



Understanding Latin American anti-populism¹

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Abstract

Anti-populism is antagonistic opposition to what it names-pejoratively-as “populism”, going beyond criticism of aspects of a perceived populist movement or government to become a radical antagonist to it. The anti-populist field is capable of including right wing, liberal and left sectors, even though right wing and liberal sectors will tend to have predominance over left wing ones there. In Latin America even though it tends to present itself as a defense of liberal democracy it has supported or paved the way for anti-democratic coups against perceived “populist” governments. Classist, racist and neoliberal economic discourses are historically prominent in Latin American anti-populism. This shows historic socio-political forms and narratives linked to economic, social, and ethnic cleavages of the region manifesting in political conflict around discourse about “populism”. An overview of the phenomenon of anti-populism is provided, then an analysis with it of the 3 historical waves of “populism” in Latin America.

Key words

Anti-populism, populism, ideology, Latin American politics, conflict, racism, class, discourse

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Introduction

The subject of populism in Latin America has received an immense quantity of studies since the 20th century, and populism in general a growing important quantity of studies at the global level in the 21st century. In these studies the phenomenon of “anti-populism” has been mentioned and briefly analyzed but remains “understudied” (Ostiguy 2017, 3). Only until recently it has received more specific attention (Nállim, 2014; Stavrakakis, Katsambekis, et al., 2017; Moffitt 2018; Abi-Hassan, 2019; Van Dyck, 2019; Biglieri and Perelló, 2020). There is a lack of studies of Latin American anti-populism as a regional phenomenon since it has only been studied as separate national cases. This article seeks to be a contribution to understand more that understudied socio-political phenomenon in general, and in a pioneering way from a regional Latin American perspective. It also sees itself as a contribution to a wider understanding of Latin American elite ideology and motivation.

While populism is seen as an anti-elite political discourse and style but with multiple contradictory definitions and which is often used as a mere political insult, anti-populism is seen as a political discourse and movement which manifests a radical opposition towards what it labels as “populism”. Anti-populism labels a political phenomenon specifically as “populism” in a pejorative form, and proceeds to denounce it as a serious menace often to democracy itself or to political stability and often also to economic prosperity and stability. Much of anti-populism can be understood as self-defense of mainstream political elites and the economic upper classes, and social sectors close to these within the middle class. This antagonistic interaction between what gets labeled as populism and anti-populism tends towards creating a polarized political field if consolidated.

In Latin America anti-populism has appeared in conservative, liberal and leftist political sectors and, even though it often has said it defends democracy and freedoms, it has supported coups which have brought down democratically elected governments to replace them with dictatorships. Anti-populism in Latin America has been studied as a long existing political phenomenon in Argentina as “anti-Peronism” (Spinelli 2005) (Nállim 2014) (Ferreyra 2015) (Biglieri y Perelló 2020) which goes back to the beginning of the Juan Domingo Perón presidency in the 1940s. In studies of anti-Peronism as well as of the opposition to the Brazilian populist government of Getulio Vargas racist, classist and pro-coup features have been observed in them, and these sentiments will be noticed

also within anti-populist fields in the two later waves of populism in Latin America (neoliberal and left wing) identified by the literature on “populism”. A specific theory of “economic populism” in the region has also been put forward by conservative, liberal and neoliberal economists who tend to associate populism with leftist or redistributive economics and economic crisis (Edwards Figueroa y Dornbusch 1992), but that view in fact goes back also to the initial wave of Latin America populism of the mid-20th century. Seen as such Latin American anti-populism can be seen as displaying the fears of social and political elites, and sectors of the middle classes associated with them, of the socio-political and socio-economic aspirations and mobilizations of more mestizo, afro-descendant, indigenous and “plebeian” sectors within a democratizing Latin America.

This article will be divided into four sections. The first one will establish a general view on anti-populism as well as noticing the specificities of anti-populism within Latin America. The next 3 sections will see that theoretical frame displaying itself specifically in the three main waves and types of Latin American populism identified in contemporary theories on that subject: “classic populism”, neoliberal and right wing populism, and left-wing populism.

Defining anti-populism as a general worldwide and Latin American political phenomenon

We can define populism as a political discourse (Laclau 2005, 68-69) and/or style (Moffitt 2018, 4) that features an appeal to the “people” against an elite or a sector of it, usually the political one but it can be also be against the economic elite-the upper classes of a social structure. To understand more the “style” of populism we can add the “socio-cultural” definition of populism provided by Ostiguy (2017, 1) which sees it as the “antagonistic, mobilizational” “flaunting” of “the low” understood as “cruder, personalistic, culturally “nativist,” overall “less sublimated” and more transgressive way of being and doing politics.” For Ostiguy this is usually opposed by those who adhere to a normative “high” view of politics which means “well behaved”, polished, learned, worldly and cosmopolitan, and more respectful of institutional procedure. Beyond that it is argued here that the concept of “populism” remains too vague and manipulated by political interests to be of much use beyond only denoting a vague anti-elite discourse and style. It continues to be used to talk about mutually contradictory issues in a semantically confusing way such as personalist politics (2017), a vague “ideology”

(Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017), xenophobia, racism, authoritarianism, neo-fascism but also recent forms of left wing politics (2018), criticism of the neoliberalization of social democracy, redistributive or nationalist economics (Edwards Figueroa and Dornbusch 1992), clientelism, demagoguery, and in the past even “political underdevelopment” (Germani 1973). As such all of that diversity of topics might be better served by focus on each of these instead of confusing all of that under the overstretched and confusing label of “populism”.

A response from those elites or sectors of them can be expected to criticisms of them and so for Stavrakakis, Katsambekis, Kioupkiolis, Nikisianis, & Siomos (2017, 3) a “historically sedimented” negative connotation of the designation “populist” exists with political behavior of irresponsibility, incompetence, demagogy and of an authoritarian or anti-democratic nature. Mainstream elite sectors can also resort to these frames to blame what they name “populism” for crisis situations as well. For those authors (Stavrakakis, et al. 2017, 11) this relationship of mutual identity construction and political struggle produces an “antagonistic choreography” which has to be included within a comprehensive theory of populism. This is linked for these authors, as well as for Ranciere (2007), Breugh (2007) and Green (2016), to a history of socio-political divisions which go as far back as Greek and Roman antiquity in Western civilization in which a “patrician” view of the people exists in mutual opposition with a “popular” or “plebeian” position. In those struggles an often bitter political antagonism occurs in which both sides can be “equally vitriolic”. For Stavrakakis, Katsambekis, et al (2017, 11-12) the French Revolution puts forward a model of democratic political subjectivity based on the sovereignty of the people and it starts two opposing forms of modern politics. One emphasizes popular sovereignty and even idealizes it, and another stresses the dangers of mass mobilization and tends towards a view of “democratic elitism”. Following Pearce (2019, 152), who writes about the tension between the idea of the citizen and of the people in Latin America, this can be understood as a struggle between Rousseau’s “general will of the people as the expression of a collectivist search for a common good” versus Montesquieu’s separation of powers and rule of law as a mechanism to protect individual liberty from the masses as well as from autocrats.

Moffitt (2018, 8) proposes joining the views of Stavrakakis and Ostiguy on anti-populism. Following that suggestion we can propose here a definition of anti-populism as a socio-political field of antagonistic identification against what is labeled as “populism”, which defends mainstream political elites and sometimes also socio-

economic ones, and “high” forms of doing politics against rising more “plebeian” political and social movements and the “low”, anti-elitist and insurgent political manifestations.

From there we can understand a response to that from sectors of elites and other groups close to them-socially, economically or ideologically. Moffitt (2018, 10) thus proposes that the antagonistic frames of populism can create a similar antagonistic response instead of an “agonistic” one. Moffitt, speaking about contemporary Europe, argues that the populism/anti-populism divide has tended to produce an antagonistic instead of an agonistic political conflict “with a clear deadlock between the two sides”. Here he is following Chantal Mouffe’s terminology where in an agonistic conflict one has “adversaries” while in an antagonistic conflict one has “an enemy to be destroyed” (Mouffe 2000, 101-102). Nevertheless this does not mean that other sectors of the elite or the middle classes cannot respond to what they label as “populism” in a more moderate “agonistic” and diffused form-as it is proposed by Rovira Kaltwasser (2017a) which is what can help avoid the creation of a strongly polarized political field. He sees that depicting populists as “the bad ones” and their opponents as “the good ones” contributes to a polarization of the political field in which stable political coalitions and agreements between government and opposition becomes “extremely difficult if not impossible”. For that author a paradigmatic example of extreme political polarization and crisis within a clear populist/anti-populist frame happening in recent times in Latin America is the situation in Venezuela under the Chavez and Maduro governments.

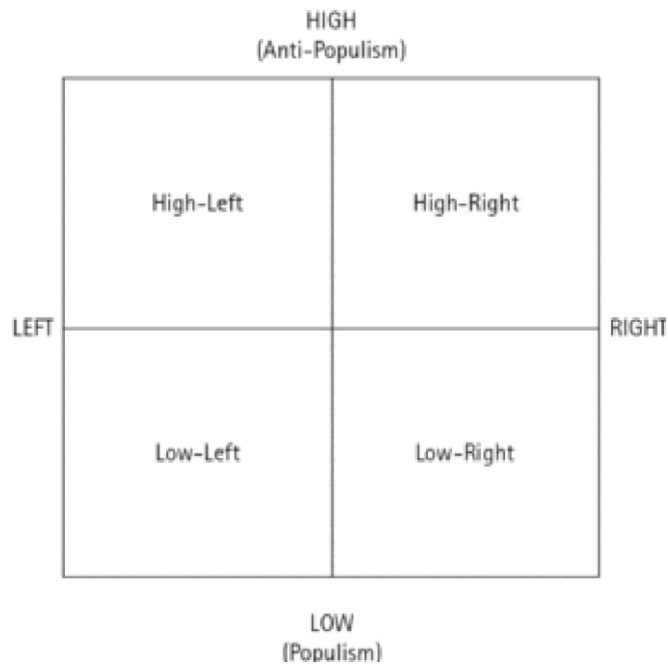
Moffitt (2018, 5) proposes that anti-populism is present also within the social sciences. In particular he notes that political scientists who study the phenomenon often can be said to fall into the category of “anti-populism”, “unwittingly or explicitly”, since they tend to have a strong concern about the alleged corrosive effects of populism on liberal democracy. He gives as recent examples of “explicit anti-populism” in the academy the works of Mounk (2018) and Müller (2016). For understanding this in the Latin American context we have to notice notions of “political development” existing alongside those of economic development since the mid-20th century. Within this frame “political underdevelopment” could be associated with populism which itself was associated with economic underdevelopment (Weyland 2001, 4). Both Latin American Marxists (Cueva, *El populismo como problema teórico-político* 2012) and non-Marxist scholars (Germani 1973) could subscribe to this view in their own ways. These views tended to be abandoned by the 1980s and Political Science lead the way towards a view

emphasizing the “autonomy of politics” (Weyland 2001, 8-9). Nevertheless it can be suggested that political science has kept the previous “developmentalist” view of liberal western democracy as being the normative ideal of politics which Latin America must adopt, and within that frame populism can clearly be seen as something sabotaging that goal which most of contemporary political science adopts explicitly or unconsciously.

As far as the forms of anti-populist movements we can follow Van Dyck’s (2019, 362) explanations on the emergence or not of anti-populist parties which he elaborates from a study of what he labels as “populist” regimes and their oppositions in Andean countries and in Thailand. He proposes that successful populism impedes anti-populist party building. From this he sees that when populists are in government and there is no competitive anti-populist party, anti-populist sectors may decide to take “extra-electoral” or undemocratic behaviors such as coups, police rebellions, the proscription or dissolution of populist parties, territorial autonomy movements, strikes, protests, attacks on public buildings, and the creation of tutelary privileges and authoritarian enclaves.

It is proposed in this article that the anti-populism field opposing a “populist” movement or government tends to be transideological, which means that it can fit inside it right wing, liberal and left wing political groups and ideologies. Even though this might seem strange or illogical at first, they come together-in a more or less organized form-because they share both having that populist actor as a political enemy and the goal of keeping it out of government or to take it out from government. The next section will show a history of Latin American transideological anti-populist electoral convergences, but the issue of internal ideological differences within the anti-populist camp can be an important one since Van Dyck (2019, 362) argues that “since successful populists discredit a wide spectrum of elites and organizations, anti-populists are heterogeneous in ideological and class terms, preventing cohesion”. Noticing this it can be expected that anti-populist left wing sectors are often linked to mainstream or older left-wing parties or organizations, and criticize what they label as “populist” movements and governments seeing them too “reformist” or not “revolutionary” enough (Nállim 2014, 19) and also seeing their leadership as too verticalist or that it blocks the autonomous organization of workers or of popular sectors (Portantiero y De Ipola 1981), and so can also be included by the “populist” actor within the “establishment” or the political elite it denounces. This can motivate these left-wing sectors to participate in anti-populist frames and political fields. To understand this possible ideological diversity of anti-populist political fields we can consider the proposal of Ostiguy (2017) who sees that the widespread left/right

wing distinction in politics is perpendicular to the high/low one that he proposes within a two-dimensional graph.



Source: Ostiguy (2017, 15)

This can allow us to see the existence of anti-populism also within the left as well as in liberalism and the right since criticism of a style of “the Low” can come from any of those ideological sectors.

Nevertheless, as far as the left/right divide existing within a contemporary democratic anti-populist political field, this article proposes that the right wing and liberal sectors-since we are talking about a context of a capitalist economy coexisting with democracy-tend to have better and more resources than left wing and social movement sectors which can allow them to gain hegemony within the larger anti-populist field. These resources can be better funded political parties, better access or direct control of mass private media, more and better economic and logistic resources for supporting right wing and liberal leaning protests and political discourses and frames, and links from social networks to effective and powerful individuals and groups at the national and international level in which to rely on. For this we can consider how Acemoglu, Egorov and Sonin (2013, 773) see that Latin American societies have “high levels of inequality and sufficiently weak political institutions” which enable “the rich elite (or a subset thereof) to have a disproportionate influence on politics”. From these advantages right wing and liberal anti-populism can end up over determining the main discourses as well

as the political leadership of the larger anti-populist field over the left wing sector of it. This should be seen as a tendency of anti-populist political fields, even though more specific left wing and social movement parties and protests can also exist in opposition to a populist movement or government. In this line of reasoning and following the previous graphic Ostiguy (2017, p. 15) argues that the challenge of left-wing politicians to have and maintain support within “popular sectors may become more difficult if they are on the high left, as is often the case”.

Closely related to the ideological issue in populism and anti-populism is the issue of the economic policies of populism and anti-populism. Politicians who can be said to have “populist” discourse—noticing how vague that label is—cannot be said to have a specific single economic policy position between protectionist, interventionist and redistributive policies, and privatizing, pro-deregulation free market ones. It can be suggested here that anti-populism on itself does not have to adhere to a single economic position either as it will be seen in the next section of this article. Nevertheless, following what was proposed before about the predominance of right wing and liberal anti-populism over left wing anti-populism within a wider transideological anti-populist political field, it can be argued here that economic proposals favored by economic elites and linked political elites will have more diffusion and advantages within the transideological anti-populist field over left wing redistributive ones. Considering this we can notice a certain liberal and right wing economic discourse which has tried to link populism mainly to “irresponsible” protectionist, redistributive economic policies. We will see in the next section how that has existed in Latin American anti-populism since the mid-20th century.

At the end of the previous century an academic theory of “economic populism” emerged from neoliberal economists who proposed a more sophisticated form of that view already present in right wing and liberal Latin American groups. The main proponents of it were Edwards and Dornbusch (1992, 1) who argued that in the Latin American region “populist regimes have historically tried to deal with income inequality problems through the use of overly expansive macroeconomic policies.” For those authors those policies “relied on deficit financing, generalized controls, and a disregard for basic economic equilibria, have almost unavoidably resulted in major macroeconomic crises that have ended up hurting the poorer segments of society.” A more recent liberal view of economic populism has been proposed by Acemoglu, Egorov and Sonin (2013, 772) who explicitly state that they “offer a simple model of populism” following “Dornbusch and Edwards”. These neoliberal theories of economic populism have been

criticized and rejected by the editors of *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* (Rovira Kaltwasser, Taggart, y otros 2017b) and others before them (Roberts 1995) (Weyland 1999) who argue that these cannot explain the many cases of movements and governments labeled as “populists” with neoliberal economic policies both in Latin America and in other parts of the world. Speaking on Latin America, Estrada Álvarez (2008) argues that Edwards and Dornbusch are mainly presenting an ideological construct with the goal of discrediting political projects which do not follow neoliberal economic policies. Following these two last views we can propose here that anti-populism has both a political form and an economic form, with both also existing within the social sciences—mainly within political science and economics respectively.

A last point should be made here about Latin American anti-populism’s relationship with the particular history of ethnic and class relations in that region. Socio-politically this can be seen as white and lighter-skinned Latin Americans being over-represented among the region’s political, economic, and cultural elites while indigenous and black people being over-represented among the region’s poor and marginalized classes (Johnson III 2012, 307). That particular socio-ethnic cleavage is what can be seen to describe the particularity of the previously mentioned frames of “patrician” and “plebeian” within Latin America, but also differences between what gets labeled in the region as “populism” and anti-populism in Latin America and in Europe and the United States. For Centeno & López-Alves (2001, 11-12), unlike Europe and much more than in the United States, Latin American societies “live with a permanent internal division” around race “that was codified in innumerable laws and supported by daily customs and assumptions”. Unlike nation building in Europe, the first phase of the formation of Latin American nationalism in the colonies starts with colonization. For Quijano (2014, 779) the colonization of Latin America produced relationships of domination around race and racial identities which corresponded to a pattern of hierarchies, social places and roles. Later notions of economic and political underdevelopment have been tied to racist views in the region. Loveman (2014, 123) notes that from the 1870s into the first decades of 20th century in Latin American intellectual and political elites there was a strong view which thought that “populations composed of non-European “racial stock” were destined to lag perpetually behind in the race to progress; where there was extensive racial mixing, they might even move backward on the evolutionary trail.” This genealogy of racist discourses and social forms in Latin America can explain reports, which will be seen later, of racist anti-populism tied to discourses and narratives pointing out to perceived non-

democratic or “pre-modern” behaviors of followers of so called “populist” movements or governments. Movements labeled as “populism” in the region took force in the early to mid-20th century alongside ideas of “racial democracy” linked to *mestizaje*. Since then Madrid (2012, 1) argues that “populist” parties in the region have increasingly embraced indigenous people’s demands, recruited indigenous candidates and employed indigenous symbols. Clearly very explicit displays of racism have tended to disappear within Latin American public debate but, as we will see later, racism has continued to express itself against presidents labeled as “populist” presidents themselves as well as towards their followers.

From this theoretical proposal we can now go on to consider it within the specifics of the historic three waves of populism in Latin America.

Anti-populism in the era of mid-20th century Latin American “populism”

The literature on Latin American populism-much of it which can be seen as “anti-populist”-has tended towards a view of three main “waves” of populism in that region starting with the first or “classic populism” of the mid-20th century, then the wave of “neoliberal populism” which starts in the 1990s, and the third being the wave of left wing populism of the 2000s-2010s.

Political movements and governments included in this literature as a “first wave” of “classic populism” (1930s-1970s) tended towards a certain ideological ambiguity in which populist movements and governments decided to show non-alignment with both sides of the Cold War conflict, as well as an Americanist ideology which didn’t feel comfortable with the labels “left” and “right” wing. Nevertheless it is associated with economic policy of a protectionist and redistributist nature, and highly personalistic leaderships with clientelist and corporatist relationships with their followers. Those populist leaders denounced both political and economic elites as the “oligarchy” and accused them of being aligned with foreign imperialist powers instead of with the “people”. Those protectionist pro-industrialization policies were able to attract also the support of the industrial bourgeoisie besides that of the middle and lower classes. On ethnic issues it tended to promote a view of a nation which embraced *mestizaje* while neglecting dealing more specifically with indigenous and afrodescendent sectors of the population.

For Moffitt (2018, 5) academic analysis of anti-populism had tended to come from outside the “mainstream” of populism studies. He mentions Latin Americanist historian Alan Knight as providing such an approach. Knight (1998, p. 239), while summarizing in Latin America “reaction of `bourgeois', propertied, conservative groups to the rise of a` class ' party-however vague, ad hoc, reformist and populist that party might be”, sees “anti-populism” as a “discourse/ideology/style” which is the elitist counterpart of “populism” in the region and that it “deplores the coarse, degenerate and feckless character of ` the people”.

Knight (1998, 240-241) deals in that article with the period of the early 20th century in the region and its crisis of “oligarchic” regimes, the Great Depression, growing migration from the countryside to urban areas and the corresponding challenges of political incorporation and representation of these new socio-political sectors. All of that contributed to the emergence of the wave of “classical” populism with presidents such as Juan Doming Perón in Argentina, Getulio Vargas in Brazil, Carlos Ibañez del Campo in Chile and José María Velasco Ibarra in Ecuador, and less successful populist movements and leaders such as APRA in Peru and Jorge Eliecer Gaitán in Colombia. He summarizes those years as the dominant classes “coming under attack”. Even though if at the end of that period there might have existed significant “reassertion of class domination”, Knight calls to not overlook the previous period of significant mass mobilization and challenge to political and economic elites and this didn't just come from those “populist” political leaders but also from mass rural and urban mobilizations which tended to be led by left wing and middle class sectors.

At this point let us take a look at 2 cases of Latin American anti-Populist movements from this era with some detail and other cases with less detail in order to see important patterns in them. Nállim (2014) deals specifically with “anti-Peronism” or what we here can see as the main Argentinian discourse and movement of anti-populism since the mid-20th century until today. For that author, the presidency of Juan Domingo Perón (1946-1955) brought with itself a huge process of economic and political incorporation of large sectors of the population which brought economic improvement and new political rights for poor, middle class and industrial sectors. That socio-political process included conflicts due to resistances to these new inclusive policies, but also due to the political forms of the Peronist movement and its personalist leadership. Those tensions evolved towards more violent and radical political interactions between Peronists and anti-Peronists, which led to the political exclusion of the Peronist movement from the

Argentinian political system after the military *coup d'état* of 1955, which continued with two more authoritarian military regimes in 1966-1973 and 1976-1983. For Nallím (2014, 18-19) the main ideas present in common within the diversity of anti-Peronists were that Peronism was inspired on the defeated totalitarian movements of World War II and on a *caudillo* tradition within Argentinian politics. From there members of the Peronist movement are seen as “upstarts” of power, manipulative and ignorant who are seduced by demagogy. From a cultural view, the Peronist “masses” are seen as uncultured and with a strong tendency towards violence while being denigrated with classist, racist and sexist stereotypes. Taking into account the ideological diversity of anti-Peronism, Nallím proposes that economically liberal minded anti-Peronists saw Peronism as bad intervention in the economy inspired in demagogy and as an enemy of fundamental liberties and rights. For left anti-Peronists Peronism was authoritarian and insufficiently transformative. Anti-Peronism managed to converge electorally as early as the 1946 presidential election won by Perón through the electoral alliance of “Unión Democrática”. The ideological diversity of that alliance is clear as we see that it was composed of the liberal-radical Unión Cívica Radical, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the liberal Progressive Democratic Party. The discursive and action field of anti-Peronism consolidated itself as the Peron presidencies went on. There the anti-Peronist sectors became more convinced that Peronism was taking control over the whole political field, which was on itself seen as just the fulfillment of their prophecy already announced in 1944. As this went on the anti-Peronist message started attracting other political groups, intellectuals in universities and in literary occupations. All of this paved the way for the coup of sectors of the Argentinian armed forces which brought down the presidency of Perón in 1955 and established a dictatorial military government. The new *de facto* non-democratic government went on to undo the redistributist and protectionist policies of the Perón government and moved towards more *laissez faire* liberal ones under the guidance of conditions acquired with loans from the International Monetary Fund. Noticing this change in economic policy we can argue that this case confirms what was proposed in the previous section of this article concerning the political predominance of liberal and right wing economic views in anti-populist fields over leftist views. The new military government clearly implemented the economic policies proposed by liberal and right winger anti-Peronists and not those of leftist anti-Peronists.

During the presidential election of 1945 in Brazil anti-populism manifested itself electorally mainly through the União Democrática Nacional (UDN) against the perceived

pro-Getulio Vargas Partido Social Democrático who won the election. Before UDN a brief right wing anti-Varguista movement also appeared which during the 1930s argued for Sao Paulo's secession from Brazil (Woodard 2006, 94-95). In a comparative article between anti-Peronism and anti-Varguismo Bohoslavsky (2012) notes that UDN was not as transideological as Unión Democrática was in Argentina and so it represented just liberal and right wing anti-Varguista views which tended to see both Varguismo and communism as "totalitarian". This happened since the UDN leadership feared giving the Brazilian Communist party political legitimacy after briefly considering initially an anti-Varguista electoral convergence with it similar to the Argentinian Unión Democrática. The reason was that the Brazilian Communist party had a more insurrectionist recent past than the Argentinian Communist Party and some influence within the Brazilian armed forces. UDN thus tended only towards liberal-conservative economics visible in its strong promotion of positions against worker's unions which included accusing them of Varguista "corporatism" and authoritarianism. This showed the economic interests of landowners and industrialists with links with foreign capital dominating that anti-Varguista party.

Also the UDN included less publicly expressed upper class racist positions within it (Woodard 2006, 93) (Hentschke 2006, 7) acting against the Varguista proposal which was closer to "racial democracy" for multiracial Brazil. Racist themes have been also reported as present in the upper class opposition to Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and his movement in Colombia. Braun (1986, 124-125) reports that the conservative newspaper *El Siglo* included in its editions in January of 1948 printed photographs of naked Indians armed for battle and labeling them "gaitanistas" and also a cartoon of a black "Gaitanista tribe" knifing a white man to death. Braun says that those attacks against Gaitán reflected the fear of the Colombian upper class that "a Gaitanista return to the past would lead back to the nation's indigenous and African roots and that this ideal motivated Gaitán's defense of the Colombian race. In their fear, the Conservatives did not bother to distinguish between blacks and mestizos." Gaitán was murdered in April of 1948 and this motivated large riots in Bogotá in what is known as the *Bogotazo*. He was going to be the presidential candidate for the Liberal Party in 1950.

Bohoslavsky (2012, 93) also notes that anti-populism from Brazil and Argentina influenced Chilean anti-populism directed against the populist president Carlos Ibáñez del Campo (1952-1958). Bohoslavsky (2012, 94) also notes how the upper class based Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio* saw the coup against Perón in 1955 as "democratic

recovery” after years of “rabid persecution of the republican order” which had a lot of “demagogic irresponsibility”, while showing solidarity to the similar Argentinian newspaper *La Nación*. Additionally Argentinian sociologist Atilio Boron (2020[2006], 287) sees a clear similarity in the decades long persecution and proscription that both Peronism in Argentina received as well as the Peruvian APRA party led by Victor Hugo Haya de La Torre-also labeled as “populist”-and communist parties of the mid-20th century. Boron’s point here is that this should be seen mainly as the region’s economic elite’s explicitly interrupting and opposing democracy in the region.

These common features of Latin American anti-populism (radical and often violent opposition to populism, defense of liberal democracy which can justify anti-democratic outcomes, opposition to redistributive and protectionist economic policies, racism, and classism) will also appear in the two later waves of populism.

The era of the “Washington Consensus” and neoliberal populists

The literature on “populism” talks about what it calls a second Latin American populist wave associated mainly with the governments of Carlos Menem in Argentina, Alberto Fujimori in Peru, Fernando Collor de Mello in Brazil, Abdalá Bucaram in Ecuador and lately also with Álvaro Uribe in Colombia (Galindo Hernández 2007) (Fierro C. 2014) (Weyland 2017, 12). These political leaderships also had strong personalistic features and a clientelist and/or corporatist style of relationship with their followers like the first “classic” wave of Latin American populism. Nevertheless they didn’t follow the first wave’s anti-imperialism and their redistributive and protectionist economic policies. Instead they mainly adhered to the neoliberal “Washington Consensus” of that era and focused their criticism on the political elite (mainly mainstream political parties) during a political or economic crisis (Roberts 1995) (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017, 29-30). The existence of this wave of “neoliberal populism” went against the proposal of Edwards and Dornbusch (1992) that “populist economics” should be seen mainly as redistributive and nationalist economic policies.

It can be expected that a neoliberal populist movement or government will tend to get less oppositional force by economic elites and their political representatives and networks than “classic populists” of the mid-20th century and left wing populists of the 2000-2010s. This mainly because those two types of populism share a commitment towards protectionist and redistributive economic policies while neoliberal populists

agree with neoliberal economic policies. Nevertheless Fujimori and Fujimorismo in Peru has motivated a broad transideological alliance against him which continued to exist even after Fujimori himself was imprisoned and his daughter Keiko Fujimori became the leader of Fujimorismo during the 2010s. This could be seen in the support of left wing candidate Veronika Mendoza of right wing Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in the second round of the presidential elections of 2016 against Keiko Fujimori. This happened even though both Kuczynski and Fujimori share a support for neoliberal economic policies and so Mendoza explained this vote as above all a vote towards the preservation of democracy in Peru (Ferrari Haines y Ahumada Angulo 2016). The broad consensus of anti-Fujimorismo tends towards seeing Fujimorismo as authoritarian and corrupt, which goes in line with what has been proposed in this article as far as Latin American anti-populism presenting itself as a defense of liberal democracy. Two more cases of radical anti-populism against a right wing or pro-neoliberal economic policies populist leadership can be seen in Ecuador in the massive protests which lead to congress and the military in that country twice to bring down an elected president in 1997 and 2005. In 1997 this happened against Abdalá Bucaram who inherits a populist caudillo tradition in his city of Guayaquil which goes back to the CFP party and its leadership of his uncle Assad Bucaram in the 1960s-70s. In 2005 this happened against the coup leader (in 2000) and military official Lucio Gutierrez. Both Bucaram and Gutierrez motivated both left and right wing sectors to participate in the protests which brought their brief governments down. Also both populist presidents during their short tenures implemented neoliberal policies, but in the case of Gutierrez this was unexpected since he was elected with an anti-neoliberal redistributive protectionist platform and ran in alliance with the left-indigenist party Pachakutik. In that case the actions of the left against his presidency were justified by them due to the betrayal of Gutierrez of the leftist program with which he won the election.

Classist and racist motivations also manifested themselves against neoliberal populists. De la Torre (2008, 210) reports in some of the protesters from the country's capital Quito against Gutierrez racist, classist and regionalist expressions about Gutierrez's followers who came to the capital to support him. He notices that in those expressions those *quiteño* anti-Gutierristas tended to speak from a place of superiority alluding to their being from the more cultured capital city of the country while seeing those supporters of Gutierrez as invasive hordes of provincials. That author also notices that in the anti-Gutierrez protests there was also a display of what he sees as "aesthetic" classist and racist values from middle class sectors who saw Gutierrez himself as someone

who didn't have the lineage, the skin color or the "good manners" necessary to be president. Let's return to the case of Fujimori and Fujimorismo in order to see both class and race as elements also displaying themselves in the struggles of populism/anti-populism in the context of neoliberal or right wing populism. Latin Americanist scholar Steven Levitzky (2012) notices that the Peruvian right wing has been very weak in recent presidential elections, and that in the elections of 2011 some sectors of it entered in a strong panic mode due to the rise of the perceived leftist and nationalist ex-military candidate Ollanta Humala in the polls. In that situation important sectors of the social and economic elites decided to give support to Fujimorismo as lead by Keiko Fujimori-Alberto Fujimori's daughter-in order to support a neoliberal economic program in the state and avoid a possible Hugo Chavez or Evo Morales-like leftist leader in the presidency. Nevertheless Levitzky reports that a Fujimorista activist told him that the Peruvian socio-economic elite would never see Fujimorismo as a "serious ally" since they see Fujimorismo as being mostly "*muchos cholos*". "Cholo" is a common racist epithet in Peru used against people of indigenous or mestizo physical features. What this shows is that racist and classist undercurrents are still relevant in contemporary Latin American politics as far as considering the preferences and behaviors of socio-economic elites. In this case though, groups of those elite sectors decided to support as a "lesser evil" a more "plebeian" mestizo right wing populist political movement like Fujimorismo over the danger of a possible charismatic leftist president with perceived indigenist sympathies such as Humala-as he was seen in that election.

Anti-neoliberalism and 2000-2010s left and left-populist governments

Latin America experienced in the late 1990s some effects of the Asian financial crisis, and Ecuador and Argentina suffered around that time very large economic crisis due to the collapse of their financial systems in what became known, respectively, as the *Feriado Bancario* and *El Corralito*. Meanwhile during the early 2000s Bolivia was experiencing very strong anti-privatization protests known as the *Guerra del Gas* (War of Gas) and the *Guerra del Agua* (War of Water). These protests in these three countries were so strong and large that ended up forcing elected presidents out of their office. By that time the leftist nationalist ex-military member Hugo Chavez was already the Venezuelan president while Lula da Silva of the Workers Party also won the presidency of Brazil in late 2002. In 2003 the left wing Peronist Nestor Kirchner wins the presidency

in Argentina, in 2005 Tabaré Vázquez win the presidency in Uruguay for the leftist coalition of parties Frente Amplio, while the indigenous rural trade union leader Evo Morales wins the presidency in Bolivia. This was the beginning of the Latin American leftist wave of presidents of the 2000s or what is known in Anglo literature as the “Pink tide”. Within that leftist wave there are 4 cases of what has been called the third wave of Latin American populism which has been seen as mainly a wave of “left wing populism”. Those are the presidencies of Hugo Chavez, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Evo Morales and those of the marriage of left-wing Peronists Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernandez in Argentina. This group of populists combined the anti-imperialism, the redistributism, protectionism and the personalistic leadership of the first wave of “classic” populism of the mid-20th century with the anti-neoliberalism, Latin Americanism and sometimes (especially in the cases of Morales and Correa up to a point) of the indigenist and multiculturalist tendencies of the contemporary Latin American left. Those ideological and programmatic features, especially in economics, will put these presidents more clearly in contradiction with the socio-economic elites of their country than a neoliberal populist would.

This could be seen in the previous section when this article dealt with some Peruvian economic elite sectors opting to support right wing populist Keiko Fujimori over perceived left-populist and indigenist Ollanta Humala in the 2011 election. This can be seen more dramatically in how early the Venezuelan right wing and other sectors of the opposition against Chavez decided to carry out a coup attempt trying to bring him out of the presidency. That coup attempt happened in 2002 which was only 3 years after his presidential term started in early 1999. After Chavez was kept hostage in a military building, the leaders of the opposition decided to place as the new “president” of the country the then president of the main national association of businessmen FEDECAMARAS. Something similar happened in September 2010 with a rebellion of sectors of the police and the armed forces in Ecuador which kept Correa hostage in a hospital building. Correa was also only 3 years in the presidency. This happened until elite members of the military went there and interchanged shots of firearms with the rebel armed forces members and took out Correa of that situation, therefore reinstalling constitutional normality in an episode UNASUR recognized as a *coup d'état* attempt. Those events in Ecuador happened just a few months after a military uprising in Honduras took out of the presidency left-leaning Manuel Zelaya. These Venezuelan and Ecuadorian

situations can be seen as radical non-electoral political forms of the opposition to those leftist presidents.

These events also confirm Van Dyck's (2019, p. 362) view mentioned in the previous section on the radical and almost desperate actions that anti-populists sectors can take when they are not effective electorally against a very popular populist government, which have included violent protests and *coups d'état*. Later on during the presidency of Correa the "anti-Correista" socio-political field in Ecuador will stop being mostly just right wing and will tend to get more transideological due to social movements and older left wing parties also entering it who denounced excessive repression in protests and a non-dialogic attitude towards them from the Correa government (Becker 2013). Also "anti-Correismo", as a political and discursive field of anti-populism, expanded to take force within the Ecuadorian academy. For that we can consider an open normative and politicized positioning in the words of the prominent Ecuadorian sociologist of populism Carlos De La Torre (2015, 18) when he openly manifested that "my reader will notice my critique of authoritarianisms which base themselves in the fantasies of populist redemption"³, which for him comes from a defense of democratic "pluralism".

We can also notice classist and racist motivations in anti-populism in the era of early 21st century left-populist governments. Biglieri y Perelló (2020) study Argentinian anti-peronism against ex-presidents Néstor and Cristina Kirchner (*anti-kirchnerismo*) and find that "hate" against "kirchneristas" was an important "structuring" element of that political movement which governed under the center-right Macri presidency. Álvarez, Baiocchi, Laó-Montes, Rubin, & Thayer (2017, 5) see that the middle and upper class opposition to several of those governments have "politically appropriated the name "civil society" for itself, disdainfully relegating pro-government popular organizations to the status of barbaric, uncivilized "hordes," "rabble," and pejoratively racialized "mixed breeds" and "Indians"." Lucero (2017), dealing with an event in the early years of the Evo Morales government in Bolivia (2007) reports "manichean divisions" put into action

³ "Las ciencias sociales, como lo manifestó Pierre Bourdieu, si quieren ser pertinentes deben ser impertinentes. El lector constatará mi crítica a los autoritarismos que se asientan en las fantasías de la redención populista... Los valores que guían mi trabajo son el respeto a los derechos civiles y a la universalidad de los derechos humanos que garantizan el pluralismo." (De la Torre 2015, 18)

in the often violent struggles in Bolivia between the largely indigenous and mestizo popular movements supportive of Evo Morales's government and the more European-descendant, wealthier, and regionally centered secessionist opposition. On January 11, 2007 a conflict between the regionalist Cochabamba prefect Manfred Reyes Villa and Morales over claims for regional autonomy during the elaboration of the new country's Constitution motivated a march of indigenous and peasant supporters of Morales to the city of Cochabamba which was responded in the following form:

...Young men from the city, a group called Youth for Democracy (Jóvenes por la Democracia, or JPD), were among the main protagonists in "defending their city" from the invasion of *cocaleros* and *campesinos*. Wielding baseball bats, improvised shields made of plywood, and (according to some versions of events) golf clubs, the JPD crossed police barricades and clashed with *campesinos*. Although many *campesinos* were unarmed, some had sticks and machetes and the violence raged across the city. By the end of the fighting over 200 were injured, and three people were dead... (Lucero 2017, 304)

It should be noticed that the JPD say in their name that they are "for democracy" while engaging in this kind of violent uncivil behavior with Morales supporters. Johnson III (2012, 306) reports that Hugo Chavez himself as well as some of his Afro-Venezuelan political appointees have been attacked regularly in strong racist terms by sectors of the opposition. For Johnson "Their brown complexions, facial features, hair textures, and humble origins have all been ridiculed by critics as markers of unfitness for office". Herrera Salas (2005, 84) reports racist political graffiti (one goes "Death to the monkey Chávez!") on the walls of upper and middle class neighborhoods in the country as well as racist portrayals and epithets against Chavez and his supporters happening in private TV and press. Chavez responded to his followers being called "rabble" saying that they were the same rabble that followed Venezuelan independence leader Simón Bolívar as well as "indigenous leaders who resisted the Spanish conquest and Afro-Venezuelan rebels such as José Leonardo Chirino and El "Negro" Felipe." (Herrera Salas 2005, 86)

Abi-Hassan (2019, 311) suggests that the extreme polarization existing in Venezuelan politics since the beginning of the Chavez presidency has to be understood with both actors-*Chavismo* and the opposition-playing a role in it and not just "the holders or active generators of populist ideas, and those who sympathize with these ideas". Abi-Hassan sees a role of the opposition to *Chavismo* "in radicalizing Chávez's populist

discourse and consolidating populist policies in Venezuela.” He analyses the Venezuelan situation using a “process tracing” qualitative analysis of the progression of the opposition’s reaction to Chavismo. In a similar form to the previously mentioned proposal of Van Dyck (2019) on “anti-populist parties”, Abi Hassan (2019, 317-323) finds that between 2000–2002 and 2006–2007 there is greater emphasis on antagonistic rhetoric framed in an “us” versus “them” discourse that proposed openly for removal of Chavez from power “through any means necessary”-something confirmed by the previously mentioned coup attempt against Chavez of 2002. Hassan sees that anti-Chavismo adopted in this period “a discourse, sometimes more radical and polarizing than Chávez himself” and so the dichotomous nature of the discourse of the opposition did not allow for a third alternative in Venezuelan political discussion. After 2006 the extra-electoral strategy begins to give space to greater focus on electoral strategies and the selection of a unity candidate for anti-Chavismo, but the “us” vs. “them” logic was retained there against Chavismo. Chantal Mouffe (Mazzolini 2019) suggests that in Venezuela under Chavez the elites always treated him as an intruder in government and never accepted his legitimacy. As such, following her theoretical terminology, it was hard for Chavistas to treat the opposition as an “adversary” since they treated Chavez as an enemy or “antagonist”. For Straka (2017) Chavez did not speak of “socialism” at all until the World Social Forum of 2005. In the presidential elections of 2006 Chavez announced that a vote for him was a vote for “socialism” and from then onwards, for Straka, proceeded to go far beyond other Latin American left-populists of that era in “ending capitalism” and demolishing what he called “bourgeois democracy” in a discourse closer to the ideology of the Marxist-Leninist Cuban government. A particular pattern will then consolidate itself in which Anti-Chavista protests will reach important levels of violence in what will be known as *guarimbas*, which will be responded by *colectivos* (Chavista armed groups) supporting state armed forces. From this analysis it can be suggested that the “antagonistic choreography” between Chavez’s anti-establishment discourse and anti-chavismo’s radical opposition ended up creating and consolidating a strongly polarized discourse and political field in the country almost resembling a rift between two parts of the population.

Conclusion

This article sees itself as a contribution towards a comprehension of the phenomenon of “anti-populism” in general and in particular in its specificity within the

Latin American region. It proposed that by presenting a general approach to understand anti-populism using mostly recently published work on that issue, and also within a dialogue with the theory of Latin American populism as well as with the history of that phenomenon.

It proposed that anti-populism can be seen as a socio-political field and discourse which promotes an antagonistic opposition towards what it labels as “populism”. Socio-politically it proposed that anti-populism can be seen as a response coming mainly from social, economic, political or cultural elites (and sectors close to them) towards the anti-establishment insurgent discourse, style and action of insurgent leaderships and movements. From this it is argued that the populism/anti-populism confrontation, if affirmed socio-politically as a dominant political frame, tends towards the establishment of a polarized field which tends to abandon more “agonistic” forms of political conflict to consolidate more “antagonistic” ones. For that there exists a history of frames within Western civilization’s political discussion, going back to its antiquity, between pro-“patrician” and pro-“plebeian” discourses and events.

Anti-populism, just like populism, can come linked to different ideological and social associations. Anti-populism can be a transideological political field which can fit right wing, liberal and leftists sectors. Nevertheless this article argued that right wing and liberal sectors will tend to have predominance over leftist ones within the anti-populist field due to those ideologies being associated with richer or more influential sectors of society, and so with more or better resources, than left wing sectors.

The history of the populist/anti-populist divide in Latin America was shown as a political battlefield in democratizing states inside deep historical social hierarchical divisions of class and race, as much as rejection of a particular leadership and movement and their discourse and political style. This is the particular form in which the previously mentioned polarization of the political field under the populist/anti-populist divide tends to occur in Latin America societies. Classist, racist and neoliberal economic discourses are historically prominent in Latin American anti-populism. This was seen following the main current tendency within contemporary literature of Latin American populism which has identified three waves and types of populism in the region: classic populism which was ideologically ambiguous but nationalist and anti-imperialist, neoliberal and right wing populism, and left-wing populism. In this history Latin American anti-populism displayed a repertoire of actions which included violent protests, riots, military *coup d etats* and attempts at secessionism. These actions were mainly displayed in times when

electoral action was not successful, and were justified as defense of democracy and liberties even though they sometimes showed very uncivil forms and even ended in the forceful interruption of democracy.

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