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Nationalism, Populism, and Globalization in 21st Century Latin America[1]

Abstract

In this chapter, I argue that today's populism should be regarded as another type of nationalism. While all populisms are nationalistic, not all nationalisms are populist. Some varieties of populism may challenge this assertion, but I submit that in the 21st century nationalism and populism are more intertwined than ever especially in Latin America. I call this combination populist nationalism, PN.

Second, I offer some concept definition and a summary of the current debates on nationalism, populism, and their combinations.

Third, the chapter discusses changes in the global system that have favored the consolidation of nationalism at a global scale and their impact on Latin America and elsewhere.

Fourth, relaying on public opinion surveys, I show how citizens in the region see PN as an option that, in their opinion, would allow to combat the negative effects of globalization and the corruption of political elites. I believe that studies on nationalism that do not consider how actual people conceive their nations and what they feel about nationalism, remain incomplete

Fourth, I consider whether present day PN is changing the nature of democracy. While nationalism and populism have been connected to one another since the nineteenth century, this 21st century combination can destroy or transform democracy. Most

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PN leaders that have been elected to office attempt to control the state, centralize power, and change the dynamics of liberal democracy.

Finally, I will not dwell in depth into the experience of individual countries with nationalism and populism since those individual cases are treated in depth in other chapters of this collection.

Key Words: Globalization, nationalism, populism, democracy, Latin America.

Background

About 25 years ago I wrote a book focusing on less developed democracies, Societies with no Future (2000), in which I argued that the nemesis of democracy in Latin America was lack of planning for the future. Electoral cycles driven by short term agendas or no agendas at all, prevented long term planning with every administration brining new people with different ideas and new clientele networks. Ignorance about the international system or convenient obliviousness as to its workings, added to the usual excuses that political elites put forward not to improve the lives of their citizens.

They took no responsibility for situations that they themselves created and invariable pointed the finger to political rivals, the international system, imperialism, the IMF, and so forth. Unfulfilled promises, and irrational tax structures conspired to convince the citizenry of several democracies (at least the ones I compared in that occasion) that their societies had no future, no prospects. In the early 2000s, voters questioned the legitimacy of liberal democracy, faith in the electoral process diminished, and a sense of hopelessness prevailed. This is what, in time, favored the renaissance and consolidation of populist nationalism.

I pointed out that the most threatening enemy of democracy in those countries did not came from outside. Rather, democracy was being undermined from within. At that time, military coups or external threats had virtually disappeared. Fear of a military coup remained alive in some cases, but all public opinion surveys showed that, in the minds of citizens and in reality, this was only a remote possibility. Political elites, confident of their privilege position, became even more reluctant to abide by the rules of the game and started to consider the possibility of remaining in office for longer periods of time. This is in a way like the situation that the region faces today.

And this was not very different from what the region's history had shown throughout most of the twentieth century. What did change in 2000, however, was the international context. During the 1990s, Latin America was considered part of what came to be called the second—and even the third —wave of democratization. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, we were inundated with books and scholarly articles proclaiming the inevitability of democracy. Scholars argued that there had been a first "wave," a second one, and, as Samuel Huntington claimed, even a third. Not to mention Fukuyama's famous thesis on "the end of history as we knew it." Autocracies and dictatorships were increasingly portrayed as relics of the past. At least at the core of the global system—the European Union and the United States—liberal democracy appeared destined to reign indefinitely.

In most of that region of the world erroneously label "Latin America", however, the spread of democracy provoked unexpected effects.[2] First, it made political elites more confident that their control of the system could not be challenged. Second, despite initial enthusiasm with democracy was soon darkened by a rising dissatisfaction with these systems that emerged hand in hand with the 1990s adoption of neo-liberal policies. After a few years, the population of the region looked for some other forms of democratic governance that did not include the neo-liberal doctrine.

[2] The inhabitants of the region do not use Latin as a language, are not from the Mediterranean, and were not part of the Roman Empire. I rather prefer the geographical denomination of South and Central America.

For most countries around the world, the new ideological doctrine of the Word Bank and the IMF meant privatization and the partial death of national industry. In Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, the business sectors and local manufacturing badly suffered the consequences of international competition, many local firms declaring bankruptcy. Unions feared the end of their bargaining power, and foreign capital investment never came in the quantities promised and needed.

Unemployment continued to rise. The promised and much-needed retraining of the working class—essential for adjusting to the demands of the global market—never took place, and the investment in education required by these reforms scarcely materialized. Private universities proliferated in countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay, Peru, and Chile, but their curricula largely continued to offer more of the same. In some of these countries, strong unions also resisted the new economic policies (López Alves and Johnson, 2007). Under such unfavorable conditions, privatization often turned out to be neither more efficient nor more profitable. Moreover, clientelist practices in public institutions remained a persistent problem; they simply assumed a different form.

Prone to theatrics, strongly entitled, and for the most part indifferent to the needs of their constituencies—except at election time—the political elite of the late 1990s soon lost legitimacy, paving the way for populist nationalism (PN). Populist clusters of resistance had long existed, but in the early 2000s populist leaders emerged as important public figures.
Chávez won an election in 1999 and remained firmly in power until his death in 2013. His populist-nationalist discourse gained solid support in Venezuela and beyond. In Ecuador, Argentina, Bolivia, and to a lesser extent in Peru—where Fujimori’s legacy can be seen as a form of conservative PN—leaders experimented with similar formulas, exploiting democratic institutions and political competition to gain power through the ballot box. Uruguay, despite claims to the contrary, also adopted elements of this language and drew on its longstanding populist tradition. Brazil was a latecomer with its conservative version of PN, though it had a long history of leftist populist nationalism. Despite clear

differences in development and financial power, this political scenario resembles what the United States experienced in the years prior to 2016, as well as similar developments in the European Union.

Nationalism and Populism: Debates and Definitions

The global growth of PN has revived old debates about the meaning of nationalism and populism. Since twenty-first-century PN seems to emerge and thrive in democratic regimes, the debate has also involved redefinitions of liberal democracy and whether it can survive the combined embrace of nationalism and populism. Most contemporary forms of right- or left-wing PN have arisen from democratic practices and fair elections, but substantial evidence shows that PN regimes or parties tend to undermine the rules of liberal democracy once in power (López Alves and Johnson, 2018).

Nearly two decades ago, Margaret Canovan (1999) observed that it was rare for anyone to self-identify as a “populist.” Those labeled as such typically resisted the term. In the developed West, “populism” has often been used pejoratively against political opponents or leaders in other countries accused of disrespecting democratic institutions. Such leaders usually seek to monopolize power and, whether left or right, claim to act in the name of “the people,” thereby creating divisions and identifying an “other” that the people must oppose. Critics of Donald Trump in the United States have placed him in this category.

In Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia, however, the debate has tilted toward seeing nationalism-populism as a threat to democratic institutions. Trump’s victory generated a wave of media commentary detailing the damage that Trump-style PN could inflict on democratic stability. Other global powers, such as Russia and China, have also been loosely described as populist. These regimes wage continuous campaigns of control over the media and the opposition, often succeeding in cultivating state-sponsored nationalism. Jeffrey Brooks, for instance, concluded

that the Soviet state created a public culture grounded in nationalism, a legacy that persists in Russia today (2001).

In Latin America, by contrast, populism still retains a positive resonance—perhaps because the word “people” is embedded in its definition, and because in some countries populist regimes have pursued policies that benefited the poor. At the same time, globalization has heightened perceptions that local values, customs, and even territories are under threat, strengthening nationalist sentiment.

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Chavez had succeeded at winning an election in 1999 and remained firmly in power until his death in 2013. His populist nationalist discourse gained solid support in Venezuela and around the world. In Ecuador, Argentina, Bolivia, and to a less extent in Peru although the legacy of Fujimori can be considered one of conservative PN, leaders tried to use similar formulas, all of them exploiting the institutions of democracy and political competition to gain power through the ballot box. Uruguay, despite claims to the contrary, also adopted some of this language and cultivated its old populist tradition. Brazil was a late comer with its conservative version of PN, although it had a long history of leftist populist nationalism. Despite obvious differences in levels of development and financial power, this political scenario resembles the one that the US experienced in the years prior to 2016 and similar events in the European Union.

Nationalism and Populism: Debates and Definitions

As expected, the growth of PN at a global scale has provoked a revival of old debates about the meaning of nationalism and populism. And since at the present time all types of PN appear to emerge and grow in democratic regimes, then the debate has also involved definitions of liberal democracy and whether it can survive the embrace of nationalism and populism combined. Most versions of twentieth first century right or leftist PN have emerged from democratic practices and fair elections, but substantial evidence shows that PN regimes or parties tend to undermine the rules of liberal democracy afterwards (Lopez Alves and Johnson, 2018).

Nearly two decades ago Margaret Canovan (1999) observed that it would be rare to hear someone identify him or herself as a "populist," and those who were referred to as populists typically bridled at the term. Indeed, in the developed west the term "populism" has often been used as a pejorative label for one's political opponents or for leaders of other countries who show disrespect for democratic institutions. These leaders usually wish to monopolize power and, either on the left or the right, act in the name of a sector of society defined as "the people", thus creating divisions and attacking an "other" which "the people" should oppose. Critics of Donald Trump in the United States have placed him and under this category.

Other developments in Easter Europe, Latin America, and Asia, have tilted the debate on nationalism and populism in favor of those who see that combination a threat to democratic institutions. Trump's victory generated a flurry of media activity spelling out the damages that populist nationalism *a la* Trump can cause to democratic stability. Other powerful elites in the international system are also loosely defined as populists, such as those of Russia or China, systems that have continued to wage a war of control against the media and the opposition. And they have in part succeeded at creating state nationalism. Jeffrey Brooks, for instance, studying the importance of state sponsored nationalism in the Soviet Union, concluded that the state had succeeded at creating a Soviet public culture based on

nationalist ideology, and that that same culture has been transferred to today's Russia (2001).

In Latin America, however, populism still carries a positive resonance, perhaps because the word *people* is embedded in its definition and because, in some countries, populist regimes have adopted policies that benefited the poor. At the same time, as global forces increasingly shape daily life, nationalism has grown stronger, fueled by perceptions that local values, customs, cultures, and even territories are under threat.

The region has suffered an overall economic and financial decline in the last decade, with rising unemployment and inflation, widespread popular mobilization, and, in some cases, the growing threat of organized crime and cartels. Against this backdrop, populist policies complement a resurgent nationalism that resists foreign economic and social influence. As the traditional left has lost ground, populist-nationalist (PN) leaders have gained visibility —some in power, as in Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia, or Ecuador, and others in the opposition.

At present, the region presents a mixed picture. Liberal leaders have returned to office in countries such as Uruguay, while in Chile they have managed to retain power. Yet PN continues to control the executive in key countries such as Argentina and Brazil—the two giants of South America—and, as many have pointed out, Mexico. Even where PN politicians are not currently in government, they remain powerful challengers to the liberal-democratic order. Whether nationalist-populist solutions can provide better alternatives than traditional liberal democracy remains uncertain. The experience so far, especially in Venezuela and Brazil, has yielded negative results. Nicaragua is a different case, but Daniel Ortega is often described as a pseudo-Marxist populist.

It is important to note that PN regimes are not alone in adopting nationalist discourse. Liberal democracies in the region—despite their greater openness to foreign influence, especially through longstanding ties to the United States, as in Colombia—have also

relied on nationalist rhetoric. PN, however, is more explicitly nationalist and openly anti-U.S. influence. Yet the case of Rafael Correa in Ecuador demonstrates PN's flexibility: it adapts its version of nationalism to context, while strategically employing vague but powerful language that champions "the nation" and "the people." At the same time, PN leaders have sought alliances with global powers—such as China, Russia, Iran, or the Gulf states—that can themselves threaten national autonomy. In this sense, PN replicates many of the failures of liberal democracy, while presenting itself as more authentically national.

Scholars have underlined the centrality of populist discourse as one of PN's greatest strengths: "a language whose speakers conceive of ordinary people as a noble assemblage not bounded narrowly by class; view their elite opponents as self-serving and undemocratic; and seek to mobilize the former against the latter" (Kazin, 1995: 22). The popularity of PN in Latin America stems partly from the fact that many of its leaders have, at times, delivered tangible benefits to the working classes and the poor. This has created a loyal base that takes pride in being both nationalist and populist. Yet, often, these leaders have ultimately led their countries into crisis. PN supporters are typically anti-globalization, hostile to foreign influence, and opposed to international financial regulators such as the World Bank and the IMF. In many ways, they echo the rhetoric of the traditional Latin American left. PN's critique of "politics as usual" mirrors long-standing leftist and liberal positions, especially its denunciations of neoliberalism and globalization. But where the left failed to capture the allegiance of those marginalized by globalization and technological change, PN has succeeded.

PN's eclecticism is its most powerful weapon. Its discourse monopolizes a conversation long dominated by the left, contrarians, and social movements. It reclaims the defense of the working class while simultaneously incorporating conservative concerns. Historically, both the left and the right defended the principle of national self-determination. Today, PN has appropriated this theme wholesale, transforming it into what some see as a moral imperative. As Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser argue, populism creates a "moral imperative" that mobilizes the

people and, in some cases, may even strengthen democracy (2012).

Despite its ideological vagueness, PN has always been tied to international transformations. The fall of the Spanish Empire and the wars of independence gave rise to local *caudillos* with pseudo-populist styles and clear nationalist traits. Their intimate relationship with followers and their use of direct, colloquial rhetoric remain hallmarks of PN discourse. Some historians have described José Gervasio Artigas of Uruguay as an early case of populist nationalism, a tradition that continued into the twentieth century and consolidated in the region's first populist-nationalist regimes (Machado, 1984; Fernández Saldaña, 1969; Real de Azúa, 1984). Very different figures, such as Juan Manuel de Rosas in Argentina and José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia in Paraguay, have also been interpreted as proto-populists.

Similar roots can be found in the United States, where populism gained prominence in the late nineteenth century with the formation of the Populist (or People's) Party. This movement responded to international economic pressures and was largely seen as a positive influence. It championed farmers, rural and urban labor, and the lower classes, seeking to free the political system from the "grip of money power," often identified with foreign sources of wealth (Judis, 2016: 22). This populism was class-based but also strongly nationalist.

Resistance to global influence is also central in Ernesto Laclau's theorization of populism, which he defines, somewhat abstractly, as an identity with its own "logic" (2015: 15). For Laclau, populism is a positive force that cultivates cultural distinctiveness without necessarily undermining democracy. In simpler terms, populism and democracy can coexist, since populism does not inherently damage democratic practices. Jan-Werner Müller offers a different view, describing populism as "a particular moralistic imagination of politics, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified—but ultimately fictional—people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior" (2016: 22). Similarly, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2012: 15) define populism as a "thin-centered

ideology” that divides society into two antagonistic camps—the “pure people” versus the “corrupt elite”—and insists that politics must express the general will of the people. Both perspectives focus more on discourse than on the practice of PN.

Torcuato Di Tella’s more complete definition situates populism within international transformations while emphasizing charismatic leadership, anti-elite mobilization, and clientelist networks. He describes populism as a connection between leaders and followers based on a convergence of interests, but one sustained by charisma, anti-status quo attitudes, and shared emotional bonds (1990: 31). For Di Tella, populists are those who confront the “upper strata” of society. He excludes figures such as Marine Le Pen or Ronald Reagan and treats populism as a movement rather than a party. In his view, the participation of organized labor—whether Peronism in Argentina or Solidarność in Poland—is essential, as is the populist tendency to brand opponents as “anti-national” (1990: 34). His definition aligns with much of what we see in contemporary Latin American populist governments.

In short, the *populus* of populism can be understood as defending a just cause—whether fighting against liberal democracy’s entanglement with foreign powers or undermining democracy’s openness and fairness. Many scholars, especially on the radical left, have defended populist nationalism in Latin America as a legitimate reaction to imperial globalization (Robinson, 2008). Importantly, definitions of populism and nationalism often overlap: both frame foreign influence as harmful and present politics as a struggle between the “real people” or “patriots” and those within the nation who threaten its integrity. Both pit the collective against elites and foreign powers in defense of the nation, understood as a community bound by shared identity and solidarity.

As with populism, scholars remain divided on nationalism’s effects. Critics see it as a source of violence, war, and exclusion (Hechter, 2000; Wimmer, 2013). Others view it as a cohesive force. Vicente Cacho Viu, for example, argues that by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Catalan nationalism was

a positive factor in modernizing and unifying Spain (1990). Leah Greenfeld (2001) even interprets nationalism as the “spirit of capitalism,” akin to Weber’s Protestant ethic—a driver of capital accumulation, entrepreneurship, and cultural transformation.

Most work on nationalism agrees, however, that it is an ideology, distinct from the nation it claims to represent (Hobsbawm, 1990; Hastings, 1997; Rich, 1997). Just as populism constructs “the people” as a political subject, nationalism constructs “the nation” as a community requiring protection. Conservative PN often adds patriotism as its ultimate defense. In many respects, debates on nationalism mirror those on populism.

Historically, nationalism has been a powerful engine of regime formation and political change. It is not simply an “attitude,” but a complex ideological system that has developed over centuries, with its own semantic structures, rituals, and symbolic practices (López Alves, 2015). For this reason, I understand populism as a form of nationalism. Other scholars reach a similar conclusion: John Lukacs (2005), for example, calls populism “a special kind of clientele network, a mass movement based upon extreme nationalism.” While nationalism is sometimes treated as just one component of populism, I contend that it is the essential defining factor. Populism, in this sense, is best understood as nationalism in practice—an ideological mold upon which populist discourse and politics are built.

Resistance to nefarious global influence has also been associated with PN in the work of theorists like Ernesto Laclau who has somewhat obscurely defined populism as an identity with a particular “logic” (2015, 15). For Laclau, it is a positive influence and achieves a “cultural distinctiveness” that is not harmful to democracy. What that means, in simpler language, is that populism and democracy can coexist, or, better, than populism does not necessary damages democratic practices.

Jan Werner Muller explains populism as “a particular moralistic imagination of politics, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified – but … ultimately

fictional – people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some other way morally inferior"(2016:22). And in their edited volume, Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser (2012) similarly define populism as a "thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, the 'pure people' and 'the corrupt elite' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people." (2012:15). These two versions refer more to populist discourse rather than the political practice of PN.

International change is also part of Torcuato DiTella's more complete definition of populism. His is somewhat like positive versions but adds interesting shades that are not totally positive: "the connection between leaders and led is based on a convergence of interests but it must be backed up by charismatic appeal, anti-status quo attitudes … and a common emotional mood". (1990:31) For DiTella, as for many others, only those who challenge the "upper strata" of society are populists; he expressly left out leaders like Marine Le Pen in France or Ronald Reagan in the US and treats populism as a movement rather than a party. The participation of organized labor (e.g., *Peronismo* in Argentina or Lech Walesa's Solidarity in Poland) is essential, as is the tendency of populists to define their enemies as "anti-national" (ibid., 34). DiTella's definition, stressing charisma and clientele networks that allow the leader to reach down directly to his or her following, coincides with much of what we see in populist governments today in Latin America and elsewhere.

Thus, to conclude, the Populus of populism appear to be defending a right cause either fighting against oppressive manifestations of liberal democracy connected to foreign powers that threaten the nation, or else damaging the openness and fairness of the democratic process altogether. A defense of nationalism and populist leaders in Latin America as a reaction to imperial globalization has been made by many authors, some of them from the radical left (Robinson, William I. (2008)

Secondly, and very importantly, these definitions connect populism with nationalism and are similar to the long and venerable discussion on nationalism. Both theories of populism

and nationalism place an emphasis on the damaging effects of foreign influence and see the polity as a conflict between real patriots –or the people-- and others that although living in the same territory threaten the nation or the people. Nationalism, like populism, also confronts elites and foreign powers in defense of the "nation", a group of people that are described as having a lot in common and forming a community that is oppressed or attacked by others (the "people" of populism.

Third, very similar to the debate on populism, scholars are divided as to the damaging or beneficial effects of nationalism. It has built a reputation as an ideology that encourages violence, war, and division (Hechter, Michael, 2000; Wimmer, Andreas. (2013). On the other hand, however, there are those who see it as a positive glue uniting people as collectives. Vicente Cacho Viu, for instance, has claimed that by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth Catalan nationalism acted as a positive force that contributed to modernizing Spain and to unify it. (1990). Leah Greenfeld sees nationalism as the "spirit of capitalism", in the same way that Max Weber conceived the influence of the protestant ethics, thus as a major force behind the growth of capital accumulation and the cultural revolution leading to individual entrepreneurship. Nationalism becomes a "needed and beneficial force" that contributes to encourage economic development, democracy, and collective trust.(Greenfeld, Leah, 2001).[3]

Lastly, most work on nationalism agrees that it is an ideology and not the same as "the nation" that it purports to defend (Hobsbawm, Eric, 1990; Hastings, Adrian 1997; Rich, Norman. (1997). [4] The nation is, as the "people" in populism, a

[3] "My central thesis is that the factor responsible for the reorientation of the economic activity toward growth is nationalism, and that the unprecedented position of the economic sphere in the modern consciousness is a product of the dynamics of American society, in turn shaped by the singular characteristics of American nationalism."Nationalism becomes the "organizing principle of modernity", p. 16.

[4] Most literature agrees that "the nation" refers to a group of people who believe or imagine that they share something in common, and usually live under the jurisdiction of the same state, although nations can also exist as Diasporas or under the rule of more than one state.

group of people that need protection, and conservative PN stresses patriotism as the most effective defense . [5] In a lot of ways these debates are very close to those of populism.

We can conclude that, historically, nationalism has long been an engine of regime formation or change in a variety of political systems. Nationalist ideology is not just an "attitude"; rather, is a very complex ideological system with its own semantics that took almost three centuries to be built. It includes a variety of signifiers, conceptual structures and institutionalized rituals that conforms an "ideological practice of nationality" (López-Alves 2015).

Therefore, I understand populism as a type of nationalism. Other authors also have concluded that populism is a "special kind of clientele network, a mass movement based upon extreme nationalism" (Luckas, John, 2005). Most of the ideological beliefs and agendas of populist regimes can be framed within the general tenets and agendas of nationalism. Nationalism has traditionally been included in some definitions of populism, but it is usually treated as one more aspect of populist ideology. Rather, I claim that nationalist ideology is the essential defining factor of populism and a mold upon which populist discourse has been built.

Globalization and The Strengthening of Nationalism in Latin America

The recent resurgence of nationalism in combination with populism in Latin America is directly connected to a global phenomenon: the search for identity at all levels, personal, communal, sexual, racial, gender based, and national. The speculations about the construction of a global culture based on the revolution in social media and global communications have not found solid grounds. What is happening is the opposite,

[5] Patriotism is not the same as nationalism, as it is more focused on the defense of a territory under the control of a state rather than its people; these two concepts, however, are close cousins and have been used indistinctively.

despite the sort of “global” ethos developed by a minority in each country and the growing US cultural influence in the region due to the adoption of an American vocabulary and the stronger presence of the US service industry in the region (McDonalds, FedEx, Starbucks etc.).

The power of national identity, the identification with a “nation”, has never subsided, but in the 21st century the search for distinctiveness has taken an unexpected scope and power. This is indeed global system has been characterized by a search for identity and belonging, a perfect scenario for the propagation of PN. Even the most enthusiastic cheerleaders of globalization and convergence cannot ignore the irresistible search for the local and the “authentic” as opposed to the bland acceptance of global influence. Paradoxically, the spread of political correctness across the region, with its emphasis on racial, ethnic, indigenous, or sexual identity has also contributed to empower PN.

Closely connected to this search for identity are the structural characteristics of the present-day global system. Unlike the liberal order that followed WWII, this arrangement is much more chaotic, which makes the search for identities even the stronger. Richard Hass has indeed argued that this global system is “in disarray” (2017). It is a system “in transition” that questions the very notions of “system” and “order.” As he put it: “We are witnessing a widespread rejection of globalization and international involvement and, as a result, a questioning of long-standing postures and policies, from openness to trade and immigrants to a willingness to maintain alliances and overseas commitments. This questioning is by no means limited to Great Britain; there are signs of it throughout Europe, in the United States, and nearly everywhere else” (p. 3 and 33 and passim)

The question that remains half-answered in most of these theories about the transitional character of the international system is: transition toward what? I submit that among other things this international environment encourages the consolidation of ideologies that can offset the uncertainty and rapid pace of change push forward by globalization. Individuals and groups seek certainty, and a view of the future that offers some relief from the present. This is precisely what nationalism and populism provide. In addition, PN offer individuals and groups

a political path of militance and participation which increases their hopes that the needs of the “people” and the nation are going to be satisfied.

Most data indicates that in democracies, developed and less so, people yearn to rescue what is known and familiar, their local culture, customs, ethnicity, historical experiences, familiar social networks, belonging, and stability. This has created “political tribes” across the board formed by people that institutively see that their interests are best defensed by people that look and think like them rather than by traditional political institutions (Chua, Amy (2018).

Nationalists in the region have been usually fearful that their national values are in danger and that their leaders, the global elite, and international financial institutions do not have the best interests of the nation at heart (Lopez Alves and Johnson, 2007: 23-35). Given the failure of political elites to deliver what they promised, these feeling has grown. It is sobering to note that nationalist reaction against international influence has grown 40% globality since the early 1990s. Not only that, but several European countries have also faced the secession of regions (United Kingdom, Spain, Italy), or attempts at secession. The ideology of secession has, in fact, gained strength worldwide.

Democracies are not the only systems that have seen the growth of nationalism. The same can be said of other big power players like China or Russia, where very nationalistic states spend money, time, and effort, to cultivate national sentiment. But while in democracies PN can be a dangerous political bet, in stronger authoritarian states nationalism is seen as beneficial. China or Russia, for instance, use the media and other propaganda outlets to offer as sense of belonging, pride, and power to their citizens (Elizabeth Economy, 2018).

In a global system that hosts the highest number of international actors in recorded history --some of them with access to resources far beyond what many governments can control— the question of who is charge and who controls the system is a day-to-day debate and a concern for citizens. Just three decades ago, both elites and people in Latin America believed that the US was the major force that dominated the international system. Today, to

assess who is in control is much more difficult, and this empowers nationalism.

In 2018, surveys in 5 Latin American cities (Montevideo, Buenos Aires, Bogota, Lima, and Santiago de Chile) showed that a great majority of citizens felt powerless in a world that seemed to remain out of their control. To the question of "who do you think is in control of the country?" they answered that local political elites only controlled 30 to 35% of what happened in their countries (Lopez Alves and Aragon, 2018). About 25% believed that China was in control, 17 % thought that the US was still the superpower that decided their future, and 30% believed that " international events" were pulling the strings that controlled their lives. To the question of whether they believe that the ruling classes were patriots that defended their nation, an average of 37% in these democracies thought that politicians were not patriotic enough.

It has often been noted that corruption at the top and the increasing decline of trust in political parties, elections, and politicians in general, offers an opportunity for outsiders to access power. Yet, how damaging is the decline of trust in elected representatives in Latin American democracies? And how has this help the rise of nationalist/populist leaders?

In the same study (Lopez Alves and Aragon, 2018) we tried to measure this variable The results tell us, again, that nationalism grew in direct proportion to what citizens saw as the incompetence of local politicians and the threat of globalization. We sampled 2000 cases for each city.[6] To the question or whether they would prefer a stronger leader who did not came from the political elite to rule their country, an average of 55% responded positively. To the question of whether they would prefer a nationalist leader with a strong foreign policy bent, 67% responded positively, and many (44%) argued that the lack of strong nationalist policies was ruining their countries. To the question of whether they thought that the local elites were engaged in conspiracies with foreign 58% responded positively.

To the question of whether they thought their country was dependent upon other countries, in Argentina, 45% believed that the country was more dependent on China than on the United

[6] Data collection was done by different opinion poll experts in the cities in question following of course the same protocol and questions.

States. In Chile, 55% mentioned US influence, and 26% China, as the major winners from the global policies of the Chilean government. In Uruguay, the majority (55%) blamed the economic situation of the country on relations with the United States, Brazil, and Argentina, and 21% believed that China could be a better influence. In Bogota, an overwhelming 69% blamed the situation of the country in its close relationship with the United States and wished that new political candidates were more nationalistic. In Lima, 47% believed that their government was not in control of Peru and that China, and the US, were. Citizens in these cities therefore believed that their countries "did not belong to them" (Lopez Alves and Aragon, 2018:10). When asked "who do you think runs your country?" in average 67% of all respondents alluded to international actors or forces. Less than 30% believe that their countries were fully in control of the situation.

It is obvious, therefore, that despite the benefits of partaking in social media and the power of the worldwide web, voters believed that the lack of a strong nationalist stand damaged their future. Leaders, nationalistic or not, have long learned how to profit from this sentiment. At the time of this writing, for instance, Keiko Fujimori is running an extremely expensive presidential campaign in Peru using all the usual promises and claims of populist nationalistic leaders. Her opponent is doing likewise. As indicated, however, the experience with PN in the region has not been encouraging. Once in power, these leaders tried to undermine the rules of the game that placed them in power in the first place. Constitutional reforms, centralization of power in the executive, changes in the Justice system, and the creation of networks of influence that can secure their coming back to power have, so far, been the result. No military intervention is needed.

Latin America has seen the consolidation of both right-wing and leftist PN. These two are close cousins. They transform a group of people into the "real" nation and their ideological platform is based on the defense of this group's interests. Both favor strong leadership, claim to represent the dispossessed and left behinds, and create strong clientele networks that secure

their leaders in power. This nationalist ideology, as all nationalisms, divides peoples between “us” and “them”.

When populism is added to the equation, this nationalism either on the right or the left, conceptualizes and redefines the nation or a “people” to mean, basically, those who follow their leaders. Given that a majority of people in the region have expressed a strong concern about the destiny of their nations and whether foreign powers are in charge of local decision making, PN movements and parties have found more than propitious grounds to gain support, and some are firmly in power. Both conservative and leftist versions of PN defend the local against the global and propose to follow “anti-colonialist” values as a way to save the “real” and authentic nation.

Despite some ideological differences between conservative and leftist PN both create clientele networks that respond to the leader. Conservative PN, as in Donald Trump’s or Bolsonaro’s version, wishes to rescue a nation that it perceives threatened by the left, identity politics, immigrants, and political parties that no longer defend the national interest. They are anti-globalization and promote local free market initiatives and compels individuals to become entrepreneurs under the argument of saving small national business form unfair global completion. They define the nation using a nativist conception of the collective based upon traditional representations that use patriotic symbols, national pride, flag, and country.

In its pseudo leftist versions, PN also operates through organizations that play middle managers and offer favors, connections, bribes, or goods to followers. This has been apparent in Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela. In both right wing or leftist versions, you are either with them or against them. While these leftist PN leaders have vowed to save their countries from corruption, malfeasance, and a dishonest political elite, some of them, however, left office only after creating large clientele networks that brought them back to power more than once, as happened in Argentina. The control of 35 to 40% of the vote has emerged as the magic number that allow populist nationalists to undermine democratic competition. In this version,

PN also defends the nation and the people, especially the poor, from unfair globalization.

PN discourse in Latin America can be considered a precedent for the nationalist ideology that took roots in developed democracies afterwards. Latin American versions spoke of putting the interests of their countries first, and Trump and other PN leaders in the EU put together a public discourse of "America First", or whichever country first. Not to mention the strong anti-globalization position of the regions' PN, that was also adopted by Trump, Erdogan, Organ, and others.

This anti-globalization and patriotic message, plus favors and clientele relations, resonated with voters who became a faithful following. Others voted for PN because they wanted to "shake the system" and punish traditional politicians and multinational corporations. In some ways, leaders in Latin America like Hugo Chavez, a sort of pioneer of 21 century PN, and others who later used an anti-globalist rhetoric and a patriotic defiant overtone, resemble the political discourse of leaders like Trump, Organ, and Putin. They shared the idea that they could talk "straight" to the people. Evo Morales (while he was in power) adopted a similar style and Maduro, although lacking Chavez's charm and charisma, has continued to use social media to bypass regular media outlets. The Kirshner's in Argentina also used, like Venezuela, social media, and well-funded youth organizations, like the Campora, to gain supporters for their policies.[7]

Latin American PN politicians have nonetheless copied powerful political tools from the US left and progressives, who also hold an anti-globalization platform. I am referring to political correctness. [8] This has indeed strengthened PN in many Latin

[7] The Venezuelan nationalist/populist style of Maduro, although layered in Marxist and radical language, is no longer "leftist" or "revolutionary" but, rather, quite conservative, and protective of the status quo.

[8] Political correctness is a term coined by leftist organizations of the 1970s and early 1980s. It was meant to have humorous overtones, but it has evolved to mean the strict avoidance of using pejorative or offensive language against disadvantage members of society. It has evolved into an ideology that went from promoting inclusive language in public discourse and the media, to lawsuits against those who did not. Not to speak a politically correct language when addressing co-workers or subordinates

American countries, especially in urban centers, since political correctness speaks to several constituencies that were originally not included in more traditional versions of populism. PN leaders have used the banners of racial, gender, LGBTQIA rights, women rights, gay marriage, and even immigrant justice to gain new constituencies, especially younger voters. Despite its original good intentions, in the US and increasingly so in Europe, political correctness has become an ideology that often encourages reverse discrimination and is dismissive of people who do not conform. It has become a culture into itself and in many cases a severe doctrine that requires absolute compliance. The region is not at that point yet, but it would not be surprising if it reaches it under PN candidates who wish to retain these constituencies.

The divisions created by addressing the needs of some constituencies and leaving others aside can have negative consequences, as the experiences of the US and Europe have demonstrated (Chua, Amy, 2018; Luce, Edward 2017). It can bring about more divisions that adds to traditional class stratification and enormous differences in income, like the ones that we see in the region.

This vision of the larger nation in which many smaller "nations", theoretically, coexist under one state and have the right to make decisions based upon their own cultural norms, race, religion, and ethnicity, has been historically a great achievement of liberal democracy. And we know what happens if this proves to be unstable and segregation consolidates. (Tuchman, Barbara W. 1966; Hastings, Marx 2013; McMillan, Margaret 2013).

Conclusions

PN represents a rebellion of the "demos". In Latin America traditional tensions between elites and citizens have been accentuated by globalization and the 4th industrial revolution. These do not seem to connect to one another. Yet they are

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both in the public sector and in the corporate world has made life better and restored dignity. enforcement of these rules usually results in reprimands and in damaging evaluations or work performance.

intimately connected and favors nationalism and the consolidation of PN as a force that is there to stay. While when in the past we thought of nationalism and populism as something pertaining to a few Latin American countries like Argentina under Peron, Apra in Peru, or mild versions of populism in Uruguay etc., today the whole continent can be prone to support this kind of organizations. Economics, as usual, is of course a major factor. It has been shown, for instance, that in the region a young person of 20 years of age today will, if he or she is lucky, have more than 15 different jobs before retiring (Aragon and Gutierrez, 2019). This applied to both skill and unskilled labor in an increasingly depressed labor market.

For the Latin American unskilled working-class, small business sector, and national industry, the word “globalization” is still a feared and alien force that could take away your job, make your pensions go away, and upset your daily life. Since the early 2000s pessimism and uncertainty reigned in the region and people blamed both globalization and their governments for the declining purchasing power of their currencies. (Lopez Alves and Johnson, 2007). The pressures of globalization have not stopped. In 2021, globalization has become even more demanding in terms of high-tech skills in a labor force where only a very tiny minority can partake in those markets. China produces 5 times more computer, biotechnology and nanotechnology engineers than the United States, and 3 more times AI professionals. while Latin America produces less than a quarter of what the US graduates, and most of them are not in those fields. The 4th technological revolution (Schwab, Klaus 2016) is rapidly changing the world and the region is not prepared for either coping with or profiting from it.

These changes have created more inequality, unemployment, and unrest, and can favored even further the position of PN leaders who promise that they can shelter their countries from these global forces. Or claim that they can get their countries to profit from them. Neither nationalist leaders nor traditional party ones, corrupted or somewhat honest, have been able to cope with the 4th technological revolution, economic crises, inflation, and the changing rules of the game.

In 1966, Baran and Sweezy warned that the concentration of capital in fewer hands was an indicator of rising inequality.[9] It stood as the nemesis of competitive capitalism and entrepreneurship. They argued that this type of capitalism was the future of the United States. Today the 4th industrial revolution favors a different kind of monopolies. In the 1960s, despite mergers wealth could be made outside large monopolies. Individual inventors of new technologies could still make contributions outside the corporate framework. Today, however, this is not the case. [10] Not to mention that in the past elites did not possess the powerful tools of mass surveillance and public opinion control that 21st century technology makes possible.

Latin America has long suffered from lack of adequate technological development despite ingenious contributions in the development of some apps and communication technology. In today's global system, however, technological development and education have become even more elitist than in the past. Education matters even more than it used to because the demand for brainpower has soared. A young college graduate in the developed world earns 63% more than a high- school graduate if both work full-time—and the high-school graduate is much less likely to work at all. For those who do not participate in this very small elite, the word of today is more threatening.

We know that in Latin America PN supporters are usually poorer, working, or low middle class with scarce education but we also know that recently educated young voters have been more engaged by leftist PN politically correct ideology. Brazil is an example in which PN both in the left and the right can win

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[9] Tellingly enough, the dedicated their book to Ernesto Che Guevara.

[10] Every other week, Google buys off a smaller company; by 2020 it controlled 240 new companies and it continues to grow. Amazon monopolizes more than 70% of book sales in America and is continually expanding into new markets including real state, while Apple manufactures more than 95% of software for mobiles. Antitrust actions, a very telling variable, has reached its lowest point in the US, falling 65% since the early 1980s; 90% or more of advertisement is controlled by Google.

elections by a large majority. Nationalists and populists have profited from a global scenario in which the search for identities and nationalism are still on the rise. They have not, however, catch up with new demands in the labor market, resolved the declining standards of life in their countries, stopped the virtual disappearance of the middle classes or the corruption that they claimed to combat, and shown little success in instituting effective solutions for rising unemployment.

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