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RESEARCH ARTICLE



Virtuous people and evil elites? The role of moralizing frames and normative distinctions in identifying populist discourse

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ABSTRACT

Populism has been a much-studied concept in Social Science research. A great share of research on the concept has been dedicated to measuring the occurrence of populism in political text. In this article, I propose a novel measure of populism that considers established theoretical assumptions, i.e. presenting the people as morally superior and the elite as evil. This moral framing of the antagonistic groups is necessary to identify populist discourse while keeping it separate from empirically related concepts, e.g. radical right-wing ideology. The novel two-step dictionary detects morally-framed references to both groups. I apply this approach to a text corpus of all speeches given in the European Parliament from 1999 to 2014 and carry out extensive validity checks. Taking the moralizing notion of populism more seriously not only contributes to our theoretical understanding of populist discourse and its impact on the political sphere, but the new measure also improves previous approaches to measuring populism.

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Introduction

Populism has become a buzzword (Hunger and Paxton 2022): It is used attributed to politicians of all kinds; is said to be contagious for mainstream parties; and supposedly affects citizens in their political behaviour. Particularly if we are interested in how populist discourse affects other actors, e.g. parties and voters, we need a theoretically informed way to measure populism on a large scale. Many influential studies (e.g. Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011) have laid important groundwork for the endeavour of measuring populist discourse across large quantities of text. Drawing on these studies, this article uses text-as-data methods for a new measurement of populist discourse, which emphasizes the moral notion of populism.

Theoretical accounts of populism stress the centrality of the morally-charged Manichean distinction between the people and the elites. That is, populists refer to the people by portraying them as homogeneous, superior and good, while the elites are presented as corrupt, evil and degenerated. While theoretically well-established, this moral

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distinction has not travelled to quantitative measurements of populism. This poses several problems, as not only populism, but also thick ideologies are based on a differentiation between the people and an out-group, e.g. in the case of nationalism the people understood as 'natives' vs. immigrants as 'non-natives'. This example is particularly crucial, as populist radical right parties experienced a leap of support in recent years in Europe. I argue that this normative distinction between the two groups needs to be taken more seriously in measuring populism and in the study of its consequences, e.g. its effect on other parties, voters, or the media

In order to ground my populism measurement thoroughly in the theory, I propose a two-step dictionary approach. The first step employs two *baseline dictionaries*, one for 'the people' and one for 'the elite', which consist of morally neutral words for both groups, such as 'elite', 'politicians', 'citizens', or 'taxpayers'. These baseline dictionaries are used to detect neutral mentions of each of the groups and for extracting the section or snippets of the speeches in which these mentions occur. In the second step, these snippets are then analysed using *frame dictionaries*, again one for each group. The frame dictionaries contain words and phrases which can be used to present the groups as morally superior, i.e. the people, or as morally corrupted, i.e. the elite.

My approach comes with several advantages. First, by using a different measurement for anti-elitism and people-centrism, it allows for assessing how these different features of populism are used by different actors. Second, by taking the moral distinction between the people and the elites into account, it provides a way of measuring populism that is less prone to be conflated with references to the people in nationalist, socialist, or other ways. Third, after having established and validated my measure, I compare my discourse-based measures to categorizations of populist parties based on experts in order to assess if 'populist is what populists do'. Following Forrest Gump's famous dictum of 'Stupid is as stupid does', I assess whether parties, that are considered as populist use more populist rhetoric based on my measure and test whether there are differences based on radicality and ideology. Lastly, the combination of *base* and *frame* dictionaries provides a straight-forward approach to quantitative frame analysis more generally. This might be of interest for a broader range of scholarship beyond populism research, for instance for assessing how specific groups of people, e.g. female politicians, experts, etc., are presented in different sets of texts.

Populism as a moralized discourse

The ideational definition of populism

The concept of populism has often been criticized for lacking conceptual clarity and is subject to vivid academic debates about a worthwhile definition. However, several scholars (Aslanidis 2016, 89; Bonikowski et al. 2019, 62; Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017, 527; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018, 2–3; Rooduijn 2019, 363) have noted a trend towards agreeing on an ideational definition. These approaches share some conceptions of populism: (1) the antagonism between the people and the elites as populism's core concept, (2) the idea that populism lacks strong programmatic appeals and is most often combined with 'full' ideologies, as well as (3) a 'degreeist' understanding of populism.

While the 'ideational camp' includes scholars that define populism as 'framing device' (Bonikowski et al. 2019, 62), 'discursive frame' (Aslanidis 2016, 98), 'communication style'

(Brubaker 2017a, 2017b), ‘communication phenomenon’ (Vreese et al. 2018), or ‘world-view’ (Hawkins 2009), most famously phrased by Mudde (2004, 543) describing populism ‘thin ideology’ that:

considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the ‘pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.

A further common denominator of different ideational definitions is the understanding of populism as discursive feature rather than a fixed policy orientation: ‘unlike a [thick] ideology, populism is a latent set of ideas or a world view that lacks significant exposition and (...) and is usually low on policy specifics’ (Hawkins 2009, 6). While full ideologies result in programmatic orientations of parties, the populism becomes visible through the use of a specific discourse (Hawkins 2010, 10).

Closely connected to the ideational understanding of populism is the debate around the ‘degree-ism’ of populism. Aslanidis (2016, 96) proposes to consider populism as gradual rather than dichotomous since this is ‘more or less, how the concept has been operationalised in the growing quantitative literature’ (Bernhard, Kriesi, and Weber 2015; see e.g. Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Reungoat 2010; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011). This allows for varying degrees of populist discourse across different political actors and contexts. Similarly, Cammack (2000, 155) makes a case for rather using the adjective ‘populist’ instead of the noun as a ‘qualifier of some substantive political project’. Deegan-Krause and Haughton (2009, 822) also suggest to shift ‘our understanding of populism (...) to a description of party appeals rather than parties themselves’. Additionally, treating populism solely as graded allows for a more nuanced study of the phenomenon and decreases normative biases and the compulsion for academics to take sides in an essentialist struggle (Aslanidis 2016).

The degreeist understanding of populism is central to this study. It allows for developing a measurement that is independent from ‘external’ categorizations of actors into a binary measure of populist and non-populist. On the other hand, it makes it crucial to develop a measurement which is strongly based on theoretical assumptions instead of relying on a ‘we know it when we see it’-logic.

Both the opposition to the ‘evil’ elites and the praise for the ‘good’ people are well-established core features of populist discourse. While nearly all ideologies appeal to ‘the people’ in a specific way, e.g. socialism or nationalism, the *moral* distinction between the people and the elites is essential to populism. This moral elevation of the people, however, requires a references category, an ‘other’, an anti-pole. This reference category is embodied by the ‘morally degenerated’ elites and hence completes this dyadic relationship. In the following section, I discuss that references to both groups and their moralized framing are inextricable markers of populism, that are both necessary but not sufficient (see also Table 1).

Table 1. Morality and antagonistic groups as markers of populist discourse.

Moralized language		Antagonistic groups: elite vs. people	
Yes	Yes	Yes	No
No	populist	not sufficient	not sufficient
		not sufficient	not populist

The centrality of moral framing for populist discourse

Actors, who employ populist discourse, need to discriminate between the people and the elites and they do so by presenting one side as pure, good and virtuous and the other side as evil, corrupt and rotten. Various authors have emphasized this normative distinction between both groups as central to populism, as it is defined as ‘a Manichean and moralistic discourse that divides society into el pueblo and oligarchy [...]’ (De la Torre 2000, 4).

In a similar vein, Müller (2017, 19–20) defines populism as ‘a particular moralistic imagination of politics, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified (...) people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior’. Wiles (1969, 167) connects the ideational nature of populism and its moral notion stating that populism ‘is moralistic rather than programmatic’. Similarly, Panizza (2005, 22) argues that populists substitute a moral discourse for a political discourse in order to be able ‘to talk politics while denouncing it as a dirty game’. That is, by employing a moralistic discourse that differentiates them from other political actors, they can be part of politics while condemning the whole political sphere and its actors. By using universal abstractions, they ‘contrast the high moral grounding of [their] message with the corruption and betrayal of the political establishment’ (Panizza 2005, 22–23). In this moralistic logic, the elites, e.g. other political actors, are presented as enemies who are not ‘sharing a common symbolic space within which the conflict takes place’ (Mouffe 2000, 20). This makes compromise or even dialogue with the opponent impossible which is unacceptable for populist parties (De la Torre 2000). Panizza (2005, 22–23) also points out that moral divides are used by populists in order to disqualify adversaries thereby making legitimate dissent impossible. Mudde dedicates a significant share of his chapter on the ideational approach to populism to morality, which he calls ‘the essence of the populist division’ (2017, 29). Thus, *purity* and *authenticity* are for him at the core of the distinction between the two groups. This moralistic distinction is, however, tied to the presence of anti-elitism and people-centrism, in order to be considered as populism, as Table 1 shows.

Despite this multitude of scholars emphasizing the moralized notion of populism, Stavrakakis and Jäger (2017, 12) argue that morality is ‘the shaky basis’ of ‘the “new” mainstream in contemporary populism study’ which is both under-defined and too broad to be a distinct feature of populist rhetoric. Moreover, they (Stavrakakis and Jäger 2017, 13–14) criticize that the morally charged distinction between ‘evil’ and ‘good’ has been employed by politicians of manifold ideologies, especially as it is ‘more or less unavoidable in any political conjuncture, and especially pronounced in crucial turning points’. They provide several exemplary quotes by politicians, e.g. by Thatcher: ‘I am in politics because of the conflict between good and evil, I believe that in the end good will triumph’. While this statement certainly includes moral elements, it falls short of qualifying as populist as the antagonistic divide. Thatcher refers to ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in an unspecific way, which is from references to people or elites. Moralized language is certainly employed by manifold actors (Jasper 1992; see e.g. Jung 2019) and purity and idealization may be used for various political arguments (e.g. during the recent political crisis in Europe, see Narotzky (2016)), but Stavrakakis and Jäger (2017) neglect the necessary combination of moralized framing with the references to the people and the elites. In this regard, their critique of morality is under-specified and does not apply to a shared theoretical understanding of populism.

The antagonism between the people and the elites

However, morality and moralized discourse alone are not sufficient markers for populist discourse, the same applies for sole references to the people and the elites. It is not just bare references to ‘the people’ and ‘the elites’ that characterize populism, these groups are presenting and framing them in a morally charged way. First, ‘appeals to the people’ as marker are not explicit enough about how ‘the people’ are perceived by populists. Referring to the people is a trait that is shared by politicians from nearly all political camps and colour. In political discourse, various understandings of ‘the people’ may be at play: for instance, in nationalistic, economic, cultural, or political terms (Meny and Surel 2002). Radical right-wing actors present the ‘people as a nation’, while radical left actors rather emphasize class (Kriesi 2014, 362). What sets populism apart is how these groups are charged with meaning which is core to this ideology (Zehnter 2023). While various constructions of the people can be found in modern democracies, I argue that the construction of the people as morally superior, honest and virtuous lies at the core of populism, which is then to be contrasted by the rejection of the ‘evil elites’.

Many authors (Hawkins 2009; e.g. Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Reungoat 2010; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011) have used ‘appeals to the people’ as identifier for people-centrism. When measuring appeals to the people, Jagers and Walgrave (2007, 339) stress that references to the population (group) as an inseparable unity mostly preceded by a definite article (e.g. the voter, the people, the consumer) ‘can be regarded as the most solid indicator of populism’. Reungoat (2010) operationalizes people-centrism as the frequent use of ‘terms that referred to the population (population as a whole or population categories)’ but does not specify any moral evaluation or construction as superior and therefore might overestimate people-centrism. Aslanidis (2017, 9) points out that with this approach ‘people-centrism tends to get over-coded, since all references to ‘the people’ are coded indiscriminately into this category’. When not considering this moral framing of the antagonistic groups, we might rather be measuring concepts other than populism, e.g. nationalism.

The necessary combination of references to the antagonistic groups and a moralized framing of these requires careful operationalization. In the next section, I shall present my approach which takes both markers into account.

The moral distinction between the people and the elites – a tool for identifying populist discourse?

Measuring populism using dictionaries

Populism has often been measured in political texts of all kinds, since common approaches to measuring ideology, such as using roll-call votes, are not transferable to the concept of populism. Next to text-based measures, expert surveys are increasingly used to measure populism in political parties (see e.g. Meijers and Zaslove 2021). However, the surveys are not suitable to retrospectively assess how populism developed (Levick and Olavarria-Gambi 2020).

Measuring populism using automated text analysis has shown to be a tedious task, that comes – due to the conceptual complexity of populism – with many pitfalls and challenges (Jankowski and Huber 2023). Recent advances in the social sciences have also

sparked approaches to measure populism using supervised machine learning. Di Cocco and Monechi (2022) and Celico, Rode, and Rodríguez-Carreño (2024) use externally-defined (binary and continuous) measures of parties' populism and train classifiers on this information. This party-based approach, however, does not allow to distinguish between populism and other party characteristics, such as communication style or thick ideology, in the prediction and is thus largely detached from a theoretically-based conception of populism (see also Jankowski and Huber 2023).

Erhard et al. (2023) and Bonikowski, Luo, and Stuhler (2022) use transformer models in order to measure parties' level of populism, in the German Bundestag and US electoral campaign respectively. Weighting between dictionaries and supervised machine-learning is strongly tied to the level of transparency the classification should entail.

Weighting between dictionaries and supervised machine-learning is strongly tied to the level of transparency the classification should entail. Supervised machine-learning approaches are often black-boxes for researchers and readers alike and 'due to [their] complexity [they] lack transparency for validating the results sufficiently. Hence, inherently interpretable models should be preferred for highly complex tasks, similar to the task at hand' (Rudin 2019). Since I aim to implement the theoretically well-established centrality of a moral framing into a valid measurement of populism, for me transparency outweighs the benefits of transformer models. While often feature scores are not discussed in machine-learning approaches, using a dictionary model gives us full transparency and control of which features are tied to our concept of interest. I believe this is particularly valuable in my case, where my contribution also aims at showing the importance of morality in order to measure populism.

Some of the aforementioned studies use dictionaries to identify and measure populist discourse (Bonikowski and Gidron 2016; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011; see also Gründl 2022, for an application Breyer 2022). Dictionaries draw on word frequencies that are used in a respective text. They are designed to capture categories of a theoretical concept 'by allocating words to these categories using a combination of a priori and empirical criteria' (Laver and Garry 2000, 626). Applying a dictionary, i.e. a list of theoretically motivated keywords, then results in counts of these keywords' occurrences in different texts. By assessing the frequency in which the keywords are used, it measures to which extent a certain concept is prevalent in a document (Grimmer and Stewart 2013, 8). Hence, designing such a dictionary requires a deep understanding of the concept at hand, as it is only valid with a precise choice of keywords and it might otherwise result in numerous false positives (Ruedin and Morales 2017).

Furthermore, qualitative, in-depth assessment and validation are crucial in order to assess the number of false positives. Deleting and adding keywords based on this, however, may result in rather ad hoc dictionaries of either extreme brevity or excessive length (Aslanidis 2017). Hence, the terms included in populism dictionaries often seem too broad, e.g. *class*, *politic**, *propaganda*, *referend**, *regime*, *people* (Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011), as there is no strong theoretical reason why – for instance using the word *politics* – qualifies for a populist statement. Other keywords seem very arbitrary and tailored to a very specific context, such as *loophole* and *long nose* (Bonikowski and Gidron 2016), or *donors* (Oliver and Rahn 2016). Many of these words are not theoretically connected to the concept of populism and hence capture other phenomena.

I base my approach on strong theoretical assumptions, i.e. the centrality of moral framing for populist discourse. I argue that this theoretical foundation allows us to choose keywords for the two reference groups and their respective framing that permits us to identify populist discourse. This approach draws on a communication-centred rather than an actor-centred understanding of populism (Stanyer, Salgado, and Strömbäck 2016, 354). While the first focuses on the theoretical characteristics of populist communication, the latter uses the characteristics of populist political actors as a starting point. The actor-centred approach assumes that we already know who populist actors are and draws conclusions about populist communication based on these actors' political communication. Focusing on a pre-defined set of populist actors and the way they talk, comes at risk, I argue, of conflating populist discourse with the programmatic profile of the populists' host ideologies. Furthermore, an actor-based approach is at odds with an understanding of populism as a matter of degree, as discussed in the previous section. If we use a set of actors as a heuristic to measure populist discourse, we discount the possibility that populist discourse can vary across settings, contexts, issues and actors.

Identifying the moral distinction in populist discourse through a two-step dictionary

In order to use the normative distinction between the elite and the people as a tool for identifying populist discourse, I suggest using a novel two-step dictionary approach, that allows for detecting whether one of the groups is referred to in a morally charged way. Unlike most previous studies, I use separate dictionaries to capture the reference to the two groups. This allows for measuring people-centrism and anti-elitism, i.e. two core features of populism, separately and thus for assessing differences in the number of references across actors. My two-step dictionary approach is set up as follows: First, I design two *baseline dictionaries* for references to the people and the elites. This allows me to identify the references to the two groups as distinct features and to show how they are used by different parties as well as when they occur together. Studying micro-level populist attitudes, Schulz et al. (2017, 2) make a similar argument stating 'that a uni-dimensional model fails to adequately describe populist attitudes, as it does not account for the different political ideas that have been identified as distinct yet correlated facets of a populist ideology'. As argued above, mentioning the elites and the people is not fine-grained enough to measure populist discourse. As referring to the people can be done in neutral, nationalist and many other ways, I suggest that the construction of the people as morally superior captures populism more precisely. Similarly, not all references to the elite are necessarily populist, i.e. negative, as politicians could refer to the elite positively as well. In order to capture this moral framing, I develop two additional *frame dictionaries* which aim to capture whether the people are presented in a morally superior and the elites in a morally degenerated manner.

In the first step, the *baseline dictionaries* are tailored to identify references to the people or the elites (see Table 2). I created them drawing on previous automated approaches and codebooks for hand-coding (Bonikowski and Gidron 2018; Hameleers and Vliegenthart 2019; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Reungoat 2010; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011). Next, I assessed the quality of the two dictionaries by looking at a sample of appearances of every word in the people – and the elite-dictionary and judged whether they capture

Table 2. Keywords for references to the people and the elite.

People		Elite	
citizen	population's	apparatchik*	europhil*
citizen's	resident	aristocrat*	financial sharks
citizens	resident's	bad apples*	financier*
citizens'	residents	banks	mafia
europeans	residents'	bosses	mafia's
europeans'	taxpayer	bosses'	old elites
families	taxpayer's	Brussels mafia	oligarch*
family	taxpayers	bureaucrat	political class*
man on the street*	taxpayers'	circles*	politician*
ordinary person*	the public	cronies	power monger
the public's	people	ruling circles	elit*
people's	population	establishment	ruling class
	establishment's	sycophancy	eurocra*

the right concepts. I excluded words as false positives if they were mostly used to refer to specific, narrow groups of people or other concepts that are not related to 'the people' or 'the elites'. For instance, some studies claim that *caste* is often used in populist discourse in order to refer to the elites (Rooduijn 2015). However, most of the occurrences of the word *caste* were in fact referring to the Indian caste system. Hence, the keyword 'caste' was removed from the dictionary. Some keywords were included using globing, i.e. wild-card characters (depicted by an asterisk *), thus allowing for any string following the specified keywords. This means that the keyword *elit** will pick up *elite*, *elitism*, *elitist*, *elite-focused*, and so on. Other words, e.g. *resident*, are only included in specific grammatical forms, as the keyword with an asterisk otherwise would pick up words such as 'residential' disproportionately. The final set of words for the base-dictionaries is depicted in Table 2. Some of the keywords are quite broad and neutral, e.g. *citizen*, while others – especially for the elite – carry a value judgement, for instance, *cronies*. I consider these morally charged keywords as sufficient markers for a moral framing. These words are highlighted in bold in Table 2. Using the baseline dictionaries, I find a total of 9817 references to the elite and 133,625 references to the people. The overrepresentation of references to the people serves as an indication that referring to the people is done by most politicians in a multitude of ways, that are not populist. Table A2 in the appendix shows the frequency of the individual keywords for people and elites in the corpus.

As I have argued above, references to the people and the elites ought to be presented in a moralized way in order to be considered populist rhetoric. To perform the next step of my analysis, i.e. determining if the two groups are framed in a morally-charged way, I select 'snippets' around the occurrences of the people- and the elite-dictionary. This means, that I create a new text corpus, that does not consist of the full speeches anymore, but only of the parts of the speeches in which we find a reference to the people or the elites. Considering the length of the speeches and the sentences within them, I decided to select a window of eight words before and after each keyword. Additionally, the length of the frame window is based on the German election manifestos since 1998. The Manifesto Project (Lehmann et al. 2023) uses the source in order to code parties' issue position. The main coding unit in the project are so-called quasi-sentences, where one quasi-sentence includes exactly one positional statement on one issue. I assessed the summary statistics for the quasi-sentences coded in all German manifestos in that timeframe. The median length is 13 words, the mean is 14.71 words. I used this

heuristic to arrive at a window of 17 words, i.e. 8 words before and 8 words after a keyword.

The extraction of these snippets was conducted using the KeyWord in Context (kwic) function in the quanteda package for R (Benoit et al. 2018). A selected example of these snippets (see Table A3 in the appendix) already shows that while some of these snippets clearly contain populist rhetoric, e.g. the need to defend the interests of hard-working taxpayers or references to the ordinary people. Other snippets contain references to the people but completely lack any trait of populist communication, for instance, the phrase ‘these figures really speak for themselves. Citizens gain many advantages through the single market’. Next, the frame dictionaries are applied to these snippets detecting instances of moralized framing around the occurrences of references to the people and the elites.

In order to do so, I developed two *frame dictionaries* that consist of words that are associated with moralizing frames; positive for the people and negative for the elites (see Table A1). The frame dictionary for the elite consists of 146 keywords, while the one for the people consists of 45-word stems. The positive and negative framing can be further distinguished in sub-categories, loosely following the hand-coding schemes of Manucci and Weber (2017) and Ernst et al. (2019). These two schemes provide a very detailed operationalization in fine-grained key messages. Hence, anti-elitism can be expressed in several ways, either discrediting the elites, blaming them, or detaching them from the people. All three of these carry a negative value judgment. Similarly, people-centrism is expressed by stressing the people’s virtues, praising their achievements, stating that they are monolithic, or demonstrating closeness to them.

Following these key messages, I develop my dictionaries, both for group references and the moral frames, based on theoretical considerations, previous works which measure populism (Bonikowski and Gidron 2018; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011), and the Moral Foundations Dictionary (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009; Haidt and Graham 2007). Graham et al.’s (2009) extensive dictionary measures sets of moral intuitions. These different moral foundations are well established in the field of moral psychology and based on the Moral Foundations theory (Haidt and Graham 2007; Haidt and Joseph 2005). For the *frame dictionaries*, I only selected those words that can be used to present groups of people in a negative and a positive way and hence capture the moralizing notion of populism. In order to do so, I checked the occurrences of my keywords in their context and accordingly adjust my dictionaries deleting some of the keywords, which did not perform well. However, I am very careful with adding new keywords, as this could lead to keywords that are not grounded in the theory and only used over-proportionally by populist actors due to other ideological or political traits, such as nationalism. Thus, I aim to prevent my dictionary from being ad hoc as Aslanidis (2017) points out.

The words in the negative frame dictionary can be broadly distinguished into three groups: First, adjectives that attribute negative characteristics to the elite, such as *crooked**, *immoral**, *power-hungry*, *self-serving*, *unelected*, or *wealthy*. Second, verbs that describe how elites harm or betray the people: *disrespect**, *damag**, or *ignore**, *refuse**. Third, nouns that are connected to a negative depiction of the elite, such as *favouritism*, *fraud*, or *lobby**. The words for the positive framing of the people consist of words that are mostly related to the moral superiority of the people: *decent*, *hardworking*, *honour** (e.g.

honourable), *principled*, or *virtuous*. Some words in the positive dictionary are also tailored towards capturing how these people are left behind by the elite: e.g. *betray**, *expense of*.

Based on the coding scheme by Ernst et al. (2019, 3), popular sovereignty is divided into two key messages, demanding popular sovereignty and denying elite sovereignty. While I do not provide a dictionary specifically tailored for popular sovereignty, my manual assessment showed that these demands are often tied to a value statement and hence picked up by my approach.¹ This might include statements in which the people role is threatened by elites and claims that politicians ought to act in the pure interest of the people. These statements are very well along the lines of Mény and Surel (2000, 181), which phrase the restoration of popular sovereignty as the re-establishment of the people's place in society.

In the following, I apply my two-step dictionary approach to a text corpus consisting of all speeches given at the European Parliament (EP) from 1999 to 2014 and extensively validate this approach. This vast number of speeches was delivered by members of populist and non-populist parties of all facets.

The European Union parliamentary speech corpus

Previous studies measuring populism have used diverse empirical material such as party broadcasts (Jagers and Walgrave 2007), parliamentary debates (Cranmer 2011) talk shows (Armony and Armony 2005), party manifestos (Reungoat 2010; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011), parties' membership magazines (Pauwels 2011), public speeches (Hawkins 2009), newspapers (Hameleers and Vliegenthart 2019) or internet forums (Caiani and della Porta 2011). I draw on a text corpus provided by Cross and Greene (2016; see also Greene and Cross 2017) which consists of all the plenary speeches held in the European Parliament (EP) in its 5th to 7th term, i.e. from July 1999 to April 2014 by a total of 1735 Members of European Parliament (MEPs).

On the one hand, these speeches are – unlike party internal documents and speeches – not only directed to party members and can be used to get media attention and are – unlike party manifestos – not too broad and strategic, but issue-specific. On the other hand, they are less vote- or office-seeking than speeches in campaigns or at party conventions – which might be where we expect populism to be mostly present. EP speeches are often used as a tool of communication between MEPs, party groups and national parties (Slapin and Proksch 2010). Hence, I argue that parliamentary speeches provide a rather conservative test for identifying populist discourse especially compared to campaign materials. However, other than policy-seeking materials, such as manifestos, EP speeches are spoken words and thus the means of communication, where populism as a discourse style or thin ideology should occur.

While the EP differs in its outreach from national parliaments, the EP often serves as a springboard to national success for (populist) challenger parties (Schulte-Cloos 2018). Thus, these challengers might use the EP more for public outreach than mainstream parties in order to communicate with (potential) voters as they lack other platforms (Grabbe and Groot 2014, 38–39). Populist parties and their behaviour in the EP differ from mainstream parties' behaviour: They have been largely marginalized until recently and were deprived of many positions of procedural powers (Grabbe and Groot 2014). This is supported by qualitative studies, that show that the presence of populists

changed the dynamics in the EP, as ‘plenaries were the key site for the formal activities of the radical right populist groups and this is where other political groups first encountered their rhetoric and strategies.’ (Kantola and Miller 2021, 797). Especially Eurosceptic politicians can often act as public orators, meaning who actively use plenary speeches in order to spread their agenda (Brack 2015). Hence, I argue that the EP provides us with a suitable case to develop and test a new measure of populism.

The corpus is limited to the speeches translated into English, which is 77.95 per cent of the total number of speeches. This, however, results in an under-representation of certain countries. The number of translated speeches ranges from 87 per cent for Germany to 66.2 per cent for Romania (Greene and Cross 2017). The corpus includes a vast number of speeches from a diverse set of politicians in one language, which is an advantage compared to other studies that often translate the dictionaries and apply them to speeches in different languages (e.g. Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011). This procedure alters the measurement and might hence introduce bias. Furthermore, the corpus was translated by professional translators and interpreters and is hence less biased than automatically translated documents as human translation is more sensitive to context and nuances.² A further extension of the analysis is prevented by the EU’s decision to discontinue the translation of all speeches in verbatim (European Parliament 2012). The sample consists of a total of 178,905 speeches.

The original corpus contains only information on the MEPs’ affiliation to political groups in the EP. I hand-coded their national party affiliation, which allows for a more fine-grained analysis. There are 323 parties in my data sets. For my analysis of the use of populist speech by different actors, I draw on several other resources, specifically PopuList (Rooduijn et al. 2019), which provides an overview of parties that are considered populist in Europe and is conducted by a large expert team. This external categorization of actors into populist and non-populist allows to compare my more communication based, degreeist measurement of populism with an actor-based, binary classification. Of a total of 1704 MEPs, about 18 per cent (i.e. 310) of MEPs belong to a party that is considered populist. They delivered 19 per cent of all speeches, which serves as an indication that ‘populist’ MEP do not speak less in the EP than their ‘non-populist’ colleagues.

Validation of the two-step dictionary

I employ an extensive validation strategy to show the additional empirical value of my populism measurement. First, I present several examples that show how the combination of two dictionaries allows for detecting instances of populist rhetoric. This allows to establish face validity showing how the moralized framing matters. Second, I test my approach and other dictionaries against a hand-coded gold standard in order to test the construct validity of my measures, i.e. whether they are empirically associated with a manually coded measure of populism (Adcock and Collier 2001).

The following instances of populist discourse detected by my approach illustrate its advantages. Consider, for instance, the keyword ‘politicians’: it can be used in a completely morally neutral, non-populist way:

Is climate change the major challenge of the next century or a good New Year’s resolution without any significant value? It is difficult for us **politicians** to sell to our electors political

decisions which are planned over ten or twenty years. Yet have we not agreed to take responsibility? The debate on climate change is not a trivial affair. (French MEP Nicole Thomas-Mauro (Rassemblement pour la France), document ID: 1999/12/15/TEXT_CRE_19991215_3-025)

Introducing the *frame dictionaries* as a more fine-grained measure allows to detect morally charged references to politicians as following example shows very clearly:

I am delighted that defeatist talk of a crisis has given way to such courageous notions as opportunity, modernization and change, and that Tony Blair is prepared to tackle the glaring discrepancies that exist between the **arrogance of EU politicians**, the real lives of our citizens and overall developments in the world economy. (Czech MEP Jana Bobošíková (Independent Democrats), document ID: 2005/06/23/TEXT_CRE_20050623_4-047)

Similarly, the people are often mentioned without any reference to their moral superiority, in fact the global pattern 'people*' alone matches 72,396 hits in the whole corpus. Certainly, not all these instances are populist, as the following example illustrates:

The directive will not enter into effect until 2003. This illustrates that it sometimes all takes longer sometimes than expected. If we consider the numbers of **people** still being killed due to unsafe working conditions, then more urgency is needed. (Dutch MEP Bartho Pronk (Christian Democratic Appeal), document ID: 1999/12/01/TEXT_CRE_19991201_3-163)

Applying the *frame dictionary* to the snippets enables us to detect morally superior framing of the people as this excerpt shows:

Through the fault of unelected, incompetent Eurocrats and blinded Member State leaders, the financial crisis is being used as a tool for further EU integration. What a heavy price we are paying for the Eurocrats' fantasy of a United States of Europe. Have they learned nothing from their folly? President Barroso and his apparatchiks care little for the **ordinary person**. (British MEP Nicole Sinclair (We Demand a Referendum Party), document ID: 2012/10/23/TEXT_CRE_20121023_2-094-000)

The last example picks up 'ordinary people', i.e. one of the keywords that were considered sufficient for populist discourse even without the application of the frame dictionary. Furthermore, this speech represents an example that also includes markers of anti-elitism, i.e. 'Eurocrats' and 'apparatchiks'. The next two speeches show how the frame dictionaries are capable of detecting moral frames even in greater distance to the reference to the people. In the first example, the people-centrism is also combined with strong anti-elitism and the bemoaning of the loss of popular sovereignty. It also serves as a good example of how the communist host ideology ('audacious imperialist plans', 'capitalist restructurings') of the party is combined with populist elements:

The pressure on Bulgaria and Romania is mounting to ensure their people are fully subject to the dictates of the EU, so that more onerous terms can be imposed which will make it easier for the plutocracy to exploit the workers. The accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU is being pushed through along (...) the concession of the sovereign rights of these countries to the audacious imperialist plans of the USA, NATO, and the EU, **at the expense of the people**. The continual adaptation of accession conditions to the *acquis communautaire* for the purposes of the Lisbon Strategy, the reform of the CAP, capitalist restructurings and the EU's more general anti-grassroots and anti-labour policy is resulting in extremely poor terms for the workers, with sweeping changes to fundamental employment and social rights. The people of these countries are realising day by day that they cannot expect

anything positive to come out of their accession to the EU. The European Parliament motion for a resolution supports the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the imperialist union and their concession to the plans of the EU and a more intensive anti-grassroots policy against their people, which is why the European parliamentary group of the Greek Communist Party will vote against it. (Greek MEP Toussas (Greek Communist Party), document ID: 2006/06/14/TEXT_CRE_20060614_3-154)

The second example showing the additional value of the frame dictionaries is less focused on praising the people as morally superior, but presenting them as threatened by evil elites, hence serving as a good illustration of how these two core features may coincide with each other. It also includes other, very particular moralized language such as ‘tub-thumping rhetoric’ and stresses that might be let down by their representatives and that they deserve to know what these MEP voted for.

I voted against this resolution and I deplore the tub-thumping rhetoric of this House. The European Parliament is trying to flex its muscles while **ignoring its citizens** who are crying out for a cut-back, streamlined European Union. I am at least pleased that this resolution sends out a clear signal to those Members who wished to conduct the business of the house behind closed doors. It is curious that a parliament which desires democratic legitimacy should wish to vote on a matter as important as the 7-year budget in secret. Citizens deserve to know how their MEPs voted. And I hope that citizens who feel let down by those Members who choose to reject budget savings will express their displeasure at the ballot box. (UK MEP Marina Yannakoudakis (Conservative Party), document ID: 2013/03/14/TEXT_CRE_20130314_4-171).

Moving to a more systematic evaluation of the measurement’s construct validity, I draw on a set of four different random samples containing 100 speeches each. The composition of the samples is presented in Table 3. Taking the possible sparsity of populist rhetoric in the EP into account, my sampling strategy artificially increases the number of populist speeches in the test set. Thus, the gold standard contains four samples, a) 200 instances where my approach detects either people-centrism or anti-elitism (samples 1 and 2, 100 speeches each), b) 100 speeches where the other dictionaries detect populism (sample 3) and c) lastly 100 speeches that were selected randomly, albeit speeches by populist actors (following PopuList) were oversampled (sample 4). The first two samples are designed to weed out false positives. The third set directly compares my approach with previous, English-language dictionaries while also being classified as non-populist by my approach. Lastly, I include a random sample of 100 speeches, in which I over-sampled speeches by populist actors as defined by the PopuList (Rooduijn et al. 2019). Thus, the fourth sample includes 50 speeches of parties

Table 3. Selection of samples for gold standard.

Sample	Sampling	No of speeches	% Populist (hand-coded)
False positives			
1	Instances of people-centrism following my approach	100	65 per cent
2	Instances of anti-elitism following my approach	100	69 per cent
False negatives			
3	Based on Bonikowski and Gidron (2018) and Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011)	100	25 per cent
False positives and false negatives			
4	Random, over-sampling of populist parties (50:50)	100	6 per cent

Table 4. Classification accuracy.

	My approach	Bonikowski & Gidron	Rooduijn & Pauwels	References to groups
Sensitivity	0.66	0.49	0.49	0.51
Specificity	0.84	0.61	0.72	0.94
Balanced accuracy	0.75	0.55	0.61	0.72
Overall accuracy	0.74	0.56	0.55	0.58

classified as non-populist and 50 speeches of parties which are considered populist. The four samples were hand-coded by the author. The last column of Table 3 also shows the prevalence of populism in the human-annotated data.

I assess the performance of my approach with several measures presented in the confusion matrix in Table 4 (See also Table A4 in the appendix). Additionally to the dictionaries by Bonikowski and Gidron (2018) and Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011), I compare my approach to a measurement solely relying on my baseline dictionaries (i.e. references to people and elites without the frame dictionaries).

Sensitivity represents the true positive rate, i.e. the share of true positives classified as positives. Specificity is the true negative rate, measuring the proportion of true negatives classified as negatives. Accuracy combines these two measures, showing the proportion of correctly classified documents. I also present the balanced accuracy here, which accounts for a possibly skewed proportion between true positives and true negatives in the gold standard. This allows for testing whether adding the moralized framing indeed comes with additional measurement performance. I present the measures for both my dictionaries combined, i.e. clustering the two core features anti-elitism and people-centrism together. My approach outperforms the other measures, only the specificity of the baseline dictionaries combined is higher with 0.94. This means that references to the people tend to be better at classifying true negatives. However, the sensitivity of the reference dictionaries is lower compared to the frame dictionaries, which shows that the approach overestimates the occurrence of populist rhetoric. Apart from sensitivity, specificity and (balanced) accuracy, my approach outperforms or performs on par with the dictionary by Rooduijn and Pauwels. Especially on ‘combined metrics’ such as F1-score and (balanced) accuracy (see appendix, table A4), my approach achieves higher values.

Who uses populism?

After having established my approach as a valid tool to identify populist discourse, the next section has several purposes. First, I aim to show whether parties traditionally classified as populists indeed use more populist discourse in the EP. Second, I shall focus on the relationship between people-centrism and anti-elitism as core features of populism. And third, I assess whether radical left and radical right parties use populism to a larger extent than mainstream parties.

Populist is as populist does?

In a 1994 US movie, the protagonist Forrest Gump gets asked a couple of times whether he considers himself stupid and responds with ‘Stupid is as stupid does’. This mirrors – as

Table 5. Classification of speeches for different dictionaries.

Populist party		Own approach	Bonikowski & Gidron	Rooduijn & Pauwels
No	Count	3623	2003	53,282
No	Proportion	0.025	0.014	0.371
Yes	Count	1148	880	13,715
Yes	Proportion	0.032	0.025	0.389

already discussed above – a discussion on populism research that could be summarized as ‘Populist is as populist does?’ Or put differently: How do we define whether an actor or a party is populist? Gump’s answer implies that a person should rather be judged by actions and not her appearance. Transferred to the study of parties and party actors, this calls for perceiving populism as a ‘description of parties’ appeals rather than parties themselves’ (Deegan-Krause and Haughton 2009, 822) as already discussed in section 2.

Table 5 shows the total number of speeches given by MEPs of parties that are classified as populist or non-populist following Rooduijn et al. (2019). The three last columns show the classification of populist speech based on my measure, and the measures of Bonikowski and Gidron (2018) and Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011), separately for populist and non-populist parties. Of all speeches in the sample, about 20 per cent were given by actors belonging to parties that are traditionally considered populist. The first difference that sticks out is the mismatch regarding the total share of speeches classified as populist between the measures. While the dictionary by Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) hits in nearly 40 per cent of the speeches, my measures classify around 2.5 per cent as populist and the approach of Bonikowski and Gidron (2018) classifies only around 1.4 per cent of all speeches as populist.³ This serves as an additional indication that Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) approach drastically overestimates populism. This is in line with the expectation of the EP as a hard test for populism. While the share of populist discourse is similar to Bonikowski and Gidron’s (2018) approach, their small accuracy serves as an indication that they identify different speeches than my approach. Looking at the set of parties that are classified as populist a priori based on Rooduijn et al. (2019), all three measures identify a higher share of populist rhetoric among them compared to the parties categorized as non-populist. Hence, it seems that the parties generally seen as populist in academic literature also show higher levels of populist rhetoric in the EP. However, the difference between both groups is fairly small, or in the case of Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) even negligible.

Core features – anti-elitism and people-centrism

Next, I delve more into the core features anti-elitism and people-centrism and break up my measurement. Other than many previous approaches, having separate dictionaries provides the opportunity to study how they relate to each other. In order to assess how their use coincides, I present two different figures. First, I show how often both concepts are present in the very same speech. Second, I show whether actors who are using people-centrism also use anti-elitism, i.e. whether the use of references to both groups is correlated within actors.

Table 6 shows the presence of anti-elitism and people-centrism in single speeches. The two-by-two table shows that people-centrism is around six times more common than anti-elitism. Additionally, the table allows to assess the co-occurrence of anti-elitism and people-centrism within a single speech. This is, however, an extremely rare event. It appears in 61 speeches in the whole corpus i.e. in only 0.03 per cent of the speeches.

Table 6. Cross tabulation of anti-elitism and people-centrism being present in the same speech.

Anti-elitism	People-centrism	
	Yes	No
Yes	61	594
No	4055	174,195

Next, I turn to the MEP-level, assessing whether there is any relationship between the use of the two core features anti-elitism and people-centrism within individuals. [Figure 1](#) presents a scatter plot showing the percentage of speeches in which MEPs used the core features of populism. The percentage of speeches including people-centrism is shown on the x-axis, while the y-axis shows the percentage of anti-elitism. The black dots represent MEPs who are classified as populist a priori following Rooduijn et al. (2019), while each grey dot represents a non-populist MEP. Additionally, the graph presents the fitted lines for both groups separately, again populist MEPs in black and non-populist MEPs in grey.⁴ The graph confirms the findings already presented above: people-centrism is far more used than anti-elitism. However, there seems to be a positive correlation for the usage of both core concepts for populist parties, while this correlation is nearly absent for non-populist parties.

These findings speak to a conceptual issue which has sparked a debate among populism scholars: Do markers of populism have to co-occur in the same speech or text or is it 'enough' if an actor uses both core features separately? Rooduijn, de Lange, and van der Brug (2014, 567) argue that 'it is the combination of people-centrism and anti-elitism that defines populism. Only if a critique on the (bad) elite coincides with an emphasis on the (good) people, can we speak of populism'. However, if they re-run their analyses removing this condition, their results are robust.

Engesser et al. (2017) argue for a 'fragmented concept', i.e. the core features of populism do not necessarily have to be present in one speech by a politician in order to consider the speech populist. Along similar lines, Ernst et al. (2017) show that the core features occur in a fragmented manner, but still emphasize the importance of combining them. The results presented above support this view, showing that a co-occurrence of both features is rather rare in the EP, but the use of both features by a single MEP is correlated for MEPs belonging to parties that are classified as populist.

Populism left and right?

Lastly, I present evidence that populism is more commonly used by parties on the fringes of the political spectrum. Several previous studies (Bernhard and Kriesi 2019; Ernst et al. 2017; Rooduijn and Akkerman 2017) have argued and shown that parties at the fringes of the political system tend to use populism more than those positioned in the centre.

[Figure 2](#) shows the use of anti-elitism, people-centrism, my combined measures and the measures by Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) and Bonikowski and Gidron (2018). The parties are clustered along their left-right dimension using the ParlGov (Döring and Manow 2016) left-right measures, where 0 denotes the left end and 10 the right end of the spectrum. While ParlGov provides the most exhaustive measure of parties' left-right position, I also include the category 'NA' in order to show that the missings do not introduce additional bias.

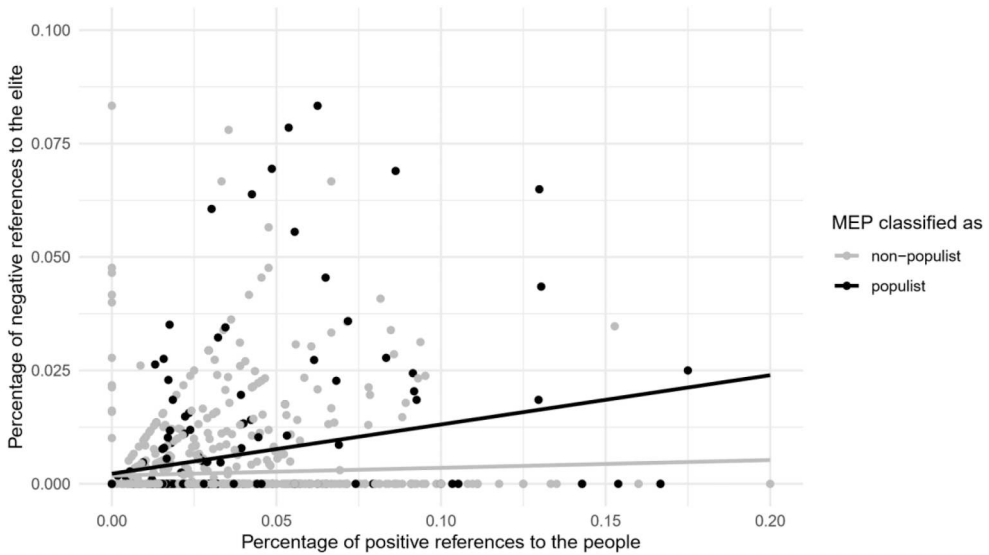


Figure 1. Scatter plot for percentage of people-centrism and anti-elitism in MEPs' speeches.

Panel A clearly shows that far-right parties use anti-elitism to the largest extent, followed by far-left parties. Unsurprisingly, mainstream parties use very little anti-elitism, given that they are considered part of 'the establishment' themselves. For people-centrism (panel B), the differences shrink. While the far-left and the far-right use appeals to the people nearly equally often, mainstream parties also do employ the people-centrist rhetoric, however to a smaller extent. This partly confirms March's (2017, 290) findings of 'demoticism' (i.e. closeness to 'ordinary' people without this antagonistic identity)' as

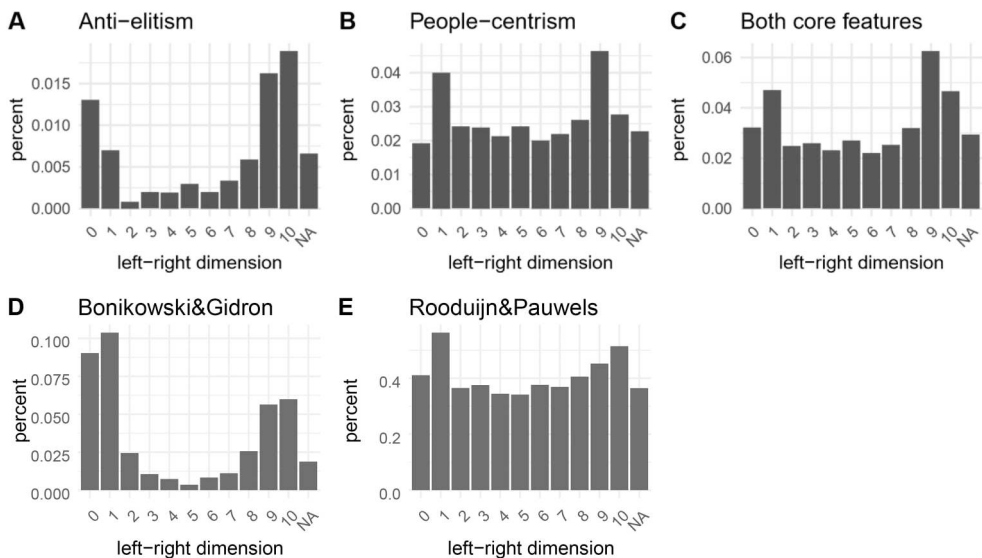


Figure 2. Box plots for parties by left-right dimension.

a common trait of mainstream parties' rhetoric. My combined measures (panel C) still show that radical left and radical right parties use more populism than centrist parties. Turning to the outcomes of the other two dictionaries, we also see the inverse u-shaped curve in Bonikowski and Gidron's (2018) (panel D) measure. It is worth pointing out that here radical left parties turn out to be more populist than radical right parties. For the measure by Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) (panel E) the differences between parties of different ideological orientations nearly vanish.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that the moral distinction between the people and the elites is a central component of populist discourse. While this is theoretically well-established, quantitative approaches to measuring populism have often neglected this moral divide. Building on this centrality of the two antagonistic groups for populism discourse, I developed a novel two-step dictionary approach to measure populist discourse. My approach comes with several advantages. First, as my dictionaries are well-grounded in the literature, they are less at risk of being context-dependent and hence less ad hoc fashioned. Second, as I designed the approach based on theoretical assumptions and not actor-based, it is less prone to conflate populism with empirically co-occurring concepts, such as nationalism and radical right ideology (Hunger and Paxton 2022). Additionally, combining dictionaries for references to groups and then identifying their framing with a second set of dictionaries is a research design which can be transferred to other fields of study.

I validated my measures carefully, against a hand-coded gold standard and compared their performance to other populism dictionaries. While the accuracy is not skyrocketing, my dictionaries outperform previous approaches and are hence a valuable tool for identifying populist discourse. Bonikowski and Gidron (2018) obtain very similar results in terms of the share of speeches containing populist discourse, however, their accuracy measures differ significantly from my approach. This might be due to the fact that their dictionary mostly includes words related to anti-elitism rather than people-centrism. Hence, it is very likely that their approach is not suitable for measuring people-centrism.

A valid automated approach to measure populist discourse is particularly valuable for large sets of texts, as manual approaches often require an unmanageable effort, Zulianello, Albertini, and Ceccobelli (2018) for instance hand-coded 24,240 Facebook posts. I use my measures to analyse the occurrence of populist discourse in the European Parliament from 1999 to 2014 drawing on a corpus of 178,905 speeches held by 1704 individual MEPs. A comparison to a predefined classification of populist parties shows that indeed 'Populist is as populist does', meaning that populist parties use more populist speech than mainstream parties, however only to a small margin. The two core features of populism interact with each other on MEP level, however, their co-occurrence in one single speech is empirically scarce. Nevertheless, actors traditionally defined as populist are more prone to use both features across their speeches than mainstream party parliamentarians. Lastly, I show that radical left and radical right actors use populist discourse to a greater extent than mainstream parties. This difference is, however, more pronounced for anti-elitism than for people-centrism.

Apart from serving as a tool to identify populist discourse, showing how moralized framing is central to populism provides further avenues for future research. The first

possible expansion is to study the effect of moral framing on individuals. This might well speak to scholarship on individuals' motivation to vote for populist parties (Arzheimer 2009; Bakker, Rooduijn, and Schumacher 2016; Dunn 2015). We might argue that aside from classical voting theories, populists manage to activate people's moral convictions (see e.g. Ryan (2014); Ryan (2017)) by using their moralized framing and hence gain their votes (see e.g. Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese 2017). Second – and connected to scholarship on individual-level populist attitudes (see e.g. Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014; Elchardus and Spruyt 2016; Schulz et al. 2017) we could ask which role the moralized framing and moral convictions play in these populist attitudes.

Notes

1. Previous hand-coded analyses (see e.g. Ernst et al. (2017, 1359) show that 'The dimension of restoring sovereignty is almost absent'.
2. In order to exclude interposed questions which are often technical or procedural, I introduce a minimum length of 26 words. The maximum speech length is 2528 words, with a mean of 210 words. Additionally, I remove speeches on foreign policy, as they often contain references to people and elites of non-European countries debated (Watanabe 2018), which amounts to 43,309 speeches. The removal of speeches on foreign policy was done using the newsmag dictionary created by Watanabe (2018). Specifically, I removed all speeches with references to non-European countries with exception of the US.
3. The hand-coded random sample contains 6 percent of populist speeches. Other approaches find similar numbers for different text corpora: Bernhard and Kriesi (2019) in 5 percent of parties' press releases in 11 countries, Ernst et al. (2017) in about 10 percent of their analysed twitter and facebook posts, Zulianello, Albertini, and Ceccobelli (2018) in about 1.9 percent of the Facebook posts in their sample.
4. For the sake of readability, I removed outliers from the graph, they were however included in the estimation of the fitted lines.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in [Harvard Dataverse] at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/9UGJVM>, reference number [9UGJVM].

<will be created (including replication material) upon publication>

The raw data from the EU Parliamentary Speeches can be found via https://github.com/Connected-Politics-Lab/EUDD/tree/main/Datasets/EP_Corpus

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Appendix

Frame dictionaries

Table A1. Keywords for positive and negative framing of the people and the elite.

negative frame				positive frame		
abuse*	deprav*	hungry for power	political class	sins	betray*	noble
alienate	desecrat*	ignore*	power grabbing	spurn	blameless	ordinary man
annihilate	deserted	immoral*	power hungry	stain*	brave	ordinary men
apostasy	deserter*	impair	power monger	stomp	bravely	ordinary person
apostate	deserting	imperialist*	power-grabbing	sycophany	cleanliness	ordinary
apparatchik*	destroy	impiety	power-hungry	taint*	decency	praiseworthy
arrogan*	detriment*	impious	privilege	tarnish*	decent	principled
bad	discrimnat*	imposter	privileges	traitor*	defen*	reasonable
bad apples	disgust*	indecen*	profan*	transgress*	digni*	refined
betray*	dishones	inequitable	profligate	trashy	ethic*	the good
bias*	disloyal*	inhuman*	ravage	treacher*	expense of	upright
bigot*	disobe*	instable	refuse	treason*	fair	upstanding
blemish	disproportion	insubordinat*	refuse*	unacceptable*	forget	valor
Brussels	disrespect*	insurgent	renegade	uncaring	forgetting	valour*
mafia						
contagio*	dissociate	intemperate	repuls*	unchaste	hard earned	virtuous
corrupt*	dysfunctional*	jilt*	ruin*	unclean*	hard working	
coward*	endanger*	lawless*	ruling circles	undemocratic*	hard-earned	
cronies	enem*	lobby*	ruling circles	unelected	hard-working	
crooked*	eurocrat*	miscreant	sediti*	unequal*	hardworking	
cynical*	europhil*	mutinous	self-interested	unfaithful	honest*	
			self-satisfied	unhealthy	honor*	
damag*	evil	nonconformist	self-serving	unresponsive	honour*	
debase*	favouritism	not in touch	sequester	unscrupulos	ignor*	
debauche*	filth*	obscen*	sick	useless	interest	
deceiv*	fraud	obstruct	sin	venal	loyal	
defector	greed	offend*	sinful*	wantona	loyalt*	
defian*	gross	old elites	sinned	wealthy		
defile*	harmful*	oppose				

(Continued)

Table A1. Continued.

negative frame					positive frame
					man on the street*
defy*	heretic*	out of touch	sinner*	wicked*	modesty
denounce	hot air	pervert	sinning	wretched*	moral
					morally
					wrongdo*

Number of hits of base dictionaries

Table A2. Frequency of keywords for people and elite dictionaries.

People	Count	Elite	Count
Total	183,980	total	13,967
people	74,047	banks	5725
citizens	57,482	politicians	4049
the public	9988	establishment	729
population	8570	elite	681
family	8336	politician	583
taxpayers	5653	circles	345
europeans	5140	mafia	345
families	4763	bosses	239
peoples	4004	eurocrats	236
citizen	3227	political class	153
taxpayer	1050	elites	109
residents	902	europhile	104
resident	643	europhiles	91
populations	124	eurocracy	83
ordinary person	43	financiers	65
man on the street	8	elitist	59
		apparatchiks	44
		oligarchy	37
		ruling class	34
		oligarchs	26
		eurocrat	24
		eurocratic	24
		political classes	24
		cronies	22
		financier	22
		oligarchic	20

Note: For the elite dictionary, only the 25 most-occurring keyword are depicted.

Example for snippets

Table A3. Example for snippets.

Pre	Keyword	Post
European Parliament resolution vilifying Poland, the Polish	people	and Radio Maryja, the much-loved Catholic radio
of protection enjoy the same rights as long-term	residents	of that country within the scope of Directive
is an important signal to the banks and	citizens	of Europe . The financial crisis was largely
of very small businesses – often run by	families	- working in the sector of seaside establishments
our people have always cherished the most vulnerable	citizens	? Finally, Taoiseach, why have you
. A budget freeze is the minimum our	citizens	expect . I should like to see EU
the learning of foreign languages will bring European	citizens	closer together by giving them the means to
plays a part in democratic politics, as	the public	, if they are dissatisfied with the services
performing tasks that should be done by two	people	. Of European women, five per cent

(Continued)

Table A3. Continued.

Pre	Keyword	Post
we are going to explain this to the able to defend the interests of	citizens hard- working defend	. We are going to have Treaties 1 Dutch taxpayers yesterday .
. You are elected by the people to		democracy . What do the selected

Accuracy of measurement

Table A4. Classification accuracy.

	Own approach	Bonikowski & Gidron	Rooduijn & Pauwels	References to groups
Sensitivity	0.66	0.49	0.49	0.51
Specificity	0.84	0.61	0.72	0.94
Pos pred value	0.82	0.50	0.83	0.98
Neg pred value	0.68	0.60	0.34	0.29
Precision	0.82	0.50	0.83	0.98
Recall	0.66	0.49	0.49	0.51
F1	0.73	0.49	0.61	0.67
Prevalence	0.53	0.44	0.73	0.83
Detection rate	0.35	0.21	0.36	0.42
Detection prevalence	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43
Balanced accuracy	0.75	0.55	0.61	0.72
Overall accuracy	0.74	0.56	0.55	0.58