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# Populism

as the post-Marxist adaptation of leftist Manicheanism

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## Resumen

Antes de definir el populismo, es importante identificar las principales culturas políticas en las democracias contemporáneas occidentales. Las culturas políticas pueden definirse como conjuntos coherentes de ideologías, que están “un tanto” (es decir, de una manera diferente) vinculadas a la promoción de ciertos intereses. La forma concreta en que se vinculan las ideas y los intereses depende de la cultura política particular y no puede seleccionarse de manera abstracta para todos ellos (ver más abajo). ¿Cuáles son las principales culturas políticas occidentales contemporáneas? Hay dos enfoques para responder esta pregunta. El enfoque de los divisores es elaborar una clasificación (o tipología) de las ideologías de los partidos. La lista será larga, porque estos instrumentos analíticos deben ser exhaustivos. En cambio, el enfoque de los *lumpers* es el de idear modelos, es decir, los tipos ideales de Weber; la lista será mucho más corta, porque esas categorías no son exhaustivas e identifican solo aquellos comportamientos que obedecen a condiciones de simplicidad y coherencia. Los modelos se han utilizado con mayor frecuencia en la fase “moderna” de las ciencias humanas (1950 y 1960), y fueron aplicados especialmente por la escuela italiana de ciencias políticas.

## Palabras clave

**Populismo, Patrimonialismo, América Latina, Régimen Híbrido, Democracia Iliberal.**

## Abstract

Populism can be defined as the post-Marxist adaptation of leftist Manicheanism. In Western Europe, this process materialized after 1989, while in Latin America populism was applied before 1989. Populism is based on: a Manichean ideology with a binary cosmology of the world; the expansion of the public expenditure with damaging effects (high inflation rates) on the economy; charismatic leaders making plebiscitary appeals

to the population, with a limited role of intermediate actors (interests groups or parties) and institutions; a high mobilization process from above leading to a *movimientismo* of the lower sectors of the population. The four cases of orthodox macro-economic populism were: Peron in Argentina, Allende in Chile, Garcia in Peru, and Chavez/Maduro in Venezuela. In partial populism, there is plebiscitarianism, but the increase of the public expenditure and of the inflation rate remains under control (Syriza, Movimento 5 Stelle, Correa, Morales, and Cristina Kirchner). Orthodox populism has always had negative consequences in politics, leading to authoritarian regimes, increased conflict and military coups; instead, partial populism has never endangered democracy and is usually coupled with hybrid/illiberal regimes. The political cultures of the right are not populist, because there is not the increase of public expenditure, but there is plebiscitarianism.

**Keywords** Populism, Patrimonialism, Latin America, Hybrid Regime, Illiberal Democracy.

**Introduction** This article is going to analyze the populist political culture, first by a theoretical point of view; then through an empirical analysis of the different populisms in Latin America. This task will be accomplished after the presentation of the main political cultures in contemporary democracies. In the first chapter, a political culture will be defined as a mix of interests and/or ideologies. Then, the main contemporary political cultures will be identified: first, the four (the conservative, the liberal, the constructivist/social-democrat and the Manichean/socialist) “models”; then, the “hybrids” (like the xenophobic and the neo-communist). In the second chapter, populism will be defined as the post-Marxist adaptation of leftist Manicheanism, that was the “next best thing” of socialism. Thus, the definitions applying the label of populism to (conservative, liberal or xenophobic) “plebiscitarian” rightist parties will be criticized. Then, the evolution of Latin American (radical and moderate) leftist populist governments will be presented, focusing on leaders such as Peron in Argentina, Allende in Chile, Garcia in Peru, Chavez and Maduro in Venezuela; Morales in Bolivia, Correa in Ecuador, Nestor and Cristina Kirchner in Argentina. In the conclusions, the different radical (orthodox) or moderate (partial) Latin American populist governments will be classified within a typology on (right and left) plebiscitarian regimes.

## The main political cultures in Western democracies

Before defining populism, it is important to identify the main political cultures in Western contemporary democracies. Political cultures may be defined as coherent sets of ideologies, that are “somewhat” (i.e. in a different way) linked to the promotion of certain interests. The concrete way in which ideas and interests are linked depends on the particular political culture and cannot be selected in an abstract way for all of them (see below). What are the main contemporary Western political cultures? There are two approaches to answering this question. The splitters’ approach is to draw up a classification (or typology) of party ideologies. The list will be a long one, because these analytical instruments must be exhaustive. Instead, the lumpers’ approach is that of devising models, that is to say Weber’s ideal-types; the list will be much shorter, because those categories are not exhaustive, and identify only those behaviors that obey conditions of simplicity and coherence. Models have been more often used in the “modern” phase of human sciences (the 1950 and 1960’s), and were applied especially by the Italian school of political science

**Four models** of political cultures of Western democracies’ diplomacies have been identified by Fossati (2017): the **conservative**, the **liberal**, the **social-democrat**, and the **socialist**. Nazi/fascism and communism were not democratic political cultures and are not followed anymore in contemporary politics. Each model shows how these political cultures would work at the analytic level. Then, the empirical analysis will show if either behaviors rigidly follow one of the models (like the primary colors: white, yellow, red, blue, black) or if they disobey them, being flexible, volatile, incoherent, and so on; thus, political cultures would turn into (green, orange, violet) hybrids (like the xenophobic or the neo-communist).

Conservatism has been influenced by the realist philosophical tradition; it must not be confused with the defense of the *status quo* (“past-ism”: in French, *passéisme*). At the beginning of the 1900’s, conservatism was the political culture of those parties, that had two main interests; they were against universal suffrage and defended the interests of rural producers. When universal suffrage was introduced, and industrial modernization was consolidated, conservatism focused on two main interests: the defense of security of its citizens and the application of moderate *laissez faire* economic institutions. In fact, conservators have always been in favor of capitalism, but they tried to defend national producers (with moderate trade and investments’ protectionism) and to oppose blind privatizations, that would increase investments of foreign firms. Security has been applied to both the fight against criminal individuals or organizations and the strengthening of citizens’ national identity. Thus, conservators have tried to limit immigration flows of people with different national identities, according to the *ius sanguinis* principle of citizenship; as a consequence, they are against the *ius soli* principle. Then, they have always defended the values of the mainstream heterosexual family, being against gays’ weddings (and children’s adoptions), and they have rejected the values of post-modern feminism, being in favor of divorce, but against abortion. In sum, in conservatism interests are more relevant, and subsequently favor the consolidation of a nationalist ideology, which differs from Nazi-fascism, because nationalism is “defensive”, but is not imperialist in foreign policy and it is not racist.

At the beginning of 1900’s, Liberalism was in conflict with conservatism because on one hand liberals wanted universal suffrage, and on the other hand they defended urban and industrial interests. Then, the liberal parties focused on the defense of certain values, such as human rights, democracy, free market, and national self/determination. Liberals promoted both civil and political rights in Western democracies. Then, liberal parties have always supported the free movements of goods and people, and have objected to limits to migration flows. However, they have always promoted a symmetric

integration of immigrants that must respect the laws of the guest country; then, foreign countries should apply reciprocity to the legislation on immigrants coming from the West. In economy, liberals have always promoted radical *laissez faire* reforms, by supporting privatizations and foreign investments. Liberals have also promoted cultural pluralism, being in favor of federalism, and/or secessions, if some minorities with different cultural identities promote national self-determination through referenda. In fact, liberals have usually been in favor of single-nations states, as cultural pluralism is preferred to state interests. In sum, liberalism starts with the defense of some values (democracy, radical *laissez faire*, federalism), and then consolidates the interests of actors like business groups, pro-human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), national self-determination movements. However, liberalism in the West has mostly reached its objectives in the promotion of civil and political rights, while in economy it has been strong from the 1980's until the 2008 economic crisis; since then, it has been weakened. The leftist moderate political culture has consolidated *constructivist* values. These have usually been the strategies of Social-democrat parties, that have always promoted solidarity among classes, to be defended (especially since 1945) through the welfare state. As those reforms have been consolidated in Europe (but not in the USA and Australia), after 1989 the main value of the moderate left has become multi-culturalism, that has been applied to decisions concerning both Third World migration flows towards the West, and armed conflict resolution processes outside Western Europe. Constructivists have promoted free immigration flows, through an *asymmetric* integration process with immigrants, that are not requested to respect the laws of the guest country; then, reciprocity is not asked to foreign governments when they must defend the rights of Western immigrants in the Third World. Then, multi-culturalism has been applied to conflict resolution processes, by neglecting national self-determination and referenda outside the West, and promoting pluri-national states, based more on consensus pacts than on federalism. The ideology of the moderate left has been called *political correctness*, that is a post-modern attitude of leftist intellectuals based on the perception that rational Western people can no longer manage reality. Political correctness aims at making equal what is different and at not criticizing under-privileged actors (underdogs) through language or politics. In economy, the constructivist left has accepted free market, even if it should be corrected by a strong state governance: welfare state in domestic politics and foreign aid in world politics. Thus, also this political culture starts from values (solidarity through welfare state and multi-culturalism) and then consolidates interests: of unions, of NGOs for immigration or foreign aid.

The leftist neo-Marxist philosophy (without the violent inclination of communism), based on third-worldism and passive non-violence, has led to a Manichean ideology. Pre-1989 Manicheanism has consolidated a socialist political culture, whose parties were in favor of democracy (instead of violent communists), but against capitalism and wanted to nationalize the private property. In fact, these objectives have never been reached within Western democracies, and if socialist parties won the elections, they turned into social-democrats. Fully Socialist institutions have been applied only by communist regimes. In Latin America, democratic governments (like Peron in Argentina or Allende in Chile) have partially applied socialism (for example in the energy or the agriculture sector) before 1989, and coupled it with both trade protectionism (the Import Substitution Industrialization) and populism, that was based both on a strong increase of public expenditure and deep redistributive policies. Both socialists and populists have Manichean cosmologies, because reality is interpreted under two rigid dichotomous categories (of white-good, black-evil). However, after 1989 the main problem became that

1. Olson (2018) emphasized that socialism has a class identity, while populism privileges people's identity.

2. Germani (1978) linked Latin American populism to a phase of the modernization process, when the industrialization process had been launched by late (or third) comers (Latin American countries) after first (Great Britain, USA and France), and second (Germany, Italy and Japan) comers. Oxhorn (1998) linked populism to the high social inequalities and the economic asymmetries in Latin America, that has produced a much more heterogeneous class structure than Western Europe.

3. *Neo-conservatism* represents a hybrid between conservatism and liberalism. The *Greens* are a hybrid between the social-democrat and the Manichean political cultures. *Social-Christian parties* are a hybrid between conservatism and social-democracy. The *Radicals* are a hybrid between liberals and social-democrats. *Anarchism* is a hybrid between liberalism and Manicheanism or communism.

4. Communism was based on Marxism, with the use of violence in both the conquest of power (through revolutions, *coups d'état*, or terrorism) and in its maintenance (through communist regimes). Instead, Nazi-fascism was based on radical nationalism, leading to both imperialism (with the promotion of wars against other nations) and racism (in their relations with people of other civilizations). Weyland (2018) has emphasized that the fascist ideology was very dogmatic, while populism is much more flexible and pragmatic. According to Roberts (2018), not all radical right parties are populist, that is to say *plebiscitarian*, especially those with a strong organization structure like the **Front National** in France.

there was still the black and the evil (the USA, the West, "*neo-liberalismo*"), but the white and the good were absent: both communism and socialism had failed. In Western advanced countries, that void was filled by populism<sup>1</sup>. That's the reason why populism can be defined as the post-Marxist adaptation of leftist Manicheanism. In Western Europe, this process materialized after 1989, while in Latin America populism was applied after the 1929 economic crisis and the Second World War. That continent was under the hegemony of the United States, that would have never accepted full socialism within a democracy; thus, post-Marxism in Latin America had a strong international constraint and its conversion into populism<sup>2</sup> has materialized before 1989; only Cuba and Nicaragua were communist authoritarian regimes that applied socialist economic institutions. Marxism wanted to favor socio-economic equality through nationalizations and the elimination of private property, but socialism has always led to the total failure of the economy. Thus, populism has been the "next best thing" of socialism, becoming a "post"-Marxist political culture that does not reject free market anymore, but uses the expansion of the public expenditure as a tax imposed to the middle and the high classes to defend the poorest sectors of the society -which in the past was the ultimate objective of socialism-. Thus, all Manichean actors start from ideas and then consolidate interests, that may be defended by socialist parties or populist leaders, or by even more rigid (no global, third-worldist, ecologist, feminist, pacifist, animal rights) Manichean movements.

Other political cultures may be identified, by emphasizing the hybrids between two models<sup>3</sup>. In contemporary politics, two relevant hybrids have materialized through the combination with two non-democratic political cultures (Nazi-fascism and communism). *Neo-communism* promoted a "post-modern" synthesis between non-violent socialism and revolutionary (or terrorist) communism. In fact, neo-communists are not directly violent, but appreciate the 'violence of the others' (the underdogs): Castro, Chavez, Chiapas rebels. *Neo-communism* has been stronger in the Cold War but persisted in the 1990's, and always strongly criticized the use of violence by Western countries; its outcome was a "false pacifism", that was promoted by the **Italian Communist Party (PCI)** in the Cold War or by **Rifondazione Comunista (RC)** with its mobilizations against Nato's wars in former Yugoslavia in the 1990's. However, if also post-1989 no global groups are sympathizers with the use of violence, they become neo-communist. At the same time, a hybrid between conservatism and Nazi-Fascism<sup>4</sup> has also materialized in recent decades. The so-called Xenophobic radical right has emerged in many European countries. It is also called the Alt-Right, that is deeply anti-political correctness. They are against immigration flows, especially from Islamic countries. This political culture was strengthened after the terrorist attacks of Al Qaeda and Isis since 2001. In the USA it is also called *white supremacist* extreme right, and its supporters are against immigration flows also from Mexico and Latin America. Like neo-communists, xenophobic groups of the extreme right are not directly violent, but their discourse is very ambiguous and deeply intolerant. The application of their values may lead to the *violence of the others* (their most radical sympathizers), that is never criticized.



## The definition of populism

5. Also Mudde (2004) emphasized the Manichean worldview of populism. Laclau (2005) has been the Argentinian political philosopher who inspired post-1989 populism, especially that of Nestor and Cristina Kirchner. He theorized the radical left strategy of opposing technocratic elites, austerity, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and *neo-liberalismo*.

6. Di Tella (1990) defined *populism* as a political movement with a high mass support from urban (and rural) workers, a mobilization process from above, the central role of (personal or charismatic) leaders (coming from the middle class), a nationalistic economic ideology and an anti/status quo program. On populism and nationalism, see De Cleen (2017).

7. Kaufman and Stallings (1991) emphasized that pre-1989 radical (leftist) populism obtained a strong backing from domestically oriented (especially industrial) business sectors, while it isolated rural agro-exporters and foreign multi-national enterprises.

8. *Movimiento* is characterized by: charismatic leadership, vertical and horizontal solidarity, antagonism towards the political enemy (Alberti, 1996). According to Aslanidis (2017), populist movements may be new, or may be coopted by pre-existing parties. Jansen (2011) linked populism to a political project aimed at mobilizing marginalized social sectors.

The populist political culture has the following features:

- ◆ Populists have a Manichean vision of the world (Hawkins, 2018), that is to say a cosmology with a dichotomous, binary, antagonistic division between us and them, the good and the evil, the white and the black, the people and the elite, the masses and the establishment, the pure and the corrupted<sup>5</sup>. Leftist Manichean political movements are anti-market, anti-USA, anti-NATO, and anti-West.
- ◆ Populist governments aim at expanding public expenditure to defend those citizens that are being excluded by formal work: the unemployed citizens in the West or the marginal people in Latin America (Fossati, 1997). Populist parties have never been worried of the inflation effects of the expansion of the public expenditure, that in Latin America often reached the three-digit level, pushing into deep economic crisis all the countries that applied populism. Macro-economic populism has been defined by Dornbusch and Edwards (1989) as that economic approach that emphasizes growth and income distribution and deemphasizes the risk of inflation and deficit finance, external constraints and the reaction of economic agents to aggressive non-market policies. *Economic populism* has been coupled with trade and investments' protectionism, influenced by *economic nationalism*<sup>6</sup>, but nationalism has affected not only populism, but also the conservative right's ideology. Kaufman and Stallings (1991) emphasized three features of economic populism: budget deficits, price controls and nominal wage increase, controlled or appreciated exchange rate. The common outcome of pre-1989 macro-economic populism has been the ultimate collapse of the economy, with a frightening cost to the popular groups who were supposed to be favored, with violent real wage cuts that ended in massive political instability. For its evolution in Latin America, see the following sections.
- ◆ The political feature of populism is *plebiscitarianism*, that is to say the direct appeal of charismatic leaders to the masses, without any strong intermediate actors (parties or interest groups), and with many *unorganized* followers (Roberts, 2017; Weyland, 2017). Peron, Allende, Garcia, were charismatic leaders that made plebiscitarian (Geddes, 1994) appeals to their electorate, while the middle class usually voted for moderate left or right parties. Charismatic leaders may form populist parties, but they are usually weak, and do not represent the core of the populist strategy, that is strongly linked to leaders and movements. Populism usually relies upon some grassroots organizations, with a low organizational structure. There may be business associations<sup>7</sup> and (for example, Peronist) unions, but these interest groups mostly depend on the populist leader; also parties or institutions (parliaments and governments) have a limited role and usually ratify decisions of the populist leader.
- ◆ This political relation leads to a strong mobilization process (mostly from above) of the masses, within the so-called *movimiento*<sup>8</sup> (Alberti, 1996), that is the *interface concept* of populism. Those who mobilize themselves have a precise socio-cultural origin, that Ostiguy (2017) has defined as the "low" of the society, and have a sociological (people excluded from formal work and urban centers), an economic (the poorest sectors of the population) and a cultural (all those with a low level of instruction) dimension. On the low, people use a politically incorrect, raw, coarse, inhibited language, based on *anti-politics*, and they fight against the "high": moderate right or left parties. Among the low, there are also poor immigrants; populists are inclusive and not xenophobic (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013, De La Torre 2016, Garcia Augustin and Brizziarelli, 2018). Among the high, there are those foreigners who reject the expansion of public expenditure: the supporters of market reforms, the promoters

of austerity (the IMF or the European Union), and the trans-national finance. This mobilization process also needs a strict control of the media to disseminate populist values (De la Torre, 2018); populism usually leads to limit the freedom of the press.

In sum, populism is based on: a Manichean ideology with a binary cosmology of the world; the expansion of the public expenditure with damaging effects (very high inflation rates) on the economy; charismatic leaders making plebiscitary appeals to the population, with a limited role of intermediate actors (interests groups or parties) and institutions (parliaments or governments); a high mobilization process from above leading to a strong *movimiento* of the lower sectors of the population.

If the populist political culture is fully applied in all its features, the political consequence is a high threat to liberal (and representative) democracy (Pasquino, 2005), and political conflict may lead to either a deep political crisis, or a transition to a hybrid or authoritarian regime, together with anti-populist reactions such as military coups or even wars: the *populist political cycle* (Sachs, 1989). In Latin America, populism was usually applied by illiberal (or limited) democracies during the Cold War, because populist parties were often winning democratic elections, with a strong support by the “low” of the population: marginal urban (more than rural) sectors and informal workers. The political effects of populism in Latin America will be analyzed in the conclusions of this article.

Which is the main theoretical (and empirical) problem of populism? In the literature (Weyland, 2017) the economic feature of populism has been *erased*<sup>9</sup>. Many radical rightist parties have been defined as populist (Pappas, 2019). It often happens that: first, also rightist xenophobic parties have charismatic leaders; second, they have plebiscitarian relations with the masses; third, those who mobilize in favor of xenophobic parties are the “low” of the society (Ostiguy, 2017). On one hand, xenophobic parties do not expand public expenditure, that is a typical leftist economic politics. On the other hand, leftist populist governments are not xenophobic, even if they divide the world into us and them, low and high; but excluded immigrants are within “the low” and pertain to the electoral base of populist parties. Populists are against those pro-globalization foreigners that are part of “the high” of society, are in favor of austerity, and are against the expansion of the public expenditure<sup>10</sup>.

One of the main assumptions of those scholars who theorize the existence of both rightist and leftist populist parties is that populism is above the right-left cleavage. That is analytically incorrect - it is a form of conceptual stretching - and empirically false. Leftist populist parties aim at expanding public expenditure and are not xenophobic. Rightist parties are xenophobic and not want to expand public expenditure. But it is sure that low sectors of society usually vote either for the populist left or for the xenophobic right. Thus, even if the right-left cleavage is still alive, it may happen that populist parties are voted by both radical right and radical left electors. That is a big change, because in the past radical right electors had always been against socialist parties, that were influenced by Marxism (even if they were not violent like the communists). The right has always defended capitalism; liberals were in favor of radical, while conservators (like Trump or Berlusconi) of moderate *laissez faire*.

Roberts (1995, 2007) and Weyland (1996, 1999, 2001) theorized the existence also of neo-liberal populism, like those of Menem in Argentina or Fujimori in Peru, but that is conceptual stretching. According to Kaltwasser (2019), also conservative leaders like Berlusconi or Trump are populist. Menem and Fujimori made plebiscitary appeals to the population to apply market reforms (Geddes 1994), which were obstructed by parliaments, but they were the contrary of populism. Menem and Fujimori can be labeled as

9. Weyland (2017) wrote about *the decline of notions of economic populism, or of the deficiency of counter-arguments* (Weyland, 2003). Other political scientists (Knight, 1998, Cammack 2000, Demmers, Fernandez Jilberto, Hogenboom, 2001; Ellner, 2003) neglected economic factors. Zanatta (2013) and De La Torre (2017) clarified the evolution from left to right populism, but accepted both definitions. In fact, leftist scholars cannot accept that a negative label like populism may be applied only to the left. According to Zuquete (2018), as populism is often perceived as a negative label, there must be a *good (leftist) populism* and a *bad (rightist) populism*. Then, definitions linking populism to the expansion of public expenditure are considered *old fashion*, i.e. positivistic, that contradict the values of post-modernism.

10. Rodrik (2018) emphasized how (leftist) populist actors are against globalization. Rightist conservative or xenophobic parties are critical of globalization, but their cosmologies are not Manichean. The right supports a moderate *laissez faire*, with some trade and investments' protectionism and with limited privatizations to defend national producers, as national governments should maintain their control on global and regional organizations.

11. Drake (1982) emphasized that populism is characterized by these features: a personalistic leadership, high political mobilization of followers with a multi-class origin, and nationalistic economic policies.

12. *People's Party* of the 1890's was an agrarian, more than populist, party. Huey Long, Louisiana's governor of the 1930's, has probably been the American leader with the closest political program to populism, but his political career has been too short, as he was killed in 1935. All the other rightist American leaders (Wallace, Buchanan, Trump...) have never been populist, but were radical conservative or xenophobic politicians. The Tea party has always been against the increase of public expenditure. For examples of American populist leaders or parties, see Lowndes (2017, 2018), Savage (2018).

plebiscitarian liberal leaders, as they favored those technocratic governments and *laissez faire* reforms, which have always been rejected by populist leaders. Instead, other scholars made a clear distinction between liberalism and populism (Edwards, 2019); Drake<sup>11</sup> (1982) linked the definition of populism to economic nationalism, like Kaufman and Stallings (1991), Conniff (1999) argued that neo-liberalism and neo-populism remained antithetical to each other also in the 1990's.

In the United States, no *fully populist* (with all the four above-mentioned features) political party or leader has ever existed, even if some of them have been labeled as populist. The emphasis on the expansion of public expenditure has never been formulated, even if some radical leaders of the Democratic Party (like Jesse Jackson) pressed for more effective redistributive policies: probably, to compensate the weak American welfare state<sup>12</sup>. The Italian case shows that governments may be the outcome of an alliance of the "two low" (rightist xenophobic Lega and leftist populist Movimento 5 Stelle) against the "two high" (moderate left Partito Democratico and moderate right Forza Italia): see the typology of Ostiguy (2017). Conte's coalition in 2018/19 was based on an exchange; the populist party accepted some anti-immigration measures; the xenophobic party accepted some increase of the public expenditure (Chiarini, 2020). It was probably the first coalition among the two "low" in a Western country. However, that coalition was dissolved in August 2019.

<i>Socio-Cultural Origin</i>	<i>Political Ideology</i>	
	Left	Right
High	Social-democrat parties	Conservative or Liberal parties
Low	Populist parties	Xenophobic parties

In sum, the main assumption of this essay is that leftist Manicheanism at first took the (neo-Marxist) form of socialism, and then it turned into (post-Marxist) populism. This process materialized first in Latin America during the Cold War, through a mix among partial socialism, trade protectionism and populism (with Peron in Argentina and Allende in Chile), and then (after 1989 and especially after the 2008 economic crisis) in Europe: with economic populism only and without any socialism. Rodrik (2018) linked the recent episodes of populism, like Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece, to the post-1989 *hyper-globalization*. The only post-1989 exception is Venezuela, where Chavez and Maduro applied the same mix of partial socialism, protectionism and populism of Allende and Peron during the cold war, and Venezuela turned into an authoritarian regime (see the conclusions).

## Populism in Latin America

Macro-economic populism has been coupled with **Import-Substitution Industrialization (ISI)**, launched in Latin America after the 1929 economic crisis and the Second World War (1940/45). Industrial imports from advanced countries had decreased in that period, and Latin American populist governments (mostly within illiberal democracies) applied ISI policies, that were based on two instruments: high tariff barriers against industrial imports from the advanced countries and public subsidies to the local industry. At the same time, for example in Argentina with Peron (1946/55), agriculture exports were taxed. The *first phase* of ISI lasted from 1929/45 to mid-1950's; ISI policies were coupled with **macro-economic populism** (strong public expenditure increase) and



also with *partial socialism*, that is to say with some nationalizations aiming at damaging multi-national firms. Those economic policies were launched especially thanks to the intellectual support of **CEPAL (Comision Economica para America Latina)** economists, of the United Nations in Santiago de Chile; their neo-Marxist ideology was based on the hypothesis that dependence from advanced countries had to be removed, through macro-economic populism, ISI and economic nationalism. Before 1929, post-colonial Latin American economies were more integrated with those of the USA and their former European empires, with the typical neo-colonial division of labor: imports of industrial goods from the empires and export of (agriculture and mineral) primary goods from the colonies (Fossati, 1997).

The first phase of ISI led to an economic crisis, with high rates of inflation. Thus, some middle-class (*desarrollistas*) parties won the elections against populist leaders; Kubitschek (1956/61) and Goulart (1961/64) were elected in Brazil; Frondizi (1958/62) and Illia (1963/66) in Argentine. They applied the second phase of ISI, that lasted from mid-50s to the beginning of the 1970's. *Desarrollismo* maintained protectionist ISI policies, but tried to stop economic populism and partial socialism. *Desarrollistas* parties tried to attract multi-national corporations, but without supporting exports (like Asian tigers); they tried to appeal them to sell their goods in the Latin American protected markets. Those democratic experiments also failed, under the pressure of the mobilizations of the lower sectors of the population. In mid-60s in both Brazil (1964-85) and Argentine (1966-73) there were military coups of the so-called *dictablandas*, to continue with the above-mentioned second phase of ISI. However, renewed popular mobilizations pushed also those military leaders to abandon power (in Argentine but not in Brazil), and there was a wave of *neo-populism*. Allende won the elections in Chile (in 1970), and Peron in Argentina (in 1973). The second phase of ISI had ended, and there was a return to both macro-economic populism and partial socialism, together with the radicalization of some terrorist communist groups: especially in *Cono Sur* countries (Argentine, Chile and Uruguay), but also in Colombia (FARC) and Peru (Sendero Luminoso). In Peru, the radical left-wing armed forces applied a sort of *rural socialism*, coupling populism with the nationalization of private property in the agriculture sector, whose lands were organized in cooperatives under Velasco Alvarado (1968-75); instead, the (private) industrial firms were still favored by the protectionist ISI policies (Cavarozzi, 1992).

Then, there was a new wave of military coups (in Chile in 1973, in Uruguay in 1975 and in Argentine in 1976) of highly repressive anti-communist -supported by the US republican president Nixon- military regimes (*dictaduras*); populism and partial socialism were stopped, but ISI policies were abandoned only in Chile. Pinochet implemented radical *laissez-faire* reforms: not from the beginning (in 1973), but only from 1976 to 1981 with the government of the so-called **Chicago boys**. From 1982 to 1989, Buchi's government applied moderate *laissez-faire* policies in Chile. Instead, Argentina and Uruguay coupled ISI with austerity programs, but did not implement privatizations and trade or financial opening. The same happened to most of democratic governments of the 1980's. Austerity, negotiated with the IMF after the foreign debt crisis of 1982, and trade (and investments') protectionism led to a deep economic recession in the so-called *década perdida*. In those years, Peruvian Garcia's government returned to macro-economic populism and to high public expenditure, declaring a *moratorium* to creditor banks and refusing an agreement with the IMF, with devastating effects on the economy. Instead, Argentinian Alfonsín's government made a compromise between austerity and populism, with both **Plan Austral** (1985) and **Plan Primavera** (1988), and the outcome was another deep economic crisis (Fossati, 1997).

Only after 1989, *laissez-faire* reforms were launched by all Latin American governments, with privatizations, trade and financial opening. ISI policies, populism and partial socialism were abandoned and Latin America experienced a decade of growth, also favored by the 1989 Brady Plan that introduced a discount (of 20/30%) of the foreign debt that had to be paid to creditor banks (Fossati, 1997). Many countries were governed by the left (Aylwin, Frei, Lagos and Bachelet in Chile or Lula in Brazil), but their decision making process was more institutionalized and thus not populist (Schamis, 2006). Some rightist presidents (like Menem in Argentina or Fujimori in Peru) applied market reforms, but kept using the same plebiscitarian decision-making style of leftist populism of the past. Venezuela returned to populism, protectionism and partial socialism with Chavez' hybrid regime (1999-2013) and with Maduro's (since 2013) authoritarian government. Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina (with Nestor and Cristina Kirchner) applied more moderate populism than Venezuela.

**Populism  
before 1989:  
Argentina (Peron),  
Chile (Allende),  
Peru (Garcia)**

Peron became president in June 1946 and launched an economic policy with a deep increase of both public expenditure (at the federal and the provinces levels) and money creation (by the nationalized Central Bank), with a strong redistribution program, managed by Evita, together with high increases in wages. There was a big nationalizations' campaign: for example, in energy (oil, gas, nuclear plants, water, electricity), iron metallurgy, tele-communications and (railways, ports, ships and airplanes) transports. Peron implemented a sort of *partial socialism*. In 1949, the inflation rate reached 34%, and in the early 1950's there was a deep economic crisis. In 1955, a military *coup* pushed Peron to go into exile. In 1973, Peron won again the presidential elections. Populist economic policies (with wage increases, price and exchange rate controls) and a strong ISI program were re-launched by Peron in 1973, and were continued by his second wife Isabel after his death in July 1974. The mismanagement of the economy and the increase of violence in the society, led to the highest peak of the inflation rate with 430% in 1976; the budget deficit in 1975 had reached 16%. In June 1975, a devaluation of the exchange rate was decided, but it had no relevant economic effect. In 1976, the real wages level had decreased of 50% since 1973 (Sturzenegger, 1991).

Allende started his mandate in 1970 and formed the **Unidad Popular** government with the support of both communists and socialists. Public expenditure (within a deep redistribution project) and real wages increased, prices and the exchange rate were controlled, and a nationalization program in the copper industry and in the agrarian sector, according to the socialist ideology, was launched. Thus, Allende probably implemented the deepest form of *partial socialism*. Inflation rate reached 35% in 1970 and 1971, then 200% in 1972 and 600% in 1973. The rate of deficit over GDP started with 3% in 1970, then increased to 11% in 1971, 13% in 1972 and 25% in 1973. In 1972, a devaluation of the exchange rate was decided, but it did not produce any relevant economic effect. Thus, Allende lost the support of the middle class, and there was a strong increase of violence in the society. In 1973, real wages were 70% of those of 1970 (Dornbusch and Edwards, 1989).

Garcia became president of Peru in August 1985, as the leader of **APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana)**, the Peruvian leftist populist party. During the left wing military regime of Velasco Alvarado, the land (but not the industry) was nationalized; also Peru had a memory of *partial socialism*. Garcia's economic program was based on a high increase of public expenditure and of real wages, a strong money creation program of the central bank, controls on prices, interest rate and exchange rate. He declared a

moratorium on foreign debt and refused to make an agreement with the IMF. In July 1987, Garcia tried to implement a partial socialist project, aiming at nationalizing the banking system, but the parliament rejected his proposal. The economic effects of his policies were devastating. Inflation grew at 1722% in 1988, 2775% in 1989, and 7600% in 1990. The budget deficit increased from 2,4% in 1985, to 4,9% in 1986, 6,5% in 1987, and 5,3% in 1988. In 1989, real wages values had decreased of 50% since 1985 (Dornbusch and Edwards, 1989).

## Populism after 1989: Venezuela (Chávez, Maduro), Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina

13. This did not happen because of popular dissatisfaction with market reforms or of social inequality, but because of a *success paradox*; market reforms improved economic conditions; thus many electors returned to the old (anti-American) populism, also because post-1989 external constraints were absent in the 2000's (Remmer, 2012). Panizza (2005) emphasized that after 1989 many leftist parties implemented moderate market reforms. On the various lefts, see Roberts (2006), Levitsky and Roberts (2011), and Weyland (2009, 2013).

After 1989, most of Latin American governments (except Cuba) applied *laissez faire* reforms, and ISI has been abandoned, together with populism and partial socialism (Fossati, 1997). Then, Chavez tried to stop liberal reforms: first with his attempted coup in 1992; then after his election in 1998. He relaunched economic populism, protectionism and partial socialism, trying to push other countries (Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua and neo-Peronist Argentina from 2003 to 2015) to imitate his reforms (Edwards, 2019)<sup>13</sup>.

In Venezuela, Chávez first staged a military *coup* in 1992 (with nearly 250 deaths), pushing president Perez to fire the **IESA boys**, that were implementing successful *laissez-faire* reforms since 1990 (Fossati, 1997). Then, he won the presidential elections in 1998 and changed the constitution in 1999; Chávez was a very charismatic leader, making repeated plebiscitary appeals to the population; he also strongly relied upon decrees. Thanks to oil exports revenues, he increased public expenditure, money supply, and financed social policies, aiming at benefiting the lower sectors of the population, within the so-called *petro socialism*, which was another form of *partial socialism*; also prices and the exchange rate were controlled. Chávez strongly limited democracy, and Venezuela became a hybrid regime; from 1999 to 2008 **Freedom House's** (FH, 2019) performances were around 3 or 4. The lower sectors of the population represented his electorate, while the middle class voted for the opposition parties. In 2002, there was an attempt of electoral revolution, leaded by Carmona (head of the main industrial business association), and diplomatically supported by the USA, but it failed. Chavez increased again his presidential powers after the constitutional referendum of December 2007; he also put the armed forces under the direct rule of the chief of state, and limited the freedom of the media; Venezuela became a case of *hyper-presidentialism* (Hawkins 2010). In February 2009, the terms' limits for his re-elections were removed by another referendum. FH's performances reached the level of 5 from 2009 to 2013. In 2008, the inflation rate was 27,5% (Hidalgo, 2009). Budget deficit was around 5% in 2010, and reached 15% in 2012. Chávez died of cancer in 2013.

His successor, Maduro, did not have his charisma, and Venezuela became an authoritarian regime, with a performance of 5,5% in 2016/7 and of 6,5% in 2018, according to the FH. Inflation rate was 56,2% in 2013; 275% in 2015, 800% in 2016, 4000% in 2017, then since 2018 the government is not publishing inflation rates anymore. Budget deficit was around 20% in 2015/6, and 30% in 2017/8. Since 2013 also the oil prices started to decrease. Real wages have declined of 75% after 2013. The middle class started to mobilize again (since 2014), especially against the new constitutional referendum of July 2017, and against the presidential elections of May 2018, that were considered unfair because of many electoral irregularities. In January 2019, the president of the parliament Guaidò leaded another wave of protests and proclaimed himself president of Venezuela, but the regime reacted with repression; there have been nearly 300 deaths since 2014. There has also been a strong increase of violence, and four million people (13% of the population) left Venezuela.

In the 2000's a new wave of *rentier populism* (Mazzuca, 2013) started; rents were guaranteed by oil (in Venezuela and Ecuador) and by gas (in Bolivia), and permitted the expansion of public expenditure and the launching of vast social policies. Morales won the Bolivian presidential elections in 2005, and in 2006 he nationalized the gas industry that had been privatized in the 1990's; his government, with his party **Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS)**, became a case of *etno-populism* (Madrid 2008). In autumn 2019, after his election for a fourth term and many popular pretests against him, Morales resigned and went into exile in Mexico; in May 2020 there will be new presidential elections. Bolivian FH (2019) political performance has always been 3 since 2003, but worsened to 3.5 only in 2014 and 2015. The main economic indicators remained under control; the inflation rate reached 14% in 2008, 10% in 2011, and then it decreased at 5%. The ratio of public debt over Gross Domestic Product (GDP) started with 80% in 2005, then it decreased at 38% in 2010, and increased again at 50% in 2017. Correa won the Ecuadorian presidential elections in 2006, and implemented *macro-economic populism*, but he limited democratic performances, changing the constitution. Ecuador became a case of *hyper-presidentialism*; both the power of the judiciary and the freedom of the media were limited (De la Torre and Lemos 2016). Another more moderate leader (Moreno) of his party **Alianza PAIS (Patria Altiva I Soberana)** won the 2017 presidential elections. In July 2018, a judge ordered Correa's arrest, but he went into exile in Belgium and did not return to Ecuador. Correa's FH (2019) political indicators were 3 since 2000, then worsened to 3,5 in 2014, but with Moreno they improved to 3 in 2018. The main economic indicators remained under control; inflation rate started with 3% in 2006, reached 8% in 2008, was maintained at around 5%, then in 2017 reached 0,4%. The ratio of public debt over GDP was 38% in 2006, 23% in 2010, 33% in 2015, and 45% in 2017.

In Argentina, after the 2002 economic crisis with the president (of the Radical party) De la Rúa, the Peronist party won the following presidential elections with Nestor Kirchner -who governed from 2003 to 2007- and his wife Cristina Kirchner -who governed from 2007 to 2015-. Argentina had no energy rents; the only solution to get the resources to increase public expenditure was to raise export taxes to rural producers. They had been reduced at 5-10% in the 1990s; after 2002, they were raised at 20%; Nestor increased them at around 25% and Cristina at around 35% in 2008; this decision led to a deep conflict with the agro-exporters. The inflation rate remained at 10% with Nestor, and reached 20,5% with Cristina; the ratio of public debt over GDP was 150% in 2002, reached 60% in 2005 and remained at 40/5% in the 2010s. Kirchner's Argentine political performances have been good (2/2) (FH 2019). Argentine economic performances have been more consistent with Nestor Kirchner, whose export-led economic policies were defined *neo-desarrollistas*, coupled to moderate social policies and neo-corporatist relations with interest groups. Cristina returned to orthodox populism, with radical social policies and plebiscitarian relations with interest groups; Central Bank's independence was weakened, and oil company YPF was re-nationalized in 2012 (Grugel and Riggiozzi, 2007, Levitsky and Murillo, 2008, Wylde 2011, 2016, Lupu 2016). In October 2019, Fernandez of the Peronist party became the new president. He raised again taxes to agro-exporters and increased public expenditure, but in the first months of his mandate, he implemented a moderate left economic policy, like Nestor Kirchner.

The cases of Morales, Correa, Nestor and Cristina Kirchner show that Latin American populists have learned something, as the main economic indicators (like inflation rate) remained under control, even if there has been an increase of public expenditure and budget deficit (Edwards, 2019). This moderate populism has not had negative effects on politics; Argentina is still a liberal democracy. Bolivia and Ecuador remained hybrid re-



gimes, because Correa and Morales went into exile and there was not any authoritarian transition; however, both countries had had similar political performances even before *etno-populism*. Instead, Venezuela's radical populism has had devastating effects on the economy, and Venezuela became a hybrid regime with Chavez and an authoritarian one with Maduro (Mazzuca, 2013).

## Conclusions on populism and plebiscitarianism

The four cases of Latin American mainstream populism (Peron in Argentina, Allende in Chile, Garcia in Peru, and Chávez/Maduro in Venezuela) show these features. First, populist economic policies bring to the expansion of public expenditure, money supply and redistributive policies, then to partial socialism with some targeted nationalizations, and to trade and financial protectionism. Second, populist leaders make plebiscitary appeals to the lower sectors of the population, leading to a deep conflict with the high/middle classes. Third, the economic outcome is a devastating economic crisis. Fourth, the political effect of populism were hybrid regimes (with Peron) in the Cold War, and an authoritarian one after 1989 in Venezuela (with Maduro). Fifth, there was an increase of violent conflict in the society, with: the extreme right vs (communist) extreme left cleavage before 1989 in Chile, Argentina and Uruguay; the diffusion of *estallidos sociales* in Peru in 1989-90 after Garcia's economic chaos (Fossati, 1997); the 2010s popular protests against Maduro in Venezuela.

How did mainstream populist experiments end? Peron's and Allende's governments finished with military *golpes*, supported by the USA, that applied the diplomacy of the "lesser evil"; when there was the danger of a communism, *real-politik* pushed the USA to support military *golpes* (Fossati, 2017). Garcia's populism ended thanks to 1989 and to the presidential elections of 1990. The current economic and political conflict in Venezuela has not been resolved. After Chavez' death in 2013, there were many protests, which were repressed by Maduro; Venezuela became a case of competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky and Loxton 2018). The outcome of post-1989 mainstream populism is a *post-communist* authoritarian regime. The paradox is that Venezuela never had a communist regime in the past, like Cuba, but the economic policies and the political performances of these two regimes are similar right now (FH, 2019), with limits to both economic and political freedoms (Fossati 2017). The USA and the European governments have abandoned *real-politik*, and only reacted with (soft) diplomatic pressure, that has not produced relevant outcomes.

The other cases of populism, with Correa in Ecuador, Morales in Bolivia, Cristina (but not Nestor) Kirchner -whose political experience, even if public expenditure increased, was closer to neo-corporatism (Wylde, 2011)- in Argentina, showed that the main economic indicators (especially inflation rate) have remained under control. Even if there was an increase of public expenditure and budget deficits, the effects of populism on the economy were not devastating. Thus, if populist presidents implement moderate economic policies, the effects on politics are not negative. For example, Correa and Morales did not push their countries towards authoritarianism, like Chavez and Maduro in Venezuela; thus, Ecuador and Bolivia are still hybrid regimes. Argentinian Peronists were defeated in 2015 by Macri, and then they won again with Fernandez in 2019; thus, democracy resisted. In sum, Latin American populism usually leads to either illiberal democracies or hybrid regimes, because of: plebiscitarianism and low powers of parties or interest groups; high personalization and low institutionalization of politics; limits to the freedom of the media and to the access to internet. However, negative consequen-

ces in politics have also been produced by non-populist governments in Latin America. The devastating effects of populism on democracy have been produced only by leftist Manichean macro-economic populism, that has been denied by most of political scientists (Roberts, 1995; Weyland, 2001). If public expenditure is strongly expanded, together with partial socialism, the outcome is a deep economic crisis with high inflation rates, and a threat to democracy. Instead, if populist presidents turn moderate when they govern, the outcome is a form of (softened) “partial” populism. At the same time, partial populism did not bring to authoritarian regimes, instead of orthodox populism, with Chavez and Maduro in Venezuela. Thus, Argentina has always remained a democracy, while Bolivia and Ecuador are still “hybrid regimes”, even if political conflict has increased with two illiberal presidents like Correa and Morales.

Here is a typology, that summarizes the different cases of plebiscitarianism:

<i>Ideology</i>	<i>Political culture</i>	
	<b>Right</b>	<b>Left</b>
Radical	Xenophobic Plebiscitarianism	Orthodox Populism
Moderate	Conservative or Liberal Plebiscitarianism	Partial Populism

In *orthodox* (macro-economic) *populism*, there is both plebiscitarianism and the increase of the public expenditure and of the inflation rate (with Peron, Allende, Garcia, Chavez and Maduro). In *partial populism*, there is plebiscitarianism, but the increase of the public expenditure and of the inflation rate remains under control, and macro-economic populism is softened (with **Syriza** in Greece, **Movimento 5 Stelle** in Italy, Correa, Morales, and Cristina Kirchner). The political cultures of the right are not strictly populist, because there is not the increase of public expenditure, but there is still plebiscitarianism: the *moderate Conservative* (Trump and Berlusconi), the *moderate Liberal* (Menem and Fujimori), and the *radical Xenophobic* (Salvini’s Lega in Italy and Orban in Hungary).

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