

Populism in Latin America

POL333 Populism and political parties





Latin America



Latin America



Latin America Political Position of Leading Political Party, 2015

(approximate, impressionistic designations)

Left --- Right



South America's Political Orientation

Over the past several years, Latin America appears to have rejected the leftist populism that punctuated its political landscape. Brazil and Argentina, however, will probably swing back to the left by the end of the decade.

■ Countries with leftist or populist governments

2007



2016



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LA 2007-2019

- **1. „Classical LA populists: created mass-based party or labor organisations linked to the state to incorporate their followers, national populism**

Peru: Haya de la Torre 1978-79

Argentina: Juan Perón, 1945-55

Chile: Popular Front, 1938-41

Mexico: Lázaro Cárdenas, 1934-40

Brazil: Getulio Vargas, 1937-45 (Estado Novo period)

- **2. „Neo-populists“ - more pluralistic or individualized form of representation, neoliberalism and populism**

Peru: Alberto Fujimori 1990-2000

Argentina: Carlos Menem 1989-99

- **3. Left-wing populism, socialism and indigenism:**

Venezuela: Hugo Chavez 1999-2013

Bolivia: Evo Morales since 2006

Argentina: Nestor Kirchner 2003-2007, Christina Fernandez de Kirchner since 2007

Ecuador: Raffael Correa since 2007

- **4. Far right populism in Brazil : Bolsonaro**

Waves of LA populism



- **more voters – workers as well as firm owners, poorest part of society**
- **nationalism or indigenism**
- **charismatic leader**
- **Sentiments, strong leadership, rapid solutions,**
- **Always men with exception of Eva Perón – LA machismo**
- **origins are quite different from traditional while elite**
- **High public support**
- **Mostly presidential systems without checks and balances**
- **Fragile party system**
- **Aim to create “new type of democracy”**

LA Populism



- **Hard where party system is strong and inclusive and where strong civil society exists**
- **Easy for weak, fragile and exclusive party system and weak civil society**



Populist mobilisation

- **use of established political party as Menem in Argentina/**
- **create new one against established existing party system as e.g. Chavez in Venezuela**
- **Property in state hands, nationalisation – Chavez, vs. Neoliberalism e.g. Fujimori**
- **Polarisation of society and support from low class in Chavez Venezuela vs. Multi-class coalitions in Fujimori regime**
- **Most of them critiques of partidocracias but unable to fill the political vacuum with new representative institutions**
- **Peronismo, fujimorismo, chavismo.....**

Different forms

- **Promoted democracy eventhough they did not always behave in democratic ways**
- **Exhibit authocratic tendencies**
- **Show little respect for the rule of law, political pluralism and democratic checks and balances**

Populism as challenge to democracy

- **Voice to the excluded and marginalized ones – workers in the classical populism or indigenismo in the neo-populist one**
- **End up ruling with decrees, changing constitutions, launching military backed up presidential coups, disregarding division of power, shutting down congress, legitimizing power by new elections or referenda**

Populism as challenge to democracy

- **Rely on armed forces so politicisation of army and weakening of civilian representative institutions**
- **Skirt institutional checks and balances**
- **Promise to be more efficient but usually end up similarly as their predecessors with administrative failures and inefficiency**
- **„bait-and-switch“ tactics**

Populism as challenge to democracy

- **1914-1979 military governments alternate with weak democracy**
- **Transition to democracy in Peru only from 1979**
- **1979 new constitution – suffrage for illiterates indigenas (30% increase in electorate)**
- **Democracy very weak**
- **Marked by hyperinflation**
- **Social tensions, rise of Shining Path, terrorism**



LA neo-populists: Fujimori in Peru

- Capitalized from disenchantment with the government of Alan Garcia, beating Mario Vargas Llosa with the political party „Cambio 90“ in 1990
- Exploited political distrust, Llosa ties with previous establishment and won much support from the poor
- El Chino – first LA head of government with East Asian decent
- Controversial figure
- Restoring macroeconomic stability
- Authoritarian way of ruling
- Violation of human rights and consequent imprisonment after he seeked refugee in Japan

LA neo-populists: Fujimori in Peru



- **implemented measures that caused inflation to drop from 7,650% in 1990 to 139% in 1991.**
- **disolved Congress in the auto-golpe of 5th April 1992**
- **The poutsch was perceived positively because congress was seen as the corrupted institution**
- **He then revised the constitution; called new congressional elections; and implemented substantial economic reform, including privatization of numerous state-owned companies, creation of an investment-friendly climate, and sound management of the economy.**

LA neo-populists: Fujimori in Peru

- Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path)
- Successful but marred with HR violations
- 1996, Japanese embassy taking 72 people hostage.
- Fujimori's seek a third term in 2000 brought political and economic turmoil

Fujimori against terrorism and the end of Fujimorismo

- 1935- 1952 new ideologies
- 1952 Revolution, universal adult suffrage, sweeping land reform, rural education, nationalized the country's largest tin mines.
- for the first time in Republican history, the State attempted to incorporate into national life and Aymara and Quechua peasants that together constituted no less than 65 percent of the total population.
- 1964-85 junta, coups, counter coups, hyperinflation,
- 1985 -2005 transition to (weak) democracy

LA 3rd wave of populism: Bolivia before Morales



- **Bolivia is South America's poorest country, with 60 percent of the population living below the poverty line, and 38 percent in extreme poverty,"**
- **Bolivia is 2nd after Venezuela with the natural reserves**
- **30% Quechua, 30% Mestizo, 25% Aymara, 15% White**
- **Exploitation of gas resources: capitalisation vs nationalisation**
- **Coca eradication/cultivation**
- **Military responses towards strikes**

Social conflict in Bolivia before Morales



- **loose confederation of indigenous social movements (MAS) with Evo Morales as leader**
- **2005 -2019**
- **Evo Morales and MAS - 54% of the electorate's votes, becoming the first Native Bolivian president in history**
- **announced the increase of the minimum wage by 50%**
- **nationalizing most of Bolivia's natural gas fields**



Bolivia: Evo Morales

- **We want to be an exemplary country in Latin America with the participation of the people“.**
- **nationalised the oil and gas industries, begun redistributing land, cut public sector salaries and hopes to promote some legal uses of coca leaves.**
- **Some have called the changes in Bolivia a democratic revolution.**
- **close ties to governments in Venezuela and Cuba**

Bolivia: Evo Morales administration



- **Re-election:** Allows Mr Morales to stand for re-election in Dec 2009
- **Indigenous rights:** Stresses importance of ethnicity in Bolivia's make-up. A whole chapter devoted to indigenous rights
- **Autonomy:** Power decentralised, four levels of autonomy - departmental, regional, municipal and indigenous
- **Resources:** Sets out state control over key economic sectors, state sovereignty over vast natural gas fields, redistribution of revenues to poorer parts of the nation
- **Judiciary:** Indigenous systems of justice same status as official existing system. Judges will be elected, and no longer appointed by Congress.
- **Land:** New limit on ownership 5,000 hectares (12,355²) But measure not retroactive.

Bolivia: New constitution introduced by Evo Morales



- **Rise of tensions against redistribution**
- **Anti-imperialism**
- **national protests after cutting government subsidies to gasoline and so increase of petrol price. Morales responded by annulling the decree, saying that he was complying with his promise to "listen to the people".**

2019 political crisis

2020 election and victory of MAS

Evo Morales administration



- 1820s-1935 caudillismo
- 1935-58 democratisation however interrupted by junta regime, universal suffrage, political parties,
- 1958-1998 transition towards democracy
- Agreement from Punto Fijo – power in hands of two parties AD and COPEI, corporativism, nepotism, high oil revenues flowing through the government, corruption
- 1992 unsuccessful coup d etat, Chavez imprisoned and becomes national hero

Venezuela before Hugo Chavez



- **Bolivarian revolution**
- **New constitution 1999: Reform of the judiciary power, More opportunities for referenda, Stronger presidential power, The role of the state in economy stronger, President can issue the decrees which have the power of law without consultation of approval by the parliament**
- **The president term was extended to 6 years (5 before) with the right of re-election**

Venezuela: Hugo Chavez 1998-2013



- **Firstly popularity**
- **Since 2001 increase in the opposition due to the nepotism, aggressive style, revolutionary extremist rhetoric**
- **2002 unsuccessful coup d'état organized by the opposition with the cooperation of oil company PDVSA, businessmen and USA**

Chavez



- Chavez very clever in PR – soap novellas about the young couple (she is for Chavez fighting for the life of poor, he is undecided and at the end decides for president)
- 2006 Chavez reelected in the president office (being for the 3rd time president – the election according to the old constitution does not count☺)
- The Constitution designates three additional powers of the federal government--the judicial, citizen, and electoral branches.

Venezuela under Hugo Chavez



- POLITICS
- * **Lifts** the existing **two-term limit** for presidents and **extends** the term from six to seven years.
- * **Lowers** the **voting age** to 16 from 18.
- * Allows the president to **create and eliminate provinces**, districts and "communal cities" via **decree** and name the authorities in charge of them.
- ECONOMY
- * Ends the central bank's autonomy and gives the **president direct control** over foreign currency reserves.
- * Prioritizes **collective interests** over individual interests in constitutional goal of creating a socialist economy.
- * Reduces the **work day** to six hours from eight.
- * Extends **social security** to some self-employed workers.
- RIGHTS
- * Allows security forces to **arrest citizens without charge** and opens the way to **censoring media** during natural disasters or political "emergencies" declared by the president.

Venezuela under Chavez: Constitution 2007

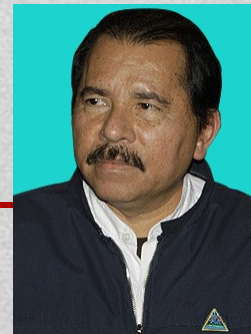


- **New Constitution severely limits checks and balances**
- **High government spending on populist policies**
- **Maintained fixed exchange rate for a long time**
- **Expanded role of the military**
- **Nepotism and corruption**
- **Stronger OPEC relationships → oil prices**
- **Growing tensions: poverty, crime & corruption**

Venezuela under Hugo Chavez

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wsxmod0TSAo>
(hugo chavez at un assembly, devil)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzQCQm77GK4> (last
speech 18 min)
-

- LA integration against US power
- „Bolivarian Alliance of the American People" (ALBA) –Castro in Cuba, Morales in Bolivia, Raffael Correa in Ecuador and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua.
- OPEC relationships (Iraq, Libya & Iran) and the ability to control oil prices
- Russia



Hugo Chavez and his friends

- **Protests**
- **Supported by police and army**
- **Authoritarian**
- **Decree ruling**
- **9 000 executions**
- **5 mil flee out**
- **Crimes against humanity**
- **Conspiracy theories**
- **homophobia**



Nicola maduro since 2013

- **1978 towards democracy**
- **Weak democracy, permanent crisis**
- **Correa since 2006- 2017**
- **Hugo Chavez his mentor**

Ecuador before Rafael Correa

- (1) a **constitutional and democratic revolution**, including a deep reform of state institutions,
- (2) a **moral revolution** through a media campaign and tougher penalties against those guilty of corruption,
- (3) an **economic and productive revolution** against the interests of big business,
- (4) an **education and health revolution** through the creation of new social programmes, and
- (5) a **revolution for dignity, sovereignty** and Latin American integration.



Ecuador: Rafael Correa

Lenin Moreno – Ecuador 2017



switching sides and decorreisation

reversed several key legislation pieces passed by Correa´s

administration, that targeted wealthy individuals and banks,

also reversed a previous referendum allowing indefinite re-election

unstable policies

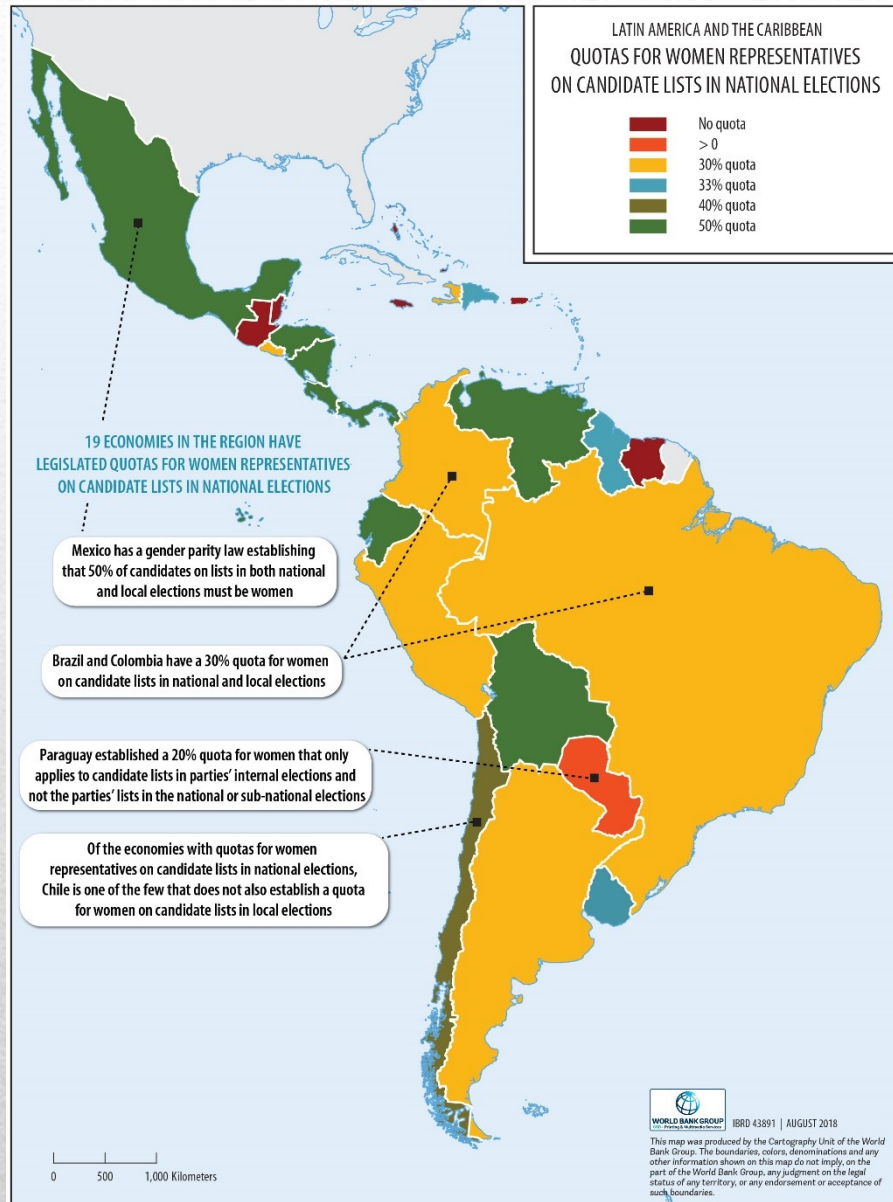
fuel subsidies, poverty, - political crisis

- **Since 2015 in Mexican politics**
- **Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador**
- **Anti-establishment**
- **opponent to the neoliberal economic policies**
- **fair wages**
- **stop the privatization of Pemex**
- **no land to foreign mining companies**
- **better treatment of the Indigenous peoples**
- **to carry out the 1996 San Andrés Accords**
- **Legalisation of marihuana**
- **Against US engagement in Mexico**
- **Mexicanismo**

MORENA



In the name of women in LA



- **Jair Messias Bolsonaro**
- **Nationalist, populist**
- **Pro-gun**
- **Misogyny, homophobia**
- **vocal opponent of same-sex marriage, environmental regulations, abortion, affirmative action, drug liberalization, land reforms, and secularism at the federal level**
- **statements in defense of the Brazilian military regime**
- **torture is a "legitimate practice"**
- **introduction of life imprisonment to the Brazilian penal code**
- **supports the privatization of state-owned companies and advocates free market policies**

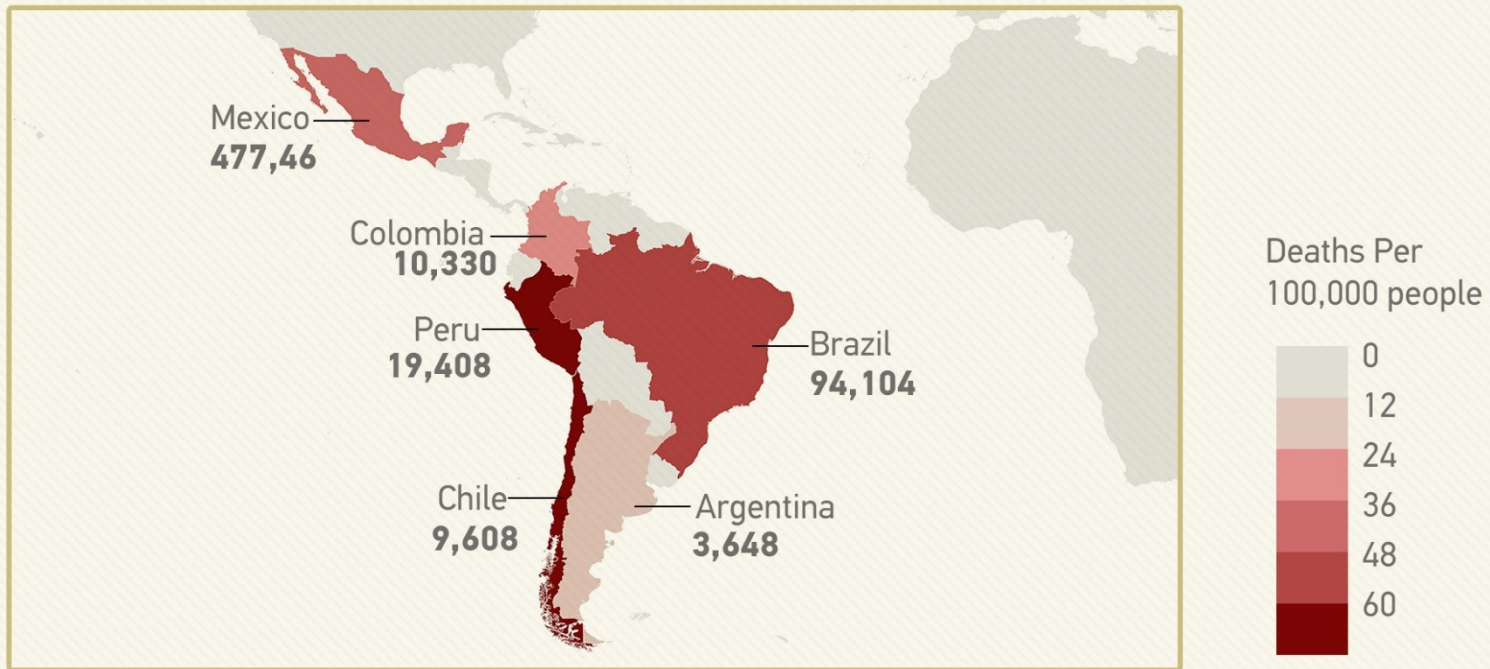


Brazil: far right populism?

- Unequality and exclusion
- **weak states** which provide virtually no services to their citizens
- **elitist governments** that have failed to create representative and inclusive democracy
- Drugs
- Gas
- US backyard

LA populism as a result of these factors:

Reported coronavirus deaths in Latin America



Source: Johns Hopkins University. Data as of 03 August

Covid-19 – worse than 1981/2008 crises?

Basic education

economies, exports, tourism

OC, underground economy

Migrants

Democracy

Authoritarian drift

Conflicts

political violence

<https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/two-month-review-latin-america-22>



