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POPULISTS, OUTSIDERS AND ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I attempt to clarify the relationships among three contemporary concepts that are often used interchangeably or conflated in the literature: anti-establishment politics, political outsiders and populism. In order to make sense of these manifestations of public discontent, I argue that one must examine the nature of political appeals, political actors' locations vis-à-vis the party system and the linkages between citizens and government. Doing so, furthermore, helps clarify the meaning of populism, one of the most elusive concepts in political science. The definition of populism I offer allows us to synthesize much of the literature on the subject while weeding out unnecessary and secondary characteristics. Importantly, too, this definition allows us to separate competing claims of 'direct democracy' and thus populists from non-populists.

KEY WORDS ■ anti-politics ■ direct democracy ■ political outsiders ■ populism ■ public discontent

Introduction

In recent years there has been much discussion of parties in decline around the globe, an increased dissatisfaction with politics as usual and a rise in right-wing populism in Europe and neopopulism in Latin America. To capture these phenomena, analysts use terms such as anti-politics, outsider politics and populism. However, the literature seldom defines these terms with precision; their meanings at times overlap but at others diverge. The result is a high level of conceptual cloudiness when it comes to issues of public discontent and its political manifestations.

The notion of populism is undoubtedly the biggest offender. It has numerous definitions (as a regime, a movement, a style, etc.) and is often regionally specific, with analysts of European populism, for instance, talking past those of Latin American populism and vice versa. That the likes of Alberto Fujimori, Jean-Marie Le Pen and Ross Perot are all called populists is only

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suggestive of their character and defies precision. Although some populist literature does cross regional boundaries (e.g. Weyland, 1999), the conceptual boundaries between terms like populism, anti-politics and outsiders remain largely closed (exceptions include Kenney, 1998). This is a problem, because too often different terms describe the same phenomenon, and the same terms describe different phenomena.

My goal in this article is to sharpen the analytical tools used to examine public discontent with politics and its manifestations. I do not seek to explain the sources or outcomes of such popular dissatisfaction. Rather, I hope to present a more precise vocabulary to describe and understand this increasingly common phenomenon. Doing so, furthermore, helps clarify the meaning of populism, one of the most elusive concepts in political science. The efforts to clarify the term began with Ionescu and Gellner's (1969) volume, in which they ask their contributors: '*Is* there one phenomenon corresponding to this one name?' (1969: 1). Since that time, populism has been defined and used in so many ways that some have called, not surprisingly, for its abandonment. Nevertheless, the frequency with which scholars rely on the concept, however ill-defined, highlights its allure and the need for an improved definition. To be analytically useful, the definition must have enough precision to permit differentiation among, and thus exclusion of, cases. I offer an answer of sorts to Ionescu and Gellner's question, arguing that populism is an identifiable phenomenon. Other phenomena that assume that label, however, are distinct in vital ways and clearly warrant separate categorization.

In order to accomplish these tasks, I examine three key factors: the appeals designed to build support, the location of political actors with respect to the party system, and the linkages between citizens and politicians. By examining these factors, one can distinguish anti-establishment politics, political outsiders and populism from each other. I first examine appeals and define anti-establishment politics. Second, I turn to location and describe insiders, outsiders and mavericks. In the third section, I examine the main types of linkage, each of which has an implication for how citizens relate to their government. Following that, I explore the relationships among these factors, emphasizing the connection between appeals and linkages. This step permits an exploration of the essential features of populism, which is the topic of the final section. I attempt to clarify this concept, and I argue that many of its frequently assigned characteristics are simply derivatives of its essential features. Moreover, a clear definition of populism permits differentiation among mass movements with similar superficial, but different core, traits.

Appeals

In contexts of high public discontent with politics, some political actors find it advantageous to cultivate this attitude for political purposes through an

anti-establishment discourse. The literature offers a variety of concepts, such as 'anti-partyism' and 'anti-party politics' (Ignazi, 1996; Kenney, 1998; Scarrow, 1996), 'anti-political-establishment' politics (Schedler, 1996a) and even populism (Canovan, 2002; Kitschelt, 2002), to describe this phenomenon. Despite the terminological diversity, all these approaches concern the claim that the power elite are unable or unwilling to represent ordinary citizens. In other words, they deal with a specific rhetorical appeal, where political actors attempt to gain support through an 'us versus them' discourse, opposed to the entire class of individuals wielding power. Rhetoric, party platforms and even material payoffs are various types of appeals – reasons for citizens to offer their support to a party or politician.

What I call anti-establishment politics refers to the rhetorical appeal used in opposition to the elite. This term is comparable to what some call anti-politics, anti-party politics, and the like. Rather than unnecessarily restrict the terminology to the political sphere, 'anti-establishment' captures the politics of opposition to those wielding power. This slightly broader perspective is preferable because the distinction between the political elite and the economic elite is not always clear, and the specific target varies with the context. While the Latin American populists of the 1940s criticized the economic elite, for instance, recent populists have primarily targeted the political class. In both cases, however, the phenomenon was the same: politicians took advantage of a discontent stemming from common citizens' perception that they lacked power. Furthermore, in both cases, politicians offered a solution based on replacing those with power and on improving the political system to more accurately and efficiently represent the interests of ordinary citizens. The point is that the discontent stems from the disparity between those who hold no power and those who do (hence the 'us versus them' rhetoric), even though the specific targets of the anti-establishment rhetoric may be political and/or economic actors. As Schedler writes, '[a]nti-political-establishment parties describe one specific conflict as society's fundamental cleavage: the conflict between the "ruled" and the "rulers"' (1996a: 294). One does not need to distinguish among the specific targets to understand why political actors use this rhetoric: to build support.

A variety of political actors use anti-establishment appeals, but populists are particularly known for doing so. Indeed, many authors consider these appeals as defining characteristics (Canovan, 1981; de la Torre, 2000; Laclau, 1977). Canovan, for instance, argues that populism's central message is that politics has 'escaped popular control', and that citizens 'have been shut out of power by corrupt politicians and an unrepresentative elite' (2002: 27). However, as this article seeks to make clear, such rhetoric is but one aspect of the populist phenomenon and is *not* the exclusive domain of populist leaders.

Related forms of oppositional politics include 'anti-politics' (Mayorga, 1995; Panfichi, 1997; Schedler, 1996b) or 'anti-system' politics (Keren, 2000). It bears noting, however, that the 'extent' of their opposition differs

from the anti-establishment appeals. Appeals based on anti-politics challenge the political system as a whole. The problems faced by common citizens are not the fault of those in office *per se*, but the system through which they rule. Those politicians or parties who use appeals of this type – anti-political and anti-system actors – constitute a disloyal opposition (Schedler, 1996a).[1] By contrast, a loyal opposition may offer anti-incumbent appeals, with a rhetorical attack levied not against a class or the political system, but only against the incumbent government.[2] Anti-establishment appeals fall somewhere between loyal and disloyal opposition, as semi-loyal opposition. These appeals seek support based on opposition not only to the incumbents but instead the entire entrenched power elite – the 'political class' in the Latin American context. They do not, however, go so far as to advocate the replacement of democracy *per se* (although they frequently offer improvements to it).[3]

The relative success of the anti-establishment appeal depends, ultimately, on the ability of the political actor (or party) to convince potential supporters that he indeed stands in opposition to, and is not part of, the entrenched power structure. This appeal does not depend strictly on one's position with respect to the party system – insider or outsider (Kenney, 1998). There are numerous cases of individuals who rose to prominence through an established and competitive party only to convince voters that they were not insiders. The appeal's success depends instead on a widespread acceptance of the message, and that acceptance is likely to depend in part on how closely the message conforms to perceptions of reality or how well those perceptions can be manipulated. With respect to populists, for example, the success of their project 'depends upon the widespread acceptance of a 'system of narration' or 'distinctive ideological ordering of political and social facts' (Laycock, 1990: 18). De la Torre adds that citizens must perceive the 'Manichean discourse' of populists as conforming to reality (2000: 21–2). The appeal's success is also likely to depend in part on the person conveying the message. Personal charisma may go a long way in attracting supporters, and even helping politicians overcome gaps between their messages and reality. This discussion highlights the importance of discourse for anti-establishment politics: it depends not strictly on reality but on constructing an 'us versus them' understanding of social conflict.

In short, anti-establishment politics refers to a type of appeal politicians – populists or otherwise – use to garner public support. This appeal constructs a view of society where 'the people' (commoners) are pitted against the power elite. Unlike anti-political or anti-system appeals, the anti-establishment appeal does not represent a disloyal opposition, but rather a semi-loyal one. Importantly, through its criticism of the political status quo, this appeal 'explicitly or implicitly invokes criteria for assessing the performance of a political system' (Scarrow, 1996: 301) and, thus, advocates prescriptions for change. I return to this important point later.

Location

Politicians frequently employ rhetoric suggesting their independence from the political status quo, but such discourse is distinct from, and may not accurately reflect, a politician's actual association with the political establishment. Herein lies one source of confusion regarding outsiders and anti-politics. To clarify the two, one must distinguish rhetorical appeals from the political actor's location vis-à-vis the political establishment. Following Kenney (1998), I argue that it is preferable to conceptualize outsiders in terms of the politician's (or party's) experience with the party system. An outsider is someone who gains political prominence not through or in association with an established, competitive party, but as a political independent or in association with new or newly competitive parties.[4] Insiders, by contrast, are those politicians who rise through or within the established, competitive parties of the nation's party system and who preserve that system.

It is important to highlight the potential for long-standing but marginal parties to warrant classification as outsiders. As Schedler notes: 'Smallness and marginality may serve as functional equivalents to novelty' (1996a: 299). In other words, newness (or novelty) is not a requirement for outsider status. What matters, instead, is the politician's or party's location with respect to the party system. Marginal parties are outsiders not based on their date of origin, but because they are not among the nation's 'effective' parties – *de facto* outsiders. For instance, the Libertarian Party in the United States is more than 30 years old, but it cannot be considered part of the country's two-party system; as such, it is an outsider party. To be clear, however, irrelevance is not a defining characteristic of outsiders. Sartori (1976) defines relevance according to the capacity to affect the tactics of party competition. In some cases, previously uncompetitive parties – outsiders – gain political traction and influence the campaigns of the established parties. In other cases, outsiders remain inconsequential. By contrast, an old and competitive party consistently excluded from governing coalitions is an insider. Again, the distinction between insiders and outsiders strictly relates to their location vis-à-vis the party system.

However, one cannot always easily make these distinctions. As mentioned, the literature sometimes conflates the status of outsider with the form of appeal. A further complication arises in cases where politicians undermine the power structure within established parties or when they break away to form new ones. For instance, the literature labels Argentina's Carlos Menem as both an insider and an outsider. While he clearly emerged through the long-standing Peronist Party, he not only used an anti-establishment appeal to build support, he also transformed the party's organization, platform and constituency. As such, he undermined the party establishment from within. In Venezuela, Raphael Caldera had been an integral part of the political establishment, having helped found the Social Christian Party (COPEI), yet he abandoned the party to form a new one, National Convergence, for a

presidential campaign in 1993. Mexico's Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas is another example: he abandoned the PRI to form a new opposition party, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Although these politicians rose to prominence through their respective party systems, their actions changed those systems.

Such cases raise doubts about the utility of the bimodal conceptualization – insider or outsider – of location vis-à-vis the party system. I offer an intermediate category, that of maverick.[5] A maverick is a politician who rises to prominence within an established, competitive party but then either abandons his affiliation to compete as an independent or in association with an outsider party, or radically reshapes his own party.[6] The latter is admittedly somewhat vague, but the idea is to capture the difference between a political actor who maintains the status quo and one who alters it. Such unconventional or even rebellious behaviour is notable not only with respect to the character of the party, but because it provides some basis for that politician to make the same claims as outsiders often make. To be clear, the status of outsider depends strictly on location, not rhetoric or strategy. Outsiders need not use anti-establishment appeals to gain support, but could use any number of techniques. Nevertheless, outsiders frequently take advantage of the opportunity afforded them by their location and use an anti-establishment discourse (and hence the occasional confusion between the two concepts). Although mavericks are not outsiders, they can likewise credibly claim to be fighting the establishment. Adding this intermediate category helps eliminate the definitional disputes with respect to individual politicians. In addition, the implications of anti-establishment appeals may vary according to who employs them, as might the implications of whether outsiders or mavericks gain power. I address these issues in the last section.

Linkages

Linkage refers to an interactive connection between two units (Lawson, 1980: 5). More specifically, it concerns the means by which political actors and constituents exchange support and influence.[7] The interactive aspect of a linkage is important to highlight because the literature does not always distinguish linkage from appeal. Discussions of 'programmatic linkages', for instance, typically concern the party's platform and thus the basis of its support, but not the ways through which the party interacts with its supporters. For example, Kitschelt (2000) uses the phrases 'programmatic appeals' and 'programmatic linkages' interchangeably. Similarly, Roberts (2002: 18) writes: 'Programmatic linkages exist where citizens develop loyalties to a party that are based on ideological or general programmatic commitments.' The bonds citizens feel towards the party in this case are based on the party's platform, and platforms are developed in order to give a reason for large numbers of citizens to support (vote for) them. A

programmatic platform is not, however, an interactive connection between citizen and party. Linkage refers to the means by which citizens and parties interact, not the reasons for that interaction.

Linkage is of obvious importance since it concerns the relationship of those in government to the citizenry. As such, it can affect the distribution of resources, the recruitment of leaders, the degree of government responsiveness, and so on. It is likewise important for the study of populism and anti-politics. Although aspects related to linkage are very commonly associated with populism – namely 'plebiscitarianism' (e.g. Barney and Laycock, 1999) – the literature on populism rarely explicitly examines linkages in a manner that helps distinguish populists from non-populists.

Lawson (1980, 1988) identifies four types of linkage: clientelistic, directive, participatory and electoral.[8] These are not mutually exclusive and a party may use multiple forms at any time. With clientelism, the connection centres on the exchange of material benefits for support. Patron–client networks are long-standing forms of linkages. In earlier forms, clientelism involved highly localized and personalized connections. Its more modern variant includes selective benefits for targeted groups. Directive linkages, her second type, coerce constituents in order to control them. For instance, Corbett's study of Mexico shows how the PRI used directive linkages to 'ensure popular acquiescence in elite-determined policies' (Corbett, 1980: 330).

Participatory and electoral linkages are more pertinent to the present study. Participatory linkages involve mechanisms by which citizens themselves have some role in government. A party's selection of leaders from its support groups would be an example of such a linkage, as would citizen influence over ballot access and party platforms. Internal party democracy facilitates such linkages. The exchange in this form of linkage is inclusion into the process: citizens gain a stake in policy-making through the capacity to influence the process. Extending Lawson's explanation only slightly, one should also include the citizen initiative (but not plebiscites) as a participatory linkage. With this instrument, citizens have a policy-making, and thus participatory, role by initiating proposals.

Electoral linkages are much more minimal, as they entail linkages at only specific points in time (elections). These linkages serve, ideally, to hold representatives accountable to the views of the rank and file. 'Those views', however, 'are *independently* (and sometimes inaccurately) determined by the party leaders' (Lawson, 1988: 17, italics added). Accountability, though, is the crucial point of distinction here: rather than offering citizens the chance to make their own decisions, this form of linkage allows citizens to judge whether their rulers are doing a good job for them. Citizens 'connect' with the party only in the form of turnout – it is the manifestation of the success of the politician's appeal.

An extreme form of the electoral linkage is plebiscitarianism, which I add to Canovan's four types. Plebiscites involve a similar process and logic: policy-makers present a choice to the voters, who may accept or reject it.

Citizens' input into the decision-making process is only episodic and only at a specific point in that process. Whereas initiatives (and participatory linkages more generally) grant citizens substantial control over the process, plebiscites offer them a 'take it or leave it' choice. Hayward notes that plebiscites generally serve 'to provide passive political support for a leader, to confirm the popular legitimacy of his authority' (1996: 15–16). Public opinion polls have the same purpose, '[T]hey have provided a way of testing the extent to which political elites accurately reflect mass views' (Hayward, 1996: 18). Mass demonstrations also serve to affirm – or not – the leader's authority. Mass demonstrations are standard tools of populist leaders, who use them not only to convey their appeals, but also to demonstrate their responsibility to the people. De la Torre explains that, although citizens feel like direct participants, they 'are reduced to follow the lines of a drama that has assigned them a central though subordinate role. They are expected to delegate power to a politician who claims to be the embodiment of their redemption' (2000: 19). One should note, however, that these mechanisms do not necessarily affirm a leader's authority – they can backfire – but such is the intention.

Plebiscitarianism, then, is a purer variant of electoral linkage. It vests a single individual with the task of representing 'the people', replacing political parties in that role (Mainwaring, 2006: 18). It may be associated with a form of 'direct democracy', albeit a highly majoritarian, Rousseauian version, where any intermediation or distribution of the responsibility of representation leads to inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Laycock writes: 'Direct democracy is a construction kit for detours around policy intersections that have been clogged and polluted by parties and organized interests' (2002: 95). Taggart adds: 'The populist reliance on unusual leaders and structures is not an appeal for more representative government; rather, it is a call for better governance' (2002: 67). Since this kind of linkage emphasizes accountability, the fewer the representatives, the better. It is an extremely vertical form of linkage.

How They Relate

Although appeals, location and linkage are conceptually distinct, they are nonetheless interrelated. As mentioned earlier, anti-establishment appeals either explicitly or implicitly present prescriptions for changes – solutions to break the elite's hold on power and to provide access to citizens. It is in these suggested changes that one finds an important relationship among these concepts, namely with respect to the type of linkage emphasized. Although a political actor's location vis-à-vis the party system is not an essential aspect of these dynamics, only outsiders and mavericks are reasonably positioned to present anti-establishment appeals and thus offer these specific, semi-loyal, prescriptions for change.

The critique inherent in anti-establishment politics is that the political class has failed to tend to the needs and interests of ordinary citizens and, as a result, changes are necessary. As Scarrow notes: '[A]nti-party rhetoric helps set the agenda for political action because it mobilizes diffuse disaffection, and transforms it into support for specific reforms' (1996: 298). There are three general solutions that form part of the anti-establishment appeal: a change of personnel; a change in personnel plus improved accountability and government effectiveness; or a change in personnel plus citizen participation. Changes in specific policies may be included as well, but these are not essential parts of anti-establishment politics. If the appeals were based only on policy issues, then their advocates would be members of the loyal, not semi-loyal, opposition.

A change of personnel is common to all three options. It is the minimum prescription in anti-establishment appeals. It refers to the replacement of the 'political class' with the anti-establishment politicians (whether populist or not). The other two options offer corrections to (but not a replacement of) the political system to ensure that it can effectively attend to the needs and interests of the 'ruled'. Both corrections criticize the system of representation, although with different emphases. One suggests that the current means of representing common citizens' interests are inefficient: the current arrangement has accomplished little, and so we must streamline it to increase accountability. The other suggests they are inattentive or inaccurate: politicians are not representing citizens' interests well, so citizens should represent themselves. An observer might accurately conclude that both forms favour unmediated decision-making ('direct democracy') over representation, but it is not sufficient to leave the analysis here. The two specific corrections offer different kinds of direct democracy, which vary in form and implication. These corrections entail different forms of linkage.

The option that proposes to improve accountability does so by emphasizing electoral or plebiscitary linkages. These linkages, as Lawson (1980, 1988) explains, hold representatives accountable for effectively looking after the needs and interests of 'the people'. There is little in the way of citizen participation, except at the polls. The plebiscitarian form offers the clearest line of accountability, resting with a single individual. One can describe this linkage as direct democracy in that it is unmediated – citizens no longer have to channel their interests through the filter of representative institutions in order to reach the pinnacle of decision-making power. The channels are more direct in this form: there is no question of whom to hold responsible for success or failure. Plebiscitarian linkages are highly vertical and top-down in this sense. Those who propose this view are more likely to present themselves as able and willing to represent the people effectively: 'I can do it *for* you.'

The other option offers a correction based on increased citizen participation. Anti-establishment politicians who espouse this view propose mechanisms for citizen input: 'We can do it for ourselves.' One can also consider

this as direct democracy, albeit of a fundamentally different form, because the citizens themselves are responsible for decision-making. This form of linkage is much more bottom-up in character than the plebiscitarian form. The implication is that not all anti-establishment appeals – or visions of direct democracy – are equal: some entail singular leadership and control while others offer more diffuse influence and participation.

Populism

The distinction among these solutions to public discontent is central to understanding populism. Populism reflects the specific combination of appeals, location and linkages that suggests a correction based on enhanced accountability rather than increased participation. More specifically, it is a mass movement led by an outsider or maverick seeking to gain or maintain power by using anti-establishment appeals and plebiscitarian linkages. This definition does not bring new ideas to the concept, but simply refocuses predominant understandings of the term. By specifically relating to appeals, location and linkages, it facilitates an understanding of populism's relationship to other political manifestations of discontent. One can more easily identify core differences among such cases, and thus can clearly differentiate populist from non-populist movements. For instance, this definition excludes insiders as populists because they cannot credibly offer anti-establishment appeals. Similarly, it excludes those mavericks or outsiders who offer something other than anti-establishment appeals. Appeals based on anti-incumbency or on programmatic terms would belong more to politics as usual rather than a reaction thereto. Those mavericks or outsiders who use anti-establishment appeals but propose participatory linkages also belong to some other classification.

The latter point would rule out certain prominent movements, including the agrarian movements in the United States in the late 1800s and in Canada in the early 1900s. The US agrarian movement, for instance, was a bottom-up phenomenon that promoted participatory mechanisms in the form of farmers' cooperatives (Canovan, 1981: 17–58). Some might object to my reclassification of these agrarian movements as something other than populist, but the rationale centres on the different linkages. Plebiscitarian and participatory linkages have very different implications with respect to the extent of citizen control or involvement in government, and the prospects for manipulation by elites. In describing plebiscitarianism, for example, Barney and Laycock (1999) argue that it has 'a bias against public, highly pluralistic and group-organized deliberation, and a tendency to manipulative use of the preferred decision-making instruments' (p. 320). Similarly, Hayward notes that the plebiscite 'is a populist device through which the people are treated by a government as a manipulable mass rather than a reasoning public' (1996: 15). Some agrarian movements, by contrast, used participatory

linkages and had a much more 'bottom-up' character with more citizen involvement. Hence, analysts looking at Latin American cases, for instance, tend to note the tendency towards manipulation of the masses (e.g. Dix, 1985; Germani, 1978), while analysts of the US case often emphasize community organizations like the farmers' cooperatives (e.g. Goodwyn, 1976; McMath, 1992). While, as Canovan notes, both types of movements espouse anti-elitism and appeal to 'the people' (1981: 294), the use of a single term would mask significant differences between these phenomena. The rationale for using the term populism to describe those movements that rely on plebiscitarian, not participatory, linkages rests simply on prevalence. The bulk of the cases considered populist exhibit a top-down relationship between the leader and followers, and the bulk of the literature points out the same phenomenon (although not with specific reference to linkages). As such, it is more consistent with the literature to include, not exclude, movements with plebiscitarian linkages.

This perspective not only highlights the fundamental differences among political manifestations of public discontent, but it also sheds new light on several commonly cited attributes of populism. These include social constituency, personalism, charisma and organization. Populism is frequently associated with its social constituency, whether in terms of its multi-class composition (e.g. Roberts, 1995), the primacy of rural workers (e.g. MacRae, 1969), urban labour (e.g. Hennessy, 1969) or the marginalized masses (e.g. Mouzelis, 1985). In his classic analysis of populism, for example, di Tella argues that an essential feature is the support of the 'mass of the urban working class and/or peasantry' and 'non-working-class sectors upholding an anti-status quo ideology' (1965: 47).

This emphasis on the character of the constituency, however, is of secondary importance. Whether the primary constituency consists of workers, peasants or the informal sector are functions of context. That is, if one accepts that anti-establishment appeals are central to the populist project, then the target audience of those appeals will vary depending on the specific circumstances. In contemporary Latin America, those who find the appeals most attractive are largely found in the informal economic sector of unregulated, self-employed workers. However, in the 1940s it was the urban workers. In Louisiana of the late 1920s, rural people liked the language of Huey Long. What is common among these cases is the appeal, not the audience. 'Artisans as well as peasants make excellent populist material' (Wiles, 1969: 169). Even di Tella admits that populism's supporters', 'social situations are different, but what they have in common is a passionate hatred of the status quo' (1965: 50).

Put differently, populism's social constituency is a function of where the construction of the 'us versus them' conflict will most likely take hold. Recall the important role of discourse in these appeals. As de la Torre explains: 'It is a rhetoric that constructs politics as the moral and ethical struggle between el pueblo [the people] and the oligarchy' (2000: 4). Similarly,

Laycock explains that the 'point of these efforts is to incline supporters to accept a particular logic of political action and social change' (1990: 18). Hence, the populist project is not about a specific social class *per se*. Rather, it is a political project of building and maintaining power (Weyland, 2001: 12). The support base for such a project will vary according to where the appeals are likely to ring true and, thus, be effective. Social constituency, then, is not a core component of populism, but a secondary feature. Although it helps to distinguish one populist movement from another, it does not help distinguish populists from non-populists.

Another frequently cited characteristic is personalism (e.g. de la Torre, 2000; Mayorga, 2006; Roberts, 1995; Weyland, 2001). This term, however, has multiple meanings: personal ambition, bases for loyalty and/or vertical organization. For instance, Roberts writes, 'the essential core of populism is the political mobilization of mass constituencies by personalistic leaders seeking to challenge established elites' (2006: 127). This view implies that populism centres on an individual's ambition. 'In the fashion of Argentine populists', according to Horowitz, 'Peron pulled power to himself and refused to share it' (1999: 33). Similarly, 'in what can be called populist style, Menem amassed power, stretching the constitution' (Horowitz, 1999: 42). It is logical to associate populism with an individual's political ambition, given the proclivity towards plebiscitarian linkages. Inherent in these linkages is significant individual responsibility to 'the people'. As such, it may be the ambitious personalities that seek out such individualistic configurations of power. Naturally, though, populism is not the only outlet for personal political ambition or the only form of personalistic authority (Ansell and Fish, 1999).

Another view of personalism concerns organizational characteristics, specifically unmediated representation (e.g. Stein, 1980). 'Since under populism the ruler is an individual, that is, a personalistic leader, the connection between leader and followers is based mostly on direct, quasi-personal contact, not on organizational intermediation' (Weyland, 2001: 13). Personalism here is merely a derivative feature of the plebiscitarian linkage. As mentioned, the very idea of this linkage is that a leader embodies the 'will of the people' – that representation need not get bogged down in multiple layers of institutions (occupied by the political class) that are likely to misconstrue, ignore or delay effective representation. Hence, plebiscitarian linkages lead to 'personalism' in this sense of unmediated representation, and thus it is repetitive to include both as central features of populism. I return to organizational characteristics below.

Personalism is also associated with loyalty to individuals rather than to ideologies, platforms, rules or any other impersonal factors (Ansell and Fish, 1999: 286). De la Torre's description of Ecuadorian populism fits this notion: 'Ideologies or concrete electoral proposals were not important; what mattered was the role of personalities as the embodiment of different social classes and lifestyles' (2000: 91). Similarly, Roberts describes populist

movements as 'umbilically tied to dominant personalities' (2006: 128). In this perspective, then, personalism concerns why citizens support a given political actor. The problem is that there are numerous reasons to support a politician; loyalty may stem from multiple sources. The distribution of patronage, which is often dependent upon personal connections, can secure bonds of loyalty as easily as an individual's specific message or a powerful personality. Thus, it is not clear whether personalism in the sense of loyalty results from the benefits received (via clientelistic linkages), the individual's message (appeal) or the individual's personality (charisma).

Given its popularity in the literature (e.g. Conniff, 1999; de la Torre, 2000; Wiles, 1969), charisma bears further discussion. Certainly the most successful populists have had tremendous personal charisma, but there have been notable non-charismatic populist leaders as well (e.g. Peru's Alberto Fujimori). Charisma, that quality that seemingly endows someone with superhuman capabilities (Weber, 1964: 358), is a useful resource for any politician, helping him gain support no matter the type of appeal. It may be particularly useful, nevertheless, for populists. Since the populist leader is to represent 'the people', charisma helps instill confidence in the leader's capacity to perform. Certainly charismatic personalities have a natural advantage in generating support, but it is not a defining characteristic.[9] It serves a similar supporting role sometimes assigned to crises: it facilitates mobilization (Roberts, 1995: 113–14). Hence, if personalism in the sense of loyalty is dependent upon charisma, then personalism is not an inherent feature of populism. Or, if it is related to the appeal offered, then the emphasis on personalism is misplaced; one should emphasize the nature and strength of the appeal.

The point of this discussion on personalism is to highlight that the literature treats the notion of personalism rather loosely, and conflates it with other characteristics including ambition, organizational features, personality (charisma) and appeal. As such, it may be more analytically useful to emphasize instead the appeals and linkages associated with political actors as one attempts to distinguish populists from non-populists.

Another common attribute of populism according to the literature concerns its organizational characteristics. This aspect also defies consensus. Many analysts emphasize populism's general lack of institutionalization (Weyland, 2001: 14) and/or the absence of organizational intermediaries (Mouzelis, 1985). Others, however, take a different view: 'The development of these populist "systems of narration" owes a great deal to the organizational breadth and depth of particular populist movements' (Laycock, 1990: 18). Roberts, meanwhile, suggests that 'any number of organizational outcomes is likely to emerge' from a populist movement (2003: 2). Some of this disagreement may emerge from the divergent understandings of populism. Nevertheless, the extent to which the organization is 'thick or thin' (Gunther and Diamond, 2003)[10] and the degree of contingency (Roberts, 2002: 15) certainly vary. Examples range from Alberto Fujimori's highly

ephemeral electoral coalitions ('party' seems too strong a term) to the 'thick' organization of Juan Peron's Justicialista Party, with Preston Manning's Reform Party perhaps somewhere in between.

Perhaps, then, it would be best to de-link populism from any specific organizational form (Roberts, 2003, 2006), albeit within the parameters set by the plebiscitarian linkage. A variety of organizational characteristics may be supportive of such a linkage. Following di Tella (1965), however, the crucial component here is the absence of group autonomy within the movement. Autonomy would suggest the power to influence, and this would be more consistent with participatory linkages than plebiscitarian ones. As Mouzelis argues:

> Even in cases of populist movements with strong grass-roots organizations, in so far as the rank and file's allegiance is centered on the person of the leader, local or intermediary cadres are left without a structural basis for establishing some degree of political autonomy vis-à-vis that leader. (1985: 334–5)

The point to highlight here is that populism can be associated with a variety of specific organizational types that share one common feature: absence of autonomy within the movement. Rather than a defining characteristic in its own right, however, this feature results from the nature of the linkage.[11] Once again, analysis of the organizational specifics may help distinguish one populist from another, but not to distinguish populists from non-populists.

As should be clear, populism emphasizes the plebiscitarian linkage. Nevertheless, linkages are not mutually exclusive, and political actors often use multiple forms. This is the case with respect to populism: once populists have taken power, they tend to use clientelism in addition to plebiscitarian linkages. Given the nature of the latter linkage, populist leaders are accountable for delivering on their promises. They win office on anti-establishment appeals that seek to replace the political class and improve the effectiveness of government. Once in office, then, they face the challenge of tangibly improving the lives of the supporters in order to solidify or maintain their basis of power. Populists frequently turn to clientelism for these purposes. However, it would be a mistake to limit populism to clientelistic linkages, for it 'cannot help us to understand the generation of collective identities in populist movements' (de la Torre, 2000: 21). Mouzelis (1985) likewise draws a very clear distinction between populism and clientelism, arguing that the two are separate forms of incorporation. Although a complete separation of the two may defy empirical realities, it is nevertheless fair to say that the predominant mode of linkage helps define the movement. Should clientelism become the principal linkage, then one could no longer consider the movement populist. As Weyland explains, 'where proliferating clientelism transforms the relationship of leader and followers into a purely pragmatic exchange, political rule based on command over large numbers of followers eventually loses its populist character' (2001: 14).[12]

As an example, Levitsky gives an account of how clientelism became the predominant linkage in Argentina's Peronist Party, turning it into a machine party (2003). This transformation was crucial for the electoral success of the party. If this account is correct, then Carlos Menem – the maverick who made the transformation – would not be considered a populist, contrary to some accounts (e.g. Roberts, 1995), but rather the head of a hierarchical patronage-based party. Menem is an interesting example because his time in office is widely considered an example of 'delegative democracy' (O'Donnell, 1994). In this type of governance, 'whoever wins election to the presidency is thereby entitled to govern as he or she sees fit, constrained only by the hard facts of existing power relations and by a constitutionally limited term of office' (O'Donnell, 1994: 59). This description is consistent with populist governance, but it is not necessarily the same. Support for such leaders is not necessarily based on an anti-establishment appeal, nor is the maintenance of such support necessarily based primarily on plebiscitarian linkages. If neither condition holds, the movement could not be classified as populist. An implication of this discussion is that populism is a substantive phenomenon that goes beyond a particular style of politics, despite the views of some analysts (e.g. Knight, 1998; Tarchi, 2002).[13] Such views overstate the role of the stylistic elements found in an anti-establishment appeal and overlook entirely the type of linkage employed, which has material implications for citizens' relationship with their leaders.

By emphasizing the appeals and linkages of populism, one can also identify why populism is an inherently unstable phenomenon. The promise of plebiscitarian linkages means that the populist leader is accountable for representing 'the people'. Yet it is an enormous and difficult task for a single individual to embody the general will. The populist must deliver improved substantive performance of government (the term encompasses material issues and tangible benefits). During times of crisis, the task may be somewhat easier in that resolution of the crisis provides a clear demonstration of the populist's ability to deliver. Even where successful, however, these rulers face the 'paradox of success': those who solve politically salient problems may soon receive less and less support as a reward for their accomplishments (Weyland, 2000). Because of this inherent difficulty, populists often seek out other means to stabilize their rule, notably through clientelistic linkages. However, when clientelism overtakes plebiscitarian linkages, the movement changes form.

Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to clarify the relationship among three distinct contemporary issues that the literature often conflates: anti-establishment politics, political outsiders and populism. In order to make sense of these manifestations of public discontent, I argue that one must examine the

nature of political appeals, the individual's location vis-à-vis the party system and the linkages emphasized. Anti-establishment politics refers to a rhetorical appeal based on opposition to those who wield power within the state. These appeals, furthermore, are associated with specific corrections or means of fixing the flaws of the nation's representative democracy: simply changing the personnel, or doing this in conjunction with either promoting citizen participation in the political process or with more effective governance through someone who embodies the popular will. These corrections, in turn, are associated with specific types of linkages, the interactive means of connecting citizens with politics.

Participatory linkages entail a measure of citizen input into (and thus control over) decision-making; citizens gain a stake in the system. Participatory linkages thus correspond to the anti-establishment correction that emphasizes a form of 'direct democracy' in the sense of having citizens lead themselves. Plebiscitarian linkages, on the other hand, emphasize holding decision-makers accountable for meeting the needs and demands of the citizenry. They entrust an enormous level of responsibility to a single individual. It reflects a form of 'direct democracy' that criticizes the ineffectiveness of intermediaries and attempts to focus the embodiment of the general will.

With respect to location, I argue that the notion of outsiders is not necessarily associated with anti-establishment politics and populism, but simply reflects a political actor's relationship to the system of competitive parties. Nevertheless, outsiders and mavericks (those insiders who do not act in a way that maintains the status quo) can credibly offer anti-establishment appeals and present themselves as agents of change.

Putting these factors together permits a concise definition of populism: it is a mass movement led by an outsider or maverick seeking to gain or maintain power by using anti-establishment appeals and plebiscitarian linkages. To be clear, one cannot reduce populism to the use of fiery, anti-elite rhetoric, nor to the rise of demagogic outsiders, nor even to highly vertical connections between leader and followers. Rather, the specific combination of these factors defines populism.

This definition synthesizes much of the literature on the subject, while weeding out unnecessary and secondary characteristics. Importantly, too, it can distinguish between competing claims of 'direct democracy', and thus populists from non-populists. Kitschelt and McGann nicely sum the populist version:

> In political terms, populism signifies the effort to destroy established institutions of interest intermediation and elite control and to put in their place some kind of 'direct' voice of the people, embodied in the leader of the populist party. (1995: 160)

Other oppositional movements may promote direct democracy but have in mind mechanisms of citizen control, rather than singular leadership. The

populist version seeks to replace the multilayered system of representation where citizens hold the leader accountable in part through horizontal means (checks and balances) with a highly vertical system of accountability. Some say that populists favour the 'de-institutionalization' of politics. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say they favour its re-institutionalization towards more direct vertical ties between leader and followers.

Notes

1 As Schedler (1996a: 293) points out, 'anti-politics' technically embodies the rejection of politics *per se*, and suggests the replacement of its fundamental operating principles. One could say the same of the term 'anti-system'.
2 'System-sustaining' might be a useful term for these appeals.
3 For a related distinction, see Poguntke (1996).
4 One can operationalize this idea through calculations of 'effective' parties.
5 The choice of terminology, made prior to the 2008 US presidential contest, may have been an unfortunate one as the term now has a somewhat different connotation than intended here.
6 Kenney (1998: 59) considers these politicians to be insiders.
7 This definition borrows from Levitsky (2003: 7), who writes: 'Party-union linkages are the ensemble of rules, procedures, and organizations that facilitate the mutual exchange of support and influence between parties and unions.'
8 The terminology used here comes from the 1988 work. The notions are similar, but the terminology changes from 1980 to 1988.
9 In addition, charisma is extremely difficult to define, as even Conniff acknowledges (1999: 192), and thus hinders conceptual clarity.
10 This notion is akin to Roberts' 'level of association' (2002: 15).
11 Lawson (1988: 16) suggests that organizational form follows from the dominant linkage.
12 For a similar discussion, see also Knight (1998: 231–2).
13 Laycock forcefully lays this claim to rest: 'We can rule out the possibility that populism is simply an aspect of political leadership style. This typically journalistic substitute for explanation assumes that any folksy appeal to the "average guy," or some allegedly general will, is evidence of populism' (1990: 15).

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