

**Media,
Populismo &
Corrupção**

9-10 nov. de 2022

Populism and gender: the antifeminism arrives to Parliament

3.rd plenary session “POPULISM AND GENDER”

10 nov. de 2022

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Rita Matias: declares to be antifeminist during the campaign to the Portuguese general elections of 2022



Foto de Leonardo Negrão/Global Images

- The only female MP of political party Chega (radical wing) among 12 MPs
- 23 years old, the youngest MP of the Parliament
- Catholic
- Critic of feminist movements because of their “marxist inspiration”
- Admirer of VOX and Santiago Abascal, Matteo Salvini and Rocío Manasterio

Reasons for being antifeminist



TVI/CNN Portugal – 1.2.2022
Debate with Joana Amaral Dias

The biggest antagonism is that [feminism] is a movement of a Marxist nature, a movement that separates society between "us" and "the others". It is a movement that often puts women and men in opposition

Questions

- Rejection of feminism as a communication strategy: ensures media visibility for the news value of conflict?
- Gender instrumentalized for the pursuit of Chega's political and ideological objectives, contributing to the consolidation of the party's conservative matrix?
- Questioning the strategic nature of its anti-feminist stance when, at the same time, she claims to embrace causes in defense of women

Exploratory study: analysis of Rita Matias interventions in two different arenas

- 1 - Interventions in the Assembly of the Republic — because the argument is more complete and understandable in the parliamentary debate
- 2- Media interventions — because populism is situated in the context of the increasing media coverage of politics and its intensification as a spectacle (Moffitt and Tormey 2014)

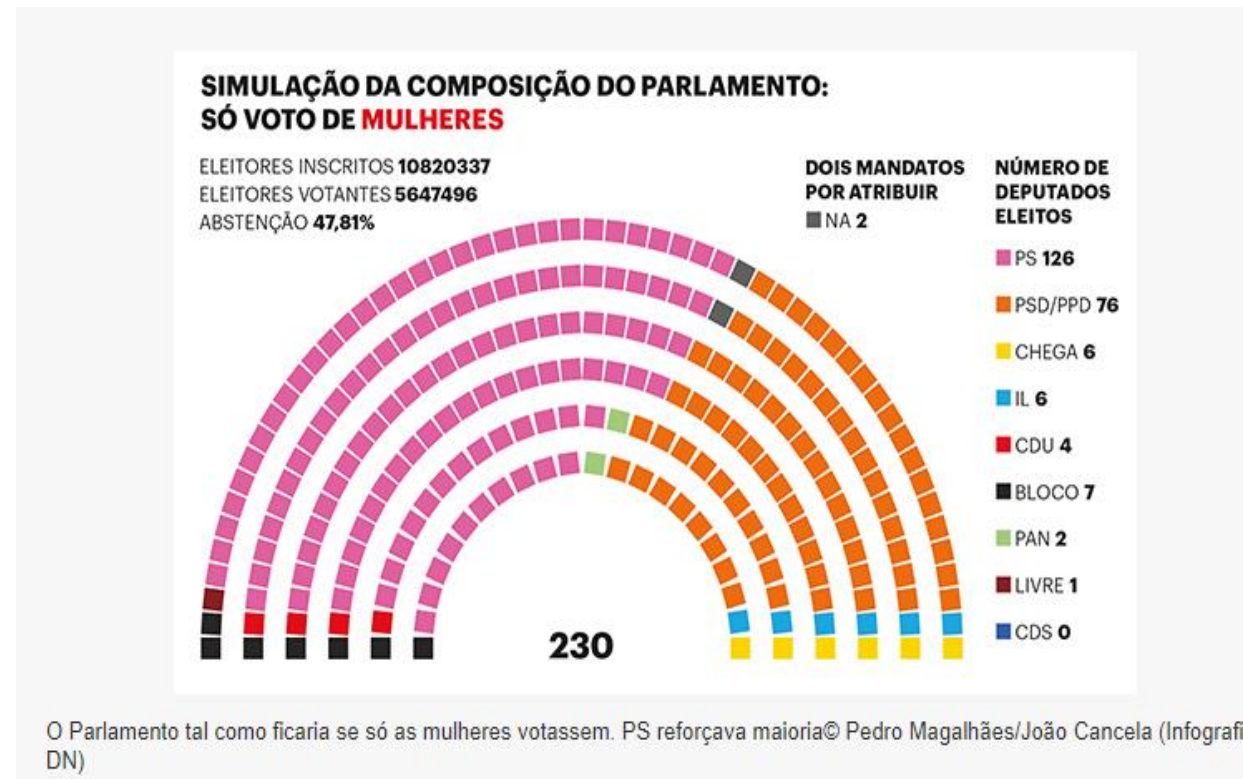
Chega: electoral growth (2019-2022)

- Populism as an organized political force is very recent in Portugal
- Chega — populist, nationalist, conservative and anti-system radical right wing political party founded by André Ventura in 2019
- In the general elections of 2019, with 1,29% of votes, wins a seat as MP — André Ventura
- In the general elections of 2022 achieves 7,18% of votes and 12 MP seats. It becomes the third political force in the Parliament

Gender gap in the general election of 2022

- Pedro Magalhães and João Cancela: for the first time a *gender gap* “«the female vote more to the left than the male vote»”

Chega the most male political party insofar as two in three voters are men



DN, 20-2-2022

Conservative matrix of Chega

- Obsession with gender issues and sexuality (Dietze and Roth, 2020)

- **POLITICAL PROGRAM**

Family as the nuclear institution of society

Concept of “**NATURAL FAMILY**”, “based on the intimate relationship between a woman and a man, a psycho-sociological and socio-economic reality prior to the State, historically stable and humanly irreplaceable”

Birth incentive policies based on “nativism”, exclusive to “cases in which both parents are of Portuguese birth and nationality and are officially resident in Portugal”

Conservative matrix of Chega

How these values are reflected in the defense of education as an exclusive of the family. Only teaching (ENSINO) is up to the State



Denuncie Casas de banho mistas nas escolas dos seus filhos

Legislative proposals XVth Legislature (2022-)

- Reorganization of the discipline and curriculum area of Citizenship and Development
- Recommends to the Government to change the designation from Ministry of Education to Ministry of Teaching (ENSINO)
- Immediate suspension of use of the Caderno PRESSE 3rd cycle in all public and private educational establishments

Political program permeable to the positions of the Catholic Church on gender equality

- Alberta Giorgi (2018) wonders how gender equality has become a “gender ideology” in Portugal. This debate was animated in 2013, from a radical change of perspective, on the issue of gender and its meaning on the part of the Episcopal Conference
- In 2017 the focus began to be placed on “women's rights”, on “equality between men and women”, denying the use of the concept of gender. According to the Church, the meanings and uses of this concept constituted an anthropological paradigm, a true cultural revolution, which broke with the Judeo-Christian matrix of our culture. The great object of contention is linked to sex education in schools

Empirical analysis

Connection between gender and populism:

- 1) Gender performance structuring populist style
- 2) Ideology

Two axes:

- 1) Selection of interventions in Parliament of Rita Matias from 29 of March (beginning of the legislature) and 30 of September of 2022 (key themes: women, women's rights, education, gender ideology, family).
- 2) News centered on the figure, ideas and parliamentary interventions of Rita Matias (key themes: feminism and women's rights)

Parliamentary interventions – thematic axes

Violence against women

“Allow me to reinforce the confidence of the Portuguese and say that, if, before, they could count on André Ventura, now, they will be able to count on 11 more MPs, who will not make women mere objects, like other political forces sitting here (...) who assume themselves as defenders of women, but look at them only when it suits them and according to their limiting and, in some cases, perverse ideological lenses” (DAR n.º 5, 14 of April, p. 43).

Parliamentary interventions – thematic axes

Proposal of menstrual leave

- “Madam MP [Inês Sousa Real, PAN] is well aware that women are already discriminated against because of becoming pregnant and being mothers, now we are adding another factor of discrimination due to the circumstance of menstruating (...). Therefore, I can only say that Chega is available to support all types of measures that are not indiscriminate and do not represent salary losses. Do you know something, Madam MP? We don't need your ignorant [bacoco] feminism that penalizes women to be the party that presents the most proposals, in this State Budget, about women. Shame!” (DAR n.º 15, 25 of May, pp. 13-14).

Parliamentary interventions – thematic axes

“Demographic Winter”

- The “demographic Winter”, “which is advancing in a pandemic fashion and which, in a galloping way, is shaking the pillars of our society, which are the family, homeland, Europe. (...) The decline in births in Portuguese maternity hospitals is the real structural challenge for the sustainability of our country, for the preservation of our people, for the preservation of our culture and our national identity”
- “(...) They try to mix concepts such as total, natural, migratory population jumps”
- “It is urgent that we adopt policies favorable to life and family” (DAR n.º 16, 26 of May, p. 59).

Parliamentary interventions – thematic axes

Prostitution

- “I could not fail to underline the inconsistency of some people in this House who claim to be fighting the objectification of women, but who are now turning a blind eye to a system in which women are categorized and more or less valued according to their age, their race, their appearance and physical characteristics. Let it be very clear that the finger we are pointing is at this incoherent political class and, above all, at that class that, over the last few decades, the best it could do was to distribute miseries” (DAR n.º 19, 2 of June 2022, pp. 60-61).

Parliamentary interventions – thematic axes

Gender ideology

- “Young Portuguese people don't need that money is wasted on ideological subjects in schools” (DAR, n.º 4, 9 of April 2022, p. 55)
- “Freedom of education does not exist in Portugal or, at least, it does not exist for all people. This is because, while we accept that some ethnic groups and communities see their young people abandoning schools in the name of tradition, the truth is that the General Attorney is following a line from the Ministry of Education, a line of bullying and persecution of a family that only asks that its children don't be exposed to indoctrination in Portuguese schools” (DAR n.º 31 7 of July 2022, pp. 55-56)

Parliamentary interventions – thematic axes

Female political leaders

- On the results of the legislative elections in Italy on 25 September, with the victory of the Fratelli d'Italia party, led by Giorgi Meloni:
- Criticizes PAN for not having a say in the election of “female leaders – ironically for those who call themselves feminists –, saying that with these results, which are, and I emphasize once again, the fruit of popular will, we are living in sad days for democracy. (...) Hypocrisy also exists when the honorable member calls herself a “feminist”, but is unable to celebrate the historic achievement of Italy having, for the first time, a woman in the place of Prime Minister ” (DAR n.º 43, 29 of September 2022 – p. 65; p. 69)

We (Antifeminists)	They (Feminists)	Civilizacional Clash – Inês Sousa Real (PAN) Vs. Rita Matias (Chega)
Trust	Contribute to the objectification of women, consider women mere objects	PAN advocates diversity and gender equality
Protection of victims of sexual crimes	Other political forces assume themselves as defenders of women, but instrumentalize them Limiting and perverse ideological lenses	Civilizational combat line
Legislative initiatives against domestic violence	Legislative proposals (such as 3-day menstrual leave) exacerbate the discrimination and inequality for women	It's on the right side of history
Political party with the most proposals on women	Feminism ignorant and hypocritical	
Policies favorable to life and family	Incoherent political class, distribute miseries	
Birth incentive – key to the preservation of the people, culture and national identity Nuclear: the “natural”, native family, repudiation of the migratory leap based on immigration	Permissive elites with “ethnicities and communities” in the name of tradition, but prevent freedom of education by native families	
Companies should have benefits to hire mothers with children up to 3 years old	Undemocratic left (does not accept election results it does not like)	

SUBSTANTIVE
AND SIMBOLIC
ELEMENTS IN
THE GENDER
PERFORMANCE
OF POPULISM

Corpus in media: Genre, Theme and Tone

Medium	News	Interview	Opinion	Themes	Tone of Journalist
Notícia ao Minuto	2	1		Antifeminism of Rita Matias	Neutral
Diário de Notícias	3	1		Parliamentary debate: menstrual leave	Neutral
Expresso	1			Profile of the new MPs	Neutral
Observador		1	1	Criticism of the government and PSD (main opposition party); stance against abortion; for life under any circumstances	Cynical and provocative
Público	2		3	1. The central theme is the access to higher education and the minister ends with a criticism of the radicalism of the students' parents about the citizenship and development classes, with the radicalism of Rita Matias 2. Parliamentary debate: amendment of penal frameworks for crimes against animals. Rita Matias criticizes the radicalism of the PAN proposal, claiming that they had more regard for animals than for the elderly	Neutral Neutral
Visão	1			It describes the interview of Rita Matias to Observador and Diário de Notícias and the dispute between her and the opinion of Inês Sousa Real	Neutral
Total	9	3	4		

News coverage – Thematic axes

How you describe your antifeminism?

“It is to recognize that feminism is a movement that has given some social achievements to women - and I have no desire to go back on those achievements - but also recognize that society was moving in that direction and, therefore, these achievements are not exclusively of these movements. The greatest antagonism is being a movement of a Marxist nature, a movement that separates society between "us" and "the others". It is a movement that often puts women and men in opposition. First, because it compares them, and it is necessary to recognize that the nature of man and woman are different”

Diário de Notícia, 11.7.2022

News coverage – Thematic axes

Abortion

And if a 10-year-old girl gets pregnant as a result of rape must have an abortion?

“I am immensely sorry and I find it absolutely regrettable and reprehensible that a child finds herself in this situation and brings me back to a sphere of work that we must have for the promotion of human dignity. What I really wanted to emphasize is that they often try to push Chega towards the retrograde party and against women, and in the work we have done in the Assembly of the Republic we have presented alternatives”

Observador 8.7.2022

News coverage – Thematic axes

- **Catholic conservative matrix**
- “I grew up in a Christian family context that continues to profess faith in God and to live a life, as far as possible, based on the values that have been transmitted to me. Right-wing conservative, yes, without nostalgia, a word that is used a lot here, without any nostalgia for the past or connection to old regimes, but rather out of respect for traditions and recognition that society has had other ways of organizing itself, where there was also respect, where the woman also played a role”

Diário de Notícias, 11.7.2022

Discussion

- The engine of Rita Matias' media visibility is her declaration as an antifeminist during the electoral campaign
- Rita Matias embodies the link between a well-defined gender perspective, the populist style and the political program of Chega
- Solidarity with the judicial case that affects the Mesquita Guimarães family, using gender as “symbolic glue” (Kováts/Põim 2015)
- Populist characteristics in Rita Matias' speech opposing an “us” against the elite. Declined polarization from a gender perspective (antifeminism vs hypocritical feminism). It is in the polarized gender positioning that antifeminism is associated with gender ideology
- Rita Matias embraces modernity of the situation of women and equality (social and cultural context), “a woman's place is wherever she wants”. But a vision framed in the defense of the heteronormative family and based on traditional gender roles. Hypothesis: “Retrotopian desire”? (Schleusener , 2020)



Muito obrigada!

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