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**“Beloved homeland, Brazil!”:  
the relationship between populism and nationalism in Bolsonaro’s speeches**

**versão corrigida**

**André Viola**

São Paulo  
2023

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Orientador: Prof. Dr. Paolo Ricci

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**ENTREGA DO EXEMPLAR CORRIGIDO DA DISSERTAÇÃO/TESE**

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Nos termos da legislação vigente, declaro **ESTAR CIENTE** do conteúdo deste **EXEMPLAR CORRIGIDO** elaborado em atenção às sugestões dos membros da comissão Julgadora na sessão de defesa do trabalho, manifestando-me **plenamente favorável** ao seu encaminhamento ao Sistema Janus e publicação no **Portal Digital de Teses da USP**.

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*(Assinatura do (a) orientador (a))*

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*“Senhor Antão de Sousa de Meneses,  
Quem sobe a alto lugar, que não merece,  
Homem sobe, asno vai, burro parece,  
Que o subir é desgraça muitas vezes.*

*A fortunilha autora de entremezes  
Transpõe em burro o Herói, que indigno cresce  
Desanda a roda, e logo o homem desce,  
Que é discreta a fortuna em seus reveses.*

*Homem (sei eu) que foi Vossenhoria,  
Quando o pisava da fortuna a Roda,  
Burro foi ao subir tão alto clima.  
Pois vá descendo do alto, onde jazia,  
Verá, quanto melhor se lhe acomoda  
Ser home em baixo, do que burro em cima.”*

**(Gregório de Mattos Guerra, “À despedida do mau governo que fez o governador da Bahia”, 1640)**

*“O terceiro mundo vai explodir! Quem tiver de sapato não sobra”*  
**(Rogério Sganzerla, “O Bandido da Luz Vermelha”, 1968)**

*“L’indifferenza è il peso morto della storia. E’ la palla di piombo per il novatore, è la materia inerte in cui affogano spesso gli entusiasmi più splendenti, è la palude che recinge la vecchia città e la difende meglio delle mura più salde, meglio dei petti dei suoi guerrieri, perché inghiottisce nei suoi gorghi limosi gli assalitori, e li decima e li scora e qualche volta li fa desistere dall’impresa eroica.*

*L’indifferenza opera potentemente nella storia. Opera passivamente, ma opera.”*  
**(Antonio Gramsci, “Gli indifferenti” tratto dalla rivista “La città futura”, 1917)**

## **Abstract**

What is the relationship between nationalism and populism? The term “populism” as an explanatory category and as an empirical concept has been revisited within the scope of Political Science, which has converged to a minimalist definition centered on the opposition between a virtuous people and a corrupt elite (Mudde, 2007). In turn, “nationalism” is a concept much discussed in several areas of knowledge, including anthropology, history, and political science itself, referring in its main version to the nation as a community limited territorially and in time, as opposed to other communities (Anderson, 2004). More recently, some scholars have observed that both concepts tend to overlap, thus generating a theoretical and empirical problem insofar as populism is characterized by nationalist elements (Brubaker, 2020). This research has as its main objective to clarify the relationship between populism and nationalism in the official speeches of President Bolsonaro, theoretically and empirically contributing to the analysis of the issue related to the overlap between these two concepts. The emphasis placed on the analysis of President Bolsonaro's speech will also allow us to clarify whether the president should be characterized as populist, nationalist, both or neither.

Keywords: Populism; Nationalism; Authoritarianism; Democracy.

## **Resumo**

Qual a relação entre nacionalismo e populismo? O termo “populismo” como categoria explicativa e como conceito empírico tem sido revisitado no âmbito da Ciência Política internacional que convergiu para uma definição minimalista centrada na oposição entre um virtuoso povo e uma elite corrupta. (Mudde, 2007). Por sua vez, “nacionalismo” é um conceito muito discutido em diversas áreas do conhecimento compreendendo antropologia, história e a própria ciência política, referindo-se em sua versão principal à nação como comunidade limitada territorialmente e no tempo, em oposição a outras comunidades (Anderson, 2004). Mais recentemente, alguns estudiosos têm observado que ambos os conceitos tendem a se sobrepor, gerando, assim, um problema teórico e empírico na medida em que o populismo se caracteriza por elementos nacionalistas (Brubaker, 2020). Essa pesquisa tem como objetivo principal clarear a relação entre populismo e nacionalismo nos discursos oficiais do presidente Bolsonaro, contribuindo teórica e empiricamente para a análise da questão relativa à sobreposição entre estes dois conceitos. A ênfase posta na análise do discurso do Presidente Bolsonaro nós permitirá também esclarecer se o presidente deve ser caracterizado como populista, nacionalista, ambos ou nenhum deles.

**Palavras-Chave:** Populismo; Nacionalismo; Autoritarismo; Democracia.

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## Introduction

In his book *Identity* (2018), Francis Fukuyama argues that the platonic concept of “*Thymos*” (*θυμός*), *i.e.*, “the part of the soul that craves for recognition or dignity” is the key concept to understand politics nowadays. The concept is first found in Plato's *Republic* and represents what would be “the third part of the soul”, beside “reason” and “appetite”, according to the tripartite division of the soul made by Socrates. While “reason” made us humans and “appetite” made us animals, “*thymos*” (often translated as “spirit” or “passion”) lies somewhere in between.

This concept, however, represents only one aspect of our modern idea of “Identity”, which is also based on the distinction between the inner and the outer self and the subsequent desire for moral evaluation of the inner self over society, and also on the concept of “dignity”, according to which we, as human beings, have the capacity of choice, making us equal and transforming “recognition” from a private quest to a political project (Fukuyama, 2018).

The idea that we as human beings seek recognition and dignity is at the core of two forces driving the current political arena: Populism and Nationalism. In a way, we can say that the 2018 Brazilian Presidential Election was strongly marked by these two ideas and that the winner, Jair Bolsonaro, was able to channel them to his favor, granting him the victory.

The spectacularization<sup>1</sup> and the extensive covering by the media of the corruption scandals and the operation “Car Wash” (“Operação Lava Jato”) increased a feeling of distrust in the political class among the general population, who felt disrespected and betrayed<sup>2</sup> (Renno, 2020; Fuks et al. 2020), clearing the way for a populist anti-establishment discourse. The populist and anti-establishment discourse brings with it nationalism, since most of the populist claims made in the past implied some sort of national treason by the left-leaning government of the PT (the Workers Party), who supposedly favored countries and

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<sup>1</sup> We just have to think of the elevation to celebrity status of various names related to the “Operation Car Wash”, such as the former Judge Sergio Fernando Moro, the former Federal Prosecutor Deltan Martinazzo Dallagnol and even the former Federal Police Officer Newton Hidenori Ishii (also known as “Japonês da Federal”/“the Japanese of the Federal Police”) All of them were even honored with songs and carnival marches during the apex of the operation. The fact that the operation was the inspiration for the series “The Mechanism”(2018) by José Padilha is also a proof of this spectacularization.

<sup>2</sup> Vannucci (2009) presents an interesting analysis on how corruption inquiries (in his case the “Mani Pulite” operation in Italy) can have as a legacy the escalation of tensions in the political and judicial arenas.

organizations belonging to the *São Paulo Forum* (“*Foro de São Paulo*”), such as Cuba and Venezuela, over Brazil itself.

The political turmoil, marked by a strong distrust towards the old political establishment (Hunter, & Power, 2019), economic anxiety due to commodity price shocks (Marcolin, 2021), the impeachment of former president Dilma Rousseff and the following Michel Temer presidency, where a series of unpopular political and economic reforms took place, and the unsolved legacy of an authoritarian past,<sup>3</sup> facilitated the populist leader to assume the role of a redeemer, unifying the masses with his charisma. Hence, as Urbinati (2019) states, “redemption, charisma and unification go hand in hand, and they take us to the heart of the populist leader” (Urbinati, 2019, pg.119).

As a matter of fact, Brazil’s populist tradition does not begin with Bolsonaro. It goes back to the first government of Getulio Vargas, the president that started a personalist dictatorship under the pretext of preventing a communist insurrection and went down in history as “The Father of the Poor” due to his economic reforms that led to improvements in the quality of life of the working class (Levine, 2005). Politicians such as Adhemar de Barros, governor of the São Paulo State, Miguel Arraes, governor of Pernambuco, and Jânio Quadros are also worth mentioning.

More recently, the presidencies of Collor de Mello and Lula are regarded by many scholars as the most recent populist experiences in Brazil after the democratization process that took place after the end of the Military Regime, which ruled the country from 1964 to 1985 (de la Torre, 2017, Perruci, 1995; Ricci, Izumi & Moreira, 2021; Marques & Mendes, 2017), although the classification of the latter as populist is still controversial, considering that, on the one hand, some scholars consider that he avoids an explicit dualism between the people and the elite in his speeches, preferring not to directly label groups related to the elite as “evil” (Grigera, 2017; Hawkins 2009; Hunter & Power, 2006) while, on the other hand, others defend that there is indeed an opposition between the rich and the poor in Lula’s speeches (Ricci et al., 2021).

What, then, makes the Bolsonaro presidency so interesting? It is interesting because it inserts itself in a new political *Zeitgeist* in which populist leaders are able to achieve power

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<sup>3</sup> The right-wing Military Dictatorship that ruled the country from 1964-85 had a strong influence in the political discourse that led Bolsonaro to power, despite some studies indicating that citizens socialized under such regimes are less likely to support far-right parties (Frantzeskakis & Sato, 2020)

through elections in almost every corner of the world, combining populist and nationalist views in their platforms in order to conquer the disappointed voters of their respective countries. From Donald Trump in the US and Órban in Hungary to Yoon Suk-yeol in South Korea and Duterte in the Philippines (and, of course, Bolsonaro in Brazil), these new leaders are found in every corner of the planet, no matter how rich or poor the nation is.

Another point of interest in this research is to analyze how a populist leader (Bolsonaro) of this “new populist wave” (Foa and Mounk, 2019) would behave once elected. The fact that he holds an elected position means that the populist rhetoric that brought him to power cannot be easily maintained considering that he is now part of the *establishment*<sup>4</sup> (Tamaki, 2022).

In this regard, Nadia Urbinati (2019) presents an interesting account of the power that reaching an elected position has to corrupt the populist leader, mobilizing the Florentine philosopher and diplomat Niccolò Machiavelli<sup>5</sup>.

According to Urbinati, Machiavelli’s basic assumption was that “the exercise of power goes hand in hand with the development of morally negative qualities” (Urbinati, 2019, p. 60), hence “the drive to achieve and preserve power [...] is the source of corruption” (Urbinati, 2019, p. 60). Taking this view into account, the populist leader should do everything possible to keep his façade of a man of the people and “outsider”, for “the people are variable; to convince them of a thing is easy; to hold them to that conviction is hard”<sup>6</sup> (Machiavelli, Book VI, 6).

However, it is important to stress that people do not seek a “saint” but rather someone they can relate to and identify with. The true issue is the “exercise of power”, characterizing a strong sense of antipolitics (Urbinati, 2019, pg.41). Leaders like Silvio Berlusconi in Italy

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to notice, however, that Bolsonaro is by no means new in the political arena, considering that prior to the presidency he was elected Councillor at the Municipal Chamber of Rio de Janeiro in 1988 and had held elected positions at the Chamber of Deputies for the Rio de Janeiro state since 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Mobilizing Machiavelli in order to analyze populism can be a little tricky considering that according to some authors (McCormick, 2005) he argues that the people should mistrust political elites, thus defending a “ferocious populism” according to which the people would control the elite. This is shown with more detail in Machiavelli’s *Discorsi*, where he thinks about mechanisms for the people to control the elites (such as the tribune) based on the political experience of the Roman Republic.

<sup>6</sup> “[...] la natura de’ populi è varia; ed é facile a persuadere loro una cosa, ma é difficile fermarli in quella persuasione”.

and Alberto Fujimori in Peru were able to maintain high popularity throughout their tenure in power exactly because they kept this link with the people. Bolsonaro tries to do so by posting photos and videos of him that depict him as an “every man”, wearing soccer shirts and sandals while eating the breakfast of the every man and sporadically appealing to memes in his social networks.<sup>7</sup>

Nationalism also played an important role in his election. Throughout his campaign, the patriotic and nationalist elements in his speeches were even more important than populism, the State and the Nation being more important than “the people” (Tamaki & Fuks, 2020).

Nationalism was also an important force during his term. Among the many institutions that he tried to monopolize during his first year of government was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, naming the diplomat Ernesto Araújo as his first Minister of Foreign Affairs. Araújo’s ideas are exposed in his article “*Trump and the West*” (2017), where he proposes the idea that Trump defends a view of the so-called “West” not based on capitalism and liberal democracy, but rather on the rescue of “Western” History, Culture, and a symbolic past.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, according to Araújo’s view, Trump’s cosmology has its origins in a long intellectual tradition that conceives Nationalism as indissociable from the essence of the “West”. (Araújo, 2017)

In another article entitled “*Now we do*” (2019),<sup>9</sup> published when he was already in charge of Itamaraty,<sup>10</sup> Araújo defends that, due to the action of a triad composed by Olavo de Carvalho, the Operation Car Wash and Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil was experiencing a “political and spiritual rebirth” after the break with the supposed “thoroughly totalitarian enterprise” of domination of political institutions by the Workers Party (PT) (Araújo, 2019).

The rise in politics of nationalist and anti-globalist individuals would mark this rebirth. In Araújo’s words: “in Brazil (at least), nationalism became the vehicle of faith, faith became

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<sup>7</sup> In this aspect he is closely related to his Italian counterpart, Matteo Salvini.

<sup>8</sup> Some authors offer interesting critiques of this concept of “Western Civilization”, considering it to be a myth and a political ideology. Example of these critiques can be found in Kwame Anthony Appiah’s book “*The Lies that Bind: Rethinking Identity*” (2018) and Enrico Ferri’s book “*The Myth of Western Civilization: The West as an Ideological Category and Political Myth*” (2020)

<sup>9</sup> It was published in Portuguese with the title “*Agora falamos*”

<sup>10</sup> Short for Brazil’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs

the catalyst for nationalism, and they both have ignited an exhilarating wave of freedom and possibilities” (Araújo, 2019).

Therefore, the concept of Nationalism is at the very core of Bolsonaro's government and must be included in the analysis of his speeches. In order to have a better understanding of Bolsonaro's political discourse, it can be helpful to take a look at the tripartite division International Relations scholars have suggested to characterize his Political base (and, hence, the Political forces which support him). This scholarship argues that his support base is divided into three parts: first, there is the “ideological” or “Olavist” wing, second, there is the Military and, lastly, there are the economic sectors that have supported him (agribusiness, libertarians, etc.) (Spektor, 2019, Schutte et al., 2020).

This work aims to clarify the relationship between Nationalism and Populism in Bolsonaro's official speeches during his presidency. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will be presenting what the literature says about Populism, Nationalism, and the relationship between them.

My findings are based on gathering and reading all the official speeches delivered by Bolsonaro during the first three years of his presidential term (2019-2021). The database used in this research is composed of 495 speeches.

This dissertation is separated into two parts: firstly, I review the state-of-the-art literature on Populism and Nationalism. Secondly, I analyze the speeches. This latter part is divided into a quantitative and a qualitative section.

The quantitative part will focus on the number of Populist and Nationalist speeches per month, showing in which situations Bolsonaro was more populist/nationalist and whether these concepts intermingle.

In the qualitative part, in turn, I will take a closer look at important aspects of his communication, such as how Bolsonaro mobilizes populism and nationalism. The examples given will be presented together with his Foreign Policy attitudes in order to show how these concepts are put into action based on the preliminary reading of the speeches delivered between 2019 and 2021.

After showing the results, I will present my conclusion, where I summarize the findings.

## 1. Populism and Nationalism: theoretical and empirical interpretations

Within the human sciences, it can be difficult to reach a consensus about the definition of some of its concepts (Goerz, 2006). If, in the natural sciences, there is little doubt about what constitutes a proton or a cell, in the human sciences there is an extensive debate about how to define its concepts.

One of the main reasons for this difficulty is the fact that concepts in the humanities can have very different meanings depending on the intentions of the author who uses them. Many political theorists have discussed the polysemy of concepts, specifically in the realm of politics. As early as in the 18th century, John Locke denounced what he called “the abuse of words” (Locke, 1998), *i.e.*, the improper use of political terms. This terminology was later adopted by French Revolutionaries when they wanted to accuse an opponent of abusing political language as “*l’abus des mots*” (Ritcher, 2005; Turchetti, 2006).

With this in mind, we shall proceed to the proper definition of the two concepts used in this dissertation: Populism and Nationalism. Both concepts share an “us vs them” discursive distinction, which establishes inclusions and exclusions in their discursive practices that directly limit and differentiate the speaker from “the other” (e.g., “the corrupt elite” and “the pure people”, “the nation” and “the others”). According to Kosseleck, this distinction is essential for the way these concepts constitute political agency, according to Kosseleck:

A political or social agency is first constituted through concepts by means of which it circumscribes itself and hence excludes others, and therefore, by means of which it defines itself. [...] Concepts are needed within which the group can recognize and define itself if it wishes to present itself as a functioning agency.” (KOSSELLECK, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, 2004, p. 155-156)

The two sub-chapters will deal in more detail with the definition of each concept, and with the reasons why they are not the same despite sharing this common “asymmetric” standpoint.

## 1.1 Populism Literature Review

According to Urbinati (2014), we can trace the historical origins of the populist phenomenon to the “demagoguery” of Ancient Politics. There are many examples of such phenomenon throughout history, one of them being Cleon of Athens in the context of the Peloponnesian Wars. Aristotle pointed out his bad manners when conducting speeches, stating that:

[He] was the first who shouted on the public platform, who used abusive language and who spoke with his cloak girt about him, while all the others used to speak in proper dress and manner. (ARISTOTLE, Constitution of Athens, apud CEASER, 2010, p.89)

Moreover, according to Thucydides, “he was the most violent of the citizens, and at that time exercised by far the greatest influence over the people” (THUCYDIDES, III, 36).

The concept of populism as we know it, however, comes from the Latin word “Populus”, which in the Roman Republic marked the opposition between the destitute plebs and the patricians, despite the fact that both groups shared the sovereign power of the republic (Urbinati, 2014).

Etymology aside, the origins of the populist phenomenon are subject to historical debate. Some authors argue that the concept of populism is already present in ancient Rome with Julius Caesar’s rhetoric and his special relationship with the Roman people (particularly the plebs), which would later be emulated by other historical figures such as Napoleon Bonaparte (Canfora, 2006). Others point out a defense of populism in Machiavelli’s historical analysis of the Roman Republic and Renaissance Italy with his description of the quarrel between the people “who don't want to be oppressed” and the elite, who “want to dominate them” (Vatter, 2012; McCormick, 2005; McCormick, 2011; Urbinati, 2014).

Despite these considerations, current scholarship on the phenomenon considers the 19th century as the moment when populism, as we understand the term nowadays, began. More specifically, populism as a historical phenomenon is understood as having its roots in 19th century Russia and the United States and is usually divided into three categories: classical populism (*e.g.*, Vargas and Perón), neoliberal populism (*e.g.*, Fujimori, Berlusconi,



Collor and Yeltsin) and the neoclassical populism, which can be both right-wing (e.g., Bolsonaro, Trump, Erdogan, Kaczynski and Orbán) and left-wing (e.g., Chávez, Morales, Kirchner and Tsipras) (Finchelstein, 2020).

The interpreters of the first phase focus on the centrality of the Weberian charisma certain politicians exercised towards a mass encompassing urban sectors and rural workers. These interpreters also emphasize the asymmetrical relationship between the leader and the masses, with the leader subjecting, , manipulating and co-opting the masses (Weffort, 1978).

During this period the governments of Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina and Getúlio Vargas in Brazil stand out as the main examples of “classical populism”. In Brazil we can also cite the names of Adhemar de Barros and Jânio Quadros, both having prosperous political careers until the Military *coup d'état* in 1964 (Gomes, 2001) that led to the “collapse” of the old political regime, which was marked by an unstable and contradictory compromise between “the bourgeoisie” and “the masses”<sup>11</sup> (Ianni, 1968).

When writing about Populism in Brazil’s Third Republic, the interpretations of Francisco Weffort and Octávio Ianni stand out. Both authors shared a reading of Brazil’s “Populist Republic” (1945-1964) heavily influenced by Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) since they were trained as Marxists during their participation in the so-called “*Seminário Marx*”<sup>12</sup>.

In his classic work, *O populismo na política brasileira* (1968)<sup>13</sup> Francisco Weffort turns the charisma of the leader and the unified mass into two fundamental aspects of his version of populism. According to this argument, populism is a theory of social relations, incorporating other theories such as the modernization theory.

The interpretations of both Octávio Ianni and Francisco Weffort were specifically suited to the analysis of the causes for the military *coup d'état* that took place in 1964 and took into account the historical context that preceded it, namely the so-called “Populist Democracy” in

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<sup>11</sup> Hence the title of Ianni’s book “*O colapso do Populismo no Brasil*” (1968) (“*The collapse of Populism in Brasil*”)

<sup>12</sup> “*Seminário Marx*” (Marx Seminary) was a multidisciplinary study group organized by professors and students at the University of São Paulo in the 1950s, with the goal of discussing the works of Karl Marx. It was founded by the philosopher José Arthur Gianotti, the sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso and the historian Fernando Antonio Novais.

<sup>13</sup> “Populism in Brazilian Politics”

Brazil, which was based on the “dissolution” of the rural oligarchy that had hogged Brazilian politics during the First Republic (1889-1930) and the establishment of a “compromise” between the rural and urban sector, thus creating a situation where neither group had exclusive political power and the State put itself over them. Hence, the populist leader would be, as Weffort (1978) puts it, “the personification of the State”, having a direct relationship with the masses.

For these authors, the populist dynamic allowed the first incorporation of the masses into the economic and political life of the country. According to Ianni (1968) the masses “were entering the power structures legitimized by populism”.

Until then, in Brazil, the citizen was seen more as a subject deeply dependent on the clientelist relationships that dominated the countryside (“coronelismo”). This affected voter turnout: according to Victor Nunes Leal (2012), the voter was dependent on the coronel’s action and his electoral behavior was only influenced by local dynamics. Francisco Weffort challenges this view by stating that, while “coronelismo” represents a form of power domination that acts at the local level, populism “is, in essence, the exaltation of public power; it is the State putting itself in direct contact with the desired image of the State through the leader”, and, moreover, it would express an “exaltation of a person in which this person appears as the desired image of the State” (Weffort, 1978, p.28, translation by the author).

This interpretation was heavily influenced by the works of two prominent Italian-Argentinian sociologists: Gino Germani and Torcuato Di Tella. In Germani’s books, “*Clases Populares y Democracia Representativa en América Latina*” (1962)<sup>14</sup> and “*Política y sociedad en una época de transición*” (1971)<sup>15</sup>, he analyzes society through the lens of Social Relations Theory, which takes into account the influence of the urban class and the modernization of social structures. In Germani’s view, populism was a mere period of transition between old and modern societies, which would eventually disappear with the maturation of the modernization of social structures brought by industrialization.

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<sup>14</sup> “Popular classes and Representative Democracy in Latin America”

<sup>15</sup> “Politics and Society in a Period of Transition”

Di Tella's book "*Populismo y reforma en América Latina*" (1965)<sup>16</sup> argues that populism is a movement typical of developing countries based on urban masses and, despite its negative connotations, it has a strong potential for social change due to its usual *anti-status quo* stance.

This first populism is also characterized by its sensitivity to the issue of economic development and redistribution to please the masses (thus, defending state interventionism). This approach to politics gained appeal because, at that time, societies were marked by strong inequality, being based on domination structures, and politicians often segregated an important part of its population, preventing them from having a say in the political arena (de la Torre, 2017).

The second populist wave (also known as "neoliberal populism") represents a radical change in the history of populism. If classical populism was characterized by strong state interventionism and redistributive policies directed to the underprivileged masses, neoliberal populism is characterized by an anti-state discourse, seeking to downsize the state.

According to the literature, leaders such as Alberto Fujimori, Fernando Collor de Mello, Carlos Menem, Abdalá Bucaram, Boris Yeltsin and Lech Walesa would be the main examples of such a wave (Wyland, 1999; De La Torre, 1999; Crabtree, 2000). This populist strand was particularly strong during the nineties in Latin America and Eastern Europe, in a context of democratization that followed the end of many civil-military dictatorships in the former and one of political and economic turmoil caused by the end of the Soviet Union and the iron curtain in the latter.

It is from this institutional fragmentation and deep economic crisis that the neoliberal populist leader arose and gained strength. For some, the success of Latin American neo-populism can be explained by the conjunction of fluid party systems and a directly elected presidency which in turn busts its leadership (Weyland, 1999).

Some of these leaders, however, have an ambiguous position in the political spectrum. For example, Fujimori adopted neoliberalism circumstantially and was not seen as a right-wing politician before his ascension to the presidency (Braga, 2021; Murakami, 2012).

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<sup>16</sup> "*Populism and Reform in Latin America*"

More recently, there is a third wave of populist leaders, marked by political leaders that increase their powers and use them to take over political institutions, creating divisions in society through their bellicose speeches.

Notable names related to this wave are Donald Trump in the US, Yoon Suk-yeol in South Korea, Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, Viktor Orban in Hungary, Andrzej Duda in Poland, Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Cristina Kirchner in Argentina. It is important to note that such leaders belong both to the right and to the left of the political spectrum. Right-wing populists are characterized by an exclusionary attitude, that is, they do not accept certain groups in their notion of “the people” (such as foreigners and immigrants). Left-wing populists, on the other hand, are characterized by a more inclusive approach, and their leaders defend policies in favor of the unprivileged part of society at the expense of the elites (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013).

The emphasis on historical phases is useful in order to represent the phenomenon, but it is unable to provide a clear vision of what populism itself is. In this sense, any analytic proposal seeking to test a hypothesis or to interpret the phenomenon needs, first of all, to clarify the concept itself. What do we understand as populism? In the literature, populism is a disputed term.

In Brazil, there was some consensus in abandoning this interpretation of populism as an analytic category (Gomes, 1996; Ferreira, 2001). Above all, it questioned the dichotomy between an appealing leader and a passive urban working class that would be manipulated by the leader (Gomes, 1996).

Recent scholarship in Brazil also stresses the need for a critical evaluation of the concept, considering it to be ambiguous and problematic for political analysis. However, this does not mean that the concept must be abandoned. Instead, studies of populism are useful for understanding the tensions and crises of modern democracies despite the ambiguities inherent to the concept. (Cassimiro, 2021)

Despite this criticism in Brazil, there was, at least internationally, not only a theoretical revival of the concept but also an empirical one, *i.e.*, centered on the operationalization of the concept and stimulating the measurement of populism in parties and voters (Betz, 1994; Heinsich & Mazzoleni, 2016; Akkerman et al., 2014). It is useful here to differentiate

between those who approach the subject from a normative perspective and those who are more interested in empirical questions related to the concept.

When it comes to the normative aspect, the debate on whether populism represents a threat to democracy stands out the most. On the one hand, there are those who analyze populism in relation to constitutional democracy, treating it as a “project of government” and a “transformation of the three pillars of modern democracy—the people, the principle of majority and representation” (Urbinati, 2019, p. 3). In this case, contrary to popular belief, the populist leader is fully capable of governing and has the ability to transform the democratic regime from within (Finchelstein & Urbinati, 2018). Citing Urbinati “Populism in power, I hold, is a new form of representative government, but a disfigured one” (Urbinati, 2019, p. 3)

On the other hand, Ernesto Laclau in his “*On Populist Reason*” (2005) and Chantal Mouffe in her book “*The populist moment*” (2013) see populism with a positive lens. They interpret populism as a way for the excluded people, who are often marginalized from politics, to claim power. Hence, according to this view, populism is a possibility for the rejuvenation of democracy and a weapon to be used by the left in order to reach power.

Without fully endorsing this perspective, other authors claim that populism presents itself as neutral towards democracy, since it offers an answer to the two political dilemmas that present a threat to democracy, namely the effective participation of “the people” and the limits of self-government, posing legitimate questions to the procedures of governments in modern democracies (Kaltwasser, 2013).

Given these various shades of populism, current empirical scholars have tried to reach a minimum consensus on the dimensions of populism. With the goal of epistemologically defining what populism is, the ideational approach was the most used in recent studies (Hawkins & Kaltwasser, 2017). According to this approach, the distinctive dimension of populism would be a set of ideas that can be summarized in a dichotomic way as a conflict between “the people” and “the elite”.

According to Hawkins and Kaltwasser (2019), a populist is a populist if, and only if, it has the three following elements:

I- Manichean cosmology.

II- The proclamation of the people as a homogeneous and virtuous community.

III- The depiction of the elite as a corrupt and self-serving entity.

According to Canovan, “all forms of populism without exception involve some kind of exaltation of an appeal to “the people,” and all are, in one sense or another, anti-elitist.” (Canovan, 1981, p. 294). It is interesting to note that this approach has won consensus in the academic literature. Thus, for example, the attempts to classify political leaders as populist are based on this dichotomic vision of populism (Hawkins, 2010).

However, within such an approach there is a difference among the authors when it comes to interpreting the opposition between “the people” and “the elite”: it can be an ideology (Hawkins et al., 2018), a style (de Vreese et.al), a strategy (Weyland, 2001), a performance (Moffit, 2016) a discourse or even a set of policies (Acemoglu et al., 2013; Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013; Rodrik, 2010; Mattozzi et al. 2020).

The authors that consider it to be an ideology were inspired by the work of Cas Mudde (2004), who first described populism as a “thin-centered ideology”. According to him, populism is a “thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be the expression of the *volonté générale* of the people” (Mudde, 2004).

Hence, according to this view, populism would always appear attached to more well-established ideologies. This implies that a populist leader can assume many positions in the ideological spectrum, depending on the salient issues of their country.

Populism as a political style focuses on features of political communication rather than the characteristics of the actor sending the message. (de Vreese et al. 2018) In short, it focuses on the way populist ideas are conveyed to the public in order to determine degrees of populism.

The authors who define populism as a strategy consider populism to be a mere strategy used by a personalistic leader when seeking or exercising power through the support of a considerable number of followers (Weyland, 2001; Weyland, 2021).

Those who consider populism to be a performance, notably Benjamin Moffit (2016), add two new dimensions on the populist politics: the so-called “bad manners” (which brings the populist closer to the common man) and the fomenting of crises which he can later use in his favor. In this case, the populist discourse is in itself a performance.

The authors that consider populism to be a discourse focus on the discourses, using speeches and party platforms as their main sources. This definition follows Laclau who defines discourse as a set of phenomena that produces social meaning and creates political identities through discursive practices (Laclau, 2005).

Finally, when it comes to the view that populism is a set of policies, the focus is on the economic consequences of populism. There is a direct association between populism and the implementation of a series of policies that, although seemingly advantageous in the short run, are harmful in the long term. This view is based on the work of the economists Acemoglu et al. (2013), which explains why it focuses on the economic aspects of populism.

In this study, I will use the ideational approach according to which populism is a discourse. By doing so, I will be using the ideational approach focusing on the idea that 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’” (Hawkins & Kaltwasser, 2019).

I chose this approach for its explanatory potential when compared to the others. For example, recent scholarship has pointed out that the “populism as a strategy” approach has severe drawbacks considering that it is susceptible to normative biases and overlooks many aspects of the demand-side of populism, hence leading to both false positives (via conceptual stretching) and false negatives (via conceptual shrinking) (Rueda, 2020).

The approach that considers populism to be a set of policies is not useful for this research since it is primarily focused on the consequences of populism, while this research aims at understanding the relationship between populism and nationalism in a set of speeches.

Before moving to the next chapter, it is important to consider two subtypes of populism that can be useful to our analysis. According to Mudde & Kaltwasser (2013), the populist phenomenon can be subdivided into two subvariants: inclusionary populism and exclusionary populism.

The first one is more common in Latin America and is characterized by a strong socioeconomic dimension, while the second subvariant is more common in Europe and is characterized by a strong sociocultural dimension (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013). The populist subvariant displayed by Bolsonaro during his campaign is primarily exclusionary (Chueri, 2018), and it would be interesting to see whether he kept his exclusionary tone instead of adopting a more inclusionary one once he took office.



## 1.2 Nationalism Literature Review (and why it is neither Populism nor Patriotism)

Nationalism as we know it is the fruit of the struggles for nation-building in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries<sup>17</sup> (Hobsbawm, 2012; Anderson, 1983; Viroli, 1995). It is different from both “patriotism” and “populism”. In this chapter, I will give a definition of nationalism and explain why it is not patriotism or populism.

Patriotism began as a religious sentiment toward the fatherland (*terra patria*) associated with “a sacred soil, inhabited by Gods and ancestors and sanctified by worship” (Viroli, 1995). Moreover, in ancient Rome, it evolved to be associated with the very idea of *res publica* (the commonwealth) thus gaining political connotations.

This idea of patriotism associated with the common good of a city was later fully recovered during the Italian *quattrocento* in order to form the common basis for the language of republican patriotism<sup>18</sup> (Viroli, 1995). Hence, the idea of *patria* and patriotism began to be associated with republican tradition and with the idea of a common liberty that must be preserved through civic spirit.

That is why, according to Maurizio Viroli (1995), while nationalism is created in the specific context of late eighteenth-century Europe in order to defend the cultural, linguistic and ethnic oneness and homogeneity of a people, patriotism is related to the love of the political institutions and the way of life that sustain the common good, the love of the republic.<sup>19</sup>

Once done with this differentiation I will proceed to define Nationalism. According to Smith (2010), there are two ways of defining the core idea of nationalism (*i.e.*, the nation): an

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<sup>17</sup> Historically, Nationalist uprisings can be found in the resistance to Napoleon (*e.g.*, in Spain), in the Greek war of Independence (1821-30), in the Italian *Risorgimento* (with its important names such as Giuseppe Mazzini) and in Latin America with the uprising of Simon Bolívar and San Martín against their Spanish overlords (Hutchinson and Smith, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Examples of such tradition can be found in Machiavelli’s works, where he associates “*patria*” with the idea of political institutions and the republican way of life.

<sup>19</sup> It is important to notice, however, that Bolsonaro does use the term “*patria*” as in “homeland” in his speeches, but he does so in a Nationalistic way as we shall see.

objective one and a subjective one. The objective one stresses “objective factors” such as territory, language and ethnicity whereas the subjective one stresses the idea of an “imagined community” and has as its main representative Benedict Anderson (Smith, 2010).

According to Anderson, a nation is:

An imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign [...] It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (ANDERSON, B., 1983, p.6)

According to Smith, despite both of these approaches to the concept of “nation” being able to locate relevant features of it, they still have important faults. Smith argues that:

Insofar as the ‘objective’ definitions are stipulative, they nearly always exclude some widely accepted cases of nations, sometimes quite intentionally. As Max Weber (1948) showed, purely ‘objective’ criteria of the nation – language, religion, territory and so on – always fail to include some nations. Conversely, ‘subjective’ definitions generally take in too large a catch of cases. Emphasizing sentiment, will, imagination and perception as criteria of the nation and national belonging makes it difficult to separate out nations from other kinds of collectivity such as regions, tribes, city-states and empires, which attract similar subjective attachments. (SMITH, Anthony., 2010, p.12)

Hence, Smith defines “nation” as “a named human community residing in a perceived homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a distinct public culture, and common laws and customs for all members” (Smith, 2010, p.13). Moreover, Smith stresses the important fact that there can be nationalism without nations considering that there are many cases where a group of nationalists is willing to create particular nations “on the ground” (Smith, 2010, p.10) as in the case of Catalonia and the Basque Country in Spain. That’s the reason why in Smith’s definition of nationalism, *i.e.*, “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential “nation” (Smith, 2010, p.9), has the word “potential” in it.

Fukuyama, in turn, describes nationalism as a doctrine according to which political boundaries must correspond to cultural communities, with culture largely defined by a shared language (Fukuyama, 2018; Fukuyama, 2014). Moreover, he concludes that Nationalism is a by-product of the modernization process and, therefore, it is the by-product of the economic and social changes brought about by industrialization and all the acute anxieties that came with them.

Thus, according to him, the transition from an overwhelmingly agrarian and rural life to an urban-industrial one aggravated an identity problem, creating the need to have a defined identity in opposition to another. Hence, nationalism would be a movement that demands the recognition of the dignity of a group (Fukuyama, 2018).

This interpretation is heavily influenced by Ernest Gellner account of the origin of nationalism (1983), where he defends that nationalism was born out of the needs brought by modernization (*i.e.*, industrialization), particularly the need for a common language) which in turn fosters the need for a standardized state-sponsored educational system.<sup>20</sup> Gellner summarizes his ideas as follows:

Let us recapitulate the general and central features of industrial society. Universal literacy and a high level of numerical, technical and general sophistication are among its functional prerequisites. Its members are and must be mobile, and ready to shift from one activity to another, and must possess that generic training which enables them to follow the manuals and instructions of a new activity or occupation. In the course of their work they must constantly communicate with a large number of other men, with whom they frequently have no previous association, and with whom communication must consequently be explicit, rather than relying on context. They must also be able to communicate by means of written, impersonal, context-free, to-whom-it-may-concern type messages. Hence these communications must be in the same shared and standardized linguistic medium and script. (Gellner, 1983, p.35)

Moreover, according to John Mearsheimer (2011), ethnic and national groups have created their own “nationalist myth” about the nation’s past in the process of establishing a

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<sup>20</sup> Fukuyama describes the socio-linguistical landscape of pre-industrial Europe in this way: “In Premodern Europe, France was a mosaic of different tongues such as Breton, Picard, Flemish and Provençal, in addition to Parisian French. Elsewhere in Europe, peasants often spoke a different language from their lords in the local manor; Latin was the court language of the Habsburg Empire until the nineteenth century. Throughout Central and Eastern Europe, Germans were mixed with Poles, Moravians, Ukrainians, Hungarians and many others in small-self regarding communities” (Fukuyama, 2018, p.63)

nation-state. This “nationalist myth” portrays the nation in a favorable way and portrays rival nations in a negative light.

These stories are important because they “help fuel group solidarity; they help create a powerful sense of nationhood, which is essential for building and maintaining a viable nation-state” (Mearsheimer, 2011). Moreover, it is important to note that this nationalist mythmaking comes both from the elite and the people and is an ongoing process since “those stories have to be updated from time to time, as new information about the past emerges, and fresh myths have to be created to deal with significant new episodes in the nation's history” (Mearsheimer, 2011).

This view of nationalism as a tool used by political elites in order to foster solidarity among the members of a community is also found in Guibernau’s book “*Nationalism: The Nation State and Nationalism in the Twentieth-Century*” (1996), where she makes a thorough analysis of the relationship between Nationalism as a Political Ideology and the Nation State.

In this book, the author criticizes Anderson’s and Smith’s approaches to nationalism lacked the ability to merge two “fundamental attributes” of the phenomenon: the idea of nationalism as a political ideology which defends the congruence between State and Nation and its ability of providing an identity for individuals eager to form a group based on a shared culture (Guibernau, 1996).

Therefore, a Nation is a community with limited boundaries, formed in opposition to others and is always under construction. The declaration of European populist party leaders expresses this very idea of nationalism when they oppose “the people” to “the others” (most of the time the latter term is referring to immigrants). The Italian party *Lega Nord* explained its view of immigrants in these terms: “we can also claim the paternity of one of our slogans that is as lucky as it is not heard: let’s help them in their own homes”.<sup>21</sup>

A specific way of thinking about nationalism is nativism, which prevails in some European countries. In this case, the opposition between the people and the elite is found in the valorization of natives over immigrants. The origins of this sentiment can be found in the Know-Nothings in the 1850s United States. This movement, which was later rebranded as the

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<sup>21</sup> “In questo senso possiamo anche rivendicare la paternità di un tanto fortunato, quanto inascoltato, nostro slogan: “aiutiamoli a casa loro”. (Salvini, 2017, pg.4)

“American Party”, arose in response to the influx of Roman Catholics from Ireland and Germany during the mass immigration of the 19th century, which, according to the Know-Nothings, was threatening the Protestant identity of the US. (Betz, 2017)

In Europe, the first prominent Nativist movement can be found in the Boulangist movement of *fin-de-siècle* France. What had started as a movement against “the caste” and “parliamentarism” was soon coopted by Nativist sentiments against “alien elements” such as Protestants, Jews, and foreign workers (particularly from Germany) (Betz, 2017).

Although thinking of nationalism as nativism is common among researchers, this approach is incomplete because it doesn’t take into account other expressions of the phenomenon. On the one hand, we also have “sovereignism” which opposes the idea of a nation-state to international institutions (Vittori, 2017; De Lange & Mugge, 2015). In this sense, there are parties in Europe from both sides of the political spectrum that are against European integration, adopting a nationalist language, although they cannot be considered populist merely because of this attitude towards Supranational Organizations.

Examples of this kind of nationalism can also be found in East Asia through an anti-imperialist lens, especially in Japan and China, where the books *The Japan that Can Say No* (1989), written by the former leader of the right-wing Japan Restoration Party Shintaro Ishihara, and the subsequent *China can say no* (1996), stressed the need for more independence from the United States by these countries<sup>22</sup>.

In the Middle East, intellectuals like the Lebanese Christian Antoun Saadeh<sup>23</sup> and the Syrian Christian Michel Aflaq<sup>24</sup>, would combine elements of both Marxism and Nationalism in order consolidate the concept of Arab Nationalism, a concept which would have a profound impact in the region’s political landscape due to its influence in the governments of prominent leaders in the region, such as Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and its role in the rise of the Baath Party in Iraq and Syria (Manduchi, 2017).

Finally, there is a third kind of nationalism that can be found among politicians and political parties, which defends a certain idea of nationality that is opposed to specific

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<sup>22</sup> Although the US is not a supranational institution, it can be said that it plays a role similar to them in the East Asian context.

<sup>23</sup> The founder of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party

<sup>24</sup> The founder of the Baath Party

questions that are perceived as “menaces” to the traditional values of the national community. In Northwestern Europe, civic nationalism plays an important role in separating the “in” and “out” in a society (more specifically, “northwestern Europeans” and “Muslims”). According to this idea, Muslims are incompatible with the liberal values present in Northwestern European countries, which ends up legitimizing anti-Muslim sentiments in the broader mainstream society. (Simonsen & Bonikowski, 2020)

Hence, for example, gender questions are openly seen as a matter of paramount importance. The idea of “Anti-genderism”, for example, is a central element of the platform and speeches of the leaders of *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) in Germany (Keil, 2020). “Anti-feminism”, a specific kind of “Anti-genderism”, is also present in South Korea, where Yoon Suk-yeon was able to mobilize the gender conflict in the country and won the 2022 elections by defining the feminist movement simply as a movement that despises men (Khil, 2022).

In Brazil more specifically, this kind of Nationalism can be found in the debates on LGBTQ+ and Indigenous questions. According to Bolsonaro, Foreign Governments and environmentalists are manipulating indigenous tribes to expand areas of environmental protection and, therefore, hamper Brazil’s economic progress (Barretto Filho, 2020).

This attitude set a precedent for the decrease in environmental protection, which led to an increase in illegal mining and the further destruction of Indigenous communities either through illnesses or violence (Machado et al., 2021).

Another important point to highlight about civic nationalism and Bolsonaro is the strong relationship it has with Christianity. Christian Nationalism as a concept has been widely used in American literature at least since the election of Donald Trump, referring to a cultural framework that advocates the fusion between Christianity and civic life, encompassing nativism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, authoritarianism and militarism (Whitehead & Perry, 2020).

Moreover, Christian Nationalism views God’s demands in terms of an allegiance to a national Christian identity, considering the relationship between God and the Nation akin to the covenant made by God to the people of Israel in the Old Testament (meaning that a Nation should be in constant fear of God’s wrath toward unfaithfulness) (Whitehead & Perry,

2020). Finally, it is important to stress the strong apocalyptic element in Christian Nationalist discourse (Whitehead & Perry, 2020).

Christianity is indeed a powerful force in Brazilian politics, having had an important role in Brazil's Presidential elections at least since Collor's victory (Mariano & Pierucci, 1992). Many of the early interpreters of Brazil such as Gilberto Freyre argue that Christianity, particularly Catholicism, is at the root of Brazil as a Nation (Freyre, 2014). Moreover, recent scholarship has emphasized the role of Christian Nationalism in Brazil's recent "cultural wars" and current political polarization, highlighting the role played by the rise of evangelical churches in the public sphere and its increasing popularity among Brazilians (Smith, 2019).

However, it is important not to demonize Christian groups (and, more specifically, evangelicals). Most of the time, despite their more "conservative views" on social issues, they tend to be supportive of democracy and democratic values (Smith, 2019).

This apparent paradox is connected to the distinction Brazilians make between the socio-cultural and the political sphere: while in the former Brazilians tend to have more conservative opinions, in the latter they tend to be more "liberal", being very supportive of democracy (Nishimura, 2009).

It is undeniable that Bolsonaro mobilized Christianity to his political goals, and his ties with Conservative Evangelical leaders are well-known in the literature (Almeida, 2019; Camurça, 2020; Oro & Alves, 2020; Pleyers, 2020; Antonopoulos et al., 2020). As Barbosa & Casarões (2022) show, the religious element provided the capabilities that allowed Bolsonaro to capture state institutions. Moreover, religion also guides his governing strategies and, when it comes to International Relations, this religious element helped to advance a conservative agenda based on an alliance to foster their worldview based on independent ethnoreligious communities<sup>25</sup> (Barbosa & Casarões, 2022). Given the importance of this element in his way of conducting both internal and foreign affairs, the Christian Nationalist element in his speeches must also be considered in the analysis.

It is important to notice, however, that Nationalism is not something intrinsically bad or good. According to Aram Hur (2022), strong national attachments can be good for

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<sup>25</sup> A notable example is the Geneva Consensus Declaration, signed by 34 countries on October 22, 2020. This Consensus was an anti-abortion alliance co-sponsored by several conservative governments around the world, including Bolsonaro's Brazil and Trump's United States.

democracy when the folklore of a Nation State (portrayed in the story of the nation's friends and foes) is one of mutual commitment. Hence, when it comes to Nationalism, civic duty cultivated by strong relational legacies is more important than its civic and ethnic basis (Hur, 2022).

Having defined both Nationalism and Populism, I will now dig into the hazy connection between them. At first glance, these ideologies appear to be very similar. After all, they both rely on an "us vs them" Manichean mindset, being defined in the literature as thin-centered ideologies, that is, they can fit into any kind of political ideology (Billig, 1995; Freedon, 1998).

Due to these similarities, some scholars even support the idea that there has been a rise in Populist Nationalism (sometimes labeled "National-Populism") worldwide (Anastasiou, 2019; Camus & Lebourg, 2017; Goodwin & Eatwell, 2018; Fukuyama, 2017).

According to Anastasiou (2019), one can speak of National-Populism insofar as the signifier "people", typical of populist discourse, is often overestimated by nationalist narratives. According to the author, it can be said that, to a certain extent, National-Populism can be understood as a "chimerical" logic (Anastasiou, 2019), in which a populist totality receives its meaning before the hegemonic signifier of "the nation".

Eatwell and Goodwin (2018) define National-Populism as a movement whose leaders "prioritize the culture and interests of the nation and promise to give voice to a people who feel that they have been neglected, even held in contempt, by distant and often corrupt elites."

Despite these initial similarities, however, these concepts are not the same. Both rely on the idea of "the people" as a signifier in their speeches, but who the people is and what separates it from others is a source of divergence between these concepts. On the one hand, populist speeches tend to praise the people but when it comes to defining it it tends to be very malleable depending on the historical context and on individualism (Tamaki, 2022). On the other hand, when Nationalism mobilizes the concept of the people, it does so with a predefined idea of who the people is, regardless of ideology or historical circumstances. The idea of "people" in Nationalism discourse is related to the idea of an inheriting culture and, ultimately, "blood" (Billig, 1995).

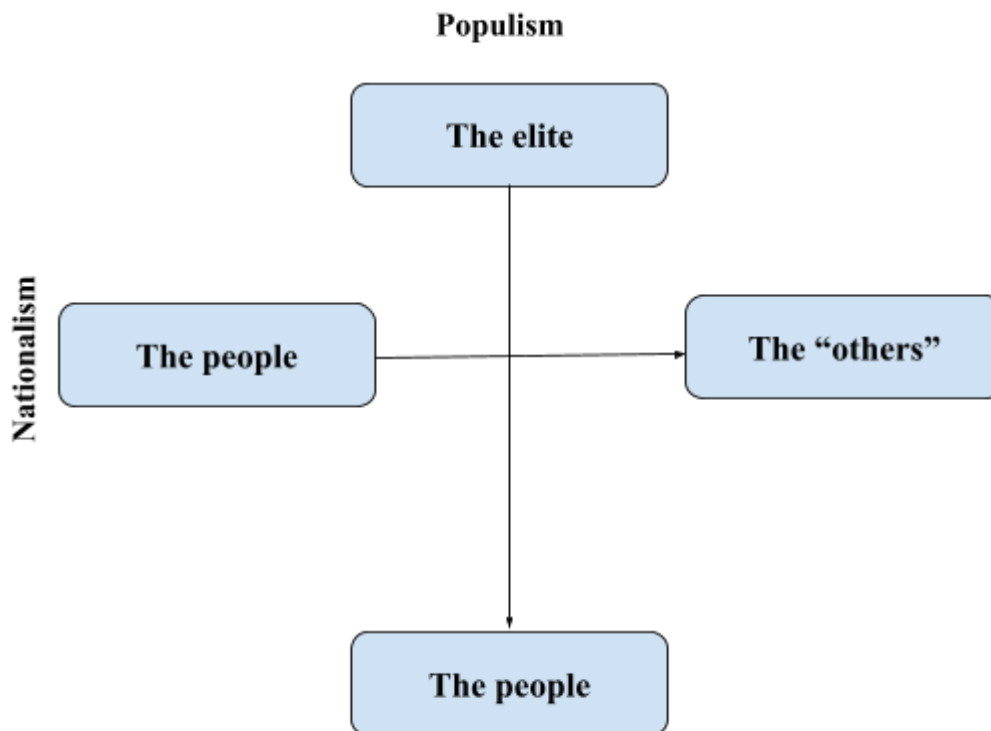


Thus, while the idea of “the people” is more malleable in populist discourse, depending on historical circumstances and ideology, the idea of “the people” in Nationalism is related to a sense of kinship that separates “us” from “them” based on a shared culture and kinship between the members of a community.

When it comes to empirical research, there are two concurrent approaches: on the one hand, there are those who argue that populism and nationalism are conceptually different, though not analytically independent (Brubaker, 2020). On the other hand, there are those who defend a complete separation between the two concepts during the analysis (De Cleen & Stratavakis, 2020; Caiani & Kroll, 2017).

The first approach also argues that populism tends to get confused with other dichotomic discourses, something that generates an empirical problem as populism is also characterized by nationalist elements to the extent that it (based on the essentially vertical opposition between “the people” and “the elite”) incorporates nationalist concepts that value the horizontal aspect of the people-elite relationship (people as a “community” as opposed to “the outsiders”). Thus, “the elite” is located both “above” and “outside” (Brubaker, 2020). Therefore, in order to solve this problem, an “impure” concept would be the best way to capture this two-dimensionality of discourse.

**Figure 1: The horizontal and vertical dimension of nationalism and populism**



Source: author

On the other hand, other authors advocate for a more rigorous conceptual distinction, allowing a better analysis of how populism and nationalism interact in politics (De Cleen & Stratavakis, 2020). Hence, for the defenders of the total separation between the two concepts, in order to have a better understanding of the phenomenon, the researcher should pay attention to the interaction between populism and nationalism and observe whether the two phenomena coexist.

The example of the “*Podemos*” party in Spain and the “*Movimento Cinque Stelle*” in Italy can help us clarify this point. In both parties, populism and nationalism often intermingle (Vittori, 2017). Both adopt a clear sovereigntist stance, valuing the country’s independence from the supranational power exercised by the European Union. The message, however, takes on a populist tone when the politicians of their respective parties openly attack the political elite in Brussels, advocating greater state autonomy and a redefinition of the relationship with the European Community in the name of popular sovereignty.

In the Brazilian context, recent research points to a mix of moderate populist and aggressive forms of nationalism and patriotism in Bolsonaro's speeches both during his

campaign and the first two years of his government (Tamaki & Fuks, 2020; Tamaki, Braga & Fuks 2021, Tamaki, 2022).

Up to this point, we have seen the definitions of Populism and Nationalism and how these concepts differ from each other. Now, we shall proceed to mobilize these concepts as tools for the analysis of Bolsonaro's speeches. The different dimensions of populism and nationalism (inclusionary and exclusionary populism and, when it comes to nativism, civic nationalism etc...) will be analyzed in Bolsonaro's speech in the next chapter.

## 2. Discourse Analysis

Since Aristotle's and Cicero's times, Politics has always been regarded as the art of speech and rhetoric. As stated by Quentin Skinner, "words are also deeds" (Skinner, 2008), and, according to Laclau (2005), language and action are important means through which politics materialize. Keeping this in mind, this study uses as its main source the political speeches available on the Planalto's website. The database contains all of Bolsonaro's official speeches from 2019 to 2021, totaling 495 speeches.

In order to assess populism and nationalism in Bolsonaro's speeches I divided my research into two parts. The first part is a more exploratory and qualitative analysis. This first part of the research is separated into two parts: first, I read the speeches delivered between 2019 and 2021, in order to classify whether they were populist or nationalist, using a dummy variable where 1 stands for populist/nationalist and 0 stands for neither. Then, I proceed to the qualitative analysis of the speeches, taking a closer look to better understand what kind of populism and nationalism is present in these speeches.

As already mentioned, the first part of this research was dedicated to the conceptual analysis of the terms. We must remember that when attributing to a term its referent, a reconstruction of the concept is necessary since its meaning is the intermediation between the concept and the "outside world" (Sartori, 2009).

In the case of populism, the definition adopted is the one that characterizes it as the division between "the people" and "the elite". Keeping this in mind and following the lead of Caiani and Kroll (2017), when operationalizing the concept, it will be necessary to look at these aspects:

(I) The people and similar concepts, whose interests the populist discourse claims to protect. For example, "us", "the people", "Brazilians" and "Christians".

(II) The political elites against which the people are opposed. In this case, it is important to select concepts that can be closely related to a critique of the elite like "socialists" or "corrupt".

When it comes to Nationalism, I operationalize it by searching for the following elements:

(I) The “in” and “out” dimensions of Nationalism. Examples of terms are “Brazilian”, “citizens” and “patriots”.

(II) The Sovereigntist dimension of Nationalism. A good example can be “globalists”.

(III) The Civilizational dimension of Nationalism and the construction of the national identity against enemies who are on the margins of the “ideal people”. Examples are “Christians”, “gays” and “gender ideology”.

Once the minimum criteria for the definition of the concepts is established, the next step is to preliminarily read the speeches from 2019 to 2021. However, we should keep in mind that defining the terms connected to those concepts is not enough for the analysis and we need to look at how they relate to other terms in the speeches in order to classify them as populist and nationalist (e.g., a statement is populist if, and only if, “the people” and “the elite” are contraposing one another).

This chapter is divided into two parts. First, I do an exploratory analysis of the data collected with the purpose of showing when and to what extent did Bolsonaro make use of populist or nationalistic rhetoric in his official speeches.

The second part is dedicated to the proper Qualitative analysis of the speeches. In order to do so, I carefully read the whole of his speeches in order to locate in which contexts Populist and Nationalist elements were used.

## 2.1 Quantitative Analysis

In order to quantitatively analyze the speeches, I proceeded to read each one of them and localize populist and nationalist elements within their content. This operation was done with the help of a dummy variable, being 1 in case of a populist or nationalist speech and 0 in case neither of these elements was found.

After that, I calculated the number of populist speeches per month and plotted them per year. The results can be seen below.

**Table 1: percentage of Populism and Nationalism in Bolsonaro's speeches per year.**

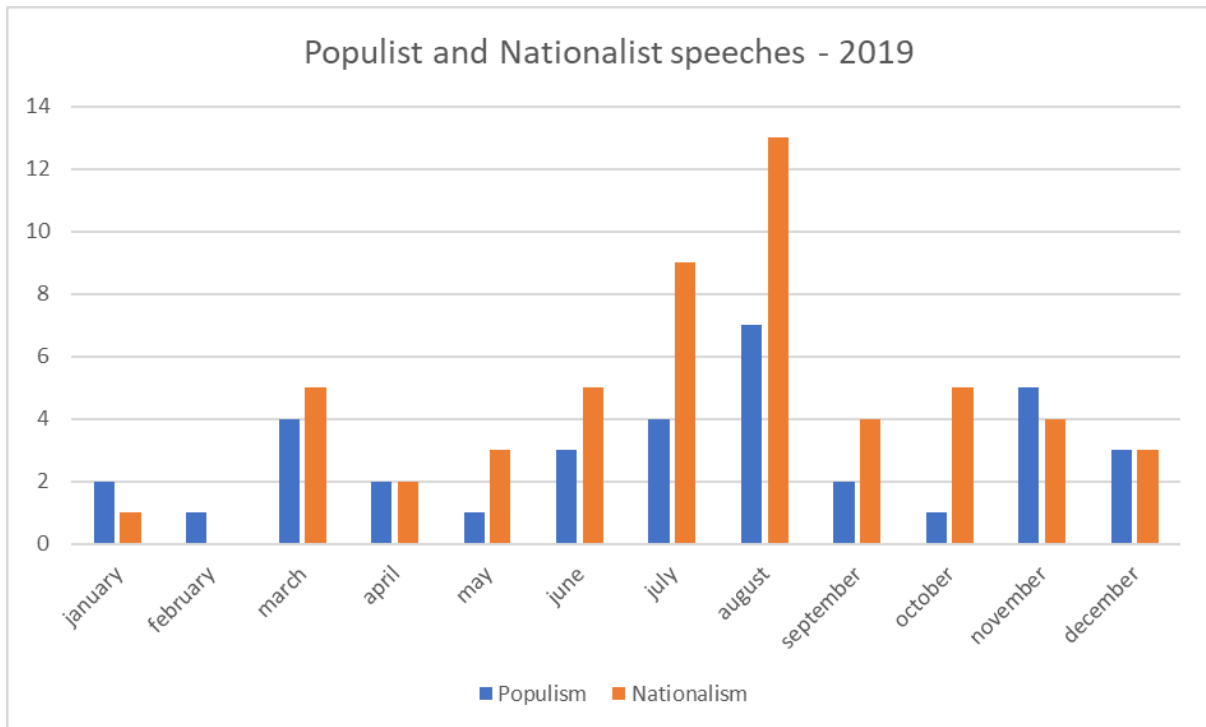
	Year	Speeches	Populism (%)	Nationalism (%)
1	2019	204	0.171	0.265
2	2020	129	0.193	0.2325
3	2021	158	0.297	0.24

Source: author

First, it is interesting to take a closer look at the statistics surrounding the actual amount of Populist and Nationalist speeches given by Bolsonaro per year. It is interesting to notice that the amount of Populism increases per year (from 17.1% in 2019 to more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  in 2021) whereas the amount of Nationalist speeches are relatively stable during the three years analyzed.

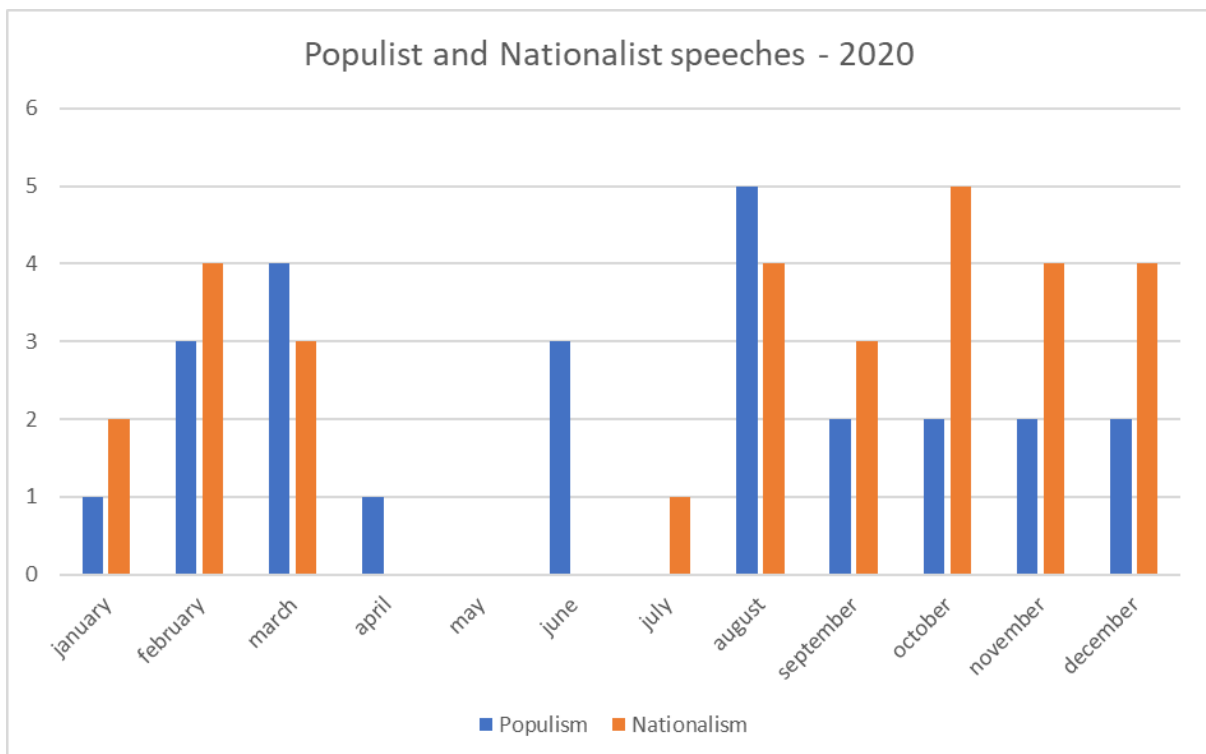
That doesn't mean, however, that the Nationalist component in Bolsonaro's speeches is irrelevant. On the contrary, it represents at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the content present in his speeches delivered between 2019-2021.

**Figure 2: Populist and Nationalist speeches per month in 2019.**



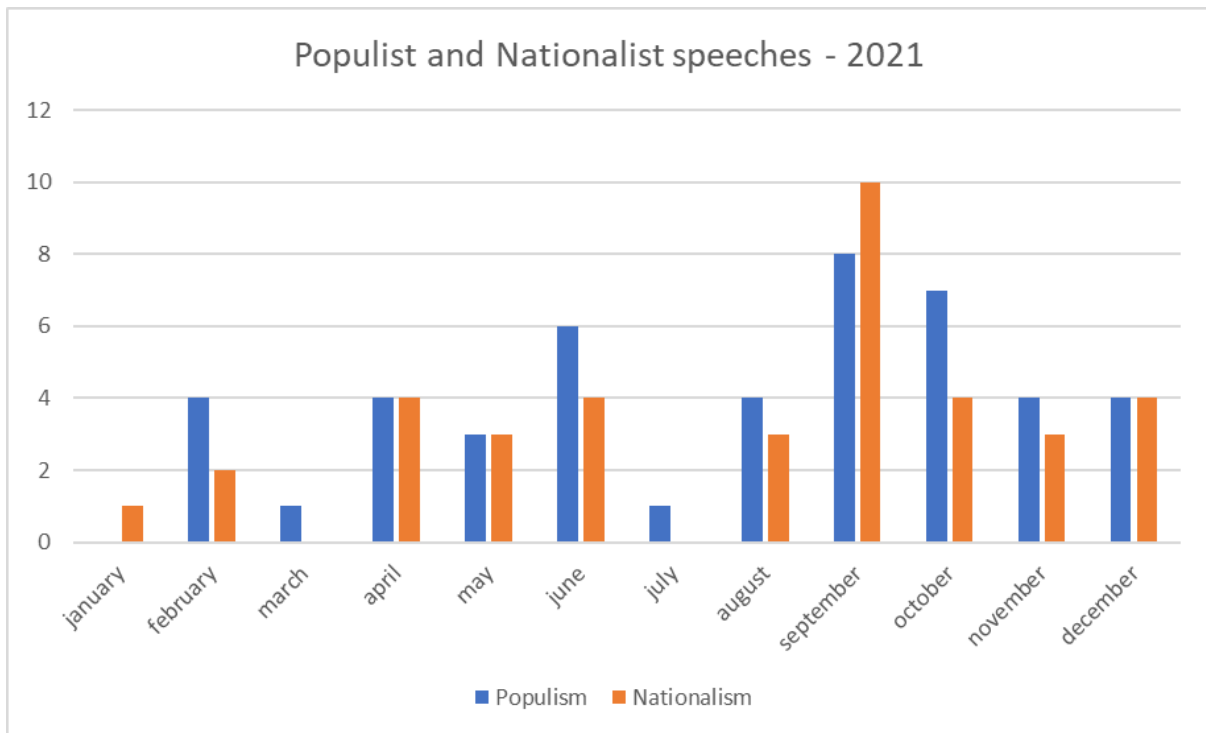
Source: author

**Figure 3: Populist and Nationalist speeches per month in 2020.**



Source: author

**Figure 4: Populist and Nationalist speeches per month in 2021.**

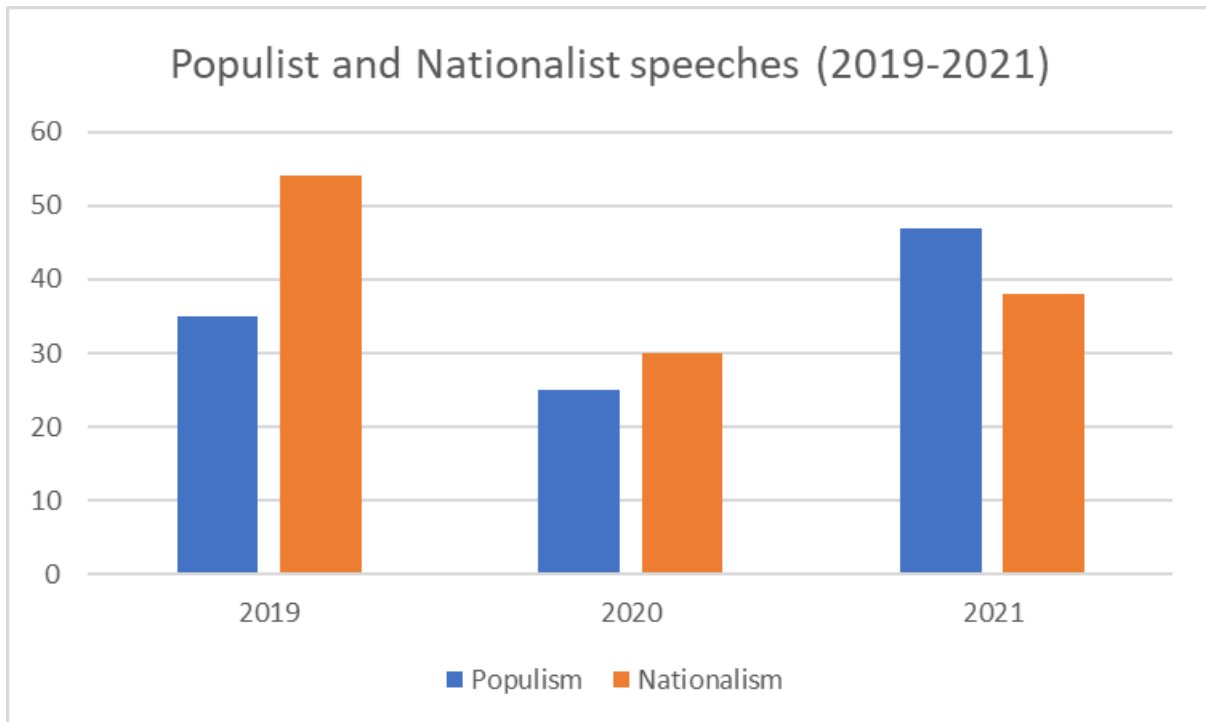


Source: author

The graphic analysis confirms what was shown in the table above. The micro-analysis (*i.e.*, calculating the amount of populist and nationalist speeches per month for each year individually) tells us that in 2019 there was a massive prevalence of Nationalist elements in Bolsonaro's speeches, with a particular peak in August, 2019. In 2020, due to the small amount of speeches given in that year (probably because of the pandemic), the populist element began to appear more, but overall it had almost the same distribution as Nationalism. In 2021, populist elements slightly take over the nationalist ones, but overall the distribution of Populist and Nationalist speeches remains very similar.



**Figure 5: Populist and Nationalist speeches per year.**



Source: author

When it comes to the macro analysis of Bolsonaro's speeches (*i.e.*, calculating the amount of populism and nationalism per year), it can be noticed that populism starts relatively high in 2019, then decreases in 2020 and slowly rises again in 2021 (probably because of a combination of factors such as the upcoming election in 2022 and the pandemic in 2020-2021). Nationalism, on the other hand, is the element that stands out the most during his first presidential year, only to decrease in the following two years.

It is important to highlight, however, that 2019 was the year when Bolsonaro gave most of his speeches (204, against 129 in 2020 and 158 in 2021). This can explain in part the reason why the numbers seem to differ so much when we compare 2019 with 2020 and 2021.

## 2.2 Qualitative Analysis

### 2.3 Populism

#### 2.3.1 The Elite

The elite in the populist discourse is conceived as “evil” and opposed to the people. Taking this into account, Bolsonaro identifies this elite with “the left”, the press, the Supreme Court, Environmentalists and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the governors and mayors who did not follow his carefree approach to the pandemic and imposed COVID-related restrictions (what Bolsonaro pejoratively labeled the “stay-at-home-we-will-see-the-economy-later” politics).

One important thing to mention is that, when it comes to political targets, he almost never directly mentions the actual target of his speech. Most of the time he uses vague yet concise references that the audience is automatically able to get.

**(Bolsonaro, August 6, 2019):** *“I make it very clear; I’ve already said that. I don’t understand economics, those who did<sup>26</sup> [understand it] sank Brazil”.*

**(Bolsonaro, September 30, 2021):** *“How nice it is to have a governor of the stature of Mister Romeu Zema, a man who no one knew of in politics, his ascension was a surprise for all of us. [Meanwhile] Others<sup>27</sup> ascended throughout Brazil, but their ego went over their heads”.*

**(Bolsonaro, January 16, 2020):** *“It is as History well puts it, our press is scared of the truth, they misrepresent it every time, and when they can’t misrepresent it, they*

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<sup>26</sup> Referring to the previous governments.

<sup>27</sup> Referring to former judge and Minister of Justice Sergio Fernando Moro.

*blatantly lie. This is the book of this Japanese woman<sup>28</sup>. I don't know what she is doing in Brazil, what she is doing now against the government. They are those who work all the time against Democracy, against Freedom, they are on the payroll of what is no good in our Brazil”.*

**(Bolsonaro, December 4, 2020):** *“[...] There are always some bad Brazilians<sup>29</sup> who want to steal what is most sacred to us, our freedom”.*

Sometimes, however, he is more direct in his attacks:

**(Bolsonaro, April 23, 2021):** *“Dear Silas, here I thank God for my life, I thank you, the people of Manaus, the people of the Amazon, for the confidence deposited in my person, we made the difference, Brazil began to leave the ominous Brazilian Left. [...] Imagine this pandemic with Haddad as President of the Republic, we would be in a National Lockdown, thank God it did not happen[...].”*

In Bolsonaro’s view, the “Elite” represented by the Left, seeks nothing but “absolute power” through the control of State institutions, threatening Democracy and freedom in Brazil. He also emphasizes the distance between him and the so-called “establishment”, in an attempt to distance himself from this elite he is attacking.

**(Bolsonaro, March 10, 2020):** *“Returning to our Brazil: the rigging of the State was enormous. We were one step away from a Venezuelanization of our Brazil by the left-wing politicians who occupied the Executive, who bought the Brazilian Parliament, in a fury never seen anywhere in the world, working at full speed for an absolute project of power. And the miracle happened, the impeachment of a president<sup>30</sup> and the election of another one with no ties to those who made that kind of politics”.*

**(Bolsonaro, April 24, 2020):** *“The powerful rose against me. And it's a reality, it's the truth. I'm fighting a system, the establishment. Things that happened in Brazil*

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<sup>28</sup> Referring to Thais Oyama, a Japanese-Brazilian journalist who wrote a book entitled *Torment: Bolsonaro's government: crisis, intrigues and secrets* (2020).

<sup>29</sup> Referring to the left.

<sup>30</sup> Dilma Vana Rousseff.

*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”*

During the pandemic, his attacks included the so-called policy of “stay at home and we’ll see the economy later”, allegedly carried by governors and mayors (it is noteworthy to mention the rivalry between him and João Dória Jr. governor of the State of São Paulo, which emerged during this period).

**(Bolsonaro, October 13, 2021):** *“I make it very clear what problems we are experiencing. They complain about the price of fuel, the price of cooking gas and groceries. It is true [that the prices have increased], but this is the bill the World is paying for the cowardly and criminal “stay at home and we’ll see the economy later” policy. Maybe I was the only Head of State in the entire World who had the courage to rise up against this stay-at-home policy, against closures, lockdowns, restrictive measures and currently against mandatory vaccination. Our government bought all the vaccines which are currently still distributed throughout Brazil, no governor bought a single dose, and we offered it, voluntarily, to all those who wanted to take it.”*

### **2.3.2 The People**

One of the most recurring elements in the populist political discourse is the praise of the “ordinary people”, opposing them to an “evil elite” and describing them as possessing a will often undermined by the elite. Therefore, the populist leader often poses himself as the guardian of the “*volonté générale*” and a herald of the “*vox populi*”. In order to do so, they portray themselves as a man of the people.

It is important to notice that the range of Bolsonaro’s supporters is very diverse and encompasses several different kinds of voters. In her study of Bolsonaro’s voters, Isabela Kalil (2018) localized 16 kinds of Bolsonaro supporters ranging from the average

conservative male, nerds, some groups of Christians, and members of the army to conservative sectors among social minorities (women, Afro-Brazilians, and the poor).

Throughout his government, Bolsonaro sought an approximation with his ideal of the ordinary man, often mobilizing national symbols and passions such as football and religion.

He often compared himself to a football coach in an attempt to “simplify” politics to the masses.

**(Bolsonaro, June 12, 2019):** *“I’m the coach of the football team. They<sup>31</sup> are the ones who play [with] the ball. I’m Felipão<sup>32</sup>, they are the ones who play [with] the ball.”*

**(Bolsonaro, March 10, 2020):** *“I confess that I never expected to be in the situation I find myself in.<sup>33</sup> Obviously, humility has always been on my side. I even say it’s the ministers who work, I’m the coach of the football team.”*

Bolsonaro describes his version of “the people” linked to the idea of “*cidadão de bem*” (“good citizen”), which in turn is related to conservatism, Christianity, hard work and family values and is opposed to the idea of the “bum” or “bandit” (Costa, 2021; Kalil, 2018). Moreover, the idea of “*cidadão de bem*” is central to Bolsonaro’s political project and political appeals, since, more than representing an individual’s conduct in his private life or a set of specific political revindications in the public sphere, it is also related to a set of particular agendas which began to be considered legitimate, and this is exactly the reason why being a “good citizen” started to be opposed to being a “leftist” (the latter being associated with support for corruption and people who refuse to work) (Kalil, 2018). In this way, “*cidadão de bem*” is “a specific notion of person and a feeling of belonging to a correct way of being in the world” (Kalil, 2018).

When it comes to the opposition, the underlying idea is that “the people” as a whole are being threatened by things such as gender ideology and unchristian politicians who threaten

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<sup>31</sup> Referring to his ministers

<sup>32</sup> Luiz Felipe Scolari, Coach of the Brazilian National Team in the 2002 FIFA World Cup.

<sup>33</sup> Being the president

the so-called “Judeo-Christian”<sup>34</sup> tradition of Brazil (which is also a sign of Christian Nationalism).

**(Bolsonaro, January 1st, 2019):** *“Let’s unite the people, let’s value the family, let’s respect religions and our Judeo-Christian tradition [sic], let’s fight gender ideology [sic], conserving our values. Brazil will return to being a country detached from ideological ties.”*

**(Bolsonaro, December 12, 2019):** *“Now we have a president who respects the family. It seems that it is something that is not important. Yes, it is important. The family is the basis of society. Where are we going? [Where are we going] with all the family diversities? [...] [May] everyone do what they want, but do not try to impose their customs on the vast majority, which is us. A God-fearing government. The state is Secular, but I am a Christian. Period”.*

**(Bolsonaro, June 23, 2019):** *“We are not like those who want to pull back our state, our Brazil. We are not this. I regret that the governor of Bahia<sup>35</sup> is not present here. Also, because we can’t agree with wanting to change the color of our flag. We won’t change the color of our flag. Bahia, the Northeast, will grow because they will and are being treated as equals for the first time. Brazil is the union of everyone, [...] the State is secular, but we are Christians”.*

Echoing the 19th century idea that Brazil is a “Racial Democracy” (Domingues, 2005), he defends the idea that the Brazilian people are a unified “peaceful” mass, without race distinctions. According to him, it is the left who wants to divide Brazil by race, class, or regional differences. The average Brazilian is a color-blind, conservative, peaceful, hard-working, and Christian person, who at the end of the day only wants to get by despite the problems that he will eventually face in life.

**(Bolsonaro, March 10, 2020):** *“We are a single people, a single race and we want to unite for the good of our Brazil. Brazil, in addition to the riches that I spoke to you*

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<sup>34</sup> Many scholars have shown the flaws of the “Judeo-Christian” concept, stating that it is an American invention during the Cold War and that it obscures the fact that Christianity has historically been an opponent to Judaism from a theological point of view, although collaboration between the two religions can be possible on the grounds of a shared humanist basis (Cohen, 1970).

<sup>35</sup> Rui Costa, affiliated with the left-wing Workers’ Party

*about, also has a wonderful, peaceful, orderly, and hard-working people that has its problems, obviously. Isn't it?"*

Another important element of his idea of “the people” is the Military as an institution. According to Bolsonaro’s lore, since the end of the Military Dictatorship and the beginning of the Democratization Process, the Military has been subject to boycotts (both financial and moral) and persecuted by members of “the left”.

**(Bolsonaro, December 12, 2019):** *“For decades, the Army has been mistreated and persecuted, but, due to its formation and character, it stood up. And this persecution is simply for one thing, it is their<sup>36</sup> search for absolute power, and they know that we in the Military are the last obstacle to socialism. If nowadays Brazil is a Democracy and if we have freedom, it is mostly due to those who preceded us.”*

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<sup>36</sup> the left

## **2.4 Nationalism**

Regarding the nationalistic aspect of his speeches, two things stand out the most: the environmental issue (represented mostly by the Amazon rainforest, the “Novo Marco Temporal” and environmentalists) and the threat represented by the left (both at the national and international level).

Considering the “in-out” dimension of Nationalism presented by De Cleen (2017), where the “in” is characterized by the members of a Nation and the “out” being the non-members, the nationalist discourse in Bolsonaro’s speeches is mostly characterized by a mix of the worldview shared by the Military that ruled the country in the 70s and a mysticism influenced by the ideas of the polemicist Olavo de Carvalho, who influenced the so-called “ideological” wing of his government (Spektor, 2019; Schutte et al. 2020).

The Military mindset is strongly marked by the idea that Brazil is a land rich in natural resources that must be defended and explored at all costs. The Amazon rainforest plays an important role in this project since it is the most important Brazilian asset when it comes to natural resources. Hence, according to this worldview, the Amazon is a Brazilian property and any criticism by foreign countries regarding how the government is treating this asset must be characterized as a threat to national sovereignty (Schutte et al., 2020).

The “Olavist” mindset, in turn, consists of the idea that Brazil is a Conservative Christian Nation whose values are being threatened by the Left. According to this worldview, there is a conspiracy by leftists both at a national and at an international level to subvert Brazil’s Western Christian character. At the national level, this left is represented by left-wing parties, activists, and even minorities. On the international front, the left is represented by the leftist governments of Venezuela and Cuba (eventually Argentina and Chile will be included in this group) and International Organizations and NGOs, considered to be the promoters of “globalism”. (Schutte, Fonseca & Carneiro, 2019)

### **2.4.1 The Amazon rainforest and the Indigenous question**

Throughout his government, Bolsonaro never hid his ties to the deputies connected to the agribusiness in Brazil. In a speech, delivered to the Deputies and Senators of the



Agricultural Parliamentary Front, he stated that his government was “theirs” and that the then Minister of Environment (Ricardo Salles) was “married to them”.

**(Bolsonaro, July 4, 2019):** *“I still feel like a Federal Deputy after 28 years in the Chamber, and [I want to] say that this government is yours. [...] And we have, nowadays, a Minister of the Environment who is married to you”.*

Moreover, in the same speech, he denounces the former governments for “letting it happen” (referring to the creation of Indigenous reserves) and accused Foreign Countries of interference in Brazilian affairs, especially those related to the management of natural resources.

**(Bolsonaro, July 4, 2019):** *“Over 28 years in the Chamber [of Deputies] I followed and, more than that, I believe that I voted 100% [of the times] with the ruralist caucus. And often the issues were born there as if it were a rhinoceros birth: it was the press hitting you [the ruralists], it was NGOs and it was also governments of other countries. And what I felt now in Osaka, Japan,<sup>37</sup> on the part of two heads of state in particular<sup>38</sup>, is something that confirmed what I thought in the past, what they think about us. These two in particular thought they were dealing with the previous government that, after meetings like this one, came here and demarcated dozens of indigenous areas, demarcated quilombolas, expanded protection areas, that is, made our progress more and more difficult here in Brazil”.*

Bolsonaro’s mindset is clear, the exploration of the environment is directly related to the progress of Brazil and the government of other countries (those from the “Global North” in particular) are secretly conspiring, together with NGOs, to take over Brazil’s natural resources. He, as the president, would represent a change in how the country deals with Foreign Affairs since he will not bow to foreign interests in the Amazon rainforest, accusing former governments of demarcating large areas for indigenous people and quilombolas and also of creating environmental protection areas after multilateral meetings.

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<sup>37</sup> 2019 G-20 Osaka Summit

<sup>38</sup> Referring to the French President Emmanuel Macron and the then-German Chancellor Angela Merkel

In a speech with the former Minister of Environment (Mr. Salles), he defends the sovereignty of the Amazon, attacking environmentalists (labeling them as “bad Brazilians”) and, again, putting himself in opposition to foreign governments.

**(Bolsonaro, August 6, 2019):** *“We have everything to develop this wonderful region called the Amazon. You cannot imagine the pleasure I had talking to Macron and Angela Merkel. What a pleasure! They haven’t realized yet that Brazil is under new management. Now we have a President of the Republic. [...] There’s a president of the Republic, damn it! [A President] who is loyal to the Brazilian people [...]. A president who says that the Amazon is ours! [A president] who says, Ricardo Salles, that bad Brazilians<sup>39</sup> cannot disclose lying numbers, making a negative campaign against our Brazil.”*

In another speech delivered in Manaus, Bolsonaro accuses NGOs of sponsoring fires in the Amazon.

**(Bolsonaro, November 27, 2019):** *“Recently, I’ve suffered some serious attacks regarding fires in the Amazon. After that, in the matter of fire focus. Now, I pay the price for spilled oil on the Brazilian coast. Slowly the truth shows itself. Back then, two months ago, I said that the fires were sponsored by NGOs. I know these people. Except for a few exceptions, I do know these people. And now, the Federal Police of Pará has finished an inquiry pointing to NGOs, to an NGO, fires in the Amazonian Region.”*

Bolsonaro’s approach to the Amazon question is directly related to his background in the Military (Garcez, 2019). The Military dictatorship which ruled the country from 1964 to 1985 gave special attention to the Amazon Region, considered to be essential to the integration of the Brazilian territory. Back then, the government followed the guidelines of the geopolitical thought formed at the “Escola Superior de Guerra” (ESG)<sup>40</sup>, both in national and foreign affairs, particularly the thoughts of general Golbery do Couto e Silva (Miyamoto, 1995; Gonçalves & Miyamoto, 1993; Miyamoto, 1984). According to the book “Geopolitics

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<sup>39</sup> Referring to environmentalists

<sup>40</sup> “Superior War College

of Brazil” (1967) written by Couto e Silva, there was an urge to “flood the Amazonian *hylea*<sup>41</sup> with civilization” since it was a “green desert”. (Couto e Silva, 1967)

Thus, based on the motto “to integrate not to deliver” the Military government implemented a series of policies to connect the country, initiating major roadworks towards the Amazon, among which we can name the Transamazon (inaugurated in 1972) and the Belém-Brasília highway (inaugurated in 1974). This eagerness for integration was directly related to deforestation and was justified by a fear of the “Internationalization of the Amazon” (Benchimol, 1977).

This theory was based on the idea that foreign countries are after the riches of the Amazon rainforest and, in order to take them over, manipulate NGOs and indigenous tribes, hiding under the façade of “environmentalism”. Examples of these ideas can be found in the book “The Yanomami farce” (1995), written by colonel Carlos Alberto Menna Barreto, in which he defends the idea that the Yanomami tribe is an invention of the Brazilian media to change the map of the Amazon in the name of foreign interests hidden under the façade of a “noble environmentalism” (Mena Barreto, 1995).

With this background in mind, it is easy to understand why Bolsonaro is so concerned with international pressure regarding his management of the Amazon and his relationship with Native Brazilians. In his view, NGOs and Foreign Governments are manipulating Indigenous peoples in order to gain control over Brazil’s natural riches. Presenting himself as the true defender of the Indigenous people, he confronts Foreign Countries, NGOs, and Brazilian environmentalists. These concerns are better illustrated in his speech at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly in New York:

**(Bolsonaro, September 24, 2019):** *“I want to make it clear: Brazil won’t increase its area already demarcated as Indigenous Land to 20%, as some heads of State would like to see it happen. [...]The worldview of an Indigenous leader does not represent the worldview of all Brazilian Indigenous peoples. Some of these leaders, such as Cacique*

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<sup>41</sup> “Hylea” was the term used by German geographer Alexander Von Humboldt and French naturalist Aimé Bonpland to refer to the Amazon.

*Raoni<sup>42</sup>, are often used as a maneuver by Foreign Governments in their information war to advance their interests in the Amazon. Unfortunately, some people from inside and outside Brazil, supported by NGOs, insist on treating and maintaining our Indigenous people as true cavemen. Brazil now has a president who cares about those who were there before the arrival of the Portuguese. The indigenous man does not want to be a poor landowner on top of rich lands. Especially the richest lands on Earth. This is the case of the Yanomami and Raposa Serra do Sol reservations. In these reservations, there is a great abundance of gold, diamonds, uranium, niobium, and rare lands, among others. And these territories are huge. [...] This demonstrates that those who attack us are not concerned with the Indigenous human being, but rather with the mineral and biodiversity existing in these areas.”*

This kind of attack is also present in his critique of the delimitation of the “Novo Marco Temporal”. In his point of view, extending Indigenous lands would be a terrible blow to the Brazilian economy, since it would harm what he considers to be the most important economic activity in the country: agribusiness.

**(Bolsonaro, October 13, 2021):** *“The Supreme Court decides a process known as the “Novo Marco Temporal”. In case it gets approved, another area equivalent to the Southeastern region will also be demarcated as Indigenous Land. This is the end of agribusiness in Brazil. This is the certainty that we may no longer have food security, the certainty that our economy, which is largely based on agribusiness, will suffer a severe blow.”*

#### **2.4.2 Christian Nationalism**

Christian Nationalism is also an important aspect of his speeches. Bolsonaro tends to highlight the fact that his middle name is “Messias” (“*Messiah*”) and once stated that his function as president was “*a mission from God*” (Bolsonaro, April 12, 2019).

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<sup>42</sup> Raoni Metuktire, Indigenous Brazilian leader and environmentalist.

As shown in the above section, Bolsonaro tends to stress that Brazil is a Christian Nation despite the state being secular and that, under his guidance, Brazil had a “Christian government”. His speeches are aimed particularly against those whom he accuses of being willing to distort Christian values with things such as “gender ideology” (namely the left).

**(Bolsonaro, August 16, 2019):** *“We respect all religions, but 90% of the population is Christian. The State is secular, but we are Christians and we believe in God. This thing of messing with the Brazilian family is over. The Brazilian family is sacred. Every day we see less and less of that garbage, that devilish thing named “gender ideology”. [...] We are going to change this Brazil. [...] Now you have a Christian government.”*

**(Bolsonaro, August 4, 2019):** *“Here on Earth we have to work for the good of others or for ourselves. The spiritual question is up to us. But our Judeo-Christian tradition weighs heavily on the fate of this country. That’s why there are bills within the Chamber and within the Senate trying to disqualify the family [...] we were born in 1955, what did our parents tell us? “He is a man!” Isn’t he? He is a man, he is going to play football, isn’t he? I don’t know, anyway, “he is a man”. Not like nowadays [...] if the Worker’s Party had continued this would certainly have advanced: sex as a social construct.”*

## 2.5 Implications to Foreign Policy

### 2.5.1 Israel and the United States as models to be followed

When it comes to international affairs, Israel and the United States play an important role in his speeches.

Regarding Israel, Bolsonaro's Foreign Policy abandoned Brazilian support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, threatening to move the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and, throughout his campaign, he stated that he did not recognize Palestine as a country, adding that "you do not negotiate with terrorists" (Casarões, G. & Fletes, D., 2019).

Given these facts, one would expect his mentions of Israel to play with the opposition between "Israel" and "Arabs" or, more specifically, "Palestinians". Despite this, his mentions of Israel are related to the idea that it is a country that Brazil should aspire to, especially when it comes to the management of natural resources.

**Bolsonaro (September 29, 2021):** *"I've already told you. In the past, when I was in Israel. Israel has almost nothing. They don't have drinking water, they don't have fertile land, they don't have riches and minerals, they don't have oil, they don't have almost anything. But they are a people who have an unparalleled faith, who believe in God above all. I will compare them to Brazil. Look at what Israel doesn't have and see what they are, now see what Brazil has and really get to know what we are not."*

**Bolsonaro (September 17, 2021):** *"We have everything to be a great nation. It is what I always say: look at Israel, that small country, look at what they don't have and see what they are, now look at Brazil. Look what we have and see what we aren't yet"*.

**Bolsonaro (August 31, 2021):** *"How can such a small country [Israel] make its people have a good life with not as much suffering as our people? Look what they don't have and see what they are, now look what we have and see what we are not yet"*.

This admiration of Israel, however, does not imply hate towards Arabs, as it is in the case of many of his populist and nationalist counterparts in Europe. On the contrary, Bolsonaro seems to hold a positive view of the Lebanese community in Brazil as it is evidenced by the speech given in the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion of August 4, 2020, when Brazil sent a Humanitarian Mission to Lebanon under the representation of former president Michel Temer (a prominent Lebanese-Brazilian):

**Bolsonaro (August 12, 2020):** *“This date further marks our approach to Lebanon. Our countries do not give up Democracy and Freedom, that’s what we want for the whole World, and you can rest assured that the 12 million Lebanese descendants who are in Brazil contribute a lot to our homeland, working, integrating, and collaborating in the more diverse areas for Brazil to really reach the prominent place it deserves on the World stage.”*

Moreover, Bolsonaro always stressed the importance of the partnership with Gulf Countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar.

**(Bolsonaro, October 19, 2020):** *“The visit I made last year to the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, is unequivocal evidence of the Brazilian interest in strengthening the relationship with the Middle East. [...]. I’m sure that we can take advantage of the modern infrastructure of the Gulf Countries in order to diversify and expand the access of Brazilian products to Asian markets”.*

Throughout his campaign, Bolsonaro never hid his admiration towards the United States, or better, towards Donald Trump. As stated by Bolsonaro himself, his admiration towards the US is old, going back to “the school benches”.

**(Bolsonaro, March 10, 2019):** *“It is an honor, it is a satisfaction to be in the United States of America, a country that since I was young [...], back in the school benches, I came to admire.”*

Borrowing the Manichean discourse from the Cold War, he puts the country as the main symbol of Capitalism, Democracy and Freedom in opposition to Communism. In a way, his new approach towards the US can be considered a new version of the “carnal relations” between Argentina and the US when Guido Di Tella was the minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina under the Menem administration (Menezes, 2019, Gonçalves & Teixeira, 2020).

However, this good relationship with the US was damaged during the 2020 Presidential Elections, since Bolsonaro openly supported the re-election of Donald Trump. In a speech directed to Robert O'Brien, the US National Security Adviser at that time, he stated:

**(Bolsonaro, October 20, 2020):** *“I hope, if this is God’s will, to attend the inauguration of the soon-to-be re-elected President in the United States. I don’t need to hide it. It is from the heart. I don’t interfere, but I manifest this way at this moment from [my] heart and the respect I have for the American people, and for the work and consideration Donald Trump has had for us”.*

Moreover, Bolsonaro was one of the last World Leaders to recognize Joe Biden’s victory in that election, causing embarrassment to both sides

### **2.5.2 Latin America as a cautionary tale**

Given the relatively lack of connection to the Latin American region and the unwillingness to bear the costs of regional leadership displayed by Brazilians (Onuki et al, 2016), Latin America does not appear to be at the center of Bolsonaro’s Foreign Policy, and the region has been used exclusively as a rhetorical strawman.

When it comes to his Latin-American neighbors, Bolsonaro’s positions are mutable and malleable, depending on the form of government adopted by the country. During the first year of his term, he expressed hopeful and positive views towards Argentina and Chile, then governed by Mauricio Macri and Sebastian Piñera respectively, expressing the idea that this alliance would inspire a new right-wing wave in Latin America.

**(Bolsonaro, July 17, 2019):** *“We want each country to be autonomous, to be democratic, and [...] to be great. As I see Trump saying, we want a great America<sup>43</sup>. I want Brazil great, Paraguay great, Argentina and Bolivia great as well, Uruguay [too], that’s our vocation. And especially the Chile of Piñera, [who is] right here. [...] I congratulate Argentina, once again, for the proposal of a declaration for the strengthening of Democracy in Mercosur. We don’t want what is, unfortunately, happening with our Venezuela to happen in another country here in South America.”*

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<sup>43</sup> In this case he is referring to the continent.



**(Bolsonaro, June 6, 2019):** *“Dear President Macri, my brother. We have pretty much the same ideals. Our coming here obviously translates into what we want best for our people. As you well ended your speech, citing Venezuela, I think that all of South America is worried about avoiding new Venezuelas in the region.”*

**(Bolsonaro, March 23, 2019):** *“Dear President Piñera, it feels like we have been friends for a long time. My admiration for Your Excellency really goes back from [your] first term, when I met you in that miner’s situation<sup>44</sup>. Congratulations on [your] leadership in that moment. And even more, even before the first round in Brazil, Your Excellency was in Chile, or better, in Antarctica, and gave a statement about me on Chilean TV.”*

However, this initial optimism is converted into an acute worry that the left might win the election in these two countries in 2019 and 2021, which it eventually did with the election of Alberto Fernandez in Argentina and Gabriel Boric in Chile.

**(Bolsonaro, January 16, 2020):** *“We cannot arrive in 2022 in the situation Argentina reached this year, or, unfortunately, Chile, a large and prosperous country [that] is walking towards chaos, towards socialism.”*

This view of Latin American countries as a cautionary tale was already strongly present in his speeches mentioning Venezuela and Cuba.

**(Bolsonaro, October 2, 2019):** *“Ms. Yuly Teran<sup>45</sup>, what happened to our dear, rich, and prosperous Venezuela? It didn’t happen overnight. It started in 1999, when one person, using the weapons of Democracy, came to power. And he was a hope for many in the world, but the mask began to fall. He began to co-opt the population, buying the people with social projects, taking advantage of the fact that [Venezuela] is an OPEC member. Even those who didn’t need it began to benefit [from it]. And, over time, what is, in my opinion, more important than life, which is freedom, began to be lost.”*

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<sup>44</sup> Referring to the 2010 Copiapó Mining Accident in San José Mine, Chile.

<sup>45</sup> Venezuelan Refugee in Brazil

**(Bolsonaro, September 30, 2021):** *“Yesterday in Roraima there were dozens of Venezuelans, most of them women, who fled the Venezuelan paradise to Brazil. Women who arrive there in Pacaraima usually with a child in the womb, with some other children in their lap, a bundle of clothes in their head, and a suitcase in their hand. They arrive [...] extorted and many also became prostitutes in order to feed themselves. Is this the future we want for Brazil? Is this the socialism we want to implement here?”*

**(Bolsonaro, August 14, 2019):** *“There’s only one way for Brazil. A single people, a single race, a single green and yellow flag. Mão Santa<sup>46</sup> told me just now that we are to put an end to poop in Brazil. The poop [in question] is this race of corrupt communists. In the next elections, we are going to sweep this red gang from Brazil. Since [the situation] is good in Venezuela, I’ll send this bunch of people there. I’ll send to Cuba those who want to go a little further to the North, it must be very good up there too.”*

However, it is important to stress that, in his speeches, Bolsonaro expresses disdain for the type of government adopted by these countries, not towards their people. He often emphasizes a sense of kinship and brotherhood with them (referring to them as “Argentinian brothers”, “Venezuelan brothers”, “Cuban brothers” and so on), expressing pity towards the ones governed by left-leaning governments (“poor Venezuelans/Argentinians suffering from socialism”) and even volunteering to take in eventual refugees fleeing the “oppressive socialist regimes” of these countries.

In this way, we can say that the Nationalism present in Bolsonaro’s speeches is different from the Nationalism present in Europe and the US. Here, the enemy of the nation comes from within (namely, “the left” and “the activists”) or, if it comes from the outside, is represented by the countries that want to interfere in Brazil’s environmental affairs (namely, Western European countries and the US under the Biden administration), resembling the same mindset adopted by the Military Government that ruled Brazil in the 1970s.

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<sup>46</sup> Francisco de Assis de Moraes e Souza, also known as “Mão Santa” is the current mayor of Parnaíba, a city in Northeastern Brazil. Ironically, his mandate was revoked because of corruption when he was the Governor of Piauí in 2001.

### 2.5.3 China

The relationship between Bolsonaro's government and China has been the subject of many debates, beginning even before his nomination as President. The reason for this is that the relationship with China is very important for Brazil's economy.

In 2009, China replaced the US as Brazil's biggest trading partner (Wheatley, 2009), and the two countries have been cooperating in multilateral organizations such as the BRICS, assuming a leadership position in the Global South.

Yet, this rapprochement between Brazil and China did not please the aforementioned "Olavist" base, which induced Bolsonaro to make controversial statements on the eve of the elections such as "China does not buy from Brazil. China is buying Brazil". Of course, such statements have been criticized by the Military, which sees the relationship with China as beneficial for Brazilian trade.

For this reason, in spite of what had been speculated about Bolsonaro's stance towards China once in power, given the fact that his inner circle for international affairs is strongly marked by an anti-China sentiment (Spektor, 2019), his official presidential speeches do not express any direct sign of Sinophobia. When he refers to China, he refers to them as a partner, even volunteering to do business with them.

**(Bolsonaro, October 25, 2019):** *"We decided a few days ago, after hearing our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ernesto Araújo, to exempt you from visas when it comes to tourism and business travels in Brazil. By doing so, our government demonstrates trust in your country. We want, in addition to business, more Chinese people to visit us. [...] We were born to walk together in the commercial issue, among other [issues]. I'm very happy to be here and this afternoon I will have the pleasure of personally shaking hands with President Xi, demonstrating that the new government is [...] aligned [with China] on more than just the trade issue."*

Another significant moment of Bolsonaro's retreat from his criticism of China was when he admitted the importance of the latter in combating the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil, despite the tensions observed between the two countries during the apex of the same pandemic, with Bolsonaro suggesting that the Chinese had created the virus and doubting the

effectiveness of Chinese CORONAVAC vaccines brought to Brazil by São Paulo State's governor João Dória jr.

**(Bolsonaro, September 9, 2021):** *“That was, for example, the last occasion on which I met in person President Xi Jinping<sup>47</sup> when we discussed issues of the Global Strategic Partnership between our two countries, as well as the good state of our bilateral relations in various aspects, more specifically in the commercial and investment spheres. This partnership has proved to be essential to the management of the pandemic in Brazil, given that a significant portion of the vaccines offered to the Brazilian population is produced with inputs originating in China.”*

However, in his official speeches, Bolsonaro does criticize China in a more indirect way, avoiding direct conflict with Brazil's biggest trading partner.

**(Bolsonaro, September 5, 2019):** *“The economy has to work because if it doesn't work, we will be in 2022 what Argentina is today, what Venezuela was yesterday, what Cuba was in 1959, or what another country out there was in 1949.”<sup>48</sup>*

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<sup>47</sup> Referring to the 11th BRICS summit that took place in Brazil in 2019

<sup>48</sup> Referring to China

### **3 Conclusion: populism and nationalism in Bolsonaro's official speeches (2019-2021)**

Despite the media fuss over his “populist” side, the extent to which Bolsonaro embodies Nationalistic principles is often overlooked. I argued that the relationship between Populism and Nationalism in Bolsonaro's official speeches from 2019 to 2021 is strong, as he mixes both populist and nationalist appeals to his base.

Overall, we can say that Bolsonaro is not exactly a “Trump of the tropics” but rather an embodiment and adaptation of the ideas held by the Military that ruled the country in the 70s. His speeches often emphasize Brazil's natural resources and the need to protect them, the constant opposition to “the left” (and, in the case of the Covid pandemic, governors and mayors who were against his government), the need to learn from countries such as Israel and the United States, and his connection to the Military and the “values” of the “everyday man” (often associated with religion and morality and in opposition to the “degeneration” that the left was supposedly trying to impose).

When it comes to the Populist aspects of his speeches, they start weak in 2019 but rise up to a quarter of his speeches in 2021. The low levels of Populism in the first year corroborate with the findings of Castanho & Silva, Fuks & Tamaki (2022) which indicate that rather than populism *per se*, a huge part of the support for Bolsonaro comes from illiberal attitudes, although the increase in populist attitudes in his speeches in 2021 is yet to be explained (perhaps a combination of the elections in the following years and the pandemic in the former). Nationalism, on the other hand, is more present, especially in its sovereigntist shape, which is expected given his background in the Military at the height of the Dictatorship during the 70s and 80s. Nationalist speeches amount to a quarter of his speeches delivered between 2019-2021, which indicates that Bolsonaro may be more Nationalist than Populist, although in 2021 the two concepts strongly intermingle.

However, it is important to keep in mind that the tone adopted by Bolsonaro in his official speeches differs, to a certain extent, from the tone adopted in his weekly lives on the internet or the tone adopted in informal statements to the press, which are more aggressive (Tamaki, 2022). Examples of this can be found in his statements on the COVID-19 pandemic, threatening to withdraw Brazil from the WHO<sup>49</sup>, which he accused of having an “ideological bias” (Paulino & Waisbord, 2021). This difference in the tone of the speeches is explained by

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<sup>49</sup> World Health Organization.

the fact that, once elected, Bolsonaro began to moderate the language adopted in his official statements due to institutional constraints, beginning to use alternative means in order to circumvent such constraints and to directly communicate with his audience (Tamaki, 2022).

Finally, it is important to highlight that the speeches analyzed in this dissertation only refer to his first three years of government (2019-2021), thus, they do not include recent developments such as the 2022 Presidential Elections and recent events in Foreign Policy such as the Russia-Ukraine war and the speech to the ambassadors, where he tried to undermine the electoral process by delegitimizing it before the international community.

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