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Maxim Shipenkov/AFP/Getty Images Russian servicemen march at Red Square during the Victory Day military parade in Moscow, May 9, 2018.

By Maria Raquel Freire



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Institution in backward: FUNAI and the Brazilian democracy under Bolsonaro

AN Original

2022-04-05

By Martiniano Neto

Brazil is a country that has been trying to set out a formal democracy since the 1980s. A well-known step forward in this struggle was the current Constitution, which was ratified in 1988. The subsequent elections took place in an almost formal democratic background. Brazilian political parties and their leaders disagree on many important topics, but have generally respected broad democratic values during every election since 1988. Campaigns and elections were carried out accordingly until the last presidential election, in 2018.

Jair Messias Bolsonaro won the last presidential elections. It was an unusual race: the winner did not attend any debates on the major TV open channel, Rede Globo. This TV channel was the main media in all elections before 2018. Brazilian presidential candidates have the right to use free TV time and campaign on a daily base. The bigger the coalition the candidate and his party can manage, the longer the candidate will appear on open TV. For instance, Geraldo Alckmin, in 2018, achieved five minutes and thirty-two seconds, twice a day, on all open TV channels; Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, who was in jail at the time, achieved two minutes and twenty-three seconds; finally, Bolsonaro only achieved 8 seconds. He won the elections anyway.

This victory is due to the discourse and the emergence of a new media to which Bolsonaro's discourse was deeply linked to. It was an unembellished anti-democratic discourse, using the Internet, mainly through chat apps such as WhatsApp, as the main broadcaster. Bolsonaro was a member of the lower Congress House during seven terms, as a Rio de Janeiro state's representative, and he was mostly unknown to the broader public before right-winged extremism rose in Brazil during the 2000s. One common saying of his supporters, much before the 2018 elections, is a shortcut for the content of his discourse: "*direitos humanos para os humanos direitos*". It means "human rights for the right humans". In abstract, this discourse encapsulates the notion that the warranties of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution safeguard the "wrong" humans: thieves, rapists, and all kinds of bandits. But also, corrupt politicians,



politicians linked to “international communism”, left-wing politicians and their supporters, LGBT, Pro-Indigenous, and Black People activists, all of them supposedly plotting the end of private property and individual and liberal rights. Nonetheless, in spite of the spreading of this extremism and the lack of regulation of new digital media, the 2018 election was formally democratic.

Of course, the extremism, which was once a discourse, became a current political practice. In a presidential system of government in which the president has the prerogative to “occasionally” legislate and to approve or disapprove the public budget voted in the two Congress Houses, Bolsonaro actually has a lot of power on his hands. Here I reach the main theme of this short article: what can an extremist president democratically elected do to minorities like the Indigenous peoples? I will write about it from the standpoint of an anthropologist who is actively engaged in the Pro-Indigenous people’s movement in Brazil.

To answer the question above, one needs to analyze FUNAI, the Brazilian government agency for Indigenous peoples. During the last three years (2019-2021), Bolsonaro’s supporters overrun this last institution, by indication of Bolsonaro himself or from his Ministry of Justice. Thus, it became a public institution where the discourse and political practice of the new Brazilian extremism took place in a very direct way. FUNAI functioned in this direction because the Indigenous peoples in Brazil are often miscomprehended as a social group that has too much land for a few individuals. It needs to be said that this is not a new way of understanding the native population: what is currently new is that all the political power at the Federal Executive level (legal, marginally legal, or even explicitly illegal) is being used to achieve the goal. It means that there is no chance of initiating any new Indigenous land process inside FUNAI and, at the same time, lands already recognized are under great pressure. For instance, the TIX (*Território Indígena do Xingu*, Xingu River Indigenous Territory), one of the oldest legal indigenous land in Brazil, has presently witnessing a wave of illegal miners, loggers, and squatters. TIX, the homeland of famous Indigenous leader Raoni Metyktire, had not experienced a considerable invasion during the last fifteen years.

The current FUNAI president is known in the Brazilian political arena: Marcelo Augusto Xavier da Silva, a Federal police officer in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso, worked (2017-2018) as a consultant in a Congress Inquiry to investigate supposed irregularities in FUNAI processes to recognize Indigenous lands. At that time, he even advised for the end of FUNAI. This Congress Inquiry was organised and led by the landowners’ congressional representatives and their supporters, who tried, for instance, to criminalize the work of the anthropologists that have conducted technical studies regarding bureaucratic procedures for the recognition of Indigenous land, inside FUNAI. Along these lines, it is at least very peculiar that the leader of FUNAI is someone who has even asked for the agency itself to disappear.

However, what did FUNAI do during the Marcelo Augusto Xavier administration? Much more than nothing: FUNAI is currently acting **against** the Brazilian Indigenous peoples, even if this way of acting is explicitly illegal. The Vale do Ribeira case, a set of Indigenous lands demanded to be recognized by the Brazilian State, is one to be taken as an example. After the first technical studies (which were very costly and required a lot of years) pointed out that the Indigenous peoples in the Ribeira’s region had the right to their land, Augusto Xavier just ignored those reports and demanded for all the processes and technical studies regarding the region to be done again. There was no bureaucratic or legal justification for his action and Xavier was legally prosecuted for that.

There is a huge difference in doing nothing in favour of Indigenous peoples’ rights, on the one hand, and, on the other, using an already operative bureaucratic structure to deny access to those rights. To ignore the previous studies conducted by FUNAI, demanding all of them to be repeated, is not only to ignore the Indigenous rights to their land: it is effectively denying these rights the possibility to materialize.

The way Xavier's administration is dealing with the pandemic is even worse. Under his direction, the Indigenous public organization refused more than once to vaccinate the Indigenous peoples living in Brazilian cities. It also neglected the claims of several Indigenous peoples to see their lands freed from illegal miners and other illegitimate activities, even during the worse time of the pandemic. An extreme case is the one of the Yanomami people: widespread illegal gold miners are dominating the region with the open support of local public authorities. Besides COVID-19 itself, the area is under a strong malaria outbreak and almost no official help came from FUNAI or other Federal public agencies.

Finally, it is very important to notice that Bolsonaro's government did or is trying to do the same to all the legal, institutional and even technical Brazilian apparatus related to the protection of the environment, including those linked to the Amazonian Rain Forest and the Cerrado region, one of the most important savannas in the planet. For instance, the current Brazilian government has stopped monitoring the Cerrado deforestation, cancelled or procrastinated legal fines for illegal, over-exploitation of lands and it is working effectively to deny any international or national responsibility for its acts. Thus, the democratic institutions are still working in Brazil, but they are working backwardly.

Martiniano Neto - I am a social anthropologist with a Ph.D. from the Federal University of Brasília, Brazil. My research in this last institution took place among the Tapayúna indigenous people, who are today outside from their traditional region, inhabiting the Xingu Indigenous Territory, in the extreme north of the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso. My research interests are ethnology, and currently the historical formation of the idea of the Amazon Forest from written and iconographic reports (among others) of travelers and also from native cosmology.



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Populism and Negative Partisanship

AN Original - UNPOP Series

2022-03-30

By Maisa Lima, José Santana Pereira

As populism remains a hot topic in social sciences and in the media, the debate around its conceptualization comes closer to reaching a consensus. The ideational approach to populism has become the center of its definition in academia, rising from the pool of miscellaneous definitions that treated populism as a narrative, a discourse, or a political strategy or style. This ideational approach revolves around three main pillars: people centrism (the idea that the people are bound to be at the center of the political process), anti-elitism (negative attitudes and assessments of political and other elites) and the need to reestablish the sovereignty of the will of the people. It entails a Manichean divide that opposes the people and the elite, revealing an “us” versus “them” mentality. The affirmation of the people embodies the rejection of the elites and this antagonism is crucial to the understanding of populism.



Indeed, populism tries to break the bond between voters and mainstream parties. Established political forces are blamed for economic misdoings and for not being able to represent the will of ordinary folks. Mainstream politicians are viewed as a corrupt force that acts only on behalf of their own interests and that of the established elite. The populist demonization of elites can be perceived through different societal prisms, which means the anti-elite sentiment can manifest as antiparty, antimedia, antiexperts, or antieconomic elites. In turn, this antiestablishment stance can, along with the other two components of populist attitudes, people centrism and appeal for popular sovereignty, result in action through voting behavior and other forms of political participation, affecting the political context.

This understanding of populism would lead us to hypothesize that, at the demand side level, there might be an intimate link between populist support and negative partisanship. Recent developments have shown that partisan identities (and its immediate behavioral correlate, voting behavior) have been increasingly entangled with negative affect, leading to a pattern of affective polarization or negative partisanship, understood as the repulsion or rejection of one or more parties. More than the rational component of those parties' performance appraisal, political identity and attitudes towards representatives, that is, identitarian and affective elements, are believed to be deeply associated with the strong rejection of specific parties.

It must be said that negative and positive partisanship are not necessarily associated, as strong party support is not a prerequisite for the development of negative affect towards another party. This also implies that negative partisanship is not restricted to two-party systems, in which support for one party and disdain for the other could erroneously be seen as two sides of the same coin. Negative partisanship is also present in multi-party systems and can manifest in the form of disdain for one or more parties, and independently from any affection for another party.

Antiestablishment partisanship can be seen as the extreme level of negative partisanship, as it entails the rejection of all parties, for they compose the established political elite. Some scholars sustain that the success of populism depends on the existence of a coherent and stable antiestablishment identity within the citizenry. The antiestablishment sentiment is therefore key in fully comprehending populism and populist attitudes as it carries the intrinsic quality of political elite rejection in its definition. The disdain for the established elite is translated in the denial of the established political parties. This is how negative partisanship, as a possible antechamber of antiestablishment partisanship, plays a crucial role in the phenomenon of populism studied from the demand side.

However, some researchers suggest that, since negative identities do not provide a psychological sense of belonging, negative partisanship might be less stable than positive partisanship. This raises the question on what kind of partisanship is a stronger and more stable predictor of populist party support: widespread negative partisanship/antiestablishment sentiment or positive, traditional partisanship, understood as an attachment, feeling of proximity or perception of representation by a specific party. In other words, is populist party support more about rejecting mainstream parties or supporting non-mainstream, antisystem parties proposing a different way of thinking and carrying out politics? While there is research linking populist attitudes (composed of, as we saw, antiestablishment positions) and support for populist parties, especially when those parties are opposition parties, others show that antiestablishment attitudes can be observed both within citizens who embrace and who fully reject populism along with any other political narrative. The question remains thus unanswered, as further studies must be carried in order for us to fully comprehend the cognitive and emotional aspects of the relationship between populist support and different kinds of partisanship, as well as the role of context.

Another conundrum that surrounds the relationship between these two phenomena has to do with the fact that populist parties themselves can be targets of negative partisanship. For instance, it has been found that an important part of European electorates reject radical right populist parties, expressing a great deal of negative partisanship on their regard, which is linked with strong support for democracy and the liberal democratic paradigm.

In short, while negative partisanship can, on the one hand, develop into antiestablishment partisanship, on the other it can be directed towards populist parties too, eroding the support they may obtain. This backhand quality highlights the complexity surrounding the relationship between negative partisanship and populist attitudes and illustrates a relevant gap in both populism and partisanship literatures.

To conclude, we must say that while we tried to shed light into the link between negative partisanship and populism at the demand side, it is still not possible to answer all questions or fully explain this relationship. This is mainly so because this is an area of study that is still recent and underdeveloped. We have but a small and blurred knowledge about the links that hold these factors together and the academic community must accord the necessary importance to these relationships, should we want to fully understand – and maybe even intervene in – them. As affective polarization rises all over the world, one must stop and analyze how negativity plays a role in it and how populist actors thrive in this scenario. In more concrete terms, social sciences scholarship would benefit from further studies on negative partisanship and its relation to populist support, focusing both on the cognitive and affective aspects of these phenomena, with a special focus on the environmental factors that might act as triggers or buffers of their relationship. Amongst those, political culture and the nature of the political offer (both in terms of mainstream and anti-system or populist parties) are those we believe might impact the strength and direction of the relationship between negative partisanship and populism.

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Legalizing Abortion: Learning from the South.

What US abortion advocates can learn from feminist movements in Argentina AN Original

2022-03-29

By Jessica Morris

In December 2020, after decades of mobilization and organization by feminist movements in Argentina, the country's Congress legalized abortion making it safe and free. This is a monumental achievement and is central to the feminist struggle not only for the country but for the Americas and beyond. We have seen the impact of this *feminist tide* in the mobilizations, discussions and legal strategies being adopted across the continent. Since the legalization in Argentina, abortion was decriminalized through the supreme courts in Mexico (2021) and Colombia (2022) and the right to abortion has been included in the draft constitution of Chile. In all these cases, and across the world, the Argentinean green *pañuelo* (handkerchief) – symbol of the struggle to legalize abortion – has been used in marches, protests and even at the oral arguments before the courts.



Photo: Jessica Morris *International Women's Day 8 March 2020*

However, while we have witnessed an expansion of reproductive rights in many Latin American countries in the past year, across the US, many states have gone in the opposite direction and passed abortion restrictive laws. In 2021, Texas enacted the most restrictive law in the country which bans abortion after six weeks of pregnancy and makes no exceptions in cases of rape or incest. Legal challenges to this law were filed, however after losing several appeals to the highest court of the state and of the country, on March 11, 2022, Texas abortion providers conceded that the path to challenge the law was over and that abortion in the state is, in essence, banned. Since then, other states have followed suit. Most recently Idaho's governor signed a bill modeled after Texas' law and many others are poised to ban abortion as well. With a heavily conservative Supreme Court, more setbacks, if not the overturning, of the landmark case that has protected a pregnant woman's constitutional right to liberty to choose to have an abortion since 1973 - *Roe v. Wade* - is to be expected. In fact, in the next few months the US Supreme Court should decide *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, a case where an abortion facility in Mississippi is challenging the state's restrictive law, and Roe's reversal is anticipated.

The setbacks in the US send a message to abortion advocates in the country that the days of relying on the courts to protect reproductive rights are gone and that they need to look to other models to guarantee that abortion continues to be legal.

As a researcher in the field, I believe the story behind the Argentinean feminist movements' historic achievement can provide lessons to abortion advocates in the US and elsewhere. Here I share five lessons:

1. Social change takes time

Argentina's feminist movements mobilizing around abortion have a long trajectory dating back to the 1970-80's, but it was in 2005 that the *Campaña Nacional por el Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito* was launched with the mandate of legalizing abortion and since then has been tirelessly working to make it a reality in the country. It took time – decades – but in December 2020 abortion became legal, safe and free in the country.

2. Collective struggle

By denouncing the sexist, classist, and racist impact of the criminalization of abortion, feminist movements in Argentina were able to make the legalization of abortion a collective struggle. No longer perceived as an issue of one sector of society, abortion was a topic of daily discussions in the urban centers and the peripheries, at schools, universities, factories, offices, and dinner tables across the country and across all segments of society. Once a taboo, abortion was now, to use the words of the Argentinean activists, “out of the closet” and discussed everywhere.

3. Coalition building and action from below

The *Campaña* brought together people of diverse ages, backgrounds and ethnicities. *Pibas* (teenagers), *históricas* (feminists over the age of 70), academics, medical and legal professionals, immigrant and Indigenous women, and trans people – all came together with a common goal: defending the autonomy of their bodies. They used different and creative strategies, organized meetings, parties and protests and were present in schools, universities, social media. They drafted, lobbied and presented bills to congress. They dominated the public debate. By mid-2018 the *Campaña* had been joined by over 500 organizations across the country and mobilized over two million people to march on the streets calling for the legalization of abortion.

4. Resilience and perseverance

There were multiple obstacles along the way, but the *Campaña* pushed forward. During the first 13 years of the *Campaña* their proposed bills would not even be discussed by congress – as there was not enough political support to push it forward. In addition, the *Campaña* faced an organized opposition from conservative forces that counted with the full support of the Catholic Church, and of the Pope himself – who is Argentinean. And to make things even more challenging, with the Covid-19 pandemic the government issued a lockdown (Argentina faced the longest lockdown in the world) that prohibited in-person get-togethers and events on the streets. But the *Campaña* was not in lockdown, and nothing would stop it. In very creative ways feminists resisted and continued to press for the legalization. Groups held virtual workshops, classes, and protests. Despite all these challenges, the *Campaña* kept the legalization of abortion front and center in the country's agenda and continued to collectively organize the movement, and finally, on December 30, 2020, the *Campaña* succeeded in making abortion legal, safe and free for anyone who can become pregnant. Between December 2020 and December 2021, there were 32,758 voluntary abortions carried out in the country through the public health system in the country.

Putin's military revisionism in Ukraine

AN Original

2022-03-22

By Maria Raquel Freire



Maxim Shipenkov/AFP/Getty Images

Russian servicemen march at Red Square during the Victory Day military parade in Moscow, May 9, 2018.

Russian foreign policy since Putin came to power in 2000 has sought status recognition, pursuing policies to 'achieve firm and prestigious positions in the world community, most fully consistent with the interests of the Russian Federation as a great power, as one of the most influential centres of the modern world' (Russian Foreign Policy Concept, RFP2000), highlighting 'its status as one of the leading States of the world' (RFP2008) and 'Russia's increased responsibility for setting the international agenda and shaping the system of international relations' (RFP2013), and seeking to position Russia 'as a centre of influence in today's world' (RFP2016). Moreover, through its foreign policy Russia has consistently underlined the relevance of the post-Soviet space in Russian identity construction, historically sharing

values and principles, and defining this as a space of strategic importance, a 'priority area', always coming first in the concentric circles approach to Russia's foreign policy. This is evident from all fundamental foreign policy documents, and its security and military strategies. The political-territorial dimension of the post-Soviet space is also highlighted, materializing the relevance of its 'near-abroad', in the way Moscow criticises actions of western interference, such as the 'colour revolutions', with broader political destabilizing goals, namely aiming at regime change in Moscow. The rose revolution in Georgia (2003) or the orange revolution in Ukraine (2004-2005) are examples of this line of reasoning. Also, the Kremlin has been a fierce critic of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s enlargement policy, as a continuous threat to its security, by bringing NATO's equipment and personnel closer to Russia's border. The encirclement argument has been made clear by Russia. The attempted policies at transparency- and trust-building, such as the NATO-Russia Council did not work. And this distrust persisted in the agenda of discontent, feeding Russia's narrative of exclusion from the European security order. The revisionist policy promoted by Russia sought a more inclusive European security order, where Russia could have vote and veto rights. The proposals put forward, such as for a (new) European Security Treaty, in 2008, reaffirming the indivisibility of security as stated at the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, or the proposal for a framework 'From East to West, or Greater Eurasia' (2015) demonstrate this discontent with European security and Russia's desire to revise it. But it should not be forgotten Russia has long been socialized in this order, with the NATO-Russian Council, or even its participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme, the EU-Russia strategic partnership and many cooperation agreements, such as the Agenda for Modernization, or as a member of the Council of Europe. This order is not alien to Russia, and Moscow has not been absolutely excluded from it.^[4]

The willingness to use force as a way of containing movements considered unfavourable to the Kremlin, becomes evident in Georgia in 2008, and crystallizes Russian militarized and revisionist policy in the actions in Ukraine in 2014. The narrative on the crossing of 'red lines' becomes part of a national security narrative that accuses the west of crossing structuring lines for Russia, justifying a militarized response. This disposition for military action goes side-by-side with an assertive narrative towards the post-Soviet space as visible in different moments. In 2005, in his State of the Nation address, Putin states that the 'end of the USSR was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century. For the Russian people, this was a real drama'. This makes it urgent to restore the past status and glory. (But Putin also commented in 2005 that in Russia it is said 'whoever does not miss the Soviet Union has no heart, whoever wants it back has no brain', underlining the end of the USSR should not prevent Russia from moving forward). More recently, when asked what event in the country's history he would change if that would be possible, Putin referred to the collapse of the Soviet Union. And this past December, Putin mentioned the end of the USSR as the end of 'historical Russia', when 25 million people in the newly independent countries suddenly found themselves separated from Russia, which constituted a 'large-scale humanitarian tragedy', meaning the collapse of the Soviet Union constituted without doubt a step backwards in Russian history. These examples make clear the relevance of the post-Soviet space in both Russia's narrative and policy-action. The war in Ukraine fits this understanding.

The article signed by Putin in July 2021, referring to the development of the anti-Russia project in Ukraine, makes a statement about the reading of the Russian president that there is no place for a sovereign Ukraine or for political forces that seek to defend its independence. However, recreating a Soviet Union 2.0 seems like an artificially constructed goal, the limits of which underline that Russia does not have unlimited power in the post-Soviet space. Georgia became an example. The invasion of Ukraine already signals, regardless of the outcome of this war, the dynamics of resistance to a policy of imposed domination. Together with the expansion of the Atlantic Alliance, referred early on, also in military doctrines and strategic security concepts, as an external threat to Russia's security, arguments about the protection of Russian citizens outside its territory, and non-interference in the post-Soviet space in line with a sovereignist stance – non-interference in internal affairs and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states – have always been present in the narrative. The justification for Crimea's annexation as historical 'reintegration' of the territory in Russia, seeks to preserve the sovereignist line, with no credibility. The blunt violation of the European borders' regime and of Ukraine's territorial integrity do not match the frail justification. The Russian perception of insecurity in the face of the enlargements of the European Union, and in particular NATO, which feed the narrative of Russian exclusion from European security issues, as mentioned, has lost credibility in the

current context. Russia has become the biggest threat to European security, and the biggest threat to Ukraine. As a Russian colleague commented recently, this invasion is synonymous of a strong anti-Russian campaign, translating the many contradictions present in discourse. The objective of recognition of international prestige and status, and of affirmation as a great power in a multipolar system, shattered. Russia acts as a pariah state, outside the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, it violates once again the territorial integrity of a state and the borders' regime in Europe. Russian militarized revisionism collided with the very goals that Moscow had set: it brought Western cohesion, reinforced NATO's presence on the Organization's eastern borders, and had a strong negative impact on Russia's desire for status recognition. If Russia prepared since 2014 for greater isolationism that would allow it to resist western sanctions and a greater policy of international isolation, it does not seem that this same Russia prepared for the (potentially) unanticipated consequences that resulted from this invasion. Resistance on the ground in Ukraine, packages of western sanctions as never seen before, internal protest movements in Russia, despite a highly repressive context. Russia has reinforced its geopolitical isolation and will emerge weakened from this war without justification.

[1] - Parts of this piece draw on an opinion article from *Público*, 16 March 2022.

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