

The Influence of Populism on Democratic Quality in Latin America

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Is populism a dangerous force threatening the stability and development of democracy? Or, is it a force pushing for a more inclusive system by giving a voice and mobilizing excluded sectors of the society? The ambivalent image of populism, as being a pathological political phenomena or a authentic form of political representation, is largely discussed in the media and academic debates.

There is not much consensus on the way to conceptualize populism as it cuts across space, time and ideological cleavages. In Europe and North America, one tends to associate this term with the rise of far-right movements, exacerbate nationalism or racism. On the other hand, in Latin America, it took very different forms, from left-wing leaders promoting redistributive and inclusive politics to right-wing leaders promoting neoliberal reforms. In contrast to Europe, populism is far from being a new phenomenon in Latin America (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013). Scholars considered it first appeared on the continent in the 1940s with charismatic figures such as Juan Peron in Argentina and Getulio Vargas in Brazil. In the 1980s and 1990s, Alberto Fujimori in Peru and Carlos Menem in Argentina embodied the wave of neoliberal populism by enacting drastic market reforms (Weyland 2001). Finally, the 2000s were marked by the resurgence of radical leftist populists, such as Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia, who blamed free trade, markets and globalization for inequality and poverty. Those waves of populism are embedded in a particular context, often triggered by a period of crisis: the post-Great Depression era, the democratic transition and the diffusion of neoliberalism, the crisis of neoliberalism (Ibid.).

The emergence of empirical analysis to examine the phenomena of populism allows to study its mixed effects on democratic quality. To that extent, this paper intends to replicate the article "Friend or Foe? Testing the Influence of Populism on Democratic Quality in Latin America" published by Huber and Schimpf in 2016. The authors propose a quantitative comparative approach to understand the dynamics between populism and democracy in Latin America. Based on qualitative researches, they argue that to study the influence of populism on democracy, one should distinguish between populist actors in government and the ones in opposition. Indeed, the formers are expected to have a greater influence on democracies because they have more institutional tools available. By examining eighteen countries over the continent between 1995 and 2009, they found that populists in government have a negative impact on democracy because they tend to weaken the checks and balances system. On the other hand, populists in opposition have a positive impact because they champion the inclusion of minorities and the revitalization of conflictive democracy.

The goal of this paper is to shed light on the ambivalent influence of populism on democratic systems. In that sense, I will first replicate the paper from Huber and Shimpf (2016). After presenting and discussing their results, I will demonstrate that the models they have formulated can be improved. Then, I will propose a different approach to study the impact of populism on Latin American democracies.

I. REPLICATION: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Defining Populism: an Ideational Approach

The 'chameleonic' character of populism makes it difficult to define. Indeed, the term has been used to refer to various political movements, parties, ideologies and actors across geographical, historical and ideological contexts (Gidron 2013). Gidron (2013) identifies the three main conceptual approaches use to conceptualize populism: it can be considered as an ideology (Mudde 2004, Hawkins 2010), a discursive style or a strategy (Weyland 2001, Roberts 2006). In the framework of this paper, populism is understood

as a thin-centered ideology, as defined by Mudde (2004). The main characteristic of thin centered ideologies, such as nationalism and populism, is their capacity “to serve themselves from wider ideational settings and adapt to specific contexts that enable them to attract the interest of large political groups” (Freedman, 1996). Relying on a minimal definition of populism helps to identify its core aspects and to compare it across time and space. In that sense, Mudde defines populism as

"an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the people and the corrupt elite, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people" (2004, p. 543)

Then, populism should be understood as a set of ideas characterized by a Manichean view distinguishing between the people and the elites (Mudde 2004). The people is considered as representing the virtuous general will and the elites as being morally corrupted. Populist actors stress not individual rights but the rights of the people as a corporate body and they oppose the interests of the people to those of the elite (Houle and Kenny 2016). Furthermore, the concept of *volonté générale*, at the heart of the populist ideology, means that the people is the sovereign and nothing should constraint his will. To that extent, the people temporarily grant an agent their power for decision-making but do not delegate the will to make decisions (Kaltwasser 2014). In sum, following this minimal definition, three conditions are necessary to classify an actor as being populist, the reference to the ideas of the pure people, the corrupt elite and the virtuous general will (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012).

Populism and Democratic Quality

To consider the complex relationship between populism and democracy, the theoretical considerations of Huber and Schimpf's article greatly rest on the qualitative analysis from Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012). Relying on an ideational definition of populism, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012) argue that this phenomena has mixed effects on democratic quality as it can diminish it but also improve it. Also, Huber and Schimpf (2016) understand democratic quality as outlined by the concept of polyarchy from Robert Dahl (1998). This

ideal definition considers democracy through its procedural and institutional arrangements and considers not only the functioning of the institutions but also the vitality of societal groups and adequate space for them to maneuver and organize (Dahl 1998).

In Latin America, the impact of populism on liberal democracies is particularly ambivalent. In fact, although populist leaders such as Chavez and Morales have implemented political initiatives promoting more political participation, they have also undermined the rules of public contestation (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012). Then populism is both a corrective and a threat to democracy (Ibid.). On the one hand, populist leaders deepen the quality of democracy because they give voice and mobilize disenfranchised groups that do not feel represented by the elites and the representative institutions (Ibid.). For instance, the Movimiento al Socialismo founded by Evo Morales has acted as a channel for indigenous people that were greatly excluded from the Bolivian political system. In that sense, it can be argued that populism has an inclusionary effect (Ibid.). Besides, through the revitalization of public opinions and social movements, populist leaders bring back the conflictive dimension of politics (Ibid.). On the other hand, populism in Latin America tends to deteriorate the quality of democracy. First, populists threaten checks and balances and concentrate the power in the executive by reducing the level of horizontal accountability and the constraints on the executive power (Ibid.). Furthermore, the excessive use of the majority rule defended against the pluralism principles produces the exclusion of certain groups. In the case of Venezuela, the constant reference to the people does not include everyone and exclude the elites, framed as morally corrupted (Hawkins 2010). Finally, by advocating a plebiscitary form of politics populism tends to undermine the legitimacy and power of formal political institutions and unelected bodies such as central banks (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012).

To empirically determine if populism and democracy are friends or foes, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012) propose to make a distinction between populists in government who tend to negatively influence the democratic quality, and populists in opposition, who tend to defend a more inclusionary vision of politics. The impact of both actors is conditional on the level of democratic consolidation, as they have a greater influence in unconsolidated regimes than in consolidated ones. Following those theoretical considerations, Huber and Schimpf (2016) formulate four hypotheses.

HYPOTHESIS 1: "When populist actors are in government, they are likely to have a negative influence on the democratic quality of their country."

HYPOTHESIS 2: "When populist actors are in opposition, they are likely to have a positive effect on the democratic quality of their country."

HYPOTHESIS 3: "Populist actors in government have larger effects on democratic quality than populist actors in opposition."

HYPOTHESIS 4: "The higher the level of consolidation, the smaller the in of populist actors." (2015, p. 876-877)

II. REPLICATION: TESTING THE INFLUENCE OF POPULISM ON DEMOCRATIC QUALITY

The Data

To test their hypotheses, Huber and Schimpf (2016) rely on a cross-sectioned time-series dataset in which the behavior of populist actors is observed across time. They have compiled data from 18 Latin American countries between 1995 and 2009 and their dataset include 270 observations.

TABLE 1 *Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Democratic Quality (PIV)	270	7.80	1.70	-3	10
Consolidation	270	19.00	19.00	0	90
Economic Development	270	8.00	0.63	6.80	9.10
Populism in Government	270	0.14	0.34	0	1
Populism in Opposition	270	0.15	0.36	0	1

The dependent variable, democratic quality, is measured according to the Polity IV Index. This index measures the level of democracy according to its procedural and institutional arrangements. It assigns each country a score based on the competitiveness of political participation, the openness and competitiveness of executive recruitment and constraints on the chief executive (Marshall et al 2013). The main independent measures

are the presence of populist actors in the government and the presence of populist actors in the opposition, coded as dummy variables (1 for presence and 0 for absence). To classify the presence of populism, the authors rely on Doyle's empirical researches (2011). To control for the expected effect of consolidation on the influence of populism, the authors have included in the dataset the duration of democracy from the Polity IV Index. Another control was added for economic development as it is expected to positively impact the level of democracy. In that sense, they use the GDP per capita values from the World Bank dataset (2013). Those values have been logged since one expects it to grow exponentially.

The authors have fitted the data with three Linear Mixed-Effects Models (LME). To give structure to the error term and accounts for the variation between the countries, a random intercept is included in the models. In the second and third model, an interaction term between the populist variable and the duration of the democratic regime was specified to elucidate the assumed moderation effect of democratic consolidation.

Model 1

$$DQ = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * Pgov_i + \beta_2 * Popp_i + \beta_3 * Con_i + \beta_4 * GDPc_i + \zeta_j$$

with $\zeta_j = N(0, \psi)$

Model 2

$$DQ = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * Pgov_i + \beta_2 * (Pgov_i * Con_i) + \beta_3 * Popp_i + \beta_4 * Con_i + \beta_5 * GDPc_i + \zeta_j$$

with $\zeta_j = N(0, \psi)$

Model 3

$$DQ = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * Pgov_i + \beta_2 * (Popp_i * Con_i) + \beta_3 * Popp_i + \beta_4 * Con_i + \beta_5 * GDPc_i + \zeta_j$$

with $\zeta_j = N(0, \psi)$

Results

The table 2 reports the regression results for the three models specified by Huber and Schimpf (2016). By replicating their models and by using their dataset, I found the exactly same results. We begin with evidence for empirical results for the hypotheses 1 and 2. The model 1, without the interaction effects, shows that the variable populism in government

has a significant negative impact (estimated at -0.650) on democratic quality, while the variable populism in opposition has a significant positive impact (estimated at 1.300). Then, the empirical evidence confirms the two first hypotheses. Yet, contrary to what the authors expected, the variable populists in opposition have a larger impact on the level of democracy than populists in government. As expected, the level of democratic consolidation has a positive impact on the dependent variable. However, the variable GDP per capita to control for economic development is not statistically significant as the p value is superior to 0.01.

TABLE 2 *The Influence of Populism on Democratic Quality*

	Democratic Quality		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Consolidation	0.054*** (0.010)	0.046*** (0.012)	0.072*** (0.010)
Populism in Government	-0.650** (0.280)	-1.200** (0.510)	-1.100*** (0.260)
Populism in Opposition	1.300*** (0.260)	1.300*** (0.260)	5.100*** (0.480)
Economic development	0.100 (0.300)	0.160 (0.300)	0.130 (0.280)
Consolidation:PopulismGov		0.020 (0.017)	
Consolidation:PopulismOpp			-0.240*** (0.027)
Constant	5.800** (2.400)	5.500** (2.400)	5.300** (2.300)
<i>N</i>	270	270	270
Log Likelihood	-448.000	-451.000	-417.000
Akaike Inf. Crit.	911.000	918.000	850.000
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	936.000	946.000	879.000

Notes:

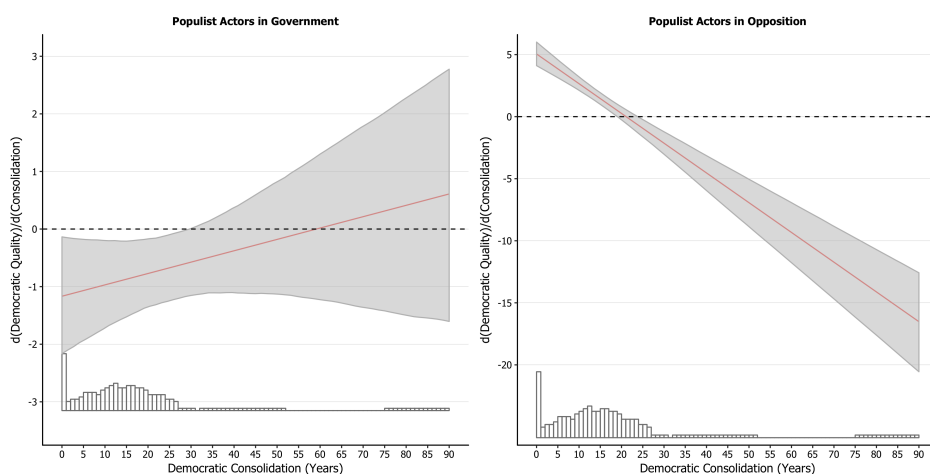
***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

To elucidate the conditional hypotheses, the second and third models include an interaction term. By looking at the table 2 one can see that populism in government has a negative impact on democratic quality, but the interaction term is not statistically significant. As the authors did in the article, I display marginal effect plots to confirm or refute this assessment. In figure 1, one can observe that the effect is significant but only to a very slight extent and it stops from being significant after 30 years of consolidation. Furthermore, the confidence intervals are quite large meaning that, contrarily to what the authors argue, we cannot fully trust those results. Concerning the third and last model, as expected by the authors, the presence of populism in opposition increases the quality of Latin American democracies. Contrarily to the second model, the third model displays a significant interaction. The figure 1 shows that this positive impact is confirmed for unconsolidated democracies only. After one year of consolidation, the effect of populism in opposition decreases the level of democratic quality.

Figure 1. Marginal Effects of Populism on Democratic Quality



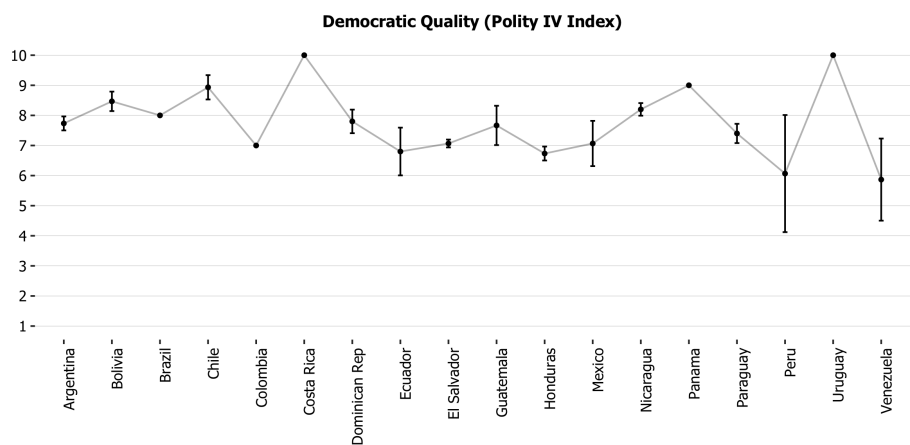
In summary, the regression results from Huber and Schimpf's models confirm that the presence of populists actors in the government decreases the quality of the democracy, while populism in opposition do have a positive influence. Also, this effect of populist actors in opposition is bigger than the one of populism in government. In that sense, the

authors failed to reject the null for the third hypothesis. Finally, the results highlight that the level of democratic consolidation moderates the effect of populism in opposition, but not the effect of populism in government.

Measurement issues

After fully replicating Huber and Schimpf paper, I assess the validity of their models by checking basic linear assumptions. The diagnostics plots and statistical tests reveal that first, the models are not ideal to fit the data and, second, they demonstrate severe measurements issues.

Figure 2. Variation across Countries



First of all, the authors argue that a random intercept is needed to account for the variation between the countries and the hierarchical structure of the data. Yet, the figure 2 shows that concerning the measure of democratic quality, Polity IV, there is not so much variation across the countries. Besides, the standard deviation of the dependent variable (1.7) displayed in the table 1 is not that large. It seems that, after all, a mixed effect model is not appropriate to fit the data. To decide between fixed and random effects, the authors have compared a null and an empty model through a likelihood ratio test. The results of

the test show that the model including a random intercept is significant. Yet, there are other tests to decide between two kind of models. When running a Hausman test, where the null hypothesis is that the preferred model is random effects against the alternative with the fixed effect (Green 2008, chap 9), the results speaks for not using a model with random effects as the p value is inferior to 0.01. Then, it seems that further analysis should have been provided to justify the use of a LME to fit the data.

Furthermore, to asses the validity of the models, I have displayed basic diagnostic plots. When looking at the residuals plot and the normality of the residuals, one can observe that there are important outliers in the data. By computing the cook distance, it turns out that the outliers are influential points that could severely influence the regression results (Appendix I). In addition, the points concerned, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela are countries where the phenomenon of populism in government and democratic erosion have been particularly present over the period studied (Levisky and Loxton 2011, de la Torre 2013). Levistky and Loxton argue that the presence of populist actors in the Andes explain the emergence of competitive authoritarianism regimes, or, in other words, semi-democratic regimes. In those regimes, even if democratic institutions still exist, the power tends to be concentrated in the executive and the institutions of horizontal accountability are often assaulted consequently eroding the quality of democracy. Furthermore, most populist actors in this region share the same radical left-wing ideology (de la Torre 2013). Then, it might be that populist defending this ideology tend to erode more democratic quality than other type of actors. I will try to elucidate this relationship in the next part. Hence, those four cases over the eighteen studied could explain the results of Huber and Schimpf's analysis, that populism in government has a negative impact on democratic quality. In fact, when one exclude those countries from the first model, the estimated coefficient of the variable populism in opposition drops significantly from -0.650 to -0.190 and it is not anymore statistically significant (Appendix I). Then, without Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela, the model fails to validate the authors' first hypothesis.

III. AN EXTENSION: THE IMPACT OF LEFT-WING POPULISM ON DEMOCRATIC CONTESTATION

As the quantitative analysis from Huber and Schimpf (2016) shows some limits, this paper intends to demonstrate how to improve their approach. First of all, one possible solution to reduce the weight of the outliers is to extend the dataset. Indeed, the dataset used by the authors only covers fourteen years, between 1995 and 2009. In that sense, based on a literature review (Houle and Kenny 2016, Doyle 2011, Ruth 2017), I have coded the presence of populism in government from 1985 to 2015 and create from scratch a dataset covering thirty years. Unlike Huber and Schimpf (2016), I am only considering populist actors in government as they have greater room of manoeuvre to use the toolkits made available by democratic systems (Kaltwasser and Taggart 2016). Also, rather than distinguishing between populism in government and populism in opposition, I am relying on another dichotomy: left-wing populism and non-left-wing populism. This dichotomy might help to shed light on the potential stronger effect of left-wing populism on democratic quality. Finally, instead of looking at the impact of populism on democracy as a whole, I intend to look at its effect on different components of democracies, namely horizontal accountability, vertical accountability, civil liberties and freedom of press.

Theoretical Considerations

By identifying the lowest common denominator presents in all expression of populism, the minimal definition advocated by Mudde (2004) allows to consider subtypes of populism, notably across ideological cleavages. Populist experiences in Latin America have been very diverse, particularly in term of the proposed economic policies (Weyland 2001). To that extent, Roberts (1995) and Weyland (2001) have underlined that populism across the continent is compatible with both neoliberalism and state-centred development. Right-wing populists such as Fujimori in Peru and Menem in Argentina have defended marked-oriented economic policies and a "conservative modernization project" (Weyland 2001). On the other hand, the 'neopopulists' from the left turn, such as Correa in Ecuador and Humala in Peru, have greatly challenged neoliberal reforms considered as being the main cause

of political alienation and, they have defended state interventionism and redistributive policies in order to integrate economically excluded sectors (Levistky and Loxton 2013).

TABLE 3 *Populist Actors Elected in Latin America (1985-2016)*

Country	Presidential Mandate	Years	Ideological Orientation
Argentina	Carlos Menem	1989-1999	Right-wing (Kaltwasser 2014, Weyland 2013, Walker 2008)
	Nestor Kirchner	2003-2007	Left-wing (Weyland 2013, Walker 2008)
	Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner	2007-2014	Left-wing (Weyland 2013)
Bolivia	Evo Morales	2006-	Left-wing (Kaltwasser 2014, de la Torre 2013)
Brazil	Fernando Collor de Mello	1989-1992	Right-wing (Kaltwasser 2014, Walker 2008)
Colombia	Álvaro Uribe Vélez	2002-2010	Right-wing (Weyland 2013)
Dominican Republic	Hipólito Mejía	2000-2004	Left but ambiguous (Levitsky and Roberts 2011)
Ecuador	Abdala Bucaram	1996-1997	Right-wing (de la Torre 1999)
	Lucio Guitierrez	2003-2005	Elected on a leftist platform but governed on the right (Levitsky and Roberts 2011)
	Rafael Correa	2007-2017	Left-wing (Kaltwasser 2014, de la Torre 2013)
Honduras	Manuel Zelaya	2006-2009	Left-wing (Weyland 2014)
Nicaragua	Daniel Ortega	2006-	Left-wing (Weyland 2014)
Panama	Mireya Moscoso	1999-2004	Right-wing (Schwindt-Bayer 2018)
Paraguay	Fernando Lugo	2008-2012	Left-wing (Seligson 2007, Raby 2008)
Peru	Alan Garcia (I)	1985-1990	Left-wing (Walker 2008, Calvert 2004)
	Alberto Fujimori	1990-2000	Right-wing (Kaltwasser 2014, Weyland 2013, Walker 2008)
	Alan Garcia (II)	2006-2011	Center-left (Walker 2008)
	Ollanta Humala	2011-2016	Left-wing (Levistky and Loxton 2013)
Venezuela	Rafael Caldera	1994-1999	Center-left (Seawright 2012)
	Hugo Chavez	1999-2014	Left-wing (Kaltwasser 2014, de la Torre 2013)
	Nicolas Maduro	2014-	Left-wing

The effects of populism are not limited by ideology as both left-wing populism and right-wing populism have deteriorate key components of liberal democracies (Ibid.). Then, it makes sense to distinguish between left-wing and right-wing actors to study the complex relationship between populism and democracy. In table 3, following an extensive review of the literature, I have coded populists leaders as being left-wing or non left-wing. The distinction between center-left, center-right, and right-wing populism being sometimes very ambiguous I have not specified a right-wing category in my dataset but rather a

non left-wing one. As Latin American populism has predominantly a socioeconomic dimension, contrarily to European populism for instance which rather focus on sociocultural dimension (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012), I have classified populist actors according to their socioeconomic orientation. Finally, following Huber and Schimpf method, I consider populist leaders rather than their political party. In fact, as Latin American political systems are mostly presidential ones centered on strong individual leaders it makes sense to look at leaders (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012).

Rather than testing the influence of populism on democracy quality in general, I am looking at more specific components and particularly the elements of democratic contestation. In other words, I am interested in the democratic components on which populism has a potential negative effect. It would be also relevant to look at the potential positive effects, on democratic participation for instance, but this is beyond the scope of this paper. Dahl (1982) argues that the survival of democracy depends on the existence of checks and balances to guarantee the separation of powers and to protect the rights of minorities. By directly appealing to the masses of the peoples, populism ends up threatening this system of checks and balances (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012, Kaltwasser 2014). Indeed, the plebiscitary form of democracy championed by populist actors such as Hugo Chávez "ends up bypassing or neutralizing (if not directly challenging and threatening) the institutions of representative democracy while attempting to bring under control institutions such as the Constitutional Court and jeopardizing some basic democratic freedoms" (Walker 2008). Moreover, in the name of bringing back political stability, Rafael Correa has undertaken major institutional reforms that have concentrated the power in the executive branch (de la Torre and Ortiz 2015). As populists leaders defend a view in which ordinary people are the rightful sovereign, they consider independent branches of government as suspect because of their lack of accountability to the people. Then, one can expect populist actors to challenge horizontal accountability in Latin American countries. On the other hand, scholars have shown that the minimal component of a democracy, the presence of free and fair election, is not severely threatened in Latin American regimes dominated by populist presidents (Levitsky and Loxton 2013, Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012). In that sense, Levitsky and Loxton (2013) argue that populist actors do not undermine significantly the extent to which citizens have the power to hold the government accountable. Liberal democracies also imply the protection and the ability

to exercise the basic liberties of speech, assembly and protest and the existence and free access to alternative information, not controlled by the government. The literature on populism underline that populist governments tend to use the unchecked control of the state to attack and weaken opponents through, for instance, the harassment of journalists and the use legal frameworks to criminalize social movements and to punish independent media (Ibid.). In that sense, one expects the presence of populism in government to limit the possibilities to criticize and to contest the government by undermining the protection of civil liberties and the freedom of the press.

The Data

I have compiled a dataset covering the same eighteen countries selected by Huber and Schimpf and going from 1985 to 2015 (2016). As two dummy variables, I have first coded populist actors according to their ideological orientations, left-wing or non-left-wing, following the table 3. Then, from external datasets, I have merge the variables I am interested in using *R studio*.

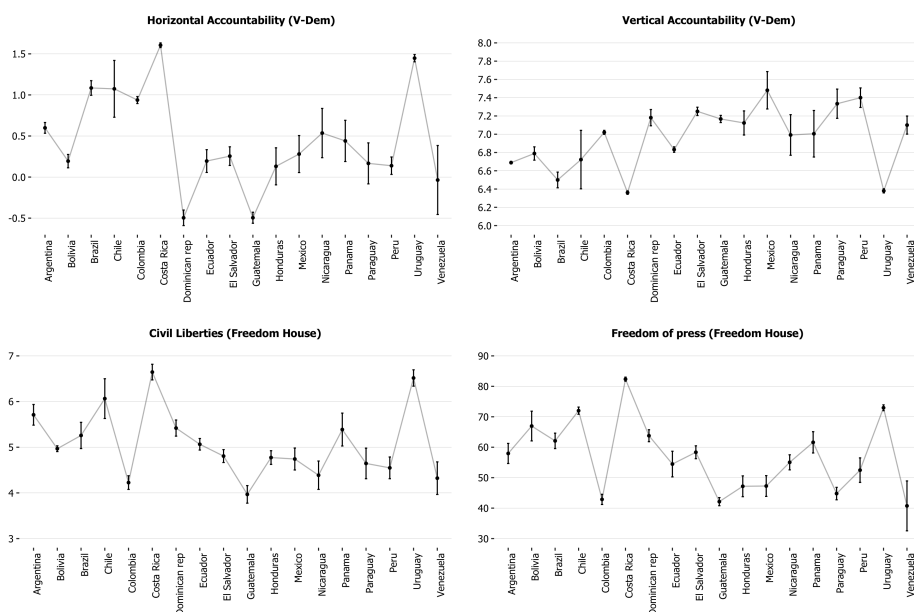
TABLE 4 *Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Horizontal accountability	558	0.448	0.793	-1.673	1.726
Vertical accountability	558	6.963	0.508	6.168	9.128
Civil liberties	558	5.081	1.018	2	7
Freedom of Press	414	56.944	14.040	19	86
Left-wing populism	558	0.136	0.343	0	1
Non left-wing populism	558	0.099	0.298	0	1
Duration of presidential term	557	3.686	3.678	1	35
Consolidation of democracy	558	18.661	18.943	0	96
Party Seat Share	549	43.791	14.577	2.500	95.122
GDP per Capita	558	4,993.926	3,138.316	1,063.435	15,485.960

To test the influence of populism on horizontal accountability and vertical accountability, I am using the variable *v2xhoracc* and *v2xveracc* from the V-Dem dataset (2015). Those

variables measure to what extent the ideal of horizontal government accountability and vertical accountability are achieved. Looking at horizontal accountability helps elucidate the effect of populism on the check and balances by looking at the power of states institutions - the legislature, the judiciary and specific oversight agencies such as ombudsmen, prosecutor and controller generals - to oversee the government (V-Dem 2015). Vertical accountability refers to the ability of a state's population to hold its government accountable through elections (Ibid.). Both variables are measured on a scale from -2 to 2. To measure the change on civil liberties and freedom of press, I am using the data from Freedom House (2016). Civil liberties has a possible range of 7 and freedom of press is measured between 0 and 100. For both variable, I have reverse the scale so that 7 and 100 are the highest score in terms of civil liberty and freedom of press and 1 is the lowest score. For the variable freedom of press, the data go from 1993 to 2015 because Freedom House did not score the countries before this year. The figure 3 presents the variation of the dependent variables across Latin American Countries.

Figure 3. *Variation across Countries*



To further specified the model used by Huber and Schimpf (2016) and prevent omitted variable bias, I am using additional control variables. As they did, I am controlling for economic development by using the logged GDP per capita variable from the World Bank dataset (2017). I am also controlling for the duration of the presidential mandate, as I expect populists being in power for a long time to further deteriorate democratic quality. Indeed, being reelected provide populist actors more legitimacy to pursue their controversial policies (Ruth 2015). Besides, I have included the legislative support provided to the executive based on the percentage of seats in the legislature owned by the party in power. Indeed, Ruth (2015) highlights that more legislative support tends to increase opportunities for populist presidents to erode the democratic system. I have gathered those data from the Database of Political Institutions (2015). Finally, following Huber and Schimpf, I am controlling for the level of democratic consolidation, based on the duration of democracy from the Polity IV Index. In fact, scholars argue that low levels of consolidation have created fertile ground for populists to influence the quality of democracy (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012). Then, as Huber and Schimpf (2016), I am interested in the conditioning effect of democratic consolidation.

Turning now to the applied models, for each components of democratic contestation (horizontal accountability, vertical accountability, civil liberties and freedom of press), I am using LME regression models. Indeed, I have run a likelihood ratio test and a hausman test confirming that a random intercept is needed to account for the variation across space (figure 3). The model 5 and 6 include an interaction term to elucidate the potential moderating effect of consolidation on the impact of left-wing populism and non-left-wing populism.

Model 4

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Democratic contestation} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Left Populism}) + \beta_2(\text{Non Left Populism}) \\ & + \beta_3(\text{Consolidation}) + \beta_4(\text{Term Duration}) + \beta_5(\text{Seat Share}) + \beta_6(\text{Logged GDP per Capita}) \\ & + \zeta_j \text{ with } \zeta_j = N(0, \psi) \end{aligned}$$

Model 5

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Democratic contestation} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Left Populism}) + \beta_2(\text{Non Left Populism}) \\ & + \beta_3(\text{Consolidation}) + \beta_4(\text{Left Populism} * \text{Consolidation}) + \beta_5(\text{Term Duration}) \\ & + \beta_6(\text{Seat Share}) + \beta_7(\text{GDP}) + \zeta_j \text{ with } \zeta_j = N(0, \psi) \end{aligned}$$

Model 6

Democratic contestation = $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Left Populism}) + \beta_2(\text{Non Left Populism})$
 $+ \beta_3(\text{Consolidation}) + \beta_4(\text{Non Left Populism} * \text{Consolidation}) + \beta_5(\text{Term Duration})$
 $+ \beta_6(\text{Seat Share}) + \beta_7(\text{GDP}) + \zeta_j$ with $\zeta_j = N(0, \psi)$

Results

TABLE 5 *Influence of Populism on Government Accountability*

	Horizontal Accountability			Vertical Accountability		
Left-wing populism	-0.203*** (0.067)	-0.337*** (0.116)	-0.202*** (0.067)	0.021 (0.047)	0.063 (0.081)	0.021 (0.046)
Non-left-wing populism	0.113 (0.072)	0.116 (0.072)	0.171 (0.112)	-0.063 (0.050)	-0.064 (0.050)	-0.160** (0.078)
Consolidation	0.011*** (0.002)	0.009*** (0.003)	0.011*** (0.002)	-0.008*** (0.002)	-0.007*** (0.002)	-0.008*** (0.002)
Duration of mandate	-0.047*** (0.006)	-0.047*** (0.006)	-0.047*** (0.006)	0.029*** (0.004)	0.029*** (0.004)	0.029*** (0.004)
Seat share	-0.012*** (0.002)	-0.012*** (0.002)	-0.012*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.001)	0.007*** (0.001)	0.007*** (0.001)
log(GDP per capita)	0.208* (0.111)	0.235** (0.113)	0.209* (0.111)	-0.055 (0.074)	-0.063 (0.074)	-0.056 (0.073)
leftpopulism:consolidation		0.008 (0.005)			-0.002 (0.004)	
nonleftpopulism:consolidation			-0.003 (0.005)			0.005 (0.003)
Constant	-0.739 (0.909)	-0.912 (0.920)	-0.742 (0.909)	7.152*** (0.604)	7.205*** (0.608)	7.162*** (0.600)
N	548	548	548	548	548	548
Log Likelihood	-360.138	-363.460	-364.338	-162.189	-166.678	-165.650
Akaike Inf. Crit.	738.276	746.919	748.675	342.378	353.355	351.300
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	777.032	789.982	791.738	381.134	396.418	394.363

Notes:

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

We begin with empirical evidence for the influence of populism on horizontal accountability and vertical accountability. The table 5 shows that only left-wing populist actors have a

significant negative impact on horizontal accountability. The estimated coefficient for left-wing populism tells us that the presence of left-wing populist actors at the head of the state decreases the level of horizontal accountability by 0.203 points. As the range of this dependent variable is between -2 and 2, this effect can be considered as strong. On the other hand, the impact of non-left-wing populism on the checks and balances system is a positive one but it is not statistically significant. In addition, as expected, neither left or non-left populism significantly undermine the power of citizens to hold government accountable through free and fair elections. Yet, in the model with an interaction effect between non-left-wing populism and consolidation, the variable non-left-wing populism has a significant negative impact on vertical accountability. This relationship can be further elucidate by looking at the marginal effect plots. The figure 4 demonstrates that left-wing populists have a strong negative influence on horizontal accountability at a very low consolidation level. Concerning non-left-wing populism, the interaction is not statistically significant as the confidence intervals overlap with the zero line. In addition, neither interaction is significant in the models looking at vertical accountability (figure 5).

Figure 4. *Marginal Effects of Populism on Horizontal Accountability*

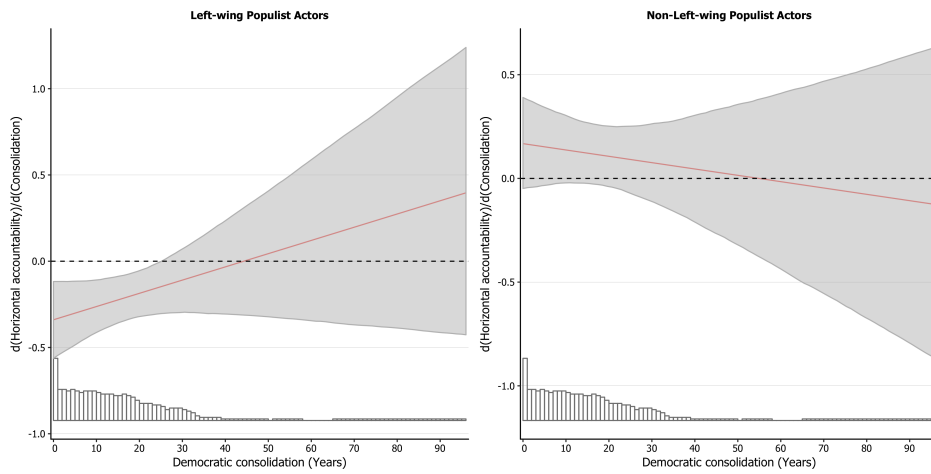
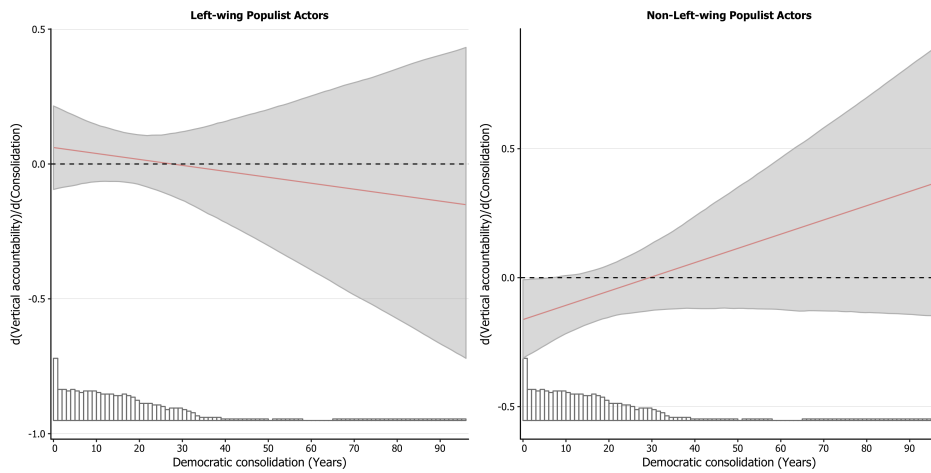


Figure 5. *Marginal Effects of Populism on Vertical Accountability*



Finally, our last six models concern the possibilities for the civil society and the media to criticize the government. The regression results in the table 6 demonstrate that left-wing populist actors reduce significantly the extent of civil liberties and freedom of press. Indeed, the impact of left-wing populisms on civil liberties is estimated at -0.192 and the impact on freedom of press is estimated at -10.704. The effect of non-left-wing populism is not statistically significant, except for the civil liberties' model when there is an interaction term between this variable and consolidation. Concerning the control variable, one observes that the logged variable of GDP per capita has a significant negative impact on freedom of press which does not make sense. This tells us that the model might be misspecified.

TABLE 6 *Influence of Populism on Democratic Contestation*

	Civil Liberties			Freedom of Press		
Left-wing populism	-0.192** (0.096)	-0.330** (0.166)	-0.192** (0.096)	-10.704*** (1.259)	-14.928*** (2.191)	-10.703*** (1.260)
Non-left-wing populism	-0.087 (0.103)	-0.084 (0.103)	-0.281* (0.160)	-0.587 (1.310)	-0.318 (1.309)	-1.288 (2.115)
Consolidation	0.008** (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.007* (0.004)	0.075 (0.060)	-0.024 (0.072)	0.071 (0.060)
Duration of mandate	-0.053*** (0.008)	-0.053*** (0.008)	-0.054*** (0.008)	-0.962*** (0.164)	-0.930*** (0.164)	-0.964*** (0.164)
Seat share	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.076*** (0.028)	-0.093*** (0.029)	-0.075*** (0.028)
log(GDP per capita)	0.781*** (0.162)	0.813*** (0.165)	0.784*** (0.162)	-11.128*** (2.714)	-8.996*** (2.820)	-11.138*** (2.719)
leftpopulism:consolidation		0.008 (0.008)			0.232** (0.099)	
nonleftpopulism:consolidation			0.011 (0.007)			0.035 (0.083)
Constant	-1.218 (1.328)	-1.435 (1.347)	-1.244 (1.334)	156.588*** (22.081)	141.318*** (22.683)	156.693*** (22.119)
N	548	548	548	410	410	410
Log Likelihood	-553.568	-557.008	-556.378	-1,396.369	-1,395.028	-1,397.851
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,125.135	1,134.016	1,132.756	2,810.739	2,810.055	2,815.702
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	1,163.892	1,177.079	1,175.818	2,846.884	2,850.217	2,855.864

Notes:

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

Figure 6. *Marginal Effects of Populism on Civil Liberties*

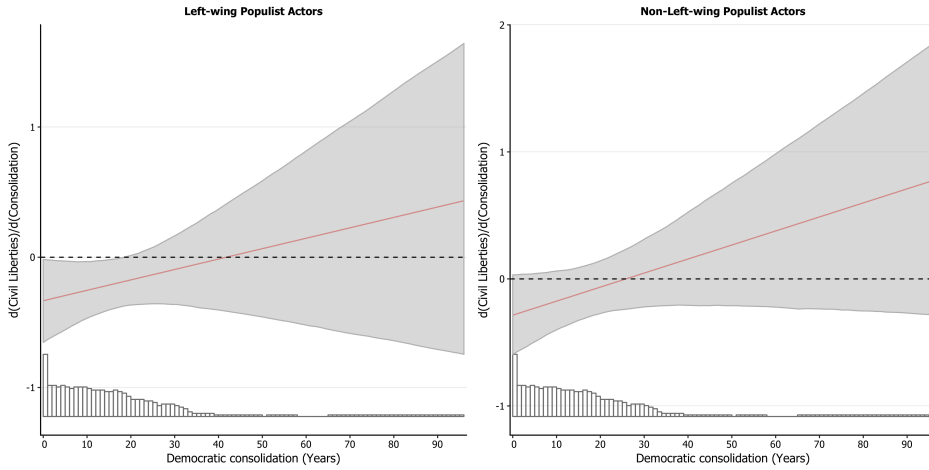
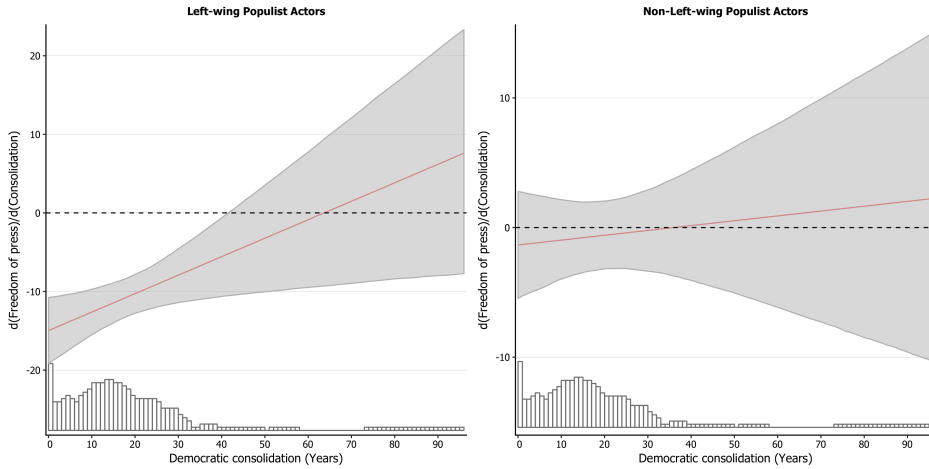


Figure 7. *Marginal Effects of Populism on Freedom of Press*



Turning now to the models with interaction terms, only the interaction term between left-wing populism and duration of democracy in the freedom of press' model is significant. To confirm or infer those results, one needs to do a final assessment through the marginal

effect plots. The conditional effects showed in the figure 6 are hardly interpretable because the confidence intervals overlap with the zero line. On the other hand, the figure 7 shows that the impact of left-wing populism is significantly negative at a low level of democratic duration and, this effect is reduced with the further consolidation of democracies.

CONCLUSION

In order to assess the ambivalent influence of populism on democratic quality in Latin America, this paper has first replicated the analysis from Huber and Schimpf (2016). By looking at basic diagnostic plots and running some statistical tests, I have demonstrated that their findings can be discussed. In fact, using a LME might not be the best way to fit their data and, the presence of four outliers - namely Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela and Ecuador - severely changed the results by reducing the estimation of the coefficients.

Then, the paper has proposed a different approach to study the mixed-effects of populism on democratic quality. More precisely, the paper focuses on the potential negative effects of populist leaders on the components of democratic contestation. Even if the approach presents some limits and needs to be improved, it has shown some interesting results. First of all, the results suggest that populist leaders - being left-wing or not - do not undermine the main component of democratic system, that is the presence of free and fair elections. On the other hand, it demonstrates that only left-wing populist actors undermine significantly democratic contestation. Besides, concerning horizontal accountability and freedom of press, this effect is particularly strong at a low level of consolidation. This approach could be improved by coding the presence of populism differently. Indeed, relying on a dummy variable is not the best strategy to consider populism as some actors are not fully populist and other present only few populist characteristics. Then, it would be better to classify populist actors according to a scale. Hawkins (2009) has measured populism through a content analysis considering political speeches and political parties' manifestos using the ideational definition as a point of comparison. His data are not available and he does not study the eighteen Latin American countries I am interested in as he conducts a cross-regional analysis. Yet, to improve my approach, I think it could be useful to rely on his analysis.

APPENDIX I

Figure 8. Influential points in Huber and Schimpf's model 1

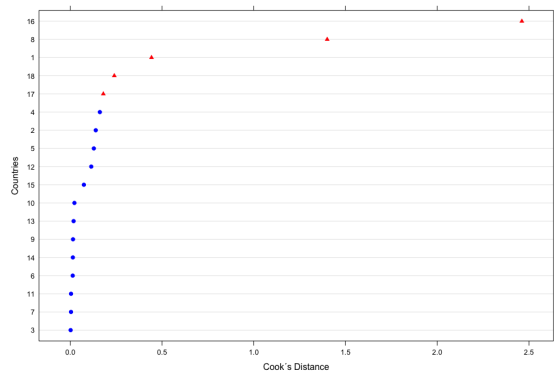


TABLE 7 Regression Results without Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela

	Democratic Quality	
	Model 1	Model without influential points
Duration	0.054*** (0.010)	0.052*** (0.009)
Populism in Government	-0.650** (0.280)	-0.190 (0.220)
Populism in Opposition	1.300*** (0.260)	0.540** (0.220)
Economic development	0.100 (0.300)	0.017 (0.200)
Constant	5.800** (2.400)	6.800*** (1.600)
N	270	210
Log Likelihood	-448.000	-220.000
Akaike Inf. Crit.	911.000	453.000
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	936.000	477.000

Notes: ***Significant at the 1 percent level.
**Significant at the 5 percent level.
*Significant at the 10 percent level.

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