It’s Conditional: Improving the Measurement of Populism

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Abstract

This article seeks to advance the literature by improving the measurement of populism in content analyses. Following the conceptualization of the ideational approach, we argue that populist key elements (such as people-centrism and anti-elitism) need to co-occur for a political actor to be considered a populist. Strikingly enough, this conditional requirement only plays a marginal role in empirical analyses thus far. When it comes to the aggregation of populist key elements into a composite measure scholar tend to rely on summary indices. To better differentiate between populists and non-populists, we propose the use of an alternative aggregation procedure, the conditional summary index (CSI). Based on a quantitative content analysis of campaign speeches given by 22 candidates in South American presidential elections (2012–2018), we show that, contrary to the summary index, the CSI only yields positive scores for those politicians that the literature commonly identifies as being populist (i.e., Hugo Chávez, Rafael Correa, Evo Morales and Jair Bolsonaro).

Keywords

populism – content analysis – speeches – elections – campaigns – Latin America
1 Introduction

Populism may have acquired the status of a concept that defines our age.¹ Indeed, it is currently one of the most intensively researched fields in the social sciences. Motivated by the emergence of numerous successful populist actors and parties in many democracies worldwide, the study of populism has received unprecedented academic attention in recent years.² Amongst others, scholars have increasingly relied on quantitative and comparative content analyses of a wide range of documents such as party manifestoes, press releases and speeches. The so-called ideational approach,³ which conceives populism as a set of ideas based on an antagonist relationship between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’, has greatly contributed to the proliferation of empirical analyses that investigate the discourse of political actors across time, space and ideological groups. The resulting coding efforts have not only led to an impressive amount of accumulated knowledge; they have also initiated a new era of more rigorous research revolving around the reliability and validity of measurements of populism. However, there is still no consensus on the most appropriate operationalization.

This article seeks to advance the academic literature by focusing on the neglected question of how to aggregate single key elements of populism (such as people-centrism and anti-elitism) into a composite measure in content analyses. In line with some sensible theoretical considerations, we argue that


² Such populist success stories have occurred all around the globe from iconic Latin American presidents of the twentieth century such as Getúlio Vargas, Juan Perón, Carlos Menem and more recently Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, to Donald Trump in the United States of America, Beppe Grillo in Italy, Victor Orbán in Hungary and Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines. Among the political actors that are commonly labelled as populist, the primary interest has been on those that have managed to come to power in their respective countries. See Heinisch, R. “Success in Opposition – Failure in Government: Explaining the Performance of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Public Office.” West European Politics 26 (3) (2003), 91–130; Mudde, C., and C. Rovira Kaltwasser, eds. Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy? (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Albertazzi, D., and D. McDonnell. Populists in Power (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015); De la Torre, C., and E. Peruzzotti “Populism in Power: Between Inclusion and Democracy.” Populism 1 (1) (2018), 38–58.

these key elements need to co-occur for an actor to be considered a populist. Remarkably enough, this conditional logic has only played a marginal role in the empirical literature so far. The standard practice employed by scholars includes using summary indices (SI) in a rather unreflective manner. However, there is a major potential drawback to doing so. The SI generate positive values for political actors who rely on incomplete populism, which is characterized by the absence of at least one key element of populism. To avoid mistakenly identifying politicians, parties and movements as populist (‘false positives’), we propose using a simple and intuitive conditional summary index (CSI). More specifically, the scores at the level of the populist key elements can only be summed up if all the elements are present for a given actor. Otherwise, the composite measure is set to zero.

Based on a quantitative content analysis of campaign speeches given by South American candidates in the context of eleven presidential elections from 2012 to 2018, we show that applying the proposed aggregation procedure yields the desired outcome as to the identification of populist actors. When using the CSI, only the candidates who the scholarly literature consistently identifies as populists (i.e., Hugo Chávez, Rafael Correa, Evo Morales from the left as well as Jair Bolsonaro from the right) show positive values. In contrast, when using the SI, some candidates who engage in incomplete populism also reach high levels of populism. These results suggest that the CSI may faithfully ensure construct validity by discriminating between populists and non-populists. In terms of magnitude, we demonstrate that the three populists from the left rely on populism much more frequently than Jair Bolsonaro.

The article proceeds as follows: in the next section we present the ideational approach to populism as well as our main theoretical argument about the required co-occurrence of populist key elements. Next, we discuss the currently available measurement of populism and introduce the CSI. Then, we introduce the case selection as well as the documents and the measures used in our empirical analysis, before turning to the results. In the concluding section, we summarize our main findings and discuss some implications.

2 On the Co-Occurrence of Populist Key Elements

In academia, populism has long been a highly contested concept. Divergences over its usefulness and its essence have greatly complicated the emergence of
a widely accepted definition.4 Amongst others, the literature conceives populism as a discourse,5 an ideology,6 a (communication) style,7 and a political strategy.8

While it remains premature to conclude that scholars have reached a consensus, the so-called ‘ideational approach’ is currently widely used in the field today.9 This approach builds on the influential definition provided by Mudde (2004, 543) that views populism as a thin-centered ideology ‘that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups – “the pure people” versus the “corrupt elite”, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volante générale (general will) of the people’. In line with Mudde’s definition, Stanley (2008, 102) posits that populism contains distinct but interrelated elements: the existence of two homogeneous units of analysis, i.e., the people and the elite, the antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite, centered in the positive valorization of ‘the people’ and the denigration of the elite, and the idea of popular sovereignty.

Unlike thick-centered ideologies such as liberalism, socialism and nativism, populism as a thin-centered ideology includes a rather narrow set of ideas about society and the world. It nevertheless refers to a specific vision of democracy, which relies on the prevalence of the people over constitutional, institutional, and international rules. The populist vision of the government as the literal conception of the people rejects all of democracy’s checks and balances on the popular will.10 Moreover, populism includes the monolithic conceptualization of people and the elite.11 Populists view the people and the elite as two separate homogenous entities that have their own common interests.

9 Mudde, C. “Populism”.
and will. A ‘Manichaean outlook’ is another key feature of populism due to the moralistic understanding of political conflicts in terms of the good against the evil.\(^{12}\)

Defining populism in this minimal way and through the lens of a thin-centered ideology presents two major analytical advantages. First, this conceptualization allows for the analysis of populism of various stripes (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). This is crucial given that large comparative studies show that successful populist mobilizations occur over various spatio-temporal contexts and in quite different ideological forms (Mény and Surel, 2002; Newth, 2021). Without precluding the possibility of unconventional variants, the academic literature has, above all, drawn a basic distinction between inclusionary populism from the left and exclusionary populism from the right.\(^{13}\)

Inclusionary and exclusionary populisms stem from varying notions of ‘the people’. Populist actors from the left usually conceive of the people as a socio-economic category by emphasizing the moral opposition between the virtuous working class on the one hand and the oppressive representatives of capital on the other hand.\(^{14}\) In contrast, populists from the right define people in ethnic terms.

The second main advantage of using the ideational approach is that it has served as a basis for the development of empirical measures of populist discourse. A growing number of studies apply content analysis techniques. These empirical contributions rest on the ideational approach’s assumption that populism, as a thin-centered ideology, in fact appears visible in the discourse of political actors. In that sense, the ideational approach is compatible with discursive theories of populism.\(^{15}\) Indeed, its claim that populist ideology manifests itself in the political discourse of political actors has yielded a rich empirical literature of textual analyses that (more or less explicitly) builds on Mudde’s definition. Yet it needs to be highlighted that the ideational approach

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15 Mudde, “Populism.”
was opened by earlier currents of qualitative discursive approaches that can be traced back to some influential scholarly work.\textsuperscript{16}

Whereas the initial empirical contributions dealt with single country-contexts and used to be qualitative, the amount of comparative and quantitative work has rapidly increased in recent years. These initial contributions usually took a dichotomous approach that categorized political actors as populist or not. In contrast, later contributions based on quantitative methods tended to rely on continuous measures that analyzed the extent to which leaders and parties resort to populist rhetoric across time, space and ideological groups in text documents such as party manifestoes, press releases and speeches.\textsuperscript{17}

By relying on Giovanni Sartori’s idea of a minimal definition, according to which a concept should encompass only its necessary and jointly sufficient elements,\textsuperscript{18} it follows that the question of aggregation is crucial when it comes to measuring populism. To be sure, Mudde’s definition suggests that all key elements need to co-occur for a given political actor to qualify as a populist.

In their article, Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2013) explicitly addressed this important conceptual question by stating that the ‘core concepts represent the sufficient and necessary criteria for defining populism: all of them must be present in order to categorize a phenomenon as populist. Hence, actors or parties that employ only an anti-elitist rhetoric should not be

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Sartori, G. “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics.” \textit{American Political Science Review} 64 (4) (1970), 1033–1053.
\end{itemize}
categorized as populist. At the same time, discourses that defend the principle of popular sovereignty and the will of the people are not necessarily instances of populism.19

If populist key elements must be considered necessary and jointly sufficient, the absence of a given key element cannot be compensated by the presence of another one. A composite measure thus only indicates a populist ideology when all key elements exist in combination with one another. Hence, creating a measurement of populism requires employing a conditional logic as far as the key elements are concerned. In line with these theoretical considerations, some scholars have explicitly drawn attention to the aggregation of populist key elements by claiming that measures of populism need to refer to the extent to which the latter co-occur.20 To the best of our knowledge empirical content analyses seem to have left unaddressed this conditional logic so far, however.

3 A Conditional Measure of Populism

We have argued in the previous section that the aggregation issue is anything but a detail. Yet the existing scholarly literature seems to suffer from a major discrepancy between the theoretical conceptualization that considers populism to be a set of ideas the requires the co-occurrence of its key elements and the operational measurement in content analyses that basically neglects to mention, let alone to address this crucial question. It is precisely for this reason that we present in the following a new measure that accounts for the conditional aggregation of populist key elements.

Empirical studies have so far largely neglected the methodological question of how to aggregate these key elements into a composite indicator of populism and mostly rely on summary indices (SI) that add the indicators of the single key elements. With the use of the SI, however, not all key elements need to be present for a political actor to display positive values on the aggregate measure (and in terms of magnitude, the presence of a key element can compensate

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19 Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism", 151.
for the absence of another). In other words, the additive aggregation procedure does not account for incomplete populism, which is characterized by the absence of at least one populist key element. This is particularly important for content analyses given that previous research shows that some political actors tend to focus on a given populist key element such as people-centrism and anti-elitism.\(^{21}\) Hence, there is a particular risk that some political actors will mistakenly be identified as (at least moderately) populist, even though they do not rely on a complete populist discourse.\(^{22}\)

While we generally agree with the existing literature that populism is a matter of degree, an addition is only indicated in case all key elements are present. If this condition is not met, a given political actor should not be considered a populist. Let us now formally represent the aggregation rule. If \(E\) is the set of key elements, we define the conditional summary index (CSI) as follows:

\[
CSI = \begin{cases} 
\sum_{i \in E} E_i \quad & \text{if } \forall E > 0 \\
0 & \text{otherwise}
\end{cases}
\]

According to this simple and intuitive composite measure, the scores of the single populist key elements are summed up if each key element has positive values. Otherwise, the CSI is set to zero.

In order to achieve construct validity of this operationalization, it is necessary to provide empirical evidence that establishes that the CSI yields the desired difference when compared with the standard SI. One way to do so is by comparing the scores of both measures for political actors who are generally considered populist with those who are not. The proposed measurement can be considered superior if it consistently better distinguishes between these two types of actors than the standard SI aggregation. To test the CSI’s validity, we conduct a quantitative content analysis of campaign speeches given by candidates in the context of South American presidential elections from 2012 to 2018. The next section presents the main features of our empirical examination.

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\(^{21}\) Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, “Populism in Election Times”.

\(^{22}\) Marcos-Marne et al., “Populism and New Radical-Right Parties”.
4 Empirical Analysis

4.1 Case Selection

The focus on South America can be justified by the fact that it refers by many accounts to the world region with the richest populist tradition. From Getúlio Vargas (Brazil) and Juan Domingo Péron (Argentina) to the present, populist leaders regularly shape the politics of their countries. The first populist manifestations occurred between the 1930s and 1960s, followed by the neoliberal populist phase of the early 1990s. A third wave of populism began with Hugo Chávez’s 1998 win in the Venezuelan presidential election. In 2005, Evo Morales came to power in Bolivia, and one year later, Rafael Correa won the presidential election in Ecuador. Despite their differences, the voluminous academic literature considers these three leaders as the paradigmatic cases of the third wave of South American populism. In 2018, populism from the right made a spectacular comeback with the election of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency of Brazil. Even though he has received comparatively little attention from scholars so far, most of them basically agree that Jair Bolsonaro can be classified as a populist.

Our empirical analysis of the CI’s validity examines populism in the ten biggest South American democracies (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela) by focusing on presidential
elections. We chose this type of election because it is the most important one by far in the selected countries and extraordinarily high levels of political communication ensue. We include each country’s first presidential election starting from January 2012. As shown in Table 1, the first election took place in Venezuela (October 2012) and the last one took place in Peru (April 2016). To account for right-wing populism, we also include the 2018 Brazilian presidential elections, from which Jair Bolsonaro emerged victorious. The selected time frame thus enables to consider presumed populists from both the right and left sides of the political spectrum in the Latin American context. Choosing earlier years might overlook the emergence of new right-wing populist actors who have only recently appeared on the continent. For reasons of comparability, we restrict our analysis to the first rounds of voting. Second rounds of voting occurred in seven presidential elections (Argentina 2015, Brazil 2014, Brazil 2018, Colombia 2014, Chile 2013, Peru 2016 and Uruguay 2014).

4.2 Documents
This empirical analysis relies on campaign speeches. This form of communication is particularly suitable for populism because populist leaders typically seek to establish a direct bond with their mass following, especially during election campaigns. Although television\(^\text{26}\) and increasingly social media,\(^\text{27}\) are important vehicles of political communication, public speeches remain the most fundamental communication practice in political campaigns.\(^\text{28}\) This especially applies to presidential and semi-presidential systems, in which politics is highly personalized and campaigns are at least as focused on candidates as on parties.\(^\text{29}\) It is thus no coincidence that the literature focuses on analyzing populism through the speeches of political leaders in these systems.\(^\text{30}\)

For each of the eleven campaigns selected, we analyze the two candidates with the highest numbers of votes. Table 1 lists the names and ranking of these


candidates in chronological order based on the first round of voting. In total, this empirical analysis contains 88 speeches, that is, four speeches for each candidate. To provide a certain degree of consistency, we ensured that the first speech referred to the launching of the campaign and the fourth one to its closure. The second and the third speeches were given in the context of public meetings that took place during the campaign. We took the speeches from candidate websites and their YouTube channels. If we were unable to access the text version of the speeches, we transcribed selected video speeches. Spanish speakers and a Portuguese speaking person (in the case of the two Brazilian elections) transcribed the speeches.

Four native Spanish and Portuguese speakers conducted the coding work. In this analysis, the unit of coding refers to sentences. Their total number amounts to 9837, after the removal of very short statements (such as exclamations) and those made by other persons than the selected candidates.

### 4.3 Measures

We assume that the populist ideology of political actors becomes visible in political discourses.\(^{31}\) To empirically capture the extent of populism, we perform a quantitative content analysis of the selected campaign speeches. Let

\(^{31}\) Jagers and Walgrave, “Populism as political communication style”; Bernhard and Kriesi, “Populism in election times”.

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**Table 1**: Overview of selected presidential elections and candidates (first rounds of voting)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>First place</th>
<th>Second place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>7 Oct 2012</td>
<td>Hugo Chávez *</td>
<td>Henrique Capriles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>17 Feb 2013</td>
<td>Rafael Correa *</td>
<td>Guillermo Lasso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>21 Apr 2013</td>
<td>Horacio Cartes *</td>
<td>Efrain Alegre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>17 Nov 2013</td>
<td>Michelle Bachelet *</td>
<td>Evelyn Matthei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>25 May 2014</td>
<td>Oscar Ivan Zuluaga</td>
<td>Juan Manuel Santos *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>5 Oct 2014</td>
<td>Dilma Rousseff *</td>
<td>Aécio Neves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>12 Oct 2014</td>
<td>Evo Morales *</td>
<td>Samuel Doria Medina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>26 Oct 2014</td>
<td>Tabaré Vázquez *</td>
<td>Luis Lacalle Pou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>25 Oct 2015</td>
<td>Daniel Scioli</td>
<td>Mauricio Macri *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>10 Apr 2016</td>
<td>Keiko Fujimori</td>
<td>Pedro Pablo Kuczynski *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>7 Oct 2018</td>
<td>Jair Bolsonaro *</td>
<td>Fernando Haddad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: * stands for elected candidate
us now address the measurement of populism. Our indicators are based on
the definition proposed by Cas Mude, according to which populism refers to
an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homog-
enous and antagonistic groups – the ‘pure people’ versus the ‘corrupt elite’,
and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of
the people.\footnote{Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist”, 543.}

While this quantitative approach has invited an era of more systematic
research, the selection of the populist key elements and their operationaliza-
tion tend to vary from study to study. Many studies rely on two components:
ies often disregard a fourth key element of Mudde’s definition of populism,
namely, the antagonism between people and elites.\footnote{Exceptions include Bernhard, “Revisiting the Inclusion-Moderation Thesis on Radical Right Populism” as well as Meijers and Zaslove, “Measuring Populism in Political Parties”.}

To fully capture this definition, we select the following four populist key
elements: 1) people-centrism, 2) anti-elitism, 3) antagonism between people
and elites as well as 4) demands for popular sovereignty. For each key element,
we use a dichotomous indicator (PC, AE, ANT, and SOV) with the values ‘1’ or
‘0’. The coding took place at the level of the campaign speeches’ individual
sentences. We applied the following coding criteria: PC (people-centrism) is
coded as ‘1’ if a candidate portrays the people in a homogeneous manner. The
mere mention of the word ‘people’ is not sufficient to be coded as ‘1’. This code
only applies if a candidate presented the people or equivalents (e.g., ‘the popu-
lation’ or ‘the sovereign’) as a unitary entity. For AE (ant-elitism), we relied on
similar instructions. Those sentences were coded as ‘1’ if candidates criticized
political, economic, cultural or other elite actors as a whole (such as the entire
business community, the media or international organizations). In contrast to
this encompassing representation of elites, the mention of single actors such
as the incumbent president or the party in power was not enough to obtain
the code ‘1’. Regarding ANT, our measure of antagonism, those sentences were
coded as ‘1’ in which candidates described the relationship between the peo-
ple and elites as a conflict or a clash of interest between these two groups.
Finally, our indicator on popular sovereignty includes accounts for two types

\footnotetext{Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist”, 543.}
\footnotetext{Bernhard and Kriesi, “Populism in Election Times”; March, “Left and Right Populism Compared”.}
\footnotetext{Exceptions include Bernhard, “Revisiting the Inclusion-Moderation Thesis on Radical Right Populism” as well as Meijers and Zaslove, “Measuring Populism in Political Parties”.}
of statements. A given sentence was given a ‘1’ as soon as a candidate asked for more power to the people or cautioned against the loss of people’s power. Table A1 in the appendix provides an overview of the applied coding instructions.

Inter-coder reliability tests conducted with two additional native speakers produced very satisfactory results. For both subsamples in Spanish (8 speeches) and Portuguese (4 speeches), Cohens’ Kappa amounted respectively to 0.94 and 0.86 across the four indicators. On the level of single indicators, this figure ranged from 0.82 (PC in Portuguese) to 0.98 (ANT in Spanish). For the sakes of both transparency and replicability, the selected speeches as well as the coding of each sentence are made available to interested scholars via an academic repository.

5 Results

Table 2 provides an overview of the levels of populism displayed by the 22 selected candidates in their campaign speeches. The mean values at the bottom of the table show that people-centrism (PC) is the most prevalent indicator. On average, a candidate portrayed the people as a homogeneous entity in 3.5 percent of the included sentences. Anti-elitist appeals (AE) were the second most used indicator (1.4 percent). The antagonistic representation of people and elites (ANT) in 0.4 percent of sentences and calls for popular sovereignty (PS) in 0.2 percent of sentences occurred much less frequently. Consequently, the SI of these four indicators amounts to an average of 5.4 percent.

Table 2 lists the candidates by decreasing SI values. Seven of them prove to have above average populist scores. Hugo Chávez (18.0 percent), Rafael Correa (17.7 percent) and Evo Morales (15.7 percent) reach the highest levels. In addition to these three paradigmatic populists from the Latin American radical left, it is striking that Henrique Capriles, Chávez main opponent in 2012, also obtains a double-digit value (12.2 percent). Next in line are Fernando Haddad (7.9 percent) and Jair Bolsonaro (6.2 percent), who competed against each other in the 2018 Brazilian presidential election, followed by Efrain Alegre (5.8 percent) from Paraguay. Among the remaining candidates, seven are somewhat below average (Horacio Cartes, Tabaré Vázquez, Daniel Scioli, Dilma Rousseff, Keiko Fujimori, Aécio Neves and Samuel Doria Medina), three prove to be very low (Luis Lacalle Pou, Guillermo Lasso and Michelle Bachelet), while five do not show any indication of populism (Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, Mauricio Macri, Evelyn Matthei, Juan Manuel Santos and Oscar Ivan Zuluaga).

As shown in Table 2, only four candidates possess all four populist key elements, however: Hugo Chávez, Rafael Correa, Evo Morales, and Jair Bolsonaro.
### Table 2: Scores of populist indicators by candidate (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Election</th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>AE</th>
<th>ANT</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>CSI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hugo Chávez</td>
<td>Venezuela 2012</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafael Correa</td>
<td>Ecuador 2013</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evo Morales</td>
<td>Bolivia 2014</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrique Capriles</td>
<td>Venezuela 2012</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando Haddad</td>
<td>Brazil 2018</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jair Bolsonaro</td>
<td>Brazil 2018</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efraín Alegre</td>
<td>Paraguay 2013</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horacio Cartes</td>
<td>Paraguay 2013</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabaré Vázquez</td>
<td>Uruguay 2014</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Scioli</td>
<td>Argentina 2015</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilma Rousseff</td>
<td>Brazil 2014</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aécio Neves</td>
<td>Brazil 2014</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keiko Fujimori</td>
<td>Peru 2016</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Doria Medina</td>
<td>Bolivia 2014</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Lacalle Pou</td>
<td>Uruguay 2014</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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<td>Guillermo Lasso</td>
<td>Ecuador 2013</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Bachelet</td>
<td>Chile 2013</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro Pablo Kuczynski</td>
<td>Peru 2016</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauricio Macri</td>
<td>Argentina 2015</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn Matthei</td>
<td>Chile 2013</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Manuel Santos</td>
<td>Colombia 2014</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar Ivan Zuluaga</td>
<td>Colombia 2014</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** PC stands for people-centrism, AE for anti-elitism, ANT for antagonism between people and elites, PS for calls for popular sovereignty, SI for summary index and CSI for conditional summary index.

Given the conditionality of the key elements previously developed in the theoretical argument, the remaining candidates cannot be considered populist and therefore receive a 0 on the CSI.

Most importantly, the fact that the candidates who the literature consistently identifies as populist obtain positive values suggests that the CSI measurement can successfully discriminate between populists and non-populists. Yet the former, this empirical analysis reveals large differences in terms of magnitude. Indeed, Jair Bolsonaro is shown to resort to populist rhetoric to a much lesser extent (6.2 percent) than do Hugo Chávez (18.0 percent), Rafael Correa (17.7 percent) and Evo Morales (15.7 percent).
In other words, employing the CSI greatly reduces the number of (at least somewhat) populist candidates. Due to the conditional requirement, 13 out of 17 candidates who displayed values higher than 0 under the SI fail to do so under the alternative composite measure. Among these candidates, those three who scored above average on the SI prove to be especially interesting. Table 2 shows that Henrique Capriles, Fernando Haddad, and Efrain Alegre share a reliance on a specific form of incomplete populist discourse. More specifically, all three limit themselves to people-related appeals (i.e., people-centrism and popular sovereignty) and refrain from employing anti-elitist and antagonist statements between the people and elites. If populism is understood as a phenomenon that requires the presence of some necessary components, it is not possible to compensate some absent components for others. Accordingly, scholars shall not label such political actors as populist.

Finally, it is worth noting that the same conclusion in terms of discrimination between populists and non-populists arises when relying on an alternative aggregation procedure that occurs at the level of single speeches (as opposed to lumping the four selected speeches per candidate together). This also holds true when using more restrictive measures for people-centrism and anti-elitism, which require explicit positive attributes of the homogeneous people (and equivalents) and similarly explicit negative attributes of encompassing elite actors.

6 Conclusion

In recent years, scholars have increasingly described and analyzed sometimes very heterogeneous populist politicians, parties and movements across time and space. This article has aimed to contribute to the voluminous literature on populism by focusing on the neglected question of how to aggregate single key elements of populism (such as people-centrism, anti-elitism antagonism between people and elites as well as demands for popular sovereignty) into composite measures. Following the theoretical considerations of the ideational approach, we have argued that these elements need to co-occur for an

actor to be considered as a populist. Accordingly, measures of populism need to be in line with this conditionality requirement. Strikingly enough, this has hardly been the case in the scholarly literature so far. The standard practice of content analyses relies on SI that can at least potentially be regarded as flawed, as such measures can yield positive values for politicians, parties and movements who rely on incomplete populism.

To avoid such ‘false positives’ (i.e., political actors whose rhetoric is restricted to single populist key elements), we have proposed a simple and intuitive CSI that only sums up the scores of populist key elements if all elements are present. Our empirical illustration focused on the South American context and a quantitative content analysis of campaign speeches given by 22 candidates in the context of eleven presidential elections from 2012 to 2018. Through this analysis, we have shown that the CSI is able to differentiate between populist and non-populist candidates given that only candidates that the academic literature consistently describes as populists (i.e., Hugo Chávez, Rafael Correa, Evo Morales from the left as well as Jair Bolsonaro from the right) obtained scores higher than zero. This finding suggests that the CSI serves as a promising aggregation procedure. Among the candidates in our sample whose speeches were characterized by incomplete populism, most resorted to people-related appeals in general and to people-centrism in particular. Yet despite this finding it is conceivable that merely anti-elitist rhetoric will emerge from empirical analyses that will take into account other documents, actors and spatio-temporal contexts. In any case, such a communication pattern should not be classified as populist neither.

In terms of magnitude, we have established that Hugo Chávez, Rafael Correa and Evo Morales more frequently rely on populist appeals than Jair Bolsonaro. The fact that populism from the left attains higher CSI scores may not come as a surprise to scholars working on contemporary Latin America. However, we recognize that it remains to be seen whether Jair Bolsonaro employed a coherent populist discourse in the 2022 Brazilian presidential election, given that he ran as an incumbent. This position in the competition especially prompts the question of his reliance on anti-elitist appeals. In any case, the three populist presidents from the left suggest that such appeals are not necessarily restricted to challengers. Indeed, Hugo Chávez, Rafael Correa and Evo Morales have extensively mobilized against the ‘oligarchy’ at the domestic level (e.g., the bourgeoisie, business, and financial institutions) and abroad (e.g., the United States and international financial institutions) in the campaign speeches we selected for our analysis. In the case of a right-wing populist in power, anti-elitist appeals may instead be directed at cultural actors such as intellectuals and the media.
More generally, we would like to highlight that the conditional measurement we have adopted here is not confined to ideational approaches to populism nor to quantitative analyses. Once it is accepted that at least two populist key elements need to co-occur for a political actor to be considered a populist, scholars must pay attention to this conditionality their empirical endeavors.

Appendix

Table A1 Overview of the coding criteria by indicator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Instructions for coding a given sentence as ‘1’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peoplecentrism (PC)</td>
<td>The speaker describes the people (including synonyms, and functional equivalents) as a homogeneous unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-elitism (AE)</td>
<td>The speaker criticizes elite actors (such as political, economic, and cultural elites) as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antagonism (ANT)</td>
<td>The speaker describes the relationship between the people and elites as a conflict or a clash of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular sovereignty (PS)</td>
<td>The speaker calls for more power to the people or opposes the loss of people’s power.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>