

POPULISM AND THE SECOND CRISIS OF INCORPORATION IN LATIN AMERICA

by

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Abstract

Beginning with the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998, populist leaders have come to power in many Latin American countries. I argue that this recent wave of populism results from demands for incorporation made by marginalized, unorganized groups. Their demands are a reflection of acute inequality and, when aggregated, lead to crisis. Populist movements, parties, and leaders tend to emerge during such crises because they are able to take advantage of the presence of groups that become de-incorporated or that were never incorporated and mobilize them within existing state structures. This is a distinctive pattern in highly unequal societies where a full set of rights and freedoms has not been universalized. I illustrate the usefulness of my approach by applying it to the rise of Chávez in Venezuela. I conclude that, where populism enables meaningful incorporation of marginalized groups, it may ultimately provide an improved basis for long-term democracy in Latin America.

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* * *

"El futuro es imprevisible. Una cosa, sin embargo, es obvia: en ninguna otra parte del mundo hay tanta esperanza, tanta búsqueda de alternativas, tanta utopía como, hoy, en América Latina.

Ojalá que el sueño se transforme en realidad."

Frei Betto

Introduction

Populist leaders have recently come to power in many Latin American countries. First was Hugo Chávez, who was elected president of Venezuela in 1998. Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of the (Peronist) Justicialist Party were elected in Argentina in 2003 and 2007, respectively. Former left-wing finance minister Rafael Correa was elected in Ecuador in 2006. The same year, the Sandinista demagogue Daniel Ortega prevailed in Nicaragua and Chávez was reelected by an increased margin. The 2008 election of Fernando Lugo, a former Catholic bishop, ended over six decades of rule by a single party in Paraguay and, while it is too early to definitively cast him as populist, José Mujica, a former member of the leftist Tupamaros, won a run-off election in Uruguay in 2009. Other potential populists include former coca union leader Evo Morales, elected in Bolivia in 2005, and right-wing Álvaro Uribe, elected in Colombia in 2002 and again in 2006 (following constitutional reform to allow for reelection). A strong populist presence was also established by Andrés Manuel López Obrador who came second in the 2006 Mexican elections and Ollanta Humala who lost a run-off vote in Peru in 2006.

The present wave of populism is the third in the history of Latin America; the first began in the 1930s and the second in the 1980s. Current populists differ somewhat from their predecessors and tend to be closely associated with Latin America's new lefts (see Cameron 2009). However, the overlap between populism and leftism does not make the terms synonymous. For example, Brazil's Luiz Inácio (Lula) da Silva is clearly on the left but not populist, and right wing populism is also possible.

I define populism – and this applies both to classic examples of populism such as the Vargas, Perón and Cardenas regimes and to populist regimes today – as a multi-class, anti-oligarchic movement that mobilizes mass support from above and builds direct links between a charismatic, autocratic leader and a vaguely defined collective, “the people.” Although populists have overwhelmingly moved from their traditional balconies to more modern venues – including social networking sites and national television broadcasts that forcibly interrupt regular programming – continuity between waves of populism is undeniable.

How should we explain the third wave of Latin American populism, and what does it reveal about the causes of populism in general? Earlier waves of populism were associated with economic conditions that no longer exist and yet populism maintains a strong presence in the region. The unexpected resilience of populism suggests that either existing explanations are incorrect or, as I argue, incomplete given that there is more than one discrete cause. Indeed several causes have been

suggested – and I survey them in Section 2 – but the emergence of a third wave of populism makes it necessary to consider potential explanations within a unifying framework, to assess the plausibility of each explanation not *in preference to* but *in combination with* others.

This paper attempts to provide such a framework. Ultimately, its main concern is with the societal tensions that underpin the rise of Latin American populism, both in general and in the specific case of the third wave. I contend that populism emerges in moments of crisis when leaders have the opportunity to mobilize marginalized groups within existing state structures. This pattern is particular to societies that lack a universalized set of rights. To support this thesis, I begin by conceptualizing the most recent wave of populism. I then discuss potential explanations for populism and show that they are individually unsatisfactory. Finally, I conceptualize the crisis of a second moment of incorporation and attempt to demonstrate that it provides an appropriate framework for assembling diverse causal elements.

Contemporary demand for incorporation is influenced by the failure of neoliberalism. Initial incorporation made organized labor into a legitimate actor in the political arena (Collier & Collier 1991), but neoliberalism produced new groups that were deprived of a full set of rights. Today, these groups are reacting to this inequality by demanding incorporation.¹ The associated crisis synthesizes diverse causes of populism, allowing us to move towards a theory of populism that does not apply merely to a fleeting developmental moment, but rather to all societies that lack universalized rights.

In a way, this is implicit in the definition of populism already given. Populism, according to my definition, requires a leader who can mobilize marginalized groups and transform them into legitimate social actors, using their support to infringe upon horizontal accountability.² In other words, the leader receives a popular mandate to override state agencies that are designed to restrict his or her power. However, the leader can only mobilize marginalized groups if the members of these groups have a sufficiently strong sense of inequality and injustice for it to be worth their while to mobilize.

¹ Collier and Collier (1991) define initial incorporation as “the first sustained and at least partially successful attempt by the state to legitimate and shape an institutionalized labor movement.” (Collier & Collier 1991, 161) The incorporation period is seen as a fulcrum that constitutes a “crucial transition”; it instigates a dialectic relationship between state control and mobilization of the labour movement that has a long-term impact. David Collier later succinctly defined the incorporation period as “a period when the state assumed a new role in society, recognized organized labor as a legitimate actor, and, in highly varied ways, sought to institutionalize this role.” (Collier in Munc & Snyder 2007, 573)

² O’Donnell (1999) defines horizontal accountability as “The existence of state agencies that are legally enabled and empowered, and factually willing and able, to take actions that span from routine oversight to criminal sanctions or impeachment in relation to actions or omission by other agents or agencies of the state that may be qualified as unlawful.” (pp 38)

Such is presently the case in Latin America because there is a second crisis (or multiple crises) of incorporation (Luna & Filgueira 2009), meaning that some groups, like indigenous peoples and participants in the informal economy, are not seen as fully legitimate political actors. They have formal political rights (essentially, the right to vote), but lack civil and socio-economic rights. Sometimes this is because they once had these rights and have since been deprived, but more often it is because the rights were never granted in the first place. This lack of rights is perceived as acute – which is why we can use the term *crisis* to describe the situation, especially when it overlaps with a period of economic transition – but it is not unique to a given point on the trajectory of development.

My approach provides a novel contribution to the study of social development in Latin America because it explicitly theorizes the relationship between moments of crisis and the emergence of populism. It thereby provides unique insight into the roots of populism and the implications for democratic consolidation. I contend that populism is as durable as the inequality and political exclusion that provoke it. On the flip side, however, populism actually addresses these conditions of inequality and exclusion. While it appears to undermine the quality of democracy by increasing unchecked executive power, third wave populism seems to be uniquely equipped to address underlying societal tension and fully incorporate marginal groups. Successful incorporation bodes well for meaningful democratic participation in Latin America.

This paper has three sections. First I present the key characteristics of populism and explain what makes the third wave unique. Here, I identify and adopt a definitional consensus within a subset of recent scholarly work. Section 2 explores possible causes of the emergence of populism. I find that monocausal explanations are unsatisfactory and require a unifying framework in order to collectively provide a coherent account of the rise of populism. Section 3 accordingly provides such a framework by conceptualizing what I see as a crisis of incorporation and uses underlying societal polarization to relate the crisis to today's populists. I illustrate the fruitfulness of my approach by applying it to the rise of Chávez in Venezuela and conclude by discussing the implications for democratic consolidation in the region.

1. Conceptualizing Populism

Although scholars tend to agree on the basic definition of populism (see in particular Roberts 2006, Weyland 2001, de la Torre 2001, and Conniff 1982), the phenomenon has taken on a new flavor in the past decade. Today it coincides with the rise of the lefts to a much greater degree than either its classical or neoliberal predecessors. In the interest of conceptual clarity, it therefore seems useful to investigate Latin American populism in light of this new ideological affinity.

Some influential scholarship has conflated populism with the lefts, dismissing the populist left as incompatible with programmatic social democratic movements or parties (see Castañeda 2006).³ The new lefts are repeatedly dichotomized into a responsible left that is tolerated and a second left that is denigrated for its supposedly incoherent populist tendencies; apparently proponents of the latter are “much more interested in policy as an instrument for attaining and conserving power than in power as a tool for making policy” (Castañeda 2006, 33).⁴

For instance, Lula is lauded for his apparent fiscal discipline and respect for territorial diversity through federal devolution of power (see Schamis 2006, 21-25) while Chávez and the Kirchners in Argentina are chastised for allowing inflation to run wild (a claim that is not entirely unjustified). Dichotomizing leftist behavior and labeling subsequent categories as right and wrong reflects a profound elitist prejudice that is increasingly antiquated given recent socio-economic developments in the region. It additionally misconceives populism as a unidimensional, avaricious platform.⁵

³ Castañeda defines the lefts as “that current of thought, politics, and policy that stresses social improvements over macroeconomic orthodoxy, egalitarian distribution of wealth over its creation, sovereignty over international cooperation, democracy (at least when in opposition, if not necessarily once in power) over governmental effectiveness.” (Castañeda 2006, 32)

⁴ The populist left is often associated with opportunism. See, for example, Zamora Cordero 2006: “La estructuración del neopopulismo “en contra de” y no “a favor de” hace que sus elementos comunes, a lo largo de Latinoamérica, estén dados en función del grado de oposición al modelo neoliberal y no en función de un proyecto político alternativo que otorgue a dicho movimiento mayores pretensiones que la mera conquista del poder político a partir de un movimiento de masas.” Populism is consistently represented as reliant on irresponsible economic policy and gaudy personalism (Krauze 1992), as well as void of any sophisticated mandate: “The essential point is that populists do not aspire to an elaboration of their own ideology placed in historical perspective; either because the ideological basis is, after all, too weak to bear this intellectual burden, or – and this may also be important – because the political need for doing so is considered secondary or irrelevant.” (Van Niekerk 1974, 30)

⁵ Three decades after she initially wrote, Margaret Canovan’s commentary on the academic elite is strikingly relevant to Castañeda and Krauze: “Interpretations of populism have... been deeply influenced by the fears of some intellectuals who have dreaded the grass roots and the appalling things that might crawl out of them, and by the idealism of others who have exalted the common man and his simple virtues. ... Because of the intimate relevance that populist themes have for intellectuals, scholarly interpretations of populism have often been controversial to the point where one can hardly recognize the same movement in different accounts.” (Canovan 1981, 11)

While populism and leftist movements tend to thrive in similar circumstances, I suggest that systematic conflation of the lefts with populism is not only inaccurate, but is also does a great disservice to our ability to understand the origins of both phenomena. That such analysis continues to be published in leading journals suggests that the academe has not yet come to a clear consensus regarding the relationship between populism and the new lefts.

Aside from dispelling scholarly ambiguity, studying the causes of the recent rise of populism in Latin America is important for unpacking its implications for democracy. In particular, conceptualizing populism as a product of demand for incorporation allows me to argue that it is as durable as the societal conditions that provoke it. I can thereby refute claims that it necessarily reflects a transitory disequilibrium. Such claims would imply that, while populism's hyper-presidentialism subsumes judicial independence, its effects are temporary given that the electoral market will react to such abuses, bolstering the party system and soon shifting back to "the only game in town," namely full democracy (Przeworski 1991, 26; see also Linz 1990).⁶

My approach enables me to rebut scholars who have been prematurely ringing the death knell of populism for decades.⁷ Populism was supposedly on its way out when Peru's Fujimori was just an innocent professor at the National Agrarian University, devoid of any apparent autocratic aspirations, and Chávez was still dreaming of a career in baseball (Marcano & Tyszka 2007). These repeated funeral rites ignore that populism becomes salient on the basis of societal conditions that may be persistent. Populism seeks to address these exclusionary conditions through an electoral challenge and by offering an alternative to existing state hegemony. Unless we can recognize the explicit connection between the absence of universalized rights and the rise of populism, we have little hope of understanding why groups would voluntarily accept increases in presidential discretion and indeed how a populist regime can persist. And with Argentina having passed well over half of the past six decades under populist rule and Chávez claiming that he will be in power until 2031, claims of disequilibrium are less than convincing.

Finally, I have a normative agenda. In presenting populism as a strategy adopted by multiclass alliances with a clear mandate for institutional change, I wish to refute the claim that it is necessarily a defective "shadow of democracy"⁸ (Canovan 1999) as well as the claim that it

⁶ Note that this kind of analysis reflects Huntington's argument that political development is a function of size, number, and effectiveness of organizations; in a world where the party system is not totally independent (Boix 1999) and where parties respond to electoral opportunities, we can reasonably argue that 'conventional' moves towards authoritarianism would be rejected.

⁷ For an example of a premature epitaph, see "Conclusion: Requiem for Populism?" by Paul W. Drake in Conniff 1982.

⁸ Canovan thereby suggests that populism is a permanent possibility given consistent contradictions within democracy. I disagree with her on two major points. (1) She argues that populism is a perennial possibility in the

consistently “smacks of improvisation and irresponsibility, and by its nature, is not regarded as functional or efficient” (di Tella 1965, 47). Instead, I see populism as a direct reflection of problematic societal conditions that it seeks to overcome. Identifying the ways in which populism negatively influences levels of democratic consolidation should therefore add urgency to the need to address the societal exclusion that provokes it. One possible implication of my paper is that reducing inequality and granting full socio-economic and civil rights to all citizens may increase the likelihood of permanent democratic consolidation.

Classical Populism and Neopopulism

“¡Yo no soy yo... yo soy un pueblo, carajo!” (Hugo Chávez, 23 January 2010)

As a general concept, populism is typically associated with charismatic leaders such as Vargas, Perón and Cardenas. It is also associated with delegative democracy, which O’Donnell (1994) defines as the potentially enduring concentration of power in the hands of a single leader under conditions of weak accountability between branches of government. Delegation is interrupted only by the use of direct democracy that is institutionally embodied in binding referenda and plebiscites.⁹ Substantively, populism is comprised of “a mixture of reactionary and progressive sentiments: reactionary in their wish to restore rights formerly enjoyed by citizens; progressive in their desire for expanded benefits for the disfranchised masses” (Conniff 1982, 5). This diversity of purpose is reconciled by top-down political mobilization that provides an alternative to existing institutional weakness. Populism “enables personalist leaders to establish vertical, unmediated relationships with atomized masses” (Roberts 1996, 113) and effectively creates a viable support base for diverse ideological goals.

The first major wave of populism was closely associated with import substitution industrialization (ISI) beginning in the 1930s and for several decades afterwards. Not only were numerous industries nationalized, but economic growth and the development of domestic markets enabled governments to provide some income redistribution (Cardoso & Faletto 1979, 131). Such

presence of democracy. Instead, I suggest that its likelihood depends on the depth of exclusion and the salience of calls for further incorporation – see section 3. (2) Populism is the defective result of the ambiguity contained in a democratic ideal; rather, I suggest that populism can have the function of enabling incorporation and can thereby improve the likelihood of meaningful democracy.

⁹ The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) indicates in its 2008 World Survey of Direct Democracy that globally only Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador, along with Belarus and Uganda, satisfy all of their categories for direct democracy. These include legal provisions for mandatory and optional referenda, national presidential recall votes, binding referenda, and having enacted a binding referendum since 1980.

redistribution enabled leaders to consolidate mass support for their populist projects, particularly amongst subaltern groups (see Dornbusch & Edwards 1991¹⁰). Support from these groups was necessary to create legitimacy (and sometimes to win elections) but because the groups were very diverse, there were not many policies that all of them would agree to support. Populists therefore tended to favor targeted transfers to major support groups (see Kaufmann & Stallings 1991).

The ISI model began to decline in the 1960s. Export sectors in the region were unable to sustain debt service payments and globalization made resistance to foreign direct investment (FDI) seem inappropriate. Gross domestic product (GDP) growth stagnated. The ISI model was fully discredited by the 1982 debt crisis and was subsequently subsumed by export-driven growth (Bulmer-Thomas 2006). Populism, however, revealed itself to be much more resilient than the development model with which it had been associated and underwent a significant ideological shift.

A second wave of populism accordingly coincided with the rise of neoliberal economic policy in the late 1970s. This “post-adjustment” neopopulism (Roberts 2007) was distinct from classical populism as it reflected the ostensible move throughout the region towards democratic consolidation, particularly as embodied in expanded enfranchisement and increasingly legalized rights for marginal social movements. The second wave therefore contrasted with classical populism by consistently respecting formal democracy, but it continued to be problematic as it was correlated with incomplete social rights (and, at least in the case of Fujimori, incomplete political rights).¹¹

Neopopulists typically embraced the central tenets of neoliberalism, including deregulation, structural adjustment programs, and reduced redistribution. They were averse to rent-seekers and to intervention in the market (Weyland 1996). Their source of popular support differed from that of classical populism: “The social base of the so-called neopopulisms... is based on an alliance between emerging elites and the poor, excluding organized sectors of society such as the middle class, the proletariat and the industrial bourgeoisie that were the support base of classic populisms like peronism, varguism, and cardenism”¹² (de la Torre 2001, 172). Neopopulism was associated

¹⁰ Dornbusch and Edwards (1991) investigate economic populism and argue that it emphasizes growth and redistribution.

¹¹ An interesting nuance is added to this dynamic by Weyland 2001: “according to my redefinition, which focuses on personalistic leadership with mostly unorganized mass support, neopopulism is by no means a diminished subtype of populism. Instead, due to its lower level of institutionalization it is more populist than classical populism in terms of political strategy.” (16)

¹² My translation of: “La base social de los llamados neopopulismos, por ejemplo, se basa en una alianza entre elites emergentes con los más pobres, excluyendo a los sectores organizados de la sociedad tales como las clases medias, el proletariado y la burguesía industrial que fueron la base de apoyo de los populismos clásicos como el peronismo, el varguismo y el cardenismo.”

with reduced partisanship and decreasingly institutionalized popular support bases, a dynamic that allowed leaders to concentrate their power.¹³

The Third Wave of Populism

The third, most recent wave of populism is strongly associated with Latin America's new lefts. It is observable in the behavior of Chávez, Correa, the Kirchners, and Ortega. These leaders all display the characteristics of populism that were discussed earlier. They have mobilized multiclass coalitions from above. They are all charismatic and, while the intensity of their rhetoric varies, they are all anti-oligarchic. Other conceivably populist leaders in the region include Morales, Lugo, Mujica and, while far from the lefts, possibly Uribe. However, these leaders tend to use populist tools less consistently (or have been in office for only a short time), making it difficult to label them as unambiguously populist.

Morales constitutes a contentious case because he distinguishes himself from populist leaders like Chávez on the basis of “distinct mobilizational patterns – specifically, the greater autonomy of lower-class and indigenous socio-political mobilization in Bolivia. Morales’s leadership... was spawned by a social movement which toppled two presidents and then successfully entered the electoral arena itself, creating a political dynamic that is quite different from Chávez’s top-down process of populist mobilization in Venezuela” (Roberts 2007, 6). I nonetheless classify Morales as populist because of his rhetoric (Hawkins 2010), his desire to create close links between himself and the people (see Landes 2007), and his mobilization strategies in urban areas. He has additionally established a multi-class, multi-sectoral coalition (Albro 2005) while espousing a profoundly anti-political approach to traditional politics (Madrid 2008, Brienen 2007) and at least at the outset, opposing the oligarchy (Toranzo Roca 2008, 17; Dunkerly 2007).

Moreover, the bottom-up mobilization that initially made Morales’ *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) into a social movement in rural areas appears to have been at least partially reversed by overt differentiation between the movement and its leadership (Mayorga 2008). Despite these populist characteristics, there is a great deal of ambiguity because Morales has recently employed conciliatory rhetoric (see in particular Los Tiempos 07-08-2010) and has

¹³ The clearest example of this is Fujimori’s *Cambio 90*, which was not a political party in any traditional sense but rather a vessel made exclusively to carry Fujimori to the presidency. Such organizational flexibility initially allowed neopopulists to survive neoliberalism (Levitsky 2003); they were able to forge new partnerships and provide unexpected benefits to key social actors. However, they thereby built a reputation for opportunism while burning bridges to traditional supporters. For examples of scholars who see neopopulists as principally opportunistic, see Castañeda (2006), Krauze (1992), di Tella (1965), and Drake 1982 (pp 242).

encouraged decentralization through the recent Framework Law on Autonomies and Decentralization (passed on 19 July 2010; see Ministerio de Autonomía 2010).

Uribe is likewise ambiguous. He is typically considered non-populist because he lacks charisma, displays little commitment to the truly downtrodden, and respects the constitutional courts (Dugas 2003). However, he downplayed party politics by creating a new supraparty coalition specifically to support his election in 2002, bypassed formal procedures to increase his executive discretion while consistently seeking to undermine the judiciary (see Breuer 2008), exercised mechanisms of direct democracy (notably the 2003 referendum on concentrating executive power, which failed), and significantly raised taxes for the rich. He furthermore created direct links between the regime and the people through community-based CONVIVIR squads¹⁴ and runs marathon, televised *consultas* throughout the country on Saturdays that are broadcast in a way similar to Chávez's *Aló Presidente* and Correa's *Dialogo con el Presidente*.¹⁵

Uribe exhibits deeply populist tendencies, but his focus is not incorporation but rather security. Instead of demonizing the oligarchy, he focuses on othering terrorists to produce “a discourse of national unity on the basis of the fight against terrorism”¹⁶ (Galindo Hernández 2006, 157). I accept the scholarly consensus that overall he is not populist, but I nonetheless maintain that he displays numerous populist tendencies.

Third wave populism shares the contemporary left's penchant for charismatic leaders and its goals of increased equality and inclusivity within a democratic framework. It differs on the basis of an underlying belief that democratic institutions often hinder the direct expression of the people's preferences. Populist leaders can come from any point along the ideological spectrum and they tend to advocate for high levels of executive discretion in order to effectively respond to popular demands. They feel justified in doing so because they claim to directly embody the people. The concurrent rise of the left and of populism therefore has contradictory implications for democracy. The former heralds the institutionalization of opposition, suggesting that the era of armed regime change is behind us (barring, of course, a contagion of Honduran-style coups). The latter, on the

¹⁴ Convivir refers to a network of mostly rural, community-based security cooperatives. They work with the Colombian military to provide intelligence and basic policing services. Although the network was created in 1994 and has been lambasted for corruption and human rights abuses, Uribe remains “an adamant defender of the CONVIVIR strategy, arguing passionately that its record had been distorted.” (Dugas 2003, 1124)

¹⁵ These are the weekly television shows that are run by the two presidents in their respective countries. In both cases, shows can last over four hours and typically feature political commentary. Chávez has become particularly notorious for his unpredictable presentations. Both leaders additionally take advantage of television to conduct *cadenas*, or chains, whereby televised government interventions forcibly interrupt all regularly programmed shows on all channels. At least in Venezuela, they have no formal time limit and are extremely common.

¹⁶ un discurso de unidad nacional en torno a la lucha contra el terrorismo

other hand, suggests that democracy is perhaps not as entrenched as dominant scholarship might claim.

The defining features of the most recent wave of populism clearly contrast with those of the lefts. In addition to their problematic relationship with democracy, third wave populists promote institutional flexibility in order to exercise their ostensibly democratic prerogative, even through clientelism and ostracism of the oligarchy. Institutional flexibility is particularly evident in constitutional changes, most notoriously in allowing for indefinite re-election in Venezuela. It is enabled by weakened interparty competition that allows populists to change electoral laws to their advantage. These changes can in turn undermine conventional mechanisms for ensuring accountability.

I therefore argue that third wave populists have an ambivalent relationship with democratic consolidation. It is often difficult to establish whether increased incorporation will compensate for executive discretion with regards to institutionalizing democratic behavior. This ambiguity is exacerbated by populists' vague policy commitments. Since populists claim that they can and should act on the people's behalf, they tend to restrict legislative deliberation. However, they are arguably justified in doing so given their ability to mobilize a "cohesive force to weld together a polyclass coalition" (Drake 1982, 219). The strength of third wave populism effectively lies in its monopoly of the quintessential democratic resource: "When pushed to the wall, [populist leaders] invoke and thus reveal the *ultima ratio* of populism: broad mass support" (Weyland 2001, 12).

Having broadly discussed the characteristics of the three waves, it is clear that populism is consistently reflected in parties, alliances, and leaders that mobilize mass support from above and that concentrate power in the hands of a charismatic leader. It provides a set of tools through which "a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers."¹⁷ This direct, quasi-personal relationship bypasses established intermediary organizations or deinstitutionalizes and subordinates them to the leader's personal will" (Weyland 2001, 14). Populist ideology exists only to the extent that it encourages popular mobilization through social integration rather than as a programmatic political philosophy.

¹⁷ It should be noted that earlier populism tended to be associated with more organized groups. A major challenge for recent waves of populism is that the unorganized nature of major constituents makes it unclear how – or even if – incorporation can be institutionalized.

Alternative Conceptual Approaches

Having conceptualized populism in a way that is broadly accepted in existing scholarship, it is useful to briefly highlight alternative conceptual foci and explain why I do not embrace them here. While my focus is clearly on populism as the embodiment of multi-class, anti-elite alliances, other authors focus on attributes such as charismatic leadership, provocative rhetoric, opposition to hegemonic domination, economic redistribution, and discourse that aggregates diverse demands. These approaches may collectively add nuance to my definition.

Arguably the most important alternative approach to the study of populism is presented by Ernesto Laclau (2005; 1977). He contends that populism is a discursive strategy that aggregates the demands of diverse social actors by demonstrating the equivalential nature of their grievances, meaning that while a plurality of demands may not be homogenous, they are shown to be similar enough to be aggregated into broad, popular demands. As demands become aggregated, diverse actors transform into an increasingly unified unit. This process is enabled by a symbol that shows the actors in question the merit of subscribing to broad demands; in this case, the symbol is a populist leader. A populist can thereby appeal to diverse groups for different reasons but, through their shared support for that leader's demands, they become part of a single project and are thereby integrated into a broader group that is generally referred to as the *pueblo*. Diverse subnational groups typically express themselves politically through populism when they are otherwise incapable of organizing themselves or promoting their demands through an autonomous social movement.

Laclau's approach to populism is nebulous; we can only establish *post hoc* that a given symbol is powerful enough to aggregate diverse demands. However, we can use Laclau's analysis to establish how populism is distinct from social mobilization in general. Specifically, populism is salient in situations where meaningful mobilization must be activated from above and where aggregation (to use Laclau's term) does not occur organically. Social movements do not require such top-down mobilization. Populism is therefore unique in its ability to mobilize otherwise available but un-mobilized groups. Availability is a quasi-permanent feature of Latin American societies; a "disposable" mass of people is arguably psycho-structurally created whenever the poor observe the success of the rich and feel incapable of emulating that success (di Tella 1965). While specific causal dynamics will be clarified in Section Three, I elaborate on this kind of reasoning by suggesting that marginal gains have demonstrated that improvement is possible; political rights create awareness of incomplete incorporation and spawn a desire for full civil rights. Transforming

that desire into a meaningful set of demands is impossible without aggregation, a dynamic that often results in mere availability in the absence of a populist symbol.

Other alternative conceptualizations tend to be less useful for my approach. For example, numerous authors focus on the independent influence of populist rhetoric, which they codify and quantify in order to identify populism (see Hawkins 2009, Armony & Armony 2005). It seems, however, that rhetoric is an imperfect proxy for populism as it does not necessarily reflect ideology, public receptivity, or the structural constraints that inspire the rhetoric in question.¹⁸ Clearly “political agency alone... provides an idiosyncratic and unsatisfactory explanation of organizational variation” (Roberts 2006, 128). While rhetoric certainly may enable top-down mobilization, it is simply not useful to brush aside instrumental questions of how and why rhetoric plays such a mobilizational role. The same critique can be applied to scholarship that focuses exclusively on charisma outside of its institutional and structural context (Cammack 2000).

Another major conceptual approach to populism dwells on its oppositional nature. Populism arguably transforms marginalized groups into coherent political forces by reifying them in opposition to hegemonic forces that must be vanquished. Populism accordingly arises where the social order is particularly exclusionary. Analytical dialectics therefore abound.¹⁹ Scholars who use these dialectics tend to conceptualize populism as an anti-political²⁰ project that is engaged in the construction of an “anti-system” (Panizza 2005, 182). This oppositional approach is sometimes extrapolated to imply that social development effectively becomes a zero-sum game (Ellner 2008; Peruzzotti 2001, 137).

Both of the broad conceptual categories discussed above are relevant to the study of populism, but they individually provide an incomplete definition. Together with my definition, however, they begin to provide a useful impression of the substantive diversity entailed in the concept. In my brief survey, I have deliberately underplayed conceptual approaches that emphasize specific policies given that reductionist definitions seem much more amenable to capturing

¹⁸ Hawkins 2009 finds that “despite recent talk of a wave of populism, we found only two clear current examples of populist discourse in Latin America as of late 2005 and early 2006” (pp 1055), namely Chávez and Morales. Such a conclusion is unsurprising given the unidimensionality of his assessment; rhetoric is not the only way to mobilize marginal groups or establish direct links between them and the leader.

¹⁹ Notable examples include the masses and the oligarchy (de la Torre 2000, 4), the *pueblo* and its exploiters (Hawkins 2009), and the nation and the anti-nation (Mayorga 2006). These approaches tend to conceive of populism as “an ideology of popular resentment” (Shils 1956, 103 cited in Zuquete 2008).

²⁰ While the term seems first to have been used by Mayorga 2006, it was brought to the fore by Marcano & Tyszek 2005 in their remarkable biography of Chávez. Arenas 2006 provides insight into the mobilisational power of opposition: “Estos líderes [populistas], casi siempre provenientes de los márgenes de sus respectivos sistemas políticos, con un discurso que surge contra éstos – de allí su carácter antipolítico – logran una gran sintonía emocional con el pueblo al que interpelan con la oferta de su redención.” (36)

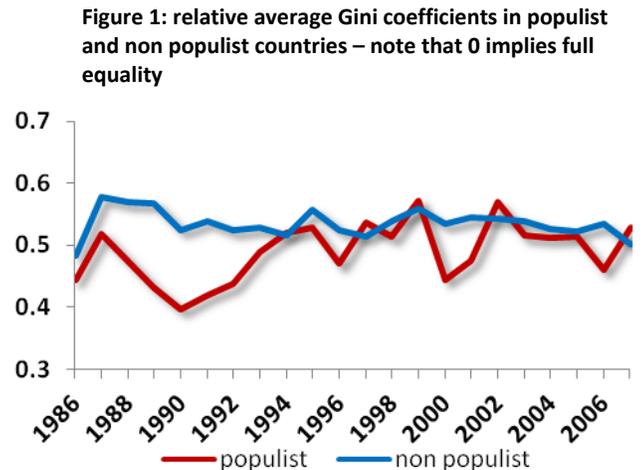
variation in populist policies, strategies, and organizational arrangements while preserving the necessary core of top-down mobilization of diverse, marginal masses. Having established the utility of maintaining my focus on anti-elite, multi-class coalitions, I now turn to a survey of relevant causes of populism.

2. Causes of the Rise of Populism

The foregoing discussion raises at least two questions. Why is top-down mobilization a meaningful strategy for charismatic leaders? Why are diverse groups amenable to coalescing into a unified societal actor with broad demands? Having provided an overview of conceptual approaches to populism and proposed a definition that focuses on multi-class, anti-oligarchic tendencies, I now shift from descriptive to causal analysis. This section considers existing explanations for the emergence of populist leaders and demonstrates why incorporation is a useful framework for uniting diverse causal elements.

My approach posits that populist leaders, coalitions, and parties have sufficient power to overcome sectarian and class differences and unify the demands of diverse groups. Populists tend to emerge in moments of crisis because groups become unincorporated; alternatively, groups that were never incorporated grow and gain importance in society. They are amenable to being mobilized by a populist because of relative exclusion from formal politics and the absence of universalized rights. Populists then take advantage of the availability of these vaguely defined collectivities of people. By proposing to collectively give voice to their grievances, populists integrate them into a coherent political actor that is generally referred to as the *pueblo*.

In contrast with my approach, scholars have argued that populism constitutes a programmatic ideology, explaining its emergence through discrete causes such as crisis, opportunism, and as an externality of modernization. This section briefly outlines the respective theories and finds that while they are individually weak, they collectively provide a great deal of insight into the rise of populism. I therefore contend that our understanding of populism would be deepened if these discrete causes could be integrated under a unifying logic. I present such logic in section 3.



Source: World Bank, compiled by the author

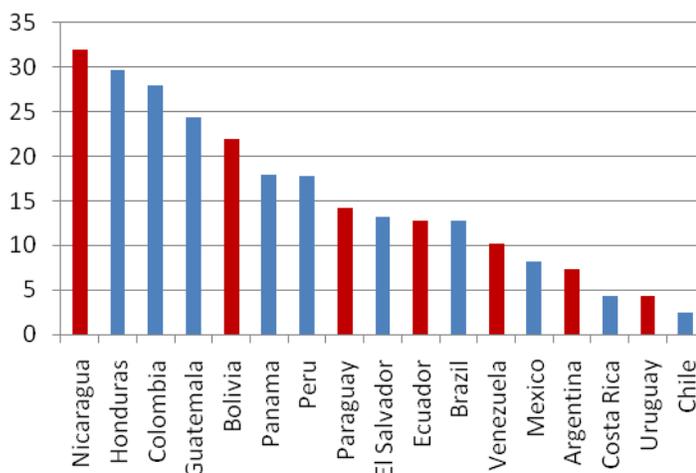
Assessing the Potential for Quantitative Analysis

Before moving to qualitative analysis, it is necessary to consider whether there are any clear statistical patterns associated with populism. After all, I have agreed with Laclau and di Tella that the availability of the masses is a necessary precursor to populism. Susceptibility to mobilization is unquestionably linked to feelings of societal injustice, which are in turn associated with income inequality. We can and should empirically assess whether income inequality and other statistical trends rival my focus on relative incorporation in explaining populism.

There is no clear correlation between Gini coefficients and the rise of populists. Figure 1 indicates that countries where populists have recently come to power are not more unequal than countries without populists. Even using historical data and considering (a) inequality immediately prior to the election of a populist (i.e. changes within cases) and (b) average inequality in populist versus non-populist regimes, there are no clear patterns. However, some notable cases conform to expected patterns. For example, Chávez assumed power when inequality in Venezuela was at a ten-year high and it has since decreased dramatically. Likewise inequality in Argentina was at unprecedented levels at the time of the 2003 election of Néstor Kirchner and has since decreased. However, a similar downward trend in Bolivia started before the election of Morales while inequality in Ecuador has increased since the beginning of Correa’s presidency.

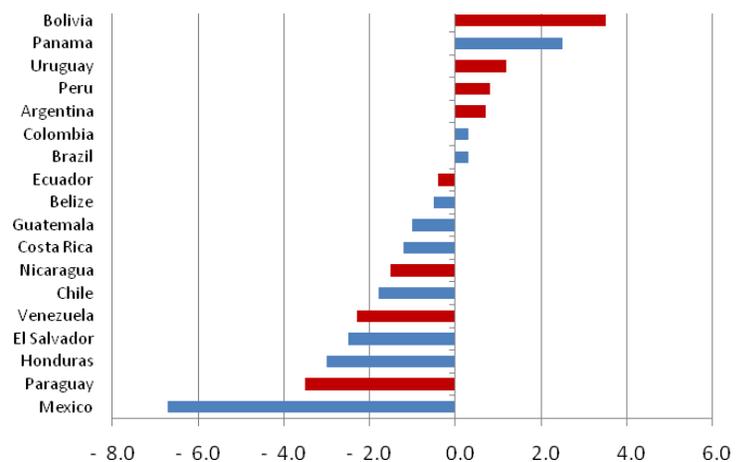
These results suggest that relative deprivation may not matter as much as absolute deprivation. The causal mechanism here would be that the poor are not concerned as much by the

Figure 2: Poverty headcount at PPP \$2 a day, % of population
 – note that there is no clear pattern (red indicates populist leadership)



Source: most recent available World Bank data

Figure 3: average GDP growth rate in 2009
 – once again there is no clear pattern



Source: ECLAC

success of the elites as by the failure of the government to relieve poverty, generating skepticism for the state's ability to meet societal demands. However, a comparison of the poverty gap and of poverty levels at \$2 a day does not reveal any patterns between countries that elected populists versus non-populists (see Figure 2). A comparison of unemployment levels and GDP growth rates (actual and immediately prior to election) likewise does not reveal any conclusive patterns (see Figure 3).

We should not dismiss voters' apparent electoral ambivalence to objective changes in welfare as inconsequential. Rather, the data shows us that totally objective analysis is impossible. While it would be nice to quantify a public sense of injustice, the plebeian forces that bring populists into power are subjectively constructed. We must therefore consider not the quantifiable ability of regimes to provide public welfare, but rather society's impression of a regime's ability to do so. In a world where power is allocated on the basis of democratic institutions, the *perception* of regime legitimacy constitutes genuine legitimacy *sine qua non*.

A more fruitful target to investigate statistically would therefore be voting behavior, the principal mechanism by which the public can express its preferences. However, the ambiguity of electoral choices means that we cannot simply take all votes cast for non-populists and claim that they are in support of the status quo.²¹ We can nonetheless consider turnout. Other than voting for a populist, abstention is the only unambiguous way of expressing disillusionment with existing state structures. I favor assessing turnout over electoral volatility because the latter could result from exogenous shocks to a multidimensional policy space, suggesting preference volatility rather than just an underlying resentment of state structures (see Roberts & Wibbles 1999).

While we cannot know that abstainees are least opposed to the populist candidate, low turnout is intuitively associated with the conditions that breed populism. Indeed the region is characterized by voters who "have had enough, they are impatient, and they want to vote for new politicians that offer a rupture with the past and that promise a way of escaping the grave, present situation"²² (Naim 2007, 51). It would be impossible to know voters' preferences regarding the details of this rupture without conducting in-depth interviews (which are outside the scope of this

²¹ I admit that populism, like the lefts, can influence politics in ways that are not immediately evident in vote choice (Arditi 2008). It is nonetheless useful to consider whether any influence *is* evident in electoral statistics.

²² My translation of: "Los votantes latinoamericanos están hartos, impacientes y deseosos de votar por políticos nuevos que ofrezcan una ruptura con el pasado y prometan una forma de salir de la grave situación actual." I acknowledge that I use this citation outside of its intended context given that Naim, like Krauze, is deeply skeptical of populist projects, contending instead that populists "han puesto de relieve los peligros del abandono." (47) He writes in favor of promoting education, strong institutions, and judicial independence as ideal development tools, clearly going against conventional populist attributes.

paper). I nonetheless tentatively contend that extreme resentment for past regimes will lead to a populist vote; disillusionment with the state may manifest itself in abstention.

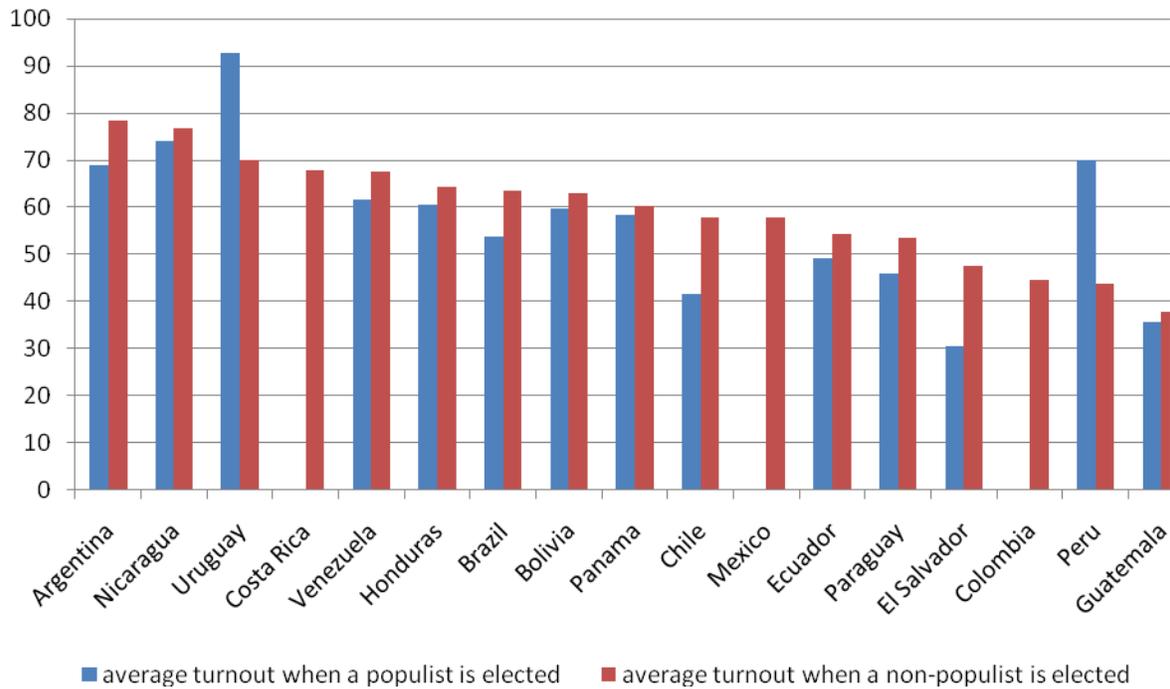
In order to assess the relationship between populism and abstention, I coded all Latin American presidential elections from 1946 to 2008 using data compiled from national statistical institutes by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. After dropping all cases where elections were not free or fair, I compared the turnout of voting age population (VAP) between elections where a populist was elected to those where a non-populist was elected.²³ I began by comparing aggregate data and found that voter turnout gradually increased at the same rate over time for elections where populists and non-populists were elected, plateauing in the early 1980s at roughly 60% turnout. Temporally disaggregating turnout within the three waves (identified in Section 1) revealed that average turnout for the two categories was consistently within 3% of one another. Comparison within categories across time indicated almost perfect covariation.²⁴

I initially suspected that these results indicated that societal attributes that engender populist leadership might have been present, but simply were not manifest in voter turnout. This would be a reflection of the deficit in legitimacy that is associated with vertical accountability mechanisms like elections, combined with the absence of a functional civil society (O'Donnell 2007). This analysis seemed reasonable given that political rights require civil rights to be meaningful, and aggregate turnout data simply cannot show the collapse of party systems. I tentatively concluded then that the data demonstrates that, even if elections were considered to be legitimate - and therefore relevant - we do not see any correlation between higher turnout and electing populists. This implies that inconclusive statistical data is somewhat moot and calls for a qualitative investigation of civil rights (including economic rights).

However, to further justify a purely qualitative approach, I further disaggregated data and conducted within-case comparisons. While this is problematic because acquiring a sufficiently large population of cases requires comparing across vast time periods, I found that, on average,

²³ I acknowledge that classifying populism within only two discrete categories is a vast simplification and that there are often regimes that exhibit only a subset of populist characteristics. In fact, Lanzaro (2007) insists that cataloging the whole range of governance experiences is necessary, arguing that “we have to insist that studies catalogue diverse government experiences and that they locate them between the two extremes of the continuum that exists between populism and social democracy” (Lanzaro 2007, 22; my translation). However, I think that dichotomizing regimes is a useful and justifiable heuristic in this context.

²⁴ Some of the cases had mandatory voting, which would of course skew case to case comparison (turnout is enforced in Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay). However, we can still compare within cases and then drop these countries for populist versus non-populist comparisons.



Source: IDEA, compiled by the author

Figure 4: Voter turnout in Free and Fair Presidential Elections (1946-2008) – note that data is for % VAP turnout in free and fair elections

turnout when a non-populist was elected was 7% higher than when a populist was elected (see Figure 4).²⁵

I suggest that the causal dynamic here is indirect. While my argument will be further elucidated in the next section, low turnout will be associated with low faith in the legitimacy of institutions resulting from high levels of exclusion. I have not demonstrated this quantitatively (indeed it is not clear that perceptions of legitimacy can be quantified), but I have established a material basis for arguing that when people don't think that the state is legitimate, they are less likely to vote. Party loyalists stay home while those who do vote under such conditions will voice their concern by choosing the populist.

²⁵ A few cases had to be dropped in calculating this outcome because no populists were fairly elected or because voting became mandatory mid-sample (Uruguay and Peru). The case of Uruguay behaves abnormally because mandatory voting was not enforced until 1970 (IDEAS 2010) and the only case of a populist being fairly elected between 1946 and 2008 was Luis Lacalle de Herrera in 1989 (for a justification of classifying Lacalle as populist, see Mieres 1990 and Morales Alvarez 2003). Turnout was 93% which is obviously higher than all the other cases prior to mandatory voting. Peru behaves abnormally because, although voting became mandatory *de jure* in 1933, turnout was abysmal until 1980, averaging at less than a quarter of the VAP. This low turnout decreases the average for the election of non-populists given that Peruvian populists, Fujimori and Garcia (only the 1985-90 term), were elected after 1980. If we compare results for elections since 1980, turnout for populist wins is 70% versus 74% for non-populists, confirming the trend established in Figure 5.

Crisis as a Possible Explanation

The foregoing discussion suggests that part of the causal story associated with populism lies in disillusionment with the state. Clearly such a claim requires further qualitative investigation. This section reviews proposed links between disillusionment, crisis and populism. This approach does not rival my own, but I find that it underplays the importance of antecedent conditions such as societal tension, producing an explanation that is insufficiently convincing. I will later use material presented here to enrich my argument that populism arises in a second moment of incorporation.

In this approach, populism results from a rudimentary opportunistic calculus whereby “charismatic legitimacy is most likely to arise during times of crisis” (Conniff 1982, 21). In the literature, crisis has been presented as a causal variable because destabilization of predominant social structures opens political space for new actors. Subsequent mobilization exposes “the latent contradictions of Latin America’s dual transitions—in particular, the tensions between the extension of democratic political rights and the retraction of social citizenship rights” (Roberts 2007, 11). The causes of populism in this account lie in an exclusionary economic and political order that combines with institutions that are incapable of quelling popular protest. Populist leaders can therefore take advantage of existing discontent because institutional constraints are not enforced, implying that “populist waves should occur during periods of institutional crisis, decay, or transition” (Roberts 2007, 4).

The discontent that creates space for populism is most acute when socioeconomic exclusion is coupled with democratic inclusion. Expanded electoral rights are unable to compensate for reduced social rights that are associated with economic insecurity (discussed below). The irony of the emergence of populism in such a context is that it “indicates a crisis of existing political institutions, and itself constitutes and extends a crisis of political and institutional mediation” (Cammack 2000, 154). We can thereby arrive at a scenario where initially unstable populist leadership can be institutionalized (Conniff 1982). A sophisticated elaboration of crisis-based theory can be found in the belief that the strategic adoption of populism is shaped by the perceived source of crisis, along with the incentive structure and organizational capacity for adaptation (Burgess & Levitsky 2001).²⁶

²⁶ They succinctly suggest that “a populist party that inherits a crisis that is widely associated with heterodox (Keynesian or populist) policies carried out by an outgoing left-of-center government will have a stronger incentive to adapt in a neoliberal direction than a populist party that inherits a crisis that is widely associated with orthodox neoliberalism implemented by an outgoing conservative government.” (Burgess & Levitsky 2001, 887)

Empirically, we can link the waves of populism to significant transition periods between developmental models. Post-war classical populism was connected to an “initial incorporation period” (Collier & Collier 1992) that heralded a mass movement away from oligarchic domination and, with it, new economic models such as ISI from the 1940s onwards. Second wave neopopulism is characterized largely by its relationship with neoliberalism; leaders both vehemently opposed its central tenets of deregulation and openness, strongly associating it with the debt crisis of the early 1980s, and embraced it through populist neoliberal reform, as was the case in Argentina, Peru, and Brazil. Third wave populism can be seen to result from the crisis associated with the perceived failure of the Washington Consensus in encouraging sustainable development.

Although crisis-based explanations for the rise of populism are enticing (along with their oppositional corollaries), they are problematic in two ways. Crisis is an inherently vague term; it is under-theorized and difficult to measure. For example, it has been argued that delegation to populist leaders results from democratic perversions that lead to a “crisis of representative democracy, giving way to the substitution of institutions and parties in exchange for the figure of a personalist leader who, upon concentrating excessive representative [powers], ends up distorting representation and with it, democracy”²⁷ (Arenas 2006, 56). While descriptively useful and undoubtedly accurate, this causal argument can alarmingly be reduced to “crises of representation lead to crises of representation”. So unless we can find a way of distinguishing crises (and I think that we can), crisis is a vague concept that is not particularly helpful.

Secondly, even when we can distinguish between types of crises, it is extremely difficult to establish crisis as an independent explanatory variable. Crisis does not typically erupt spontaneously and, even if it did, we would still be forced to qualify its influence by type of crisis, thereby identifying more relevant, specific causes. For example, it is all very well to attribute the rise of populists to crisis, then proceed by stating that “the fundamental condition [for the emergence of populism] is the existence of a crisis of representation... [meaning] that a significant part of society feels that none of the existing parties represents their interests”²⁸ (Paramio 2006, 68). But then, crisis loses its independent explanatory value and we are forced to consider the nature of the party system. Overcoming these apparent endogeneity problems requires integrating discrete causes through a unifying framework.

²⁷ My translation of: “Efectivamente, las delegaciones que hemos visto en la América Latina de los últimos años... han sido producto en buena medida de la crisis de la democracia representativa, dando lugar a la sustitución de las instituciones y los partidos por la figura del líder personalista, el cual al concentrar una excesiva representación, termina por distorsionar la representación misma y con esto a la democracia.”

²⁸ “La condición fundamental es la existencia de una crisis de representación... [lo cual quiere decir] que una parte importante de la sociedad sienta que ninguno de los partidos existentes representa sus intereses.”

Opportunism in the face of Weak Party Systems

A second rival argument that I find useful but incomplete emphasizes the causal influence of opportunism. Such accounts typically rely on conditions that are mostly exogenous to the populist regime in question so they avoid the pitfalls discussed in reference to crisis. Opportunistic analysis tends to fall into two major categories; it either presents populists as attempting to fill an institutional void that is associated with a weak party system, or it considers more material influences such as fluctuation in export rents.

Populism thrives in a weak party system because it entails a relatively unmediated relationship between the executive and the people. A functioning party system would necessarily induce intervention in this relationship at the legislative level. As such, atrophied partisanship can be exploited by elites to construct the direct links that characterize populism (see McCoy 2004 on this occurring in Venezuela). Where the party system is weak, populism becomes a relatively low cost way of providing transfers to the masses, which are of course necessary to garner electoral support. Where the elites maintain some influence, such transfers may take the form of clientelism instead of populism because it preserves greater benefits for elites (Robinson 2005); where the masses become powerful – as in the case of populist mobilization – they will prefer the semi-private goods that are associated with targeted redistribution.²⁹ Indeed “disjointed party systems tend to weaken the legislature, tilting the balance of power in favor of the executive” (Schamis 2006, 28) which of course provides ideal conditions for the enactment of populist policies.

The causal direction with regards to weak party systems is often nebulous given that “the emergence of direct democracy may be both an indicator of and a cause behind weak representative institutions” (Barczak 2001, 39). Nonetheless, there is evidence that populists are associated with weak parties. They often assemble parties almost exclusively for electoral purposes, establishing only a minimal legislative mandate. For example, Correa was elected despite choosing not to run any congressional candidates from his party concurrent to presidential elections.³⁰ The new 1999

²⁹ Such analysis suggests that populism effectively privatizes public goods and uses them as rewards for mass mobilization. The foregoing discussion will cause some readers to suspect that we are instead seeing the provision of selective public goods which, while non-excludable (and hence essentially public) will not be consumed by unmobilized groups. They contrast with genuinely public goods such as infrastructure or low inflation. For example, MVR’s *Misión Robinson* provides literacy classes while the *Misión Barrio Adentro* provides health care in shanty towns. While these are clearly public goods, it is hardly conceivable that the Venezuelan elite take advantage of them.

³⁰ On the choice not to run MPAIS congressional candidates in 2006: “With one bold stroke, Correa both unequivocally identified his candidacy with the voters’ deeply antipolitical mood and accepted the risk that, if elected, he would assume office with zero assurance of legislative support and far greater assurance that legislators might move to oust him at any time.” (Conaghan 2008, 50)

Venezuelan constitution similarly rejected the conventional party system; it institutionalized increasingly delegative democracy, thereby assaulting the remnants of *Punto Fijo* party-dominated politics. The 1993 Peruvian constitution under Fujimori also effectively codified “post-party politics.” (Levitsky 1999) The major point of electoral competition in these cases was not so much interparty as it was between the party system and antipolitical or “extrasystemic” candidates (Van Cott 2002, 774).³¹

In the void left by the weakened party system, “[populist] constitutions buttressed the national executive, contributing to hyperpresidentialism” (Ellner 2003, 149). Such conditions make legislative competition increasingly meaningless, further obviating the role of traditional parties. While this arrangement undoubtedly contributes to executive decisiveness, it suffers from problems of legitimacy while disproportionately concentrating prospects for political development in the hands of a single person. This can be particularly problematic in cases where there is little transparency regarding long-term goals and strategies, which is arguably the case in Venezuela where Chávez’s “MVR party, like other Latin American radical populist parties throughout history, lacks a long-term vision”³² (Ellner 2005, 172). It has likewise been evident in Argentina where Kirchner has “flirted with unconstitutionality by extracting from Congress extraordinary powers to make unilateral decisions regarding such critical matters as foreign-debt negotiations and the budgetary process” (Schamis 2006, 28). Clearly the potential for legislative debate and for deliberative democracy in the broader society suffers as a result.

I agree that the measures described in this section would not be possible where an active party system ensured active congressional debate. It is unclear, however, that a party system can fully account for the emergence of populism. Top-down mobilization and concentration of executive power could conceivably substitute for existing mechanisms of political participation rather than filling an existing void. In order to establish when weak parties generate populist regimes and when they simply remain weak party systems, further consideration of societal demands is required.

³¹ The antipolitical dimension is clearly influential in elections. In Bolivia, for example, “the [1985-2002 electoral] results demonstrate how a growing segment of the population no longer accepts the direction chosen by the traditional parties, or even the parties themselves.” (Barr 2005, 75)

³² Ellner continues by stating that “The MVR’s Department of Ideological Formation has refrained from formulating any specific ideological model on grounds that its role is to promote consensus rather than ideologies that would divide the party (Morales, 2004)” (Ellner 2005, 172) clearly indicating directional ambiguity.

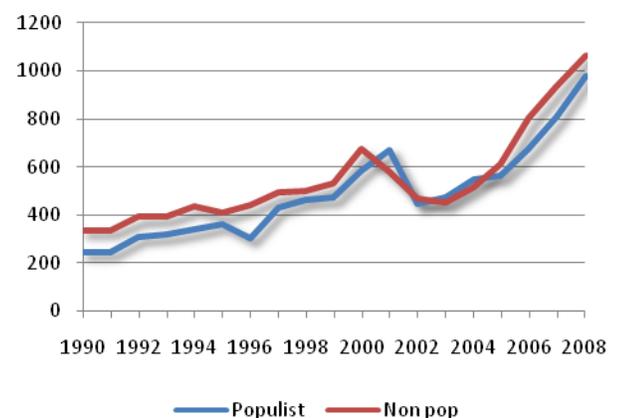
Opportunism and Economic Cycles

A second major category of opportunistic analysis considers how export rents and full government coffers enable populist behavior. Disposable wealth arguably enables governments to provide significant transfers to the masses and thereby garner support for their populist project. It may additionally incite a general impression of economic success and provide legitimacy for the regime. A corollary of this approach is that economic cycles drive political outcomes given that, “when prices are favorable and the economy is growing, the incumbent chief executive rides high, often circumventing established institutional routines and concentrating power in the office of the president” (Schamis 2006, 26).

This approach certainly makes sense intuitively; a government that aims to reduce inequality is better equipped to do so when it disposes of funds. A preliminary look at the data confirms this; we see current account surpluses skyrocket in countries presently led by populists as opposed to non-populists starting in 2001 (see Appendix). The logic here is that the recent commodity price boom has enabled them to come to power. Aggregate data can, however, be somewhat misleading because populists tend to enact policies that increase the productive potential of poor domestic groups, including labour, leading to reduced imports and a current account surplus.³³ So while we do not see anything as extreme as the ISI of the 1940s onwards, relative current account balances are not particularly elucidating (a point that tends to be overlooked in the literature). If we look instead at export rents as a proportion of GDP, we actually see presently populist countries consistently underperforming (see Appendix). Furthermore, average per capita government expenses are almost identical for populist and non-populist countries (see Figure 5). With the exception of direct consequences of the Argentine crisis, the same goes for debt stocks.

Empirically it is evident that, in rebuttal to Castañeda’s claims regarding the populist left, redistribution is not characterized by either irresponsible or excessive fiscal expansion but rather by increases in

Figure 5: Per capita government spending (USD)



Source: World Bank

³³ There has additionally been a significant increase in the price indices of key export commodities in the region; the price of metals tripled, fuel increased 5.4 times, and edibles increased 1.9 times between 1999 and 2008. Prices for non-fuel commodities (the major import category) doubled for this same period, suggesting that on average price fluctuations benefit Latin American exporters.

spending that are proportional to budgetary constraints and are made possible by favorable external constraints. Comparing both within and between cases, it is empirically inaccurate to claim that populists spend a larger proportion of their GDP than non-populists and it is simply not true that today's populists are favoring "egalitarian distribution of wealth over its creation" (Castañeda 2006, 32).³⁴ However, we know that populist regimes are associated with relatively high social spending that cannot be explained through higher GDPs, as indicated by the per capita data discussed above. We must conclude then that populists are spending roughly the same amounts as non-populists, but that they are investing in different things. Empirically it appears that the populist lefts focus on redistributing existing rents, particularly through social projects, while the non-populist lefts invest in order to stimulate production and competitiveness (Moreno-Brid & Paunovic 2010, 327).³⁵ We can now extract Castañeda's claims of "macroeconomic folly" (34) from the vagueness of jargon-laden analysis. The only way for him to reasonably accuse the average Latin American populist of fiscal irresponsibility in today's empirical context is if he finds that their policies themselves – outside of a managerial context that has been shown to be moot – are irresponsible. I suspect that most scholars would be loath to publish denigrations of literacy projects and subsidized food programs for the hungry.³⁶

Much more careful analysis of possible opportunism from expanded export rents is offered by Kurt Weyland. He uses a quasi-psychological approach to contend that natural resource booms provide a sense of disposing of unearned income; "the abundance in the ground and the resulting windfall gains make the neoliberal quest for wealth creation through productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness look unnecessary" (Weyland 2009, 151). This results in high risk tolerance and leads to elevated social spending in good economic times. While Weyland equates such behavior with a category that he labels the radical left, the universe of cases contained therein is almost identical to the countries that I consider to be presently populist.³⁷

³⁴ In the face of the data described here, Castañeda's vitriolic caricature of the irresponsible Latin American left (which he is, of course, delighted to leave in the singular) takes on a nearly comical feel. The governing populist logic, according to him, is "When everything else fails, ... spend money." (34) In a particularly amusing lexical move that could be misinterpreted as a desire to analytically resurrect Cold War dichotomies, he contends that Morales' success results from cocalero militancy and agitprop.

³⁵ This is clearly the case in Venezuela where "Chávez has argued that economic growth does not necessarily translate itself into material benefits for unprivileged sectors, and thus places the accent of his budgetary allocations on social programs." (Ellner 2005, 174)

³⁶ Castañeda nonetheless does just this with an almost obscene level of gumption, referring to 'inclusion of the excluded' as "bizarre" (34) and contending that populists "needed money to give away but did not like taxes." (33-34)

³⁷ The only exception is Uruguay which Weyland categorizes within the moderate left, along with Brazil and Chile. However, Uruguay has since elected Jose Mujica who I strongly suspect is populist; having assumed office only in March 2010, it is still not clear whether his electoral populism will be reflected in a fully populist regime. Analysis

The foregoing discussion is intuitively attractive. Populists tend to nationalize key sectors of their economies,³⁸ meaning that government intake is directly affected by price fluctuations. When we plunge deeper into potential causal stories, however, there are numerous problems. First, covariation between populist spending and export booms is empirically imperfect, even taking into account a time lag. Second, while there may be an impact of export rents on specific budgetary choices, it is difficult to see how they would propel a populist to power (this is admittedly not Weyland's project, but is an oft-cited corollary of similar discussions and quite salient to the present investigation).

Neither of the two hypotheses that I can imagine for relating export booms to populists work very well empirically. First, we can contend that high commodity rents lead to the election of a populist leader. We would then need to see rents rise prior to the election; the electorate would conceivably thereby consider promises of social spending to be credible and choose for increased income to go towards cheap health care instead of to building six-lane highways through the countryside. However, this kind of behavior requires an unreasonably enlightened electorate that is aware of the movement of commodity indexes and is willing to bet on price movements.

Second, we could be seeing a relationship where a populist comes to power and subsequently causes export rents to increase. Except in the case of oil, targeted government programs may seek to promote greater domestic production. While we do see some of this in the case of ores and metals under Fujimori and manufacturing under the Kirchners, most increases in rents result from exogenous price movements, precluding the possibility of a causal relationship. The notable exception is where the country in question is a price maker, as in the case of Venezuela regarding oil. Chávez convened OPEC members in 2000 for the first time in a quarter century to scale back production and oil prices surged, vastly increasing Venezuelan export rents whereupon he chose "to mobilize oil and petroleum revenues³⁹ to consolidate his power internally" (Coronel 2007, 218). However, throughout the boom in oil rents, Venezuelan government spending remained proportional to export rents, which were of course also proportional to the fuel price index (see Figure 6 – the close correlation of price and rents is unsurprising in a cartel context).

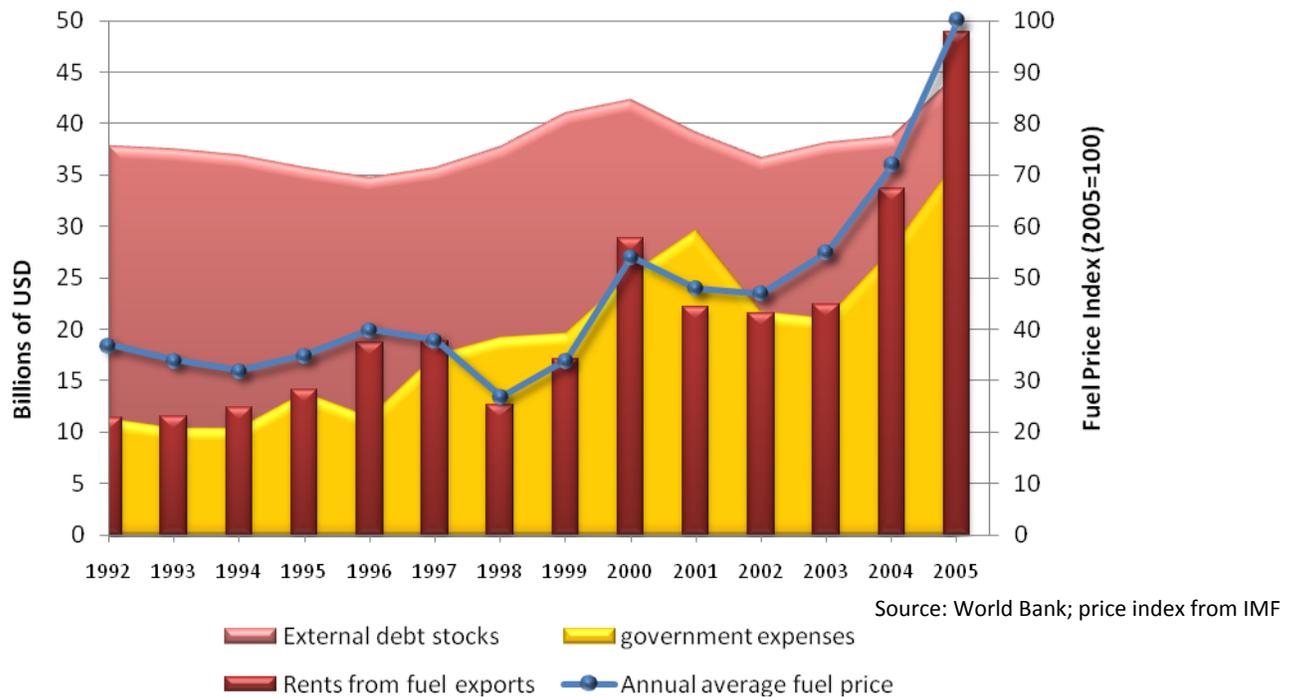
similar to Weyland's is presented regarding Venezuelan oil (Tsafos 2007) and Bolivian coca (Estellano & Nava-Ragazzi 1994).

³⁸ Recent notable examples include Chávez and Morales (oil); examples under classical populists include Vargas (oil and steel), Perón (the central bank and infrastructure including railroads, phone system, and docks), Cardenas (oil), Paz Estenssoro (mining monopolies), and Velasco (banking, infrastructure, and copper and iron mines).

³⁹ « Mobiliser le pétrole et les revenus pétroliers pour consolider son pouvoir à l'intérieur. »

Neither of the hypotheses discussed here help us to understand how export rents would directly enable a populist to come to power. I am therefore obliged to scale back typical rentier state arguments, replacing the dependent variable of regime type with the less ambitious dependent variable of government expenditures. Given that price movements do not bring populists to power – either in the short or long term – we can only hypothesize that, if there is already a populist in power (conditional variable), then increased export rents will cause the populist to expend these resources, typically on social projects. Overall, I regretfully conclude that rentier state theory helps us to understand behavior once a regime is in place, but does not really provide much causal insight into the rise of populism in Latin America.

Figure 6: In Defence of Venezuelan Spending Patterns



Opposition and Modernization

A final category of explanations argues that populism becomes salient on a purely oppositional basis, often in reaction to the supposed savagery of modern capitalism. The masses become particularly amenable to being mobilized when an existing model is seen to have failed. Arguably “the ‘old populism’ of the post-war era emerged as a reaction to the failures of liberal political institutions and economic policies evident in the depression of the 1930s and the events

that followed” (Panizza 2000, 145). Likewise neopopulism was intimately shaped by its relationship to neoliberal policies (Cammack 2000, for example) whereby “the demise of ISI and the transition to market liberalism, far from rendering populism obsolete, may have actually contributed to its political revival” (Roberts 2007, 9).

While this approach is intuitively attractive, populism and neoliberalism are not theoretically discordant. They both speak to the needs of the poor while mandating top-down mediation and institutional change. Furthermore, opposition and reaction are empirically ambiguous; there is evidence of populist governments that reject neoliberalism (Chávez), that embrace neoliberalism (Fujimori, Menem), and that attempt to institute neoliberal reform and fail (Collor de Mello). Policy diversity between populist regimes suggests that the popularity of neoliberalism only influenced the rise of populism within a restricted period, or that the relationship is somewhat spuriousness.

We can surmise then that, if opposition does indeed play a role, its effects are constrained by (a) the norm-laden international context or (b) the domestic developmental context.⁴⁰ At the international level, Cuba is cited (typically by right-leaning scholars) for providing an example of an authoritarian, socialist state that has endured. Likewise Chávez is cited for explicitly supporting populist colleagues through preferential access to oil. Venezuelan meddling was decried following Morales’ election when he referred to both Chávez and Fidel Castro as ‘*Mi Comandante.*’ The success stories of populist regimes in other countries may provide domestic masses with awareness that change is possible. However, the magnitude of the effect would be almost impossible to assess.

The role of the norm-laden international context may also partially explain the rise of populists because it bolsters indigenous activism. Such activism “exposes and contests the normative basis both for the world system and the state as the primary institutional mechanism through which the values and resources of the world system are allocated” (Martin & Wilmer 2008, 584). It thereby fuels transnational antipolitical sentiments (discussed above) because it protests not so much a single regime as the state in general. Domestic demand for indigenous rights can inspire ethnopopulism when the indigenous lack universalized rights. The multidimensionality of contemporary grievances in Latin America means that ethnopopulism can in turn inspire broader populist movements because “it is not just feasible for an indigenous party or movement to be

⁴⁰ Normally levels of analysis would include systemic, domestic, and individual levels. However, I exclude the potential role of elites in constraining the impact of opposition because, while agency is important, it is inextricably confined by existing structures.

inclusive, it is also the most rational electoral strategy to pursue” (Madrid 2008, 481). This process seems to have been reflected in the election of Morales and Correa.⁴¹

The crux of both of these normative arguments is that international influences must find resonance in the domestic context. There are no known cases of overt intervention between Latin American countries to put a populist into power so, while norms may escalate existing mobilization, we are better off looking at domestic explanations for the rise of populism.

I find that it is fruitless, however, to explain populism through association with a discrete developmental phase. Tying the rise of populism to modernization would imply that the growing strength of marginal groups would create demand for checks and balances, obviating the utility of populist strategies. It seems, however, that populism remains salient in spite of significant development throughout Latin America. We must therefore consider levels of relative exclusion rather than absolute levels of development. The evidence shows that populist regimes may be capable of consolidating, or at least enduring, and that populists consistently extract the delegative mandate that they require throughout the development process. (Note, however, that not all delegative regimes are populist.) Relying on developmental explanations is therefore fruitless, particularly given that the emergence of the third wave seems to suggest that populism can exist sustainably in the context of politically and developmentally viable regimes.

This section has reviewed existing explanations of the rise of populism and has found that they individually provide a weak account. Collectively, however, they are convincing; they make a persuasive case for the validity of multi-factorial analysis. Proceeding along these lines requires some kind of unifying logic that can demonstrate how and why the individual causes described above combine to produce populism. I propose such a logic in the next section.

In building a testable hypothesis, it is important to recall the substantive diversity of populist policies. I acknowledge that, since “populism pursued integration of marginal groups, it was everywhere reformist and often quite progressive in its goals; hence populism was both backward- and forward-looking, a bridge between tradition and progress” (Conniff 1982, 12-13). However, such diversity of purpose does not preclude shared causality. Given recent evidence, causal analysis must finally cross Conniff’s bridge and actively consider the extent to which populism can

⁴¹ I doubt that Martin & Wilmer would have been as laudatory towards Correa if they were writing today. Indigenous inclusion in Ecuador has increasingly revealed itself as an electoral strategy with limited substantive implications, as shown through massive indigenous protests in 2010.

become sustainably and permanently reformist and, in so doing, assess it as a viable political style that has a permanent presence in the Latin American political landscape.

3. An Alternative Explanation: Incorporation and the Rise of Populism

The causes discussed above provide a sense of some of the key elements that explain the rise of populism in Latin America. This section seeks to assemble them into a comprehensive argument that I heuristically divide into three parts: context, crisis, and incorporation. I argue that populism results from inequality and the absence of universalized rights combined with a failure of stateness. The causal link to populism lies in a second incorporation crisis. Where existing investigations consider how stateness leads to democratic consolidation (Linz & Stepan 1996, for example), I consider the negative case by looking at how a failure of stateness can result in populism.

As discussed at the beginning of this paper, populist movements, parties and leaders emerge in moments of crisis when groups either become de-incorporated or when previously unincorporated groups grow in importance. Charismatic, autocratic leaders seize the opportunity to mobilize these groups from above, uniting their demands and transforming them into a legitimate social actor. This process is particular to societies that lack fully universalized rights. A direct implication of my thesis is that the emergence of populism requires the presence of unincorporated groups.⁴²

Initial incorporation can be defined as recognition of labour as a legitimate political actor (Collier & Collier 1991), enabling mutual acknowledgement of the legitimacy of contradictory forces and thereby creating space for meaningful dialogue and purposive reform. While incorporation initially increased popular participation in conventional politics, the critical juncture associated with integrating labour to conventional politics has proven to provide reform that was either initially incomplete or has since broken down, typically as a result of neoliberal reforms. The result is a heritage of only partial incorporation.

Enduring exclusion generated discontent and demand for “the expansion of market institutions (and its expected results in fostering stable economic growth) and the extension of political rights to a significant part of the Latin American population that was either never incorporated before or which had been recently de-incorporated under authoritarian regimes” (Luna & Filgueira 2009, 376). The turbulence of recent years provides evidence that the legacy of initial labour incorporation in the region is characterized by sustained or reemerging social cleavage and

⁴² Note that it is not feasible to make the inverse argument. The presence of unincorporated groups does NOT invariably lead to the emergence of populism. First, the populist in question must be sufficiently powerful to mobilize unincorporated groups. Second, exclusion must be sufficiently problematic for marginal groups that it is worth their while to mobilize. This typically means that the society must also have high levels of material inequality.

crisis rather than full inclusion and meaningful stateness. We can therefore define a second moment of incorporation as recognition of unorganized groups that were previously excluded from formal politics. This exclusion is characterized by the absence or incompleteness of socio-economic rights that are required to make political rights meaningful. Excluded groups typically include the indigenous and participants in the informal economy that lack the ability to make corporatist demands. I therefore argue that today's populists, like neopopulists before them, are seeking the inclusion of unorganized sectors. I conclude by reflecting on the implications of my argument for democracy.

Context: Exclusion in both Breadth and Depth

Formal democracy in Latin America means that there are legal guarantees for all citizens to exercise an undifferentiated set of political and civil rights. In practice, however, these rights are often reduced to the ability to vote. Latin America has admittedly made great progress with regards to electoral rights in recent years; with the exception of Cuba, never before have we seen full enfranchisement and consistently fair elections being held regularly throughout the region. Nonetheless, this progress does not change the fact that significant groups of unincorporated people continue to have only a very restricted ability to influence government choices. Weak institutions allow for weak accountability to those who lack clientelist or corporatist ties to the government.

The lack of universalized rights has spurred a crisis of incorporation as a result of “the tensions between the extension of democratic political rights and the retraction of social citizenship rights” (Roberts 2007, 11). Uncoupling the development of political rights from the consolidation of civil liberty – and citizenship rights writ large – produces latent contradictions and dissatisfaction amongst those who are disadvantaged and even oppressed by this arrangement. Indeed capitalism has expanded in a manner that is sometimes oppressive given that “huge, and growing, informal markets are a depository not only of deep poverty but also of pre- and protocapitalist, even servile, social relations” (O'Donnell 2007, 37). Servility is clearly not conducive to meaningful political participation.

The present situation has been exacerbated by widespread knowledge that meaningful development is possible but has been overwhelmingly undermined by neoliberal policies. While neoliberalism does not autonomously constitute a critical juncture, it clearly undermined the sustainability of the legacy of initial labour incorporation. Specifically, the failure of trickle-down economics swelled the ranks of the informal sector while weakening labour organization. These

changes undermined previous socio-political progress towards inclusivity while creating new challenges for a debilitated state to address.

Neoliberal antecedents have created the context for the present crisis in at least two ways. First, they prevented incorporation of the full scope of marginal groups during the initial labour incorporation period. Incorporation typically happened when a major labour union demanded inclusion, opening the door for other labour organizations to enter negotiations with the state (Collier & Collier 1991). So while incorporation is justifiably referred to as a critical juncture, it is far from an instantaneous change in societal arrangements. In Latin America, full incorporation was aborted by neoliberalism.

Secondly, neoliberalism created new actors that were not incorporated. In some cases, *laissez-faire* policies caused the state to rescind on previous incorporation. In most cases, however, it caused unorganized sectors to expand. While the full gamut of marginal actors may have been incorporated when neoliberal policies were first applied, unorganized sectors grew and were not progressively incorporated. This growth may have been accelerated by the apparent benefits of being unorganized. Indeed the presence of protected labor groups may have made the flexibility of working in the informal sector into a comparative advantage, providing clear incentives for the unorganized ranks to swell.

These two dynamics illustrate that the second moment of incorporation is a highly path dependent outcome. To fully understand its relevance, it is useful to look back to the period of initial labor incorporation in the early twentieth century. Labor incorporation was characterized by deep concern for “the appropriate role of the newly emerging working classes within the economic and political system and the problem of mitigating the exploitative conditions of work that appeared to encourage this new social protest” (Collier & Collier 1991, 100). These concerns were dealt with in a corporatist manner and were at least partially at the root of the decision to pursue ISI. This development strategy worked for decades, beginning in the 1940s and lasting well into the 1970s.

Globalization created international pressure to open markets. Latin American governments were susceptible to this pressure, at least partially because of the imperative of servicing their debt. Neoliberalism accordingly took advantage of a weakened domestic opposition and flourished; the informal sector expanded, as explained above. A new social question therefore emerged on the basis of establishing an appropriate role for unorganized groups in the context of a minimal state. This was a major concern for neopopulists, mainly in the 1990s, and is today the basis of demands for a second moment of incorporation.

These demands expose a crisis of the state wherein conventional institutions are perceived to be ineffective and illegitimate by those who are structurally confined in their ability to exercise citizenship rights. The state's authority accordingly diminishes, leaving it to develop support through restricted, targeted policies. These policies effectively privatize public space (or at least restrict it to given classes or corporatist groups) and further undermine state legitimacy. Society's uneven ability to exercise civil rights combines with unequal access to economic resources (exacerbated of course by inflation and a weak or non-existent social security net) to produce increasingly problematic perceptions of stateness.

Such perceptions couple with sustained exclusion from conventional politics such that "incorporation attempts can enjoy long-term legitimacy thanks to their greater efficiency in terms of temporally synchronising subjective needs and collective processes" (Luna & Filgueira 2009, 375). The needs of marginalized groups find resonance in formal decision-making processes and thereby constitute a response to a multiparadigmatic crisis of the state.

Crisis: Polarization as a Basis for Change

I have established that unorganized groups have not enjoyed full incorporation in recent years in Latin America. In order to connect this condition to populism, I now explain how it has taken on the proportions of a crisis. I must emphasize that crisis is *not* conceived of as a discrete cause of populism in this context. Rather, it is a label for a period in which an antipolitical drive for profound change at the state level becomes widely resonant with the public. It provokes a redefinition of the relationship between the state and unorganized groups.

Incomplete incorporation qualifies as a *crisis* of incorporation when a given society is deeply polarized. The extent of polarization depends, at least partially, on how deeply excluded individual members of marginal groups are feeling, and how easy it is for them to turn this feeling of exclusion into a meaningful aggregate demand for incorporation. The next section explains when and how that crisis results in populism.

Recalling my earlier discussion of opposition, a crisis of incorporation is at least partially shaped by societal polarization. Polarization results when fissures develop between groups that enjoy full rights and those that do not. Differentiation between societal groups means that there is variation in the extent to which these groups benefit from the state. This variation can lead to polarization because it generates divergent behavior, which in turn reifies differentiation.

Specifically, groups that do not benefit from the state will often attempt to generate informal institutions that replace those that they perceive as unjust (discussed below).

Polarization can create crisis in this context because it produces a sense of injustice, eliminates the viability of strategies that would normally diffuse conflict, and creates concern amongst marginal groups that their position may become entrenched. I discuss each of these mechanisms below. Polarization makes it clear to the unincorporated that the status quo is reprehensible, which can in turn lead to crisis; we can then expect institutions to lose their consolidated nature while the terms of the social contract become subject to debate.

First, a sense of societal injustice can make polarization into a crisis. This sense can emerge amongst the unincorporated when they see efforts to improve their welfare through conventional institutions as essentially futile. For example, formal representation of indigenous interests at the state level were sparse prior to the rise of third wave populists. This lack of representation made indigenous groups feel that influencing state behavior was futile, provoking them to form confederations that, while ineffective in meaningfully organizing the indigenous and enabling corporatist integration into state structures, could formally voice indigenous grievances. Examples of such confederations include the Confederation of Ecuadorian Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE), the Pachakutik Indigenous Movement (MIP) in Ecuador, and the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB).

The emergence of these groups illustrates that differentiated rights can provoke demand for incorporation within state structures. Capitalism has influenced society such that “political democracy inevitably stands in tension with the system of social inequality” (Rueschemeyer et al 1992, 41). As the gulf between the interests of the demos – which are at least nominally reflected in democratic processes – and those of the plebs – which are at best poorly represented – progressively widens, the distinction between the plebs and broader society becomes increasingly reified, even though the plebs may constitute a majority.

We therefore have a situation where cleavage can become crisis. The nature of contemporary crisis is distinct from that which provoked labour incorporation because today’s unincorporated groups are different from those that demanded incorporation under classical populists. Lower levels of cohesion and organization undermine their ability to make corporatist demands. Today’s unincorporated groups are not united as a class as labour was and they do not have the same level of corporatist influence that unions did. The ability of labour unions to go on strike and otherwise destabilize precarious institutional arrangements made them “constantly

unsettling” (Collier & Collier 1992, 40). By comparison, today’s unincorporated groups often have little in common with one another other than their inability to fully exercise citizenship rights.

Unincorporated groups today therefore lack cohesion. They are proportionally limited in their capacity for collective action in the absence of clear leadership. This means that they are relatively impotent in influencing the system through the deliberative use of voice and are forced to explore exit strategies (Hirschman 1978). In this context, exercising voice would mean effectively engaging with authority figures, implying that coherent demands would be meaningfully acknowledged. However, voice is weak or even impossible in exclusionary contexts because exercising it is an essentially inclusive act. Even when it is used to advocate dissent, dialogue mutually confirms the worthiness of interlocutors.

Exit, on the other hand, implies resignation to the impossibility of extracting benefits from within existing state structures. This resignation entails rejection of the state’s legitimacy and its ineffective formal institutions. Groups may subsequently embrace either substitutive or competitive institutions (see Helmke & Levitsky 2006, 14). Demand for the prior may result in the creation of autonomous areas (notably in Atlantic Nicaragua and Panama, and parts of Chiapas) while the latter is reflected in the anti-political – and even revolutionary – nature of populism. The weakness of the *plebs* outside of the polls typically means that electing the antipolitical candidate becomes the only salient strategy as it constitutes exit rather than voice.

I have established that a sense of injustice can transform polarization into crisis. A second reason why cleavages can lead to crisis is that options within the system are fairly unattractive to marginal, unorganized groups. Such groups can hardly hope to gain advantageous terms when they negotiate with the state. For example, workers in the informal economy have few bargaining chips to bring to negotiations; they do not pay taxes and they are insufficiently organized to strike. Even if they could strike, an elite-dominated government would be largely indifferent given that the informal economy tends to provide goods and services to the lower classes.

Relative exclusion from government deliberation means that electoral options for the unincorporated become essentially reduced to the dimension of whether candidates are for or against the existing state system. This dichotomization in turn results in further polarization, engendering crisis even when the availability of a middle ground would obviate the need for it. Specifically, if unincorporated groups had the option of electing a candidate that advocated incorporation while maintaining state structures, it is quite possible that such a position would

correspond with the median voter's preferences and be wildly successful. However, such a candidate cannot logically exist; incorporation *necessarily* entails revolutionizing state structures.

Cleavage therefore leads to crisis because it undermines the ability of electoral mechanisms to diffuse conflict. Crisis may mean looking outside existing institutions to redefine the appropriate role of societal actors. For example, Fujimori justified his *autogolpe* as “not a negation of real democracy, but on the contrary, it is the initiation of the search for an authentic transformation to assure a legitimate and effective democracy” (cited in Conaghan 2006, 29-30). While this case is an extreme one, a vote for the plebs can often amount to a vote against existing structures.

Incorporation therefore provokes a modern form of the dual dilemma⁴³ whereby the unwillingness of conventional politicians to undermine their own authority by sponsoring radical institutional reform means that there is little deliberation at the elite level. The onus of choice thereby shifts to the demos. They must decide if a populist's message resonates sufficiently with them to risk profound transformation and the accompanying institutional mayhem. In essence, deep social cleavages create a situation in which vote choices are reduced to for or against the existing system, entrenching polarization and formalizing the drive to translate dissatisfaction into policies that enable incorporation. The structural nature of barriers to incorporation means that those who seek incorporation must necessarily revolt against the system (albeit mostly at the polls). Given a lack of viable alternatives, electoral outcomes can sharpen crisis.

A third reason why cleavage may lead to crisis is that marginal groups may fear that inaction will cause their subaltern position to ossify, a concern that is exacerbated by inflammatory rhetoric. There is a sense that cleavage may become intractable as power becomes increasingly concentrated in the hands of the elites. This makes the populist project seem progressively less viable, in turn making the prospect of a compromise leader appear improbable. Indeed leaders like Chávez and Morales “presented political messages that contained a double promise: not only to break with the political and economic status quo but also to refound the political order by setting up inclusive and participatory institutions and a more just economic system” (Panizza & Miorelli 2009, 42). Changing the political order would appear to become progressively more difficult, creating a sense of urgency and accentuating crisis.

⁴³ In the context of initial labour incorporation, the dual dilemma refers to the state's choice to mobilize or abate the labour movement concurrent to labour's choice to cooperate with or resist the state (Collier & Collier 1991).

Incorporation: More Symbolic than Real?

I have argued that we see the emergence of a crisis of incorporation in Latin America as political rights become ingrained but the development of parallel civil rights and economic security stagnates, or even regresses. This process is particularly applicable to groups that have been traditionally excluded from the formal political sphere such as the indigenous and workers in the informal economy. Antisystem or antipolitical sentiments grow and, through a process of aggregation, become demands that are expressed through electoral behavior. Therefore, “populist waves should occur during periods of institutional crisis, decay, or transition, when established political institutions lose their capacity to contain or channel popular political mobilization” (Roberts 2007, 4).

Indeed we see populism coinciding with the critical junctures between development models (Weyland 1996).⁴⁴ Transition between models reorganizes society through the empowerment of new groups. As those groups become aware of structural limitations on their rights and freedoms, they develop widespread grievances. The crux of my argument is that these grievances result in a demand for populism because, where there is persistent inequality and restriction of freedom, “there is an accumulation of unfulfilled demands and an increasing inability of the institutional system to absorb them in a differential way (each in isolation from the others), and an equivalential relation is established between them” (Laclau 2005, 73). Diverse groups therefore develop a relatively unified demand for incorporation.

When the groups involved are diverse and lack organization, this process is typically not spontaneous or endogenous. Clearly there are many historical cases where grievances are aggregated to create change in an organic manner. For example, social movements tend to originate in the grass roots. However, such spontaneous movements combine the potential for mobilization described here with a pre-existing sense of shared identity that facilitates purposive action. The dispersed, diverse nature of groups that are directly implicated in the second incorporation crisis obviates the possibility of spontaneous mobilization.

Populist leaders therefore perform the essential role of uniting diverse groups. By transforming a movement, party, or leader into a veritable depository for diverse grievances, “populism makes the people into a subject on the basis of organicist premises that reify it within the state and that negate its pluralist manifestations, transforming core differences into direct

⁴⁴ Notable examples include the transition from agricultural export-driven development to ISI, the process of market reform that resulted from the 1980s debt crisis, and the various reactions to neoliberalism.

oppositions that divide the popular sphere on the basis of the distinction between ‘friend’ and ‘foe’.”⁴⁵ (Portantiero & Ipola 1981, 8; cited in Arenas 2006, footnote 6) Populists therefore do not only have a substantive role in advocating for profound structural change; they additionally have a role in *creating* the people as a coherent group.

While aggregation of diverse interests through top-down populist mobilization does effectively construct “a popular identity out of a plurality of democratic demands” (Laclau 2005, 95), it also exacerbates cleavages by reifying distinct subsets of society and opposing them antagonistically by co-opting the general will.⁴⁶ While the oligarchy remains part of the demos, the populist defines the *pueblo* in opposition to an excluded oligarchy. The *pueblo* thereby becomes the only legitimate actor in the public sphere. This exclusionary process politicizes all levels of society. It forces groups to choose whether they are sufficiently disillusioned with the existing system to identify with a populist project, and thereby indicate whether or not they are part of the *pueblo*. Increasing antagonism finds release in a critical juncture that entails a populist rupture from past public life and a reinvention of the political.

A major concern that emerges from this discussion is that, for a populist to successfully appeal to the diverse groups that constitute the *pueblo*, policy proposals would have to address only areas where groups’ preferences overlap. This seems reasonable at the outset given that the principal concern during the current crisis of incorporation is the role of the state, and “agreements about stateness are logically prior to the creation of democratic institutions” (Linz & Stepan 1996, 26). However, agreement regarding the need for incorporation may mask disagreement regarding the substantive role of institutions and specific policy priorities. We should then question whether subsequent incorporation is meaningful and sustainable, or whether it merely reflects individual perceptions of dubious commonality. This has certainly been argued in reference to leaders such as Chávez who have supposedly sponsored incorporation that is more symbolic than real.⁴⁷ One possible response is that feelings of incorporation are sufficient to imply real incorporation given that civil rights are exercised subjectively. However, if incorporation is ideational rather than material, is it sustainable?

⁴⁵ My translation of: “el populismo constituye al pueblo como sujeto sobre la base de premisas organicistas que lo reifican en el Estado y que niegan su despliegue pluralista, transformando en oposición frontal las diferencias que existen en su seno, escindiendo el campo popular a base de la distinción ‘amigo’ y ‘enemigo’ ”.

⁴⁶ This process is reflected in Laclau’s discursive conditions for the emergence of the pueblo: “equivalential relations hegemonically represented through empty signifiers; displacements of the internal frontiers through the production of floating signifiers; and a constitutive heterogeneity which makes dialectical retrievals impossible and gives its true centrality to political articulation.” (Laclau 2005, 165)

⁴⁷ See, for example, Ramírez Roa (2003): “El discurso del ex-militar [Chávez] se ha caracterizado por un llamado a la (re) integración de vastos sectores sociales, pero en la realidad esto es más simbólico que efectivo.” (153)

Rupture and the Prospects for Durable Incorporation

In the aftermath of initial labour incorporation, there were long term benefits for the quality of democracy. Links with labour groups were formalized, creating conditions for the emergence of multi-class centrist parties capable of garnering labour support. A dialectical relationship between labour control and labour mobilization became a permanent feature of Latin American politics, clearly integrating labour into conventional political deliberation. The prospect for the permanent incorporation of marginal groups lacking citizenship rights is more dubious given populism's problematic relationship with democracy. While populists contribute to social development by extending the popular sphere, the direct links to the people that they build to do so risk undermining state legitimacy as marginal groups become empowered. This section briefly reflects on the implications of populism for democracy.

It would be difficult to argue that populism is good for democracy in societies with an active and inclusive civil society and where democracy already has strong roots. It concentrates power in the hands of the executive, often undermining judicial independence and weakening the party system to effectively reduce the impact of legislative deliberation. However, we can argue that it has a positive impact for at least two reasons: it is inclusive and it is authoritative.

First, populism becomes a salient political style because of a crisis of incorporation. As such, it may sometimes effectively overcome structural limitations on the people's ability to exercise citizenship rights and thereby extend the formal political sphere. This inclusivity can be extremely positive because "democracy was achieved by those who were excluded from rule and who acquired the social power to reach for a share in the political process" (Rueschemeyer et al 46, 1992). It can therefore be a useful tool in pursuing the constantly receding horizon of democracy as an ideal type.

For example, I argued earlier that, prior to incorporation, indigenous groups see the pursuit of representation through the state as overwhelmingly futile. Following incorporation, however, there is evidence of "a self-confident indigenous presence in the management of broad parts of public life" (Dunkerly 2007, 136). There are also some specific initiatives designed to address limitations on indigenous rights, such as *Misión Guaicaipuro* in Venezuela. This initiative is designed to formalize communal resource ownership and protect human rights.

Second, the kind of radical structural reform that is demanded through populist mobilization requires a concentration of political resources. As such, populism is conducive to the emergence of centripetal democracy whereby "the people rule, but they do so indirectly, through chosen

representatives, and in a fashion that enhances rather than detracts from the authority of the state” (Gerring et al 2005, 570).⁴⁸ Populism reconciles the formal inclusion that is produced by incorporating the *plebs* with the concentrated authority that is necessary for meaningful state reform. Such authority is necessary because populists must first create a consensus that state reform is necessary, and then they must legitimately propose and implement mechanisms for reform.

Populism therefore enables regimes to be inclusive and authoritative which, at least in the short term, can help further entrench populism’s mandate through a process of institutional feedback. Indeed institutions like those ideally associated with populism “gather broadly; their roots are deep, that is, embedded. Through these institutions, diverse interests, ideas, and identities (“interests” for short) are aggregated” (Gerring et al 2005, 570). So even though incorporation may have been mainly symbolic at first, the institutional arrangements that are associated with populism can make that incorporation real.

The problem is that populist institutions imperfectly approximate the developmental ideal of a system that improves the quality of democracy by encouraging participation without detracting from state authority. Such an ideal should combine sufficient decisiveness for the state to respond to development imperatives with clear mechanisms for accountability, in order to prevent corruption and other abuses of power. Clearly populist regimes are decisive given that they concentrate executive power. They are unitary; although there are some cases of consultative power going to the municipal level, there is very little meaningful devolution of power to sub-national regions. For example, interest groups concentrated in the Bolivian lowlands were unable to substantively alter plans to redistribute rents from natural gas in spite of vociferous protest and even threats of seeking autonomy. Likewise, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was unwilling to negotiate with farmers concentrated in Santa Fe province in spite of repeated paralyzing strikes. These examples demonstrate that the populist model has little to do with federalism.⁴⁹

One drawback associated with populism is that high levels of executive discretion tend to undermine the potential for direct accountability. Executive discretion can co-opt a great deal of

⁴⁸ Note that centripetalism in its purest sense is not compatible with populism today. The centripetal ideal entails institutions that are unitary and parliamentary, and elections based on list proportional representation (PR) (Gerring et al 2005). Only the first of these three characteristics is evident in populist behavior. However, centripetalism constitutes a move towards the concentration and centralization of power. Populism’s ability to do precisely that implies that it may compensate for substantive insufficiencies associated with presidentialism that would normally undermine inclusivity through its association with the highly inclusive act (within the *pueblo*) of incorporation.

⁴⁹ In assessing Chávez’s aversion to devolving power, it has been convincingly argued that “la personalización del poder político de Chávez y las estrategias anti-partido y anti-establishment pueden considerarse como un tipo de re-centralización del sistema político, y el Presidente ha intentado evitar los procesos de mediación a través de los partidos políticos e incluso varias veces el proceso parlamentario, para basarse en el contacto directo entre el líder y las masas, y de manera populista así legitimar su estilo de gobierno.” (Lalander 2004, 84-85)

legislative power through the use of direct democracy. Populists argue that state institutions are illegitimate and that the only justifiable limitation on their mandate must come directly from the people, particularly through referenda and plebiscites. Populism therefore creates ideal conditions for delegative democracy (O'Donnell 1994), complete with the potentially enduring concentration of power in the hands of an autocratic leader.

Populism can therefore permanently redefine the relationship of the people to the state (and not just to the regime). However, it does so in a manner that can be problematic because it replaces objective, horizontal accountability with delegative democracy. I refer to horizontal accountability (O'Donnell 1999) as objective because it entails oversight and sanctioning of the leadership by state actors that are not directly implicated in the leadership's actions.⁵⁰ In the absence of such oversight, there are no formal guarantees that the power that has been delegated to a populist is being used appropriately.

A lack of accountability seriously undermines any claims that populism is fully democratic. We must therefore question whether or not the model is so flawed that it is no longer useful. Populism does, after all, compensate for its lack of formal accountability through personalistic, emotive commitments to the downtrodden that can resonate with a marginalized people, but that are not necessarily conducive to democratic development. Whereas a conventional, democratic system would rely on party structure and transparent accountability to ensure legitimacy, the populist state relies on a kind of radically subjective, organic legitimacy that is based on charisma and protest against hegemonic structures.

Therefore, the question at the heart of the debate on the relationship between populism and democracy is whether or not a populist project and its subjectively interpreted sense of inclusion can translate into meaningful incorporation. The combination of authority and inclusion may certainly have material benefits for the *pueblo* while taking into account a great array of interests, ideas and identities. These developments are far from inimical to sustainable democratization. However, the populist state is deeply reliant on conditioning those interests through processes of top-down mobilization.

From a democratic and developmental perspective, high levels of mobilization coupled with executive discretion and institutional weakness can lead to political instability (see Huntington 1968, 55). Maintaining executive discretion in such a context requires either massive, measurable

⁵⁰ O'Donnell's definition of horizontal accountability is: "The existence of state agencies that are legally enabled and empowered, and factually willing and able, to take actions that span from routine oversight to criminal sanctions or impeachment in relation to actions or omission by other agents or agencies of the state that may be qualified as unlawful." (O'Donnell 1999, 38)

improvements in social and material welfare for the masses in order to limit social frustration, or it requires ensuring that mobilization does not translate into meaningful political participation.⁵¹ In a country like Venezuela, this decision can mean channeling export rents from PDVSA (the state oil company) to subsidize food for the poor, or it can mean buying majority shares in all opposition television channels. The fact that Chávez's MVR-200 does both has ambiguous implications for political participation, but it almost certainly means that populism and the executive discretion that comes with it are here to stay.

Evidence from Venezuela and the Rise of *Chavismo*

To understand how the present crisis of incorporation has produced populism in Latin America, I heuristically divided the causal process into three parts: context, crisis, and incorporation. While it is outside of the scope of this paper to illustrate precisely how this process occurs in each country where a third-wave populist has been elected, at least one case study will be necessary to show that I have proposed a useful unifying logic. I therefore briefly consider evidence from Venezuela.

Hugo Chávez was elected in 1998, but the social forces that brought him to power had begun to develop decades earlier. Labor groups were initially incorporated in the 1940s. Following several decades of ISI and a restricted party system, neoliberalism in the 1980s increased the importance of the informal sector. Chávez's mobilization strategy accordingly took advantage of the existence of unincorporated groups. Looking back to the legacy of labor incorporation enables us to understand how Chávez has been successful in mobilizing groups, considering that neoliberalism was never particularly strong in Venezuela. I conclude that his rise was not a reaction to neoliberalism; instead, it was a reflection of incomplete incorporation.

One reason why Venezuela was an ideal context for third wave populism was that initial labour incorporation was not very extensive. Amongst major Latin American countries, "Colombia and ... Venezuela had the least developed labor movements" (Collier & Collier 1991, 96). Labour incorporation occurred in the 1940s following the end of almost three decades of dictatorship. The death of President Juan Vicente Gómez put an end to his dictatorship (1908-1935) and initiated an ambiguous period wherein members of Gómez's administration sustained his policies until 1945,

⁵¹ Huntington contends that political instability emerges when political participation exceeds institutionalisation. Participation results from the social frustration of limited prospects for economic development exceeding mobility opportunities.

but were less authoritarian. This created space for a new political party, Acción Democrática (AD), to organize a civilian-military coalition under the leadership of Rómulo Betancourt and overthrow the existing regime. The following three years were characterized by labor incorporation, democratic elections, and a new constitution. However, the AD suffered a military coup in 1948, at which point the labor movement was quelled and numerous freedoms were retracted.

Following a decade of military dictatorship under General Marcos Pérez Jiménez, the *Punto Fijo* pact was created in 1958. It established that AD and the other major civilian party, COPEI⁵², would alternate holding the presidency each term. They subsequently became catch-all, “multiclass parties with converging social bases of support” (Collier & Collier 1991, 617) and the party system predictably stagnated. Venezuela pursued a conventional ISI development strategy throughout this period, nationalizing industries (notably iron ore in 1975 and oil in 1976) but few benefits accrued to the lower classes. Given that I have presented populism as an anti-oligarchic strategy that is attractive under conditions of exclusion, Venezuela’s inequality combined with a particularly detestable elite to set the scene for populism.

The last president that was unambiguously brought to power under the *Punto Fijo* system was Carlos Andrés Pérez (1989-1993; he had a previous term in 1974-1979). The system collapsed for at least two reasons: neoliberal policies enacted in the early 1980s had created tension and growing societal unrest could no longer be diffused within an ossified party system. Indeed neoliberalism revealed itself to be highly polarizing given that “the problems of corruption and mismanagement, which intensified under the [neoliberal] Lusinchi administration [1984-1989], not only undermined the efficiency of the public administration but also the productive capacity of state companies” (Ellner 2008, 82). Neoliberalism was progressively intensified, particularly through Carlos Andrés Pérez’s vast austerity measures. They provoked discontent that was compounded by institutional weakness, culminating in the 1989 violent protests known as the *Caracazo* (López Maya 2003).

The neoliberal era combined with globalization to undermine existing incorporation and weaken organized labour. Not only did neoliberalism de-incorporate people, but the weakness of initial labor incorporation meant that many people were never incorporated to begin with, including not just the indigenous and workers in the informal sector, but even certain labor groups. Unsurprisingly, “Chávez’s social base of support consists of members of the marginalized class of

⁵² This stands for Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente, or Independent Electoral Political Organization Committee.

the informal economy and poorer non-unionized workers of the formal economy” (Ellner 2005, 162-63).

Chávez first entered national politics with his 1992 coup attempt. He describes the attempt as a reflection of profound societal tension (Chávez 1998) that was as inevitable as the eruption of a volcano.⁵³ While it was unsuccessful, he rapidly came to embody the “anti-political” (Arenas 2006, 36) following a television broadcast where he conceded defeat “for now.”⁵⁴ After being pardoned for his involvement in the coup attempt by President Rafael Caldera (1994-1999), he ran for the presidency in 1999 and, with the help of his *Polo Patriótico* electoral coalition, won with 56% of the vote (CNE de Venezuela). He has since made significant changes in Venezuela, notably by altering the constitution to create a National Constituent Assembly that supersedes congress, allowing for indefinite presidential reelection, conducting nationalizations⁵⁵ and land redistribution,⁵⁶ and by creating numerous significant social projects.

Chávez came to power under ideal circumstances for a populist. According to World Bank statistics, Venezuela’s Gini coefficient had increased by almost 20% in the five years preceding Chávez’s election. There was a growing belief that state institutions were illegitimate. *Punto Fijismo* had previously channeled dissatisfaction by marginalizing the left (Levine 2002) so its end created an institutional void: societal polarization could no longer be diffused institutionally. Furthermore, the absence of ideological diversity within the party system meant that elections provided only extremely limited tools for voicing discontent. People could exercise formal political rights but lacked sufficient civil rights to mount an electoral challenge to elite-dominated politics. They also faced growing economic vulnerability as people below the national poverty line grew from 31% of the population in 1989 to 52% in 1999 (World Bank). It is therefore unsurprising that the poor masses would feel that the state was not dealing with their needs and that they had no

⁵³ Chávez stated that the coup attempt “era inevitable como lo es la erupción de los volcanes” during his inaugural speech in 1999, at which point he twice referred to the existing constitution as moribund. See www.analitica.com/bitbllo/hchavez/toma.asp

⁵⁴ On the night of February 4, 1992, Chávez stated on national televisión: “Compañeros, lamentablemente, por ahora, los objetivos que nos planteamos no fueron logrados en la ciudad capital.” See www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBUo-pYeVfQ

⁵⁵ The 49 Special Laws of November 2001 sought to reverse neoliberal policies from the 1990s; they notably included the Organic Hydrocarbons Law whereby majority government ownership was required of all companies involved in primary oil operations. This effectively reversed the Oil Opening program passed under the 1994-1999 Caldera administration.

⁵⁶ The 2001 Lands Law subjected all idle land to expropriation (with compensation). On June 15, 2010, the law was extended to prohibit the eviction of farmers that are working land and allow for *Consejos Comunales* (Communal Councils) and other collective organisations to become owners.

resources for influencing state behavior. Voter turnout plunged from 81% of the VAP in 1958 to 49% in 1993 (IDEA).

Polarization turned into crisis because a growing sense of injustice could not be voiced within the system. Exit strategies (discussed above) became salient and resulted in violent protest. The electoral equivalent of antisystem protest was embodied in Chávez's *Movimiento Quinta Republica* (MVR): "the basic rationale for the Chavista movement's drive for power was that the post-1958 [Punto Fijo] democracy had betrayed national interests, neglected the poor, and was riddled with corruption" (Ellner 2008, 12).

Chávez would effectively provide a platform for incorporation of marginalized groups. He recognized them within formal politics, organized them into a multi-class coalition, and positioned them in opposition to the oppressive oligarchy. Chavismo was supported by "a part of the population (workers, middle class, workers in the informal economy, peasants, fragments of the business world) that was deeply disenchanted with the state of affairs"⁵⁷ (Arenas 2006, 47). Chávez mobilized these diverse groups on the basis of their shared exclusion and, "to make the people feel that they are part of [his] mission, Chávez developed through the years a discourse of identity" (Zuquete 2008, 102).

Opposition played an important role in popular mobilization. Chávez vilified the oligarchy (both political and economic elites) and the old, authoritarian system that they represented. He initially rejected the electoral system as unjust and refused to run.⁵⁸ Once in power, he claimed that "we the patriots are fighting against the antipatriots"⁵⁹ and, in reference to the old undemocratic model in Venezuela, he argued that if the people did not destroy it, it would destroy the people.⁶⁰ He initially considered himself to be implicated in a political war⁶¹ that would later develop into an ideology as the MVR broadened its "political vision and perspective in terms of ideology,

⁵⁷ "una franja de la población (trabajadores, clase media, informales, campesinos, fragmentos del empresariado) profundamente desencantada con el estado de cosas." (Arenas 2006, 47)

⁵⁸ See Chávez's justification: "No participaremos en [el proceso electoral] de ninguna manera. Las elecciones están montadas como un torneo para maquinarias, choque entre los distintos matices de los mismos intereses dominantes, sin que de ellas puedan derivarse la menor posibilidad de progreso, o siquiera beneficio para las grandes mayorías nacionales. Intervenir en un proceso electoral como este, cuyo marco ha sido impuesto por las elites, es hacerse cómplice de una burla deliberada de las aspiraciones populares que un movimiento como el nuestro, de irrevocable condición revolucionaria y claro compromiso con las masas, jamás cometerá." (cited in Blanco-Muñoz 1998, 178)

⁵⁹ "aquí estamos enfrentados los patriotas contra los antipatria [sic]" (Chávez, 15 February 2004, pp 23).

⁶⁰ Chávez claims that "la vieja idea hay [sic] golpearla, golpearla, golpearla, pero golpearla sin clemencia... si no lo hacemos, si no las demolemos, ellas nos va a demoler tarde o temprano" (Chávez 2004b, 16-17).

⁶¹ "Estamos ahora en una guerra política, estamos en otra forma de guerra, y no sabemos si más adelante pasaremos a la guerra armada nuevamente." (Chávez in Blanco-Muñoz 1998, 344-45)

pragmatics, the ability to analyze a political scenario, to not just be soldiers with a helmet and gun, but to have a political perspective, to deepen and broaden it”⁶² (Chávez 1998, 345).

While Chávez continued to define his populist alliance as popular and revolutionary,⁶³ he nonetheless constructed a minimalist party organization capable of mounting an electorally coherent movement in favor of his “wide-reaching national project”⁶⁴ (Chávez 1998, 351). The project today entails high levels of inclusivity, but popular mobilization continues to unambiguously occur on a top-down basis. Aside from the leadership, Chavismo is “simply not that well organised” (Hawkins 2003, 1157).⁶⁵ We have then an excellent example of a political alliance that depends on the authority of a charismatic leader to whom power is delegated.

Venezuela provides evidence of a near archetypal populist rupture that unites the *pueblo* and proposes a new project on an inclusive, authoritative basis. Chávez used marginalized groups to come to power and has since incorporated them through numerous concrete policies. First, he developed a comprehensive set of social initiatives called *misiones*. These include *Misión Barrio Adentro* to provide health care in poor areas, *Misión Robinson* to improve literacy levels, *Vuelvan Caras* to provide job training, and *Misión Guacaipuro* to restore indigenous rights to communal land. He has additionally encouraged the formation of cooperatives by creating SUNACOOOP, the National Superintendence of Cooperatives.

Second, Chávez has incorporated marginal groups by attempting to institutionalize their participation in formal politics. In 2004, he created a Ministry of Popular Power for the Community Economy (MINEP) to provide support for cooperatives and small businesses. Following his reelection in 2006, he created the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) by merging all parties that supported his Bolivarian revolution and policies associated with what he calls 21st century socialism. While the PSUV may undermine the prospect of electoral competition in the long run, it presently ensures that previously unincorporated groups can directly access decision makers.

⁶² My translation of: “la amplitud era algo en lo que siempre estuvimos atentos, tratando que los militares, al menos los cuadros fundamentales de aquel movimiento antes del 04F ampliásemos la visión y la perspectiva política en cuanto a lo ideológico, lo pragmático, la capacidad de analizar un escenario político, de no ser solo militares de casco y fusil, sino de tener una perspectiva política, profundizarla y ampliarla.” (Note that 04F refers to February 4, 1992, the date of Chávez’s failed coup attempt against President Carlos Andres Perez.)

⁶³ “Si tu me pides que nos definamos, te diré: somos un movimiento revolucionario, un movimiento popular a favor de la causa de los dominados de este país y de este planeta, a favor de justicia, de la revolución.” (Chávez in Blanco-Muñoz 1998, 355)

⁶⁴ “hay un proyecto nacional de largo alcance”

⁶⁵ The obvious exception to this is the existence of *Circuitos Bolivarianos* that today play a central role in mobilising people and ensuring the success of the *misiones*. However, they were only instituted in 2001. It would appear that Chavismo is progressively deepening – becoming more organised and institutionalised – and thereby encouraging an increasing level of grass-roots involvement.

While space prevents further investigation of this case, it is clear that relative exclusion of marginal groups played an important role in bringing Chávez to power. These marginal groups could previously exercise political rights but the absence of civil rights created latent contradictions that contributed to polarization and eventually to crisis. The novel contribution of my approach to this case is that it adds depth to existing analysis. While it is generally accepted that Chávez came to power following a crisis of representative democracy, conceptualizing this crisis as a second moment of incorporation explains how it led to populism. Indeed my approach shows that Chávez's success is inextricably tied to the failure of neoliberalism because this failure created groups that were susceptible to Chávez's top-down mobilization strategy. Populism in Venezuela has created the potential for meaningful and durable incorporation of these groups.

Permanent Pluralism and Democratizing the State

To conclude, full incorporation equalizes access to citizenship rights, obviating the salience of populism as a political style. Populism is therefore as sustainable as Latin American inequality is entrenched. The irony is that it incorporates marginalized groups by integrating them into a relatively homogenous collective actor – the *pueblo* – and thereby tramples guarantees of individual rights. Its antagonistic strategies could combine with the construction of new hegemonies to create new minorities. So long as populism remains a fluid strategy for incorporating the down-trodden, its emancipatory promises place it on a track towards a cycle of permanent revolution.

On the other hand, there is no guarantee that populists will consistently vilify the oligarchy and base their mandate on oppositional dynamics. Once in power, there are some indications of a willingness to enable full participation in the public sphere. Correa's assurances to business interests and Kirchner's acceptance to have dialogue (if not compromise) with the financial sector suggests that full participation may be possible. Where this is the case, populism may be a temporary facet of the transition towards inclusivity and may set the stage for sustainable democracy. After all, "democraticness is an attribute of the state, not only of the regime" (O'Donnell 2007, 32). Moves towards inclusivity that are made under populist regimes could conceivably be sufficiently durable to become a permanent feature of the Latin American state. By reducing inequalities and enabling subculture pluralism, populism improves the conditions for the emergence of a functional polyarchy (Dahl 1971).

Evidence from the first two populist waves would suggest that permanent pluralism is unlikely. It is therefore unsurprising that, given the sustained presence of inequality,

“organizational malleability and policy flexibility, populism is likely to... remain a central feature of the region's political landscape” (Roberts 2006, 145). However, having conceptualized the third wave as a result of demands for meaningful incorporation, we may for the first time be seeing a situation where populism effectively addresses the problems that inspired its emergence. While populism itself tends to compromise democracy, it may ultimately create conditions for deepened, more meaningful democratic participation in the long run.

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Appendix

All data is from the World Bank, compiled by the author.

Figure A1: Current accounts as a percent of GDP: populists versus non populists

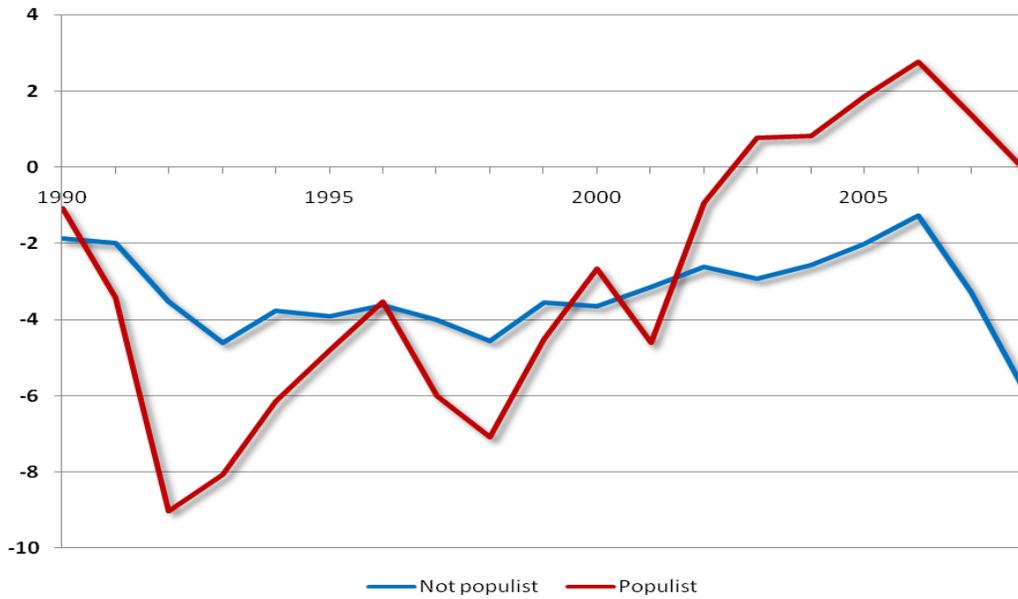


Figure A2: Export rents classified by present regime, percent of GDP

