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Neopopulist Actors and Democracy in Latin America: A Comparative Analysis of Peru, Brazil, and Bolivia

I. Introduction

In several Latin American countries, neopopulist antipolitical actors have become influential. They have posed serious political threats to the prospects for institutionalizing democracy, proposing questionable alternatives and policies which do not take into account the institutional problems of unstable democracies which are based on party systems and state structures with serious problems of legitimacy and representativity. This paper is an attempt to discuss from a comparative standpoint three different cases of neopopulist politics, all of which emerged in unique contexts of democratic processes in a continent with a long populist tradition. It focuses on three main issues:

- 1) the problem of the distinctive neopopulist character of Latin American antipolitics in Peru, Brazil and Bolivia stressing some common features bearing on their origins and discourse;
- 2) the political context and institutional mechanisms which encouraged the rise to power of Fujimori and Collor de Melo, and the constraints on neopopulist actors in the case of Bolivia;
- 3) the different effects of antipolitics on the prospects for democracy in these countries.

Both the process of emergence, and the results of which neopopulist politics vary considerably in different national contexts. A comparative analysis is necessary to assess the political roots of this phenomenon and the ways in which the politics of antipolitics determines the prospects for consolidation or destabilization of the democratic system, or according to O'Donnell, perhaps the emergence of a new political system, called delegative democracy. The cases of Peru, Brazil and Bolivia were selected because they differ greatly in the particular nature of their neopopulist politics.

Avoiding extensive generalizations bearing on gloomy perspectives based on the "leitidee" of alleged social anomy and political disintegration processes, the key thesis of this paper is that the success of neopopulist actors like Fujimori and Collor de Melo in seizing power by democratic means was related to the fragmentation and weakness as well as to the acute delegitimation and dissolution of the traditional party systems. It was also connected to the crisis of governability in the face of serious unresolved

economic and social problems. Bolivia is on the other hand a counter-example, since the delegitimation of parties was not far-reaching, the economic crisis was soon overcome in 1985 by market-oriented policies, and the state attained a certain degree of governability. All of these factors explain the limited success of neopopulist antipolitics in Bolivia.

Before addressing the main issues, it is necessary to explain the reasons for considering these cases of Latin American antipolitics to be neopopulist. The following characteristics show the links between antipolitics, neopopulism and neoliberal modernization.

1. Neopopulism is an enhanced form of political decisionism and voluntarism unfolding within a context of institutional weakness and political decay, both stemming from a deep crisis in democratic institutions (political parties, governments, parliaments, judiciary).
2. Neopopulism is fundamentally characterized by personalistic politics and antisystem activity rooted in traditional patrimonial political culture. It is as such, a form of antiinstitutional politics paradoxically spreading out within the institutional framework of presidentialism. Thus, neopopulism centralizes power in the hands of the president and encourages a type of government which systematically curtails and diminishes the role of political parties.
3. The discourse of the neopopulist "outsiders" is ambiguous in that it is a blend of neopopulist appeal to the masses, the people, the nation, and at the same time a commitment to neoliberal values and market-oriented strategies of economic transformation. Paradoxically, populist rhetoric is used to support orthodox policies.¹ Thus, it has common roots with traditional populism, such as the key ideological elements of a dichotomous political discourse (the people, the poorest, the enemies of the people, etc.). However, it breaks away from traditional populism by leaving aside statism, antiimperialism, nationalism and distributionism, and highlighting goals like privatization, reduction of the role of the state, and development of export-oriented economies.
4. Under certain circumstances, neoliberalism tends to stimulate neopopulist antipolitics. Is antipolitics therefore one of the political consequences of neoliberalism? Does antipolitics represent the rebirth of populism under the new guise of neoliberalism and the fusion of economic and political power? The crucial feature of neopopulist actors in power is their relationship to neoliberal politics, which in some cases is marked not only by ideological elements, but also by the intertwining of economic entrepreneurial power and political leadership (in a narrow sense the case of Fernández in Bolivia, and in a paradigmatic sense the case of Berlusconi in Italy).²

¹ Whitehead, Laurence: "The perils of populism?" In: Hemisphere, no. 1, January 1991.

² See on the fusion of economic and political power in the hand of Berlusconi. Rinaldi, Claudio: "No ha sido un milagro". In: El País, March 30, 1994, p. 14.

5. A change has taken place in politics in the last decade. Although political parties are still necessary, they are no longer the only mediator of social interests. Faced with the weakening of political representation structures, communication media, particularly the TV, tend to displace and substitute political parties as channelling mechanisms, filling the vacuum left by the disintegrating political system.³

II. The logic of antipolitics and its institutional setting

There are several inherent and political features of antipolitics which allow us to speak it as having of a pervasive logic:

1. Antipolitics describes the activities of actors outside the established political processes.
2. It employs a neopopulist discourse of confrontation against the "enemies of the people", with an antipolitical thrust directed against the established parties and the dominant political and economic elites.
3. Antipolitics is personalist, antiinstitutional politics carried out in the name of the nation and the poor people, but its ideology is fundamentally neoliberal.
4. Antipolitics is based on direct contact with the masses without party intermediaries and channels.
5. Antipolitics is fostered by the electoral availability of the masses within a disintegrated or delegitimized institutional political framework.
6. Its social context is the expansion of poor marginal, mobilized masses in a conflicting economic situation.

It is remarkable that antipolitics in Latin America unfolded its logic within the specific *institutional setting of presidentialism*. This government system undermines the chances of establishing a representative democracy, constituting thereby the fundamental *paradox of prevailing institutional structures*.

As the political experience of many Latin American countries, particularly Peru and Brazil has demonstrated, presidentialism has negative institutional consequences on the prospects for the institutionalization of representative democracy. The most negative effects have been:

1. Since in presidentialist systems the political system is based on the president as head of the state and leader of the government, there are

³ As Rosanvallon puts it: "Toutes les fonctions que n'accomplit pas le système politique trouvent souvent une réponse déformée et perverse dans le système médiatique." "Entretien avec Pierre Rosanvallon", Propos recueillis par Jean-Marie Colombani. In: Le Monde, December 14, 1993; see also Rossanda, Rossana: "Berlusconi y la Televisión". In: El País, March 29, 1994; Duverger, Maurice: "¿Un tercer tipo de fascismo?" In: El País, March 24, 1994.

no incentives to strengthen the role of political parties in the political system. Not only do they fail to encourage party cohesion, as Riggs has argued, but they actually encourage the lack of it. Most presidentialist systems avoid the institutionalization of the party system, disqualifying parties as organizations, eroding conditions necessary for building up permanent party identities and electorates, and strengthening the tradition of the personalization of power relations.⁴

2. Presidentialism also works against the government system itself: by virtue of its personalization it weakens the government. There are no checks and balances and no accountability mechanisms reinforcing the dependence of the whole system on one allegedly powerful person, the president. The Congress is downgraded, since the president's legitimacy is considered superior to the legitimacy of the Congress.⁵
3. Presidentialist systems based on fragmented and polarized multiparty systems, and on proportional representation lead to confrontation and stalemate between executive power and opposition majority in Congress.
4. The run-off electoral system enhances the personalist tendencies of the presidentialist system, stimulating decisionism in politics as the cases of Collor de Melo and Fujimori have clearly shown.
5. The weakness of the state apparatus and the inability of governmental institutions to cope with the economic and social crisis have undermined the legitimacy of the political system.

III. The rise to power and the discourse of neopopulism

1. A charlatan as president: Collor de Melo and the presidential elections of 1989 in Brazil

The political context of Collor de Melo's meteoric rise was marked by the political and economic failure of the Nova República – a real interregnum in Brazilian politics –, and the increasing inability of the state to grapple with economic and social problems. This weak government provoked a loss of credibility of politicians, and the decay of institutions.⁶ The political setting in which Collor de Melo appeared was in a broad sense the "breakdown" of the Nova Republica.

4 Riggs, Fred: "The Survival of Presidentialism in America: Para-Constitutional Practices". In: *International Political Science Review* 9, no. 4, October 1988, pp. 247 – 478; Linz, Juan J.: "Democracy: Presidential or Parliamentary. Does It Make a Difference?"

5 Linz defines this as dualism of legitimacy. Linz, Juan J.: op.cit.

6 Gianotti, José Arthur: "Tráfico de esperanças". In: *Novos Estudos*, CE, no. March 26, 1990, pp. 25 – 38; Oliveira, Francisco de: "Fernando Collor de Melo: Perfil de um prestidigitador". In: *Nueva Sociedad*, no. 118, March/April 1992, pp. 99 – 108.

Certainly, in the decade of the 80s economic growth came to a halt (for example, in 1981 it was – 4.3%), but on the eve of the Plan Cruzado hyperinflation became the biggest concern as it accelerated, reaching a monthly rate of 15% and of 29% as the Plan Bresser was adopted. When Sarney left the presidency the monthly range had climbed to 80%. There was a public sector spending deficit of \$US 20 billion, and the external debt totalled about \$US 112 billion. This serious economic crisis led to a dramatic deterioration of public services, increased unemployment and social violence in cities like Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, eroding the credibility of the state and the party system.

Nevertheless, the economic crisis is not the only explanation for Collor de Melo's election. Important institutional structures and problems related to the political system were also key factors in the emergence of this marginal and unknown politician. Two overriding features define the political system in Brazil: first, the weakness, vulnerability and fragmentation of the party system (in other words, parties have low representativity and legitimacy, and loose societal ties, reinforced by a negative electoral system vis-à-vis a high availability of the masses) and secondly, a bureaucratic and over-centralized state predominated over the parties and the party system.

These features of the acute underdevelopment of parties stem from deeply rooted historical factors: the by the private sector domination of the political system a state-centered politics, state interventions against the parties, and the lack of restrictions on politicians in their dealings with the political parties which led to loose organizations.⁷

These factors affected the historical dynamics of the Brazilian party formations leading to: a) sharp oscillations in the number of parties (28 parties in the period 1985 – 1989, and 43 between 1989 – 1994) causing a fragmentation of representation, b) a notable heterogeneity of the system's internal composition, marked by abrupt desertions from one party to another, and c) the inconsistency in the positioning of parties along the political-ideological spectrum.⁸

Such a party system could not develop strong and stable representation mechanisms. On the contrary, representation became basically a way of

7 "The freedom of politicians to wheel and deal as they want and with whom they want has been a fundamental pillar in a patrimonial and elitist system." Mainwaring, Scott: "Politicians, Parties, and Electoral Systems". In: *Comparative Politics*, October 1991, p. 39. See also Kinzo, Maria D'Alva G.: *Radiografia do quadro partidário brasileiro*. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Rio de Janeiro 1993; Moises, José Alvaro: "Elections, Political Parties, and Political Culture in Brazil: Changes and Continuities". In: *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 25, pp. 575 – 611.

8 "A calculation based on incomplete data shows that politicians in the current congress – 1990 – 1991- have belonged to an average of 2.9 parties ... During the 1978 – 1990 congress, about one-third of the 559 representative have switched parties since being elected in november 1986". Mainwaring, Scott: op.cit., p. 28.

creating networks of clientelism. In this way, the dependency of parties on individual politicians has tended to encourage the atomization of interests in Brazilian civil society. Social interests are not aggregated in political parties.

As Mainwaring has argued, the structural problems of the Brazilian party system are also shaped by the prevailing electoral system based on preference voting with an open list system. This reinforces the individualistic behavior of politicians and undermines the cohesiveness of parties.⁹ Parties became therefore "partidos de aluguel" (parties for rent). Moreover, the 1985 reform of electoral and party legislation, just six years after the previous reform, established extremely permissive parameters for the organization of new parties. These new legal norms have made it much more difficult to form permanent party identities, thereby stimulating volatility and dispersion of voter loyalties. The elections also made evident the key role of individual marketing and, given the great regional differences, of regional alliances for the electoral success. Parties therefore became mainly tools for organizing elections.

Another factor of great importance in determining the vulnerability of parties was the role of elections in a presidentialist system which weakens the role of the parties. The electoral contest tends to disqualify parties as such.¹⁰ Due to the run-off system, the elections of October 1989 demonstrated the near total disjuncture between the results for the Executive and the legislature as well as the relative insignificance of parties in the presidentialist system. As Maria D'Alva Kinzo contends, the incapacity of the Brazilian regime to reproduce and consolidate in Congress the ephemeral majority supporting the election of the president has become dramatic. The presidential contest was determined by Collor and Lula while the party system was dominated by the PMDB and the PFL.¹¹

Such a political system, affected by the lack of institutionalization and the weakness of the party system and by the predominance of presidentialism, was the perfect condition for the emergence of an outsider like Collor de Melo, and for his electoral triumph, with neither party nor political machine behind him. Such an outcome leads us to the assumption that the presidential elections of 1989 reveal not only a crisis in party representativity but also the decay of the party system inherited from the authoritarian regime. But it is perhaps more appropriate to consider the situation of the party system as contradictory, since parties in crisis like the PMDB and the PFL coexist alongside parties like the PT which is enjoying a relatively steady growth.¹²

9 "Brazilian politicians have consistently opted for electoral systems that weaken parties". Mainwaring, Scott: *op.cit.*, p. 21.

10 Moisés, José Alvaro: *op.cit.*

11 Kinzo, Maria D'Alva: *op.cit.*, p. 17.

12 Moisés, José Alvaro: *op.cit.*, pp. 590 and 592.

The Brazilian multiparty system is characterized by high levels of fragmentation and polarization. In the presidential and parliamentary elections of 1989, 22 parties participated. The most important were the following: the Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB), the Partido Trabalhista (PT), the Partido Democrático Social (PDS), the Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB), the Partido da Reconstrução Nacional (PRN), the Partido Democrático Trabalhista (PDT), the Partido da Frente Liberal (PFL), the Partido Comunista Brasileiro (PCB), and the Partido Liberal (PL).

The PRN was created in February 1989 by Collor de Melo to make viable his candidacy in the name of a profound liberal transformation of the economy and the State. Due to the intense conflict between this radical option and the socialist alternative presented by Lula, the leftist candidate of the PT, Collor de Melo appeared acceptable to both sides concentrating and channelling not only the expectations of the poor people in Northern Brazil and also in rich federal states like São Paulo, but in addition appearing after the first round of elections as the candidate of the middle classes and major business interests. He enjoyed the support of economic elites frightened by Lula. On the other hand, he enjoyed the decisive electoral support of the poorest and most ill-educated people.

Nevertheless, Collor de Melo's political success has nothing to do with his 'party'. Rather it derived from the broad support of the TV system, particularly, by O Globo, Brazil's largest TV company which defended the interests of the bigger enterprises. His political image was in fact created by TV. Before the rise of Berlusconi, Collor de Melo was the first example of "video-politics" in a democratic politics, the first case demonstrating how the power of TV as channel of communication could be transformed into political power, shaping a candidate, and determining electoral results. Television allowed Collor de Melo a populist form of direct communication with the people, despite the lack of party organization. It could be said that his party was the TV Channel O Globo.

Collor de Melo was an obscure and unknown politician coming from Alagoas, the smallest and one of the poorest federal states in Northern Brazil. Son of a rich and powerful family in this state, he never attracted attention until he was appointed major of Alagoas by the military dictatorship, being elected later on as governor of his state during the democratic period. Taking advantage of the social and political polarization of the period, Collor de Melo's electoral campaign was carried out with a political discourse of confrontation which revealed the ambiguous nature of the neopopulist discourse of antipolitics. Appealing simultaneously to the marginal classes and to high- and middle class voters and presenting himself as defender of the poor and embodiment of the nation, he campaigned as "Mr. Clean" and

"maharajá hunter", attacking the traditional political and economic elites of the country. Politically and ethically, he called into question party organizations and their clientelistic patterns of action, condemning in particular the sweeping corruption of the so-called 'maharajás', the high ranking bureaucrats in the state management. At the same time, he campaigned for a liberal transformation of the economy. His TV-backed discourse defeated the "old" parties and the leftist leadership of the PT which had been so deeply rooted in Brazilian society.

Collor de Melo's performance in the first round was outstanding. He obtained 28.52% of the vote, most of which came from the poor sectors which he labelled "descamisados" (shirtless), a famous term during the time of Perónism in Argentina Peronism. Lula came second with 16.08% of the vote and Brizola, the PDT's candidate, third with 15.45%. In the second round, Collor de Melo obtained 49.94% and Lula 44.23% of the vote. As in the case of Peru, due to the run-off system, this majority in the presidential election had no counterpart in the parliamentary elections, in which Collor de Melo's 'party' performed poorly obtaining 20 seats out of 494 in the Deputy Chamber, and 2 out of 72 seats in the Senate, e.g. less than 5% of the seats in Congress. After gaining the presidency, Collor totally disregarded his own party.¹³

Having no majority support in Congress and backed by direct popular legitimacy, Collor de Melo's government tried to put through its economic program, eluding institutional constraints through executive action by decree. His political style was an extreme form of voluntarism and decisionism. After the failure of his economic program, however, based on the assumption of reducing inflation by destroying liquidity, he proved the limits of sheer voluntarism and sought to include congressional parties within his cabinet.¹⁴

2. Peru's Japanese Tsunami: The election of Fujimori

Peru has a history of profound social and political fragmentation with an associated lack of articulation between society and state. The transition to democracy revealed the predominance of a politics of confrontation between political elites and parties, and of irresponsible clientelistic management of the state. The party system was unable to adapt itself to the requirements

13 As the Folha de Sao Paulo put it: "Although it is the president's party, he ignores it preferring parties with more power in the political game like the PFL", quoted by Francisco de Oliveira: op.cit. After Collor de Melo's impeachment and destitution, the PRN lost its *raison d'être* and disappeared.

14 See the essays of Lamounier, Bolívar and André Singer in: Lamounier, Bolívar (ed.): *De Geisel a Collor: O balanço da transição*. IDESP, Sao Paulo 1990. Roett, Riordan: "Indiana Jones to the Rescue?" In: Hemisphile, May 1990.

and challenges of democratization in a society under the pressure of great urbanization processes, new social movements and an explosion in demands. Although the party system was not as fractionalized as others in Latin America, it was nevertheless unstable and highly polarized. It consisted mainly of four parties: the center-right party Popular Action (AP), the right Christian Popular Party (PPC), the center-left party American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) and a fragile left coalition, the United Left (UE).

But the polarization was very detrimental to democratic development, since the parties did not or could not change traditional authoritarian and patrimonial patterns of action and organization. The democratic regime crumbled, along with the party system, as a structure of mediation between state and society. Clumsy administration of the ruling parties, corruption of government officials and incoherence of electoral promises and government policies deeply eroded the credibility of the whole political system.¹⁵

In the elections of 1980, the AP seized power with 45% of the vote, while APRA gathered 27%, the left coalition 14%, and the PPC 10%. In the elections of 1985, on the contrary, APRA was able to win with 53% of the balloting, the AP was defeated with 7%, the left got 25% and the PPC 12%.

Paradoxically, democracy in Peru not only deepened the economic crisis and the incapacity of the state to tackle to the minimum extent, social and economic problems and develop an effective counterinsurgency strategy against the growing terrorism of Sendero Luminoso. It also accelerated the collapse of the party system. Fujimori's rise to power took place in a context of increasing ungovernability of the country as a result of the state's and the traditional parties' loss of legitimacy and credibility. The two democratically elected governments of Belaúnde, of the center-right AP, and Alan García of the center-left APRA, after the reestablishment of democracy in 1980, were accelerators of the crisis and could not ward off the ensuing economic and social decay.

In fact, the economic and social crisis had been worsening during the previous fifteen years. However, the ultrapopulist policies of García were a milestone in the deepening of the crisis, leading not only to the greatest economic disaster in Peruvian history but also to the breakdown of the state apparatus and the disorganization of society. Between 1987 and 1989 the GDP had fallen about 20%, wages and salaries lost between 50% and 60% of their value, affecting the low income groups and provoking misery throughout the land. The hyperinflation rate was 2,700%, and in 1989 alone it was

15 Cotler, Julio: "Democracia y desintegración política en Perú", Mayorga, René Antonio (ed.): *Democracia y gobernabilidad: América Latina*. CEBEM, ILDIS, Nueva Sociedad, Caracas 1992; Degregori, Carlos Iván and Romeo Grompone: *Elecciones 1990: Demonios y redentores en el nuevo Perú*. IEP, Lima 1991. Vargas, Losa Mario: *El pez en el agua*. Seix Barral, Barcelona 1993.

7.000%. Whereas a great part of the country was under military control and state of siege, the war unleashed by Sendero Luminoso had reached a peak causing 18.000 victims and economic losses of about \$US 20 billion, a sum, which at the time was a total equivalent to Peru's external debt.¹⁶

Given the failure of the APRA, the discrediting of the traditional parties and the atomization of the left, in the electoral campaign of 1990, just three weeks before the elections, opinion polls considered Mario Vargas Llosa a sure winner. Nobody imagined that a candidate of the group of those "without options" could defeat the notorious candidate of the new coalition FREDEMO. This coalition was composed of new groups and two traditional parties (AP, PPC), whose main goal was a "liberal revolution" to carry out a hard economic adjustment policy in order to stop hyperinflation, dismantle the state sector of the economy and introduce market mechanisms. In early 1990 Fujimori had the support of less than 2% of the electorate, but surveys just ten days before the election showed him in the last place after the 'prophet' Ezequiel, candidate to the presidency and founder of a 'new' religion called 'The Israelis of the Universal Church's New Pact'. When the elections finally took place on April 8, he obtained 24% of the vote in the first round, thereby qualifying for the run-off in June, which he won with 56.5%, defeating Vargas Llosa who obtained only 34%.

Neither Vargas Llosa nor Fujimori were professional politicians, but outsiders. Vargas Llosa is a novelist and as such a personality in the cultural world, whereas Fujimori was completely unknown. The son of Japanese immigrants, an agronomist mathematics professor and former president of La Molina Agrarian University and the National Association of Peruvian Universities, Fujimori created CAMBIO 90 (Change 90) just a few weeks before the elections. CAMBIO 90 was a heterogeneous and weak movement of non political groups without political experience such as evangelical Christians, entrepreneurs of the informal economy and other political outsiders such as his own gardener and Madame Carmeli, a fortuneteller who was involved in a drug trial. It was a thoroughly antipolitical movement without ideology or program, which emerged proclaiming a very simple slogan – "technology, honesty and work" – in an attempt to counteract the sophisticated liberal discourse of Vargas Llosa, which was rooted in Karl Popper's philosophy, and neoliberal economic adjustment strategies.

Fujimori's candidacy arose in an advantageous and unexpected environment due to the fact that Vargas Llosa polarized the electoral struggle. He had become the main target of the government party and other parties which denounced the alleged imperialist shock therapy which FREDEMO would

16 Rospigliosi, Fernando: "Elecciones generales: Perú, 8 de abril y 10 de junio de 1990". In: Boletín Electoral Latinoamericano, San José, CAPEL, January/June 1990. Ferrero, Eduardo: "Peru's Presidential Coup". In: Journal of democracy, January 1993.

carry out against the poor population. Vargas Llosa was labelled an agent of the upper classes and imperialism, a defender of the rich and privileged elites which always had Peru in their sway. This electoral propaganda made use of some features of FREDEMO's organization and political program, linking them to the traditional right.

In fact, Vargas Llosa's Movimiento Libertad made a serious mistake by incorporating into FREDEMO not only two discredited parties of the center-right and right (AP and PPC), but also many past presidents of the leading business confederation of Peru (CONFIEP). In this was FREDEMO could be said to have initiated to some extent traditional oligarchical organizations led by elitist, racist and arrogant groups which were responsible for the failures of the past. In fact, Vargas Llosa's movement reflected in many ways the ethnic-cultural divisions in Peruvian society. Even the bodyguards were "white", whereas the candidates of Cambio 90 were overwhelmingly "cholos" and "mestizos".

Another striking difference between FREDEMO and Cambio 90 was the use of television in the electoral campaign. Never before had a Peruvian party used and abused this medium in the way FREDEMO did, spending about \$US 12.5 mill. in the electoral campaign while Cambio 90's propaganda relied basically upon 'informal' means and spent only \$US 198.000.¹⁷ In contrast to Collor de Melo's campaign, the success of Fujimori's electoral campaign and the expansion of his electorate can not be attributed to his use of the media and modern means of communication.

CAMBIO 90's political discourse during the campaign was a salient example of anti-politics which found an important support in the two-thirds of the electorate, made up of the poorest urban and rural population, as the electoral results demonstrated. Devoid of any political program and strategy, Fujimori displayed an electoral discourse based on the previously quoted slogan. He attacked Peru's bankrupt "political class", political parties and economic elites putting the blame for Peru's crisis on them and stressing his own independence of them.¹⁸ Above all, he vehemently opposed the liberal economic program presented by Vargas Llosa and defended a vague and amorphous gradualist economic strategy of recovery which would not attack the interests of the poor. The main orientation of Fujimori's discourse was populist, in the sense that he tried to mobilize the people on the grounds of his own charismatic leadership as the only guaranteed way to save the

17 Rospigliosi, Fernando: op.cit., p. 36.

18 After having achieved his goal, Fujimori declared that he owed his triumph to nobody, not even to his own movement. Correa, Marcial Rubio: "Orígenes de la crisis del régimen democrático", Costa, Eduardo Ferrero: *Proceso de retorno a la institucionalidad democrática en el Perú*. CEPEI, Lima 1992.

nation, rejecting thereby any kind of political alliances and institutional support.

Fujimori's radical stance was favoured by the run-off system which discourages negotiations and coalitions. On the contrary, it encourages the proliferation of candidates and the emergence of outsiders like Fujimori who probably could not have appeared under plurality rule.¹⁹ Besides, the run-off system made it possible for Fujimori to obtain the votes of those who did not support him in the first run (electorate of the left parties and the APRA), but were not prepared to give their votes to Vargas Llosa either.

Another negative effect of this electoral system concerned the radicalization of the dualism of legitimacy which characterizes presidentialist systems. The run-off system in Peru (as in Brazil and Ecuador) – a bad copy of the French ballotage –, gives a kind of superior mandate to the president placing him over the parliament which is elected in the first round. Fujimori came to power with the absolute majority of 56.5% of the votes in the second round, but in the first round his movement won scarcely 23.3% of the seats in the Senate and 18.3% in the Deputy Chamber.

The contradictory result of this disjunction was that, on the one hand, the president saw himself as an omnipotent ruler and the depositary of popular will, and on the other hand, he did not possess a majority in Parliament having in fact no power to rule. Presidents elected this way are pushed 'in the name of the people' to rule by decree, to underestimate the need for political negotiations and agreements with other political forces, and to bypass the Congress.

3. Bolivia's Neopopulist Outsiders

Neopopulist outsiders in Bolivia constitute a different case.²⁰ First of all, they did not have the political power to bid for the presidency. Their impact on the party system and government has been quite distinct from that of Peru and Brazil. They share some common political and ideological features; however, their patterns of political action and their role in the evolution of the democratic system are very different. Bolivia's democratic development underwent a dramatic change after the first democratic government led by the Unidad Democrática y Popular (UDP), a center-left coalition. The UDP had failed in tackling the severe social and economic crisis, fueling, on the contrary, a

19 Shugart, Matthew Soberg and John M. Carey: *Presidents and Assemblies. Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992, p. 215.

20 Mayorga, René Antonio: "Outsiders y kataristas en el sistema de partidos, la política de pactos y la gobernabilidad en Bolivia". Perelli, Carina (ed.): *Los partidos políticos en América Latina en la década de los 90*. CAPEL, San José 1994. Lazarte, Jorge: "Partidos políticos e informalización de la política", Mayorga, René Antonio (ed.): op.cit.

process of hyperinflation which rose to about 26.000% in 1985. Like Alan García's government in Peru, the UDP regime provoked a global destabilization and confrontation between the government and the opposition parties, the business associations and the labour movement. Thus, the Bolivian democracy had to face the danger of political disintegration and breakdown of the state.

But a far-reaching historical change involving a political learning process took place which expressed itself in three closely linked processes:

1. the passage from confrontational politics to a politics based on interparty bargaining and agreements. In the government of Paz Estenssoro (1985 – 1989), this led to the "Pact for Democracy", a parliamentary coalition of the governing Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) and the opposition party Acción Democrática Nacionalista (ADN);
2. the New Economic Policy (NEP), a common economic strategy based on market-oriented policies in order to resolve the economic crisis;
3. the establishment of a government system of "parliamentarized presidentialism", in which presidents – according to a constitutional principle – are elected by an absolute majority of the members of the Congress, thus making it possible to overcome a recurring deadlock in presidentialist systems in Latin America between the executive power and the Legislative. In this sense, the Bolivian government system is a unique case in Latin America, which stands out for having contributed to increasing conditions of governability.²¹

This process can be defined as a "second transition" because it involved the construction of a more adequate institutional framework. This has been reinforced since 1991 by a process of reforms of the electoral system and the state structures. The emergence of neopopulist actors has to be seen both in the contradictory context of reinforcement of democratic institutions and of relative delegitimation of the government parties due to the social and political effects of the NEP's implementation. Broad marginal masses and workers of the state mining corporation were disappointed by an economic program which had narrowed the scope of the state's responsibility. These groups felt unrepresented by the MNR and ADN, giving their support to the new neopopulist movements.

Conciencia de Patria (CONDEPA), founded in 1988 by the owner of a TV- and Radio Network in La Paz, and Unidad Cívica Solidaridad (UCS) founded in 1989 by Max Fernández, the biggest stock holder of the country's most important brewery, are political outsiders appearing at a time when the government parties are relatively weak. Because of direct support and assistance – Palenque's TV and Radio Network has a well-known program

21 Mayorga, René Antonio: *¿De la anomia política al orden democrático?* CEBEM, La Paz 1991.

called "Tribuna del Pueblo" and Fernández developed a clientelistic social program providing assistance basically in the form of improved infrastructure for small towns —, these outsiders developed a mass following mostly in marginal sectors of the population, affected by the liberal economic policies which enlarged the informal economy. As the results of the elections in 1989 have shown, the MNR and ADN lost the support they received in the elections of 1980 and 1985 among the marginal groups, particularly in the cities of La Paz and Cochabamba.²²

CONDEPA and UCS are neopopulist movements dominated by authoritarian leaders. They represent a non political politicization of marginal masses. They also developed a strong antipolitics discourse against the traditional parties and elites, with the same features proved in the cases of Peru and Brazil, but much less radical in the sense that they strongly emphasize integration into the prevailing democratic system. The main difference with regard to Fujimori and Collor de Melo is indeed the striking fact that Palenque and Fernández have made efforts to channel their social basis and to integrate them into the political system. They have not played a destabilizing role, nor have they called into question the party and the democratic system.

On the contrary, both CONDEPA and UCS have played a part in the process of government formation and interparty agreements to carry out political reforms like the National Agreement of July 1992 for the modernization of the state. Since August 1993, UCS has even become a coalition partner in the new government of Sánchez de Lozada. They have both attained remarkable electoral results in the presidential elections of 1989 and 1993, although their growth potential seems to have found clear limits. Since CONDEPA is fundamentally a regional movement, their votes are restricted to the Department of La Paz, whereas the support for UCS is broader. CONDEPA obtained 11.02% and 14.56% in the elections of 1989 and 1993, whereas UCS reached 14.02% in its first electoral participation 1993.

Nevertheless, owing to neopopulist ideological elements in their discourse and political action, both movements may be considered as "dual parties". On the one hand, they have emerged outside the 'established party system' and blamed the political elites for the economic backwardness and social inequality of the country, but they have not developed antisystem actions which jeopardize the development of democracy. On the other hand, the personalized and clientelistic patterns of action in CONDEPA and UCS are not compatible with the modernizing trends in state policies and in the political parties. Since their inception, both movements have participated in the management of some important city councils. There are of course some

²² Mayorga, Fernando: *La Política del Silencio*. ILDIS, La Paz 1991. Saravia, Joaquín and Godofredo Sandoval: *J'acha Uru. La esperanza de un pueblo*. ILDIS, La Paz 1991.

important differences between CONDEPA and UCS. CONDEPA's discourse and politics are more populist in the traditional sense. They represent a state-centered economy upholding the principles of nationalism, with strong Indian cultural and antiimperialist elements. In contrast, UCS's neopopulism stems from its clientelistic practices and antipolitical rhetoric rather than from its commitment to market-centered economic policies.

IV. The outcome of neopopulism and the prospects for institutionalizing democracy

Although there have been some common features shared by Fujimori, Collor de Melo and the Bolivian neopopulists regarding antipolitics in discourse and practice, the consequences nevertheless differ substantially. After Fujimori's coup d'état in April, 1992, Peru's democracy became an authoritarian, personalistic government system. Legitimized by the support of the majority of the population, the Constituent Assembly and the new constitution of October 1993 allowing the president's reelection, Fujimori's autocratic regime has apparently succeeded in creating a 'new order', even though the new Constitution was accepted in a plebiscite with only 51% of the votes.

The new constitution significantly reinforces presidential powers, but the new parliament and constitutional framework have nevertheless been established in an institutional void because of the breakdown of the traditional party system. They have no strong political basis since the traditional parties are discredited and weak, having no part to play in the new framework. The exception is the PPC. On the other hand, the new political 'parties' are politically random groups without social roots and political bearing. After having set aside his own movement, Cambio 90, Fujimori created another artificial movement called Nueva Mayoría for the Constituent Assembly. In this sense, the government system is dependent on Fujimori's presidency, therefore fitting the model of delegative democracy.

By contrast in Brazil the dismissal of Collor de Melo after impeachment by Congress for corruption, has opened up another political phase, entailing a recovery of institutions. Examples include the reinforcement of the Congress, its relative capacity to control executive power, and the strengthening of the Judiciary and the Supreme Court. Brazil may be considered an example of democratic survival involving an ethical retrieval of democracy and a relative strengthening of Parliament despite a continuing economic crisis, and weakness of the party system. However, no far-reaching constitutional and electoral reforms nor any fundamental changes in the party system, Brazil can still not to be said to have institutionalized democracy.

As we have seen, the institutional framework allows the emergence of antipolitics. The establishment of a lasting democracy will be dependent therefore on the development of a moderate, modern, multiparty system and the modernization of those heavy state structures which could establish some factors of governability in the face of the pervading economic crisis.

Bolivia's neopopulist movements have not hampered the self-enforcing mechanisms of parliamentarized presidentialism, in a paradoxical process in which the political parties themselves face representativity problems. However, despite these problems and the lack of any thorough modernization of party organizations, a consolidation of the democratic system has taken place on the basis of fundamental changes in the rules of the game and of the ongoing process of institutional reforms. Because of this, the scope of neopopulist actors has been narrowed and at the same time a remarkable integration of these actors into the democratic system has been attained.

Do current global approaches in the analysis of Latin American democracy fit these diverse political developments? According to Sergio Zermeno there is a fundamental paradox in Latin American democracies marked by:

- the strengthening of certain features of democratic regimes (election processes, civil liberties, etc.);
- a growing social inequality (unemployment, informal economy, social exclusion, tendencies to social anomy); and
- the increasing role of personalized leadership (the "return of the leader" or "the return of verticalism").²³

Zermeno's assessment is based on three logically interrelated steps: First, the dominating neoliberal economic strategies bring about social disorganization, impoverishment and exclusion. Secondly, neoliberal politics calls for a restricted democracy, limiting participation and destroying not only intermediate political and social structures (parties, unions, grass roots organizations, etc.) but also the whole realm of the public sphere. The political regime arises from and is determined by the constraints and requirements of economic adjustment policies. Thirdly, social changes caused by the new economic dynamics bring about political instability.

This line of argument seems very deterministic and resembles the model used to explain the emergence of the so-called bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes. It ignores the institutional dimension and overlooks the institutional structures and starting points in those countries (party system, patrimonialism, etc.) where, according to O'Donnell, delegative democracies seem now to dominate. It reproduces in a different way the old functionalist model of modernization, which developed an approach to modernization as a necessary condition for the emergence and consolidation of democracy, but

23 Zermeno, Sergio: "México neoliberal: Globalización autoritaria con tránsito a la democracia?", p. 1.

asserted that the ongoing modernization path inevitably destroys the chances for democracy in Latin America.

Such a view is not however substantiated by the particular outcome of the democratizing processes in Latin America. It is necessary to reexamine this case stressing the autonomous political variables of democracy in the different national contexts. If capitalist modernization erodes the conditions for building a democratic regime, we should probably give up the prospects of consolidating representative democracy at all. I argue, that is not the case because the flawed underlying assumption is the alleged existence of a pure and overwhelming economic transformation, e.g. that there is only one prevailing path to capitalist modernization in Latin America today, which is imposing its own logic on political institutions. In this sense, the political framework turns out to be just a subproduct.

As Philippe Schmitter puts it, the point of departure should be instead that there is a "problematic relationship between capitalism and democracy – 'necessary, but necessarily modified' – which is structural. This root difference stems from a policy that distributes power and status relatively equally and an economy that distributes property and income relatively unequally. This poses a dilemma no matter how well the economic system is performing at a given moment."²⁴

O'Donnell's conceptualization of "delegative democracy" does not derive this type of regime from some kind of logical consequences of exclusionary modernization processes.²⁵ It is not a genetic theory nor a reductionist model. Rather, it is a description of structural features referring to an institutional void, to a low degree of institutionalization or to the lack of democratic tradition as a starting point and, last but not least, to the efforts of personalized leaderships to block a process of institutionalization.

O'Donnell sees "delegative democracies" trapped in an infernal and vicious circle, but he does not rule out the possibility of breaking this circle through a double process of positive learning of political elites and of institution-building. Thus, he avoids the deterministic trap. But I think O'Donnell also tends to overemphasize some prevailing features and tendencies of the present social and political crisis in certain countries, drawing from them a general pattern of antiinstitutional pitfalls which is supposedly valid for most Latin American democracies. In effect, in another essay his suggestive reflections on Latin America start from the assumption that there are

24 Schmitter, Philippe: "Dangers and Dilemmas of Democracy". In: *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 5., no. 2, April 1994, p. 67. See also Przeworski, Adam: *Democracy and the Market*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991.

25 O'Donnell, Guillermo: "Delegative Democracy". In: Working paper, no. 172, March 1992. Kellogg Institute, University of Notre Dame.

predominant tendencies towards a total atomization of society and disintegration of the state.

O'Donnell contends that one of the most negative consequences of this process unfolds at the level of political representation. Since the conduct of actors is disaggregated, opportunistic, and limited to the short term, he questions the possibility for political representation, and of stable intermediate structures between the state and civil society at all.²⁶

Some critical remarks are necessary. O'Donnell's model seems to fit particularly well the case of Peru's Fujimori and Brazil's Collor de Melo. However, it does not allow us to account for qualitative differences regarding political trends against atomization and disintegration in democratic processes. Thus, according to our analysis Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, and Argentina are seen to have the same degree of social atomization, political disintegration, and delegative democracy. Only Chile seems to have found a way out of this destructive circle, although O'Donnell also admits that possibly Bolivia, Argentina and Mexico could find a way out in the future through a "second transition" towards an institutionalized democracy. But as far as the essential features of Bolivian democracy are concerned, I think Bolivia has already embarked on a consolidation process.²⁷

I argued that a specific and detailed comparative analysis is necessary in order to assess the problems and prospects of democracy in countries like Peru, Brazil and Bolivia, rather than a conceptual model which submits particular cases to concepts reflecting the sweeping force of global tendencies. I do not call into question the heuristic usefulness of global conceptual models. Rather, I contend that generalizations implied in them should not lead us to overlook the intertwining of tendencies and countertendencies in particular democratic processes. Latin American democracies undergo both complex situations of advance and reversal. This could culminate perhaps, on the one hand, in different types of "authentic" and "hybrid" democratic regimes, and, on the other hand, in "unconsolidated" democracies with no crystallized regular and predictable democratic patterns.²⁸

What we need are in-depth analytical studies of some cases suitable for comparative research, and yielding theoretical insights which should be continually tested. I have tried to analyze specific similarities and differences. Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia – even though they experienced comparable common antipolitical forces – cannot be reduced to a model of contemporary antiinstitutional and undemocratic tendencies affecting the development of

26 O'Donnell, Guillermo: "Estado, democratización y ciudadanía". In: Nueva Sociedad, no. 128, November/December 1993.

27 Mayorga, René Antonio: "Reforma política y consolidación de la democracia". In: Murillo, Gabriel (ed.): Hacia la consolidación democrática andina. Universidad de Los Andes, Bogotá 1993.

28 Schmitter, Philippe: op.cit., p. 60.

multiparty systems, the capacity of governments to govern, and the capability of the political system to cope with representation and legitimacy problems. In these countries, the efforts towards political change in the face of negative political legacies, have had a different direction in each case and have produced different results and prospects for the future.

Abstracts

In mehreren lateinamerikanischen Ländern haben neopopulistische antipolitische Leitfiguren an Einfluß gewonnen. Sie wurden zur ernsthaften politischen Bedrohung für die institutionellen Perspektiven demokratischer Konsolidierung, indem sie zweifelhaft Alternativen und Verfahrensweisen vorschlugen. Sie wichen der Auseinandersetzung mit den institutionellen Problemen instabiler Demokratien, geprägt von Parteiensystemen und staatlichen Strukturen mit geringer Legitimität und Repräsentativität, aus. Dieser Artikel ist ein Versuch drei verschiedene Fälle neopopulistischer Antipolitik vergleichend zu diskutieren. Er konzentriert sich auf ihre unterschiedlichen Ausprägungen bezüglich Ursprung und Verlauf in Peru, Brasilien und Bolivien, auf die spezifischen politischen Zusammenhänge und institutionellen Mechanismen, die einerseits den Aufstieg von Fujimori und Collor de Melo förderten und andererseits den Neopopulismus in Brasilien einschränkten. Schließlich zeigt der Artikel die unterschiedlichen Auswirkungen der Antipolitik auf die Demokratie in diesen Ländern.

In several Latin American countries neopopulist, antipolitical actors have become influential. They have posed serious political threats to the institutional perspectives of democratic consolidation proposing dubious alternatives and policies which eschew the institutional problems of unstable democracies based on party systems and state structures with great legitimacy and representativity problems. This paper is an attempt to discuss from a comparative standpoint three different cases of neopopulist antipolitics. It focuses on their distinctive character in Peru, Brazil and Bolivia regarding their origins, and discourse; on the specific political contexts and institutional mechanism which, on the one hand, encouraged the rise to power of Fujimori and Collor de Melo, and, on the other hand, constrained neopopulist actors in Bolivia; and finally on the different impact of antipolitics on democracy in these countries.

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