TEAM POPULISM

A Drop in the Ocean or a Change in the Weather? Populism in Bolsonaro's Campaign Revisited

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WHAT IS TEAM POPULISM?

Team Populism brings together renowned scholars from Europe and the Americas to study the causes and consequences of populism. We seek to answer why some populist parties, leaders or movements are more successful than others.

Our general argument is that populism is best understood as a combination of individual and contextual issues ("demand side") and the availability of successful leaders ("supply side").

We expand on this broad framework by studying multiple levels of analysis, and we draw on different methodological tools, including experiments, surveys, and comparative analysis. To facilitate this work, individual teams are organized around functional tasks.

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Populism in Bolsonaro's Campaign Revisited

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the discourse of Jair Bolsonaro during his winning bid for Brazil's presidency in 2018. The research follows the holistic grading method, through which 10 campaign speeches were independently assessed by two graders. These measures were accounted as reliable following Krippendorff's alpha coefficient, and their total average accounted for 0.5, meaning that Bolsonaro's discourse is to be considered "moderately populist" according to the scale developed by Kirk Hawkins. The present study argues that much of this result owes to Bolsonaro's use of nationalism and patriotism in his speeches, so that patriotic appeals through the use of a nationalist "we" replaces, in many instances, the use of a populist "us", thus resulting in a lower score for populism. The paper concludes by arguing that this lower score in no way should be interpreted as meaning that Bolsonaro is less of an illiberal, or of a populist actor. On the contrary, what the results show is that Bolsonaro is a populist-nationalist, rather than merely a mild populist.

Keywords: Populism; Brazilian Elections; Far-Right, Jair Bolsonaro; Nationalism; Patriotism;

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Introduction

On October 28, 2018, Brazilians elected their 38th president, four years after its last general election, as commanded by the constitution. Seen from this angle, one might be allured into thinking the election reflected the overall stability of the political system. It was anything but. The president-elect, Jair Bolsonaro, is the country's first far-right leader selected by suffrage and arguably the first South American far-right leader since Pinochet. In the four years preceding his triumph, Brazil went through a large-scale economic crisis, the second presidential impeachment in a generation, and witnessed the conviction of influential politicians in corruption-related charges – including former president Lula da Silva.

Given the significant implications of Bolsonaro's election and the relevant lessons to be learned by Political Science from the recent episodes in Brazilian political life, a thorough analysis of these events is due. This paper contributes to this analytical effort, focusing on Bolsonaro's 2018 electoral victory – more specifically, on the populist character thereof.

The following work investigates the campaign discourse of Bolsonaro, and it evaluates how populist it is based on ten campaign speeches. Discourses are measured objectively, according to the holistic grading method of textual analysis for a six-dimensional scale of populism, following Hawkins (2009).

The results might strike as surprising: Bolsonaro's overall score is relatively low (0.5) - just enough to classify his campaign discourse as "somewhat populist." As the paper will argue, Bolsonaro's populism finds itself entangled with nationalism and patriotism, with "the people" playing second fiddle to other preferred terms. Furthermore, the very idea of "the people" is

construed in a way that is more influenced by the use of patriotic and nationalist rhetoric as opposed to Manichean discourse at times.

As the paper asserts in its conclusion, however, this relatively low score should not be taken as indicating that Bolsonaro's speech is any less illiberal than it would be expected from a leader who places great emphasis on majoritarianism. Indeed, Bolsonaro's attacks on minorities and institutions show that substituting patriotism and nationalism for specific aspects of populism does not lead to a more constructive result in terms of deviation from liberal democracy.

Brazil and Populism

Amongst the various definitions of populism from the specialized literature, most of the contemporary empirical research on populism in Political Science has converged towards the so-called "ideational" definition of populism (e.g., Hawkins et al., 2018; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). This approach sees populism as a set of ideas held by individuals and political actors, who, ultimately, perceive society as separated into two antagonistic and homogeneous groups: "the people" - the good - and "the elite" - the evil.

In recent years, Brazil was hit by a "perfect storm," comprised of four simultaneous crises: economic, political, corruption, and public security (Hunter and Power, 2019). This made the country a likely candidate for the emergence of populism - both from the demand and supply sides (Castanho Silva, Fuks, and Tamaki, 2021). In times of crises, populism flourishes (Moffitt, 2015), and during moments of widespread distrust and crisis of representation, with the entire political class discredited, the sight of populism as a "redemptive face of democracy" is due to emerge (Canovan, 1999; Urbinati, 2019). In this sense, the populist agency plays a pivotal role, as it is

responsible for creating and employing a rhetoric frame that mobilizes and activates a set of latent dispositions, besides politicizing salient issues (Elchardus and Spruyt, 2016).

The populist message is argued to be highly persuasive as it relies on personal emotions (such as fear, anger, and even hope) while favoring easy, simple solutions to political and societal problems (Hameleers, Bos and de Vreese, 2017; Rooduijn, 2014). Although it is a moral discourse potentially used by different actors such as politicians, the media, or the common citizen, populist ideas are often studied in the rhetoric of political leaders, parties, and movements. In this sense, the present study revisits Bolsonaro's campaign speeches, offering an updated analysis based on the authors' collected data.

In the remainder of this article, we measure populism using a form of content analysis first introduced to measure political speeches by Hawkins (2009). Also known as holistic grading, it asks graders to interpret whole texts instead of breaking content to the level of words and phrases (Hawkins, 2009: 1049). This technique is suitable for diffuse, latent textual meaning common in political discourse, especially those related to latent issues and ideologies such as populism.

To give some context on the range of populism as coded by holistic grading, the subsequent leaders were all classified following the same method, taken from Hawkins (2009) and Hawkins et al. (2019). In Latin America, Hugo Chávez, in Venezuela, received an average score of 1.9 (1999 – 2006), while Evo Morales, in Bolivia, scored 1.6 (2006 – 2009). As for Europe, Hungary's Orbán scored 0.9 (2010 – 2014), while, in the United States, Donald Trump received an average score of 0.8 (2017 – 2018).

Methodology

Following the characterization of populism as a discourse (Hawkins, 2010), we coded and analyzed Jair Bolsonaro's campaign speeches relying on the holistic grading method of textual analysis. We paired it with a rubric designed by Hawkins (2009) that identifies the qualities associated with the different dimensions of populism: the overall Manichaean frame and its branches on people-centrism and anti-elitism. In total, the rubric is based on these three main dimensions, which are then expanded to a total of six populist traits[4]. However, they do not work as a checklist. People-centrism and anti-elitism are necessary, while other elements help address the intensity of populism.

Grades follow a ratio level scale ranging from 0 to 2, where 0 indicates a speech with few if any populist elements and two a highly populist speech close to a "perfect" discourse (Hawkins, 2009: 1062)[5]. Regarding the corpus, we selected 10 speeches from both official events and Facebook live streams. Except for July (which had fewer official pronouncements), we picked at least two speeches per month: one from July, two from August, three from September (one before Bolsonaro's stabbing and two after this attack), and four from October, the month of the elections[6]. Lastly, we recognize that the usual procedure would be to code written speeches in which the grader cannot evaluate emotions and, therefore, cannot receive all the non-verbal communication from the speaker. However, as Hawkins and Silva (2018) demonstrated, graders exposed to video do not differ significantly in their grading from coders who have access to written speeches only; this indicates that grading videos do not affect our average score.

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[4] For more information, see the complete rubric in Appendix A.
[5] Detailed information is in Supplementary Appendix B.
[6] Speeches and Rubrics can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/A_Drop_In_the_Ocean>

We opt for utilizing official live streams due to Bolsonaro's strategy of delegitimizing traditional media as information providers. He presented his official social media as the only legitimate source of information - his weekly videos as an alternative to traditional daily news. Overall, this is a channel in which Bolsonaro has unrestricted control of his on-stage character while avoiding the gate-keeping imposed by mainstream media outlets (Burni and Tamaki, 2021). Finally, coding was conducted by two graders[7], and intercoder reliability was calculated along the process to ensure the reliability of our results.

Analysis and Discussion

To calculate intercoder reliability, we employ Krippendorff's alpha. This coefficient measures the level of agreement between observers and indicates whether results are random. It ranges from 0 to 1, with an α of 1 indicating "perfect reliability," and of 0 the absence of reliability Krippendorff (2011). We opt for this method as it suits any number of observers, categories, scale values, or measures; it can also work with nominal and ordinal data, as well as intervals (Krippendorff, 2011). We calculate an $\alpha = 0.88$, which is above the threshold recommended[8]and, therefore, indicates that our data and analysis are trustworthy.

Table 1 shows the individual score given to each discourse by each grader, as well as their average score. A quick analysis indicates that Bolsonaro's speeches grow in populism as the campaign progresses, from an average of 0.5 to one of 0.9, an 80% increase. Our analysis will be limited to the average score of his campaign speeches, which is 0.5.

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[7] We thank former research assistant Caio Emanuel Marques, from IE University, Spain, for acting as grader number 2.
[8] Krippendorff (2004) suggests that we should rely only on variables with reliability above $\alpha = 0.8$. A value between $0.667 < \alpha < 0.8$ should be used only for drawing "tentative conclusions" (Krippendorff, 2004: 241).

Table 1 Bolsonaro's Campaign Speech Scores

Title	Date	Grader A	Grader B	Average Score (Rounded)
1 - Official launch of his political campaign.	July 22, 2018	0.4	0.5	**0.5**
2 – Araçatuba.	August 23, 2018	0.6	0.5	**0.6**
3 – Porto Velho.	August 31, 2018	0.1	0.0	**0.1**
4 – Rio de Janeiro.	September 06, 2018	0.3	0.2	**0.3**
5 – After being Stabbed.	September 16, 2018	0.3	0.3	**0.3**
6 – Av. Paulista.	September 30, 2018	0.5	0.3	**0.4**
7 – One day before the first round of elections.	October 06, 2018	0.3	0.2	**0.3**
8 – Right after the first round of elections.	October 07, 2018	0.7	0.6	**0.7**
9 – Av. Paulista.	October 22, 2018	1.0	0.8	**0.9**
10 – The day before the second round of elections.	October 27, 2018	0.8	1.0	**0.9**
	Total Average:	0.5	0.44	**0.5**

Source: Authors coding; speeches and the coding rubrics are included in the Appendix.

As a moderate populist, Bolsonaro scores noticeably low at some points - particularly between late August and early October. However, after the first round of the Brazilian presidential elections (October 7), his discourse became gradually more populist, going from an average of 0.3 on October 6 to one of 0.9 on October 27, one day before the second round of elections. It is clear,

therefore, that Bolsonaro's populism is inconsistent. In what follows, we analyze vignettes from his campaign speeches that support our statement and show that nationalist traits prevent him from scoring higher.

People-Centrism

One of the main dimensions of populism is the belief in and praise of popular sovereignty. In this sense, populists view ordinary citizens as good, pure, and homogeneous. This, consequently, entails the existence of a unified "popular will," (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007) stemming from an "essential harmony of interests among "the people" (Stanley, 2008: 101). Ultimately, populists see politics as the expressions of the "volonté générale" (the general will of the people).

> **Bolsonaro**: "*We are different from those who ruled over us for the past 20 years – Workers' Party and Brazilian Social Democracy Party. With us, you [the people] will be in the first place; you will be our bosses! Together we can change Brazil; we won't have another opportunity!*[9]"

The implications of this vignette are twofold. While standing apart from the opposition, Bolsonaro evokes the idea of "the people" as a homogeneous group - to which he vouches to return the power once he wins the elections. With him, "the people" will be in charge, their sovereignty will be restored. Consequently, it is this simultaneous reference to "the people" as both "ordinary people," and the politically sovereign demos that, we argue, makes up for the constitutive element of populism's people-centrism.

"The people" is a concept that acts like an "empty signifier" (Laclau, 2005), which means that it is malleable, an "in-group" that changes and reshapes according to the context (Laclau, 2005; Reinemann et al., 2017). With that in mind, during his campaign, Bolsonaro builds the notion of

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[9] Bolsonaro (2) – Araçatuba (2018).

"the people" from a cultural and religious perspective, romanticizing the "common man" and equating the in-group to religious and moral standards depicted as the "good."

> **Bolsonaro**: "*Brazil is ours, 'good citizens,' hard workers, conservatives, Christians that maintain family values; that don't want "gender ideology*[10]*" in classrooms.*[11]"

At the same time, "the people" is equated to the nation, and Bolsonaro is prone to make multiple references to "Brazil" and the Brazilian people as a way to create proximity between him and his supporters, which could also reflect an attempt to strengthen their identification with an "imagined" group.

However, "the people" occupies a secondary position in Bolsonaro's discourse; it is not always construed through an "up/down" antagonism proper to populism, and besides a few occasions, it is rarely referenced as simultaneously plebs and politically sovereignty-bearing demos. Its use is inconsistent and often implicit, leaving his people-centrism to support other preferred nodal points that constitute different signifiers "us." Therefore, his populism's people-centrism is overshadowed by other elements discussed soon.

Anti-Elitism

For "us" to exist, there must be a "them." In this vein, what groups different demands and identities together in an "in-group" is that they are all frustrated and threatened by an evil-ruling "elite" (de Cleen, 2017) whose ultimate goal is to maintain its power. In other words, "the people" is considered to constitute a "silent majority" and, while its "volonté générale" should rightly be the basis of politics, it is frustrated and co-opted by a self-serving homogeneous entity, "the elite."

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[10] "Gender Ideology" is a pejorative term coined by the Catholic Church to fight against gender issues and related subjects. Widely influential in Latin America, the term is often used by those who fear that discussing sexuality in school will induce homosexuality and erode the traditional family (Biroli, 2017).
[11] Bolsonaro (6) – Av. Paulista (September, 2018).

Essentially, a populist discourse constructs two homogeneous groups, "the people" and "the elite," through a down/up Manichean antagonism which frames "the people" as a virtuous and large, yet powerless, group, and "the elite" as an evil and small, yet illegitimately powerful up-group (see De Cleen, 2017: 346). In Bolsonaro's discourse, "the elite" takes the shape of its political opposition: the Left (ideology) and especially the Worker's Party (PT):

> **Bolsonaro**: "*Petralhada[12], you will go to the 'edge of the beach*,' you won't have any more chances in our homeland, because I will cut off all your luxuries. You won't have any more NGOs to satisfy your hunger for mortadella[13]. It will be a purge never seen in the history of Brazil![14]*"

Although often using "PT" and "the Left", Bolsonaro also employs a range of other labels and pejorative terms. Here, he references a widely known torture site during Brazil's military dictatorship (1964 - 1985) - the "Edge of the Beach" ("Ponta da Praia"). He thus openly alludes to non-democratic means of dealing with his opposition.

During his campaign, Bolsonaro openly addresses the PT and its government as corrupt, inefficient, and responsible for executing a plan to spread left-wing ideology. Furthermore, he holds the PT accountable for undermining traditional family values - often relating his opponents to "gender ideology" and using this association to further his anti-minorities agenda. To deal with this situation, Bolsonaro openly defends non-democratic means as a way to fight his political enemy. His overall tone is aggressive, and it relies heavily on inflammatory and belligerent language; as the elections approach, his aggressiveness increases:

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[12] Reference to those affiliated with the Workers' Party; a wordplay with the words "Metralha" from the Brazilian Portuguese translation of the Beagle Boys (mobsters) and "Petista" (affiliated with the Workers' Party).
[13] Leftist activists are also referenced as "mortadella sandwiches."
[14] Bolsonaro (9) – Av. Paulista (October, 2018).

> **Bolsonaro**: "*You, Petralhas [derogatory term for PT supporters], will see Civil and Military police with a legal rearguard to uphold the law on your back [sic]. Bandits from MST[15], bandits from MTST[16], your actions will be typified as terrorism; you will not terrorize the countryside and the cities anymore! Either you fit in and fall in line, or you will accompany the "drunkard" in Curitiba[17]*"

Nationalism and Patriotism (And Why It Is Not Populism)

So far, we showed how populist elements are articulated in Bolsonaro's campaign speeches; however, most of the time, the idea of "the people" is more influenced by nationalistic rhetoric than by Manichean discourse. Although intertwined in practice, populism and nationalism are two distinct discursive traditions (Brubaker, 2019), and in this sense, though not fully overlapping, they are better understood if construed as intersecting and mutually implicated (de Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2020: 2).

Following this idea, we depart from the existing literature and propose that for an "us" to be appropriately considered "populist," "the people" must be invoked in a twofold way: it needs to be simultaneously part and whole. In other words, it needs to refer to the common or ordinary people at the same time it is designating a political sovereignty-bearing demos (in the terms used by Brubaker, 2019)[18]. In this regard, as we will demonstrate, Bolsonaro's discourse is often devoid of references to "us" in any of these part-whole categories, relying primarily (and almost uniquely) on the construction of the in-group as a cultural community, constituted by shared citizenship and inheritable fictive kinship. He is prone to using "we" and "our" to denote shared ownership of the

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[15] Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement.
[16] Brazilian Homeless Workers Movement.
[17] Bolsonaro (9) – Av. Paulista (October, 2018).
[18] Although we do not follow Brubaker (2019) in adopting a vertical and horizontal division to populism's idea of "the people," we are also not getting into the details surrounding this dispute. For a detailed discussion, see Brubaker (2019); de Cleen and Stavrakakis (2020); Rooduijn, de Lange and van der Brug (2014).

country, its symbols, and culture. In the end, even though populist people-centrism is present, it plays second fiddle to other preferred terms.

Nationalism is not intrinsically incompatible with populism. Besides being described as thin-centered ideologies (Freeden, 1996; Jenne, Hawkins, and Silva, 2021; Singh, 2021), both rely on a sense of social division, which entails a group behavior that separates society into "us" versus "them," inscribing and delimiting the boundaries of an imagined sovereignty across salient socio-cultural issues. In this sense, being part of an "in-group" entails the construction of and categorical distinction from an "out-group" (e.g., Tajfel, 1982; Mouffe, 2019). Therefore, as Michael Billig similarly stated, both populism and nationalism are ideologies of the first- and third-person plural: it tells "us" who "we" are in a world where there can be no "us" without a "them" (Billig, 1995: 78).

Despite sharing commonalities, nationalism and populism are different political discourses. As stated previously, populism praises the "good" and virtuous people; however, who the people are and what they demand are historically contingent and difficult to identify very far in advance. It is ultimately very proximate to the individuals that constitute the people. In contrast, the national identity tends to be less malleable or connected to the individuals that are part of it. It revolves around an implied idea of fictive kinship that is inheritable – it is part of "our" blood, our culture[19]. It is all about "our" ways of life and "our" values (Billig, 1995: 71) - even if it is limited to pre-existing, historically inherited ideas that are most often transformed radically (Gellner, 1983). In

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[19] If we think of culture in terms of a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating (Gellner, 1983: 7).

this sense, "we" must be categorized with a distinctive label, a national label that does not only separate "us" from "them" but carries with itself a precious genetic inheritance.

Unlike populism, nationalists extol the "good and virtuous" nation (Jenne, Hawkins and Silva, 2021). It is itself an idea connected to a physical space with physical borders; it has to do with "territoriality" and the idea of a space, related to us in a "primordial way." In this sense, while populism is structured around a "down-up" frame that advocates for popular sovereignty, nationalism follows an "in-out" with "in" being the members of the nation and the "out" encompassing different non-members (de Cleen and Stavrakakis, 2017, 2020).

> **Bolsonaro**: "*We speak what Brazil needs to hear, we show that Brazil has a solution, but this solution obviously passes through the hands of each one of you. Our big problem in Brazil is a political issue: Or we put people like us in politics, or we have no future, and people like us are honest people, people who believe in God, patriotic people!*"[20]

To understand this vignette, we need to break it down into small parts. First, the subject of his rhetoric is the nation as a whole. It represents an underlying idea of an all-encompassing community that is brought together by this implicit notion of shared and inherited historical national values. Those values, however, are shaped, transformed freely to fit into Bolsonaro's narrative; the community, therefore, is limited to those who are "like us." Finally, by claiming that "people like us" are "honest people," who "believe in God," and people who are "patriotic," Bolsonaro is delineating the nation's core religious and conservative values as a representation of the virtues and distinctiveness that compose the Brazilian national identity.

> **Bolsonaro**: "*Together we have the ability to unite our Brazilian people who have been divided (...) by the left in the last years. We are one country, one fatherland, one nation, one green and yellow heart! Together we can really make Brazil a great nation!*[21]"

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[20] Bolsonaro (2) – Araçatuba (2018).
[21] Bolsonaro (1) – Formal public launch of his political campaign (2018).

Interestingly, even though Bolsonaro may at times use "people," "nation" (or in this case, "Brazil"), "Brazilians," and even "fatherland" interchangeably, he does so without actually evoking those terms in a Manichean frame. In other words, this is to say that they do not refer to "the people" as a part of a wider political community, nor as a political whole that is construed as a sovereignty-bearing demos (Brubaker, 2019: 7). Instead, those are just different ways to reference a national community united by pre-existing symbols that reflect "our" way of life. There, "green and yellow heart" is a wordplay with the colors of the Brazilian flag.

Slightly different is patriotism. It comes closer to nationalism as it also alludes to the "celebration of the nationalistic virtues of patriotic fervor" (Smith and Sells, 2005), however, if nationalism praises the nation, patriotism praises the State (with capital "s").

> **Bolsonaro**: "*My brothers in the navy, army, and air force (...) you are attacked daily, accused of the greatest absurdities by this Left (Left-wing in general). Do you know why? Because you are the last obstacle to socialism*[22]"

It also alludes to its institutions, symbols - such as flags and national anthems -, the government, and the military. As seen above, by portraying the military as the ultimate gatekeepers against socialism, Bolsonaro delineates his opposition as a political threat and links the PT to a resurrected socialist menace.

Consequently, it is all about the defense of the "fatherland" - A Pátria - and, when it comes to it, nothing stands above (O'Donnel, 1979; Hawkins, Amado, and Cranney, 2010). As Brian Loveman states, persons, groups, movements, and behaviors that threaten the fatherland's

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[22] Bolsonaro (1) – Formal public launch of his political campaign (2018).

"permanent interests" "cannot be tolerated, even if their actions are formally legal" (Loveman, 1994: 109).

The subject of patriotic rhetoric is not "the people" or "the nation," but rather a quasi-religious belief of an unwavering commitment to the defense of the "Pátria." The fatherland, therefore, is a "sacred concept; it [is] an 'entity of destiny,' a transcendental basis of identity and solidarity, flexible in form but unchanging at its core" (Smith and Sells, 2005: 59). It is in this sense that Bolsonaro embodies the idea of guardianship - he acts as a guardian defending the "Western Christian way of life" (Loveman, 1994) against its perceived enemies from within and without. His mission is to save the fatherland and meet with "decisive retribution" those who endanger it.

> **Bolsonaro**: "*Right now [society] is polarized? it's us and the PT; It's Brazil, green and yellow, and they that represent Cuba, [that] represent the Venezuelan government, with its flag that is red and has a hammer and sickle on top of it.[23]*"

> **Bolsonaro**: "*[I have to] thank God for this opportunity [to] govern Brazil. If that is God's will, together with these beautiful people, we are ready to fulfill this mission [ruling Brazil]. (...) I thank God for this mission; if this is His will, we will get there![24]*"

His rationale rests on: (1) defending the fatherland against communism (and the Left), against what Loveman called "more Cubas" (Loveman, 1994: 133), and preventing the rise of more "Venezuelas;" and, lastly, (2) defending the national sovereignty against external threats.

Similarly to populism and nationalism, patriot rhetoric also separates "us" from "them," and while "us" takes the shape of one's fatherland, "them" are forces of subversion threatening it. It is also important to highlight that, although obscure, "Brazil" is often used to reference different

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[23] Bolsonaro (7) - One day before the first round of Brazil's presidential elections (2018).
  [24] Bolsonaro (7) - One day before the first round of Brazil's presidential elections (2018).

ideas (be it populist, nationalist, or patriotic). In this specific context, it works interchangeably with "fatherland;" what will distinguish its meaning is the communicative context in which Bolsonaro uses those words.

As shown, nationalist and patriotic elements coexist with populism in Bolsonaro's campaign discourses but do not necessarily combine with it. Although his score of 0.5 classifies him as "somewhat populist," his people-centrism is inconsistent and is often obscured by nodal points that revolve around different signifiers.

A Drop in the Ocean or a Change in the Weather?

Bolsonaro's discourse, therefore, presents moderate populism and highly exclusionary, aggressive forms of nationalism and patriotism. The former army captain demonized his political opponents, framing them as enemies of "the people" and threats to the nation and the State. Albeit treated as a quintessential case of right-wing populism, Bolsonaro's discourse is just another drop in the ocean - "somewhat populist" and not strong enough to properly change the "populist" weather. All in all, his discourse embodied the idea of guardianship to safeguard the fatherland and, consequently, to deal with the perceived threats. This resulted in a staunch defense of illiberalism, which is manifest in attacks on minorities, on opposition's rights, and on institutions such as the independent judiciary and the media.

This illiberal rhetoric, however, did not arise out of thin air. It emerged to the forefront of the national political scene partly due to what we propose are two sides of the same coin: (i) first, the demand on the part of voters. As Esther Solano puts it, "for those who support Bolsonaro, the belief is that collective struggle does not guarantee the conquest of more rights; rather, personal effort and meritocracy do so" (Solano, 2020: 216). Although this rejection of "collective struggle"

might hold for the most devoted among Bolsonaro's supporters, it can hardly be generalized without raising a series of issues – chief among them the fact that merely four years before Bolsonaro's rise, Brazilians gave PT its fourth presidential mandate in a row. The puzzle, thus, remains as to how Bolsonaro's discourse managed to amass support from a majority of voters. To solve this, one should look at what scholars have called the (ii) "perfect storm". Starting in 2013, economic and political crises, corruption scandals, and security issues amounted to a multidimensional crisis that plunged government and regime legitimacy. Witnessing an all-time low level of regime legitimacy, democracy satisfaction, and support for democracy (according to 2018's Latinobarómetro), Brazil was engulfed in a toxic political atmosphere which displayed the political class at it its worst (Hunter and Power, 2019). This was the perfect scenario for Bolsonaro's carnivalesque mockery and illiberal flaunting.

Finally, this paper has contributed to expounding the populist, nationalist, and patriotic strands which unite in Bolsonaro's discourse, providing quantifiable figures. This opens possibilities for future scholarship to research how and under what conditions each of these strands finds echo in the electorate. It also quantifies Bolsonaro's populism. Despite his often being regarded as a prototypical case of a far-right populist, the present study casts some shadow on this idea by revealing that, during the 2018 presidential campaign, Bolsonaro's discourse can only be classified as "somewhat populist." His rhetoric displays inconsistent use of "in-group" signifiers, often fluctuating between nationalist, patriotic, and populist constructions of "the people."

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