Current supply and demand for neopopulism in Latin America

Gabriela de Oliveira Piquet Carneiro

University of São Paulo, Brasil

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The emergence of neopopulism in several countries in Latin America has been described by political science literature as the success of a political strategy in which a leader, generally bearing a strong personality and charismatic appeal, seeks popular support in an almost direct form, and overshadows political parties, the external mechanisms of control which define a democratic regime (Roberts 1996, 2003, 2006, Weyland 1999a, 1999b, 2001, Knight 1998, Coniff 1999). This article adopts this definition of the concept and argues that the success of this strategy can be analyzed as a relation between supply and demand for populism. The supply refers to the political process which allows leaders to make use of features such as charisma and anti-political and polarizing speech to obtain the support of the public based on their non-programmatic and personal qualities. The demand is defined as the presence of certain preferences within the public, which increase the chance of success of the neopopulist strategy adopted by the leaders. Amidst that relationship, we can place fragile intermediate institutions, mainly the political parties, which would limit themselves to working as vehicles centered on the figure of the leader in order to allow his success among voters. Before going any deeper into the arguments regarding the relationship between supply and demand for neopopulism, the next item will discuss the concept of populism in its more contemporary form.

**Keywords:** policy; democracy; Latin America; Brazil

1. **Contemporary interpretations of neopopulism** (1990–2000)

Basically, there are two competing contemporary analytical versions regarding the reappearance of populism: one economic and the other political.

The economic version defines populism strictly in terms of its economic policy and agenda, associating it with the expansion of the fiscal deficit and wide redistributive measures that are designed to satisfy latent demands from people with lower income and less education, even if that means compromising the macroeconomic stability, that is, increasing public debt and inflation (Sachs 1990, Dornbusch and Edwards 1991, Kaufman and Stallings 1991). They are governments which expand social expenses and infrastructure investment in order to accelerate growth and income distribution in exchange for public support.

On the other hand, the political version focuses on the deinstitutionalization of authority or the fragility of the mediating institutions of the political conflict, fundamentally the parties. It is the paternalistic relationship between charismatic
leaders and the heterogeneous public\footnote{3} of followers, which is intrinsic to political populism (Conniff 1999, Weyland 1999a, 2001, Roberts 2003).

From the political point of view, populism is defined as a style of making politics (Conniff 1999, Legler 2006) or, in a more systematic fashion, it is a political strategy (Weyland 1999a, 2001, Roberts 2006) in which a magnetic and charismatic leadership exerts its power based on direct non-institutionalized support from followers, the majority unorganized, directly subordinated to the wishes of their leader.

The phenomenon establishes itself in a political relationship in which two central elements are present: a ‘charismatic’ leadership and an audience of followers, generally, precariously organized, which will be mobilized during the elections or at moments of conflict with the opposition.

From the economic point of view, the political dimension of neopopulism, such as political strategies of leaderships, personality, charisma, a type of polarizing and anti-political speech, as well as the political mobilization of followers from subordinate sectors, are not even taken into account to define the phenomenon. In this approach, the political dimension is treated as an independent variable which explains the occurrence of ‘output’: an increase in the public spending by some governments.

The critical point of ‘economic populism’, according to the political standpoint, primarily regards its tendency towards fiscal indiscipline resulting from exaggerated expenditures on redistributive policies. In these terms, the empirical analysis becomes confusing since it puts under the same label leaders who are quite different from one another, such as Juan Peron, Alan Garcia, the conservative Jose Sarney and the socialist Salvador Allende. Additionally, it is not clear what the nature of the economic irresponsibility is – whether it stems from a deliberate economic strategy, or results from legislative disagreement on increasing public taxation, or even whether it is generated by sheer administrative incompetence during tax collection (Weyland 2001). Thirdly, by focusing only on the economic outputs, the definition does not embody two fundamental characteristics of populism which directly relate to politics: the strategy to gain power and the relationship between the leader and the public.

Consequently, the political definition is more adequate for authors of the new generation who adopt a political perspective, since it defines the phenomenon with more accuracy, placing it in the sphere of domination – social mobilization, electoral competitiveness and the exercising of power – and not in the sphere of the economic policy. Distributive policies, under this perspective, are now seen as just an instrument of the political strategy to reach the populist leader’s ultimate purpose: winning elections and exercising power. The populist leader turns the State into his equity and, by means of paternalistic manipulation, makes use of public resources in wide redistributive measures to repair poverty and ensure the loyalty of the population. Economic policies, therefore, can be analyzed as strategy and not as the central element defining the concept of populism. As Roberts (2006, p. 6) wrote,

If populism is understood in political terms, then the economic policies adopted by populist figures are a subject of empirical investigation rather than definitional fiat. Specific policies or policy making patterns (…) can be understood as economic instruments that belong to the populist ‘tool kit’ for mobilizing and securing popular support.
It is worth mentioning that Francisco Weffort is one of the authors who most closely approached the political view when emphasizing, in his definition, the type of relationship (direct) between leaders and the public. Nevertheless, the author himself, in an article published in Folha de São Paulo (2003), does not admit the possibility of the return of populism even in countries where it may seem to be going back to the ‘classic moulds’ of the nationalistic populism, such as Venezuela, since the nationalistic structure of social policies would no longer be able to finance such uncontrolled public spending. To Weffort (2003), populism is a bygone concept, since it is conditioned by the adoption of economic measures from the state that are textbook interventionist, and not only by political traits. From that standpoint, the nationalist wave of the 30s could no longer be seen and compared to recent nationalist events, even when States are incapable of paying the high cost of nationalization policies.

Weffort, in spite of being one of the pioneers in the analysis of Brazilian and Latin American political populism, limits its occurrence to the economic nationalist structure of populism during the 30s, following the same logic as the economic analysis of the phenomenon. Undoubtedly, this is a vision that hinders the accomplishment of an empirical analysis that associates other possible parallel factors with the occurrence of contemporary populism.

In short, the economic version of populism is centered on the government’s economic strategies – macroeconomic policies that generate inflation, fiscal deficit and crises of credibility in financial markets. According to this view, populist leaders would be those who did not adopt the neoliberal policies associated with the Washington Consensus – as Raul Alfonsin (1983–1989) and Jose Sarney (1985–1990) did – putting them in the same analytical category of classic populist leaders with very distinct characteristics – such as Juan Peron, Cardenas, Vargas and Haya de la Torre. From the economic standpoint, therefore, populism is no longer a useful concept, since it contrasts with the ‘pro-market’ orientation of governments from Latin American countries where economic reforms of such nature have taken place.

The political version, on the other hand, by defining populism as a political strategy of a charismatic leader, who aims at establishing a quasi-direct relationship with the population, disdaining institutional mediation, labels the above-mentioned classic populist leadership as well as that leadership that adopted liberal economic reforms during their terms, such as Menem, Collor, Fujimori and Carlos Andres Perez, exemplifying, thus, the coexistence of two apparently adverse phenomena: populism and neoliberalism. Leaders as recent as Hugo Chavez, Evo Morales and Rafael Correa are not only considered charismatic leaders who painted themselves as candidates of the people, of the poor and oppressed, but also express their aversion to North American neoliberalism and capitalism by means of nationalist and nationalization measures, as did the old populist leaders in Latin America.

In its political version, the fragility of the party system is one of the chief factors associated with the occurrence of neopopulism (Roberts 1996, Weyland 1999a, 1999b, Navia 2003). Roberts and Weyland, for example, claim that, wherever the political party institutions are weak, populism is a perpetual trend, fundamentally in periods marked by crisis or deep social transformation in the new democracies. In these contexts, parties are considered unable to structure the political behavior of the voter’s preference.
Populism may be, thus, described as an electorally viable strategy whenever certain conditions prevail in the party system. A weak electoral system, high volatility and the lack of social roots within the parties, among other institutional factors, are read by political leaders as signs of opportunity to establish direct bonds with the voters, to offer an anti-establishment image, to engage with charismatic appeals, and present poverty relief proposals at the core of their political discourse.

This article adopts the political concept of neopopulism, which dispenses with any definition regarding its economic content and which will not condition itself to a specific development phase, as claimed by some analysts of populism from the 30s to the 70s (Germani 1973, Germani et al. 1977). In that sense, Roberts (1996, p. 4) states:

This conceptualization presumes that populist leaders tend to design economic policies to build or sustain political support by providing material benefits to subaltern groups. The specifics of macroeconomic policy are variable; however, they may be market or state oriented, open or closed to international competition, fiscally lax or disciplined, and progressive or regressive in their overall distributive effect. This flexibility enables the populist concept to travel across different development strategies, recognizing that there exist multiple and diverse economic instruments for the cultivation of lower-class support.

Besides that, the political concept frees us from the difficult task of tracing historic continuity between populist leaderships that took place and take place in completely different contexts (Weyland 2001). In the post-war, leaders such as Peron, Cardenas and Vargas acted in an environment of economic development that no longer exists. On the other hand, new administrations identified with populism, such as Menem, Fujimori, Collor de Melo, Rafael Correa, Hugo Chavez, Evo Morales, exercised and still exercise their power within the context of limited spending set by the Washington Consensus, though the latter two are clearly trying to do away with the rules imposed by the market. And from the point of view of the more general explanatory schemes about political support from the public to the populist leaders, if before the focus was on the great structural schemes – such as the urbanization process, the fall of the oligarchy and the substitution of imports – at present the functions of the representative institutions are in focus – their capacity for forming preferences and controlling the mediation between the leadership and the public.

2. Supply and demand in the production of populism

In its political version, populism seems to flourish with an unavoidable dynamic whenever the party system is poorly institutionalized. This type of approach focuses overall on the determiners of the ‘supply for populism’ that is, in the political strategy adopted by the leadership aiming at establishing a direct link with the majority of the population. Roberts (2003, 2006) and Weyland (1999a), for example, have been investigating not only the emergence of neopopulism as a consequence of the weakness of the party system, but also the role that the neopopulist leaderships, strategically, play in the disorganization of the system. That strategy involves a certain ‘style of making politics’ based on the charisma of the leader and a type of speech characterized as anti-political and polarizing (Canovan 1999, Weyland 1999a, Roberts 2003, Legler 2006, Gilbert 2007).
Charisma is a central characteristic of the populist strategy. A good contemporary description of the characteristics of a charismatic leader is given by Connif (1999, p. 05), according to whom:

[...] populists exhibited charisma — that is, special personal qualities and talents that, in the eyes of their followers, empowered them to defend the interests of the masses and uphold national dignity [...] They exhibited such diverse traits as great intellect, empathy for downtrodden, charity, clairvoyance, strength of character, moral rectitude, stamina and combativeness, the power to build, or saintliness. Qualities such as these set the populists apart from and above the ranks of common politicians.

Although not all populist leaders are capable of expressing such extraordinary characteristics, all of them certainly have a share of the qualities considered exceptional, or, at least, the most important of them, to obtain and mobilize the support of their clientele: the ability to present oneself as the voice of the least favored, of the destitute, of the ‘shirtless’ and of the workers. This charisma expresses itself, therefore, in the capacity of making the population identify itself with the image of the leader, in a direct way, personally, and without the mediation of political organizations, and not taking into account other aspects that, in consolidated democracies, act in the electoral process, such as political stance or differences in policy of the candidates. In this sense, populists are capable of introducing themselves as ‘spokesman of the people’, in the words of Gilbert (2007, p. 29), ‘(…) otherwise, the populist leader would be nothing more than a popular leader’. Thus charisma may be considered a strategic resource adopted by certain political leaders.

Another important characteristic of the populist strategy is to appropriate discourse, usually qualified as anti-political, that is, as a frontal attack on the ‘political class’ as a whole, which is represented as helplessly corrupt and incapable of catering to the interests of the population (Canovan 1999, Weyland 1999a, Roberts 2003, Legler 2006).

In the engineering of the populist mobilization, the political adversaries are to be converted into enemies, into ‘forces’ that the people need to be protected from. The first candidates to take on such roles were the ‘rural oligarchies’, whom the modernizing populist leaderships of the first half of the twentieth century aimed their fire against. For the neopopulists, the role of main nemesis is taken by two diffuse objects: the ‘political class’ and the ‘elites’. The first group encompasses the representatives in the legislative, the judiciary power and the state bureaucracy. As they are painted as corrupt and hungry for power, they need to have their powers limited somehow, or submitted to an executive power (the latter being a real representative of the people’s will for a change) with extraordinary powers (Weyland 1999a, p. 387). The second group, the ‘elites’, has a generally fluid and variable definition. The advantage, from the standpoint of the populist leaders, of not offering a clear definition of the ‘enemies’ and grouping them under generic labels is that the government’s actions against the target of the attacks may be played according to political conjuncture. In a given moment, the enemy of choice can be a private communication company, in the next, the very same company may be needed as an ally in a campaign against multinational companies in some sector where the directive core may have some interest at stake.
The neopopulist discourse is, therefore, strongly anti-establishment and directed against the political and social institutions that support the representative democracy, including in that group the parties, unions and other organizations in the civil society. We are not, thus, before a merely ordinary discourse that blames the adversary for some wrongdoings, or even states the criticism that they would be unable to execute a certain political program, as happens in any democratic dispute. We are before initiatives organized by political leaderships that aim at establishing direct links with the public (Legler 2006, p. 7). Once populist leaders look for legitimizing the power based on their own self, they usually voice their opposition against any political instance that may limit their power, fundamentally the political parties. As Weyland states (1999a, p. 386):

(...) After taking office populists have a distant, if not adversarial, relationship to parties. Besides weakening opposition parties, they often refuse to join and strengthen the organizations that helped them win power and support their government.

Besides being anti-political, the speech of the populists is also markedly polarizing, anti-plural and constantly intolerant, as Legler (2006), Roberts (2006) and Gilbert (2007) have perceived, to the measure that they preach an extreme division in society, in which the ‘us’ (‘us’ commonly being the people, the poor, the ‘shirtless’) is against ‘them’ (the dominant elite, the wealthy, the bourgeois, the oligarchy, the ‘maharajahs’).

An important distinction must be made at this point regarding the polarizing speech of the socialist left-wingers. The current generation of neopopulist leaders are pragmatic users of ideologies and even of social movements. The speech of classes, for instance, almost never shows, in a clearly and articulated manner, in the political manifestations of these leaders. Sided by other divisions that may, by chance, prevail in their societies — such as language, ethnicity, or religion — the socio-economic divisions undergo a series of semantic transformations, aiming at the construction of a unified and comprehensive social identity, which will be used by the leaders in their political manifestations.

For Legler (2006, p. 8), the polarizing nature of populism, supported by social cleavages, helps aggravate political conflict, since it obliges the citizen to state fidelity to one side: ‘either for the populist leader and his movement, or against. This can also feed perceptions of a zero-sum conflict, where one side’s gains are the other side’s losses’.

Once the social identities are redefined and the fidelity to the populist leader is established, a polarizing dynamic is set forth, which increases the power of the leadership; at the same time the leader promotes the intensification of the conflict between the polarized groups.

Under this view, which privileges a certain individual style of politics, political parties are only useful when they help disseminate the image of the leader, ‘redeemer’ of the oppressed. In this case, parties created by past populist leaders were, necessarily, under their personal domain. Without that function, political parties are organizations that go against the aspirations of charismatic leaders, which have, in their turn, their legitimacy based on personal qualities. In the new Latin American democracies, although the new political environment is teeming with parties that could block their way, populist leaders found the communicative means at their
disposal, mainly through television, and public opinion surveys have captured the public demand and mobilized voters as efficiently as—if not more than—the political parties, especially in environments where the public is ever more suspicious of such parties and other interest groups. In this new cycle, it is the new political resources of communication that establish a quasi-direct relationship between the neopopulist leaderships and the voters, making the role of the parties less essential in the communication between them and the population. With the dissemination of the means of communication and with the development of opinion polls, candidates and political leaders have continuous and more accurate access to the preferences and interests of the different social divisions, not necessarily organized ones. At present, as stated by Raquel Meneguello (1998, p. 26),

the process of building political preferences starts to look for parameters in a wide and homogeneous field of information, through which the perception of public themes and issues take place, and no longer are they defined based on opinion lines structured over cleavages or specifically organized interests, traditionally established by political party organizations.

The dissemination of the political information in a political environment endowed with incipient political organizations—incapable of organizing the preferences of the population—has turned the Latin American political scenario into the ideal environment for the flourishing of new populist leaderships. The use of political parties may merely take an instrumental role, to win over the presidency, but, once in power, populist presidents will not develop the parties, or else will aim at weakening them wherever they are stronger.

It is at this point that the connection between the supply and demand for neopopulist leaders takes place. From the point of view of public opinion, the political parties are not institutionalized in society, as many polls regarding public trust in political parties show (Power and Jamison 2005, Seligson 2007, Moises and Carneiro 2008). Thus, the populist leaders need the ratification of the public regarding their leadership—a vote of confidence in their person, based on their singular qualities and not on organizational affiliation, institutional or programmatic position. Public support becomes, thus, one of the central elements for the success of the neopopulist strategy.

In the next topic, I make an empirical analysis focused on the other side of the equation, that is, on the side of the ‘demand for populism’. I present, next, a discussion about the individual determiners for support of neopopulist leaderships, an aspect, so far, rarely explored by the literature on populism in Latin America. By shifting the focus of the investigation into the phenomenon to the individual level, I do not intend to abandon the perspective that the behavior of the voters is framed by institutions which produce incentives that are rationally decoded by those voters. Nevertheless, this dislocation at the level of analysis brings about new theoretical problems—such as the problem of legitimacy—and methodology, as we will see in the following item.

3. The demand for populism: the problem of political legitimacy
Attempts to use a model applicable to the individual determiners of public support in the study of populism in Latin America are still few. In that regard, it is worth
highlighting the recent article by Seligson (2007) in which an empirical study is carried out on the role of the ideological identity of the public across four dimensions of political support: (a) the presidential choice, (b) legitimacy of the democratic regime, (c) attitudes of political tolerance and (d) the preference for strong leaderships. The study is based on 2006’s ‘Americas Barometer’ (LAPOP).

Among the most important results, the author concluded that although there is a dissemination of left-wing governments in Latin America, the voters in the region are a bit further to the right than in other regions of the world. Voters identified with the left tend to give less support to the democratic regime, are less tolerant and prefer stronger leaders. Regarding presidential choice, the role of ideology will vary from one Latin American country to the other, but it is not discarded as a factor of choice. Another interesting piece of information indicates that there is a low level of trust in the institutions of liberal democracy, especially of the parties, but when the interviewees were asked whether democracy could exist without any political parties (what Seligson calls the index of populist feeling), only a minority of 44% (sic) believes that to be true. At the end of the article, Seligson presents a scale of populism based on five items from the questionnaire and relates that to education, economic status and age. The data would have been very interesting if the author had detailed how the populism scale was conceived, but unfortunately the article failed to supply that information. The author simply concluded that this ‘populist feeling’ is higher among the younger, the poorer and less literate individuals.

Besides Seligson (2007), the studies by Norris (1999) and Moises and Carneiro (2008) on support of democracy argue that the trend of decreasing support for mediating institutions, such as the Congress and the parties, is worrisome. The erosion of such institutions’ legitimacy may lead to, under Norris’s view, the occurrence of coups, the aggravation of ethnic conflicts or the victory of extremist parties (Norris 1999, p. 2). Moises and Carneiro’s (2008, p. 39) analysis of the data from Latin Barometer shows that the mediation of typically democratic institutions is still of little value and elements of the Latin American political tradition, such as populism, are still present in the public.

Seligson’s study refers, therefore, to the problem of legitimacy as formulated by Easton (1965), and updated in recent literature, on the legitimacy of political systems by Norris (1999), Gunther and Monteiro (2003) and Moises (2005). As highlighted, Seligson offers an attempt at explaining the occurrence of neopopulism in Latin America based on concepts that are at the core of the literature regarding political support and the legitimacy of regimes.

Since the publication of *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* in 1965, there have been several empirical studies on the problem of political legitimacy in the democracies that propose that one of the crucial aspects of the ‘quality’ and of the consolidation of the democratic regime is the building of stable attitudinal support of the regime among its citizens.

In his scheme on the proper functioning of political systems, the dynamics of which are observed in terms of inputs and outputs, Easton highlights the public support (input) oriented to the three dimensions of the political system: the political community, the government and the regime. The author classifies the nature of that support into two categories: specific support and diffuse support. Specific support refers to public satisfaction with the performance of the government and political leaders, and diffuse support refers to the deepest orientations related to the system,
the ‘mind set’ or a set of attitudes and values about the political system as a whole, regardless of any government-specific performance. In that sense, the oriented support of the political community is that which translates its sentiment of identification among the members of the system, as being part of a greater whole, and that they are capable of contributing, peacefully, with collective efforts to the execution of demands. Moreover, it deals with the feelings of the citizen towards the State-nation, or the territorial borders that serve as a parameter for the building of its collective identity. Support for the regime, in turn, regards the legitimacy given to the rules of the game, to the belief of the citizens that democratic politics and the institutions of the representative democracy constitute the most appropriate structure of government, regardless of the performance of specific governments and leaderships.

Based on Easton’s scheme, Norris (1999) and Dalton (1999) deepen the discussion regarding the multiple dimensions of the concept of legitimacy and elaborate five aspects of political orientation that would correspond to five analytical levels of legitimacy, enabling them to be evaluated in terms of either specific or diffuse support. Table 1 classifies the objects related to political support according to two dimensions: the type of support and the level at which the analysis is developed.

A discussion regarding the validity/reliability of that analytical breakdown has been the target, specially, of studies by Konberg and Clark (1992), Gunther and Monteiro (2003), Dalton (2004), Seligson et al. (2006) and Meneguello (2007). Although this is an important point, it is not dealt with in this article, since its complexity would deserve an empirical topic of its own if we were to try to reproduce the problems surrounding the validity of each measure. For the time being, it is fitting to highlight that there is wide acknowledgement of the importance of dividing legitimacy into distinct analytical levels, once studies indicate that the dimensions of support are empirically distinguishable, as shown in Konberg and Clark (1992, cited in Seligson et al. 2006, pp. 6–7).

The model I test over the empirical determiners of support for populist leaders explores the relationship between the support of presidents, legitimacy of political

Table 1. Levels of analysis of political legitimacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Diffuse support</th>
<th>Specific support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Political community</td>
<td>National pride</td>
<td>Best nation to live in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Principles of the</td>
<td>Central values of democracy</td>
<td>Democracy is the best way of government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regime</td>
<td>Rules for participation and</td>
<td>Evaluation of rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>political rights</td>
<td>Satisfaction with democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Performance</td>
<td>Institutional expectations</td>
<td>Judgment of performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support of parties</td>
<td>Trust in the institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expectations of results</td>
<td>Trust in the party system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Institutions</td>
<td>Sentiment related to the political leaders</td>
<td>Evaluation of politicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and identification with parties</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: See figure 1.2 in Norris (1999, p. 10) and table 3.1 in Dalton (1999, p. 58).
institutions and the support of ‘individuals’ from the public. Furthermore, I analyze how the incentives generated by public policies are perceived and assessed by the public and converted, in turn, into political support for leaders. This connection between the micro level of individual behavior and the macro performance of the political system has been present in many papers since Sartori (1968, 1972), who established a difference between strong and weak electoral and party systems. A strong party system is that which maximizes structural consolidation, the understanding of this being based on the votes oriented towards the party and not towards the political individual. A weak party system, in turn, would be that in which the prevalence of the candidate overshadows the party, that in which there is the predominance of personality. Mainwaring and Torcal (2005, p. 254) critically discuss the definition of an institutionalized party system presented by Sartori and propose that the institutionalization refers to a process by which a practice or organization becomes well established and widely known, if not universally accepted (...) Thus an institutionalized party system is that in which the players develop expectations and behaviors, on the premise that the contours and fundamental rules of the competition and of party behavior will prevail in the foreseeable future.

Given that populism in its political definition, as presented and discussed at the beginning of this article, is a strategy that has higher probabilities of succeeding in less institutionalized environments, I verify at what point poor party institutionalization, based on two attitudinal variables related to institutionalization, party legitimacy and personality (as an attribute of the electorate), affects political support for presidents.

4. Hypotheses
The yardstick for party legitimacy I use is public trust in parties (measured from opinion polls with voters) and the measure of personal trust is based on the question of public support for the concept that a strong leader may bend the rules in order to solve a nation’s problem.

The hypotheses tested by public support for neopopulist leaders relate the two previously discussed dimensions of legitimacy and personal trust, and also explore the importance of the ‘president’s performance’ as a factor attracting specific clienteles among the voters by such leaders.

Table 2 conceptually sums up the level of analysis and the modalities of support that sustain the hypotheses regarding the determiners of ‘demand for populism’ within the public.

For the purpose of empirical discussion, the selected variables in the opinion poll *Latin America Pulse* concerning the evaluation of objects in the political system are located on the fourth and on the fifth levels of analysis related to specific and diffuse support directed at institutions and authorities, as indicated in Table 2.

Based on those dimensions, it was possible to formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: the approval of neopopulist leaders is higher among those who do not trust political parties.
Hypothesis 2: the approval of neopopulist leaders is higher among those who prefer strong leaders who present themselves as capable of overcoming the institutional status quo.

Hypothesis 3: the approval of neopopulist leaders is higher among those who prioritize the results of the social policies.

5. The determiners of support for neopopulist presidents

This item assesses the determiners of the public support for six Latin American presidents: Evo Morales, Rafael Correa, Hugo Chavez, Nestor Kirchner, Lula and Calderon. It is verified by what measure the support is conditioned by the following factors: (1) low institutionalization of the party system – measured by the trust in the political parties; (2) political ‘personal trust’ – measured by support for strong leaders and (3) the president’s performance – measured by satisfaction with the policies in seven social areas. Those three factors were measured based on the perception of the public, as justified in section 4.

The data used in this analysis are originally from research in Latin American Pulse carried out by IPSOS in July, 2007, in the six countries under scrutiny (Argentina \(n = 1200\); Brazil \(n = 1000\); Bolivia \(n = 601\); Ecuador \(n = 1078\); Mexico \(n = 826\); Venezuela \(n = 1000\)). The probabilistic sampling by quota is representative of the population aged 16 and above, in the respective countries. In spite of the analytical limitations comparing only six Latin American countries, the sample encompasses all cases covered by the previously mentioned research.

Figure 1 depicts the public approval levels of those presidents. Both the average and the indexes per country indicate that, indeed, the presidents have majority support, indicating a generalized optimism regarding the performance of such new leaderships in the year 2007. The approval for Rafael Correa is the highest (75%), followed by Nestor Kirchner (70.5%). Although some indicators show a decrease in the electoral support at the end of his term, his image was still positive enough for him to be, in the latest election, the principal canvasser for the former first lady and current president Cristina Kirchner. Hugo Chavez’s high level of approval also greatly contributed to presenting a majority that is optimistic about the performance of the presidents in the six countries where Latin America Pulse carried out the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Diffuse support</th>
<th>Specific support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Institutions</td>
<td>Support for parties: does not trust the parties or the Congress</td>
<td>Judgment of the government’s performance: satisfaction with policies that fight poverty, redistribution of income and ‘pork barrel’ measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and policies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of the leaders (dependent variable): approval of the performance of presidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Authority and</td>
<td>Sentiment related to political leaders: a strong leader may override rules in order to solve the problems of the nation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>legitimacy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What factors can be attributed to such presidential support? The two initial hypotheses of the study state that neopopulist presidents would have more support from a public which confers low institutionalization on the party system. Thus, such a public would be politically oriented towards the charismatic type – oriented towards strong political leaders, capable of overruling institutions to solve the problems of the country. The current presidents would personify such a preference for ‘innovative’ leadership, efficient in the fight against poverty and against the ‘corrupt’ institutions, implying the dissemination of popular approval for the figure of the president. Moreover, that public which approves the actions of neopopulist presidents would rely very little on the mediating institutions, fundamentally, the political parties.

But that would not be the only explanation. The support for such presidents may also be attributed to a second dimension related to the specific support – previously located in the theoretical chart of the dimensions of legitimacy – here represented by the satisfaction with the execution of public policies. The hypothesis related to this aspect of support foresees that the approval of neopopulist leaders is also conditioned by the execution of policies, mainly, oriented towards fighting poverty.

On that second hypothesis, Figure 2 shows which five problems are considered to be the biggest in the country. Violence and unemployment top the list of problems. In Venezuela, over 70% of the interviewees consider violence the worst problem in the country. In Argentina, violence also takes first place as the most severe problem with over 50% of the interviewees. Over 60% of Bolivians, in turn, highlight unemployment as the most serious problem. Unemployment is the second biggest problem to 44% of Argentinians and to 59% of Venezuelans.

The first impression than can be seen from these results is that policies directed at fighting violence and unemployment would be decisive for presidential support. But,
as we will see ahead, the policies which fight poverty are the ones that most influence that support.

In order to test both hypotheses—diffuse and specific support for the approval of president—individual regression logit models were made based on the 2007 Latin America Pulse research, which may be verified in Table 3. The data are recent enough to allow associating the perception of the public over the selected dimensions of populism with the neopopulist presidents currently in their terms, with the exception of Nestor Kirchner.

Regarding the first hypothesis of diffuse support, the low trust in political parties has statistical significance in Venezuela, Bolivia and Mexico. That means that the chance of approval for presidents from those countries is, more or less, twice as likely among those individuals who do not trust political parties. The case of Ecuador demands additional methodological awareness: the suspicion over parties reaches 90% of interviewees in the country in the year of the research (see Table A1 in the Appendix). That result indicates that there is no systemic trust in the political parties in that country, which is in accordance with what the hypothesis established, that the bigger the lack of trust in parties, the higher the probability that the public will manifest preference for neopopulists. The subjacent supposition is that this relationship happens both at systemic level and at individual level. That is, the hypothesis may be tested, supposedly, at both levels. Nevertheless, since the lack of trust in parties reaches 90% of the population, when we try to test the hypothesis at individual level there are not enough cases for the estimation of a model that has suspicion as an explanatory variable, although the effect of the suspicion is exactly the same as established by the hypothesis. For that reason, I opted to run a model with an explanatory variable and another model without it.

Regarding the second hypothesis of diffuse support, on the impact of personal trust in support, we find statistical significance in Brazil and Venezuela ($p < 0.001$).
Table 3. Multiple models (logit regression) of presidential approval, satisfaction with their performance in seven areas (specific support), support to parties and personal trust (diffuse support).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lula</th>
<th>Calderon</th>
<th>Kirchner</th>
<th>Morales</th>
<th>Chavez</th>
<th>Correa&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Fight against poverty</td>
<td>3.000 **</td>
<td>2.050 **</td>
<td>2.064 **</td>
<td>2.055 **</td>
<td>3.686 **</td>
<td>3.379 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Security policies</td>
<td>2.245</td>
<td>1.489</td>
<td>1.346</td>
<td>1.252</td>
<td>1.297</td>
<td>1.223</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Education policies</td>
<td>1.451</td>
<td>1.600 *</td>
<td>1.364</td>
<td>1.068</td>
<td>2.317 **</td>
<td>1.477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fight against inflation</td>
<td>2.975 **</td>
<td>1.164</td>
<td>1.625</td>
<td>1.701</td>
<td>0.533 *</td>
<td>1.842 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Health</td>
<td>1.156</td>
<td>1.629 *</td>
<td>1.455</td>
<td>1.678</td>
<td>2.141 **</td>
<td>1.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Foreign affairs</td>
<td>1.098</td>
<td>1.316</td>
<td>3.170 **</td>
<td>4.162 **</td>
<td>2.211 **</td>
<td>2.361 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not trust in traditional parties and politicians</td>
<td>0.753</td>
<td>2.119 **</td>
<td>1.033</td>
<td>2.314 **</td>
<td>1.953 **</td>
<td>0.809 _</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A strong leader needs to be above the laws to help the poor</td>
<td>2.094 **</td>
<td>0.867</td>
<td>1.226</td>
<td>1.457</td>
<td>2.264 **</td>
<td>1.421</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>790</th>
<th>596</th>
<th>859</th>
<th>459</th>
<th>852</th>
<th>968</th>
<th>973</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R2</td>
<td>0.1965</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>0.2067</td>
<td>0.2602</td>
<td>0.4196</td>
<td>0.2566</td>
<td>0.2566</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Source: IPSOS Latin America Pulse, June/July 2007.

Notes: *In the Ecuadorian case, we opted for running two models: the first contains the variable on trust in traditional parties and politicians. The second model OR(2) does not contain this variable, since the percentage related to those who DO NOT TRUST reaches 90% of the interviewees. That severely limits the capacity of prediction for the variable.
In both cases, the chance of approval of presidents Lula and Hugo Chavez is twice as likely among individuals who support the idea that a strong leader may act above the law. In Argentina, in opposition to what one could expect, what is at stake in presidential approval does not include the capacity for the leader to overshadow the institutions, nor the importance that individuals give to political parties. The approval of President Kirchner is higher among individuals who are satisfied with the policies that fight poverty, who back policies to reduce unemployment and who are satisfied with the image of the president abroad.

When it comes to the hypothesis of specific support, all models show that the issue of fighting poverty is a determining factor for the support of leaderships assessed by the public. Satisfaction with security policies, in contrast, is not related to support for the president in any group, although this problem is considered the most severe in almost all cases.

The hypothesis of this article established that neopopulist presidents should have, as a base, a public willing to support them because of individual attributes, such as a lack of trust in the political parties and the preference for a charismatic leadership. That is the type of diffuse support that confers the leader with a legitimacy of the populist kind. Therefore, the hypothesis stated, supply and demand should be both converging. Nevertheless, as we could observe in the synthesis of the results presented in Figure 3, there are neopopulist presidents whose support is not related to the expected type of legitimacy (Kirchner) and there are countries in which the public legitimizes a populist leadership and that, in spite of it, are not ruled by neopopulist presidents (Lula and Calderon).

If the demand presented a perfect association with the supply of leaders, as established by the main hypothesis of the article, all cases should be in the main diagonal, that is, Kirchner should be placed in cell n11 and Lula and Calderon in cell n22 of Figure 3. Thus, the question I leave for final considerations is: what other factors need to be taken into account in order to better understand the prevalence of the neopopulist strategy in all of the six cases used in the sample?

6. Final considerations

I presented a double explanation for the electoral success of neopopulism. In the first part, I tried to analytically frame populism – particularly, neopopulism – as a political strategy followed by certain leaders; afterwards, I presented a model of the problem of the legitimacy conferred to those leaders by the public. I called that ‘demand for populism’ and I described the leader’s strategy as the component of the supply. The supply of populism is determined by the political leadership, which rationally chooses a specific political strategy when engaging the electoral game,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPLY</th>
<th>Neopopulist</th>
<th>Non-populist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neopopulist</td>
<td>Chavez, Morales, Correa</td>
<td>Kirchner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-populist</td>
<td>Lula, Calderon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Relationship between supply of populist leaders and demand for neopopulism.
consisting of a communication style of its own and of a polarizing and antiestablishment speech that reaches the public supported by political organizations, which are easily recognized: they are hierarchical, centralized and almost exclusively dedicated to promoting the political project of their leaders.

Demand for populism is, in turn, determined by the confidence that people have in institutions and by the preference for charismatic leaders. Satisfaction with policies against poverty, as I mentioned before, is also important. The correlation I identified between those variables and the support for leaders remained significant even after controlling for variable education. In short, preference for populist leaders grows when a political system’s legitimacy is low.

The ‘demand curve’ for populism defines, as in economic models, how far the public is willing to go in order to have a populist leader in the government. The supply curve for populism, in turn, defines how much leaders are going to offer in return, according to the price paid by the electorate (the currency in this market is legitimacy). As in real markets, the balance will occur in the intersection of demand and supply curves. But some political markets are not in balance: the amount demanded is greater than the capacity to supply for it. From my point of view, the politic system is the external agent with the power to control this market so that demand for populism is not satisfied. More specifically, that role is played by the party system. A strong, distributed and highly legitimate party system restrains the choices of the relevant political agents. That means the adoption of the populist strategy becomes less likely in this context.

When comparing supply and demand, I verified a particularly interesting configuration: there is more demand for populism than supply of it in some countries, and there are countries where supply surpasses demand. I consider this one very important issue to be addressed. Let us see the meaning of each one of these asymmetries.

I will start the analysis with the hard core of the Latin American neopopulism, Chavez, Correa and Morales, everyone engaged in building institutionally innovative forms, designed with the purpose of maximizing plebiscitary mechanisms of power. The rise of these leaders was preceded (Chavez and Correa) or caused (Morales) by the destruction of the party systems of their respective countries. The traditional political parties were or became, therefore, agents with little or no influence on the structuring of the voter’s preference. Not surprisingly, we found an enormous similarity in the rhetoric of those politicians regarding the necessity of overthrowing institutions considered corrupt that used to exert a monopoly on representation.

In these three cases, there seems to be an ‘adjustment’ between supply and demand that has made the political dynamics quite favorable for the centralization of the power of their presidents.

From the demand point of view, Venezuela is the case that best fit this study’s hypothesis: the three support indicators of neopopulism that were used — low confidence in political parties, personal trust and satisfaction with policies against poverty — are converted into support for president Hugo Chavez. Additionally, from the supply point of view, Chavez is, obviously, the neopopulist leader who best represents the success of the neopopulist strategy. He was able to mobilize the support of the majority of the Venezuelan electorate to consecutively modify the Constitution and also their support for his initiative confronting independent communication media. With the excuse of fighting the corruption that hit
Venezuelan ‘partidocracy’ and promises of promoting social justice, he made his political projects prevail in the Constituent Assembly and obtained total control over virtually every State institution. The motion to modify 33 articles of the Venezuelan constitution, including, among others, the revocation of term limits, was not approved by popular referendum, but showed the importance of the public’s attitude over the government’s destiny. Before being reelected in 1998, President Hugo Chavez stated that the previous 40 years of Venezuelan democracy could not be considered democratic and called the regime which had been in force till then a pact of elites that should be eliminated.

Hugo Chavez’s electoral victory over his opponents, on 5 December 1998, was overwhelming: he received 56.2% of the valid votes. And, since that support came mainly from the lower income echelons and from certain radical middle-class sectors, the candidate started what he believes to be the re-founding of Venezuela. His speeches quickly reached a large part of sectors that were unsatisfied with the traditional politicians who were considered corrupt and inefficient. According to Roberts (2003, p. 36), in the Venezuelan case, ‘Chavez proved to be a master of the “politics of antipolitics”’.

In institutional terms, the traditional parties, mainly AD and COPEI, lost much of their strength after Chavez’s electoral victory. According to Amorim Neto (2002, p. 2), what occurred under Chavez’s presidency was ‘a complete institutional rupture, a definite breaking of the political game rules that were in force since 1958’. Just before the end of his first term, in 1999, Hugo Chavez dissolved Congress and called for a Constituent Assembly, managing to approve reform proposals through popular referendum. Because of the newly approved Constitution, new presidential and legislative elections took place on 30 July 2000. In the Executive level, after a year and a half of mandate, the results of those general elections further reinforced the effect of Hugo Chavez’s charismatic and polarizing forces, with a victory that reached 59.8% of the votes.

In Bolivia, from the demand point of view, support for president Evo Morales may be partially explained by the low level of confidence in political parties and by the satisfaction with policies against poverty. From the supply point of view, Evo Morales leaned on his ethnic heritage to obtain support from a population composed of a poor indigenous majority (approximately 70%). Morales was crowned Apu Mallku – the supreme Andean leader of the indigenous population – in January of 2006. To some analysts, deliberately using that symbolism to exert power is, undoubtedly, an attitude of populist nature, but, for Gilbert (2007), the characterization of his speech as anti-political has to be guarded, since he would not attack the whole political class as Chavez and Correa did in their speeches. Morales clearly rose as an outsider leader, and his engagement with pro-indigenous rights was often seen as anti-political and anti-institutional. But his great enemy, according to Gilbert, has always been neoliberalism and the free market policy.

According to Mayorga (2003, p. 103), up to the end of the 90s, the Bolivian party system showed signs of consolidation as a result of a combination between stability and exchange between the three traditional parties – the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR), the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) and the Nationalist Democratic Action (ADN) – and as a result of the emergency of new political forces – the Consciousness of the Fatherland (Condepa) and the Civic Solidarity Union (UCS). Condepa and UCS were essentially populist parties, which based
themselves on the personification of political representation, on patronage and on the promotion of new social identities and demands, especially associated with indigenous movements. They are organizations that can barely be defined by programmatic issues. They are parties that served as a platform for charismatic politicians, such as Carlos Palenque and Max Fernández, respectively. But the importance of Condepa and the UCS had grown dim by the end of the 90s, and they became marginal parties in 2002; a scenario that showed the power of new political movements, although it was still a party system in which the MNR played a central role (in 2002, Sanches de Lozada won the elections with 22.5% of the votes). In the elections of 2002, the New Republican Force (NFR), Movement toward Socialism (MAS) and the Indigenous Pachakuti Movement (MIP) took over Condepa’s electoral space (Mayorga 2003, p. 116). National results put Evo Morales (MAS) as runner-up, with 20.9% of the votes, and Manfred Villa (NFR) in third, with 20.9% of the votes. In the following elections, Morales was the winner and, since then, the Bolivian president has followed the path of previous neopopulists Chavez and Correa, having established a Constituent Assembly around six months after having become president, in January of 2006.

Demand for neopopulism in Ecuador demands a more careful look. The indicator of personal trust is not significant, neither is the confidence in political parties. But the latter, given its extreme characteristic (90% of the public does not trust political parties), makes the variable virtually impracticable for analysis, as a minimal percentage distribution is needed for both sides of the category (‘trust’ and ‘does not trust’) in order to calculate the regression equation. The fact is that, at a systemic level, there is practically no confidence in political parties in this country, but that also occurs at the individual level of the sample. That being said, it is left to say that supply is quite coincident with the systemic indicator of demand: without links to political parties (Alianza Pais did not launch candidates to the legislature, a successful maneuver which allowed the presidential election to be transformed into a Constituent plebiscite, as it will be later described) Rafael Correa launched himself as an anti-system candidate, and declared war against the system’s ‘corruptocracy’ and ‘partidocracia’. Externally, Correa follows the model set by Chavez and Morales, with recurrent demonstrations of hostility to the International Monetary Fund, to the USA, to the World Bank and to the president of Colombia Alvaro Uribe, the right-wing representative in the region. Another important element in his rhetoric is the appeal to the indigenous movements and identities, despite his lack of effective bonds both with indigenous movements and with their culture. During his campaign, he stated that his government would be ‘el gobierno de los indígenas’, and once elected, before taking office, he was given – while accompanied by Chavez and Morales – the indigenous staff of command in a ceremony that took place in the Andean village of Zumbahua, near Quito.

During his electoral campaign he promised that changes would come along with the establishment of a new constitution, which, in effect, happened. Soon after taking over the presidency, he dissolved the Congress, where he had no representatives of his own, and called a plebiscite to decide on the summoning of a Constituent Assembly, a proposal which was approved by popular referendum, with 81% of votes favorable in April 2007. The Assembly was gathered in November of the same year and, in July 2008, voted and ratified the final project of constitutional reform.
I move on to the three cases in which there is no expected adjustment between supply and demand: Argentina, Mexico and Brazil.

In Argentina’s case, there is more supply than demand on the part of the public. Low trust in parties and personal trust are not the determining factors for President Kirchner’s support, although the attitude regarding poverty-fighting policies is, indeed, an important factor. If these two dimensions, which are fundamental for the support of neopopulist leaders in the other countries studied, do not take on their expected role, why is it that the offer of neopopulism prevails in Argentina?

The answer may be in the type of political mobilization prevailing for decades in the country, a mobilization centered on the figure of Juan Peron and strongly anchored in the CGT and in the Peronista Party (former Partido Único de la Revolución and, currently, PJ) during the years in which Peron presided over the country. The Partido Justicialista is, perhaps, one of the most persistent and successful expressions of Latin American populism. In this case, it is the party that is populist, and not the leader himself, and it has structured the preference of the population for decades. Between 1989 and 2007, PJ was successful in four out of the five elections, being practically elevated to the position of hegemonic force in Argentinian politics, after the crisis that affected the government of the Union Cívica Radical. It is a party that managed to renew, for three generations, its leadership and even the content of its political discourse. Although modified and renewed, Justicialism maintained a strongly hierarchical, charismatic and centralizing structure, which served its new leaders well after the transition to democracy in the 80s.

The election of Nestor Kirchner by the PJ, after the failure of Duhalde in the elections of 1999, and his nomination as presidential candidate in 2003 definitely marked the tone of the Argentinean populist field and the return of the nationalist and statist speech which characterized PJ’s political actions throughout its history. Kirchner was capable of invigorating Justicialism and taking it back to power, competently maneuvering the party in order to eliminate the influence of rivals, such as Menem and Duhalde, thus obtaining personal control over the fragmented party machinery. During his term as president, he managed to reestablish political order and administer a reasonable economic recovery through measures that aligned him with the statistism professed by other neopopulists in the region: he decreed the non-payment of the external debt, openly challenging the FMI’s recommendations and jeopardizing the credibility of the country before international creditors; he re-nationalized some of the privatized companies, and managed to neutralize the social protests which were massing during De la Rua’s government (Roberts 2007, p. 16). His high popularity at the end of his term and the nearly total control over the Justicialist party paved the way for launching the candidacy of Cristina Kirchner in 2007.

Nestor Kirchner’s populist style during his ascension to the top of Justicialism and his strategies of mobilization and confrontation during his presidency are clear throughout his political track record. As governor of Santa Cruz, Kirchner (his first term started in 1991) introduced amendments in the provincial constitution aimed at dissolving term limits. In 1995, he was reelected governor and again in 1999, remaining in the job for 12 years. During his second term as governor, he started to politically drift away from Menem – who, at the time, was both the president of the country and director of the PJ – and organized his own movement in the Justicialist party. The Corriente Peronista, oriented further to the left, supported his candidacy
for president in 2003. Therefore, Argentina is a case which demonstrates that the candidate and the party converge regarding the interest in and the capacity for supplying policies of populist nature, beyond the dimensions of the demand.

In Mexico and in Brazil, in contrast to Argentina, the demand for populism is higher than the supply; however, in both countries, the last four elections did not elect populist candidates, even though the supply did exist in every one of them (C. Cardenas and L. Obrador in Mexico and Eneas Carneiro in Brazil). What makes the Brazilian case more interesting, at least for the analysis of institutional factors that may hinder neopopulism, is the fact that in Brazil 97% of the valid votes in the last presidential election were given to non-populist candidates, while in Mexico, Obrador, a neopopulist candidate, was defeated by Calderon by less than one percentage point. Moreover, in the 2007 sample, the public that supported Calderon did not trust political parties. This does not hold true for President Lula – low trust in parties is not significant enough to explain part of his support.

Since the very beginning of his career, Lula has been part of a clear party project. PT managed to establish itself as a modern left-wing party, socialist-oriented at first, and, later, ever more pragmatic, keeping an organic relationship with union and social movements. But PT has also managed to lure the middle class towards a project of, institutionally and democratically, increasing its power. Lula, in the five times he has run for president for the party, remained faithful to that collective project and refused to take shortcuts to power, which could have been eventually done through anti-political or polarizing speech. Being a charismatic politician, he chose not to use his personal strength, the trademark of his political communication. He has negotiated his governmental program since the beginning, remained committed to economic stability, and put together a comprehensive political coalition to support his government. As president, he has been pragmatic, open to negotiating and predictable; as party leader, he was in charge of a party that never had elective affinities for populism, and this consolidated a decentralized and institutionalized command structure (Singer 2009). None of these characteristics are dominant in the leaders and in the organizations classified as neopopulist.

What this commentary suggests is that wherever the supply for populism is greater than or coincides with the demand, its presence seems inevitable. And where there is demand, but the parties are non-populist political forces, they manage to slow down such demand.

One last remark: the poverty issue translates into support in all of the cases. Such an agenda, therefore, does not seem to be particular to neopopulist leaders. As long as it is decisive for the success of electoral campaigns and government support, it will certainly exist in any discourse, be it ‘liberal’ or ‘non-liberal’, populist or non-populist.

Notes
1. This article is a synthesis of my doctoral thesis: ‘A nova maioria: determinantes do apoio ao neopopulismo na América Latina’ [The new majority: determinants of the support to neopopulism in Latin America], defended and approved on 13 February 2009 at the USP Department of Political Science.
2. I use the term ‘neopopulism’ to differentiate the period depicted: post Washington Consensus.
3. From this point on, I substitute the expression ‘masses’ with ‘public’. According to Carlos de la Torre (2003), the expression ‘masses’, recurrent in both classic and contemporary
studies to refer to populist leaders’ followers, is linked to a notion that followers are disorganized and respond immediately to their leadership’s appeals and strategies. Those studies, however, privilege the leaders’ actions and they do not pay enough attention to the fact that the bond between leaders and followers also depends on responses, interpretations and meanings that the latter accredit to the leader’s actions. Thus, since this study intends to contribute a contrary position to that of the previous studies, I prefer to adopt a more neutral term, so that it is not inferred that these followers are necessarily disorganized. Therefore, I will use the term ‘public’, assuming that those agents are rational, more informed and autonomous than ‘the masses’ could possibly be.

4. Some of the most important groundbreaking studies about the relationship between political legitimacy and political system’s stability date back to the 60s, typified by the works of Lipset, Political man (1981), originally published in 1960, and of Easton, A systems analysis of political life (1965). In the first work, Lipset discusses the historical process according to which political legitimacy promotes democracy. It defines democracy as a political system designed in a way to have power alternation and to allow most of the population to influence the political decisions that conduct their government’s choices. That definition implies having a specific set of beliefs, such as considering that democratic institutions are legitimate, namely, that they are valuable themselves, and that they are considered correct and adequate. Without that condition, in which democratic values become consensual between the actors – thus affording passive power play – democracy may get chaotic. Hence the author’s concern with examining the patronizing nature of the middle and working class, as well as electoral tendencies in occidental democracies.

5. See, for example, the series of articles gathered by Norris (1999) in Critical citizens, a book edited by Nye et al. (1997) and also the article by Pharr et al. (2000) and one by Dalton (2004). Those studies, mostly focused on more ancient democracies, show a decrease in the citizen’s confidence in democratic institutions due to an increase in the number of critical citizens. Regarding the ‘third wave’ democracy, good examples are the book by Linz and Stepan (1996) and the article by Gunther and Monteiro (2003).

6. The choice of variables and the elaboration of the survey questions used to do the analysis are detailed in Table A1, in the Appendix.

7. See the results of the research called ‘Poliarquia’ (Polyarchy) in the article published in the Estado de Sao Paulo, dated 15 October 2007, Caderno Internacional, p. A10.

8. Juan Evo Morales Ayma is of Amerindian origin, of Aymara ethnicity, established since the pre-Columbian era in the south of Peru, in Bolivia and in Chile.

References


G. de Oliveira Piquet Carneiro


Appendix

Table A1. Percentage distribution of the variables used in the analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Bolivia</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
<th>Ecuador</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent variable (1)</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approves the president’s performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables of diffuse support (2)</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>90.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A strong leader needs to be above the law to help the poor*</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables of specific support (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fight poverty</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>68.8</td>
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<td>1200</td>
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<td>1000</td>
<td>1078</td>
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</table>

(1) Percentages of approval were taken from the following question: regarding the president (…) in general, you approve a lot, a little, disapprove a lot, a little or do not approve nor disapprove nor disapprove of the manner in which the president has performed? Percentage indicates the answer related to ‘approve a lot’ and ‘approve a little’.

(2) The percentages were elaborated from the interviewees who agreed with the following statements:

*Traditional parties and politicians are not reliable.

Sometimes, a strong leader needs to disrespect the law in order to help the poor.

(3) The percentages refer to the interviewees who answered they were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the results that the government has achieved in the above-mentioned areas.