

Anglo-American University  
School of International Relations and Diplomacy

Spanish populist parties:  
An alternative understanding of populism success.

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Spanish populist parties: An alternative understanding of populism success.

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## Declaration of Consent and Statement of Originality

I declare that this thesis is my independent work. All sources and literature are properly cited and include in the bibliography.

I hereby declare that no portion of text in this thesis has been submitted in support of another degree, or qualification thereof, for any other university or institute of learning.

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis is based upon an original expert survey that divides the study of populism into two periods in Spain: from 2004 to 2011 and from 2011 to 2018, depicting a pre-crisis and a post-crisis context since Spain experienced a massive economic crisis and the 15-M protest movement in 2011. The survey compared the position of Spanish political parties in the left-right and the populist-nonpopulist spectrum in these two periods. Results show that while in both periods populist parties were present, during the post-crisis period, new populist leftwing parties has emerged, the existing leftwing has become more populist, and the rightwing have not changed along the populist scale to such a degree. This paper analyses the reasons why populist leftwing parties occupy the post-crisis context in Spain instead of the populist rightwing, by asking why populism was only successful on the radical left but not on the radical right in Spanish general elections in 2016? This thesis aims to broaden the existing knowledge about populist parties' success by challenging the effectivity of current theories, including the "grievance theory," "the losers of globalization" and "the failed economy theory." The failure of those theories to explain the outcome of interest leads this thesis to present an alternative explanation. This thesis argues that when populism rises it chooses the most anti-status quo party ideology, regardless of whether they are right or left. Understanding anti-status quo ideology as that ideology that promotes regeneration of the current state of affairs, a move forwards in changing the present political, social and/or economic system. An analysis of the electoral manifestos of the main populists radical left and right parties, Podemos and Vox respectively, by using content and discourse analysis, finds that Podemos presented a more anti-status quo ideology than Vox.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

The literature of populism has recently been expanded by many studies that try to explain the sudden success of such phenomenon around the world. Such literature has primarily been focusing on the study of populist parties within Northwestern European countries where the phenomenon has mostly been present directly linked to radical right parties. While populism is not a recent phenomenon, it is shocking to notice that most of the current theories and understanding on populism have been developed in recent studies, making this field of study a very dynamic and changing one.

Meanwhile the study of populism in a Spanish context has been very limited to a few studies whose focuses were mainly distributed between two topics: those that focused on why Spain were not following the common European trend of successful populists radical right; and those that focused on Spain not being an exception anymore about successful populists parties with the entrance of Podemos in the parliament in 2015. But among the different angels in which the phenomenon of populism can be study there are very few studies that try to understand the particularities of success among the diverse populist movements that exists. In other words, the literature has covered why populism rises but have failed to provide a comprehensive review of why some populists movements rise while other fails, which are the dynamics of the diverse movements that exists within populist parties. Based on this gap in the literature on populism, this thesis tries to give an answer to such matters. Spain as a case study seems the perfect fit for such matter because the first populist party becoming successful was the populist radical left, while the populist radical right remained electorally irrelevant,<sup>1</sup> a deviant pattern while compared to the rest of Europe where it was the populist radical right the successful one. Therefore, this thesis asks why populism was successful on

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to notice that by the time this thesis was concluded Spain held general elections the 28<sup>th</sup> April 2019, in which Vox, the main populists radical right party, ended up entering in Parliament with a 10% of the valid votes and 24 seats.

the left but not on the right in Spanish general elections in 2016?<sup>2</sup> The argument here defended is that populism when populism rises it chooses the most anti-status quo party ideology, in other words, the political parties whose ideology promotes the change in the present state of affairs, a move forward in the regeneration of the system. To answer this research question and corroborate or not such argument, the present thesis is divided in several chapters. The first one covers the conceptualization of populism, radical right and radical left parties, as well as the theoretical background where the most known and relevant theories on populism are introduced. The following chapter is divided between the justification of the case selection of Spain and a brief description of the Spanish political context for helping those readers foreign to Spanish politics to understand the background in which the following analysis is framed. The next part of the thesis is dedicated to build and narrow the concept under analysis. To do so, this chapter includes an original expert survey that divides the Spanish political parties in two dimensions, left-right and populist-nonpopulist, for two time periods (2004-2011 and 2011-2018) After the frame of the populist radical parties, which are the concept under analysis in this thesis, the following chapter studies the existing theories on populism and proposes an alternative explanation for the success of populism on the left and not on the right based on the Spanish context. Then, next part is dedicated to the main analysis and conforms the argument of the thesis, where the alternative explanation is tested based on the analysis of electoral manifestos of the main populist radical parties, Podemos on the left-wing and Vox on the right-wing. Finally ending the thesis with a conclusion chapter where the main findings of the paper are summarized.

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<sup>2</sup> 2016 elections where the last elections prior to the 2019 elections.

## Chapter 2. Theoretical Background

The puzzling situation on why populism was only successful on the radical left but not on the radical right in Spain during last elections in 2016, focuses the attention on the logics of populist parties, why they rise or why they do not. This thesis will, therefore, try to test and enlarge the knowledge already presented in the literature on populist parties, which in its large majority has been monopolized by the study of populist radical right parties. While it is defended here that populist radical right parties do exist, the study of populism cannot be solely regarded to the study of these radical right parties. The study of populism in Europe has largely focused on the study of populist radical right parties and therefore the understanding of them has been many times merged in a single one.

This thesis argues that those concepts, populism and radical politics, both in its left and right version, are separated entities, populism on one hand, and radical politics on the other, and so their merging as a single entity is creating a confusion in the literature regarding the study of the two phenomena, especially in regards the understanding of populism. Far from a banal distinction, the relevance of this process, the conceptualization and the selection of theories, lies in the fact that depending on the terminology and how these concepts are defined and understood, they would guide the study of such phenomena in one way or another. For all this reason, this thesis follows the theoretical background created by Takis Pappas<sup>3</sup>, who argued for the distinction of the concepts of populism as a single entity and of radical politics as a different one. In other words, this thesis follows the understanding that there can be radical right parties with populist tendencies or not, and the same with the radical left, there can be populist radical left parties or just radical left parties with no populism present. Therefore, in this case, there are three main phenomena to be

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<sup>3</sup> Takis S. Pappas, "The Specter Haunting Europe: Distinguishing Liberal Democracy's Challengers," *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 4 (2016).

conceptualized, the radical right, the radical left and populism, being this last one the main focus of our study, the reasons for its rises and the conditions under which this phenomenon does not happen.

The added difficulty to this process is the fact that radical left parties have rarely been the center of the analysis of the academic literature, and so they are still nowadays a big unknown phenomenon. On the other hand, its counterpart the radical right, while being a very studied phenomenon, its study remains far from achieving a consensus among scholars. The existing literature of those parties whose ideology is located at the right extreme of the ideological spectrum, or as Herbert Kitschelt said to the right of the right,<sup>4</sup> here named as radical right parties, all share a pathological lack of consistency “over the appropriate terminology (...) worsened by the lack of clear definitions.”<sup>5</sup>

The present chapter is divided in two main parts. The first one is dedicated to the conceptualization of populism, radical left and radical right parties, as these three are the main concepts and phenomenon under study in this thesis. The second and last part of this chapter comprise a review of the existing theories on the explanation of the electoral success of populist parties.

## 2.1. Conceptualization: Populism, Radical Left and Radical Right parties

### 2.1.1. Populism

Before starting the conceptualization of populism, it is interesting to briefly discuss the on-going debate on whether populism should be regarded as a political strategy or as an ideology, with this thesis following under those that understand populism as an ideology.

Populism as a political strategy understands that the organizational aspects of the populist

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<sup>4</sup> Herbert Kitschelt, and Anthony J. McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A comparative analysis*, (University of Michigan Press, 1997), quoted in Bruno Larralde Velten, “La extrema derecha como fenómeno transnacional: la elección racional y las necesidades insatisfechas,” (PhD diss., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2009), 62.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah L. De Lange, and Cas Mudde, “Political extremism in Europe,” *European Political Science* 4, no. 4 (2005): 479.

discourse such as the charismatic leader or the way they communicate style with the people with no intermediaries lead to understanding such approaches as a mere strategy used in the political discourse.<sup>6</sup> Contrarily, those who defend the idea of populism as an ideology refuse that those mentioned organizational and communicative styles form part of the core understanding of populism, and they based their reasoning on the fact that several other movements, such as “religious and millenarian movements have charismatic leaders and low levels of institutionalization early in their organizational life cycle, but usually we do not consider them as populist.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, those characteristics cannot be considered the core elements of populism and so the understanding of populism as a political strategy is refused.

Following the understanding of populism as an ideology, it is understood that populist parties are characterized mainly by their division of society into two antagonistic groups, the people, as a diffuse entity to which they represent, versus the rest.<sup>8</sup> The conceptualization of populism is highly contested, and the literature is filled with controverted definitions and categorizations. But it is also true that many scholars agree in the idea that populist parties “consider society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups (...) and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.”<sup>9</sup> As it is advice by experienced scholars, while defining populism “scholars should employ a narrow framework and be precise, distinctive and consistent.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, based on this thin-centered definition populism is regarded as a combination of a dichotomization of the society and people-centrism.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Cas Mudde, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, “Voices of the peoples: populism in Europe and Latin America compared,” *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies Working Paper* 378 (2011): 6.

<sup>7</sup> Kirk A. Hawkins, “Chavismo, Populism, and Democracy,” in *Venezuela’s Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Taggart, *Populism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000)

<sup>9</sup> Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist,” *Government and Opposition* 39, no. 4 (2004): 543.

<sup>10</sup> Matthijs Rooduijn, “State of the field: How to study populism and adjacent topics? A plea for both more and less focus,” *European Journal of Political Research* 58, no. 1 (2019): 362.

<sup>11</sup> Rooduijn, 363-364.

The literature on populism has always stressed the distinction of the people versus the rest as the central point of populism. But the definition of who the people are is not that clear, since “the people means fundamentally different things to different populists.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, this understanding of populism and its core ideas shows how versatile this approach can be to different ideological movements. While in a radical right party this distinction would mostly be the nationals versus the immigrants, in a Eurosceptic party it would be the nationals versus the European elites, or in a separatist party, this distinction could be between the oppressed minority versus the oppressive majority. “Populism has an essentially chameleonic quality that means it always takes on the hue of the environment in which it occurs”<sup>13</sup> and that is exactly why its definition is so minimal and why it can fit perfectly and be found along some other ideologies.

### 2.1.2. Radical Left

Literature of radical left parties is scarce, specially, especially if compared with its counterpart the radical right, but as a result or as a consequence, this fact presents a benefit for its study in the sense that there is more consensus regarding its conceptualization.<sup>14</sup> Before presenting a definition on the radical right, it is important to stress the relevancy in the use of radicalism instead of extremism. Since this thesis is focused on political parties that took part in the electoral process and therefore are accepting the democratic frameworks in which parties participate, it is necessary to limit the study to the radical left parties. “Extremists can be defined as anti-democrats per se, while radicals are antiliberal democratic, but not anti-democratic per se.”<sup>15</sup> Extremist left parties and movements do not participate in

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<sup>12</sup> Margaret Canovan, “People, politicians and populism,” *Government and Opposition*, 19 (1984), cited in Taggart, *Populism*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Taggart, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Luis Ramiro and Raúl Gómez, “Radical-left populism during the Great Recession: Podemos and its competition with the established radical left,” *Political Studies* 65, no. 1 (2017): 109, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321716647400>.

<sup>15</sup> Cas Mudde, “Politischer Extremismus in Westeuropa”, in *Gefährdungen der Freiheit: Extremistische Ideologien im Vergleich*, eds. Uwe Backes et al., (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005), cited in Luke March and Cas

the democratic game and remain themselves extra-parliamentary forces, therefore, they are out of the scope of this thesis that focuses on the parties that do take part in elections.

As it was defined by Luke March and Cas Mudde, they identify radical left parties “in that it rejects the underlying socio-economic structure of contemporary capitalism and its values and practices.”<sup>16</sup> Anti-capitalism is its signaling trait, but unlike in the past, “their anti-capitalism no longer involves a planned economy but opposition to »neo-liberal« globalized capitalism, broadly associated with the so-called »Washington consensus«.”<sup>17</sup> Along with its signaling trait of anti-capitalism, the radical left ideology has been identified with other two main components denounce of economic inequalities, and internationalism in two sense, in both as the cause of the structural inequalities and as the solution to overcome them in international solidarity.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the radical left is clearly mostly identified with economy base claims, claims that, as it was the case with the radical right, can also be found along populist ideologies creating the so-called populist radical left parties, in fact, some recent literature have found out that populism has the same probability to be found along radical left ideologies than radical right ideologies.<sup>19</sup>

### 2.1.3. Radical right:

The term radical right is relatively recent in comparison with the existing literature that studies this party family, as the term that was usually used in the past was extreme right. The radical right has been the most accepted denomination in the literature that studies the Third wave, which started in 1980, while the extreme right was mostly used in the literature

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Mudde, “What's left of the radical left? The European radical left after 1989: Decline and mutation,” *Comparative European Politics* 3, no. 1 (2005): 25, <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cep.6110052>.

<sup>16</sup> March and Mudde, “What's left of the radical left? The European radical left after 1989: Decline and mutation,” 25.

<sup>17</sup> Luke March, “Contemporary Far Left Parties in Europe: From Marxism to the Mainstream?,” *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* 1 (2009): 126.

<sup>18</sup> March and Mudde, “What's left of the radical left? The European radical left after 1989: Decline and mutation,” 25.

<sup>19</sup> Marco Lisi and Enrico Borghetto, “Populism, blame shifting and the crisis: discourse strategies in Portuguese political parties,” *South European Society and Politics* 23, no. 4 (2018): 408, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2018.1558606>.

that refers to the First and Second waves.<sup>20</sup> Both terms, extreme and radical imply different things. On one hand, extreme right is identified with anti-system sentiments while the radical right refuses that variable as a feature of these parties. Piero Ignazi is one of the leading experts regarding the study of these parties and he advocates for the use of extreme right:

Firstly, it recalls the notion of extremeness in a political and ideological space [location]: extreme right denotes those issues and organizations that are closed to one extreme to the political spectrum. Secondly, the extremeness is related to anti-system values [ideology]<sup>21</sup>

Ignazi defense of such term lies in the idea that extreme right parties not only help us understand their position in the ideological spectrum, but it also asseverates the anti-system or anti-democratic values of these parties. Certainly, this understanding is nowadays questioned by many scholars that reject the used of extreme right because this definition portrays parties that go “beyond the legal boundaries of democratic politics that are willing to use violent direct actions, or even terrorist tactics.”<sup>22</sup> The use of that term implies the necessary use of violence, as well as references to fascism or Nazism, as indicators of belonging to this party family which would limit the scope of analysis since barely any party follows nowadays that path, either for electoral-marketing reasons<sup>23</sup> or because of the electoral laws of the country bans that type of parties.<sup>24</sup>

Nowadays, radical right terminology has taken the lead in the literature to define the family party here studied. This concept does not only do not accept the anti-system feelings previously discussed, but it has been built as an opposition to it. This term refers to those parties that do not aim the full or partial elimination of the free democratic order.<sup>25</sup> Among

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<sup>20</sup> Cas Mudde, *The ideology of the extreme right* (Manchester University Press, 2000), 6.

<sup>21</sup> Piero Ignazi, *Extreme right parties in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 30.

<sup>22</sup> Pippa Norris, *Radical Right: Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 45.

<sup>23</sup> Norris, *Radical Right: Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market*, 6.

<sup>24</sup> De Lange and Mudde, “Political extremism in Europe,” 478.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Frisch, “Die Herausforderung unseres demokratischen Rechtsstaats durch Extremismus und Terrorismus,” in *Rechtsextremismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, (Bonn, Der Bundesminister des Innern, 1990), cited by Mudde, *The ideology of the extreme right*, 12.

the literature, Mudde has been one of the most prominent scholars creating literature seconding the use of radical right. He established the necessary and sufficient features that identify a party as a member of the radical right family: nativism and authoritarianism.<sup>26</sup>

Nativism is a combination of nationalism, “the believe that the political unit (the state) and the cultural unit (the nation) should be congruent”, and xenophobia, “fear, hate or hostility to groups that are perceived as ‘alien’ or ‘strange,’” and authoritarianism would refer to the support or a strong state with strict law and order.<sup>27</sup>

This study will use the definition of radical right parties as a combination of nativism and authoritarianism with an acceptance of the democratic rules, but the problem arises when the term is complemented with a third component, populism. Here is where the debate gets more intense due to the implications that it entails.

#### 2.1.3.1. Radical Right and Populism

The populist radical right has been defined as “a combination of at least three features: nativism, authoritarianism and populism.”<sup>28</sup> The incursion of populism in the definition of radical right parties is recently new, but it has managed to find many acolytes among scholars and different schools. The present definition of populist radical right belongs to the leading German scholar, Cas Mudde, but many other relevant scholars, such as Hans-Georg Betz<sup>29</sup> or Roger Eatwell<sup>30</sup> have found in populism the key feature to this party family. This has led, once again, to a chaotic terminology among scholars and to a multiplicity of denominations, such as national populism, right-wing populism and new populism among

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<sup>26</sup> Cas Mudde, “Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe Redux,” *Political studies review* 7, no. 3 (2009): 331.

<sup>27</sup> Mudde, *The ideology of the extreme right*, 187-188.

<sup>28</sup> Cas Mudde, “Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe Today,” in *Transformations of Populism in Europe and the Americas: History and Recent Tendencies*, eds. John Abromeit et al. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 296.

<sup>29</sup> Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical right-wing populism in Western Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> Roger Eatwell, “Populism and Fascism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser et al. (Oxford University Press, 2017).

others. But above all of them, the concept of populist radical right is the one with the most acceptance in the literature.

The incursion of the concept of populism as a feature of radical right parties comes from the idea that “the step from ‘the nation’ to ‘the people’ is easily taken, and the distinction between the two is often far from clear.”<sup>31</sup> One of the main features of radical right parties is nativism, and therefore, Mudde argues that nowadays both concepts, the nation, which belongs to the core definition of radical right, and the people, which belongs to the core definition of populism are merged into one single entity. Hence, the term given to the party family changes to populist radical right.

The addition of populism to the definition of radical right has not only changed the necessary and sufficient features for parties to fall under this category, but it has also changed the relevancy of each of them. Followers of this understanding think that populism is considered the ideological core of radical right parties, in fact, Mudde himself has stated that “my hunch is that the only truly particular feature is populism”<sup>32</sup> leading to the point that the concept of populist parties and radical right parties are often interchangeable in the literature.

The problematic here presented is that scholars use populist radical right as a single entity of study and therefore populate the literature with analyses that try to explain the rise of such parties. This is the case of the already mentioned Mudde, Eatwell or Betz to name a few relevant scholars in the field that have presented studies that seek to explain the electoral successes and dynamics of those parties. On the contrary, this thesis believes that since these analyses do not distinguish between populism and radical right their findings cannot be used as explicative of the functioning of populist parties. As Takis Pappas explains,

Parties and movements that do not belong to the same species should not be treated as if they do—it will only make the search for causes and solutions harder. We are dealing with a range

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<sup>31</sup> Mudde, “The populist zeitgeist,” 549.

<sup>32</sup> Mudde, “Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe Redux,” 331.

of political phenomena that have their own distinct sets of causes, normative assumptions, and practical consequences.<sup>33</sup>

It is also interesting to acknowledge that there are also other scholars who support the view stated in this thesis. It is the case of Ignazi, who claimed back in the 1990s that populism could not be considered an exclusive characteristic of radical right parties since it is a general concept that can appeal to all kinds of political parties regardless of their location in the ideological scale.<sup>34</sup> Or more recently, Matthijs Rooduijn, who clearly stated that “conflating populism with nativism is not a minor problem. It could lead to highly flawed conclusions.”<sup>35</sup> Even Mudde himself has stated that the idea that populism can also be found on (radical) left parties,<sup>36</sup> which makes even more shocking the idea that he continues to study populism as a feature embedded in radical right parties and not as a single entity as it is here defended. Thus, this thesis defends the necessity to study the rise of populist parties as a single entity and not as part of the larger party family of the radical right, since populism can be found along any other ideology. As a matter of fact, the use of the term populist radical right is accepted in this thesis, but not with the connotations of forming a single entity of study.

## 2.2. Existing theories of the electoral success of populist parties

The recent rise of populist parties all over the world has fueled the creation of literature trying to explain the reasons behind this phenomenon. Several theories have tried to understand why populism rise and under which circumstances. In order to try to understand the research question of this paper, why the rise of the populist radical left rather than the populist radical right, several of those existing theories will be presented and analyzed.

Among the diverse theories that aim to explain the rise of populism, there is one key element

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<sup>33</sup> Pappas, “Distinguishing Liberal Democracy's Challengers,” 23.

<sup>34</sup> Ignazi, *Extreme right parties in Western Europe*, 30.

<sup>35</sup> Rooduijn, “State of the field: How to study populism and adjacent topics? A plea for both more and less focus,” 365.

<sup>36</sup> Mudde, “The populist zeitgeist,” 549.

shared by all theories that is free from controversy, and that is that the rise of populism is an implicit or explicit response to a sense of crisis.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, theories explaining the rise of populism can be divided in two groups, those ones who focus on the economy and the ones that focus on grievances.

Among the theories whose focus is on a crisis of economic nature is the “losers of globalization theory.” This theory was firstly introduced by Hanspeter Kriesi and explains that citizens voted for populist parties because they felt threatened by “the rise of unemployment, austerity policies limiting welfare benefits and clearer manifestations of transnational constraints on national governments might have accentuated the relevance of the conflict between globalization ‘losers’ and ‘winners’”<sup>38</sup> creating the perfect ground for populist parties and their dichotomization of society.

The second theory focuses on the crisis of economic nature is the “failed economic theory” that was developed by studying the cases of Turkey and Argentina. This theory, while following the same focus on the economy, it develops the understanding on populism a bit further. The theory is divided in two parts. The first one theorizes that “high public discontent accompanying the difficulties and crises associated with the policies of the Washington Consensus has generated a variety of populist response.”<sup>39</sup> But then the novelty part of theory is the second part where they argue that if the blame of the crisis is directed primarily towards external actors there would be an increase in the vote towards populist radical left parties and yet if the blame is towards domestic actors there would be a rise of the

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<sup>37</sup> Taggart, *Populism*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> Hanspeter Kriesi et al., *Political Conflict in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), cited in Luis Ramiro and Raúl Gómez, “Radical-left populism during the Great Recession: Podemos and its competition with the established radical left,” *Political Studies* 65, no. 1 (2017): 113.

<sup>39</sup> Selim Erdem Aytaç and Ziya Öniş, “Varieties of Populism in a Changing Global Context: The Divergent Paths of Erdoğan and Kirchnerismo,” *Comparative Politics* 47, no. 1 (2014): 42.

populist radical right.<sup>40</sup> Thus, this theory includes not only an explanation of when populism rises but also differentiates between dissimilar populists movements.

Apart from the economic-focused theories, there are recently another group of scholars who focus on crisis of a different nature, a crisis of representatives, it is the grievance theory. “Populist forces rise to power when citizens perceive that policy failures result from the intentional acts or indifference of their representatives.”<sup>41</sup> This theory is differentiated from the previous ones in the fact that it theorized that the vote for populist parties rise is not so much linked with the economic situation of the country, but with the relationship of citizens with their representatives. As similar as it might look from the previous theory, there are two major differentiations. Prior theory stressed the importance of being a failed economy as the necessary context for the theory to be applied, while this theory does not have such requirement to be applied, and secondly, the previous theory focused on the economic discontent while this theory focuses on representative dissatisfaction, in other words, when citizens feel “that representatives are technocratic (...) deaf to voters’ concerns”<sup>42</sup>

After introducing the main existing theories on the explanation on the rise of populism it can be observed that two of them, the losers of globalization theory and the grievance theory are not useful for this thesis. Those theories present explanations of the circumstances under which populism rises but failed to be useful to explain why populism succeeds on the radical left but not on the radical right, which is the research question of this paper. This fact highlights a major problem in the study of populism. Like Aytaç and Öniş explain,

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<sup>40</sup> Aytaç and Öniş, “Varieties of Populism in a Changing Global Context: The Divergent Paths of Erdoğan and Kirchnerismo.”

<sup>41</sup> Team Populism, *Policy Brief on Populism in Europe and the Americas: What, When, Who, and so What?* (Segovia: IE University, 2018), 7, accessed March 20, 2019, [https://populism.byu.edu/App\\_Data/Publications/SegoviaMemo%20final.pdf](https://populism.byu.edu/App_Data/Publications/SegoviaMemo%20final.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Team Populism, *Policy Brief on Populism in Europe and the Americas: What, When, Who, and so What?*, 7.

While the literature on populism is rich on specifying the characteristics of populist movements that distinguish them from non-populist ones, much less attention has been paid to distinguishing between different types of populist movements.<sup>43</sup>

An explanation for this lack of research can be traced back to the understanding of populism as a characteristic of radical right parties only, and therefore the inadequacy of the study of populism as a single entity that can be presented along many other ideologies, and the necessity to differentiate among them. When populism is confused with radical right and the terms are interchangeable, it leads to theoretical misunderstandings, in this case the failure of those two theories to explain the rise of populism on the radical left but not on the radical right. This reality underlines the importance of the already mentioned theoretical background in which this thesis is built upon, the distinction of populism as a single entity.

However, this is not the case of the failed economy theory. Such theory presents a detailed explanation on the rise of populism, why it might lead on the left and under which circumstances it does it on the right. Therefore, this theory has the potential to answer the research question of this paper. Following this theory, the hypothesis that will be tested later is as follows:

H: The blame towards external factor for the Spanish economic crisis was the key to the increased of votes to the populist radical left.

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<sup>43</sup> Aytacı and Öniş, “Varieties of Populism in a Changing Global Context: The Divergent Paths of Erdoğan and Kirchnerismo.” 42.

## Chapter 3. The Case of Spain

### 3.1. Justification of case selection

There are two main reasons that explain the selection of Spain as a single case study.

The first one is that the Spanish political context has experience in previous general elections the rise of a populist party called Podemos [We Can].

“Until the emergence of Podemos in 2014, populist parties were largely focused on garnering regional or peripheral nationalist support (the case of the Catalan and Galician parties), and to date, they have received relatively low-level electoral support.”<sup>44</sup>

This fact alone might not be surprising while compared to the rest of Western European countries, where a similar trend in the rise of populist parties can also be found. But the Spanish cases presents the perfect scenario to study why it was Podemos, a populists radical left party and not a populists radical right the one rising, breaking then with the uniformity of the rest of the literature who’s tendency is just to focus on the study of populism, without making distinctions between the different types of populist movements. Therefore, the Spanish case presents an interesting case within the continental Europe in where to analyzed and test the understanding that literature has on populist parties. It is also important to notice that the study of populism is very much monopolized by research that focus on northwestern European countries.<sup>45</sup> This reality could be shaping in a specific direction the understanding of populism, and therefore, the study of Spain as a rare case studied in this field could shed some light to it to better understand populist parties.

A case study is broadly defined as “the intensive study of a single case or a few cases for the purpose of understanding a larger class of cases.”<sup>46</sup> Case studies are characteristic for

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<sup>44</sup> Karen B. Sanders, Rosa Berganza and Roberto De Miguel, “Spain: Populism From the Far Right to the Emergence of Podemos,” in *Populist Political Communication in Europe*, eds. Toril Aalberg et al. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 252.

<sup>45</sup> Larralde Velten, “La extrema derecha como fenómeno transnacional: la elección racional y las necesidades insatisfechas,” xvi.

<sup>46</sup> John Gerring, “The Case Study: What it is and What it Does,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, eds. Charles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 95.

focusing on particular issues of a specific situation, or country as it is the case here. This abstraction to a small number of cases or small-N makes this method an advanced tool to grasp the complexities of the phenomenon and case studied that otherwise, such as with a large-N could not be possible to study in such detail due to practical reasons.

The case of Spain is not a mere single case study, but it is also a rare case, the first Spanish populist parties rose on the left unlike rest of Europe, whose populist parties rose first on the right, a rare case that has received little attention in the literature. Therefore, while compared with the existing literature this case could be understood as a deviant case, which is defined as those cases that “deviate from an expected causal pattern and thus invoke the opposite selection criterion of the conforming case.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the Spanish case could lead some light to understand better under what circumstances populist parties rise.

### 3.2. Presentation of background history

Before starting the analysis part of the present paper, it is necessary to understand the Spanish background. The chapter is divided in two subchapters that study the social economic and political framework in which this thesis is developed. Following a chronological order, the first one covers the time from the end of transition to democracy, in 1982, until the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2011. And the second and last part, covers from there until the elections in 2016.

#### 3.2.1. Bipartisanship. From early democracy until the economic crisis (1982-2011)

The 1982 general elections, the first ones under the new democratic Constitution of 1979, symbolized the ending of a dictatorial regime and the acceptance of new democratic principles. The political landscape of the democratic Spain has been characterized by an electoral bipartisanship between the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party or PSOE and the

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<sup>47</sup> Arend Lijphart, “The Comparable Cases Strategy in Comparative Research,” *Comparative Political Studies* 8 (1975), cited in John Gerring and Lee Cojocaru, “Case-selection: A diversity of methods and criteria,” (*Department of Political Science, Boston University* 2015): 7.

Popular Party or PP, which were and are the largest political parties in Spain. The Spanish electoral system is characterized by the existence of an institutional architecture and electoral mechanisms that certainly induce the prevalence of bipartisanship, generating an asymmetric structure of opportunities for the eventual emergence of power by other partisan options.<sup>48</sup> The alternation in power between PSOE and PP lasted almost a total of 30 years. During these years, the political landscape as well as the economic situation of the country not only remained stable but improved. Spain got accepted as a member state in the then known European Community in 1986. An important step since it strengthened the path of leaving behind the days when Spain was under a dictatorial regime and it helped to settle the recently accepted democratic rules and principles.

The economic situation of the country improved greatly during the last years of the XX century and during the early XXI. The period between 1985 and 1992 was economically very prosperous, with steady economic growth rates reaching similar levels as the rest of the Western European countries. There are several reasons that can explain such growth. Among the external ones, it is worth noting the fall in oil prices and the dollar. The improvement of the exchange rate in an economy so dependent on foreign energy markets, supposed an injection of income that was eventually reflected positively in the whole Spanish economy. Moreover, the fall of the dollar was a remarkable help in the fight against inflation.<sup>49</sup> As for the internal reasons, the adjustment on the economic policies undergone in previous years, helped to reinforce the competitive capacity of the different national economic agents. The already mentioned entrance of Spain to the European Community since 1986 along with their integration policies helped to improve the efficiency of the economy, especially regarding the

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<sup>48</sup> Francisco José Francés García and Óscar Antonio Santacreu Fernández, “Crisis política y juventud en España: el declive del bipartidismo electoral,” *Società Mutamento Politica* 5, no. 10 (2014): 111.

<sup>49</sup> José Lara Galisteo, “España a finales del siglo xx: sociedad, economía y cultura,” *Central Sindical Independiente y de Funcionarios* (2009): 2-6.

investment.<sup>50</sup> But this economic stability was soon interrupted in 2008, which also ended up affecting the electoral landscape.

### 3.2.2. The rise of populist radical left? From the economic crisis until the 2016 elections (2011-2016)

The economic recession that followed the global economic crisis that started in 2008 left “soaring unemployment rates, severe cuts to the welfare state, and a constant stream of corruption scandals affecting the whole political system from the monarchy, mainstream parties, and members of parliament to regional deputies and local mayors.”<sup>51</sup> The stability of economic and political contexts were severely damaged and that led to changes in society.

The 15<sup>th</sup> May 2011 two associations, “Democracia Real Ya” (Real Democracy Now) and “Juventud Sin Futuro” (Youth Without Future) organized a demonstration in Madrid to protest for the economic and political situation of the country, and at the end of the protests they decided to illegally camp at the kilometer 0 of Spain, located in Madrid. This action led to the creation of a new movement known as “15-M” or “Indignados” (Outraged) that occupied the center of Madrid for a month and had replicas in many other Spanish cities, all sharing the same features of strong opposition, widespread distrust and strong criticism of the party system and models of traditional political representation.<sup>52</sup>

In order to understand those changes in the society is necessary to understand that the stability of previous years had more to do with a mirage than with real advances. Indeed, some scholars have argued “that a fundamental reason for the crisis is rooted in the process of

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<sup>50</sup> Gabriel Tortella Casares, *El desarrollo de España contemporánea: historia económica de los s. XIX y XX* (Madrid: Alianza editorial, 1998).

<sup>51</sup> Sanders, Berganza, and De Miguel, “Spain: Populism From the Far Right to the Emergence of Podemos,” 251.

<sup>52</sup> Eduardo Romanos and Igor Sádaba, “The evolution of (techno) discursive frames of 15M movement and its consequences,” *EMPIRIA Revista de Metodología de Ciencias Sociales*, 32 (2015): 17.

institutional degeneration that preceded the crisis”<sup>53</sup> In other words, it was not only an economic issue, but it was the existing corruption and missuses of the institutions in Spain that aggravated the crisis. It is also interesting to notice that unlike the *indignados* protests who blamed the politician and the economic elites, this other analysis of the crisis actually points out to the society.

“The crisis exposed a passive society that failed to hold its political class accountable, that was not vigilant, and that was more interested in perpetuating and living the “fiesta” than in asking the tough questions challenging the status quo. As long as the society benefitted, it did not question the situation.”<sup>54</sup>

The *indignados* movement can therefore be considered the awakening of an apathetic society. What appeared to be a short-lived initiative, became a mass mobilization with the greatest impact on Spanish politics in recent decades.<sup>55</sup> Thus, not only it supposed a major change of attitude in the Spanish society, but that change had far-reaching political consequences. The following elections after the uprising of the society took place the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2015, and were characterized firstly, for the emergence of new political parties that run for the elections, and secondly and consequently, for the increased in the fragmentation of the vote and the end of the bipartisanship.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the increase in the number of political parties in the parliament and the weakening of the two larger parties led to the need to repeat election elections the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2016. Among the new successful political parties Podemos got the most attention of the Spanish media and to a lesser degree the attention of the literature on populism, who came to denominate the party as the new

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<sup>53</sup> Niall Ferguson, *The great degeneration: How institutions decay and economies die* (New York: Penguin, 2013), cited by Sebastian Royo, “Institutional Degeneration and the Economic Crisis in Spain,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 58, no. 12 (2014):1569, doi:[10.1177/0002764214534664](https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764214534664).

<sup>54</sup> Royo, “Institutional Degeneration and the Economic Crisis in Spain,” 1575.

<sup>55</sup> Íñigo Errejón Galván, “The 15-M movement as a counter-hegemonic discourse,” *Encrucijadas* 2 (2011): 121.

<sup>56</sup> Óscar Sánchez Muñoz, “The (Momentary) End of Two-Party System in Spain: Analysis of the Electoral Results of 2015 and 2016,” *Revista Española de Derecho Constitucional* 109 (2017): 237, <https://doi.org/10.18042/cepc/redc.109.09>.

populist radical right of Spain.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, some scholars such as the historian Xavier Casals<sup>58</sup> claimed that since 2011 a new wave of populism started in Spain. This is the context in which this thesis is framed, the 2016 general elections where Podemos became a successful party, opening the gate for the success of populist parties in Spain. Thus, the need to understand why such success of the populism was driven from the left and not the right.

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<sup>57</sup> Sánchez Muñoz, “The (Momentary) End of Two-Party System in Spain: Analysis of the Electoral Results of 2015 and 2016,” 259.

<sup>58</sup> Xavier Casals i Meseguer, “¿«Vox Populi, Vox Dei?»,” in *El pueblo contra el parlamento: el nuevo populismo en España, 1989-2013* (Barcelona: Pasado y Presente, 2013), 21.

## Chapter 4. Concept

The present chapter is dedicated to introducing the data collected that would eventually lead the answer to the research question of why populist radical right parties have remained stable and electorally irrelevant while populist radical left has become electorally more successful. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, there are some papers and scholars that identify some Spanish political parties as populists, but a comprehensive understanding of this phenomena among Spanish political parties has never been done before. Therefore, prior to the analysis of this thesis is necessary to narrow down the concept here under study. First, the data collected through the expert survey would be presented. This step is key in this thesis since it would help to identify the parties belonging to the populist radical right and the populist radical left. And secondly, that data along with data collected from Spanish Ministry of Interior regarding the voting share of parties would be linked to fully understand how the level of electoral support has changed for these party groups over time.

### 4.1. Method of positioning the Spanish parties: the expert survey

This type of survey is considered the key method to determine the position of parties' ideology and position on certain issues<sup>59</sup> and has been used by many scholars. Starting with the pioneering research of Castles and Mair in 1984, who decided to ask experts from seventeen different countries about the location of several political parties in a left-right scale,<sup>60</sup> this method has been used to place political parties at a variety of issues. To do so,

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<sup>59</sup> Leonard Ray, "Measuring party orientations towards European integration: Results from an expert survey," *European Journal of Political Research* 36, no. 2 (1999): 285.

<sup>60</sup> Benoît Collette and François Pétry, "Comparing the position of Canadian political parties using French and English manifestos as textual data," in *From Text to Political Positions: Text Analysis Across Disciplines*, eds. Bertie Kaal, Isa Maks and Annemarie van Elfrinkhof (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014), 32.

this method relies on “experts to synthesize their knowledge of a party system and assign positions to parties on specific dimensions of interest.”<sup>61</sup>

In this case, the expert survey would be used to locate Spanish political parties on two different scales, a left-right scale and a nonpopulist-populist scale. There are several reasons why this thesis’ data collection has relied on this method to identify parties’ position. The first one is a very simple reason, and that is the necessity to rely on non-costly data collecting methods. It is true that there are other non-costly methods to collect data, such as any secondary sources for instance, but the problem here is that regarding the issue of populism there is no single research done that covers the level of populism of Spanish political parties. This reality is a blessing and a curse, on one hand, it makes the collection of the data more difficult to achieve and then to validate it, but on the other hand, it makes this thesis more relevant due to its innovation. Similar situation is found on the left- right scale, where surveys, such as for example, the “barómetro”<sup>62</sup> [barometer] carried out by the “Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas” or CIS [Center for Sociological Research] does provide the location of parties on a left-right scale but they only include the electorally relevant parties, meaning that they do not include in the survey any of the radical right parties.

The survey created for this thesis was sent to a group of experts who were asked to position several Spanish political parties in two dimensions, a left-right scale, and a scale of populism and non-populism. Both questions were asked for two different periods of time, the first one goes from 2004 until 2011 and its regarded as the pre-crisis period and the second one starts in 2011 until 2018 as it’s the post-crisis period, making a total of four questions.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> René Lindstädt, Sven-Oliver Proksch and Jonathan B. Slapin, “Assessing the measurement of policy positions in expert surveys,” (Paper prepared for the Biannual Meeting of the European Studies Association, Boston, February 25, 2015): 1.

<sup>62</sup> Sample questionnaire of the barometer conducted in November 2018, accessed March 20, 2019, [http://www.cis.es/cis/export/sites/default/-Archivos/Marginales/3220\\_3239/3231/cues3231.pdf](http://www.cis.es/cis/export/sites/default/-Archivos/Marginales/3220_3239/3231/cues3231.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> The questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

The questionnaire included in the survey follows a rating scale. On the first question, experts were asked to locate some political parties given in a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 meant left and 10 right. On the second question, experts were asked to identify the level of populism of each political party on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant no-populist, 2 slightly populist, 3 moderately populist, 4 very populist, and 5 extremely populist. The reason for using a scale of 1 to 10 for the left and right axis is rooted in the traditional way of studying such phenomenon in Spain. Hence, the same scale was used here for the question dedicated to such same dimension, where it is implied that 1 is the radical position on the left and 10 the radical on the right.

On the other hand, the nonpopulist-populist axis used a different scale, only from 1 to 5, because the different degrees in which populism can be relevantly divided into fitted perfectly such scale, as it can be seen from the progressive values each number represents “none, slightly, moderately, very and extremely populist.” At the same time, such 5-point scale has been widely used in political science research with great results,<sup>64</sup> and therefore, it was decided to reproduce it for this survey. While in the previous question about left and right, these concepts did not present controversies and therefore were not defined in the survey; this was not the case with populism. The study of populism could be more problematic and so the questionnaire included a definition of populism, which match the thin-centered definition given in the previous theoretical part of this thesis. It also is important to notice that the survey was conducted in Spanish due to the fact that the majority of the experts, as it will be explained later, were Spanish or fluent in Spanish.

Following with who the experts are, the definition of expert taken to identify the potential respondents of the survey was those professional political scientists whose field of

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<sup>64</sup> Fern K. Willits, Gene L. Theodori and A. E. Luloff, “Another look at Likert scales,” *Journal of Rural Social Sciences* 31, no. 3 (2016).

study encompasses the Spanish electoral system. As it was explained in the first part of this paper, the study of populists parties in Spain is really rare and limited research have been made about them.<sup>65</sup> This was clearly a problem to identify experts since it would be limiting the number of people that could answer the survey, so it was decided to expand the understanding of experts to those whose field of research lies on the study of Spanish political parties and Spanish domestic politics. In the end, the experts selected where both foreign and Spanish political scientists working at both Spanish universities and foreign universities, but with a sound understanding of Spanish political parties and political context.<sup>66</sup>

Regarding the political parties elected to be analyzed in the survey, it was decided to first select the most relevant political parties in Spain, including parties from all ideological backgrounds, mainstream parties and radical ones included. This would help to make the survey more academically relevant and the findings more significant than just a partial analysis of Spanish political parties. To identify those, it was necessary to pay attention to the vote percentages of each party at general elections and whether they achieved representation at the national Parliament. Such information was found at the Ministry of Interior's webpage<sup>67</sup> who provides the legal results for each election since 1979. Along with their electoral relevancy, another method used to select the political parties was to follow the selection of parties that the already mentioned "barómetro" does for its own survey, which ended up being the same parties. Thereby, fifteen parties were identified as relevant for the survey, including national and regional parties.<sup>68</sup> These parties can be found in the next table:

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<sup>65</sup> Sanders, Berganza and De Miguel, "Spain: Populism From the Far Right to the Emergence of Podemos," 249.

<sup>66</sup> The reason for choosing experts from the academic field is for practical reasons, as professors usually have their university emails published online and therefore accessible for sending the survey.

<sup>67</sup> Ministerio del Interior, "Consulta de Resultados electorales," *Dirección General de Política Interior*, accessed March 20, 2019, <http://www.infoelectoral.mir.es/infoelectoral/min/>.

<sup>68</sup> Regional parties are those who only present their candidacy in some regions. This is possible because Spain is divided into 52 electoral constituencies.

Name of the party	Institutional position (2018) <sup>69</sup>	General/Regional
Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) <i>Spanish Socialist Workers' Party</i>	Government	General
Partido Popular (PP) <i>People's Party</i>	Main opposition	General
Ciudadanos (Cs) <i>Citizens</i>	Opposition	General
Podemos <i>We can</i>	External support	General
Izquierda Unida (IU) <i>United Left</i>	External support	General
En Comú Podem (ECP) <i>In Common We Can</i>	External support	Regional
Esquerra Republicana (ERC) <i>Catalan Republican Left</i>	External support	Regional
Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català (PDeCAT) Convergència i Unió (CiU) <i>Catalan European Democratic Party</i> <i>Convergence and Union</i>	External support	Regional
Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV) <i>Basque Nationalist Party</i>	External support	Regional
EH Bildu Aralar <i>Basque Country Unite</i>	External support	Regional
En Marea <i>In Tide</i>	External support	Regional
Coalición Canaria (CC) <i>Canarian Coalition</i>	External support	Regional
Compromís <i>Commitment</i>	External support	Regional
Unión Progreso y Democracia (UPyD) <i>Union Progress and Democracy</i>	Extra-parliamentary	General
Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG) <i>Galician Nationalist Bloc</i>	Extra-parliamentary	Regional

Table 1. Selection of parties

<sup>69</sup> Position of the parties in the parliament, whether they are in government, in opposition or as supporters of the current government without forming a coalition.

Following the few previous studied that focus on Spanish radical right parties,<sup>70</sup> five other parties were identified.

Name of the party	Institutional position (2018)	General/Regional
VOX	Extra-parliamentary	General
Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista (Fe de las JONS) <i>Spanish Phalanx of the CNSO</i>	Extra-parliamentary	General
Plataforma per Catalunya (PxC) <i>Platform for Catalonia</i>	Extra-parliamentary	Regional
España 2000 (E-2000) <i>Spain 2000</i>	Extra-parliamentary	General
Democracia Nacional (DN) <i>Nacional Democracy</i>	Extra-parliamentary	General

Table 2. Selection of extra-parliamentary parties

In the end, the survey asked experts to locate a total of 20 political parties in the two dimensions, left and right, and non-populist and populist. Very linked to this matter of which political parties to study is the selection of dividing into two time-periods both questions. As it is normal, some political parties are newer than others, and so that directly affects the survey and the parties that would be asked in each of the periods. While in the period post-crisis 2011-2018 experts are asked to locate the 20 parties here presented, in the period pre-crisis 2004-2011 that number decreases to 14, because 6<sup>71</sup> of the parties previously presented were yet not created. The last remark necessary to mention related to the political parties selected is that two parties changed their name from one period to another, but they remain the same. These are CiU and Aralar in 2004-2011 that evolved to PDeCAT and EH Bildu respectively in 2011-2018.

<sup>70</sup> Sonia Alonso and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, “Spain: No country for the populist radical right?,” *South European Society and Politics* 20, no. 1 (2015).

<sup>71</sup> Those parties are Podemos, Cs, ECP, Compromis, En Marea and VOX.

The reason for dividing the questionnaire of the survey in two time-periods was to see if there has been any movement of the political parties along the two dimensions asked, or on the contrary, such change has not happened at all, including the already mentioned assumption that populist parties rise in times of crisis. 2011 was the year cutting the two periods of time. Even though 2008 is the year of the beginning of the economic crisis, 2011 is the year when the historian Xavier Casals identifies the beginning of a new wave of populism, in Spain.<sup>72</sup> Thus, it felt appropriate to divide the two-time period on those dates. The next decision taken was the amount of years that each period would cover. Having in mind that 2011 was a key year, and that the longest the survey the fewer replies it would have, it was decided that two periods would be ideal for the questionnaire, from 2011 until today, 2018, would be one of the periods, and 2011 until 2004 the other one, both comprising a total of 7 years and 3 general elections within the years they cover. In total, the survey was sent to 90 experts via email, receiving 13 answers, with only one reply completely blank, making the overall rate of useful responses at 13.3%.

#### 4.1.1. Reliability and validity

Before presenting the basic findings from the survey it is important to verify the reliability and validity of the answers, to understand whether they are useful for the latter analysis or not. It is necessary to test the reliability as it would indicate whether the data collected “systematically measure some single underlying factor.” The validity, instead, would assure that the data collected “corresponds to the theoretical concept in question.”<sup>73</sup>

In order to test the reliability a standard deviation of the answers sent by the experts has been undergone. This system is used to inform of any internal inconsistency among the answers received, as it would help to locate any deviant answer, so it will not affect the

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<sup>72</sup> Casals i Meseguer, *El pueblo contra el Parlament: El nuevo populismo en España, 1989–2013*, 21.

<sup>73</sup> Ray, “Measuring party orientations towards European integration: Results from an expert survey,” 288.

average position of the political parties in each of the two questions, left-right scale and populism. This is done by neutralizing the deviant answer and eliminating it while calculating the average for each political party. Doing so, the consistency and robustness of the findings would be assured.

	N of suspect respondents	Mean SD deviation	Mean SD deviation without suspects
Left/right (2011-2018)	2	0,75	0,67
Left/right (2004-2011)	2	0,69	0,61
Populist/non-populist (2011-2018)	5	1,01	0,71
Populist/non-populist (2004-2011)	5	0,91	0,57

Table 3. Standard Deviation (SD) of the expert survey

As it can be observed in Table 3 there is a big difference between the standard deviation of the first two questions regarding the location of the parties in a left-right scale (0,75 and 0,67) and the standard deviation of the other two questions about the level of populism (1,01 and 0,91). While the levels of standard deviation for the first two questions are rather normal for a 10-point scale, the situation is very different for the standard deviation of the other two questions based on a 5-point scale. Logic suggests that the standard deviation of a larger scale has more chances of obtaining a larger number than a short scale. But this reality only corroborates what had been stated before, about the fact that populism is not such a common field of research in Spain and that this reality would, therefore, affect the consistency of the answer. Yet, this is the best possible way of finding out how populist the Spanish parties are and have been over time.

The next necessary step to do in order to secure the reliability was to identify the answers of deviant experts. It was then decided that a respondent would be considered suspect if its answers deviated more than 2 points off the mean for the left-right question (on

a 10-point scale) and 1,5 points off the mean for the populist question (on a 5-point scale). Since one is a 1-10 scale and the other 1-5 scale it would be logical to think that the definition of suspect answer should be proportional, but since the already mentioned difficulties regarding the study of populism in Spain, the need to have half point more to identify “suspects” in those last two questions it is justified.

Following these two definitions of suspect respondents, it was found that for the first two questions there were 2 respondents in each whose answers deviated two points off the mean. Regarding the two questions on populism, the number of suspect respondents increased to a total of 5 respondents in each question whose answers deviated more than 1,5 points off the mean. The higher number of suspect respondents in regard to the populist/non-populist questions is once again an indication of the lack of consensus among experts and therefore, it brought the need to eliminate more respondents (5) as suspects. After the elimination of those suspect respondents the mean standard deviation for each question, located at the last column of Table 3, can be considered acceptable as they are not too high and each suits the difficulties of each question, and therefore, the reliability of the answers obtained is confirmed and suitable for the bases of a further analysis.

In order to test the validity, the results obtained with the expert survey are compared with the results obtained by the “Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas” or CIS [Center for Sociological Research]. Such institution develops an already mentioned “barómetro” [barometer] where periodically they survey several issues to Spanish society, including the positioning of political parties on a left-right scale. As it was mentioned previously such barometer does not include the radical right parties since they are not electorally relevant, therefore, the matching of both surveys can only be done regarding the rest of the political parties.

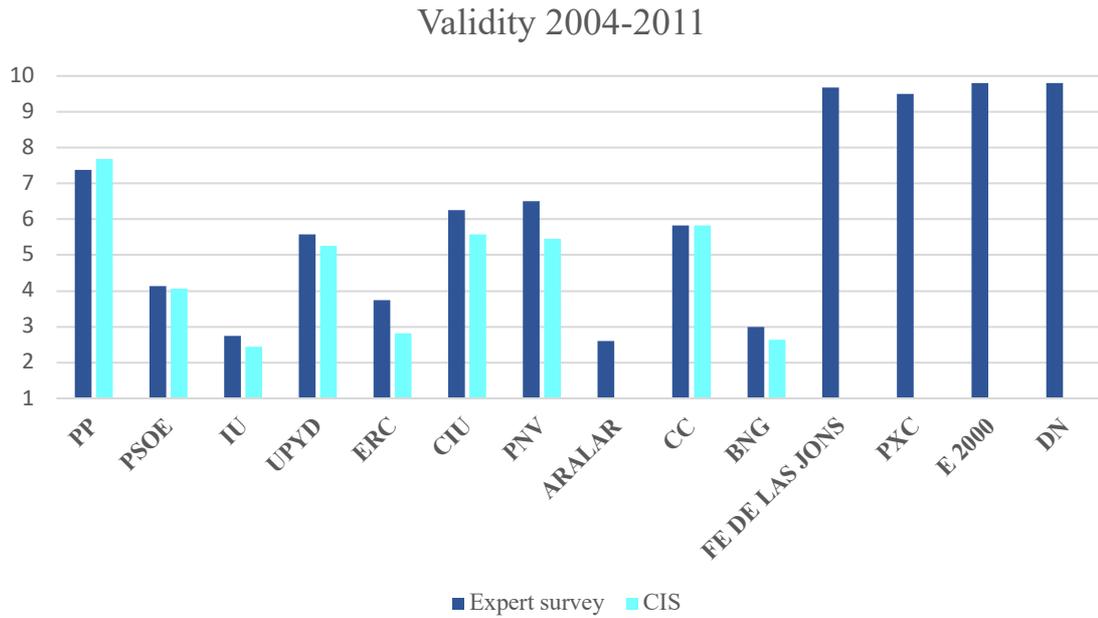


Figure 1. Validity 2004-2011<sup>74</sup>

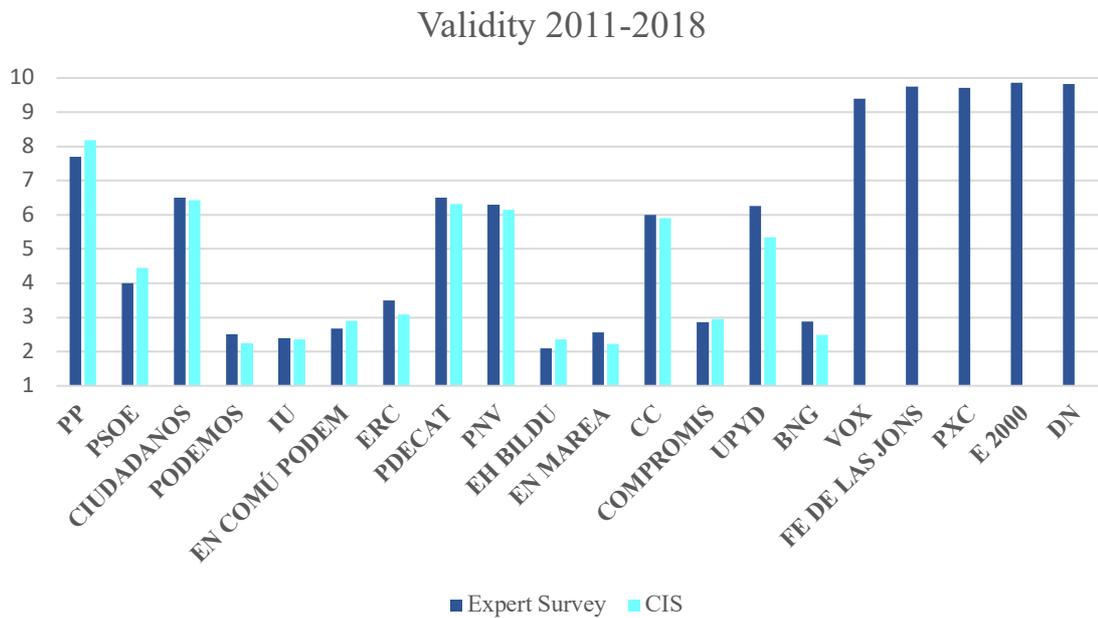


Figure 2. Validity 2011-2018<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Sources: Data from Barómetros no. 2640, 2775, 2815, 2853 and 2909, Centro Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), accessed March 2019, [http://www.cis.es/cis/opencm/ES/11\\_barometros/index.jsp](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencm/ES/11_barometros/index.jsp).

<sup>75</sup> Sources: Data from Barómetros no. 2951, 2993, 3021, 3080, 3156, 3191 and 3231, Centro Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), accessed March 2019, [http://www.cis.es/cis/opencm/ES/11\\_barometros/index.jsp](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencm/ES/11_barometros/index.jsp).

After comparing the positions of the political parties from the expert survey and from the barometer of the CIS it can be concluded that there is a consistency in the data, with minor disagreements, as it is the case of PNV in 2004-2011 and UPyD 2011-2018. But even though, those slightly different results are a mere 0,2 and 0,1 standard deviation. The consistency between the results of this expert survey and the public opinion data shows that the results on ‘populism’ and ‘radical right parties’ from the expert survey can also be considered as highly valid. In this respect, this analysis is the first of its kind with regard to showing where the Spanish parties stand in the populist- nonpopulist scale across different time periods.

#### 4.1.2. Party families

After assuring the reliability and validity of data collected and before introducing the findings of the expert survey it is necessary to understand the division of party families in Spain, how they are located on the left-right scale.

	Position	Denomination
Left	1-2	Radical Left
	3-4	Center-left
Center	5	Center 1
	6	Center 2
Right	7-8	Center-right
	9-10	Radical Right

Table 4. Party groups classification<sup>76</sup>

As it can be seen in table 4, those located on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> positions are considered radical right parties, while the ones on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> position are center-left, both been considered on the left spectrum of the ideological scale. Regarding the center, it is usually

<sup>76</sup> Source: Data from Guillermo Cordero García and Irene Martín Cortés, “¿Quiénes son y cómo votan los españoles "de izquierdas"?” *Fundación Alternativas Documento de trabajo* 164 (2010): 10.

divided between those located on the 5<sup>th</sup> and on the 6<sup>th</sup>. The reason for dividing it because mathematically the center of a 10-point scale would be 5,5 therefore, in the scale both 5 and 6 would be considered the center. But the problem is that people tend to think that the 5<sup>th</sup> position is the center while locating the parties and therefore it has been proved that there are some differences between the parties located on the 5<sup>th</sup> and those located on the 6<sup>th</sup>.<sup>77</sup> Since this paper is interested in the extremes of the ideological spectrum, it is not necessary to differentiate between two centers and so positions 5 and 6 will be considered as one, the center. And finally, those parties located on between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> position are center-right, leaving the remaining positions, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> to the radical right parties. At the same time, each party group can be populist or non-populist, considering populist those parties above the 3<sup>rd</sup> position that was considered moderately populist and including those located on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> positions, as they were considered very populist and extremely populist in the expert survey questionnaire.

#### 4.2. Results of the expert survey

Now that the party group division is clear, it is possible to observe and analyze the data obtained by the expert survey in order to see the changes that occurred during the two time periods. Two two-dimension graphs have been created, one for the pre-crisis period 2004-2011 (figure 3) and the second one for the post-crisis period 2011-2018 (figure 4), where parties are located according to their level of populism and their position on the left-right scale. These graphs help to obtain a better look at the changes of parties regarding the two phenomena between both time periods.

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<sup>77</sup> Cordero García and Martín Cortés, “¿Quiénes son y cómo votan los españoles “de izquierdas”?”, 10.

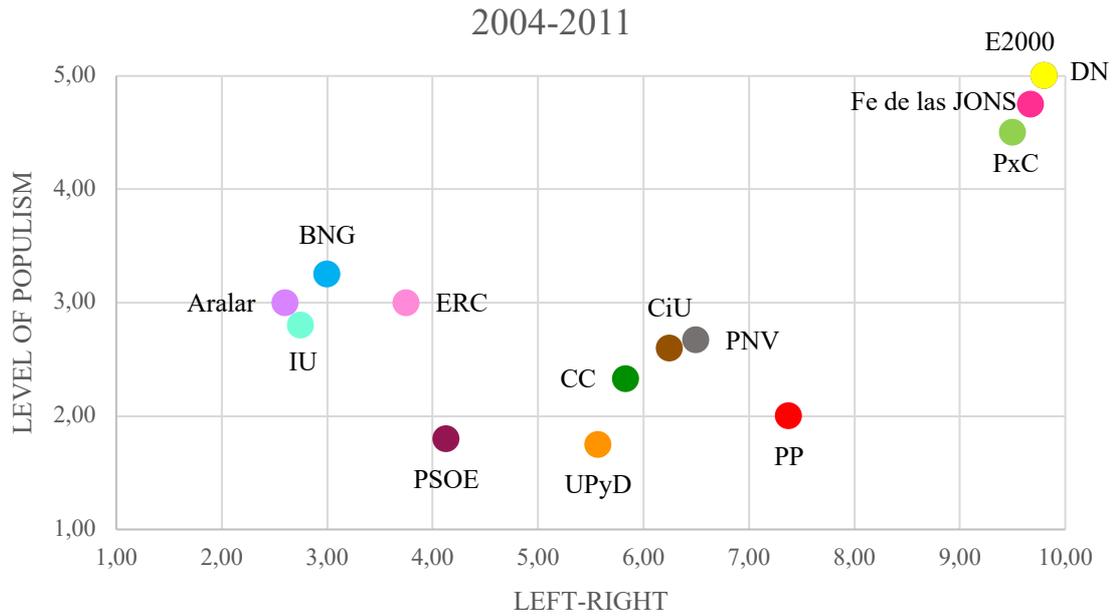


Figure 3. Party distribution 2004-2011

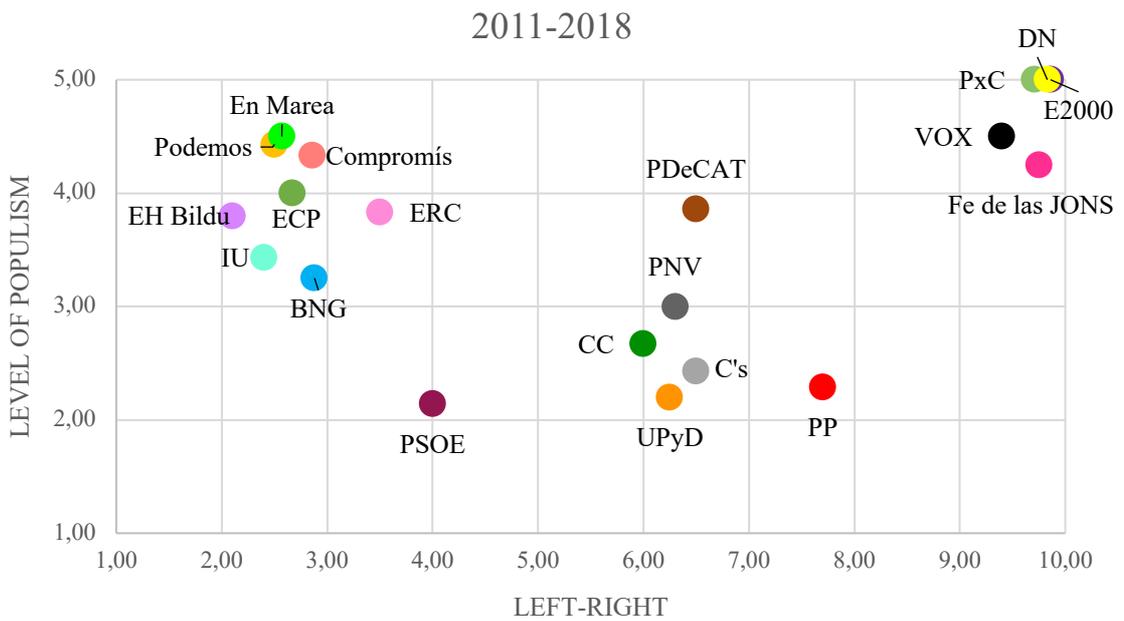


Figure 4. Party distribution 2011-2018

There are mainly four remarkable differences worth to notice. The first one is the already mentioned increase in the number of populist radical left parties during the 2011-2018 period. At the same time, some already existing left parties such as IU, ERC and EH Bildu (former Aralar) have moved from a non-populist to a clearly populist position.

Focusing on centrist parties it can be observed that some parties have become more populist, such as PNV, that shift is especially noticeable in PDeCAT (former CiU) a party that has gone from a slightly populist to a very populist party. And finally, it is very much important for this thesis to observe that the radical right parties have been the only party group that has remained stable in number (with only one party added in the 2011-2018 period) and in the level of populism over time.

In order to appreciate better the findings of the expert survey and the information presented in previous graphs, the following table has been created.

	<b>Radical left</b>	<b>Center-left</b>	<b>Center</b>	<b>Center-right</b>	<b>Radical-right</b>
<b>All the time populist</b>		BNG			Fe de las JONS, PxC, E2000, DN
<b>Populist after 2011</b>	IU, Aralar/EH Bildu, Podemos*, ECP*, Compromis*, En Marea*	ERC	CiU/PDe CAT		
<b>All the time non-populist</b>		PSOE	UPyD, CC, PNV, C's	PP	
	<i>*Parties formed after 2011.</i>				

Table 5. Party family division of political parties

It can be seen that most of the newer parties that did not exist during the 2004-2011 period are located on the left side of the scale, with the exception of C's and VOX. And those new parties, with the exception again of C's, are considered very populist or extremely populist. It is also very interesting to notice that all parties on the radical left, as well as the parties on the radical right, are considered populist, with the only exception of IU and Aralar/EH Bildu before 2011. The second most noticeable fact is that the most populated ideological positions and therefore most fragmented ones are both the radical left and the radical right. On the contrary, the center-right only counts with one political party, PP,

located on the non-populist side. Same lack of populist parties was found on the center position until recently with the shifting of CiU to the populist side with its new political party name PDeCAT.

#### 4.2.1. Electoral success

This second part is dedicated to the presentation of the electoral data. It is relevant for the present thesis to introduce the electoral success of each of the party group because this type of data would be very useful to see the electoral path followed by parties and party families. The time span covered by this paper goes from 2004 until 2018, and exactly five different elections took part during those years, more precisely in 2004, 2008, 2011, 2015 and 2016. Table 6 is dedicated to the electoral results of each party family:

	<b>PRL</b>	<b>RL</b>	<b>PCL</b>	<b>CL</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>PC</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>PRR</b>	
<b>2004</b>	-	5,11%	0,81%	45,11%	5,77%	-	37,71%	0,13%	<b>%votes</b>
	-	5	2	172	20	-	148	0	<b>seats</b>
<b>2008</b>	-	3,89%	0,83%	45,03%	6,27%	-	39,94%	0,14%	<b>%votes</b>
	-	2	2	172	19	-	154	0	<b>seats</b>
<b>2011</b>	8,8%	-	1,82%	28,76%	10,79%	-	44,63%	0,31%	<b>%votes</b>
	19	-	5	110	28	-	186	0	<b>seats</b>
<b>2015</b>	25,23%	-	2,67%	22%	16,09%	2,25%	28,71%	0,27%	<b>%votes</b>
	73	-	9	90	47	8	123	0	<b>seats</b>
<b>2016</b>	35,34%	-	2,82%	22,63%	14,79%	2,01%	33,01%	0,24%	<b>%votes</b>
	73	-	9	85	38	8	137	0	<b>seats</b>

Table 6. Share of valid votes and seats by party families<sup>78</sup>

As can be observed from this table, the center-left and center-right have monopolized the elections until very recently. While the center-left noticeably started its decline in 2011 elections, the center-right resisted until 2015, when they suffered a sharp reduction of votes. The second most noticeable fact is the huge transformation that Spanish voting share experimented in the last two elections. The table shows that the new political parties

<sup>78</sup> Source: Data from Ministerio del Interior, “Consulta de Resultados electorales,” *Dirección General de Política Interior*, accessed March 20, 2019, <http://www.infoelectoral.mir.es/infoelectoral/min/>.

belonging to the populist radical left achieved “good” electoral results, understanding by good the fact that they entered in parliament and achieve better results than some other mainstream parties with longer tradition at Spanish elections. At the same time, it shows the changes experienced by that same party family in their electoral results, where the populist radical left rockets its voting share from less than 10% to over 25% in 2015 and becoming the most voted party group in 2016. The trajectory of populist radical left parties voting contrast with that one of populist radical right parties who’s voting share has remained almost non-existent. In fact, their best electoral result was achieved in 2011 with a 0,31%, very different from the populist radical left’s path. At the same time, table 6 confirms the theories on populism that liked crisis as windows of opportunities for populist parties. In the pre-crisis period, there are no electorally relevant parties, while in the post-crisis period populist parties’ electoral success increases noticeably. With all this information is it time now to try to understand why it was the populists radical left and not the populist radical right the one that succeeded in the post-crisis period.

## Chapter 5. Existing Theories and an Alternative Explanation

Once the parties under analysis, the populist radical parties, are identified, it is time to search for answers for the research question. The previous chapter 2 introduced some of the key theories on populism that usually populate the literature in order to answer why populism in Spain was successful on the radical left and not on the radical right. These theories were the “losers of globalization theory”, the “grievance theory” and the “failed economy theory.” At the same time, that chapter explained the difficulty that most of those theories had when explaining the outcome here study, the rise of populism only on the left and not on the right. Among the major theories of populism, the so-called “failed economy theory,” featured what seemed in a beginning as a plausible explanation for why in some political contexts populism rises on the left rather than on the right.

This theory was developed based on the study of two cases, Turkey and Argentina, and it found out that public discontent with the economy in countries that suffered “crises associated with the policies of the Washington Consensus has generated a variety of populist responses”.<sup>79</sup> And among those populist responses if the blame of the crisis is on external actors, populism would more likely be successful on the left, but if the blame was on domestic actors, populism would rise on the right.<sup>80</sup> This theory clearly presents an interesting explanation for answering the research question of this paper but unfortunately, the case of Spain does not follow the same path.

First of all, this theory was developed by studying countries whose economies suffered great difficulties, reaching the state of being considered failed economies, Argentina during the “corralito” and Turkey’s economic crisis both happening in the early 2000s. The economies of the two countries were so damaged that they both needed loans from the

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<sup>79</sup> Aytaç and Öniş, “Varieties of Populism in a Changing Global Context: The Divergent Paths of Erdoğan and Kirchnerismo,” 42.

<sup>80</sup> Aytaç and Öniş.

International Monetary Fund (IMF), an international organization that is usually the last financial resource for countries with economic problems due to the strict conditions that accompany the loans.

Firstly, the theory stresses the fact the countries suffered economic crisis aggravated by the conditionality imposed by the IMF, as it was the case of Argentina and Turkey. Nevertheless, Spain, unlike its regional neighbor Greece, never needed a bailout from the IMF, but it did need it and got it from the EU, and such bailout did come with 37 conditions.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, while the situations are not entirely the same, the EU is not the IMF and therefore their conditions are not the same, it could be fair to say that they have similarities. Secondly, the theory stresses the importance of high public dissatisfaction with the economy, and this time, Spain fully meets the requirement. As it can be observed from the following graph the number of Spaniards that rate the Spanish economy as “good” or “very good” has decreased exponentially since 2000.

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<sup>81</sup> Spain, “Memorando de entendimiento entre la Comisión Europea y España,” *BOE* no. 296 (December 10, 2012).

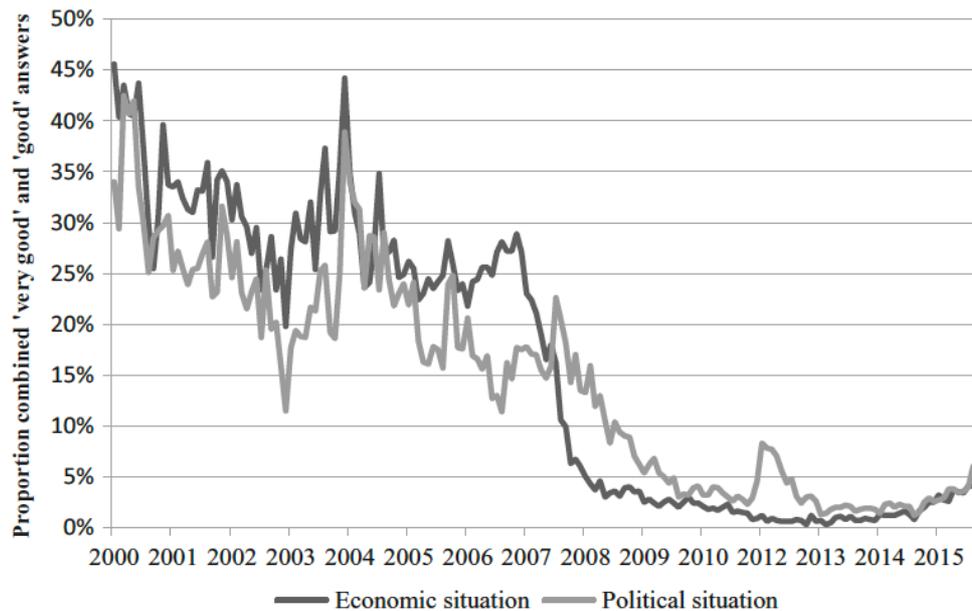


Figure 5. Economic and political satisfaction<sup>82</sup>

In other words, by 2013 the amount of people that considered the situation of the economy bad or very bad reached 95%.<sup>83</sup> Thus, Spain does fulfill the two requirements of the theory under which populist movements occurred. Now the next part of the theory explains that the populist movements would be more likely to occur on the left if the blame of the bad economic situation is on external actors, but if the blame is on domestic actors, populist movements would succeed on the right. Following this understanding, since in Spain the outcome was the success of the populist radical left, it should be observed that the bad situation of the country was blamed on external actors.

Spain is part of the EU and more precisely is part of the euro area and this implies that in many economic policies its sovereignty has been ceded to a supranational institution. This situation could lead to a resentment towards the EU and a blame towards them for the bad

<sup>82</sup> Eva Anduiza, Marc Guinjoan and Guillem Rico, “Economic crisis, populist attitudes, and the birth of Podemos in Spain,” in *Citizens and the Crisis Experiences, perceptions, and responses to the great recession in Europe*, eds. Marco Guigni and Maria T. Grasso (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 65.

<sup>83</sup> Anduiza, Guinjoan and Rico, “Economic crisis, populist attitudes, and the birth of Podemos in Spain,” 61.

situation of economy in the country. But Spaniards, when asked about the responsibility for the economic crisis, answer the following:

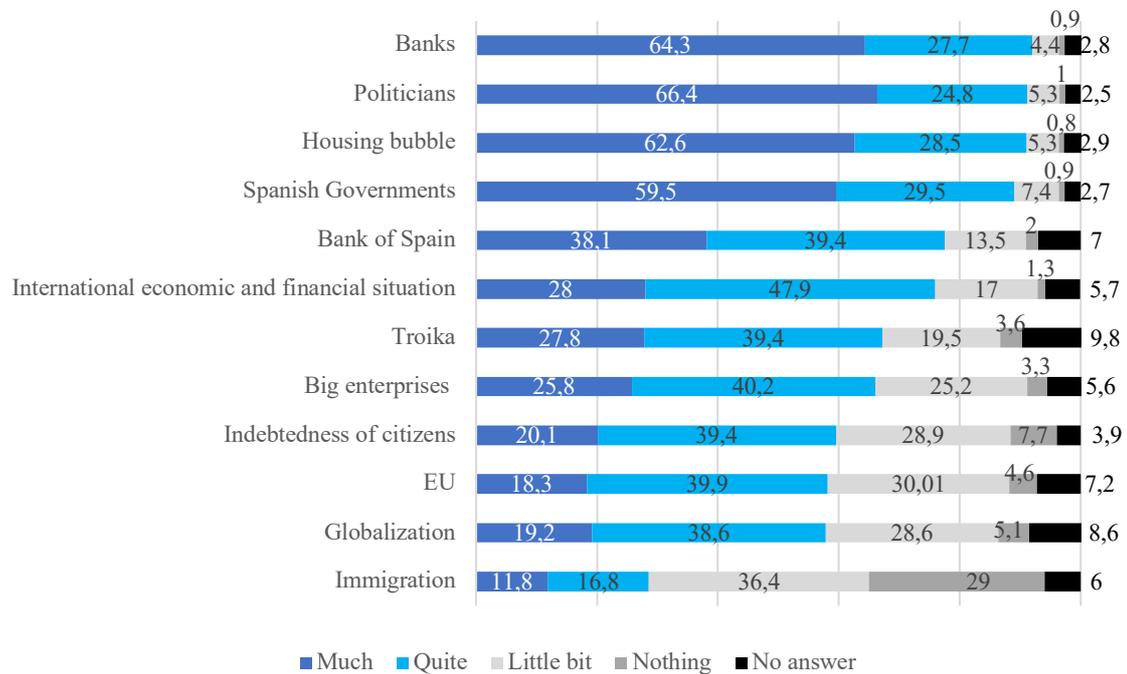


Figure 6. Responsibility for the crisis<sup>84</sup>

There are four institutions to whom the Spaniards direct the responsibility for the economic crisis, and they are, the banks, politicians, the housing bubble and the different Spanish governments that ruled during the crisis. All of them are domestic actors. Moreover, the foreign actors are the least blames for the economic crisis, such as immigrants, the EU, or the Troika, which encompasses the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission. Therefore, the “failed economy” hypothesis is refused as it fails to explain the outcome of interest under study, why in Spain the populists were only successful on the left. It is necessary to keep searching for an explanation, a matter covered in the following part.

<sup>84</sup> “10 años de crisis: valoraciones y cambios tras la crisis”, *El País* (November 2018): 9, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://ep00.epimg.net/descargables/2018/11/10/34eace53ebccda0639767f6e249fbf8.pdf>.

### 5.1. Proposed explanation

To sum up, the study of different types of populism has barely been studied but some theories such as the failed economy theory tried to provide an explanation for when populism is more likely to rise on the left or when it is more prone to do so on the right. But once again that theory proved wrong for the Spanish case. Therefore, this paper proposes a new and different way of understanding the rise of populism. This paper argues that it is not a specific ideology that aligns with populism, but that if there is a demand, such as in the case of a crisis, it is populism that finds its own path in choosing the ideology to align with. The more anti-status quo an ideology is in the political culture of a country, the more likely populism emerges aligning with that ideology. It does not matter whether it is the right or the left, what matters is which party ideology is more anti- status quo.

That populism rises in times of crisis is a non-argued fact, and that the global crisis that started in 2008 and affected the European countries caused the rise of several populist movements around Europe is also a known fact. Indeed, this paper is not trying to contradict any of the previous theories that explain why populism rises in times of crisis but to improve them.

There has been a boom in the literature on populism in recent years, and as some scholars have called it, nowadays populism is sexy.<sup>85</sup> It was during this recent explosion of interests in populism where the understanding of populism was definitely linked to the idea of anti-establishment, and to the already discussed radical right. Since then, the majority of the literature has been argued that populist parties are by nature anti-establishment, as they tend to simplify reality and distance themselves from the system of established parties that they consider corrupt, being this the reason why they advocate for measures of direct

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<sup>85</sup> Rooduijn, "State of the field: How to study populism and adjacent topics? A plea for both more and less focus," 362.

democracy.<sup>86</sup> Voters of countries which are experiencing times of crisis would more likely to vote for populist parties as they claim to be able to provide a change in the current state of affair, meaning the status-quo. It was therefore understood that the success of these parties during crisis was due to their anti-establishment nature. The problem arises when recent studies discover that populist parties should not always be considered anti-establishment.<sup>87</sup> These very recent studies have noticed that populist parties are entering in governments and still they are continued to be considered populist. They still qualify for the minimum definition of populism as a thin-centered ideology, which is the understanding of the society as a dichotomic division of antagonistic groups, “the people” versus “the rest” and their self-identification with the people, but not anti-establishment anymore, since they are now becoming part of the establishment.

Moreover, it is also very interesting to notice that some traits of populist ideology can nowadays be found also among mainstream parties, even to political parties of the establishment in countries with no successful populist radical parties.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, this new way of understanding populism is actually corroborated by the results obtained in the experts’ survey in chapter 4, which asked about the level of populism of Spanish political parties. The results showed that almost all political parties share traits of populist ideology, even those that are considered mainstream parties or parties of the establishment, such as for example the center-right with PDeCAT and C’s that have a level of populism of 3,86 and 2,45 out of 5 respectively, or even the center-left, with the PSOE with 2,14. Just because these political parties share a level of populist ideology, does not imply that they also share a level of anti-

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<sup>86</sup> Taggart, *Populism*, 19.

<sup>87</sup> Lise Esther Herman and James Muldoon, “There is something about Marine. Strategies against the far right in the 2017 French presidential elections,” in eds. Lise Esther Herman and James Muldoon, *Trumping the Mainstream: The Conquest of Democratic Politics by the Populist Radical Right* (Routledge, 2018), Kindle edition.

<sup>88</sup> Gianpietro Mazzoleni, “Populism and the media,” in eds. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, *Twenty-first century populism: The spectre of Western European democracy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), cited in Cas Mudde, “Three decades of populist radical right parties in Western Europe: So what?,” *European Journal of Political Research* 52, no. 1 (2013): 9.

establishment, since they are part of it. Hence, it could be argued that among populist parties, the level of anti-establishment could vary, while some of them could present such sentiments and in different levels, it is not a considered as common trend among them.

The most interesting part of this new understanding of populism is how it is in reality not new. It might seem that populism is a new phenomenon due to the amount of literature is has been published in recent times, but the first studies on populism can be dated back to the 1960s. Back then the phenomenon of populism lacked a common definition,<sup>89</sup> but it was recently when the scholar Mario Tronti discovered two types of populism, the historical and the contemporary populism.

While the core characteristics and minimal definition of populism remained the same for both types of populist ideology due to its already mentioned versatility, there is a fundamental difference between the two populisms, and that is their “conflictual relationship with the dominant reality.”<sup>90</sup> On one hand, the historical populism tends to express a rejection of development and a defense of the status quo or even a called for returning to the past, while on the other hand contemporary populism defends exactly the opposite and promotes the regeneration, therefore, an anti-status quo ideology whose “rallying cry is for change, for the renewal of the present state of affairs.”<sup>91</sup> The fact that populism was regarded as pro-status quo, which in a sense implies pro-establishment, and at the same time, be considered as populists, could shed some light into the idea that an anti-establishment sentiment is not part of the ideology of populism. At the same time, the research done by Tronti could explain why nowadays populism is automatically identify as anti-establishment, and that is because in more recent times, the type of populism that has emerged did share anti-status quo traits, but

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<sup>89</sup> Rooduijn, “State of the field: How to study populism and adjacent topics? A plea for both more and less focus,” 363.

<sup>90</sup> Mario Tronti, “Either the people, or populism” in *Changing faces of Populism: Systemic Challengers in Europe and the US*, eds. Hedwig Giusto, David Kitching, Stefano Rizzo (Brussels: Foundation for European progressive studies, 2013), 16.

<sup>91</sup> Tronti, “Either the people, or populism,” 16.

it was a mistake to understand that all populist movements do have to share such characteristic. Thus, after understanding that the level of status quo of populist parties could vary, and due to the importance of such understanding has on the thesis here proposed, it is important now to determine which values form the status quo.

Not all European countries are the same and not all share the same values or not to the same degree. Values are usually divided into the social and the economic ones, and so the understanding of which ones are more relevant for a society and which ones are part of the status quo should be the starting point for the understanding of the rise of populist parties.

It has already been mentioned and denounced several times in this paper the fact that the vast majority of the current studies on populism has been built upon the observations from countries in northwestern Europe, such as Germany, England and France.<sup>92</sup> Yet, those countries do not necessarily share the same values or not to the same degree as the rest of European countries. In Spain, the understanding of which party ideology is more anti-status quo might differ accordingly.

It is not surprising to find out that the main social and economic values are generally shared by all member states with few divergences in its acceptance. Multiculturalism, free market economy, freedom and justice are some of the key values promoted by the EU and embedded in European societies by the early 2000s.<sup>93</sup> Even nowadays, European citizens believed in this common ground of values, as a matter of fact, “a majority (53%) of respondents consider that the Member States of the European Union are “close” in terms of shared values.”<sup>94</sup> Consequently, it is fair to say that these values were and are part of the establishment or the values that define the status quo. But it is also true that, while the social

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<sup>92</sup> Larralde Velten, “La extrema derecha como fenómeno transnacional: la elección racional y las necesidades insatisfechas,” xvi.

<sup>93</sup> European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 66: Public Opinion in the European Union*, 2006, accessed March 20, 2019, [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66_en.htm).

<sup>94</sup> European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 89: European citizenship*, 2018: 50.

and economic values might be shared among Europeans, the importance given to each of them might differ, especially in times of crisis. The connection between values changes and crisis has already been established in the literature,<sup>95</sup> as well as the understanding that while dissatisfaction during crisis is a common trend, it also has its local causes.<sup>96</sup> Hence the next step is to understand which values were reshaped due to the global crisis that started in 2008, especially considering that the impact of the crisis was not even among all member states. The southern European countries, including Spain, suffered more severe economic consequences than their northern counterpart, especially in terms of unemployment and public debt. Data collected at the early years of the global crisis indicates that it is precisely Spain the country in which economic values are more relevant than the social ones.<sup>97</sup>

2006		2011		2014	
Unemployment	45,0	Unemployment	81,7	Unemployment	78,7
Immigration	42,1	Public debt	49,6	Corruption	39,1
Terrorism, ETA	24,2	Political parties	22,0	Public debt	28,8
Housing	23,6	Immigration	10,3	Political parties	26,7
Citizen insecurity	19,5	Citizen insecurity	6,9	Health	10,9
Public debt	16,6	Health	5,8	Social problems	8,1
Quality of jobs	9,0	Housing	5,8	Education	8,1
Political parties	9,0	Education	5,6	Austerity	3,9
Drugs	5,8	Corruption	5,5	Immigration	3,7
Health	4,5	Government	4,3	Government	3,3
Social problems	3,8	Terrorism, ETA	4,3	Quality of jobs	2,9
Education	3,7	Social problems	3,8	Crisis of values	2,7
Violence against women	2,9	Pensions	3,0	Justice	2,7
Pensions	2,7	Quality of jobs	2,8	Administration	
Nationalisms	2,3	Crisis of values	2,2	Citizen insecurity	2,3
Environment	2,2	...	...	Banks	2,3
Government	2,1	-	-	Pensions	2,0
Crisis of values	2,1			...	...

Table 7. Main problems during the crisis<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Mălina Voicu and Hermann Dülmer, "Values and attitudes in times of economic scarcity," in *Values, Economic Crisis and Democracy*, eds. Mălina Voicu, Ingwill C. Mochmann and Hermann Dülmer (New York: Routledge, 2016), 14.

<sup>96</sup> Anna Bosco and Susannah Verney, "Electoral Epidemic: The Political Cost of Economic Crisis in Southern Europe, 2010–11," *South European Society and Politics* 17, no. 2 (2012): 133.

<sup>97</sup> European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 69*, (200)8: 65, accessed March 20, 2019, [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb69\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb69_en.htm).

<sup>98</sup> Source: Data from Kiko Llanera, "Los problemas de los españoles antes y después de la crisis," *Politikon*, January 21, 2015, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://politikon.es/2015/01/21/los-problemas-de-los-espanoles-antes-y-despues-de-la-crisis-2/>.

The table 7, shows the development of the main concerns among Spaniards between 2006 and 2014. Social issues such as immigration, health system, education, social problems or citizen insecurity were higher before the crisis started, but by 2014 the economic issues overtook the main positions, in particular, unemployment, corruption and the economic model. Economic values are of higher importance for Spanish society than the social ones, a fact that can also be corroborated by looking at the already analyzed table 1 in the previous part of the present chapter, where Spaniards identify as the least responsible for the economic crisis the immigration, globalization and the EU, in other words, the multiculturalism. A perception completely opposed to the one perceived by northwestern European countries, where social issues, in particular multiculturalism, such as immigration and the EU integration, became into question and blamed for the crises of their countries.<sup>99</sup>

This brief analysis of which values are more relevant for different societies has shed light into a reality that is usually overlook, while Europeans share social and economic values, the importance given to either ones or the other can and do vary between countries and even regions. Therefore, while there was a demand for anti-status quo parties on the economic ground in Spain, in northwestern European countries the demand for anti-status quo parties was based on the change of the social values. For all these reasons, this thesis reiterated its defense of the idea that when populism rises it chooses the most anti-status quo party ideology, regardless of whether they are right or left. Following this understanding, it is hypothesized that:

H: Populist radical left parties rose in Spain because the anti-status quo sentiments are associated more with left-wing ideology than the right-wing ideology in Spain.

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<sup>99</sup> European Commission, Standard Eurobarometer 69, 2008: 52; Banting, Keith and Will Kymlicka, "Is There Really a Backlash Against Multiculturalism Policies? New Evidence from the Multiculturalism Policy Index," *The Stockholm University Linnaeus Center for Integration Studies Working paper 4* (2012): 10; Jo Ritzen, Klaus F. Zimmermann and Caroline Wehner, "Euroskepticism in the Crisis: More Mood than Economy," *Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) Discussion Paper 8001* (Bonn, 2014): 7.

## Chapter 6. Analysis

### 6.1. Methods of empirical manifestation of the argument

The results of the expert survey conducted in chapter 4 indicated that populist ideology was not only present on the radical left parties but also on the radical right parties. Therefore, it is quite puzzling that Spanish populist parties do not follow the common trend in Europe which is the rise of populism on the radical right. This paper has tried to find among existing theories the explanation for such outcome, but they have partially failed to understand the phenomenon. For these reasons, a different but at the same time a complementary approach to the already existing literature of populism is tested in this chapter, the idea that when populism rises it does it with the most anti-status quo party, regardless of the left-right ideology of such party. In order to test such assumption two methods have been selected, content analysis and discourse analysis of electoral manifestos. Electoral manifestos are “strategic documents written by politically sophisticated party elites,”<sup>100</sup> whose relevancy lies in the fact that they “assess the importance of current political problems, specify the party’s position on them, and inform the electorate about the course of action the party will pursue when elected.”<sup>101</sup>

The first method, content analysis, is a “systematic, rigorous approach to analyzing documents obtained or generated in the course of research.”<sup>102</sup> It is used in all types of written texts and can be used in a qualitative or quantitative method.<sup>103</sup> In this case, the

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<sup>100</sup> Michael Laver and John Garry, “Estimating policy positions from political texts,” *American Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 3 (2000), cited in Sven-Oliver Proksch, Jonathan B. Slapin and Michael F. Thies, “Party system dynamics in post-war Japan: A quantitative content analysis of electoral pledges,” *Electoral Studies* 30, no. 1 (2011): 115.

<sup>101</sup> Hans-Dieter Klingemann, “Electoral Programmes in West Germany 1949– 1980: explorations in the nature of political controversy,” in *Ideology, Strategy, and Party Change: Spatial Analyses of Post-War Election Programmes in 19 Democracies*, eds. Ian Budge et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), cited in Proksch, Slapin and Thies, “Party system dynamics in post-war Japan: A quantitative content analysis of electoral pledges,” 115.

<sup>102</sup> Marilyn Domas White and Emily E. Marsh, “Content analysis: A flexible methodology,” *Library trends* 55, no. 1 (2006): 41.

<sup>103</sup> Mariette Bengtsson, “How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis,” *NursingPlus Open* 2 (2016): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001>.

content analysis of electoral manifestos has been conducted in a quantitative way, meaning that the text from the manifestos was “presented in the form of frequency expressed as a percentage or actual numbers of key categories.”<sup>104</sup> Those categories are social values and economic values as well as an intersection category for those concepts that could relate both to social and economic values. Through this method, it was possible to code the manifestos of political parties and to ascertain whether they cover more social or economic problems depending on their frequency.

Far from limiting the scope of this analysis to a mere transformation of words into data, after the content analysis, a discourse analysis of the manifestos was also conducted. Discourse analysis has been described as “a qualitative method that provides a framework for a richer understanding of how meaning is constructed and construed in political debate.”<sup>105</sup> This method complements the content analysis and helps to provide more reliable results. This method tries to provide an in-depth understanding of phenomena to which it is applied by analyzing the discourses in which it is presented, how the concept framed, its meaning and the consequences it has. Electoral manifestos are considered political discourses<sup>106</sup> and they present a privileged object of study of the relationship between language and ideology.<sup>107</sup>

This type of analysis of the electoral manifestos is used as a way to try to understand better the level of anti-status quo sentiments embedded in the ideology of the selected populist parties. Electoral manifestos are produced by the parties themselves and summarize the policies adopted by each party and the arguments behind them,<sup>108</sup> thus, based on their policies this chapter tries to understand whether parties stressed the social or the economic

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<sup>104</sup> Bengtsson, “How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis,” 10.

<sup>105</sup> Nieves Zúñiga, *Methodologies For The Analysis Of Political Party Programmes*, (Berlin: Transparency International, 2018), 1.

<sup>106</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, “What is political discourse analysis,” *Belgian journal of linguistics* 11, no. 1 (1997): 18.

<sup>107</sup> Emilia Anglada Arboix, “Análisis Del Lenguaje Político (Estudio Lingüístico),” (PhD. diss., Universitat de Barcelona, 1984): 27.

<sup>108</sup> Marco Lisi and Enrico Borghetto, “Populism, blame shifting and the crisis: discourse strategies in Portuguese political parties,” 412.

values and which narrative accompanies the understanding of those values. The end of such categorization is to classify political parties regarding their level of anti-status quo, depending on how much they stress the importance of reshaping the current state of affairs. Those electoral manifestos that overstress and promote an ideology of change among their proposals would be considered as anti-status quo. It can perfectly be observed here the complementary use of content analysis and discourse analysis. Content analysis helps to understand which issues dominate the manifestos, but such analysis is not enough to determine the level of anti-status quo of the programs, it is necessary to follow it up with a contextual analysis of the meanings and the reality that those policies portrayed.

Regarding which political parties' electoral manifestos will be analyzed, this paper decided to limit the analysis to two political parties, Podemos and VOX for the 2016 elections. The expert survey conducted in Chapter 3 identified 6 political parties as populist and radical left wing<sup>109</sup> and 5 parties as populist and radical right wing.<sup>110</sup> There are several reasons why the manifesto of Podemos is selected for this analysis. Among those 6 parties, only Podemos and IU are general or national parties, who actually presented a single list to the 2016 elections, thus their manifestos were united in one, which is the one here under study. The rest of the parties are all regional parties, meaning that they presented candidacies only in single regions, and all of them, except EH Bildu, run for the elections in coalition with Podemos. Therefore, their electoral manifestos included the same policies and ideology as the electoral manifesto of Podemos. The case of EH Bildu is a bit more different because it is a regional and separatist party, therefore its populism is less related to the social vs economic values and more to the autochthonous cleavage of center-periphery. Meanwhile, on the other side of the political spectrum, among all the populist radical right parties VOX is

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<sup>109</sup> Podemos, IU, EH Bildu, ECP, En Marea and Compromís.

<sup>110</sup> VOX, E-2000, Fe JONS, DN and PxC.

the most “successful” party and the only one to whom the experts predict their high chances of entering parliament on the coming elections the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, something that already happened at the Andalusian parliament where the party has a total of 10,97% of the valid votes and 12 seats.

The selection of the manifestos is limited to the last general elections held in Spain by the time this thesis is written, meaning 2015/2016. The elections in December 2015 were repeated in June 2016, and that is why electoral manifestos remained the same for both elections. It was also during those elections when the populist radical left become successful for the first time.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, those elections were the first ones where both Podemos and VOX presented their candidacy for the parliament. Some scholars found out that some citizens identify the existing parties during the crisis as part of the establishment, regardless of their ideology and discourse,<sup>112</sup> therefore, such problem here is not contemplated since both Podemos and VOX were new parties. Finally, it is relevant to mention why this thesis is not using any secondary data provided by the numerous free databases, such as *Manifesto Project*. The reason is that these databases only covered a limited number of parties, excluding the so-called smaller parties with no political representation that are electorally irrelevant but relevant for the present thesis, such as VOX, and that is why it is necessary to conduct such analysis directly from primary sources.

## 6.2. Results of content and discourse analysis.

The content analysis indicates the frequency in which key concepts appear and provides the importance and the salience that those concepts possess in each of the electoral manifestos. The first step into the analysis is to divide the different policies covered by the electoral manifestos in 2016 into economic, social and intersectional values which could

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<sup>111</sup> See table 6 in chapter 4.

<sup>112</sup> Ramiro and Gómez, “Radical-Left Populism during the Great Recession: Podemos and Its Competition with the Established Radical Left,” 115.

either be social or economic. In order to follow a reliable way of categorizing the policies included in the manifestos and to verify that at least the most important policies during the 2015/2016 elections were covered, this paper followed the worked done by Guillermo López-García.<sup>113</sup>

Economic	Intersectional	Social
Employment / Unemployment	Urbanistic problems	Housing
Taxes	Immigration	Inequalities
Public Debt	Territorial Organization	Education
Austerity	International policy	Health
Business	Infrastructures	Citizen security
Tourism	European Union	Family
Pensions	Environment	Nationalism
Corruption		Catalan secessionism
Agriculture		Sport
Industry		Emigrants/ Spanish abroad
		Informative manipulation
		Culture
		Information society
		Equality policies/ Social rights
		Abortion law
		Terrorism
		Justice
		Church/ Catholicism
		Festivities, traditions
		Gender violence

Table 8. Division of policies

<sup>113</sup> Guillermo López-García, “‘Nuevos’ y ‘viejos’ liderazgos: la campaña de las elecciones generales españolas de 2015 en Twitter,” *Communication and Society* 29, no. 3 (2016): 166.

Table 8 shows that most of the policies, a total of 20, fall under the category of social values, while only 10 to the economic values and 7 that could either be social or economic. Based on this division, a manual research of key concepts related to each one of the policies was conducted, so as to understand their frequency and ultimately to determine which of the following values is predominant in each of the manifestos. Both manifestos have a very different extension, while Podemos electoral manifestos consist of 193 pages, Vox manifesto is shorter, with only 89 pages. Having that in mind, as well as the fact that there are more policies belonging to the category of social issues, the actual counting of words provided in table 2 in brackets could be misleading,<sup>114</sup> that is why the official results are provided in percentages.

Economic		Intersectional		Social	
Podemos	Vox	Podemos	Vox	Podemos	Vox
<b>45,5%</b>	27,7%	19,7%	18,8%	34,8%	<b>53,5%</b>
(401)	(119)	(122)	(57)	(613)	(460)

Table 9. Electoral manifestos' distribution.<sup>115</sup> (Raw Counts presented in Brackets)

It can be observed that Podemos' electoral manifesto due to its extension has more mentions in all of the three categories, but it is in economic issues where its manifesto presents the highest percentage. A total of 45,5% of the document is regarded to such matters, followed by social issues take the second place with a 34,8% of the manifest. But it is also true that between the economic and social issues the difference is a mere 10,7%, unlike the big distance with the intersectional issues to which they dedicate the remain 19,7% of the manifesto. In regard to Vox's manifesto, it can be observed that, unlike Podemos, there is a great difference between all extensions they dedicate to each of the issues. The most part

<sup>114</sup> See Appendix B for detailed word counts.

<sup>115</sup> Unit of Analysis: Words

of its document is dedicated to social issues with a total of 53,3%, followed by 27,7% of economic issues and a mere 18,8% for intersectional issues. Thus, through content analysis, it has been possible to verify the fact that Podemos' manifesto is more focus on economic issues than Vox, but it is not possible to understand the ideology embedded within those policies. While this content analysis is certainly significant, it is not sufficient to understand the level of anti-status quo of the parties and it is necessary now to analyze the interpretation of the narrative in which those concepts appear in the electoral manifestos.

The first part of the discourse analysis is regarded as the economic values since Spanish people showed more interest in economic matters. The goal is to understand where the political parties stand in the status quo vs anti-status quo spectrum regarding the different values that form the establishment. The three main economic problems were employment/unemployment, public debt and corruption. Among the different economic issues, Spaniards worried the most about the employment/unemployment, thus it is a great starting point for the discourse analysis.

A new constitutional architecture capable of guaranteeing the change of the Spanish productive model through stable levels of public investment in R+D+i, the most effective tool to combat unemployment and job insecurity.<sup>116</sup>

We will create a "Social Eurogroup", which will be made up of the Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs and will monitor social imbalances and the coordination of labor policies in the euro area.<sup>117</sup>

Unemployment is the biggest problem that worries the Spanish. It is therefore a priority to promote job creation and to eliminate inefficiencies from the market and encourage the creation of new companies. Keep in mind that the best and most efficient job creator is the private company and the free initiative.<sup>118</sup>

The current conditions for the self-employed are not only very unfair, but discourage people who want to start working, by imposing a penalty of 300 euros per month just for trying to work, regardless of whether they get money or not (... )

- Set the minimum fee at 50 euros / month during the first three years of activity.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Podemos, "26J," (2016): 126, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://lasonrisadeunpais.es/programa/>. Translation by the author.

<sup>117</sup> Podemos, 137.

<sup>118</sup> Vox, "Hacer España grande otra vez," (2016): 79, accessed March 20, 2019, <http://www.voxespana.es/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Programa-electoral-VOX-26-J.pdf>. Translation by the author.

<sup>119</sup> Vox, 82.

Both political parties present a negative reading of the employment reality in Spain and developed their own proposals to revert the situation. Podemos stresses the role of the State and of public institutions as a way to improve the quality and quantity of employment. Vox, on the other hand, presents complete opposite measures to deal with the issue and stresses the role of the private enterprises and the need to reduce the intervention of the state in the regulation of the employment. The present findings are not surprising since they are in line with the ideology of radical left and radical right parties respectively. But regarding the current state of affairs, it is fair to say that both manifestos present a change of current policies of employment. Continuing the analysis of the economic policies about public debt:

The ECB should restructure the public debts of the euro area economies that exceed 60% of GDP; and to develop this operation of suppression of public debt for all the countries of the Eurozone, thus mutualizing the debt.<sup>120</sup>

The restructuring of this debt will focus not so much on a reduction of the amortization periods or the agreed interest rates, but on a redefinition of the final payers of the invoice.<sup>121</sup>

Establishment of a Public Debt Reduction Plan to alleviate the high financial burden on public spending.<sup>122</sup>

This time, the question of where the two parties stand on the situation of the public debt shows very different behaviors. Vox talks about paying the public debt and reduce it to zero, which is actually the goal that Spain is currently following since it was a binding obligation imposed from the European institutions. Meanwhile, Podemos presents a very different proposal that aspires to radically change the situation of the Spanish public debt. It mentions a restructuration and suppression of the debt, as well as the redefinition of who the payers should be. From these words, it is implied that the Spanish citizens should not be the ones paying for the public debt since they are not the ones to be blamed for the economic crisis.

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<sup>120</sup> Podemos, “26J,” 192.

<sup>121</sup> Podemos, 134.

<sup>122</sup> Vox, “Hacer España grande otra vez,” 63.

Along the employment/unemployment and the public debt policies, the other economic question that concerns the most to Spaniards was corruption. Indeed, both Podemos and Vox include in their brief of principles mentions to this matter. Before introducing their proposals more in detail both parties include a “principles part” in which they state in a more narrative way the principles and main values that frame their ideology and that guide their key proposals. Therefore, the fact that both parties include mentions to the corruption indicated the relevancy of such topic.

To regenerate Spain and return to national unity, it is necessary to implement a "project suggestive of life in common", with new ideas and concepts beyond the classics. This is the main political challenge faced by VOX that is presented to the center and right electorate as the viable alternative that will face widespread corruption and the prevarication of the extractive and destructive oligarchies that have kidnapped the institutions in favor of their own interests to steal and fracture Spain.<sup>123</sup>

Starting with Vox, the paragraph presents the classic populist dichotomy, in this case, is between Spain as a nation and the oligarchies that want to corrupt it. Here the issue of corruption is actually framed more as a social issue rather than as an economic one. Considering that corruption was the second problem among Spaniards it is interesting to see how Vox links corruption to the idea of Spain as a nation. Indeed, the idea of Spain as a nation is a very controversial social matter. There is an ongoing ideological debate in Spain regarding those that understand Spain as a single nation and those that defend the idea of a “nation of nations.” The first ones understand that there is a single nation, Spain as a whole, and the second ones believe that Catalonia, Basque Country and Galicia should be regarded as nations within Spain.<sup>124</sup> While the former defends the idea that Spain is not a single nation but the union of several nations, the latter defends the independence of several territories based on the understanding of countries as nation-states. Moreover, the solution that Vox proposes to avoid corruption is the return to a life in common with new ideas. But while they

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<sup>123</sup> Vox, “Hacer España grande otra vez,” 6.

<sup>124</sup> It is important not to confuse this debate with the separatists one.

claim to present concepts beyond the classics, in the next pages of the principles part they claim that:

Historically, Spain has been characterized as a nation with a universal vocation, based on permanent principles and values. Spain is today disoriented, fragmented, adrift. Individualism and relativism prevail in this impoverished nation.<sup>125</sup>

Vox proposes measures to promote the values that we must return to assume as a previous step to solve the multiple problems that plague Spain. The first values that we must preserve is the right to exist as individuals. Without the right to life, all other rights and values are sterile. Second, if our life in common is based on the existence of social cells of coexistence, the first of these cells, the basis for all others, is the family. Therefore, it is essential to appreciate and defend this institution (...) And finally, we will defend here today the importance of creating birth policies that guarantee the generational change in the model of society that we defend.<sup>126</sup>

The returning to those “common ideas and values that go beyond the classics” are the only way to improve the crisis that the country was going. In other words, they are linking the economic issues to social ones, to which they seem to give more importance as considering them the heart of the countries. But if carefully analyzed, those values are rather traditional values. Vox defends the current constitutional approach to the nationalist problem by stating that there is only a single nation, Spain as a whole. As well as in the previous case, this conception of Spain will most likely have consequences for other policies, especially for the social ones. Following this understanding of Spain is the idea that there are a group of values shared by Spanish society and that these values are currently been eroded. Moreover, they understand the erosion of these values as the source of all the problems that the country is facing. Those values to which Vox pose so much importance revolve around the idea of the family. In other words, Vox proposal to revert the bad situation of the country starts by focusing on the social issues that in their opinion have been undermined during recent years. By looking at those specific values, the family, the right to live, understood as in opposition to abortion and euthanasia laws, and the importance of natality, it is clear the connection of

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<sup>125</sup> Vox, “Hacer España grande otra vez,” 6.

<sup>126</sup> Vox, 21.

these values with religious beliefs, more precisely Catholic values that guide the ideology of this political party.

It is fascinating how the focus on Vox's approach to corruption lead the analysis to the discovery of the real values and ideology that leads the understanding that the party makes of the economic situation of the country. This discourse analysis of Vox's manifesto only corroborates the findings of the previous content analysis that showed that more than half of their manifesto was dedicated to social issues. Regarding the first introduction that Podemos does about corruption:

We propose a route capable of leaving behind the Spain of the five million unemployed, of precariousness, of the exploitation of the self-employed, of competitiveness, of the salary decrease and of energy dependence. It is a guide that proposes simple and effective ways against the impunity of the corrupt. It is a path through which we can democratically build the plurinational and respectful Spain that already exists in cities and towns and has not yet entered the parties and institutions.<sup>127</sup>

Here the context in which Podemos introduces the issue of corruption differs greatly from Vox's treatment of the same problem, but as well as the other political party, Podemos' "principles part" does also include a classic populist dichotomy of society. Podemos identifies their values and priorities with those that already exist in the society, therefore they are first identifying themselves with the people, and then making the distinction between them and the already existing political actors by stating that those values that they defend have not yet entered in the political or institutional context, in other words, calling the already existing political class corrupt and undemocratic. The order in which Podemos' manifesto presents their principles is a hint to the relevance they give to each of them. The first part starts directly addressing the main economic issues, mainly related to the bad situation of employment such as decrease of salaries and lack of decent opportunities and continues with a denunciation of corruption. They identify the main problems of the country and therefore

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<sup>127</sup> Podemos, "26J," 126.

the main goals of their proposals and state very clearly their intention to erase them, indeed, they define their policies as “simple and effective” against those economic maladies. The stress that this opening paragraph does on the economic issues goes in line with the findings of the content analysis, where economic issues were overrepresented in comparison with intersectional or social ones. While Vox defended the constitutional idea of Spain as a nation, Podemos defends the idea of Spain as a nation of nations with the use of the concept “plurinational” to refer to the country. The selection of words while referring to Spain are far from a minor issue. They imply the reform of the constitution to recognize Catalonia, Basque Country and Galicia as nations, at the same level as the Spanish. Additionally, this change would also imply changes in other policies, such as the territorial organization of the state, culture or education among others.

This first part of the discourse analysis confirms the findings of the content analysis. Both parties present a pessimistic representation of the reality of the country and proposed measures to change it. But while Podemos mainly focuses on change stressing on economic values, Vox proposes the focus on social values. The former stresses the importance of reshaping some constitutional values the latter underlines the importance of the return to traditional Catholic values.

Continuing with the approach of the parties to the social issues, the two issues that the manifestos stress the most are the family for Vox and culture for Podemos.<sup>128</sup> In the case of Podemos, when they present and explain their cultural policies it is very interesting to see how they end up portraying them as economic issues:

In the framework of a set of measures for a reform of the taxation of culture aimed at stimulating the creation, production, distribution and access of culture, we will reduce the value added tax (VAT) of cultural services, currently subject to the normal rate, to the reduced rate.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> See Appendix B the concept most referred to by Vox is the family.

<sup>129</sup> Podemos, “26J,” 153.

Even though they present several policies regarding culture, it is worth noting that their start policy in this matter is linked to economic measures, in this case to a modification of taxes. Meanwhile, the approach of Vox to culture is more traditionalist:

VOX believes that the State must carry out a National Culture and Heritage Plan, which comprehensively encompasses the set of actions that must be carried out for the knowledge, dissemination and protection of national identity.<sup>130</sup>

In this case, Vox underlies the connection between culture as part of the heritage and national identity and promotes as their key measure the creation of a specific plan targeted to its protection. Once again, Vox discourse has two main ideological assumptions, the first one is that there is a clear link between culture and nationalism and secondly, that there is a single national identity, in line with their already mentioned refusal to the idea of peripheric nationalisms, that needs to be preserved. To finalize the discourse analysis is the study of the family policies. Starting with Podemos:

We will put in place measures that guarantee the protection of the families of single mothers with children under their care.<sup>131</sup>

We will modify the laws, the official documentation and the forms of the Public Administrations so that all the familiar realities are included and none is excluded.

- We will support adoption in LGTBI families.<sup>132</sup>

Podemos proposes some radical changes in regard to family law, with the acceptance and incursion of families outside the traditional understanding of family that is identified with Catholic values. The changes proposed by Podemos' manifesto are in direct opposition to Vox's family policies. As it was already introduced, in the "principles part" of Vox, they reiterated the importance of the family as one of the main pillars of Spanish society, in that line, their proposals state that:

The defense of the natural family. The public authorities have to pay the consideration that deserves to the natural family, that is to say, the one formed between man and woman. No other type of union will be equated to that of the family, since the right of children to have a father

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<sup>130</sup> Vox, "Hacer España grande otra vez," 68.

<sup>131</sup> Podemos, "26J," 150.

<sup>132</sup> Podemos.

and a mother will be protected, without prejudice to the regulation of other realities of coexistence.

Once again, the ideology behind the policies of Vox is clearly traditionalist and it is highly influenced by Catholic values which try to perpetuate their understanding of family. Indeed, the Catholic church, as well as its communities defend the idea of the family as a Christian value that should not be corrupted to refer anything else than the union of man and woman, hence, the reference to “other realities of coexistence.”

### 6.3. New theory

The last chapter presented the hypothesis as “populist radical left parties rose in Spain because the anti-status quo sentiments are associated more with left-wing ideology than the right-wing ideology in Spain.” Following the understanding that populist parties can vary their approach to the establishment, and therefore to the status quo, if the hypothesis is accepted, it would explain why the only successful populist parties were the radical left. In other words, the success of radical left parties could be explained by the fact that they present a more anti-status quo ideology than the radical right.

The content analysis showed that Podemos’ manifesto was more evenly divided among the economic, social and intersectional policies and that contrary Vox regarded more than half of their manifesto to just for social issues. The fact that Spaniards posed more importance on economic values, and Podemos, while compared to Vox, dedicates more extension in their manifestos to the economic issues, 45,5% and 27,7% respectively. But this data is still not enough to understand why populism rose on the radical left but on the radical right since the importance here is not on the extension but the treatment that each political party gives to each of the issues.

The discourse analysis, on the other hand, provided the perfect understanding of the level of anti-status quo of the parties. Starting with the economic issues, it was discovered that both parties presented proposals that aim to change the current status quo of the

employment/unemployment situation of the country, but when analyzing the proposals for the public debt, it was Podemos who presented radical changes while Vox's proposals were in line with the current policy. As it was stated in the previous chapter while talking about the failed economic theory, Spain economic situation during the 2008-2014 was quite precarious, including the situation of the public debt that rises up to... by the time of the elections here analyzed. Moreover, Spain is part of the euro area and therefore, the majority of the economic policies are decided at the European level and member states need to obey them, Therefore, the position of paying the public debt and reduce it to zero that was presented by Vox is actually just the continuation of the obligation that was imposed to Spain by the EU. Indeed, the Spanish Constitution<sup>133</sup> was modified in 2011 to include the new agreements of the Euro Plus Pact, in which it was stipulated to give "absolute priority" to the payment of interest and principal of the public debt.<sup>134</sup> Different situation is presented in Podemos' manifesto, where they state clearly that the payers of the debt should be reconsidered, and the impositions should be lifted, a clear change with the already on-going policies. But the most relevant part was the narrative in which the political parties included the corruption issue. While Podemos included the matter on their anti-status quo rhetoric of the economic issues, Vox understand of corruption was directly linked with the erosion of the "national values," and those values were, at the same time, directly linked their pro-status quo defense of social values. Therefore, the analysis of the treatment that each political party makes of economic issues positioned Podemos with a more anti-status quo ideology. But even more, the analysis of the social issues only confirmed these first findings. Indeed, Vox statement of keeping things the way they are can be observed from their negative approach on the concept of Spain as a nation of nations or the new idea that the concept of families nowadays evolved to

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<sup>133</sup> Spanish Const. art. CXXXV.

<sup>134</sup> Alejandro Bolaños, "El pago de la deuda será la "prioridad absoluta" para todas las Administraciones," *El País*, August 26, 2011, accessed March 20, 2019, [https://elpais.com/politica/2011/08/26/actualidad/1314392901\\_597378.html](https://elpais.com/politica/2011/08/26/actualidad/1314392901_597378.html).

include other types of families rather than the traditional women-men union. Podemos, on the contrary, proposed the change in the laws to include those other forms. Vox presented once again a very pro-status quo proposal. It is important to understand, that Spain, during Franco's time was socially ruled by Catholic values, which conform one of the main pillars of the ideology of his regime. While it is true that Spanish society has evolved since then, it is also true that the vast majority of Spanish still identify themselves as Catholics. The article 32.1 of the Spanish Constitution states that "men and women have the right to marry with full legal equality."<sup>135</sup> In 2005 the socialist party, PSOE, reinterpreted the spirit of the law in a newer way so that homosexual marriages were included. The right-wing including Vox disapproved the newer interpretation and filed an unconstitutionality appeal before the Constitutional Court who has not yet pronounced sentence on it. Same situation with the nation issue. The right-wing in general has always been very reluctant to accept that any other nationalism exists in Spain and refuses to equate the peripheral movements as nations and defend the current constitutional order. The article 2 of the Spanish Constitution states that "the Constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation, the common and indivisible country of all Spaniards."<sup>136</sup> Therefore, it is fair to say that the proposal of Vox is certainly pro-status quo while Podemos one is very anti-status quo, as they pretend to reshape the current Constitution to include the new understanding of nations and defend the socialists reform of the family that modified the traditional understanding of such institution. Moreover, the stress that Vox does on the idea of the family with 115 mentions, the most repeated concept in the manifesto, shows the level of pro-status quo of their manifesto.

All these analyses make it differentiate the position of each party regarding their level of anti-establishment, and so it can be concluded that the only political party that truly

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<sup>135</sup> Spanish Const. art. XXXII, § 1.

<sup>136</sup> Spanish Const. art. II.

presented an electoral manifesto with proposals that aimed to change the status quo, not only on the economic background but also the social values is Podemos. The fact that the country during the vast majority of the crisis, from 2011 until 2018, was ruled by the center-right party PP, made it only possible the change of the establishment from the left-wing. The proposals of Podemos indicated a high level of anti-status quo as almost all of the key proposals here studied showed advocate for the change of the current state of affairs. It is also true that Podemos did a greater emphasis on economic matters while compared with Vox, but it was the narrative and the embedded ideology in which the proposals were presented what decided the conclusion on the position of each party.

The working hypothesis of this thesis is confirmed: Podemos electoral rise was due to the presence of a more anti-status quo sentiments in their ideology, than the one presented by Vox. There are several key conclusions to make from this statement. The first one is that, as it was prognosticated, the Spanish left-wing is more anti-status quo than the right-wing, and therefore that is why populism, when decided to rise, chooses the most anti-status quo party, in this case Podemos. At the same time, it is also true that the importance of Spanish people regarding the social-economic values can shift and the results of the elections could shift, and populism could rise from the right. The second conclusion is the fact that populism as it has been traditionally studied in the literature, stresses greatly the link between populism and the left-right ideology, usually claiming that in Europe populism is right-wing, while in Latin America is left-wing<sup>137</sup>. The analysis here conducted contradict those assumptions and present an alternative explanation for the rise of populism. It is the level of anti-status quo sentiments of the parties what matter the most while understanding why populism rises, and not so much whether they are left or right. It all depends on what sentiments formed the status quo and the narrative in which those sentiments are presented by the political parties.

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<sup>137</sup> Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, "Voices of the peoples: populism in Europe and Latin America compared."

## Chapter 7. Conclusion

The focus of this thesis was to achieve a better understand of the rising phenomenon of populism. By asking why populism was successful on the left but not on the right in Spanish general elections in 2016, this thesis has shown that it is the level of anti-status quo sentiments embedded in the ideologies of populist parties what matters for their success. It was found that in an electoral context with several populist parties, those ones with a stronger anti-status quo ideology were the most successful ones. In other words, in order to understand the logics behind the rise of populist parties the key is not so much on whether they are left or right but their position towards the establishment.

This reasoning is directly linked to the conceptualization discussion that took place in the first chapter of this thesis. Lately in the literature, there has been a trend that link the phenomenon of populism to the ideology of radical right parties, making a single entity out of them. Following the theoretical background developed by Takis Pappas<sup>138</sup> based on the distinction of the two concepts as separate entities it was possible to develop such in-depth understanding of populist parties. Populism is then regarded in this thesis as a thin-centered ideology based on two characteristics, the dichotomization of society and people-centrism. Among the several theories that focus on why populist parties rise and treat the phenomenon as a single entity, only the “failed economy theory” developed by Selim Erdem Aytaç and Ziya Öniş<sup>139</sup> provided a plausible explanation for the research question of this thesis. While most of the theories on populism focuses on the differentiation of the phenomenon from those non-populist ones, there has been little research done about the different populist movements. This theory, on the contrary, presented a differentiation of when populism rises on the left and when it does it on the right, arguing that in times of crisis populism will rise

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<sup>138</sup> Pappas, “Distinguishing Liberal Democracy's Challenges.”

<sup>139</sup> Aytaç and Öniş, “Varieties of Populism in a Changing Global Context: The Divergent Paths of Erdoğan and Kirchnerismo.”

on the left if the blame of the crisis is on external actors, and on the right if the blame is on internal actors. Based on that theory it was then hypothesized that *the blame towards external factor for the Spanish economic crisis was the key to the increased of votes to the populist radical left.*

While the research question as well as the hypothesis asseverated that the populist radical left was more successful in Spain than the populists radical right, such assumption was based on previous works on Spanish political parties. But in order to corroborate the level of populism and their stand on the left-right spectrum of Spanish parties, it was decided to develop an expert survey that would locate the parties in two scales, a left-right scale and a populist-nonpopulist scale, in two times periods, a pre-crisis one between 2004-2011 and a post-crisis one between 2011-2018, to verify among other things the veracity of the assertion that populisms increase in times of crisis. Results confirmed both the assumptions, showing that it was the populists radical left and not the populists radical right the successful ones during the crisis in the second time-period. Moreover, the results also showed that almost all political parties share some traits of populist ideology, even the mainstream parties were not free from populist ideology. Therefore, the theoretical background of Takis Pappas confirmed once again its veracity in the idea of considering populism a separated entity from radical right parties, which can even be present in mainstream parties.

Once the concept was settled, it was time to bring an answer to the research question. The hypothesis based on the “failed economy theory” was tested and failed to explain the outcome of interests in Spain, since it was internal actors the ones society blamed for the crisis and not external actors, which would have explained the rise of the populist left. Thus, it was necessary to find an alternative explanation to the outcome of interest. Breaking with previous understandings of the logics behind the rise of the different populist movements, this thesis argued that the key was not to focus on which ideology was allied with right or

left, but the level of anti-status quo sentiments embedded within the populist ideology of each party. Therefore, it was hypothesized that *populist radical left parties rose in Spain because the anti-status quo sentiments are associated more with left-wing ideology than the right-wing ideology in Spain*. The roots of this new theory come from very recent studies on populism that question the understanding of populist parties as natural anti-establishment parties and therefore, argue for a new understanding of populism and its relationship towards the status quo. This new working hypothesis was tested with two different methods, the quantitative content analysis and the qualitative discourse analysis of the electoral manifestos of the main populist radical left party, Podemos, and of the main populist radical right party, Vox. Since the goal was to verify the level of anti-status quo ideology in each of the manifestos, it was necessary first to find out what values conformed the status-quo in Spain and which of them posed more importance for Spaniards. Results showed that while all European countries share a common ground of economic and social values, in Spain, during the 2016 elections, the main stress was over economic values. The analysis to the electoral manifestos revealed that Podemos not only did more emphasis on the economic values but that their approach to them was more anti-status quo than the one presented by Vox. Moreover, the overall analysis showed that Vox, both in economic and social values presented a very pro-status quo ideology in their proposals, while Podemos's electoral manifesto revealed the opposite. These findings confirm the last hypothesis and present an alternative understanding of the rising of populist parties, whose focus of study should not be on whether they are accompanying by right or left-wing parties but the level of anti-status quo ideology of the parties. Indeed, this new theory on the rise of populism presents a very flexible understanding since the values that conform the status-quo of the countries might vary depending on the case under study. Ending the myth of populism only present on radical right parties, the findings of these thesis can be added to the already existing literature on the

rise of populism and can help to understand better such phenomenon, not only to differentiate between populist and non-populist parties but also to differentiate within diverse populists movements.

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## APPENDIX A. QUESTIONNAIRE OF THE EXPERT SURVEY

### SURVEY FOR EXPERTS

Please use the form provided here to evaluate the positions of the political parties in relation to the two questions posed below:

- A. Location of the parties on the left-right axis, where (1) represents left and (10) right.
- B. Level of populism of the party. Understanding by populist the party that simplify reality by the division of society into two antagonistic groups, the people, as a diffuse entity to which they represent, versus the rest.

- 1 = no populist
- 2 = slightly populist
- 3 = moderately populist
- 4 = very populist
- 5 = extremely populist

Please rate each political party in these two dimensions in the following periods: from 2004 until 2011 and from 2011 until 2018. If possible, please specify if any party had, at any given time, any relevant change in its orientation on the issues raised here. If you feel uncomfortable with your judgments about the positions of the parties in the second period (2004-2011), feel free to limit your evaluations to some political parties or to the most recent period (2011-2018). Always a partial response is more useful than a non-response.

Thank you very much for your collaboration!

- A. Place the following parties in the left-right axis:

(Tables)

- B. Rate the level of populism of the following parties:

(Tables)

## APPENDIX B. NUMBER OF WORDS

<b>Economic</b>	<b>Intersectional</b>		<b>Social</b>					
	Podemos	Vox	Podemos	Vox				
Employment/ Unemployment	103	38	Urbanistic problems	7	2	Housing	77	18
Taxes	19	11	Immigration	3	14	Inequalities	15	1
Public Debt	5	2	Territorial Organization	5	20	Education	93	74
Austerity	28	0	International policy	6	2	Health	30	14
Business	92	32	Infrastructur es	52	8	Citizen security	14	23
Tourism	11	2	European Union	32	5	Family	76	115
Pensions	48	21	Environment	17	6	Nationalism	0	3
Corruption	23	6				Catalan secessionism	1	0
Agriculture	10	0				Sport	30	26
Industry	62	7				Emigrants/ Spanish abroad	10	1
						Informative manipulation	0	3
						Culture	160	36
						Information society	5	1
						Equality policies/ Social rights	73	26
						Abortion law	0	10
						Terrorism	0	42
						Justice	22	51
						Church, Catholicism	4	6
						Festivities, traditions	1	3
						Gender violence	2	7