

The Evolution of Populism: An Analysis of the Evolution of the Populist Message of Podemos (2014-2019)

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Abstract

This research article aims to analyse the evolution of Podemos' populist message. For this purpose, a content analysis of the electoral manifestos presented by the political party since its foundation in 2014 until the 2019 European elections was carried out. Results suggest that the presence of populist elements in the party's electoral manifestos does not follow a clear downward trend as a consequence of the growing presence of the political party in the country's legislative and executive institutions. However, an evolution of the content of populist messages has been identified, whereby i) these messages follow an economic rather than a political framework, and ii) the enemy is defined in ideological terms, thus breaking with the initial "de-differentiation" strategy of the organisation: The Spanish "three right-wingers", the European "reactionary axis" and the dominant neoliberalism in Europe are now identified as the great threat to the interests of the people, while the PSOE is portrayed as an ideologically differentiated political organisation. These results suggest, therefore, that the new/old politics axis that emerged strongly between 2014 and 2016 could be considered eclipsed today by the traditional left/right and centre/periphery axes of Spanish politics.

Keywords: Podemos, populism, political parties, content analysis, Spain