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## Populist Moralization of Foreign Policy Issues

*Linda Bos, Frederic R. Hopp, and Penelope Sheets*

Honourable members, I stand here in front of you and I defend my country because for Hungarians liberty, democracy, independence and Europe are questions of Honour. This is why I say that the report in front of you insults Hungary and insults the honour of the Hungarian nation. Hungary's decisions are taken by voters at parliamentary elections and you state nothing less but that Hungary is not reliable enough to decide what is in its interest. You believe you know better than what Hungarians they need themselves. Therefore I have to say that this report does not give due respect to Hungarians. The report uses double standards [and] abuses its power and goes beyond competences. Its methodology, its approval, violates the treaty.

This is how Victor Orbán addressed the European Parliament on 11 September 2018 when the latter voted on a report to punish Hungary for its breaches of the European Union's core values. Victor Orbán is considered a populist far right politician and is known for his populist

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communication style. Here, populism is perceived as a communication style that can be discerned in utterances of political elites, but also in news coverage or social media content. Following Mudde (2007), the populist message is defined as depicting an antagonistic relationship between ‘we, the people’, on the one hand and the political elite and other out-groups on the other (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). Yet scholars relying on this conceptualization often find it difficult to rhetorically distinguish populists from non-populists (e.g. Bos et al., 2011; Engesser et al., 2017; McDonnell & Ondelli, 2020). This might be a consequence of the fact that there is more to populist communication than the people/elite distinction, such as using a distinctive performative style (see Lacatus et al. in the introduction). Here we focus on the usage of moral appeals: populists do not simply distinguish between an in-group and an out-group; they do this by appealing to moral values: the people are good and moral, and the elite is bad, immoral, and corrupt (Müller, 2016). While this moral distinction between the people and the elite is at the core of the populist Manichean worldview, we know fairly little about the extent to which populist politicians are more likely to use moral appeals in their messages (cf. Bos & Minihold, 2022).

This is surprising, because the moralization of a political message is likely to appeal to (Lipsitz, 2018) and convince voters and thus have mobilizing effects (Jung, 2020). However, moral appeals are also argued to induce “‘other-condemning’” emotions and action tendencies that can drive citizens apart’ (Ryan, 2014, p. 383), thus fostering interpersonal intolerance and (issue) polarization (Clifford, 2019). It is therefore paramount to understand the extent to which political leaders are likely to use moral appeals, especially when they discuss International Relations—in which the consequences of interpersonal intolerance and polarization have implications not only for national stability but for global conflict and security. Moralization in international political communication can be expected for several reasons: first, (populist) political leaders may perceive a moral obligation to place ‘the people’s’ interests above all else in international politics, responding to potential infringements of national sovereignty with heightened moral rhetoric geared towards the protection of one’s nation. Orbán’s response above is in line with this. He defended the nation by alluding to moral values such as honour, respect, and harm. Alternatively, moralization may strategically be used for international coalition building, emphasizing tribal notions of ‘us-versus-them’ (e.g. EU/NATO versus Russia), or as a mobilizing technique on morally salient issues such as humanitarian aid or climate change. Thus, the international policy domain

is ripe for moralization by strategic political actors, the consequences of which can be potentially global.

With this in mind, this chapter explores the extent to which policy statements on International Relations are moralized by both populist and non-populist parties. We do so by performing an automated content analysis on manifesto data from 22 elections in Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (using the Comparative Manifestos Project—CMP;  $n = 215,625$  policy statements) to parse the extent to which this moralized, Manichean outlook is unique to populist rhetoric or not. Election manifestos are the ideal outlets to gauge the policy preferences of parties, and, because they are texts written by and for the party, are perhaps the purest articulation of a party's ideology. In addition, by offering us coding of policy issues in manifestos, the CMP allows us to tease out not only to what extent populist parties moralize foreign policy issues more than non-populist parties, but also whether specific issues lend themselves more or less to moralization. In addition, we explore the extent to which different moral appeals are used by (non-)populist parties in specific foreign policy areas.

### MORAL RHETORIC IN PARTY MANIFESTOS

We conceptualize morality in political communication by focusing on the extent to which communication on different political issues makes use of moral and non-moral rhetoric. Specifically, we focus on the use of moral language in party manifestos. While election manifestos are generally well-suited for the comparative study of party positions on multiple domestic and foreign policy issues, little is known about the use of moral rhetoric in these documents. On the one hand, manifestos are often sanitized, amended by multiple authors, and generally not written to persuade voters, but are used to streamline the campaign and provide candidates with an overview of party positions (Eder et al., 2017). In that sense, manifesto statements may be less moralized than other campaign materials, including social media (Bos & Minihold, 2022) and speeches (Wang & Inbar, 2021). Yet, as manifestos form the template for the political campaign, any moralized statement in these texts reflects the official moral standpoint of the party.

By making use of subtle moral framing (Spielvogel, 2005) almost any issue can be 'moralized' by connecting it to deeply held beliefs about what is morally right and wrong (Anderson et al., 2014; Lakoff, 2010). This

depends on a range of factors, including one's (political) socialization (Graham et al., 2009). The resulting 'moral worldview' one adheres to is argued to guide positions on political issues (Strimling et al., 2019), for voters and politicians alike. This implies that moral rhetoric differs for politicians and parties with different moral standpoints (Wang & Inbar, 2021): they forward different arguments why a certain course taken is in fact (im)moral. Not only does this have consequences for *which* issues are moralized but also *how*.

Haidt and Graham (2007) distinguish several dimensions of morality in their *Moral Foundations Theory* (MFT). They argue that moral intuitions are rooted in five distinct, yet universal and innate, psychological mechanisms that are edited by experience and socialization. Each foundation serves a different, but related social function. First there are two '*individualizing foundations*', aimed at protecting individual rights and well-being: (1) Care/Harm (sensitivity to individual suffering), and (2) Fairness/Cheating (sensitivity to disproportionality). In addition, there are *three binding foundations* that are aimed at group protection: (3) Loyalty/Betrayal (sensitivity to group loyalty), (4) Authority/Subversion (sensitivity to social rank and position), (5) Disgust/Purity (sensitivity to social threats and taboos). MFT is increasingly used in (political) communication research to investigate the extent to which political actors moralize their statements, and by doing so, appeal to different moral values (Bos & Minihold, 2022; Marietta, 2008; Wang & Inbar, 2021). In this way, politicians not only make clear *whether* a specific policy or standpoint is in fact morally right or wrong but also *why*—e.g. because it is unfair, disloyal, or harmful.

Appealing to morality and values in political communication is nothing new. From earlier discussions of 'symbolic politics' (see Busby, 2007), to the strategic invocation of morality in promoting foreign policy (Coe et al., 2004; Spielvogel, 2005), to the public reinforcement of the moral superiority of the national group during international conflict (e.g. Entman, 1991; Rowling et al., 2015; Wolfsfeld et al., 2008), researchers have long studied the strategic power of morality-laden rhetoric among political actors. Perhaps because of its link to innate moral foundations (Haidt & Graham, 2007), moralized rhetoric is powerful because of its ability to polarize (Feinberg et al., 2019), and unite disparate groups of people (Feinberg & Willer, 2015). That is, shared values or moral frameworks are one way to overcome disparate or diverse ethnic or religious identities. Debates over ethnic versus constitutional patriotism illustrate

this acutely: in societies where the national population never shared one common ethnic past (e.g. the United States of America), the coherence of the group is nevertheless quite powerfully constructed through a moral appeal to shared values and norms—very effectively creating an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983).

Notably, these instances of moral rhetoric in political communication almost always relate to a group—and a shared sense of morally right and wrong held by a specific group of people (Greene, 2014). Like the moral intuitions discussed earlier, group identification is an equally powerful, innate psychological force (Tajfel, 1982). That is, humans have a natural tendency to not only classify each other into groups, but to derive comfort, self-esteem, and a sense of security or safety from the groups we identify with (Mercer, 1995). Notably, such positive ingroup-identification also often comes at the expense of groups we are not a part of (Feinberg et al., 2019; Greene, 2014; Mitzen, 2006).

Though social identities can take many forms—ethnic, religious, partisan—arguably the most pervasive and powerful in the modern era is national identity. Cultural myths, shared stories, and embedded social narratives are told and repeated daily by citizens and group leaders to appeal to and maintain citizens’ sense of connection with a national group (Billig, 1995). Furthermore, news routines and domestication processes (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017) reinforce the national lens in most stories we hear about other parts of the world. Thus, national identity is a particularly powerful form of social identity: it is constantly reinforced, capable of uniting (and dividing) entire groups of people, and of motivating citizens to fight, kill, and die for their country.

If we accept the natural link between moralized rhetoric and discussions where group identity is particularly salient, it follows that manifesto rhetoric related to foreign (versus domestic) policy should entail more moralized rhetoric. Put more simply: a moral support and conception of the shared values of the national in-group is essentially politically ‘safe ground’ for any party, regardless of its ideology. But we argue that when in-group identity is discussed with regard to an ‘Other’, i.e. in the foreign policy context, the temptation to moralize should be even stronger (see Friedrichs, 2022), because the national identity is ‘at play’ in such discussions. Therefore, we expect:

*H1 There is more moralization in foreign than in domestic policy issues.*

However, there are many distinct foreign policy issues. Some are directly concerned with life and death (defense policy) or moral responsibilities towards foreign special relationships or building peace. While other foreign policy issues always affect the nation and the national identity—such as regional integration—they might be less prone to moralization by political elites. We therefore also explore differences in moralization of different foreign policy issues:

*RQ1 To what extent are different foreign policy issues moralized?*

In this chapter we are specifically interested in differences between populist parties and non-populist parties. To conceptualize populism, we depart from Mudde (2004, p. 543) who regards populism as ‘*an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people*’. Populist parties adhere to this ‘thin’ ideology but subsequently differ in many respects, depending on the thick ideology that is attached to their populist core. Here, there is a clear distinction between populists on the right, also dubbed the *populist radical right* (PRR) (Mudde, 2013), and populists on the left. The common ground of the PRR is found in their nationalist/nativist agenda, their authoritarianism, and their populist ideology (Mudde, 2007; Taggart, 2000). Left-wing populist parties are also anti-establishment, but instead of ‘excluding the aliens’ they focus on ‘including the poor’ (Van Kessel, 2015). What unites populists from different walks of life, however, is their focus on morality (Mudde, 2004): all populists pit the ‘pure’ people against the ‘immoral, corrupt’ elite, making the populist claim *moral* and symbolic, not empirical, in nature, meaning ‘it cannot be disproven’ (our italics). In addition, populists are antipluralist: ‘they, and only they represent the true people’ (Müller, 2016, p. 72). One of the important consequences of this populist moral logic is its Manichean outlook: contrary opinions are illegitimate, as is compromise, and political conflict is *moralized* by denouncing political opponents as evil, enemies of the people as a whole (e.g. Mudde, 2004).

Yet, empirical research looking into rhetorical differences between populists and non-populists is scarce and mainly focused on specific cases (Alizadeh et al., 2019; Friedrichs, 2022; Lewis, 2019; Norocel, 2013). The one systematic study by Bos and Minihold (2022) shows that populists in three Western European countries consistently use more negative moral appeals—making clear what is *immoral*—and appeal more to

morality on Twitter. Yet, their study also shows that populists are not likely to use more moral appeals in party manifestos in general. This raises the question whether some policy issues, such as foreign policy issues, lend themselves more to moralization by populists than others.

It is argued that populist parties face a more difficult challenge than mainstream parties in finding their position on foreign policy, because of the salience of the demarcation-integration cleavage (Kriesi et al., 2008)—the electoral cleavage increasingly aligning voters in their support for open versus closed societies, on both economic and cultural dimensions. This forces populist parties to explicitly define who belongs to the people and who does not (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2017). The attached ideology subsequently guides foreign policy positions of populist parties (also see Destradi et al., 2021; Friedrichs, 2022). While the populist radical right limits the pure people to ‘a cultural unit defined within the nation state’ (p. 11), left-wing populists tend to have a more inclusionary conception of the exploited people, transcending national boundaries (but see Tamaki & Venturelli and Rana in this book). These different conceptualizations of the people spark different outlooks on foreign policy issues, meaning that it is the ‘thick’ ideology that determines foreign policy standpoints, not the populism that is attached to it (note that Petris shows that populist foreign policy is also dependent on the specific policy arena). However, what unites the populist left and right is their support for protectionism, and their critical stance (or opposition) towards Europeanization. In general, the PRR is considered isolationist, while left-wing populists are ‘social cosmopolitan’: they support ‘international arrangements to protect the weak and counter the existing hegemony’ (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2017, p. 15). As a result, the latter do not reject international governance in principle, but contest it for its limits (Hooghe et al., 2019).

In other words, while one can observe many differences between specific populist movements on the left and right, what unites them in their foreign policy is not the substance but the rhetoric (Wehner & Thies, 2021): their support for and heralding of the ‘pure’ people, and their critical stance towards, or contempt of, the international elite leading to a suspicion of international or transnational institutions (Chrysogelos, 2017). This Manichean outlook is thus transported from national to foreign policy (also see Destradi et al. in this volume). In this chapter we do not focus on the content, but on the discursive treatment of foreign policy statements by populist parties. Recent research indeed shows that populists use populist argumentation to justify and legitimize or frame foreign



policy standpoints (Lacatus, 2021; Visnovitz & Jenne, 2021), and that the impact of populism on foreign policy concerns the ‘how’ rather than the ‘what’ (Chryssogelos, 2021), resulting in emotive discourse (Homolar & Löffmann in this volume) that can turn harsh and friendly (Destradi et al. in this volume). Especially in the European context where most populists are Eurosceptics, populist argumentation is likely to be quite prominent in foreign policy statements. At the same time, the earlier discussion of manifesto features—often a compromise of party discussions—may diminish potential differences in moral rhetoric between populist and non-populist parties on foreign policy issues. Hence, we ask:

*RQ2 Is there a greater likelihood to observe moralization in populist versus non-populist manifesto statements on foreign policy?*

And, analogous to RQ1 we ask:

*RQ3 Are populists more likely to moralize particular foreign policy issues compared to mainstream parties?*

## RESEARCH METHOD

To study the use of moral rhetoric in international political communication, we used the corpus of the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) (Krause et al., 2018). We retrieved the annotated texts of 22 elections (Table 2.1) via the Application Programming Interface of the CMP. In the CMP, the manifestos were unitized into quasi-sentences, containing exactly one statement or message, and we dropped statements classified as headings, not assigned any category (see below), or that were labelled as ‘uncodable’. This resulted in 215,625 statements. All data were analysed in Python and preprocessed using the Natural Language Toolkit (Bird et al., 2009) to remove language-specific stopwords and punctuation marks from the text.

### *Measures*

**Policy Issues** Each quasi-sentence in the CMP was manually coded into one of 56 standard categories, designed to be comparable between parties, countries, elections, and across time. The 56 categories were grouped into seven major policy areas: welfare and quality of life ( $N = 62,583$ ; 29%), economy ( $N = 49,849$ ; 23%), fabric of society ( $N = 28,803$ ; 13%), external

**Table 2.1** Overview of elections and parties

<i>Elections</i>	<i>Parties</i>
Austria 1999	FPÖ, GRÜNE, ÖVP, SPÖ
Austria 2002	FPÖ, GRÜNE, ÖVP, SPÖ
Austria 2006	BZÖ, FPÖ, GRÜNE, ÖVP, SPÖ
Austria 2008	BZÖ, FPÖ, GRÜNE, ÖVP, SPÖ
Austria 2013	FPÖ, GRÜNE, NEOS, ÖVP, SPÖ, TS
Austria 2017	FPÖ, GRÜNE, NEOS, ÖVP, PILZ, SPÖ
Austria 2019	FPÖ, GRÜNE, NEOS, ÖVP, SPÖ
Germany 1998	90.Greens, CDU.CSU, FDP, PDS, SPD
Germany 2002	90.Greens, CDU.CSU, FDP, PDS, SPD
Germany 2005	90.Greens, CDU.CSU, FDP, SPD
Germany 2009	90.Greens, CDU.CSU, FDP, LINKE, SPD
Germany 2013	90.Greens, AfD, CDU.CSU, FDP, LINKE, SPD
Germany 2017	90.Greens, AfD, CDU.CSU, FDP, LINKE, SPD
Germany 2021	90.Greens, AfD, CDU.CSU, FDP, LINKE, SPD
The Netherlands 2006	CDA, CU, D'66, GL, PVV, PvdA, PvdD, SGP, SP, VVD
The Netherlands 2010	CDA, CU, D'66, GL, PVV, PvdA, PvdD, SGP, SP, VVD
The Netherlands 2012	50PLUS, CDA, CU, D'66, GL, PVV, PvdA, PvdD, SGP, SP, VVD
The Netherlands 2017	50PLUS, CDA, CU, DENK, D'66, FvD, GL, PVV, PvdA, PvdD, SGP, SP, VVD
United Kingdom 2001	Labour, SNP
United Kingdom 2015	Conservatives, DUP, GPEW, Labour, LibDems, PC, SDLP, SF, SNP, UKIP, UUP
United Kingdom 2017	Conservatives, DUP, GPEW, Labour, LibDems, PC, SF, SNP, UKIP
United Kingdom 2019	Alliance, Conservatives, DUP, GPEW, Labour, LibDems, PC, SDLP, SF, SNP

relations ( $N = 20,870$ ; 10%), social groups ( $N = 19,036$ ; 9%) political system ( $N = 18,195$ ; 8%), and freedom and democracy ( $N = 16,289$ ; 8%). Here we focused on statements categorized as ‘external relations’ to reflect discussions of foreign policy issues. Specifically, we contrasted how moralization of foreign policy is different from moralization of other (domestic) policy issues and how these differences are modulated by party ideology.

**Moral Foundations** To estimate the presence of moral foundations in political elite appeals, we used the Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD; Graham et al., 2009).<sup>1</sup> The MFD holds 11 lists of English words, for each

<sup>1</sup>The dictionary was designed for use in the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count program (LIWC) and adapted to Python, making use of regular expressions.

foundation two words (a positive ‘virtue’ and a negative ‘vice’) and a list of general moral words. Some words are assigned to more than one list. In addition to the original English MFD, we used the Dutch and German translated version of the MFD as introduced by Bos and Minihold (2022).

Each word in each statement was automatically coded for presence in the dictionary. For each moral foundation, a dichotomous variable was computed, indicating the absence/presence of said moral foundation, collapsing negative (vice) and positive (virtue) words ( $M_{\text{Care/Harm}} = .15$ ;  $M_{\text{Fairness/Cheating}} = .1$ ;  $M_{\text{Loyalty/Betrayal}} = .12$ ;  $M_{\text{Authority/Subversion}} = 0.11$ ;  $M_{\text{Purity/Degradation}} = .06$ ). Three composite scores were used in the analyses. First, the propensity to moralize was calculated by computing a dichotomous variable indicating the presence of either one of the moral foundations or of general moral words ( $M_{\text{P(Moralize)}} = .39$ ). In addition, a dummy variable was constructed to denote the presence of virtue words ( $M_{\text{Virtue}} = .32$ ) and a second one signalling vice words ( $M_{\text{Vice}} = .11$ ).

**Ideology** To study the extent to which moral appeals are affected by ideological differences, we use the categorization of the CMP to distinguish between (1) green parties (dubbed ecological by the CMP), (2) social democratic parties, (3) liberal parties, and (4) Christian and conservative parties (the two families are grouped together in this analysis). That leaves us with a number of parties considered socialist (the German PDS/Die Linke and the Dutch Socialist Party<sup>2</sup>) by the Manifesto Project, but populist far left by populism scholars (Rooduijn et al., 2019), and parties dubbed Nationalist by the Manifesto Project (the Austrian FPÖ and BZÖ, the Dutch PVV and FvD, and the German AfD), and populist far right by Rooduijn et al. (2019). Here we follow the latter, adding two more party families: (5) the left-wing populists and (6) the right-wing populists. It should be noted that there are populist parties that do not fit this left/right distinction, such as the Five Star Movement in Italy. The study period, however, did not include such parties in the countries studied. The remaining parties, dubbed single issue parties by the Manifesto Project, are included in the analyses but not as a separate party family (Table 2.2).

**Controls** We automatically assessed the length, in number of words, of each manifesto statement after preprocessing ( $M = 8.40$ ,  $SD = 4.51$ ). Additionally, because the use of moral words is closely related to valence,

<sup>2</sup>We do not take into account the manifesto of the Austrian Communist Party—only competing in the 2008 national elections.

**Table 2.2** Classification of parties as mainstream or populist

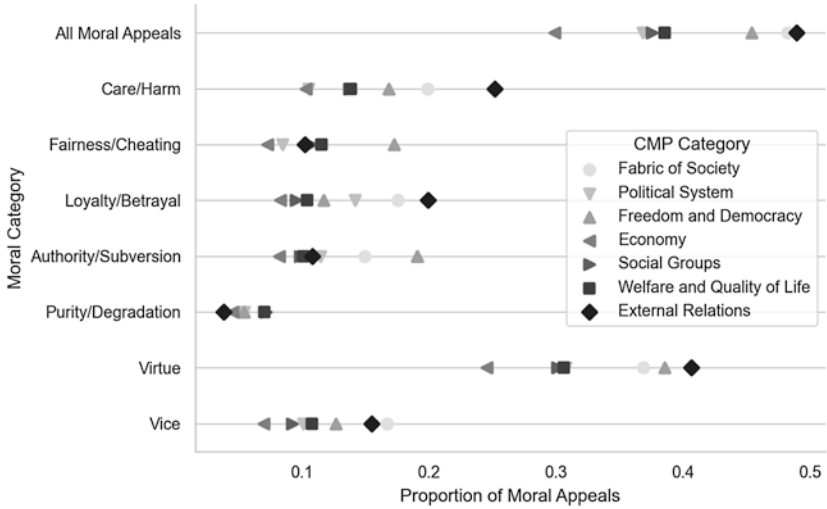
<i>Country</i>	<i>Party type</i>	
	<i>Mainstream</i>	<i>Populist</i>
Austria	GRÜNE, NEOS, PILZ, SPÖ, TS, ÖVP	BZÖ, FPÖ
Germany	90/GRÜNE, CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD	AFD, LINKE, PDS
The Netherlands	50PLUS, CDA, CU, DENK, D'66, GL, PVDA, PVDD, SGP, VVD	FVD, PVV, SP
United Kingdom	ALLIANCE, CONSERVATIVES, DUP, GPEW, LABOUR, LIBDEMS, PC, SDLP, SNP, UKIP, UUP	SF

we also control for sentiment. We coded the sentiment of all statements using SentiStrength, denoting the number of positive and negative words per statement ( $M_{\text{Positive}} = 1.26$ ,  $SD_{\text{Positive}} = 0.51$ ;  $M_{\text{Negative}} = 1.23$ ,  $SD_{\text{Negative}} = 0.60$ ). SentiStrength is an opinion-mining algorithm created to identify and assess sentiment-related information and polarity (positive/negative) of social web data (Thelwall et al., 2010).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We first examined the extent to which different policy issues contain different moral appeals (H1 & RQ1). Figure 2.1 shows the mean proportion of moral appeals in manifestos per policy issue. A one-way ANOVA ( $F =_{6,215,618} = 676.35$ ,  $p < .000$ ) revealed significant differences in moralization across policy issues: almost half of the references to external relations (.489) or to the fabric of society<sup>3</sup> (.482) contain moral appeals, whereas discussions of the economy are generally least moralized. Confirming H1, post-hoc tests revealed that statements referring to external relations are significantly more moralized than other policy issues (all  $p = .001$ ), with the exception of discussions referring to the fabric of society ( $p = 0.645$ ). This corroborates that the international policy domain, even in sanitized, non-emotional election manifestos, lends itself more to moralization than many other domestic policy issues. In addition, we see that moral statements on foreign policy often refer to principles on Care/Harm and Loyalty/Betrayal and that they include more positive than negative moral

<sup>3</sup> Policy statements on ‘the fabric of society’ concern statements about, among others, the national way of life, morality, law and order, civic mindedness, and multiculturalism.

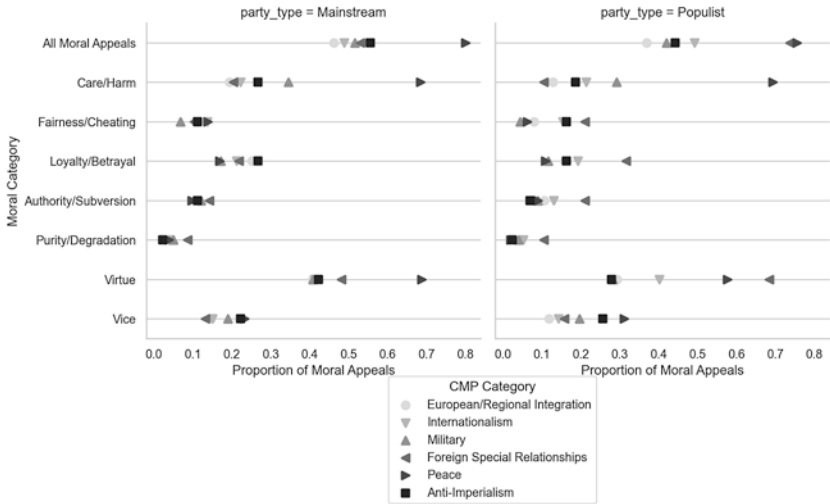


**Fig. 2.1** Proportion of moral appeals in manifesto statements by policy issue. *Note.*  $N = 215,625$ . Symbols denote the proportion of statements in manifestos of each policy issue containing a moral appeal

words. This implies that foreign policy communication is mainly concerned with what is morally right, and this seems to be derived from the moral obligation to care and bring peace and be loyal to special foreign relations.

Next, we explored whether party ideology modulates moral appeals to particular subcategories of external relations.<sup>4</sup> Figure 2.2 shows the mean proportion of moral appeals in manifesto statements referring to external relations, split between mainstream and populist parties. Across ideological lines, we find that the majority of statements relating to peace are moralized, with a particular emphasis on the Care/Harm foundation. Notably, populist parties also largely moralize statements mentioning foreign special relationships, particularly with a focus on the Loyalty/Betrayal foundation and positive moral appeals. In contrast, mainstream parties mostly use positive moral appeals when discussing peace, whereas populist parties tend to use more negative moral appeal when referring to peace.

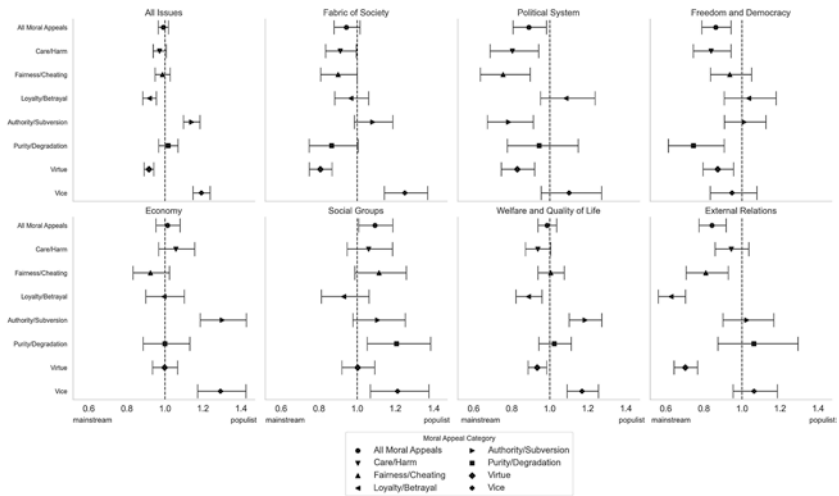
<sup>4</sup>To reduce the number of subcategories, we grouped together positive and negative dimensions.



**Fig. 2.2** Proportion of moral appeals in manifesto statements discussing external relations. *Note.*  $N_{\text{Mainstream}} = 14,795$ ,  $N_{\text{Populist}} = 3068$ . Symbols denote the proportion of manifesto statements of each external policy issue containing a moral appeal

While these descriptive analyses provide an overview of the popularity of certain moral appeals in specific policy issues, multivariate analyses are needed to examine how ideological differences shape moralization of policy issues (RQ2). Figure 2.3 plots the result of logistic regression analysis regressing different moral appeals on the categorization of the party as mainstream (0) or populist (1). We control for length of the manifesto, year, country, and sentiment. When considering all policy issues, our results largely replicate those reported by Bos and Minihold ((2022); Fig. 2.2): populist parties are significantly more likely to use appeals to Authority/Subversion (OR: 1.13) and negative moral appeals (OR: 1.19), whereas the probability that their manifesto statement contains positive moral appeals decreases 0.91 times (Fig. 2.3, top left).

However, when discussing external relations (Fig. 2.3, bottom right), populists are actually less likely to use any moral appeals (OR: 0.84) or appeals to Fairness/Cheating (OR: 0.81), Loyalty/Betrayal (OR: 0.63), as well as positive moral appeals (0.70), answering RQ2. Instead, populists tend to focus their moralization on internal issues referring to social



**Fig. 2.3** Moral appeals in manifesto statements by policy issue and ideological dimension. *Note.* Results of logistic regression analyses. Coefficients are odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals, representing the likelihood of a manifesto statement for a particular policy issue to contain a (specific) moral appeal dependent upon the party’s populist versus mainstream status. Controlled for length of manifesto, year, country, and sentiment

groups (OR: 1.09); discuss social groups more via appeals to Purity/Desecration (OR: 1.21); and generally are more likely to use negative moral appeals when discussing the fabric of society (OR: 1.25), the economy (OR: 1.29), social groups (OR: 1.21), or the quality of life (OR: 1.17). In other words, the moralization of foreign policy issues is driven by mainstream, not populist parties. A potential explanation for these findings might be that mainstream parties are less bound to mobilize across groups in foreign policy statements than in statements on domestic policies. This possibly allows them to more freely moralize their statements, outlining differences with foreign outgroups—something that could be regarded as ‘mainstreaming populism’. Analogously, populist parties may be reluctant to moralize foreign policy statements because international politics does not always directly map onto the people/elite divide that is so central to populism: the people-as-underdog are sometimes extended

across borders (De Cleen et al., 2020) and the populist contestation of the liberal international order is not always as consistent as one would expect (Friedrichs, 2022).

To contextualize these findings, we examined the most frequently used words in the top 10% of moralized statements on foreign policy issues across countries and party types (Fig. 2.4). Mainstream parties in Austria



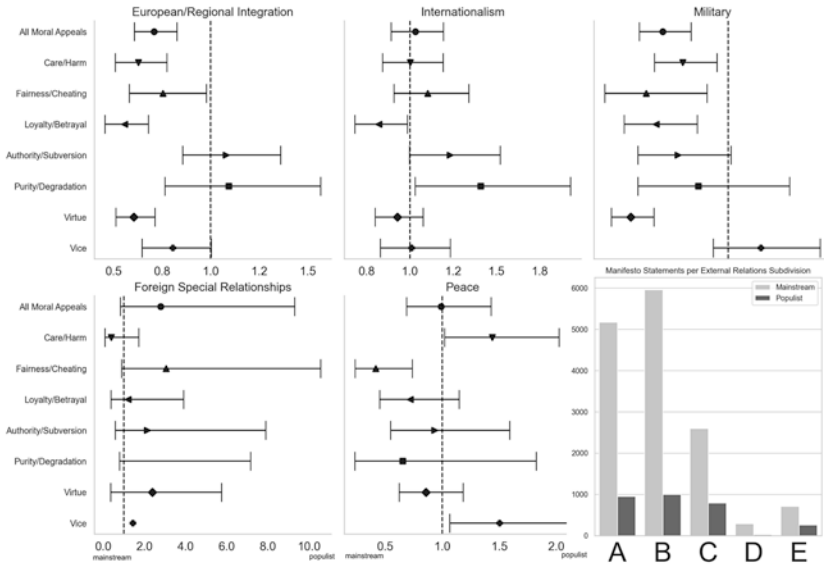
**Fig. 2.4** Most common words in moralized manifesto statements, per country. *Note.* Word clouds showing the 100 most common words in the top 10% of moralized manifesto statements on foreign policy issues for mainstream (left) and populist (right) parties across the four analysed countries



tend to use moral rhetoric when emphasizing the nation (österreich), togetherness (gemeinsame), and Europe (europäische; europa), whereas populists rather moralize discussions focused on security (sicherheit), compliance (erfüllung), and cohesion (zusammenhang). In contrast, mainstream parties in the United Kingdom moralize foreign policy issues concerned with labour, support, and continuity, whereas their populist opponents use more moral language when discussing the referendum associated with Brexit and the EU. Analogously, mainstream parties in both Germany and the Netherlands use more moral rhetoric when situating the nation in the context of foreign policy, whereas populist parties in these countries focus moral language on specific international issues (Germany: *frieden, krieg, hilfe*; Netherlands: *israel versus palestijnse, terrorisme*).

To address our third research question, we examined whether populists are more likely to moralize particular subcategories of external relations compared to mainstream parties. Accordingly, we again employed a series of logistic regression analyses for each policy subdivision of external relations, regressing different moral appeals on the categorization of the party as mainstream (0) or populist (1), controlling for length of the manifesto, year, country, and sentiment (Fig. 2.5). Notably, we find that populists are only more likely to use appeals to Purity/Desecration when discussing internationalism (OR: 1.41) and appeals to Care/Harm (OR: 1.44) and general negative moral appeals (OR: 1.50) when discussing peace. In contrast, the likelihood that populist parties use general moral appeals decreases when they mention European/regional integration (OR: 0.71) and the military (OR: 0.69), and this effect extends over specific moral appeals referring to Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, and to general positive moral appeals. Lastly, it must be noted that class imbalances exist across policy issues (Fig. 2.5, bottom right), with fewer manifesto statements per external relation subdivision for populist than mainstream parties, explaining the rather large confidence intervals across models.

In general, differences in populist foreign policy preferences follow the thick ideology that is attached to populism. While it would have been an interesting avenue to compare the moralization of external policy issues of left- and right-wing populists, the small number of populist statements on foreign policy did not allow this.



**Fig. 2.5** Results of logistic regression analyses for moral appeals in manifesto statements by external relation subcategory and ideological dimension. *Note.* Coefficients are odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals, representing the likelihood of a manifesto statement for a particular policy issue to contain a (specific) moral appeal dependent upon the party’s populist versus mainstream status. Controlled for length of manifesto, year, country, and sentiment. Bottom right chart displays frequency counts for each subcategory by ideology (A = European/Regional Integration, B = Internationalism, C = Military, D = Foreign Special Relationships, E = Peace)

## CONCLUSION

This chapter explored the extent to which foreign policy issues are moralized by populist and non-populist parties. We used the Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD) to gauge the use of (different) moral words in party manifesto statements on different policy issues (n = 215,625 statements). Our study shows that, overall, political parties in Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom moralize statements on foreign policy more than statements on other policy domains, with the exception of policies on ‘the fabric of society’. However, populist parties are not more likely to moralize policy statements on *foreign* issues. Zooming in on

specific issues, we can discern a more nuanced picture, in line with Petris' findings in this book. Policy statements on European integration and Defense (Military) are generally more moralized by mainstream parties, in both cases using moral words related to Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, and Loyalty/Betrayal. With regard to policies on Internationalism, Foreign Special Relationships, and Peace, the moral framing is more mixed. While mainstream parties are more likely to refer to Loyalty/Betrayal concerns when discussing Internationalism, populist parties instead emphasize on Purity/Degradation. And while mainstream parties refer to fairness considerations in their reflection on peace policy, populist parties refer to Care/Harm more and mainly use negative moral words. Future research might look at other corpora to compare partisan foreign policy statements, such as proceedings from the European Parliament or national parliaments, or speeches in supranational institutions, such as the United Nations. In addition, a limitation to our findings is our reliance on a word-count based dictionary for detecting moral appeals in text. Despite its popular application, recent work has highlighted several shortcomings of the MFD, such as its small vocabulary and the reliance on ostensibly moral words selected by a few domain experts (Hopp et al., 2021). Accordingly, future work should triangulate our findings using recently introduced moral sentiment detection tools that aim to remedy these limitations.

Overall, our chapter shows that communication on foreign policy issues lends itself to moralization, more than most of the other policy domains, and even in scripted party manifestos. While populist parties do not moralize foreign policy statements more, our analyses show that there are nuanced differences between populist and mainstream parties in their statements on foreign policy.

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