

: Programme

Bonn Symposium 2024 **From Cooperation to Confrontation?** **Populism and International Cooperation** **in the Super Election Year 2024**

Three-part online series, Wednesdays, 2:15 - 3:30 PM *(in English)*

Sep. 25, 2024 The Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Europe – Will Europe Remain a Reliable International Partner?

Oct. 30, 2024 In the Name of the People? How Populists Influence International Climate Negotiations

Nov. 21, 2024 Democracy Modi-fied - Populism in India and German-Indian Relations

Evening Event & Reception, Old Town Hall, Bonn, 6 PM *(in German)*

Nov. 29, 2024 What's Next After the worldwide Super Election Year 2024?
International Cooperation in Times of Populism

The Bonn Symposium is supported by the State Government of North Rhine-Westphalia and the City of Bonn.

Die Landesregierung
Nordrhein-Westfalen



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der Sparkasse in Bonn

BACKGROUND

The 2024 super election year represents a serious test for liberal democracy. Almost half of the world's population will be called or has already been called to the polls at various levels this year: From the European elections to the elections in the US, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, and others, to three German state elections. Everywhere, significant gains or even victories for populist parties or groups are to be expected or have already occurred.

Populist movements universally claim to represent the “ordinary” people (Latin *populus*) in contrast to the elites. They propose overly simplified solutions to complex problems, often accompanied by dramatized threat scenarios. A common feature of populism, irrespective of its underlying ideology, is a selective skepticism towards international cooperation. Populists frequently argue that such cooperation would undermine national sovereignty and the nation's socio-economic interests. Take, for example, the Trump administration's rejection of international organizations, or the skepticism towards to EU of populist parties in many European states.

Given the global rise of populism, the joint management of global challenges is becoming more difficult. The capacities of multilateral organizations are thwarted, which hinders the implementation of international agreements. At the same time, global challenges still require cooperative solutions, e.g. in the promotion of a sustainable and just future, establishing and maintaining peace, or in the fight against the climate crisis. Thus, populist movements have a strong impact on various international political processes.

This year's Bonn Symposium will address how increasing global populism is affecting international cooperation and the joint management of the economic, social and ecological challenges of our time. We will discuss what concrete approaches can be taken to counteract the described trends and strengthen international cooperation.

We will pursue these questions at different levels: in the first two online sessions, we will analyze two regional examples, the European Union and India, where elections have taken place this year in which populist actors have succeeded. In the third online session, we will focus on a specific policy area, climate, to shed light on how populism influences processes in international cooperation. Finally, in a German-language evening event, we will discuss with political decision-makers what our findings mean for the future international cooperation, and how Germany should position itself in response.

Online Session I - September 25, 2024

2:15 PM

THE RISE OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN EUROPE - WILL EUROPE REMAIN A RELIABLE INTERNATIONAL PARTNER?

Fratelli d'Italia, the Rassemblement National (RN), and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) all recorded significant gains in the European elections. Although they are largely divided and therefore limited in their power, these successes mean that the two right-wing parliamentary groups ECR (European Conservatives and Reformists) and ID (Identity and Democracy) have gained significant strength in the European Parliament. Both groups influence European politics with their isolationist and EU-sceptical attitudes and thus also shape Europe's international role.

Populist movements, especially right-wing populist hardliners, are currently contributing to the erosion of institutional structures and the unity of the European Union. This is not only exacerbating tensions between national governments and EU institutions. European solidarity, the rule of law, and trust in the EU are also being undermined. The increasing influence of populist parties therefore represents a key challenge for the European Union - both internally and externally.

Are the EU's institutions resilient and can they withstand the growing influence of right-wing populist parties and groups? What does the rise of populism mean for the role of Europe in international politics and international institutions? What strategic adjustments are necessary to ensure the stability and reliability of European institutions?

Chair:

Dr Marcus Kaplan

Executive Director, Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)

Discussion

Dr Raphael Bossong

Deputy Head of Research Division EU/Europe; German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)

Dr Célia Belin

Head, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) Paris; Senior Policy Fellow

Colin Scicluna

European Commission, Former Head of Cabinet of the Vice President Democracy & Demography, Brussels

followed by

Q&A

3:30 PM

End of session

Online session II - October 30, 2024

2:15 PM

IN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE?

HOW POPULISTS INFLUENCE INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

To tackle climate change, efficient global cooperation is indispensable. However, populists are putting the brakes on this cooperation by insisting on national interests first. For example, they over-emphasize the burdens that climate protection measures might place on “ordinary people” and the economy; or distract from their respective nation’s responsibility by demanding that other countries must act first. In some cases, they even deny the existence of man-made climate change altogether.

This is severely hampering the development of a common global strategy. In the run-up to the 29th Climate Change Conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, this panel will discuss the positions of populist actors and their influence on international climate negotiations. The issue of climate justice and the responsibilities of different countries will also play a role. We would like to identify options for action at national and international levels. How can necessary progress in the international climate regime be achieved despite the resistance by populist forces?

Chair

Dr Marcus Kaplan

Executive Director, Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)

Discussion

Prof Dr Markus Lederer

Head, Research Group International Relations, Technical University of Darmstadt

Tim McPhie

Spokesperson for Climate Action and Energy, European Commission, Brussels

Adriana Ramos

Coordinator, Social and Environmental Policy and Law Program, Instituto Socioambiental (ISA)

followed by

Q&A

3:30 PM

End of session

Online session III - November 21, 2024

2:15 PM

DEMOCRACY MODI-FIED - POPULISM IN INDIA AND GERMAN-INDIAN RELATIONS

India has become an important centre of power in the Global South and its influence is steadily increasing. As a growth market and political counterweight to China, it is a key partner for Germany. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country is pursuing a populist course, alongside its self-confident foreign policy and ambitious economic goals. This is a cause for concern in parts of the Indian population, as well as in the international community.

This Hindu nationalism, a theocratic form of populism, disadvantages more than 200 million Muslims in the country and jeopardizes social cohesion. Minorities are oppressed and freedom of the press has declined rapidly in recent years. Although Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lost its absolute majority in the 2024 election, it remains in power, continuing its alliance with other parties.

Together with our experts, we want to look back at the parliamentary election in India and discuss the implications of the election for Indo-German relations. What options does Germany have to maintain the positive relationship and continue to cooperate with India both bilaterally and in the solution of global problems?

Chair

Dr Marcus Kaplan

Executive Director, Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)

Discussion

Dr habil Christian Wagner

Senior Fellow, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin

Rajeshwari Krishnamurthy

Visiting Fellow, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), New Delhi

Christoph P. Mohr

Country Director, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, India

followed by

Q&A

3:30 PM

End of session

Evening event - November 29, 2024 (in German)

Location: Old Town Hall Bonn, Gobelin-Saal, Markt 2, 53111 Bonn, Germany

6 PM **WHAT'S NEXT AFTER THE WORLDWIDE SUPER ELECTION YEAR 2024? INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN TIMES OF POPULISM**

The strong election results of populist parties in the 2024 European elections are a cause for severe concern: nationalist thinking is on the rise and jeopardizes the progress of European unification. Efficient governance in the EU is becoming more difficult and the functioning of important multilateral institutions is under threat. Public discourse is shifting, and radical opinions are increasingly being normalized.

In addition, in this year's elections in India and the US, authoritarian and populist forces were able to win elections or achieve strong results. The elected parties are characterised by nationalist tendencies ("America first") and a transactional understanding of international cooperation, focused on their own advantage. The victory Donald Trump in the presidential elections in the US is posing additional challenges for Europe and the international community.

Our panelists will discuss the implications of this year's various election results for multilateral cooperation. Which opportunities do Germany and Europe have to counteract the rise of nationalism? How can international collective efforts successfully address global challenges in the future? And how can Germany under these circumstances implement a value-based foreign policy?

Chair

Conny Czymoch

Moderator and Journalist

Welcoming remarks

Dr Ursula Sautter

Deputy Mayor of Bonn

Oliver Krauß, MdL

Chairman of the Board, Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)

Summary: Key outcomes of the online sessions

Dr Marcus Kaplan

Executive Director, Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)

Discussion

Dr Thomas Bagger

State Secretary at the Federal Foreign Office, Germany

Nathanael Liminski

Minister for Federal, European and International Affairs and the Media of North Rhine-Westphalia; Head of the State Chancellery

Eva Quadbeck

Editor-in-Chief/Head of Berlin Office, RedaktionsNetzwerk Deutschland (RND)

7:30 PM **RECEPTION**