



## Workshop Programme

# ‘How to Study the International Effects of Populism’

6-7 July 2023, University of Freiburg

Venue: University of Freiburg – Wilhelmstr. 26, Room 01 014, first floor,

Thursday 6 July 2023

14:00-14:15

### Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Sandra Destradi

14:15-15:15

### Panel 1: Populism and Foreign Policy Change (Chair: Erin Jenne)

Fabrizio Coticchia, University of Genoa

#### Foreign Policy Change: A Research Agenda (Discussant: Sandra Destradi)

After the end of the Cold War, Italian foreign and defense policy has radically transformed. Since 1991, Italy has deployed its armed forces in a large and constantly growing number of military interventions across the world, including those in former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. The Russian invasion of Ukraine altered further the strategic context in which Italian (and European) armed forces operate. The Ukrainian war can be seen as a critical juncture in which policymakers could reverse their defense posture, adopting new policy paradigms.

The FPA literature has finally devoted growing attention to foreign and defense policy change. Yet, despite notable exceptions, the scholarly debate still needs to address manifold issues on foreign policy change: from theoretical frameworks that take into consideration the stunning evolution of both international arena and party systems, as well as the (paradoxically lacking) connections between FPA and public policy and public administration.

A research agenda on foreign policy change is presented by examining the case of Italy. In recent years, an impressive variance affected Italian domestic politics: after the full-populist Yellow Green (2018-2019) and the M5S/Pd (2019-2021) executives, a technocratic government led by Mario Draghi ruled until the 2022 general elections, when a right-wing coalition led by Giorgia Meloni came to power. How did institutional and political changes occurred in domestic politics reflect on Italian defence and security politics? What was instead the impact of the evolution of external events on the approaches adopted by the Italian technocratic and populist governments? Preliminary findings and new theoretical approaches are presented to answer such questions, focusing on the concept of foreign policy change.

**Leslie Wehner, University of Bath**

### **Foreign Policy Change and Populism: A relational model of role change (Discussant: David Cadier)**

Populist leaders present themselves to their audience of followers as agents of change in all policy areas including foreign policy. However, it is not clear the extent to which the promised change offered by populist leaders as saviours and fixers of their countries happens, or if it does happen, by which means it is triggered and the form it takes. This paper engages with the notion of change in foreign policy and offers a relational role theory framework to trace change in the foreign policy of a state. The paper engages with concepts such as role conflict and role dissonance as key mechanisms of change at the interplay of structure and agent forces in foreign policy. The paper relies on cases of populism from the Americas to illustrate the potential applicability of the theoretical framework to understand change in foreign policy. This framework is argued to be useful for more than just populist leaders as well.

15:15-16:15

## **Panel 2: Populism and Mobilization: Intended and Unintended Consequences (Chair: Leslie Wehner)**

**David Cadier, University of Groningen (Discussant: Daniel Wajner)**

### **Differentiation, Mobilisation and Prioritisation: Pathways and Patterns of Populist Mobilisation**

The tendency of populist governments to politicise foreign policy once they make to power as by now been documented across several cases. The pathways, patterns and implications of this politicisation require additional theorisation however. What is specific and distinctive of populist politicisation, as compared to what prevails under non-populist governing actors? How does it flow from populism and spill over onto foreign policy? This paper will address these questions by relying on an action-oriented understanding of politicization, on a syncretic approach to populism, on the FPA scholarship on oppositional politics and on case-study analysis of Poland.

**Hakki Taş, GIGA**

### **Populism and Civilian Control of the Military (Discussant: Swarati Sabhapandit)**

Scholars largely view populism as a democratic game and study it through the lens of civilian mass politics, thereby, dismissing the role of the military elite. Nevertheless, populist mobilization may inject new dynamics into military-dominated regimes, potentially tilting the political equilibrium. This article

scrutinizes the degree and type of civilian control of the military in populist settings and generates two hypotheses, each based on a pillar of populism. It mainly argues that incumbent populists tend to limit the veto power of the military. Along with the populist institutional decay, however, the common pattern is the personal civilian control of the military based on individual, communal, or ideological ties between the populist leader and the armed forces.

16:15-16:45

## **Coffee break**

16:45- 17:45

### **Panel 3: Populism, Marginalization, Hate Speech: Insights from India and Rwanda (Chair: Daniel Wajner)**

**Authors: Jean-Thomas Martelli, Vihang Jumle, Vedant Jumle**

**Presenter: Vihang Jumle (Discussant: Corina Lacatus)**

#### **Ideology or Viewership? Drivers of the Anti-Muslim Discourse on Indian TV**

Is Islamophobia a byproduct of ideological leanings or economic drives? This article explores the drivers of the anti-Muslim discourse on partisan media channels in India. It examines the effect of majoritarian rhetoric on user engagement using key metrics of Republic TV's The Debate on the popular video-streaming platform YouTube. We argue that vituperative stances against Muslims do not necessarily widen the shows' audience. On the one hand, when The Debate's anchor Arnab Goswami explicitly makes anti-Muslim statements, public engagement is weaker than average. On the other hand, Islamophobic innuendos and implicit anti-Muslim bolster views, likes and the volume of comments. We build on existing literature on populist communication to unpack this paradox. We suggest that the anti-Muslim rhetoric produces a better impact when Muslim individuals are presented as evil and corrupt elites, as opposed to when he simply attacks Muslim politicians, clerics, activists and artists on religious or cultural lines. The 2020 suicide case of Sushant Singh Rajput—a popular Hindu Bollywood actor from humble origins—is a case in point. Mr Goswami advocated the suicide as a murder by a 'gang' and presented himself as the 'voice of the people' against the elites of the Bollywood film industry. He subtly but efficiently portrayed this gang as a Muslim clique. Conversely, his numerous explicit verbal assaults against Muslims have counterproductive effects on gross engagement; this suggests that he is not only trying to maximise viewership, but also seeks ideological alignment with the ruling dispensation to benefit from their active support, favours and protection.

**Erin K. Jenne, International Relations Department, Central European University (Discussant: Leslie Wehner)**

**Promise Frank Ejiofor, Queens' College, University of Cambridge (online)**

#### **Ethnopolitism and the Ideology of Genocide: A Discourse Analysis of Hate Speech in the Rwandan Genocide**

This paper seeks to establish a link between ethnopolitist discourse and the policies of ethnic extermination prescribed by the ideology of genocide. We begin by proposing that ethnopolitism is

an exclusionary sovereigntist discourse that holds that the core ethnonational community is critically compromised by “national others” colluding with foreign interests to destroy the authentic ethnonational people. To protect against the existential threat posed by this ethnic “fifth column,” members of the ethnic majority are enjoined to exclude the hostile “others” through ethnic cleansing or even extermination. We then use the paradigmatic case of the Rwandan genocide as a plausibility probe of our argument. Using the transcripts from Radio Rwanda in the months leading up to the 1994 Rwandan genocide, we demonstrate that the genocidal ideology conveyed by Hutu extremists is a logical extension of the ethnopopulist discourse. In doing so, we draw a line between more mundane national populist claims and the urgent injunction in 1994 to rid the Hutu people-nation of threatening Tutsi others.

19:00

## **Conference Dinner at Restaurant Sichelschmiede**

**Friday 7 July 2023**

9:00-10:00

## **Student Poster Presentations**

10:00-10:30

## **Coffee break**

10:30-11:30

## **Panel 4: Populism, Foreign Policy and IR (Chair: Sandra Destradi)**

**Angelos Chrysosgelos, London Metropolitan University (Discussant: Hakki Taş)**

### **The people vs. IR: The challenge of populism to IR theory**

The global rise of populism today is seen as a challenge to multilateralism, economic openness, diplomatic practices and prevalent norms of the international system – features usually lumped together in the concept of the liberal international order. This article argues that populism does not just challenge this order, but also undermines key assumptions of international relations theories that analyse it. Populism is understood here as a particularist oppositional ideology that is in tension with most key tenets of the liberal program while overlapping with some others. This ambiguity mirrors the

relationship of populism with the discipline of international relations, which has developed on largely liberal ontological, epistemological and normative bases. The article outlines the main points of friction between populism and IR over assumptions of actorhood, progress in international change, and the relationship between domestic and international political order. It concludes that the reality of populism calls upon IR to reassess many of its liberal foundations.

**Bertjan Verbeek, Radboud University Nijmegen (Discussant: Fabrizio Cotichia)**

### **The impact of populism on the foreign policies of states: a conceptual model**

Over the past 10 years the literature on populism and international relations has become abundant. Valuable theoretical insights were presented and empirical cases were discussed. Still, this has not yet resulted in a shared research programme. This paper seeks to identify the major factors that affect the potential impact of populism on the foreign policies of states. Based on that, it seeks to identify outstanding questions that merit to be addressed by the new generation of scholars.

11:30-12:30

## **Panel 5: Populism and Democratic Backsliding: Insights from India and Senegal (Chair: David Cadier)**

**Swarati Sabhapandit, Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence (Discussant: Vihang Jumble)**

### **Fundamental Rights of the Indian Constitution: A Site of Persistent Struggle**

Part III of the Indian constitution underscores the transition from colonial subjects to right bearing citizens. The roots of the Fundamental Rights lie at the tales of struggle for independence. They confront discriminatory institutions in our society and empower the State to create habitable conditions for all citizens. The nature of these rights is justiciable, and the Constitution made the judiciary the ultimate defender of these rights. This constitutional arrangement indicates two things: first, under the law, the State cannot violate these rights, and second, these rights are the result of the power dynamics between the citizens and the State. These constitutional safeguards are in place against the State's unique and monopolized sovereign power. India's constitutional history unveils inconsistency in the everyday interactions between the State, the citizens, and the judicature, especially when the substance of such interactions are citizens' Fundamental Rights. During the first two decades after independence, the judiciary engaged primarily with two strands of fundamental rights: Right to Property (Article 19 (1)(f)) and Right to Freedom of speech and expression (Article 19(1)(a)). The Court was assertive in safeguarding people's property rights against the State's welfare policies, actively protecting the landowning class. Concerning the second set of rights, the Court's narrative corroborated the State and predominantly status quo-ists. However, two significant developments radically changed the nature of the judiciary: first, the introduction of the doctrine of basic structure that provides constitutional safeguard against parliamentary arbitration, and second, the Emergency. In the aftermath, efforts were made to challenge the legislature's exclusive capacity to represent popular sovereignty by widening the scope of Fundamental Rights. Against this premise, this chapter will describe the chronicle of the judicial conduct vis-à-vis the Fundamental Rights between 2014-2022. There are two reason for choosing the demarcated period: first, the year 2014 marks the incumbency of a new single-party majority government at the Centre. Second, the tenure of the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) appears to be an era of strong political executive characterised by right-wing populist majoritarianism and purported undermining of constitutional institutions. Scholarship on Indian politics frequently refer to the BJP's tenure as a state of 'undeclared emergency'

by drawing a parallel with India's experience during the Emergency. By analysing the vigour of citizens' constitutional rights during the study's demarcated period, the chapter shall examine the role of an independent judiciary, as a guardian of the basic structure, in protecting citizens' Fundamental Rights since the BJP came to power in 2014? The chapter shall delineate different judicial precedents to corroborate its arguments. The goal is to depict the judiciary's eroding institutional autonomy in the face of a strong political executive.

**Corina Lacatus, Queen Mary University of London**

**Populisms and the decline of democracy in Senegal (Discussant: Erin Jenne)**

On 24th February 2019, Macky Sall won a second five-year term as Senegal's president, beginning a process of consolidation and centralisation of power. The first half of his second presidential term have led commentators to state that Senegalese democracy is backsliding and that President Sall is making increasing use of populist rhetoric to garner public support for an unconstitutional third presidential term. In this paper, I explore public communication on Twitter during the electoral campaign ahead of the 2019 election and in the two years following Macky's successful re-election. More specifically, I explore the uses of populist communication by Macky Sall and his main counter-candidate, Ousmane Sonko, to better understand how they strategically advance diverging electoral and political aims in a competitive autocratic domestic setting.

12:30-13:45

**Conference Lunch at Blauer Fuchs**

13:45-14:45

**Panel 6: Factors Mediating the Impact of Populism on Foreign Policy (Chair: Corina Lacatus)**

**Sandra Destradi, University of Freiburg**

**Populism and the Provision of Global Public Goods (Discussant: Bertjan Verbeek)**

The global rise of populism is frequently mentioned as one of the main drivers of the crisis of the so-called liberal international order. This paper explores the impact of populism on the readiness to provide global public goods. Based on theories of populism, we expect populist governments to be less likely to contribute to global governance as compared to non-populist ones for various reasons. First and foremost, populists can be expected to focus on a narrowly defined 'people' and should therefore be skeptical of costly policies that by definition benefit everyone. Yet, the degree to which populists in power reject meaningful contributions to global governance varies, and this depends on the extent to which the non-provision of global public goods can be used for domestic political mobilization. Our empirical analysis focuses on changes in contributions to global governance understood as the provision of global public goods in four countries that experienced a transition from non-populist to populist governments: Bolivia, Italy, the Philippines, and Turkey. In particular, we focus on the following fields: a) climate governance; b) peacekeeping and peace promotion; c) development cooperation (where applicable).

**Daniel Wajner, Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

**Catalysts or Barriers? The Mediating Role of (Inter-)National Political Structures in the Effects of Populist Foreign Policies (Discussant: Angelos Chrysosgelos)**

A 'populist turn' in International Relations is here to stay. However, the growing research on populist foreign policy (PFP) still needs to further investigate the national and international conditions that affect the different implementation of PFP across countries. This study will build on some of the conclusions of the recently published edited volume "Populist Foreign Policy Regional Perspectives of Populism in the International Scene" (Springer, 2023), to suggest new theoretical insights into how changes in (inter-)national political structures, both locally and externally, enable or restrain the expected behavior of populists in their international interactions. Empirical evidence from cases of contemporary populist leaderships in Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East will be used to illustrate the intermediate role of (inter-)national political structures as either catalysts or barriers to PFP. The lessons may contribute to a greater understanding of the role of parties, coalitions, allies, and enemies in the way populist leaderships impact current global politics.

14:45-15:00

**Concluding Discussion: Plans for the Future of Our Research Agenda**