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Mapping sovereignty(s) in South America

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Email: enrico.padoan@unitus.it**Abstract**

Sovereignism is said to be on the rise: defending a nation's political autonomy, international borders, and cultural identity and protecting the domestic economy from the perils of globalisation are core demands. What about Latin America? To what extent are sovereignist claims a key component of Latin American parties' platforms and rhetoric? How do these vary according to national contexts and ideological foundations? Is sovereignism truly novel in the region? This article, relying on qualitative analyses of party manifestos from six different countries, as well as on data from the Manifesto Project, aims to map Latin American sovereignism in its different dimensions (political, economic, cultural, international) according to country and party families. As our data show, claims for defending or achieving 'sovereignty' are a key component of the (mostly left-wing) populist idiolect in the region. The Latin American extreme right tends to adopt a sovereignist rhetoric to justify a traditional pro-market agenda. The article overall calls for a problematisation of the concept of 'sovereignism' by proposing a stronger cross-regional perspective. There are different 'varieties of sovereignism' depending on whether state sovereignty is primarily viewed as something to be restored or, alternatively, to be achieved (as is the case in South America).

KEYWORDS

Latin America, political ideology, populisms, sovereignism

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1 | WHY AND HOW CONTEXTUALISING AND MAPPING SOVEREIGNISM IN SOUTH AMERICA

According to Google Scholar, the concept of 'sovereignism' was mentioned in 105 academic papers in the period 2000–2010; the number rose to 151 in the period 2010–2015, then to 536 in the period 2015–2020 and 506 in the last two and a half years. While the numbers are still small compared to the 21,500 entries mentioning the term 'populism' since Baldini et al. (2020), they reflect the increasing attention paid to major political processes such as Brexit (e.g. Baldini et al., 2020) and the rise of Trumpism, both of which aim 'above all to protect or regain our sovereignty and our cherished independence' (Trump, 2018). Sovereignism is 'on the rise: the defense of a nation's political autonomy, the consolidation of its international borders, the preservation of cultural identity and the protection of the domestic economy from the negative effects of globalization are central demands' (Mueller & Heidelberger, 2020). Sovereignty is thus increasingly politicised; sovereignist demands are widely represented in political platforms and rhetoric, especially by populist actors on the left and (mostly) the right (García Agustín, 2020). This has drawn academic attention to 'sovereignty conflicts' which are about 'identifying the legal and political source of ultimate authority' (Bickerton et al., 2022), and which have become so relevant that they are a central part of the 'integration and demarcation divide that structures most contemporary Western European party systems' (Emanuele et al., 2021).

What about South America? To what extent are the defence of national political autonomy, the fortification of borders, the preservation of cultural identities, the shielding of the domestic economy from the negative effects of globalisation, and – we add – the demand for the recovery of 'popular sovereignty' in decision-making process a central part of the programs and rhetoric of South American parties? How do these differ according to national contexts and ideological foundations? Are South American sovereignist demands 'on the rise' or rather enduring demands in a region where at least two major political parties (the Ecuadorian *Patria Altiva i Soberana* and the Bolivian *Instrumento Político para la Soberanía de los Pueblos*), which have restructured the party systems in their countries over the last two decades, even include calls for the restoration of sovereignty in their party names?

This article thus aims to propose a starting point for mapping South American sovereignism in its different dimensions (political, economic, cultural, international) by country and by party family. While all these different dimensions are defined based on the available contributions in the literature in our 'Data and Methods' section, we advocate the following definition of sovereignty as:

the belief in the uncontested primacy of national-level politics and the call to recover at this precise level (institutionally as well as territorially) power that has slipped away to more distant and diffuse layers of governance

(Kallis, 2018: 299).

This article aims to paint a picture of contemporary forms of sovereignist politics in the region by qualitatively analysing party platforms and selected presidential speeches since 2011 in six different countries, while providing a (temporally) broader overview by drawing on data available for the region from the Manifesto Project (MARPOR).

The literature on the concept of sovereignism is still in its infancy, both in theoretical terms and (even more so) in empirical terms (Basile & Mazzoleni, 2020). Moreover, recent attempts to develop a theoretical framework for analysing the emergence of 'sovereignty conflicts' have focused exclusively and deliberately on the European context (Destradi et al., 2021; Bickerton et al., 2022; for an exception, see Jenne, 2021), mostly with an empirical focus on right-wing declinations of sovereignism (e.g. Borri & Verzichelli, 2021; for an exception, see Coticchia, 2021). This article aims to contribute to the evolving research agenda on sovereignism by drawing mainly on the available definitions and theoretical works, with the aim of exploring their applicability to the South American region.

Given the strong theoretical and empirical links already established (Basile & Mazzoleni, 2020; Chrysosgelos, 2020; for Latin America, see Panizza & Miorelli, 2009; De La Torre, 2007) between sovereignism and

populism, and considering that populism is a central political phenomenon both in Europe and (to an even greater extent) in South America, our work also aims to qualify these links and, consequently, to propose a broader historical and geographical contextualisation of this debate. In populism research, the existence of different 'varieties of populism' is widely recognised (e.g. Caiani & Graziano, 2019), often referring to the distinction between 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' forms of populism: Indeed, this distinction was introduced precisely by looking at populism from a cross-regional perspective, — i.e. in Europe and South America — (Mudde & Rovira, 2013). Similarly, we argue that mapping South American sovereignty can help enrich our understanding of the concept by tracing its different understandings and roots. Our study can thus contribute to advancing the debate on the definition of 'varieties of sovereignty'.

As Basile and Mazzoleni (2020: 152) aptly summarise, sovereignty is the 'complete decision-making power and authority of a governing body over a clearly defined territory or polity' and, in their contemporary conceptualisation, consists of three core elements: (i) sovereignty is exercised over mutually exclusive territories, i.e. the nation-states; (ii) it is an expression of the will of the people; and (iii) it is exercised through the mechanisms of representative democracies. The rise of actors such as supranational and subnational institutions and transnational corporations has challenged state sovereignty in its 'Westphalian', modern understanding, paving the way for a political discourse that advocates the 'reclaiming of control' (over borders, the economic system, decision-making processes vis-à-vis internal, international and supranational institutions) of the legitimised 'sovereign', namely the people (Kallis, 2018), by granting the decisions made at the nation-state level an effective primacy. This is where the clearest link to populist phenomena lies: As Basile and Mazzoleni (2020: 156) emphatically stated, 'there may be sovereignty without populism, but there is no populist discourse that does not contain sovereign demands'.

Sovereign actors thus demand to restore/recover something supposedly lost, at the level of the people (against elites and 'unresponsive' institutions: Mair, 2014), at the national level (against international and supranational organisations and foreign economic and state powers: Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2007) and even cultural (against migration processes that dilute ethnic identities: Sassen, 2008) sovereignty. However, the notion of sovereignty as something that needs to be 'restored' does not really apply to the Latin American context, because while in Europe 'integration is understood as an alternative to the dangers of strong sovereignty [that led to two world wars]' (Pastrana, 2014: 454), in Latin America such 'strong' state sovereignty has not been fully achieved. The control of territory and polity has been a contested process since the post-independence civil wars: indeed, 'classical populisms' have been interpreted in a functionalist view (Ianni et al., 1975) as key actors in state-building processes through a 'model centered on national practices and references, in an introspective and parochial governmental reality [and] through [...] inward-looking economic systems' (Pastrana, 2014: 449).

As dependency theorists (Cardoso & Faletto, 1977; Prebisch, 1986) emphasise, sovereignty as autonomy and independence from foreign pressure was never achieved due to underdevelopment. Consequently, dependency theorists from the left proposed forms of 'closed regionalism' to improve terms of trade through protectionism: Ultimately, integration was understood to preserve and defend national sovereignties vis-à-vis the global North. In contrast, a neoliberal vision that called for 'open regionalism' prevailed in the 1990s: In this case, 'integration is replaced by openness and harmonisation of markets, as a basis for inclusion in the international arena on the basis of increasing competitiveness' (Pastrana, 2014: 455).

In contrast to the European context, both 'closed' and 'open' regionalisms do not entail forms of integration that imply a transfer of 'hard-earned' (Petersen & Schulz, 2018) sovereignty: Indeed, all examples of regionalist projects in Latin America have shown 'a clear preference for intergovernmentalism and a low degree of institutionalization, as well as for the preservation of sovereignty and autonomy in the national sphere' (Sanahuja, 2017: 118). 'Closed' and 'open' regionalist visions obviously differ in their prospective relationship with the United States and have crystallised in different regional intergovernmental organisations (RIOs): on the one hand, 'Bolivarian' organisations such as ALBA, and on the other, the inter-American OAS, which played a prominent role in the (failed) project of creating the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Nowadays, old and new RIOs (sometimes just multilateral forums) often reflect the different ideological conjunctures of member states' leaders (ALBA and UNASUR on the left; the

Pacific Alliance, the Lima Group and PROSUR on the right) and are sometimes the prey of increasing ideological divisions among members (Baracaldo & Chenou, 2019), as in MERCOSUR and the UNASUR/PROSUR split.

To summarise, sovereignty in Latin America is something that states (and political actors) are jealous of, partly because they have little of it. Moreover, in the past, there have been different views on what should be an 'acceptable' level of sovereignty (e.g. does further market integration affect it or not?) and how to increase and defend it. From this derives the need to understand what types of sovereignty claims are made in the region by different political actors and how sovereignty is understood according to country and party family. Sovereignism, like Euroscepticism (Vasilopolou, 2017), is a multidimensional concept that, as we will elaborate in the next section, encompasses political, cultural, economic, and international dimensions.

Based on the (European) literature on sovereignism, the (South American) reflections on the relationship between sovereignty and regionalism, and the broad literature on populism research, we can have some expectations regarding the results of our 'mapping'. First, given the strong theoretical and empirical link between populist and sovereignist discourses, and given the prevalence of left-wing populism in the region, we expect to find a very different ideological (i.e. more left-wing) decline of sovereignism in South America compared to the European context (H1). Second, we expect economic sovereignist appeals to be stronger on the left than on the right (H2), which typically favours open market models in the region (Zeichmeister & Corral, 2013) (while in Europe protectionist proposals are often found in very different party families). Third, we expect strong differences in the nature of international sovereignist appeals, depending on the specific RIOs addressed in our analysed material (H3). Fourth, we expect to find stronger political, cultural, and international sovereignist appeals at the extreme ideological poles (i.e. the populist left and the radical right) than in the centrist party families (H4).

In the next section, we will detail our research strategies in terms of case selection, data collection, and methods. The central sections contain our empirical analyses and results, which are summarised and discussed in the conclusions.

2 | DATA AND METHODS

Our aim is to map the main forms of South American sovereignism by tracing its different ideological manifestations and identifying any differences at the country level. We have opted for a two-step strategy in our analysis: First, we trace sovereignist rhetoric and then analyse the *claims* that are made when such rhetoric is deployed. This approach is based on the assumption that sovereignism as a political concept, which includes some specific *diagnoses* (e.g. the 'loss of control' of the 'people over the polity' or the renunciation of 'responsiveness' in favour of 'responsibility': Mair, 2014) and *prognoses* (e.g. the restoration of 'the full decision-making power and authority of a governing body over a clearly defined territory or polity': Basile & Mazzoleni, 2020: 152), should be understood primarily as a *frame*.

Goffman (1974: 21) defined frames as 'schemes of interpretation' that enable individuals to 'locate, perceive, identify, and name' events in their habitat and in the world at large. Framing involves 'selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration' (Severin & Tankard, 1997: 320) and serves to 'mobilize potential supporters and voters, gain the support of bystanders, and demobilize opponents' (Snow & Benford, 1988: 198). Framing is thus an agential process that involves the adoption and dissemination of specific 'interpretive schemes' for political purposes through rhetorical means (Birks, 2014).

Our data come from the manifestos of the main (from an electoral point of view¹) political parties or presidential candidates for at least two presidential elections (time frame: 2011–2022) in six selected countries, depending on the different legal requirements for submitting manifestos²: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The countries were selected so that both the left and right sides of the national political spectrum are represented. In Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela, the PL dominates, while in Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, the main left-wing parties belong to the social democratic family (Cameron & Hershberg, 2010; Padoan, 2020; Roberts, 2014). On the right, RR-wing leaders and parties have achieved significant electoral success in Bolivia, Chile, and Brazil (where Jair

Bolsonaro won the presidency in 2018), while this party family plays no role in Argentina, Uruguay, and Venezuela. A total of 40 manifestos were analysed (the list can be found in the online appendix, Tables A1, A2, A3 and A4).

Methodologically, we first selected and extracted all paragraphs in which the word *soberan** appears from each selected manifesto in order to capture all passages in which the adjective 'sovereign' and/or the noun 'sovereignty' was used. This allowed us to focus on whether, when, and how sovereignist rhetoric is used by political actors. A total of 695 paragraphs were extracted. We then coded each paragraph (examples can be found in the online appendix, Table A8) by identifying:

- a. the linguistic qualifiers associated with the concept of *soberanía* (e.g., national sovereignty, territorial sovereignty, economic sovereignty, popular sovereignty);
- b. the policy area in which the reference to 'sovereignty' was inserted: A total of 20 policy areas were identified (e.g. agricultural policy, economic policy, cultural policy, infrastructure policy, foreign policy, general political principles);
- c. the 'in-group' to which the reference to 'sovereignty' referred (e.g. 'the nation'; 'the country'; 'the citizens'; 'the state');
- d. the 'out-group' that threatens sovereignty (e.g. inter alia 'colonialism', 'imperialism', 'multinational corporations' or certain countries, such as 'the UK' in the case of Argentina — referring to the Malvinas affair — or 'Bolivia/Chile' in the case of Chile/Bolivia — referring to the long-standing border affairs).

Steps (a), (b), (c), and (d) were used to facilitate our qualitative assessments and no corresponding statistics were published in this article.

Each candidate/political party was coded into four party families according to their ideology:

- i. Social democratic left (SDL), including the 'New Left' (the Chilean *Frente Amplio*), the 'labour-based' (Padoan, 2020) left (the Uruguayan *Frente Amplio*; the Brazilian PT) and the liberal centre-left (e.g. the Chilean *Concertación/Nueva Mayoría*);
- ii. PL (e.g. the Bolivian MAS-IPSP; Argentinian Kirchnerism; Venezuelan *Chavismo*);
- iii. Centre-right (CR: e.g. the Bolivian *Comunidad Ciudadana*; the Uruguayan *Partido Nacional*);
- iv. RR (e.g. Bolsonaro in Brazil, Camacho in Bolivia, José Antonio Kast in Chile).

We have opted for the term 'radical' right instead of 'populist' for this last party family. First, the literature is still hesitant to label figures such as Bolsonaro as populist (Ryo et al., 2021), eventually opting for the ad hoc term 'far-right populism' (e.g. De Sá & Dutra, 2021). Secondly, the 'populist right' is usually associated with 'neo-populisms' in the Latin American literature (e.g. Fujimorism, Menemism, the meteoric rise of Collor in Brazil: see Weyland, 1996), who are ideologically different from contemporary figures such as Bolsonaro in Brazil, Kast in Chile and Camacho in Bolivia (while perhaps closer to the current Argentine president Javier Milei).

Using this preliminary coding, we have highlighted the importance and frequency of sovereignist statements, as well as the type of sovereignism referred to. Following previous work on the concept of sovereignism (Basile & Mazzoleni, 2020; Kallis, 2018), we consider it as a 'multidimensional concept' (Basile & Mazzoleni, 2020: 157) and identify four different dimensions:

- i. Political sovereignism: This refers to the reassertion of control over borders, flows of people, decision-making processes and competences (*state* sovereignism), and/or the assertion of the role of the sovereign people in democratic decision-making (*popular* sovereignism)³;
- ii. Economic sovereignism: This involves advocating less global interaction and interdependence in favour of a protectionist approach and the re-appropriation of independent action by the state in areas such as monetary policy and trade;

- iii. International sovereignty: This includes strategies to regain control over globalisation, including exit strategies at the international level (e.g. from regional integration projects);
- iv. Cultural sovereignty: This involves the defence of the 'sovereignty' of a 'people' defined by cultural, ethnic, religious and/or historical arguments.

Our four dimensions of sovereignty were treated as mutually exclusive, and we assigned each of the 695 selected paragraphs to only one dimension (see Table A6 in the Appendix). The author and a colleague coded all paragraphs separately; intercoder reliability was ≈ 0.85 , and disagreements were discussed to reach consensus on the code to assign.

We focused on how different forms of sovereignty are prevalent in different countries and party families and, through finer qualitative assessments, how sovereignty is understood and helps explain the broader ideological inspirations of the South American parties we studied.

Our data were complemented by an analysis of:

1. the available presidential inaugural speeches per country during our time frame⁴;
2. the available 'state of the nation' speeches (under different names in the countries considered) during our time frame.⁵

In total, 15 presidential inauguration speeches and 51 state of the nation speeches were analysed using the same procedure that we applied to the party manifestos. In doing so, 212 paragraphs were selected and coded (the entire list can be found in the Online Appendix, Table A5, A6, A7).

To extend our analysis to a longer period, we also drew on data from the MARPOR project, whose database covers five of the six South American countries we included in our study (from 1989 to 2018), with Venezuela as an exception. MARPOR covers these countries unevenly (only one Uruguayan and two Bolivian elections were coded).

The MARPOR dataset is based on an overall analysis of the *content of electoral programs*,⁶ while our strategy focuses on sovereign *rhetoric*, so the two data sources are only partially comparable. However, we argue that our exploratory analysis of the MARPOR dataset, which allows us to create four different indices (each capturing one of the four dimensions of sovereignty), may be useful in making our mapping more accurate and providing a broader historical context for our findings. Methodological details and results are discussed in the [MARPOR online appendix](#). We address these results in our concluding remarks.

3 | EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS: UNPACKING SOVEREIGNIST RHETORIC IN SOUTH AMERICA

3.1 | An overview

The most basic descriptive statistics make it clear that sovereignist rhetoric is much more central to the PL than to the other South American party families categorised in this article (Table 1), which is fully consistent with H1. Sixty-one percent of our sovereignist assertions are found in the PL manifestos; the two Chavista manifestos alone account for almost half of the total assertions. Such a concentration of sovereignist claims in the Venezuelan PL must be taken into account in order to avoid unfounded generalisations. However, the central importance of sovereignist claims in the PL manifestos is also confirmed by Table 2, which shows the frequency of *soberan** words in the manifestos per 1000 words: The Argentinean and (especially) Bolivian PLs also wrote many more 'sovereignist' manifestos than any other manifestos in our sample (with the notable exception of Lula in 2022). As can be seen from both tables, the second party family in terms of sovereignist rhetoric is the SDL, although this category shows strong internal differences. In the manifestos of the Chilean centre-left parties and also in Dilma Rousseff's 2014 manifesto,

TABLE 1 Number of sovereignist claims in manifestos, per country and ideology.

Country	Populist left	Social-democratic left	Centre-right	Radical right	Total
Argentina	25	4	0	NA	29
Bolivia	74	NA	4	4	82
Brazil	NA	70	0	10	80
Chile	NA	34	14	17	65
Uruguay	NA	74	36	NA	110
Venezuela	328	NA	1	NA	329
Total	427	182	55	31	695

Abbreviation: NA, not available.

TABLE 2 Average presence of sovereign* per 1000 words in manifestos, according to party family.

Party family	Sovereign* per 1000 words	Higher values	On average values	Lower values
Social-democratic left	0.49	Lula 2022 (2.71); Haddad 2018 (0.94); Gomes 2018 (0.89)	Frente Amplio 2014 and 2019 (≈ 0.35); Sánchez 2018 (0.22); Boric 2021 (0.19); Rousseff 2014 (0.20)	Frente Amplio Progresista 2011 (0.12); Bachelet 2014 (0.08); MEO 2014 (0.13); Guillier 2018 (0); Provoste 2021 (0.11)
Centre-right	0.11	PN 2014 (0.59); Parisi 2014 and 2021 (≈ 0.22); Comunidad Ciudadana 2020 (0.21)	PC 2014 (0.16); PC 2019 (0.11); PN 2019 (0.06)	Cambiamos 2015; Renovating Front; Juntos por el Cambio 2019; Neves 2014; Matthei 2013; Sichel 2021 (0); Capriles 2013 (0.03); Piñera 2018 (0.04)
Radical right	0.22	Kast 2018 (0.29); Bolsonaro 2022 (0.26)	Kast 2021 (0.19); Bolsonaro 2018 (0.22)	Creemos 2020 (0.15)
Populist left	1.51	Maduro 2018 (2.30); Chávez 2013 (2.31);	MAS-IPSP 2020 (1.24) and 2014 (1.26)	Frente para la Victoria and Frente de Todos (2011: 0.74; 2015:1.11; 2019: 0.96)

sovereignist statements are almost non-existent, while they are quite relevant in other Brazilian manifestos: Lula's 2022 manifesto has the highest score in our sample. CR parties hardly refer to sovereignty in their manifestos. The RR party family's mean is slightly higher and with moderate internal differences.

3.2 | Sovereignist dimensions

Focusing on the different categories of sovereign claims by distinguishing them based on our four different dimensions of sovereignism, our data show the overall prevalence of economic sovereignism ($N = 321$, 46% of total sovereign claims), followed by political (28%), international (21%), and cultural (5%) sovereignism. The distribution of demands across the different dimensions varies greatly depending on the party family: indeed, economic sovereignism predominates for the PL and to a lesser extent for the SDL (in line with our expectations: H2), while political sovereignism slightly outweighs the international dimension for the CR and RR parties. In absolute terms, however, the RR parties do not display strong sovereignist rhetoric in their election manifestos for any of the dimensions under consideration, which does not confirm H4. In the following sections, we will go into more detail to

TABLE 3 Sub-dimensions of sovereignism (on percentage) in manifestos, by party family (N of claims on parenthesis).

	Populist left	Social-democratic left	Centre-right	Radical right	Total
International	18% (76)	24% (44)	29% (16)	35% (11)	21% (147)
Political	21% (89)	33% (60)	51% (28)	48% (15)	28% (192)
Economic	56% (239)	37% (67)	18% (10)	16% (5)	46% (321)
Cultural	5% (23)	6% (11)	2% (1)	0%	5% (35)
Total	100% (427)	100% (182)	100% (55)	100% (31)	100% (695)

provide a more in-depth analysis of the content of the single sovereignist dimensions. In addition, a closer look at the presence of international sovereignist claims will allow us to test H3. For each sovereignist dimension, a table summarising the findings is provided.

3.3 | Political sovereignism

As Table 3 shows, political sovereign rhetoric — as with all sovereign dimensions — is found in absolute terms primarily in the manifestos of the PL and, to a lesser extent, the SDL. In relative terms, the political sovereign dimension appears to be particularly important for the two right-wing party families and especially for the CR. However, two parties account for 15 of the 20 political sovereignist claims in the CR manifestos: the Chilean *Partido de la Gente* (PdG, ‘People’s Party’) and the Uruguayan *Partido Colorado* (PC). Both the PdG characterised by loud calls for digital and direct democracy and strong anti-parliamentary tones (Padoan, 2023), and the PC expressed demands for popular sovereignty by denouncing the government for its lack of accountability. In contrast, the political sovereign rhetoric of the RR refers almost exclusively to state sovereignty, e.g. on issues such as: Border controls — against migrants or in the Bolivian-Chilean border dispute; repression of mobilised indigenous communities, as in the case of Kast in Chile; and the affirmation of the Amazon as the ‘heritage of the Brazilian nation’, as Bolsonaro said in 2022.

The SDL’s political sovereignist rhetoric consists mainly of calls for political participation. Political (popular) sovereignty is particularly strong in the Uruguayan *Frente Amplio*⁷ and especially in the 2018 manifesto of Fernando Haddad (of the Brazilian PT), which was obviously influenced by the impeachment proceedings (2016) against Rousseff (see the calls for ‘respect for the sovereign vote’ of the people and against ‘fascist and authoritarian forces’ that ‘impeached Dilma and imprisoned Lula without evidence’). However, Haddad’s manifesto and even more so Lula’s 2022 manifesto also celebrate *state* sovereignty: Attacks on the military (‘which has failed to secure our sovereignty’) are juxtaposed with the need to ‘strengthen our armed forces to defend our fatherland’. Lula, in particular, repeatedly links the sovereignty of the people and that of the state, emphasising how the ‘loss of civil rights [and] the rule of law’ has caused the loss of both the sovereignty of the people and the autonomy of the state vis-à-vis the economic elites and international actors. As we will see, such a ‘patriotic’ register is also found in the analysis of the international and economic sovereignist dimensions of Lula’s and Haddad’s manifestos.

As for the PL, the political dimension plays a relevant but, somewhat unexpectedly, not the primary role in its broad sovereignist rhetoric — as the economic dimension is by far the most important. In the case of the MAS-IPSP, the ‘state’ is typically the sovereign subject (‘state sovereignty’, ‘sovereign country’). Mayorga (2014) noted that the MAS-IPSP in power has gradually shifted from an indigenist to a state-centred rhetoric and cultural symbolism, presenting itself as a historical actor leading a process of state-building in political-institutional, economic and cultural terms. As formulated in the 2014 manifesto: ‘The crisis of the state in Bolivia has been defined by a) a ‘sham state’ that excludes large indigenous worker and peasant majorities; b) the absence of the state [and thus state sovereignty] throughout the national territory; and c) the application of economic models oriented towards the foreign

TABLE 4 Political sovereignty in South America.

Party family	Typical declination of political sovereignty	Saliency	Main parties/candidates adopting political sovereignist rhetoric
Populist left	State-building (Bolivia); popular participation through state-sponsored institutions (Venezuela)	Medium to high	MAS-IPSP; <i>Chavismo</i>
Social-democratic left	Democracy vs authoritarianism	Medium	FA (URU); PT (Lula and Haddad)
Centre-right	Accountability; anti-representative tones	Medium to low	Parisi (CHI); PC (URU)
Radical right	Restrictive migratory policies; law and order	Low	Kast (CHI)

Note: To assess ‘saliency’ in Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7, we took into consideration both (i) the absolute number of claims per dimension and per party family and (ii) the relative contribution of each dimension to the total amount of sovereignist rhetoric per party family (see Table 3).

market that benefit only a few. All these factors have transformed Bolivia into a capitalist colony’. In this passage, the MAS-IPSP equates the (lack of) state sovereignty with the historical lack of state capacity. Instead, the ‘new plurinational state’ could present itself ‘as an expression of the will of all to take sovereignty to all corners of the national territory, to incorporate [indigenous] forms of organizing the world’ while ‘avoiding the interference of the US embassy’. Overall, while there is still a coexistence of ‘popular’ and ‘state’ sovereignty in the MAS-IPSP discourse, the emphasis is on the latter — and the former is seen merely as a precondition already achieved for the latter. In short, the MAS-IPSP as a governing institution tends to downplay the participatory inspiration of its origins.

According to the party’s own name, sovereignty is the MAS-IPSP’s deepest political mission (‘Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples’). This is all the more true for *chavismo*, in whose manifestos the concept of sovereignty in all its dimensions (especially economic, as we will explain in more detail in the next session) is tantamount to a catchword that is associated with very different qualifications. Apart from the concepts of national and popular sovereignty, and to limit ourselves to the political claims of sovereignty, we find references to sovereign ‘actions’, ‘responses’, ‘applications’, ‘hope’, ‘integration’, ‘use’, ‘willingness’, and even ‘sovereign supply’ (referring to the state distribution of basic goods at subsidised prices).

The 2013 Chavista manifesto affirms that ‘our goal, the consolidation of our independence, refers to a series of national and strategic objectives in the political, [institutional], economic, social and cultural spheres, the realization of which will guarantee the irreversibility of our national sovereignty’ through the ‘expansion of socialist democracy’. ‘Imperialism’ and the ‘bourgeoisie’ are identified as the main enemies of this process. The explicit rhetoric of war became a central theme in Maduro’s 2018 manifesto, in a phase characterised by deep political and economic crises: ‘The struggle for sovereignty and independence is undoubtedly the great achievement of the 2013-2019 Plan for the Fatherland, which counteracts the years of aggression’. Maduro calls for a nation in the army to defend both the sovereignty of the people and national sovereignty. However, the latter is not only seen as a prerequisite for the former but also as a goal in itself: Venezuela must become a ‘powerful, sovereign and socialist country’ (or be recognised as such). As in Bolivia, the PL in power ultimately and concretely tends to place state sovereignty above that of the people (Table 4).

3.4 | Economic sovereignty

As Table 3 shows, the economic dimension is relatively important for the SDL, less relevant for the CR and especially the RR and definitely of central importance for the PL: more than half of the (extensive) sovereignist claims of the PL parties relate to the economic dimension.

Most of the SDL's economic sovereignty claims come from the Uruguayan *Frente Amplio* and, more recently, from Brazil. Neither Rousseff in 2014 nor Guillier in 2018 included economic sovereignty claims, while the Chilean *Frente Amplio* focuses almost exclusively on the concept of 'food sovereignty' (*soberanía alimentaria*) — albeit with the cautious clarification that this 'does not mean self-sufficiency in food production' — and on strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises.

In the case of Lula and Haddad, the polemical target is the Bolsonaro government and the *golpistas*, who have 'dismantled our economy and sovereignty' by selling 'strategic wealth and companies to foreigners'. Economic sovereignty, which implies the strengthening of domestic demand and the guarantee of social rights, is considered a prerequisite for political sovereignty ('it will be impossible to govern Brazil without reversing the [neoliberal] measures that attack national sovereignty and the sovereignty of the people'), as well as (as we will examine below) 'regional integration, which is the basis for Brazil's sovereign [i.e. non-dependent] integration in the world'. Ciro Gomes, the other major (moderate) candidate of the left in the 2018 Brazilian elections, focused on 'a *desarrollista* model based on the control of national resources', in line with the (populist) Varguist, *Trabalhista* identity of his coalition (which was in fact called the 'Sovereign Coalition of Brazil'). Finally, in the case of the Uruguayan *Frente Amplio*, three main articulations of economic sovereignism can be identified: state control over national resources, agribusiness, and energy; regulation of fishing; strengthening of state-owned enterprises and the public university system in order to 'develop a national high-tech industry'.

In the CR manifestos of CC (Bolivia, 2020), PN and PC (Uruguay, 2014 and 2019), a sovereignist framework on economic issues is limited. However, such a framework should support market-oriented models. Therefore, we propose the concept of 'paradoxical sovereignism': the adoption of sovereignist rhetoric to actually propose the opposite, namely further economic integration. Thus, the *Comunidad Ciudadana* insists on the development of the 'infrastructure of Puerto Busch' (to be integrated into the Paraná-Paraguay waterway) in order to 'provide Bolivia with effective and sovereign access to the Atlantic Ocean, promote our foreign trade and ensure greater competitiveness for the economy of the Bolivian Orient'. The same goes for the RR, as this passage in Bolsonaro's manifesto shows: 'Some political difficulties that could arise during the privatization process can be circumvented with well-designed 'golden shares' that guarantee national sovereignty'. However, Bolsonaro also uses economic sovereignty rhetoric when it comes to the Amazon issue, proclaiming full state control over natural resources to ensure 'a favourable environment for business' (*ambiente de negócios*).

'Economic sovereignism' is the most important dimension for the party family that most frequently resorts to sovereignist rhetoric, i.e. the PL. Again, this is true for the Bolivian MAS-IPSP and *Chavismo*, surprisingly less so for Kirchnerism (but see the importance given to this dimension in the presidential speeches: see below). In the case of the MAS-IPSP, the Baldini et al. (2020) manifesto lists 13 pillars, seven of which include the word 'sovereignty' in the title and six of which can be clearly assigned to the 'economic sovereignty' dimension: *scientific and technological sovereignty*, *economic and financial sovereignty*, *productive sovereignty with diversification*, *sovereignty over national resources*, *food sovereignty*, and *environmental sovereignty with integral development*. More generally, the 2014 and 2020, manifestos capture different economic phases of the so-called 'Bolivian change process', i.e. from the defence of the post-neoliberal extractivist strategy (2014) to the aspiration to fully develop a model of import substitution (2020); however, both phases are presented in a sovereignist framework.

Two hundred 'economic sovereignist' claims were catalogued in the two *Chavista* manifestos (159 in 2018 alone), with 'sovereignty' being the second most mentioned term, right after 'socialism' and before 'Bolivarian'. Much emphasis was placed on the 'preservation of sovereign control' over 'natural, oil and mineral resources'. However, as in Bolivia, the more recent manifesto focused mainly on strengthening the national transformation industry. In our analysis, we found that great importance is given to external relations, with the aim of limiting the influence of 'hostile countries' on the 'critical nodes of the productive economy' while strengthening economic relations through 'geopolitical strategies' (on this aspect, see Jenne, 2021) and alliances to circumvent the 'financial circuits dominated by neocolonial powers'. However, despite the bellicose tones that the party strikes, the 2018 manifesto also contains some 'paradoxical sovereign' demands when it comes to 'promoting and consolidating the Bolivarian Republic

TABLE 5 Economic sovereignty in South America.

Party family	Typical declination of economic sovereignty	Saliency	Main parties/candidates adopting economic sovereignist rhetoric
Populist left	Post-liberal extractivism; import-substitution; search for new geopolitical alliances	High	MAS-IPSP; <i>Chavismo</i>
Social-democratic left	Strengthening internal demand; state control on resources	Medium to high	Brazilian PT and Uruguayan FA
Centre-right	'Paradoxical sovereignty'	Low	Uruguayan right; Comunidad Ciudadana (BOL)
Radical right	'Paradoxical sovereignty'	Low	Bolsonaro

of Venezuela as a reliable location for foreign investment within the framework of national sovereign development' (Table 5).

3.5 | International sovereignty

Sovereignist claims on international politics are an important component of our data set. While in absolute terms they are mainly found in PL manifestos, they are also an important component of sovereignist demands in RR manifestos.

Both of Kast's manifestos contained the following statement: 'Chile's participation in international treaties that support its economic and social development should be encouraged; treaties that compromise its sovereignty should be denounced'. Kast targets the Pact of Bogotá, a treaty on the peaceful settlement of disputes that has brought the Chilean-Bolivian border issue before the International Court of Justice, and ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, which is relevant to the Mapuche issue. Bolsonaro affirms the principle of 'national sovereignty over the Amazon' in all relevant international forums (see also Ferrante & Fearnside, 2019).

The CR parties only vaguely mention the concept of sovereignty when addressing international politics (and usually advocate a general 'sovereign foreign policy'). The anti-Chavista candidate Capriles interestingly adopted 'paradoxical sovereignty' when he promised to 'restore Venezuela's presence and responsibility in the international sphere', 'thus overcoming the country's isolation'. Some SDL parties, notably the Brazilian PT under Lula and Haddad and the Uruguayan *Frente Amplio*, have adopted a sovereignist rhetoric when it comes to international issues. The PT candidates hoped for a leading role for Brazil among the non-aligned countries, emphasising the 'greatness' and 'respectability' of Brazil under Lula and advocating for 'weak countries that are losing their sovereignty against imperialist aggression'. Ciro Gomes explicitly urged a 'revision of the current world order [by] the IBSA movement (India, Brazil, South Africa)': not the BRICS, because 'a process of greater indebtedness to China could jeopardise our sovereignty'.

The Uruguayan *Frente Amplio* understands the 'sovereignty of peoples' as a goal that must be sought — and guaranteed — through forms of regional integration in order to stop 'hegemonic projects of colonialist and imperialist powers' and 'enable us to act more forcefully in global forums'. Such a formulation of sovereignty as secured through regional integration (through specific organisations such as ALBA and UNASUR) is, arguably, the key principle of leftist and, as we are going to highlight, PL parties in South America. Indeed, in 2011, the Argentine FpV promised to 'intensify the process of regional construction, with the aim of strengthening national autonomy and sovereignty in the international context [and] negotiating more vigorously in international organizations [...] and rejecting unilaterally imposed prescriptions'. The MAS-IPSP placed great emphasis on international solutions to the Chilean-Bolivian border issue, while at the same time invoking the defence of the 'identity of indigenous peoples' and the rejection of 'the servile foreign policy of the neoliberal era'.

The Chavista manifesto for the 2013 elections had a strong internationalist, sovereignist dimension. It advocated a 'multipolar world' in which Venezuela should 'position itself as a powerful country at the regional and universal

TABLE 6 International sovereignty in South America.

Party family	Typical declination of international sovereignty	Saliency	Main parties/candidates adopting international sovereignist rhetoric
Populist left	<i>Patria Grande</i> to increase states' sovereignty. Venezuela: Middle-range power aspiration, praises for multipolar world	Medium	MAS-IPSP; <i>Chavismo</i> ; Kirchnerism
Social-democratic left	Regional integration under anti-colonial frame. Brazil: BRICS, middle-range power aspiration	Medium to low	Brazilian PT and Uruguayan FA
Centre-right	Preference for ad hoc free trade agreements; insertion among community of 'civil states'	Medium to low	Uruguayan right; Comunidad Ciudadana (BOL)
Radical right	Rejection of dispute settlement bodies on border and civil right issues	Medium to low	Kast (CHI)

level' through alliances 'between countries that share the same vision on the exercise of sovereignty, with each country developing its own identity' (referring, as Maduro did in 2018, to RIOs such as ALBA, CELAC and UNASUR). This also included the possibility of withdrawing or terminating multilateral (e.g. the Inter-American Human Rights System) or bilateral treaties 'exploited by neo-colonial powers to limit our national sovereignty'. The very difficult situation in 2018 suggested a more defensive stance: a 'special emphasis' was placed on 'relations with non-hostile countries' (such as India, China and South Africa) to ensure 'an international shield that interrupts relations with any power that seeks to block Venezuela's sovereign development'. Similarly to Bolsonaro, Maduro warned 'the hegemonic powers [through the UN Security Council] against claiming the environmental issue for themselves [in order] to attack the sovereignty of peoples and their self-determination'.

Overall, our analysis of the international sovereignist dimension allows us to reject H3 in the sense that regional integration, understood as a precondition for achieving and/or strengthening national sovereignty, is vociferously supported exclusively by all the leftist parties considered (with the exception of Chile, where sovereignist rhetoric is barely present in manifestos — but quite relevant in presidential speeches: see below). In contrast, CR parties resort to sovereignist rhetoric either to justify international economic integration by asserting the protection of national sovereignty (what we call 'paradoxical sovereignty') or to oppose the intervention of international actors to settle ethnic or environmental disputes (Table 6).

3.6 | Cultural sovereignty

We identified only 32 instances of 'cultural sovereignist' rhetoric, all but one (from the Uruguayan Partido Colorado in 2014⁸) in left-wing manifestos and 22 in *chavismo* (19 in the 2018 manifesto alone). It is therefore impossible to draw reliable general conclusions. The *chavista* manifestos emphasised the need to 'strengthen communicative sovereignty, to disseminate our cultural, geographical, tourist and environmental heritage [...] also to strengthen the processes of integration and unity in Latin America and the Caribbean', as well as a 'cultural struggle for an anti-colonial ethic [...] a cognitive sovereignty [to promote] our Latin American [*nuestroamericano*] images'. Appeals to strengthen national and indigenous identities have also been described as functional to the economic model of import substitution by 'promoting the consumption of native products' (Table 7).

3.7 | Presidential speeches: a summary

In our selected sample of presidential inaugural speeches, sovereignist statements are comparatively less frequent than in manifestos (see Table 9 compared to Table 3), especially in state of the union speeches. As shown in Table 8,

TABLE 7 Cultural sovereignty in South America.

Party family	Typical declination of cultural sovereignty	Saliency	Main parties/candidates adopting cultural sovereignist rhetoric
Populist left	Anti-colonial (both indigenous and <i>patria Grande</i>) narratives (<i>communicative/cognitive sovereignty</i>)	Medium	MAS-IPSP; <i>Chavismo</i>
Social-democratic left	Public media system to protect national identity from (US-led) homogenization	Low	Brazilian PT and Uruguayan FA
Centre-right	Celebration of democratic tradition of the country (Uruguay)	Low	<i>Partido Colorado</i> (URU)
Radical right	None	Absent	None

TABLE 8 Number of sovereignist claims in presidential speeches, per country and ideology.

Country	Populist left	Social-democratic left	Centre-right	Radical right	Total
Argentina	30	NA	3	NA	33
Bolivia	31	NA	0	NA	31
Brazil	NA	14	0	5	19
Chile	NA	11	14	NA	25
Uruguay	NA	0	1	NA	1
Venezuela	103	NA	NA	NA	103
Total	164	25	18	5	212

Abbreviation: NA, not available.

TABLE 9 Average presence of sovereign* per 1000 words in presidential speeches, according to party family.

Party family	N * 1000 words (number of speeches analysed)			Most sovereignist speech
	All speeches (mean)	Only inaugural speeches (mean)	Only state of the nation speeches (mean)	
Populist left	0.50 (26)	0.59 (5)	0.48 (21)	Morales 2015 (SN), Maduro 2018 (SN)
Social-democratic left	0.28 (18)	0.50 (5)	0.19 (13)	Lula 2023 (IS and SN)
Centre-right	0.13 (17)	0.18 (4)	0.11 (13)	Piñera 2019 (SN)
Radical right	0.88 (5)	4.41 (1)	0.00 (4)	Bolsonaro 2019 (IS)
Total	0.37 (66)	0.71 (15)	0.27 (51)	

Abbreviations: SN, state-of-the-nation speech; IS, inaugural speech.

almost half of the claims come from *Chavista* presidents, although they account for only 9 of the 66 speeches considered (see Online Appendix, Table A7). Economic sovereignist claims are even more clearly limited to PL, while SDL and CR presidents mainly use political and, especially in the case of SDL, international sovereignist rhetoric. With regard to RR, the very high scores (Tables 9 and 10) are misleading: they refer only to the case of Bolsonaro, who repeatedly used sovereignist rhetoric in his short inaugural speech to celebrate his victory, for example by invoking the ‘will of the Brazilian people’ and calling on the armed forces to ‘protect our borders’. He also announced, echoing Trump, that ‘foreign policy will resume its role in the defence of sovereignty, the construction of grandeur

TABLE 10 Sub-dimensions of sovereignty (on percentage) in presidential speeches, by party family (N of claims on parenthesis).

	Populist left	Social-democratic left	Centre-right	Radical right	Total
International	30% (49)	52% (13)	44% (8)	20% (1)	34% (71)
Political	38% (62)	32% (8)	44% (8)	80% (4)	39% (82)
Economic	31% (51)	12% (3)	6% (1)	0%	26% (55)
Cultural	1% (2)	4% (1)	6% (1)	0%	2% (4)
Total	100% (164)	100% (25)	100% (18)	100% (5)	100% (212)

[*construção da grandeza*] and the promotion of Brazil's development'. However, Bolsonaro has not opted for sovereignist rhetoric in any of his annual State of the Nation speeches. In turn, the dimension of cultural sovereignty is practically non-existent.

Our analysis does not add much to what has already been said about the sovereignist rhetoric emanating from the PL, apart from a smaller incursion of the economic dimension. However, it is interesting to note that in several successive State of the Nation speeches, Cristina Kirchner has particularly emphasised the fight against the International Monetary Fund, which is considered especially important. Bolivian President Arce, former Minister of Economy during Morales' term in office, also repeatedly celebrated his own productive social-community economic model when he took office in the *Palacio Quemado* – perhaps also to emphasise his independent political position vis-à-vis the previous president. The PL presidents devote a large part of their speeches to the international sovereign dimension, focusing on recurring themes: the Malvinas (Kirchner and Fernández), the Chilean-Bolivian border conflict (Morales; here too, however, Arce departs from his predecessor by placing greater emphasis on the construction of the *Patria Grande*), Venezuela's already emphasised global projection and the forging of 'alliances with states that respect the sovereignty of peoples' (referring to China and Russia), and the issue of Guayana Esequiba, presented in an irredentist/anti-colonial framework. As for the political dimension, there is a contrast between the emphasis on popular sovereignty in Argentina (by appropriating the gap between democracy and dictatorship, 30 years after the transition) and Bolivia (where Morales claimed, also to defuse internal conflicts, that the MAS-IPSP government is still 'the government of sovereign social movements') and, on the other hand, the celebration of state sovereignty in Venezuela (by celebrating the role of the armed forces against international enemies, including neighbouring countries [Colombian President Duque as well as Bolsonaro]). It is noteworthy how Chávez, in his early days (1999), emphasised exclusively the sovereignty of the people: 'Can we be afraid of popular sovereignty? Sovereignty is not ours, the President, the Congress, the Supreme Court are not sovereign, the only sovereign here in Venezuela is the people'.

As far as the SDL is concerned, as already mentioned, the international dimension is very central. The Chilean presidents who belong to this faction (Bachelet and especially Boric) emphasise the importance of 'regional integration with sovereignty', explicitly mentioning UNASUR: This symbolism is very similar to what we have seen in the manifestos of the Uruguayan *Frente Amplio*. In Brazil, on the other hand, both Rousseff and – even more clearly – Lula focus more on the global stage, calling for multilateralism and Brazil's role in a multipolar world. Political sovereignty is evident in the solemn references to the 'sovereign people who wanted to go their own way' (Rousseff), but above all in the call to strive for a new constitution (Bachelet) and 'to be a sovereign country again' (Lula), in explicit opposition to Bolsonaro's mandate. This is what we have called *popular* sovereignty. The CR presidents, on the other hand, emphasise *state* sovereignty. For example, when Piñera addresses the Bolivian-Chilean border dispute, he emphasises the central role of the armed forces in defending internal and external integrity. We also encounter forms of 'paradoxical sovereignty': Piñera, in turn, combines 'free trade' and 'sovereignty', while Macri differs from his predecessor governments in relation to the Malvinas by stating that 'it is necessary to overcome the opposition' because 'isolationism and empty rhetoric make any possibility of a solution a distant prospect.

4 | CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper aims to provide a basis for mapping the different manifestations of sovereignist rhetoric in South America, focusing on the differences at the country level and between party families. As our analysis of manifestos shows, the term 'sovereignty', alongside concepts such as *patria* and (anti-)imperialism/colonialism, is a central component of an idiolect that is typical of South American (mostly, though not exclusively, left-wing) populisms. In the SDL, it seems that the more a political party tries to reaffirm its ideological roots, as in the case of the Uruguayan *Frente Amplio*, or to mobilise its constituency in polarised contexts, as with the Brazilian PT after the impeachment of Rousseff, the more it tends to use sovereignist rhetoric, while the more moderate Chilean left does not. In contrast, RR-wing leaders such as Bolsonaro and Kast make limited use of sovereignist rhetoric, often denouncing international organisations and treaties that serve to protect the environment or indigenous minorities. Cultural sovereignty can be found above all in the rhetoric of the *Chavistas*.

As for the political dimension of sovereignty, we emphasise its importance in the presidential speeches we selected. Along with international sovereignty, this is a very important dimension that presidents believe it is important to highlight in important events. According to Basile and Mazzoleni (2020), political sovereignty asserts that 'sovereignty [should] be exercised over mutually exclusive territories, i.e. the nation-states' and that 'it [should] be an expression of the will of the people', thus assigning the 'people' a decisive role in the democratic political decision-making process. The first objective, which implicitly involves control over the flow of people and the strengthening of state capacities, is embodied by the concept of state sovereignty, while the second objective is represented by popular sovereignty. These components of the political sovereignty dimension are theoretically and empirically distinct and, in our opinion, should be analytically separated in the literature.⁹ However, this does not mean that these components — theoretically and empirically — are unrelated. While RR-wing parties focus on state sovereignty and centre-left parties on popular sovereignty, both components coexist in PL-wing parties. It can be argued that state sovereignty and popular sovereignty are intertwined: The former can be seen as a precondition for the latter, limiting the influence of unelected actors and giving the state sufficient capacity to freely implement the 'will of the people', while the latter ensures that the state remains accountable to the people. PL-wing government candidates and presidents, however, tend to emphasise the alleged achievements of state sovereignty more strongly, seemingly justifying the institutionalisation, bureaucratisation and diminishing participatory-mobilising (Padoan, 2020) features of their governments.

The South American sovereignist rhetoric also has a strong economic dimension, which is particularly evident in the party manifestos. Here, there is considerable overlap with the state-market dimension (and the rejection of free trade agreements), which remains a key factor in structuring party competition along the left–right axis in the region (Zeichmeister & Corral, 2013). Economic sovereignty correlates linearly with the left–right dimension, as confirmed by our extended quantitative analysis based on MARPOR data.

Economic sovereignty is primarily expressed either as a rejection of export-oriented development models and a demand for policies to develop national industry and domestic demand, or as a reclamation of state control over renewable and non-renewable resources ('post-neoliberal extractivism': e.g. Brand et al., 2016). It is noteworthy that contemporary radical (but not moderate) right-wing forces find it necessary to adopt what we call a 'paradoxically sovereignist' stance: Their demands for open markets, privatisation measures and limited state intervention are accompanied by assurances that all this will be pursued 'while respecting the sovereignty of our country'.

In the case of the South American RR, *sovereignism* and *sovereignist rhetoric* can thus diverge. While sovereignist rhetoric does indeed support forms of international sovereignty (as our analysis based on MARPOR data also suggests), it is also used to disguise the rejection of forms of economic sovereignty. Such a decoupling between sovereignist rhetoric and international sovereignty (as defined in this article) also applies in part to the PL, whose opposition to Inter-American (US-led) integration is accompanied by appeals to strengthen regional integration between equal countries. Regional integration processes are seen not only as compatible, but also as essential for ensuring and realising substantial sovereignty at the national level.

Perhaps the discussion on regional economic integration and political *coordination* better describes the path that the South American left has in mind, since national sovereignties should not be completely sacrificed in the name of the *Patria Grande*. However, the need to strengthen a regional bloc economically, politically and culturally in order to strengthen national sovereignties remains a powerful political and emotional argument that pro-market forces (and/or 'open regionalists') must also reckon with when advancing their agenda. The old slogan is: 'The goals of the Peronists are social justice, economic independence and political sovereignty', and to this day the PL keeps all these terms to itself in public. For the evolving (global) research agenda on sovereigntism and sovereignty conflicts, it is not only necessary to further deepen the distinction between state and popular sovereigntism within the dimension of political sovereigntism, but our findings also suggest highlighting how sovereignist arguments diverge ideologically depending on whether sovereignty (in all its dimensions) is seen as something to be achieved or restored (for a similar reasoning, see Filc, 2015). Finally, our analysis, which focuses on South America, where state sovereignty has historically been anything but 'strong', suggests (as confirmed by our quantitative analysis of MARPOR data) that sovereignist claims are not 'on the rise', but rather a recurring feature in the rhetorical arsenal of (especially leftist and/or populist) actors.

These concluding reflections explicitly call on the literature on sovereigntism not to focus exclusively or predominantly on the European context, as otherwise there is a risk that old wine, namely Euroscepticism, will be filled into new ('sovereign') bottles. Given that the literature on Euroscepticism is much more established and conceptually advanced, the impact of the European integration process (a global *unicum*) and its impact on 'sovereignty conflicts' (Bickerton et al., 2022) between EU, state and even regional institutions warrants specific and well-developed analytical tools. This process has profoundly affected the identity of the European (centre) left, which, as Moschonas (2009) provocatively argues, is much less social democratic or economically interventionist than European. In Europe, 'sovereigntism' has become synonymous with far-right populism. As our analysis shows, in South America, where integovernmentalism prevails and supranational actors are absent, and given the significant historical links between the US and the region, 'sovereigntism' is found on the left in all its variants: populist, Marxist (see the MARPOR online appendix) and, to some extent, social democratic (as our analysis of presidential speeches shows). We are not arguing for a European (or South American) exceptionalism, but for a broader, global perspective that should be adopted for 'sovereignty studies'.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ We included in our sample only presidential candidates achieving the 10% of the votes at the first round of the presidential elections.
- ² In Chile and Brazil, the manifestos are submitted by the candidates, who are typically supported by party coalitions. In the other countries, manifestos are submitted by a single political party (or by a coalition of parties, as in Bolivia) supporting a specific presidential candidate.
- ³ The analytical distinction between *state* and *popular* sovereigntism has been aptly suggested by an anonymous reviewer, which we thank.
- ⁴ An exception was made for the Venezuelan case: we opted for including in our sample the Chávez's *very first* opening discourse (in 1999).

- ⁵ We considered: in Argentina, the presidential discourse at the annual opening session of the Parliament; in Bolivia, the presidential discourse at the *Sesión de Honour* of the Parliament (on the Bolivian Independence Day); in Brazil, Chile and Venezuela, the presidential message/discourse delivered in occasion of the annual *cuenta pública* ('accountability'). No available comparable documents have been found for Uruguay.
- ⁶ More precisely, as reported in MARPOR's website (<https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/down/tutorials/main-dataset.html>), 'the values stored in the variables indicate the share of quasi-sentences that were coded with the specific category. So, a value of 4.5 in a column named per501 indicates that 4.5% of the sentences in the party's manifesto that is represented in that row were assigned the code 501 by an expert coder'.
- ⁷ The FA often linked telecommunications policies, as well as cybersecurity, to the concept of sovereignty (also declined in 'cultural' terms), with a special focus on issues of data protection from external attacks from both public and private actors.
- ⁸ It interestingly celebrates the Uruguayan democratic tradition, "the commitment to peace, negotiation, dialogue, and non-intervention [...] and the protection of sovereignty [...] as values for which it is worth being Uruguayan".
- ⁹ We thank, again, an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this key distinction.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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