered by an experimental enthusiasm, which is not contradictory to a corrupted hunger for power. It makes me think of Quincas Borba and his innovative theory about the nature of human beings, presented in the books written in the 19th century

by Brazilian writer Machado de Assis (de Assis, 1994). As an alienist in the novel says, Quincas is like the famous Athenian maniac who assumed that all incoming ships at Piraeus Port were his property, and thought that the imaginary possession of ships was worth it all. But this character is not just the maniac who serves the political ambitions of his friend Brás Cubas. The theory he created was meant to debunk Voltaire. Quincas insists that the scientific man, Pangloss, was not as delusional as the French writer suggested. The world we live in is indeed the best, Quicas confirms, provided the individual has the power to give it meaning, by means of a science—a practice created to make sense of the world. Of course, if everyone has their own science, it is not science. But how can a taste for consensus be retrieved if science is not considered to be providing benefits for all? If it is also less promising than ever in providing futures? The far-right is not the culprit of these problems, it is only the opportunist of the current crisis.

Conclusions and what comes next

The pandemic confirmed that regulatory actions, in the world as it works today, tend to set off almost unavoidable political conflicts. As told in the previous sections, the technocratic apparatus was embraced by the neoliberal project to diminish the scope of politics—particularly mass politics. It gave birth to a governance that has tried—and for at least three decades, managed—to transform politics into policy, in different spheres, both national and global. Now the backlash of this fantasy is unfolding. Unfortunately, the far-right has taken the lead by promising to put politics back in the hands of "the people", using denialism as a tool to beat and replace the experts. Therefore, some analysts qualify these governments as populist. But this label says too little. When someone equally identifies left- and right-wing governments as populist, this person is usually expressing nostalgic feelings for a world governed by experts, unhindered by the perturbation caused by the masses.

The governance of climate issues will hardly be resolved by the means that have been tried in multilateral forums, which rely heavily on the role of experts. After the failure of the Kyoto Protocol, which was blamed on regulatory demands, a new type of governance was sought in the Paris Agreement. Stefan Aykut and coauthors (2021) call the 2015 pact a case of "incantatory governance": it was "no longer aimed at the production and enforcement of binding reduction targets for states but builds on a flexible 'pledge and review' system combining voluntary pledges by public and private actors alike, and binding reporting and transparency rules for states" (Aykut, Morena and Foyer, 2021, p. 525). They note that this change, the so-called "Paris shift", has been described as a break away from a "regulatory model", towards a "catalytic and facilitative model" of global governance, with an inflationary use of communicative devices. This is a consequence of the importation of a business culture in global governance, inspired by the adoption of "new public management" methods. Persuasion, founded on science, has thus become a key tool and a condition for the success

of communication tactics, considered essential to persuade "decision makers". This whole apparatus helped to hollow out politics and alleviate the need for regulations, which are considered dangerous in the face of the disruptive potential of the reactions they may provoke.

New regulatory measures will require new experts, and we must open the way for them to emerge from mass democracy (instead of functioning as a tool to restrict democratic pledge). The solution to the experts' crisis therefore must come from the deepening of democracy. A survey carried out in Brazil in 2019 by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation shows that Brazilians do not feel supported by the way decisions about science and technology are made (Centro de Gestão and Estudos Estratégicos, 2019). The demand that the population be consulted about the directions that science and technology take is practically consensual, across all income brackets: the percentage of those who are in total agreement with this statement, in addition to those who partially agree, reaches 83 per cent.

One way out is to strengthen forums for citizen participation in science-based decisions, which will be increasingly important and subject to conflict. The idea seems aberrant, but it is already circulating in the debate about increasing democratic participation in decisions involving sensitive scientific topics. An article recently published in Science magazine showed that ordinary people are fully capable of avoiding manipulation and making decisions, such as in the case of "global citizen deliberation on genome editing" (Dryzek et al., 2020). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) document on "Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions" advocates similar actions on other issues (OECD, 2020).

These are just initial proposals to face the crisis of trust in science and in experts. Providing collective life with more democracy and new institutions that are open to the participation of common people, expanding dialogue between citizens, and training new experts and scientists seem more constructive suggestions than reinforcing an exceptional place for science and privileged positions for experts. The intellectual class struggle can be harnessed in favour of more democratic projects—this is how it will stop being seen as anti-intellectual. In these difficult times, marked by profound changes and uncertainties, it is understandable that people are suspicious. In order to redraw the borders between science and politics, as well as the participation of experts across these fields, it is necessary to expand spaces of power, to take into account the expectations, doubts, and apprehensions of the population. Only in this way will it be possible to move in the opposite direction of that of the extreme right: to offer, instead of paranoia, more transparency; and instead of authoritarianism, more democracy.

It is precisely in the creation of these new forms of democracy that the North and the South differ. In the South, it is not a question of resuming the experiences of the post-war golden years. It is common to characterize the base of the extreme right as made up of resentful people who are tired of losing rights, income, consumption conditions and positions of power. This base supposedly

consists of a white middle class of former workers—a squeezed middle class. This interpretation is contested when it comes to analysing the rise of the far-right in the Global South. The notion of "aspirational classes", proposed by Pinheiro-Machado, Marins, Combinido, and Malini (this volume) to analyse the base of the far-right in the BIPs (Brazil, India, and the Philippines) is not centred on resentment. As a Brazilian samba says, "the higher the coconut tree, the harder the coconut falls". In other words, the feeling of loss—and, therefore, resentment—tends to be less relevant when there is less to lose. Although fringes of the Global South's elite also support conservative rulers, this group only has electoral strength because it is supported by a mass of precarious and platformed small businessmen. This is a lower middle class, hardly characterized by the loss of a previous sense of security—and it constitutes the majority of the Brazilian population).

How does democracy respond to this? Obviously, this question is one of the motivations for this article, even if I do not address it directly. The handling of new pandemics and the creation of effective solutions for the climate emergency will make some kind of regulation essential. How can government regulations and actions coexist with new ways of talking about freedom and experiencing freedom collectively? These issues cannot be masked behind an elitist and technocratic regime of government. One of the main difficulties for future progressive projects will be to regain trust without appealing to a declining authority of science and technology, and even less to the fading convincing power of consensual truth as a basis for policy. This downturn of politics based on policy helps to explain the weakness of measures that confront global warming.

Truth, evidence, and consensus-based governance is usually part of an effort to reduce politics to policy. But politics is back, as the ascension of the far-right evinces. We won't find alternatives based on good policies, and even less by means of persuasion strategies based only on expertise and better communication strategies. It seems more inspiring to abandon our Enlightened faith in policy-based government, and reinvent politics *tout court* (that is, popular and mass politics) aimed at facing the most pressing challenges of our time.

Note

1 Interview with Faisal Islam of Sky News on 3 June 2016: www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGgiGtJk7MA

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12

NOTES ON THE EXPRESSIVE FORMS OF THE NEW RIGHTS

A dispute over the subjectivity of the majorities

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I

Recently, a major debate has focused on the possibility, relevance, and effectiveness of deploying the term "fascism" to refer to "new right-wing" formations and, more generally, to the emergence of sexist, racist, and classist forms as generalized affects for processing the current crisis. As always with the adjective "neo," in the face of the emergence of so-called neofascism, questions arise about novelty and persistence, about repetition and difference, about historicity and discontinuity, leading to efforts to classify, diagnose, and also establish a political strategy when determining how to name the phenomenon.

The global map that has served to *systematize* the phenomenon, to give it consistency as such and thus retroactively trace the elements that it condenses, brings together a series of names of leaders who have reached power. Trump, Erdogan, Bolsonaro, Salvini, Modi, Orban, and Bukele synthesize and are symptomatic of an issue that can no longer go unnoticed: they bring together dissimilar histories and conjunctures, but they undoubtedly stand out because they make it possible to visualize this emergence. In turn, other figures, who positioned themselves as a "democratic" right-wing, the inheritance of the neoliberalism of the 1990s, started adopting increasingly authoritarian recipes organized around "security," which brings them closer to the harsher profiles of the new rights (Argentina's Mauricio Macri, for instance, is a clear embodiment of this transition). It is not a matter of limiting the phenomenon to specific personalities, but rather pointing out how they have managed to construct their political representation, what collective affects they channel, the sites from which they make programmatic enunciations, how they attempt to set a tone for the era in contexts that span at least three continents. Here we also see a debate that originated in the twentieth century: how authoritarian forms manage to win over the majorities' support

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and even forms of consensus that cannot be underestimated when thinking about its repressive imprints.

Zeynep Gambetti (2020), in conversation with Hannah Arendt, proposes thinking about the *origins* of this new fascism starting with Turkey. Her hypothesis is, to put it briefly, that it is worth talking about fascism not as an ideal type that requires all the elements of twentieth-century fascism to authorize its use with a historiographic certification, but rather as a "marker that limns governmental practices whose constitutive elements extend both spatially and temporally beyond a presumed 'fascist core'" (2020: 3). Analyzing contemporary fascism in terms of governmental practices allows for connecting and thinking about the relationships between leadership of the political system and what here we call expressive forms of reactive affects (that is, affects that react to an extended perception of threat and crisis). This already gives rise to a first *question* as a method: what dynamic is this fascist *reaction* attempting to counteract? As we will see below, both the leaderships and expressive forms, despite their reactionary character, put into play the notion of freedom, which is connected to its current meaning as a mode of political management of generalized precarity.

Therefore, in terms of a political regime, speaking of neofascism is inseparable from the question about a subjective regime, precisely as, in its moment, all the intelligence of the Frankfurt School was dedicated to unraveling. In fact, we can recall M. Horkheimer's maxim: it is impossible to speak of fascism without speaking of capitalism. Nonetheless, now it is up to us to update those coordinates where modern interpretative keys such as war and colonialism acquire new features and unfold over other maps and territories, as signaled by the neoliberal era. More concretely, we have to analyze that regime in relation to our countries in the Global South, which is the concern of this book.

II

If we try to systematize the elements of the political landscape of recent years, one feature that stands out is the rise of the massiveness of the feminist movement and its capacity to transform the very field of democratic struggles (a movement, and this is no minor point, that also especially emerges from the south). We want to highlight that these new rights deploy their reactive dimension *in relation to that transfeminist massiveness*. We think that this is a central element, that, however, is often marginalized in analyses, as if it were not considered to be forceful enough to generate the fascist reaction and, therefore, not taken as a key element when it comes to explaining the expressive forms of the new rights, despite the fact that those new rights take gender as a discourse of confrontation instead of commenting on it in a purely instrumental register. We want to argue, to the contrary, that, since transfeminism currently articulates diverse struggles, in composition with antiracist and antiextractivist struggles, it distills a universalizing force that, while it expresses the desire to "change everything," is able

to do so based on concrete bodies and territories, with a strong anticolonial imprint (making demands ranging from recuperating land to decolonizing the unconscious, to use Suely Rolnik's formula), and thus systematizes a "threat" to which there is a *reaction*. This perspective allows for better understanding how those figures of hyper-masculine theatricality place gender – which is made into a doctrine under the formula of "gender ideology," against which a battle must be waged – as a central axis of disputes regarding democracy and the political. If these confrontations, with which, for example, Bolsonaro inaugurated his speech when he took office and that become the emblem of new political forces against the right to abortion in Argentina, are not taken seriously, we run the risk of not comprehending what they are truly doing: pointing to a "threat" to a certain *political* order.

From the South of the planet, where that mass transfeminism has taken to the streets to intervene and channel antineoliberal protests, popular and Indigenous uprisings and strikes, as well as impregnated parliamentary candidacies and constituent reforms, the reactionary counter-offensive lies in singling out feminisms as the cause of the decline of the Christian West, once again constructing an "enemy." That counter-offensive promises the return of patriarchal subjectifications that condense many of neofascism's modes of visibility and expression: its theatricality systematically modeled on the Masculine, its exhibitionism of violence, its repertoire of poses challenging the demands of transfeminist, LGBTQI, and antiracist struggles. Thus, analyzing the reactive affects of the new fascism also involves understanding the singular historical configuration in which they take place, characterized by the advances of transfeminism and its transversal and universalizing power. In this sense, the aggressiveness of contemporary neofascism expresses an attempt to stabilize neoliberalism's crisis of political legitimacy that has found the feminist movement to be a concrete political form that disputes both the diagnosis of that crisis, as well as modes of traversing and confronting labor precarity and generalized existential precarity. With the impact of the pandemic, this situation has only intensified.

III

By analyzing neofascism in relation to what it is responding to, to how it fabricates enemies in order to legitimate its intervention and proposal of subjectivation, we want to underscore its capacity to deploy and mobilize what we could call *forms of reactive transgression*. Thus, on one hand, we see a capacity to mobilize cultural prestige and the seductive capacity of *transgression*, a prestige that is undoubtedly inherited from the twentieth century, to deploy them in specific directions, corresponding to the values and modeling of the public that these new rights seek to consolidate and spread: hyper-individualism, so-called "antipolitics," the free market and its unceasing grammars of racism, masculinism, and classism. Yet, on the other hand, we could say that it is a transgression that seeks to *replicate* and *compete* with the challenges that transfeminisms put into play on the disruptive

plane, not only in cultural terms, but also at the political, economic, and subjective levels.

We could add that this politics that seeks to be *anti-establishment in its reaction* claims to practice a "realistic" evaluation of how recent democratic dynamics have combined with forms of inclusion of the majorities that require a subjectivation trained in the arenas of neoliberal competitiveness. Elsewhere we have analyzed the implications of forms of "inclusion through consumption" (Gago 2014) that have been key in recent democratic politics in our countries, the financialization of everyday life as a way of traversing the most recent crisis of reproduction (Cavallero and Gago 2019), and forms of "civil war" that unfold in territories of precarity alongside the drive and proletarianization of illegal economies (Gago 2019). These issues show that the expressive forms that we want to analyze are also connected to *practical readings* of what it means to guarantee the social reproduction of the majorities today.

Thus, the mobilization of this *performative* transgression is both extremely realist and is composed of a *two-part game*: on one hand, an exhibitionism of breaking the rules and conventions of democratic life (while also showing that they are *rules*), and, on the other hand, a return to archaic power configurations, patriarchal, racist, and classist forms that react to the destabilization of a political-sexual order to manage the crisis. This is how this hyper-masculine theatricality, that overacted emphasis on the Macho, acquires its central importance (which extends from major world leaders to the neighborhood drug dealer) in the moment of the decline of that masculine figure in its previous instances of authority tied to its function as the provider (in monetary, sexual, and symbolic terms).[1]

It is in those *expressive forms*, then, that these new rights articulate their modes of intervention; and it is in that threshold where decisive interpretive keys are revealed for understanding their capacity to expand at the level of popular subjectivities, on the level of those who have experienced the everyday war to guarantee social reproduction. Unlike other conservative rights, more attached to perpetuating dominant norms seen as obedience, decorum, respectability, identification with the law (at least in public), frequently cast in terms of the slogan "law and order," the current landscape offers a display of *transgressive right-wings*. These have a capacity to transversally spill over into *middle class and popular sectors* and mobilize plebeian and anti-elitist senses in which they seek to assemble new interpellations, in which transgression ultimately emerges as an expressive form that brings together challenges to a democratic order defined as repressive and exclusionary, gestures and a dispute over the sayable, and an everyday violence taken to be the primary landscape for the majorities.

Épater les bourgeois [scandalize the bourgeoisie] was the formula of the aesthetic avant-garde that, starting in the late nineteenth century, made transgression into a mechanism for shaking up the increasingly pervasive forms of social disciplining and docilization of subjectivities in the face of a capitalism seeking to absorb everything. Transgression of conventions was seen as one of the tasks of

an art that sought to liberate vital powers and make them spill out onto the social plan: onto life, to thus transform it, freeing it from the constrictions of morals and capital. Here we see a comparable phenomenon but in its inverse form: *épater les democrates [scandalize the democrats]* – frequently embodied by "the feminists," who are seen as those who impose regulations on language and senses, as well as on behaviors and financial operations in a continuum of "regulation" – in the name of a *freedom that is modeled* based on a very specific criteria: that of exacerbated individualism, that does not dissimulate its social and economic consequences in the slightest (thus opening new terrains for capital and undermining or directly eliminating any regulations on its expansion and accumulation).

This, in turn, forms a machine with a reactionary return of social, racial, and moral hierarchies in which the white, heterosexual, property-owning, Christian male of a colonial lineage – that figure long time embodied anti-democratic forms of authority – comes back to reclaim his monopoly on power in the democratic space itself (the forum, the march, the public "debate"), occupying that space and pulling it toward a new radicalization, counteracting the advances of transfeminist and LGBTQI movements. If we look at how erudite ecclesial doctrinal debates become hashtags and tools for fabricating their mobilizations (such as the protests organized under the slogan "Con mis hijos no te metas" ("Don't mess with my children," which was a fundamental cleavage point in the recent elections in Peru), we see an open dispute for the street, for the occupation of public space, through forms that have proven to be politically effective for challenging privileges and linking struggles.

Reactive transgression, then, is an instance of a two-part movement: it breaks basic agreements of democratic practices (and not just in any way, but through a form of realism that denounces its *formality*), but does so in the name of greater freedom; and, at the same time, it seeks to assure the return, now without "democratic" mediation, of more rigid patriarchal hierarchies: the Macho, the White Man, the Boss. That two-part game is what is unique about the "form of the content" of the new rights: that of an exhibitionist simulation of breaking rules to reaffirm the return of a violent ordering through patriarchal, racist, and class-based hierarchies that, in turn, are shown as the *truth* of the sexual-political order under dispute.

IV

As we have been indicating, it is necessary to connect these dynamics with contemporary productive forms. How can the expansion of the affective mobilization of the masses required by a type of production that is increasingly dedicated to communication, the production and constant consumption of images, texts, and news, be sustained, without that implying – as Walter Benjamin suggested – any change in property relations? In other words, *how are expressive forms directly productive dynamics, that, at the same time as they are encouraged, must also be compatible with an accelerated concentration of the means that make them possible?* As we know,

Benjamin's response was that imperialist war was the device that enabled combining mass mobilization and conservation of property relations. What is the form of war that enables that simultaneity today?

We can see an unfolding of that battlefield in digital platforms, as systems that concentrates labor exploitation, production of subjectivity, data extraction, and the expansion-concentration of logistics. As an image of labor and communication, the velocity and fusion of production circuits, distribution dynamics, and segmentation of consumption, a capillarity of capital can be seen in the platform economy as a logistic-communicative machinery. Its dependence on communication terminals seems to take the connection between desire and expression, violence and psychic management of the crisis to its limits.

The massification of the use of the media is, in turn, a form of democratization against the privilege of the author, the actor, and the intellectual: according to Benjamin it is that demolition of the aura, of the specialist, where the camera designed for the masses puts the multitudinous "optic unconscious" into operation, which is more prone to apperception than the cultivated vision of one who concentrates their knowledge as a distinction. Fascism attempts to organize the masses' desire for access, for protagonism, which is the result of an appropriation of the conditions of production. This is a central point: the desire for participation is not created by fascism, but rather by the subjectivation of the masses as producers. How is this desire for participation, increasingly enabled by a technification of the means of communication (in which the cellular telephone becomes the most massive and cross-class device in the human history of technology) articulated with the orientation of that expressive force in fascist terms?

The genealogies of digital platforms all point to the late 1970s and 1980s and coincide in indicating the intersection between counter-cultural tendencies from the 1960s and the acutely neoliberal type of individualist emphasis in so-called "Californian ideology" (Cedric 2021). The desire for expression and collective participation – a *desire for the social* – can be read in that intersection. That desire is recaptured in increasingly concentrated property relations, in that dynamic of digital platforms which serves as the model for many of the expressive forms that would become the backbone of neofascism. The expansion of expressive possibilities, the gestation of new technologies of writing and new circuits of interpellation offered by digital platforms are combined with the platform's specific model of capitalization. This model wagers on affective intensification and identitarian segmentation, in which algorithms, in order to be able to continue producing "raw data" from their users, operate by encouraging discursive radicalization and the affirmation of individuality against the given forms of solidarity and social bonds. This so-called "networked individualism" functions as a matrix of subjectivation of platform users, which different analysts have identified as a condition of contemporary fascisms (Seymour 2020).

This dynamic between hyper-individual affirmation and discursive and affective intensification is what is combined, we want to suggest, in the forms of reactive transgression that populate the landscape of contemporary rights and

that differentiate them from previous forms of conservatism and even prior forms of fascism. A competitive and aggressive affirmation of one's own difference, a defense of what is perceived as one's own earnings and privileges (of consumption, social hierarchies, racial, gendered privileges, etc.) against a social fabric seen as a limit and threat: in that web, a certain concept of freedom is gestated that seems to color the demands, as well as the hyper-individualistic and masculinist performances, of the new rights.

Neofascism is thus responsible for an enormous level of individuation (it is no longer the masses mobilized through the uniformity of the *pueblo*) for which it also seems to get ahead of the democratic interpellation that claims to sustain equality, but which is increasingly disproven in the everyday life of the majorities. That realism also appears when it comes to evaluating the supposed democratic pacification that, to the contrary, is experienced as a civil war in the territories that have been made most precarious. In this way, war as a mechanism for preserving property relations appears as a cross-class truth (the logic behind what seems to happen in a *favela* to protect one's belongings and what is demanded by large corporations, what is experienced in labor competition and in the forms of assuring one's subjective existence as difference on social media). As war on the level of everyday life, as a war of subjectivities, as the systematic production of enemies, as a war to ensure property in all its forms, we see the multiplication of Benjamin's hypothesis: *war provides a goal for large-scale mass movements but now on a micropolitical register, conserving and even exacerbating the inherited conditions of property.*

The landscape of the new rights can be read, we think, against the backdrop of that paradoxical knotting, that unresolved tension, between that capacity for mobilization and expansion that give rise to a subjectivity trained in decades of neoliberalism and its capture in devices of expression – paradigmatically, digital platforms – that often redirect those capacities toward deepening existing property relations and even intensifying their violence (the everyday war to "protect" one's own and the little that one has in the popular sectors).

It is an operational paradox: that movement takes place under the claim to and demand for "freedom." Given that these questions must be put in relation to neoliberalism, understood as a governmental rationality in which risk management and optimization, again alluding to Foucault, stand out as key features, which always maintain and deepen property relations and their "security." That particular combination of security and freedom that neoliberalism manages is the field on which we could think about how the neofascist forms that characterize our current moment grow, where the dispute for the realist interpretation of the majority's living conditions becomes the political laboratory for what we have been calling the expressive forces of the new rights.

V

When we say *expressive forms* we are thinking about two dimensions that make up the processes in which political senses are modeled, through words and bodies. On

one hand there are discursive forms: disputes over what is publicly sayable, which are a fundamental starting point for the new rights in their contestation of what they call "political correctness" and that regulate modes of democratic diction and, therefore, their interpellation and political subjectivation. Democratic (dis) agreement operates as a discursively regulated (dis)agreement in the sense that discourse is not solely produced in language, but also, and fundamentally, a diagram of enunciations, subjectivations, and collective forces. Reactive transgression functions there, appropriating disputes that make up freedoms and rights, but redirecting them against democratic dialogues and relations, which are questioned for not being truly democratic. In this sense, the *democratic twist* exercised by expressive technologies manages to spread anti-democratic feelings at the mass level.

On the other hand, expressive forms also include *gestures*, that is: performances, ways of positioning one's body, of occupying the public, and of articulating senses that are not immediately translated into words. This terrain has been widely elaborated by feminist and LGBTQI+ movements, which have been able to articulate political and legal demands as inseparable from new forms of inhabiting and constituting public space and how it mediates bodies, frequently interfacing with explorations of the senses originating from art and activisms. Those movements made it clear that that terrain of expressive forms is decisive for understanding the modes in which the political operates in the present moment, not only because it refers to a modeling of subjectivities, but also because it raises stakes about the question, the possibility for, and the very form of the public.

The new rights learn from that field of strategies and redirect it. Perhaps the clearest example of how this performative dimension articulates senses for the new rights can be found in the weapon identified by Jair Bolsonaro's campaign as a performance that was replicated by the candidate and his followers: a *form* that spills over onto the social field and that produces senses that are not necessarily articulated into words, harboring an *affect* that would reveal its weight not only in the electoral results, but also in the political culture that it creates. That same performative dimension also reappears in Argentina, where recent mobilizations against the quarantine measures took over the streets – a territory that historically belonged to the social movements, the left and to Peronism – presented as a challenge to and transgression of a political order perceived as the "K dictatorship," which has been especially intensified and crystallized during the pandemic. *Transgression as a gesture*: that is enacted, "done" with the body, but necessarily reflected in words, mobilizing affects to stretch and displace the limits of the sayable.

These expressive forms are frequently analyzed through the concept of political hatred (Giorgi and Kiffer 2020), but are certainly not limited to it. What is at stake is something more than an affective sedimentation in which new and old reactionary forms are processed; what is conjugated there is primarily a dispute over subjectivity based on a *modeling of freedom* founded on individualism,

a racializing classism, and patriarchy that are articulated from above and from below. Reactive transgression would be its expressive laboratory.

VI

Following a tradition that originated in the nineteenth century, if not before, transgression has an emancipatory prestige, which is indistinguishable from certain formulations of freedom, and that is perhaps one of the key meanings deployed in contemporary uses of transgression by the new rights: the *modeling of freedom* (Nagle 2017). Freedom, as shown by the Foucauldian legacy, is never a predetermined meaning or a given "good," as often claimed by the liberal tradition. Freedom is shaped based on designs and demarcations, that is the "affirmative" task of power. The subject of freedom is disaggregated into a multiplicity of games between freedom and control: freedom is always reinvented in specific conjunctures; it is a pragmatic notion, not an ontological one. The notion of governmentality would be the deployment of that permanent exercise of power: no longer the exercise of repression, but rather the modeling of freedom. Economic *insecurity* would be a fundamental piece for assembling and determining the orientation of freedom. If freedom as power-to is fostered as a mode of government, what is governed are, above all, the conditions and environment in which that freedom is to be deployed. It is not necessary to go against freedoms, but rather to make them depend on the experience of generalized insecurity. With an accelerated process of the precarization of life, the political field becomes organized by that conjunction of freedom and security.

A transgression is situated there whose objective is to model individual freedom as the only means and measure of freedom: a hyper-individualism in which the demands of consumption and expression are exclusively condensed in the individual as the focal point of all value and the normative horizon of what is called "democracy." It is no longer a matter of a market that promises universal inclusion and pacification through consumption; it has to do with a consumer who aggressively defends their consumption and property – at whatever scale – as the *only measure of freedom*. We underscore *aggressively*: hatred is a privileged expressive means of that defense. It is articulated with demands for security, an exacerbated masculinity, with gestures of outright violence. It is a transgression that serves to model an idea of freedom as individual and tied to property ownership, against other ideas of freedom – those that come, for example, with structures of collective protection, cultures of care, with plebeian demands of those who never believed in abstract freedoms and learned that being free comes from having rights and ways of making them effective, which are always under threat. Hatred thus functions as an affective gravitational pull in a moment of the democratic in which conceptions, models, and embodiments of freedom are up for dispute. In turn, it meshes with the search for a *moralizing advantage* – that is, of the reaffirmation of racist and family-based confinements – that make it possible to bring together a neoliberalism, which is unable to guarantee the social

reproduction of the majorities, with a neofascism willing to sacrifice the most vulnerable bodies.

The dynamic of digital platforms can, once again, be illustrative. Richard Seymour, in his work on the articulation between digital platforms and new fascisms, argues that networks form a matrix around the figure of a "networked individualism" that is fundamentally neoliberal and anti-social with competition, hierarchy, and status as its main coordinates. Perhaps we can find a clue there about how that modeling of freedom operates in the neofascist moment of neoliberal logic. In an apparent paradox, that networked individual affirms their individual freedom (and deepens capital's individualism with new intensities) *through the network*: in opposition to any communitarian imagination, here the network is the condition for a hyper-individualism that is aggressively and violently affirmed (in which hatred emerges as an affective theme). Seymour adds a key formulation: that individualism is affirmed as a sort of "war against vulnerability" of the other. Thus, to put it one way, *entrepreneurship of the expression* modeled on platforms occurs through the construction of freedom as the breakdown of the social fabric through the network itself. The affirmation of one's own individual difference is shaped *against* the vulnerability of the other: against their faults, their breakdowns, their fragility produced by that neoliberal abandonment. It is as if what one seeks to ward off are the persistent traces of the vulnerability of bodies, which are managed by neoliberalism as a mode of government. The "networked individualism" of platforms, Seymour says, thus functions as a sort of *subjective war* against that precarity that systematically marks bodies in neoliberal processes. That subjective war, we could add, finds a privileged vehicle of expression in masculinist and patriarchal formulas.

Perhaps that is where we need to look to in order to analyze the modulations of the reactive transgression that acquires a new potency and reach under platform capitalism.

VII

Throughout this text we have moved between thinking about neofascism by pointing to the historical sediment of the war as a way of maintaining capitalist relations in order to locate it in the coordinates of neoliberalism and, at the same time, identifying the "new rights" to remit to the political and expressive game in the context of the current democratic crisis. These two dynamics act simultaneously without necessarily being coherent and that discrepancy is an important feature expressed in the political forms of what we call the conservative neoliberal counter-offensive.

If neoliberalism now needs to ally itself with retrograde conservative forces – from white supremacy to religious fundamentalisms, from neocolonialism to the most unrelenting financial dispossession, as has been documented and theorized by Wendy Brown, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Silvia Federici, and Judith Butler, to cite just a few of the books that configure a map of readings nourishing a

radical feminist perspective – it is because the destabilization of patriarchal and racist authorities threatens capital accumulation in the present moment. Once the factory and heteropatriarchal family are no longer able to maintain discipline (even as imaginaries of mass inclusion and stability), once securitarian control is challenged by transfeminist and ecological forms of managing interdependence in eras of existential precarity – which includes disputing public services and wage increases, housing, and debt relief – the counter-offensive, understood as a *fascist reaction*, intensifies.

It is in relation to that type of dispute over the determination of a freedom, counterpoised to the accumulation of neoliberal violences, that feminisms, in their modes of constructing political alliances, have the capacity to be a driving force. This means giving credit to feminisms and movements of sexual dissidence in their migrant, slum, union, student, rural, Indigenous, popular, and so on, compositions and in their mass, radical, and transnational character as crucial dynamics of destabilizing the sexual, gender-based, order and, therefore, the neoliberal political order, which are materialized in the dispute over the directions of the crisis that has continued to deepen since 2008. In this sense, neoliberalism and conservatism share strategic objectives of normalizing and managing the crisis of the relation of obedience that is a key condition for accumulation.

"If we don't work on resignifying freedom, we will lose this battle," Wendy Brown (2020a) stated in a recent interview analyzing the rearticulations of the new rights in the United States in the context of Trumpism. One working response in that direction has been elaborated from the Global South. *Vivas, libres y desendeudadas nos queremos!* ("We want ourselves alive, free, and debt free!"): the slogan produced by the NiUnaMenos movement in 2017 puts forth a triangulation in which the question about freedom is inseparable from a demand for non-punitive justice (that includes diverse demands ranging from responses to the inaction and impunity of institutions – against the violences embodied in femicide – to the horizon of other forms of non-patriarchal justice). In this way, the mobilization defies hegemonic notions of security at the same time as it illuminates the violences that are articulated with civil war and police management of the social field, displacing the question of what makes life possible in those conditions. Therefore, the *we want to live* is tied to an idea of security that, resisting the most brutal threshold of violence of patriarchal terror, necessarily reclaims forms of freedom that disrupt binomial security as fear and reaction, condensed in the figure of the police or the armed citizen (since police agents are responsible for a very large number of femicidal attacks, the discussion about security in terms of gender-based violence radically disputes the most securitarian declinations and doctrines mobilized by the new rights).

In turn, when the slogan assembles with and calls for *debt relief* as a focal point of feminist demands, it is composed by a critique of a political economy that does not address the material bases of the chain of everyday submissions involved in

debt. Therefore, without affirming the modes of production, redistribution, and appropriation of collective wealth that sustain not only the reproduction of life but also the forms of autonomy that are created on its basis, there is no real possibility for a vital freedom.

Security and economy: here the bastions of the new rights are reclaimed by transfeminists and anti racist struggles as the foundations for imagining new coordinates of freedom. In that sense, freedom does not belong to the individual, nor is it affirmed against the collective fabric and vulnerability of other bodies, rather it coincides with the space that is generated where the minimum conditions of collective protection are produced and affirmed. Is this counter-offensive regarding freedom not the most effective weapon against the current inflection point and the eruption of the "new rights"? It is a matter not only of disputing meanings, but also livable forms of freedom in the neoliberal matrix – now in its libertarian inflection – that claims its final patrimony in the new rights, to instead affirm a freedom sustained on the minimum grounds of protecting bodies and freeing their economies from debt, in other words, based on their management of the reproduction of life. "Resignifying freedom" thus implies, to a large degree, disputing and resignifying the very terrains that the new rights disputes and seek to monopolize.

Note

1 Rodrigo Nunes speaks of a "confluence of the pre- and the post-modern, traditional authority and the neoliberal voiding of the social" as one of the most salient aspects of *Bolsonarismo* in Brazil. See R. Nunes, *"Of what is Bolsonaro the name?"* (2021). www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/of-what-is-bolsonaro-the-name

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