



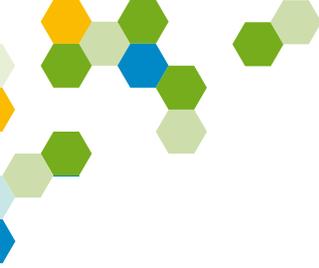
SPECIAL REPORT

# The new populism in Latin America, more alive than ever

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Latin America prepares to experience an intense wave of elections during the next months that will be decisive for the continent. While the region awaits what will happen in Venezuela, countries like Chile, Honduras, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Colombia, Mexico and Brazil will hold presidential elections till 2018. Populism is more present in this political scenario against all odds, and instead of falling apart is more alive than ever.

Beyond its swinging ideological movements through Europe or the Americas, populism has started to produce similar leadership formulas wherever it sets up shop. The new populist leaders have charisma, authoritarianism, political incorrectness and the metonymy of taking their part in the whole, just like they share an aversion for nuance, Manicheism—or stark division into good and evil—a visceral rejection of a political class they consider merely a power mafia, and the surprising ability to capitalize on all types of protest votes to use them to their own benefit.

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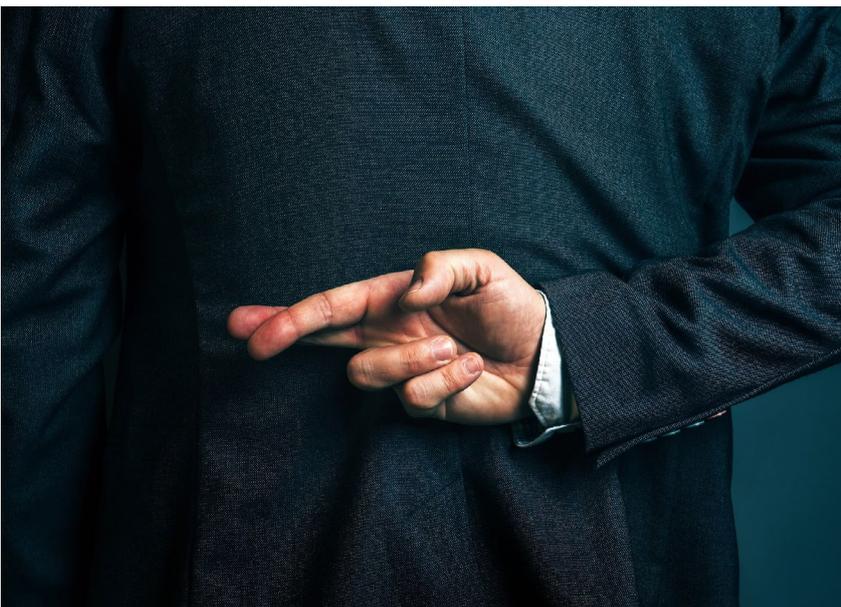
## 2. THE PERSISTENCE OF POPULISM IN LATIN AMERICA

The outcomes of different electoral votes since 2015 have caused the perception to spread that populism and populist-demagogic movements, at both ends of the spectrum, and at their peak in Europe and the United States (Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, Podemos, Syriza...) are actually beating a retreat in Latin America. Latin American elections over the last two years, beyond the specificities typical of each nation, would seem to reveal and confirm this ebb.

As a result of Mauricio Macri's 2015 victory over “Kirchnerism,” this idea of populist withdrawal had already been upheld by Italian academic Loris Zanatta, who stated in the newspaper *La Nación*:

“Now that the favorable economic cycle is behind us, the open economies of the Pacific Alliance are generally proving to be more robust and more dynamic than the nationalist and autarchic economies of the countries bordering the Atlantic. Thus, to understand the new climate that—according to some signs—would seem to be opening up in Latin America, it is better to use the nature of the political regimes as a parameter. By doing so, we will see that the broad support that populist regimes have enjoyed until now is deflating and the demand for normal democracies, with no adjectives, is growing<sup>1</sup>.”

Nonetheless, as we will try to show in these pages, to talk about the end of populism in Latin America is actually a mirage and a false perception. Here, we will understand populism as a way of interpreting the political game in which populists claim for themselves the total representation of a “people” formed only by the supporters of the populist leader, while the opposition lacks legitimacy and is likened to being unpatriotic<sup>2</sup>. This approach, far from being in decline in Latin America,



<sup>1</sup> Loris Zanatta en *La Nación*, “Se desinflan los populismos de la región”, 2015: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1843963-se-desinflan-los-populismos-de-america-latina>

<sup>2</sup> Jan-Werner Müller en *What Is Populism?* University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016: <http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/15615.html>

Figure 2. Latin America election calendar



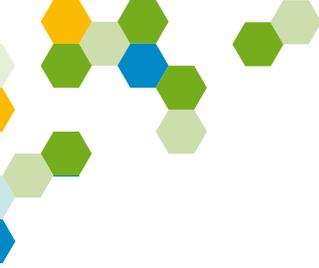
Source: <http://www.celag.org/calendario-electoral-de-america-latina-2016-2017-2018/>

continues to be very present, now brandished not only by parties, movements and leaderships related to “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism,” but also by forces whose stance is on the right of the political spectrum and that now has greater options for winning elections and for obtaining electoral impact.

Effectively, the vines with which Latin American populism are woven are persistent and have continuity in the current regional situation. Indeed, there are clear signs that new populist forms and leaderships are emerging from the slump of fatigue certain governments are suffering from, as well as the deceleration and growing disenchantment towards some inefficient and ineffective states that are not suitably channeling the needs of the growing middle classes, which feel let down.

These new populisms, whose immense majority arise on the fringes of “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism,” continue to be replete and loaded with authoritarianism, committed to protectionism, charismatic leaderships and rejection of institutions and institutionalization. As political expert Andrés Malamud stresses:

“Populism promotes a direct relationship between the leader and the masses. To



“[...] populism has continued to show its ability to resist disappearance, maturing on suitable terrain.”

evade parliaments and political parties, populist leaders build antinomy and take their stand on only one side: that of the people. The generic name for populism is Manicheism. More than institutions or the elite, the enemy of populism is nuance<sup>3</sup>.”

In short, as we will have the chance to verify with the defeat of Kirchnerism in Argentina, of Chavism in the legislative, or the difficulties Correa had holding onto power in Ecuador, they do not represent any type of end to Latin American populism. It is actually the complete opposite, as the head researcher at the Royal Elcano Institute, Carlos Malamud, would put forth: “There will be new types of populism in this new wave, although of a different sign than what has prevailed since 1998 and with great strength until Hugo Chávez’s death in March 2013<sup>4</sup>.”

The following pages will analyze the change in political cycle the region is experiencing and how, along with the alternatives of center-right—on the rise—and center-left—weakened—other types of proposals start to be glimpsed of the “right-wing populist,” in parallel with the survival of the shipwrecked remains of “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism,” left-wing populism.

### 3. THE STAGES OF POPULISM IN LATIN AMERICA

Populism in Latin America has historically proven to have a great capacity for resistance, and skill at continuing to mutate over the course of the 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Susanne Gratius described how the initial, or “classic,” populism existed in the 1930s and 40s (Juan Domingo Perón and Getulio Vargas). It had a revival, when many analysts, experts and academics considered it dead, in the form of neoliberal populism in the 90s (Carlos Menem, Alberto Fujimori and Abdalá Bucaram) that led in the last decade to “new populism,” now shaped as “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism,” and whose main reference was Hugo Chávez. Thus, populism has continued to show its ability to resist disappearance, maturing on suitable terrain: political and institutional crises, as well as the economic and social crises that end up becoming excellent breeding grounds, ideal for their germination, growth, development and even mutation.

Some of the new world populist paradigms (Donald Trump, the ultra-right populism of Marine Le Pen

<sup>3</sup> Andrés Malamud, en La Nación, “Un mal momento para salir del populismo”, 2017: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1983269-un-mal-momento-para-salir-del-populismo>

<sup>4</sup> En Real Instituto Elcano por Carlos Malamud “El populismo y la nueva coyuntura política en América Latina”: <http://www.blog.rielcano.org/populismo-y-nueva-coyuntura-politica-en-america-latina/>

“Populism [...] contains a message that ends up seeping back through the cracks left by cyclical crises and traumatic socioeconomic changes.”

or the left-wing populism of Podemos) cannot be explained without the previous crises (political and socioeconomic) that these countries have gone through. Likewise, the crises of the 30s and the changes in the social model (urbanization) and economic model (industrialization) are behind phenomena like Peronism in Argentina and Vargism in Brazil. The current crisis, with structural proportions and that kicked off in 2008, is the backdrop that explains the emergence of phenomena like Trump in the United States, Le Pen in France and Podemos in Spain, as well as Golden Dawn and Alexis Tsipras—at least until he took office as prime minister—in Greece.

The populist discourse, simple, direct and easy to understand, constructed by leaders with excellent oratory skills, tends to be effective because it says aloud what many think to themselves. It does not appeal to reflection or analysis, but to instincts; it channels and fosters accumulated social rage and rancor. And in Latin America there is a hotbed that favors these forces: the citizens' disenchantment and dissatisfaction about an ineffective state and a party system that does not suitably articulate demands and that is under the long shadow of corruption. Citizens that have

socially progressed but that, with the current low economic growth, fear losing the terrain gained, not becoming fully integrated into the emerging middle class.

Populism may seem to have been extinguished (it happened in the 60s and 70s in Latin America) or receding (current situation in Latin America), but it contains a message that ends up seeping back through the cracks left by cyclical crises and traumatic socioeconomic changes. After the crisis of the 80s (the “Lost Decade”), the “neopopulism” of Menem and Fujimori arose; after the “Lost Half-Decade” (1997-2002) Chavism appeared and the “21<sup>st</sup> century socialists.” Now, as Emili J. Blasco points out: “There is a change in the economic situation, which is being reflected in political changes. This does not mean that it will transfer to all countries. Some governments will go through bad times and others will be definitively done away with, although I don't think we will see the end of populism at this time<sup>5</sup>.”

#### 4. THE APPARENT POPULIST DOWNTURN IN LATIN AMERICA

The defeat of Kirchnerism in Argentina's presidential elections in 2015, of Chavism in the legislative elections

<sup>5</sup> En ABC por Emili J. Blasco en “El populismo entra en vía muerta en el continente” [http://www.abc.es/internacional/abc-populismo-entra-muerta-201512080239\\_noticia.html](http://www.abc.es/internacional/abc-populismo-entra-muerta-201512080239_noticia.html)

**“In reality, what is happening on the Latin American political panorama is the downslide of a “certain” way of governing.”**

in Venezuela this same year, and of Evo Morales in the referendum in Bolivia started to create this false sensation that populism was and is in decline and withdrawal, in a region in which the majority of election results have defeats for governments close to or linked to “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism.” The growing difficulties of Nicolás Maduro’s government in Venezuela since 2016, or the tight victory of Lenín Moreno in Ecuador in 2017 have only confirmed this feeling, beside the fact of the overwhelming re-election of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua.

In reality, what is happening on the Latin American political panorama is the downslide of a “certain” way of governing. In 2015, Mauricio Macri’s victory over Peronist Daniel Scioli started to open up a new

stage in the region, marked by the influx of center-right governments. A trend that Jimmy Morales’ victory against “social democrat” Sandra Torres in Guatemala, and the triumph in the Venezuelan legislative elections of the Democratic Unity Roundtable over the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) only strengthen this idea.

As political scientist Steven Levitsky says:

“(This) withdrawal... has two main causes (where) the first is... the natural fatigue engendered after three or four presidential terms of governance (...). After three terms, governments lose political reflexes; they become distanced from the people, and corruption grows. Even when they are not that

Figure 1. Election results 2015-2017

YEAR	OPPOSITION VICTORIES	RULING VICTORIES
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> ARGENTINA (PRESIDENTIAL)</li> <li> GUATEMALA (PRESIDENTIAL)</li> <li> VENEZUELA (LEGISLATIVE)</li> </ul>	
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> BOLIVIA (REFERÉNDUM)</li> <li> PERU (PRESIDENTIAL)</li> <li> COLOMBIA (REFERENDUM)</li> <li> CHILE (LOCAL)</li> <li> BRAZIL (LOCAL)</li> <li> MEXICO (LOCAL)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (PRESIDENTIAL)</li> <li> NICARAGUA (PRESIDENTIAL)</li> </ul>
2017		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> ECUADOR (PRESIDENTIAL)</li> </ul>

Source: In house

“The latest defeats, or clear withdrawals, indicate the start of the decline of this type of alternative compared to the about-face and predominance of center-right political parties [...].”

corrupt (as is the case with Chile’s *Concertación*), the people get tired. Sooner or later, weariness affects all governments. Twelve years (Argentina) or 13 years (Brazil) in power is a lot. Nothing is permanent in democracy. Nobody governs forever<sup>6</sup>.”

Populism, in its version ascribed to “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism,” is undergoing clear shrinking, much more pronounced since 2013 after its undoubtable progression starting in 2005. Hugo Chávez was very much alone in Latin America for six years (1999-2005), besides his alliance with Fidel Castro’s Cuba. In the middle of the last decade, the Chavist project started to win allies in the region: Evo Morales in Bolivia in 2005, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua in 2006 and Rafael Correa in Ecuador in 2007. Since 2009, Chávez’s “anti-imperialist” and anti-neoliberal proposal (expressed in ALBA, in Petrocaribe, etcetera) continued to expand, with new allies like Manuel Zelaya in Honduras and Fernando Lugo in Paraguay. Further, he had the sympathy of Lula da Silva in Brazil and similarity to Kirchnerism in Argentina.

The latest defeats, or clear withdrawals, indicate the start

of the decline of this type of alternative compared to the about-face and predominance of center-right political parties, movements and leaders and the emergence of another class of demagogic and populist leadership, now distant from the trend following “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism.” These new populists that—as described by Flavia Freidenberg in her already classic study entitled *La tentación populista* (The Populist Temptation)—have a series of highly defined characteristics:

“Populism (is) a leadership style that is characterized by direct, personalist and paternalist relationships between leader-follower, in which the leader does not recognize organizational or institutional mediations, speaks on behalf of the people and discursively strengthens their opposition to ‘the others;’ where the followers are convinced of the leader’s extraordinary qualities and believe that because of them and/or the client exchanges they have with him (both material and symbolic) they will manage to improve their personal status or that of their surroundings<sup>7</sup>.”

The populism linked to “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism” may have

<sup>6</sup> En Confidencial por Steven Levitsky, “¿El Fin del giro a la izquierda”: <http://www.confidencial.com.ni/archivos/articulo/21384/iquest-el-fin-del-giro-a-la-izquierdan>

<sup>7</sup> Flavia Freidenberg, “¿Qué es el populismo? Enfoques de estilo y una nueva propuesta de definición como un estilo de liderazgo” Instituto de Iberoamérica: <https://www.sintesis.com/data/indices/9788497564823.pdf>

“[...] only around 40 percent of the Latin American population expresses satisfaction about the democratic quality of their respective countries, according to a study by the Chilean consultancy *Latinobarómetro*.”

stopped spreading or currently be in decline, although populism in general—the populism now emerging that follows stances more closely linked to the right-wing of the political spectrum—is facing optimal opportunities for development, since the political and socioeconomic conditions that explained the earlier populist surge (in the past decade) continues to arise in one form or another in the current situation. University of Salamanca professor Manuel Alcantara recalls that the success of Chavism and other movements with these features was due to the existence of factors that contributed to their triumph. Like the period from the end of the 90s to the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, at present Latin America continues to be marked by some of these shortcomings that fed—and continue to feed—a new revival of different types of populisms:

## 5. POPULIST SYSTEMIZATION, ACCORDING TO ALCANTARA

**1. Political disaffection.** In the words of the professor from Salamanca, the onset of the new millennium suffered: “**a severe crisis in the political representation system, which translates not only into a loss**

**of society’s trust in political parties, and rejection of them, but also of traditional professional politicians**”<sup>8</sup>.”

Similarly, today we are also witnessing a distancing between representatives and the represented: extreme mistrust of the “political class,” unbelief in parties and traditional participation routes, as well as lack of trust in governments. As José Woldenberg, professor at the UNAM Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, states for the case of Mexico:

“Like never before, I am seeing people with very little hope. You get the impression that for many, civic duty ends after voting (...). Clearly, we have a deficit of citizen responsibility as a country. Very few Mexican citizens regularly participate in an organization, whether human rights, electoral observation or environmental defense, and are only a minority”<sup>9</sup>.”

Indeed, only around 40 percent of the Latin American population expresses satisfaction about the democratic quality of their respective countries, according to a study by the Chilean consultancy *Latinobarómetro*. It is what French political

<sup>8</sup> CIDOB, Manuel Alcantara Saéz, “América Latina después de Chávez”: <https://es.scribd.com/document/261039605/Alcantara-Saez-M-America-Latina-Despues-de-Chavez>

<sup>9</sup> Reforma Revista R. Miguel de la Vega entrevista a José Woldenberg: <http://www.reforma.com/aplicacioneslibre/articulo/default.aspx?id=552435&md5=caddabdf328cb86b21622705e4e8631&ta=odfdbac11765226904c16cb9ad1b2efe>

“[...] social mobilizations [...] are putting pressure to obtain more effective and efficient states that channel their demands towards better public services.”

scientist Pierre Rosanvallon describes as a democratic malaise, characterized by the growing loss of importance of elections, the lesser centrality of administrative power (and its public policies) and the lack of connection they feel with public servants and institutions.

### 2. Doubts about the model.

Although the region is not going through “a severe economic crisis” like during the Lost Half-Decade (1998-2003), the current effects of deceleration and slowdown have called into question the “oil company-export model in which the political class had the right to profit from rentier distribution channels<sup>11</sup>.”

The Lost Half-Decade engendered the third populist wave (“the new populism”), and the current stagnation

the region is suffering from creates a breeding ground (dissatisfaction at an inefficient state and a stagnant economy that offers fewer opportunities for social improvement) for a new populist wave to arise, now situated on the right of the political spectrum.

### 3. Growing social divide.

Alcántara states that, after the Lost Half-Decade, “a severe conflict in the way of setting out relations between the economy and society became clear, as well as in the role assigned to the state to handle them.”

In the present situation, the social mobilizations led by the emerging middle class (those that have taken place in Chile, Brazil and Guatemala) are putting pressure to obtain more effective and efficient states that channel their demands towards better public services (transportation, security, education and health) and greater transparency.

### 4. Disappointing reforms.

Two decades ago, according

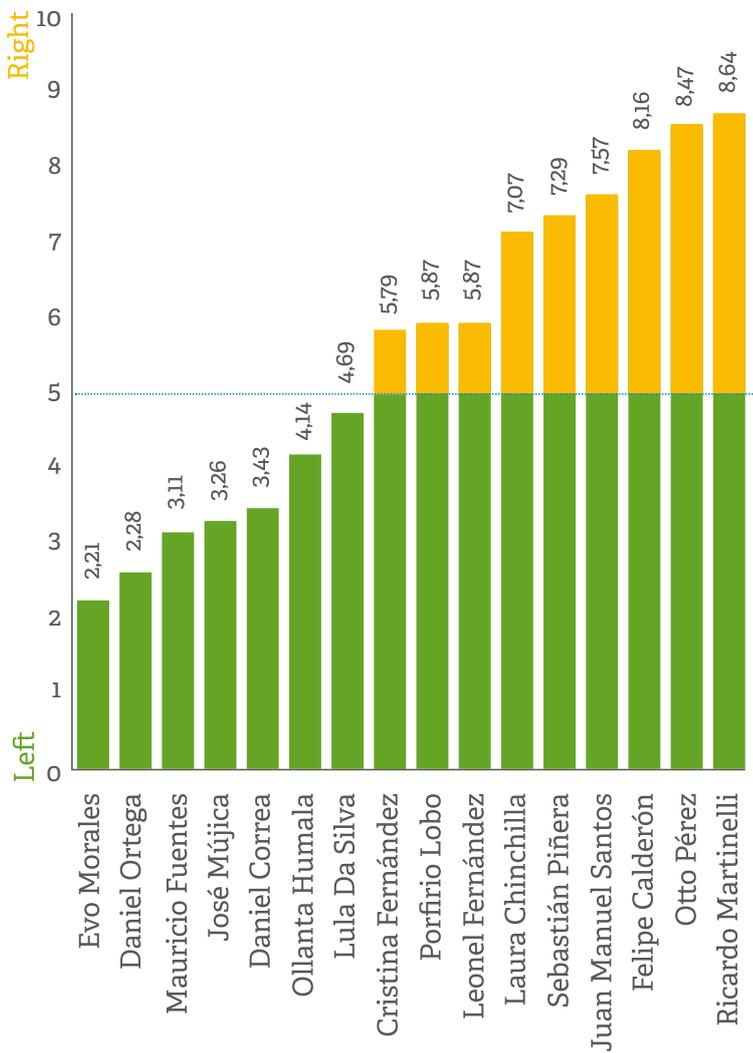


<sup>10</sup> Opinión Pública Latinoamericana: <http://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp>

<sup>11</sup> CIDOB, Manuel Alcántara Saéz, “América Latina después de Chávez”: <https://es.scribd.com/document/261039605/Alcantara-Saez-M-America-Latina-Despues-de-Chavez>

<sup>12</sup> CIDOB, Manuel Alcántara Saéz, “América Latina después de Chávez”: <https://es.scribd.com/document/261039605/Alcantara-Saez-M-America-Latina-Despues-de-Chavez>

Figure 2. Ideological stance of presidents



Source: <https://es.scribd.com/document/261039605/Alcantara-Saez-M-America-Latina-Despues-de-Chavez>

to Alcántara “**the failure at shrinking the enormous inequality** was recorded and had even deepened, partly due to disappointments from the application of the structural reforms model backed by international financial institutions.”

At present, the slowdown puts the social status and ground gained into danger, not only with regard to reducing poverty and inequality, but also for the consolidation of the middle classes: the most vulnerable sectors of these middle classes runs the danger of experiencing social setbacks due to lean economic growth.

This overall context is what explains the current and future survival of populism, even though it is turning up under other guises and with different characteristics. Indeed, emerging center-right alternatives (Mauricio Macri in Argentina) are coexisting in the present situation with center-left parties and coalitions (Michelle Bachelet’s New Majority government in Chile) and two types of populist-leaning movements, as Alcántara summarizes in figure 2.

<sup>13</sup> CIDOB, Manuel Alcántara Saéz, “América Latina después de Chávez” <https://es.scribd.com/document/261039605/Alcantara-Saez-M-America-Latina-Despues-de-Chavez>

“The Lopez Obrador discourse has been constructed on the foundations of creating a common and easily identifiable enemy: the “power mafia” (the traditional parties and the political class).”

## 6. SURVIVAL OF THE “NEW POPULISM” MOVEMENTS AND LEADERSHIPS

Along with the governments that arose in the last decade in the heat of the explosion of Chavism, although with their own characteristics and individual features (Evo Morales in Bolivia, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua and Correa in Ecuador), forces survive that clearly espouse the most recent populist tradition. This is the case of Kirchnerism in Argentina, represented by former president Cristina Kirchner, who aspired to the senate in 2017, to pave the way for her return to the Casa Rosada (presidential Pink House) in 2019; as well as the leadership of Mexican Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO). They are the remains of what Susanne Grätius described as the **third populist wave**, or “new populism,” hegemonic in the last decade.

AMLO, a favorite for winning the Mexican presidential elections in 2018, deploys a demagogic discourse that in itself contains the features of this type of populism. For example, the dichotomous and Manichean presentation of a reality permanently divided between “good and bad,” like when he points out and accuses the traditional political class of corruption: “All of them have turned their backs on our movement and I foresee the arrival of new betrayals, because

betrayal always joins hands with many others, and never arrives alone, although those who betray are the zealots, the corrupt, and not the people.”

The Lopez Obrador discourse has been constructed on the foundations of creating a common and easily-identifiable enemy: the “power mafia” (the traditional parties and the political class). A “mafia” that has betrayed the people, a mythologized creation and symbol of Republican purity, for whom the leader (in this case AMLO) is its representative and embodiment. After the election in Edomez this June, López Obrador has seen his favoritism for the upcoming elections next year strengthened.

## 7. AMLO AND HIS THREE PILLARS

A pre-eminence that is held up by the three pillars that reflect the characteristics of his proposal:

**1. His great charisma.** All populism requires charismatic leadership based on the direct and non-institutionalized relationship between the leader and his followers.

Claiming that he speaks on behalf of and as the embodiment of the people, one of López Obrador’s great strengths is that he has a highly attractive discourse for the working classes, based on raising flags against the

“López Obrador has created a party centered on himself. [...] that has a scanty developed structure, as well as few and heterogeneous policies.”

traditional political class, denouncing corruption and brandishing a message with an extreme nationalist flavor around the defense of itself (very important in this situation in which Donald Trump is just across the border, upholding policy that does not favor Mexico's interests).

**2. Citizens extremely weary and unbelieving of traditional parties.** Populism grows to the extent that democratic institutions are weak and the crisis setting favors the emergence of demagogic leaderships. In this regard, the exhaustion of all other political forces has elevated opinions about López Obrador. The PAN governed for two six-year terms (2000-2012) and the PRI since 2012, but neither of the two administrations has managed to channel the population's desire for change or to carry Mexico toward sustained and high-level growth. The belief would seem to prevail that “it's his turn,” or “now it's López Obrador's time”: that the time has drawn nigh to give the chance to the only party (Morena) that, along with the PRD, has not governed Mexico since the PRI hegemony ended in 1997/2000.

**3. The mirage of expectations.** A possible López Obrador government would **start off with a serious problem, arising from his populist sermon. His promises of change and regeneration create a revolution of expectations**

**that would be very complex to fulfill and make real.** López Obrador has created a party centered on himself (in reality a political power that is nothing without him) that has a scanty developed structure, as well as few and heterogeneous policies. This means that a possible López Obrador government would immediately crash up against the complex reality: he would not have a majority in the Chambers; he would have little backing among governors, as the majority are in the PRI and PAN; and he would face difficulties shaping a solid and coherent governing team.

López Obrador would try to offset these weaknesses by appealing to his ability to popularize a utopia based on a mythical reconstruction of Mexican history. He aspires to recreate a mythologized Republican past (the era of Benito Juárez) in which moral and ethical values had been placed above material interests and in which corruption—*theoretically*—did not exist. This utopian and mythical world, which many of his followers dream of recreating, would involve complex situations from the very start of his term, which would have to make compromises to deal with the tough Mexican, regional and world reality.

**These difficulties may lead López Obrador to take short-term measures aimed solely at maintaining his levels of**

“[...] leaders coming from outside traditional parties, who were not involved in politics and were related—in one way or another—to mass media communications, and who grew in parallel to crises or due to the collapse of old party systems weighed down by corruption.”

**backing and social support.**

It would be a government with continuous and dramatic hurdles to jump, trying to compensate for situational difficulties that it would keep running up against: stopping and paralyzing of the opening reforms of Peña Nieto’s term, a commitment to raising nationalist social and political spending with regard to the United States, trying to prove itself firm and overreacting to Donald Trump’s initiatives.

It is unlikely that López Obrador unleashes a wave of expropriations or adopts a policy based on “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism” if he takes office. **It is much more probable that his government team would be marked by improvisation and ups and downs**, the result of the heterogeneity of the men at his side and the inexperience of the majority of them. Especially if his possible victory and taking of office, which has already caused a removal of foreign investments, is heightened by his first measures (of an anti-reformist type) and espouses an official line almost definitely marked by a lack of a single and coherent direction.

**8. APPEARANCE, EMERGENCE AND ASCENT OF “ANTI-ELITE POPULISM” IN LATIN AMERICA**

Alejandro Ordóñez: “I will brandish a politically incorrect discourse, challenging the established powers”.

If populism linked to “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism” has prevailed in the region since 1998, the “left-wing rentier populism” that we have seen since 2015 is beset by the appearance of another class of populisms situated on the right of the political spectrum. It has been strengthened by the international emergence of success stories to emulate, at least in part like that which is embodied by Donald Trump in the United States. This populism is characterized by one concrete feature, among other things: rejection of the political class in power (the majority linked to “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism”) and of traditional parties, which they feel are far from their roots. This component was no stranger to the three previous populisms, but it is extremely pronounced in this fourth stage.

There have actually already been cases in the region that pointed to or contained some of the characteristics that the new U.S. president later popularized: leaders coming from outside traditional parties, who were not involved in politics and were related—in one way or another—to mass media communications, and who grew in parallel to crises or due to the collapse of old party systems weighed down by corruption.

In this regard and an advance of what was yet to come, the phenomenon of Jimmy Morales in Guatemala in

“Leaderships that grow because there is a breeding ground: low economic growth and the social and political malaise felt about inefficient administrations.”

2015 was remarkable. Now, in the present scenario, there are other figures who could become populist leaders emerging from an anti-establishment right-wing. They include people like Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Alejandro Ordóñez and, in some ways, Uribe in Colombia and Fujimori in Peru.

Leaderships that grow because there is a breeding ground: low economic growth and the social and political malaise felt about inefficient administrations. This favors protest votes against whoever is in power: in the majority of cases center-left or “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism” governments, which explains the about-face towards right-wing options and figures from outside the system. Leaders born from the ennui of a large part of the population, who felt like they were strangers to the decisions made that affected them. As Peter Hessler recently wrote in *The New Yorker* in his article “How Trump is Transforming Rural America”:

“The calculus seemed to have shifted: Trump’s negative qualities, which once had been described as a means to an end, now had value on their own. The point wasn’t necessarily to get things done; it was to retaliate against the media and other enemies. This had always seemed fundamental to Trump’s appeal, but people had been less likely to express it so starkly before he entered office.”

At this time, the protest vote is being channeled in two different ways in the region. Either via candidates in the main traditional opposition parties, or via the support of outsider candidates.

Opposition victories in Latin America have been happening in recent years, especially since 2015, and primarily but not exclusively affect leaders and presidents considered left-wing (Kirchner in Argentina, for example). These defeats of the different lefts (Brazil’s PT and Chile’s New Majority in the 2016 local elections; Chávez in the Venezuelan legislative elections in 2015) are accompanied by the emergence of new personalities ascribed to the center-right (**Mauricio Macri** in Argentina and **Pedro Pablo Kuczynski** in Peru).

An example of the second case (supporting outsiders) was **Jimmy Morales**, who in 2015, facing the collapse of the Guatemalan party system and political class due to La Línea scandal, emerged from outside the system to take victory in the second round of the presidential elections. Morales became the big surprise in Guatemala’s 2015 elections for three primary reasons that explain the success of this television actor turned politician:

1. Morales managed to become the only candidate who could convey the image of renewal compared to the old politics

“Popular players and outsiders to politics who grew electorally by brandishing an anti-establishment message that impressed citizens who rejected the traditional party system as corrupt.”

linked to clientelism and corruption. He was in some ways an advance of Trump and the new bath of populist politicians in Latin America.

Daniel Hearing, professor at Francisco Marroquín University, stated that a comedian without money, without political structure who tested the environment for the next elections turned out to be in the middle of all of this. With the pulchritude given him due to not being a politician, he only had to smile to be the most credible of all candidates. Not corrupt or a thief. Not much more than that.

2. He also managed to channel citizen’s malaise against the political parties and class. His message particularly reached the urban electorate, especially in the capital and among the middle classes, mobilized against corruption.

Indeed, the discredit he suffered, and still does, the Guatemalan political class for the numerous cases of corruption and the disenchantment towards institutions is what favored the emergence of this new figure on the political panorama of this Central American country. This malaise, which caused multitudinous mobilizations from April to September 2015, and even caused the fall of Otto Pérez Molina, ended up being channeled by Jimmy Morales.

With no political experience, his persona was benefited by the image he projected: a man distant from the elite, with no shadow of corruption. The accusations he received (lack of political inexperience and lack of knowledge about the state), he wisely knew how to transform into virtues in his favor (he was not a player from the reviled traditional politics).

3. He also managed to place corruption as the priority topic on the national agenda, a terrain in which he became unbeatable against Manuel Baldizón, who grew up within this system; or against Sandra Torres, who held important positions in previous administrations and was linked to political clientelism.

The example of Morales, seen in perspective, actually transforms into an advance of what was to come and to happen. Popular players and outsiders to politics who grew electorally by brandishing an anti-establishment message that impressed citizens who rejected the traditional party system as corrupt. These types of leaders (Morales in Guatemala, the governor of Nuevo León in Mexico, Jaime Rodríguez Calderón, aka “El Bronco”, Trump himself in the United States) raised great expectations of change and renewal who, over time, end up running aground with the current turning against them.

“The Trump phenomenon [...] would ripple and expand throughout the world, also in Latin America.”

The Trump phenomenon (as an example of successful personal and non-institutional leadership and with a message that mobilized an electorate that felt alienated from traditional parties) would ripple and expand throughout the world, also in Latin America. He becomes a paradigm to imitate and follow by people who, far from large parties, and popular due to their presence in the media, try to take office via direct and politically-incorrect discourses that are sensationalist and polarizing. Further, the message is extremely personalist, pronounced from the right wing, but maintaining parallelisms to the methods, and partly the substance, of what was upheld by left-wing populisms until now.

This “Trumpist populism” or “anti-elite populism” is gestating in the current Latin America situation. It will progress strongly in some countries, although other countries will flee from it forever, and in others it may remain as a larval and future project. The crisis of the party system burdened by corruption (Brazil), of societies highly polarized around certain topics (Colombia), or of countries in which disaffection is brewing towards an

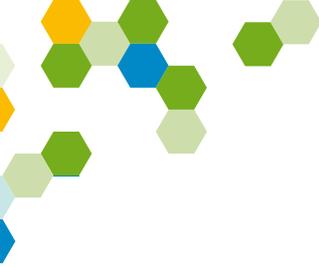
inefficient state and a political class that does not channel demands (Peru) are breeding grounds for the germination, maturing and success of this new type of populism.

And there is no shortage of examples of these types of leaders: in October 2015, the Brazil office of the BBC warned that the 2018 presidential race “could have a Brazilian Trump” with respect to the federal deputy of Rio de Janeiro, Jair Bolsonaro, who surveys placed among those with the greatest intention to vote, along with Marina Silva and Lula da Silva. “In 2018 Brazil will continue on the same road<sup>15</sup>”, said Bolsonaro after learning of Trump’s win. One of the keys to his rise is—according to Datafolha CEO Mauro Paulino—that over the years Bolsonaro has managed to implant his messages and to create a brand that considers extreme-right values: violent fighting of crime, homophobia, anti-feminism and the like.

However, there are more contenders for “Latin American Trumps.” Alejandro Ordóñez, the former district attorney in Colombia, strives to lead, or at least integrate, a large right-wing coalition<sup>16</sup>, starting from an anti-peace agreement, with the aim of preventing Santos’

<sup>14</sup> BBC “Los presentadores de “The Apprentice” que se han lanzado a la política como Donald Trump” 2017 <http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-38923270> <http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-38923270> de-Chavez

<sup>15</sup> La Tercera “Jair Bolsonaro, el populista que aprovecha la crisis de Temer” por Fernando Fuente, 2017. <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/jair-bolsonaro-populista-aprovecha-la-crisis-temer/>



“I will brandish a politically incorrect discourse, challenging the establishment. That will be my campaign.”

continuance, or a turn to the left in the country.

His ideas and his methods and ways in some cases remind us of Trump, who he did not hesitate to defend:

“It is a proposal of conservative thought. It is a conservative revolution such as that led by Reagan and Thatcher. And now we can say that Trump is doing it, despite himself. What I have said is that orthodoxy and paradigms have been breaking, and not a moment too soon, in Western democracies. In the United Kingdom with Brexit, in France with Macron and Le Pen, who were not establishment, and in Colombia with the plebiscite of October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Trump is a benchmark for political affairs because he is one of the few politicians who does what he promises. He confronts the establishment. There are things we may not agree with in his personal life or eccentricities. What I aspire to be is to say what I think, do what I say and fulfill what I promise. I have thought what I think since I was a little boy. And I have never been ashamed of it, and I have never apologized from who I am. **I will brandish a politically incorrect discourse, challenging the establishment.** That will be my campaign.”

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

Latin America is experiencing a new political cycle fed by economic prosperity and marked by three dynamics that move in parallel:

1. The weakening of options linked to the different regional left-wing parties.
2. The greater strength of center-right options.
3. The survival of two types of populisms, whose survival will negate the hypothesis that these powers are withdrawing. This populism is close to the approaches of “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism” and another situated on the right, with a clear anti-elite message.

**These new populist movements, which may or may not win elections, but which are a palpable presence on the political arena, are growing due to the worsening economic climate (slowdown) that puts the social improvements achieved since 2003 into danger.** It is also nourished by disaffection and criticisms of parties and politicians involved in cases of corruption. Finally, it is strengthened by the existence of a state and administrations that are ineffective and inefficient

“Terrible simplifiers proliferate as society’s uncertainty and anxiety grow, which is why they are a global trend today.”

when designing public policies, channeling claims for public services to work and run better (education, health and transportation, as well as security).

The inefficiency, weakness and precariousness of institutionalization processes has opened the road for the survival and emergence of populist phenomena that advocate a strong personalist concentration of power against institutional weakness. The malaise about a dysfunctional state translates into backing alternatives with a heavy personalist look.

These right-wing populisms base their success on brandishing flags that the left-wing parties have waved for over a decade: they build a dichotomy between “good and bad”, people and oligarchy. Enrique Gil Calvo speaks of how populism aims to build:

“The collective identity appeals to common aversions, as Laclau theorized. This makes the populist identity be characterized by its negativity, as it needs to manufacture an enemy of the people on

which its proposal of political subject depends... Populist reasoning tends to exacerbate antagonistic conflict.”

In short, demagogy and populism are far from falling into decline or being at the point of disappearing in Latin America. Indeed, everything points to its reappearance with different faces, as well as having a global presence, because there is a propitious context (economic stagnation), success stories to imitate (Donald Trump) and charismatic leaders who aspire to take advantage of the new populist momentum.

In reality, nothing new under the sun, as Moisés Naim would point out: “The most interesting thing about Trump, as a political product, is not how exceptional he is, but how common he is in these anti-political times. **Terrible simplifiers proliferate as society’s uncertainty and anxiety grow**, which is why they are a global trend today. They are everywhere. But Trump is the most dangerous manifestation of this trend. And that in itself is indeed exceptional.”

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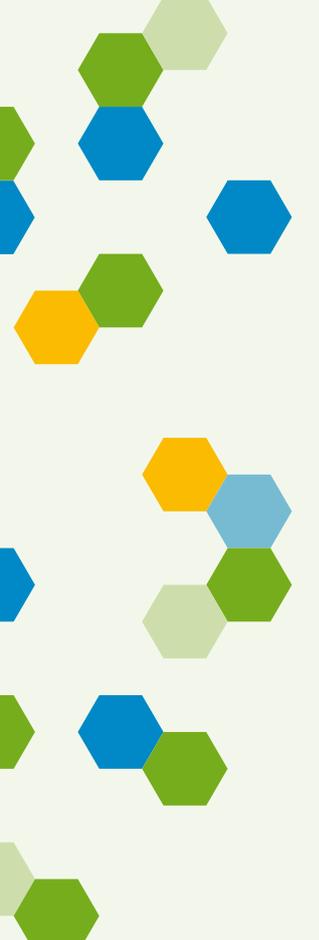
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