Populism in Europe and the Americas

Threat or Corrective for Democracy?

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To Peter Mair (1951–2011)

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voters even in the weakly consolidated conditions of Slovakia in the early 1990s, intensifying Mečiar's primary appeal as the defender against dangers from *outsiders*, whether international, ethnic Hungarian, or disloyal Slovaks. But populism-fortified nationalism was not invincible, and Slovakia offers the encouraging message that citizens can become aware of populism's limits and that sometimes the voice of the people can recall government from the brink of populist-induced collapse.

10 Populism: corrective *and* threat to democracy

Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser

Introduction

Populism stands in tension with (liberal) democracy. In the opening chapter of this volume, we maintained that in order to understand this tension, it is necessary to move from theoretical discussions to empirical studies and demonstrate in concrete cases the ways in which populism can be a threat and/or a corrective for democracy. The chapters of this edited volume offer a rich basis for such analysis. Accordingly, in this concluding chapter, we provide a first analysis with the aim of assessing and rethinking the ambivalent relationship between populism and democracy. Particular emphasis will be given to identifying aspects that, on the one hand, might appear only in certain regional contexts, and on the other hand, might be present in diverse geographic and socio-political settings.

Without a doubt, both populism and democracy are today widespread in different parts of the world. This consequently begs the question whether the impact of populism on democracy is determined by the regional context or by generic factors. In other words, is populism related to specific factors that might be well more pressing in certain world regions than in others? At the same time, it can be argued that particular aspects of the relationship between populism and democracy go beyond regional particularities. For instance, populist forces always promote the repoliticization of certain topics, which either intentionally or unintentionally are not being addressed by the establishment.

In line with this cross-regional and intra-regional perspective, this concluding chapter draws upon the eight case studies of this edited volume and is structured in three sections. In the first section we turn our attention to the concepts and hypotheses developed in the theoretical framework, developed in Chapter 1, in order to assess their validity. Then, in the second section, we proceed from 'the empirics' to 'the theory;' that is, we present new insights on the basis of the eight case studies. Finally, in the last section, we propose lines of inquiry for further research on populism and democracy.

10.1 Assessing the concepts and hypotheses developed in the framework

The framework developed for this edited volume is based on Sartori's (1970) conceptual approach. We proposed minimal concepts of both populism and democracy, since this increases conceptual clarity, avoids conceptual stretching, and enables the cross-regional approach of this book. Indeed, Europe (both West and East) as well the Americas (both North and South) differ at many levels, which makes the comparison of the relationship between populism and democracy in these world regions a difficult task. In this sense, the use of minimal concepts has proven to be very valuable, because it has permitted us to 'travel' across different cases and even geographical areas.

As is well known, the downside of minimal definitions is that they do not provide enough analytical depth to distinguish relevant aspects of a common phenomenon (Keman 2009: 77). For instance, in this book it has been argued that quite dissimilar leaders, such as Vladimír Mečiar in Slovakia and Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico, should be regarded as populist. Of course, both leaders are quite different in terms of their respective policy agendas and political aims, but they share an important commonality, which allows us to analyse them under the same conceptual umbrella. This means that the proposed minimal definition of populism must be seen as a starting point, based on which it is possible to (a) determine if particular cases might be considered as examples of populism or not; and (b) study to what extent, and in which aspects, particular cases of populism differ. Specifically, the proposed minimal definition of populism can be used for identifying two types of populism: exclusionary populism in Europe and inclusionary populism in Latin America (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2011).

In a similar vein, we consider Dahl's (1971) minimal definition of democracy as a crucial benchmark upon which a distinction between authoritarian and democratic regimes can be drawn. At the same time, this concept is useful for hypothesizing about the ambivalent relationship between populism and democracy. As we stated in the framework, populism can be seen as positive for democracy in terms of improving 'inclusiveness' and negative with regard to 'public contestation.' Do the case studies of the edited volume confirm or reject this thesis? Generally speaking, the evidence presented in this volume supports this argument. Both in Europe and the Americas populist actors seek to give voice and power to marginalized groups, but they also tend to combat the very existence of oppositional forces and transgress the rules of political competition (Rovira Kaltwasser 2012).

The way in which particular expressions of populism define 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite' determine the type and degree of inclusiveness that is promoted. In the words of Mouffe: 'What is problematic is not the reference to "the people." (...) The problem lies in the way in which this "people" is constructed' (2005a: 69). For example, in relatively affluent and egalitarian societies (such as the cases of Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia described in this edited volume) populist actors are prone to define 'the people' in ethnical terms, and in consequence, they reserve the notion of political participation to the native population. By contrast, in relatively poor societies (such as the cases of Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela) populist forces usually define the 'the people' as the socio-economic underdog, and therefore, they seek to promote the inclusion of vast groups which are objectively and subjectively excluded from society. Beyond this important difference, it is worth stressing a significant similarity that we find in all the chapters of the book: Populism's lack of respect of public contestation derives from its monist conception of society. Indeed, populism draws upon a Manichean distinction between the 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite,' which leaves little space for pluralism (de la Torre 2000; Hawkins 2009; Mudde 2004).

According to Dahl's minimal definition, real existing democracies differ on many levels. Hence, it is not surprising that scholars normally propose, either implicitly or explicitly, an expanded concept of democracy in order to differentiate between 'low quality' and 'high quality' democratic regimes. Against this backdrop, we were not only interested in studying the impact of populism on democracy as such, but also, and mainly, in the negative and positive effects that populism can have on the quality of democracy. This distinction is not trivial. There is an important difference between referring to a 'democracy *without* adjectives' and 'the quality of democracy.' While the former alludes primarily to majority rule and popular sovereignty, the latter indicate achievements or failures in relation to the model of *liberal* democracy.

Based on the case studies examined in this volume, a first general observation to be made is that populists usually mention and exploit a tension between two dimensions of the quality of democracy: They criticize the poor *results* of the democratic regime and, to solve this problem, they campaign for a modification of the democratic *procedures*. Put in another way, populists tend to claim that the rule of law and the 'checks and balances' anchored in the constitution not only limit the capacity of 'the people' to exercise their collective power, but also give rise to a growing discontent with the political system. This explains why populist actors normally favour, at least in theory, plebiscites and other forms of direct democracy.

The latter is conceived of as an appropriate method to give back power to the people and avoid the gap between the governors and the governed (Canovan 2005: 107). However, this does not mean that populism is at odds with democratic representation per se. It is more accurate to say that populism is against the alleged 'misuse' of the channels of democratic representation and to circumscribe the latter only to periodical elections. From this angle, populism can be seen as a sort of democratic extremism, in the sense that it is particularly suspicious of all kinds of unelected bodies, which are becoming increasingly powerful today (Vibert 2007).

It is not a coincidence that populist actors refer to and exploit a tension between these two dimensions (procedure and result) of the quality of democracy. By doing so, they appeal to the notion of popular sovereignty, arguing that 'the people' is the only authority that has the right to evaluate and legitimize the political system. This poses a real challenge to the theory of liberal democracy, which takes the existence of 'the people' for granted and, because of that, proceeds with the discussion of the legitimacy of the political regime. As Näsström (2007) has pointed out, liberal (as well as deliberative) democratic theory explains the process of people building by referring to the 'contingent forces of history,' that is, peoples are formed by accident, tradition, and, more often than not, wars. This means that 'the people' is conceived of as a *constituted power*, which normally is crystallized in a formal constitution that defines how political power should be exercised. By contrast, populist actors see 'the people' as an active entity, or what Kalvyas (2005) calls the *constituent power*, that is, the main actor of a democratic regime when it comes to (re)founding and updating the higher legal norms and rules that regulate the exercise of power.

In addition to this general observation, it is important to analyse whether populism does have a positive and/or a negative effect on the quality of democracy. To answer this question, we selected our cases on the basis of two criteria: (1) if the main populist actors are in opposition or in government, and (2) if the democratic regime is consolidated or unconsolidated. The first criterion indicates that the most relevant factor should be the actual power of the populist forces; that is to say, if populism is confined to the opposition, it has little room to manoeuvre and thus has a minor impact on the quality of democracy. The second criterion refers to the 'maturity' of the democratic regime and is based on the idea that when a democratic regime is consolidated, even governmental populism should have little impact on the quality of the democracy, since the latter is sufficiently robust to deal with the 'populist challenge.'

What do the eight case studies tell us about these two assumptions? The evidence of the book supports the first assumption. In fact, the four

cases of 'populism in opposition' (Flemish Block/Interest in Belgium, Reform Party in Canada, 'Republicans' in the Czech Republic, and Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico) all show that when populist actors are in opposition, they do not have great influence on the quality of the democratic regime. Nevertheless, this does not mean that populism in opposition should be considered irrelevant. This might be the case in the Czech Republic, where the Republicans flourished for a short period of time but did not challenge the established parties in a profound way. Yet in the other cases of 'populism in opposition' the situation seems quite different. By advancing certain topics that normally receive little attention in the public agenda and are considered improper by the establishment, populist forces challenge the mainstream parties and obligate them to adapt their programmes. For instance, Bruhn shows in her chapter on Mexico that López Obrador lost the presidential elections, but the winner (Felipe Calderón) was compelled to redefine the priorities of his government, and thus placed much more emphasis on the fight against poverty. In a similar vein, the cases of Belgium and Canada demonstrate that due to the emergence of a right-wing populist party, the mainstream right parties are prone to strengthen their conservative stance in order to avoid a loss of votes.

To sum up, populism in opposition can have a positive effect on the quality of democracy since it helps to give voice to groups that do not feel represented by the political establishment. Under these circumstances, the latter has to deal with issues raised by the populist forces. Interestingly, these issues are normally seen by most elites as disgusting and vulgar. Hence, and to paraphrase Arditi (2005: 90–1), populism acts like a drunken guest at a dinner party: While usually it does not respect the rules of public contestation, it spells out painful but real problems of the existing political order. From this point of view, populism per se cannot be considered as anti-democratic, but rather as an expression of the will of a neglected part of the people that might be at odds with certain procedures and results of liberal democracy.

With regards to the second assumption (the 'maturity' of the democratic regime), the evidence of the case studies reveals a mixed picture. While consolidated democracies are more resilient, and hence better suited than unconsolidated democracies to cope with the 'populist challenge,' they can also suffer a process of democratic erosion. As Roberts shows in his chapter on Venezuela, Hugo Chávez has built a new regime which has little respect for the 'checks and balances' that are inherent to the model of liberal democracy and, in turn, promotes a radical shift in terms of fostering political participation. But, as Roberts also indicates, the deterioration of the quality of Venezuelan democracy started *before*

Chávez came to power, and is closely related to the poor management of the country's oil economy by the established 'democratic' political actors, that is, AD and COPEI. In other words, if Roberts is right in indicating that contemporary Venezuela may well be closer to Levitsky and Way's (2002) model of 'competitive authoritarianism' than it is to liberal democracy, then it is relevant to stress that this process of democratic deconsolidation – or what O'Donnell (1992) has called the 'slow death of democracy' – started before Hugo Chávez came on the scene. This implies, in turn, that populism is not the only factor, and possibly not the most decisive, when it comes to explaining the erosion of the quality of democracy in current Venezuela.

This finding is very relevant, since the academic scholarship has tended to affirm that elite settlements – such as the one that Venezuela experienced in 1958 through the so-called Punto Fijo pact – have a positive impact on the consolidation of democracy (e.g. Higley and Burton 2006; Peeler 1992). In short, the case of Venezuela illustrates that a process of elite settlement might well lead to the formation of a political establishment, which in the long run is much more interested in preserving its own interests and wealth than in improving the quality of the democratic regime. In this sense, populist actors might be correct when they maintain that elite pact making is not only an anti-democratic form of interest representation, but can also have a negative impact on the quality of democracy.

However, the three other cases of consolidated democracies analysed in this edited volume confirm our thesis. Austria, Belgium, and Canada are countries in which the rise of right-wing populist parties has not provoked a process of democratic erosion. In all these cases the democratic 'checks and balances' are entrenched and, in consequence, populist actors have limited room of manoeuvre. While they have the capacity to put their concerns on the public agenda, they do not have the force to trigger a wide reform of the political system. Moreover, in all these countries several institutional protections can be enacted by the parliament and/or the constitutional court in order to 'defend democracy' from populist forces. Accordingly, the limited impact that populism has had on the quality of democracy in the cases of Austria, Belgium, and Canada derives not only from the relatively weak electoral performance of the respective populist parties, but also from the existence of a consolidated democracy that has several formal and informal mechanisms which seek to tame – or in extreme cases ban – the parties in question. As Capoccia (2005) has noted, while there must be legal limits to the 'tolerance for the intolerant,' it is also crucial to have inclusive strategies in the toolbox of democratic defence, that is, strategies that aim to socialize the populist forces into the rules of public contestation.

Finally, it is necessary to refer to the impact of 'populism in power' on unconsolidated democracies, the most threatening scenario. The two cases that we selected for this scenario leave us with a mixed picture. On the one hand, Mečiar in Slovakia can neither be portrayed as a 'pure democrat' nor as an 'authentic dictator.' Deegan-Krause's chapter shows that if the government of Mečiar did have any impact on the quality of democracy, it was rather positive and, in consequence, it contributed to the completion of Slovakia's democracy, that is, the movement from an unconsolidated to a consolidated democracy. In spite of this, the chapter also demonstrates that Mečiar was not only a populist, but also, and mainly, a nationalist who ethnicized Slovak politics and the Slovak state. On the other hand, as Levitsky and Loxton explain in their chapter on Peru, Fujimori represents a case in which the rise of a populist leader did lead to a process of democratic breakdown.

The answer might be, in part, provided by the difference in political system. In presidential systems, political outsiders can gain the presidency without having political support within the broader political system. This was the case with Fujimori, who was elected democratically, but had neither a majority in parliament nor any kind of party or grassroot organization supporting him (Tanaka 2005: 278). This situation provoked a deadlock, which Fujimori solved by undertaking a presidential coup (*autogolpe*). After closing the parliament in 1992, he formed a constituent assembly that drafted a new constitution and served as an interim congress until legislative elections were held in 1995. In a parliamentary system, the executive always needs the backing of the majority of the legislative. Hence, while Mečiar was not the single executive, and even had to share executive power with other parties, he did have broad support in the parliament and the best organized political party in the country. Perhaps this gave him less incentive to leave the democratic arena, despite some minor infringements, as he was less frustrated in his legislative attempts.

10.2 From 'empirics' to 'theory': Unexpected findings

The eight case studies discussed in this edited volume are extremely valuable not only due to the answers that they give to the questions raised in the introductory framework, but also because they offer new insights into several aspects that we did not consider or anticipate beforehand. Without the aim of developing a detailed list of unexpected findings, we will proceed to focus on the following four aspects: (1) populism at the sub-national level; (2) reactions to populism; (3) the relationship between populism and competitive authoritarianism; and (4) populism and the international arena.

10.2.1 Populism at the sub-national level

In her chapter on Mexico Bruhn shows that we can assess the impact of populism on the quality of democracy not only at the national, but also at the local level. In fact, Andrés Manuel López Obrador is a populist leader who was the mayor of Mexico City between 2000 and 2005, one of the most populated metropolitan areas of the world. The chapter convincingly demonstrates that López Obrador's trajectory as mayor was rather positive, since he implemented several policies in favour of poor and marginalized groups. In addition, his economic management was responsible and did not cause any major criticisms. His negative impact on the quality of democracy came to the fore during his presidential campaign, particularly when he lost the elections in 2006. López Obrador claimed fraud, did not accept the official results, and mobilized his supporters in order to block important streets and places of Mexico City. In addition, he proclaimed himself 'the Legitimate President of Mexico' and attacked anyone who accepted that Felipe Calderón was in fact the real president of the country. In clear populist fashion, he maintained that the existing institutions were corrupted and appealed to the power of 'the people' as the only source capable of restoring democracy.

In his chapter on Austria Franz Fallend analyses the province of Carinthia under Governor Jörg Haider in the period 1999–2008. His analysis shows that Haider tried to circumvent the rights of certain minorities, particularly the Slovenian population. For instance, he criticized the existence of bilingual (German and Slovenian) local signs in the ethnically mixed districts of Carinthia. Nevertheless, the constitutional court of Austria forced Haider to respect the law. This means that the coming to power of the FPÖ at the local level did not represent a real challenge to the quality of Austrian democracy, since institutions like the constitutional court acted as 'checks and balances' against the popular sovereignty endorsed by Haider.

What can we learn from these cases of populism in government at the local level? As these examples illustrate, populism is much less threatening to the quality of democracy at the sub-national than at the national level. The reasons for this are at least two. On the one hand, while being mayor of a capital city or governor of a province does represent a powerful position, it is a position that is inevitably under control of certain institutions at the national level (e.g. parliament or constitutional court). On the other hand, populist actors – as almost all political leaders – usually aspire to obtain increasing quotas of power and, in consequence, they see the sub-national level only as a step towards achieving a more powerful position. Accordingly, populist leaders might show more respect to the rules of public contestation at the sub-national level, since this would permit them to demonstrate their 'democratic credentials' and hence improve their chances of obtaining a political position at the national level in the near future.

10.2.2 Reactions to populism

Although we did not explicitly raise the question about how to deal with 'the populist challenge' in the introductory framework, almost all chapters refer to this issue. Since there is little research to determine whether certain strategies are more successful and/or more democratic than others when it comes to coping with populism, it is worth looking into the findings of the case studies. In this regard, it is possible to identify four general strategies: isolation, confrontation, adaptation, and socialization. Of course, these different strategies rarely appear in pure form, as in most cases populists are confronted with a combination of strategies.

Those who adhere to the logic of *isolation* simply deny the legitimacy of the claims of the populist actors. The latter are seen as pathological expressions of the democratic order (Rosanvallon 2008; Taggart 2002). Accordingly, the established political parties construct a discourse, which makes a clear distinction between us and them: While the establishment is (self) proclaimed as 'good democrats,' the populists are drawn as 'evil forces.' It is worth noting that this reaction is quite similar to the populist language, since it assumes that the political world should be seen as a moral battle, which is (almost) impossible to solve through democratic channels. Not surprisingly, one of the main policies of the strategy of isolation is the formation of a *cordon sanitaire*, which, as de Lange and Akkerman demonstrate for the case of Belgium, has mixed effects on the quality of democracy.

Another option is *confrontation*, in which case the established political actors not only deny the legitimacy of the claims of the populist actors, but also decide to attack them. Arguing that there must be limits to the 'tolerance for the intolerant,' segments of the establishment might be tempted to transgress the rules of public contestation in order to extirpate the 'populist syndrome.' For instance, Roberts illustrates in his chapter that large parts of the Venezuelan (former) elites tried to boycott Chávez's government via extra-institutional mechanisms in at least two occasions: first, by supporting a military coup in 2002, and second, by backing a general strike in the national oil company in 2002–3.

In contrast to the strategy of isolation and confrontation, the strategy of *adaptation* does not rely on a moralization of politics. By contrast, it

is based on the assumption that the claims made by the populist forces have a certain degree of legitimacy. Accordingly, those who adhere to the logic of adaption either implicitly or explicitly accept that populism can function as a democratic corrective, since it may well direct the attention of the establishment to certain topics that they have left aside of the political agenda. Consequently, as paradoxical as it might appear, populism can trigger a sort of learning process by which established political parties renew their programmes and policies in order to reduce the gap between governed and governors. This is to a large extent what the Austrian Christian Democratic ÖVP did in Austria before and during its coalition with the FPÖ. And, as Fallend shows, they did it with great success, largely marginalizing the populists and regaining the initiative in Austrian politics.

Finally, the strategy of *socialization* can be seen as complementary to adaptation. Whereas adaptation relates to the mainstream actors, socialization refers to short-term and long-term tactics that aim to include the populist forces in the political establishment. This implies a sort of pacification by de-radicalization of the populist actors, particularly in terms of accepting the rules of public contestation inherent to liberal democracy. The analysis by Fallend offers a possible example of this, as the coalition government triggered a division within the populist forces: While the more radical sector withdrew from the government, the more pragmatic sector formed a new party and stayed in government. Another possible example of the strategy of socialization is the involvement of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Venezuela after the 2002 coup against Chávez. By using a multi-lateral approach called 'intervention without intervening' (Cooper and Legler 2005), the OAS paved the way for the establishment of a dialogue between government and opposition, whereby an agreement on the realization of a presidential recall referendum was reached.

The findings beg a broad variety of questions of how best to deal with populists from a liberal democratic perspective. This is a hot issue particularly in Western Europe, where the best way to deal with radical right parties and extreme right groups is debated fiercely (e.g. De Witte 1997; Eatwell and Mudde 2004; Van Donselaar 1995; for a historical perspective see Capoccia 2005). While the populist radical right, let alone the extreme right, threat is not identical to that of populism per se, much can be learned from that debate. At the same time, while much of the European debate is purely normative, that is, determining one best approach, academics should (also) look into the conditions that foster or inhibit the success of the different approaches.

10.2.3 The Levitsky-Loxton thesis: Populism leads to competitive authoritarianism

Levitsky and Loxton's chapter is not just interesting because of their insightful analysis of the case of Fujimori. The authors also present a more general thesis, namely that populism leads to 'competitive authoritarianism.' They argue that this is a logical process because: (a) populists are political outsiders; (b) populists earn a mandate to bury the political establishment; and (c) the political elite that they mobilized against, and defeated in the election, continues to control these institutions after the populist leader comes to power. Without a doubt, this argument is valid for the case of Fujimori in Peru, but the evidence of the other cases in this edited volume challenges the general validity of their thesis.

First of all, not all populists are political outsiders. While this might often be the case, there are several examples of populist leaders who are part of the political establishment. For instance, Bruhn shows in her chapter on Mexico that leaders such as Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Andrés Manuel López Obrador cannot be labelled as 'political outsiders.' Indeed, both are well-trained politicians socialized into the functioning of political parties and who had been in power at the local or regional level before their national bid. A similar argument could be made for Haider in Austria, even though he was at times confronted with political ostracism, and certainly Silvio Berlusconi in Italy and Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands.

According to Barr, the populist leader is usually a 'maverick,' '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' (2009: 34). Alternatively, populists like López Obrador and Haider can be seen as 'outsider-elites, *connected to* the elites, but not *part of* them' (Mudde 2004: 560). In any case, many populists are not true political outsiders; they might be outside the political establishment, but they are inside the political game. Hence, many populists do have some kind of allegiance to the political game, even if they tend to oppose some rules and compete with most key players.

Second, Levitsky and Loxton rightly note that populist leaders aim to get rid of the establishment (i.e. the key players). In effect, it is not an exaggeration to say that populism, particularly in Latin America, can be seen as an important driver of processes of elite circulation and renewal (Rovira Kaltwasser 2009: 299–303). However, the interaction between populist leaders and different segments of the establishment can show a

great level of variance, going from important degrees of cooperation (e.g. Fujimori in Peru or the FPÖ/BZÖ in Austria) to radical conflict (e.g. Chávez in Venezuela or VB in Belgium).

To understand this variance, particularly within the Latin American context of presidential systems, it is important to stress that populism can take divergent organizational forms in different national settings. Accordingly, populist leaders invest energy in forming a solid mass organization only when the reforms that they aim to embark on are fervently resisted by the establishment, since then they can effectively mobilize the masses in order to undertake the reforms in question (Roberts 2006). This implies that populism does not always intend to get rid of the *whole* establishment. By contrast, populists in power and in opposition try to maintain relations of cooperation with segments of the establishment that are more proximate in ideological terms (or strategic aims). It is not a coincidence that several European countries have seen the formation of coalition governments with and minority governments tolerated by populist radical right parties (De Lange 2008).

10.2.4. Populism and the international arena

The chapters of this edited volume have shown that the ambivalent relationship between populism and democracy can also be studied from an international perspective. Transnational actors and supranational institutions are aware of the 'populist challenge.' For instance, the agreements of the European Union (EU) and the Organization of American States (OAS) contain a democratic clause, which has been invoked to denounce the alleged anti-democratic character of certain populist actors (e.g. the coalition between the FPÖ and ÖVP in Austria, Fujimori's decision to close Congress, or Mečiar's increasingly authoritarian and nationalist third government).

Nevertheless, 'defending democracy' at the international level has proven to be anything but a straightforward task. Supranational institutions usually apply double standards when it comes to establishing sanctions based on democratic principles. For instance, the European Union reacted vigorously to the formation of a government that included a populist radical party in Austria, but it said nothing when Silvio Berlusconi formed a coalition with Gianfranco Fini's National Alliance and Umberto Bossi's Northern League. At the same time, the Organization of American States (OAS) has tried to deal with certain anti-democratic practices of Fujimori in Peru and Chávez in Venezuela, but did not complain about G. W. Bush's anti-terrorist measures. In fact, the OAS doctrine is focused on addressing interruptions and alternations of democracy, not of the

quality of democracy (Boniface 2007: 53). This means that democracy promotion implies a reactive rather than a proactive endeavour for the OAS. Indeed, the OAS tends to intervene only when a major crisis comes to the fore; it does not have clear criteria and tools for action when it comes to dealing with a process of 'slow death of democracy' (O'Donnell 1992: 19), such as the ones that Peru and Venezuela have experienced with the rise of Fujimori and Chávez, respectively.

Put simply, there are good reasons to believe that when supranational institutions try to take sanctions based on democratic principles, they are not capable of overcoming the existent power asymmetries at the global level. This, in turn, gives more visibility and to a certain extent more legitimacy to the populist forces, since they can portray themselves as David fighting against Goliath (Mouffe 2005b: 64). This happened, for example, in Austria, where many right-wing people rallied behind the government mainly to protest the perceived illegitimate and hypocritical EU interference. In Latin America, on the other hand, many populists have made their struggle against the clearly self-serving U.S. interference in the region a key part of their populist struggle of *Americanismo*. The problem is that democracy promotion is based on the idea of non-partisanship. Consequently, the involvement of outside actors in democratically elected governments inevitably raises suspicion of the existence of a partisan agenda (Carothers 2010: 69). In other words, dealing with populism is a complicated task because it usually implies the defence of a particular model of democracy, which is not necessarily shared by the governed all over the world. Certainly, this opens the question about the normative and historical underpinnings of the very concept of liberal democracy (Koelble and Lipuma 2008).

Finally, it would be erroneous to think that populist forces operate only at the sub-national and national levels. While Jean-Marie Le Pen's efforts to build a strong EU-wide populist radical right bloc, which could play an important role in the European Parliament, have failed miserably, Venezuelan president Chávez has become a serious regional player within Latin America. Backed by the highest oil prices in history, he has used his (relative) wealth to reward allies in other countries in the region, such as Bolivian president Evo Morales and Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa, and to undermine U.S. influence in Latin America (Ellner 2008). Moreover, the current wave of Latin American radical left-wing populism is characterized by the attempt to redefine both democracy and democracy promotion along lines that are more meaningful for 'the people' (Legler, Lean, and Boniface 2007: 11). Although it is too early to evaluate the impact of this attempt, there is little doubt that contemporary populism is not only changing the meaning of the very

concept of democracy in the Latin American region, but it is also sparking a public and academic debate on the shortcomings of the neoliberal policies that the U.S. and the International Financial Institutions have promoted in Latin America in the last decades.

10.3 Future paths of inquiry on populism and democracy

Although this volume is the first to study the relationship between populism and democracy cross-regionally and according to an integrated theoretical framework and has produced significant new findings, there remains much to be done. In this last section we suggest a few avenues of further study which we believe are particularly relevant to the better understanding of the nature of populism in general and of the complex relationship between populism and democracy in particular.

First, a topic that several chapters in this volume touched upon, but few truly studied in detail: the diffusion of populism. In other words, in what way, and under which circumstances, can populism spread from one society to another? Not by coincidence, scholars working on Latin America have identified the existence of different 'waves of populism,' such as the rise of neopopulist leaders in the 1990s and the formation of radical left-wing populist forces since the first decade of the new millennium (Freidenberg 2007; Gratius 2007). Similarly, the rise of populist radical right parties in Europe has often been described as a 'wave' (e.g. Von Beyme 1988) or a 'contagious' phenomenon (e.g. Rydgren 2005). As these examples suggest, there are good reasons to think that the emergence of populism in one country is partly related to similar developments in neighbouring countries. This would mean that populism, as well as democracy, is affected by the regional and international context.

Although we do not intend to develop a detailed argument about the diffusion of populism here, it is worthwhile indicating a possible starting point for further studies. Following the terminology of Simmons and her collaborators (2008), there are at least three mechanisms of diffusion which can influence the (re)appearance of populism: competition, learning, and emulation. The mechanism of *competition* came indirectly to the fore in various chapters of this book, where it was shown that the rise of populist forces challenges the mainstream parties, which, under certain conditions, are tempted to copy the populist discourse. At the same time, mainstream parties can adapt their agendas in order to prevent the formation of populist competitors (Mudde 2007: 281–2). In contrast to competition, the mechanism of *learning* refers to a change in beliefs, resulting either from observation and interpretation or from acquisition of new frames or theories. This process of social learning

is normally facilitated by the exchange of information via networks in which both technocrats and 'organic intellectuals' are operating, developing new ideas and policies that can be raised by populist leaders and parties. Finally, the mechanism of *emulation* alludes not so much to the supply side, but rather to the demand side of the populist phenomenon. From this angle, the electorate of one country is aware of the political development of neighbouring countries, and in consequence, the emergence of a populist actor in one place can trigger a 'demonstration effect' in other places.

A second research agenda refers to the relationship between the type of organization promoted by the populist forces and the model of democracy that they (aim to) construct. Much Latin American literature assumes that populism includes the lack of strong party organizations and direct communication between leader and followers (e.g. Weyland 2001, 1996; Roberts 1995). At the same time, some North American scholars consider grassroots mobilization a key feature of populism (e.g. Formisano 2007). Finally, European populism entails both highly personalized parties (e.g. Forza Italia or List Pim Fortuyn) and some of the best organized parties in their respective countries (e.g. Flemish Interest, Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, or Swiss People's Party). The advantage of using our *ideological* minimal definition is that it enables us to use this definition across regions and also allows us to study the effect of party organization on the relationship between populism and democracy. Do non-organized populists indeed inflict more harm on democracy, as Levitsky and Loxton argue in this book, or do better institutionalized populist parties form a larger threat?

In addition, the relationship between the populist ideology and the kind of institutional setting that populist actors prefer is closely related to a topic raised by many scholars, namely, the transformation of the organization of political parties and the possible impact of this transformation on the democratic regime (e.g. Katz and Mair 1995; Von Beyme 1993). For instance, Mair (2002, 2006) has argued that the erosion of 'party democracy' paves the way for the rise of a sort of 'populist democracy' in which political parties are replaced by strong leaders who develop a direct and unmediated linkage with 'the people.' Seen in this light, the rise of populist forces goes hand in hand with the constitution of a new political scenario marked by the formation of 'cartel parties' and the increasing influence of the mass media, particularly television. However, while the previously mentioned new political scenario has been gaining momentum in many countries, we have not seen the emergence of populist forces in all of them (important exceptions are, for example, Spain in Europe and Chile in Latin America). At the same time, it is an exaggeration to say

populism in Latin America and the more exclusionary populism in Europe (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2011). Moreover, although there is little doubt that the Tea Party in the United States can be seen as a populist movement, no academic studies have so far tried to compare this movement to populist movements outside of the United States. Does the use of different definitions of 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite' have an effect on the relationship between populism and democracy? Do neoliberal populists affect the relationship between populism and democracy in similar ways in Europe and in Latin America? Does the Tea Party in the United States have a similar agenda, for instance in terms of anti-immigration, as the populist radical right parties in Europe?

Since populism represents a challenge for (liberal) democracy, future studies should focus on the factors that might hinder the (re)appearance of populism and thus take into account negative cases. For instance, some scholars have contended that the way national elites dealt with the Nazi past had a profound effect on the electoral success of the populist radical right in Europe (e.g. Art 2006; Decker 2008). In a similar vein, in those countries of Latin America where the left has experienced a learning process due to the authoritarian past and has adapted its programme in accordance with liberal democracy (e.g. Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay), the 'specter of (left-wing) populism' has not come to the fore (Lanzaro 2006). Finally, it has been argued that Latin American countries with a strong party system and solid political institutions can avoid populist reactions, since in these cases the proper functioning of the institutions of democratic representation leave little space for the (re)emergence of populism (e.g. Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Navia and Walker 2009). At the same time, in Europe various scholars have linked the rise of populist actors to the strength (or better: inertia) of party systems and political institutions, arguing that populist parties do particularly well in consensus democracies (e.g. Hakhverdian and Koop 2007; Kitschelt 2002), implying that more majoritarian and pluralist societies, like the United Kingdom, would be better protected against populists. As these illustrations suggest, when it comes to studying the factors that impede the (re)appearance of populism, many arguments have been put forward, and most can only be assessed on the basis of cross-regional and cross-temporal analyses.

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