

Too Much Democracy: Party Collapse, Political Outsiders, and the Andean Populist Resurgence

Roque Daniel Planas

Texas State University at San Marcos, USA

Introduction

The return of populism to South America took observers by surprise. Theoretical scholarship on populism had linked the phenomenon with economic processes that had been completed by the 1980s. Observers expected the triumph of representative democracy and market capitalism to preclude further flirtations with mass politics. They were wrong.

The decidedly populist tone of the presidential campaigns of Alberto Fujimori, Carlos Menem, and Fernando Collor signaled a return to a previous era in which presidential candidates approached the electorate directly, bypassing representative institutions. This group, the “neopopulists,” differed markedly from the classical variety, particularly in their endorsement of neoliberal economic reform. This led some scholars to assert that the new populism was, above all, a political style. As such it was a phenomenon to be understood politically rather than structurally.

Recent events have proved the proclamation of a new kind of populism premature. The elections of Hugo Chávez in 1998 and Evo Morales in 2005 marked a return to the statist policies which had more in common with classical populists than the neopopulists. Their elections represented a rejection of establishment politics in general, and neoliberal economic reform in particular. Furthermore, what seemed to be a pan-South American process in the 1980s and early 1990s has become increasingly isolated in the Andes. Because of the socioeconomic similarities shared by the Andean countries, and the correlation of these structural indicators with party decline, I argue that the populist resurgence must be understood structurally. Because of the unwillingness or inability of Andean party systems to represent socioeconomic changes (particularly the increasing size of the urban poor), the traditional parties have become increasingly less representative, leading to their decline or collapse and directly contributing to the rise of outsiders. The decline of traditional party systems and the rise of populist outsiders is creating a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, the populist resurgence is fuelling a marked turn toward less liberal government. On the other hand, it is also increasing incorporation of the urban poor into the polity, which is necessary for democratic representation to continue developing in societies as unequal as the ones under study.

In order to put the current developments in context, I will begin with a review of the major theoretical works of classical populism. Following that, I will

discuss the phenomena of neopopulism and the Andean populist resurgence . The next section will briefly compare some socioeconomic variables relating to poverty and urbanization for the seven nations of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, and then discuss the rise of political outsiders, party system collapse, and the turn toward plebiscitarian democracy with this data in mind. Finally, I will discuss some of the implications of this for South American democracy, addressing the fundamental question of liberal versus plebiscitarian democracy. I will conclude with some remarks about how we might return to thinking about the populist resurgence in theoretical terms as the confluence of factors making party collapse and the rise of outsiders more likely, rather than as a purely political and rhetorical style.

Theoretical Foundations

Populism in Latin America was originally interpreted as a part of the process of industrialization and later a consequence of the policy of import substitution industrialization (ISI). As industrialization fostered the process of modernization, rural migrants flooded the cities. Due to their lack of political sophistication and uncertainty in a new environment and economic situation, they provided easy prey for demagogic leaders ready to manipulate them for their own political gain. (Germani 1971, especially 303-353; di Tella 1965) Because the most prominent theorists on the subject were Argentine (di Tella, Germani, and later O'Donnell), Perón has been modeled as the “classic populist.” Populist politics were widespread between the 1930s and the 1960s, however, and nearly every South American nation can boast a populist leader or party organization during this period.

Because populism was so widespread, the problem of definition has plagued its study since the 1960s. For the purposes of this paper, populist leaders will be defined as highly personalistic leaders who espouse anti-establishment rhetoric and come to power with loose or no party support, preferring to appeal directly to the voters at the emotional, rather than the programmatic, level.¹ Although several movements have been designated as “populist,” for the purposes of this paper, the movements created by Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina and Getúlio Vargas in Brazil will be treated as distinct from their classical Andean contemporaries. In both of these cases, political outsiders took advantage of socioeconomic changes created by rapid urbanization and industrialization to

¹ This paper only deals with populists at the presidential level; state and local level populists have been excluded.

create a new voter base.² Both of these leaders attempted to channel the popular will through themselves personally, and created institutions for serving that purpose. Both of these nations saw a rise in suffrage because of them, and a redistribution of wealth away from the traditional elite, towards the ascendant industrial working class.³

Although other nations – the Andean nations of Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador, in particular – experienced populist movements during this period, they were predominantly rural-oriented. They were not as associated with an expansion in suffrage. In Ecuador, the vote remained an elite prerogative until the 1980s. (de la Torre 2000, 85) The populism of Haya de la Torre and APRA had a decidedly rural appeal, as did that of Paz Estenssoro's MNR in Bolivia, whose main achievement was land reform. (Mainwaring, et al 2006, 20) Because none of these movements aimed to incorporate the urban poor or working class into the polity, they ultimately became obsolete as their economic policies failed to bring prosperity to the countryside and urbanization continued apace.

Neopopulism

Beginning in the 1960s, the wave of bureaucratic authoritarian regimes put an end to populism in South America. Subsequent theorists continued to explain classical populism, as well as bureaucratic authoritarianism, structurally and progressively. Because the point in the progression where populism was expected to occur had passed, theorists expected it to die completely. (Cardoso & Faletto 1979, 121-171; O'Donnell 1973, cited in de la Torre 2000, 4)

But redemocratization brought an unexpected return to populist political styles in the mid 1990s. As outlined by Weyland (1999), Carlos Menem in Argentina, Alberto Fujimori in Peru, and Fernando Collor in Brazil all won the presidency by appealing directly to masses of unorganized followers through the media⁴ They were all outsiders and they all, once in office, embraced neoliberal economic reform.⁵

Much has been made of the neopopulists' endorsement of neoliberal

² Brazil was predominately rural throughout this period, but for my purposes the industrial south can be treated as distinct from the north because of Vargas's political approach. See French 1998.

³ *Ibid* for Vargas and expansion of suffrage. French's research indicates that industrial workers managed to avoid the literacy requirement. Perón extended suffrage to women.

⁴ Abdalá Bucarem of Ecuador would fit this description as well.

⁵ There are problems with classifying Menem as an outsider which I will discuss below.

economic reform, but the affinities between neopopulism and neoliberalism proved short lived. They do not offer an explanation for the sustained appeal of populism. The majority of the population throughout South America, with the major exception of Chile, have remained static in their support of state intervention in and direction of the economy. The neopopulists identified by Weyland are perhaps the only leaders in the region to make neoliberal economic reform popular, and they were only able to do this because of people's willingness to try anything to put an end to hyperinflation. None of these leaders campaigned on an austerity platform for their first successful elections.

Beginning in 1998 with the election of Hugo Chávez, a new group of outsiders began to take office in South America. He was followed by Evo Morales in Bolivia (2005), and another outsider, Ollanta Humala, nearly took the presidency in Peru the following year. The recent election of Rafael Correa in Ecuador puts Ecuador in political alliance with Chávez. All of these leaders have rejected neoliberal economic reform, and we have yet to see one change their tune as Menem or Fujimori did out once in office (although, of course, it may be too early to tell). Furthermore, the election of these leaders coincided with major changes in the functioning of their democracies. Plebiscitarian measures increased, bypassing institutional channels. In Peru and Venezuela, the election of outsiders was accompanied by a collapse of the party system. In Bolivia and Ecuador a total of five presidents were removed from office amid popular protests. Anti-establishment discourse has become a common feature to all of these countries' national politics.⁶

The intensification of populism in the Andean nations, which some have labeled a "crisis in democratic representation," was accompanied by the rise of a more moderate "New Left" in the Southern Cone. As the two regions' politics diverge, it appears that Fujimori, and perhaps Collor, belong to a separate genre than Menem. Peru has remained politically destabilized, and an outsider with no previous political experience nearly took the presidency in 2006. Argentina, on the other hand, has retained its traditional party system and avoided devolving into plebiscitarianism, despite experiencing the worst economic crisis of the region in 2001-2. The classification of Menem as a populist outsider, in fact, may be somewhat inaccurate. Unlike Fujimori or Collor, he was a career politician and he came from the strongest party in a nation with a tradition of anti-establishment rhetoric.

⁶ It is interesting to note here that both candidates in the recent Ecuadoran election adopted anti-establishment rhetoric, despite the fact that Alvaro Noboa is the richest man in the country. See Romero 2006.

Socioeconomic factors and the Andean populist resurgence

The sustained competitiveness of political outsiders in the Andes begs a reexamination of the causes of neopopulism. Strictly “political” or rhetorical explanations of the phenomenon only explain half of the story. Recent studies have attempted to explain the populist resurgence in terms of elite approaches to the electorate (Weyland 1999**), discursive analysis (de la Torre 2000), the relationship between state inefficiency and party system collapse (Mainwaring 2006), and elite decision making (Tanaka 2006). While these studies demonstrate political factors that help to explain the rise of outsiders in Andean politics, they neglect to analyze structural factors which can help to explain voter behavior. In fact, many of these studies take an actively hostile view of structural analysis because the authors assume economic explanations to be deterministic.⁷ Establishing a relationship between socioeconomic and political change does not necessarily imply causality, however. Socioeconomic change may constrict the range of available choices open to political leaders, and may create opportunities for new leaders to exploit changing preferences in the voting population. To ignore this relationship is to hinder understanding of the phenomenon.

If the populist resurgence is truly a political phenomenon and nothing more, it follows that populist leaders should be expected to appear throughout the region, whenever a given leader decides to approach the masses by way of the television and promises of redistribution (performing a “populist seduction” to use the phrase of de la Torre). But this is not the case. The populist resurgence is concentrated in the Andes, in societies characterized by intense inequality, high overall rates of poverty, and more recent transitions from rural to urban societies. If socioeconomic variables truly do not affect the incidence in the rise of outsiders, then where are the populists in the more equitable and prosperous nations of the region? Why do their party systems fail to collapse?

The following tables compare various structural indicators between seven South American countries: Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. The first four nations have all experienced the election of at least one political outsider to the presidency within the last twenty years (see chart 1), and all have experienced either the collapse of their traditional political party framework, or the ouster of elected presidents by popular protest within the same time period. Two countries experienced prototypical classical populism in the 1930s, 40s and 50s – Perón in Argentina (1943-55, 1973-76) and Vargas in Brazil (1930-1945, second period). The last two, Uruguay and Chile, never experienced a

⁷ Weyland 1999 and Tanaka 2006, 47-9 are representative. Weyland 1999 does analyze socioeconomic variables despite emphasizing political style.

national government led by a populist outsider.⁸

Table A: Absolute Poverty

	\$1/day measure	\$2/day measure	Year
Argentina	3.3	14.3	2001
Brazil	8.2	22.4	2001
	23.6	43.4	1995
Chile	<2	9.6	2000
	15	38.5	1992
Bolivia	14.4	34.3	1999
Peru	18.1	37.7	2000
	15.5	41.4	1996
Ecuador	17.7	40.8	1998
	30.4	65.8	1994
Uruguay	<2	3.9	2000
		<2	1998
Venezuela	15	32	1998
	11.8	32.2	1991

Source: World Bank

⁸ I discount Ibañez in Chile, because he had previous political experience, and moderated his stance when in office in the 1950s. Neither did he effect the kind of dramatic and long-lasting changes of Vargas, Perón, Haya de la Torre, etc.

Table B. Percent Population Living in Urban Area
Source: World Bank

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2003
Venezuela	79.4	81.9	84.0	85.8	88
Bolivia	45.5	50.5	55.6	60.5	64
Ecuador	47.0	51.2	55.1	58.9	64
Peru	64.6	66.9	68.9	70.9	74
Chile	81.2	82.6	83.3	83.9	87
Argentina	82.9	84.8	86.5	88.1	89
Uruguay	85.2	87.2	88.9	90.3	93
Brazil	66.2	70.7	74.7	78.3	83

Table C: Rate of Urbanization. Source: World Bank.

	1980-1984	1985-1989	1990-1994	1980-2003	Average annual rate of change
Venezuela	3.15	2.56	2.14	10.83	0.47
Bolivia	11.0	10.10	8.81	40.66	1.77
Ecuador	8.94	7.62	6.90	36.17	1.57
Peru	3.56	3.00	2.90	14.55	0.63
Chile	1.72	1.95	0.72	7.14	0.31
Argentina	2.32	2.00	1.85	7.36	0.32
Uruguay	2.34	1.95	1.57	9.15	0.40
Brazil	6.80	5.66	4.82	25.38	1.10

Chart 1

	Party System Collapse	Election of an Outsider	Popular Protest Ousts a President
Venezuela	1998	Hugo Chávez, 1998, 2001, 2006	
Peru	1990-92	Alberto Fujimori, 1990, 1995	
Ecuador		Rafael Correa, 2006	Abdalá Bucarem, 1997 Jamil Mahuad, 2000 Lucio Gutiérrez, 2005
Bolivia		Evo Morales, 2006 ⁹	Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, 2003 Carlos Mesa, 2005
Argentina			De la Rúa, 2001
Uruguay			
Chile			
Brazil		Fernando Collor, 1990	

There is no need to dwell too long on the issues of poverty and inequality. It is well known that Brazil, Bolivia, Venezuela, Peru and Ecuador are poorer and more unequal societies than those of Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. It should be noted, however, the positive correlation between poverty and populist resurgence. It also bears mentioning that the only country to experience an increase in absolute poverty in the years recorded was Venezuela. It should also be noted that Brazil does not fit the correlation. I will return to these points below.

The statistics on urbanization reveal a similar pattern. All of the societies are now predominately urban, but the rate of urbanization is significantly higher in

⁹ Some would not classify him as an outsider due to the success of MAS following his 2002 bid.

Brazil and in the Andean nations, with the exception of Venezuela. It might be mentioned, however, that Venezuela did not make any progress at alleviating absolute poverty during the 1990s. In fact, Venezuela (along with Peru) seems to have backslid a bit (see Table A).¹⁰ In Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, the process of urbanization took place earlier, and has remained essentially static for the last two decades. In the Andean nations and Brazil a societal transformation has occurred in the last three decades, in which these agrarian societies became urban ones. Furthermore, unlike the cases of Argentina and Brazil in the classical populist era, none of the Andean countries had strong industrial bases to incorporate the rural migrants into a working class. The result has been the expansion of the informal economy, which for most of the urban poor provides a precarious existence, and none of the economic benefits of official labor.

The pattern here suggests a structural explanation for the rise of political outsiders and the collapse of the party system. In the Andean countries, the continuing process of urbanization has exacerbated tensions associated with economic and social inequality. People have been abandoning the countryside in large numbers since the 1960s in search of work. Although the city offers perhaps more economic opportunities than the countryside, the cities have not effectively absorbed the migrants economically, contributing to higher rates of urban poverty and increasing the size of the informal economy. Because this type of employment and limited experience in the cities does not offer much security or political representation, the urban poor have little stake in the current economic model and are attracted to outsiders precisely because the outsiders are attempting to recognize them politically and redistribute wealth to them. The polarizing effects of political and economic exclusion brought on by the evolution of Andean society have been exacerbated by the fact that in most of these countries ethnicity also acts as a social division, a problem Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile are less susceptible to due to greater ethnic homogeneity. Therefore, in the Andes, elites are seen as unrepresentative to a large portion of the eligible voters not only because they are wealthy, but also because they are European-descended rather than indigenous, African, mestizo or mulatto.

This line of reasoning is not intended to draw neat divisions between more and less developed democracies, or to argue that populism is somehow a pre-determined feature Latin America's process of modernization. The point is that the rise of outsiders is more likely to occur in countries experiencing the process of urbanization, and in the countries with greater levels of absolute poverty, and greater levels of social and economic inequality. The rationale is obvious. In such societies, creating a form of political representation which does not reflect the deep

¹⁰ At any rate, the role of the urban poor in the electoral success of Chávez is widely acknowledged. See Canache 2004.

social and economic divisions plaguing the country is exceedingly difficult. Either segments of the middle and upper class must find common interests with the lower class, or they will ally with elites against the lower class and society will polarize. In Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador, polarization has occurred within the last two decades.

It is this polarization which makes the rise of outsiders so alarming. Programmatically speaking, the populists differ from leaders of Latin America's new left only in terms of degree. Essentially all politics within these countries tilt toward the left, or the populist, side of the spectrum.¹¹ In all of these countries, the dominant question of national significance is the degree to which a market economy must be limited or directed by government to avoid a decrease in the standard of living. In the Southern Cone, the question has been answered by mixing limited state intervention or increased social spending with neoliberal reform in order to alleviate extreme social costs.¹² In those countries in which neoliberal reform has not been accompanied by extreme polarization, a rise in plebiscitarianism or party collapse – Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay – representation of the urban poor has either been institutionalized, or the urban poor do not constitute a large enough portion of the population to destabilize forms of democratic representation at the national level. In those nations in which a party collapse, the popular overthrow of an elected leader, or the election of an outsider has occurred – the Andean nations – no such institutionalization ever occurred.

This consideration provides the reason for differentiating between Peronism (and to a lesser extent, Varguismo) and the Andean movements (APRA, MNR, Velasco Ibarra, AD, etc) of the classical populist era. Perón and Vargas created a new political class out of the nascent industrial working class in the context of democratic expansion, while the populist movements of the Andes responded to a primarily rural environment that did not necessarily bring increases in suffrage. (Sosa-Bucholz 1999, 138-141; de la Torre 2000, 85) Therefore, when Perón and Vargas instituted mechanisms for the representation of the working classes, those mechanisms attained semi-permanent status. Because classical populism committed institutionalized parties to representation of the working class and an urban-oriented social agenda, they have managed to adapt better to the

¹¹ There are problems with categorizing populism as a leftist ideology because of its associations with corporatism and fascism. But, due to Morales's and Chávez's adoption of socialist rhetoric, and the dominant journalistic trends, as well as to highlight the similarity between them and the "New Left" of Latin America, I define them as such here.

¹² Chile is not a fair comparison in this respect because they adopted neoliberal reform a decade before the crisis of state-led economics.

changes of the last two decades. They also changed less. With the exception of Brazil, the Southern Cone nations have urbanized less and at a slower rate than the Andean nations. Despite the trend away from an industrial economy toward one based on services, the continued existence of a dwindling working class combined with support from the middle class and a portion of the *informales* has allowed Peronism to remain relevant. In Brazil, the institutionalization of representation for the working class and urban poor proceeded in a two stage process which I will explain below, but with the same result: party representation which balances portions of the working class, the *informales*, and the middle class vote. In addition, despite high levels of volatility and multiple relevant parties, Brazil's party system is showing signs that it will function roughly like a two party system of coalitions in the future. (Lamounier 2003, 291; French 1998; Alexander 1998, 117-19)¹³ The populisms which came to power espousing a rural agenda, such as the MNR or APRA, have proved less durable.

With the idea of institutionalization of the urban poor and working class in mind, we can separate the four Andean cases into two groups. In Venezuela and Bolivia, it appears that just such a process of citizen incorporation is occurring, and that the future political system will institutionalize the representation of the masses through the vehicles of the parties and being created by Chávez (Movimiento Quinta República, or MVR) and Morales (Movimiento al Socialismo). Therefore, the erosion of democratic institutions, a concern of many political scientists, must be balanced against this. For those of us who believe that democracy necessarily entails at least the approximate representation and response to the interests of the majority of the population, the governments of Chávez and Morales may prove less problematic than most academic analysts fear for the long term health of democracy. In Peru and Ecuador on the other hand, the role of outsiders has proceeded apace. While the Ecuadorian party system has not experienced a full collapse, the popular removal of two presidents from office and the recent election of an outsider is cause for concern. In Peru, the election of an outsider, Ollanta Humala, was narrowly averted in the 2006 election. The retaking of the presidency by Alan García marketing himself as a reformed populist in a manner reminiscent of Lula da Silva should relieve some, but in both Peru and Ecuador the process of creating an institutionalized form of party representation for the urban poor has not truly begun. Until it does, we can expect outsiders to play a continued role in national politics.

¹³ Alexander 1998, p. 117-19 criticizes Vargas severely for concentrating his attention on the urban working class to the exclusion of the non-industrial lower class and the rural masses.

The case of Brazil

As many scholars of populism are fond of pointing out, there is an element of human decision-making that attenuates the determinism of socioeconomic forces. The case of Brazil provides the best example of a nation following a path that its socioeconomic figures would suggest is unlikely. Although Brazil did experience a national populist movement under Vargas, in which Vargas attempted to use the growing industrial base of the country as a voting block, this process remained incomplete. It only truly involved the southern half of the country, and even there the process was less inclusive than that of Argentina. (French 1998) On the other hand, Brazil's relatively low levels of urbanization by Southern Cone standards meant that Brazil had much more room to shift, and in fact this is what happened. Between 1960 and the present Brazil has continued to urbanize at a rapid rate, primarily on the basis of rural outmigration, and primarily migration from the impoverished, rural northeast to the wealthier industrial south. (Perz 2000) This situation has maintained the conditions which in other cases have proved conducive to populist resurgence - high rate of urbanization, high income inequality, high rate of poverty, ethnic division.

The presidency of Fernando Collor has been noted, so we cannot say that Brazil's system of representation is so consolidated as to be immune to the competition of outsiders. He was not affiliated with a established party, he adopted an inflammatory, anti-establishment discourse, and he campaigned against neoliberal economic reform (although he later implemented such reforms). In contrast to the case of Fujimori, however, he was removed from office in disgrace because of his incompetence and corruption.

Collor did not polarize Brazil around his rule to the degree that Chávez, Fujimori, or Evo Morales have done. There are several reasons for this, but the most important one for this paper is that in Brazil, representation for the urban poor exists, and it is more complex than the plebiscitarian variety currently being constructed in the Andean nations. Brazil has an extreme multiparty system, with high levels of electoral volatility, even for the region. But the parties do function, and when confronted with an outsider in Congress, they united to oppose Collor's attempts to rule by decree, and eventually forced him from office. (Lamounier 2003, 280) Furthermore, the strength of the Worker's Party, the ascendant center left party, has managed to secure a sizeable portion of the vote of the urban poor and combine it with that of the middle class. Because multiple class interests are represented through a single major party – the one that currently holds the presidency – Brazil manages to balance demands for macroeconomic stability and demands for redistribution of wealth and increased social spending within the same organization in order to retain its voter base. Such agreement is characteristic of the Southern Cone, but virtually nonexistent in the Andes. The achievement of

such an agreement was fostered by socioeconomic status in the case of Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, but that reasoning does not hold for Brazil. In this case the institutionalization of representation for the urban poor by conscious human effort, managed to keep Brazil from devolving into the plebiscitarian representation characteristic of the Andes. But it easily could have gone the other way – if one day Brazil’s urban poor do not feel they have a stake in the system any longer and decide to go anti-establishment, their numbers would make them a formidable political force to be reckoned with.

Implications for South American democracy

The collapse of traditional party systems and the rise of plebiscitarian democracy in the Andes cause concern to many academic observers of the region. Among other things, they argue that plebiscitarian democracy is problematic because it is illiberal, that the collapse of the party system erodes modes of democratic representation, and that the personalism of populists has the potential to supersede parties indefinitely. While these criticisms are valid, they are often exaggerated and reveal an inability of many observers to suspend their reverence for liberal-democratic ideology in order to understand the relationship between outsiders and the voting public.

Some political scientists have rightly accused plebiscitarian democracy of being fundamentally illiberal. Specifically, it has a tendency to lead to a tyranny of the majority and a deterioration of checks and balances. (Coppedge 2003) While this accusation may be accurate, criticizing the Andean nations for creating tyrannies of the majority is hardly fair. If a party system becomes fundamentally unrepresentative of the social cleavages of its society, giving rise to political outsiders, then it logically follows that the rise of the outsider occurred to correct an effective tyranny of the *minority*. Such a situation is not only illiberal, it is undemocratic. If we are to maintain the academic ideology which dictates that democracy is preferable to all other forms of government, it would be a logical fallacy to prefer the continuation of an antiquated and unrepresentative party system to rule by a popularly elected, illiberal outsider.

Furthermore, populism has always attacked liberalism, and there is some doubt as to whether its category as an illiberal ideology constitutes anything more than an a priori argument to be invoked by and for liberals. Perhaps this illiberal ideology has something to offer which people were not receiving before. Most of the people constituting the voter base for these movements do not read Mills, and it is unlikely that they would find his logic compelling. The entire discourse of populism is based on the notion that the society in question is governed by a tyranny of the minority, justifying the abuse of the liberal elite as a combined piggy bank and punching bag. The final point is important, because in addition to being

far poorer than the political class, much of the urban poor of the Andes today is rooted in a separate cultural background in which ideas about individualism and communitarianism may differ considerably from those held by the European-oriented political class of the capital. Further research into this topic will be important for understanding the evolving political order of the Andes.

The second criticism, that “plebiscitarian democracy easily erodes into less-than-democratic forms of governing,” constitutes a selective application of the criticism. (Mainwaring, et al 2006, 30) As noted above, outsiders may erode democratic institutions, but if the party system fails to represent the population, then it makes little sense to categorize the situation previous to the collapse as democratic. If outsiders can so easily walk into the presidency, clearly something was not functioning properly with the old system.

In addition, while today’s populist outsiders no doubt concentrate power in the executive (and, therefore, in their person), and consistently attack horizontal accountability, most of them do not have an interest in overturning democracy. Outsiders who show no interest in institutionalizing their ideas through the creation of parties, such as Fujimori, may not have much of a stake in maintaining democracy. But other populists such as Chávez or Morales depend on the electoral framework of democracy for their legitimacy. Their conscious cultivation of institutionalized forms of representation (MVR, MAS) demonstrates this concern. Failure to recognize this fact has been extreme in the case of Chávez, who is regularly referred to in the scholarly literature as an authoritarian ruler. And yet his regime is not characterized by repression. An opposition exists, an opposition press criticizes him daily, an opposition organizes regular strikes and protests against him. The only thing the opposition fails to do is win national elections. Indeed, the opposition leadership’s uncoerced withdrawal from the 2005 elections constitutes the most egregious hindrance of democratic representation that their own supporters have yet suffered under the regime. So why should we refer to Venezuela’s government as authoritarian, when it is merely majoritarian? We do not refer to the liberal era of Argentine republicanism as authoritarian, though it was markedly less representative than Venezuela today.

The third criticism of plebiscitarian democracy, that the personalism of populists will supercede parties and possibly make party collapse a semi-permanent feature of Andean government is simply unfounded. Personalism is at the core of Latin American party systems. In fact, some of the major parties to continue into the 21st century (although some just hobbled through the gates) – the Partido Justicialista, the Partido Trabalhista do Brasil, or APRA, for example – were playthings of their populist leaders at one point. In South America, today’s personal vehicles have a way of becoming tomorrow’s establishment parties. In Venezuela and Bolivia this already occurring with the MVR and MAS. Some scholars do not even classify Morales as an outsider due to the success of MAS in

the Congressional elections preceding his election bid. (Mainwaring, et al 2006, 22)

Conclusions

The Andean nations are caught in a situation in which the socioeconomic structure of their countries encourage the rise of plebiscitarianism on the one hand, while a liberal regime would most likely necessitate exclusion to be put into effect. Neither situation is desirable, and thus these nations are highly polarized. But its problems have been exaggerated to the point of dismissing its reason for existing. The problem is not one of manipulation and seduction by populist outsiders; it is structural. Weyland, de la Torre, Mainwaring and others have isolated political variables that help to account for the success of populists in instances where they have been elected, but in cases where the socioeconomic variables of high inequality, poverty, ethnic conflict and urbanization are not present, their arguments become inoperative

The key to understanding the populist resurgence is the institutionalization of the urban poor through party representation. Where this has occurred, plebiscitarian democracy is unlikely. Where it has not, the party system fails to encompass the national vote because the parties do not represent the interests of the majority of society. Studies which ignore these features of the resurgence, preferring to focus on exclusively political or discursive elements, over-mystify what is in reality a simple phenomenon. Where the establishment fails to represent the voters, the voters will vote anti-establishment. Such is the nature of nature of democracy, for better or worse.

References

- Robert, Alexander. 1998. *Father of the Poor? Vargas and His Era*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Canache, Damarys. 2004. "Urban Poor and Political Order." *The Unraveling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela*. Jennifer McCoy and David Myers, eds. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, p. 33-49.
- Cardoso, Fernando Henrique and Enzo Faletto. 1979. *Dependency and Development in Latin America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Coppege, Michael. 2003. "Venezuela: Popular Sovereignty versus Liberal Democracy" In: *Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin América*. Jorge Domínguez and Michael Shifter, eds. Baltimore, ML: Johns Hopkins UP,

2nd ed., p. 165-192.

- Di Tella, Torcuato. 1965. "Populism and Reform in Latin America." In: *Obstacles to Change in Latin America*. Claudio Veliz, ed. London: Oxford UP, p. 47-74.
- De la Torre, Carlos. 2000. *Populist Seduction in Latin America: The Ecuadorian Experience*. Athens, OH: Ohio UP.
- Germani, Gino. 1971. *Política y sociedad en una época de transición*. Buenos Aires: Paidós. 4th ed.
- French, John. 1998. "Los trabajadores industriales y el nacimiento de la República Populista en Brasil, 1945-1946." In: *Populismo y neopopulismo en América Latina: el problema de la Centenaria*. María Moira Mackinnon and Mario Alberto Petrone, eds. Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, p. 59 – 75.
- Lamounier, Bolívar. 2003. "Brazil: An Assessment of the Cardoso Administration," In: *Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin América*. Jorge Domínguez and Michael Shifter, eds. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 2nd ed., p. 269-291.
- Levine, Robert. 1998. *Father of the Poor? Vargas and His Era*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Mainwaring, Scott. 2006. "The Crisis of Representation in the Andes." *Journal of Democracy* 17:3, p. 19-28.
- Mainwaring, Scott, et al. 2006. "The Crisis of Democratic Representation in the Andes: An Overview." In: *The Crisis of Democratic Representation in the Andes*. Scott Mainwaring, et al, eds. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, p. 1-46.
- Perz, Stephen. 2000. "The Rural Exodus in the Context of Economic Crisis, Globalization and Reform in Brazil," *International Migration Review* 34:3, p. 842-876.
- Romero, Simon. 2006. "Ecuador's Path and Alliances at Stake in Runoff Election." *New York Times*, 26 November, p. A4.
- Sosa-Bucholz, Ximena. 1999. "The Strange Career of Populism in Ecuador," In:

Populism in Latin America. Michael Conniff, ed. Tuscaloosa, AL: Alabama UP, p. 138-156.

Martín Tanaka. 2006. "From Crisis to Collapse of the Party Systems and Dilemmas of Democratic Representation: Peru and Venezuela," In: *The Crisis of Democratic Representation in the Andes*. Scott Mainwaring, et al, eds. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, p. 47-77.

Kurt Weyland. 1999. "Populism in the Age of Neoliberalism" In: *Populism in Latin America*. Michael Conniff, ed. Tuscaloosa, AL: Alabama UP, p. 172-190