

Regional identities and roles of the state in populist rhetoric. The cases of Brazil and Poland

Recebido: 01.11.23
Aprovado: 07.05.24

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Abstract: The focus of this study is directed to the way national-conservative decisionmakers envision their own neighborhood and its core cooperation platforms. Through a comparative analysis of the political rhetoric on their respective regions and the ties connecting Poland and Brazil with it, the article seeks to answer the following research questions: How do Brazilian and Polish ruling elites envision the regional belonging of the state? How do they depict major regional integration initiatives of which Brazil and Poland are members and how can regional identities affect those discursive articulations?

Keywords: Jair Bolsonaro, Andrzej Duda, populism, regional identity, European Union, Mercosul

As identidades regionais e papéis do Estado na retórica populista: os casos do Brasil e da Polônia

Resumo: Este estudo examina a maneira como os formuladores nacional-conservadores de política externa conceitualizam sua própria vizinhança e as principais plataformas de cooperação regional. Por meio de uma análise comparativa da retórica política sobre suas respectivas regiões e os laços que ligam a Polônia e o Brasil a elas, o artigo procura responder às seguintes perguntas de pesquisa: Como é que as elites políticas conservadoras brasileiras e polonesas imaginam o pertencimento regional do Estado? Como elas retratam as principais iniciativas de integração regional das quais o Brasil e a Polônia são membros e como as identidades regionais podem afetar essas articulações discursivas?

Palavras-chave: Jair Bolsonaro, Andrzej Duda, populismo, identidade regional, União Europeia, Mercosul

Introduction

In his inauguration speech², Foreign Affairs Minister Ernesto Araújo (Araújo, 2019), mentioned Poland as a country admired by Brazil. The statement was surprising, as his predecessors used to refer to the country's main political and commercial partners. On the other side, the Polish head of state when inviting President Bolsonaro to visit his country, stated in 2019 that both leaders had an ideological affinity (Nowak, 2019). Jair Bolsonaro's administration (2019-2022) and Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS), the national-conservative party in power between 2015-2023, had much in common. Brazil and Poland's ruling elites serve as examples of radical right-wing and authoritarian populism with their anti-elitism, attacks on the independence of the judiciary, and recurrence to the use of fake news. The ideological alignment is also discernible in foreign policy adopted by the two governments, including the promotion of conservative values that led to the joint launch of initiatives within the UN. These similarities notwithstanding, a valid question refers to the discrepancies in foreign policy towards their own region and their possible sources. The aim of this study is to grasp the way national-conservative decisionmakers envision their own neighborhood and its core cooperation platforms. Through a comparative analysis of the political rhetoric on their respective regions, the article seeks to answer the following research questions: How do Brazilian and Polish ruling elites envision the regional belonging of the state? How do they depict major regional integration initiatives of which Brazil and Poland are members and how can regional identities affect those discursive articulations?

The article seeks to enhance the ongoing debate on populist foreign policy and builds on role theory and a two-layered identity model which will be outlined in the following sections. It then moves to discuss the particularities of populist rhetoric regarding the region through content analysis of the official statements of the Brazilian (2019-2022) and Polish (2015-2022) policymakers. The final part highlights the main findings regarding the region and regional cooperation in the discourse of right-wing leaders in Brazil and Poland.

A populist foreign policy (and how do Brazil and Poland fit within it)

The rich tradition of research on populism has been further enhanced over the past few years by the study on populist foreign policy (see Wajner and Giurlando, 2023). It scrutinizes how populism – understood in this article as a thin-centered ideology (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017, 6) expressed through a distinctive political rhetoric – affects a state's external conduct. Driven by the belief of an exclusive capacity to fully understand the national interest and lead the nation accordingly, populists may be

keen to extend their activism onto the international level (Nymalm and Plagemann, 2019, 14). While the people constituting the nation are depicted as virtuous in populist rhetoric, their state at the global stage is exceptional. Although exceptionalism is not a feature restricted to populists, researchers identified a proclivity of populist leaders to build their foreign policy and justify numerous initiatives by referring to their country's greatness and uniqueness (Nymalm and Plagemann, 2019; Destradi et al., 2022, 480). In case of both Brazil and Poland, mentions of greatness, dignity, and a glorious past are detectable in the rhetoric of politicians not associated with populism, yet populists tend to refer to their mission to reclaim what has been lost due to the errors committed by their political opponents. Reconstruction and redefinition rather than continuity are guiding principles of foreign policy formulations. In Poland this was best expressed by the phrase "getting up from its knees" which stressed the subservient and un-autonomous foreign policy of PiS predecessors. The recuperation of dignity and international respect was an element of the so-called "second transformation" (the first being the political and economic transformation after the end of communism) that was to fix the shortcomings of the shift after 1989 and eradicate any remnants of the past regime (Balcer et al., 2016, 5). In case of Brazil, the reconstruction was epitomized in what was coined by Ernesto Araújo as the "new foreign policy" in which the Bolsonaro administration's main aim was the country's disassociation from the international coalitions, programs and bodies deemed as initiatives of the left-wing PT (Casarões and Farias, 2022).

An anti-elitist and antipluralist standing translates on the international stage into a more personalistic style of foreign policymaking, a dismissive approach towards diplomatic etiquette, and lack of moderation in rhetoric regarding foreign policy (Moffit 2016, 44). Repeated and explicit attacks on foreign leaders and international bodies are not rare in populist discourse. While policymakers are particularly outspoken when depicting foreign politicians in front of domestic audiences, daring if not blatantly offensive remarks also reach a wider international public. Such language is frequently coupled with a nonchalant if not contemptuous approach towards universal diplomatic customs and protocol. For example, the firm reaction of French authorities to Poland's unexpected cancellation of the purchase of Caracal helicopters in 2016 was met with Polish deputy minister of defense's response that reverberated abroad. The undiplomatic remark ("These [the French] are people who learned to eat with a fork from us a few centuries ago. So perhaps this is the way they behave now"), dubbed the "forkgate" by the Polish media, made international headlines (BBC, 2016). In the case of Brazil, a similarly disdainful posture was exemplified by the diplomatic scandal that arose when the Brazilian leader made offensive comments about Brigitte Macron in social media at a moment of increased tensions in bilateral relations with France due to Brazil's environmental record (Uribe,

2019).

A radically dichotomous vision of reality is expressed by a more confrontational standing and the classification of states and their leaders into friends and enemies (Wajner and Giurlando, 2023, 16). The Manichean worldview limits policymakers' proneness to compromise and dialogue (Destradi et al., 2021, 675-676). Depending on the thick ideology of the political leaders, the people and their international allies (if any) have to stand up against their enemies, ranging from international clubs of states, global complots, neoliberal multinationals, communists, socialists, cultural Marxists, nihilists, atheists, globalists and globalization processes in general (Brun et al., 2022, 93; Saraiva, 2022, 7-9). A common practice – confirmed in the case of Poland and Brazil – is accusing external opponents of spreading lies and fake news about populist governments. The country in question resembles a besieged fortress in constant crisis. In its far-right and conservative version, populist foreign policy becomes articulated as a civilizational mission in which the state protects its cultural heritage, defends the faith from external threats, and saves the world from evil – embodied in the opponent (Casarões and Farias, 2022, 744; Saraiva, 2022, 8). It is the populist leader who knows the “true” values underlying international cooperation.

The fundamental feature of right-wing populism is a strong attachment to sovereignty. It triggers skepticism towards multilateralism and cooperation understood as collective problem-solving through institutionalized channels (Higgot and Proud, 2017, 8). Nationalist populists' strong proclivity to attacking international organizations makes them fierce critics of liberal institutionalism (Destradi et al., 2021, 674). Established rules of cooperation and the obligations that stem from them are seen as obstacles limiting national autonomy and the right to self-determination. If agreements and commitments were made by the predecessors of those currently in power, this creates an additional opportunity to reach for conspiracy theories and portray the predecessors' foreign policy in terms of national treason (Wajner and Giurlando, 2023, 16). Bureaucrats working for the bodies of international organizations and foreign politicians are also becoming targets of attack (Styczyńska and Meijer, 2023). They are portrayed as part of the international establishment allied against the independence of the state and the well-being and dignity of its people. The answer to the alleged limitations is to adopt a “tough” stance of resistance based on a “they-won't-tell-us-what-to-do” attitude. The organization under populist attack is presented as the embodiment of values alien to the true people making the option to withdraw from it justified. In recent years Great Britain's decision to leave the EU and the Trump administration's withdrawal from several bodies including the UN Human Rights Council raised questions about the future of the liberal world order. They also made the question whether right-wing populists seek an isolationist foreign policy legit.

The attachment to sovereignty has also far-reaching consequences for regional policies. Wehner and Thies (2021, 326) reflected on populist foreign policy patterns in regional integration processes. Populist leaders “either freeze regionalist efforts hoping they will fail or directly undermine existing regional integration groups”. An empirical example of such claim can be found in President Bolsonaro’s decision to withdraw from the UNASUL, membership suspension in the CELAC and Paulo Guedes’ (at that time, the soon-to-be minister of the economy) declaration, that Mercosul will no longer be Brazil’s priority. And while the Polish administration did not build their foreign policy narrative on threats to leave the EU, its Euroscepticism is widely acknowledged (see for example Styczyńska and Meijer, 2023). Jarosław Kaczyński’s 2020 interview for a national-conservative magazine can serve as an example of such approach. The Law and Justice leader and deputy prime minister explicitly stated that the European Union was “terrorizing” Poland, trying to strip away Poland’s sovereignty, while its bureaucratic apparatus was worse than the Soviet Union (Kaczyński in *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, 2020).³

The above description of populist foreign policy indicated the converging points in the external affairs of two countries ruled by right-wing, conservative populists. Before discussing the regional identities of Poland and Brazil and the discourse of their leaders, it is necessary to answer the question of why it is worth comparing countries that, apart from the ideological affinities of their leaders, differ a lot.

Why compare Poland and Brazil?

Cross-regional case studies are breakneck ventures due to differing regional contexts, including the unparalleled level of European integration, and different regional positions and capacities held by the two countries. While Brazil, by virtue of its area, demography, military, and economic might is seen as the undisputed leader of the region with the status of a regional power (see e.g. Lima and Hirst, 2006; Pecequillo and Carmo, 2015; Carvalho and Gonçalves, 2018)⁴, Poland is a medium-sized country. Brazil’s prominence created expectations in the region that the country would become the paymaster of integration, which was hardly the case of Poland, with its GDP approx. six times smaller than that of Germany, EU’s biggest economy. Both the political elites and society of Poland traditionally see EU membership as the main opportunity for accelerated socio-economic development. These linkages are not as clear-cut for Brazil, where a part of the citizens, business, and politicians, aware of the economic issues facing South America, look to other regions (relations with the US, China, the EU or Western European countries) (Visentini 2013: ix, xiii-xvi, Pecequillo and Carmo 2015: 8, Vigevani et al. 2008: 18-20).⁵ Brazil borders almost all South American countries, hence it is difficult to imagine strengthening regional cooperation or developing the region’s physical infrastructure without this

3. Anti-EU narratives can also be identified in the Polish conservative press, so far one of the most prominent manifestations was the cover with the slogan “Yes, we should leave the European Union” published two weeks before the parliamentary elections by the weekly magazine *Do Rzeczy*.

4. Although Brazil’s regional powerhood is not uncontested, with several Brazilian scholars drawing attention to Brazil’s behavior that does not fit into the typical activity of leadership expected of a regional power (see Spektor 2010a: 25-27; Lima 2013, Vaz 2018).

5. Varying preferences of political elites and business circles were also confirmed by Amaury de Souza in his authoritative study on the foreign policy community (2009, 32-33).

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country. On the other hand, Poland, even if geographically located in the center of Europe, is positioned on the eastern fringes of the EU, which gives rise to fears of marginalization. The degree to which the two countries' economies are linked to the region also differs significantly, including their trade volume with regional partners.⁶

Nonetheless, apart from the affinities of right-wing, conservative populist governments mentioned in the previous section, there are other similarities between Poland and Brazil in terms of the specifics of their regional relationships, which make comparisons justified. Both countries' historical ties with South America and Western Europe (which initiated and still forms the core of the EU) have not been very strong. Brazil can be considered a regional outsider until the late 19th century and had limited regional relations (Spektor, 2010b, 192; Vizentini, 2013, xiii). Poland, on the other hand, is not part of Western Europe and has remained on the margins of key European modernization processes occurring in the western part of the continent (Sowa, 2011; Stasiński, 2022). Both countries reoriented their regional policies at a similar historical moment, following a process of redemocratization - Brazil included regional integration as a foreign policy goal in its democratic constitution of 1988, while Poland began treating integration with (Western)European structures as *a raison d'être* from the early 1990s. Until populist parties and politicians took power in both countries, their political elites, despite difficulties and challenges, pointed to regional relations as an important foreign policy vector. Poland and Brazil proposed or participated in new integration initiatives and achieved unprecedented success (compared to earlier historical periods) in improving relations with neighbors and building mutual trust (notable are Brazilian-Argentine and Polish-German relations). On the other hand, analysts in both states saw limitations and reticence in efforts to strengthen cooperation with their immediate neighborhood (see Fiszer, 2010, 136; Niedźwiecki, 2017; see also the footnotes in the following section for a more nuanced assessment of Brazil's regional policy). Finally, if Brazil is distinguished by opposition to create supra-state integration structures due to the limitation of state autonomy (Vigevani et al., 2008), resistance to deepening European integration or the threat posed to state sovereignty by EU supra-state institutions is also present in Poland (Paczeński, 2015).

How deep is Brazilian and Polish regional identity?

While regional policy is determined by many factors such as historical experiences, security considerations, economic interests, intraregional trade figures, and the level of integration, ideational factors also matter. This study postulates to focus on the ideational variable – identity. The definition of we-ness plays an important role

in foreign policymaking in general, and in the analysis of populist foreign policy in particular as populists resort to the people and their understanding of the general will (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017, 16-18). And although populist leaders mold this will according to their political agenda, if their rhetoric is to attract a wider audience's attention, deeply rooted and widely shared self-understandings require consideration.

I follow Jarymowicz and Szustrowa (1980 apud Szacka, 2003, 153) in their understanding of identity as the "awareness of one's own coherence in time and space [...] in social situations and in roles performed, as well as awareness of one's own distinctiveness, individuality, and uniqueness". Identities are paramount in defining role conceptions – policymakers' ideas of the appropriate patterns of behaviors which the state should enact in the external environment (see Holsti 1970, 246). They become expressed in the political discourse to domestic and international audiences as role declarations. The conceptualization of roles is based on self-images. State actors, cultural and political elites, and civil society articulate this awareness by providing meanings to state identity through collective understandings of "us" and "them" (see e.g. Aggestam, 2006; Guimarães, 2020, and in populist foreign policymaking Guimarães and Silva, 2021). Further, this study adopts a discursive and processual understanding of identities which draws from the conceptualization offered by Hagström and Gustafsson (2015). While the authors distinguish between three strata of state identity, I propose a modified two-layered version. The first layer - deep identity - is constituted by a set of fundamental values, beliefs and institutions that are widely shared among political elites and the society. The content of deep identity constitutes the essential qualities of the state. The distinctive feature of this identity layer is a broad national consensus over its content. Therefore, questioning the sense of we-ness that is based on the deep identity is, at the very least, highly risky for political elites, and most often unacceptable for the public, if not unthinkable. Elements of Brazil's deep identity include sovereignty and autonomy understood as non-interference in both domestic affairs and the external choices made by the country in its foreign conduct, peaceful settlement of disputes, autonomy, national development along with a more or less explicit desire for *grandeza*⁷ (greatness) (cf. Guimarães, 2020, the formation of these values is described by i.a. Cervo, 2008). A broad consensus over sovereignty and liberty (closely tied to the notion of self-governance), security based on alliances with the West and the NATO in particular, modernization and progress ("catching up with the West") distinguish Poland and can be seen as elements of its deep identity layer.

Although deep identity is resistant to abrupt changes and gross reconceptualizations, it is not immutable. Core intersubjective understandings of the state's self are subject to adjustments. Consensus over the meaning of self is absent in the second

7. It should be noted that while the desire for greatness distinguished Brazil's intellectual and political elites, which is understandable given the country's material resources and its potential (Carvalho, 2000; Pinheiro, 2000; Herz, 2011; Buarque, 2022; Sawicka, 2023, 75-87), the assessment of Brazil's real capabilities is more ambiguous. If a part of the political elites and Brazilian public opinion believed in Brazil's ability to achieve great powerhood (see e.g. Souza, 2009, 15; Carvalho, 2020; Buarque, 2022, 52-70), Brazilian scholars were mostly more sceptical. For instance, historian José Murilo de Carvalho defined the Brazilian desire of greatness as a hope "to be something it [Brazil] never becomes" (Carvalho, 2000, 77). The traditional aspirations - the quest for international recognition - were also heralded

“a characteristic obsession” (Lessa et al., 2020, 74; cf. Buarque, 2022, 52-70) and confronted with assessments of diplomatic overstretching (Schenoni et al., 2022).

8. Apart from public opinion’s perceptions, this claim is supported by the ongoing Brazilian discussion about the regional status and meaning of the region in the country’s foreign policy. On one hand, authors stress the vital importance of South America, especially after redemocratization, the desire to lead the region (Lima and Hirst, 2006; Spektor, 2010a; Gratiús and Saraiva, 2013; Pinheiro and Gaio, 2014; Pecequilo and Carmo, 2015; Pasquarelli, 2023, 65), point out that the region was a foreign policy end in itself (Pinheiro and Gaio, 2014, 24; Carmo and Pecequilo, 2016, 73). On the other, objections are raised about the instrumentalization of the region

identity layer, thin identity. It is understood as a constantly molded repertoire of complementary, alternative, or even competing narratives. They are offered by various stakeholders interested in making their narrative(s) the ruling definition of we-ness. A dominant narrative will entail legitimization of foreign policy definitions (Wehner and Thies, 2014, 421). Compared to the deep identity layer, the reinterpretations occurring at this level require less time and efforts, are constantly developing, and compete with alternative self-articulations (Vucetic, 2017).

The sense of cohesion and distinctiveness of states, apart from the relation with other state actors, is based on the definition of their bond with their region, the physical and cultural space in which they are geographically and symbolically embedded. A fundamental question is whether the country’s regional affiliation is part of the deep identity, or if it constitutes one of many competing narratives of the collective self. Another outstanding matter is whether common patterns in right-wing populists’ regional identity definitions can be observed.

An overview of literature and earlier research enables to assert that while Brazil’s regional identity is a thin one⁸, Poland’s attachment to Europeaness – although not fully uncontested⁹ – can be considered in the 21st century as part of its deep identity. In case of Brazil, the country’s regional belonging has historically been firmly questioned by an important part of its elites while the population did not feel a strong connection with its neighborhood. The country’s perception of its regional embeddedness can be grasped through such contrasting notions as the lonely (isolated) island or “Europe in the Tropics” (Visentini 2013, xviii; Fredrigo, 2003, 99), the American state (an understanding that envisioned Brazil’s alignment with the US, overlooking its closer neighbors, see e.g. Moura, 2013), a member of the Latin American community of states and a founder and promoter of a South American affiliation (see Pecequilo and Carmo, 2015; Sawicka 2023, chapter 4). Each of these understandings was a dominant narrative in a given point of Brazil’s history yet, even if policymakers were promoting a preferred narrative, it was not unquestioned by other stakeholders, including opposition parties. Apart from the plurality of voices defining Brazil’s regional profile, this becomes further confirmed by the opinion of Brazilian citizens on their regional identification. All editions of the study *Brazil, the Americas and the World according to public opinion and leaders* (*O Brasil, as Américas e o Mundo*, 2019, 17) present unequivocally that ordinary Brazilian’s do not have a strong identification with neither Latin nor South America. In the 2019 edition only 3.08% of polled confirmed that they felt Latin American and even less – 1.74% – South American.¹⁰

Throughout Poland’s tumultuous history the bond with its neighborhood underwent significant reorientations, and Poland’s civilizational proximity to Western Europe has

been questioned (the distinct civilizational peculiarities of Central and Eastern Europe were described i.a. by Jan Sowa, see Sowa, 2011). Yet, since re-democratization the urge to confirm its belonging to the European community was widely accepted among Poland's political elites regardless of partisanship. It meant the accession to the EU and being a part of the European civilization. The return to Europe or Europeanization – meaning a reapproximation with Western Europe after decades of distance caused by Poland's forced membership in the socialist bloc – became a doctrine of the country's foreign policy after 1989 (Balcer et al. 2016: 1). This main goal anchored and justified by the understanding of Poland as a country belonging to Europe united post-communists and members of the former democratic opposition. One reason for this deep strive for Europeanness was its association with a growing distance and final separation from Russia and its sphere of influence. Becoming European also meant freeing themselves from the remnants of *homo sovieticus*. This was further confirmed by polls on Poles' opinion about feeling European and membership in the EU. According to a 2019 poll conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS), 52% of respondents consider themselves Polish and European (with 44% self-identifying as only Polish) (CBOS, 2021,5). Eurobarometer 2019 results showed that 84% of Poles identified themselves as citizens of the European Union (Eurobarometer 2019, 4). CBOS polls further confirm that the support for membership has invariably remained at a high level of at least 84% since 2016.¹¹ The consensus and strong attachment to being/becoming European is a clear example of a regional identity constituting the deep identity layer.

Different approaches to regional self-articulations have implications for foreign policymaking and affect the discourse of state authorities. I contend that the leeway to avoid mentions of the region and frontally undermine existing cooperation channels is impacted by the regional sense of belonging of the state. In the case of a country whose regional identity is a thin one, this opens more possibilities to prioritize other regions and partners over one's own neighborhood, skip mentions of it in the political rhetoric, opt for bilateral cooperation over multilateralism in the region, and to criticize regional initiatives and commitments more openly. Apart from the sovereign state and defender of democracy and other values, roles of isolate and vandal (actively contributing to the dissolution of existing regional activities without proposing alternative cooperation channels) will be feasible. For a country whose regional affiliation constitutes a part of the deep identity layer criticism is not out of question, yet it requires more moderation. Also, mentions of the region are expected to be frequent. Having outlined features of populist foreign policy conduct relevant for the cases of this paper and the ways political elites and societies of Poland and Brazil understand their own region, the article now moves to the analysis of policymakers' discourse on the region.

in the pursuit of global goals or its secondary place in the hierarchy of foreign policy objectives (see Vigevani et al., 2008, 9-10; Spektor, 2010a, 27; Lima, 2013, Pecequillo and Carmo, 2015, 19; Lazarou and Luciano, 2015). Assessments of the region's importance also point to reticence in overcoming the obstacles when shaping regional priorities and strategies, including concerns about sub-imperialist charges (Pecequillo and Carmo, 2015; Mesquita 2016) or the willingness to bear the costs of integration (Bouzas et al., 2008; Lima 2013; Lessa et al., 2020).

9. Karolewski and Mehlhausen (2017, 55-56) identify four phases of Poland's European policy, including the contestation (2002-2007) and "sovereignism" (2015-) phases in which Eurosceptics managed to undermine the earlier broad

political consensus regarding Poland's adhesion to (Western) European structures, notably, the European Union.

10. Answers by the group identified as having interest but no knowledge about international affairs.

The responses of polled interested in foreign affairs were slightly higher – 3.39% felt South American and 9.04% Latin American (*O Brasil, as Américas e o Mundo* 2019: 17).

11. Europeanness as a deep identity, however, does not preclude support for the EU motivated by “utilitarian” motives – expectations of improved living standards and service provision (see Styczyńska 2022). However, Europeanness is understood in this article as a broader concept than support for the EU, as an awareness of the region's civilizational distinctiveness and a sense of belonging to the European

Regions reflected in the Polish and Brazilian political discourse

Sample selection criteria

To verify the discursive strategies and tropes present in the rhetoric of Brazilian and Polish leaders, content analysis was conducted of presidential official addresses and statements. In the Brazilian case ministerial statements and interviews were also included into the analysis.¹² Selected speeches of President Andrzej Duda date from the beginning of his first term in August 2015 until the end of 2022. Brazilian texts cover the period Jair Bolsonaro's mandate (2019-2022) and include the speeches of his foreign affairs ministers: Ernesto Araújo (2019-March 2021) and Carlos França (March 2021-2022).

The corpus of speeches consists of a total number of 213 texts. The first selection criterion was the availability of the texts. In case of Poland, an online repository of all speeches that allows sampling is only maintained by the presidential office.¹³ Brazilian governmental sites make both presidential and ministerial speeches available which allowed to include the later into the analysis.¹⁴ The second criterion for sampling was the occurrence of keywords. In the case of President Duda's Polish-language texts, speeches containing the expressions “region”, “Europe” and “European Union”/“EU” were selected for analysis. The selection of Portuguese- and Spanish-language texts was dictated by the occurrence of the phrases “region”/“regional”, “continent”, “South America”, “Latin America”, “Mercosul”, “Prosul”, “Unasul”. Finally, the context in which the keywords appeared was considered. Included in the analysis were speeches containing evaluative statements in which decisionmakers expressed their attitude towards their regions and its key organizations or referred to the region when talking about the identity of the state and the nation.¹⁵ Qualitative content analysis was performed using the MAXQDA software. The codebook was prepared after the first reading of the texts hence it is content-driven.

Understandings of the region

The sheer number of Polish and Brazilian speeches meeting the criteria for analysis shows that regional relations had a permanent place in Polish Presidential discourse during the analyzed period, while they were marginal in the case of Brazil. Indeed, 129 texts of President Duda and only 43 texts of President Bolsonaro were selected for analysis (the Brazilian sample was further supplemented with 30 texts of Minister Araújo and 10 speeches of Minister França). Several observations made at the text selection stage are noteworthy. In selecting President Duda's speeches, the author noted the absence of two speeches that reverberated widely in Poland, including a

2018 speech in Kamienna Góra in which the head of state was critical of the European Union, implying an analogy between Poland’s EU membership and the partition (the period between 1795 and 1918, when three neighboring empires partitioned Poland, leading to loss of statehood). When selecting Brazilian texts, it is noteworthy that during speeches from meetings with regional leaders (e.g., Paraguay), the Brazilian head of state often focused on bilateral relations while omitting the topic of regional integration or any reference to multilateral cooperation. The shift in the approach to regional policy from multilateralism (and deepening regional initiatives) to a focus on bilateral (economic) cooperation was also confirmed by Brazilian diplomats interviewed in Brasília in August 2015 (authors interviews, August 9, 10, and 11, 2022) who admitted that this was a major recalibration of foreign policy principles.

Not only was the number of texts selected for analysis much lower in the case of Brazil (which is confirmed even if we make allowance for the shorter time frame of the analysis of Bolsonaro’s speeches), also the saturation of texts with references to the region varies significantly. An analysis of the word frequencies shows that the adjective “European” saturated Polish speeches, being the third most frequent word (and most frequently used adjective) (frequency 1402, 96,9% of all documents). “Europe” was 7th (frequency 981, 95,5% of documents). The most frequent word used by Brazilian policymakers was “Brazil” (frequency 1434, 98,8% of texts). “MERCOSUL”, the highest ranked word referring to the region ranked 14th, the frequency, however, was much lower - 414 mentions, followed by the word region (frequency of 259, 36th place, 79,52% of documents). Tables 1 and 2 present a compilation of the understandings of the state’s regional belonging based on the most frequent expressions referring to the region and regional organizations.

Table 1. The region and its main integration platforms as presented in President Duda’s statements

Europe (<i>Europa</i>)	“family of states and nations”, “Christian European community” - a civilizational and cultural community to which Poland belongs since the introduction of Christianity, based on Greek philosophy, Roman law, and Christianity
Central Europe (<i>Europa Centralna / Środkowa</i>)	a symbolic and geographic entity in which Poland is embedded, referred to as “our region”, the primary point of reference, a group of post-communist countries that have integrated into Europe (implicitly: Western Europe) after joining the European Union, this way completing the European unification project; an area with a lower level of socio-economic development that is trying to “catch up” with Western Europe

community.

12. Tweets and blog entries were excluded as they do not constitute the official discourse of a government body and it can be questioned whether and to what extent they are part of the state’s foreign policy conduct.

13. Poland is parliamentary republic with the Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister responsible for the country’s external affairs. Nonetheless, the Polish Constitution states that the head of state collaborates on foreign policy with the head of government and respective minister. This constitutional provision offers considerable discretion in matters of presidential engagement in foreign policy conduct and political practice so far has proven that most Polish heads of state have exercised this leeway by demonstrating their commitment to

external affairs (see Pawłowska, 2021, 87-92).

14. However, it should be noted that only a very limited number of Minister França's speeches is available on the ministry's website.

15. In the case of Poland, statements limited only to historical events, issues of security and inter-regional cooperation on the EU-US axis, EU relations with third countries and the strictly technical dimension of cooperation within the EU and those in which Europe is mentioned only as a geographical location were excluded from the sample. In the case of Brazil, the corpus does not include texts only referring to Venezuela and Cuba treated as a threat to Brazil (with no mention of the region), referring to South/Latin America as a geographical area or mentioning the EU-Mercosul trade treaty without further references to South-or Latin

Central-Eastern Europe (*Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia*)

Western Europe (*Europa Zachodnia*)

European Union (*Unia Europejska*)

Three Seas Initiative (3SI, *Trójmorze*)

Visegrád Group (V4) (*Grupa Wyszehradzka*)

a term used interchangeably with the term Central Europe

a frequent point of reference: Poland is depicted as belonging to it due to a common Judeo-Christian tradition; on the other hand, in terms of socio-economic development level, Poland is not a part of Western Europe but strives to "catch up" with it, making Polish families' standard of living comparable

a community that is the most mature manifestation of European civilization based on values, an organization that ensures the socio-economic development of its members; EU membership enjoys broad support among Poles and is not contested by leading Polish political parties; a space for the clash of interests of diverse states, an international organization with an elaborate institutional apparatus claiming the right (in an unsanctioned manner, going against EU treaties) to "impose its will" on sovereign states; "an imaginary" (*wyimaginowana*)/"fictitious" (*fikcyjna*) community dealing with "imaginary problems" due to ideology

the main European initiative of President Duda, of which he was the co-ordinator (it includes 13 Central-Eastern European countries from the Baltic, Black and Adriatic seas), the head of state stressed that the 3SI is implemented as a project within the EU, its main aim was the improvement of infrastructure and interconnectivity to "catch up" with Western Europe

a platform of political cooperation formed by Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary whose members according to President Duda shared a common view on major issues in the EU; their coordination efforts and joint positions were to strengthen the voice of Central Europe within the EU structures

Table 2. The region and its main integration platforms as presented in presidential and ministerial statements

American affairs.

Americas / America	mentions are rare (and include references to the Summit of the Americas), a space where democracy and human rights require protection against the threats identified by Brazil; a space in which Brazil jointly with the US have important roles of defending fundamental values underlying hemispheric cooperation
Latin America	mentions are few and refer to a geographic location rather than a community (e.g. only four excerpts from President Bolsonaro's speeches mentioning LA were coded), Minister Araújo only once admitted that Latin America was Brazil's priority and mentioned Latin American integration;
South America	the continent in which Brazil is geographically located and in which it holds a special status due to its vast resources; President Bolsonaro mentions SA scarcely, reflections on regional unity and deepening integration as a foreign policy priority are missing in his speeches; the approach towards SA is "pragmatic", focused on economic affairs and the promotion of two values: freedom and democracy; the region is a hostile environment due to socialism (and other -isms) "looming over" the region and threatening Brazil; Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, and Argentina (after the return of <i>Kirchneristas</i>) are depicted as dysfunctional states in deep crisis that embody all that Brazil is not and should not become - the negative Significant Others
the Amazon region (região Amazônica or países Amazônicos)	President Bolsonaro and his FA ministers mostly refer to the Brazilian Amazon, in several speeches, however, policymakers mention Amazon countries (i.a. as "the masters of our territories, of our destiny"), Brazilian neighbors sharing the valuable biome; the sense of cooperation is justified by international pressure experienced by Amazon countries to protect their resources, common developmental and security challenges including cross-border issues, and a shared sense of threat to national sovereignty over their part of the Amazon

Mercosul

a regional economic cooperation organization requiring reforms and „the return to its roots” of open regionalism; a promoter of democracy and liberty in the region; while at Mercosul summits Bolsonaro and Araújo mentioned cooperation successes, much attention was directed to its past ideologization, lack of outcomes; its clear priority is the trade agreement with the EU and removal of barriers to trade

Unasul

“a negative experience” - a failed integration project imbued with leftist ideology mentioned only six times in the corpus of texts; UNASUL was incapable of promoting the values of freedom and democracy, “prolixity was the rule and effectiveness the exception”, a project led by Hugo Chávez which Brazil left after “opening its eyes” (metaphor referring to becoming aware of the leftist threat in the region)

Prosul

a replacement of the ideologized UNASUL, a pragmatic endeavor of democratic (=right-wing) leaders withstanding the totalitarian threat epitomized by Venezuela, focused on delivering “pragmatic outcomes” and defending democracy and liberty, yet, also rarely mentioned by policymakers

Values and perils

To assess the speakers’ approach to their respective regions, the analysis started with an overview of the values and threats mentioned when referring to the neighborhood. They were identified through the verification of word frequency and by considering the literature on right-wing populism. The list of shared values mentioned in Polish and Brazilian speeches included liberty, democracy, sovereignty, Christianity, family, tradition, solidarity, and truth, although the weight assigned to them by the speakers (reflected in the frequency in which they were mentioned in the texts) differed significantly. A clear common point in the speeches of the Polish leader and his Brazilian counterpart were references to freedom as a fundamental value in foreign policy. For Bolsonaro it meant liberating the region from ideological perils, Duda’s statements were notable for their call for the transformation of the

EU into a community of “free nations and equal states”, hinting at his objection to deepen supranational mechanisms. Common was also a sovereigntist narrative. The defense of sovereignty was the driving force behind the Amazon region’s cooperation with countries sharing this biome with Brazil. President Bolsonaro mentioned also in one of his speeches that he opposed the idea of Latin America *pátria grande* – presumably referring to 19th century integration projects that included the possibility of federalization. For the Polish leader, who explicitly stressed his objection to federalization projects, the EU was pointed out as an entity whose institutions should abstain from limiting the sovereignty of states. Frequently mentioned by both policymakers was also democracy, although it served different purposes. Brazilian policymakers demanded the protection of democratic states (identified as those not ruled by leftist regimes) across the region, whereas President Duda called for a more democratic EU in which sovereign states had a greater saying than supranational bodies. Finally, a point of convergence was the populist leaders’ oft-quoted capacity to seek and promote truth and authenticity. President Bolsonaro is known for his proneness to quote the Biblical passage from John 8:32 (“*you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*”) which he also invoked when speaking about the region (six mentions in the selected texts; President Duda on the other hand is known for his fondness for citing the supreme authority of another John, John Paul II, mentioned 52 times in the corpus of analyzed text). Facing defamation attempts steered by representatives of the opposition or international complots of the left (the latter accusation was made by Minister Araújo) Polish and Brazilian policymakers claimed that they were defenders of the truth. If Brazil under Bolsonaro’s leadership was depicted as an authentic democracy standing for “true values” in the region, Poland led by a conservative government remained true to European (Christian) origins and had the ability to protect Europe’s civilizational legacy.

If both leaders envisioned for their countries the regional roles of defender of (true) liberty and democracy, Poland was additionally depicted as a defender of Christian faith and tradition. Numerous statements about the Christian foundations of Europe and the EU were a distinctive feature of Duda’s regional discourse. Christianity was pointed out as key for Poland’s membership in the European civilization. While integration was frequently presented as an opportunity for the country’s economic development and provided for the improvement of living standards of Polish families, statements about the country’s European identity were a constant element in President Duda’s discourse. Whereas the politician paid much attention to Polish and regional identity, it was lacking in the Brazilian discourse (President Bolsonaro mentioned it only on four occasions in the regional context). Christianity was also less commonly invoked and not as a principle underlying regional affairs – the Brazilian head of state either spoke of his and his countrymen’s faith or mentioned religion in

16. Since August 2021 the Polish leader increasingly emphasized responsibility as another fundamental norm, and Poland as a state committed to the role of a good international citizen. The discourse stirred up controversies as it referred to Polish authorities' response to the refugee crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border. It was a clear manifestation of the instrumental use of the EU to justify push-backs on the border: the policy of Polish authorities was shown as a way to guard the European border and security of the entire community.

17. This was an oversimplification that omitted to mention the growing Euroscepticism of right-wing political parties in Poland (see Styczyńska and Meijer 2023).

a supra-regional context. Solidarity, tradition, and the wellbeing of families were also more frequently depicted as norms underlying regional projects in President Duda's rhetoric.¹⁶ Brazilian policymakers listing positive drivers of regional affairs, apart from invoking democracy and freedom, focused on the pragmatic side of regional cooperation that was to be secured through a focus on economic topics.

The analysis of the region's threats and problems – typically referred to as crises – on the other hand, showed wider differences both in terms of the object of the threat but, primarily, in the way it was described. Statements of Brazilian policymakers leave no doubt as to who and what is causing crisis in South and Latin America. The three perils quoted most frequently are Venezuela, followed by narcotraffic, organized crime, and terrorism (a threat closely interlinked with Venezuela), and ideology. Policymakers, notably Minister Araújo, also referred to socialism or leftist ideology more broadly (Marxism, communism, São Paulo Forum, leftism, etc.). The Maduro regime was depicted as a major regional challenge and Brazil as a steadfast crusader ready to defend South America from a criminal network led by the Venezuelan dictator. It was also ideologization and inefficiency with which Brazil explained its decision to leave UNASUL and join the Chilean-Colombian PROSUL project. However, given the scant mention of the latter and the generally small number of high-level events held during Bolsonaro's presidency, the attention given to the new cooperation platform was very limited. With a lack of commitment and critical remarks about the region's cooperation architecture, Brazilian policymakers were embracing the role of vandal that was undermining existing regional multilateral mechanisms without offering much in return.

President Duda's statements included both the danger of ideology, threats to European integration (from inappropriate institutional reforms that limited sovereignty or deepened internal cleavages, Brexit, the Nord Stream gas pipeline, and security threats). Although ideology was mentioned in his speeches (mostly but not exclusively directed to domestic audiences), accusing regional cooperation of ideologization was less common than in the Brazilian case. Unlike President Bolsonaro, Duda was mostly more balanced and vaguer when mentioning regional troublemakers. He refrained from pointing to specific states or names of politicians if they were EU partners. The Polish leader spoke of "some countries", "contemporary leaders", "them", "many", "big European countries", his statements also contained criticism of EU institutions (referred to as "Brussels", "EU bureaucrats", "politicians in EU institutions"). While PiS was known for statements highly critical of Germany treated as a negative Significant Other (see Kopper et al., 2023, 100), there were no explicit and ideologically motivated remarks about the Western neighbor in official speeches by the head of state. Further, to create the effect of understatement President Duda frequently resorted to impersonal forms when criticizing the EU (e.g.

“attempts are being made”). Against the backdrop of Duda’s discourse, the rhetoric of Bolsonaro and Araújo was marked by a strong language avoiding euphemisms. Both policymakers named actors and politicians posing a threat or hindering cooperation in the region straightforwardly - Venezuela under Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro, Argentina ruled by Peronists led by Kristina Kirchner, sporadic mentions of Fidel Castro and Evo Morales were also identified. More frequent was also the use of negative epithets. Venezuela was described not only as a dictatorship and authoritarian state, but also as totalitarian (“the worst totalitarian regime ever seen in Latin America”) and committing “silent genocide”, Nicolás Maduro as a criminal, leader of a “political-criminal network” and “*Internacional Narcotraficante*”. While the radical tone of these statements was primarily attributable to the personal style of the speaker - Bolsonaro and Araújo are known for their lack of constraint, something that cannot be said of Duda indicated as the “gentle” or “smiling” side of PiS (Stawikowska, 2023) - it also testifies to the importance attributed to the region. Further, moderation, or the lack thereof, was indicative of policymakers’ assessment of the meaning assigned to regional relations among Polish and Brazilian voters and the country’s political class.

Regional cooperation? Yes, *but...*

The final part of the analysis aimed at juxtaposing the assessment of regional cooperation within the main integration body – the EU and Mercosul – made by Brazilian and Polish policymakers. Having coded statements mentioning the EU and Mercosul, in the next step the statements were classified into one of three sub-codes (favourable/positive, unfavourable/pejorative, and neutral/non applicable) to assess the speaker’s attitude and evaluation of the organization and Poland/Brazil’s membership in it. Noticeable qualitative differences in the Polish and Brazilian discourse were identified.

Although positive remarks when speaking of Mercosul dominated in the presidential and ministerial discourse, what stands out is the way the head of state and Minister Araújo referred to it. Both figures spoke of the organization’s post-2019 achievements. The frequent use of the future tense is outstanding, with both politicians outlining intentions to revitalize the organization, and terms such as “eventually” emphasizing that Mercosul’s successes were being recorded after a long period of inertia. Mentions of achievements focused mostly on the trade agreement with the EU whereas the praise for the South American body itself seemed somewhat lukewarm. Mercosul was not described in terms of a “great” organization or integration success story. While democracy and freedom were mentioned as shared cooperation principles, a common regional identity was once again absent from the discourse. Positive statements also largely focused on envisioned reforms – the need to

return to its roots of open regionalism and abolition of trade barriers. The coded statements included phrases that spoke of modernization, reform, reconstruction, transformation, defect removal, flexibilization, institutional slimming and budget cuts to the (already chronically underinvested) organization. A more limited bureaucracy and areas of cooperation (both policymakers did not talk about a wide swath of areas of cooperation, this was done only by Minister França) showed a clear desire to reduce the organization's responsibilities. It was Minister França who reminded of the organization's 30-year legacy and repeatedly spoke about Mercosul as the fundamental platform to increase Brazil's geopolitical weight, regional integration, and promotion of peace in the region.

The Polish head of state did not question the achievements of the European Union. Speaking of EU membership and the organization's achievements to date, President Duda used phrases that have a clearly positive tinge, including hyperboles. The organization was repeatedly described as a "great" if not "the greatest" project, and Poland's membership as its "most important success" and "a landmark event" in line with the national interest. The Polish leader recurrently highlighted the unquestioned support of the Polish society for EU membership and his "absolute" support for the European project. Further, in October 2018, President Duda stated that no Polish political party wished to leave the EU.¹⁷ "Polexit" was not verbalized in the speeches, making the notion of leaving the EU unthinkable.

What also differs in both cases is the importance attributed to regional affairs and joint membership in regional bodies addressed during meetings with other heads of states. While Bolsonaro's reference to South America at bilateral meetings was the exception rather than the rule, the opposite is true for President Duda. Apart from bilateral topics, invoking joint EU membership, the improvement of historical relations through participation in a major integration initiative, and opportunities for future cooperation were regular features of Duda's statements.

The Polish leader recognized not only the socio-economic development clearly felt by Polish families after EU accession, but also the peace and security of a united Europe. The European Union was depicted as a "community of ethics" and a "family of states" built on common values. References to ideational underpinnings of the integration project and a common identity, missing in the Brazilian discourse, are palpable in President Duda's speeches. When speaking about Christianity as the foundation of integration projects, the president repeatedly reminded in his postulates that the EU, with Poland's support, must remain faithful to them.

Differences are also found in critical remarks regarding both organizations. Brazilian statements coded as negative did not lack explicit and blunt phrases. Mercosul,

17. This was an oversimplification that omitted to mention the growing Euroscepticism of right-wing political parties in Poland (see Styczyńska and Meijer 2023).

according to President Bolsonaro, stood as “a synonym for inefficiency, wasted opportunities and trade restrictions”, therefore requiring profound reforms. It raised widespread skepticism and doubt, suffered due to “archaic visions” and ideology. Brazilian leaders spoke of a “negative image” acquired by the organization. Both President Bolsonaro and Minister Araújo discredited its negative legacy, focusing on unsatisfactory trade indicators and completely disregarding the importance of the organization to peace and confidence building between the Southern Cone countries. The clear message was that the body prior to 2019 failed to deliver outcomes, leaving Brazil with a “thirst for results”. Both politicians not only openly criticized the organization; they stated on three occasions the possibility to circumvent Mercosul and recent domestic debates over Brazil’s membership in the grouping. The alternative of leaving Mercosul became explicitly verbalized in the Brazilian case with the role of (regionally) isolated state as a feasible option.

A noteworthy discursive strategy observed in both cases was juxtaposition. President Bolsonaro and Minister Araújo frequently resorted to it to contrast Mercosul’s past failures, errors, and deficiency with current achievements. If Brazilian policymakers contrasted an ineffective, ideologized Mercosul led by leftist leaders in the past with a promising organization striving to implement the tenets of open regionalism, the Polish leader collated past successes with problems or desired changes according to the scheme “The European Union is a great project supported by Polish citizens, however...”. This smuggled into the discourse criticism of erroneous policies (e.g. on migration), a skewed and untrue perception of Poland’s domestic policies (the reform of the judiciary which led to Poland’s conflict with the European Commission over the rule of law), undesirable changes in integration processes (including a two-speed EU distinguishing between countries within and outside the eurozone), changes advocated by Poland (a greater say for nation-states). The strong support declared by President Duda for the EU came along with worries regarding the future of the EU in times of multiple crises. While some reflected Poland’s economic and security concerns, the mention of others was ideologically motivated and served as an excuse to criticize institutions and bodies seen as endowed with over-reaching powers. Such was the case of Brexit interpreted as the British society’s revolt against EU bureaucracy and democratic deficit. Such were also projects of deepening integration that according to the Polish head of state led to sharper discrepancies among member states, and a clear division into the EU’s “center” and “peripheries”, seen as the beginning of disintegration. If leaving the EU was not an option, the (undesired) end of the EU was pointed out as a looming peril. Nonetheless, contrary to the Brazilian discourse, there were no radically negative assessments in presidential statements that would describe the European project as a failure. Among the most negative characterizations of the organization were those in which the European Union was

described as an “imaginary” and fictitious community of which there was little use. It is telling that these words reverberated widely in Poland and faced strong criticism from the public. Finally, critical remarks on European integration after Russia’s full-scale invasion in Ukraine clearly gave way to positive messages about the need for European unity.

Conclusions

The purpose of the article was to conduct a comparative analysis of the way right-wing populists in Brazil and Poland envisioned their own region, membership, and cooperation within the most important regional organizations. Content analysis confirmed common populist features in the rhetoric on the region in both cases. Policymakers resorted to a sovereigntist narrative and emphasized that it was the nation state with a leader or leadership defending the interests of the (true) people who had to have the final say in regional affairs. Common were the values invoked by the leaders - democracy and liberty that were also used instrumentally to justify state autonomy and counter any aims at deepening integration. Criticism of regional cooperation also permeated the Polish and Brazilian statements. The need to reform and return to the origins of Mercosul and the EU, postulates to limit the organizations’ bureaucracies, and opposition to supranational solutions were points in common. Another was the ideological thread mentioned both by Polish and Brazilian policymakers. The identified references to similar values and (to a lesser extent) perils and enemies when speaking about the region, as well as critical remarks on regional cooperation are indicative of the right-wing populist foreign policy rhetoric. The identified roles embedded in political discourse were those of defender of democracy, liberty, and faith, and the sovereigntist state. Further, while President Duda aimed at presenting Poland as the good and responsible international citizen, the roles of isolate and vandal were feasible for Brazil during the Bolsonaro government.

What also stood out were the identified differences. Due to the Latin/South American identity being a thin one, Brazil’s policymakers dedicated limited attention to the region’s affairs in their speeches, were more critical of it and considered the option to withdraw from joint initiatives or seek other extra-regional priorities. Mentions of the importance of the region for Brazil (its history, identity, etc.) were few and the focus when speaking about cooperation was on economic matters. As Poland’s European identity is a deep one, the Polish head of state mentioned the region frequently. If President Duda criticized it, he did so in a more constrained way as he had a more limited space for maneuver when it came to undermining Europe and

European integration. An isolationist standing and proposal to withdraw from joint European enterprises – the *Polexit* – was overly risky to be explicitly declared in official statements. It should be pointed out, however, that for a complete picture of the shaped official discourse of the Polish authorities, the analysis should be expanded to include speeches by the Polish prime minister and foreign affairs ministers in the PiS government. It is possible to argue that President Duda represented the moderate wing of the ruling coalition with other politicians - including the PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński - known for much more critical remarks. Nonetheless, the fact that he was selected as the party's candidate for presidential office shows that PiS considered it necessary to have a moderate politician in a position equipped with certain prerogatives concerning foreign policy.

The study of the rhetoric of President Bolsonaro and President Duda points to more moderation in the Polish case and suggests that identity serves as an inhibitor mostly holding back the Polish leader from overly aggressive rhetoric. Nevertheless, the moderate if not discrete Euroscepticism underlying President Duda's speeches could have a far-reaching impact in the long term as restraint does not equal impotence. In a society with a strong regional identity and supportive of EU membership it is the more subtle remarks by the head of state, recognized as a rational agent, rather than frontal attacks by more radical and Eurosceptic politicians that can lead to a change in perceptions and attitudes toward the European Union and Europe. They can make the unthinkable not only thinkable, but also viable. For deep identity is not set in stone. Even if the changes will be gradual and take more time, deep identity is malleable and exposed to political narratives. This is another argument justifying empirical explorations of populist foreign policy discourse in general, and populist rhetoric on the region and regional cooperation in particular.

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