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Right-Wing Populism and Strategic Realignment: Argentina's Milei Experiment

Federico Merke

The Populist Turn in Middle Power Diplomacy

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Introduction

Since the return to democracy in 1983, Argentine foreign policy has been characterized by a broad commitment to multilateral engagement, regional coordination, and a balancing between autonomy and alignment. While governments differed with respect to their tone, partners, and intensity of engagement, international institutions and South American relations remained enduring arenas of diplomatic action.

The election of Javier Milei in November 2023 disrupted this long-standing pattern. A radical outsider propelled by an anti-establishment discourse, Milei assumed the presidency displaying a marked disdain for multilateralism and regionalism, favoring instead ideologically driven alignments and confrontational rhetoric. In this sense, Milei constitutes an instructive case for scholars of populism and foreign policy: He denounces Argentina's traditional populism—particularly its Peronist variant, long synonymous with economic nationalism and Third-Worldist foreign policy—yet governs through an antagonistic, personalistic style aligned with contemporary right-wing populist movements.

This tension raises a central question: To what extent can Milei be considered a populist, and how does this classification illuminate his approach to foreign policy? This article examines Argentina's foreign policy under Milei through the lenses of populism, transnational linkages, and shared policy agendas. It argues that while Milei embodies elements of a libertarian variant of right-wing populism, his government's external behavior reflects a hybrid pattern: sharp ideological gestures, intense leader-to-leader diplomacy, and selective institutional disengagement, combined with pragmatic accommodation in areas where international costs are prohibitive.

Libertarian Populism: Understanding the Milei Phenomenon

Crisis and the Demand for Rupture

Javier Milei, a self-styled libertarian economist, television commentator, and one-term congressman, rose to power amid a convergence of Argentina's economic decay, political exhaustion, and cultural upheaval. The country faced chronic inflation, mounting price and capital controls, and a state that could no longer stabilize the economy. The entrenched party system had also lost credibility. Peronists and anti-Peronists had swapped power for

decades without delivering growth or predictability, severing the bond between citizens and their institutions. The country's social fabric was equally frayed: distrust, polarization, and resentment toward elites turned anti-system rhetoric into a powerful outlet for frustration.

Exploiting this predicament, Milei's appeal rested on a simple diagnosis: that a venal political class (*la casta*) had expanded the state beyond its capacity and driven the country into dysfunction. In a society where the public sector had grown by more than 60 percent in two decades,¹ his promise of a radical break resonated as the clearest departure from a discredited status quo. Together, these failures emptied the political center and created a demand not for incremental reform but for rupture—a vacuum that Milei's chainsaw politics, anti-system ethos, and promise of radical shock therapy were uniquely positioned to fill.

When Milei took office in December 2023, his government moved immediately on two fronts: stabilization and deregulation. It launched a sharp devaluation, deep spending cuts, and an aggressive fiscal adjustment that delivered a monthly surplus and began to pull inflation down (from 211 percent in early 2024 to 31 percent by December 2025) by compressing public and private budgets alike.² At the same time, it sought to overhaul the institutional framework that had long encouraged discretion and deterred investment. A sweeping deregulatory decree and reform package (*Ley Bases*) aimed to liberalize markets, curb bureaucratic power, and attract large-scale capital. These early measures reflected the view that Argentina's crisis was both fiscal and institutional—and that recovery required a swift correction of the first and a structural reset of the second.

Populist Style, Technocratic Substance

In sharp contrast to the technocratic ambition of his economic program, Milei's political style has been consistently combative. Even as his government pursued fiscal orthodoxy and regulatory overhaul, he has communicated in a register of confrontation—denouncing opponents as “criminals,” “parasites,” “rats,” or enemies of freedom, and turning policy debates into moral battles.

Aggressive rhetoric serves to sustain his outsider identity and frame resistance to his reforms as evidence of a corrupt establishment fighting for survival.

Milei's intensive use of social media amplified this confrontational tone. In October 2025, for instance, he spent an average of three hours a day on Twitter/X, a platform where rapid-fire insults, attacks on journalists—“we don't hate journalists enough”³—and open clashes with governors and legislators became central to his style of governing.⁴ This aggressive rhetoric served to sustain his outsider identity and frame resistance to his reforms as evidence of a corrupt establishment fighting for survival.

Seen through scholar Cas Mudde’s lens of populism as a “thin-centered ideology” that pits a virtuous people—what Milei calls “*los argentinos de bien*”—against a corrupt elite, Milei’s politics seem to fit the profile.⁵ They rest on a moral binary rather than a programmatic disagreement: *La casta* is not simply inefficient, but “parasitic,” “predatory,” and deliberately destructive of national prosperity. In line with Mudde, Claudia Zilla presents Milei as an instance of “libertarian populism,” emphasizing his anti-elite narrative, his depiction of the state as an inherently predatory actor, and his self-presentation as an embattled outsider.⁶

Milei also shares similar characteristics with other populist leaders in what philosopher Joseph Heath identifies as a defining feature of contemporary populism: cognitive closure and a systematic rejection of expertise and institutional mediation.⁷ Populist leaders, Heath argues, convert intricate policy challenges into moral confrontations, dismiss technical knowledge as part of an elite plot, and view institutions not as sites of negotiation but as obstacles to be circumvented or dismantled—a pattern that aligns closely with Milei’s own political style.

A Hybrid Variant: Libertarian Populism

Yet Milei departs from conventional analyses of populism in at least two ways. First, although he shares affinities with the new populist right in the Global North—U.S. President Donald Trump, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and French nationalist politician Marine Le Pen—on anti-woke politics and skepticism toward global governance, his ideological core is far more liberal and far less nationalist. Whereas voters in advanced economies often mobilize around economic and demographic anxieties tied to deindustrialization, cultural threat, or migration, Milei’s median supporter is propelled by a different mix of factors: hyperinflation fatigue, anti-statism, and deep frustration with a decades-long cycle of economic decline. A forthcoming review by Evelyne Hübscher and Thomas Sattler shows that the rise of populism in Western Europe has tended to occur in waves that follow episodes of austerity.⁸ Milei stands out precisely because he inverts this pattern: His ascent is not a reaction *against* austerity but a mandate *for* it.

A libertarian insurgent who deploys populist rhetoric to advance an anti-populist economic agenda—populist enough to mobilize anger, but libertarian enough to unsettle Argentina’s entrenched Peronist/anti-Peronist divide.

Second, Milei diverges just as sharply from the archetypal populist of the Global South, and of Latin America in particular: protectionist, statist, redistributive, and instinctively wary of the United States. Milei is not a conventional Latin American populist. He is, in effect, a populist in style and method who rejects the traditional ideological content of Latin American populism—its statism, its nationalism, its suspicion of markets. In this sense, Milei’s rise is less a mirror of Northern populism than a reaction to Argentina’s long detour

away from market orthodoxy. He thus emerges as a hybrid figure: a populist communicator advancing an agenda grounded in market orthodoxy rather than redistribution.

In line with this reading, Heinisch, Gracia, Laguna-Tapia, and Muriel offer a cautious view, describing Milei as a “partial populist” who denounces *la casta* and dramatizes crisis but lacks a fully articulated notion of “the people.”⁹ For these authors, Milei’s position is better understood as crisis performance—the sustained invocation of emergency narratives—that legitimizes radical rupture. Political scientist Thomas Kestler, meanwhile, places him within the rise of right-wing populism in Latin America, drawing parallels with Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro and Chile’s Antonio Kast, while noting the absence of strong nativist elements typical of European radical right movements.¹⁰

Taken together, these strands point to a hybrid profile that blurs the boundaries of existing populist typologies. While populism and ideological orientation are analytically separable—one can imagine a non-populist libertarian just as one can imagine a non-libertarian populist—in Milei’s case the two are partially mutually reinforcing. His libertarianism is not merely the ideological payload carried by a populist vehicle: His anti-establishment stance, his sense of insurgency, and his framing of the state as predatory all flow directly from his economic convictions. Milei thus occupies an unusual ideological niche: a libertarian insurgent who deploys populist rhetoric to advance an anti-populist economic agenda—populist enough to mobilize anger, but libertarian enough to unsettle Argentina’s entrenched Peronist/anti-Peronist divide. See **table 1** for summaries of Milei’s type of populism.

Table 1. Populist Features: Theory vs. Milei’s Profile

Dimension	Theory Expectation	Evidence	Fit
Anti-elite antagonism	“People” vs. “corrupt elite”	Attacks on <i>la casta</i> ; state as predatory	High
Crisis performance	Crisis as moral/existential threat	Inflation as “theft”; Argentina as “collapse”	High
Personalistic leadership	Direct leader to people link	Centrality of his voice; bypassing institutions	High
People-centrism	Unified virtuous “people”	Focus on individuals (taxpayers/entrepreneurs)	Low
Redistributive economics	Pro-poor, pro-consumption agenda	Fiscal austerity; market orthodoxy	Low
National-cultural protectionism	Defense of national identity	Ideological, not nativist framing	Low-Med
Cognitive simplification	Suspicion of complexity/expertise	Anti-expert rhetoric; “common-sense” fixes	High

Source: Author’s own analysis.

Milei's Right-Wing Populism and Argentina's Foreign Policy Turn

Populist Style and the Transformation of Diplomatic Practice

A growing body of scholarship has examined how populism reshapes foreign policy, identifying several recurring patterns.¹¹ First, populism typically leads to the centralization and personalization of foreign policy. Decisionmaking becomes concentrated in the executive, diminishing the role of professional diplomatic institutions and elevating direct, leader-driven communication.

Second, populist leaders systematically politicize foreign policy to mobilize domestic support. They deploy anti-elite and nationalist rhetoric, construct external threats, and frame international relations as a moral struggle between the “pure people” and “corrupt elites,”¹² often prioritizing domestic political gains over strategic or institutional considerations.

Third, populist governments may pursue revisionist or confrontational international agendas—challenging alliances, multilateral institutions, and established norms—especially when nationalism forms part of their platform. This revisionism can range from symbolic defiance, such as withdrawing from international forums or rejecting expert-based regimes, to more substantive realignments of strategic partnerships and long-standing commitments.

Against this backdrop, Javier Milei has introduced arguably the most consequential transformation in Argentine foreign policy since the country's return to democracy. Even Peronist administrations critical of U.S. hegemony or global capitalism operated largely within multilateral and regional frameworks, treating them as instruments of influence rather than as adversaries. Milei represents a structural break. He sidelines regional forums, treats multilateral institutions as constraints rather than platforms, and replaces institutional diplomacy with ideological combat and leader-driven gestures.

Milei's external behavior is driven by two parallel logics—one rooted in political performance, the other in a coherent right-wing worldview.

One way to understand Milei's foreign policy is to distinguish the effects of his populist style from those of his right-wing orientation. Populism shapes the method: how he engages with the world, how institutions are treated, and how diplomacy is framed. Ideology shapes the substance: the choices he makes, the partners he elevates, and the priorities he pursues. This distinction avoids the common trap of treating populism as a foreign policy blueprint. Instead, it highlights how Milei's external behavior is driven by two parallel logics—one rooted in political performance, the other in a coherent right-wing worldview.

Seen through this lens, Milei's populist style produces four distinctive effects on Argentina's foreign policy. First, *global anti-elitism* projects the domestic divide between *la casta* and "good Argentines" onto the global arena, casting multilateral and regional bodies as a "global caste" intent on constraining sovereignty.¹³ On several occasions, Milei accused the United Nations of seeking to impose a supranational government that no one ever chose.¹⁴ Milei's government has also downgraded Argentina's participation in the G20, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and Mercosur; withdrawn the country from the World Health Organization as a member; pulled out of COP29 in Azerbaijan; withdrawn Argentina's Nationally Determined Contribution from COP30; and reduced its engagement at the UN Human Rights Council.

Second, *cognitive closure* reflects a rejection of complexity and deliberation, leading Milei to downplay issues such as climate change and market failures, and thus to devalue global public-goods agreements. Since taking office, Milei has advanced a strongly climate-skeptical discourse, dismissing global warming as "another lie that collapses"¹⁵ and instructing Argentine negotiators to withdraw from COP29 in Azerbaijan on the grounds that "all policies that blame human beings for climate change are false."¹⁶

Third, *moralized diplomacy* reflects a worldview defined by in-groups and out-groups rather than Westphalian legitimacy, with leaders—rather than states—judged by ideological affinity. Milei sees not an international society of states, but a cast of leaders arrayed along a moral spectrum. And those in his out-group face open delegitimization: Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as the emblem of a discredited left; Colombian President Gustavo Petro as a "communist murderer"; former Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador as "inept"; former Chilean president Gabriel Boric as "economically naïve"; and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez as "corrupt."¹⁷

Finally, *domestic institutional erosion* is apparent. Argentina's diplomatic machinery has been hollowed out as expert voices have been sidelined and professional channels bypassed. During the same period, unconventional tools—from U.S. lobbying firms to public denunciations of diplomats—moved to the fore. In his first year, Milei suspended the entry examinations for Argentina's Foreign Service Institute, the first interruption since the return to democracy. In November 2024, after a clash with Foreign Minister Diana Mondino, the government launched an "ideological screening" of the diplomatic corps to identify "agendas hostile to freedom."¹⁸ And between March and September 2025, two key appointees—Ursula Bassett and Nahuel Sotelo—were tasked with controlling language in official documents and steering Argentina toward negative votes on gender, indigenous rights, domestic violence, climate change, and the UN's sustainable development agenda, among other issues.¹⁹

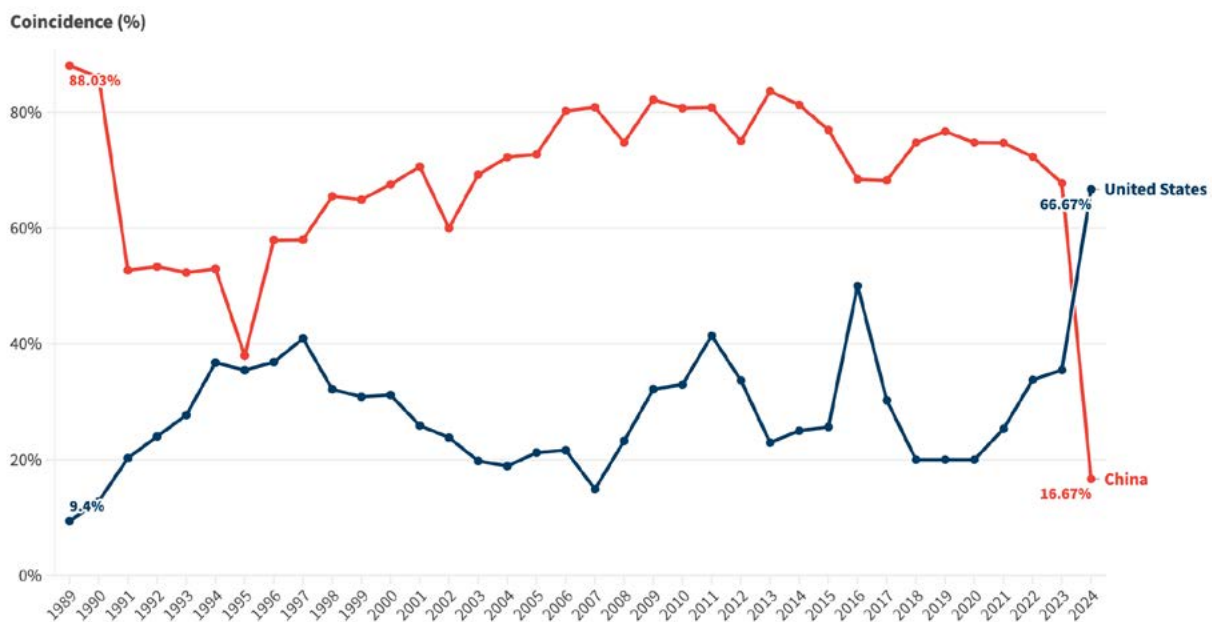
Ideological Realignment and Strategic Alignment

While populism shapes the *how* of Milei’s foreign policy—the tone, the instruments, the treatment of expertise—his right-wing orientation gives it substantive coherence. It clarifies *what* Argentina seeks to do in the world beyond the style in which it does it. This combination produces four distinctive patterns.

First, *ideological alignment* replaces the hedging strategies of previous governments with a narrow partnership centered on two right-wing leaders: U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.²⁰ Milei has repeatedly aligned with both countries in key multilateral votes—on human rights, humanitarian access, and Middle East resolutions—while abstaining or dissenting from broad UN General Assembly majorities that previously counted on Argentine support.

As illustrated in **figure 1**, the sharp increase in Argentina’s voting alignment with the United States at the United Nations in 2024—accompanied by a pronounced decline in congruence with China—reflects President Milei’s decision to anchor Buenos Aires within a Trump-led, anti-globalist coalition. This pattern is consistent with Milei’s issue-specific positioning: His support for Ukraine has expanded or receded in step with shifts in Trump’s stance; he has openly endorsed the capture of former Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro; and he has expressed explicit approval of the re-emergence of the Monroe Doctrine within the

Figure 1. Argentina’s Voting Coincidence with the United States and China at the United Nations, 1990–2024



Source: Global & LAC Datahub, Georgetown University

U.S. National Security Strategy. More recently, Argentina has entered advanced discussions with Washington on an unprecedented deportation arrangement that, if finalized, would allow the United States to send migrants from other nations to Argentina—a development that signals a willingness to adopt U.S.-led security frameworks over traditional regional or multilateral migration cooperation.²¹

This alignment has brought quick rewards. It reassured markets, softened the International Monetary Fund (IMF)’s stance, and opened doors to U.S. financial power. U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent’s intervention helped steady the peso, and a \$20 billion swap signaled access to emergency liquidity unavailable to previous governments.²² The most striking step came in November 2025, when U.S. IMF Special Drawing Rights fell by roughly SDR 870 million as Argentina’s rose by the same amount—an extraordinary maneuver interpreted as a direct U.S. transfer enabling Buenos Aires to meet an IMF repayment.²³ Political validation accompanied these financial gains: Trump invited Milei to join the newly created Board of Peace, a gesture that further underscored Argentina’s incorporation into his inner diplomatic circle. The result was time, stability, and political oxygen. In the short term, closeness to Washington paid off.

Second, *like-minded networking* reflects Milei’s search for ideological shelter among leaders such as Marine Le Pen, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán—fellow anti-establishment and culturally conservative figures who share his rejection of the liberal mainstream—whom he sees as part of a shared political tribe. This is less traditional alliance-building than identity politics: a coalition of anti-woke, anti-statist, and culturally conservative actors who validate one another’s narratives and amplify each other’s agendas.

Third, a *techno-heroic orientation* captures Milei’s conviction that the future is being shaped not in state capitals but in the headquarters of firms like OpenAI, Meta, and Tesla—run by figures he celebrates as “heroes,” including Sam Altman, Mark Zuckerberg, and Elon Musk. In this view, technological innovators—not diplomats or governments—are the true engines of progress. Milei treats them as lodestars for Argentina’s modernization, symbols of an entrepreneurial frontier that he believes can vault the country out of stagnation and into a new global economy. Whether this techno-heroic orientation is a feature of right-wing populism per se or a distinctive expression of Milei’s libertarian ideology is debatable. What is clear is that it performs a populist function: Technological innovators replace the virtuous people of left-wing populism, while the bureaucratic state plays the role of the corrupt elite that impedes progress.

Finally, Milei’s instrumental engagement with institutions such as the EU, the OECD, and the IMF can best be described as *notarial multilateralism*. These forums function as seal-of-approval mechanisms rather than arenas for negotiation or coalition-building, allowing Milei to showcase external validation while keeping his distance from the multilateral agendas he dismisses as statist or “woke.”

Rather than treating international institutions and regional forums as venues for negotiation, Milei reorients foreign policy toward bilateral alignment, ideological affinity, and symbolic confrontation.

Against this backdrop, Milei fuses populist performance with a coherent right-wing project, producing a diplomacy that is combative in style and selective in substance: hostile to multilateral norms yet eager for external validation; suspicious of state bureaucracies yet enthralled by technological elites; regionally disruptive yet strategically dependent on Washington. What distinguishes this approach is the abandonment of multilateralism as a primary arena of action and of the region as a space for political coordination. Rather than treating international institutions and regional forums as venues for negotiation, buffering, or coalition-building—as was the case across otherwise divergent governments since 1983—Milei reorients foreign policy toward bilateral alignment, ideological affinity, and symbolic confrontation.

Transnational Linkages in Milei’s Foreign Policy

Milei’s foreign policy relies less on conventional diplomacy than on a dense web of transnational, ideologically aligned networks. These transnational linkages can be grouped into five categories. While they often overlap in practice, the typology helps clarify the nature, scope, and limits of Milei’s international embedment.

Leader-Centric and Personalist Networks

Milei’s international ties are forged primarily through direct relationships with like-minded leaders rather than through institutional channels. The paradigmatic case is Milei’s relationship with Trump. Milei has repeatedly framed Trump not merely as a strategic partner but as an ideological reference point, aligning Argentina’s external posture with Trump’s positions on global governance, culture-war issues, and hemispheric order.

Milei’s references to Trump in interviews, public speeches, and social media posts consistently reflect this feature. According to data compiled by *La Nación* Data through September 2025, out of a total of 1,320 references in X (formerly Twitter), 1,239 were coded as positive or explicitly laudatory statements by the Argentine president toward his U.S. counterpart. No negative references were identified. Over the period of analysis, this corresponds to an average of more than one positive public reference to Trump per day.²⁴

This leader-centric logic also extends to Milei's ties with other right-wing heads of government, notably Israel's Netanyahu and Italy's Meloni. What binds them is not a shared programmatic ideology—Milei's libertarian cosmopolitanism sets him apart from their nationalism—but a common adversary: the liberal progressive mainstream in politics, culture, and international institutions. Diplomatic engagement is thus organized around moral affinity and ideological kinship rather than bilateral policy agendas, producing a personalized and vertically structured diplomacy that sidelines bureaucratic mediation in favor of interpersonal trust and symbolic recognition.

Party-to-Party and Parliamentary Alliances

A second category consists of party-to-party and parliamentary linkages with rightwing and far-right political movements, particularly in Europe and Latin America. Milei has cultivated close ties with Spain's conservative Vox party, Bolsonaro-aligned networks in Brazil, and conservative actors in Paraguay and Chile. These relationships operate primarily through partisan events, joint appearances, and mutual endorsements rather than through formal intergovernmental mechanisms.

Such alliances serve two functions. Domestically, they reinforce Milei's self-presentation as part of a broader international movement resisting progressive and statist agendas. Internationally, they provide access to ideological allies who amplify narratives, normalize confrontational rhetoric, and embed Argentina within a wider right-wing political community. However, these linkages remain institutionally shallow: They do not translate into coordinated legislative agendas, joint foreign policy initiatives, or durable organizational structures.

Shared Narratives and Political Messaging

Another layer of transnational linkage operates at the level of discourse. Milei's foreign policy is embedded in a shared marketplace of ideas defined by anti-elitism, culturewar framing, and hostility toward multilateral governance. Symbols, slogans, and rhetorical tropes circulate fluidly across borders: the chainsaw as an icon of state-cutting zeal, denunciations of "woke" ideology, and portrayals of global institutions as predatory or illegitimate.

Milei participates in a transnational politics of performance, where alignment is expressed through language, imagery, and public gestures rather than through policy uniformity.

This discursive convergence does not require formal coordination. Instead, it functions through repetitive performance and mutual reinforcement, allowing actors across different countries to affirm one another as members of the same symbolic community. In this sense,

Milei participates in a transnational politics of performance, where alignment is expressed through language, imagery, and public gestures rather than through policy uniformity.

Transnational Movement Infrastructures

Beyond leaders and parties, Milei is embedded in a set of transnational movement infrastructures that provide platforms, resources, and legitimacy. Chief among these is the U.S. conservative ecosystem organized around the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) and affiliated organizations. Milei’s repeated participation in CPAC events, his prominence at Mar-a-Lago, and Argentina’s hosting of CPAC Buenos Aires signal his incorporation into a movement infrastructure that connects activists, donors, media outlets, and political entrepreneurs.²⁵

Argentina occupies a distinctive role: a Southern outpost that offers territorial anchoring and symbolic legitimacy—living proof that right-wing populism and market radicalism can prevail in the Global South.

These infrastructures function as arenas of validation and coordination rather than as policymaking bodies. They enable Milei to project Argentina as a regional node within a global right-wing movement, linking U.S. MAGA networks and European far-right actors with Latin America. In this respect, Argentina occupies a distinctive role: a Southern outpost that offers territorial anchoring and symbolic legitimacy—living proof that right-wing populism and market radicalism can prevail in the Global South—to networks that are otherwise concentrated in the Global North.

Another layer of Milei’s transnational linkages emerges from religious-political networks, most prominently Chabad, the global Orthodox Jewish outreach movement. His very first act as president-elect—a visit to the gravesite of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the late leader of the Chabad movement—signaled not only personal devotion but early alignment with a U.S.-anchored conservative and pro-Israel ecosystem. That alignment deepened in April 2024, when Chabad Lubavitch in Miami bestowed on him the title of “Ambassador of Light,” elevating him within a network that blends religious authority, diaspora influence, and political activism.²⁶ The same constellation resurfaced at the September 2025 UN General Assembly, where Milei again met both Trump and Netanyahu. By November 2025, the trajectory converged in policy: Argentinian Foreign Minister Pablo Quirno and his Israeli counterpart, Gideon Sa’ar, publicly confirmed Argentina’s decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem before a packed auditorium of Argentine and Israeli business leaders at the Argentina–Israel Forum²⁷. What began as symbolic affinity had matured into geopolitical alignment.

The last network is composed of business forums, conservative think tanks, and right-wing parties. This arc has taken Milei to Madrid, where he appeared on stage with Vox leader Santiago Abascal and to platforms such as the Madrid Economic Forum and the *Club de los Viernes*, both of which rail against the “hegemony of social-democratic ideas”²⁸ and champion radical market liberalism. It has also drawn him deep into the American conservative and pro-market ecosystems: to the Cato Institute, where he declared that “the state is a criminal and violent organization”;²⁹ to the Milken Institute, where he warned that the West is succumbing to bureaucracy and runaway public spending³⁰; to the America First Policy Institute; and finally, to the Heritage Foundation, whose president led a delegation to the *Casa Rosada* in March 2025.

Opportunistic Alignment with Revisionist or Illiberal Powers

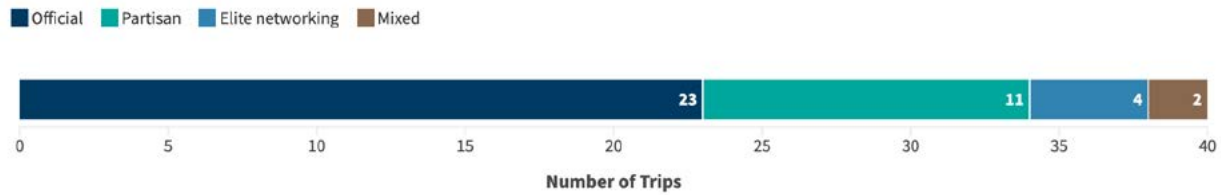
Finally, Milei’s transnational strategy includes selective and opportunistic alignment with states—like Hungary, through its right-wing populist leader Viktor Orbán—that challenge prevailing liberal norms, particularly when such alignment reinforces ideological affinity or signals defiance of multilateral consensus. Argentina’s voting behavior alongside the United States and Israel on human rights, humanitarian access, and international criminal justice illustrates this pattern. These alignments are not embedded in formal alliances, nor do they imply comprehensive strategic coordination. Rather, they function as tactical signals that reinforce Milei’s anti-progressive, right-wing identity-driven diplomacy and his rejection of multilateral norm-production.

Scope, Selectivity, and Asymmetry

Taken together, these five categories reveal a pattern of transnational engagement that is selective rather than comprehensive. Milei’s overlap with the global right-wing ecosystem is issue-specific, highly performative, and weakly institutionalized. Cooperation is sustained through shared narratives, symbolic acts, and episodic coordination rather than through binding commitments or durable organizational ties.

The relationship is also markedly asymmetric. Milei depends far more on these transnational networks for validation, protection, and leverage than they depend on Argentina. For the broader ecosystem, Argentina represents a useful outpost and amplifier; for Milei, these networks constitute a central pillar of international relevance and domestic legitimation. This asymmetry underscores the personalized and contingent nature of his foreign policy: a diplomacy anchored not in institutions or regions, but in identity, affinity, and narrative alignment.

Figure 2. Classification of Milei’s International Trips, 2023–2025



Source: Author’s own analysis.

Figure 2 arranges Milei’s travels (see the **appendix** for the full list) from 2023 to 2025 by category, namely official (for example, UN, Mercosur), partisan (for example, CPAC, Vox), elite networking (for example, meetings with Elon Musk, speech at Heritage), and mixed travel. A clear majority of his trips correspond to official diplomatic or protocol activities, reflecting the formal obligations of the office.

Yet these conventional duties coexist with an unusually high number of partisan trips, which account for over a quarter of all travels and are heavily concentrated in events linked to the U.S. conservative ecosystem and ideologically aligned actors in Europe and Latin America. A further 10 percent of trips fall into the category of elite networking, consisting of meetings with technology entrepreneurs, financiers, and corporate leaders—again, overwhelmingly based in the United States.

Milei’s Populism and Shared Policy Agendas

The early wave of populist leaders, the “solo populists,” operated largely in isolation. Today, the social structure of global politics is shifting toward a more mature transnational right-wing ecosystem where the circulation of narratives, tactical playbooks, and policy templates is fluid and increasingly effective.

This ecosystem, however, does not form a tight policy coalition as it comprises diverse and often ideologically conflicting factions that are more united by common grievances and enemies than by a single, coherent policy platform. Rather than constituting a cohesive policy coalition, these shared agendas operate as issue-specific and short-term alignments, sustained by symbolic gestures and narrative convergence as opposed to institutionalized coordination or binding commitments.

Much of the cooperation is *performative* (shared stages, narratives, symbols—such as the chainsaw motif and culture-war vocabulary) rather than embedded in joint institutions or binding commitments. This network therefore forms a coalition of norm spoilers. It does not dismantle the international system, but it does narrow its scope and slows norm production, especially in domains the global right sees as being subjected to “overreach.”

Milei’s overlap with this ecosystem is selective rather than comprehensive—rooted in shared narratives, culture-war politics, and skepticism toward multilateralism, but diverging on economics and geopolitics. See **table 2**, which summarizes the core themes of this alignment, below.

Table 2. Milei’s Shared Policy with the Global Right

Theme	Milei’s position	Global right alignment
Skepticism of global governance	Rejects UN Sustainable Development goals; climate skepticism; downgrades environmental policy; resists multilateral norms.	Echoes U.S./European far-right anti-globalism (Trump, Meloni, Vox); part of broader backlash against the liberal international order.
Culture wars and social conservatism	Anti-abortion; anti-gender equality policies; defends “traditional family”; attacks “cultural Marxism.”	Fully aligned with Bolsonaro, Vox, U.S. Christian right, Orbán; culture-war narratives and identity politics.
Economic liberalism and anti-state rhetoric	Extreme free-market agenda; austerity shock; deregulation; rejects redistribution.	Less protectionist than northern populists; closer to libertarian think tanks and techno-libertarians.
Geopolitical alignment	Strong tilt toward U.S./NATO; rejects BRICS; cools China ties; friction with Brazil.	Fits within emerging right-wing transnational networks; ideological kinship with Trump, Meloni, Vox, Bolsonaro.

Source: Author’s own analysis.

Against this backdrop, as shown in **table 3**, Argentina’s multilateral behavior in 2024–2025 displays a clear realignment toward some of the tenets of this ecosystem. The government has stepped away from broad international consensus on human rights, gender equality, refugee protection, international criminal justice, and global governance.³¹ The pattern is cross-cutting: systematic rejection of resolutions tied to global governance or normative frameworks viewed as overreaching, combined with alignment with states skeptical of these agendas. It marks a sharp departure from Argentina’s traditional voting profile and signals a broader repositioning of its external orientation.

Table 3. Argentina’s Voting and Alignment Behavior in Multilateral Forums, 2024–2025

Date	Forum	Issue	Type of norm / agenda	Argentina’s vote / action	Notable alignment
September 2024	UNGA	UN “Pact for the Future”	Global gov-ernance and development	Did not endorse	Belarus, North Korea, Nicaragua
November 2024	UNGA	Indigenous rights	Human rights	Voted No	Isolated negative vote
November 2024	UNGA	Violence against women and girls	Gender rights / human rights	Only country to vote No	Isolated negative vote
March 2025	UNGA	International Day for Peaceful Coexistence (Jan 28)	Peace and coexistence norm	Voted No	United States, Israel, three countries total
September 2025	UNGA	“New York Declaration” on Palestinian statehood	Conflict resolution / recognition	Voted No	United States, Israel, nine countries total
October 2025	UNGA	Condemnation of U.S. embargo on Cuba	Sanctions / international law	Voted No	Break with long-standing Argentine precedent
November 2025	UNHCR	Protection of refugees	Refugee protection / human rights	Voted No	United States, Israel, Paraguay
November 2025	UNGA	ICC annual report	International criminal justice	Voted No	United States, Israel, Russia, Belarus, Nicaragua
November 2025	UNGA	Condemning and abolishing torture	Human rights / anti-torture norm	Voted No	United States, Israel
November 2025	G20	Final Leaders’ Declaration	Global economic governance	Declined to sign	Parallels Trump’s non-attendance

Source: Author’s own analysis.

A High-Risk Realignment

Populism does not merely reshape foreign policy; it repurposes it. In a fragmenting international order, diplomacy becomes less about managing exposure and more about signaling identity. Alignments are moralized and personalized, institutions bypassed, and strategic ambiguity recast as ideological weakness. Foreign policy, in short, turns into performance—designed to demonstrate conviction rather than to absorb risk.

Argentina under Javier Milei offers a particularly stark illustration. Here, populism fuses with libertarian dogma to produce a foreign policy that is combative, selective, and conspicuously uninterested in hedging. Multilateralism is treated with suspicion, regional pluralism with impatience, and diplomacy itself is reframed as a contest between civilizational camps. Milei is not simply breaking with Argentine tradition; he is testing how far an ideologically saturated foreign policy can go for a country structurally dependent on external finance, trade, and institutional access.

Argentina is not aligning with the United States as a durable strategic actor; it is aligning with one political moment, one faction, one temperament.

This amounts to a concentrated geopolitical wager. By binding Argentina tightly to Trump's America, Milei is betting that ideological intimacy can substitute for diversification—that loyalty to a single patron and a single worldview will unlock benefits large enough to offset the costs of alienating Brazil, Europe, China, and global fora—even as pragmatic trade ties with China have proven more resilient than the ideological posture implies. It is a strategy that privileges certainty over optionality, faith over flexibility. Small and middle powers usually avoid such bets precisely because they turn external volatility into domestic vulnerability.

The wager may deliver short-term rewards. Access to U.S. financial leverage, symbolic endorsement from a superpower, and temporary insulation from market pressure all have tangible value. But the structural exposure is equally clear. Trump's coalition is unstable and deeply contingent on U.S. domestic politics. Argentina is not aligning with the United States as a durable strategic actor; it is aligning with one political moment, one faction, one temperament.

In doing so, Milei's foreign policy captures the deeper paradox of populism in international affairs. By rejecting ambiguity, it magnifies risk. By disdaining institutions, it narrows exit options. And by turning alignment into belief, it makes strategy brittle. Argentina is not merely choosing sides in a divided world—it is choosing to stand still while the ground beneath its chosen ally remains in motion.

Appendix A: Milei’s International Trips, 2023–2025

Dates	Country	Main Purpose / Activity	Classification
November 27, 2023	United States	Meetings with Hasidic leaders; meeting with Bill Clinton; meetings with U.S. officials and IMF	Mixed
January 15–19, 2024	Switzerland	World Economic Forum	Official
February 6, 2024	Israel	Meetings with Isaac Herzog and Benjamin Netanyahu	Official
February 9, 2024	Vatican City	Meeting with Pope Francis	Official
February 2024	Italy	Meetings with Sergio Mattarella and Giorgia Meloni	Official
February 23, 2024	United States	CPAC invitation	Partisan
April 10–12, 2024	United States	Meetings with Elon Musk; Chabad House	Elite networking
May 5–6, 2024	United States	Milken Institute Conference	Partisan/Elite networking
May 17–19, 2024	Spain	Vox “Europa Viva 24”	Partisan
May 28–30, 2024	United States	Meetings with tech CEOs; Stanford speech	Elite networking
June 1, 2024	El Salvador	Nayib Bukele inauguration	Official
June 13–15, 2024	Italy	G7 Summit	Official
June 15–16, 2024	Switzerland	Ukraine Peace Conference	Official
June 21, 2024	Spain	Madrid regional medals	Partisan
June 22–23, 2024	Germany	Hayek Medal; meeting with Olaf Scholz	Official
June 24, 2024	Czech Republic	Meeting with Petr Fiala and business leaders	Official
July 6–7, 2024	Brazil	CPAC Brazil	Partisan
July 12–14, 2024	United States	Allen & Co. Conference	Elite networking
July 25–27, 2024	France	Olympics opening; meeting with Macron	Official
July 27, 2024	Paraguay	Meeting with Ambassador Guillermo Nielsen	Official

Dates	Country	Main Purpose / Activity	Classification
August 8, 2024	Chile	GasAndes event	Official
September 22–25, 2024	United States	NYSE opening; UNGA speech; Musk meeting	Official
November 14–15, 2024	United States	Trump’s CPAC	Partisan
November 18–19, 2024	Brazil	G20 Summit; bilaterals with Xi Jinping, Narendra Modi, Kristalina Georgieva	Official
January 19–20, 2025	United States	Trump’s inauguration	Partisan/Protocol
January 21–23, 2025	Switzerland	WEF Annual Meeting	Official
February 19–22, 2025	United States	CPAC	Partisan
April 2–3, 2025	United States	“Lion of Liberty Award”; attempted meeting with Trump	Partisan
April 9, 2025	Paraguay	Meeting with President Santiago Peña	Official
April 25, 2025	Vatican + Italy	Funeral of Pope Francis; meeting with Meloni	Official
June 6, 2025	Italy	LNG strategic agreement (YPF–ENI); Plan Italy–Argentina	Official
June 7, 2025	Vatican City	Meeting with Pope Leo XIV	Official
June 7–8, 2025	Spain	Meetings; Madrid Economic Forum speech	Partisan
June 9, 2025	France	Meeting with Emmanuel Macron (UN Ocean Conference)	Official
June 9–11, 2025	Israel	Official visit; meetings; Jewish Nobel Prize	Official
September 4–5, 2025	United States	Business meetings; visit with Milken, Chevron VP	Mixed
November 6, 2025	United States	Attended American Business Forum and CPAC meetings	Partisan
November 8, 2025	Bolivia	Attended the inauguration of President Rodrigo Paz Pereira	Official
December 8, 2025	Norway	Attended Maria Corina Machado’s Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo	Partisan

Notes

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