

POPULISM AS A CENTRIST STRATEGY FOR DISQUALIFICATION. The use of “populism(s)/populist(s)” in Belgian, French and Spanish Parliaments

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Abstract:

This article examines the uses of the words populism(s) and populist(s) – hereafter *populis** – by Members of Parliaments from Belgium, France, and Spain in 2019. It presents noteworthy findings unexplored in the literature on the uses of *populis**. First, when employed by MPs, *populis** refers mainly to actions, discourses and elusive threats rather than directly blaming political enemies (except in Spain). Second, in the three focal countries, *populis** is mainly used pejoratively by right and centre-right MPs as a strategy implemented to disqualify political projects and discourses deemed nationalist, demagogical and extremist. The originality of our study lies in demonstrating similar trends in Belgium, France, and Spain, while also unveiling differences stemming from national contexts.

Keywords: populism, parliamentarians, strategy for disqualification, Belgium, Spain, France