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THE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS OF GLOBAL RIGHT-WING POPULISM

RYAN JEFFREY DARBY  
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Reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Raymond John Watkins  
Professor of English  
Thesis Supervisor

Jonathan Abel  
Professor of Comparative Literature  
Honors Adviser

\* Electronic approvals are on file.

## ABSTRACT

With the elections of divisive leaders such as Donald Trump in the U.S., Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, and Boris Johnson in the United Kingdom, the past decade of global politics can be characterized by the ideology of right-wing populism. Right-wing populism is a political ideology that combines social and economic conservatism with anti-elitist rhetoric. In many countries across the world, this ideology has resonated deeply with working class populations who have felt left behind by the globalizing and diversifying nature of the modern world. This ideology also resonates with those who feel that their country needs a law and order leader to save the state from crime and corruption. While right-wing populism may not sound inherently harmful on the surface, the countries that have adopted this ideology have seen devastating human rights abuses. This is because populist leaders tend to blame the problems of a country's majority population on minorities and other vulnerable populations, putting these populations at risk of hate crimes and discrimination through policy.

This thesis will argue that the implementation of right-wing populism causes significant human rights abuses in the countries where it is present. Through comparative analysis of the U.S., Brazil, the U.K., and the Philippines, this thesis will survey the human rights abuses caused by right-wing populism in each country and analyze the conditions for why voters felt the need to support this ideology. In the conclusion, the analysis shows that right-wing populism causes significant human rights abuses because the ideology itself is based upon the blame and exclusion of outgroups. The analysis also finds that the perceived need for and implementation of this ideology contrasts between countries in the Global North (U.S. and U.K.) versus countries in the Global South (Brazil and the Philippines).

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## **Introduction**

The twenty-first century has seen a number of traumatic worldwide events within its first two decades. Between the rise of global terrorism, economic recessions, and instances of high-level political corruption, people throughout the world have come to live in fear of threats seemingly outside of their control. For many, these fears have become realities of harsh financial setbacks, job losses, and widespread crime. Meanwhile the governments in place to protect them from violence and assist them in economic hardships are not reliably doing so, and instead are largely focusing on maintaining the status quo and catering to foreign alliances. In the age of globalization, the average working-class voter feels abandoned by modern politics and longs for a more nationally focused alternative. This alternative has taken form throughout the world in right wing populism.

Right-wing populism is a political ideology that combines social and economic conservatism with candid, anti-elitist populist rhetoric. Right-wing populist politicians are known for avoiding political correctness, and openly expressing controversial standpoints regardless of the backlash they may receive. This ideology focuses heavily on fostering domestic advancement and catering to the concerns of the majority. While this ideology at its surface may not seem harmful, the implementation of right-wing populist policies often come at the expense of minority groups and vulnerable populations. In appealing to the majority population of its country, a right-wing populist will suggest that the rights and mere presence of minorities impede the success of the majority population. The political establishment is accused of catering to minority populations with undeserved special protections, and thereby ignoring the concerns

and wellbeing of the majority. This works in the populist's advantage, as it secures the votes it needs from the majority to retain federal power. However, it leaves minority populations vulnerable to a variety of potentially life-threatening human rights abuses.

This thesis argues that the spread of right-wing populism throughout the globe contributes to an increase in human rights abuses against vulnerable populations in the countries where it is present. It will also explore how a country's political history impacts the implementation of this ideology. Through comparative analysis, the countries of the United States, Brazil, the United Kingdom, and the Philippines will all be studied for the types of human rights abuses that are occurring as a result of right-wing populism, and what social and economic circumstances in each country that allowed for this ideology to thrive. It's crucial to note that right wing populism is a political ideology, and not a political platform. Meaning, that the implementation of this policy and the populations that are negatively impacted as result are expected to vary depending on a country's social and political history and circumstances. Each chapter of this thesis will focus on a particular country's modern political history, as well as the human rights abuses that have occurred there since right-wing populism became prevalent. This is done with the aim of establishing a connection between the perceived need for right wing populism throughout the globe as well as conveying the direct impact that this ideology has on human rights.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The United States**

#### **Introduction**

For many, the world seemed to stop on the night of November 6th, 2016. It was on that night when much of the earth anxiously watched as business mogul and reality TV star Donald Trump beat out former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to be the 45th President of the United States. Although Trump trailed Clinton by nearly three million votes, the electoral college ultimately declared him the winner.<sup>1</sup> Trump's victory came as a surprise, not only because of his lack of political experience, but because of the nature of his campaign. His path to the Presidency was largely defined by nativist rhetoric, putting America first, and making it "Great Again." He espoused nativist concepts such as walling off the Mexican-American border, banning Muslims from entering the country, and challenging corrupt politicians in Washington. In essence, Trump epitomized exactly what it means to be a right-wing populist. Though a billionaire himself, he successfully appealed to white, working class Americans who felt left behind by the political establishment in the modern age. However, rather than genuinely helping this population, he exploited their struggles to secure votes, and directed their anger toward minority populations. As a result, the Trump Presidency has been notoriously damaging to human rights. As President of the United States, Trump has unique power and influence not only over the U.S., but throughout the world. Domestically, his rhetoric has deepened the partisan divide, further ignited racial tensions, and encouraged prejudice. Globally, he has shifted the tone of politics in the twenty-first century away from long established traditions and expectations. In addition, Trump's

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<sup>1</sup> "2016 Election Results." CNN, November 6, 2016. <https://www.cnn.com/election/2016/results>.



policies have put countless lives in jeopardy. His policies regarding LGBT people have left millions subjected to discrimination and have encouraged violence against trans women, his rhetoric regarding Muslims has exacerbated the problem of Islamophobia, and most notably, his strong stance against illegal immigration has torn apart countless families and led to the detention of thousands of undocumented children. In short, the detrimental impact of Trump's presidency will be felt by generations of marginalized people.

### **The Rise of President Donald Trump**

In the beginning of his candidacy in June 2015, many political analysts, voters, and fellow Republicans did not take Trump's presidential run seriously. A July 2015 Gallup poll found that only 41% of Republican voters considered him a serious candidate for President, and only 31% of Americans across political parties viewed him favorably.<sup>2</sup> His campaign announcement speech mainly focused on immigration, claiming that Mexico is sending drugs, crime, and rapists to the United States,<sup>3</sup> and he "will build a great, great wall on the southern border, and [he] will make Mexico pay for that wall."<sup>4</sup> Trump also boasted about his wealth, emphasizing that he will finance his own campaign and not rely on the money of special interests.<sup>5</sup> Overall, it was a stark contrast to the political jargon that most Americans have become accustomed to in the modern age. It's not common for a serious presidential candidate to so blatantly denounce an entire race of people in the name of border security. Even if a politician

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<sup>2</sup> Dugan, Andrew. "As in 1999, Most Do Not See Trump as Serious Candidate." Gallup.com. Gallup, July 14, 2015. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/184115/1999-not-trump-serious-candidate.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> Sims, Cliff. "The 10 Most Amazing Quotes from Trump's Presidential Campaign Announcement." Yellowhammer News, June 17, 2015. <https://yellowhammernews.com/the-10-most-amazing-quotes-from-trumps-presidential-campaign-announcement/>.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

wished to express a similar sentiment, they certainly wouldn't use terminology such as "criminal" and "rapist" to describe Mexican people. Additionally, it's not common for a politician to talk about their own massive wealth as a reason why voters should consider them. Months later, Trump announced that he would implement a ban on Muslims entering the United States if he were to become President.<sup>6</sup> From the onslaught of his campaign, he was targeting minority populations with racist and potentially life-threatening policies.

There were a number of factors that contributed to Trump's ultimate Presidential victory. The most obvious one being that even as Trump plowed through the Republican primaries, the Democratic establishment refused to view him as a serious threat. Poll after poll continually predicted that Clinton would win the Presidency.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the Clinton campaign became overconfident, and started neglecting to conduct an efficient campaign. Between the Presidential convention and the election, Trump visited the key states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin a total of 133 times.<sup>8</sup> Clinton only visited these states 87 times and did not visit the state of Wisconsin at all.<sup>9</sup> Trump went on to win all of these states, flipping many of them from the previous election.<sup>10</sup> Clinton's primary challenger, Bernie Sanders, also undoubtedly hurt her chances at the Presidential win. While she faced Trump, a right-wing populist, in the general election, she encountered a left-wing populist in Sanders during the primary. Left wing populism is different than right wing populism as it targets a more inclusive base, and blames the struggles of the working class on wealthy corporate elites rather than

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<sup>6</sup> Diamond, Jeremy. "Donald Trump: Ban All Muslim Travel to U.S. - CNNPolitics." CNN. Cable News Network, December 8, 2015. <https://www.cnn.com/2015/12/07/politics/donald-trump-muslim-ban-immigration/index.html>.

<sup>7</sup> "2016 Election Forecast." FiveThirtyEight, November 8, 2016. <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2016-election-forecast/>.

<sup>8</sup> Terrell, Anthony. "Trump Out-Campaigned Clinton by 50 Percent in Key Battleground States in Final Stretch."

NBCNews.com. NBCUniversal News Group, November 13, 2016. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/trump-out-campaigned-clinton-50-percent-key-battlegrounds-final-100-n683116>.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

<sup>10</sup> "2016 Election Results"

minority populations. However, these ideologies are similar in that they appeal to those who feel abandoned by modern politics. While the specifics of his proposed policies were incredibly different, Sanders espoused many of the same themes that Trump ran on in his campaign. Neither the Sanders or the Trump campaign accepted money from special interests or major donors, and both ran to appeal to the economic frustrations of the working class. They both called out and actively challenged the political establishment and vowed to end a longstanding rigged economic system. During the Democratic Primary, Sanders criticized Clinton on many of the issues that Trump would later come after her for in the general election.

Both Sanders and Trump ran on anti-establishment sentiments, which is another primary reason why Trump proved successful in the general election. For many, Donald Trump represented an outside alternative to the politicians who have made a career out of working in Washington. In the beginning of the Republican Primary, Jeb Bush, the younger brother of former President George W. Bush was anticipated to be a strong contender in the election due to his familial ties to two former Presidents. However, Bush quickly became one of Trump's biggest targets for the same reasons why pundits believed that he would be a frontrunner. During one debate, Trump was faced with a booing crowd after challenging Bush. In response, Trump said, "That's all of his donors and special interests out there," and continued by saying "And the reason they're not loving me is I don't want their money ... I don't need their money and I'm the only one up here that can say that."<sup>11</sup> While Democratic and Republican politicians alike scoffed at this type of behavior, it resonated with voters as Trump won 41 of the 56 primary contests and 58% of the delegates in a race with several competitors.<sup>12</sup> According to polling data, the group

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<sup>11</sup> Swan, Jonathan. "Trump Booed for Saying Audience Full of 'Donors and Special Interests!'" *The Hill*, (February 7, 2016). <https://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/presidential-races/donald-trump-gop-debate-booed-jeb-bush-donors-special-interests>.

<sup>12</sup> "2016 Election Center." CNN, Accessed April 13, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/election/2016/primaries/parties/republican>.

that was most likely to vote for Trump was non-college educated white men.<sup>13</sup> As a populist candidate, it's unsurprising that Trump did well with these groups. His infamous slogan "Make America Great Again," implies a longing for a time when America was "great," when white men were at the apex of society and it was comparatively very easy to find a job without a college degree. In essence, America was once a white man's country. However, following a black President with a potential woman President on the horizon, a national emphasis on environmental protections, and closures of many traditional manufacturing jobs, this demographic of people felt threatened and Trump capitalized on that. Trump appealed to this key demographic of non-college educated white men by promising to put "America First," and bring manufacturing jobs back to American soil.<sup>14</sup> He continued to appeal to this group by emphasizing that the reason that their jobs are being taken is due to the alleged mass numbers of illegal immigrants coming into the country and stealing their jobs from them, which as Human Rights Watch Director Kenneth Roth points out, is completely false.<sup>15</sup> As a result of these combined narratives, Trump simultaneously invokes hope in the hearts of many Americans who have felt downtrodden and left behind by modern politics, and also ignites strong sentiments of xenophobia, racism, and hatred among those who believe that foreign migrants are the cause for the modern poor white man's economic strife.

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<sup>13</sup> "An Examination of the 2016 Electorate, Based on Validated Voters." Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy, (January 7, 2020). <https://www.people-press.org/2018/08/09/an-examination-of-the-2016-electorate-based-on-validated-voters/>.

<sup>14</sup> Politi, Daniel. "Donald Trump in Phoenix: Mexicans Are 'Taking Our Jobs' and 'Killing Us.'" *Slate Magazine*. Slate, (July 12, 2015). <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/07/donald-trump-in-phoenix-mexicans-are-taking-our-jobs-and-killing-us.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Roth, Kenneth. "World Report: The Dangerous Rise of Populism: Global Attacks on Human Rights Values." Human Rights Watch, (January 19, 2017). <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/dangerous-rise-of-populism>.

## Muslims

Islamophobia is by no means a new concept in American politics, nor is it a concept exclusive to right wing populism. Anti-Muslim sentiments have become a regular theme in American politics since 9/11 and the dawn of the Iraq War. Throughout the 2016 Republican Primary, many Islamophobic comments came to the forefront, such as Texas Senator Ted Cruz stating his desire to carpet bomb the middle east to deal with ISIS, remarking that he wants to find out “if sand can glow in the dark,”<sup>16</sup> despite the fact that carpet bombing the region would likely lead to countless civilian deaths.<sup>17</sup> Although Islamophobia has been a prevalent force in U.S. politics, past Presidents have typically maintained a certain decorum when discussing issues in the Middle East. However, Trump brings with him a new attitude, policies, and rhetoric to the Presidency, one that has heightened religious tensions and discrimination-based violence domestically.

President Trump has made ethnocentrism and disdain for outgroups the backbone of his platform. A series of surveys conducted from May 2016 to June 2017 found that anti-Muslim sentiment is a strong and significant predictor of supporting Trump among American voters.<sup>18</sup> This correlation is no coincidence, as Trump has implemented numerous policies that have harmed the livelihoods of both domestic Muslims and refugees alike. A week after he assumed office, Trump signed an executive order titled “Protecting the Nation from Terrorist Attacks by Foreign Nations,” this order banned the issuance of visas to nationals from seven predominantly

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<sup>16</sup> Neal, Deonna D. “Ted Cruz Wanted to ‘Carpet Bomb’ the Islamic State. Does He Understand Today’s Military?” *The Washington Post*, (March 18, 2016). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/18/ted-cruz-wanted-to-carpet-bomb-the-islamic-state-does-he-understand-todays-military/>.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

<sup>18</sup> Lajevardi, Nazita, and Marisa Abrajano. “How Negative Sentiment toward Muslim Americans Predicts Support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election.” *The Journal of Politics* 81, no. 1 (December 11, 2018): 296–302. <https://doi.org/10.1086/700001>.

Muslim countries, cut the number of accepted refugees for the upcoming year from 110,000 to 50,000, and indefinitely halted the acceptance of Syrian refugees.<sup>19</sup> This order was a deliberate attempt to restrict Muslims from entering the United States. Despite the fact that other areas of the world experience terrorism, the Trump administration only included nations with predominantly Muslim populations in the list of restricted nations (though, Venezuela and North Korea were later added to the ban after courts found the ban discriminatory). Notably, the only exception to this order was that migrants would be accepted only if they were Christians seeking refuge from persecution.<sup>20</sup> Saudi Arabia was among one of the countries that was noticeably missing from Trump's list, despite the fact that the 9/11 hijackers originated from this nation. This decision was most likely due to the United States' dependence on oil from the region, signaling that Muslims are a dangerous people unless they serve an economically beneficial purpose.

This sentiment is heavily echoed in Section 4 of the act, wherein vague screening measures were implemented to assess migrants.<sup>21</sup> These measures included assessing how an individual will contribute to the nation, and whether or not they pose a "risk."<sup>22</sup> This vague terminology provided by the Trump administration allows for the possibility of multiple dimensions of discrimination by immigration officials. Not only does the "risk" aspect allow for religious discrimination against Muslims from any area of the world when trying to immigrate to the United States, but the focus on "contributions to the nation," also allows for economic discrimination and turning away of poorer migrants. This order has torn apart families, as those

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<sup>19</sup> "President Trump's Executive Orders on Immigration and Refugees." The Center for Migration Studies of New York (CMS), (March 6, 2020). <https://cmsny.org/trumps-executive-orders-immigration-refugees/>.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*

with relatives in these countries can no longer have them visit. In addition, Trump's scaling back of refugees also poses harmful impacts to human rights. Although he claims this is a security measure, out of the over 800,000 refugees that have been admitted into the United States since 9/11, not a single one has committed an act of domestic terrorism.<sup>23</sup> Since the issuance of this order, the Trump administration has continually decreased the number of accepted refugees each year, with the 2020 refugee limit being slashed to 18,000.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, the Obama Administration admitted 85,000 refugees in 2016.<sup>25</sup> Trump has also given states the option to opt out of the refugee program, with Texas becoming the first state to do so in January 2020.<sup>26</sup> By putting forth this order at the dawn of his Presidency, Trump conveyed his lack of concern for some of the world's most vulnerable people and has likely cost thousands of savable lives.

Trump's rhetoric policies have not only impacted Muslims seeking to enter the country, but domestic Muslims as well. In the ten days following his announcement regarding the Muslim Ban in 2015, hate crimes against Muslim-Americans spiked 23%.<sup>27</sup> Another study found that religion-based hate crimes against Muslims tend to spike in the days following a Trump tweet expressing anti-Muslim sentiments.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Power, Samantha. "Samantha Power's Remarks on 'The Global Refugee Crisis: Overcoming Fears and Spurring Action,' at the U.S. Institute of Peace." U.S. Mission on International Organizations in Geneva, (June 29, 2016). <https://geneva.usmission.gov/2016/06/30/samantha-powers-remarks-on-the-global-refugee-crisis-overcoming-fears-and-spurring-action-at-the-u-s-institute-of-peace/>.

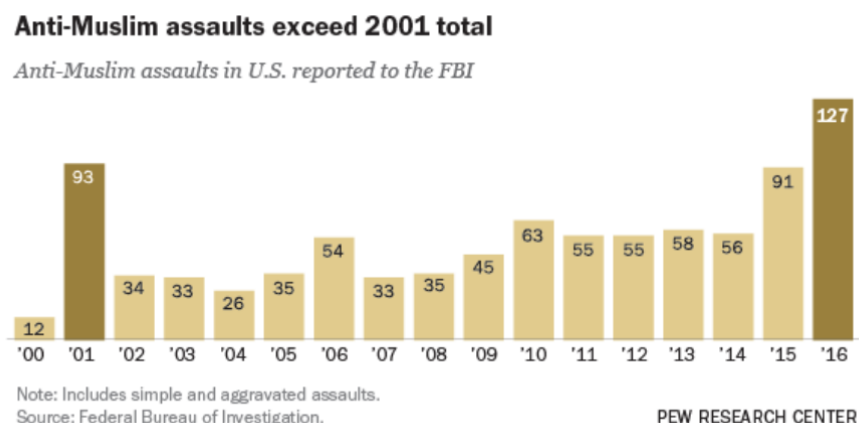
<sup>24</sup> "Texas Governor to Reject New Refugees under Trump Order." *BBC*, January 11, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-51072198>.

<sup>25</sup> Krogstad, Jens Manuel. "Key Facts about Refugees to the U.S." Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, (October 7, 2019). <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/07/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/>.

<sup>26</sup> "Texas Governor to Reject New Refugees under Trump Order."

<sup>27</sup> Kunzelman, Michael. "Trump Words Linked to More Hate Crime? Some Experts Think So." *AP NEWS*. (August 7, 2019). <https://apnews.com/7d0949974b1648a2bb592cab1f85aa16>.

<sup>28</sup> Müller, Karsten and Carlo Schwarz, From Hashtag to Hate Crime: Twitter and Anti-Minority Sentiment (October 31, 2019). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3149103> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3149103>



**Figure 1: Anti-Muslim Assaults in the U.S., FBI<sup>29</sup>**

Figure 1 includes data provided by the FBI. The figure shows that the number of anti-Muslim hate crimes rose substantially in 2015, the same year that Donald Trump announces his campaign for President along with his intent to put the Muslim ban in place. These crimes proceed to skyrocket in 2016 when Trump won the Presidency, reaching levels that significantly exceed those in 2001 following the September 11th attacks. The cause of this can very likely be attributed to Trump's populist rhetoric regarding Muslims and refugees. Trump has suggested extreme measures regarding Muslims outside of his ban, such as surveilling mosques and creating a database of American Muslims to keep track of them.<sup>30</sup> These types of proposals frame Muslim Americans as a violent enemy that needs to be watched and restricted, and this sentiment resonates particularly with Trump's base of working-class white Americans. This base often comes from homogenous backgrounds, or from areas with a very small or nonexistent Muslim populations. Therefore, it's easy for Trump to frame Muslims as a national threat to his

<sup>29</sup> Kishi, Katayoun. "Assaults against Muslims in U.S. Surpass 2001 Level." Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, (November 15, 2017). <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/15/assaults-against-muslims-in-u-s-surpass-2001-level/>.

<sup>30</sup> Krieg, Gregory. "Trump's History of Anti-Muslim Rhetoric Hits Dangerous New Low." *CNN*, (November 30, 2017). <https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/29/politics/donald-trump-muslim-attacks/index.html>.



supporters who already feel greatly threatened by the diversification of America. As a result of feeling threatened by this supposed enemy, these people lash out the form of religion-based hate crimes. Donald Trump has made it evident that the role of President holds significant weight when it comes to shaping the minds of the American people. Not only have Trump's policies impacted Muslims seeking refuge in the U.S., he has also made it so Muslims who have lived in this country for years have to live in fear of persecution and violence for as long as he is in office.

### **LGBT Rights**

In 2015, LGBT people in America experienced arguably their largest human rights victory to date. The Supreme Court case *Obergefell vs. Hodges* determined that same-sex marriage was Constitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment, and therefore must be legally recognized in all fifty states. This was a momentous moment for this population whose rights have been largely overlooked since the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s that left thousands of LGBT Americans dead due to the lack of government response. This court ruling made many LGBT Americans feel that the fight for equality and humane treatment was finally won, however a new fight was only just beginning.

Even before Donald Trump became his President of the United States, he had made his oppositional stance on LGBT rights abundantly clear. In 2013, two years before he even entered the race for President, he spoke at the Family Leadership Summit about the importance of preserving traditional marriage.<sup>31</sup> During his Presidential campaign, he continued this sentiment

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<sup>31</sup> "Donald Trump." GLAAD, (April 9, 2020). <https://www.glaad.org/tap/donald-trump>.

by vowing to select Supreme Court Justices who would be open to overturning the same-sex marriage decision, and by promoting the First Amendment Defense Act, which would protect businesses that discriminate against LGBT people in the name of religion.<sup>32</sup> He also selected Governor Mike Pence, a public supporter of conversion therapy for LGBT people, as his running mate. As a result, Trump effectively warded off LGBT voters, as he only received 13% of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual vote in the general election.<sup>33</sup> Given Trump's past involving multiple infidelities and allegations of sexual assault, it came as a surprise to many that he was all of a sudden leaning so far into religion-based policies and far right stances on LGBT people during his campaign.<sup>34</sup> This shift in image was a key political strategy for Trump, and one that directly fit in with his populist agenda. By espousing these ideologies, he was playing into the interests of the white working-class Americans whose votes he sought after. By surrounding himself with faith advisers and claiming that the Bible was his favorite book (despite not being able to name his favorite verse),<sup>35</sup> he was aiming to appeal to this large population of voters who felt unseen in much of American politics. Trump then couples this image with populist rhetoric and actions concerning LGBT people, posing them as an enemy of religious freedom and traditional American society. Ultimately this strategy worked, as Trump won 81% of the Evangelical-Protestant vote in the 2016 election, the highest a Presidential candidate has received by this population in the twenty-first century.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, this support has proved to be unwavering

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid*

<sup>33</sup> Kiley, Jocelyn, and Shiva Maniam. "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Voters Remain Solidly Democratic." Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, (October 25, 2016). <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/25/lesbian-gay-and-bisexual-voters-remain-a-solidly-democratic-bloc/>.

<sup>34</sup> Keneally, Meghan. "List of Trump's Accusers and Their Allegations of Sexual Misconduct." *ABC News*, (June 25, 2019). <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/list-trumps-accusers-allegations-sexual-misconduct/story?id=51956410>.

<sup>35</sup> Moran, Lee. "Trump Gets Stumped By Easy Bible Questions In Newly Resurfaced Video." *HuffPost*, (August 23, 2019).

<sup>36</sup> Martínez, Jessica, and Gregory A. Smith. "How the Faithful Voted: A Preliminary 2016 Analysis." Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, (November 9, 2016). <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/>.

since his election. In March 2020 it was found that 81% of Evangelicals believe that Donald Trump is actively fighting for their beliefs,<sup>37</sup> conveying that he will maintain this base of voters going into the 2020 election and that his ostracization of LGBT Americans will not end anytime soon.

Immediately following Donald Trump's inauguration, the White House and State Department websites were updated and had removed all mentions of the LGBT community and LGBT history.<sup>38</sup> This proved to be an early signal of an administration that would go on to ignore the concerns and the struggles that this population faces. The Trump Administration has taken a rather interesting approach to its suppression of LGBT Rights. Trump does not bemoan the LGBT community in rallies and speeches in the same way he does with undocumented immigrants and Muslims. Rather, his targeting of this group is much more covert, and is typically framed under the guise of "free speech" or "religious freedom." For example, in May 2019 the Department of Health and Human Services determined that the prohibition against sex-based discrimination in medical practices does not extend to transgender people, and that medical professionals reserve the right to turn transgender patients away on religious grounds.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, medical providers now reserve the right to turn away transgender people seeking medical care. This population is already incredibly vulnerable, as transgender women of color face a life expectancy of only 35 years in the United States.<sup>40</sup> However, the policies put forth by the Trump administration only add to the stigma of being LGBT and put this population at an

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<sup>37</sup> "Americans' Views on Trump, Religion and Politics." Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, (March 17, 2020). <https://www.pewforum.org/2020/03/12/white-evangelicals-see-trump-as-fighting-for-their-beliefs-though-many-have-mixed-feelings-about-his-personal-conduct/>.

<sup>38</sup> "Donald Trump"

<sup>39</sup> Diamond, Dan and Rachana Pradhan, "Trump Administration Rolls Back Health Care Protections for LGBTQ Patients," *Politico*, (May 24, 2019), <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/05/24/transgender-patients-protections-health-care-1343005>

<sup>40</sup> Arheghan, Ose. "A Beginner's Guide to Trans Awareness Week." GLAAD, (November 19, 2018). <https://www.glaad.org/amp/beginner-guide-transweek-2018>.

even greater risk. The Trump Administration has also removed transgender people from Title IX protections, giving schools and other federally funded institutions the legal right to discriminate against them.<sup>41</sup> This is particularly damaging, as transgender youth are heavily subjected to harassment from their peers. On top of this, schools themselves can now discriminate against these individuals as well. According to a national survey, 40% of transgender people have attempted suicide, 92% of whom attempted so before the age of 25.<sup>42</sup> Given this high risk among such a vulnerable population, stripping away these vital protections will likely have devastating effects.

At the 2016 Republican National Convention, Donald Trump claimed that he would “protect our LGBTQ citizens.”<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, his administration has done the complete opposite. Between firing the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS,<sup>44</sup> expressing his support for businesses who wish to turn away LGBT people, and subjecting transgender people to persecution in nearly every aspect of public life, the Trump Administration has only placed the LGBT community in further danger. According to the FBI, nearly one in five violent hate crimes committed in 2018 were against an LGBT individual.<sup>45</sup> In addition, anti-LGBT hate crimes have been steadily on the rise since 2015,<sup>46</sup> the same year that Donald Trump announced his

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<sup>41</sup> Vogue, Ariane de, and Emanuella Grinberg. “Trump Administration Withdraws Federal Protections for Transgender Students.” *CNN*, (February 23, 2017). <https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/22/politics/doj-withdraws-federal-protections-on-transgender-bathrooms-in-schools/>.

<sup>42</sup> “Facts About Suicide.” The Trevor Project. Accessed April 13, 2020. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/preventing-suicide/facts-about-suicide/>.

<sup>43</sup> Simmons-Duffin, Selena. “‘Whiplash’ Of LGBTQ Protections And Rights, From Obama To Trump.” *NPR*, (March 2, 2020). <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/03/02/804873211/whiplash-of-lgbtq-protections-and-rights-from-obama-to-trump>.

<sup>44</sup> Kight, Stef W. “Trump Just Fired the Entire White House HIV/AIDS Council.” *Axios*, (January 5, 2018). <https://www.axios.com/trump-just-fired-the-entire-white-house-hiv-aids-council-1515110901-9aeb9a42-418b-44e8-aa0e-10abb01bd223.html>.

<sup>45</sup> “Incidents, Offenses, Victims, and Known Offenders by Bias Motivation, 2018.” FBI.gov. Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2018. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2018/tables/table-1.xls>.

<sup>46</sup> McCarthy, Niall. “Report: Hate Crime Is Rising In 30 Major American Cities [Infographic].” *Forbes Magazine*, (August 13, 2019). <https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2019/08/01/report-hate-crime-is-rising-in-30-major-american-cities-infographic/#6d1639e3b8d0>.

candidacy. In the 1980s, thousands of LGBT Americans died of HIV/AIDS due to negligence from a President and a government that did not care for the wellbeing of this population. As modern protections are stripped away and LGBT Americans are made to be increasingly vulnerable, the country is heading down a dangerous and all too familiar path.

### **Undocumented Migrants**

If Donald Trump's Presidency could be described in one policy, it would be the border wall. Trump kick-started his campaign in 2015 by announcing that he would build a "great, great wall" on the southern border at Mexico's expense, and citing that "nobody builds walls better than [him]."<sup>47</sup> Trump made restricting immigration the cornerstone of his populist platform. He effectively framed the issue in a way so that white, working-class Americans felt that the reason why they are struggling in the modern economy is because illegal migrants are taking their jobs and dismantling the American economy. Through his rhetoric and policies, Trump has insinuated to his supporters that migrants are receiving rights and specialized treatments that they do not deserve, and therefore, they must be eradicated in order to restore these rights and privileges to native-born American citizens.

It's crucial to understand that there are a number of reasons why a family or an individual would willingly migrate to the United States without utilizing the legal methods to do so. To begin, legally migrating to the United States is a very long, difficult, and costly process. Temporary or permanent migration to the United States is typically only permitted through very

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<sup>47</sup> Drew, Kate. "This Is What Trump's Border Wall Could Cost." *CNBC*, (January 26, 2017). <https://www.cnn.com/2015/10/09/this-is-what-trumps-border-wall-could-cost-us.html>.

few specific channels. One option is through an employment visa, in which an employer can request a specific worker to live in the United States;<sup>48</sup> this is obviously not a viable option for migrants searching for better economic opportunities. Another option is through applying for a green card, in which someone already residing as a legal resident must sponsor the applicant, and the applicant must then take a medical examination and partake in an interview in order for their visa to be processed and accepted.<sup>49</sup> This process could take months or even years and is not a viable option for people seeking to migrate in order to flee an immediate and pressing threat. A third option is by applying for refugee status. While this may sound like it could be a realistic option for those seeking to enter the U.S., the qualifications to be determined as an asylum seeker are very specific and likely don't apply to many of those fleeing their countries of origin. Individuals seeking to apply for asylum must demonstrate "well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, or national origin," as well as partake in interviews and screenings.<sup>50</sup> There are multiple reasons why this isn't a realistic option for those who end up crossing the border illegally. Firstly, asylum seeking is a very time-consuming process, and is not feasible for those who quickly need to escape a dangerous situation in their home country. Second, this status only applies to those facing identity-based persecution and does not account for those fleeing scenarios such as extreme poverty, drug cartels, or gang violence, all of which are prevalent issues across Central America. Third, the Trump Administration has been continually lowering the number of accepted refugees throughout his Presidency, with only 18,000 to be accepted in 2020,<sup>51</sup> so even

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<sup>48</sup> "Why Don't Immigrants Apply for Citizenship?" American Immigration Council, (November 25, 2019). <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/why-don't-they-just-get-line>.

<sup>49</sup> "How to Enter the United States." USA Gov. Accessed April 13, 2020. <https://www.usa.gov/enter-us>.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*

<sup>51</sup> "Texas Governor to Reject New Refugees under Trump Order."

if these migrants qualified for asylum, it is highly unlikely that they would be permitted into the country anytime soon.

Given the extensive barriers to legal migration, it makes sense why those needing to immediately evacuate their home country or those who cannot financially afford to apply for legal status enter the United States illegally. The reasons why migrants want to come to the U.S. vary. Many come to the U.S. to enter the workforce, as evidenced by the fact that over 70% of all undocumented people in the U.S. are employed and make up approximately 5% of all workers.<sup>52</sup> Donald Trump cites this as a problem, as he touts the notion that these migrants are stealing jobs from native-born blue collar Americans. However, this is categorically untrue, as blue-collar Americans and undocumented migrants often operate in separate spheres of low wage manual labor. While native-born blue-collar Americans work in more regulated industries such as manufacturing, undocumented migrants typically work jobs involving construction, agriculture, and anything that can allow them to work under the radar.<sup>53</sup> Giovanni Perri, an Economist from the University of California - Davis, theorizes what would happen to the economy if undocumented migrants were removed from the workforce, “Some sectors, like construction, agriculture, housing and personal services would be drastically reduced... There would be companies closing and relocating. There would be jobs lost. There will be towns and cities that would see half their population disappear... It definitely would trigger a recession.”<sup>54</sup>

One of Trump’s main selling points on immigration reform is that migrants are taking the jobs of hard-working Americans.<sup>55</sup> However, it turns out that undocumented migrants are

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<sup>52</sup> Jordan, Miriam. “8 Million People Are Working Illegally in the U.S. Here’s Why That’s Unlikely to Change.” *The New York Times*, (December 11, 2018). <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/11/us/undocumented-immigrant-workers.html>.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid*

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*

<sup>55</sup> Blake, Aaron. “Trump Warns GOP on Immigration: ‘They’re Taking Your Jobs!’” *The Washington Post*, (March 6, 2014). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2014/03/06/trump-warns-gop-on-immigration-theyre-taking-your-jobs/>.

actually integral to the American economy, as its estimated that every undocumented migrant working sustains two to three jobs in the surrounding economy.<sup>56</sup> This is because undocumented migrants currently take up such a large part of certain industries, such as agriculture and construction. If these workers were to disappear, many of these industries would crumble and a large number of natural-born citizens would lose their jobs as well.<sup>57</sup> Trump's other criticism of migrants is that they are bringing crime, drugs, and rape into the United States. This is also largely untrue, as many migrants are fleeing violence in their own country and long to live a safe and peaceful life in the United States. Although most of these migrants are crossing through Mexico, they actually come from all over South and Central America. El Salvador, for example, is the most violent country in the world that is not actively at war.<sup>58</sup> El Salvador, along with Honduras and Guatemala, are commonly referred to as the "Northern Triangle." The Northern Triangle countries are largely occupied by gangs such as MS-13, which are responsible for large amounts of drug and human trafficking, as well as occupying and terrorizing towns and neighborhoods.<sup>59</sup> As a result, remaining in these areas is a matter of life and death for many people, and is why so many, particularly families, choose to migrate. These people are not experiencing the identity-based persecution outlined in the requirements for asylum status, however their situation is still critically dangerous.

Trump's characterization of migrants as criminals is also largely untrue. While some undocumented migrants have committed crimes, just as many native-born Americans have, it does not mean that this population is any more likely to do so. In fact, it's been found that

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<sup>56</sup> Jordan

<sup>57</sup> *ibid*

<sup>58</sup> Erickson, Amanda. "Analysis | Why Do Some Families Risk Crossing the U.S. Border? Because If They Don't, They'll Be Killed." *The Washington Post*, (June 20, 2018). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/06/20/why-do-some-families-risk-crossing-the-u-s-border-because-if-they-dont-theyll-be-killed/>.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*



undocumented migrants are 33% less likely to be institutionalized than native-born Americans.<sup>60</sup> Another study highlights that if undocumented migrants were responsible for so much crime, then the increase in deportations in recent years would likely lower crime rates in areas with high undocumented populations. However, crime rates in these areas have remained relatively unchanged.<sup>61</sup> By equating crime and unemployment with undocumented migrants and Latinos, Trump has created a very dangerous narrative around race and migration. Associating these groups with such existential threats invokes strong feelings of fear, particularly fear of violence and economic uncertainty among the white majority. As a result, Trump's calls for a border wall and strict immigration reform reign in enthusiastic support, as he exploits racial tensions and the anxieties of working-class America in order to advance his right-wing agenda.

It's not only Donald Trump's rhetoric surrounding undocumented migrants that is concerning; his policies have also had dangerous and deadly impacts on migrants and their families. In the first days of his Presidency, Trump announced that all 11 million undocumented migrants would be subject to deportation.<sup>62</sup> Trump then signed an Executive Order which granted ICE more power in performing arrests, allowing them to detain and deport migrants even if they do not have a criminal record.<sup>63</sup> As a result of this measure, deportations increased by 30% from the previous year, and went on to increase again in 2018.<sup>64</sup> This order effectively tore apart a large number of American families, as many of these law-abiding migrants that were

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<sup>60</sup> Nowrasteh, Alex. "New Research on Illegal Immigration and Crime." Cato Institute, (September 24, 2019). <https://www.cato.org/blog/new-research-illegal-immigration-crime>.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*

<sup>62</sup> Greene, Judith. "Confronting Immigration Enforcement under Trump: A Reign of Terror for Immigrant Communities." *Social Justice*. Crime and Social Justice Associates, (March 22, 2019). <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-574177300/confronting-immigration-enforcement-under-trump-a>.

<sup>63</sup> Kopan, Tal. "Trump's Executive Orders Dramatically Expand Power of Immigration Officers." *CNN*, (January 28, 2017). <https://www.cnn.com/2017/01/28/politics/donald-trump-immigration-detention-deportations-enforcement/index.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Gramlich, John. "How Border Apprehensions, ICE Arrests and Deportations Have Changed under Trump." Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center, (March 2, 2020). <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/02/how-border-apprehensions-ice-arrests-and-deportations-have-changed-under-trump/>.

deported at this point had been residing in the country for decades. In the first year of Trump's order being active, ICE deported 27,080 migrants with children who were U.S. citizens.<sup>65</sup> If both parents are deported, then the children are forced into the adoption system, therefore drastically disrupting their lives and development.<sup>66</sup> While this in itself is a travesty, the most egregious human rights abuses by the Trump Administration stem from the detentions made at the border. In April 2018, the Trump Administration administered a "zero tolerance" policy regarding illegal immigration following a large influx of migrants arriving from the Northern Triangle. This policy involved detaining individuals and families who were caught attempting to cross the border until their cases were brought to court, rather than releasing them in their home country. Families that were caught by ICE were ordered to be detained separately, tearing apart parents from their children with no system in place to reunite them.<sup>67</sup> After receiving widespread criticism from the public and human rights organizations, the Trump Administration formally abandoned the family separation policy in June 2018. However, reports indicate that families continue to be separated despite Trump technically ending this practice, as nearly 2,000 more families have been separated since June 2018, and there is still no system in place to eventually reunite these families.<sup>68</sup> In addition to the destructive separations of families, the conditions of these facilities are incredibly dangerous. In July 2019, the DHS Office of Inspector General

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<sup>65</sup> Buiano, Madeline, and James R. Soles. "ICE Data: Tens of Thousands of Deported Parents Have U.S. Citizen Kids." Center for Public Integrity, (October 12, 2018). <https://publicintegrity.org/inequality-poverty-opportunity/immigration/ice-data-tens-of-thousands-of-deported-parents-have-u-s-citizen-kids/>.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid*

<sup>67</sup> Panich-Linsman, Ilana. "Children Are Being Used as a Tool in Trump's Effort to Stop Border Crossings" *The Boston Globe*, (June 10, 2018).

<https://www3.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2018/06/09/borderseparations/Z95z4eFZjyfqCLG9pyHjAO/story.html?arc404=true>.

<sup>68</sup> Bala, Nila, and Arthur Rizer. "Trump's Family Separation Policy Never Really Ended. This Is Why." *NBC News*, (July 1, 2019). <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/trump-s-family-separation-policy-never-really-ended-why-ncna1025376>.

found that many of the detention sites were overcrowded.<sup>69</sup> In El Paso, Texas for example, over 900 migrants are detained in a center with a capacity of 125, and many of the holding cells in this facility smelled of “unwashed bodies/body odor, urine, untreated diarrhea, and/or soiled clothing/diapers.”<sup>70</sup> The DHS found that many other facilities also operated over capacity, and that many of the migrants held there did not have proper access to food or hygiene, resulting in some needing medical assistance.



**Figure 2: Overcrowding of Families Observed in McAllen, TX, OIG<sup>71</sup>**

Figure 2 comes from the Office of Inspector General following a visit to a facility in McAllen, Texas. These facilities are meant to legally hold detainees for up to 72 hours, but as is visible in the figure, this cage is extremely overcrowded and provides essentially no place to move around or sleep. In addition, the OIG found that Border Patrol’s custody data shows that a number of

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<sup>69</sup> Rennix, Brianna, and Nathan Robinson. “Crammed in to Cells and Forced to Drink from the Toilet - This Is How the US Treats Migrants | Brianna Rennix and Nathan Robinson.” *The Guardian*, (July 3, 2019). <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jul/03/migrant-detention-centres-us-border-patrol>.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid*

<sup>71</sup> Costello, Jennifer L. (2019).

facilities keep migrants in these conditions past the 72-hour limit. At the McAllen facility for example, 42% of adults and 31% of children were held in these conditions for over three days, some reported having been there for weeks in these unsanitary conditions.<sup>72</sup> A report conducted by the ACLU determined that as of 2019, 31 people have died in ICE custody including at least seven children.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, seven more deaths have occurred so far in 2020, according to the American Immigration Lawyers Association.<sup>74</sup> Many of these deaths are due to lack of proper medical care, as facilities such as the for-profit Aurora Contract Detention Facility have one physician for over 1,500 detainees.<sup>75</sup> The egregious display of negligence on behalf of these facilities is showing the Trump Administration and ICE's complete disregard to the lives of these migrants. The lack of concern or empathy toward this extremely vulnerable population conveys that Donald Trump cares more about advancing his political agenda among his white majority constituents than the thousands of families he has destroyed and the dozens who have died under his policies.

## Conclusion

The Presidency of Donald Trump is unlike one ever seen before in American history. The President very effectively harnessed the struggles of white, working class Americans and turned their anger, frustration, and fear against some of the country's most vulnerable populations. In response to American fears of foreign terrorism, Trump proposes that the government crackdown

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<sup>72</sup> *ibid*

<sup>73</sup> "Cashing in on Cruelty." *ACLU of Colorado*, n.d., 1. [https://aclu-co.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ACLU\\_CO\\_Cashing\\_In\\_On\\_Cruelty\\_09-17-19.pdf](https://aclu-co.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ACLU_CO_Cashing_In_On_Cruelty_09-17-19.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> "AILA - Deaths at Adult Detention Centers." American Immigration Lawyers Association. Accessed April 13, 2020. <https://www.aila.org/infonet/deaths-at-adult-detention-centers>.

<sup>75</sup> "Cashing in on Cruelty."

on American Muslims and asylum-seeking refugees, who are likely more effected by foreign terrorism than white Americans are. Evangelical Americans express disdain with the diversification of American society, therefore Trump vows to “Make America Great Again,” and restore more traditional values by removing numerous protections for the LGBT community, and particularly transgender individuals. Working class people express concern over the loss of their manufacturing jobs, so Trump directs their frustration against undocumented people who are escaping extreme poverty and violence from their home countries. Trump has built his policies around the persecution of minority groups and placing the interests of the majority over anyone else. In essence, he constructed an ingroup bias into an entire political platform and gained the trust of this group that he is the only one who can protect their interests. As Trump decries the media as “fake news,” and accuses Democrats and other Republicans alike of not caring for the interests of the American people like he does, he reinforces that his Administration is the only entity in American politics that can be trusted. This is incredibly harmful, as Trump is prone to purporting false information and statistics that depict minority populations as the enemy. This practice also undoubtedly expresses authoritarian sentiments, which is dangerous in a figure who retains support from the majority. As long as Donald Trump is President, the human rights of American minority populations are consistently challenged, and the lives of these individuals are under constant threat of violence, persecution, and even death.

## Chapter 2

### Brazil

#### Introduction

Following the election of U.S. President Donald Trump came the rise of a new populist leader in Brazil. Jair Bolsonaro ran under the slogan “Brazil Above Everything, God Above Everyone,”<sup>76</sup> making it very clear that his platform would center heavily around fervent nationalism and religious fundamentalism. In October of 2018, he secured the election for the Social Liberal Party (PSL), beating out the long incumbent center-left Workers’ Party in the wake of political scandal. Bolsonaro shares many similarities with the U.S President, both in the circumstances of their election as well as their ideologies. This is something that Bolsonaro notably acknowledges and takes pride in.<sup>77</sup> Both were perceived as outliers to the political sphere, taking on the “corrupt establishment” and claiming to speak for the people. Both are heavily controversial, nationalistic, and engulfed in scandal. Most notably however, both have employed policies since their election that have targeted their respective country’s most vulnerable populations and have placed the human rights of specific groups in jeopardy. Bolsonaro in particular has impacted the livelihoods of indigenous populations through his persecution of LGBT people in the name of religious fundamentalism, violent rule over the Amazon, and racial minorities through his militarization of the police.

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<sup>76</sup> Phillips, Dom. “Outrage after Brazil Ministry Asks Schools to Read Aloud Bolsonaro Slogan.” *The Guardian*, (February 26, 2019). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/26/brazil-education-minister-bolsonaro-slogan-students-recite>.

<sup>77</sup> Daly, Tom, Populism, Public Law, and Democratic Decay in Brazil: Understanding the Rise of Jair Bolsonaro (March 11, 2019). This paper was prepared for the 14th International Human Rights Researchers’ Workshop: ‘Democratic Backsliding and Human Rights’, organised by the Law and Ethics of Human Rights (LEHR) journal, 2-3 (January 2019). 18

## Brazil's Democratic History

In the case of Brazil, the tumultuous recent political history of this state is crucial in understanding the severity of Bolsonaro populist rule. Following a coup, the country spent much of the end of the twentieth century under the rule of a military dictatorship from 1964-1985. This regime is notorious for its widespread use of torture, political censorship, and murder of political dissidents.<sup>78</sup> While many lived in opposition to this regime, there are many who to this day, support this method of government over democracy. Given the nation's relatively recent history with a militarized regime and complicated relationship with democracy, a right-wing populist leader such as Bolsonaro is particularly dangerous in reinvigorating the sentiments and practices of this dictatorship. Even more startling is the fact that Bolsonaro himself has even expressed favorability toward the military dictatorship, along with its policies and practices. He notably praised the military government, labelling the dictatorship "20 years of order and progress,"<sup>79</sup> and even stated that "the error of the dictatorship was that it tortured, but did not kill."<sup>80</sup>

Following the fall of the military dictatorship, Brazil continued to struggle with instituting and upholding a healthy democracy. As is with many newly forming democracies, new founded and unstable democratic institutions are significantly more susceptible to corruption. When a state emerges from an autocratic government, it's very likely for sentiments from the old government to linger in the new democracy. Therefore, the burden is placed on newly elected officials to genuinely uphold the values of democracy. While Brazil had positively democratically advanced in many areas such as the proliferation of NGOs, the development of

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<sup>78</sup> Daly 8

<sup>79</sup> Snider, C.M. "The Perfection of Democracy Cannot Dispense with Dealing with the Past:" Dictatorship, Memory, and the Politics of the Present in Brazil. *The Latin Americanist*, 62: 63. (2018). doi:[10.1111/ta.12181](https://doi.org/10.1111/ta.12181)

<sup>80</sup> Pam, Jovem. "Defensor Da Ditadura, Jair Bolsonaro Reforça Frase Polêmica: 'o Erro Foi Torturar e Não Matar.'" Defensor da Ditadura, Jair Bolsonaro reforça frase polêmica: "o erro foi torturar e não matar" – Jovem Pan. Jovem Pan, (July 8, 2016).

established political parties, and holding generally fair local elections,<sup>81</sup> it also continued to struggle with broader, more systemic problems commonly associated with a newly formed democracy. Since the dissolve of the military dictatorship, there have been two Presidential impeachments on accounts of corruption, and despite the military government from 1964-1985 being notorious for violence, instances of violent crime and police brutality increased substantially in the decades following the termination of the military government.<sup>82</sup> After only a decade of democratic government, many Brazilians began to express distrust in the new political system. Anthropologists Teresa P. R. Caldeira and James Holton identify this dilemma in the October 2000 issue of Cambridge University Press, “Caught in this combination of political democracy and violence, the vast majority of Brazilians are resigned to an undemocratic fate: they cannot rely on the institutions of state to secure their civil rights, either as positive protections or as negative immunities.”<sup>83</sup> While democratically developed institutions are widely regarded in the west as a bastion of human rights protections, this was not the case in the developing country of Brazil. Given the prominence and continuation of widespread violence, it left room for voters and politicians to be skeptical of a democratic government.

### **The Rise of Jair Bolsonaro**

On August 31st, 2016, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff was removed from office following a 61-20 Senate vote. Rousseff was charged with manipulating the federal budget and was impeached at the beginning of her second term.<sup>84</sup> This event marked Brazil’s second

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<sup>81</sup> Holston, James, and Teresa P. R. Caldeira. “Democracy and Violence in Brazil.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 4 (1999): 695. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417599003102>.

<sup>82</sup> Daly 8

<sup>83</sup> Holsten and Caldeira 707

<sup>84</sup> Daly 9



presidential impeachment, which proved to be particularly significant as Rousseff's party, the Workers' Party, had maintained control over the executive since the dawn of the twenty first century. This scandal led Brazilian voters to heavily question their current democracy and the political elite as protests erupted throughout the country. Researcher Tom Gerald Daly recounts his experience of being in Brazil during this time: "widespread public dissatisfaction with Brazil's political and democratic system, encompassing left-wing claims against enduring socio-economic inequality, middle-class and elite unhappiness with the democratization of public power and perceived 'radicalism' of the left-wing government, and all bemoaning entrenched and widespread corruption."<sup>85</sup> Given this public outcry against the political establishment, it is not surprising that Brazilian voters would seek out a political upheaval and turnover of their current governmental system. In 2018, the presidential election took place between Bolsonaro and Michel Temer, Rousseff's Vice President who assumed the executive office following her impeachment. Temer's approval ratings remained low throughout his term, as he failed to turn around the Brazilian economy and anti-establishment sentiments echoed throughout the country.<sup>86</sup> As a result, Bolsonaro won the election with 55% of the vote.<sup>87</sup>

Given the circumstances, and without knowing much about him, Bolsonaro could seem like he would be a breath of fresh air in Brazilian politics. A relative political outsider taking on the corrupt establishment and promising prosperity for the world's fourth largest democracy sounds great on paper. However, Bolsonaro quickly began dismantling the shaky democracy that Brazil had built and put the human rights of marginalized groups in danger. As a former military officer, he elevated several military officers to power, and focused his campaign heavily on

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<sup>85</sup> *ibid*

<sup>86</sup> Daly, 10

<sup>87</sup> Daly, 1

bringing “order” to Brazilian society.<sup>88</sup> He heavily militarized the police force, stating that officers “should get a bonus for every person they shoot,”<sup>89</sup> which is a particularly dangerous sentiment to express given Brazil’s history with military autocracy. He also went on to criticize the globalizing society and highlighted his attempt to fight back against “cultural Marxism,” which “includes women’s and LGBT rights, gun control, the right to abortion, secularism, and environmentalism.”<sup>90</sup> He has also repeatedly attacked indigenous populations, advocating for military occupation of the Amazon and downplaying the widespread fires that had engulfed the region this past year. Overall Bolsonaro’s Presidency, while it may seem like a fresh political turnaround from the corrupt establishment, comes with a whole new series of issues concerning human rights and the safety of marginalized groups.

### **LGBT Rights**

Brazil has the highest rate of LGBT related homicide in the world, with nearly 450 deaths occurring in 2017 alone.<sup>91</sup> Throughout Jair Bolsonaro’s long life in the public eye, he’s made a wide array of comments regarding his views on LGBT people. In 2013 he boldly declared “Yes I am homophobic -- and very proud of it”,<sup>92</sup> and in a 2011 interview with Playboy Magazine, Bolsonaro shared his thoughts on how he would feel about having a gay son: "I would be unable to love a homosexual son. I'm not going to be a hypocrite here: I'd rather have a son of mine die

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<sup>88</sup> Daly, 16

<sup>89</sup> Daly, 18

<sup>90</sup> Casarões, G., & Flandes, D. Brazil First, Climate Last: Bolsonaro's Foreign Policy. (GIGA Focus Lateinamerika, 5). Hamburg: GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies - Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien, Institut für Lateinamerika-Studien: 2, (2019) <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ss0ar-64011-4>

<sup>91</sup> Montenegro, Luiz, Luciane Velasque, Sara LeGrand, Kathryn Whetten, Ricardo de Mattos Russo Rafael, and Monica Malta. "Public health, HIV care and prevention, human rights and democracy at a crossroad in Brazil." *AIDS and Behavior* 24, no. 1 (2020): 2.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid*

in an accident than appear with a mustache around. For me, he will have died”<sup>93</sup> Bolsonaro’s presidency comes at a very detrimental time for LGBT Brazilians. Over the past decade, religious fundamentalism had become increasingly prevalent in Brazilian politicians across party lines. An estimated one third of the country now identifies as evangelical, up from only 15% in 2000.<sup>94</sup> As bolstering “Judeo-Christian values” has been a key tenant of Bolsonaro’s campaign,<sup>95</sup> it’s no surprise that his presidency continued to exacerbate the influence of religious fundamentalism over Brazilian politics, particularly when it comes to the human rights of LGBT individuals. In furthering this influence, Bolsonaro appointed evangelical pastor, Damares Alves, to the new Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights, a governmental organization designed to promote and protect human rights. Formerly, the branch was simply called the Ministry of Human Rights but was changed to promote Bolsonaro's emphasis on “family values.” Notably, the Ministry declined to list the LGBT community as a group protected by its mandates, claiming that “diversity policies have threatened the Brazilian family.”<sup>96</sup> In a country with such high LGBT homicide rates, actively deciding not to protect this population puts them at severe risk for further violence. By not being acknowledged by the Ministry of Human Rights, the Bolsonaro administration is effectively conveying that the LGBT community does not deserve human rights.

Over the past decade, Brazil has been one of the global leaders in health care for individuals with HIV/AIDS. There are approximately 900,000 people in Brazil living with this

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<sup>93</sup> “Bolsonaro: ‘Prefiro Filho Morto Em Acidente a Um Homossexual.’” *Terra*, (June 8, 2011). <http://noticias.terra.com.br/brasil/bolsonaro-quotprefiro-filho-morto-em-acidente-a-um-homossexualquot,cf89cc00a90ea310VgnCLD200000bbceeb0aRCRD.html>.

<sup>94</sup> Anthony Faiola, Marina Lopes. “LGBT Rights Threatened in Brazil under New Far-Right President.” *The Washington Post*, (February 18, 2019).

<sup>95</sup> Casarões, G., & Fledes, D: 2

<sup>96</sup> Montenegro, et. al: 2

disease.<sup>97</sup> While this is a very large number, those infected with HIV are able to access free antiretroviral treatment through public healthcare, which allows those infected with HIV to live long, normal healthy lives.<sup>98</sup> Given Bolsonaro's record in regard to the rights and livelihoods of LGBT Brazilians, it's unsurprising that he is vehemently against this use of public funds. In order to help bolster the Brazilian economy, Bolsonaro proposed a series of austerity measures in order to limit government spending. One of these measures included a slash to public health funding, which helps fund free access to antiretroviral drugs for those with HIV. In an interview, the president once remarked "those who have HIV should deal with it and relieve the government of this burden."<sup>99</sup> This attitude from the head of state not only further stigmatizes those living with HIV, but also puts their lives in danger as they may no longer have access to the very treatment that is keeping them alive. As Bolsonaro stated in his Playboy interview, he would rather have a dead son than a homosexual son. Through his life-threatening policies and implementation of anti-LGBT governmental officials, he is actively conveying that he would rather have dead Brazilians than homosexual Brazilians.

### **Indigenous Rights**

The majority of large modern societies have been founded upon the persecution of the region's indigenous populations. Nations that were founded on the basis of colonialism continually abused their respective populations of native people for centuries by stripping them

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<sup>97</sup> "HIV and AIDS in Brazil." *Avert*, (October 1, 2019). <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/latin-america/brazil>.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid*

<sup>99</sup> Montenegro, et al: 3

of their homes, their humanity, and ultimately, their human rights. Over the past century, many modern leaders have acknowledged the ills of their nations' past and sought out to make reparations for indigenous populations through setting aside reserved land for them to follow their cultural traditions and practices. This is something that has been done by the Brazilian government in response to how they had treated the indigenous populations of the Amazon. However, the human rights of native populations in Brazil are arguably at more risk now than they have been since they were granted land reservations. Bolsonaro has expressed on many occasions his desire to expand extractive industries in the Amazon, as he's consistently advocated for Brazil's ultimate control over the vast rainforest.<sup>100</sup> As a result of the President's desire to industrialize the Amazon, it leaves the native people living there at risk of losing their rights to their land, reminiscent of the struggles commonly faced by native peoples hundreds of years ago. Bolsonaro's stance on the existence of indigenous populations can be summed up in a quote the president once gave on the subject: "It is a shame that the Brazilian cavalry has not been so efficient as the Americans who exterminated the Indians."<sup>101</sup> Here, Bolsonaro is expressing a desire to commit genocide against the indigenous populations of the Amazon. This sentiment is inexplicably dangerous and displays how little regard Brazil's president has for the human rights of his country's most vulnerable populations.

Expanding the industrialization of the Amazon rainforest through agribusiness and mining has been one of Bolsonaro's primary goals throughout his campaign and his presidency. Many Brazilian voters view the deforestation of the Amazon as an environmental issue, rather

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<sup>100</sup> Anderson, Jon Lee. "At the U.N., Jair Bolsonaro Presents a Surreal Defense of His Amazon Policies." *The New Yorker*, (September 25, 2019).

<sup>101</sup> Watson, Fiona. "Protect the Lone Amazonian Tribesman. He Deserves to Live in Peace | Fiona Watson." *The Guardian*, (July 27, 2018).

than a matter of human rights. Therefore, preserving the rainforest fell low on many voters' priorities in comparison with more immediate, pressing issues such as crime and political corruption.<sup>102</sup> As a result, Bolsonaro has made an initiative to strip away environmental protections. Following his election, he transferred the deforestation control sector of the Environment Ministry to the Agriculture Ministry, which is responsible for overseeing the development of agribusiness, rather than protecting and preserving the rainforest.<sup>103</sup>

Additionally, Bolsonaro has sought out to demonize environmental activist groups who seek to preserve untouched areas of the Amazon, as well as reserved land for indigenous populations. The president has done this by selecting far-right former military leaders as his close political allies, and listing various environmental activist groups, such as the Landless Workers' Rural Movement, as terrorist groups.<sup>104</sup> Since the rhetoric involving the expansion of industries and dissolution of indigenous lands has entered the political foreground, native populations have been heavily subjected to violence and vandalism from ruralists who seek to expand extractive industries on their land. In one instance, ruralists invaded the land of the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau people and threatened to kill their children if they did not give up their land.<sup>105</sup> They then went on to claim that since Bolsonaro won the presidency, the tribe will no longer be entitled to anything.<sup>106</sup> Given Brazil's history of violent militarization coupled with hateful sentiments toward native populations throughout the Amazon,<sup>107</sup> Bolsonaro's rhetoric and policies can prove especially dangerous for both activists and indigenous peoples in the region.

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<sup>102</sup> Fearnside, Phillip. "Why Brazil's New President Poses an Unprecedented Threat to the Amazon." *Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies*, (November 8, 2018): 3

<sup>103</sup> Ferrante, Lucas, and Philip M Fearnside. "Brazil's New President and 'Ruralists' Threaten Amazonia's Environment, Traditional Peoples and the Global Climate." *Environmental Conservation* 46, no. 4 (2019): 261–63. doi:10.1017/S0376892919000213.

<sup>104</sup> Fearnside, 5

<sup>105</sup> Ferrante and Fearnside, 2

<sup>106</sup> *ibid*

<sup>107</sup> Fearnside, 5

The expansion of agribusiness industries will undoubtedly strip indigenous populations of their rights to their land and their identity. Bolsonaro himself has noted his intentions to intrude specifically onto land that is reserved for native people, remarking that “not a single centimetre of land will be demarcated for indigenous peoples and that both ‘conservation units’ (protected areas for natural ecosystems) and indigenous lands should be open to agriculture and mining.”<sup>108</sup> Opening up these lands will effectively leave these populations stateless, which increases their susceptibility to violence. In addition, removing native people from their land strips them of their identity that dates back centuries. Bolsonaro is attempting to push a narrative that indigenous populations want to enter modernized society, claiming: “Indigenous want to work, want to produce and they can’t. They live isolated in their areas like cavemen. What most of the world press do to Brazil and against these human beings is a crime.”<sup>109</sup> Here, Bolsonaro is attempting to reinforce the notion that native people actually want to leave behind their lifestyles that have remained consistent for hundreds of years and enter modernized Brazilian society. He blames activist groups and global media for maintaining the belief that these groups want to stay on reservations, thus preventing them from entering the secular world. This remark is an obvious reuse to only further his agenda of expanding the agribusiness sector onto indigenous lands. Knowing full well that encroaching on these lands will be exterminating the human rights of these vulnerable populations, Bolsonaro seeks out a false narrative of a society trapped in a primitive age longing to escape. However, this narrative is in no way rooted in any truth and is simply a ploy to justify his policies.

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<sup>108</sup> Ferrante and Fearnside, 1

<sup>109</sup> Phillips, 3

Bolsonaro's attitude toward indigenous populations can be described as a form of intrastate colonialism. While much of the Amazon technically resides in Brazil, the lives of native populations remain relatively untouched by modern society, as they have been for centuries. However, Bolsonaro plainly views it as his prerogative to forcibly seize land from these populations, land that they have likely been residing on for hundreds of years and using it for the expansion of industries such as mining and agribusiness that will also perform extensive damage to the environment. Simply put, Bolsonaro views indigenous people as subhuman, undeserving of rights, and he appears to have no problem subjecting them to a complete cultural genocide.

### **Rights of Afro-Brazilians**

Although it is often discussed as a generally American issue, police violence in Brazil is at record highs, particularly against minority populations. Brazilian police kill more civilians than almost every other country on earth regardless of size.<sup>110</sup> Additionally, Afro-Brazilians are 23% more likely to be shot by police than any other demographic.<sup>111</sup> Bolsonaro has made it clear many times throughout his campaign and his presidency of his desire to expand and further militarize the Brazilian police force. This expansion would have devastating effects on minority populations in Brazil as they already are the most susceptible to violence.

Bolsonaro has made his support of Brazil's former military dictatorship abundantly clear. This past year, he reinstated commemorations and celebrations of the military dictatorship that

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<sup>110</sup> Sánchez-Garzoli, Gimena. "Bolsonaro Acts on Promises to Dismantle Human Rights Protections in Brazil." WOLA, January 24, 2019. <https://www.wola.org/analysis/bolsonaro-acts-promises-dismantle-human-rights-protections-brazil/>.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid*



lasted from 1964-1985.<sup>112</sup> These celebrations were previously outlawed by former President Rousseff, whom was a victim of torture at the hands of the regime herself.<sup>113</sup> As previously mentioned, Bolsonaro remarked that his only issue with the military government was that it tortured and did not kill.<sup>114</sup> However, the military dictatorship did kill nearly five hundred people, so what he is indicating is that he wishes they had killed even more.<sup>115</sup>

Bolsonaro has transferred his longing for a military government into the Brazilian police force. One manner in which he is aiming to achieve this is through the Guarantee of Law and Order missions. The GLO is a highly controversial bill that Bolsonaro introduced in November of 2019. The bill offers reduced sentences or even complete legal absolution if a police officer kills a suspect in the face of “unfair aggression.”<sup>116</sup> This vague description gives Brazilian police the right to kill someone posing whatever they deem as a threat, which is particularly dangerous for black Brazilians who already face an elevated rate of police-related violence. The President put forth this law because he believed the current justice system was imbalanced and gave more rights to the “bad guys” than the “good guys.”<sup>117</sup> He remarks, “We have to give a legal back up to the security people: civil, military, federal, road police,”<sup>118</sup> further emphasizing his ideal that police officers deserve full legal protections and the discrepancy to shoot whomever they feel they need to. Bolsonaro has expressed very often how he wants police officers to kill more people. He believes that a police officer who has never killed someone is undeserving of wearing

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<sup>112</sup> “Brazil: Bolsonaro Celebrates Brutal Dictatorship.” Human Rights Watch, (March 27, 2019). <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/27/brazil-bolsonaro-celebrates-brutal-dictatorship#>.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid*

<sup>114</sup> Pam

<sup>115</sup> “Brazil: Bolsonaro Celebrates Brutal Dictatorship.”

<sup>116</sup> Marcello, Maria Carolina, and Lissandra Paraguassu. “Brazil's Bolsonaro Unveils Bill to Protect Police and Soldiers Who Kill.” *Reuters*, (November 21, 2019). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-violence/brazils-bolsonaro-unveils-bill-to-protect-police-and-soldiers-who-kill-idUSKBN1XV2J2>.

<sup>117</sup> Wyatt, Tim. “Far-Right Leader Bolsonaro Says Brazilian Police Should Be Allowed to Gun down Suspects 'like Cockroaches'.” *The Independent*, (August 6, 2019). <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/bolsonaro-brazil-criminal-code-police-killings-far-right-interview-a9040796.html>.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid*

a police uniform,<sup>119</sup> and remarked that police should be able to gun down criminals “like cockroaches.”<sup>120</sup> This outlook is very dangerous, as it gives police increasing authority reminiscent of the country’s former military dictatorship.

The burden of Bolsonaro’s authorization of the police state will fall on minority populations, particularly Afro-Brazilians. Bolsonaro has expressed anti-black sentiments before, by claiming that a multiracial makeup of Brazil is “undesirable,” and through appointing no people of color to his cabinet.<sup>121</sup> WOLA, an advocacy group for human rights in the Americas, acknowledges how Bolsonaro’s presidency and policies regarding police force prove extremely detrimental for Afro-Brazilians: “The combination of racist rhetoric by Bolsonaro, popular demands for security at any cost, and the militarization of the Brazilian government could put Afro-Brazilians at much higher risk.”<sup>122</sup> This quote from WOLA was given at the beginning of Bolsonaro’s presidency, and as predicted, Brazil became a much more unsafe place for black people. Since Bolsonaro’s election, rates of racial hate crimes skyrocketed, seeing an increase of 37% in the months after he took office.<sup>123</sup> This proved to be particularly shocking, as these types of crimes aren’t as prevalent in Brazil as they are in other areas such as the United States. A country-wide rise in hate crimes and anti-black sentiments proves extremely dangerous for the rights and livelihoods of Afro-Brazilian people. Through militarizing the police force, bestowing them with seemingly endless immunities, and expressing his desire for them to kill more people

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<sup>119</sup> Furtado, Henrique. “The Bolsonaro Effect.” openDemocracy, (October 18, 2018).  
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/violence-bolsonaro-effect-and-crisis-of-brazilian-democracy/>.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid*

<sup>121</sup> “Bolsonaro Attacks Blacks and Calls Brazil ‘Garbage.’” *Telesur*, (August 29, 2019).  
<https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Bolsonaro-Attacks-Blacks-and-Calls-Brazil-Garbage-20190829-0001.html>.

<sup>122</sup> Sanchez-Garzoli

<sup>123</sup> Silva, Antonio José Bacelar Da, and Erika Robb Larkins. “The Bolsonaro Election, Antiracism, and Changing Race Relations in Brazil.” *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, (November 2019).  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jlca.12438>.

(in a country where police-related deaths are already immensely high), Bolsonaro is putting his own people, particularly people of color, at constant risk of police violence.

### **Conclusion**

Once thought to be a thriving and growing democracy, Brazil's government is slowly regaining autocratic tendencies reminiscent of its two decades spent under military dictatorship. As a result, the rights of some of the country's most vulnerable populations are placed in jeopardy, with little optimistic outlook of any improvement. This is exactly why a right-wing populist leader, such as Bolsonaro, is so incredibly dangerous. He effectively collected the frustrations that Brazilians had with a corrupt government and economic stifle and turned the burden of blame on these minority populations. By proceeding to strip away their rights to effective health care, Bolsonaro is insinuating that LGBT people are hurting the economy because of their need for life saving medication. By forcing indigenous peoples off of their land, he is insinuating that this population is halting economic opportunity by slowing down the expansion of the agribusiness sector. By militarizing the police, he is insinuating that racial minorities are the cause of the country's high crime rates, and therefore must be put in their place. Overall, Bolsonaro is a demagogue who is effectively directing the anger and frustrations of the Brazilian people onto the country's most unguarded populations in order to safeguard his own corrupt and autocratic agenda.

## Chapter 3

### The United Kingdom

#### Introduction

Coming off the heels of liberal victories in the west, such as same-sex marriage becoming legal throughout much of the hemisphere and Hillary Clinton leading in most U.S. Presidential polls, the Global North came to a shock when the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union in a national referendum on June 23rd, 2016. The issue commonly known as Brexit was far from a unanimous decision, as the “Leave” campaign only won with 52% of the vote.<sup>124</sup> As a result, the country still remains extremely divided over this resolution. One of the most prominent figures in advocating for Brexit was Nigel Farage, the former leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party. Farage is a textbook populist, as he challenged the establishment of the European Union in the supposed name of the working people of Britain, and continually denounced immigrants, particularly those from Eastern Europe and refugees from the Middle East, for threatening the English identity.

The U.K.’s decision to remove itself from the European Union was extremely significant, as it meant the country no longer had to follow the laws and regulations of the EU, and was free to establish its own laws in the place of the ones it had been following for decades. The EU also ensured various human rights protections that are not covered under any existing U.K. law. Along with domestic implications, Brexit held outstanding global impacts as well. This was one of the first major events in the Global North that was brought about by right wing populism. It set the precedent of the popularity of nativist politics, and served as a precursor to similar

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<sup>124</sup> “EU Referendum: The Result in Maps and Charts,” (June 24, 2016), <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-36616028>.

political moves, such as President Trump in the United States withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement. As the United Kingdom only officially left the EU on January 31st, 2020, it's difficult to determine exactly how human rights will be impacted by this monumental change going forward. However, the right-wing populist sentiments brought forth by the “Leave” campaign have shown that the future looks grim for vulnerable populations in the U.K., particularly foreign migrants who have become the primary target of nativist rhetoric.

### **The Events that Led to Brexit**

The fight for Brexit began before the United Kingdom even officially joined the EU. Over the past several decades, Eurosceptic sentiments existed across party lines. Before the European Union, there was the European Economic Community, which aimed to bridge the economies throughout the European continent from 1957-1993.<sup>125</sup> The Labour Party historically opposed the EEC on the grounds that it would undermine democratic and economic sovereignty.<sup>126</sup> Ironically, these criticisms mirror those that UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) would later hurl at the European Union in the 2000s. The Conservative Party was largely for the EEC, as it provided the means for corporations to easily engage in international expansion and trade.<sup>127</sup> However, in 1993 when the European Union was being formed and the UK had to ratify that Maastricht Treaty, Eurosceptic Conservatives largely opposed the EU while the Labour Party was mainly for it. This is because the Maastricht Treaty

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<sup>125</sup> Gabel, Matthew J. “European Community,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, (September 28, 2018), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/European-Community-European-economic-association>.

<sup>126</sup> Dimitrakopoulos, Dionyssis “The Labour Party and the EU,” *The UK in a Changing Europe*, (September 28, 2015), <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/the-labour-party-and-the-eu/>.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid*

included clauses such as the Social Chapter and the Working Time Directive, which involved laws surrounding worker protections that contrasted many of the neoliberal economic and social policies implemented by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s.<sup>128</sup> As an attempt to compromise, Prime Minister John Major suggested voting on the treaty while opting out of the Social Chapter.<sup>129</sup> This angered Liberal Democrat and Labour MPs, as these social protections were a large selling point of the European Union. In addition, Major still faced opposition among a number of Eurosceptic Conservatives.<sup>130</sup> As a result, the treaty ended up having to be passed through a vote of confidence. Most conservatives voted along with the majority in fear of losing the house, while a few sided with the Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs in opposition. The motion was agreed to on a vote of 339 to 299, and the Maastricht Treaty was passed without the adoption of the Social Chapter.<sup>131</sup>

The passage of the Maastricht Treaty effectively altered British politics for the coming decades. The Conservatives resoundingly lost the 1997 Parliamentary election to Tony Blair's Labour Party, likely due to infighting over the EU and lack of a unified platform.<sup>132</sup> Far right factions, such as The Referendum Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) began to rise and gained the support of Eurosceptics throughout much of England. These parties ran on a platform of the independence of the United Kingdom from the European Union. They believed it was unfair that the Maastricht Treaty was ratified through a Parliamentary vote rather

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<sup>128</sup> *ibid*

<sup>129</sup> Goodwin, Stephen "The Maastricht Debate: Major 'Driven to Confidence Factor': Commons," *The Independent*, (October 23, 2011), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/the-maastricht-debate-major-driven-to-confidence-factor-commons-exchanges-treaty-issue-cannot-fester-1486498.html>.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid*

<sup>131</sup> "Facts about the Social Chapter," European Commission, (February 5, 1997), [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO\\_97\\_13](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_97_13).

<sup>132</sup> "1997: Labour Landslide Ends Tory Rule," *BBC News* (April 15, 2005), [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/vote\\_2005/basics/4393323.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/vote_2005/basics/4393323.stm).

than a national referendum.<sup>133</sup> While the Referendum Party disbanded at the turn of the century, UKIP actually began to make some traction. In the 2004 European election, UKIP placed third with 2.6 million votes, resulting in 12 seats in European Parliament.<sup>134</sup> UKIP, and its infamous party leader Nigel Farage, have often garnered the right-wing populist label from political scientists. Farage became party leader in 2006, and shaped UKIP into the force that it eventually became. His goal was to make UKIP a “truly representative party,”<sup>135</sup> meaning that the party’s platform will expand beyond the single issue of leaving the European Union. UKIP adopted a platform of Thatcherist economics, immigration restrictions, and social traditionalism with stances against same-sex marriage.<sup>136</sup> Stances like these, coupled with the party labeling itself as the “People’s Army,” emphasize the sentiments of right-wing populism in the party’s platform. Farage believed that adding these dimensions to the party would attract a wider voter base, and he was correct. In 2009 UKIP secured 16.5% of the vote in the European elections.<sup>137</sup> UKIP went on to gain more and more popularity, as both Eurosceptics and hardline conservatives now found a party to call home.

In 2010, Prime Minister David Cameron promised to hold a referendum on EU membership if the Conservative Party won the next election.<sup>138</sup> This promise likely came out of fear of the Conservative Party increasingly losing voters to UKIP. After securing a Conservative win in 2015, Cameron remained true to his promise and a referendum was held. At this point, the two major parties didn’t have very strong uniform stances on whether they wished to remain in

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<sup>133</sup> Hunt, Alex “UKIP: The Story of the UK Independence Party’s Rise,” *BBC*, (November 21, 2014), <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-21614073>.

<sup>134</sup> “European Election: United Kingdom Result,” *BBC*, (June 14, 2004), [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/vote2004/euro\\_uk/html/front.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/vote2004/euro_uk/html/front.stm).

<sup>135</sup> Hunt

<sup>136</sup> *ibid*

<sup>137</sup> *ibid*

<sup>138</sup> *ibid*

the EU or not. While UKIP and the Liberal Democrats were very pro “Leave” and “Remain,” respectively,<sup>139</sup> the Conservative and Labour parties were a bit more unclear. While the Labour Party platform claimed to be pro “Remain,” a number of Labour MPs, including party leader Jeremy Corbyn, have hinted that they would actually vote “Leave.”<sup>140</sup> This makes sense; while many Labour MPs wanted to remain for reasons of open migration and continental unity, others felt that EU regulations largely hurt working class populations, and that restoring economic sovereignty to the UK could help blue collar workers.<sup>141</sup> These concerns over the EU largely echo the reasons why the Labour Party was against joining the EEC in the 1950s. The Conservative Party on the other hand, actually had no official stance on whether to leave or remain in the EU. However, Prime Minister Cameron made it clear that he was voting to “Remain,” and planned to step down if the “Leave” campaign won the referendum.

The nationwide referendum was held on June 23rd, 2016 and the “Leave” campaign won with 52% of the vote. David Cameron stepped down as Prime Minister as promised and was then replaced by Theresa May. With such a small margin of victory, the outcome of the vote proved to be highly divisive. The areas that saw the most “Leave” votes were the vast rural areas that make up much of England and Wales.<sup>142</sup> On the other hand, most of Northern Ireland and all of Scotland voted to “Remain.”<sup>143</sup> Despite having a referendum for independence from the UK in 2014, Scottish Parliament has been pushing for another referendum since Brexit, as Scotland

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<sup>139</sup> Smith, Matthew “Which Parties Are pro and Anti Brexit?,” *YouGov*, (April 30, 2019),

<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2019/04/30/which-parties-are-pro-and-anti-brexite>.

<sup>140</sup> Cooper, Charlie “Jeremy Corbyn's Brexit Bind,” *Politico*, September 21, 2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/jeremy-corbyns-brexite-bind/>.

<sup>141</sup> Dimitrakopoulos

<sup>142</sup> “EU Referendum: The Result in Maps and Charts,”

<sup>143</sup> *ibid*



wishes to remain in the EU.<sup>144</sup> However, this request has been repeatedly denied by both Prime Ministers Theresa May and Boris Johnson.<sup>145</sup> After taking years to establish a withdrawal agreement with the EU, resulting in May stepping down and being replaced by Boris Johnson, Brexit was finally enacted on January 31st, 2020.

### **Why Brexit Happened**

In order to fully comprehend the potential human rights ramifications that may result from Great Britain's exit from the European Union, it's crucial to understand exactly why Brexit became such a popular position throughout the United Kingdom. The movement for Brexit rested largely upon the right-wing populist politics of Nigel Farage's UKIP. While Eurosceptics existed prior to Farage's leadership, Farage brought the issue of Brexit to the mainstream with his bold populist rhetoric. During the campaign for Brexit, Farage remarked "We want our country back,"<sup>146</sup> holistically summing up the strong feelings of nationalism in the hearts of many "Leave" voters.

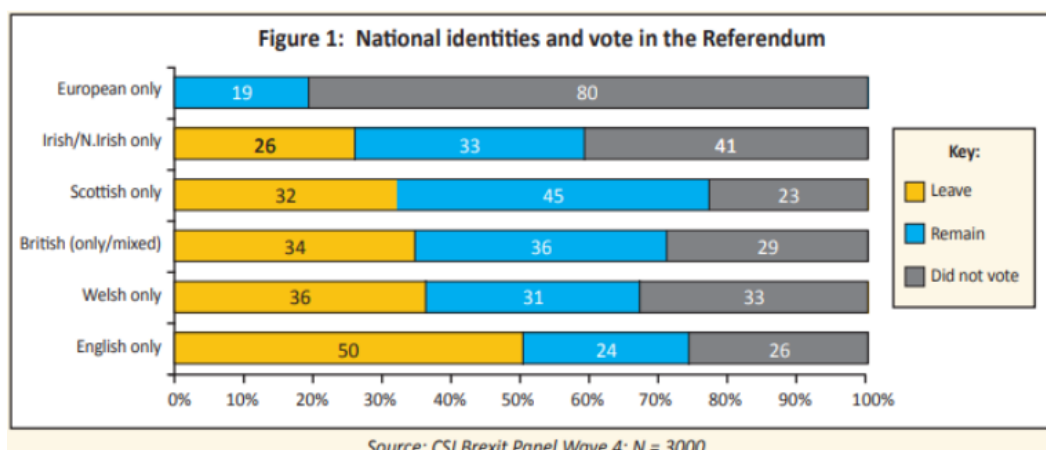
Great Britain comprises several national identities. When asked of their nationality, some will claim a region-specific identity such as being English, Welsh, or Scottish. Others will claim to be British, which has a more inclusive connotation as Britain encompasses all of the aforementioned nations. Identity politics proved to be crucially important in the outcome of the referendum.

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<sup>144</sup> Brooks, Libby "Boris Johnson Refuses to Grant Scotland Powers to Hold Independence Vote," *The Guardian*, (January 14, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/jan/14/boris-johnson-refuses-to-grant-scotland-powers-to-hold-independence-vote>.

<sup>145</sup> *ibid*

<sup>146</sup> "UKIP Leader Nigel Farage: 'We Want Our Country Back'" *BBC*, (September 25, 2015), <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-politics-34356165/ukip-leader-nigel-farage-we-want-our-country-back>.



**Figure 3: National Identities and Vote in Brexit Referendum<sup>147</sup>**

Figure 3 contains data regarding how each national identity ended up voting in the referendum. As seen, those who identify only with an English identity were considerably more likely to vote to leave the European Union, while the vote was more evenly split among those who identified as partially or entirely British. Given that the English population is much larger than those in Northern Ireland and Scotland, where the populations voted to remain by significant margins, the English vote essentially carried the results of the referendum. Farage’s right-wing populist message resonated particularly with English voters, as his message inspired sentiments of English nationalism throughout the region. Many English voters felt that English and British identities were being watered down by the free movement of migrants all throughout Europe and the EU’s refugee acceptance policies. According to the Centre of Social Investigation, ending free movement was the most popular reason for voting “Leave.”<sup>148</sup> This sentiment is expressed by Farage himself in a 2014 speech: “This country in a short space of time has become

<sup>147</sup> Richards, Lindsay and Anthony Heap, “Brexit and Public Opinion: National Identity and Brexit Preferences,” *UK in a changing Europe*, (January 31, 2019), <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/brexit-and-public-opinion-national-identity-and-brexit-preferences/>.

<sup>148</sup> Carl, Noah “People’s Stated Reasons for Voting Leave or Remain,” *UK in a Changing Europe*, (July 31, 2018), <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/research-papers/peoples-stated-reasons-for-voting-leave-or-remain/>, 4.

unrecognizable... in many parts of England you don't hear English spoken anymore. That's not the kind of community we want to leave our children and grandchildren."<sup>149</sup> Here, Farage laments the loss of English culture within its borders due to the existence of foreign migrants. It's worth noting here that Farage talks about "parts of England" rather than "parts of Britain" or "parts of the UK." One of the key tenets of right-wing populism is drawing on the concerns of the majority population. By specifically emphasizing that the English identity was being threatened, this is exactly what Farage was attempting to do. Much of Farage's and UKIP's platform focused heavily on reclaiming English control from the EU, not British.<sup>150</sup> While it may come off as simple semantics, these labels are not interchangeable, and they carry a significant political weight.

Along with immigration, the economy also had an incredible impact over why people voted for Brexit. According to an analysis of the referendum results from The Guardian, it was found that educational attainment, social class, and income were the strongest indicators regarding who would vote to "Leave" or "Remain."<sup>151</sup> Those with lower incomes, lower educational attainment, and working-class backgrounds were more likely to vote "Leave," while those with higher incomes and educational attainment were more likely to vote "Remain."<sup>152</sup> This is largely due to right wing populism's ability to explain the struggles of the working class. In response to the market crash of 2008, the Conservative-led coalition government set forth a series of austerity measures that decreased public spending more than any time since World War

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<sup>149</sup> Sparrow, Andrew "Nigel Farage: Parts of Britain Are 'like a Foreign Land'," *The Guardian*, (February 28, 2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/feb/28/nigel-farage-ukip-immigration-speech>.

<sup>150</sup> O'Toole, Fintan "Brexit Is Being Driven by English Nationalism. And It Will End in Self-Rule," *The Guardian*, (June 18, 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jun/18/england-eu-referendum-brexit>.

<sup>151</sup> Barr, Caelainn "The Areas and Demographics Where the Brexit Vote Was Won," *The Guardian* (June 24, 2016), <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2016/jun/24/the-areas-and-demographics-where-the-brexit-vote-was-won>.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid*

II.<sup>153</sup> These austerity measures heavily impacted the social safety net, as massive cuts were made to programs such as welfare and social security. As a result, working class people endured harsh financial struggles on top of the already failing economy.<sup>154</sup> The austerity measures caused many low-income people to become dissatisfied with the current state politics and seek out a total political upheaval in order to improve their dire situation. Polls conducted during this time saw that working-class people were increasingly abandoning their memberships with the Labour and Conservative parties, and instead turning to UKIP.<sup>155</sup> Another study saw that vote shares rose by over 11% in regions that were impacted most by the austerity measures, largely contributing to the success of UKIP in the 2009 European elections.<sup>156</sup> Thimo Fitzer, a professor at Warwick University, argues that the austerity measures were the tipping point for the success of the “Leave” campaign: “The swing voters who decided the referendum result were not diehard Eurosceptics. They were concerned about public goods and public services and feeling the impact of austerity policies... If it hadn’t been for austerity, more of those marginal voters would have voted the other way and the referendum wouldn’t have turned out the way it did.”<sup>157</sup> Given the small margin of victory in the outcome of the referendum, these swing voters proved to be incredibly influential. When speaking of the necessity for Brexit, Farage remarked “It’s about giving £50 million a day to the EU when the public finances are under great strain.”<sup>158</sup> To those

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<sup>153</sup> “The True Cost of Austerity and Inequality: UK Case Study” *Oxfam*, (September 2013). [https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file\\_attachments/cs-true-cost-austerity-inequality-uk-120913-en\\_0.pdf](https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/cs-true-cost-austerity-inequality-uk-120913-en_0.pdf)

<sup>154</sup> *ibid*

<sup>155</sup> Pack, Mark. “UK Party Alignments 2010-2015.” (2015).

<sup>156</sup> Bulman, May “Austerity and Welfare Cuts Main Driver behind Brexit Referendum Result Vote, Finds Report,” *The Independent*, (February 3, 2019), <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/brexit-austerity-welfare-cuts-vote-leave-social-market-foundation-report-a8760696.html>.

<sup>157</sup> *ibid*

<sup>158</sup> Watts, Robert “Is Ukip's Farage Poised for an Election Breakthrough?,” *The Telegraph*, (April 21, 2012), <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/ukip/9218814/Is-Ukips-Farage-poised-for-an-election-breakthrough.html>.

who have lost their social welfare programs due to the austerity measures, this message resonated immensely.

Beyond the austerity measures, a globalizing economy also caused struggles among the U.K.'s working class. The European Union embodies globalization, as it constitutes several independent countries in order to form a coalition on a global scale. While globalization has many benefits, such as easier access to technologies and medicine from other countries, it often causes working class people in domestic industries to feel left behind by the expanding economy. An example of this is the U.K.'s increased imports from countries that are part of European trade deals, such as China. In turn, these deals have diminished many of the U.K.'s domestic manufacturing industries.<sup>159</sup> As part of the European Union, the U.K. is not allowed to form its own trade deals with other countries, and all trade must be done through the EU. As a result, when workers in manufacturing industries lose their jobs due to the availability of cheaper labor in other countries, the blame is placed on the EU. In their report, researchers Italo Colantone and Piero Stanig address the positives and negatives of the globalizing economy:

“While trade globalization –and, more directly, imports from China and other emerging economies– is estimated to have made a significant contribution to the economies of advanced countries, it is also true that the benefits of globalization have been distributed highly unequally, leaving some social groups, and, importantly, some geographic areas, much worse off. The inability or unwillingness of governments to set up compensation schemes for the losers from trade openness might have led to a reaction

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<sup>159</sup> Colantone, Italo, and Piero Stanig. *Global Competition and Brexit*. Bocconi University, (2016), pp. 1–46, *Global Competition and Brexit*.

that takes the form of isolationism, protectionism, identity-based nationalism, and a serious crisis of “embedded liberalism.”<sup>160</sup>

Here, the authors make a key connection between the economic strife of the working class and identity-based nationalism. The feeling of their jobs being in the hands of a force completely out of their control made many working-class people feel a desire to regain that control, echoing Farage’s statement “We want our country back.”

Overall, there were a multitude of reasons why voters felt a need for Brexit to occur. For most, it was a feeling of their national identity being overtaken by foreign migrants and a desire to restore England to its more homogenous past. For others, it was frustration with a globalizing economy seemingly taking precedence over their diminishing job market. For many, it was a combination of both. Nigel Farage and UKIP effectively utilized the fears, concerns, and struggles of the English people to back Great Britain out of one of the most powerful coalitions in the world. Now, the UK must establish its own policies concerning trade, the economy, and human rights.

### **Human Rights Concerns**

Since Brexit only officially went into effect in January 2020, it's difficult to assess the exact human rights impact of leaving the EU from a policy standpoint. However, given the circumstances under which many voted for Brexit and the positions of the current Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, the future looks grim for many marginalized groups in the United Kingdom. As part of the Brexit deal that was eventually reached, the U.K. will still follow EU

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<sup>160</sup> *ibid* 37

law until December 2020, and within that time must establish the framework for an independent Britain.<sup>161</sup> As of now, Johnson is seeking to make significant changes to Britain's human rights law as the country enters an age of independence, thereby jeopardizing many of the rights that were guaranteed under the EU. In addition, UKIP's Brexit campaign raised identity-based tensions throughout England as migrants were often framed as the enemy. As a result, these populations have been left vulnerable to discrimination and violence.

The United Kingdom currently lacks a formal constitution or bill of rights. Therefore, human rights in the U.K. have been interpreted from both the Human Rights Act (HRA), which went into effect under British Parliament in October 2000,<sup>162</sup> and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which was put into effect with the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon.<sup>163</sup> Johnson made it clear that as part of the Brexit deal, the U.K. will have no involvement with EU human rights standards once the exit is finalized, even going as far as vowing to not participate in the European Convention of Human Rights.<sup>164</sup> As of December 2020, the U.K. will no longer have to follow the Charter, leaving open a gap in human rights policies that are not covered by the HRA. While many of the laws outlined in both the Charter and HRA overlap, such as various nondiscrimination policies and basic human rights such as free speech, other more modern rights are left out of the HRA. The most prominent of these rights being the right to a private life and data protection.<sup>165</sup> These rights, commonly referred to as digital rights, are incredibly important

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<sup>161</sup> de La Baume, Maïa "European Parliament Approves Brexit Deal," *Politico*, (January 29, 2020), <https://www.politico.eu/article/european-parliament-approves-brexit-deal-britain-eu/>.

<sup>162</sup> "The Human Rights Act," Equality and Human Rights Commission, (November 15, 2018), <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights/human-rights-act>.

<sup>163</sup> "What Is the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union?," Equality and Human Rights Commission. Equality and Human Rights Commission, (October 3, 2016), <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/what-are-human-rights/how-are-your-rights-protected/what-charter-fundamental-rights-european-union>.

<sup>164</sup> Stone, Jon "Boris Johnson Refuses to Commit to Keeping UK in Human Rights Convention," *The Independent*, (March 5, 2020), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-brexit-human-rights-convention-echr-michel-barnier-a9378141.html>.

<sup>165</sup> Lock, T, 'Human Rights Law in the UK after Brexit', *Public Law*, vol. Nov Supp (Brexit Special Extra Issue 2017):. 117-134.

in the modern age as they ensure one's internet privacy and the ability to engage in free speech online. Simply put, they are extensions of some of the most basic human rights into the digital world. However, instead of putting supplemental laws in place to protect these rights, Boris Johnson and the Conservatives are seeking to limit the scope of free speech.

Since the outcome of the Brexit referendum, Conservatives have wanted to scrap the HRA and replace it with a British Bill of Rights. They argue that the current Human Rights Act focuses too heavily on individual rights, and does not properly take into account the safety of society as a whole.<sup>166</sup> In particular, many Conservatives believe that the right of free speech needs to be revisited and limited in a way so that the government can more easily assess terroristic threats, both in person and online.<sup>167</sup> While this sounds like a mere safety measure, critics fear that placing these limits on free speech without objective guidelines will give authorities subjective reign over who is detained on these charges without having to fight human rights litigation in court.<sup>168</sup> Particularly, there's concerns over this restriction on free speech being disproportionately applied to minorities commonly associated with terrorism.<sup>169</sup> Since Boris Johnson's Parliament currently has such a large Conservative majority, this Bill of Rights can likely be passed if put to a vote in the House. Given that the U.K. is already one of the most monitored countries in the world with their widespread use of CCTV cameras,<sup>170</sup> giving the government even more control over the expression, whereabouts, and privacy of its citizens is a concerning threat to some of the most fundamental human rights.

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<sup>166</sup> Clear, Stephen "Boris Johnson Is Planning Radical Changes to the UK Constitution," *The Conversation*, (December 18, 2019), <https://theconversation.com/boris-johnson-is-planning-radical-changes-to-the-uk-constitution-here-are-the-ones-you-need-to-know-about-128956>.

<sup>167</sup> *ibid*

<sup>168</sup> *ibid*

<sup>169</sup> *ibid*

<sup>170</sup> Malik, Kenan "As Surveillance Culture Grows, Can We Even Hope to Escape Its Reach?" *The Guardian*, (May 19, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/19/as-surveillance-culture-grows-can-we-even-hope-to-escape-its-reach>.



While Britain has yet to establish a formal policy on immigration, the ramifications of the rhetoric conducted by Farage and UKIP during the Brexit campaign are already being felt by minority populations. Both Farage and Johnson have made their fair share of incendiary comments about the presence of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the U.K. In 2014, Farage remarked that he “doesn’t feel comfortable” with non-English speakers living in England,<sup>171</sup> and in a 2015 interview stated that he doesn’t want migrants who “come perhaps from countries that haven't fully recovered from being behind the Iron Curtain.”<sup>172</sup> Farage has particularly gone after Eastern Europeans, saying that he wouldn’t feel comfortable having a Romanian neighbor, and that he’d like to restrict migration from countries like Poland and Bulgaria.<sup>173</sup> Johnson on the other hand, has targeted a different demographic with his speech: Muslims. Johnson has remarked that Islamophobia is a natural reaction to Muslim people, and that “Islam is the problem.”<sup>174</sup> Johnson has also criticized women who wear burqas, going on to compare them to letterboxes and bank robbers.<sup>175</sup> Additionally, Johnson has expressed his intent to restrict refugee admission from EU levels when Brexit is finalized, even stripping away protections for child refugees in the Brexit deal.<sup>176</sup> Former Conservative Party co-chair Baroness Warsi claimed in 2018 that “[Islamophobia] is very widespread [in the Conservative party]. It exists right from the grassroots, all the way up to the top.”<sup>177</sup> Following these accusations,

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<sup>171</sup> Sparrow, Andrew “Nigel Farage: Parts of Britain Are 'like a Foreign Land',” *The Guardian*, (February 28, 2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/feb/28/nigel-farage-ukip-immigration-speech>.

<sup>172</sup> Mason, Rowena “Nigel Farage: Indian and Australian Immigrants Better than Eastern Europeans,” *The Guardian*, (April 22, 2015), <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/apr/22/nigel-farage-immigrants-india-australia-better-than-eastern-europeans>.

<sup>173</sup> “Nigel Farage Attacked over Romanians 'Slur',” *BBC*, (May 18, 2014), <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-27459923>.

<sup>174</sup> Bienkov, Adam “Boris Johnson Said That Islamophobia Is a 'Natural Reaction' to Islam and That 'Islam Is the Problem',” *Business Insider*, (November 27, 2019), <https://www.businessinsider.com/boris-johnson-islam-is-the-problem-and-islamophobia-is-a-natural-reaction-2018-8>.

<sup>175</sup> *ibid*

<sup>176</sup> Colson, Thomas “Boris Johnson Branded 'Inhumane' after Dropping Protections for Child Refugees from the Brexit Bill,” *Business Insider*, (January 9, 2020), <https://www.businessinsider.com/boris-johnsons-government-drops-protections-for-child-refugees-2020-1>.

<sup>177</sup> Bienkov

Johnson infamously refused to conduct a party-wide investigation into allegations of Islamophobia.<sup>178</sup> Therefore, many Islamophobic MPs likely reside in the Conservative majority to this day.

Although no specific laws have been implemented at this point targeting these populations, the rhetoric alone has had devastating effects on the aforementioned populations. According to the Home Office of the U.K., the rate of hate crimes throughout England and Wales are double what they were in 2013, and over one third of these hate crimes involve violence.<sup>179</sup> Additionally, race and religion-based hate crimes have spiked significantly since the Brexit vote in 2016. Among all religious hate crimes, 47% were committed against Muslims in this past year, and has increased each year following the referendum.<sup>180</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, Eastern Europeans have been significantly targeted by hate crimes following the results of the Brexit referendum.<sup>181</sup> Records indicate instances of Polish people being bludgeoned and murdered on the street, and families being threatened with arson if they did not return to their home country, along with Romanian and Bulgarian migrants facing similar threats.<sup>182</sup> The United Nations even blamed Brexit for this rise in hate crimes. In 2016 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination released a report claiming that the Brexit campaign encouraged “divisive, anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric,” and went on to condemn politicians who “created and entrenched prejudices, thereby emboldening individuals to carry out acts of intimidation and hate.”<sup>183</sup> Even without implemented policy, Brexit has

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<sup>178</sup> *ibid*

<sup>179</sup> Flatley, John “Hate Crime, England and Wales,” *Hate Crime, England and Wales* § (n.d.), 13.

<sup>180</sup> *ibid* 26

<sup>181</sup> Ward, Benjamin “Britain's Brexit Hate Crime Problem,” Human Rights Watch, (September 6, 2016), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/09/05/britains-brexit-hate-crime-problem>.

<sup>182</sup> *ibid*

<sup>183</sup> Butler, Patrick. “Politicians Fueled Rise in Hate Crimes after Brexit Vote, Says UN Body.” *The Guardian*, (August 26, 2016). <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/aug/26/politicians-rise-hate-crimes-brexit-vote-un-committee>.

already created a new normal for daily life in Britain. The populations who fell victim to the rhetoric of the United Kingdom's two most famous politicians are now facing threats and violence at the hands of those who were influenced by it. Much of the cause for Brexit was a nationalist uprising in the name of a lost English identity. Now, it seems many are intending to reclaim that identity through violence and intimidation of those who do not fit the mold of the ideal English person.

### **Conclusion**

If any global event is a prime example of right-wing populism, it's Brexit. Brexit was a movement derived from the will of the working-class people to reclaim their country and economy from the European establishment. It was backlash against both a perceived loss of English identity due to the increase of European migrants and Muslim refugees, and a lack of autonomy over the laws that govern the nation and the economy. Farage and UKIP ran on the message that the European Union was the cause for economic strife among the English working class, as money was being incorrectly appropriated to European institutions rather than English social programs, and that a globalized economy was taking away long-standing working-class jobs. However, there are flaws in this logic, as research has shown that the constituencies in England and Wales that had some of the highest percentages of "Leave" votes will be the most economically impacted by Brexit.<sup>184</sup> Countries in Europe remain some of the largest exporters for industries in England and Wales, and these industries will now have to pay high tariffs to

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<sup>184</sup> Roberts, Dan "Parts of UK That Voted for Brexit May Be Hardest Hit, Study Finds," (March 26, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/mar/27/parts-of-uk-that-voted-for-brexit-may-be-hardest-hit-study-finds>.

conduct trade as opposed to the free trade guaranteed under European law.<sup>185</sup> Notably, this narrative was left out of the discussion among the Brexit campaign, as it did not fit the narrative of the EU being a force of elitist control.

Certain aspects of Brexit possess concerning racial and authoritarian undertones. Major politicians so openly condemning non-English speakers and those of different faiths has turned England into a hotbed for violence and hate crimes in the name of reclaiming the English identity. Additionally, as Johnson's Conservative Party seeks to replace the Human Rights Act with a Bill of Rights that actually restricts the current rights of British citizens, it exemplifies an attempt of the U.K. government to exert ultimate control over its people in a way that it couldn't under the EU. As Brexit will not be fully realized until December 2020, it's impossible to know for certain what other human rights will be challenged as a result of this monumental political upheaval. However, given what has occurred in the U.K. since the referendum, the future of human rights in the thousand-year-old country does not look promising.

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<sup>185</sup> *ibid*

## Chapter 4

### The Philippines

#### Introduction

A few months before Donald Trump secured the title of U.S. President and altered the world's perception of political norms, sentiments of right-wing populism were already well under way in one of the superpower's former territories. Following a liberal government, right wing mayor Rodrigo Duterte became president of the Philippines on June 30th, 2016. Duterte is a figure who, like the U.S. President, has gained substantial notoriety by remaining extremely controversial throughout his career in the public eye. He has made remarks calling the Pope the "son of a whore," and referring to God as "stupid" in a country with a primarily Catholic population.<sup>186</sup> He has also made jokes about rape victims in the Philippines, even dismissing his own daughter's confessed rape as her being a "drama queen."<sup>187</sup> Like Trump, Duterte's bombastic rhetoric garnered him an army of online supporters who have appropriated the slur "Dutertards,"<sup>188</sup> reminiscent of how Trump's base reclaimed the term "Deplorables" from Clinton supporters in the U.S. election. Duterte also notoriously utilized Facebook to spread

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<sup>186</sup> "Profile: Duterte the Controversial 'Strongman' of the Philippines." *BBC*, (May 22, 2019). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-36659258>.

<sup>187</sup> Campbell, Charlie. "Philippines: Duterte Mocks Daughter for Saying She Was Raped." *Time*, (April 20, 2016). <https://time.com/4300382/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-daughter-rape-sara-inday-president-jacqueline-hamill/>.

<sup>188</sup> Reed, John. "Rodrigo Duterte and the Populist Playbook." *Financial Times*, (July 26, 2018). <https://www.ft.com/content/98589db0-8132-11e8-bc55-50daf11b720d>.

propaganda and conspiracies regarding his political opponents, and to push popularity for his now infamous war on drugs which has claimed thousands of lives.<sup>189</sup>

In short, Rodrigo Duterte's presidency has been a disaster for human rights in the Philippine region. The President has limited free speech through his intimidation of journalists, making the Philippines one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a reporter.<sup>190</sup> Additionally, the President has overseen thousands of extrajudicial killings over his war on drugs, his spearhead issue that got him elected to the executive office. Since taking office in the summer of 2016, Rodrigo Duterte has easily become one of the biggest threats to human rights in the world.

### **The Democratic History of the Philippines**

The Philippines has had better success with democracy than other developing nations that have embraced this political ideology in the past century. However, the success of this democracy has been tested by colonialism, political corruption, and the stronghold of leaders with autocratic tendencies. Spain had maintained rule over the Philippines until 1897, when Philippine revolutionaries retaliated after 333 years of living under imperialism.<sup>191</sup> The newly independent Philippines elected revolutionary Emilio Aguinaldo as President at the Tejeros Convention, where only members of the revolution were permitted to vote.<sup>192</sup> However,

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<sup>189</sup> Alba, Davey. "Duterte's Drug War And The Human Cost Of Facebook's Rise In The Philippines." *BuzzFeed News*, (September 4, 2018). <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/daveyalba/facebook-philippines-dutertes-drug-war>.

<sup>190</sup> Hunt, Luke. "Duterte's Media War in the Philippines." *The Diplomat*, (September 24, 2018). <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/dutertes-media-war-in-the-philippines/>.

<sup>191</sup> May, R.J., and Viberto Selochan. "The Military and the Fragile Democracy of the Philippines." In *The Military and Democracy in Asia and the Pacific*, 60. Canberra, Australia: Australian National University Press, (2004).

<sup>192</sup> Agoncillo, Teodoro A. *History of the Filipino People*. Quezon City: C & E Pub., (2012).

Aguinaldo's presidency did not last long as the Spanish regained rule following the Pact of Biak na Bato and the exile of Aguinaldo.<sup>193</sup> Aguinaldo's short term as President of the Philippines conveyed early democratic tendencies among the briefly independent Filipino government, however it would be the country's last taste of independence for nearly another half century.

Following the victory of the Spanish American War, the United States gained control of the Philippines in 1898 and immediately began colonizing the nation. Part of this colonization process involved instilling ideals of democracy into Philippine society, with the intent to eventually allow the region to become autonomous once democracy had been successfully implemented.<sup>194</sup> This was achieved by a process known as "Filipinization" which began in 1917. This process involved gradually replacing American military officers holding governmental positions with Filipino elites until 1935, when all political positions were occupied by native Filipinos.<sup>195</sup> Full independence was finally granted to the Philippines in 1946, after the adoption of its own constitution consisting of American-influenced democracy.

The Philippines achieved political autonomy in, comparatively, a very strange and anticlimactic manner. The country was never truly given a chance to overthrow a repressive regime and form a government on its own terms. Rather, their initial revolution against its Spanish colonizers was thwarted in about a year, and the nation was quickly recolonized by the U.S. for decades following. Being given and taught democracy by the U.S., rather than establishing it on its own terms, caused a lot of deep-rooted problems in the Philippines that still

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<sup>193</sup> *ibid*

<sup>194</sup> May and Selochan 61.

<sup>195</sup> Stanley, Peter W. "Toward Democracy in the Philippines." *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 36, no. 1 (1986): 131. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1174017>.

persist today. In Noam Chomsky's "Deterring Democracy," he quotes the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in saying, "much of [the Philippines's] problems now... seem to be rooted in the fact that the country has had its entire history no form of social revolution."<sup>196</sup> The Philippines had always been a country with power largely concentrated in the hands of the wealthy elites,<sup>197</sup> and as the United States was shaping democracy in the Philippines these were the people who were being appointed to political office.<sup>198</sup> As a result, the Philippines was imposed with change in the form of a foreign democratic system but lacked the institutional social change that typically accompanies a self-driven political revolution.

The result of this lack of structural change resulted in the election of President Ferdinand Marcos in 1965. Marcos held notoriety in the Philippines as a high-profile trial lawyer in Manila, and later a ranking military officer in World War II.<sup>199</sup> This elite status made Marcos the ideal Filipino president by U.S. standards, as he resembled the typical politician that the American government would've appointed under colonialism. As a former military ally during the time of the Vietnam war, Marcos's presidency proved especially valuable to the United States. During the beginning of his presidency, Marcos performed very well politically, having become the first Filipino president to win two consecutive terms and developing the Philippines into the second largest economy in Asia at the time.<sup>200</sup> However, during his second term Marcos began to face widespread opposition from the left and particularly among the youth and working class.<sup>201</sup> As a result of these revolts, Marcos declared martial law in 1972, effectively ruling as a dictator and

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<sup>196</sup> Chomsky, Noam. "The Fruits of Victory: Asia." In *Deterring Democracy*. London, England: Verso Books, 1992: 268

<sup>197</sup> *ibid* 270

<sup>198</sup> *ibid*

<sup>199</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Ferdinand Marcos." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (September 24, 2019). <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ferdinand-E-Marcos>.

<sup>200</sup> Hawes, Gary. "United States Support for the Marcos Administration and the Pressures That Made for Change." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 8, no. 1 (1986): 19. <https://doi.org/10.1355/cs8-1b>.

<sup>201</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica.



not relinquishing control of the presidency until he was eventually overthrown in 1986.<sup>202</sup> During his authoritarian rule, the Marcos administration administered torture on at least 3,400 victims,<sup>203</sup> performed 3,200 extrajudicial killings,<sup>204</sup> and oversaw the imprisonment of his political opponents and dissenting journalists.<sup>205</sup> The Marcos administration even went as far as to assassinate Benigno Aquilino Jr., one of Marcos's biggest critics, who had previously been imprisoned and exiled for criticizing the president.<sup>206</sup>

The 20 year-long Marcos presidency became a significant part of Philippine history, as it represented a lack of social awareness in Philippine politics and also served as a dangerous indicator of the fragility of its democracy. Despite the autocratic rule of the Marcos regime, the United States went on to support the president well into the final stages of the dictatorship with American Vice President George H.W. Bush praising Marcos's "adherence to democratic principles and democratic processes" in 1982.<sup>207</sup> Despite the atrocious human rights atrocities that occurred under this regime, the U.S. chose to largely overlook it in favor of its economic and militaristic alliance with the country.

One of the primary reasons that the current presidency of Rodrigo Duterte is so dangerous to the Philippines is due to the legacy left behind by Ferdinand Marcos. Both figures share striking similarities in their ruling practices. In 2018, Human Rights Watch reported 4,948 extrajudicial killings under Duterte's presidency after only two years of being in office,<sup>208</sup> largely

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<sup>202</sup> Hawes, 19

<sup>203</sup> *Report of an Amnesty International Mission to the Republic of the Philippines*. London, England: Amnesty International Publications, 1975. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/204000/asa350191977en.pdf>.

<sup>204</sup> *ibid*

<sup>205</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica.

<sup>206</sup> *ibid*

<sup>207</sup> Hawes, 19

<sup>208</sup> Roth, Kenneth. "World Report 2019: Rights Trends in Philippines." Human Rights Watch, (January 22, 2019). <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/philippines>.

exceeding the total under Marcos's administration which spanned over twenty years. Duterte has also notably jailed journalists and political opponents that have been critical of him,<sup>209</sup> reminiscent of the practices of the Marcos regime. Duterte has even gone on to praise the dictator on a number of occasions, stating in 2018 that "If I step down, bring back Marcos to run the Philippines."<sup>210</sup> Additionally, just as it was in the 1980s with Marcos and the Reagan administration, the conservative government currently in power in America has yet to condemn Duterte's damaging and borderline autocratic practices. The dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos set a dangerous precedent in the nascent Filipino democracy, largely normalizing widespread instances of human rights abuses and autocratic presidential behavior. This paved the way for a figure like Duterte to commit similar, and increasingly worse atrocities.

### **Rodrigo Duterte's Rise to Power**

Rodrigo Duterte is arguably the most controversial and polarizing figure in the post-Marcos Philippine democracy. However, given the context of modern Philippine politics and Duterte's infamous career as mayor of Davao City, his landslide election victory begins to make a lot of sense. Duterte took office as mayor in 1988, shortly after Marcos was overthrown as dictator in 1986.<sup>211</sup> He then went on to serve seven terms as mayor, spanning over 22 years.<sup>212</sup> Much like his presidency, his tenure as mayor focused heavily on reducing crime in Davao,

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<sup>209</sup> Fuertes-Knight, Joanna. "Attacks on the Media Show Duterte's Philippines Is Heading for Despotism | Jo Fuertes Knight." *The Guardian*, (February 15, 2019).

<sup>210</sup> Reuters. "Duterte: If I Step down, Bring Back Marcos to Run Philippines." *South China Morning Post*, (August 31, 2018). <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2162138/duterte-if-i-step-down-bring-back-marcos-run-philippines>.

<sup>211</sup> Rauhala, Emily. "Before Duterte Was the Philippines' President, He Was 'the Death Squad Mayor'." *The Washington Post*, (September 28, 2016).

<sup>212</sup> *ibid*

which faces famously high crime rates before Duterte took office.<sup>213</sup> However, his methods of making this happen are questionable to say the least, and serve as a precursor for the egregious human rights abuses he would go on to commit during his presidency.

Off the heels of a revolution, Davao was nicknamed “Murder City” after the incessant crime that occurred within its borders.<sup>214</sup> Duterte has described himself as a “hitman” and has boasted about personally killing criminals in his past.<sup>215</sup> Given these self-descriptors, his approach to crime throughout his political career comes to little surprise. Initially, approach to crime involved police killings of suspected criminals with little to no follow up investigation.<sup>216</sup> Duterte went on to develop an alternative method to combating crime, one that has gone on to be shrouded in conspiracy. The Davao Death Squad is a vigilante group that has notably targeted suspects of petty crime and drug dealing, as well as street children. For years, this group has held suspected ties to Duterte with many, including the Human Rights Watch, accusing him of supporting this group.<sup>217</sup> One reason for this being the bizarre trend involving Duterte announcing the names of suspected criminals on public radio, and those same people being killed by unidentified gunmen shortly after.<sup>218</sup> Other evidence involves remarks he makes about the killings where he appears to encourage them, as he did in this remark from the 2004 mayoral election: “If I win, more criminals will get killed because I have vowed to protect the people of this city. It’s true that there have been killings. But who were those killed? Weren’t they

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<sup>213</sup> Jenkins, Nash. “Why Did the Philippines Elect a Man Like Rodrigo Duterte?” *Time*, (May 10, 2016). <https://time.com/4324073/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-president-why-elected/>.

<sup>214</sup> Rauhala

<sup>215</sup> Goldman, Russell. “Rodrigo Duterte on Killing Criminal Suspects: ‘I Used to Do It Personally.’” *The New York Times*, (December 14, 2016). <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/14/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-killings.html>.

<sup>216</sup> Rauhala

<sup>217</sup> “‘You Can Die Any Time’: Death Squad Killings in Mindanao.” Human Rights Watch, (March 20, 2017). <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/04/06/you-can-die-any-time/death-squad-killings-mindanao#1b340c>.

<sup>218</sup> *ibid*

criminals? They were all fools.”<sup>219</sup> While these killings were nothing short of horrific human rights abuses, they appear to have ensured Duterte’s repeated victory in Davao. As an outsider, the practices of Rodrigo Duterte as mayor seem appalling, however they may come across differently to a citizen of Davao who had previously endured years of autocracy followed by unhinged crime. Duterte symbolized law and order during a time where that was all but there in Philippine politics, and despite his corruption and his penchant for violence, he ironically provided a sense of security to many Filipino people.<sup>220</sup>

Another reason why Duterte gained so much popularity leading up to the presidential election is one that echoes through many veins of right-wing populism throughout the world: he challenged the political establishment. One may think that after the reign of Marcos, Philippine politics would shift away from the elitist electoral practices that had been instilled by colonialism under the U.S. However, this trend of favoring elites in politics continued well into the twenty first century. Many political scientists regard post-Marcos Philippines as a “failed democracy,” as the candidates who followed this dictatorship all fall within the political elite.<sup>221</sup> This political elite can be defined as those who are politically and economically similar to Corazon Aquino, the first President who followed the Marcos dictatorship. Presidents who have followed Aquino have included a former military officer, two career politicians, and Aquino’s own son. Another hallmark of the establishment was its tendency toward serving special interests and those in power, rather than the average Filipino.<sup>222</sup> The establishment prefers stagnation in the everyday life of the country, and not necessarily changing anyone’s lives for better or worse. These

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<sup>219</sup> *ibid*

<sup>220</sup> Rauhala

<sup>221</sup> Casiple, Ramon C. “The Duterte Presidency as a Phenomenon.” *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 38, no. 2 (August 2016): 179–84.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid*

reasons are why a figure such as Duterte was so appealing to many voters. Duterte identified that there were problems in the Philippines that needed to be dealt with, and effectively called out the establishment for largely ignoring them. In true populist fashion, he connected with the average voter, plainly identifying their pain and proposing easy-to-comprehend solutions to solve them. In this instance, it was drug crime that largely devastated many regions of the Philippines, and given Duterte's track record on crime, people were undoubtedly ready for someone who could actually make progress on this issue. Duterte ended up winning a landslide victory in the 2016 election, triumphing both of his opponents by over six million votes.<sup>223</sup> Additionally, as recently as January 2020, Duterte faces an approval rating of 72% among Filipino voters.<sup>224</sup> However, he does not face the same approval among international human rights groups, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, or among the United Nations, which has conducted various investigations into his extrajudicial killings.<sup>225</sup> While it's understandable why people may vote for a figure like Rodrigo Duterte, the human rights abuses he has committed during his presidency are largely outperforming a twenty-year dictatorship. In a country with such a dangerous history of autocracy, suppression, and violence, Duterte's presidency becomes more dangerous with each passing day.

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<sup>223</sup> "#PHVote 2016 Philippine Elections: Official Results." Get to know who's running for office in the May 2016 elections! #PHVote. Accessed March 22, 2020. <https://ph.rappler.com/elections/2016/results/official>.

<sup>224</sup> Calonzo, Andreo. *Bloomberg*, (January 21, 2020). <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-22/duterte-s-popularity-hits-new-high-pollster-sws-says>.

<sup>225</sup> Ellis-Petersen, Hannah. "UN Launches 'Comprehensive' Review of Philippine Drug War." *The Guardian*, (July 12, 2019). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/12/un-launches-comprehensive-review-of-philippine-drug-war>.

## Duterte and Free Speech

Rodrigo Duterte's relationship with the Philippine media can be characterized as a more extreme version of Donald Trump's relationship with the United States media. Duterte has adopted much of Trump's language in referring to the media, labeling various news outlets that disagree with him as "fake news," and calling journalists "spies."<sup>226</sup> However, Duterte's taken this a step further, putting the quintessential human right of free speech at risk in the Philippines through threats and acts of violence and intimidation.

President Duterte has made it abundantly clear that he is willing to do everything in his power to suppress prominent voices that are critical of him. The Philippines is already regarded as one of the most dangerous countries to work as a journalist in the world with at least 75 having been murdered since 1992, many of whom were investigating political corruption.<sup>227</sup> When confronted about the country's high murder rate of journalists, Duterte remarked that "just because you're a journalist you are not exempt from assassination, if you are a son of a bitch," and went on to say "most of those killed, to be frank, have done something [wrong]."<sup>228</sup> Here, Duterte is justifying the murder of his ideological dissidents. This type of intimidation discourages free press throughout the country, as journalists become forced to operate under a constant threat of danger. Duterte's crusade against the free press infamously culminated in the arrest of journalist Maria Ressa, the CEO of Rappler which is a popular online news source based in the Philippines. Ressa is a longtime critic of President Duterte and has engaged in extensive investigative reporting into Duterte's war on drugs, particularly the President's

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<sup>226</sup> Fuertes-Knight

<sup>227</sup> Lewis, Simon. "Philippines: Duterte Says He'll Kill Corrupt Journalists." *Time*, (June 1, 2016). <https://time.com/4353279/duterte-philippines-journalists-assassination/>.

<sup>228</sup> *ibid*

widespread extrajudicial killings. In February of 2019, Ressa was arrested for digital libel and is currently facing up to fifteen years in prison.<sup>229</sup> This suppression of free press exhibits Duterte's authoritarian tendencies, as Ressa herself remarks "I have been in the line of fire [in reference to the Marcos dictatorship], but nothing has prepared me for this."<sup>230</sup> Ressa's situation highlights the key dangers of populism. While the practice of populism is based on making connections with the common voters, those connections are often exploited by the politician in order to advance their political interests. Ressa notes how due to Duterte's attacks on the media, her life is constantly threatened by his supporters: "the attacks on Facebook are insidious and extremely personal, from the way I look and sound to threats of rape and murder."<sup>231</sup> By turning his supporters in a violent rage toward Ressa, Duterte possesses the powerful opportunity to silence her without technically claiming any responsibility. In a country with such a dangerous authoritarian past that involved the suppression and murder of journalists, Duterte's autocratic behavior in regard to the free press is an appalling abuse of human rights.

Maria Ressa is not the only prominent figure to be silenced and threatened by President Duterte. Duterte has gone as far as to orchestrate the arrest of two prominent senators who have openly criticized his administration. In February of 2017, Senator Leila de Lima was detained by the Justice Department on charges that she accepted money from drug dealers while she was Justice Secretary during the previous administration.<sup>232</sup> De Lima had been one of the most outspoken critics of Duterte's war on drugs, which has led many international human rights

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<sup>229</sup> Fuertes-Knight

<sup>230</sup> *ibid*

<sup>231</sup> *ibid*

<sup>232</sup> Regencia, Ted. "Rights Groups Demand Release of Duterte Critic Leila De Lima." *Al Jazeera*, (February 22, 2019). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/02/rights-groups-demand-release-duterte-critic-leila-de-lima-190222053034258.html>.

groups to believe that the Duterte administration fabricated these charges to silence the Senator.<sup>233</sup> Nicolas Bequelin, a Director for Amnesty International, remarked “Senator de Lima is a brave champion of human rights, detained solely for her criticism of the Duterte administration,” as well as “This is a blatant attempt to silence her courageous voice as she continues to speak out against widespread human rights violations.”<sup>234</sup> Given that the only evidence brought forth by the prosecution were prisoner and police testimonies,<sup>235</sup> it leaves much room for these charges to be falsified by people in power. Another Senator, Antonio Trillanes, faced a similar situation when he faced arrest after the President lifted an amnesty that the Senator had received following his participation in two rebellions.<sup>236</sup> Trillanes has been one of Duterte’s biggest critics throughout his entire presidency, notably calling his war on drugs a sham to distract from Duterte’s alleged illegal drug trade scheme while he was mayor.<sup>237</sup> Upon his arrest, he famously said “officially, this now shows that we no longer have democracy.”<sup>238</sup> The fact that Duterte lifted the amnesty himself shows the intention and deliberation in this act. If Trillanes was already acquitted of his crimes and was serving as a well-regarded Senator, what reason did Duterte have behind detaining him other than silencing him? The President will seemingly go to any length to silence his outspoken political dissidents, even if it means engaging in autocratic practices. Many of Duterte’s silencing practices echo the twenty-year Marcos dictatorship, in which his opponents were also jailed, and even assassinated. Trillanes signaling the end of democracy during his arrest comes off the heels of Duterte’s many displays

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<sup>233</sup> *ibid*

<sup>234</sup> “Outspoken Senator Marks Two Years in Arbitrary Detention in the Philippines.” Amnesty International, (February 22, 2019).

<sup>235</sup> Cepeda, Mara. “Day 3 Bilibid Probe: 12 Hours of Testimonies vs De Lima.” *Rappler*, (October 7, 2016).  
<https://www.rappler.com/nation/148494-house-probe-bilibid-drugs-day-3>.

<sup>236</sup> Villamor, Felipe. “Second Philippine Senator Who Defied Duterte Is Arrested.” *The New York Times*, (September 25, 2018).

<sup>237</sup> Hincks, Joseph. “How Antonio Trillanes Came to Take on Rodrigo Duterte.” *Time*, (October 27, 2017).  
<https://time.com/4971952/antonio-trillanes-rodriigo-duterte-philippines/>.

<sup>238</sup> Villamor



of autocratic behavior. With two years left in this Presidential term, only time will tell if Duterte will further impede the imperative right of free speech.

### War on Drugs

“Hitler massacred three million Jews... There are three million drug addicts. There are. I’d be happy to slaughter them” -Rodrigo Duterte, September 2016<sup>239</sup>

From his tenure as mayor to his presidential campaign, diminishing crime and eliminating the use and distribution of illegal drugs has been the backbone of Rodrigo Duterte’s platform. In practice however, Duterte’s methods of tackling these issues are undoubtedly the biggest human rights atrocity of his presidency, leaving thousands of drug users, dealers, and innocent people dead. Throughout his political career, Duterte has repeatedly claimed that the Philippines is a “narco-state,” and that high rates of drug violence and trafficking are the country’s biggest problems, even going as far as to encourage average citizens to kill drug users and dealers on their own.<sup>240</sup> Voters seem to agree with him too, with 82% expressing satisfaction with Duterte’s action on drugs as of September 2019.<sup>241</sup> This widespread support for his practices likely comes from the shocking data and information that the President purports regarding drug use and crime in the Philippines. Duterte has made claims such as that two police officers are killed in drug-related operations every day,<sup>242</sup> and that the Philippines has

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<sup>239</sup> Johnson, David T., and Jon Fernquest. “Governing through Killing: The War on Drugs in the Philippines.” *Asian Journal of Law and Society* 5, no. 2 (May 2, 2018): 359. <https://doi.org/10.1017/als.2018.12>.

<sup>240</sup> “Philippines: Duterte’s 100 Days of Carnage.” Amnesty International, (October 7, 2016).

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/10/philippines-dutertes-hundred-days-of-carnage/>.

<sup>241</sup> Baldwin, Clare, and Andrew R.C. Marshall. “As Death Toll Mounts, Duterte Deploys Dubious Data in ‘War on Drugs!’” *Reuters*, (October 18, 2016). <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/philippines-duterte-data/>.

<sup>242</sup> *ibid*

approximately 3.7 million drug addicts.<sup>243</sup> These statistics given by a nation's leader would understandably make any population of people concerned. However, many sources dispute the figures that Duterte has given over the years. The President made his claim about police officers in October of 2016, but according to police statistics, from the time of his inauguration to the time of that speech only thirteen police officers total had been killed.<sup>244</sup> In regard to his comments on the Philippines being a “narco-state” with over 3.7 million drug users, these statistics are also grossly overexaggerated. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, drug use in the Philippines is actually considerably lower than the global average.<sup>245</sup>

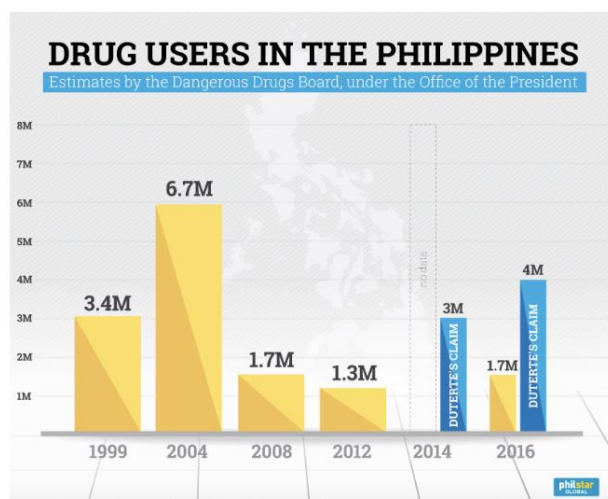


Figure 4: Number of Drug Users in the Philippines, Dangerous Drugs Board<sup>246</sup>

Figure 4 shows data collected from the Dangerous Drugs Board, a Philippine government agency under the Office of the President. The DDB found, through surveys, that approximately 1.7 million Filipinos had engaged in illegal drug use within the last thirteen months of the survey,<sup>247</sup> less than half of what Duterte was reporting to the public. Additionally, only 860,000

<sup>243</sup> Hincks, Joseph. “Philippines: Inside Duterte's Killer Drug War.” *Al Jazeera*, (September 8, 2016). <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/09/philippines-duterte-killer-drug-war-160905094258461.html>.

<sup>244</sup> *ibid*

<sup>245</sup> “Philippines: Duterte's 100 Days of Carnage.”

<sup>246</sup> “Are There 4 Million Drug Addicts in the Philippines?” *The Philippine Star*, (December 23, 2016).

<https://www.philstar.com/other-sections/news-feature/2016/12/16/1654043/are-there-4-million-drug-addicts-philippines>.

<sup>247</sup> Baldwin and Marshall

respondents of that 1.7 million reported using addictive drugs, the remainder of whom mainly reported the use of non-addictive drugs such as marijuana.<sup>248</sup> Given this information, it becomes abundantly clear that Duterte is deliberately spreading misinformation in order to create panic among Filipino people, and consequently justify the extreme measures of his war on drugs. Prior to Duterte's political prominence on a national level, most Filipino voters were concerned with the high rates of poverty throughout the nation.<sup>249</sup> However, Duterte quickly switched the main political narrative to illicit drug use. President Duterte's misinformation campaign perfectly exemplifies how right-wing populist figures are able to successfully advance their political agenda. Leaders like Duterte willingly spread false data and information that demonizes a particular group of people, creating mass panic among their voter base and thereby justifying any means taken to eradicate the population and restore normalcy. When in reality, the targeted population is not nearly as large of a threat as the leader poses it to be, and the country's deep-rooted problems likely stem from another source that the right-wing populist leader is unwilling to confront.

While Duterte's deliberate spread of misinformation is dangerous in itself, the war on drugs that resulted from it has consequently cost thousands of lives. According to Human Rights Watch, 5,526 drug dealers and users have died in police operations from the beginning of Duterte's presidency, to June 2019.<sup>250</sup> Many of these suspects were killed during police raids, where instead of being taken into custody, they were killed on the spot with police claiming self-defense.<sup>251</sup> HRW also reports that the death toll may be astronomically higher than what is confirmed, as thousands of drug dealers and users have been found dead in vigilante-style

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<sup>248</sup> *ibid*

<sup>249</sup> Hincks, "Philippines: Inside Duterte's Killer Drug War."

<sup>250</sup> Roth, "World Report 2020: Rights Trends in Philippines."

<sup>251</sup> *ibid*

killings. They estimate that the total death toll of the first three years of Duterte's presidency may be as high as 27,000.<sup>252</sup> These deaths go largely uninvestigated by police, which indicates that the killings were either staged by police officers themselves, or police forces and government officials have been backing vigilante groups to carry out these murders, much like Duterte and the Davao Death Squad. In fact, in April 2017 two retired police officers reported that Philippine police receive cash incentives for staging the murders of drug users, dealers, and other criminals.<sup>253</sup> These officers also reported that police forces do maintain contact with vigilante groups such as the Davao Death Squad and utilize them to orchestrate mass killings of drug criminals.<sup>254</sup> Antonio Trillanes, the opposition Senator that Duterte had jailed, insists that the drug war is particularly cruel because so many suspects are killed before given due process, thereby leaving the large possibility that many of them may have been innocent.<sup>255</sup> While Duterte continually emphasizes falling overall crime rates under his presidency (that were already decreasing before he took office), he neglects to acknowledge the 18% spike in murders that have occurred since his inauguration.<sup>256</sup> This significant increase in murders is very likely due to the large-scale extermination of drug users by the Duterte administration.

Some researchers and human rights groups argue that through his war on drugs, Duterte is effectively committing genocide against his own people.<sup>257</sup> The president has made it a point to dehumanize drug users. In response to the United Nations condemning his war on drugs for its

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<sup>252</sup> *ibid*

<sup>253</sup> Mogato, Manuel. "Special Report: Police Describe Kill Rewards, Staged Crime Scenes in Duterte's Drug War." *Reuters*, (April 18, 2017). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-duterte-police-specialrep/special-report-police-describe-kill-rewards-staged-crime-scenes-in-dutertes-drug-war-idUSKBN17K1F4>.

<sup>254</sup> *ibid*

<sup>255</sup> Regencia, Ted. "Senator: Rodrigo Duterte's Drug War Has Killed 20,000." *Al Jazeera*, (February 21, 2018).

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/senator-rodrigo-duterte-drug-war-killed-20000-180221134139202.html>.

<sup>256</sup> Simangan, Dahlia. "Is the Philippine 'War on Drugs' an Act of Genocide?" *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, no. 1 (July 17, 2017): 68–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2017.1379939>.

<sup>257</sup> *ibid*

human rights abuses, Duterte remarked: "Crime against humanity? In the first place, I'd like to be frank with you. Are they humans? What is your definition of a human being?"<sup>258</sup> By emphasizing the harm that drug users bring to Philippine society, and going on to label them as inhuman, Duterte conveys that drug users are worthy of death. When looking at past genocides, such as those that took place in Germany during WWII and Rwanda in 1994, similar dehumanization tactics were used to draw support for murdering their respective targeted populations. Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs is the most dangerous event to occur in modern Philippine history, and poses a threat to the human rights of tens of thousands of people.

### **Conclusion**

Rodrigo Duterte is currently one of the largest threats to human rights on the planet. However, despite his crusade against free speech and the orchestrated murder of thousands, he still maintains very high approval ratings with Filipino voters. When analyzing the success of a right-wing populist leader, it's imperative to understand the appeal he initially posed to his voter base, especially in a case like Duterte's where he won by such large margins. Duterte posed an alternative to the political establishment that likely sparked hope in the hearts of many Filipino voters. Since the end of the Marcos dictatorship, the office of the President had been occupied with rich political elites who were more focused on maintaining the status quo than the concerns of the Filipino people. When Rodrigo Duterte entered the presidential race with platforms and policies that represented a change to the status quo, it excited Filipino voters who felt that the

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<sup>258</sup> Berberoglu, Berch. "Neoliberalism, Contentious Politics, and the Rise of Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Social Movements, Revolution, and Social Transformation*, 263. Palgrave Macmillan, n.d.

establishment in power didn't properly act on their interests. This is exactly what right-wing populism is. Duterte effectively combined staunch, right wing anti-drug policies with plainly spoken populist rhetoric, and in turn convinced the Filipino people that this was the cause for their strife and struggles.

While dismantling the political establishment and challenging the elite are legitimate causes to fight for, right wing populism is a very dangerous answer. While the basis of this political ideology rests on appealing to the majority, it consequently leaves minority populations in danger of persecution. In this case, that population is drug users Duterte has explicitly expressed his interest in killing them, and has intimidated, silenced, or imprisoned anyone who opposes him. Rodrigo Duterte has repeatedly praised the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos throughout his career and given the way his presidency has gone so far, he is well on his way to surpass him in detrimental impact.

## Discussion & Conclusion

To echo the introduction, right wing populism is a political ideology and not a political platform. Meaning, that the concept cannot be applied to all affected countries in a uniform manner. Rather, a combination of the struggles of a country's majority population coupled with the country's political and democratic history shape how right-wing populism will impact the human rights of a particular nation. In the United States, poor working-class Americans feel left behind by modern politics. In response, Trump cracked down on minority populations and blamed them for the deterioration of the job market, safety, and traditional American life. Brazilians were fed up with political corruption and widespread poverty, so Bolsonaro took the Presidency with a law and order stance, and demonized minorities for halting economic progression. In the United Kingdom, many felt that the government was valuing European interests over the interests of the English people and that their identity was being overtaken by European migrants. Therefore, Farage and UKIP sought to establish an independent Britain, in turn stripping away EU protections and activating nativist rhetoric. In the Philippines, Duterte tapped into voters' frustrations with the status quo of the political establishment, and in turn conquered it through questionable authoritarian means.

The right-wing populist leaders and institutions in all four of these countries effectively tap into and manipulate the concerns of the average voter. Notably, these explanations and policies put forth by the right-wing populist have adverse human rights effects. This is because right-wing populists place the blame of the majority's economic and social setbacks on minority groups such as racial minorities, religious minorities, and disadvantaged groups. These populist leaders analyzed also all display some degree of authoritarian tendencies, as they brazenly

discredit their critics, the free press, and other governmental institutions that may not agree with them.

While all instances of right-wing populism presented exhibit evident human rights abuses as a result of the implementation of this ideology, it's worth noting the contrast between populism's presence in countries in the Global North (United States and United Kingdom) and the Global South (Brazil and the Philippines). In the Global North, right-wing populism is activated through a sentiment that the political establishment cares more for safeguarding the rights of the minority over the majority, thereby creating a feeling of identity loss and economic strife among the working class. While in the Global South, right wing populism is more so activated by frustrations over widespread crime, political corruption, and extreme poverty, thereby causing voters to question their nascent democracy and trust the populist leader to restore order by any means necessary. Leaders in the Global South seek to accomplish this order by edging on authoritarian rule and placing the blame for widespread poverty on disadvantaged populations.

Nationalism plays a large role in the success of right-wing populism in both the Global North and the Global South, however the cause behind this rise in nationalism differs between these regions of the world. In the Global North, nationalism is evoked as a response to a globalizing world. Working class people in the United States and the United Kingdom oftentimes feel left behind by the diversification and technological advancement that comes with globalization. In a report on right-wing populism, Human Rights Watch Director Kenneth Roth emphasizes this point:

“In the West, many people feel left behind by technological change, the global economy, and growing inequality. Horrific incidents of terrorism generate apprehension and fear.



Some are uneasy with societies that have become more ethnically, religiously and racially diverse. There is an increasing sense that governments and the elite ignore public concerns.<sup>259</sup>

As Roth points out, the globalizing world causes working class populations to feel as if they are losing control of their livelihoods. In response, right-wing populist leaders exploit this fear and turn it into hate-filled rhetoric against minority populations. In the United States, Trump targets undocumented migrants as threat to the American economy and Muslims as a threat to the country's safety. In the United Kingdom, Farage and UKIP target European migrants for stealing English jobs. These populist leaders adopt slogans such as "Make America Great Again" and "We want our country back," to elicit feelings of nationalism among the majority population, and in turn threaten the human rights of the populations they are targeting.

Nationalism is present among right-wing populism in the Global South as well, but the reasoning behind it is a bit different than the Global North. Rather than nationalism being a response to a globalizing economy and a diversifying state, nationalism arises in countries such as Brazil and the Philippines in response to a perceived loss of control and sovereignty at the hands of widespread domestic crime. Throughout their campaigns, both of these leaders vowed to take back their nations from the widespread criminal activity and political corruption that has overtaken them. This elicited a type of nationalism from voters that was different than the Global North, as it focused more on reclaiming the country from forces within its borders rather than foreign forces. This is largely evidenced through these leaders' response to widespread crime. In Brazil, Bolsonaro militarized the police force and gave authorities greater jurisdiction in

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<sup>259</sup> Roth, "World Report: The Dangerous Rise of Populism: Global Attacks on Human Rights Values."

murdering those suspected of a crime. In the Philippines, Duterte explicitly expressed his disdain from drug users and dealers and sought their eradication through targeted laws and rhetoric.

The political histories of each country also appear to play a significant role into how right-wing populism is able to be successfully implemented. Interestingly, there are notable contrasts between the Global North and the Global South here as well. Populism in the United States and the United Kingdom was largely fueled by the economic struggles of the working class. While populist leaders aim to place this blame on the presence of migrant workers, these countries' neoliberal economic practices offer a more likely explanation for the increasing wealth gap facing these countries for decades. In the 1980s, both the United States and the United Kingdom entered an age of neoliberal policies focused on free-market economics and decreased government spending. Since this time, the wealth gap in both of these countries has increased dramatically and caused many working-class people to suffer financially.<sup>260</sup> Harvard economist Richard Parker highlights the impact of neoliberalism on the success of right-wing populism:

“The 1980s surge of pro-corporate conservatism suffered repeated reversals, none greater than the Great Recession that began unfolding in 2008, which has left in its wake nearly a decade of slowed global growth. At the heart of neo-populism’s rise, and of growing discontent— across the political spectrum—has been an increasing disillusionment with GDP-measured “economic growth” that policy makers and academics have decreed to be the apogee of modern life, because so many have been excluded from that growth. But populism’s essential reactionary conservatism resides in its blaming foreign workers and

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<sup>260</sup> Stone, Jon. “Neoliberalism Is Increasing Inequality and Stunting Economic Growth, the IMF Says.” *The Independent*, (May 27, 2016). <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/neoliberalism-is-increasing-inequality-and-stunting-economic-growth-the-imf-says-a7052416.html>.

progressive cultural elites for this situation—rather than understanding how global market forces have done far more to create this intolerable reality.”<sup>261</sup>

Here, Parker addresses how the advancement of neoliberalism in the Global North excluded many from economic success. As more wealth was hoarded at the top and social programs were being stripped away, particularly following the 2008 recession, working class voters were looking for tangible solutions to their problems. Right-wing populism would never acknowledge neoliberalism as a cause for poverty because conservative economic practices are the cornerstone to right-wing ideology. Therefore, right-wing populist leaders instead harness the anger of the working class, and direct it toward the political establishment and minority populations. While the anger of the working class is valid, the solutions provided by right-wing populism are extremely damaging to human rights and, as evidenced within the previous chapters, most likely do not even alleviate working class struggles.

In regard to the Global South, Brazil and the Philippines both have political histories consisting of long spans of authoritarian rule that undoubtedly shaped how right-wing populism was perceived when introduced. Although the Brazilian military dictatorship and the Marcos Presidency were both devastating for human rights, these autocratic regimes provided people with a certain sense of familiarity and security. In Brazil for example, crime and corruption had actually risen following the introduction of democracy. In the Philippines, voters expressed discontent with the stronghold that the elite establishment held on to the political process. Between political corruption and lack of resonance with the average voter, many people in both

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<sup>261</sup> Parker, Richard. “The Natural Rights We Must Protect.” *Challenge* 60, no. 3 (2017): 283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/05775132.2017.1308766>.

of these countries felt as though democracy had failed them. Given the uncertain social and political circumstances of these countries, voters sought out the law and order that a leader with authoritarian tendencies could provide for them despite the devastating human rights implications that came with it. However, in many instances these right-wing populist leaders are proving to be more dangerous than their autocratic predecessors. Duterte has performed more extrajudicial killings than in Marcos's entire twenty-year reign. Bolsonaro has remarked that the military government did not kill enough people and has aimed to rectify that through his militarization of the police. Right-wing populism in the Global South combines the danger of authoritarian rule with the ingroup bias of alt-right politics, therefore creating a tyranny of the majority that drastically threatens the rights of vulnerable populations.

Through this comparative analysis, it is apparent that the spread of right-wing populism throughout the globe has had increasingly devastating human rights impacts. This analysis has shown that not only are human rights impacted by right-wing populism, but their deterioration is at the center of a populist leader's platform. Bolsonaro and Duterte have both openly regarded certain vulnerable groups as "inhuman," while Trump and Farage centered their campaigns around blatantly racist sentiments. The four countries presented in this analysis have all revealed that the implementation of this ideology has had life-threatening consequences whether it be through mass deportations, extrajudicial killings, or dramatic increases in identity-based hate crimes. Ultimately, no matter where or how it is applied, right-wing populism is an exclusionary ideology that is based on dismantling the human rights of vulnerable populations in order to place social, economic, and political control into the hands of the majority.

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## ACADEMIC VITA

Ryan Jeffrey Darby

[Ryandarby990@gmail.com](mailto:Ryandarby990@gmail.com)

### **Education:**

B.A. Global and International Studies (Human Rights), Schreyer Honors College, The Pennsylvania State University, Spring 2020

B.A. Political Science, The Pennsylvania State University, Spring 2020

Thesis Title: The Human Rights Implications of Global Right-Wing Populism

Thesis Supervisor: Raymond Watkins

### **Work Experience:**

Parliamentary Intern with the Office of Karen Buck MP, London, England, Summer 2019

Communications Intern with Blank Rome LLP, Philadelphia, PA, Summer 2018

Marketing Intern with Blank Rome LLP, Philadelphia, PA, Summer 2017

### **Academic Achievements:**

Dean's List, Fall 2016/Spring 2017/Fall 2017/Spring 2018/Spring 2019/Fall 2019

Paterno Fellows Program, Spring 2018-Spring 2020

Berman Scholarship, Summer 2019

Kim Anderson Memorial Scholarship (Political Science), Summer 2019

### **Activities:**

Benefit Dinner Coordinator, Camp Kesem Central PA, Fall 2018-Spring 2019

Public Relations Coordinator, Camp Kesem Central PA, Fall 2017-Spring 2018

ESL Tutor, Spring 2018

Community Captain, Springfield FTK, Fall 2017-Spring 2018