



Jazmín Duarte Sckell

The free authoritarian men: analysis of political discourses of far-right leaders in Latin America

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The free authoritarian men

analysis of political discourses of far-right leaders in Latin America

Jazmín Duarte Sckell

ABSTRACT

In the context of the global rise of the far right and the construction of moral panics in which gender plays a central role, this paper analyses this phenomenon through the lens of masculinity in Latin America. To this end, the political discourses of four far-right leaders from different countries are examined as a sample. The analysis finds that the model of masculinity and the values proposed within the far-right discourses analysed promote a regressive and authoritarian masculinity. This model is advanced through pseudo-liberal narratives in which the idea of freedom is used to justify stricter gender hierarchies, and the use of violence as a means to achieve security. A common narrative is observable across the cases analysed. This narrative connects elements of religious conservatism and with misogynistic discourse associated with the online manosphere.

1 INTRODUCTION: MASCULINITY AS KEY COMPONENT OF THE AUTHORITARIANISM OF THE NEW FAR-RIGHT

In recent years, there has been a deterioration of democracy in different parts of the world, most notably in the global north (Mudde 2007; Rovira Kaltwasser 2023; Tzeiman and Martuscelli 2024). This process has been described as resulting from the rise of the far right, or radical populist right (Mudde 2019). Although these actors adopt an illiberal rhetoric, they participate in elections to gain access to government. Their rhetoric can be summarised as mobilisation through antagonism, promoting intolerance towards difference, and promoting the restriction of rights for those who

are not recognised as citizens. In broad terms, the far right can be defined as “political space whose actors base their ideology and action on the notion of inequality among human beings, combining the supremacy of a particular nation, ‘race’ or ‘civilization’ with ambitions for an authoritarian transformation of values and styles of government” (Fielitz and Laloire 2016: 17–18). In order to advance these ideas, a common feature of these groups – which contributed to their description as populist – is their discourse and policies against immigrants, racialised people, LGBTQ+ individuals, and women.

Although the cases that attract the greatest attention are the ones that have achieved electoral success, it is important to emphasise that this phenomenon is not confined to political parties. Indeed it is the result of a broader network of actors made up of media organisations, influencers, think tanks, and NGOs. This phenomenon can be traced through complex intersections, multi-scalar mobilisations, and transnational networks. Owing to this characteristic, and to the wide range of arguments that form their communication, these networks have been described as a “Frankenstein’s Hydra” (Corrêa et al. 2023). Among their different discursive strategies, a recurring feature is that it is appealing to gender through moral panic¹ – often expressed through fear based cam-

¹ A mediatic discourse about “a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests” (Cohen 1972:9).

paigns – against the alleged dangers of migrant men, or the perceived perversion of homosexuality, trans people, or feminists (Kováts and Põim 2015; Kuhar and Paternotte 2017; Cabezas Hernández and Vega Solis 2023).

Prominent leaders associated with these movements have exhibited a strongman style of political leadership (Löffler et al. 2020). They have also sought to amass large followings of male sympathisers and militants, to the extent that these organisations have even been dubbed “Männerparteien” (Mudde 2007). This phenomenon has been described as “authoritarian-masculinist identity politics” (Sauer/Penz 2023). Although women² are also targeted by far-right groups, a specific form of moral panic is directed towards men (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017). This is particularly evident in the framing of “men as victims of a hostile, totalitarian force (i.e. feminism) serve primarily to dispense an affect of besiegement that is to be felt intimately in one’s sexual habits and corporeal states” (Strick 2020: 218), and claims, particularly in the contexts of Europe and the USA, about the possibility of men being “replaced” by non-white or non-Christian immigrant men (Strick, 2020).

Given these features a bipolar strategy for reaching masculine publics can be identified. On the one hand, men are represented as victims who have been emasculated by feminism or by the progressive left. While on the other, they are called upon to take their place as virile and authoritarian males (Cabezas Hernández and Vega Solis 2023: 24). This strategy became particularly evident during the radicalisation of men throughout the election campaigns of Donald Trump. To

2 There is also the case of many female leaders that are part of the European far right-wing: “This “feminization” strategy or strategy of “de-demonization” (Mayer 2013: 161) allows right-wing parties to counter or relativize the image of being men’s parties and to attract female voters. Nevertheless, these female leaders struggle with a masculinist party structure and thus have to perform their own form of political masculinity” (Sauer 2019:175).

start, mobilisation was limited to more obscure online spaces, such as the “Red Pill” community on Reddit (Nagle 2017; Dignam and Rohlinger 2019; Ging 2019). Currently, however, these ideas are being broadcast through more generic mainstream podcasts (Tahsin 2024). These online spaces form part of what is known as the “manosphere”. The manosphere can be defined as any digital space designed specifically for a male audience and that seeks to promote misogynistic ideas or advance a pessimistic and unequal view of society with the scope of legitimising male dominance (Duar-te Sckell 2025). Online radicalisation through illiberal and sexist discourse has been characteristic of the US “alternative-right” (Alt-right³), which is closely connected with Trump’s Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement.

It is possible to observe similar trends in the electoral campaigns and governments of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil (Kalil et al. 2021; de Souza Ramos 2023; Regagnan and Souto, 2024) and, most recently, Javier Milei in Argentina (Fernandez Guida 2021; Vázquez 2023; Calvo et al. 2024). This goes hand in hand with the strengthening of the fundamentalist anti-gender religious movements in the region. Several studies analyse these regressive gender politics, including anti-gender campaigns in Latin America and the rise of fundamentalism (Torres Santana 2020; Corrêa 2020; Faur and Viveros Vígoya 2020; Biroli and Caminotti, 2020; Corrêa 2022; Bárcenas Barajas, 2022), as well as the effect of neoliberal politics on women’s rights (Pedroza 2009; Schild 2016; Cavallero and Gago 2021). Although some authors have identified masculinity as a key aspect of reactionary mobilisation

3 I follow the definition of Hermansson et. al. (2020: 2): “We define the International “Alternative Right” as an international set of groups and individuals, operating primarily online though with offline outlets, whose core belief is that “white identity” is under attack from pro-multicultural and liberal elites and so called “social justice warriors” (SJWs) who allegedly use “political correctness” to undermine Western civilisation and the rights of white males. Put simply, the “Alternative Right” is a far right, anti-globalist grouping that offers a radical “alternative” to traditional/establishment conservatism”.

– understood as part of a politics of resentment generated by the effects of economic neoliberalism, not only in material terms, but also in relation to the perceived dethronement of white masculinity (Kimmel 2017; Brown 2019; Ashcraft, 2022; Sauer and Penz 2023) – there remains limited focus on how these dynamics take shape within Latin America as a region.

As a territory of both powerful feminist movements (Gago 2019; Díaz 2024) and by the widespread and well-known phenomenon of “machismo” (Mirandé 1997; Fuller 2012), Latin America provides a context in which discourses on masculinity in political propaganda mobilise meanings that are already present in local imaginaries. In light of the presence of far-right governments in Latin America and the spread of anti-gender religious movements across the region, this research examines in greater detail the dynamics through which masculinity is deployed within in current authoritarian reactionary discourse. To this end, it analyses the speeches and political propaganda of four current far-right leaders from different countries: Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Javier Milei in Argentina, Nayib Bukele in El Salvador, and José Antonio Kast in Chile.

First, ideas of masculinity and gender associated with the liberal script are summarised, emphasising the importance of gender norms for democratic constructions. Second, the communicational importance of the far right is explored in depth, both in its strategies of polarisation and in its construction of a common sense related to gender. Lastly, recurrent narratives linked to masculinity in the selected cases are analysed in order to draw brief conclusions on the matter. It can be seen that despite their differences, all these leaders – Jair Bolsonaro, Javier Milei, Nayib Bukele, and José Antonio Kast – belong to the reactionary international far right and maintain a discourse that promotes an authoritarian masculine subjectivity based on the reinstatement of

stricter heteronormative gender hierarchies and the exercise of power based on unrestricted freedom of the masculine citizen.

2 MASCULINITY AND GENDER IN THE LIBERAL SCRIPT: QUESTIONING DEMOCRACY THROUGH REGRESSIVE MASCULINITY

This section briefly reviews the overall concept of masculinity within the liberal script, its democratic features, and how it began to be questioned historically and in the context of current reactionary processes. As the gender historian J.W. Scott (1986) pointed out, gender is a primary way of signifying and articulating relations of power. Masculinity and power have been historically connected through the construction of the political subject as one associated with biological males, and power claims have been connected to masculine performances throughout history (Connell 2005; Curdileone 2005; Starck and Sauer 2014). At the same time, it is important to note that the specificity of masculinity is determined by the context and social norms of a given space. Masculinity can therefore be understood as a configuration of practice within a system of gender relations that manifests in meanings, actions, social positions, and bodily, personal, and cultural experience (Connell 2005: 84). As a type of behaviour, it is not necessarily restricted to men, but can be exercised by any gender as an embodied performance (Butler 1990; Halberstam 1998).

The social practices and subjectivity of a community are expressed in social and cultural discourses, which can be understood as social narratives (Bublitz 2019). Discourses about gender do “not only refer to gender but also wider relations of power, including race, religion, class and nationality, as well as a discourse concerning authority and democracy” (Corrêa and Patternote 2023). In the history of the expansion of human rights, liberal discourse is presented as the narrative that

outlined the normative and co-original (*gleichursprünglich*) justification for individual and collective self-determination (Börzel and Risse 2023). Nevertheless, in defining the citizen subject, it portrayed this subject as male, white, and a property owner (Pateman 1988; Philips 1991; Zürn and Gerschewski 2021). In terms of gender, this implied the maintenance of a gender binary that established the public-private divide and the breadwinner-housewife marriage arrangement identified by Pateman (1988) as the “sexual contract”.

The feminist movement has challenged these strict classifications, allowing for the expansion of the liberal script (Börzel and Risse 2023), and of the rights in practice (Ferree 2020; Lerch et al. 2021). In the case of Latin America, liberalism implied the extension of rights that were nevertheless inaccessible to women for a long time, especially if they were married. The concept of separate domestic and public spheres remained unevenly distributed across the region until the mid-20th century, with women gaining access to civil and political rights gradually (Molyneux 2001). Similarly, the bourgeois ideal of the traditional family did not always correspond to reality in much of the region due to the widespread prevalence of female-headed households (Chant 2002). Despite this, motherhood functioned as a source of symbolic power and assumed an ambivalent role in both conservative and liberal discourse when advocating for and securing rights (Molyneux 2001). Despite these tensions, liberal thinking remains a central element of Latin American feminist reasoning, enabling both democratisation and the questioning of authoritarian male leadership, such as that embodied by strongmen or “*caudillos*” (Hamill 1992; Molyneux 2001).

As with gender, the extension of civil, political, and social rights to the majority according to other social classifications plays a decisive role in the democratisation of liberal democracy itself. “The increasingly explicit critique of gender binaries

and essentialised, permanent identities is a historical product of the multigenerational struggle to unmask and unmake the masculine norm hidden in the liberal individual” (Ferree 2020: 904). This democratisation of the liberal script has nevertheless been contested from inside the liberal umbrella (Menzel 2023), particularly through the convergence of neoconservative and neoliberal thinking (Moyn 2023). The point of convergence has been the critique of all matters social – especially social spending – and the emphasis placed on morality, advocating a return to traditional “natural” gender roles, concentrating care only inside the family (Cooper 2017; Brown 2019). From this same line of thought support emerged for a feminist backlash, anti-abortion discourse, and the mobilisation of a new political Christian right in the 1980s (Faludi 1991; Hartman 2015; Cooper 2017).

Given the importance of the United States alt-right in the expansion of the contemporary far right, many ideological elements originating from the “new right” of the 1980s can be noted, the most apparent of these is the conservative Christian ideal of the family, which is now combined with anti-social elements associated with far-right masculinity on the internet. The “alpha male” model outlined in the manosphere can be broadly characterised by a rejection of feminine traits, fixation on one’s own sexual attractiveness, and an expression of strength, both through physical musculature and through warlike symbolism. Being “feminine” is, in most cases, associated with acceptance of a more democratic social order (Kimmel 2017: 194).

“Becoming uncucked or red-pilled, then, is recognised as a process through which one must “unlearn” liberal beliefs in order to fully re-masculinise the self, and resist the sinister social engineering of internal enemies. Different factions of the alt-right network will place different emphases on what these liberal beliefs are: for instance,

r/theredpill and Return of Kings will primarily understand such a process as involving the rejection of feminist principles and a commitment to the subjugation of women through sexual strategy. Social alt-right hubs such as r/altright, 4chan's/pol/ and blogs like American Renaissance, whilst not diametrically opposed to this ideology, focus more strongly on the re-assertion of racist doctrine and fascist governance" (Kelly 2017: 75).

Similar to fascism, this new masculinity of the far right appears to gain strength by emphasising strict gender hierarchies and martial masculinity. In that sense, it opposes liberal masculinity, which has been defined as an hegemonic conception after 1945, attached to parliamentary democracies and non-violence (Orozco 2004). Liberal masculinity, as part of the sketch of the ideal liberal subject, is also connected to confidence in reason, expressed through the support for science and education as a way of advancing social progress (Zürn and Gerschewski 2021). Post-truth narratives, conspiracy theories, elitist and nihilistic ideas of society, and the positioning of religious beliefs as indisputable, erode this model of progressive subjectivity. The current trend appears to question the democratic element of liberal democracy, where gender becomes a point of contention. These features of a more democratic masculinity are being challenged within the realm of the far-right and redpill ideology, which equates democracy with a "feminization of society" (Copland 2023) and advocates abandoning liberal ideas in order to reclaim "true" masculinity (Kimmel 2017; Kelly 2017).

One striking element that the discourse of the contemporary far right shares with liberal discourse is the value of freedom. This is particularly notable in the popularisation of libertarianism as a political discourse among various far-right supporters, especially young men (Hermansson et al. 2020; Vázquez 2023). As Michael Zürn and Johannes Gerschewski (2021) pointed out, a key

characteristic of the liberal script is freedom, albeit restricted by rights of others. What is observable in far right discourse today is an unrestricted conception of freedom, accompanied by the possibility of unrestrained claims to impose one's will on others (Gago and Giorgi 2023; Sidel 2023) who do not meet the basic requirements of established citizenship. This unrestricted citizen is equated with a nihilist masculine subject, which Wendy Brown (2019) associates with an authoritarian form of "liberal" time. From an authoritarian neoliberal perspective, it is questioned whether racialised, colonised, feminised, and impoverished subjects are equal to white, male property owners, and for that reason, fit for democratic self-government (Sidel 2023: 12). In terms of masculinity, this implies a subjectivity that is closed to difference and inclined towards a hierarchical society.

3 CULTURE WARS AND GENDER: SOCIAL MEDIA AND RADICALISATION AGAINST "CULTURAL MARXISM"

The popularity of the far right is linked to their communication strategies, in which social media plays a central role in terms of outreach scale, message personalisation, and speed of dissemination (Warwick and Lewis 2017; Fielitz and Thurston 2019; Forti 2021). The strategy of polarisation through the creation of fear campaigns, scapegoating and populist "us vs. them" dichotomies has become a very common trend among various far right groups (Wodak 2015; Fielitz and Thurston 2019). The use of strong language, "political incorrectness" and conspiracy theories sets the tone of their communication. George Newth et al. (2025: 823) point out that the salient element of this discourse is a politics of exclusion through authoritarian "solutions" to social problems, advocating for a reintroduction of "moral" or "traditional" values, and the adoption of punitive approaches.

During Bolsonaro's election campaign, the contemporary far right's first successful expression in Latin America, significant polarisation of the media was achieved, primarily through WhatsApp and Facebook, which shifted the focus from an economic divide of rich versus poor, present during the Lula and Rousseff administrations, to a moral divide of conservative versus leftist (Goldstein 2021). Javier Milei first gained popularity as a social media influencer, transitioning then into being a guest on popular television shows, where his economic expertise and his rageful oratory style struck a chord with the public who began to recognise him as a political figure. His success reflects and results from the broader ecosystem of reactionary and extremist influencers that form part of Latin American cyberspace (Kessler et al. 2022). Both the Bolsonaro and Milei governments maintained their support online through digital militias and trolls (Alves 2025; Taccetta 2025). In Bolsonaro's case were called, these were referred to as the "Hate Cabinet" (*Gabinete do Ódio*) and were sanctioned by the Federal Supreme Court as an orchestrated digital disinformation network (Guimarães 2020). The dissemination and mobilisation of anti-gender campaigns has also relied heavily on social media, in addition to spaces connected to conservative Christian churches (Rosseau 2021).

Drawing on the concept of "cultural Marxism", several far right activists present their interventions on social media and in traditional media, as a "cultural war" (Saferstein 2023; Saidel 2024). The idea of a cultural battle represents a right-wing reinterpretation of Gramsci's notion of building hegemony, as well as taking inspiration from the French *Nouvelle Droite* (Hermanson et al. 2020; Saidel 2024). This conception is also reminiscent of the "culture wars" of the 1970s and 1980s in the United States, when issues related to sexuality and secularism became politicised and were widely debated (Hunter 1991; Hartman 2015). These discourses, centred around a

perceived dangerous enemy, have contributed to the mainstreaming of discriminatory ideas and to the shifting of boundaries regarding what is and is not considered acceptable in liberal democracies (Wodak 2015; Krzyżanowski 2020; Katsambekis 2023). The normalisation of hate speech has been described as a pedagogy of cruelty, promoting low thresholds of empathy, a sense of isolation, and increasingly utilitarian relationships between individuals (Segato 2018: 11).

In line with cultural debates of the past, gender occupies a central place in the creation of moral panics and the mobilisation of a conservative sentiment. Within the frameworks of "cultural Marxism", progressivism, or "wokeism", multiple narratives have been established to position feminists, the LGBTQ+ community, racialised individuals, and left leaning people as enemies. On the one hand, misogyny and antifeminism within the manosphere, particularly in its most extreme red pill form, have established a conspiracy theory "that men are oppressed by a feminized society and that women have the upper hand in everything, from dating and sex life to workplace recruitment and custody battles. The red pill has become in recent years the reference of choice for virtually every far-right and conspiratorial movement around the world to describe their awakening to various hidden truths" (Simmons 2025: 5).

On the other hand, drawing on the concept of "gender ideology", religious fundamentalisms have mobilised since the 2010s across different parts of the globe to criminalise sex education, LGBTQ+ rights, and sexual and reproductive rights. The concept of gender ideology was developed by Catholic conservatism in response to the advance of institutional feminism at the Beijing and Cairo United Nations conferences in the 1990s (Morán Faundes 2023). While initially aimed at opposing sexual and reproductive rights, it is now employed by actors beyond the Catholic sphere to challenge women's rights and diversity more broadly.

However, the largest mobilisation group remains religious, operating through a Catholic-Evangelical alliance encompassing more reactionary sectors (Biroli et al. 2020). “The Vatican’s conservative shift cannot be dissociated from the concomitant revitalisation and trans nationalisation of American evangelical fundamentalism, nor from the vernacular evangelical churches in Latin America” (Corrêa and Ximenes 2022: 79).

The campaign against gender in Latin America has been closely linked to the demands for intervention in public education due to the “socialist/Marxist” nature of the issue. In Brazil, the movement “*Escola sem Partido*” (non-partisan schools) began in 2004 to monitor progressive teachers and incorporated the concept of “gender ideology” in 2014. This movement was inspired by the “No Indoctrination” group in the United States. It exemplifies the scope of this culture war, which is also reflected in the replication of similar campaigns and messages by different far-right groups across the world. It is therefore important to emphasise the transnational nature of this issue, supported by collaborations by think tanks and the use of various gatherings they as platforms to reach activists and disseminate their messages (Abrahamsen et al. 2024). Major umbrella organisations that fund different think tanks include The Atlas Network and the Edmund Burke Foundation (Forti 2021; Giménez 2024). Since 2017, the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) of the Republican Party in the USA, has become an international meeting place for the extreme right (Löhning 2025). In Latin America, CPAC has been held in Brazil in 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2024, in Mexico in 2022 and 2024, and in Argentina in 2024. Other important spaces for the Spanish-speaking far-right are the Madrid Forum organised by Vox, the Ibero-American Congress for Life and Family held since 2017, and the group *HazteOír* with its partner campaign platform CitizenGo (Forti 2021).

4 METHODOLOGY

Building upon previous literature and analysis on the far-right governments in Latin America and the scholarly contributions to the anti-gender mobilisations in the region, this research looks at these phenomena from a perspective of masculinity, aiming to contribute to understanding of gendered explanations and effects of current events. To explore this aspect in greater detail, the political discourse and propaganda of far-right leaders were analysed to gain a deeper understanding of the ideas regarding gender and specifically the model of masculinity that this movement is promoting. Some of the guiding questions for this research were: What are the common meanings associated with masculinity shared across far-right discourses? What models and values of masculinity are presented in far-right discourse? How does this differ from liberal and democratic models of masculinity? What is the role and function of gender in shaping contemporary right-wing movements?

Given the current importance of social media and platforms, the analysis prioritised discourses present in these spaces, considering their role as the arena for political discussions. Furthermore, media spaces have become the preferred sites for generating polarisation and disseminating extremist rhetoric, making them a necessary framework for analysing the far-right. Among the different digital media platforms, YouTube was selected primarily due to the accessibility of published data and, secondly, for being a highly popular and widely used platform in Latin America, with usage continuing to grow (Duque 2025). It is also important to note that although each platform has its own dynamics and types of content, audiovisual production is transversal across different spaces, so similar content is often reproduced, with minor alterations, across multiple channels and platforms from the same creators.

For the purposes of this study, namely to analyse ideas and content generated by the far-right, it was useful to focus on YouTube content due to its function as a repository or archive (Gehl 2009), which facilitated access to political content or propaganda explicitly linked to a given group or individual politician. Compared with other platforms, such as Twitter/X or Instagram, where images and memes are shared, content analysed in this research primarily consists of videos and spoken discourse, which at were transcribed and analysed as text. In addition to the content of the speech itself, the manner in which the actors delivered their speeches was also considered part of the analysis. A qualitative discourse analysis was conducted to identify common narratives and key ideas across the different texts, linking them to the conditions of discourse production in the contemporary political context, thereby providing a snapshot of the ideological construction of gender by the current far-right.

Four accounts belonging to politicians associated with the far-right were selected for a discourse analysis of the political content they produce and publish. From the broader spectrum of the current far-right, which is extensive, four male figures associated with traditional party politics were chosen as an entry point into far-right thinking. These figures were selected due to their clear leadership positions within their respective parties, having served as presidents, former presidents, or presidential candidates in their countries. In the cases of Brazil and Argentina, these politicians are the most representative of the far-right movements in their countries. Analysing different accounts provides a way of thinking about the gender constructs proposed by the far-right in a transnational and context-specific manner. Identifying these ideas allows for a deeper understanding of the type of society and politics that these movements promote, as well the connections between the particular discourses of individual leaders and other spaces of reactionary content production related to gender.

Table 1: Selected accounts for analysis

Politician	Career Trajectory	YouTube handle	Active since	Subscribers	Total Videos	Views overall
Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil - Partido Social Liberal/ Partido Liberal)	Military man. Councilman of Rio de Janeiro (1989-1991) Congressman (1991-2018) Elected president (2019-2023)	@jbolsonaro	2009	6.600.000	4156	376.165.745
Javier Milei (Argentina - La Libertad Avanza)	Economist. Influencer (2015-2021) Congressman (2021-2023) Elected president (2023-today)	@elpelucamilei	2020	2.000.000	1320	830.651.344
Nayib Bukele (El Salvador - Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional / Nuevas Ideas)	Businessman Marketing. Mayor Nuevo Cuscatlán (2012-2015) Mayor San Salvador (2015-2018) Elected president (2019-today)	@nayibbukele	2009	534.000	429	47.937.808
José Antonio Kast (Chile - Unión Demócrata Independiente/Partido Republicano)	Lawyer. Councilman of Bunin: (1996-2000) Congressman: (2002-2018) Presidential candidate (2021/ current elections 2025)	@joseantonio-kastoficial	2016	146.800	1000	68.400.100

Data was collected using YouTube Data Tools (<https://ytdt.digitalmethods.net/>), which enables the compilation of video lists from accounts and importing metadata such as tags, likes, and views⁴. From the videos available until May 2025, 100 videos were selected from each account, constructing a corpus of analysis based on their relevance to gender and masculinity, as indicated by titles, tags, and view counts. The first filter involved a keyword search, using terms such as: gender, women, men, feminism, family, security, crime, rights, gay, left, Marxism, religion, freedom. A second filter involved a deliberate selection process, in which each pre-selected video was reviewed to assess its relevance to the topic at hand, with the aim of obtaining a sample of up to 100 videos per channel. The corpus comprised transcribed content directly relevant to the research questions.

5 MASCULINITY OF THE CURRENT FAR-RIGHT: “LONG LIVE FREEDOM, DAMN IT!”

Far-right visibility has been on the rise in Latin America, since the election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018. This reaction appears to be part of a new trend following the end of the progressive pink tide of the early 2000s, which highlighted the economic crisis and corruption scandals, and increased rejection of the major political parties (Rovira Kaltwasser 2023). The far-right capitalised on this context, led by male figures who promote certain values and gender models in connection with the polarising discourse that brought them to power. To examine the masculine discourse of the far-right, this research considers the official

political messages of four male leaders representing the contemporary far-right today. Jair Bolsonaro from Brazil, Javier Milei from Argentina, Nayib Bukele from El Salvador, and José Antonio Kast from Chile.

All of these men currently hold or have held the presidency of their countries, except for Kast, who, at the time of writing, is not in office after winning the 2025 presidential elections. Although their individual political trajectories differ, common threads connect them today through their affiliation with the global far-right, which is mostly visible in 1) their conservative discourse and the use of moral panics in their communication, and 2) their transnational alignment with other authoritarian governments, especially the MAGA movement in the USA. This connection with the USA is particularly powerful and observable, for instance, in their participation in the CPAC organised by the Republican Party. It is also reflected in their adoption of similar narratives and symbols whilst campaigning, such as the “MAGA” slogan or the use of the “don’t tread on me” Gadsden flags from the libertarian movement. In addition, a strong alliance exists with the Spanish-speaking right-wing party Vox, with whom they also interact on their respective channels. Ties are further visible in the analysed videos, including speeches given by these leaders at global right-wing conferences and podcast interviews with right-wing influencers from other countries. Connections between the leaders themselves are also evident, as they frequently reference one another and produce collaborative videos.

Another common thread among the four test cases, particularly those already in office, is their effective use of social media for campaigning. Through social media, they are able to present themselves as newcomers and outsiders, opposing corrupt political elites, regardless of their actual connections to institutional mainstream politics. In this way, they position themselves as

⁴ The retrieved data corresponds to channel updates up to May 2025, taking as a starting point the starting date for each channel. The official accounts of the politicians were selected from those available on the chosen platform. However, in the case of Javier Milei, who has several accounts, the most popular one, which is still active and publishing content related to his presidency, was selected. The other politicians did not have several official accounts on this platform.

distinct and morally upright figures from the outset. In the cases of Bolsonaro and Milei, mainstream media, such as television programmes, also contributed to their national-level visibility (Goldstein 2020a; Firpo 2023). While Kast and Bukele participate in the far-right movement on many levels, Bolsonaro and Milei remain the most representative politicians of the global far-right due to their symbolism, track record, and rhetoric.

The rise to power of this right-wing movement in Latin America can be traced to Jair Bolsonaro's election victory in 2018, although anti-rights and anti-gay rhetoric had intensified since 2016. Having served as a congressman for many years across various political groups, Bolsonaro gained media visibility through his accusations of an alleged "gay kit" designed to "homosexualise" children in schools, and later for opposing the Workers' Party (PT) and supporting the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff (Rennó 2023). Amid an economic crisis and public concern over corruption within the Workers' Party, Bolsonaro successfully positioned himself as a supposed "outsider" to the Brazilian political system. He also held considerable political appeal for reactionary sectors, being a former military officer and an open defender of Brazil's last military dictatorship (1964-1984).

The figure who most clearly constituted an outsider to party politics was the economist and influencer Javier Milei, who gained prominence as a commentator on television programmes and social media, rising to visibility 2018 (Firpo 2023). He founded his own party, "*La Libertad Avanza*" (Freedom Advances), in 2021, through which he was elected to Congress. He subsequently ran for president in the 2023 elections, which he won, defeating both the conventional right-wing party "*Propuesta Republicana*" (Republican Proposal), aligned with "*Juntos por el Cambio*" (Together for Change), and the party of Kirchnerista Peronism, represented by the alliance "*Unión por la Patria*" (Union for the Fatherland). As a public figure, Milei

positioned himself primarily as an expert in economics and, from there, popularised the libertarian discourse with which he identifies.

Nayib Bukele, the media-savvy Salvadoran politician renowned for having "ended" maras gang violence, founded his own party, "*Nuevas Ideas*" (New Ideas), and ran for president in 2019, remaining in power ever since under a contested and extended national state of emergency. Having previously served as mayor – first of Nuevo Cuscatlán and then of San Salvador – as part of the leftist "*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional*" (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front - FMLN), he decided to run for president as an independent candidate. His election ended the two-party system of "*Alianza Republicana Nacionalista*" (ARENA) and FMLN, which had prevailed since the end of the civil war in the early 1990s. Ideologically, Bukele does not appear to have a very strong attachment to all core beliefs of the far-right: "his position has shifted over the years, from a progressive politician to a leader without ideology to a Trump-style conservative" (Reyes and Trejo 2024 citing Wolf 2024: 309).

In a similar manner to Bukele, Chilean politician José Antonio Kast also founded his own party, the "*Partido Republicano*" (Republican Party) in 2019. After running in 2021, he is once again seeking to position himself as the next president, presenting an alternative to both the traditional right and the current left-wing government in power. Kast, who had a long political career within the "Union Demócrata Independiente" (Democratic Independent Union), decided to establish his own party following the massive mobilisation in Chile known as the "social outbreak" of October 2019, which challenged the country's institutional and economic arrangements since the end of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1989 (Santander 2024). This event appears to have been a turning point for the then-moderate politician, contributing to his radicalisation (Kast, 24 August 2024).

Through a close examination of the discourse from a gender-analysis perspective in the content of the videos on his YouTube account, the following common narratives were identified, describing an ideal model and values of masculinity: an ideal image as “heterosexual, religious breadwinners”, which conveys a positive image as moral and family-oriented men, contrasted with the valorisation of violence, aggression, and of “unrestricted” freedom as a sign of masculine strength and power. These narratives align with a conservative and neoliberal vision that shapes much of the far-right.

5.1 HETEROSEXUAL RELIGIOUS BREADWINNERS

Connected to the discourse against gender, there is a clear fixation in marking and making the heterosexuality of the leaders visible as a moral and political value. This is expressed first through repeated discourse against homosexuality and LGBTQ+ rights, which is common to all four of the examined leaders, though communicated most aggressively by Bolsonaro and Milei. An illustrative example is the recognition given to Milei by Bolsonaro in a meeting in 2024, when Bolsonaro presented him with a medal bearing the inscription “*Imbrochável, imorrível e incomível*” (never going limp in a sexual encounter, immortal, never taking a passive role in a sexual encounter) (LPO 2024).

Milei was not initially positioned against homosexuality or LGBTQ+ rights. In his early public statements he adopted a more “liberal” stance, affirming that such matters were private and that “liberalism means the unrestricted respect towards the life plans of the other” (El Peluca Milei, 13 May 2022). Nevertheless, he adopted a more explicit position against these rights following his alliance with fundamentalist anti-gender militants (Saferstein and Goldentul 2022). This shift became particularly clear in a 2025 speech at the

World Economic Forum in Davos, where he compared homosexuality with paedophilia, which sparked large protests in Argentina (Clacso 2025). Earlier, Milei had positioned himself as a “liberal without moral hang-ups”, but social polarisation surrounding discussions on the legalisation of abortion led him to adopt a more conservative stance and an “opportunistic use of gender ideology” (Vommaro 2023). This shift also resulted in the approval of policies against transgender people, including the prohibition of gender transition for those under the age of 18 (Paletta 2025).

Conversely, Bolsonaro built much of his public persona, as he first gained media attention, on campaigning against the allegedly “gay kit” that he denounced in Congress during the government of Dilma Rousseff, warning parents about the supposed “homosexualisation” of their children (Bolsonaro, September 6, 2011; Bolsonaro, October 16, 2012; Bolsonaro, October 1, 2018). In his interventions in Congress and on social media, Bolsonaro explicitly claimed that certain activities and books that were attempting to “deconstruct heterosexuality” and that the traditional family would be corrupted by homosexual Marxists (Bolsonaro, 26 November 2010; Bolsonaro, 9 September 2015). This discourse was connected to the campaign “Non-partisans Schools”, through which teachers expressing progressive views in their classrooms began to be monitored and harassed. In contrast to Milei, Bolsonaro consistently maintained openly homophobic positions, including making statements such as “better to have a gay son die in an accident” (El Perfil 2018).

Kast has been also critical of same-sex marriage and abortion (Lara 2017), and was very vocal in opposing the law recognising trans identity (Kast, 23 January 23 2018). He has built his career as a conservative politician closely connected to religious groups, and has more recently moved toward more radical positions through his alignment with the far-right (Montes 2023). Bukele

is the leader among these four who previously held more progressive positions on gender issues during his political career. Nevertheless, in the past year he has adopted a far more opportunistic position, similar to the far-right anti-gender stances. He has recently banned gender-inclusive language in schools and has introduced measures to make it more difficult for gay and trans people to access rights (El Faro 2024).

The second most effective way of expressing and communicating the mandate of heterosexuality is by presenting these leaders as part of a heteronormative, monogamous families. As is common among many politicians in heteronormative societies, they appear publicly with their wives and children. Beyond signalling reliability to their audience, they emphasise their role as heads of household, aligning this image with their pro-family discourse and support for patriarchal social order (Bolsonaro, 14 June 2019; Bukele, 12 July 2024; Kast, 1 January 2025).

These images are connected to the broader anti-gender discourse these leaders promote and their consistent opposition to feminist policies (Iglesias 2024, alongside arguments that women should be associated with a more domestic and subordinate role (Bolsonaro, 25 November 2010; Kast, 8 March 2018; El Peluca Milei, 5 June 2023). The discourse against abortion (Kast, 10 May 2017; Bolsonaro, 7 August 2018; Bukele, 20 September 2018; El Peluca Milei, 13 May 2022), and advocacy for homeschooling (Bolsonaro, 8 March 2019; Dillon 2025), are also partly connected to the idea of restoring the patriarchal family and parental authority. Both Bolsonaro and Kast built a significant part of their campaigns around the defence of the “traditional family” (Cowley Forner and Bezerra Soares 2023; Bolsonaro, 15 June 2016; Kast, 21 September 2017). This positioning has served as an argument for shifting focus from “women’s rights” to “family rights”, as illustrated by the renaming of the women’s ministry in Brazil to “Ministry for

Women, Family and Human Rights” (Biroli et al. 2024) and the downgrading of the women’s ministry in Argentina (Clarín 2023).

As an example of the importance placed on displaying adherence to this masculine role is the case of Javier Milei during his presidential campaign. At that time, his romantic involvement with an actress was quickly made public (El Peluca Milei, 25 August 2023; El Peluca Milei Shorts, 30 September 2023). Due to his conservative positions on abortion and criticism of feminism, Milei was questioned regarding his own conformity to the conservative heterosexual norm, as he was widely known for being a unmarried man who referred to his dogs as his children (La Capital 2023). Paradoxically, the opposition used this point, along with other eccentric aspects of Milei’s public persona, to portray their own presidential candidate as the “normal guy” (VOS 2023). In some respects, Milei unintentionally displayed characteristics associated with a more queer and non-normative image rather than a conventional conservative model, even stating at one point he was opposed to marriage (El Peluca Milei, 18 July 2021). Presenting Milei as at least having a girlfriend therefore helped reinforce his image as a role model for young libertarian men who sought to avoid being labelled “virgos” (Blender 2024) or involuntary celibates: “Liberal in economic matters, inactive in sexual matters” (Campos 2021: 15).

Closely linked to this conservative discourse, and serving as a form of moral legitimation to directed at their religious constituencies, all four of the examined leaders have publicly used religious symbols, ranging from Christian to Jewish references, and have relied on alliances with religious institutions to keep their power. This narrative element is connected to the conservative repoliticisation of the Christian religious sphere (Vaggione 2005). Brazil provides a clear example, where Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal churches gained significant political influence, with some of the more

fundamentalist groups supporting Bolsonaro (Biroli 2020; Goldstein 2024). In response to this support, Bolsonaro openly described his administration as a “Christian government” (Bolsonaro, 16 September 2020), stating that: “the state is secular, but I, we are all Christians, we respect the majority, we respect the minority, but Brazil is a Christian country” (Bolsonaro, 14 June 2019: 4:00-4:23).

Kast has been an outspoken conservative Catholic throughout his political career (Díaz 2023), and, due to his conservative positions, has well established connections with evangelical groups (Kast, 29 September 2020). Which was particularly evident when the *Partido Republicano* formed a coalition with the *Partido Conservador Cristiano*, which was called the Christian Social Front, during Kast’s presidential candidacy in 2021 (Partido Republicano, 2021). Javier Milei has also supported religious groups, although his discourse has been more closely connected with Judaism and the state of Israel (El Peluca Milei, 3 December 2024; El Peluca Milei, 26 January 2024; El Peluca Milei, 6 February 2024), and he has at times adopted a more messianic tone in his public statements (Alonso 2025). Bukele was not strongly positioned as a Christian figure during most of his political career, but has increasingly made religious symbols visible during his speeches (Bukele, 28 October 2022), and has received official backing from Pentecostal sectors since coming to power (Goldstein 2020b). This moral discourse centred on family and religion contrasts with the violent rhetoric that these leaders also advance.

5.2 VIOLENCE AS MASCULINE STRENGTH

Contrasting this image of morality, violence also emerges as a common element between among the four examined politicians. On the one hand, it is possible to identify an aggressive style of communication that relies on irreverence and displays of strength. On the other hand, specific policies

and measures reflect a punitive approach to security and society more broadly, justified in the name of restoring “order”. Connected to strategies associated by the United States Alt-Right, the rejection of “political correctness” has served as a justification for more aggressive expressions, as well as for direct hate speech that has been contributed to the mainstreaming of discriminatory ideas associated with the far-right. All four leaders explicitly reject political correctness (Bolsonaro, 30 August 2018; El Peluca Milei, 4 June 2022; Bukele, 13 February 2022; Kast, 2 January 2025), despite differences in their individual rhetorical styles.

In the cases of Bolsonaro and Milei, the communication style has been directly aggressive in addition to the violence of the content of their speeches (Bolsonaro, 27 September 2016; Bolsonaro, 26 December 2017; El Peluca Milei, 4 August 2022). This approach proved successful, as it resonated with widespread feelings of anger, resentment, and fear among the public during periods of political and economic upheaval in their respective campaigns (Vasilopoulos et al. 2019; Marcus 2022). More than a communication strategy, this style has become a personal signature, signalling power and domination as integral aspects of their leadership.

In the case of Milei, this aggressive style has been a key feature allowing him to approach to a certain definition of hegemonic masculinity, despite his general characteristics being at odds with the typical “alpha” alt-right masculine prototype. This aspect has been consistently exploited by official propaganda on his YouTube channel as “rage bait” (Oxford 2025). Even when the discourse explicitly violent, the headlines frequently frame him as “dominating”, “taming”, “humiliating”, “destroying” his counterparts (e.g. El Peluca Milei, 21 October 2021; El Peluca Milei, 4 June 2022; El Peluca Milei, 14 November 2022). Many of these “others” are described as “feminist”, “lefty”, or “degenerate”

(e.g. El Peluca Milei, 21 October 2021; El Peluca Milei, 4 June 2022; El Peluca Milei, 4 February 2025; El Peluca Milei, 10 April 2025), or are journalists and politicians who are dehumanised through derogatory adjectives. Through this violent rhetoric, Milei exemplifies the slogan that made him famous: “I did not come to lead lambs, but to awaken lions” (Stefanoni 2023). This stands in contrast with his repeated assertion that “liberalism is the unrestricted respect for the life project of others based on the principle of non-aggression” (e.g. El Peluca Milei, 21 July 2023; El Peluca Milei, 3 February 2025).

In the cases of Kast and Bukele, the level of aggressive delivery in their communications is lower, as they generally speak in a calmer and more measured manner. Nevertheless, they still replicate the same patterns of hate speech as their fellow far-right politicians, participating in the alt-right’s political incorrectness discourse. In Kast’s case, it is possible to observe an ambivalent approach to the expression of violence. While he shares many of the ideological positions of the far-right, he distinguishes himself rhetorically from other leaders with whom he is often compared: “People always compare me to other presidents: you’re a Bukele, you’re a Milei, you’re a Bolsonaro. No, I have a manner of treating people with dignity at all times. They may make caricatures, but I would never speak ill of a migrant, even if they are undocumented. Yes, what I would say is: in your condition, you cannot be here” (Kast, 22 January 2025: 16:10-16:32).

However, in terms of security, both Kast and Nayib Bukele advocate for an iron fist approach. “The Bukele Model” gained international attention as synonymous with confronting gang violence (Meléndez-Sánchez and Vergara 2024). The expression of masculinity and the exercise of violence are most clearly conveyed through the widespread circulation of images depicting degrading treatment and torture of prisoners in El

Salvador’s maximum-security prisons. Bukele’s main strength lies in his rhetoric on controlling gang violence of the maras and exposing the mistreatment of prisoners, promoting a crackdown approach as a model of success in addressing insecurity and criminal activity (e.g. Bukele, 30 June 2022; Bukele, 2 February 2023; Bukele, 24 February 2023; Bukele, 15 March 2023; Bukele, 11 May 2023; Bukele, 28 March 2025).

The images go beyond mere propaganda, as El Salvador has experienced an authoritarian drift, with a state of siege in place for more than three years, leading to a situation in which gang violence has in many ways been replaced by state violence (Amnesty International 2024). The abuse of power is also evident in the forced dismissal of court ministers in order to alter the constitution and secure the continuity of government, as well as in the strengthening of the armed forces’ role (Cristancho Cuesta and Rivera Andrade 2021). Bukele’s YouTube channel further contains extensive content promoting and glorifying police and military forces, frequently showing him alongside military personnel (Bukele, 24 September 2019; Bukele, 5 August 2020; Bukele, 7 April 2022; Bukele, 7 May 2024).

In the case of Kast, as he moved from a more moderate conservative stance towards a further right-wing position, he has similarly used the issue of insecurity to propose a more hard line approach to immigration and drug trafficking (Kast, 9 March 2018; Kast, 9 June 2020; Kast, 28 September 2020; Kast, 31 August 2021; Kast, 27 September 2021; Kast, 24 April 2023). During his successful 2025 campaign, Kast places strong emphasis on his anti-immigration stance, and he has argued that illegal migration is a destruction strategy from the left disguised as solidarity (Kast, 30 May 2025). His current campaign has been based primarily on increasing security against drug trafficking and immigration, which has attributed to socialist Venezuela. He has also been very vocal

in his defence of the police forces, especially as victims of the social protests of 2019 (Kast, 27 April 2025). When discussing his security approach for Chile, Kast has expressed appreciation for aspects of “The Bukele Model” (Kast, 19 December 2024).

The Bolsonaro and Milei governments also defend the police forces, positioning them as “the good guys” (Jair Bolsonaro, 8 September 2016) and expressing “those who do it, pay for it” (El Peluca Milei, 17 February 2025). Under Milei’s government, controls and measures against social protests were increased (Lorca 2025). Bolsonaro’s government was particularly supportive of the military, with Bolsonaro himself being a former military officer and appointing military personnel to head various ministries. Bolsonaro even honoured the memory of a torturer from Brazil’s military dictatorship. On this point, there is also convergence with Milei’s governments and Kast’s political line of vindicating or minimising the previous military dictatorships (Noticias DW 2025; Muñoz Tamayo 2025). Whereas Bukele, conversely, criticises his country’s past governments after the end of the civil war, linking them to social unrest and corruption, and claims to be the “coolest dictator” of the present day.

5.3 UNRESTRICTED “FREEDOM” AS A MASCULINE TRAIT

Lastly, an especially prominent common discourse among all of these leaders is the use of the concept of freedom to justify their beliefs and their intervention in society. This concept draws on a liberal standpoint, arguing in favour of the individual freedom a subject might have to decide about their own life. Nevertheless, it is not used in a liberal manner. First, it is applied to justify the imposition of one’s own values without restriction. Second, it refers to men as the primary subjects who can, and should, exercise autonomy and decision-making. Despite the different starting points in their advocacy for freedom,

this discourse translates, in terms of gender, into a model of masculinity in which autonomy prevails over other values.

The case that most clearly illustrates this use of the concept of “freedom” is the new transnational far-right symbol Javier Milei, who has built his entire discourse, and as well as his party “La Libertad Avanza” (“Freedom Advances”), around this concept. An economist by profession, a supporter of the Austrian School, and a self-proclaimed anarcho-capitalist and libertarian, Milei has constructed his political career on the idea expanding “freedom,” primarily in opposition to the existence of the state (e.g. El Peluca Milei, 28 August 2021; El Peluca Milei, 22 July 2023). With the security measures imposed during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the worsening economic situation in Argentina, the idea of freedom resonated more strongly with the Argentines who later elected him president. Milei championed the idea of unrestricted freedom, including through his political incorrectness and symbols such as the “chainsaw”, which he used to represent plans to cut social spending and reduce the role of the state (El Peluca Milei, 15 September 2023; El Peluca Milei, 20 February 2025).

In a similar manner, Kast frequently presents freedom as the opposite of state control and contrasts it with socialism, often using Venezuela as an example of an authoritarian model (Kast, 6 September 2024). He has also stated that one of the reasons for creating the *Partido Republicano* was to “defend freedom” and avoid shifting to the left, as he claims other right-wing parties have done (Kast, 24 August 2024). This position aligns with the defence of the neoliberal minimal state that Chile has maintained since the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Much of Kast’s discourse and campaign messaging echoes this idea of freedom (Kast, 10 December 2021; Kast, 22 September 2021). On the one hand, this idea is mobilised against illegal immigration and drug trafficking, while on

the other, it is used in reference to the onset of the social outbreak of 2019, which challenged the economic arrangements of the Chilean state (Kast, 13 January 2021).

Bolsonaro has also echoed elements of the rhetoric on economic freedom through his adherence to neoliberal policies during his time in government, frequently emphasising the importance of the reduction of the state and the strengthening of individual freedoms. Nevertheless, his most significant framing of freedom is that of religious freedom, directed at his Christian constituencies and articulated through narratives of threat associated with anti-gender campaigns. Bolsonaro was particularly vocal on this issue, repeatedly invoking the slogan “God, Fatherland, Family, Freedom” (Bolsonaro, 6 May 2024). This formulation expresses a perceived license to enforce the other values promoted in this discourse, regardless of existing social differences. In this sense, it represents an update of the earlier motto used by the Brazilian integralists of the 1930s of “God, Fatherland, Family”, now combined with a neoliberal view (*Resumen Latinoamericano* 2021). In the same vein, Kast defines freedom as protecting children from what he describes as “ideological education” by the state, which he associates with “gender ideology” (Kast, 27 June 2019).

In a manner similar to his Brazilian, Argentine, and Chilean counterparts, Bukele refers to freedom in opposition to what he describes as “globalists” who are criticise his governing methods. As he stated in a speech, “they say globalism comes to die at CPAC, I’m here to tell you that in El Salvador it’s already dead” (Bukele, 24 February 2024: 1:48-2:09). Nevertheless, his discourse on freedom focuses primarily on security (Bukele, 29 September 2024), justifying certain forms of state coercion as necessary in exchange for public safety. In contrast to his colleagues on the global far-right, Bukele does emphasise shrinking the state or cutting public spending. Instead he has engaged with

contemporary business trends, including cryptocurrencies (Bukele, 24 November 2021). Milei is likewise connected to the world of cryptocurrency and has been associated with controversy in this arena, most notably through the “Libra” cryptocurrency fraud (Jaureguy 2025).

Overall, whether directed against the state, human rights, or multilateralism, when these leaders speak about freedom they refer to the possibility of action without restriction as a right. They argue in favour of their own freedom to implement the policies they consider appropriate according to their conservative and neoliberal views. As male leaders, they also reflect expectations traditionally placed on men, which are reinforced by the sexist understanding of sexuality promoted in their discourse. For this reason, freedom functions as a common value linking conservative and neoliberal thinking. It becomes a justification for imposing a particular narrow vision of family, religion, and economy on the rest of society (Brown 2023).

6 CONCLUSION

It is possible to identify several converging points in the discourse of the far-right analysed in terms of gender. First, there is the reinforcement of an unequal gender hierarchy, with men positioned as head of the household and compulsory heterosexuality presented as “tradition”. Second, aggression and violence are justified as legitimate forms of politics, and also as expressions of masculinity. Third, naturalisation of unrestricted freedom serving to justify both the imposition of an imaginary ideal gender order and the use of violence by the state. Although the leaders analysed come from different political backgrounds and traditions, the current context marked by the rise of the far-right has produced a gradual convergence in their positions. They increasingly align with a form of authoritarian neoliberalism, combining extreme liberal positions on economic issues with conservative positions on moral issues.

From this perspective, the ideal subject is hyper-individualised, and the state and its intervention are considered undesirable for the freedom of this subject. This citizen subject is clearly imagined as male and heterosexual, as evidenced by the persistent opposition to women's rights to autonomy and to the existence of the LGBTQ+ community. The demands of these groups, like any claims that highlight structural inequalities, are equated with state intervention and therefore framed as forms of authoritarianism. There is a significant contradiction and in promoting larger families and traditional gender roles while simultaneously rejecting the conditions necessary to sustain them, including a stronger state and stable employment. The promise that men can embody the figure of the male provider – more closely associated with the Fordist model of industrial capitalism (Salzinger 2016) – is now largely unattainable. This promise functions not only as a deception, but also as a disciplinary and sedative mechanism.

The violent discourse of political incorrectness serves not only to normalise violence, but also operates as a pedagogy of cruelty, as Segato argues, which pushes men towards a command to be violent as part of masculine expectations. When political models begin to adopt these forms, they also normalise violence within mainstream politics, eroding the foundations of democratic dialogue and the humanisation of adversaries, who are instead treated as enemies. This violence is reinforced by the idea of unrestricted freedom, which, in the face of security threats, legitimises more aggressive and anti-democratic interventions. At the same time, this reproduces a cycle of unrestricted freedom which applies only to certain individuals, in this case the leaders in power, to whom others must submit. This dynamic resembles the logic of patriarchal submission in exchange for protection (Vega Solís 2023: 319).

In this context of the regression of rights associated with the liberal script and the normalisation of an unequal society, the appeal to men seeks to mobilise a subjectivity based on privilege or entitlement. This represents “a patriarchal reaction that seeks to legitimize and rebuild an order that restores the power of men and fathers (political fathers, pastoral fathers, family fathers, etc.), naturalizing it and positioning it at the top of an intersection of hierarchies of gender, sexuality, race, and age” (Cabezas Fernández and Vega Solís 2023: 24). Within this context, moral discourse becomes compensatory in the face of the dismantling of the state and the curtailment of rights (Biroli 2017). Faced with the use of freedom and tradition to justify violent imposition, it becomes necessary to redefine the concept of freedom (Brown 2019) and to enable horizons of egalitarian social orders.

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