
Populist contagion or anti-elitism in opposition? PSOE's response to the emergence of Podemos

*¿Contagio populista o antielitismo en oposición?
La respuesta del PSOE al surgimiento de Podemos*

BELÉN FERNÁNDEZ-GARCÍA

Universidad de Granada

ÓSCAR G. LUENGO

Universidad de Granada

Cómo citar/Citation

Fernández-García, B. y Luengo, O. G. (2020). Populist contagion or anti-elitism in opposition? PSOE's response to the emergence of Podemos. *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 54, 13-37. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.21308/recp.54.01>

Abstract

This article assesses the possible populist discourse contagion experienced by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) due to the irruption of Podemos. To this end, a content analysis has been carried out on a selection of PSOE manifestos for national and European elections, published between 2004 and 2019. The results show that the evolution of PSOE's anti-elitism is not necessarily related to the competition with *Podemos* but to the party's opposition status, especially in contexts of citizen discontent. Therefore, the main results suggest that the political decline of traditional parties could be a more decisive factor than the emergence and rise of new parties, when explaining the shifts in party identity. In addition, the article shows that populist messages have played three main functions in PSOE's manifestos: i) to show empathy with and understanding of people's unrest in contexts of citizen dissatisfaction; ii) to attack the main political competitor when the party is in opposition; and iii) to use economic powers and other elites as scapegoats, especially when the party is in government.

Keywords: populism, anti-elitism, popular sovereignty, political parties, content analysis, party manifestos.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza el posible contagio del discurso populista experimentado por el Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) por la irrupción de Podemos. Para ello se ha realizado un

análisis de contenido en una selección de programas electorales nacionales y europeos del PSOE publicados entre 2004 y 2019. Los resultados muestran que la evolución del antielitismo en los programas del PSOE no está necesariamente relacionada con la competición con Podemos, sino con el estatus de oposición del partido, especialmente en contextos de descontento ciudadano. Por tanto, los principales resultados sugieren que el declive político de los partidos tradicionales podría ser un factor más decisivo que el surgimiento y el auge de nuevos partidos a la hora de explicar los cambios en la identidad de los mismos. Asimismo, el artículo muestra que los mensajes populistas han jugado tres funciones principales en los programas del PSOE: mostrar empatía y comprensión con el malestar del pueblo en contextos de insatisfacción ciudadana; atacar al competidor principal cuando el partido está en la oposición, y utilizar los poderes económicos y otras élites como chivos expiatorios, especialmente cuando el partido está en el Gobierno.

Palabras clave: populismo, antielitismo, soberanía popular, partidos políticos, análisis de contenido, programas electorales.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional party politics in Spain has been completely reshaped since 2014-2015 up to the present. The 2008 international economic crisis, the lack of institutional response to the demands of the population during the great recession, several corruption scandals in the traditional political parties and the territorial crisis are among the most important factors that explain the recent changes in the Spanish party system. The most visible effects of these changes are the increase of the electoral volatility and parliamentary fragmentation. In this sense, the parliamentary distribution of seats that resulted from the 2015 general elections led to the repetition of the electoral process a few months later in 2016, because the parliamentary groups were unable to agree on the appointment of a prime minister. It was the first time this had happened in the history of present-day Spanish democracy. The actors most benefited by this unprecedented electoral situation were two new political parties, Podemos and Ciudadanos, which respectively became the third and fourth political parties in votes and seats in the 2015 general elections.

In addition to the rise of new political forces, we must consider the electoral emergence of populism, previously unknown in Spain. Before the irruption of Podemos in 2014, no other party in Spain had developed a populist discourse with such intensity and success. Unlike other countries that had not successfully experienced the populist phenomenon until recently (e.g. United Kingdom or Sweden), the rise of populism in Spain has not been progressive but completely abrupt. Founded just four months before the 2014 European elections, Podemos became the fourth party in votes and seats in a very short period of time, and even the first in voting intention in a concrete moment, according to some electoral polls¹. One year later, their local candidacies and

1. Garea, Fernando. 2014. "Podemos supera a PSOE y PP y rompe el tablero electoral", *El País*, 2-11-2014. Retrieved from: www.elpais.com (last accessed: 3-6-2020).

confluences came to power in the biggest cities of the country (Madrid and Barcelona), other medium capitals (e.g. Cádiz) and became the parliamentary partners for socialist governments in five regions (Valencia, Baleares, Extremadura, Castilla La-Mancha and Aragón), as well as the support of the government in Navarra (led by Geroa Bai). Finally, in their first general elections Podemos became the third political party in votes and seats (20.7% of votes and 69 seats —Podemos and allied—), very close to the results reached by PSOE (22% and 90 seats). The support of Podemos in the 2015 elections came from former voters of United Left (IU), Union, Progress and Democracy (UPyD), the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), new voters and non-voters. In this sense, the irruption of Podemos and its regional confluences was more harmful for the PSOE than the rise of Ciudadanos in the 2015 elections; since the first managed to get 23% of the votes from former Socialist voters in contrast to 8% from Ciudadanos (Delgado-Fernández and Cazorla-Martín, 2017: 253).

Considering Podemos' electoral breakthrough in the Spanish political system, this article aims to assess the possible populist discourse contagion experienced by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), its closer competitor. Thus, the contribution of this article relates to the study of political parties' behavior, and more specifically, to the presumed impact of populism on party competition. In this regard, the Spanish case represents an interesting object of study, since the emergence of populism has been completely abrupt in the country. In addition, the results of this study may help to understand the Popular Party's responses to the recent challenge from the populist radical right.

The article is structured as follows: First, we address the socio-political context where the decline of the PSOE and the emergence of Podemos took place. Second, we discuss the concept of populism and the main hypotheses of the study, taking into consideration the literature on the impact that the emergence of populist parties has on mainstream parties. After that, we present the research design; followed by the main results. Finally, the later are discussed and interpreted in the conclusions.

THE IRRUPTION OF PODEMOS AND THE POLITICAL DECLINE OF THE PSOE

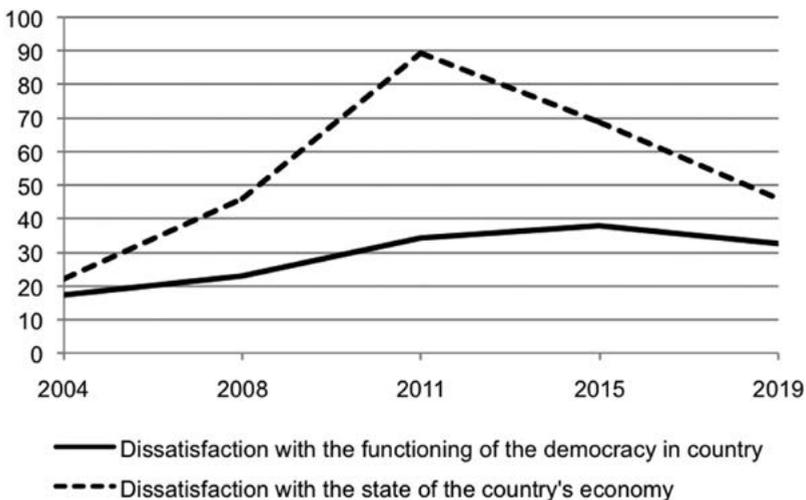
The electoral success of Podemos in 2014-2015 can be understood as the result of the political decline of the main left party in the country, PSOE, as well as citizen dissatisfaction with the political actors and the functioning of democracy (Della Porta *et al.*, 2017; Fernández-García and Luengo, 2018b; Rodríguez-Teruel *et al.*, 2016). With regard to the former, the PSOE experienced a traumatic electoral and political decline in 2011, after two terms in government (it lost 15.1% of votes and 59 seats, which constituted its worst result since 1977). Like other European Social Democratic parties, the PSOE had to implement harsh austerity policies during the Great Recession (Barberá and Rodríguez-Teruel, 2020). Notwithstanding, the unemployment rate and public debt levels remained alarmingly high, calling into question the socialist government's ability to manage the

crisis. In addition, the type of economic policies adopted (e.g. worsening labor rights, cuts in social spending, the reform of article 135 of the Constitution to guarantee the payment of debt interest, etc.) undermined the party's ideological credibility among leftist voters. As a consequence of the elements mentioned above, the party started to face serious problems as an organization: ideological-programmatic confusion; decreasing membership; difficulties to consolidate its national leadership and rapid electoral decline (Delgado-Fernández and Cazorla-Martín, 2017). All that was emphasized by new party competitors on both sides of the ideological continuum.

The economic crisis together with several corruption scandals within the main political parties led the country into a cycle of social protests in 2010-2011, that culminated in a profound change in the party system in the 2015 and 2016 elections (Della Porta *et al.*, 2017). As Figure 1 shows, dissatisfaction with the economy of the country reached an historical peak in 2011 (89.3% of voters felt that the economic situation was bad or very bad), while dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy exceeded 30% for the first time. Since then, the perception of the state of the economy improved significantly, but not democratic dissatisfaction, which remains above 30%. In this connection, Figure 2 confirms that political discontent continued to grow: the percentage of the population that considered politicians, political parties and politics as one of the main problems of the country increased significantly in 2011 (22.6%), as well as corruption and fraud in 2014 (35.7%). Therefore, what started as an economic crisis led to a crisis of political confidence and dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy, which would later be aggravated by the territorial crisis.

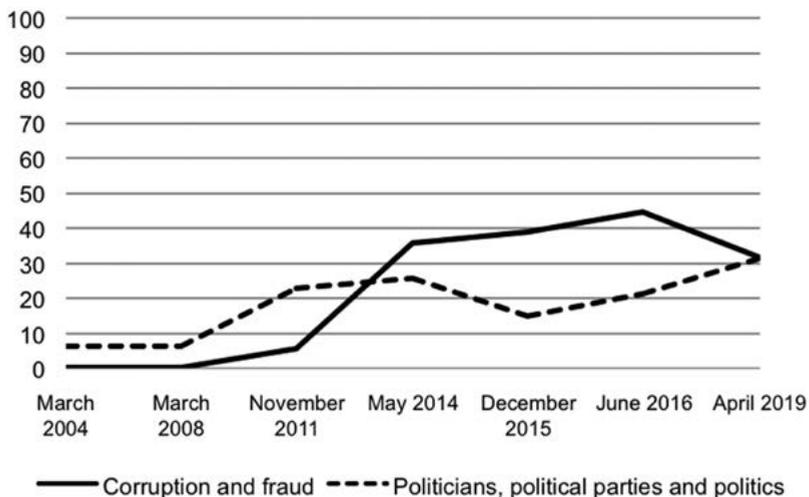
FIGURE 1.

EVOLUTION OF DISSATISFACTION WITH THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY AND THE FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRACY IN SPAIN (2004-2019)



Source: Own elaboration with data from the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) and European Social Survey (dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy of 2004 and 2008).

FIGURE 2.
MAIN PROBLEMS OF THE COUNTRY (2004-2019)



Source: Own elaboration with data from the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS).

As Della Porta *et al.* argue, “the wave of protests against austerity and ‘for a real democracy’ prepared the terrain for Podemos” (2017: 48). In this regard, the elections held in 2011 revealed not only the economic discontent with PSOE, but also the growing distancing of the party led by Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba from the 15-M movement young voters (Rodríguez-Teruel *et al.*, 2016). This election also highlighted the incapacity of other minority parties such as IU and UPyD to capitalize on the discontent with governing parties; thus, contributing to the crisis of representation that favored the emergence of new parties, especially Podemos (Fernández-García and Luengo, 2018b). Given Podemos left-wing orientation, the rise of this new populist party has taken place at the expense of its potential closer competitors within the same ideological space; that is, the PSOE and other minority left-wing parties such as the United Left (IU). In the case of IU, it was seriously damaged by the irruption of Podemos: the party lost nine of its eleven seats in the 2015 elections. The PSOE also suffered a considerable electoral loss as a result of the emergence of Podemos: 23% of the votes for the new party in the 2015 general elections came from former socialist voters (Delgado-Fernández and Cazorla-Martín, 2017). For the 2016 elections, the former Communist Party and other minority left parties agreed to run together with Podemos, under an alternative coalition labelled Unidos Podemos. In this situation, the PSOE remained Podemos’ main competitor at the electoral arena.

Considering the above-mentioned developments, this article aims to analyze if the populist discourse of Podemos had any effect on its main competitor, the PSOE. According to the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (2014), the main issues underlined by Podemos were anti-elitism, political corruption and economic redistribution. On the

one hand, anti-elitism is one of the core elements of populism (Mudde, 2004) and was the main feature of the new political organization. Indeed, Podemos emerged in 2014 with a hard discourse against the *casta política* and the main institutions of the country, considering them as anti-democratic and corrupt actors (Ivaldi *et al.*, 2017). On the other hand, Podemos combined this anti-establishment and anti-corruption discourse with a left-wing program, especially in the economic dimension. The party proposed several redistributive economic measures, such as universal basic income and raising taxes on the wealthiest.

The Manifesto Project² provides information about the political parties' positions on the last two issues: economic distribution³ and corruption⁴ (Figure 3), which allows us to verify if the Socialist Party has responded to the competition by Podemos by increasing salience on these two issues in its manifestos. First, the presence of positive statements about equality (e.g. need for fair distribution of resources) has followed a growing trend in PSOE manifestos during the 2000s. However, the maximum peak is found in the 2011 electoral program (8.67%). Therefore, the increasing attention to this issue cannot be attributed to a strategic response to the success of Podemos in 2015, but to the impact of the Great Recession in the country. Regarding the presence of anti-corruption statements, they were almost absent in the party's manifestos between 2000 and 2011 (0.16% on average). The salience of this issue increased significantly in the 2015 and 2016 manifestos (2.8 and 2.9% respectively), coinciding with the emergence of Podemos. Although the anti-corruption discourse is not synonymous with populism, this issue occupies a central role for populist actors, especially in Southern Europe (Fernández-García, 2019). Thus, the trend identified in PSOE's manifestos gives us a clue about the possible populist contagion effect that Podemos' success in 2015 and 2016 had on the PSOE.

In addition, PSOE's evolution since 2015 also leads us to presume that this party has included some populist appeals in its discourse. For instance, in a very controversial interview, the Socialist Party leader, Pedro Sánchez, affirmed that some "factual" powers had prevented his party from reaching a government agreement with Podemos in 2015⁵. Certain aspects of the party's primary process in 2016 can also be understood within the populist frame. In this regard, the mobilization of the grassroots against the party elites, as well as the claims to empower the party members was very present in Pedro Sánchez's candidacy (Simón, 2017; Lancaster, 2017; Barberá and

2. Available at: <https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/>.

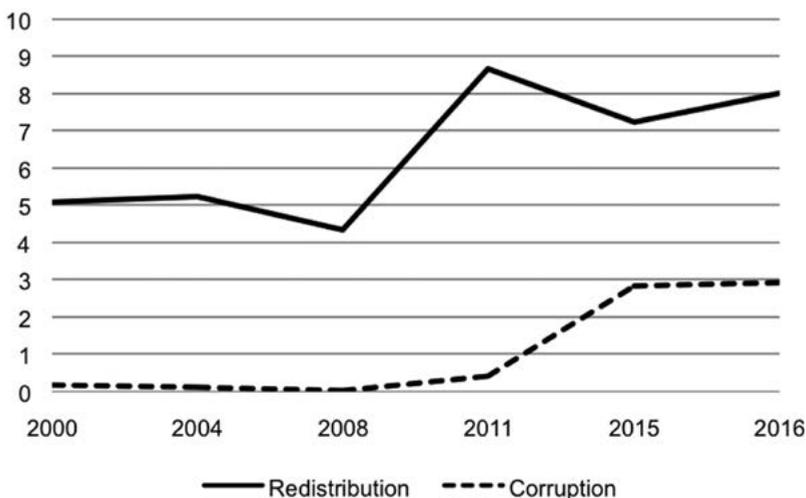
3. Per 503: We selected the variable of "Equality: Positive" to measure the positions of the party in the redistributive dimension. Following the codebook, it refers to "Concept of social justice and the need for fair treatment of all people. This may include: Special protection for underprivileged social groups; Removal of class barriers; Need for fair distribution of resources; The end of discrimination (e.g. racial or sexual discrimination)" (p. 17).

4. Per 304: "Need to eliminate political corruption and associated abuses of political and/or bureaucratic power. Need to abolish clientelist structures and practices" (p. 13).

5. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3kRBbEP>.

Rodríguez-Teruel, 2020). Finally, the comparative study by Fernández-García and Luengo (2018a) also showed the existence of a considerable degree of anti-elitism in the PSOE manifesto for the 2015 elections. However, this study is not a longitudinal one and, therefore, it is not possible to conclude this anti-elitism is a consequence of Podemos' irruption. As a result, we will study the evolution of the core elements of populism in PSOE manifestos, in order to find the presence of a populist contagion as an effect of Podemos.

FIGURE 3.
 PRESENCE OF QUASI-SENTENCES (%) CODED AS “EQUALITY: POSITIVE” (REDISTRIBUTION) AND “CORRUPTION” IN THE ELECTION MANIFESTOS OF PSOE (2000-2016)



Source: Own elaboration with data from the Manifiesto Project.

POPULISM: CONCEPT AND IMPACT ON MAINSTREAM PARTIES

The theoretical framework of this study considers populism as a set of ideas that can be communicated discursively by different actors, such as political parties, media and citizens (De Vreese *et al.*, 2018). According to this approach that combines the ideology-centered and discourse-centered understanding of populism, the emphasis “is on populist messages as independent ‘phenomenon as such’ and no longer on a particular party family or type of politician” (*ibid.*: 426). This implies that political actors—including traditional political parties— may communicate populist ideas in different degrees and that these expressions can be empirically measured.

Regarding the main features of populism, Mudde’s definition (2004) has found a high consensus in the literature due to its proven applicability in empirical research (Rooduijn and Pauwels, 2011; Rooduijn and Akkerman, 2015; March, 2017; Ivaldi

et al., 2017; Fernández-García y Luengo, 2018a): “An (thin) ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde, 2004: 543).

However, we found different interpretations regarding the combination of the core elements of populism identified by that definition. For instance, the analyses by Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) and Rooduijn and Akkerman (2015) considered the simultaneous presence of people-centrism and anti-elitism to be sufficient to satisfy the ideational definition criteria. More recently, March’s case study for the United Kingdom (2017) and the cross-national studies by Manucci and Weber (2017), and Fernández-García and Luengo (2018a) followed the triple criteria stated by Mudde and Rovira (2013), according to which the three elements of the definition have to be present (positive mentions to the people, negative references to the elite and popular sovereignty). Nevertheless, the studies by March (2017) and Fernández-García and Luengo (2018a) found that the presence of people-centrism (positive references to the people) in mainstream parties was very high, even higher than the people-centrism of left-wing populist parties (not in the case of the right-wing ones). Indeed, both kinds of parties (populist and non-populist parties) tend to refer to the people as a whole (e.g. “the people”, “citizens”, “ordinary families”, etc.), to express belonging to the people (e.g. using the words *we/our*) and to speak on behalf of the people. The main difference is that populist parties tend to do it using an antagonistic division between the people and the elite, whereas mainstream organizations use it to express belonging or closeness to the people. The presence of people-centrism in the latter was labelled by March (2017) as “demoticism”, a way to show “closeness to “ordinary” people without this antagonistic identity” (*ibid*: 290). The author interprets its use as a consequence of their condition of catch-all parties and increasing societal mediatization. In addition, Fernández-García and Luengo (2018a) showed that non-populist and populist parties differ in the radicalization of the popular sovereignty by the introduction of direct democracy mechanisms.

Hence, in order to simplify the analysis, we will focus on these two core elements of populism that seem to be potentially useful in order to better differentiate between populist and non-populist parties: anti-elitism and the radicalization of popular sovereignty. The first element introduces the antagonistic character of politics and society which is necessary to define populism. The reasoning behind the second element also shows an anti-elitist and people-centrist conception of politics by which the people, and not politicians, should make the main political decisions.

There are few studies that empirically examine the effects that the success of populism has on mainstream parties. In addition, most of them tend to focus on the effects of the anti-immigrant appeals of right-wing populist parties on mainstream parties (e.g. Harmel and Svasand, 1997; Downs, 2001; Minkenberg, 2001; Bale *et al.*, 2010; Van Spanje, 2010; Han, 2015; Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2018). That is, they focus on the effects of their “host ideologies” but not on the effects of their populist ideology as such. These studies seem to confirm that the success of radical right-wing

parties or anti-immigrant parties has an impact on the ideological, migratory or multiculturalist positions of mainstream parties, especially those of right-wing parties. Other studies have focused on the influence that the rise of Eurosceptic challenger parties (whether on the left or the right) has on mainstream parties. In this regard, Meijers (2015) found that the electoral success of these emerging organizations provokes mainstream parties to be less supportive of European integration.

In the case of populism such as Rooduijn *et al.* (2014) tried to cover this gap in the literature by analyzing the effects of populist parties on mainstream parties in five countries (France, United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy). They concluded that the electoral programs of mainstream parties have not become more populist in recent years, as a consequence of the competition with populist actors. Manucci and Weber (2017) did not find evidence to confirm the existence of a populist *Zeitgeist* in Western Europe, either: they did not observe a linear increase of populism in election manifestos between 1970 and 2010. However, other studies observed populist elements in the discourse of mainstream political actors such as the former Australian Prime John Howard and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Snow and Moffitt, 2012), the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair (Mair, 2000), the former vice-premier of Flanders Steve Stevaert (Mudde, 2004) as well as in the manifestos of some mainstream parties such as the British Conservative and Labour parties (March, 2017), the PSOE and the Irish Labour Party (Fernández-García and Luengo, 2018a). These cases have been labelled as “mainstream populism” or “soft populism” to denote less extreme versions of populist discourse.

The main theoretical framework of the studies that analyze the impact of new actors on existing actors comes from the classic spatial theory by Anthony Downs (1957) and the later “modified spatial theories” (e.g. Meguid, 2005). The main idea taken from the classic spatial theory is that the ideological closeness is a very decisive factor to take into account in order to examine the interrelation and potential contagion between political parties: the less remote the ideological distance with the emergent party is, the more vulnerable the situation for existing (traditional) political organizations will be. In this regard, populism itself is neither left nor right, but is normally accompanied by a “full” or “host ideology”. In Western European countries, populist parties present a clear ideological profile, mainly on the radical right but also on the radical left, such as Podemos (Fernández-García and Luengo, 2018a). Therefore, the emergence of these organizations tends to be more damaging for parties that are in the same ideological space. As we pointed out in the previous section, Podemos' electoral success was to the detriment of the electoral support of other left-wing political parties such as the United Left and the PSOE.

Regarding the reaction to the success of new parties, the modified spatial theories state that mainstream parties can adopt three different strategies (Meguid, 2005). First, traditional parties can decide to ignore the main issues addressed by the new competitor (“dismissive strategy”), in the hope that this strategy will lead to a decrease in the salience of these issues. Second, mainstream parties can decide to recognize and respond to the new issues by establishing an official position towards them. In this

case, a mainstream party may adopt a divergence strategy (“adversarial strategy”) or one of convergence (“accommodative strategy”). In the last strategy, traditional parties try to co-opt the issues proposed by the emerging party, claiming those are rooted in their own organizations.

HYPOTHESES

Considering the literature regarding the impact of emerging new parties on existing parties, we will set the “accommodative strategy” or “populist contagion hypothesis” as the main hypothesis of the study. The reasoning behind this strategy is that if an emerging party puts new issues on the political agenda, the mainstream parties will try to co-opt that issue out of fear of electoral losses (Meguid, 2005).

Hypothesis 1. The electoral manifestos of mainstream parties become more populist when these parties are challenged by the potential success of new populist parties.

However, other factors could also explain the evolution of mainstream parties’ manifestos and the adoption of populist ideas. In this sense, in addition to the irruption of new political competitors, the literature on party change identifies party decline as one of the most powerful external stimuli for shifts in party identity (Harmel and Janda, 1994). As Schumacher and van Kersbergen argue, “a lost election indicates that a party is out of touch with public opinion” (2016: 4). In this context, mainstream parties may be tempted to change their agenda in order to align it with public opinion and improve their electoral results. The defeat of political parties can be understood due both to the loss of elections or to the loss of government status. Although the two scenarios are closely related, the first one does not necessarily entail abandoning the government: for example, in multi-party systems where power can be reached through coalition formation (Harmel and Janda, 1994).

In this regard, electoral results are important, but not equally important for all parties. For organizations whose primary goal is to reach the government, “the shocks that most dramatically shake up the party are those directly related to participation in government” (*ibid.*: 270). Thus, parties in office are expected to be less willing to shift identity or policy positions that have proven to be successful. In contrast, parties in opposition have a clearer incentive and fewer institutional restrictions to try different strategies or change some positions. With respect to populism, parties cannot be expected to sustain a credible discourse against elites and institutions when they are in office, if only because they form part of them. Indeed, several studies suggest that parties with no government responsibilities tend to emphasize anti-elite appeals more than parties in office (Polk *et al.*, 2017). In a similar vein, Mudde suggests that mainstream opposition parties challenge the government by using populist arguments increasingly often (2004: 550). Therefore, the following alternative hypothesis will be assessed:

Hypothesis 2. The electoral manifestos of mainstream parties are more populist when these parties are in opposition than when they are in government.

Finally, political parties are also permeable to changes that occur not only on the supply side (e.g. the irruption of new parties) but also on the demand side (Adams *et al.*, 2004). From this demand point of view, the success of populism has been linked to citizen dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy and distrust towards politicians and political parties, especially in Southern Europe (Della Porta *et al.*, 2017; Fernández-García and Luengo, 2019). Therefore, we could expect that if dissatisfaction with political elites or with the functioning of democracy becomes a salient issue in public opinion, political parties will adapt their agenda to that scenario to regain people's trust. Thus, the following alternative hypothesis will be assessed:

Hypothesis 3. The presence of populist elements in mainstream parties' electoral manifestos is higher in elections characterized by high levels of political discontent.

METHODOLOGY

In line with previous studies in this field (March, 2017; Rooduijn and Akkerman, 2015; Rooduijn *et al.*, 2014; Rooduijn and Pauwels, 2011), a content analysis of a selection of election manifestos has been carried out. On the one hand, this choice relates to the definition of populism as a set of ideas. In this sense, election manifestos provide a well-developed overview of the party ideology and its positions on different political and social issues. On the other hand, manifestos are official, written and open access documents, which make them reasonably comparable documents⁶.

In total, we have analyzed seven election manifestos: those for the general elections held in 2004, 2008, 2011, 2015 and 2016, and the manifesto for the European elections held in 2014. This selection (Table 1) aims to cover all the possible combinations of the three conditions that could have an effect on the PSOE's anti-elitist and popular sovereignty statements: opposition/government status, levels of citizen dissatisfaction and populist competition. As shown in Table 1, the PSOE began the 2000s in the opposition, was in office between 2004 and 2011, and returned to opposition in November 2011. Since June 2018, the PSOE has been in power as result of a motion of censure that Pedro Sánchez presented against the Popular Party government, and continues as a government party after the November 2019 elections. With regard to citizens unrest, we will consider the 2011 and subsequent elections as processes characterized by a background of considerable political discontent (social protests began the same year). For that election, unemployment rates and the state of the economy were

6. Party activity on social networks would also be a good option to analyze the presence of populist messages, but this study includes elections prior to the emergence of social networks (e.g. 2004 and 2008).

the principal social concerns according to the data provided by Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (2011). However, the percentage of population that considered politicians, political parties and politics as one of the main problems of the country (Figure 2), increased significantly in 2011 (22.6%) compared to the elections held in 2004 and 2008 (6.3%) and continued to grow in the following elections (2014-2019). Likewise, respondents who considered corruption to be one of the main problems in the country increased significantly since 2011. Finally, the general elections held in 2015, 2016 and 2019 were distinguished by strong populist competition. In the 2014 European elections, Podemos was not a real threat to the PSOE yet: it had just been created four months before the elections and had low electoral expectations. After this electoral process, however, the party gained electoral prominence at the local level with its local confluences, as well as in the electoral polls at the national level, thus becoming a threatening competitor for the largest party at the left.

There are two non-existent scenarios, that remain consequently uncovered by the analysis: a) the combination of opposition status, low levels of dissatisfaction and populist competition; and b) the combination of government status, low levels of dissatisfaction and populist competition.

TABLE 1.
SELECTION CRITERIA OF THE PSOE'S ELECTION MANIFESTOS

| Election manifestos | Government status (previous term) | High levels of dissatisfaction and political distrust | Populist competition |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| 2004 | Opposition | | |
| 2008 | Government | | |
| 2011 | Government | X | |
| 2014 (E.P.) | Opposition | X | |
| 2015, 2016 | Opposition | X | X |
| 2019 | Government | X | X |

Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the research technique, we have conducted a quantitative content analysis using the sentence as the unit of analysis to measure the presence of populist features. The total number of units reached 21,331. Subsequently, we have qualitatively analyzed the sentences that display populism in order to identify the functions that the communication of these populist ideas could mean for the party as well as the features that populist elements have in the PSOE's manifestos.

Taking the above literature review into consideration, the coding system for the quantitative analysis has followed two categories:

- (1) Anti-elitism: negative references to the elite in general as well as different sub-categories of elite ("establishment parties", "the EU bureaucrats", etc.). We do not code negative references to specific parties (e.g. the Popular Party)

or specific politicians (e.g. Mariano Rajoy) as anti-elitism. We also include references to practices of corruption, clientelism, cronyism, etc., as well as criticisms to special interests and groups (lobbies, large corporations, etc.).

- (2) Popular sovereignty: measures to increase the power of the people by mechanisms of direct democracy; general calls to give power to the people; any proposals promoting empowerment of the people; and positive references to the will or power of the people.

In the analysis, each sentence was coded as zero (absence), one (anti-elitism) or two (popular sovereignty). Eventually, we calculated the percentage of total sentences for each category per manifesto. With regard to the different lengths of the manifestos analyzed, we have followed the research strategy by Rooduijn *et al.* (2014), according to which the sentences of longer manifestos have more weight than the sentences of shorter manifestos. The reason behind this decision is that long and detailed manifestos are expected to contain less populism than short and concise manifestos (*ibid.*: 567). Therefore, we have calculated the mean length of the seven manifestos (number of sentences) and their Z scores. Then, we assigned a different weight to the total sentences of each manifesto based on the Z score obtained for each one⁷.

Finally, the reliability of the coding system was measured by means of two different tests: a first one to measure the stability of the results of the coder (test-retest reliability or intra-coder reliability test); and a second one to measure the reliability between two different coders (test-test reliability or inter-coder reliability test). This process was applied on approximately 5 % of the sample and the degree of concordance was measured by means of a Cohen's kappa coefficient. Results showed very satisfactory levels of reliability for both analyses: 0.933*** for the test-retest (0.943*** in anti-elitism and 0.936*** in popular sovereignty); and 0.767*** for test-test (0.808*** in anti-elitism and 0.717*** in popular sovereignty).

RESULTS

Evolution of anti-elitism and popular sovereignty in the PSOE's election manifestos (2004-2019)

Figure 4 compares the presence of anti-elitism and popular sovereignty in the election manifestos of the PSOE presented from 2004 to 2019. First, the analysis shows

7. The Z score is a measure of how many standard deviations from the average of the population a data point is. For the manifestos with a Z score between 1 and 2, we gave a weight of 1.3; for the manifestos with a Z score of 2 or larger, we gave a weight of 1.5; for the manifestos with a Z score between -1 and -2, we gave a weight of 0.7; and for the manifestos with a Z score -2 or lower, we gave a weight of 0.5.

that the presence of anti-elitism and popular sovereignty does not follow a linear trend. Without weighing the sentences, the highest levels of anti-elitism are found in the 2014 (European elections), 2016, 2015 and 2004 programs (which respectively amount to 3.1%, 2.3%, 1.9% and 1.6%), whereas the lowest levels of anti-elitism are found in the 2008 and 2011 programs (0.17% and 0.96%, respectively). Regarding the 2019 manifesto, it presents a lower level of anti-elitism (1.2%) than the average of the seven manifestos (1.6%). When controlling for the different lengths of the manifestos, the results remain very similar: the levels of anti-elitism increased in the 2015 and 2016 manifestos and decreased in the 2014 one.

Regarding the competition with Podemos, the differences between the anti-elitism in 2014 (non-populist competition) and 2016 and 2015 (populist competition) are minimal (without weighting the sentences, the anti-elitism in 2014 is even higher than in 2016 and 2015). In addition, the levels of anti-elitism are higher in 2004 (non-populist competition) than in 2019 (populist competition). Consequently, we cannot conclude that the presence of anti-elitism in 2015, 2016 and 2019 manifestos was a consequence of the electoral threat posed by Podemos. Therefore, there is no empirical evidence to verify hypothesis 1; quite the opposite, the analysis suggests that the evolution of the anti-elitism of the PSOE is not necessarily the result of an accommodative strategy in response to the threat from Podemos, because this element was already present when the latter was not a competitor for the PSOE (e.g. 2004 and 2014), and decreased in 2019 when Podemos was still a threat to the PSOE⁸.

As for the second alternative hypothesis, the analysis shows that the presence of anti-elitism is higher in electoral manifestos presented by the PSOE in opposition (2014, 2016, 2015 and 2004) than when it was in government (2008, 2011 and 2019). Therefore, we find empirical evidence to confirm that the PSOE presents higher levels of anti-elitism when it is in opposition than when it is in government⁹. In addition, we have included the electoral evolution of the party to offer a broader picture of the potential impact of its political decline. The results suggest a negative correlation between the electoral evolution of the party and the presence of anti-elitism in its electoral programs: from 2004 to 2008, anti-elitism appeals are reduced while the electoral support increased; on the other hand, the percentage of anti-elitist sentences grew up in 2008, within a context of electoral decline. This trend is reversed

-
8. Although the sample is small, we have carried out an Independent Samples t-Test to confirm this finding. The mean of anti-elitist sentences when there is a populist threat is slightly higher than the mean when there is no populist threat, but the differences are not statistically significant (2.26 and 1.23 respectively, p-value > 0.05), thus confirming the aforementioned finding.
 9. Independent Samples t-Test confirms the findings previously mentioned. The mean of anti-elitist sentences of the manifestos presented while the party was in opposition is higher than the mean of anti-elitist sentences of those manifestos presented when it was in office, being these differences statistically significant (2.58 and 0.99 respectively, p-value < 0.05). The sample size of the study requires taking these statistical results with caution; however, they reinforce the conclusions obtained by the graphic observation of the content analysis' results.

in the elections held in April 2019, when populism levels dropped while the electoral results of the party improved¹⁰.

Regarding the third hypothesis, there is no indication to reveal a linear relationship between the evolution of anti-elitism in the PSOE and the context of citizen discontent: the presence of anti-elitism in 2004 was higher than in 2011, when the levels of dissatisfaction with the economy and democracy more than doubled those for 2004. The presence of anti-elitism in the 2004 and 2015 electoral manifestos was also quite similar without weighting the sentences in two very different contexts of citizen dissatisfaction. In addition, the levels of anti-elitism dropped significantly in the 2019 (April) program in a scenario of political discontent very similar to that of 2016. However, the fact that anti-elitism was higher in 2014, 2015 and 2016 than it was in 2004 (party in opposition) may indicate that citizen discontent has an incremental effect. Likewise, anti-elitism is also higher in 2019 and 2011 compared to 2008 (party in government), which reinforces this conclusion. Therefore, there is no evidence to verify hypothesis 3: the presence of anti-elitism is not higher in the manifestos presented in contexts of citizen discontent than in those presented with low levels of discontent (it does not follow a linear trend). However, the results suggest that citizen discontent could have some incremental effect on its presence¹¹. Accordingly, our findings seem to prove only hypothesis 2: the presence of anti-elitism was higher in the manifestos presented when the party was in opposition (2016, 2015, 2014 and 2004) than those presented when the party was in office (2008, 2011 and 2019).

Regarding the presence of popular sovereignty, it presents less deviation (0.21) between manifestos than anti-elitism (0.96); what could suggest less dependence on the environment. The highest levels of popular sovereignty are found in the 2004, 2008 and 2011 manifestos (1.46 %, 1.34 %, and 1.28 % respectively) and the lowest in the 2019 manifesto (0.82 %). By controlling for the length of the manifestos, the results of 2016 and 2015 (1.44 and 1.38) are closer to those of 2004 and 2008. This suggests the presence of popular sovereignty in the PSOE's manifestos is not related to the competition with Podemos, or citizen discontent or the opposition status; thus, indicating that it is a more stable and structural characteristic of the party¹².

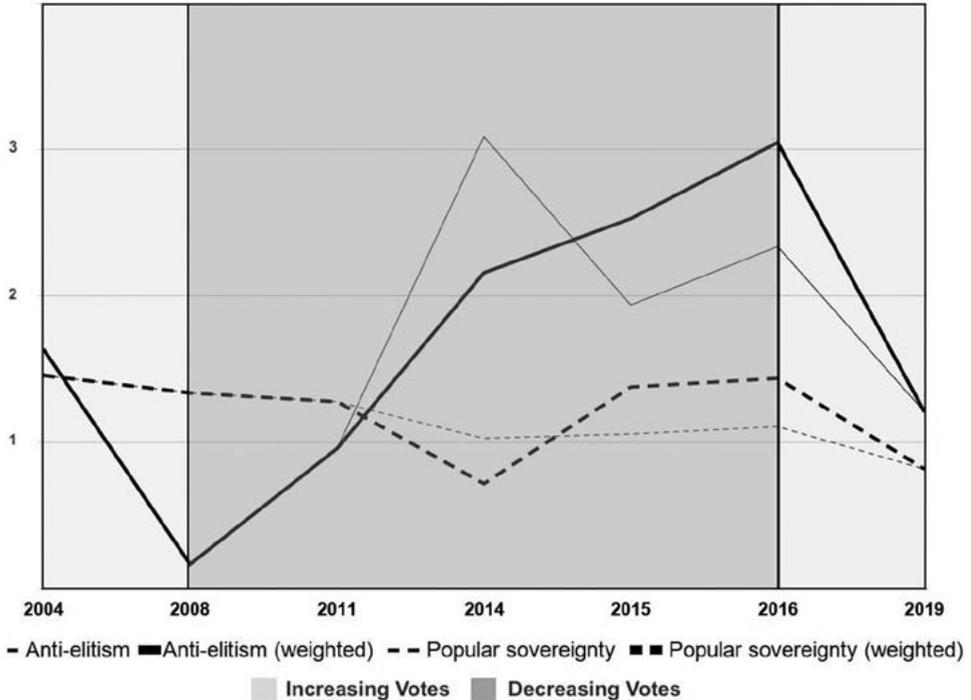
10. Although Pearson's R linear correlation statistic shows a notable negative correlation (-.731), it is not significant (p-value > 0.05).

11. Pearson's R linear correlation analysis shows that there is no evidence to confirm a linear correlation between the presence of anti-elitism in election manifestos and political discontent (0.682, p-value > 0.05).

12. The Independent Samples t-Tests for the variables of government status and populist competition (nominal variables) and a linear R correlation of Pearson for political dissatisfaction (quantitative variable) confirm the findings previously mentioned. The mean of sentences containing appeals to popular sovereignty of the manifestos presented while the party was in government do not differ significantly from those presented when it was in opposition (1.25 and 1.18 respectively, p-value > 0.05), as well as the mean of the popular sovereignty's sentences of the

FIGURE 4.

PRESENCE OF ANTI-ELITISM AND POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY (PERCENTAGE OF SENTENCES) IN THE PSOE'S ELECTION MANIFESTOS (2004-2019) AND VOTING TREND



Source: Own elaboration.

Characteristics of the anti-elitism and the defense of popular sovereignty in the PSOE's manifestos

First, anti-elitism is characterized in the PSOE's manifestos by the identification of undetermined powers beyond citizen control, that can interfere in the working of democratic institutions and harm general interests. For instance, the PSOE's 2015 manifesto recognizes that: "A small network of people and institutions are in a position to condition, to a large extent, the capacity of our society to effectively carry out the achievement of their collective goals, and do it, in addition, in line with their

manifestos presented with or without populist threat (1.21 and 1.2 respectively, p-value > 0.05). Likewise, Pearson's R linear correlation analysis shows that the percentage of sentences containing popular sovereignty does not maintain a statistically significant correlation with the percentage of respondents who indicated corruption and politicians as the main problems in the country (-.509, p-value > 0.05).

interests and priorities; which do not necessarily coincide with those of the great majority of the population”¹³ (p. 167).

However, the PSOE's anti-elitism is softer than the one presented by Podemos (Fernández-García and Luengo, 2018a). For instance, Podemos' 2015 manifesto states “we know and feel that the majority of people are tired of seeing institutions defending the interests of the powerful while they remain indifferent to the people's problems”¹⁴ (p. 11). This anti-institutional tone is absent in the PSOE's electoral manifestos. Moreover, Podemos' anti-elitism is more disapproving of the political class. As an example, it denounces the privileges enjoyed by the political caste and corrupt politicians' impunity, as well as a moral denigration of the powerful (e.g. “the shamelessness of a few”); and it refers to political parties as “criminal organizations” (2016, p. 36). In contrast, fewer negative references to politicians are found in the PSOE's manifestos. For example, the party affirms “[...] citizens are seeing how some people come to political activity to put their interests first”¹⁵ (p. 35) but it does not generalize to all politicians as Podemos does, for instance, with the term “political caste” (Fernández-García and Luengo, 2018a; Ivaldi *et al.*, 2017). In this sense, the negative references to the political elite in the PSOE's manifestos refer to a large extent to the neo-liberal and right-wing hegemony at the European level which pursues different interests from those of the people.

Second, the negative references to economic powers and particular interests are a defining feature of PSOE's anti-elitism. The party proposes measures to limit the interference of private and corporate interests in the regular working of political institutions, as well as to guarantee the independence of political powers, the media, culture and the judicial authorities from economic power groups. For example, the PSOE's election manifesto of 2016 says, “Only with active, vigilant and well-informed citizens can the popular mandate of elections be prevented from being distorted by economic pressures and interest groups”¹⁶ (p. 18). The PSOE also reports that “in Spain, economic power is too concentrated and has too much influence on

13. Own translation from the original in Spanish: “Una reducida red de personas e instituciones se encuentran en posición de condicionar, en buena medida, la capacidad de nuestra sociedad para realizar con eficacia la consecución de sus metas colectivas, y hacerlo, además, acorde con sus intereses y prioridades, que no necesariamente coinciden con los de la gran mayoría de la población”.

14. Own translation from the original in Spanish: “Sabemos y sentimos que somos mayoría las personas hartas de ver a las instituciones defendiendo los intereses de los poderosos mientras permanecen indiferentes a los problemas de la gente”.

15. Own translation from the original in Spanish: “En una situación de enorme dificultad, la ciudadanía está viendo cómo algunas personas llegan a la actividad política para anteponer sus intereses particulares y su lucro personal al bien común”.

16. Own translation from the original in Spanish: “Solo con una ciudadanía activa, atenta y bien informada se puede evitar que el mandato popular de las elecciones quede torcido por las presiones económicas y los grupos de interés”.

political power”¹⁷ (p. 15). The party also proposes different redistributive measures that increase taxes on large fortunes and major corporations as well as negative references to big businesses and banks. For instance, the PSOE promises that “we will make sure that the banks never again gamble with the lives of the citizens”¹⁸ (p. 10).

Third, references to different practices of collusion, political corruption, and concentration of power are also found in the PSOE’s manifestos. Besides the negative references to corrupt practices, we also found disapproving references to practices of concentration of economic power, to the opacity and secrecy in decision-making processes and measures to eliminate the “revolving door” (government-industry) and other privileges.

With regard to the presence of popular sovereignty, the biggest difference between Podemos and the PSOE lies in the radicalization of popular sovereignty by the introduction of different direct democracy mechanisms (Fernández-García and Luengo, 2018a). In the case of the PSOE’s manifestos, the sentences within this category are measures to regulate the existing mechanisms to materialize citizen initiatives in a more favorable way. On the contrary, Podemos proposes the introduction and generalization of the main mechanisms of direct democracy. It supports “the right to decide” of regions (i.e. referendums to decide the independence of certain regions); the compulsory use of referendums on specific issues (e.g. the participation of armed forces in international conflicts); the promotion of popular initiatives; the introduction of the popular veto initiative; and the introduction of the “right of recall” (e.g. 2015 manifesto). In addition, the PSOE’s manifestos include several references to increase the participation of the people in politics as well as general promises to empower the people, follow the will of the people and return power to citizens. As the party claims, the organization pursues “a participative democracy, activating mechanisms of deliberation, consult and accountability”¹⁹ (p. 22).

Finally, not only the degree (mentioned above) but also the function that these populist elements have on the PSOE’s manifestos seems to vary depending on the context in which they were presented. In this sense, we identify three different functions that populist arguments could play in the PSOE’s manifestos. First, the PSOE’s populist elements are used to reconnect with the people in contexts of cynicism and political discontent. Moreover, they use some anti-elitist arguments and promise to empower the people in order to display an understanding of the reasons for citizen dissatisfaction. Thereby, in those manifestos presented in contexts of high levels of political discontent (2011-2019), we find statements like the following: “In a

17. Own translation from the original in Spanish: “En España el poder económico está demasiado concentrado e influye demasiado sobre el poder político”.

18. Own translation from the original in Spanish: “Nos aseguraremos de que nunca más los bancos vuelvan a apostar con la vida de la ciudadanía”.

19. Own translation from the original in Spanish: “[...] Una democracia participativa, activando mecanismos de deliberación, consulta y rendición de cuentas”.

situation of enormous difficulty, citizens are seeing how some people come to political activity in order to put their personal interests and personal gain before the common good. These cases of corruption are leading the Spanish people to a deep sense of hopelessness and distrust of almost all democratic institutions, where political parties occupy a special place”²⁰ (2015, p. 35).

Second, populist arguments are used as a weapon against the main political competitor, especially when the party is in opposition. For example, in the 2004 elections when the PSOE was in opposition and its relations with the governing party, Popular Party, were badly damaged by the participation of Spain in the Iraq war, the anti-elitism of the PSOE was characterized by sentences like the following: “[...] The Spanish people have suffered a government that has put politics at the service of personal, partisan or group interests; that it has colonized the largest companies and most of the media and that itself has been colonized, in turn, by them; that has occupied the strategic institutions of civil society in an interpenetration between political and economic interests [...]”²¹ (p. 31).

The third function identified is the blame shifting or scapegoating, a traditional function of populist discourse. In this sense, the PSOE's manifestos express several negative references against economic powers in order to blame them for the problems of the people. This function is observed, for example, in the 2011 manifesto, when the party was in office and was accused by the opposition and citizens for mishandling the 2008 economic crisis:

Citizens from all over the world demand a greater presence of politics, which must recover an abandoned space during the last decades to economic powers. It is not acceptable that the destiny of the lives of millions of people, their jobs and their material well-being, depends on arbitrary decisions of international financial markets whose decisions sometimes have a greater influence on the economy of a country than the political representatives, who are democratically elected by its citizens (p. 6)²².

20. Own translation from the original in Spanish: “En una situación de enorme dificultad, la ciudadanía está viendo cómo algunas personas llegan a la actividad política para anteponer sus intereses particulares y su lucro personal al bien común. Estos casos de corrupción están sumiendo a la población española en una profunda desesperanza y en desconfianza hacia casi todas las instituciones democráticas, donde los partidos políticos ocupan un lugar especial”.

21. Own translation from the original in Spanish: “[...] Los españoles hemos padecido un Gobierno que ha puesto la política al servicio de intereses personales, partidarios o grupales; que ha colonizado las mayores empresas y la mayoría de los medios de comunicación y que se ha dejado colonizar, a su vez, por ellos; que ha ocupado las instituciones estratégicas de la sociedad civil en una interpenetración entre intereses políticos y económicos [...]”.

22. Own translation from the original in Spanish: “Los ciudadanos de todo el mundo reclaman una mayor presencia de la política, que debe recuperar un espacio abandonado durante las últimas décadas a los poderes económicos. No es aceptable que el destino de la vida de millones de personas, de sus empleos y de su bienestar material, dependa de decisiones arbitrarias de unos mercados financieros internacionales cuyas decisiones tienen en ocasiones mayor influencia

CONCLUSION

Based on some prominent literature that suggests the potential impact of the abrupt ascent of new political competitors on established parties, the aim of this article was to assess the potential programmatic contagion experienced by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) as a consequence of the electoral irruption of a new populist competitor, Podemos. We examined the extent to which the PSOE has incorporated some populist features into its discourse in order to compete against Podemos.

Firstly, from a qualitative point of view, the analysis shows that the party's manifestos occasionally present a "soft populism" characterized by negative statements against undetermined powers, economic groups and neo-liberal elites for pursuing interests that contradict those of the people. In addition, the party's manifestos claim that certain special interests and powerful groups can interfere in the functioning of democratic institutions. In response to this situation, the PSOE promises to make the Spanish and European Union political systems more accountable, transparent and participative in order to safeguard the people's will and interests.

Secondly, the results suggest that the use of populist messages plays three main functions in the PSOE's manifestos, depending on the context: a) to show empathy and understanding with people's unrest in contexts of citizen dissatisfaction; b) to attack the main political competitor when the party is in opposition; and c) to use economic powers and other elites as scapegoats for people's problems, especially when the party is in government. This last function is fundamental to understand the reason why a government party would use certain populist arguments.

With regard to the evolution of the PSOE's manifestos, the results suggest that the presence of statements in favor of popular sovereignty is quite stable and does not have any interaction with the analyzed factors, namely, populist competition, opposition status and context of citizen discontent). In contrast, the presence of anti-elitism seems to be related to the party's opposition status (2004, 2014, 2015 and 2016). Citizen discontent also seems to have an incremental effect on PSOE's anti-elitism levels, although it is not the main factor. The levels of anti-elitism were always higher when the party was in opposition than when it was in office (even when the levels of political discontent were higher). However, citizen dissatisfaction seems to increase the levels of anti-elitism in both scenarios: when the party is in opposition (anti-elitism was more prevalent in 2014, 2015 and 2016 manifestos than in 2004) and when it is in government (the levels of anti-elitism were higher in 2019 and 2011 than in 2008). Finally, it is not possible to conclude that the appearance of anti-elitism in the 2015 and 2016 programs (populist competition) is the result of the electoral threat posed by Podemos, since its presence was lower than in the 2014 manifesto (Podemos was not a real

sobre la economía de un país que los propios representantes políticos elegidos democráticamente por sus ciudadanos”.

competitor for the PSOE yet). In addition, the presence of anti-elitism in the 2019 manifesto (populist competition) was lower than in the 2004 manifesto (when neither Podemos nor any other populist competitor even existed) and the 2014 one (when Podemos was not a threat to the PSOE yet). Thus, the main hypothesis of the article cannot be confirmed; since there is no evidence to prove that the presence of populist elements in the PSOE's manifestos for the elections held in 2015, 2016 and 2019 was the result of an accommodative strategy in response to Podemos's threat. On the contrary, the second alternative hypothesis can be confirmed (if applied to the levels of anti-elitism, but not to the claims of popular sovereignty).

Therefore, some populist elements were found in the PSOE's electoral manifestos. However, the evolution of these elements suggests that they are not the result of an accommodative strategy in response to the success of Podemos but rather the political decline of the party, especially in contexts of citizen dissatisfaction with political actors and the functioning of democracy. Thus, the main results suggest that the political decline of parties could be a stronger external force than the rise of new parties when explaining the shifts in party identity, at least, in our case study. That is, experiencing an actual political decline seems to be a stronger explanatory factor than the fear of experiencing electoral losses due to the presence of a threatening competitor.

The main findings of this article are, thus, in line with previous research conducted by Rooduijn *et al.* (2014) and Manucci and Weber (2017). These authors state that there is no empirical evidence to confirm that populism (as a thin ideology) has a contagious effect on mainstream parties. It is very interesting to note that previous research found that successful anti-immigrant parties (Van Spanje, 2010) or radical right-wing parties (Harmel and Svasand, 1997; Han, 2015; Schumacher and van Kersbergen, 2016; Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2018) do have a contagious effect on mainstream parties' positions. This suggests that certain aspects of the host ideologies of populist parties (e.g. nativism) could have more effects on their competitors than their populist appeals.

Regarding the anti-elitism found in the PSOE's manifestos, especially when the party is in opposition and suffers poor electoral performance, it would be in line with the results of Manucci and Weber (2017), who observed that populism is a cyclical phenomenon rather than a linear one. This is probably related to the electoral cycles of political parties as our results seem to indicate. In addition, these conclusions would be congruent with those authors that suggest parties in opposition are more likely to emphasize anti-elite rhetoric than those in government (Polk *et al.*, 2017). Hence, political parties may find it attractive to engage in populist messages when they are suffering an electoral decline or losing power, especially in contexts of high political discontent and cynicism as a way to reconnect with the people. This fact could be interpreted as an electoral strategy based on the generation of empathy, closeness and understanding with the electorate. On the contrary, it is expectable that parties cannot sustain a credible discourse against elites and institutions when they are in office and consequently, clearly part of them. In other words, there would be an intrinsic tension between being in office and maintaining an anti-establishment discourse.

In this study, we found that in certain occasions, political parties can use elites and “factual” powers as scapegoats when they are in government as a way to avoid the responsibility of bad management. However, in light of the results obtained by the PSOE in 2011, this strategy does not seem successful in electoral terms, which could explain why parties in government tend not to use it. In this regard, the literature on party competition suggests that parties tend to compete by accentuating those issues on which they have an undoubted advantage (Meguid, 2005). In the case of traditional government parties, they can capitalize on the experience in office as an advantage, for example. However, anti-elitism seems a more advantageous matter for outsiders and new parties; so it might be discouraged for majority parties.

References

- Abou-Chadi, Tarik and Werner Krauset. 2018. “The Causal Effect of Radical Right Success on Mainstream Parties’ Policy Positions: A Regression Discontinuity Approach”, *British Journal of Political Science*, 50 (3): 1-19. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123418000029>.
- Adams, James, Michael Clark, Lawrence Ezrow and Garret Glasgow. 2004. “Understanding Change and Stability in Party Ideologies: Do Parties Respond to Public Opinion or to Past Election Results?”, *British Journal of Political Science*, 34 (4): 589-610. Available at: [10.1017/S0007123404000201](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123404000201).
- Bale, Tim, Christoffer Green Pedersen, André Krouwel, Kurt Richard Luther and Nick Sitter. 2010. “If You Can’t Beat Them, Join Them? Explaining Social Democratic Responses to the Challenge from the Populist Radical Right in Western”, *Europe Political Studies*, 58 (3): 410-426. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2009.00783.x>
- Barberà, Óscar and Juan Rodríguez-Teruel. 2020. “The PSOE’s deliberation and democratic innovations in turbulent times for the social democracy”, *European Political Science*, 19: 212-221. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-019-00236-y>
- Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas. 2011. *Barómetro de noviembre. Avance de resultados*. Estudio n.º 2917. Available at: http://datos.cis.es/pdf/Es2917mar_A.pdf.
- Della Porta, Donatella, Joseba Fernández, Hara Kouki and Lorenzo Mosca. 2017. *Movement Parties Against Austerity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Delgado-Fernández, Santiago and Ángel Cazorla-Martín. 2017. “El Partido Socialista Obrero Español: de la hegemonía a la decadencia”, *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 44: 247-273. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.21308/recp.44.10>.
- De Vreese, Claes H., Frank Esser, Toril Aalberg, Carsten Reinemann and James Stanyer. 2018. “Populism as an Expression of Political Communication Content and Style: A New Perspective”, *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 23 (4): 423-438. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161218790035>.

- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Boston: Addison-Wesley.
- Downs, William M. 2001. "Pariahs in their midst: Belgian and Norwegian parties react to extremist threats", *West European Politics*, 24: 23-42. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402380108425451>.
- Fernández-García, Belén. 2019. *Los partidos populistas en Europa Occidental: características y escenarios electorales favorables* [thesis]. Universidad de Granada: Granada.
- Fernández-García, Belén and Óscar G. Luengo. 2018a. "Populist parties in Western Europe. An analysis of the three core elements of populism", *Communication and Society*, 31 (3): 57-76. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.31.3.57-74>.
- Fernández-García, Belén and Óscar G. Luengo. 2018b. "Diferentes vías, un mismo resultado: el éxito electoral de los partidos populistas en Europa Occidental. Una propuesta de análisis", *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 48: 45-72. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.21308/recp.48.02>.
- Fernández-García, Belén and Óscar G. Luengo. 2019. "Electoral scenarios of success for anti-establishment political parties in Western Europe: a fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 27 (1): 77-95. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2019.1567478>.
- Han, Kyung J. 2015. "The Impact of Radical Right-Wing Parties on the Positions of Mainstream Parties Regarding Multiculturalism", *West European Politics*, 38 (3): 557-576. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2014.981448>.
- Harmel, Robert, Uk Heo and Alexander Tan and Kenneth Janda. 1995. "Performance, leadership, factions and party change: An empirical analysis", *West European Politics*, 18: 1-33. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402389508425055>.
- Harmel, Robert and Kenneth Janda. 1994. "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change", *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 6: 259-287. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0951692894006003001>.
- Harmel, Robert and Lars Svasand. 1997. "The influence of new parties on old parties' platforms. The Cases of the Progress Parties and Conservative Parties of Denmark and Norway", *Party Politics*, 3 (3): 315-340. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068897003003003>.
- Ivaldi, Gilles, María E. Lanzone and Dwayne Woods. 2017. "Varieties of Populism across a Left-Right Spectrum: The Case of the Front National, the Northern League, Podemos and Five Star Movement", *Swiss Political Science Review*, 23 (4): 354-376. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12278>.
- Lancaster, Thomas. 2017. "The Spanish general elections of 2015 and 2016: a new stage in democratic politics?", *West European Politics*, 40 (4): 919-937. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2017.1293340>.
- Mair, Peter. 2000. "Partyless Democracy and the 'Paradox' of New Labour", *New Left Review*, 2: 21-35.
- Manucci, Luca and Edward Weber. 2017. "Why The Big Picture Matters: Political and Media Populism in Western Europe since the 1970s", *Swiss Political Science Review*, 23 (4): 313-334. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12267>.

- March, Luke. 2017. "Left and right populism compared: The British case", *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 19 (2): 282-303. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148117701753>
- Meguid, Bonnie M. 2005. "Competition Between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success", *American Political Science Review*, 99 (3): 347-359. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055405051701>.
- Meijers, Maurits J. 2015. "Contagious Euroscepticism: The impact of Eurosceptic support on mainstream party positions on European integration", *Party Politics*, 23 (4): 413-423. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068815601787>.
- Minkenberg, Michael. 2001. "The Radical Right in Public Office: Agenda-Setting and Policy Effects", *West European Politics*, 24 (4): 1-21. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402380108425462>.
- Mudde, Cass. 2004. "The populist zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition*, 39 (4): 542-563. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>.
- Mudde, Cass and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2013. "Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America", *Government and Opposition*, 48 (2): 147-174. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2012.11>.
- Polk, Jonathan, Jan Rovny, Ryan Bakker, Erica Edwards, Liesbet Hooghe, Seth Jolly, Jelle Koedam, Filip Kostelka, Gary Marks, Gijs Schumacher, Marco Steenbergen, Milada Vachudova and Marko Zilovic. 2017. "Explaining the salience of anti-elitism and reducing political corruption for political parties in Europe with the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data", *Research and Politics*, 4 (1): 1-9. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168016686915>.
- Rodríguez-Teruel, Juan, Astrid Barrio and Óscar Barberà. 2016. "Fast and Furious: Podemos' Quest for Power in Multi-level Spain", *South European Society and Politics*, Available at: [10.1080/13608746.2016.1250397](https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2016.1250397).
- Rooduijn, Matthijs and Teun Pauwels. 2011. "Measuring populism: Comparing two methods of content analysis", *West European Politics*, 34 (6): 1272-1283. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2011.616665>.
- Rooduijn, Matthijs and Tjitske Akkerman. 2015. "Flank attacks Populism and left-right radicalism in Western Europe", *Party Politics*, 23 (3): 1-12. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068815596514>.
- Rooduijn, Matthijs, Sarah L. De Lange and Wouter Van der Brug. 2014. "A populist Zeitgeist? Programmatic contagion by populist parties in Western Europe", *Party Politics*, 20 (4): 563-575. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068811436065>.
- Simón, Pablo. 2017. "The Challenges of the New Spanish Multipartism: Government Formation Failure and the 2016 General Election", *South European Society and Politics*, 21 (4): 493-517. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2016.1268292>.
- Snow, Dave and Benjamin Moffitt. 2012. "Straddling the divide: mainstream populism and conservatism in Howard's Australia and Harper's Canada", *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 50 (3): 271-292. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2012.692922>.

Schumacher, Gijs and Kees van Kersbergen. 2016. "Do mainstream parties adapt to the welfare chauvinism of populist parties?", *Party Politics*, 22 (3): 300-312. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068814549345>.

Van Spanje, Joost. 2010. "Contagious parties. Anti-Immigration Parties and Their Impact on Other Parties. Immigration Stances in Contemporary Western Europe", *Party Politics*, 16 (5): 563-586. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068809346002>.

Presented for evaluation: February 11th, 2020.

Accepted for publication: October 9th, 2020.

BELÉN FERNÁNDEZ GARCÍA

bfgarcia@ugr.es

Doctora en Ciencias Políticas por la Universidad de Granada. Obtuvo una licenciatura en Ciencias Políticas y Administración Pública galardonada con el Premio Nacional a la Excelencia en el Rendimiento Académico y un máster en «Problemas Sociales. Dirección y Gestión de Programas Sociales de la Universidad de Granada». Durante su doctorado fue estudiante visitante predoctoral en la Universidad de Düsseldorf (Alemania) y en la Universidad de Ámsterdam (Países Bajos). También ha sido investigadora posdoctoral en el Instituto de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de Lisboa. Entre sus publicaciones más recientes se encuentran: «Demonization of political discourses? How mainstream parties talk about the radical populist right», publicado en *West European Studies*, y «Religion on the rise again? A longitudinal analysis of religious dimensions in election manifestos of Western European parties», publicado en *Party Politics*.

ÓSCAR G. LUENGO

ogluengo@ugr.es

Profesor titular de Ciencia Política de la Universidad de Granada. Subdirector del Comité de Investigación en Comunicación Política de la International Association of Political Science. Director de la Escuela Iberoamericana de Altos Estudios en Gobierno Local de la Unión Iberoamericana de Municipalistas. Investigador y docente en más de una decena de centros internacionales, entre otros Florida International University, University of California, Berkeley, University of Saint Louis (EE. UU.), Université Hassan II Ain Chock (Marruecos), Anadolu Üniversitesi (Turquía), University of West Bohemia (República Checa), Mykolas Romeris University (Lituania), European University Institute (Florencia, Italia), Johannes Gutenberg-Universität (Mainz, Alemania), Amsterdam School of Communications Research (Holanda). Autor o editor de cinco libros y de varias decenas de artículos científicos sobre comunicación y marketing políticos. Participante en los últimos años en más de sesenta congresos internacionales y nacionales de ciencia política y de comunicación.