

# POPULISM AS STRUCTURAL EFFECT OF POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA

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CONTENT: 1. Introduction. 2. Historical framework: understanding populism in Latin America. 3. Characteristics of classic populism. 4. Causes of classic populism. 5. Characteristics of neopopulism. 6. Causes of neopopulism. 7. Comparative analysis of classic populism and neopopulism. 8. Conclusions. 9. References.

## *1. Introduction*

The main objective of this paper is to explain the recurring emergence of populism in Latin American politics. After introducing the idea of recurrence, it examines why populism continues to be an attractive political strategy in the Latin American region. To answer this last question it is necessary to adopt a long-term historical view of Latin American politics, providing a coherent and comprehensive framework for understanding the causes, roots and historical background that have contributed to the rise and recurrence of populism.

The concept of populism is one that is often fraught with ambiguity and semantic diversity. Among journalists, politicians, consultants, and even among people who are not experts on the subject, populism can refer to a range of different phenomena, from left-wing politics to right-wing authoritarianism, from democratic movements to demagoguery. This fluidity of meaning has made the term somewhat slippery, difficult to pin down, and challenging to study (Freidenberg, 2007: 17).

Despite this ambiguity, however, there is a minimum consensus of meanings that has emerged in the academic community, especially among those dedicated to studying this topic. One of the common features of populism is its appeal to the people against an elite that is seen as distant and out of touch. Populism often sets up a dichotomy between the people and the elite, with the idea that the former is being oppressed and marginalized by the latter (Urbinati, 2020).

Another common feature of populism is its anti-institutionalism. Populist leaders often criticize traditional political institutions and present themselves as outsiders who are not beholden to the establishment. They may also reject formal political procedures, projecting an image of being spontaneous and

impulsive. Likewise, Finally, populism is often associated with a rhetoric of polarization, in which social, economic, and political divisions are emphasized and exploited for political gain. Populists may appeal to nationalist, exclusionary, and xenophobic sentiments, stoking fears and prejudices in order to mobilize support.

While there are some agreements in the literature about the effects and impacts of populism in Latin American politics, it is important to recognize that a greater focus on the causes and roots of populism is needed. Critiques of the current academic literature on populism argue that scholars often focus too heavily on the consequences of populism while neglecting its underlying causes. Ultimately, a better understanding of the causes of populism would improve our understanding of the recurrence of populism in two centuries of politics in Latin America. Analyzing the effects of populism can provide insights into its consequences on society, but examining the root causes is crucial to understanding the broader social, economic, and political context in which populism emerges.

Ultimately, this paper aims to shed light on the recurrent cycles of populism in Latin America more focus in the causes than in the consequences, as the most part of literature has studied. Therefore, we present a historical and comparative review of various populist leaders in Latin American countries. These leaders are placed into two broad categories representing two major stages of populism in the region. The first is the wave of classic populism that spanned the 1930s to the 1970s and was characterized by charismatic leaders who gained mass support by promising social and economic reforms. The second wave is known as neopopulism, which emerged in the 1990s and is characterized by leaders who seek to exploit political and economic crises to gain power and promote their personal agendas.

## *2. Historical Framework: Understanding Populism in Latin America*

Populism is a political movement which has attempted to appeal to the broad mass of the population. It is a movement that is anti-institution, concepts and various other anti-elitism leaning back on 'the people' as the remedy for the society's ills, stressing national solidarity and unity. There are also always populists and people who have acted in a populist manner. From a historical point of view, Latin America has had its fair share of instances of populism occurring, starting from the early days of right-wing populism in Brazil in the 1930s under Getulio Vargas and Juan Domingo Perón in the 1940's in Argentina.



Then even in the more recent page of history such phenomenon can be seen in the political regiments of Fujimori in Peru in the 90's and Chavez in Venezuela in the beginning of this century. There are many other examples, but these are some of the high points which give a flavor of populism's recurrence over time in the continent. With the current crises in Argentina and México, it is of some importance to investigate the causes, even more than the effects, of this political movement.

Traditional approaches to Latin American underdevelopment have tended to either ignore populism as a deviant "-ism" or endogenous form of democratic practice, in the case of the modernization school. Or more recently it has been simply branded as a failure. However, we need to understand populism in the context of the entire history of Latin American political culture. Müller ((2017) has described it as "neo-traditionalism" in essence a reflection of the residue of patrimonialism in a changing world. But possibly a historical materialist analysis would reveal it as a stage in the struggle between national bourgeoisie and the upper classes of the world market during the phase of neoliberalism. Anyhow, it is useful to consider the social and economic context in which populist movements were generated. This will be one of the main approaches taken in this paper.

Populism is not an ideology per se, but rather a style of political discourse and behavior that is characterized by an open and direct confrontation against the ruling class. While there may be ideological content associated with populism, it is the overarching attitude and approach to politics that defines it. Populist leaders often adopt positions that resonate with a wide cross-section of society, such as anti-establishment, anti-corruption, and anti-globalization stances. However, at its core, populism is a way of doing politics that emphasizes the direct communication with the people and highlights their needs and desires. Populist leaders tend to portray themselves as the authentic representatives of the people and use this position to justify their confrontational stance towards the ruling class.

The confrontation between populist movements and the ruling class is usually carried out through social and multi-class mobilization, with significant emphasis on the poorer segments of society. Populist leaders use powerful rhetoric aimed at mobilizing the masses and tapping into popular frustrations. They often promote policies and programs that are designed to benefit the disempowered and marginalized populations, such as housing, public health, and public education initiatives. Through such interventions, populist leaders seek to create a sense of popular identity among the broader population,



thereby creating a power base from which to challenge the existing power structures. Populist leaders cultivate a sense of identification with the people and often use a rhetoric that casts the ruling elites as corrupt, out-of-touch, and generally illegitimate. Overall, the mobilization of society is a core hallmark of populism and an essential tool in the struggle for political power.

To conclude this first conceptualization, populism is a dual logic manifested by the relationship between a charismatic leader and the people<sup>12</sup>. This relationship is based on a shared sense of identification and affinity, as well as a rejection of any mediating institutions or formalities, such as parliamentary representation. Populists claim to be the authentic representatives of the people and seek to legitimize their claim by actively mobilizing society behind them. The aspirations of populism go beyond the mere articulation of demands and the acquisition of power. Populist leaders aim to create a new political order, and often seek to radically transform the existing power structures that they view as illegitimate or corrupt. Overall, populism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that draws on various historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors that has transformed the political landscape of Latin America.

The end goal of populist leaders in creating a new political order, which must be more responsive and to the needs and desires of the broader population, particularly the disadvantaged and marginalized segments of society. They often seek to achieve this goal by implementing social and economic policies that aim to redistribute power, resources, and opportunities more equitably across society. In some cases, leftist populists may also seek to create new institutions that are designed to promote social justice and represent the interests of the people, rather than existing power elites, and this new order must be more inclusive, transparent, and accountable than the one they seek to replace.

### *3. Characteristics of classic populism*

One of the most well-known examples of classic populism in Latin America was the period of Peronism in Argentina, which began with the election of Juan Domingo Peron as President in 1946. Peronism represented a form of populist nationalism that sought to mobilize the masses in pursuit of a more equitable distribution of wealth and political power. During this period, the Peronist government implemented various social and economic policies in support of the

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<sup>1</sup> "No es que el líder mismo tenga que ser particularmente carismático, pero sí debe transmitir la sensación de tener una conexión directa con la "sustancia" del pueblo y, aún mejor, con cada individuo" (Müller, 2017:49).



labor unions, including minimum wage laws, social security reforms, and the nationalization of key industries. The movement also promoted a strong sense of national identity, coupled with an emphasis on the importance of the leader as a symbol of popular legitimacy. Although Peronism in Argentina ended with the coup d'état of 1955, it remained a powerful political force and returned to government several times, shaping Argentine politics for decades to come.

**3.1. National inclusion.** It is a call for the state to play a more active role in promoting social justice and reducing inequality. It was a popular demand among the large middle and low socioeconomic sectors for state policies that address their needs and aspirations. This demand is also tied to a broader proposal for a national popular project that would involve the creation of a new model of the state, characterized by a Welfare State that prioritizes social spending and promotes universal access to basic goods and services. Additionally, there would be a new type of political party, known as the mass party, that would represent the interests of the broader population, particularly the historically marginalized and underrepresented groups. In this context, the appropriation of popular values would serve as a reference for the national identity, which would be characterized by its own unique character in opposition to foreign values and models. Overall, National Inclusion represents a popular movement for a more equitable and just society, driven by a strong sense of national identity and pride in the values and aspirations of the people.

The Welfare State model implies a state that intervenes in the economy to ensure the universal access to basic goods and services, such as healthcare, education, housing, and other social programs. This model aims to reduce economic inequality and ensure that all citizens have access to key public goods and services regardless of their social class or income level. Thus, the state would play a more active role in providing social services and in redistributing resources to guarantee a minimum standard of living for the population. In general, National Inclusion and the proposed Welfare State model represent a response to the social challenges generated by the concentration of wealth in a few hands, seeking to establish a more equal, integrated, and cohesive society in Latin American countries.

**3.2. Development and industrial conversion.** This characteristic involves a proposal for industrialization promoted by the state and an emerging bourgeoisie, which aims to achieve self-sufficient economic development that is not dependent on foreign imports from developed economies. The economic plan to achieve this objective is known as "import substitution industrialization" (ISI) and involves various social and economic reforms that make the industrialization process sustainable. For instance, an agrarian reform that



deconcentrated land ownership was also a crucial component of ISI. This reform aimed to redistribute land ownership and improve the welfare of poor and marginalized rural populations. In sum, development and industrial conversion represent a way to build domestic capabilities and promote self-reliance in developing countries, reducing dependencies on foreign sources, and facilitating a more stable and lasting economic growth.

The aim of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) is to promote the development of domestic industries by reducing a country's dependence on foreign imports. ISI involves a set of policies and strategies to establish a self-sufficient and domestic production capacity for goods and services that were previously imported. Another objective of ISI is to reduce a country's economic vulnerabilities, such as dependence on other countries for essential goods and services and exposure to volatile global markets. ISI policies typically include tariffs and import quotas on foreign goods, subsidies and tax incentives for local industries, and government investments in infrastructure and education to support local production and research and development. In summary, ISI tried to improve a country's economic independence by establishing a domestic industry, which increases job opportunities and boosts economic growth in the long run.

**3.3. Latin American integration.** Populism in Latin America was not limited to national realities; it aimed to create a regional bloc of Latin American countries. Populist leaders saw that all countries were affected by economic and political domination, particularly by the United States, which was perceived as an imperialist power. Therefore, the integration of Latin American countries was seen as a necessary step to achieve economic and political independence and to resist external pressures and interference. This integration could take different forms, including the creation of regional organizations, such as Andean Pact or the Central American Common Market (CACM), or political alliances, such as the Tricontinental Conference. In general, the integration of Latin American countries was a strategy to strengthen the region's collective bargaining power and to promote closer cooperation and solidarity among them.

Latin American populist leaders viewed the United States as an imperialist power during the first half of XX Century. They believed that the United States sought to advance its economic and political interests in the region at the expense of the sovereignty and development of Latin American countries. The US had a long history of intervening in Latin American affairs, including supporting dictatorial regimes, military interventions, and backing coups. This had led to resentment among the Latin American population and a deep mistrust of the United States. Populist leaders argued that Latin American countries needed to unite and resist



US domination by strengthening their economies, promoting social justice, and building regional political alliances. The perception of the United States as an imperialist power was a crucial factor in the rise of populism in Latin America and the push for greater regional integration.

This “anti-imperialist” position will moderate with the Second World War, which reoriented international geopolitical alignments against fascism and in favor of the coalition of allies led by the United States. After the war, the approach of populist governments to the United States was strengthened and channeled through an economic modernization project called “Alliance for Progress.” In that sense, the early anti-imperialism of classical populism resulted in rapprochement and coordination with the United States, and with a significant investment of North American capital.

However, the anti-imperialist position of classical populism began to change after the Second World War. The geopolitical realignment against fascism and in favor of the United States led to a shift in populist leaders' approach to the US. As a result, the United States became a significant player in Latin American politics, promoting an economic project called the “Alliance for Progress.” This economic plan aimed to promote economic development and democratic governance in the region, and many populist leaders supported it. While the early anti-imperialist stance of classical populism positioned leaders as opposing US interests, this rapprochement with the US marked a significant departure from that ideology, indicating a more pragmatic approach to regional cooperation and partnerships with the US.

**3.4. From authoritarianism to the assimilation of democracy.** Initially, the proposal for social and political change by classical populist leaders was according to a revolutionary approach, which frequently involved the rise to power through coups d'état and other subversive means. However, overtime, most of the populist leaders adopted the democratic model and began to participate in electoral competitions. Additionally, populism's evolution led to the emergence of catch-all parties from mass parties, thereby expanding their political reach. So, classic populist leaders became promoters of democracy in their respective countries.

Catch-all parties emerged in Latin America as populist movements evolved towards more democratic models. These parties sought to capture a broader range of voters by promoting policies that catered to the interests of lower and middle-class citizens, and not just the elites. By including a more diverse range of voters and interests, catch-all parties aimed to build a wider political base specifically in the electoral field. In doing so, they embraced democratic principles such as electoral participation, political pluralism, and inclusivity. This





shift towards catch-all parties allowed populists to become more successful in their electoral campaigns, thus promoting democratic consolidation in the region. In sum, catch-all parties in Latin America expanded democratic principles by promoting inclusivity and accountability in the political process, allowing for citizens to have greater representation and participation in their democracies.

**3.5. From anti-oligarchic polarization to national fronts.** The phenomenon of populism is commonly associated with polarization, the idea of an us —versus— them division that leaves no room for intermediate positions. Initially, classic populism was directed against the aristocracies of notables, who were displaced from power by populist leaders. Later, populists also confronted the left, including anarchists, communists, and socialists, often attempting to dispute their leadership of unions and popular organizations. After the World War II, these populist leaders change from this confrontational position to make alliances with their old enemies, the aristocracy, and in some cases, integrate "popular fronts" with the left, particularly after World War II. This occurred in a context of elections and democratization of the political regime, aligned with an international social democratic line. Despite the polarizing nature of populism, the historical evidence points to instances where pragmatic alliances can be formed in the interest of electoral success or maintaining power. However, these alliances are often volatile and subject to abrupt changes.

The alliances between populist and left-leaning groups typically occur in a context of electoral politics and the democratization of political regimes. Classic populist leaders may see the potential for electoral success in forming alliances with left-leaning groups, particularly if they can appeal to the shared interests of their respective bases. Similarly, left-leaning groups may see the potential for advancing their political agenda by working with populists who have a significant base of support among the working class and marginalized groups. So, classic populists' leaders have been successful in forming "popular fronts" with left-leaning groups. These popular fronts were coalitions to form a broader political force that could contest elections and promote policies that would benefit the working class and marginalized groups.

**3.6. New State Institutions.** The arrival of classic populist leaders in power marks a significant shift in the state institutions of Latin American countries. These leaders dismantle the previous political system of notables and the upper classes, which was solely focused on maintaining order and a functioning economy through international and mercantile trade. This previous political regime only preserved the interests of the privileged social sector and considered the national majority as provider of cheap labor.





Populism, by contrast, aims to construct a Nation State that responds to the basic demands of the national majority and incorporates them as active subjects of society. The Welfare State emerges, taking on responsibility for basic needs such as health, education, housing, and services through social policies. This new state configuration remains even after the fall of populist leaders and is maintained, albeit with cuts and setbacks, through neoliberal dictatorships and the implementation of the Washington Consensus. The Welfare State has become an inseparable part of state policy in Latin America today.

The State model emerged as a response to the demands of the national majority who had been previously marginalized and excluded from political power and decision-making. With the emergence of this model, the State took on a broader role and responsibility in society, beyond just maintaining order and promoting economic growth. The State became a provider of social services and common goods, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized people in society. The impact of the Welfare State model can be seen in the significant social gains that have been achieved in Latin America, including improved literacy rates, reductions in poverty levels, and increased access to healthcare and education.

**3.7. Charismatic leadership and routinization of charisma.** The personalization of politics through charismatic leaders is a significant aspect of classic populism. These leaders possessed a mobilizing capacity and a fiery oratory while being focused on humanist preparation. They were able to articulate an ideological framework that emerged from their unique perspective of national realities, as opposed to simply adopting foreign-based ideological models like liberals and socialists.

However, a challenge that emerges with overwhelming and binding charisma is the passage of time. The capacity of the leader to convene eventually exhausts or the leader becomes too old or dies, leading to the "routinization of charisma." In some cases, heirs of the charisma emerge, continuing the legacy of the former leader, as seen in Peru with Alan García and in Argentina with the Kirchners.

To compensate for the weakened convocation caused by the loss of charisma, old leaders or their heirs make use of political institutions within the new Nation State, such as "catch-all" political parties, union centers, and other types of corporations or clientelist practices. These practices become critical in continuing the populist legacy of the former leader in the next decades, especially during economic crises.



<b>Table 1: Classic populism 1930-1975</b>		
<b>Leader</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Government Period</b>
Getulio Vargas	Brazil	1930–1945, 1951–1954
Juan Domingo Perón	Argentina	1946–1955, 1973–1974
Lázaro Cárdenas	Mexico	1934–1940
José María Velasco Ibarra	Ecuador	1934–1935, 1944–1947, 1952–1956, 1960–1961, 1968–1972
Gustavo Rojas Pinilla Jorge Eliécer Gaitán	Colombia	1953–1957 Populist leader assassinated in 1948
Juan Velazco Alvarado Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre	Peru	1968–1975 Party Founder of “American Popular and Revolutionary Alliance (APRA)”
Rómulo Betancourt	Venezuela	1945–1948, 1959–1964
José Figueres	Costa Rica	1953–1958, 1970–1974
Víctor Paz Estenssoro Hernán Siles Suazo	Bolivia	1952–1956, 1960–1964 1956–1964
Salvador Allende	Chile	1970–1973
Jacobo Árbenz	Guatemala	1951–1954

#### *4. Causes of classic populism*

The literature on populism has primarily focused on the effects or characteristics of classic populism in Latin America, that we have nominated as characteristics in this paper, rather than on the underlying roots and causes of its emergence. While understanding the effects of populism is valuable in identifying its impact on society and politics, it does not provide a comprehensive understanding of how and why classic populism emerged in Latin America.

A more in-depth analysis of the roots of classic populism in the region is necessary to comprehend its emergence, evolution and recurrency. Factors such



as social inequality, economic instability, corruption, political exclusion, and a lack of power-sharing mechanisms play a significant role in the rise of populism in Latin America.

The history and collective memory of Latin America's colonial past and subjugation by foreign powers, along with the legacy of the XIX century, have also contributed to the emergence of a unique populist phenomenon in the region. The region's experience with authoritarian governments and their subsequent collapse has also played a role in the emergence of classic populism in Latin America during the first half of XX century.

To gain a deeper understanding of classic populism in Latin America, it is important to study these underlying causes and the context in which they emerged, including:

**4.1. Social inequality** has historically been a significant factor that has contributed to the rise of classic populism in L.A. in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The continent has some of the world's most extensive social and economic disparities, with extreme poverty and inequality affecting millions of people.

Populist leaders often emerge as a response to the frustrations and discontent felt by those who have been excluded by traditional political parties and elites. These groups are often mobilized by populist leaders who promise to address issues of inequality by redistributing wealth, advocating for access to resources such as land, education, and healthcare, and addressing corruption and institutional injustice.

The national elite class had significant control over economic and political systems. They held economic power for themselves and kept access to land and other natural resources only for their benefit. They had minimal interest in promoting or initiating reforms that would benefit most people living in the region, making inequality a significant issue. The marginalization and exclusion of significant portions of the population have led to frustration and discontent, which populist leaders often leverage to mobilize support around issues of social and economic inequality.

**4.2. Underdevelopment and economic dependence** were significant factors that contributed to the emergence of classic populism in Latin America during the first half of the 19th century. During this period, L.A. countries in the region were experiencing significant economic challenges, compounded by their



dependence on foreign powers and a lack of strong, diversified economies<sup>2</sup>.

Underdevelopment, or the lack of industrialization, adequate infrastructure, and institutional development, created a situation where these countries relied heavily on exports to earn foreign exchange. However, this was often done through the export of a few primary commodities, such as raw materials, which made these countries vulnerable to price fluctuations and other external shocks.

Economic dependence arose from the fact that L.A. economies relied heavily on foreign capital and technology to develop their industries. This led to a situation where foreign corporations played a significant role in these countries' economies, and their interests often diverged from those of the local populations. These economic challenges led to significant social and political upheaval, with classic populist movements emerging as a response to these challenges. Populist leaders often drew support from the rural, working-class populations who experienced the brunt of these economic issues, promising to defend their interests against the elites and foreign powers.

**4.3. Corruption and loss of legitimacy** of the traditional political class is another root cause of the emergence of classic populism in Latin America. Traditional political parties and elites were often seen as corrupt, with a history of embezzlement and bribery that eroded public trust and confidence in the political system.

Populist movements tried to capitalize on public frustration and outrage over corruption and political scandals. Populist leaders present themselves as outsiders who will fight against corruption and abuse of power, promising to represent the interests of the people who have been marginalized and excluded from the political system rather than the interests of the political elites.

**4.4. Political exclusion and traditional authoritarianism** during the 19th century can be seen as a significant factor in the emergence of classic populism

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<sup>2</sup> Dependence Theory emerged in Latin America during the mid-20th century as an attempt to understand the region's economic challenges and the impact of economic dependence on foreign powers. This theory emphasized that Latin American countries were structurally integrated into the global capitalist system in a way that made them dependent on external forces. As Warner (2008) says: "*dependency theory in the 1960's dramatically altered perceptions of Latin American-foreign relations, and became the dominant paradigm in Latin American thought for the next twenty years*". According to the theory of dependence, this dependence was not just an economic issue but was rooted in a broader political and social context in which countries in the region were relegated to a peripheral position in the global economy, with little control over their own economic destinies. Classic populist leaders in Latin America often used the theory of dependence to argue for a new development model: Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI). This model aimed to promote domestic industries to boost economic growth, which would reduce economic dependence on foreign nations - particularly the developed countries.



in the first half of the 20th century in Latin America. During this period, many countries in Latin America were characterized by authoritarian rule, with political power controlled by a small group of elites. Moreover, the authoritarianism that characterized many Latin American countries during the 19th century contributed to a culture of resistance to established political power. Many people came to view the traditional political elite as corrupt, out of touch, and oppressive.

The authoritarianism that characterized Latin American countries in the 19th century was typically based on personalistic or caudillo rule, where political power was held by a single individual or a small group of elites. These authoritarian leaders often relied on the military, the church, and other institutions to maintain their hold on power, creating a patronage system that benefited a small group of political elites.

This kind of authoritarianism contributed to the emergence of populism in several ways. First, it created political exclusion, as large segments of the population were denied access to political participation and representation. This exclusion led to a sense of alienation and frustration among many people. Second, the authoritarianism of the 19th century often led to corruption, with political elites using their control over institutions to enrich themselves and their allies.

Finally, the authoritarianism of the 19th century established a coercive political culture, with dissent and opposition being met with force and violence. This culture of repression created an environment where people felt unsafe expressing their political beliefs openly, further fueling frustration and mistrust towards the traditional political elite.

**4.5 Historical and structural discrimination** is one of the root causes of the emergence of classic populism during the 1930s to 1970s in Latin America. Historical discrimination refers to the legacy of colonialism, which created a social and economic hierarchy that disproportionately benefited the European-descended elites while marginalizing other groups such as Indigenous and African populations. Structural discrimination refers to the ongoing inequalities that result from this legacy, which continue to perpetuate social disparities. This sort of deepened discrimination can be seen as a key factor in the rise of populist movements, as these movements often emerge as a reaction to perceived injustices and inequalities. Populist leaders often pinpoint this traditional legacy and structural inequalities as the root of social, economic, and political issues in their countries.



Populist movements call for policies such as agrarian reform, cultural revitalization, and social welfare programs that aim to address these inequalities. Moreover, the sense of national pride and sovereignty touted by classic populist leaders is a response to the perceived domination of foreign powers, a perceived loss of sovereignty and national pride, and the sense of historical injustice that has been experienced in Latin America since colonial times.

**4.6. Parochial political culture** and the disaffection of the population towards political participation is another cause of the emergence of classic populism in Latin America. Parochial political culture refers to a mentality that puts a low value on political participation and views it as not relevant to everyday life. This attitude can contribute to voter apathy, a lack of engagement with political issues, and a sense of disaffection among the population towards the political system.

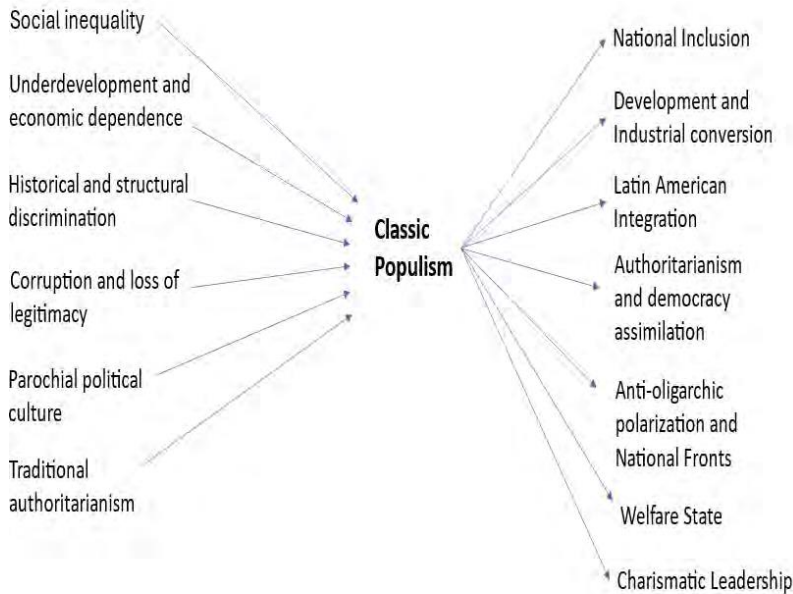
Populist movements often emerge in response to the disaffection and alienation of the population from the political system. Populist leaders strive to mobilize the disconnected and disaffected population and provide them with a sense of belonging and representation. They use rhetoric that speaks directly to the people, promising to address the issues that matter most to them. Populist leaders seek to distinguish themselves from the political establishment by presenting themselves as authentic representatives of the people.

Classic populist leaders can exploit these conditions to mobilize support and offer an alternative to traditional politics, promising to address the needs of the people who have been traditionally marginalized and excluded from political participation, and from the services and benefits of the State.

In conclusion, understanding the causes of classic populism is essential to grasp its recurrency in Latin American countries. The traditional rational choice approach fails to consider the underlying societal factors and class struggle that fuel populist movements. By examining the broader economic and political context, such as inequality and democratization processes, we can recognize the root causes of populism. The rational choice perspective on classic populism emphasizes the individual's decision-making process as the main driver of political behavior. It posits that people make rational choices based on their personal interests, beliefs, and available information. Therefore, according to this perspective, popular support for populist leaders would result from rational choices made by their supporters based on personal interests and preferences.



Figure 1. Causes and Effects of Classic Populism (1930-1975)



On the other hand, the structuralist point of view on classic populism considers broader social, economic, and political factors that contribute to the rise of populist movements. Unlike the rational choice perspective, it emphasizes the context in which individuals make decisions, considering the institutional and historical factors that shape society. According to the structuralist perspective, populism arises as a response to deeper structural inequalities and imbalances within society. Therefore, moving beyond the rational choice framework and adopting a structuralist perspective is critical to comprehending classic populism fully (Groppo; 2009: 76).

## 5. Characteristics of neopopulism

Neopopulism emerged in Latin America during the 1990s, marked by the rise of Carlos Menem in Argentina (1989–1999), Alberto Fujimori in Peru (1990–2000), Hugo Chavez in Venezuela (1999–2013), and Álvaro Uribe in Colombia





(2002–2010). Neopopulism breaks away from traditional populism by having no ideological alignment with the political spectrum's left-wing to right-wing axis. Instead, Neopopulism is a political movement that emerged during the decline of socialism and the consolidation of neoliberalism as the dominant economic paradigm in the region. Neopopulism, therefore, reflects a reaction to the loss of legitimacy of traditional leftist and rightist political parties.

The resurgence of this new type of populism in Latin America is deeply rooted in the so-called Third Democratic Wave that began in 1978 and continues to the present day. This period witnessed significant political and economic changes in the region, including the debt crisis of the 1980s, which severely deteriorated the living conditions of Latin Americans during the "lost decade" between 1980 and 1989. This led to a loss of trust in traditional political parties, offering opportunities for populist leaders to gain momentum.

One of the most important contextual references for the emergence of neopopulism was the Washington Consensus as a response to the debt crisis. The Washington Consensus was a set of economic policies that emerged in the 1990s to address the economic crises that many developing countries, including those in Latin America, faced. The key features of the Washington Consensus were macroeconomic stability, trade liberalization, privatization, deregulation, and structural reforms, such as improving the quality of public institutions, reforming the legal system, and promoting good governance.

The Washington Consensus's goals were to promote economic growth, reduce poverty, and integrate developing countries into the global economy. However, its implementation had mixed results, with many critics contending that it failed to address inequality and social disparities and exacerbated poverty and economic instability in many countries.

The severe social and economic fallout of the Washington Consensus resulted in opportunities for populist leaders who promised to address the negative impacts of neoliberalism and capitalism on ordinary citizens. Between 1990 and 1995, the application of macroeconomic adjustments endorsed by the Washington Consensus was particularly ruthless, leading to popular protests in many countries.

In sum, the resurgence of neopopulism in Latin America is situated within the context of the third democratic wave, the debt crisis, the Washington Consensus, and the severe macroeconomic adjustment more popularly known as the "shock".



To understand better the neopopulism in Latin America, is essential to study the underlying characteristics in which they emerged. They are:

**5.1. From democracy to authoritarian derivations.** This shift from democratic to authoritarian methods denotes a crucial aspect of neo-populism in Latin America, which distinguishes it from classic populism. While classic populism had a first authoritarian phase but later adopted democratic practices, on contrary the neopopulism took office through democratic elections, but later use undemocratic practices to keep the power.

The manipulation of electoral rules, the use of state resources to benefit from election results, and the questioning of the legitimacy of electoral processes are some strategies employed by neo-populist leaders to subvert democracy. Furthermore, many neo-populist governments have concentrated power in the hands of the executive branch, often bypassing other branches of government, such as the legislative or judicial, to make decisions. This concentration of power is often justified through the idea of popular sovereignty, where leaders claim to represent the people directly, rather than through the institutional channels of democracy.

Therefore, while neopopulism started as a democratic project, it can quickly devolve into authoritarian tendencies that undermine democratic institutions and threaten the rule of law. This dynamic highlight the importance of understanding the nuances and complexities of populist movements. An erosion of democratic institutions and norms can be an unfortunate consequence of these neopopulist trends, ultimately resulting in a threat to the very foundations of democracy itself.

**5.2. Confrontation with the political class and self-representation of the "people".** The rise of neopopulism has been marked by a clear political logic of polarization, which shares similarities with classical populism. Neo-populist leaders are often characterized as "outsiders" who position themselves against the existing political elite, blaming them for the country's problems and positioning themselves as the solution. Corruption is a key issue for these leaders, who promise to "clean up" politics and establish a "new" way of doing things.

However, neo-populist leaders frequently weaken the mechanisms of representation and institutional counterweights, such as the Legislative and Judicial Branches or political parties, which are essential components of a democratic system. They instead rely on a direct leader-people relationship that bypasses traditional political institutions. This trend is particularly evident in



the way that parliamentary benches and political organizations are utilized solely to reinforce the leader's direct relationship with the people.

Furthermore, the takeover of state institutions by followers and operators of the leader is a common feature of neo-populist regimes. Even those institutions that are meant to have constitutional autonomy, such as regulatory bodies, are often co-opted by the ruling party or leader, thus further undermining the checks and balances that are necessary for a functioning democracy.

**5.3. Refoundation of the political order via constitutional change.** The permanence of neopopulism in power is essential for achieving its long-term political goals. In this sense, neopopulism has a unique approach to the reconfiguration of the State, by promoting an entirely new political constitution that institutionalizes the mechanisms of power reproduction for its leaders (Arato y Cohen, 2022:160). This substantive change in the political order was not used by classic populism, as they had to rely on changes made to the old liberal constitution to implement their reforms.

The emergence of a new legal framework supported by neopopulism allows the criminalization of the opposition or, at least, the undermining of its legality. The use of electoral mechanisms is also a crucial aspect of neopopulism's political strategy. While neopopulist movements initially enjoy significant popular support via electoral processes, they resort to manipulation when that support begins to dwindle. The use of State resources during campaigns to favor their agendas is just the beginning; they can then manipulate the results of the elections through the takeover of electoral institutions.

These tactics represent a significant shift in the use of state power to maintain a political project's longevity. The level of permanence in power is an essential aspect of neopopulism, allowing for the establishment of institutions favoring their policies and ensuring their indefinite authoritarian rule.

**5.4. Economic redistribution based on the global economic boom.** State resources for social programs, particularly aimed at the majority and poor sectors, are a critical component of the populist strategy. This is especially relevant after the implementation of the Washington Consensus, as neoliberal governments prioritized macroeconomic imbalances instead of social well-being indicators. This approach resulted in negative social consequences, such as increased unemployment and the decline of social welfare indicators.

During this time, the global economy began to recover from the late 20th century's economic crises, largely due to China's increasing demand for primary resources. However, this economic boom did not translate into industrial



reconversion and a sustainable economy, as was the original project of classic populism. Instead, the boom was focused solely on redistribution and social recovery through populist social programs. This approach only provides temporary relief and becomes unsustainable in the long run if there is no sustainable economic development plan.

Therefore, neopopulist governments have prioritized both social welfare and economic sustainability to address the persistent challenges resulting from the neoliberal policies of the past. Focusing solely on social welfare without incorporating steps to promote economic growth and development can lead to populist leaders using State resources to manipulate the population's support, ultimately harming the nation's economic progress as it happened in Argentina in the present times. As such, it is essential to have a balanced approach, promoting economic development while prioritizing social welfare, to address real needs and improve the quality of life for all, as it has occurred in Mexico during the recent years.

**5.5. Creation of a regional political and economic bloc.** The case of Venezuela highlights the challenges of relying solely on natural resources, particularly oil, for economic growth and development. Venezuela's status as an oil exporter allowed it to support other countries in the region that share its political ideology through the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of America (ALBA). However, Venezuela's economy's over-reliance on oil exports has left it vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices, as seen in the current acute economic crisis.

Furthermore, the neopopulist approach adopted by the ALBA countries<sup>3</sup>, which openly opposes the United States and claims to be anti-imperialist, has limited their ability to develop deeper economic ties with other nations that are not part of their political bloc. This limitation has hindered their ability to diversify their economic activities and explore new opportunities for growth and development.

The current crisis in Venezuela has not only weakened its economy but also the regional alliance it formed. The decline in oil prices has reduced Venezuela's ability to provide economic support to other ALBA countries, making it challenging for them to maintain the socialist economic base they seek to build.

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<sup>3</sup> The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of America (ALBA) is a regional alliance founded by Venezuela in 2004 with the aim of promoting economic, social, and political integration among its member countries. ALBA is a political bloc that brings together countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that share a socialist or leftist ideology. The alliance is based on the principles of solidarity, cooperation, and anti-imperialism. Besides Venezuela, ALBA's current members include Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.



This situation underscores the importance of diversifying economies and prioritizing sustainable development strategies rather than relying solely on natural resource exports.

**5.6. Charismatic leadership based on control of the media.** While both classic populism and neopopulism share a common characteristic of possessing charismatic leaders, there are several notable differences in the training and behavior of these leaders. Neopopulist leaders, such as Evo Morales, Alberto Fujimori, Rafael Correa, Hugo Chávez, Daniel Ortega, and Nicolás Maduro, lack the political and humanistic training that characterized classic populist leaders as Romulo Betancourt, Victor Paz Estenssoro, Juan Domingo Perón, Getulio Vargas, Salvador Allende, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and many others.

Classic populist leaders often had a background in law, politics, or social sciences. They were usually well-educated and had a deep understanding of political theory and the history of their countries. Their training and experience allowed them to understand their societies' complexities better, articulate their platforms, and win the support of different segments of the population. In contrast, neopopulist leaders didn't have political and humanistic training and experience. Many of them come to political activity without previous experience or academic training in politics or human sciences. They may be outsiders to traditional political parties, representing a break from established political elites.

Another key difference is how neopopulist leaders interact with the population. While classic populist leaders relied on human "swells" in streets and squares, neopopulists use television, radio and social networks to engage with the populace. This style of interaction reflects a progressive control of media by the government, which has impacted freedom of expression. Government critics are often prosecuted, fined, or imprisoned, indicating a politicization of justice resulting from the dismissal of judges and the installation of others with partisan orientations.

These differences highlight the evolution of populist politics and the challenges they pose to democratic institutions and practices. Neopopulism represents a shift toward more centralized, authoritarian forms of governance that prioritize the leader's will over the rule of law.

**5.7. Ideological dispersion of neopopulism.** The differences between classic and neopopulism extend beyond the training and background of their leaders. While classic populism criticized elitist forms of Aristocratic republics, neopopulism questions the representative democracies of the third wave.



Classic populism was an adversary of the Marxist left and competed fiercely for control of popular organizations, later adopting a social democratic model after World War II. In contrast, a sector of neopopulism has merged with the Marxist left, forming a diffuse conglomerate of "*movementism*" and grassroots organizations.

Moreover, while classic populism mutated from a programmatic anti-imperialism to a pragmatic collaboration with the United States; neopopulism takes a discursive anti-imperialist position but opens to investments in highly profitable fields such as mining. This reflects a shift in the geopolitical and economic landscape of the world.

Finally, the ideological elaboration of classic populism was in charge of their founding leaders, while the theorization of neopopulism is assumed by a related academy led by thinkers and activists such as Ernesto Laclau (2006), Juan Carlos Monedero (2018) and Álvaro García Linera (2015), among others. This reflects the increasing professionalization and institutionalization of political theory and the emergence of new intellectual elites in the political field.

Overall, these differences reflect how the historical and structural context in which populism emerges shapes the political movements and their expressions. The differences between classic and neopopulism highlight the dynamic and evolving nature of populism as a political phenomenon.

<b>Table 2: Neopopulism 1990 to the present</b>		
<b>Leader</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Government Period</b>
Alberto Fujimori	Peru	1990 – 2000
Hugo Chávez Nicolás Maduro	Venezuela	1999 – 2013 <u>2013 to the present</u>
Álvaro Uribe	Colombia	2002 – 2010
Carlos Menem	Argentina	1989 – 1999
Néstor Kirchner		2003 – 2007
Cristina Kirchner		2007 – 2015
Evo Morales	Bolivia	2006 – 2019
Rafael Correa	Ecuador	2007 – 2017
Daniel Ortega	Nicaragua	<u>2013 to the present</u>



## 6. *Causes of neopopulism*

The emergence of neo-populism in the late 20th century was a response to a series of social, economic, and political changes that were transforming the world. The third wave of democracy, the spread of neoliberalism and the implementation of macroeconomic adjustments shaped the context in which neopopulist movements emerged, creating conditions of economic and political uncertainty that fueled populist rhetoric. The failure of traditional political parties and institutions to adapt to these new challenges and to respond to the needs and concerns of ordinary people contributed to the rise of neopopulist leaders and movements in Latin America. By examining the roots of neo-populism, we can develop a deeper understanding of the forces that drive this new type of populism.

**6.1. Electoral democracy in the third wave.** The democratic third wave of the late 20th century was marked by the establishment of numerous democracies in Latin America, almost all the countries, but Cuba, in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, the wave contributed to the emergence and recurrence of neo-populism because it focused only on the procedural aspects of democracy, like elections and the rule of law, neglecting the substantive aspects of democracy, which relate to meeting the basic needs of the population and attending social rights. The lack of substantive democratic practices created a disaffection in citizens toward electoral processes and political representation. This outlook was aggravated by macroeconomic adjustments and the shock therapy policies of neoliberalism that impacted the quality of life of the people, triggering anger, disenchantment, and antipathy towards traditional political institutions.

In this context, neo-populist movements emerged as a response to the perceived failure of traditional democratic processes and institutions, driven by charismatic leaders who could offer quick and effective solutions to the demands of these new generations. Neopopulist movements promised social justice, economic redistribution, and cultural identity, painting a picture of an idealized past, and presenting themselves as the only alternative to the corrupt and ineffective political establishment. By tapping into these populist sentiments, the neopopulist leaders were able to mobilize large numbers of followers and gain new alliances, challenging the established political scenarios and institutions.

In sum, the democratic third wave thus contributed to the rise of neo-populism by failing to meet the substantive aspects of democracy and creating the conditions for the emergence of discontent that drove large segments of the population to seek radical alternatives.





**6.2. Neoliberalism as new paradigm and new reality.** Neoliberal paradigm is an economic and political philosophy that emphasizes the importance of free markets, individual liberty, and limited government intervention in the economy. Its fundamental principles include deregulation, privatization, and reduction of government spending. Neoliberalism views markets as the most efficient mechanism for allocating resources and providing goods and services and encourages competition and entrepreneurship. It also promotes free trade and globalization, arguing that they foster economic growth and development. Neoliberalism has been influential in shaping economic policy in Latin America, where it has been associated with economic liberalization and opening markets. However, its critics argue that Neoliberalism has increased economic inequality, weakened labor protections, and eroded social welfare programs, among other negative consequences.

Neoliberal policies have had a profound impact on Latin America, with the implementation of economic liberalization and privatization of state assets. These policies were meant to promote economic growth and attract foreign investment to the region; however, they also brought about social inequalities, and lack of access to basic goods and services and reduced the role of the state in society. The implementation of these policies created an event that generated a sense of discontent among the Latin American population, leading to the emergence of neopopulism on the rightist and leftist leaders and political parties.

Rightist neopopulism typically involves leaders who implement macroeconomic adjustments in response to economic crises, as seen in the case of Carlos Menem in Argentina, Alberto Fujimori in Peru, Álvaro Uribe in Colombia. These leaders saw the solution to economic instability in neoliberal policies such as deregulation, privatization, and reduction of government spending. While these policies brought economic growth, they also led to the exclusion of vulnerable segments of society; however, these rightist neopopulist leaders knew how to deal with the discontent that macroeconomics adjustments produced in population.

On the other hand, leftist neopopulist leaders emerged as a response to the negative impact of neoliberalism in Latin America. Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, Lula Da Silva in Brazil reacted against these policies by seeking to redistribute wealth, strengthen social welfare programs, and challenge the interests of the economic and political elite. These leaders appealed to the marginalized and underrepresented segments of society whose interests were neglected by the neoliberal shocks. In response, they were able to mobilize masses of people and gain political power.



The emergence of both rightist and leftist neopopulism demonstrates the dissatisfaction and frustration of Latin American societies with the political system and the lack of effectiveness of the established political and economic institutions.

**6.3. Low institutionality and corruption.** The lack of compliance of the rules is one of the most significant causes of the emergence and recurrence of neopopulism in Latin America. This means that though there are established laws and authorities to pursue compliance with rules, their effectiveness in enforcing them is low. This creates a breeding ground for corruption since those in power are not held accountable for their actions, leading to a lack of trust in the traditional political establishment.

The low institutionality results from a history of political instability and weak state institutions. In many Latin American countries, political leadership has been characterized by widespread corruption, cronyism, and authoritarianism. Moreover, political parties have often functioned more as vehicles for personal enrichment rather than as vehicles for political representation and policymaking.

In this context, neopopulism has emerged as a response to the lack of trust in traditional political institutions and to address the grievances of the marginalized and disenfranchised population. Neopopulist leaders often present themselves as outsiders who are not part of the corrupt political establishment, promising to change these conditions. They appeal to the public's frustration with political elites who have enriched themselves through corruption and misconduct.

However, while neopopulist movements initially gain support by promising to challenge the status quo and to bring positive change, they often end up exacerbating the problem of low institutionality by using their positions of power to further their own interests. Neopopulist leaders have often centralized political power, weakened democratic institutions, and used their power to enrich their allies, creating a new political elite with the same flaws and weaknesses as the previous one.

In sum, the low institutionality in Latin America has created an environment where neopopulist movements can thrive. The distrust in traditional political institutions and the lack of accountability for those who hold power provide the perfect conditions for the emergence of neopopulist leaders who promise to bring change but end up perpetuating the status quo.

**6.4. The persistence of inequality** is another significant cause of the emergence and recurrence of neopopulism in Latin America. Despite recent economic growth and government efforts to implement redistributive policies,



large majorities of the population still face poverty, and the levels of inequality in the region remain among the highest in the world.

This persistent inequality is rooted in colonial past and the unequal structures of power and privilege that continue to shape Latin American societies. Decades of neoliberal economic policies, characterized by deregulation, privatization, and marketization, have further entrenched these structures of inequality, leading to disparities in income and access to basic services like education, healthcare, and housing.

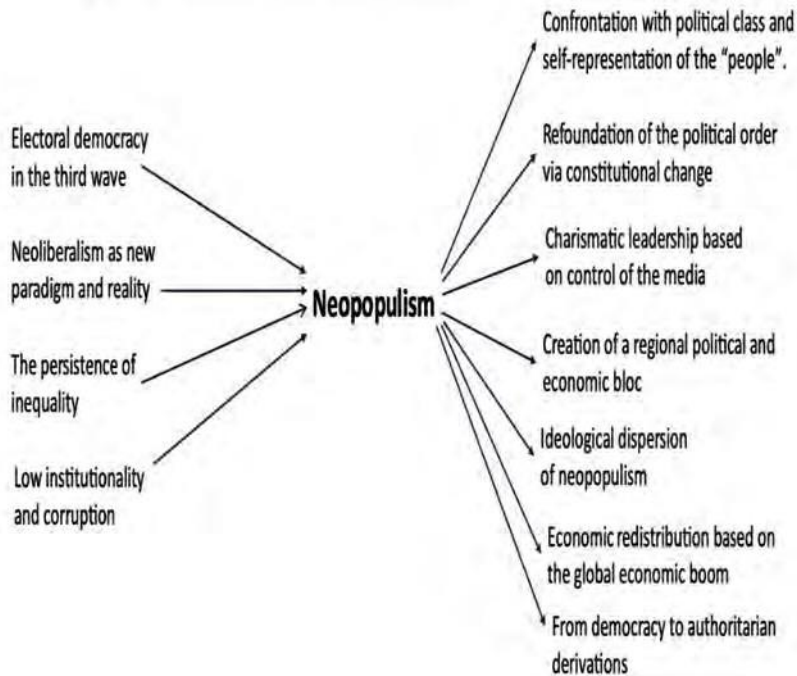
Leftist neopopulist governments have attempted to address this problem by implementing redistributive policies, but many of these policies have been criticized as clientelist, meaning that politicians have used them to maintain their support and power within specific communities. Furthermore, even when leftist governments have successfully implemented redistributive policies, they have often been insufficient to address the root causes of inequality. Therefore, these redistributive policies may not address the root causes of inequality, such as the concentration of power in the hands of the economic and political elite. Without addressing these structural factors, policies designed to redistribute wealth and resources may only provide temporary relief, rather than a long-term solution.

Finally, some critics argue that leftist neopopulist governments have not done enough to address issues like corruption and the lack of rule of law that contribute to inequality and inhibit economic growth. This can make it difficult for governments to implement effective redistributive policies, as the money and resources meant for the poor may be diverted by corrupt officials.

As a result, neopopulist leaders have emerged as a response to the persistence of inequality in Latin America. These movements, both right and left, have mobilized marginalized and disenchanted populations, highlighting the failures of traditional political and economic institutions. To address the root causes of neopopulism, there needs to be a more systemic approach to tackling inequality in Latin America. This would require addressing the structural inequalities that exist in Latin American societies, at least since the beginning of the republics in 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 2. Causes y Effects of Neopopulism (1990 until present)



## 7. Comparative analysis of classic populism and neopopulism

Despite being separated by several decades, Classic Populism (1930-1975) and Neopopulism (1990 until present days) share several commonalities in terms of their underlying causes, although they also differ in important ways. Both types of populism emerged in response to political, economic, and social upheaval, and sought to mobilize marginalized and disenchanted populations by promoting a platform of social justice, economic equality, and government intervention in the economy in the case of leftist neopopulist leaders. On the other hand, rightist neopopulist leaders in Latin America, such as Uribe in Colombia, Fujimori in Peru, and Menem and Milei in Argentina, have employed various arguments and narratives to gain popularity and support among their followers. Some of these arguments and narratives include law and order, macroeconomic adjustments to cut off inflation and recession, conservative values, polarization against traditional political parties (focus on the recent leftist governments).



One common variable between the two types of populism is economic globalization. During the 1930s, the global economic depression led to widespread unemployment and economic hardship, while in the 1990s, the expansion of international trade and finance led to the displacement of traditional economic structures, making people feel out of control of their livelihoods. Both types of populism were therefore grounded in a sense of economic frustration and a desire for greater control over social and economic affairs.

Another commonality is political alienation. Classic populism emerged in contexts where traditional politicians and parties were seen as corrupt, out of touch, and beholden to narrow interests. Similarly, neopopulism emerged in the context of the "third wave" of democratization in Latin America, which saw the proliferation of multiparty systems, but also deepened the fragmentation of the political landscape and the perceived distance between politicians and the public.

Finally, both types of populism were fueled by deep-seated popular discontent with the status quo, whether related to economic inequality, cultural change, or social exclusion. Classic populism was rooted in the legacy of colonialism, social inequality, and westernization in Latin America, while neopopulism reflected the continued persistence of inequality and exclusion, despite decades of government efforts to address these issues.

Despite these commonalities, there are also important differences between Classic Populism and Neopopulism. Classic populism was often characterized by anti-elite and anti-imperialist rhetoric, while neopopulism has been driven more by populist leader positions arguing themselves as the champion of the people against the entrenched political and economic elite. Neopopulism is a political phenomenon that has emerged in different historical contexts and geographical regions. One of the most striking features of neopopulism is its ideological diversity, as it has been embraced by both left and right-wing leaders<sup>4</sup>. On the one hand, we have the example of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, who used populist rhetoric to promote a socialist agenda, while on the other

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<sup>4</sup> "Así, no importa la connotación ideológica que pueda tomar el atractivo para el pueblo, de derecha o de izquierda, yo sostengo que el populismo está estructuralmente marcado por una parcialidad radical en la interpretación del pueblo y la mayoría, esto implica que, si un movimiento populista llega al poder, puede deformar a las instituciones, el estado de derecho y la división de poderes que conforman la democracia constitucional" (Urbinati, 2023: 198-199).



hand, we have the example of Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, who used populism to promote a right-wing agenda.

Despite the differences in ideology, however, neopopulist leaders share certain characteristics that make them compelling and charismatic figures. They tend to be passionate communicators who appeal to people's emotions and deeply held beliefs. They use simple and direct language, telling people what they want to hear, rather than what they need to hear. They are often seen as authentic and genuine, tapping into the fears and concerns of ordinary people.

Another striking feature of neopopulist leaders is their lack of formal or reserved demeanor. They often project an image of (rightist or leftist) being spontaneous, informal, and approachable. This style is in stark contrast to the traditional image of politicians as being cold, distant, and detached. Neopopulists prioritize emotional communication over reasoned argumentation, and they often use personal anecdotes and emotional appeals to build a connection with their followers.

Overall, the differences between left-wing and right-wing neopopulists are often overstated, as they share many of the same techniques and strategies for building a popular base. Despite being associated with different political ideologies, neopopulists are often able to transcend ideological boundaries by appealing to people's desire for change and their yearning for a better and fairer society.

In conclusion, there are commonalities in the underlying causes of classic populism and neopopulism. Understanding these causes of populism and the context in which it emerges is crucial to explain the emergence and the recurrence of this political phenomena.

## 8. *Conclusions*

Understanding the recurrence of populism in Latin American politics requires an analysis of the structural and historical causes that have shaped the region's political landscape. Populism has been a recurrent feature of political life in this region for decades. Therefore, recognizing the causes of populism helps to understand the hegemonic practice of populism in Latin America.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “¿Por qué está insosteniblemente vivo el populismo? ¿Por qué en América Latina predominan los casos exitosos de populismo de izquierda, mientras que en los Estados Unidos y Europa ascienden de manera casi inmarcescible los populismos de derecha?” (Casullo 2019:33).



In addition to historical legacies, contemporary factors such as economic globalization, neoliberal economic policies, political corruption, and inequality have also contributed to the recurrence of populism in Latin America. Populist leaders have been able to capitalize on these factors to rally popular support against established political elites, promising to restore order, justice, and equality.

Structural and historical causes that characterize Latin American politics implies recognizing that the logic of any political leader or party that hopes to succeed must engage with the underlying dynamics of populism. This does not necessarily mean reproducing populist practices or adopting a populist strategy, but it does require a careful consideration of the social, economic, and political factors that fuel the appeal of populism. It also requires a willingness to engage with marginalized and excluded groups in order to build more inclusive and participatory democratic institutions that can accommodate the needs and aspirations of all citizens.

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