Bolsonaro, Modi, and Trump: What is so appealing about authoritarian men?

If Donald Trump is inaugurated as the 47th president of the USA, one of the first things he plans to do is make a state visit to Argentina.

That plan is according to Trump-inspired ‘anarcho-capitalist’ Javier Milei, who in November was elected president of the South American country by a large majority.

Many believe Trump has inspired other politicians as well, such as former Prime Minister Boris Johnson in the UK, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, and Matteo Salvini in Italy.

[University of Oslo] political scientist Benedicte Bull views populism as a strategy primarily used to mobilise disaffected voters.

“Populism divides people into ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ It also promotes individual leaders as the people’s salvation,” she says.

“Additionally, populism is used to undermine people’s trust in institutions, including the judiciary, the bureaucracy, the national assembly and the electoral system.”

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Arild Engelsen Ruud observes another interesting commonality in countries with populist and authoritarian leaders.

“Whether people are storming the Capitol in the USA, supporting the oppression of minorities in India, or wanting the police to kill suspected drug dealers in the streets of the Philippines, these are people who think of themselves as a natural majority in the population,” he says.

“I think this is an important factor in many authoritarian leaders’ support. People who support them want their country to be the country of the majority, not the country of minorities.”

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