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**The Populist Allure: An Analysis of the Populism in Bolsonaro's  
Government Speeches (2019 – 2020)**

Belo Horizonte

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(2019 – 2020)**

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Orientador: Prof. Dr. Mario Fuks.  
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### ATA 13ª/2021 DA DEFESA DA DISSERTAÇÃO DO ALUNO EDUARDO RYÔ TAMAKI

Realizou-se, no dia 17 de dezembro de 2021, às 11:00 horas, por videoconferência, a defesa da dissertação, intitulada "The Populist Allure: An Analysis of the Populism in Bolsonaro's Government Speeches (2019 – 2020)", elaborada e apresentada por EDUARDO RYÔ TAMAKI, número de registro 2020678521, graduado no curso de CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS. A defesa é requisito parcial para a obtenção do grau de Mestre em CIÊNCIA POLÍTICA, e foi submetida e analisada pela seguinte Comissão Examinadora: Prof. Mario Fuks - Orientador (DCP/UFMG), Prof. Kirk Hawkins - Coorientador (Brigham Young University), Prof. Bruno Castanho Silva (University of Cologne), Profa. Aline Burni Pereira Gomes (German Development Institute). A Comissão considerou a dissertação APROVADA. Finalizados os trabalhos, lavrei a presente ata que, lida e aprovada, vai assinada pelos membros da Comissão. Belo Horizonte, 17 de dezembro de 2021.



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*“All the mistakes I made, I made,  
Whatever the price I paid, I paid,  
[So] Shoutout to the old me and everything you showed me.”  
Glad you didn’t listen when the world was trying to slow me.”*

5 Seconds of Summer, Old Me (2020).

## Resumo

Em 2018, após anos de crise política e escândalos de corrupção, uma série de eventos levou a uma “tempestade perfeita”, que culminou com a eleição do ex-capitão do Exército e político de extrema-direita, Jair Bolsonaro, à frente da maior democracia no mundo. Naquele momento de crise, beneficiando-se da insatisfação desenfreada com toda a classe política (da esquerda à direita), a visão do populismo como uma “face redentora da democracia” provavelmente emergiria, e Bolsonaro se certificou disso. Como estudos anteriores mostraram, os discursos de campanha de Bolsonaro são moderadamente populistas, apresentando uma combinação de elementos nacionalistas e patrióticos que, às vezes, ofuscam seu populismo. No entanto, uma vez no poder, como Bolsonaro se comporta? Em outras palavras, podemos considerar seu discurso durante os dois primeiros anos como o 38º Presidente do Brasil, populista? E se sim, quais são as marcas de seu populismo? O patriotismo e o nacionalismo de seus discursos de campanha são transferidos para seus dois primeiros anos no governo? Estas são as três principais questões colocadas nesta tese. Conceitualmente, parte de uma definição ideacional, segundo a qual o populismo se encontra no âmbito das ideias. Combina três elementos necessários e suficientes: (i) uma cosmologia maniqueísta e moral; (ii) a criação e defesa do “povo” como comunidade homogênea e virtuosa; e (iii) o enquadramento de uma “elite” como uma entidade corrupta e interesseira. Em seguida, para responder às questões levantadas, esta tese se concentra no discurso de Bolsonaro como o 38º presidente do Brasil. Para isso, utilizo a análise de conteúdo para classificar seus discursos oficiais e transmissões ao vivo no período de 2019 e 2020. No total, foram codificados e analisados 94 discursos: 51 discursos oficiais e 43 transmissões ao vivo. O método segue o método Holistic Grading de análise textual, que foi emparelhado com uma rubrica destinada a identificar e medir as qualidades associadas às diferentes dimensões do populismo.

Os resultados indicam que, assim como sua campanha presidencial, o discurso de Bolsonaro permanece “um pouco populista”, pontuando na extremidade inferior do que poderíamos considerar como um “pouco populista”. Apesar de exibir os três elementos necessários e suficientes do populismo, Bolsonaro não os articula de forma consistente. Apesar de seu nível moderado de populismo, a retórica de Bolsonaro apresenta elementos mais nacionalistas e patrióticos, mais alinhados com os governos militares da América Latina durante a Guerra Fria. O discurso de Bolsonaro evoca a ideia de tutela, mobilizando a nação contra aqueles que a ameaçam, encimada por uma lógica que se apoia na ideia de defesa da “pátria” contra as forças da subversão. Além disso, a própria ideia de “povo” é construída de maneira mais influenciada pelo uso da retórica nacionalista e patriótica em oposição ao discurso maniqueísta às vezes. No final, o populista “o povo” acaba ficando em segundo plano em relação a outros termos preferidos.

**Palavras-chave:** Populismo; Brasil; Jair Bolsonaro; Patriotismo; Nacionalismo;



## Abstract

In 2018, after years of political crisis and corruption scandals, a series of events led to a “perfect storm,” which culminated with the election of the former army captain and far-right politician, Jair Bolsonaro, to the head of the largest democracy in the world. In that moment of crisis, benefiting from the rampant dissatisfaction with the entire political class from left to right, the sight of populism as a “redemptive face of democracy” was likely to emerge, and Bolsonaro made sure of it. As previous studies have shown, Bolsonaro’s campaign speeches are moderately populist, presenting a combination of nationalist and patriotic elements that, at times, overshadow its populism. However, once in power, how Bolsonaro behaves? In other words, can we consider his discourse during the first two years as the 38th President of Brazil populist? And if so, what are the marks of his populism? Does the patriotism and nationalism from his campaign speeches carry over to his first two years in government? These are the three main questions asked in this thesis. Conceptually, it starts with an ideational definition, according to which populism is found in the realm of ideas. It combines three necessary and sufficient elements: (i) a Manichaeian and moral cosmology; (ii) the creation and defense of “the people” as a homogenous and virtuous community; and (iii) the framing of an “elite” as a corrupt and self-serving entity. Next, to answer the questions raised, this thesis focuses on Bolsonaro’s discourse as the 38th President of Brazil. For that, I use content analysis to classify his official speeches and live streams throughout 2019 and 2020. It was coded and analyzed 94 speeches: 51 official discourses and 43 live streams. The method follows the holistic grading method of textual analysis, paired with a rubric designed to identify and measure the qualities associated with the different dimensions of populism.

Results indicate that much like his presidential campaign, Bolsonaro’s discourse remains “somewhat populist,” scoring on the lower end of what we could consider as a “barely populist.” Although exhibiting the three necessary and sufficient elements of populism, Bolsonaro does not consistently articulate them. Despite his moderate level of populism, Bolsonaro’s rhetoric presents more nationalist and patriotic elements, more in line with the military governments of Latin America during the Cold War. Bolsonaro’s discourse evokes the idea of guardianship, rallying the nation to stand against those who threaten it, topped with a rationale that rests on the idea of defending the “fatherland” against forces of subversion. Furthermore, the very idea of “the people” is construed in a way that is more influenced by nationalist and patriotic rhetoric as opposed to Manichaeian discourse at times. In the end, the populist “the people” end up playing second fiddle to other preferred terms.

**Keywords:** Populism; Brazil; Jair Bolsonaro; Patriotism; Nationalism;

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## **Introduction**

### **Setting the Stage: Latin America and the Brazilian Experience with Populism**

Even though its historical roots trace back to the Narodniks in Czarist Russia, the seventh president of the United States, Andrew Jackson, or the People's Party (Norris and Inglehart, 2019; Taggart, 2000; Tormey, 2019; Voss, 2021), in no other region has populism enjoyed the level of success and perseverance as it did in Latin America (de Lara, 2018, Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019). The "land of populism," as it came to be known (de la Torre, 2017), Latin America experienced three almost-consecutive populist waves. As of today, it shows no signs of wearing off.

Populism became a classic feature of Latin American politics (de la Torre and Arnson, 2013), often regarded as an expression of the region's socioeconomic disparities combined with personalistic and clientelist heritages (Weyland, 2001; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Over the past 90 years, Latin America witnessed the rise and fall of all stripes of populism, all of them with varying impacts on society and democracy.

The first generation of populists, known as "Classical Populism" (e.g., Ionescu and Gellner, 1969; Weffort, 1980), emerged in the early stages of capitalist development. In Latin America, it began with the onset of the Great Depression of 1929, which plunged the region's economic and political model into crisis. These countries that had undergone modernization and economic development processes tied to rapid urbanization and industrialization gave birth to a segment of society that remained orphaned from social and economic politics of inclusion.

In Brazil, this generation dates back to the mid-1930s with the rise of Getúlio Vargas and his mass politics (Ianni, 1978; Ferreira, 2001). Back then, Vargas advanced with a language centered on "the people," rather than the "working class," by uniting a sense of belonging among groups of society that were marginalized and framed as problematic. In contrast to "the people," the oligarchy played the roles of the "corrupt elite," framed as responsible for allying themselves with foreign imperialist forces that opposed the economic import substitution model.

The same period saw the rise of ideologies favorable to an interventionist and personalist state model, and the populism that emerged then is associated with the process of economic development characteristic of the 1930s: intense industrialization and urbanization (Oliveira, 2009). Until that moment, relations of domination and subordination formed the basis of Latin American societies, where institutional and daily practices excluded a significant portion of the population from politics and the public sphere (de la Torre, 2017). Therefore, classical populism emerged from the crisis of liberalism, democracy, and social oligarchy that combined a liberal constitution based on the division of power and elections with patriarchal values characteristic of rural societies. Due to that, many scholars saw populism merely as a transitional process between traditional and modern societies, a stigma that befell democracies and under-developed societies, believing that it would disappear once capitalist modernization found its way through society (e.g., Germani, 1971).

The first Brazilian "populist moment," or first populist generation, ended with the military coup that ousted João Goulart in 1964 (Gomes, 2001). However, almost 30 years later, after the democratic transition, the crusade against subversion and the need to safeguard the people and the national values gave a new breath to the phenomenon. In 1989, amidst a context deeply marked by an economic crisis, populists rose again to power by blaming the elite for both the country's situation and usurping the people's power and sovereignty. To deal with the hyperinflation that plunged the economy, these leaders defended a "popular liberalism" (Schamis, 2013) that consisted of neoliberal strategies that aimed to promote the capitalist market and globalization. The union between neoliberal ideas and populist discourse proved to be an unexpected match (Weyland, 2003, Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019).

By adopting this particular set of ideas, the second moment of populists, also known as neopopulism, articulated a different meaning to "the people" and "the elite" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017). This time, the enemy was the traditional political parties and elites, portrayed as out of touch with the people's needs and who opposed the development of the free market in favor of old clientelist practices. Even though the populist rhetoric focused on saving and portraying the nation's essence, their policies abandoned economic protectionism (de la Torre 2014). They pursued opening their economies to the international market, subjecting the country to international institutions like the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank.

In Brazil, amidst a context deeply marked by political party organization, where the majority of the population now had the right to vote, the Sarney government's hyperinflationary collapse allowed Fernando Collor de Mello to rise to power. Framing himself as an outsider, Collor de Mello appeared to act beyond the interests of the working class. His mission was to destroy the privileges of inefficient bureaucrats and bring redemption to his followers (de la Torre 2017). Collor de Melo aimed to bridge the gap between the people and the charismatic leadership, relying on a "multiclass makeup, reformism, electoral expansion, and appeal to popular culture" (Conniff 2020). The unexpected affinity between neoliberalism and populism (or neopopulism) was heavily dependent on anti-elite rhetoric (de la Torre 2017), in addition to benefiting from Latin America's personalized politics.

This generation was much shorter and less successful than its forerunner. By the end of the 1990s, the third moment sprung from the consequences of its predecessor's questionable success, and neopopulism was over. Over the past 20 years, neoliberal reforms that originated with the military had done much for macroeconomic development but nothing for the rising socioeconomic inequality (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Addressing those social grievances, populist leaders began once more to politicize this inequality to mobilize and sustain anti-elite rhetoric. By bringing back an anti-imperialist flavor, they attacked the free market and political elites, framing enemies as responsible for enriching at the expense of the people's misery. It began with the electoral victory of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, and it quickly spread to other countries like Bolivia (Evo Morales) and Ecuador (Rafael Correa).

Different from past manifestations, those populists openly adopted socialist ideas (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017). As a testament to its chameleonic nature (Taggart 2000), populism's synergy with socialist ideas paved the way for an inclusionary concept of "the people:" "all those who are excluded and discriminated against" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 32). Those populists pledged to return the sovereignty to the people, and once in power, they advanced with constituent assemblies to allegedly do so. Due to its nature, the third populist moment received the name of "radical populism."

Regardless of their strategies, radical populism has been considered quite successful as populists' influences still linger in some Latin American countries. However, despite the evident rise of populism in neighboring countries, Brazil remained remarkably free of populist leaders or movements, at least until 2018. The opposition's

success in dealing with Collor de Mello's government paved the way for a series of moderate governments. Although some consider Lula to be a populist leadership (e. g: Perruci ,1995; Marques and Mendes, 2006; Grigera, 2017), analyses of his time as president reveal that, despite presenting some characteristics commonly related to radical populism, such as a moderately redistributive tilt in economic policies and an emphasis on participatory democracy, Lula does not fit the classification of a populist leader (Hawkins, 2009, Oliveira, 2009). When it comes to his successors, former president Dilma Rousseff and her vice-president Michel Temer (who took power after Dilma was ousted on a historical impeachment process), analyses are categorical in denying them the label of populists (Tamaki and Fuks 2020).

More recently, however, Brazil has seen the rise of a far-right politician, a former army captain who portrayed himself as a maverick and a dissonant and paradoxical figure who often flaunted his connection with the "common man" while sustaining carnivalesque mockery and promising to rid the establishment of the "old crooked politics." With a moderate populist, but clear-cut nationalist and patriotic speech (Tamaki, Braga, and Fuks, 2021), Jair Messias Bolsonaro broke Brazil's non-populism streak and got elected to the presidency of the third-largest democracy in the world.

Riding this "new populist wave" (Foa and Mounk, 2019), already in his campaign, Bolsonaro presented a mild populism and "highly exclusionary, aggressive forms of nationalism and patriotism" (Tamaki, Braga, and Fuks, 2021: 14). His rhetoric followed a staunch defense of illiberalism, often manifested through attacks on minorities, opposition's rights, and democratic institutions. Tamaki, Braga, and Fuks (2021:14) point out that this illiberal rhetoric did not arise from thin air. It emerged at the forefront of the national political scene as an answer to: (i) demand from the voters; and (ii) the consequence of the multi-dimensional crisis that engulfed Brazil over the last couple of years. Unironically, Castanho Silva, Fuks, and Tamaki (2021) find that both illiberalism and anti-democratic views are significantly associated with support for Bolsonaro when interacting with ideological self-placement. This lends more credibility to the idea that, indeed, Bolsonaro and (at least some of) his supporters are not only radical right, but "also extremists in the sense that they have little regard for democracy of any type, not only liberal democracy" (Castanho Silva, Fuks, and Tamaki, 2021: 25).

Nevertheless, the same populist rhetoric might not be that easily maintained once in power. Now that Bolsonaro is part of the political establishment, what can we expect

of his discourse? Even though Bolsonaro can adapt his populism, other elements that were strongly present during his presidential campaign might also be present during his government. As a matter of fact, if patriotism and nationalism were indeed constitutive elements of his profile, it is expected they would also be present during his government. On the other hand, once formally placed within the presidential "game," institutional constraints could tone down Bolsonaro's rhetoric, constraining him to the "rules of the game." Be it as it may, the question remains: can we consider Jair Bolsonaro a populist? If yes, what are the marks or the brand of his populism? How does he mobilize populist traits in his discourse? Moreover, what else is he? Does the patriotism and nationalism from his campaign speeches carry over to his first two years in government? These are the research questions that drive this thesis, and to answer them, we focus on the first two years of Bolsonaro's government, 2019 and 2020, reviewing discourses from two different sources: his official government speeches, and official live streams, broadcasted weekly on his official Facebook and YouTube channels.

## **How**

This thesis advances the debate surrounding this topic by presenting a method that allows us to classify and analyze the degree of populism present in political speeches: the holistic grading method of textual analysis (Hawkins, 2009). This is the subject of Chapter 3, which focuses on laying the foundations and detailing said method, justifying its selection over other approaches also utilized for measuring populism, walking through the sampling process for both the official speeches and weekly live streams, and assessing the reliability of our results.

In the end, I grade 94 speeches given by Jair Bolsonaro throughout 2019 and 2020. Those are divided into 51 official speeches and 43 official live streams. The production of these data starts with adopting an ideational definition of populism (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019: 3): it is a moral discourse that exalts popular sovereignty while understanding the world and politics as a cosmic struggle between "the people" and "the elite." Thus, the best way to identify populism among politicians is to look at what they say, given how I propose approaching populism as a moral discourse potentially used by any politician. In the end, by applying content analysis to Bolsonaro's discourse, it is possible to understand how populist he is during the first two years of his government, besides having a better knowledge of the specific traits that make up his populism.



Next, in Chapter 4, I discuss the results from both a quantitative and qualitative standpoint. First, at the end of the first two years of his government, Bolsonaro scores an average of 0.5 on the populist scale (ranging from 0 to 2), a similar score to his presidential campaign, which earns him the classification of a "somewhat populist." A quick comparison to Brazil's previous presidents (Hawkins et al., 2019) shows that, indeed, Bolsonaro is the most populist president Brazil has had in the last 28 years, since Fernando Collor de Mello. To give some context on the range of populism as coded by holistic grading, in Latin America, Hugo Chávez, in Venezuela, scored 1.9 (1999 – 2006), while Evo Morales, in Bolivia, 1.6 (2006 – 2009). As for Europe, Hungary's Orbán scored an average of 0.9 (2010 – 2014), while, in the U.S., Donald Trump (2017 – 2018) scored 0.8 (Hawkins, 2009; Hawkins et al., 2019).

Back in Brazil, Bolsonaro's live streams strategy allowed him to circumvent the traditional media and journalistic gatekeeping while creating an "alternative" facts reality on his own personal channels. In this narrative, his official social media channels were presented as the only legitimate source of information, in contrast to the mainstream media, often blamed for promoting fake news. Overall, through an analysis of the data collected, this thesis indicates that Bolsonaro's official speeches are on average more populist than his live streams, which are more radical, present more conspiracy elements, keep passions high, and often use bellicose language – but this should not be confused with "populism." Radicalism, conspiracy, and lack of decorum when dealing with the opposition are common elements of many different political speeches, but they are not necessary nor sufficient for populism.

Now, reviewing his speeches, I find that his populism, especially his people-centrism and anti-elitism, changed during the Covid-19 pandemic. His Manichaeism, however, remained consistent; it comes from two related sources: (i) the idea of two irreconcilable paths stuck on (ii) a battle, a moral war his government is fighting. Regardless of the strategy and how he frames it, the Evil is always the same, his political opposition, especially the Workers' Party (PT).

When it comes to his people-centrism, Bolsonaro's discourse presents the idea of a sovereign, united will of the people who invested him with power and is the ultimate source of legitimacy. Throughout his first year in government, Bolsonaro's idea of "the people" is grounded on good morality, and his definition of "us" is always a "people" that revolves around the notion of "good citizen," which is associated with Christianity and

family traditionalism. During the Covid-19, there is a slight shift in its focus. Now, the spotlight rests on the "informal, common worker," with Bolsonaro romanticizing its values and highlighting his proximity to them.

Regarding his anti-elitism, Bolsonaro treats the political opposition as enemies. The left (ideology in general, but also the politicians and especially the Workers' Party) is an overarching threat that is always looming "the people," it is an evil that threatens family, moral, and Christian values, core elements that bring the nation together. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Bolsonaro changes the establishment's identity, targeting the mainstream media, local governors, and mayors as enemies acting against "the people." In this new narrative, he accuses them of spreading fake news, conspiracies, and deceiving the "Brazilian people" while also attempting to undermine the government at any cost.

Finally, although he presents a clear-cut Manichaeism and anti-elitism, most of the time, the idea of "the people" is more influenced by nationalistic and patriotic rhetoric than to populist Manichaean discourse. In the end, even though populist people-centrism is present, it plays second fiddle to other preferred terms.

## **Contributions**

This study presents several contributions and advances to understanding Bolsonaro's populism, one of the most prominent representants of this new far-right wave (Mudde, 2019). Although many scholars were fast in labeling Bolsonaro "populist" (e.g., Mendonça and Caetano, 2020; Ricci, Izumi, and Moreira, 2021), this is the first time the ideational approach was systematically applied to the Brazilian context. Thus, by doing it so, this thesis adds Brazil to several other international cases studied under the same theoretical approach, which opens the path for comparative studies.

Throughout the rest of this study, I present a novel dataset classifying Bolsonaro's populism along the first two years of his government (2019 and 2020) in a total of 93 speeches. This data offers significant findings regarding Bolsonaro's populism, further pointing that although he can be considered a "somewhat populist," scoring barely enough to classify him in the lowest end of the populist scale, his discourse also presents nationalist and patriotic elements, more in line with the military governments of Latin

America during the Cold War. In the end, Bolsonaro's discourse evokes the idea of guardianship, rallying the nation to stand against those who threaten it, topped with a rationale that rests on the idea of defending the "fatherland" against forces of subversion. Combined, his populist qualities and his authoritarian traits pose a threat to Brazil's democratic institutions.

## Chapter 1.

### Brazil and Populism: Concept and Discussion

#### 1.1 What is Populism: The Ideational Approach

Populism is a contested concept among scholars and pundits alike. With Donald Trump's election to the US presidency in 2016 and the BREXIT referendum in that same year, populism became the buzzword (Hunger and Paxton, 2021), being even elected in 2017 as the "Word of the Year" by the Cambridge Dictionary<sup>1</sup>. Due to that, it is no surprise that populism became the subject of research by many disciplines in the social sciences.

The conceptual battle for the phenomenon's definition is far from over (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019). Some approaches emphasize different elements and having a different view surrounding the nature of populism – a political strategy (Barr, 2018; Kenny, 2021; Weyland, 2001), or a sociocultural and political performance (Moffitt, 2016; Ostiguy, 2017; Ostiguy, Panizza and Moffitt, 2021) –, however, virtually all definitions agree on two main components: people-centrism and anti-elitism (starting with Canovan, 1981). Therefore, most contemporary research on populism in Political Science has converged towards the so-called "ideational" definition of populism (e.g., Hawkins et al., 2019b; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

For the remainder of this thesis, I side with the ideational approach, which sees populism as a set of ideas that individuals and political actors hold. The ideational definition has three necessary and sufficient conditions: (i) a good-versus-evil view of politics – or a Manichaeic dualism; that revolves around (ii) a people-centrism, which entails the existence of a morally and homogeneous good "people"; in (iii) opposition to an equally inherently evil "elite," perceived as selfish and self-serving – an anti-elitism or anti-establishment. This entails that, as Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser (2019:3) put, something is only populist if it has all three of these dimensions.

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<sup>1</sup> <

Within the group of the ideational approach, or the group of scholars who study populism as a set of ideas, there are those who see it as an ideology or a discourse<sup>2</sup>. The first option considers populism as a "thin-centered ideology," utilizing the term coined by Michael Freeden (1996). According to the author, "thin-centered ideologies" like feminism, green political thought, and nationalism have a limited morphology, relying on a limited number of core concepts often insufficient to contain comprehensive solutions for the full spectrum of socio-political problems (Freeden, 1996, 2017). This tradition is heavily influenced by Cas Mudde's (2004) work, which describes populism as a "thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be the expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (Mudde, 2004: 543). In this sense, due to its "thinness," populism would hardly emerge in its pure form, with few authors claiming that, in practice, populism would only be seen in its subtypes. Art (2020:10) even concludes that populism would not "really" exist in the same way other regime types do, like democracy or authoritarianism. Consequently, due to its "chameleonic nature" (Taggart, 2000), populism is always attached to specific "host" ideological features related to particular issues and grievances that vary from the regional context.

The second option sees populism as a Manichaeian discourse that "identifies Good with a unified will of the people and Evil with a conspiring elite" (Hawkins, 2009: 1042). It seeks to assess the presence of populist messages and the degree of populism in different discourses, focusing mainly on political speeches and party manifestos (e.g., Bonikowski and Gidron, 2016; Hawkins, 2009, 2010). The definition of populism as discourse is heavily influenced by Laclau's (2005) understanding of discourse as a set of phenomena that produce social meaning and create political identities through discursive practices (Poblete, 2015); however, it outgrows it by taking a positivist approach and treating ideas as exogenous or given (Hawkins, 2018). As Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser (2019:3) draw attention, "populism is a moral discourse that not only exalts popular sovereignty, but understands the political field as a cosmic struggle between 'the people' and 'the elite'." The strengths and advantages of using this definition, as Hawkins (2018:67) highlighted, lies in the fact that it offers a "bold, minimal definition," based on

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed analysis of the differences within the ideational definition of populism, especially when it concerns the view of populism as a discourse, see Poblete (2015)

the idea that it connects to a "comprehensive theory that works across countries and time, and tests [it] on multiple levels of analysis." In this sense, this thesis joins a series of works worldwide that utilizes the ideational approach to study populism from both its supply- and demand-side.

## **1.2. Brazil's Populism: Today**

In recent years, the rise of Jair Messias Bolsonaro has changed the Brazilian political landscape. In 2018, after years of political crisis and corruption scandals, a series of events led to a "perfect storm," which culminated in the election of the former army captain and far-right populist as president of the largest democracy in Latin America and third-largest in the world. Brazil had been experiencing political turmoil for years: president Dilma Rousseff, reelected in 2014, had been impeached by Congress in mid-2016 amid corruption scandals, economic recession, and anti-government demonstrations that began in 2013 and escalated after the first arrests made as part of Operation Car Wash<sup>3</sup>. Her successor, Michel Temer, finished the term with single-digit approval ratings, ongoing corruption scandals, and a slow economy, which, by 2018, had contributed to engulfing Brazil in a toxic political atmosphere, discrediting and displaying the entire political class at its worst (Hunter and Power, 2019; Nunes and Melo, 2017).

In that moment of crisis, benefiting from a rampant dissatisfaction with the entire political class from left to right, the sight of populism as a "redemptive face of democracy" was most likely to emerge (e.g., Canovan, 1999; Urbinati, 2019), and Bolsonaro made sure of it. As populists flourish in times of crises (e.g., Moffitt, 2015), Bolsonaro took advantage of the fourth-dimensional crisis that engulfed Brazil<sup>4</sup> and successfully navigated a conservative wave, adopting a communicative strategy that benefited from Catholic and Evangelical identities. By doing so, Bolsonaro emerged as the expression of resistance against what was framed as the progressive left-wing attempt to diminish Christianity and erode tradition and family values (Biroli, 2020; Mariano and Gerardi, 2020; Tamaki, Mendonça, and Ferreira, 2021). He complemented his populist discourse with anti-Workers' Party ("antipetismo" in Portuguese) rhetoric, which drew from the

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<sup>3</sup> For more on Operation Car Wash, see <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/01/brazil-operation-car-wash-is-this-the-biggest-corruption-scandal-in-history>> Access on November 26, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Economic, Political, Public-Security, Institutional (democratic) crises.

negative partisanship in relation to the Workers' Party (PT) and resonated among those who strongly resent PT. On top of that, his discourse also included every other far-right element in the book – namely, authoritarianism<sup>5</sup>, nationalism, and anti-immigrant/xenophobic discourse (if we take into consideration Mudde's, 2019, definition) so that voters' radical and extreme right preferences played a significant effect in driving their vote preference for him (Castanho Silva, Fuks, and Tamaki, 2021).

Upon transitioning to his government, many scholars were fast in cementing Bolsonaro's label of populist (e.g., Mendonça and Caetano, 2020; Ricci, Izumi, and Moreira, 2021). However, most often, those studies lacked a systematic evaluation of Bolsonaro's rhetoric, often following different theoretical or methodological approaches, which makes it difficult to validate their results in a broader context. Hence, this thesis aims at filling the existing gap concerning populism studies in Brazil by employing both an approach and an empirical analysis that allows for a comparative perspective, adding Brazil to several other international cases studied under the umbrella of the ideational definition of populism. In the end, this is the first time the ideational approach will be systematically applied to a Brazilian president.

Therefore, I prepared the following hypotheses to answer the research questions that guide this thesis. First, given the discussion above, once in power, despite institutional constraints, it is expected that Bolsonaro maintains a mild populist rhetoric, similar to his presidential campaign of 2018, as populism is part of his identity, even if not a core element of it. This leads to the first hypothesis:

***H1:*** Bolsonaro's discourse along the first two years as the president of Brazil can be considered "moderate populist," with an average score similar to his campaign speeches;

Now, to better understand populism, it is also necessary to understand what is not-populist (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). In this sense, populism has two direct opposites: pluralism and elitism. While elitism conceives "the people" as a dangerous mob, with "the elite," for its intellectual and moral superiority, seen as the ones who should be exclusively or predominantly in charge, pluralism rejects the Manichaean distinction between "the people" and "the elite" (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

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<sup>5</sup> By authoritarianism, we follow Mudde's (2014) understanding that "authoritarianism entails a strict belief in order and its stringent enforcement within society through discipline, law and order-based policies" (Mudde 2014: 218).

It states that society is divided into a wide variety of partly overlapping social groups with different interests (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 7), and all of them should be equally respected and represented.

Thus, considering that the ideational definition of populism allows for different typologies, I turn my attention to nationalism and patriotism. Given the salience of nationalistic and patriotic rhetoric in Bolsonaro's campaign speeches in 2018 (Tamaki, Braga, and Fuks, 2021), I anticipate that these elements are also present in his government, especially in the first two years analyzed in this thesis. However, recalling how patriotism and nationalism were articulated during his presidential campaign, I have reasons to suspect that here, too, these elements overshadow his populism. This would happen, mainly due to the resemblance between Bolsonaro's profile and the military governments of Latin America during the Cold War, and not because of the similarity between his profile and the likes of Donald Trump, as many would like to believe. The apparent affinity he shares to the former North American president comes mainly from his loud anti-establishment and far-right orientation, but these are not the same thing as populism. In other words, I hypothesize that:

**H2:** Just like his campaign speeches, Nationalism and Patriotism are also present in his government speeches, even overshadowing some of his populist traits

To test these hypotheses, I will utilize a method of textual analysis known as Holistic Grading. In total, this thesis will review 94 discourses given by Jair Bolsonaro over two years, 2019 and 2020. The discourses come from two different sources: his official government speeches, and official live streams, broadcasted weekly on his official Facebook and YouTube channels.

The remainder of this thesis is organized in the following way: Chapter 3 focuses on the method, the sampling procedure, and reliability. Chapter 4 presents a discussion of the results from both a quantitative and a qualitative standpoint. Finally, chapter 5 concludes by reviewing the most critical findings, assessing their contributions, acknowledging the limitations of the present study, and suggesting an agenda for future research.



## **Chapter 2.**

### **Method, Sampling, and Reliability**

One of the main challenges in studying populism is finding ways of actually measuring it. With that in mind, in this chapter, I lay down the foundations of the method that will guide the process of data collection and analysis for the remainder of this thesis, textual and content analysis. As Hawkins and Castanho Silva (2019: 27) have written, generally speaking, “textual analysis is useful for anyone using the ideational approach to populism because it is focused on ideas, and because the ideas of political elites can be hard to measure through anything except the texts they produce.” Here, and for the next chapter as well, I follow this idea and apply the method known as holistic grading on Bolsonaro’s official speeches and live streams, trying to measure his populism in a total of 94 discourses over two years.

In what follows, I divide this chapter into three sections: first, it moves through the holistic approach, detailing how it works and how it got updated from initially designed for pedagogy to assess political speeches. Then, it enters the sampling section, which will discuss the sampling procedures that I have adopted for this thesis. Finally, I end up discussing the reliability of our results and analysis before actually moving to the next chapter.

#### **2.1 Holistic Approach**

Following the characterization of populism as a discourse (Hawkins, 2010), I coded and analyzed Jair Bolsonaro’s speeches relying on the holistic grading method of textual analysis. As demonstrated numerous times (e.g., Hawkins, 2009; Hawkins and Castanho Silva, 2019), this method has high reliability compared to standard human-coded content analysis (which depends on the graders) and compares well to common understandings of actual cases of populism. Let us walk through a few steps that might help illustrate the method and better comprehend the process.

The first step was to lay the foundations. Despite using the ideational approach, as previously stated (chapter 2), the holistic grading is a method of textual analysis that is

better used if matched with an understanding of populism as a discourse. In this sense, populism should be understood as a “descriptor,” or a moral discourse potentially used by any politician (and even the media or the common citizen), which explains why actors become more or less populist over time (Van Kessel, 2014; March, 2019), and also explains why we often study populist ideas in the rhetoric of political leaders, parties, and movements.

Next came the method itself. Up until then, with few exceptions, most of the studies on the supply-side of populism were limited to qualitative case studies (e.g., de la Torre, 2000, Panizza, 2005), with few nondiscursive approaches applying the label of “populist” without any systematic empirical justification (Hawkins, 2009; see Betz, 1994; and Taggart 1996<sup>6</sup>). While the holistic approach was not the first attempt to quantitative measure a populist discourse (e.g., Armony and Armony, 2005; Jagers and Walgrave, 2007), it was the first to surpass previous methodological and theoretical limitations. In that, Hawkins (2009) developed a novel approach adopting the holistic grading method (which was initially designed for educational psychology as a pedagogical assessment technique) to create a quantitative measure of discourse suitable for cross-country and historical analysis of political discourses. In other words, it not only allowed to compare the discourse of actual people in multiple settings across countries and across time, but it also allowed for comparison between different contexts, which could imply expanding the study of causes and consequences of populism (Hawkins, 2010).

Unlike other content analysis methods, holistic grading asks readers to interpret whole texts instead of counting content in the level of words and paragraphs. It works by “assessing the overall qualities of a text and then assigning a single grade without any intervening calculations” (Hawkins, 2009: 1049). For it to work, it needs to be paired with a proper rubric that identifies the qualities associated with the different grades, in our case, the different dimensions of populism: the overall Manichean frame and its branches on people-centrism and anti-elitism<sup>7</sup>. In total, the rubric utilized is based on these three main dimensions, which expands to a total of six populist traits that are listed below. Although there is a list, these items are not a checklist: items 3 and 4 must be present; they are necessary. The other items help address the intensity of populism.

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<sup>6</sup> I recognize that this still happens today. However, this does not matter since I am talking about a time prior to the first use of the *holistic grading* for measuring populist discourses.

<sup>7</sup> The complete rubric is present in table A (p. 62) of the Supplementary Material.

1. Manichean outlook: which separates the world into two morally distinct and antagonistic fields where there can be no in-between;
2. Cosmic proportion: the exaggeration of mundane-everyday topics and events, ascribing to them a cosmic proportion and claiming that it affects people everywhere and across time;
3. People-centrism: romanticizing the notion of “common man,” believing or invoking the idea of “will of the people” (or “will of the common man”). This reified people has to be defined in opposition to an “elite,” which leads us to the next topic;
4. Anti-elitism: the creation of an “elite” as an evil-ruling elite, immoral in its essence, corrupt, and that usurps the power from its rightful owner, the sovereign people;
5. Call for Systemic change: The evil rule that is/was in charge and usurped the power has/needs to be overthrown. In order to do so, there needs to be a systemic change;
6. “Everything-counts” approach: To dispose the elite of its power and to return it to “the people,” everything counts – in claiming so, leaders, politicians, and movements might even go against civil liberties and democratic institutions.

The next step involved training. The training process emphasized that the most crucial dimension of populism is the notion of a reified will of the people (or “*volonté générale*,” Mudde, 2004) and that this notion has to be developed in opposition to an “elite,” depicted as homogeneous and inherently evil (Castanho Silva, 2017: 34) – otherwise, it is just Demoticism (March, 2017). Therefore, as Castanho Silva (2017) stated, even if there was a great deal of anti-elitism present in a speech, it is not considered populist if it is not accompanied by people-centrism. The training also involved using the rubric with a set of “anchor” texts that exemplify each type of score described in it. These “anchor” texts were selected from different contexts worldwide to ensure a better representation. As in Hawkins (2009: 1062), scores vary on a fluid 0 – 2 ratio level scale, where values 0, 1, and 2 work as anchor scores, as defined below:

0 - A speech in this category uses few if any populist elements. Note that even if a speech expresses a Manichaeic worldview, it is not considered populist if it lacks some notion of a popular will;

1 - A speech in this category includes strong, clearly populist elements but either does not use them consistently or tempers them by including non-populist elements. Thus, the discourse may have a romanticized notion of the people and the idea of a unified popular will (indeed, it must in order to be considered populist), but it avoids bellicose language or references to cosmic proportions or any particular enemy;

2 - A speech in this category is extremely populist and comes very close to the ideal populist discourse. Specifically, the speech expresses all or nearly all of the elements of ideal populist discourse, and has few elements that would be considered non-populist;

Finally, the actual grading was conducted. For this present study, it was utilized two graders (I and Cezar Braga, a Ph.D. Student from the Central European University, Vienna, Austria), with measures of agreement, tests of intercoder reliability, and conciliatory meetings along the way to ensure that our results are robust and that they are not the product of sheer luck.

Now, it is worth noting that while Hawkins' method (2009) was one of the first ones to break from the mold of qualitative case studies, recent researches have also joined in, providing their takes on different, yet valid, content analysis methods to measure populist discourses. Rooduijn, de Lange, and van der Brug (2014) use quantitative human-based content analysis of party communication of Western European mainstream parties to assess Cas Mudde's (2004) statement regarding the Populist Zeitgeist. Their provoking and intriguing result indicates that the manifestos of mainstream parties in Western Europe have not become more populist in the past two decades, which goes against the hypothesis that populism had become particularly contagious (Rooduijn, de Lange, and van der Brug, 2014). Wirth et al. (2016) also apply a similar approach. On the other hand, Ricci, Izumi, and Moreira (2021) follow a mixed-methods design, combining text-mining with a dictionary-based approach and a final step of human coding to ensure the reliability of their results. While those techniques have the advantage of generating

more fine-grained data, they are more time and resource-consuming, as Castanho Silva (2017) pointed out<sup>8</sup>.

Besides that, Hawkins' approach has the upper hand for two main reasons. First, it is better to capture a diffuse, latent set of meanings common in political discourse, especially those related to latent issues and ideologies such as populism. Furthermore, it has also been tested and validated across a large number of countries and time periods (Hawkins, 2009, 2013, Hawkins et al., 2019). This way, I am not only contributing to the overall field of populism by coding and filling the gaps with data on Brazil's most recent case of "far-right populism" (Castanho Silva, Fuks, and Tamaki, 2021), but I am also bringing the discussion on the ideational approach to Brazil. Applying the holistic grading to this thesis will yield comparable, replicable results that can dialogue with the current mainstream research on populism.

## 2.2 Sampling

The speeches selection criteria applied to this thesis followed Hawkins (2009). I selected approximately three speeches per month from three categories: famous, international, and ribbon cutting. Initially, the method designed by Hawkins (2009) also included a campaign speech. Therefore, the technique usually relies on four categories; given the interest of this thesis on analyzing only Bolsonaro's government period (2019 – 2020), I opt not to include discourses from his presidential campaign. A complete description of each category is in Table B (p. 65), but, for now, suffice to say that a famous speech is regarded as the best-known and most popular speech in that particular month, and an international speech typically addresses audiences from other countries. A ribbon-cutting speech has a more obscure audience, being given at some public ceremony dedicated to a government building or project. In keeping with Hawkins's (2009) earlier criteria, for this particular part, I selected any speech that was at least three pages long or displayed more than 2,000 words so that I have enough text to analyze. They were all collected from the Government's official website and were given during official

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<sup>8</sup> Castanho Silva initial statement was limited to Rooduijn, de Lange, and van der Brug (2014) and to Wirth et al. (2016). However, due to the nature of Ricci, Izumi, and Moreira's (2021) research design and method, I can extend this statement to it as well.

ceremonies and events – therefore, from now on, I will reference them as "official speeches."

Initially, the plan was to sample an average of three speeches per month, ranging from 2019 to 2020. However, due to some limitations (i.e., some months there were no official speeches available, others they were not long enough, or there were no speeches for a particular category), the final number is only 51 speeches, an average of 2.1 per month. The choice for grading discourse in these three categories lies in the necessity of testing the consistency of the discourse while ensuring that no key categories of discourse have been overlooked (Hawkins, 2009: 1051). Table 2.1 illustrates this and displays the actual count per month.

Besides the selection criteria detailed above, I also included an analysis of Bolsonaro's weekly live streams. These live streams are broadcast every Thursday evening at his personal Facebook and YouTube channels and have an average of 40 minutes of duration. This thesis focused on the two videos aired on each month's first and third Thursdays, between March 2019 and December 2020. Except for December 2019, when there was only one video because fewer lives were broadcasted, there is a total of 43 live streams. I recognize that the usual procedure would be to code written speeches where the grader does not have direct access to the emotions and, therefore, cannot receive all the speaker's non-verbal communication. However, since this thesis follows the same path-line developed by Hawkins (2009), there should be no issues in coding videos. As Hawkins and Castanho Silva (2019) demonstrated, there are no significant differences between groups that coded videos and written speeches.

The choice behind grading and analyzing Bolsonaro's Official Speeches together with his Facebook Live Streams are threefold. First, while Official Speeches may represent Bolsonaro's official interactions as Brazil's president, they are constrained by the "weight of the sash." In other words, the institutional and politically correct status quo may often oblige the president to resign to a particular behavior that is not aligned with his actual thinking. Therefore, I argue that studying his live streams allows us to better understand his real persona. Since Facebook (and YouTube) live streams allow for direct, unmediated communication between the leader and his followers, it is the best tool for Bolsonaro to have total control over his message and to overpass potential filters imposed by not only the political institutions but also by the mainstream media and journalistic gatekeeping.

Table 2.1 - Bolsonaro's Official Speeches per Month (2019 – 2020)

| <b>Month</b>     | <b># Num.</b> | <b>International</b> | <b>Famous</b> | <b>Ribbon-Cutting</b> |
|------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| 2019 – January   | 3             | X                    | X             | X                     |
| 2019 – March     | 3             | X                    | X             | X                     |
| 2019 – April     | 3             | X                    | X             | X                     |
| 2019 – May       | 3             | X                    | X             | X                     |
| 2019 – June      | 3             | X                    | X             | X                     |
| 2019 – July      | 3             | X                    | X             | X                     |
| 2019 – August    | 2             |                      | X             | X                     |
| 2019 – September | 2             | X                    |               | X                     |
| 2019 – October   | 2             | X                    |               | X                     |
| 2019 – November  | 2             |                      | X             | X                     |
| 2019 – December  | 1             |                      |               | X                     |
| <b>Month</b>     | <b># Num.</b> | <b>International</b> | <b>Famous</b> | <b>Ribbon-Cutting</b> |
| 2020 – January   | 1             |                      |               | X                     |
| 2020 – February  | 2             |                      | X             | X                     |
| 2020 - March     | 2             | X                    |               | X                     |
| 2020 – April     | 3             |                      | X(2)          | X                     |
| 2020 – June      | 1             |                      |               | X                     |
| 2020 – August    | 2             |                      | X             | X                     |
| 2020 – September | 4             | X                    | X(2)          | X                     |
| 2020 – October   | 4             | X(2)                 | X             | X                     |
| 2020 – November  | 3             | X(2)                 |               | X                     |
| 2020 – December  | 2             | X                    |               | X                     |

Moreover, Facebook live streams also work as an alternative source of information, with Bolsonaro presenting his official social media channels as the only legitimate source of information. It is not a surprise to anyone that Bolsonaro sustains a conflicted relationship with the traditional media (Burni and Tamaki, 2021); his presidential campaign not only framed the traditional media as "part of the elite" but also accused them of lying and negatively affecting "the people." In the long run, Bolsonaro successfully managed to delegitimize these communication channels as information providers. Once in power, his weekly videos were used as an alternative to the traditional daily news, a channel where he could fully control his character and message and directly communicate with supporters.

Finally, there is the illusion of a direct, unmediated connection between him and his supporters. As Nicole Ernst and collaborators (2017) argue, one of the opportunity structures of Facebook that foster the potential for populist communication is the fact that it offers the possibility to establish a close (yet illusory) connection to the people, though I argue, however, this connection is merely illusory. Through a combination of (almost) direct access to the public and "interaction" mechanisms that create the illusion of mutual interaction (such as "likes," "shares," "reactions" such as "haha," "comments," and others), populist leaders are capable of creating an illusion of proximity between them and their supporters. Parallel to that, as Ernst et al. (2019) points out, these supporters are quickly brought together by a shared feeling of "community" that is made possible mainly due to the social media's openness, which makes it relatively easy for populists to express their radical, sometimes fringe ideas without receiving so much backlash<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, if Bolsonaro is indeed a populist, I expect live streams to be the ideal place for his populism to shine.

In the end, this thesis provides an opportunity to understand how Bolsonaro's populism behaves across space and across time, offering a "window" to his soul that would help better understand his overall profile. Although populist discourse should be prevalent at key moments, it should not be a constant feature; otherwise, it is not a distinguishing feature of a populist leader (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). In this sense, it is expected that populism is not a constant feature throughout his discourses. Nonetheless, it should be strong enough to be a core constitutive feature. All in all, an in-

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<sup>9</sup> For a similar discussion, see Kalses, Larsson, and Enli (2017).



depth study of his discourse, such as the present one, considers not only different platforms but also covers a wide range time-wise. It allows us to gauge the extent to which populism is present and utilized in his speech, its volatility, how it behaves, and to answer the main research question raised throughout this thesis: can we consider Bolsonaro's discourse as the 38th president of Brazil, populist? Furthermore, it also shows that Bolsonaro's populism shares a considerable space with nationalistic and patriotic discursive frames.

### **2.3 Reliability**

One of the most recurrent questions when dealing with this type of technique concerns its reliability. In other words, the first question that most often pops into mind concerns whether this data is reliable or if the scores are consistent across graders. To ensure intercoder reliability, I opt for calculating Krippendorff's alpha, a coefficient developed to measure the agreement achieved between observers. Highly used in content analysis, it helps assess if the results obtained are the product of chance or represent a more consistent assessment.

According to Krippendorff (2011), an alpha of 1 indicates "perfect reliability," while an alpha of zero would represent the absence of reliability. For the social sciences, we should only rely on data that present reliability above  $\alpha = .8$ . Data with reliability between  $\alpha = 0.667$  and  $\alpha = 0.8$  should be used only for "drawing tentative conclusions" (Krippendorff, 2004: p. 241). I opt for this method to test the consistency of the results as it applies to any number of observers, categories, scale values, or measures. It can also use nominal and ordinal data and intervals; as is the case with this thesis, it uses a ratio level scale.

Here, I calculated two alphas at two different times: one for the official speeches and one for the live streams. The strategy consisted of having the principal coder grade all the discourses, while the secondary coder only graded 20%. Then, I assessed the reliability of the scores based on this sample. If the alphas were satisfactory, there would be no need for having a second grader coding and analyzing the remainder of the discourses. Table 3.2 lists the alphas obtained:

Table 2.2 – Krippendorff's Alpha per Discourse Category

| Discourse Category       | Alpha Achieved: |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Official Speeches</i> | $\alpha = 0.82$ |
| <i>Live Streams</i>      | $\alpha = 0.85$ |

Alongside the grading and analysis process, I held a series of conciliatory meetings to ensure that the results were aligned. At these meetings, graders had the opportunity to change their score if they realized they had missed something the other had seen. However, this rarely happened during our sessions. With alphas of 0.82 and 0.85, I felt confident to follow the coding process with only one grader. Furthermore, the alphas indicate: (i) an alignment between coders regarding theory and the content of speeches; and (ii) this thesis' data and analysis are trustworthy.

## Chapter 3

### Results and Analysis

*Part of this chapter was published as a Book Chapter and as an Article.*

As introduced in the previous chapter, I applied a human-based approach to measuring populism – holistic grading (Hawkins, 2009) – to a total of 94 discourses of Bolsonaro over two years. These include official speeches given within an official presidential format and Facebook live streams broadcasted on Jair Bolsonaro's personal social media profiles. With this data in hand, I end up with a complete picture of how populist he was during his first two years in government. Not only that, but it was also possible to observe that he displayed some nationalistic and patriotic elements, similar to his presidential campaign in 2018 (Tamaki, Braga, and Fuks, 2021).

#### 3.1. Quantitative Analysis

Once in power, Bolsonaro was quick to develop and push forward with a "celebrity politician" status. Often, he relied on a performatic style of communication, using bad words and bellicose language, going openly against the "politically correct." Relying heavily on non-traditional social media, which allowed for two-way unmediated communication and the illusion of proximity and personal relation with his followers, Bolsonaro maintained total control of the displayed character. He managed to circumvent the traditional media and journalistic gatekeeping, including by creating an "alternative" facts reality on his own personal channels. Not only did Bolsonaro accuse the "big media" of going after him, lying, and negatively affecting the population, but he also wholly discredited the traditional channels of communication as information providers. His official social media channels were presented as the only legitimate source of information. As part of this strategy, his weekly videos were used as an alternative to the traditional daily news, a channel where he could fully control his character and message.

In this sense, Facebook live streams allowed Bolsonaro not only to avoid the mainstream media and journalistic gatekeeping but also to create an illusion of proximity with his followers (as both YouTube and Facebook utilize tools such as "Comments," "Likes," and "Reactions" to engage the audience). Therefore, if Bolsonaro were indeed a populist, we would expect Live Streams to be ideal for his populism to shine. Nevertheless, that is not the case. Bolsonaro's live streams (during the first year) are, on average, slightly less populist than his official speeches, as table 3.1 and graph 3.1 illustrates.

At first glance, disaggregated results suggest that official speeches are more populist than his live streams. There is a generally moderate level of populism (total average of 0.5) in his official speeches in comparison with his Facebook live streams (total average of 0.3). Moreover, it is also possible to see that regardless of the platform, Bolsonaro's populism increases over 2019 and 2020, with its official speeches presenting an increase of 50% and live streams of 33%.

Overall, his live streams are more radical, present more conspiracy elements, keep passions high, and often use bellicose language. However, one must be careful not to label those speeches "populist" based solely on the presence of these elements. Radicalism, conspiracy, and lack of decorum when dealing with the opposition are common elements of many different political speeches, but they are not necessary nor sufficient for populism.

Conversely, his live streams present a significant amount of technocrat, nationalist and patriotic elements. Reflecting this, when it comes to the technocrat elements, Bolsonaro's live streams are full of references to the technical ability of his ministers; more than once, he emphasizes that "for the first time ever" a president has chosen ministers based [solely] on "technical criteria" (i.e., his November 27, 2019, Ribbon Cutting Speech). Following this same line, his ministers would be responsible for giving technical reports as they would hold the authority necessary to talk about their expertise and the fields in which they excel. As for nationalist and patriotic elements, the next section (the qualitative analysis) will delve into details, but for now, suffice to say that Bolsonaro's focus on the Brazilian national identity and the idea of "fatherland" entails the construction of opposition between an "us" and a "them" that relish the populist "people" to play second fiddle to other preferred "in-groups."

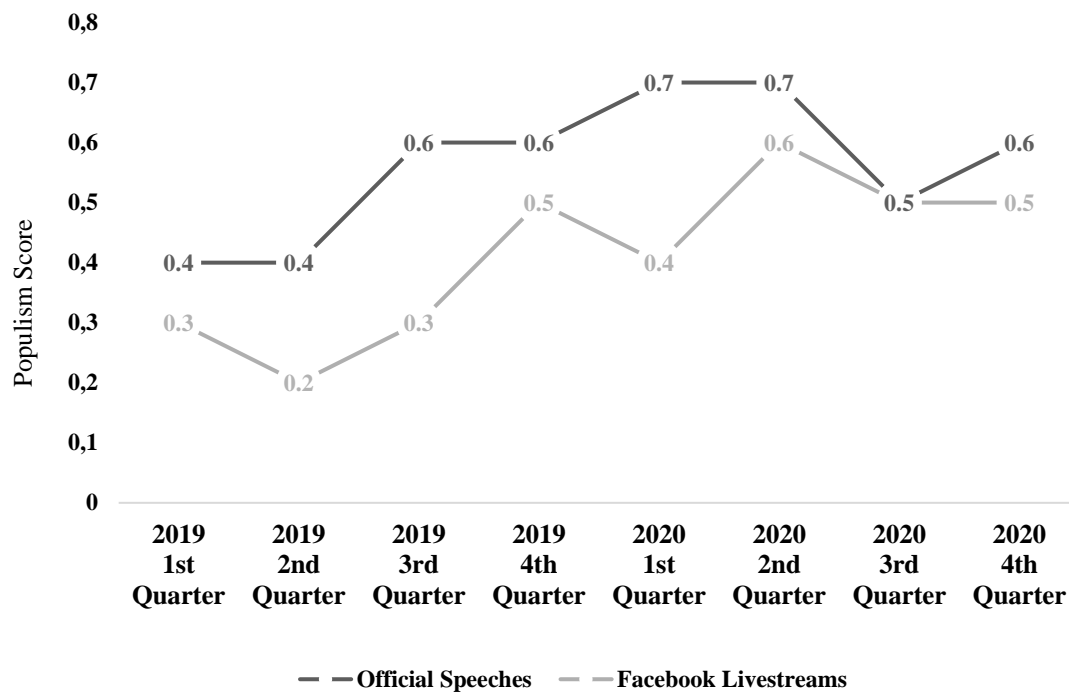
Nevertheless, in contrast with his official speeches, by adopting a performative role that highlights authenticity and displays its not-perfect flawed side, Bolsonaro's live streams were capable of reaching and connecting to an audience "untouched" by his opposition (in the terms used by Wood, Corbett, and Flinders, 2016). In there, he managed to expose the failures of the elite, undermining its authenticity and constructing his own. As argued by Sorensen (2018: 2) as something that populists do, Bolsonaro's incitement of distrust in politics was accompanied by a "promise of efficacious representation which takes the form of identification with the people and the equation of authentic self-representation to truth-telling."

Table 3.1 – Jair Bolsonaro's Score (2019 – 2020) per Quarter Disaggregated.

| <b>Quarter</b>                 | <b>Official<br/>Speech – Avg.</b> | <b>Live Stream<br/>– Avg.</b> | <b>Avg. Score</b> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| (2019) 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter | 0.4                               | 0.3                           | 0.4               |
| (2019) 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter | 0.4                               | 0.2                           | 0.3               |
| (2019) 3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter | 0.6                               | 0.3                           | 0.5               |
| (2019) 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter | 0.6                               | 0.5                           | 0.5               |
| 2019 Total Avg. Score          | 0.5                               | 0.3                           | 0.5               |
| (2020) 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter | 0.7                               | 0.4                           | 0.6               |
| (2020) 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter | 0.7                               | 0.6                           | 0.7               |
| (2020) 3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter | 0.5                               | 0.5                           | 0.5               |
| (2020) 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter | 0.6                               | 0.5                           | 0.6               |
| 2020 Total Avg. Score          | 0.6                               | 0.5                           | 0.6               |
| <b>Total Avg. Score</b>        | <b>0.5</b>                        | <b>0.4</b>                    | <b>0.5</b>        |

Source: Author's collection with the assistance of M.A. Cezar Braga, from the Central European University. Both speeches and rubrics are available under request.

Graph 3.1 – Jair Bolsonaro’s Score (2019 – 2020) per Quarter Disaggregated.



## **Jair Bolsonaro: *Just* a “Somewhat” Populist**

### **Comparing Bolsonaro to former Brazilian presidents:**

With an average score of 0.5, Jair Bolsonaro's discourse as the 38th president of Brazil is moderately populist, just enough to classify him as a "somewhat populist." Although not enough to put him side-by-side with other Latin American populists, such as Hugo Chávez (who, according to the Global Populism Database, scored 1.9, Hawkins et al., 2019), or Evo Morales (1.6), it is closer to the likes of Viktor Orbán and Donald Trump (0.9 and 0.8, respectively).

However, it is higher than what Brazil has seen over the past couple of years. In the last 26 years, Brazil has experienced the rise of both right-and left-wing governments. During this time, with the exception of Jair Bolsonaro, no other president had been classified as a populist with a score higher than (or at least equal to) 0.50. For all of them, Team Populism<sup>10</sup> calculated an average score taking into consideration four different types of speeches, three from their presidential terms (one famous, one international, and one ribbon cutting) and one from their campaign (except for Michel Temer, for whom there were no campaign speeches as he campaigned as Dilma Rousseff's vice president).

Among the former presidents, two out of four had an average score of 0.0, indicating the evident absence or insufficient presence of populist elements in their official discourse. It was the case of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (or FHC, from PSDB - Brazilian Social Democracy Party) and Michel Temer (MDB – Brazilian Democratic Movement). FHC governed for eight years, from 1995 to 2002, while Temer took over for Dilma Rousseff after she was ousted in an impeachment process in 2016, finishing her presidential term that lasted until 2018. Both had pragmatic and conciliatory approaches, and although prone to exaggeration, they played on their technocratic side, steering clear from moral antagonism, anti-elitism, and from a populist people-centrism.

Dilma Rousseff (PT) presented an average score of 0.2, slightly above those as mentioned earlier but still below a minimum of 0.5 that we could consider "somewhat populist" (Tamaki and Fuks, 2020). Dilma served as the 36th president of Brazil from

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<sup>10</sup> This data is part of Team Populism's Global Populism Database. It measured the level of populist discourse in the speeches of 215 chief executives (including both presidents and prime ministers) from a total of 66 countries around the globe. Data ranges mostly from 2000 to 2018. (Hawkins et al., 2019).

2011 to 2016, when she was impeached and removed from office amidst corruption scandals, economic recession, and massive anti-government demonstrations. During most of her presidential term, she focused on specific issues, avoided vilifying opponents, and maintained passions low. However, by the end of her second term, at the time of her impeachment process, Ms. Rousseff started to point out enemies, frame them as responsible for conspiring against her, and blame them for wanting to subvert the system; for usurping democracy. Although undoubtedly more radical, her discourse still lacked a Manichaeian quality, and "the people" was nowhere to be seen.

Now, Lula (PT), with an average score of 0.3, does not have much of a populist discourse. Although there are seemingly no questions regarding the earlier mentioned presidents, Lula is a different question. Elected president in 2002, amidst the context of Pink Tide neopopulism (Grigera, 2017), some consider the 35th president of Brazil to be a lukewarm populist (e.g., Grigera, 2017; Marques and Mendes, 2017; Ricci, Izumi, and Moreira, 2021). However, despite presenting some characteristics commonly related to populism, i.e., people-centrism – in his case, brief mentions of a popular will that is related to his own working-class origins, further telling the audience that this is why he understands their needs (Hawkins, 2009: 1056) - further analyzes of government speeches reveal that he does not fit the classification of a populist leader. According to these studies, Lula's speeches lack a Manichaeian dualism; they tend to focus on narrow, particular issues and consistently emphasize consensus and negotiation (Hawkins, 2009: 1056). Kirk Hawkins (2009: 1056) states that: "while briefly criticizing some individuals or opposition groups, he avoids characterizing these as evil." On a similar note, both Wendy Hunter and Timothy Power (2006) and Juan Grigera (2017) explain that Lula's discourses avoided the inflammatory construction of an antagonism "friend versus foe" between the people and elite or dangerous others.

Most of the time, however, Lula's erroneous classification as a "populist" comes from the academic misconception surrounding populism's necessary and sufficient elements. In this case, the idea is similar to what authors have found when analyzing Joe Biden's campaign speeches (Lindsay and Galán, 2021): Biden often praises the ordinary people without identifying a conspiratorial elite, and in this sense, Lula's people-centrism is also voided of any Manichaeian antagonism, being more in line with demoticism than with actual populism.



Demoticism is a term coined by Luke March which refers to the people-centric discourse created without the antagonistic distinction between "the people" and the elite (March, 2017, 2019). Demotic language, therefore, would emphasize the importance and virtue of the "common man" without necessarily pitching it against a dangerous elite. March is categorical in stating that while demoticism may as well lead to populism (as it is one of its necessary elements), it is far from being itself populism. In other words, while many political leaders might use demoticism to get closer to the people, they cannot be considered populists solely on the presence of this, as they lack the fundamental Manichaeic antagonism. Consequently, while Lula's score of 0.3 may be enough to put him on the lower end of the populist scale (Hawkins and Selway, 2017), it is not sufficient to classify it as a populist.

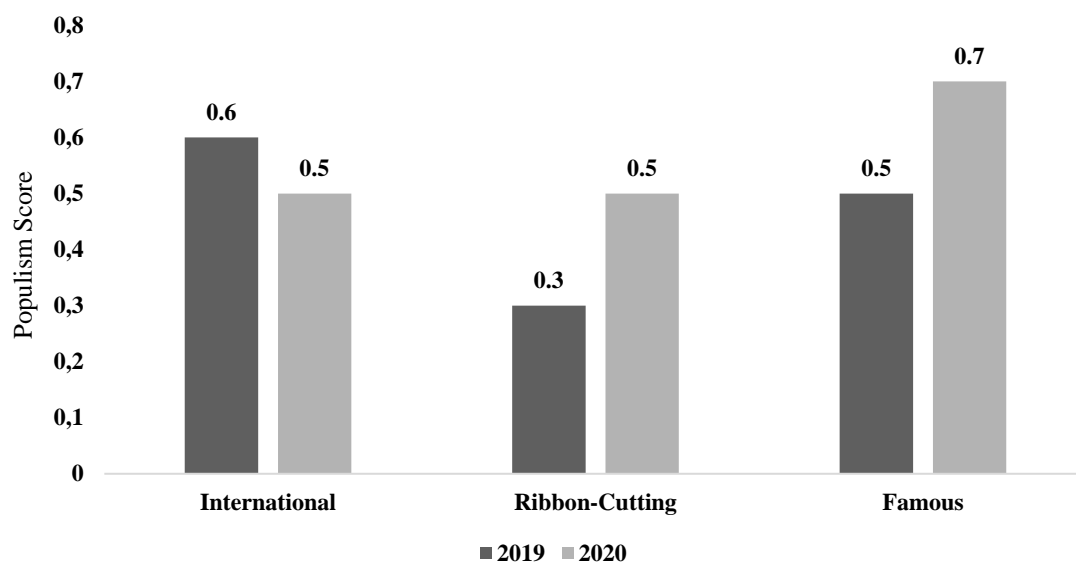
Bolsonaro, on the other side, has an average score of 0.5, sufficient to nudge him into the lower end of what we classify as "somewhat populist" (following the same classification Team Populist used for its project with The Guardian<sup>11</sup>). At first, results might strike one as surprising: after all, Bolsonaro is often regarded as one of the most prominent examples of the new far-right populist wave in Latin America (Hunter and Power, 2019; Mendonça and Caetano, 2020; Layton et al., 2021), however upon close inspection, we find that Bolsonaro's populism finds itself entangled with nationalism and patriotism, most often creating the idea of "the people" in a way that is more influenced by nationalist and patriotic elements than by the thin ideology of populism.

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<sup>11</sup> Read more here: < <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2019/mar/06/revealed-the-rise-and-rise-of-populist-rhetoric>>. Access July 31, 2021.

## International vs. Ribbon-cutting speeches

Graph 3.2 – Jair Bolsonaro’s Score (2019 – 2020) per Category.



When it comes to the different categories of discourses, at first, it was expected that famous speeches would have a stronger populism than the ribbon-cutting or international ones because they represented contexts where there were larger audiences, where Bolsonaro appealed to the nation as a whole and often touched on salient issues that were prone to highlight his populism. In 2019, however, international speeches actually scored, on average, higher on the populist scale than the others. As graph 4.1 indicates, while their average score was 0.6, famous speeches scored 0.5, and ribbon-cutting, as expected, were generally lower, with an average of 0.3.

Interesting enough, the international discourses that scored higher were the ones that were given in the United States and Israel, with an average score of 0.8, while the others, often given at places like countries of Mercosur or even Davos, Switzerland, scored an average of 0.4; two times lower. While there could be many reasons behind this difference, I suspect that the main factors that drive Bolsonaro’s populism to be stronger on discourses given in the United States and Israel are the audience and the local government. First, both countries were governed by far-right populists (e.g., Hawkins and Littvay, 2019; Filc and Pardo, 2021) who supported and had close ties with Bolsonaro and his government. Not only that, but ever since its presidential campaign in 2018, Bolsonaro did not hide his admiration of the United States. Borrowing Donald Trump’s

iconic slogan, Bolsonaro campaigned with the promise to make “Brazil great again”<sup>12</sup>, and after his election, his close ties with the North American far-right populist earned him the title of “Trump of the tropics”<sup>13</sup>. It is no surprise then that Bolsonaro felt at home in the United States; after all, most Brazilians living in the US voted for him in the 2018 elections<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, Bolsonaro positioned himself with Israel from the beginning. His rhetoric most often presented a religious narrative with deference to Judaism (Tamaki, Mendonça, and Ferreira, 2021), while his proximity to both the Israeli people and the Netanyahu government made Bolsonaro promise to move the Brazilian embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and adopt the Israeli flag as part of his far-right movement in Brazil<sup>15</sup>.

Thus, I expect that Bolsonaro often felt more comfortable showing his “true colors” in those particular countries. Having the support of both the local audience and government, Bolsonaro must have felt the necessity to “put on a show;” to mobilize a populism that resonated well among those particular spectators and attended their expectations. This theory is backed up by the fact that, in 2020, his international discourses’ average populism is lower and more in line with what we initially expected, given how the Covid-19 pandemic imposed restrictions that prevented him from traveling to those countries and forced many of his speeches to be directed to a different audience.

In what follows, I analyze vignettes from his official speeches and live streams that support our statement and better represent his overall score. The qualitative section is structured around the three main necessary and sufficient conditions of populism according to its ideational approach: (i) a Manichaeian and moral cosmology; (ii) the creation and defense of “the people” as a homogenous and virtuous community; and (iii) the framing of an “elite” as a corrupt and self-serving entity (Aguilar and Carlin, 2017; Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019). Finally, I present nationalist and patriotic

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<sup>12</sup> <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/07/brazil-election-jair-bolsonaro-makes-trumpian-pledge-as-poll-shows-big-lead>> and <<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/brazils-bolsonaro-make-south-america-great-64399135>> Access on November 26, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> <<https://www.politico.com/story/2018/12/31/jair-bolsonaro-brazil-1046763>> Access on November 26, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> <<https://sxpoltics.org/brazilian-2018-presidential-elections-in-figures/19183>> Access on November 26, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> <<https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-brazilian-leader-said-embassy-move-a-matter-of-when-not-if/>>, <<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200615-brazilian-president-bolsonaro-turns-to-israel-in-the-face-of-his-political-opponents/>>, and <<https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/brazil-s-president-speaks-next-to-an-israeli-flag-at-anti-democratic-rally-1.8827502>> Access on November 26, 2021.

elements that permeate the construction of an “us” versus “them” narrative that overshadows Bolsonaro’s thin populism.

### **3.2 Qualitative Analysis**

To understand how well this definition of populism represents and describes Bolsonaro, this section follows a qualitative analysis of his speeches during the first two years of his government (2019 – 2020). Nevertheless, despite Bolsonaro’s populism being relatively stable throughout the time covered in this thesis, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic affected how both his people-centrism and anti-elitism were portrayed. Along these lines, this chapter also analyzes Bolsonaro’s populism during the first year of the pandemic (2020). Overall, the lockdown measures created to contain the coronavirus allowed Bolsonaro to reemphasize his connection to the “common man,” further romanticizing the ideals and values often related to the “working people” who were not only suffering from the crisis but also with its immediate economic impacts. Furthermore, in the context of the pandemic, Bolsonaro reshaped his populism, pitching “the people” against those he framed responsible for the crisis. In this sense, the identity of the “evil” political establishment shifted from the leftist parties and politicians to those governors and mayors who were against Bolsonaro’s government.

#### **Manichaeism**

To begin with, Bolsonaro's discourse is consistently Manichaeic. Manichaeism, as Hawkins (2010: 55) stated, combines a notion of dualism that is strongly marked by teleological elements that "reifies history and perceives it as a cosmic struggle between Good and Evil (...)." In other words, it divides both the world and politics into two morally opposed groups where nothing is neutral: you are either with him or against him; there is no in-between.

In this sense, when addressing Bolsonaro's Manichaeism, I recognize that it comes mainly from two related sources: (i) the idea of two irreconcilable paths stuck on (ii) a battle, a moral war his government is fighting. Regardless of the strategy and how he frames it, the Evil is always the same, his political opposition, especially the Workers'

Party (PT). Although not the central part of his political discourse, Manichaeism plays a pivotal role in setting the tone for other populists (and not-so-populist) elements.

Often separating both sides along the "left-right" ideological divide, Bolsonaro links "his" side to progress, freedom, while the "left" is left with everything else that does not fit in Bolsonaro's rationale:

**Bolsonaro (May 16, 2019):** *“For ideological reasons, we cannot look for a different path from the one that has democracy and freedom as its guide”*

**Bolsonaro (April 24, 2020):** *“After our victory, the victory of democracy, freedom, free elections, I received Mr. Sergio Moro in my house, in Barra da Tijuca”*

Here, his “path” represents democracy and freedom, and his electoral victory cemented these ideals on top of the “other side,” who, indirectly, threatened them. However, at the same time, Bolsonaro does not do much to describe this “different path,” aside from linking it to the Left. This leaves it proposedly empty, which facilitates it receiving any negative meaning Bolsonaro might want to ascribe.

**Bolsonaro (September 24, 2019):** *“Over the past few decades, we have been seduced, without realizing it, by ideological systems of thought that did not seek truth but absolute power”*

Despite its emptiness, it is clear that while Bolsonaro’s path seeks democracy, truth, and freedom, the Left seeks nothing but “absolute power.”

Interesting enough, when dealing with this “other side,” there is an underlying implication that there is nothing in between: they are against “us,” therefore, “we” cannot tolerate them.

**Bolsonaro (August 06, 2019):** *“We have everything to change our Brazil. (...) We cannot continue to have "bad Brazilians" on our side, disclosing false numbers, campaigning against our homeland”*

In his speech, Bolsonaro highlights that “they” have everything on their hands to change Brazil, but they cannot tolerate it; they cannot continue to have “bad Brazilians” on their side. The term “bad Brazilians” is a way to divide between his supporters and those who “campaign against their homeland,” those who do not support their country through

Bolsonaro's image. Bolsonaro is fighting a battle. He and his government are fighting a war against forces of subversion mainly represented by their political opponents, left-wing parties, and politicians in general, but more specifically, the Workers' Party; therefore, they cannot continue to have "bad Brazilians" at their side.

**Bolsonaro (May 16, 2019):** *"We have fantastic human potential, but the Brazilian Left has come in, infiltrated and taken not only the Brazilian press, but also much of the universities and high schools. The work is not easy. But with faith in God, with Brazilians, with friends outside Brazil who see our future with concern, we will win this battle"*

To understand this vignette, we need to break it down into smaller parts. First, there is a narrative that blames the Brazilian Left-wing politicians and parties for alienating and corrupting Brazil's "human potential." Universities, high schools, and the press (mainstream media) were, in Bolsonaro's vision, infiltrated by the Left and now serve their agenda of indoctrination. In this sense, Bolsonaro says that the "work" of changing these institutions, of rescuing them, will not be easy. Finally, he has faith in God and believes that they will win this battle with the help of the Brazilians. Here, too, there are two things worth noticing: (i) the Brazilians Bolsonaro speaks of are not the entire population, but rather the ones who are at his side, who are willing to fight for their homeland; (ii) with their help, Bolsonaro is confident they will win this battle, this war against the Left, and like much battles, there can be no "fence-sitting," no in between.

Overall, the Manichaeism in Bolsonaro's discourse acts as a way to mobilize his supporters by infusing their political choices with moral consequences; after all, they are with Bolsonaro representing and fighting for democracy and freedom. In this sense, by framing the world and politics as a moral and dichotomous struggle, Bolsonaro often ascribes them cosmic proportions. These are struggles that affect people everywhere and, possibly, across time, not being limited to its material reality. Thus, Brazilians have" (...) *the commitment to change [their] history!*" (Bolsonaro, January 22, 2019), they "*can and should dream. Dream of a better life, with better conditions to enjoy the fruits of its work by meritocracy*" (Bolsonaro, January 01, 2019). His elections marked a turning point in Brazil's history; Brazilians were given a chance to "change their history."

As part of his Manichaean outlook, Bolsonaro frequently expresses a theological worldview that reifies history alongside a culture war narrative, where he claims to speak

on behalf of the country's silent majority against the wave of progressive changes that, according to him, aims at destroying the very notion and foundation of "family."

**Bolsonaro (December 19, 2019):** *“We even had a Christmas Carol today. I'll post on Facebook a little bit [of this] cantata; a wonderful Christian event there. [There] a Christmas tree was inaugurated. [On] the day before yesterday we had a Thanksgiving ritual; something that the older people from the [Planalto] palace - no one had ever heard of anything religious [happening in there], quite the opposite: there was a lady who went ahead and took the floor and said that (...), [in] a previous government, [they] banned a celebration that used to happen in a room there in the presidency. People had to leave the [Planalto Palace] and do the ritual under a tree outside. It was forbidden to come together and speak in God's name, right?! Look, you have to respect everyone's religion, and these people accuse you (him) of being intolerant, of prejudice, of racist and homophobic all the time, right, but that's okay. It has changed, people, it has changed. Now there is a president who values the family, a president who respects the army, OK? A president who is loyal to his people and believes in God. What is the problem with that?*

Now that he is in charge, things have changed. Like a Don Quixote who keeps on attacking windmills, Bolsonaro navigates a conservative wave, launching a moral crusade around the protection of conservative issues against the secularization of politics and the alleged dictatorship of progressive values. That said, Bolsonaro's reification is distinctively populist: it evolves from the will of the people. An idea of "people" however, created around those who share his same qualities: those who value the Family – not the household unity, but a more abstract view of the institution behind the idea of "family" and the values it encompasses -, who are patriotic – represented through the image of the Armed Forces -, and those who believe in God.

### **The Good: The People**

One of the main dimensions of populism is the praise of popular sovereignty and the belief in a knowable will of the people. In this sense, populists view ordinary citizens as pure and homogeneous, representing the Good in the cosmic struggle against forces of Evil. 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 expression of the “volonté générale” (the people's general will).

Throughout his first two years in government, Bolsonaro argued to be acting on a mission entrusted to him by this sovereign entity that is “the people.” For example, in his speech on August 06, 2019, Bolsonaro stated that God gave him a new life after he survived the attack in 2018 and that through the hands of the people, he received a new mission, to be the president of Brazil:

**Bolsonaro (August 06, 2019):** *“And God gave me life, in a second moment (after he survived the stabbing), and through your hands, or a large part of you [the people, I received] the mission of being ahead of the Executive (referencing his election).”*

Since Bolsonaro is acting on a power trusted him by “the people,” he owes loyalty to them and only them. This idea becomes evident later on this same speech, where Bolsonaro goes ahead to say that although he respects the other Brazilian institutions, he owes loyalty only to “the people:”

**Bolsonaro (August 06, 2019):** *“Now, I say, I respect the institutions, but I owe loyalty only to you: the Brazilian people”*

In his speech on January 10, 2020, he again emphasizes that he owes loyalty to “the people.” He represents them, so they are the ones who choose where Brazil should go:

**Bolsonaro (January 10, 2020):** *“To you people to whom I do owe loyalty. I owe you, my loyalty. You are the ones who say where Brazil should go”*

Bolsonaro is not only acting in the name of “the people,” but his election is also an answer to the “voices of the streets:”

**Bolsonaro (January 1st, 2019):** *“[The] elections gave voice to those who were not heard. And the voices of the streets and ballot boxes were very clear! And I'm here to answer [to their call]!”*

His election, as he claims, gave voice to those who were ignored. The “people” through the “voices of the streets and ballot boxes” were loud and clear, and Bolsonaro came to



answer their call. Now, he goes on to say, everything he does will have one common and non-negotiable purpose, the interests of "the people:"

**Bolsonaro (January 1st, 2019):** *“Everything we have proposed and everything we will do from now on has a common and non-negotiable purpose: the interests of Brazilians in the first place”*

Thus, Bolsonaro’s discourse presents the idea of a sovereign, united will of the people who not only invested him with power but is also the ultimate source of legitimacy.

Bolsonaro explicitly reinforces his connection to “the people” by repeatedly stating that they are at his side. This strategy works to strengthen his proximity to the “in-group” he creates as “the people” while also reaffirming his borrowed sovereignty. Therefore, in his April 2nd, 2019, speech, he proclaims that:

**Bolsonaro (April 2nd, 2019):** *“I am a Christian, I believe in God and a miracle is real, but with me [it] were miracles: [my] survival, in the first moment (after he got attacked/stabbed), [and] an election against almost everything (against all odds), right? But we had on our side, only two words: the people and God”*

Likewise, when addressing the former minister Moro’s dismissal:

**Bolsonaro (April 24, 2020):** *“Today you will meet that person who is [only] committed to himself, to his ego, and not to Brazil. What I have by my side, and have always had, is the Brazilian people. Today, that person is looking for a way to drive a wedge between me and the Brazilian people”*

In both quotes, Bolsonaro emphasizes that he has, and always had, the “Brazilian people” at his side. It was the Brazilian people who elected him – and consequently invested him with the power to rule over Brazil – and it is the Brazilian people whom the “enemy” is trying to separate from Bolsonaro.

Despite the importance that “the people” play in populism, the identity, or exactly who is this “people,” is problematic and open to different interpretations. It does not have a truly unique identity; it is, as Laclau (2005) stated, an “empty signifier” to which contentious political groups can attach their grievances, shaping group identity according to the context, alluring different actors and segments of society, and making its appeal resistant to eventual flaws inherent to the political movement to which it is mobilized.

Nevertheless, although proposedly vague, one instinctively knows whom Bolsonaro is speaking of whenever he references “the Brazilian people.” In this sense, Bolsonaro’s idea of “the people” is grounded on good morality compared to the essentially corrupt elite. Alone, words like “Christianity,” “conservative,” “traditionalism,” and “hard-working” might not seem to have a meaning. However, in his narrative, those words are articulated in webs of meaning that suggest that progressive policies are necessarily tied to corrupt left-wing actors, whose primary purpose would be to destroy families and Christian values. Even though Bolsonaro claims to represent “*the voice of those who were not heard*” (Bolsonaro, January 1, 2019), it is always a “people” that revolves around the notion of “good citizen,” which is associated with Christianity and family traditionalism. Such values are used to not only draw the boundaries between those who do and do not belong to “the people,” but they are also what bring “us” together. Therefore, in his January 10, 2020, speech, he proclaims:

**Bolsonaro (January 10, 2020):** *“We conservatives, we real workers, the vast majority of Christians, who respect the family. You are the ones who must lead the destiny of Brazil, and not us (politicians); dear mayor, dear federal deputy, [and] I, the president of the republic; we owe loyalty to you [the people]”*

And in his speech in August, 2019:

**Bolsonaro (August 06, 2019):** *“I don't smell Mortadella in here (a reference to the Left and the Workers' Party who are often called “bum with Mortadella – or “pão com mortadela” in Portuguese). Here are only those who work, who want to seek the best for themselves and their family and for their country, and that we must have, a president of the Republic, ministers, senators, federal deputies, mayors, councilors, state deputies, who do not interfere with your life”*

Bolsonaro equates “the people” to those who are conservative, “real” workers – as an opposition to the leftists who are often framed as “vagabonds” that live from government's social programs –, Christians, and that respect “family” – as a system of values (like heterosexuality and standing up against the so-called “gender ideology<sup>16</sup>”), not the

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<sup>16</sup> “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, 2020).

household institution "family." As he goes on to say, these are the ones who must lead the destiny of Brazil.

Thus, religious and conservative values distinguish between the "good people" and the others, the out-group. Like other populist discourses, his speech extolls the virtues of the "good people," equating it to a public culture that ought to be publicly defended. In his official speech on August 10, 2019, he declares that while those "disgusting leftist" say that the State is secular, he and the majority of the Brazilian people are Christians, so "end of story":

**Bolsonaro (August 10, 2019):** *“All the time, we hear this 'leftist', PT (Workers' Party), Pcdob (Communist Party of Brazil), PSOL (Socialism and Liberty Party), those disgusting leftist say that “the State is secular.” The State is secular, but I, Johnny Bravo, am a Christian. Here in this car and in this yard, we are Christians. We respect all religions and even those who have no religion. But the vast majority of the Brazilian people are Christians. End.”*

In a similar vein, this majoritarian-rule thinking translates to an oppressive narrative, where Bolsonaro states that the laws exist to protect the majorities, and for the minorities, what is left is to consent and move on with their lives:

**Bolsonaro (August 10, 2019):** *“And I make it very clear: laws exist to protect majorities. (...) What do minorities do? By their own free will, without harming the majority, they will [move on with their lives and] be happy”*

### **The Covid-19 Pandemic**

As Jenne, Hawkins, and Castanho Silva (2021: 6) state, destabilizing events such as economic and political crises marginalize the "normal" or the status quo political narrative, allowing chief executives to reframe the sovereign community. In other words, during crises, politicians can adopt new ideas, relying on exogenous shocks to reinscribe the political space, reshaping the different understandings that permeate the notions of "us" and "them." In this sense, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Bolsonaro reshaped his people-centrism, giving a new emphasis to the "working people," the informal workers who were suffering from the economic impacts of the coronavirus crises. In his new narrative, Bolsonaro romanticized the values and ideals related to those workers and often

highlighted how "informal workers" and the "working people" were suffering from the crisis' intentional mismanagement from part of the local and regional governments (governors and mayors). In the end, drastically simplifying the political debate, Bolsonaro presented himself as an ordinary man, as a part of the common people, and, for this reason, as embodying the "common sense."

In his speech on September 3rd, 2020, Bolsonaro romanticized the "common man," the "average Joe," while he tried to establish proximity to it by emphasizing that he has consistently warned about the pandemic's problems: the virus and unemployment. When dealing with the virus, the "political elite" has created an issue that is "much more serious than the disease itself." Moreover, in this sense, Bolsonaro and his government did their best to help the Brazilian workers who had lost their jobs and their livelihood:

**Bolsonaro (September 3rd, 2020):** *"(...) and I always said that we had two problems: the virus and unemployment. (...) the side effects from how they treated this issue will be much more serious than the disease itself. We did our best in Brasília. Not only with emergency aid, because there were 38 million informal people who completely lost their livelihood. There were 38 million people on the street who had nothing to do, not even cans to pick up (to recycle in exchange for some money) because that didn't exist there [anymore] (cans or materials to be salvaged)"*

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, Bolsonaro often tried to frame himself as the only one concerned with "the people," therefore, the only one who could save them. This contributed to the illusion of proximity which was further enhanced when Bolsonaro defended the end of lockdown measures based on the argument that he was concerned with the wellbeing of "the people," especially the popular strata who worked under precarious and unstable conditions and therefore could not afford to stay home. During his speech on July 2020, Bolsonaro took the opportunity to voice these concerns following a narrative that, in addition to not having how to sell their products anymore, workers and other people who live from the commerce were being punished by their governors if they broke lockdown measures:

**Bolsonaro (July 16, 2020):** *"Imagine the agony of these people [who lost their jobs] willing to sell, willing to work, to produce. In addition to no longer having a market [in the sense of finding a demand for their products], they are punished*

*by some governors and mayors with a fine, with imprisonment! Look at the situation we are at!”*

Not only that, but Bolsonaro often preaches a simplistic, anti-science approach to deal with COVID-19 – early treatment with hydroxychloroquine – justifying that he is concerned with the well-being of the people, even though there were no confirmations surrounding the efficacy of those treatments.

**Bolsonaro (August 25, 2020):** *“And I bet on hydroxychloroquine. I bet, but obviously, with doctors on my side, with people who weren't concerned about his biography; the concern was about saving lives. And, of course, I started to preach this in Brazil, to set an example, and I started to walk among the people. Look, I'm a general, man, I have to be among the troops. I can't stand in a glass dome, watching the people back there, facing a problem, and I don't feel that problem by their side.”*

Here, Bolsonaro defends hydroxychloroquine, saying that his only concern was saving lives – and not with his history or reputation, a reference to his former minister Sergio Moro who quit the government after disagreeing with Bolsonaro, stating that he had a “biography to praise.” Bolsonaro goes on to justify his constant face-to-face meetings with his supporters during the climax of the pandemic in Brazil by saying that he needed to face the problem together with the people, “walking among them,” not standing apart from them. In combination, all of this contributed to forging a savior, the image of someone who is not only extraordinary – as he stands apart from the old, corrupt mainstream politics – but also someone who is on a crusade to save the people, despite all criticism.

Although it is one of the main elements of populism, people-centrism is not consistent throughout Bolsonaro’s first two years of government, which is precisely the reason that prevents him from scoring higher on the populist scale. Most of the time, the idea of “the people” is more influenced by nationalistic and patriotic rhetoric than to Manichaeian discourse. In the end, even though populist people-centrism is present, it plays second fiddle to other preferred terms that are discussed shortly.

### **The Evil: The Elite**

For populism, “the people” is always defined vis-à-vis the elite. In this sense, similar to Hugo Chávez, for Bolsonaro, the will of the people is always seen as “juxtaposed against, indeed subverted by, the efforts of a conspiring minority that pursues its own interests at the expense of the whole” (Hawkins, 2010: 61). Much like “the people,” the elite is also homogeneous, a monolithic block perceived, as Hofstadter (1996) wrote, as “clearly delineated;” a “perfect model of malice, a king of amoral superman: sinister, ubiquitous, powerful, cruel, sensual, luxury loving” (Hofstadter 1996). This element was strongly present during his presidential campaign in 2018 (Tamaki, Braga, and Fuks 2021), and it carries through the first two years of his government. Bolsonaro frequently uses words like “enemies,” “corruption,” “threats imposed by the left” (from both an ideological and moral standpoint), and the “risks of subversion,” but never simply “the opposition.”

The notion of who constitutes this evil minority clearly changes, and similar to what happened to his people-centrism, Bolsonaro’s anti-elitism also changes with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. At first, it targets mainly the political opposition, left-wing parties, and politicians, but especially the Workers’ Party (PT). Then, with the outbreak of Covid-19, it evolves to a broader one that targets the mainstream media, local governors and mayors, and even the Supreme Court. Nevertheless, in the end, the left has an overarching presence that makes it a threat to democracy and freedom, be it in national or international territories.

From the lens of political cleavages, it is possible to understand Bolsonaro’s anti-elitism as revolving around framing the political elite as enemies, holding them responsible for deceiving and usurping the power from the people. His efforts to strengthen “the people” run through the way he frames the opposition: an evil that threatens family traditionalism and Christian values. When it comes to his political opposition, Bolsonaro openly acknowledges them (mainly the left and the Workers’ Party) as the enemy, addressing the former Workers’ Party government as corrupt, inefficient, and responsible for executing a plan to spread its ideology while in power. For example, in his speech on May 16, 2019, he does not only frame them as “the enemy,” but also treats them as an evil that has infiltrated other aspects of “our everyday life,” like

universities and the press, and, therefore, needs to be fought off. Bolsonaro is on a “war,” a battle against the left that is also fought outside the political arena:

**Bolsonaro (May 16, 2019):** *“We have fantastic human potential, but the Brazilian left has come in, infiltrated and taken not only the Brazilian press, but also much of the universities and high schools. The work is not easy. But with faith in God, with Brazilians, with friends outside Brazil who see our future with concern, we will win this battle”*

In his speech in July 2019, Bolsonaro accused the “enemy,” embodied in the image of the PT, of being responsible for conspiring against the people, seeking even to pervert and destroy their children’s innocence:

**Bolsonaro (September 24, 2019):** *“Ideology was installed in the field of culture, education and the media, dominating the media, universities, and schools. Ideology invaded our homes to attack the mother cell of any healthy society: the family. They also try to destroy our children's innocence, perverting even the most basic and elementary identity, the biological one”*

Here, the “ideology” he refers to is the left-wing ideology, mainly represented by the Workers’ Party who was at the head of the country’s executive power for the last 14 years. They are responsible for infiltrating the field of culture, education, and media, for invading Brazilian homes while aiming to attack the “mother cell” of any health society: the family – understood here, similar to in his people-centrism, as the traditional values related to the family, like heterosexuality and traditionalism. Besides indoctrination, the left is also responsible for trying to “destroy the innocence” of the children, perverting them with “gender ideology,” the “Gay-Kit,”<sup>17</sup> and an alleged eroticization.

Overall, the tone is conspiratorial and encompassing. The left does not only aim at destroying the traditional Christian and family values, but it is also against democracy and freedom. In his June 2019 speech, Bolsonaro addresses this issue:

**Bolsonaro (June 6, 2019):** *“Recently, Brazil and Argentina had experiences that could lead us to a destiny where the victims would be freedom and democracy”*

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<sup>17</sup> Gay-Kit” is a term used by Bolsonaro and conservative sectors of society, referring to an attempt to combat homophobia in schools through materials designed to address issues of sexuality.

And in his July 30, 2019, discourse:

**Bolsonaro (July 30, 2019):** *“Because the state we (Brazil, especially the previous government - the Leftist government of the Workers' Party) were building until very recently was a totalitarian state, a socialist state. Through the laws, we were getting closer and closer to socialism and communism, where the State ruled everything and everyone”*

The Brazilian and Argentinian experiences that he mentions are the leftist governments that ruled the countries over the last couple of years. According to Bolsonaro, those experiences could lead Brazil to a destiny where the victims would be “freedom” and “democracy,” as the Workers’ Party was building in Brazil, over the last 14 years, a totalitarian and socialist state. Through laws that brought Brazil closer to socialism and communism, Bolsonaro argued that the State ruled “everything and everyone.”

Finally, Bolsonaro, in his April 24, 2020, speech, stated that he was “fighting the establishment.” The “powerful” had risen against him because he was changing things in Brazil. According to him, although many politicians from the Congress shared the same views, the “extreme left” was still against him; after all, their ultimate goal was to steal the people’s freedom. And Bolsonaro would spare no effort to prevent this from happening:

**Bolsonaro (April 24, 2020):** *“The powerful rose against me. And it's a reality, it's a truth. I'm fighting a system, the establishment. Things that happened in Brazil practically don't happen anymore. And forgive me for the immodesty; in large part [this is happening] for my courage in appointing a team of ministers committed to the future of Brazil. It is still not easy but, you can be sure, nowadays I count on many congressmen within the National Congress, who already share this idea. From various parties, except the extreme left, because what they ultimately want is to steal our freedom. As far as it is up to me, I will spare no effort to ensure that this does not happen”*

### **The Covid-19 Pandemic**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Bolsonaro's strategy relied on creating enemies and blaming them for the chaos that engulfed Brazil. He targeted the mainstream media



(especially the traditional television broadcasters and newspaper channels) and local governors and mayors as enemies acting against "the people." By blaming them for politicizing the crisis to weaken the government, Bolsonaro created the narrative that the media was not committed to the truth, that there was an "informational war" between the mainstream media and the Brazilian people. He framed one side to represent "honesty" while accusing the other of spreading fake news, conspiracies, lying, and deceiving "the people" while attempting to undermine the government at any cost.

For example, in his July 2020 speech, Bolsonaro accused the traditional communication channels, or the mainstream media, of taking advantage of the pandemic to criticize the government. It was not a sign that they were losing the "informational war" but an attempt to mine his credibility:

**Bolsonaro (July 16, 2020):** *"We are bombed 24 hours a day, not because we are losing the informational war, [but because] it is a part of the [traditional] media; or [because] most of the media is taking advantage of this moment to criticize the government."*

On a similar note, during his June 09, 2020, discourse, Bolsonaro accused the media of politicizing the coronavirus, spreading panic, and leading the country to the edge of social chaos:

**Bolsonaro (September 22, 2020):** *"As happened in much of the world, part of the Brazilian press also politicized the virus, spreading panic among the population. Under the motto "stay at home" and "we'll see the economy later", they almost brought social chaos to the country"*

Thus, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit Brazil, Bolsonaro took advantage of his former military status of "captain" to justify him "charging" the battle ahead of his army. While the elite, both the mainstream media, governors, and mayors, were trying to "cowardly" create panic among the population, Bolsonaro was out there, assuming what he called a "unique position" not only within Brazil but worldwide:

**Bolsonaro (September 3rd, 2020):** *"2020 arrived, [and] we had the problem of the virus which, excuse me the expression, was treated cowardly and not with the due responsibility. [They] decided to create a real panic among the population: "Stay at home, you will die". The whole world was facing it (the virus). And from*

*the beginning, I assumed a unique position, not only within Brazil but as Head of State, worldwide. I haven't seen any head of state make a decision like mine. I studied hydroxychloroquine, I am not a doctor, I am a captain in the Army, and I studied, I looked for embassies, I looked for the North American Health Regulatory Agency, the FDA, and that was all that was left, and we had nothing [else] to do”*

In his April 2020 discourse, Bolsonaro tackled the decision of the Supreme Court to leave lockdown measures to be decided by local governors and mayors, leaving to the Executive power only the task to assist them with funding. There, when dealing with the arrests of people who have broken Covid rules (such as isolation and lockdown), Bolsonaro goes on to say that although he respects the decision of the Supreme Court, these arrests are more than illegal; they reach the soul of every Brazilian citizen. Therefore, they cannot admit them:

**Bolsonaro (April 17, 2020):** *“I don't agree with that (with the Supreme Court's ruling). It's a pity that I can't intervene in much of anything, because the Supreme Court decided that the restrictive measures that have to be respected are those of mayors and governors. But let's let fate decide. Let's respect the decision of the Federal Supreme Court, that after all, we are in a democracy, in addition to independence, there is harmony between the powers. (...) But I repeat, these arrests (of people disrespecting the lockdown), more than illegal, [they] reach the soul of every Brazilian citizen. We cannot admit it. I will not preach civil disobedience, but measures like these must be rejected by all of us”*

As the pandemic stroked at the same time that Bolsonaro's anti-elitism increased (as he targeted media channels, state and local officials), his need to distinguish himself from the "corrupt and self-centered elite" became higher. His narrative relied on the idea of being someone in possession of "exceptional" qualities. Bolsonaro evoked his murder attempt in the 2018 presidential campaign to emphasize that mere flu would not kill him - it was his mission to save "the people." His authority shared commonalities with Weber's charismatic leader: a constant need to prove his claimed exceptionality to his followers. Bolsonaro clashed with all the political actors who would disagree with him, framing those disagreements not as a difference of opinions but as moral and character. Allies and opposition alike, as soon as they diverged from Bolsonaro's solutions, they became his enemies. This happened to his former health ministers when they left the administration.

## **Nationalism and Patriotism (And why it is not Populism)**

Although displaying populist elements, Bolsonaro's discourse also presents some other elements that are worth highlighting. So far, I have shown how populist elements are articulated in Bolsonaro's government speeches; however, most of the time, the idea of "the people" is more influenced by nationalistic rhetoric than to 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, 2019: 2).

Following this idea, this thesis departs from the existing literature and proposes that for an "us" to be appropriately considered "populist," "the people" must be invoked in a two-fold 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<sup>18</sup>). In this regard, as I 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 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, 1998; Jenne, Hawkins, Castanho Silva, 2021), nationalism and populism 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. As stated by different authors (Tajfel, 1974, 1982; Mouffe, 2020), when it comes to group identity, to be part of an "in-group" entails the construction and categorical distinction from an "out-group." In this sense, similar to what Michael Billig stated, both populism

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<sup>18</sup> 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 (2019), and Rooduijn (2014).

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)<sup>19</sup>.

However, 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 constitute it. It revolves around an implied idea of inheriting fictive kinship – it is part of "our" blood, our culture<sup>20</sup>. 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 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 based on the idea of a virtual<sup>21</sup> and imagined, yet limited and sovereign community and, differently from populism, it entails a horizontal, "in-out" frame that defines national sovereignty (de Cleen, 2017; Jenne, Hawkins, and Silva, 2021). The idea of "nation" is rooted in the territory, connected to a physical space with physical borders; it has to do with "territoriality" and the idea of a space that is connected 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, 2017).

Bolsonaro's strategy to delineate those different groups began even before his 2018 official presidential campaign:

**Bolsonaro (February, 2017)** *"We are a Christian country. God above everything! This story [...] of a secular state, does not exist! It is a*

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<sup>19</sup> Billig's (1995) original statement refers only to nationalism.

<sup>20</sup> 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).

<sup>21</sup> To state that it is a "virtual community" means that one will never be able to personally meet the other millions of members of the imagined community. See Billig (1995) and Jenne, Hawkins, and Castanho Silva (2021) for a more detailed explanation.

*Christian State! And whoever is against it should leave [move out]. Let us make Brazil for the majority!<sup>22</sup>*

Here, Bolsonaro is talking to what he calls “the majority:” those who are Christians. He states that Brazil is a “Christian state” and that whoever is against this idea should leave the country. His idea of an “us,” as a nation, goes through the creation of a Christian country, for which he counts with two pillars: the idea of “Western Christian culture” (Loveman, 1994) and the North-American myth of a “Christian Nation” (Borda, 2020). Together, both pillars delineate the nation’s core religious and conservative values as part of the virtues and distinctiveness that compose the Brazilian national identity. Matched with references to a shared past-present-and-future, language, and symbols, they serve to not only unite the “nation” – Christians, conservative, and that cherish family values – but also to differentiate it from the “out-group” – those who are not:

**Bolsonaro (February 26, 2020):** *"Brazil is a Christian and conservative country and [has] the family in its base."*

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 similar to him. In doing that, Bolsonaro does not only define *what the nation is*, but also defines *what is not*. In other words, by limiting his understanding of “Brazil” to a Christian, conservative, and family-based “us,” he is creating a division between what “we” are and what “we” are not. In this case, “them,” or the other side, would be represented by those who arguably embody the progressive and secular tide that threatens the sacred values.

**Bolsonaro (July 2, 2020):** *[When asked about why he said he would not attend a LGBT Pride Parade] “I said [that] because I believe in God, in the family, and in the good values [moral principles]”*

**Bolsonaro (January 16, 2020):** *“Here, by my side, is Roberto Alvim, our Secretary of Culture. After decades, now we have a real secretary of culture, one who serves the interests of the majority of the Brazilian*

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<sup>22</sup> See: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCKEwP8TeZY>> or <<https://theintercept.com/2018/09/25/ideias-nazifascistas-bolsonarismo/>> access 02/17/2021.

*population; a conservative and Christian population. Thank you very much for accepting this mission; you knew it wasn't going to be easy. (...). Let's go, let's go win this battle."*

Interestingly enough, the idea of “battle” here represents the battle for the future of Brazil. It started with his electoral campaign in 2018 and escalated when he took office in 2019. From this point on, Bolsonaro has been fighting a culture war against forces of atheism and subversion that seek to destroy Brazil’s culture and religion (Tamaki, Mendonça and Ferreira, 2021). Ultimately, as Ernest Gellner (1983) states, “the culture it claims to defend [is] often its own invention, or [is] modified out of all recognition” (Gellner, 1983: 56). Furthermore, as part of his strategy, Bolsonaro seeks to alienate his political opposition (the left and mainly the Workers’ Party), turning the perceived political elite into an alien group. From this perspective, by setting the rulers apart from the majority of the ruled, Bolsonaro would be easily able to rally the nation against such “outstandingly intolerable breach of political property” (Gellner, 1983: 1).

**Bolsonaro (December 19, 2019):** *We even had a Christmas Carol today. I'll post on Facebook a little bit [of this] cantata, a wonderful Christian event there. [There] a Christmas tree was inaugurated. [On] the day before yesterday we had a Thanksgiving ritual; (...) the older people from the [Planalto] palace (...) have never heard of anything religious [happening in there], quite the opposite: there was this lady who went ahead and took the floor and said that (...), [in] a previous government, [they] banned a celebration that used to happen in a room there in the presidency. People had to leave the [Planalto palace] presidency and do the ritual under a tree outside. It was forbidden to come together and speak in God's name, right?! Look, you have to respect everyone's religion, and these people accuse me of being intolerant, of prejudiced, of racist, and homophobic all the time, but that's okay. [Thins] it has changed, people, it has changed. Now there is a president who values the family, a president who respects the army, okay? A president who is loyal to his people and believes in God. What is the problem with that?*

To understand this vignette, we need to break it down into small parts. First, Bolsonaro alludes to previous governments, portraying them as the counterpart of his national “us.” These “national others,” therefore, would be responsible for religious persecution. In this

sense, Bolsonaro frames the political elite (mainly his political opposition, the Workers' Party, and the left in general) as disloyal elites who betrayed the nation by banning religious celebrations and forbidding people to come together and speak in God's name. Finally, Bolsonaro portrays himself as different. With him, things have changed; now, there is a President who values the family, who believes in God, and who is loyal to his people.

**Bolsonaro (November 21, 2019):** *"We also had an event in the morning, [to] create the new party Alliance for Brazil, so it was [just] an initial convention. The first step to create this party was taken today, right along the lines that the vast majority of the population always wanted: a conservative party, a party that respects all religions, a party that appreciates family values, a party that advocates self-defense, that is favorable to firearm possession too."*

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, it just works as another way to reference the national community.

Slightly different is patriotism. Similar to what happens to populism and nationalism, patriotic rhetoric also separates "us" from "them," and while "us" takes the shape of one's fatherland, "them" are forces of subversion that threaten it. Eventually, 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, on the one hand, nationalism praises the nation, on the other hand, patriotism celebrates the State (with capital "s").

**Bolsonaro (April 4, 2019):** *"Brazil is above our [own] interests"*

The state refers to the political institutions of the community, to patriotic symbols – such as flags and national anthems –, to the government, and to the military – often portrayed as the guardians of order and security.

Bolsonaro often depicts "Brazil" as the sum of its political institutions and symbols; the State, therefore, is seen as above the interests of its parts.

**Bolsonaro (January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019):** *This is our flag, which will never be red!*

*It will only be red if it takes our blood to keep it green and yellow!*

In his speech, to prevent “our” flag from being tainted “red” (a reference to communism and socialism – one of the main threats to the fatherland, as we will see below), Bolsonaro defends that “we” give our blood to keep it “green and yellow.”

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 “la Patria<sup>23</sup>.” 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).

**Bolsonaro (June 06, 2019):** *“We, military, swore to give our life for the fatherland, here [in the United State] and in Brazil. For 30 years the Armed Forces, in Brazil, were relegated to the background. They [Workers’ Party, the former Government] created [truth] commissions to wear us out, to discredit us in the public’s eye; [all of that] because we, the Armed Forces, are the last obstacle for socialism!”*

The consequences of this discourse are twofold. First, Bolsonaro embodies the idea of guardianship – acting as a guardian, defending the “Western Christian way of life” (Loveman, 1994) against its perceived enemies from within and outside. His mission is to save the fatherland and meet with “decisive retribution” those who endanger it, in that the “armed forces” are the ultimate gatekeepers against socialism. Consequently, Bolsonaro resurrects the communist threat and, by doing it so, not only delineates his political opposition as a political threat, but he also links the Workers’ Party to it, further cementing their role as the “last obstacle to socialism.”

**Bolsonaro (March 21, 2019):** *“He (Pepe Mujica) clearly said there (in his book) that Dilma Rousseff made state decisions inside the Planalto Palace<sup>24</sup>, listening to Cuban and Venezuelan intelligence services, advised by ABIN<sup>25</sup>. Look at what direction Brazil was going to: it was “going” for*

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<sup>23</sup> To utilize the same Spanish term as used by Loveman (1994).

<sup>24</sup> Presidential Palace.

<sup>25</sup> Brazilian Intelligence Service.



*a regime similar to Venezuela. Period. So, it's one miracle that I'm alive, and other that (...) we got this victory (election), even over electronic voting machines. (...) So, we are here fulfilling a mission of God (...)."*

**Bolsonaro (September 05, 2019):** *"I was there practically on the other side of life; my life was a miracle, my election was a greater miracle. Let's build the future of Brazil together."*

Overall, Bolsonaro's rationale rests on: (1) defending the fatherland against communism (and the Left), and, similarly to what Loveman called "more Cubas" (Loveman 1994: 133) (2) preventing the rise of more "Venezuelas." As those two vignettes above demonstrate, Bolsonaro claims to be on a God-given mission to save Brazil from forces of subversion that threaten "la Patria" – and, while atheism and secular values embodied threats to the nation, communism and socialism represent threats to the fatherland.

Threats to national sovereignty can come from either internal (as is the case with the Workers' Party) or external actors, as the bellow transcripts demonstrate.

**Bolsonaro (March 21, 2019):** *"The Forum of São Paulo is [a] group created in the 1990s by various actors from South America, to deal with that great agreement, wherefrom left-wing countries - entities such as the terrorist group FARC - (...) would be helping each other, so that everyone could reach the presidency and transform South America in the great Bolivarian homeland, in the "great" Venezuela."*

**Bolsonaro (May 16, 2019):** *"[And] that ghost that was always in front of us [threatening], [ghost] of a possible Venezuela when it comes to the ideological issue, ceases to exist."*

There, Bolsonaro quotes conspiracies to transform South America into the "Great Venezuela" while evoking the idea of the "terrible" ghost of Venezuela. Ultimately, it is all about the defense of the fatherland – "la Patria" – and, when it comes to it, nothing stands above (O'Donnell, 1979; Hawkins, Amado, and Cranney, 2010). As Brian Loveman states, persons, groups, movements, and behaviors that threaten the fatherland's "permanent interests" "cannot be tolerated, even if their actions are formally legal" (Loveman, 1994: 109).

It is also important to highlight that, although obscure, “Brazil” is often used to reference different 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. All in all, the fatherland can assume various shapes, and it can manifest itself in all sorts of stripes; however, its thinness allows for each individual to connect to it in different manners. By only offering a clear-cut enemy, in this case, socialism and communism, the lack of pragmatic content of Bolsonaro’s patriotic sovereign community allow for each individual to input into it its share or piece of identity. In the long run, by allowing “us” to be amorphous, flexible in its form, but unchanging in its core, each individual connects to it in different ways, never entirely departing from it, but never fully defining it.

Ultimately, although presenting populist elements (a Manichean frame which divides society into two homogeneous and morally opposed groups: “the people” and “the elite”), Bolsonaro’s speeches do not revolve around the creation of an in-group in an “up-down” manner, but rather on a nationalist and patriotic “in-out.” By doing so, it comes closer to other patriotic speeches often seen during the military governments of Latin America during the Cold War. Consequently, it campaigns against enemies of the nation who threaten the “fatherland,” often forgetting the romantic, unchanging essentialism of a unified will of the majority.

## **Conclusion**

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. In the four years preceding Jair Bolsonaro's triumph, Brazil went through a large-scale economic crisis, the second presidential impeachment in a generation, and the conviction of influential politicians in corruption-related charges – including former president Lula da Silva.

The president-elect, Jair Bolsonaro, is the country's first far-right president selected by suffrage and arguably the first South American far-right leader since Pinochet. But how populist is he? Previous studies of his campaign speeches unveiled that although "somewhat populist," his very idea of "the people" was construed in a way more influenced by the use of nationalist and patriotic rhetoric as opposed to Manichaeic discourse at times. Now, three years after his election, this thesis asks: can we consider Jair Bolsonaro's discourse as the 38th President of Brazil, populist? If yes, what marks his populism? Do the patriotism and nationalism, strongly present during his presidential campaign, carry over to his first two years in government? Broadly, these research questions guided this thesis. In the following pages, I review the most important findings, assess their contributions, acknowledge limitations, and suggest possible agendas for future researches.

## **Review of Findings**

I started by adopting an ideational definition of populism. According to this approach, populism is to be understood as a moral discourse that exalts popular sovereignty while understanding the world and politics as a cosmic struggle between "the people" and the "elite" (Hawkins et al., 2019: 3), and it is composed of three necessary and sufficient elements: a good-versus-evil dualism (a Manichaeic dualism), people-centrism, and anti-elitism. After laying down this definition, the next step was turning the attention to Bolsonaro's discourse during his first two years as the president of Brazil.

In total, I graded and analyzed 94 speeches given by Jair Bolsonaro over two years, 2019 and 2020. Of those, 51 were official speeches, and 43 were official live streams. Official speeches were categorized as either "international," "famous," or "ribbon-cutting," depending on their audience and their setting. The data confirms what I hypothesized: with an average score of 0.5, Bolsonaro's discourse is considered "somewhat populist," scoring barely enough to put him on the lowest end of our populist scale. Nevertheless, it is still higher than anything Brazil has had in the last 28 years, since Fernando Collor de Mello, but not anywhere near other prototypical populists like Hugo Chavez or Evo Morales (who scored, respectively, 1.9 and 1.6, Hawkins et al., 2019). Bolsonaro's score is closer to other moderately populists, like Viktor Orbán and Donald Trump (0.9 and 0.8). However, this is not the only insight produced by this thesis.

First, Bolsonaro manages to circumvent the traditional media and journalistic gatekeeping through his social media accounts. Not only that, but he also successfully creates an "alternative" facts reality on his own personal channels. Overall, his narrative tries to discredit the traditional channels of communication as information providers; in this sense, his official social media channels are presented as the only legitimate source of information, as opposed to the mainstream media outlets, often framed as "not committed to the truth."

Thus, Facebook live streams allows Bolsonaro to create an illusion of proximity with his followers (as both YouTube and Facebook utilize tools such as "Comments," "Likes," and "Reactions" to engage the audience). Therefore, if Bolsonaro were indeed a populist, one would expect live streams to be ideal for his populism to shine. Yet, that is not the case. Bolsonaro's live streams (during the first year) are less populist than his official speeches, but they are more radical, present more conspiracy elements, and most often use bellicose language. Although radicalism, conspiracy, and lack of decorum when dealing with the opposition are common elements of many different political speeches, they are neither necessary nor sufficient for populism.

However, when it comes to his official speeches, as opposed to initial expectations, international discourses present a stronger populism than the ribbon-cutting or the international ones. Nevertheless, as expected, those ribbon-cutting scores the lowest. Since the international speeches with the highest score on the populist scale were the ones Bolsonaro gave in the United States and Israel, it is presumed that he often felt more comfortable showing his "true colors" in those particular countries. This theory is

backed up by the fact that, in 2020, his international discourses' average populism is lower and more in line with what was initially expected, given how the Covid-19 pandemic imposed restrictions that prevented him from traveling and forced many of his speeches to be directed to a different audience.

The analysis of Bolsonaro's populism focused on the three dimensions of populism: a Manichaeism view of politics, the belief and praise of popular sovereignty, and anti-elitism. Despite his populism being relatively stable throughout the two years analyzed, the onset of the coronavirus pandemic affected how both his people-centrism and anti-elitism were portrayed.

### **Manichaeism**

Bolsonaro's Manichaeism comes mainly from two related sources: (i) the idea of two irreconcilable paths stuck on (ii) a battle, a moral war his government is fighting. Regardless of the strategy and how he frames it, the Evil is always the same, his political opposition, especially the Workers' Party (PT). In this sense, he often associates the left with a threat to democracy and freedom, while Bolsonaro and his "side" are the ones who protect and defend it. This is a strategy to mobilize his supporters by infusing their political choices with moral consequences; after all, they are with Bolsonaro representing and fighting for "democracy" and "freedom." At the end, similar to a Don Quixote who keeps on attacking windmills, Bolsonaro navigates a conservative wave, launching a moral crusade around the protection of traditionalism against the secularization of politics and the alleged dictatorship of progressive values.

### **People-centrism**

Bolsonaro's people-centrism revolves around the idea of a sovereign, united will of the people who not only invests him with power but is also the ultimate source of legitimacy. His reification is distinctively populist: it evolves from the will of the people. An idea of "people" however, created around those who share his same qualities: those who value the Family – not the household unity, but a more abstract view of an institution behind the idea of "family" and the values it encompasses -, who are patriotic – represented through the image of the Armed Forces -, and those who believe in God.

Bolsonaro utilizes the Covid-19 pandemic to reshape his people-centrism, giving a new emphasis to the "working people" who are suffering from the economic impacts of the coronavirus crisis. In his new narrative, he romanticizes the values and ideals related to those workers. He often highlights how "informal workers" and the "working Brazilian people" were suffering from the crisis' intentional mismanagement from part of the local and regional governments (governors and mayors).

### **Anti-Elitism**

Like his people-centrism, Bolsonaro's anti-elitism also changes with the Covid-19 pandemic. At first, it targets mainly the Workers' Party (PT), then, with the outbreak of Covid-19, it evolves to a broader one that targets the mainstream media, local governors and mayors, and even the Supreme Court. Nevertheless, in the end, the left (the ideology as a whole) has an overarching presence that makes it a threat to democracy and freedom, be it in national or international territories. Bolsonaro's anti-elitism draws from holding the political establishment responsible for deceiving and usurping the power from the people. His efforts to strengthen "the people" are directly related to how he frames the opposition: an evil that threatens family traditionalism and Christian values. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Bolsonaro changes the establishment's identity, targeting the mainstream media, local governors, and mayors as enemies acting against "the people." In this new narrative, he accuses them of politicizing the virus, spreading fake news, conspiracies, and deceiving the "Brazilian people" while also attempting to undermine the government at any cost.

### **Nationalism and Patriotism**

Although displaying populist elements, Bolsonaro's discourse also presents some other elements that go in line with what was hypothesized. His rhetoric is marked by aggressive forms of nationalism and patriotism, construing the very idea of "the people" in a way that is more influenced by nationalist and patriotic rhetoric as opposed to Manichaeian discourse.

For Bolsonaro, "the nation" revolves around a Brazilian national culture and identity that surpasses the individual. Drawing mainly from religiosity and conservative

values, it taps into the idea of a "Western Christian culture" (Loveman, 1994) and the North-American myth of a "Christian Nation" (Borda, 2020). However, it is flexible as Bolsonaro freely reshapes it to fit into his narrative. The "State," on the other hand, relates to political institutions of the community, to patriotic symbols – such as flags and national anthems –, to the government and the military – often portrayed as the guardians of order and security. Its thinness allows each individual to connect to it differently. By only offering a clear-cut enemy, in this case, socialism and communism, the lack of pragmatic content of Bolsonaro's patriotic sovereign community allow for each individual to input into it its own piece of identity. In the long run, by allowing "us" to be amorphous, flexible in its form, but unchanging in its core, each individual connects to it in different ways, never entirely departing from it, but never fully defining it.

Ultimately, his discourse evokes the idea of guardianship, rallying the nation to stand against those who threaten it, topped with a rationale that rests on the idea of defending the fatherland against forces of subversion, especially the resurrected "communist threat." In this sense, his populist people-centrism ends up playing second fiddle to his nationalistic and patriotic "us." In the end, Bolsonaro's rhetoric is more in line with the military governments of Latin America during the Cold War.

## **Contributions**

The first contribution of this study is to present a novel dataset classifying Bolsonaro's populism along the first two years of his government (2019 – 2020). It is the first time such a comprehensive study has been made in Brazil (similar to what Hawkins and Littvay, 2019, have done to Donald Trump in the US). By following an in-depth analysis of a large sample of Bolsonaro's speeches, this thesis was able to provide a definitive answer to the question of whether Bolsonaro is a populist or not. Besides that, the extra data collected also allowed me to gauge other elements present in his speech, like nationalism and patriotism. Not only that, but by having an extended time series, I was also able to answer questions thoroughly, offering more nuanced and detailed analyses regarding Bolsonaro's profile. In a similar idea, this data will also be an important addition to Team Populism's Global Populism Database (Hawkins et al., 2019). In its current version, GPD counts with a score of Bolsonaro's first few months in

government; thus, this will account for a more detailed and trustful representation of his profile.

By following the ideational approach to populism and the holistic grading method of textual analysis, this data and study will allow researchers in Brazil and elsewhere to compare Bolsonaro to other politicians studied under the umbrella of the ideational definition. It will contribute to a better congruence in the Brazilian field of populist studies, as much of the disagreement existing today stems from studies adopting alternative techniques that are not replicable (e.g., Mendonça and Caetano, 2021).

The final contribution is more theoretical and is an indirect consequence of this thesis. In recent years, scholars have struggled with understanding how populism maintains power, or in other words, how populists can maintain themselves in power without giving away their populism. In this sense, this thesis contributes to this debate by showing through an extensive case study how Bolsonaro adapted his populism once he got elected to the presidency of Brazil. It shows that populism is not static, but rather something dynamic that does not vanish once it raises to power; it adapts. On this note, it also showed how populists could use the Covid-19 pandemic to reshape their populism, taking advantage of the context of crisis to reinscribe the political scenario according to their own interests.

## **Limitations and Agenda for Future Studies**

As in any academic work, this thesis has limitations that must be acknowledged. While Bolsonaro's classification as a "somewhat populist" follow a well-established academic tradition (Hawkins, 2009), the same cannot be said for his patriotic and nationalist label. As of today, there are not many resources available to adequately grade and label a speech as either "patriotic" or "nationalist"<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, for this thesis, I relied mainly on a couple of materials, among which the nationalism rubric designed by Prof. Erin Jenne and my own research as a base. Even so, I did not follow Erin Jenne's rubric, not classifying the speeches as nationalist according to her criteria. It can be that, once a patriotism rubric is developed, or if we follow the nationalism rubric as thoroughly as possible, results may diverge.

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<sup>26</sup> Except for the rubric designed to measure nationalism, designed by Erin Jenne.



A second limitation of this thesis is that while it fulfilled its initial goal of assessing the marks of Bolsonaro's populism, the method utilized is not proper to classify its subtype. In this sense, while the holistic grading method offered an advantage over other techniques, the populism rubric wielded is not designed to evaluate the subtype of populism, a process that would include gauging the host ideology and other "thick" ideological components that lend to populism a more substantial body. Thus, while we can confidently say that Bolsonaro is an example of a far-right populist, the "far-right" part of his classification has not been measured.

Next, the agenda for future studies is directly related to the limitations of this thesis. First is the development of a rubric to measure patriotic speeches. This would be a way to systematically measure patriotism, even though it would involve comprehensive research, identification, and prior classification of anchor texts. Nevertheless, the abundant quantity of materials concerning the military regimes in Latin America during the Cold War can make the process easier. Besides that, future studies could take advantage of the patriotic elements highlighted here to use it as a starting point, for example, and use it to help develop a patriotism rubric.

Finally, while we followed a human-based approach to content analysis, other methods could be used, as highlighted in chapter 2. In this sense, it could be fruitful to employ other strategies to ensure that, indeed, our results are correct (e.g., Ricci, Izumi, and Moreira, 2021; Rooduijn, de Lange, and van der Brug, 2014; even though they have their flaws, as pointed out). Besides lending more credibility to our results, this could help bridge the gap between existing studies and different ways to measure populism.

Finally, while the study of the populist rhetoric is essential, there is also the need to understand populism from both its supply- and demand-side. In this sense, studying populism from the public opinion level, further gauging its impact on electoral behavior, and how it relates with the populist agency should be of interest to every scholar interested in unraveling the causal mechanisms that operate behind the rise of populists worldwide. By offering a complete picture of Bolsonaro's populism, this thesis contributes to one side of this coin, the supply side; now, future studies are left with understanding the other.

## Appendix A

### Populism Rubric

Populism rubric created by Hawkins (2009) to measure populism in political speeches and party manifestos.

#### Final Grade (delete unused grades):

2 A speech in this category is extremely populist and comes very close to the ideal populist discourse. Specifically, the speech expresses all or nearly all of the elements of ideal populist discourse, and has few elements that would be considered non-populist.

1 A speech in this category includes strong, clearly populist elements but either does not use them consistently or tempers them by including non-populist elements. Thus, the discourse may have a romanticized notion of the people and the idea of a unified popular will (indeed, it must in order to be considered populist), but it avoids bellicose language or references to cosmic proportions or any particular enemy.

0 A speech in this category uses few if any populist elements. Note that even if a speech expresses a Manichaeian worldview, it is not considered populist if it lacks some notion of a popular will.

Table A – Populism Rubric

| <b>Populist</b>  | <b>Pluralist</b>   |
|--|--|
| It conveys a Manichaeian vision of the world, that is, one that is moral (every issue has a strong moral dimension) and dualistic (everything is in one category or the other, “right” or “wrong,” “good” or “evil”) The implication—or even the stated idea—is that there can be nothing in between, no fence-sitting, no shades of grey. This leads to the use of highly charged, even bellicose language. | The discourse does not frame issues in moral terms or paint them in black-and-white. Instead, there is a strong tendency to focus on narrow, particular issues. The discourse will emphasize or at least not eliminate the possibility of natural, justifiable differences of opinion. |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>The moral significance of the items mentioned in the speech is heightened by ascribing cosmic proportions to them, that is, by claiming that they affect people everywhere (possibly but not necessarily across the world) and across time. Especially in this last regard, frequent references may be made to a reified notion of “history.” At the same time, the speaker will justify the moral significance of his or her ideas by tying them to national and religious leaders that are generally revered.</p>   | <p>The discourse will probably not refer to any reified notion of history or use any cosmic proportions. References to the spatial and temporal consequences of issues will be limited to the material reality rather than any mystical connections.</p>   |
| <p>Although Manichaeism, the discourse is still democratic, in the sense that the good is embodied in the will of the majority, which is seen as a unified whole, perhaps but not necessarily expressed in references to the “voluntad del pueblo”; however, the speaker ascribes a kind of unchanging essentialism to that will, rather than letting it be whatever 50 percent of the people want at any particular moment. Thus, this good majority is romanticized, with some notion of the common man (urban or rural) seen as the embodiment of the national ideal.</p> | <p>Democracy is simply the calculation of votes. This should be respected and is seen as the foundation of legitimate government, but it is not meant to be an exercise in arriving at a preexisting, knowable “will.” The majority shifts and changes across issues. The common man is not romanticized, and the notion of citizenship is broad and legalistic.</p> |
| <p>The evil is embodied in a minority whose specific identity will vary according to context. Domestically, in Latin America it is often an economic elite, perhaps the “oligarchy,” but it may also be a racial elite; internationally, it may be the United States or the capitalist, industrialized nations or international financiers or simply an ideology such as neoliberalism and capitalism.</p>   | <p>The discourse avoids a conspiratorial tone and does not single out any evil ruling minority. It avoids labeling opponents as evil and may not even mention them in an effort to maintain a positive tone and keep passions low.</p>   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Crucially, the evil minority is or was recently in charge and subverted the system to its own interests, against those of the good majority or the people. Thus, systemic change is/was required, often expressed in terms such as “revolution” or “liberation” of the people from their “immiseration” or bondage, even if technically it comes about through elections.</p>   | <p>The discourse does not argue for systemic change but, as mentioned above, focuses on particular issues. In the words of Laclau, it is a politics of “differences” rather than “hegemony.”</p>   |
| <p>Because of the moral baseness of the threatening minority, non-democratic means may be openly justified or at least the minority’s continued enjoyment of these will be seen as a generous concession by the people; the speech itself may exaggerate or abuse data to make this point, and the language will show a bellicosity towards the opposition that is incendiary and condescending, lacking the decorum that one shows a worthy opponent.</p> | <p>Formal rights and liberties are openly respected, and the opposition is treated with courtesy and as a legitimate political actor. The discourse will not encourage or justify illegal, violent actions. There will be great respect for institutions and the rule of law. If data is abused, it is either an innocent mistake or an embarrassing breach of democratic standards.</p> |

## Appendix B

### Selection Criteria for Political Speeches

Generally, we need a speech that is at least 2-3 pages long, or about 2,000 words, in order to have enough text to analyze. We will use an extremely long speech (>5 pages) if it is the only one available in the category or is clearly the right speech for that category (as in the case of a famous speech), but given a choice, we prefer something shorter to make your work a little easier. We will also use an extremely short speech (1 page or less), but only if it is the only one available. Where the leader has been in office several years (say, because this is the last year in a 6-year term) and there are a variety of speeches available for a category, we generally prefer the most recent ones because they are the easiest to find. And to ensure comparability of coding across speeches and leaders, we need to have transcriptions rather than video recordings.

**(Taken from Hawkins, 2009, and Team Populism)**

Table B – Criteria for Selecting Speeches

#### **Campaign**

Here we ask for a speech given during this chief executive's latest campaign for office. Keep in mind the above criteria, especially length. Campaign speeches are often the hardest to find because they were given before the person was elected, and so they are usually not recorded on any government website. Be prepared to call the political party or the office of the chief executive to speak to someone who was involved in the campaign. If it is impossible to get a speech for the person's own campaign, we will take a speech that he/she gave for some other candidate's campaign (for example, for members of the legislature during a mid-term election). If several speeches are available, we prefer the closing speech of the campaign to the opening speech, and a speech given to a large public audience over one given at a party convention.

**Ribbon-cutting**

This is a speech given at some kind of public ceremony dedicating a government building or project, typically a road, park, or building. You will probably find a number of these on the government website. Given a choice, look for a speech that is given to a small, local audience rather than a national one, and to a domestic audience rather than an international one—we prefer something obscure in order to see whether the chief executive uses a populist discourse in settings with little apparent significance. If you have a lot to choose from, pick the most recent.

**International**

Here we are looking for a speech whose primary audience, or a significant part of the audience, consists of citizens from other countries—leaders, diplomats, or even ordinary people. There will be quite a few international speeches available, including on websites besides those of the government. For consistency, we encourage you to look for a speech given outside the country, with as small a domestic audience as possible. UN speeches are especially good as long as they are long enough.

**Famous or most-popular**

In this category, we seek for a speech that is widely regarded as one of the best-known and most-popular speeches given by this leader. Of course, some leaders don't give very popular speeches, but we at least want one of their best-known ones. As someone who knows this country well, you are in a good position to pick what you think is a particularly appropriate speech here. But as a check on your decision, we encourage you to contact the office of the chief executive or the political party and ask them for a recommendation. They will often suggest an inaugural speech (when the chief executive actually took office) or an annual report to the nation, but not necessarily, and you should not feel obliged to use one of these particular speeches if you know of another one that is more famous (or notorious). Talk to a couple of people if you feel unsure.

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