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José Santana-Pereira ⓘ and João Cancela ⓘ

ABSTRACT

Unlike other European nations, Portugal has experienced an absence of relevant populist parties, even if its recent background of severe economic crisis could have been a fertile ground for their advent. To illuminate this apparent contradiction, we look at the demand side of the equation, drawing on survey data to examine the spread, correlates, and potential electoral implications of populist attitudes in Portugal. We show that while individuals with a populist outlook do not share a particular socioeconomic profile, several attitudinal factors are significant predictors of individual-level populism. Furthermore, those with stronger populist attitudes are not more likely to abstain in elections, but rather tend to vote for parties that exhibit some degree of populism in their rhetoric.

Reacting to the real-world events of the last decades, namely the *populist zeitgeist* (Mudde 2004), the electoral growth of populist parties in Europe and their participation in governments in several countries, political scientists have devoted a great deal of attention to the phenomenon of populism in Western democracies. Within this frame of research, Portugal has often been depicted as an exception, since no clear-cut populist party, either left- or right-wing, has developed within its party system, not even after the shockwaves created by the Great Recession and the 2011–2014 bailout (Lisi & Borghetto 2018; Lisi, Llamazares & Tsakatika 2019). Indeed, while the conditions to activate populist attitudes (Lisi, Llamazares & Tsakatika 2019; Hawkins, Kaltwasser & Andreadis 2020) and foster the success of populist forces – deep economic crisis, high perceptions of corruption, and lack of responsiveness (Lisi, Llamazares & Tsakatika 2019; Hawkins,Kaltwasser & Andreadis 2020) – caused populist actors to flourish in Spain, Greece, and Italy (cases in which these parties not only became relevant players but also entered the government), the same has not happened in Portugal.

The period since Portugal exited its bailout in 2014 has undoubtedly been marked by an innovative (and initially, by no means uncontroversial) government

solution dubbed the 'contraption' (*geringonça*) – a minority Socialist government formally supported by the left-wing parliamentary parties. During this period, Portugal's status regarding populism suffered no change. In fact, within the European continent, only Malta shared Portugal's lack of relevant, unambiguously populist players (Rooduijn et al. 2019).

It has been argued that despite this contrast with most European countries (and especially with other Southern European polities), there have been important variations within the Portuguese party system in terms of the presence and salience of populist rhetoric across parties and over time (Lisi & Borghetto 2018). Comparative scholarship has also made the case that populism is a matter of degree rather than kind (Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011; Rooduijn & Akkerman 2017; Louwerse & Otjes 2019). However, even taking this into account, the Portuguese case is indeed remarkably distinct from other South European countries, as we show below.

Against this backdrop that allows us to depict Portugal as a (relatively) negative case of populism within Europe, several relevant empirical questions arise. First, to what extent is the lack of successful clear-cut populist parties in Portugal a match or mismatch with the demand side of the equation, namely citizens' general levels of populist attitudes? Second, assuming there is variation in terms of expression of populist attitudes, what are their underlying factors in Portugal, a context in which neither most parties nor the media (Caeiro 2019; Salgado 2019) have been keen to activate them? Finally, and perhaps more important, in the absence of straightforward populist choices in the electoral market, how do populist citizens vote? Do they abstain from voting or engage in forms of protest voting such as punishing the incumbent, supporting parties with some degree of populist substance, or voting in new players in the party system?

In this article, we draw on survey data collected between March and June 2018 (the beginning of the second half of the first-order electoral cycle) and in April-May 2019 (the eve of the European Parliament election) in order to examine the nature and correlates of citizens' populist attitudes in Portugal and the extent to which they are linked to different patterns of electoral behaviour: vote for parties according to their relative degrees of populism, for the incumbent, for new parties, and turnout. These data are not only recent but also one of the few sources of information about populist attitudes in the country.

The article is structured as follows. In the next section, we review the literature on populism and on this phenomenon in Portugal. Following that, we lay out the theoretical foundations of our study of populist attitudes, based on Mudde's 2004 definition of populism, and frame our expectations with reference to the results of previous research on the issue and the specific features of the Portuguese context. Then, we present the data and

methodological approach chosen to test our hypotheses. The following section presents the results of the empirical analysis aimed at identifying the prevalence of populist attitudes in Portugal, their explanatory factors and correlates, and their impact on voting behaviour. The article concludes with a discussion of the main patterns identified.

Populism: the supply side and Portugal's exceptionalism in the South European context

In the last decades, the advent of populism has received a great deal of attention from scholars, pundits, journalists, and the general public interested in political affairs in Western democracies and beyond. Along with the growth of so-called populist parties in several countries (cf. Rooduijn et al. 2019), political scientists have increased their efforts to further understand the phenomenon.

However, at least from a conceptual and theoretical viewpoint, this field of research is remarkably fuzzy, with populism being defined as a political movement, style, discourse, strategy, culture, ideology, form of representation, or conception of democracy (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017; Wuttke, Schimpf & Schoen 2020).

In spite of the conceptual richness of the field, a growing number of scholars are adopting the notion that populism constitutes a set of loosely articulated ideas which provide an interpretative framework of the political realm (Hawkins, Riding & Mudde 2012; Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017; Hawkins, Kaltwasser & Andreadis 2020). This ideational approach is best captured by Cas Mudde's (2004) minimal definition of populism, which is one of the most commonly used in empirical studies of this phenomenon. According to this author, populism is 'a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic camps, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be the expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people' (Mudde 2004, p. 543).

As a thin-centred ideology, populism is able to combine with different leftist and rightist host ideologies (wider, deeper, and more substantive) such as socialism or nationalism (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017; Rooduijn & Akkerman 2017). Some of the main components of this minimal definition (people-centrism, anti-elitism, and homogeneity of the people) were indeed identified by Rooduijn (2014) as the lowest common denominators observable in archetypical populist political actors across time and space.

Most of the extant literature has focused on the supply side of populism, i.e. political actors and, more concretely, political parties. Questions regarding the rise and success of populist parties, as well as their effects on the political system and the quality of democracy, have been thoroughly examined within the European context.[1]

Portugal's exceptionalism

As the salience of populism across Europe and interest in it have grown, Portugal has been often depicted as a case of absence of relevant populist actors. This is particularly noteworthy against the backdrop of political developments in other South European polities, in which populist actors have been quite successful (Lisi & Borghetto 2018; Lisi, Llamazares & Tsakatika 2019).

Granted, a few signs of populism are identifiable at the left-end of the Portuguese party system, in both the BE (Bloco de Esquerda – Left Bloc) and especially the PCP (Partido Comunista Português – Portuguese Communist Party), which has run in elections in a stable coalition with the greens since 1987. However, these signs are first and foremost rooted in these parties' main ideologies, which leads them to be sceptical of bourgeois/mainstream parties, European institutions, and financial/economic elites at large (Lisi & Borghetto 2018; Lisi, Llamazares & Tsakatika 2019). Indeed, Rooduijn et al. (2019) do not characterise these parties as populist, but merely as far-left and eurosceptic.

In turn, experiences of radical right-wing populism have been, largely speaking, unsuccessful – the far-right PNR (Partido Nacional Renovador – National Renewal Party) has never achieved more than 0.5 per cent of the popular vote and consequently has never entered parliament (Marchi 2013; Lisi, Llamazares & Tsakatika 2019). Other feeble populist parties and candidates have arisen in Portugal in the last decades but were unable to establish themselves as relevant players (Salgado & Zúquete 2017). It was only in October 2019 that a blatantly populist party, recently formed – Chega (Enough) – was able to secure one of the 230 seats in the Portuguese parliament (Marchi 2019; Mendes & Dennison 2020).

In order to better portray the presence of populist political parties in Portugal in comparative perspective, we rely on data from the 2017 Chapel Hill Expert Flash Survey (CHES; Polk et al. 2017). Specifically, we extracted the average expert classifications from two variables ('people vs elite' and 'antielite salience'). Both variables had values between 0 (not populist at all) and 10 (extremely populist). We used the classifications for each of the main Portuguese parties in these two variables and calculated their average, which produced a continuous variable, which we label anti-elite sentiment. The average of the values reached by each party weighted by the number of seats held in parliament yield 3.1 in the Portuguese case, which is moderately lower than in Spain (3.6), and considerably lower than in Italy (4.4) and Greece (5.7) for the same reference period.

Figure 1 plots the anti-elite sentiment scores of each party with seats in the national parliament on the vertical axis against the position of the party in terms of its overall ideological (left/right) stance on the horizontal axis.[2] These data
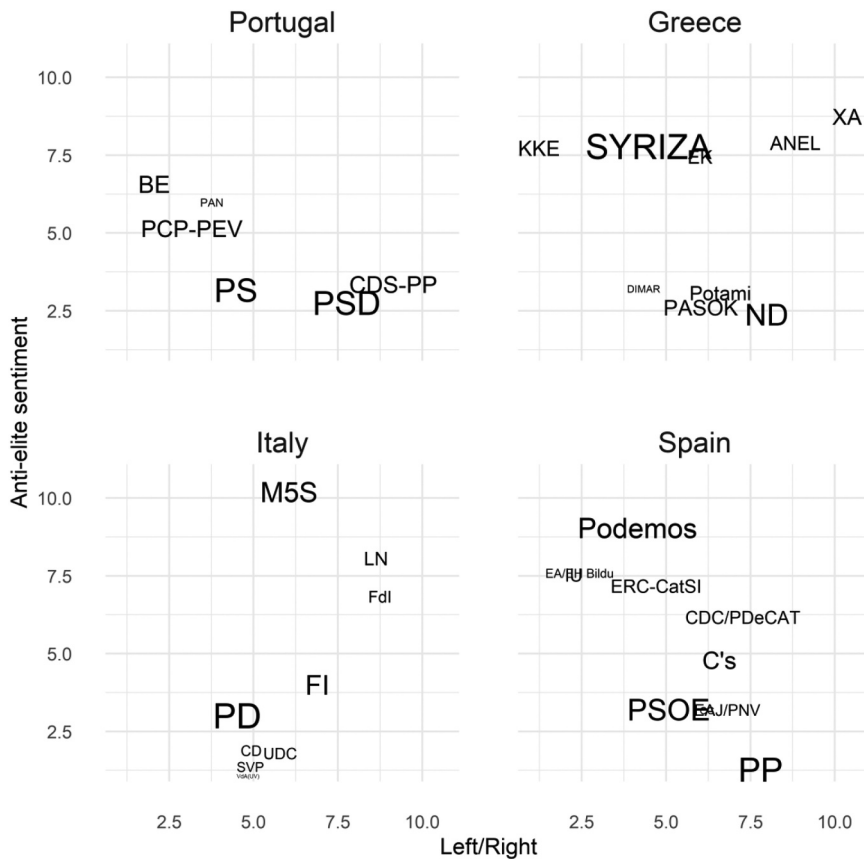
Figure 1. Distribution of South European parties along the left/right and anti-elite dimensions. Source: Own elaboration using data from the 2017 Chapel Hill Expert Flash Survey (Polk et al. 2017). Notes: For each figure, the horizontal axis represents the range of CHES scores in terms of Left/Right position (variable 'lrgen'), and the vertical axis represents the range of 'anti-elite sentiment', which corresponds to the average of the CHES variables 'people_vs_elite' and 'antielite_salience'. The size of each label is proportional to the number of seats in the legislature (as of 2017). Party acronym meanings– Portugal: BE (Bloco de Esquerda – Left Bloc), CDS-PP (CDS-Partido Popular – CDS-People's Party), PCP-PEV (also known as CDU; Coligação Democrática Unitária – Democratic Unitarian Coalition), PAN (Pessoas-Animais-Natureza – People-Animals-Nature), PS (Partido Socialista – Socialist Party), PSD (Partido Social Democrata – Social Democratic Party). Greece: ANEL (Anexartitoi Ellines – Independent Greeks), DIMAR (Dimokratiki Aristera – Democratic Left), EK (Enosi Kentroon – Union of Centrists), KKE (Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas – Communist Party of Greece), ND (Néa Dimokratía – New Democracy), PASOK (Panellinio Sosialistikó Kínima – Panhellenic Socialist Movement), Potami (To Potami – The River), SYRIZA (Synaspismó's Rizospastikís Aristerás – Coalition of the Radical Left), XA (Laïkós Sýndesmos: Chrysí Avgí – Popular Association: Golden Dawn). Italy: CD (Centro Democratico: Diritti e Libertà – Democratic Centre: Rights and Freedom), FdI (Fratelli d'Italia – Brothers of Italy), FI (Forza Italia – Forward Italy), LN (Lega Nord – Northern League), M5S (Movimento Cinque Stelle – Five Star Movement), PD (Partido Democratico – Democratic Party), SVP (Südtiroler Volkspartei – South Tyrolean People's Party), UDC (Unione di Centro – Union of the Centre), VdA (Vallée d'Aoste – Aosta Valley). Spain: C's (Ciudadanos: Partido de la Ciudadanía – Citizens: Party of the Citizenry), CC (Coalición Canaria – Canary's Coalition), CDC/PDeCAT (Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya/Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català – Democratic Convergence of Catalonia/Catalan European Democratic Party), EA/EH BILDU (Eusko Alkartasuna/Euskal Herria Bildu – Basque Solidarity/Unite Basque Country), EAJ/PNV (Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea/Partido Nacionalista Vasco – Basque Nationalist Party), ERC-CatSI (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya – Republican Left of Catalonia), IU (Izquierda Unida – United Left), Podemos (Podemos – We Can), PP (Partido Popular – People's Party), PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español – Spanish Socialist Workers' Party).

show that levels of anti-elite sentiment were relatively lower in Portugal than in the other three countries, with the most populist party with parliamentary seats being BE (6.3 on a 0–10 scale), for the reasons explained above, followed by PAN (Pessoas-Animais-Natureza – People-Animals-Nature) (5.8). Much higher scores could be found in Spain, where Podemos (We Can) scored 8.7; in Italy, with the M5S (Movimente 5 Stelle – Five Star Movement) scoring 9.9; and in Greece, which featured high-scoring parties on both the radical left – SYRIZA (Συνασπισμός της Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς – Coalition of the Radical Left) with 7.4, and the KKE (Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας – Communist Party of Greece) with 7.5 – and on the far right with XA (Χρυσή Αυγή – Golden Dawn) with 8.4.

Several factors have been put forward to explain the lack of success of populist parties in Portugal in the last decades, the majority of which have to do with the supply side. On the right end of the party system, there is the recent memory of the authoritarian Estado Novo regime (1933–1974), the lack of professionalism, strategy, and charismatic leadership of populist entrepreneurs, the absence of a refugee crisis, and the feeble salience of immigration as an issue are often mentioned factors. On the left, experts stress the fact that established radical left-wing parties have played a role in absorbing discontent and anti-austerity or anti-establishment social movements which in other South European countries led to the establishment of new populist parties, as well as their integration into the contract parliamentarism mode of government known as *geringonça* (contraption) between 2015 and 2019.[3] Less – or shall we say nothing? – is known about the demand side of populism in Portugal.

The demand side: populist attitudes, their correlates and implications

In spite of efforts aimed at identifying the social and attitudinal characteristics of populist party voters (e.g. Rooduijn 2018), researchers have been slow to adequately address the demand side of populism, namely by analysing the populist attitudes held by citizens, their correlates, and their impact on political behaviour. Indeed, most of the literature on populist attitudes is less than ten years old.

An important step in the development of this field of research was the methodological and empirical contribution by Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014). The authors followed the previous work of Hawkins, Riding and Mudde (2012) and surveyed Dutch citizens by presenting them with six statements aimed at measuring the elements present in Mudde's 2004 definition. Their results indicated that populist stances indeed constitute a distinctive and uni-dimensional political attitude.[4] Populist attitudes measured in this way consti-tute a separate dimension from other political attitudes such as elitism, pluralism, political trust, and external political efficacy (e.g. Akkerman, Mudde & Zaslove 2014; Geurkink et al. 2020). The scale designed by Akkerman, Mudde

and Zaslove (2014) has been one of the most used in the literature on populist attitudes which we will review in detail in the following paragraphs.

One of the key goals in the literature on populist attitudes, beyond measuring their dimensionality and incidence within the population, has been the identification of factors explaining individual differences in their expression. These efforts have focused on an array of variables, such as age and gender (e.g. Hawkins, Riding & Mudde 2012; Elchardus & Spruyt 2016), socioeconomic status (income, occupation, and education; e.g. Elchardus & Spruyt 2016; Tsatsanis, Andreadis & Teperoglou 2018; Rico & Anduiza 2019), the media diet people follow (Hameleers, Bos & De Vreese 2017), general personality traits (Fatke 2019), or even conspiratorial mentality (Castanho Silva, Vegetti & Littvay 2017). Others have focused on correlates such as attitudes towards immigration and the European Union (e.g. Hawkins, Riding & Mudde 2012; Hameleers & De Vreese 2020), support for referenda (Jacobs, Akkerman & Zaslove 2018), ideological self-placement (e.g. Rico, Guinjoan & Anduiza 2017; Tsatsanis, Andreadis & Teperoglou 2018), or individuals' relationship with the sphere of politics (interest and partisanship; e.g. Hawkins, Riding & Mudde 2012; Müller et al. 2017). In the next paragraphs, the main hypotheses to be tested in the Portuguese context will be framed within the context of this growing bulk of research.

Hypotheses on the correlates of populist attitudes in Portugal

We start by hypothesising that citizens who we can describe as *losers of globalisation* (Kriesi et al. 2006), and are therefore more vulnerable to recent or potential economic and cultural changes in the society, will display higher levels of populist attitudes. A few studies have indeed observed a direct relationship between some or several socioeconomic variables and populist attitudes[5]; others have reported the mediating impact of other attitudes[6] or the role of emotions[7] in the process. Specifically, we expect higher degrees of populist attitudes amongst people whose work situation (*H1a*), social class (*H1b*), and education levels (*H1c*) may cause them to feel – or indeed be – more vulnerable in an economically open and mutable environment, especially in a context like that of Portugal in the aftermath of the deep economic and financial crisis caused by the Great Recession.

Second, populist attitudes will be more pronounced amongst those who hold more negative perceptions of the path followed by society – in short, a declinist worldview, according to Elchardus and Spruyt (2016). Inspired by this, we expect populism to be higher amongst those who negatively appraise the performance of the executive (*H2a*), the general situation of the national economy (*H2b*), and the proceedings of European Union institutions (*H2c*). Regarding the specific impact of government appraisal, our

expectation is based not only on the aforementioned effects of declinist viewpoints but also on the fact that citizens who feel close to the incumbent party (or parties) tend to be less populist – if, of course, those parties are not populist themselves (Anduiza, Guinjoan & Rico, 2018; Rico & Anduiza 2019).

Our expectation regarding the impact of the assessment of the national economy is based on the findings of Anduiza, Guinjoan & Rico (2018) and Rico and Anduiza (2019), who show that sociotropic considerations are more powerful predictors of populist attitudes than egotropic perceptions or objective vulnerability. Moreover, a negative view of how things work in the EU may also be related to populist attitudes because euroscepticism is a key factor in countries as different as Greece and the Netherlands (Hameleers, Bos & De Vreese 2017; Tsatsanis, Andreadis & Teperoglou 2018; Hameleers & De Vreese 2020).

Third, we will test two contrasting hypotheses about the relationship between ideological self-placement and populist attitudes. On the one hand, some studies have shown that populist attitudes (measured after the ideational approach, i.e. lacking nativist and horizonal exclusionist accounts of who 'the people' are) tend to be higher amongst left-wing citizens.[8] On the other hand, a few studies have reported a positive relationship between ideological radicalism (being at the extremes of the ideological spectrum) and populist attitudes (Ivaldi, Zaslove & Akkerman 2017).[9]

In the case of Portugal, where an established left-wing or right-wing populist party is absent but where one can spot a few signs of populist discourse at the left end of the party system (Lisi & Borghetto 2018), testing the relative impacts of ideological self-placement and extremism on the display of populist attitudes is an interesting and enlightening endeavour. Our expectations are that either populist attitudes will be more common at the extreme left (*H3a*) or at both extremes (*H3b*) of the left-right continuum.

Fourth, we expect a correlation between interest in politics and party identification on the one hand and populist attitudes on the other. These expectations are based on the general assumption that in a context such as Portugal, in which populist political parties *strictu sensu* have been absent for a long time, closeness to the political sphere, whether it is informational or emotional, might reduce the odds of holding populist viewpoints. Specifically, drawing on the results of Müller et al. (2017) for the metropolitan regions of Paris and Zurich, we expect to find a negative relationship between interest in politics and populist attitudes (*H4a*). Also, we expect citizens who express a party identification to be less populist than those who do not feel close to a party (*H4b*).

Hypotheses on the relationship between populist attitudes and voting behaviour

In recent years, researchers have also investigated the extent to which populist attitudes explain political behaviour, namely the choices that people make at the polls. Several studies have found an impact of populist attitudes on support or vote for populist parties.[10] That said, the activation of populist attitudes seems to depend on political context: when comparing the cases of Greece and Chile, Hawkins, Kaltwasser and Andreadis (2020) observed that populist attitudes were widely disseminated in both countries, yet only in the former was support for populist parties – and the impact of populist attitudes on the vote – considerably high. The authors linked this with the general economic and political landscape: while Greece was dealing with a major economic crisis and corruption scandals, Chile ranked as one of the least corrupt countries in the world and was fairly stable in economic terms.

Interestingly enough, two studies by Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel (2018) and Loew and Faas (2019) showed that populist attitudes interact with economic policy preferences in the probability of voting for a left-wing populist party and, similarly, with cultural policy preferences in the odds of voting for a right-wing populist party: populist attitudes will only explain voting for populist parties if citizens do not hold clear-cut preferences that are congruent with the populist party's host ideology (anti-market or anti-open society). Populist attitudes thus work as a 'motivational substitute' for issue proximity and encourage support for populist parties whose positions on issues do not match our own (Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel 2018, p. 83).

But what can we expect in terms of the impact of populist parties in a context lacking overtly populist competitors such as Portugal? Four expectations will be tested. First, based on the ideas that populism is not a dichotomous phenomenon but a matter of degree (Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011; Rooduijn & Akkerman 2017; Louwerse & Otjes 2019) and that, despite the fact that no full-fledged populist parties existed during the time frame under analysis, there are differences in the degree of populism expressed by parties in Portugal (Lisi & Borghetto 2018), we expect populist attitudes to increase the odds of voting for the relatively more populist (or, shall we say, least un-populist) parties in the Portuguese party system (*H5*).

Second, based on the patterns identified by Anduiza, Guinjoan & Rico (2018) and Hameleers and De Vreese (2020), we expect that populist attitudes are negatively correlated with vote for the incumbent party (*H6*).

Third, Marcos-Marne, Plaza-Colodro and Freyburg (2020) showed that in Spain, populist attitudes increased the odds of voting for new parties, irrespective of how populist those parties were. In line with this, we expect that populist attitudes will be related to a higher likelihood of voting for new competitors in the Portuguese sphere (*H7*).

Our last expectation has to do with the relationship between populism and turnout, which is an underexplored debate in the literature. Previous research has shown that, in the Netherlands, non-voters rank high in terms of populist attitudes (Akkerman, Mudde & Zaslove 2014; Hameleers & De Vreese 2020), but an impact of these attitudes on the likelihood of turning out to vote has not been observed in Spain (Anduiza, Guinjoan & Rico 2018). In the case of Portugal, inspired by Costa Lobo (2019), we test the assumption that, in the absence of successful populist political entrepreneurship, a strategy of exit (abstention) is likely for citizens whose populist attitudes mean they feel dissatisfaction with the political offer or are anti-partyist (Bélanger 2004). We therefore expect that populist attitudes will increase the odds of not turning out to vote (*H8*).

Data and variables

We relied on survey data collected in 2018 and 2019 tapping populist attitudes and other variables relevant to empirically testing our hypotheses in routine and pre-electoral times. Two datasets were employed: the 2018 voter survey from the research project *Crisis, Political Representation and Democratic Renewal* (N = 1375), fielded between 26 March and 18 June (Freire, Lisi & Tsatsanis 2018) and the May 2019 *Sondagens ICS/ISCTE* poll (N = 802), whose fieldwork took place between 22 April and 3 May (Magalhães et al. 2019).

Populist attitudes were measured using the scale developed by Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014), composed of six items aimed at measuring the specific components of people-centrism, anti-elitism and popular sovereignty encompassed on the minimal definition of populism proposed by Mudde (2004). The items are presented in the Appendix 2, available online at https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2020.1864910. Comparative analyses of populist attitude scales have suggested that the instrument created by Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014) is one of the best available, since it ranks high in terms of internal consistency and external validity, is acceptable in terms of conceptual breath and cross-national validity (Castanho Silva et al. 2020), and is relatively resilient to different operationalisation strategies based on its three different core components (Wuttke, Schimpf & Schoen 2020).

We created a composite index of populist attitudes by taking the arithmetic mean of the answers to the six items (on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 – 'completely disagree' – to 5 completely agree'). The average levels of populist attitudes are rather high: 3.82 on the aforementioned scale (with a standard deviation of 0.63). Details about the distribution of the six items in the two surveys are reported in the online appendix's Table A.2 and Figure A1, but it should be stressed that responses to the six items were overwhelmingly tilted towards the 'populist' pole of the scale: the proportion of respondents disagreeing and strongly disagreeing does not go beyond 18 per cent for any of the questions in both surveys.

In order to further confirm the internal consistency of this index, we followed the approach of Hawkins, Kaltwasser and Andreadis (2020) and conducted a Mokken scale analysis. The results of the monotonicity checks validated our strategy, as all items obtained a score above the conventional 0.3 threshold. The three reliability measures (Molenaar Sijtsma statistic, Cronbach's alpha, and Guttman's lambda-2) all yielded scores above 0.75, which is further evidence of the adequacy of the arithmetic mean as a consistent indicator of populist attitudes.[11]

Hypotheses concerning the correlates of populist attitudes were tested by fitting two Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models using the composite index outlined above as our dependent variable.

Testing *H1a* entailed using information on work situations collected in both surveys. Specifically, respondents classified themselves as pertaining to one of the following categories: employees (reference category), self-employed, retired plus housekeepers and informal caregivers, and unemployed. In order to test *H1b*, we relied on two distinct sources of information, depending on the survey at stake. The 2018 study included information on the respondents' economic backgrounds, and we created a dummy variable named *low social class*. A somewhat different procedure was followed for the 2019 study, as in that instance we only had information about the type of work performed by the respondents. In this case, manual labourers were coded as belonging to the *low social class* group. To test *H1c*, we use a dummy variable which is set to 1 if the respondent has ever enrolled in higher education and 0 otherwise.

Testing the three propositions under the label *H2* was made possible by using three variables pertaining to the respondents' evaluations of the economy over the previous year, their assessment of the executive, and their satisfaction with how democracy works in Europe. The three variables are ordinal, and higher values mean more positive views.

H3a, which related to the impact of ideological (left-right) position on the propensity to have populist attitudes, was accounted for by the self-placement of respondents on a classic 0–10 scale. The variable used for testing *H3b*, which posited that those farther away from the centre would be more likely to share populist attitudes, was extracted from the same variable: those at the central point of the scale (5) were labelled 'centrist', those in intermediate positions on either the left (3, 4) or right (6, 7) were labelled 'moderate', and the remaining respondents (0, 1, 2 on the left and 8, 9, 10 on the right) were labelled 'extremist'.

Lastly, the operationalisation of *H4a* (interest in politics) and *H4b* (party identification) was straightforward, as both surveys included questions about these two matters. The first independent variable is ordinal with higher values meaning a greater degree of interest, while the second is a dummy in which the value 1 means that the respondent feels close to a political party.

In addition to these variables, we also controlled for age and gender, since a few studies have shown that men tend to display more populist attitudes than

women (Elchardus & Spruyt 2016; Spierings & Zaslove 2017; Fatke 2019) and that older citizens tend to be more populist than their younger counterparts (e.g. Müller et al. 2017; Rico, Guinjoan & Anduiza 2017; Tsatsanis, Andreadis & Teperoglou 2018). We also included a dummy for the survey year, although we did not expect differences between the two time points.

As to the hypotheses related to the impact of populist attitudes on voting behaviour (*H5–H8*), different models were computed, depending on the dependent variable to be explained. In order to test *H4*, which posited that those with more intense populist outlooks tend to vote for relatively populist parties, we took the values of the 2017 flash update of the CHES (Polk et al. 2017) described above. Specifically, we used the scores for each of the main Portuguese parties in the anti-elite sentiment dimension discussed earlier, which produced a continuous dependent variable.

The remaining hypotheses were tested via logistic regression models using specific dichotomies as dependent variables. The voting intention for the incumbent Socialist Party (PS, *Partido Socialista*) was operationalised using a dummy variable in which choosing the PS was coded as 1 and selecting another party was coded as 0. The same procedure was followed for measuring voting intentions for new parties, those that were founded in the five years previous to the survey and never elected members of parliament (coded as 1),[12] as opposed to all others (coded as 0). Finally, we tested the relationship between the populist attitudes index and the declared intention to abstain (1) versus the intention to vote (0).

While the models with the vote for mainstream parties ordered by their degree of populism and for the incumbents were computed for both 2018 (intention to vote in a hypothetical legislative election) and 2019 (intention to vote in the forthcoming EP election), the last two (vote for new parties and abstention) were only computed for 2019 due to lack of suitable data for 2018. All models were computed with a series of control variables aimed at ruling out effects of known factors of voting behaviour, both sociodemographic and attitudinal.

Results

The correlates of populist attitudes

The test of hypotheses 1–4 took the index of populist attitudes as a dependent variable and used a sequence of two models, the results of which are summarised in Table 1. The detailed statistical results are available in Table A.3 in the online appendix. In order to provide a more concrete understanding of the direction and magnitude of the findings, Figure 2 plots the predicted values of the dependent variable for different values of the independent variables

Table 1. Summary of results regarding the correlates of populist attitudes.

| Hypothesis		Empirical results
H.1a	Higher degrees of populist attitudes are expected amongst people with a less stable work situation	✗
H.1b	Higher degrees of populist attitudes are expected amongst people from a lower social class	✗
H.1c	Higher degrees of populist attitudes are expected amongst people with lower education levels	✗
H.2a	Higher degrees of populist attitudes are expected amongst those who negatively appraise the performance of the executive	✓
H.2b	Higher degrees of populist attitudes are expected amongst those who negatively appraise the general situation of the national economy	✗
H.2c	Higher degrees of populist attitudes are expected amongst those who negatively appraise the performance of the proceedings of European Union institutions	✓
H.3a	Populist attitudes will be more common at the extreme left of the left-right continuum.	✗
H.3b	Populist attitudes will be more common at both extremes of the left-right continuum.	✓
H.4a	A negative relationship is expected between interest in politics and populist attitudes	✗*
H.4b	Citizens who express a party identification are expected to be less populist than those who do not feel close to a party	✓

Notes: ✗: not confirmed; ✓: confirmed; *: A small, significant effect in the opposite direction was detected.

according to the coefficients yielded by Model 2 (reported in Table A.3. in the online appendix).[13]

Our first set of hypotheses regarding the higher propensity of the *losers of globalisation* to display a populist outlook towards politics was not supported. Indeed, in neither of the two models did individuals dubbed as such seem particularly prone to sharing a populist worldview. Neither those with feebler work situations nor those from low social class backgrounds or with fewer years of education were more likely to espouse such views. This suggests that, by and large, the roots of populist attitudes in Portugal do not lie in personal economic grievances, which leads us to reject *H1* as a whole.

Conversely, two of the propositions regarding *status quo* assessments were met: those who evaluated the executive more positively (*H2a*) and those who were more satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union (*H2c*) were less likely to espouse a populist stance towards politics. On the other hand, evaluations of the economy (*H2b*) were not related to populist attitudes – a finding that does not replicate the patterns identified by Anduiza, Guinjoan and Rico (2018) and Rico and Anduiza (2019). This set of results allows us to conclude that it may not be a declinist view of the world, but instead a negative appraisal of specific institutions, that is correlated with populist attitudes.

The relationship between ideology and our dependent variable also partially met our theoretical expectations. Populism did not seem more disseminated on one particular side of the ideological spectrum – neither left nor right – which leads us to reject *H3a*. Its prevalence was nevertheless more widespread among those closer to the extremes *vis-à-vis* centrists – a pattern also observed in France and the metropolitan region of Berlin (Ivaldi, Zaslove & Akkerman 2017; Müller et al. 2017). Thus, *H3b* is confirmed: more intense populist attitudes
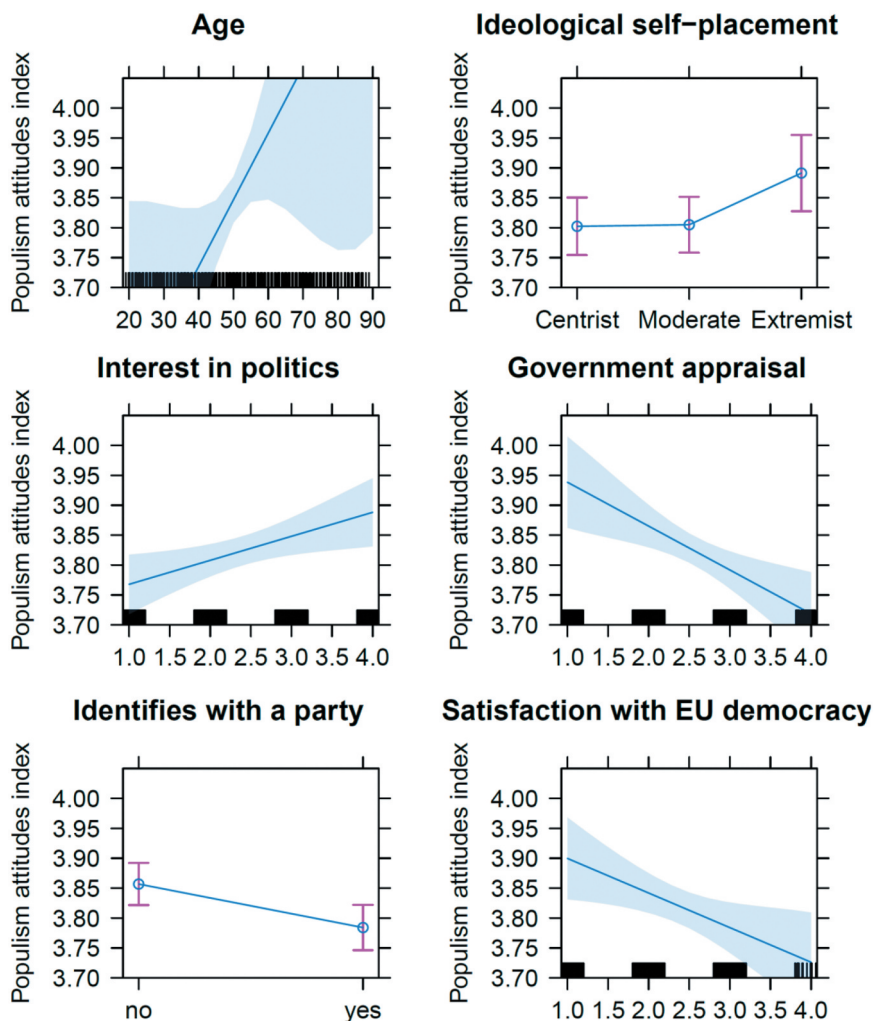
Figure 2. Factors impacting on populist attitudes in Portugal (2018–2019).
Source: Own elaboration using results from models reported in the online appendix.
Note: Figures plot the predicted values of the populism attitudes index for different values in the independent variables according to the coefficients of model 2 (reported in table A.3 in the online appendix).

are more abundant near both extremes of the axis, rather than in a specific ideological bloc.

The two propositions laid out in *H4* yielded substantive results, albeit in one of the cases in an opposite direction to what was initially posed. Indeed, interest in politics was positively correlated with our composite index of populism. This finding contradicts our initial expectation, insofar as in other studies either the reverse was shown to be the case (in the metropolitan areas of Paris and Zurich) or no effect was observed (metropolitan regions of London and Berlin) (Müller et al. 2017). While we must acknowledge that the effect is very small and barely statistically significant, this may mean that the

expression of populist attitudes in Portugal could be less about uttering stereotypes about a realm that people are dettached from, and more about critical citizenship.

By contrast, those who identify with a party are less populist in the attitudes they express towards the political system. The combination of these two results outlines a nuanced relationship between political involvement and populism: while it is true that those who are more detached from parties are more likely to adhere to populist beliefs, this group is not necessarily uninterested in politics writ large.

A last note on the effects of the control variables is due (cf. Table A.3 in the online appendix). First, we did not observe a statistically significant difference between men and women in terms of populist attitudes. Second, age is a significant factor, since older respondents tended to report higher levels of populism than their younger counterparts when several other sociodemographic and attitudinal variables were controlled for. Third, populist attitudes seemed to be more widespread in 2019 than in 2018. While we lack a theoretical ground to frame this unexpected result, we believe that the different contexts (the 2018 survey was conducted in routine times and the 2019 survey in the midst of an election campaign) may help explain this result, with the populist attitudes of some citizens being activated by the electoral race dynamics.

Populist attitudes and the vote

A summary of the results of our analysis of the relationship between populist attitudes and voting is available in Table 2. We started by looking at the extent to which those with more intense populist attitudes were more likely to vote for parties that exhibit a relative degree of populist rhetoric (H5). This required examining the relationship between parties and populism as operating on a continuum, rather than in a dichotomous fashion. We estimated the relationship between the populist attitudes index and the degree of populism of the

Table 2. Summary of results regarding the relationship between populist attitudes and the vote.

Hypothesis	Empirical results
H5 Populist attitudes are expected to increase the odds of voting for the comparatively more populist parties	~ *
H6 Populist attitudes are expected to be negatively correlated with vote for the incumbent party	~
H7 Populist attitudes are expected to be related to a higher likelihood of voting for new competitors	✗
H8 Populist attitudes are expected to increase the odds of not turning out to vote.	✗

Notes: ✗: not confirmed; ~: partially confirmed; ✓: confirmed; *: The hypothesis was only confirmed in terms of voting intention for general elections, not in elections to the European Parliament

party for which respondents intended to vote, both in hypothetical forthcoming general elections (2018) and in the European Parliament elections (2019).

The results show that the relationship is positive and statistically significant in the case of the former (column 1 of Table A.4 in the online appendix) but not in the latter (column 2 of Table A.4 in the online appendix). In other words, it seems that populist attitudes are a key factor in voting for relatively populist parties in Portugal only in hypothetical first-order elections, in which more is at stake and abstention or vote for fringe parties may feel like less legitimate vessels for such populist stances.

Regarding the controls, we see that ideology is significant in both elections, as the more left-wing respondents are, the more likely they are to vote for the more populist (or least non-populist) parliamentary parties in Portugal. This makes particular sense, since the highest degree of populism is found on the left side of the party system (Polk et al. 2017; Lisi & Borghetto 2018). In 2019, there was also an effect of radicalism, with respondents voting more populist the more they distanced themselves from the midpoint of the left-right spectrum. In 2019, age was also a significant predictor, reducing the odds of voting for parties with relatively higher levels of populism, but the size of this effect is modest.

The following hypothesis (*H6*) posited that respondents who scored high on the index of populist attitudes would be less likely to vote for the incumbent. The analysis of data from 2018 (Table A.5, in the online appendix, column 1) confirmed just that: the populist attitudes index was a strong negative predictor of votes for the incumbent Socialists, exerting an effect that was practically symmetrical to that of the popularity of PS leader and Prime Minister António Costa. Assessment of the state of the economy and ideological radicalism displayed the expected positive and negative impacts of voting for the party in office. However, an analysis of 2019 data (Table A.5, in the online appendix, column 2) did not replicate the negative impact of populist attitudes. Indeed, when asked who they would vote for in the forthcoming European Parliament elections, those with a more populist outlook did not exhibit a lower likelihood of voting for the incumbent. In terms of other results vis-à-vis the 2018 survey, it is also worth mentioning that self-employed and unemployed individuals, as well as those with higher levels of education, were less likely to vote for the PS.

Moreover, the populist index is not a very effective indicator of voting for new parties (Table A.5, in the online appendix, column 3), causing us to reject *H7*. In fact, regarding this dependent variable, only a few controls were significant – the odds of opting for them were higher amongst both the centrists and the ideologically extreme, than among those respondents who described themselves as moderately left-wing or moderately right-wing. Another finding was that the more positive the assessment of the government's record, the lower the probability of through voting for new parties. Lastly, it seems that self-employed

respondents were more risk-adverse than those who worked for others, since their odds of supporting new parties was lower.

Our final hypothesis, *H8*, suggested that individuals with higher scores on the populist attitudes index would be more likely to abstain from voting in elections. However, this does not seem to be the case: such individuals were not significantly less likely to report an intention to turn out to vote in the next European Parliament election. This is shown in Table A.6 (in the online appendix), which contains two models. The first model is more parsimonious and features only sociodemographic variables, while the second is more complete and also encompasses attitudes and predispositions towards politics. Both models converge in signalling that Portuguese citizens espousing a more populist outlook are not especially detached from the electoral realm in comparison with other individuals.

An important caveat to take into account is that individuals were asked about their propensity to vote in a second-order electoral contest, and thus we should be cautious not to extrapolate this finding to other realms. Furthermore, in line with previous research (Smets & van Ham 2013), those who identified with a party were less likely to abstain from voting, as were those with a higher degree of interest in politics. Interestingly, contrary to trends detected in a recent analysis of general election data (Cancela & Magalhães 2020), it also seems to be the case that women are slightly more likely to participate than men.

In order to provide a clearer picture of these findings, Figure 3 presents four plots that convert the regression coefficients into expected values of each dependent variable. Since H5 is tested through a linear OLS regression, the interpretation is straightforward. When it comes to the testing of H6, H7 and H8, since the outcomes are both binary (voting/not voting in the PS, in new parties, and abstaining/not abstaining), the coefficients of the logistic regression were used to generate predicted probabilities. Figure 3 thus helps to make the case that there was a significant relationship between populist attitudes and party preference in the 2018 survey, but not with the likelihood of voting in a new party or turning out to vote (in this case, using the 2019 survey).

Taken as a whole, the results of the empirical tests for hypotheses *H5-H8* seem to indicate a higher likelihood of individuals with a higher propensity towards populist attitudes to find electoral options within the established party system – voting for relatively more populist parties – rather than looking for new parties or simply abstaining.

Conclusions

In this article, we reported the results of the first empirical analysis of populist attitudes in Portugal, a country which has been described as a negative case of the populist surge (e.g. Carreira da Silva & Salgado 2018) due to the
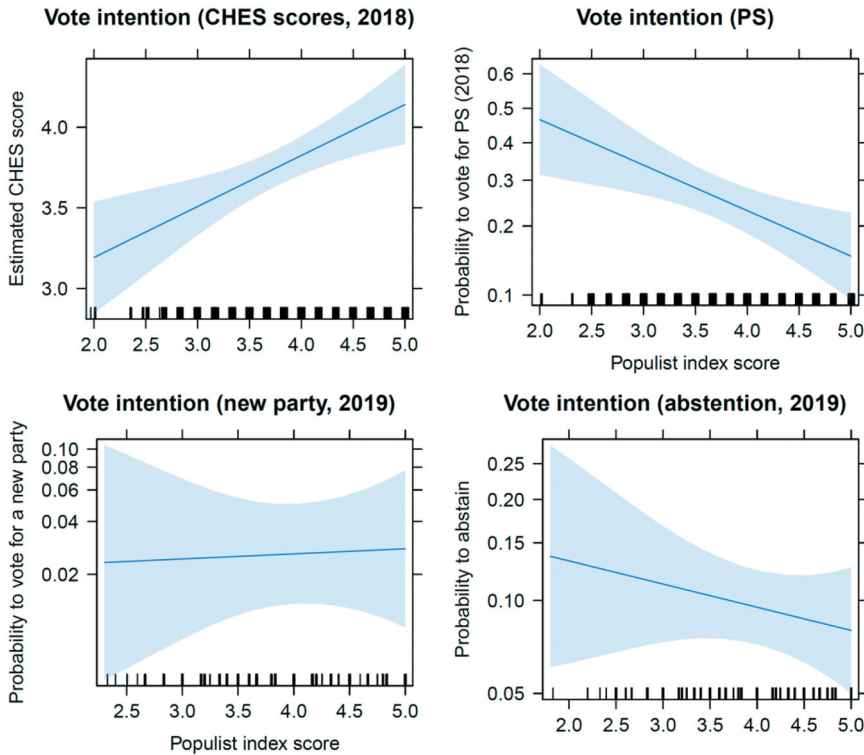
Figure 3. The impact of populist attitudes on voting intentions.
Source: Own elaboration using results from models reported in the online appendix.
Note: This figure plots the relationship between the values of the populist attitudes index and four dependent variables: degree of anti-elite score of preferred party (top left), using data from the 2018 survey; probability to vote in the PS (top right), using data from the 2018 survey; likelihood to vote in a new party (see text) in the elections to the European Parliament (bottom left), using data from the 2019 survey; likelihood to abstain in the elections to the European Parliament (bottom right), using data from the 2019 survey.

longstanding absence of clear-cut populist parties – either left- or right-wing – in parliament. Our results show that, in the post-bailout period, populist attitudes were considerably widespread in Portugal, confirming the assumption that the absence of relevant populist parties in the country has not been due to lack of demand, but is instead due to lack of supply – namely sophisticated and charismatic political actors able to choose the right substantive issues in order to thrive in a remarkably stable and closed party system such as that of Portugal.

The expression of populist attitudes seems not to be related to the specific socioeconomic position that individuals occupy in Portuguese society, as the losers of globalisation thesis (Kriesi et al. 2006) would suggest. In fact, the degree of agreement with the ideas of people-centrism, anti-elitism and homogeneity of both groups – highlighted in Mudde's (2004) influential definition and subsumed in the index we used in the empirical analysis reported here – is relatively the same for men and women; for people belonging to lower and

higher social strata; for the poorly and the highly educated; and for the unemployed, retirees, self-employed, and employees. This finding resonates with the pattern identified by Rooduijn (2018) in his study of a different but correlated phenomenon – vote for populist parties vs. mainstream parties in 15 European countries – and allows us to say, paraphrasing him, that in socioeconomic terms, there is no archetypal populist citizen in Portugal.

Attitudinal correlates of populist attitudes are, instead, clearer to spot. First, those had a more negative evaluation of the government's performance and the way democracy works in the European Union displayed higher levels of populist attitudes. As mentioned above, unlike the appraisal of the government and the EU, the assessment of the national economy was not a significant correlate of populist attitudes and does not allow us to further corroborate the role of a declinist view of the world (Elchardus & Spruyt 2016). Indeed, we might be simply observing the impact of a tendency to assess the performance of political elites and supranational institutions negatively. Second, citizens who are ideologically more extreme, placing themselves at the ends of the left-right continuum, expressed a higher degree of agreement with the populist worldview. Third, those who feel close to a political party in Portugal were less likely to embrace populist attitudes than those without a party identification – which makes absolute sense in a context in which no blatant, salient populist creed has been adopted by any relevant political competitor.

All in all, in attitudinal terms, strongly populist citizens are ideologically radical, unhappy with the performance of political institutions, and unable to find a party that they could care about. But they are not necessarily less engaged or interested in politics, as we found the exact opposite relationship between interest and populist attitudes. This would probably make it easier for a new political force to activate these citizens' attitudes, granted that it could distance itself from the disadvantageous epithet 'elite', since there is no need to fight against the barrier of disinterest.

Also, do populist attitudes impact voting behaviour when there is no clear-cut populist party to vote for? Our findings suggest that the answer is yes. Although in Portugal citizens with higher levels of populist attitudes are not more (or less) likely to support newer parties nor to abstain, they tend to support parties that score higher on the populist rhetoric scale and are less likely to vote for the incumbent party. This shows that in the absence of a populist option in the political market, populist citizens may be drawn to go for the second-best option, voting for moderately anti-elite parties and denying electoral support to the governing party.

In the October 2019 legislative election, the new party Chega, a blend of populism without a strong preference for direct democracy, on the one hand, and a strong commitment to nationalistic ideals, on the other (Marchi 2019), was able to elect one MP with 1.3 per cent of the votes, due to the concentration of its electoral appeal in the country's largest electoral district, Lisbon (Mendes &

Dennison 2020). It is too soon to know whether its leader, André Ventura, will be able to succeed where others have failed and establish his party as a long-term relevant populist political force in Portugal or whether Chega is a short-time fringe phenomenon that will fade away as others have (cf. Salgado & Zúquete 2017). If the party grows exponentially from its current 1.3 per cent of the vote and one out of 230 parliamentary seats, we will be able to revisit the hypotheses tested in this article in a remarkably different context – one that would no longer allow us to describe Portugal as a negative case of populism in the European landscape.

Notes

1. For instance: Mudde 2013; Huber & Schimpf 2016; Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017; Rooduijn & Akkerman 2017.
2. The online appendix contains the scores of the variables for each party, as well as information about the sources of the data and the selected variables. This can be found in Appendix 1 and Table A.1.
3. Marchi 2013; Salgado & Zúquete 2017; Carreira da Silva & Salgado 2018; Costa Lobo 2019; Salgado 2019. For details on the geringonça: De Giorgi & Santana-Pereira 2016; Fernandes, Magalhães & Santana-Pereira 2018.
4. Interestingly enough, the actual uni- or multidimensionality of populist attitudes is an open debate in the literature, with studies supporting the idea that populist attitudes form a single construct (Akkerman, Mudde & Zaslove 2014; Boscán, Llamazares & Wiesehomeier 2018; Hameleers & De Vreese 2020; Geurkink et al. 2020) and others suggesting a multidimensional structure (e.g. Castanho Silva, Vegetti & Littvay 2017).
5. Hawkins, Riding & Mudde 2012; Elchardus & Spruyt 2016; Rico, Guinjoan & Anduiza 2017; Hameleers, Bos & De Vreese 2017; Müller et al. 2017; Boscán, Llamazares & Wiesehomeier 2018; Tsatsanis, Andreadis & Teperoglou 2018; Fatke 2019; Rico & Anduiza 2019.
6. For instance, in 2016 Elchardus & Spruyt observed that personal economic vulnerability translates into populist attitudes via increased feelings of relative deprivation and/or a declinist view of society (see also Rico & Anduiza 2019).
7. For example, anger resulting from the economic crisis in Spain resulted in higher levels of populist attitudes (Rico, Guinjoan & Anduiza 2017).
8. Rico, Guinjoan & Anduiza 2017; Tsatsanis, Andreadis & Teperoglou 2018; Rico & Anduiza 2019; but see Hameleers & De Vreese 2018 for an exception.
9. The same is reported in Müller et al. (2017) although only for the German sample.
10. Akkerman, Mudde & Zaslove 2014; Ivaldi, Zaslove & Akkerman 2017; Rico, Guinjoan & Anduiza 2017; Spierings & Zaslove 2017; Anduiza, Guinjoan & Rico 2018; Boscán, Llamazares & Wiesehomeier 2018; Hameleers & De Vreese 2018; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel 2018; Geurkink et al. 2020.
11. Details about the distribution of the six items in the two surveys are reported in the online appendix's Table A2.
12. These parties are L (Livre – Free), NC (Nós Cidadãos – We, Citizens), A (Aliança – Alliance), IL (Iniciativa Liberal – Liberal Initiative), PURP (Partido Unido dos Reformados e Pensionistas – United Party of Retirees and Pensioners), and the pre-election coalition Basta, led by Chega's leader André Ventura.

13. Model 1 was fitted using only sociodemographic variables; in turn, Model 2 included the full set of variables after the addition of evaluative and attitudinal measures.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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