

Seton Hall

# Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations

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## Letter from the Editor

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the conclusion of the Cold War triggered an unprecedented wave of optimism in the international relations community. Great thinkers in the field touted the transformative nature of democracy and saw multilateralism as a means to end global conflict, freeing up the international community to tackle poverty, hunger, and other issues previously thought intractable.

Recent years, however, have proved that the path to a cooperative, liberal world order is more fraught than expected, if it is possible at all. A great wave of populist sentiment has injected a dose of volatility into the global landscape, bringing with it isolationism, retrenchment, and concerns of authoritarianism. When taken together, these shifts can trigger concern over the world's trajectory. However, when examined at a micro level, it becomes apparent that global sentiment is not a monolith, and each state and region is developing in its own unique manner.

For the Journal's 19th issue, we explore modern populism across the world. Richard Aidoo looks at the landscape of anti-Chinese populism in the context of Africa's resource scramble, while Alexander B. Makulilo takes an in-depth look at the siren song of populism in Tanzania. Marten Brienens and Carlos de la Torre hone in on populism in Latin America, exploring its early 21st Century evolution and its relationship with democracy respectively.

Additionally, the Journal is proud to publish an interview with Ron Boquier and Raul Castillo, both of whom are active supporters of human rights in Venezuela, a country that was a harbinger of recent global populist sentiment. Outgoing editor Joel Martinez speaks with Boquier and Castillo on the roles of the United Nations and United States in helping to advance democratic reform in the country.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and that it may shed some light on current developments in the geopolitical space.

Emily E. Fox  
Editor-in-Chief

# A World in Transition:

the Rise of Populism  
and the Fall of Multilateralism?

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- P7**     **Go Global, Meet the Locals: Pragmatism, Plunder, and Anti-Chinese Populism in Africa**  
*Richard Aidoo*
- P20**    **Latin American Resource Populism in the Early 21st Century**  
*Marten Brienen*
- P33**    **Populism and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America**  
*Carlos de la Torre*
- P49**    **Against Foreign Capital?: The Populist Temptation in Tanzania**  
*Alexander B. Makulilo*
- P67**    **[Interview] Answers of Ron Boquier, a human rights lawyer for Cofavic, and Raul Castillo, of the vicariate office of the Bishop of Human Rights.**  
*Joel Martinez*

The Seton Hall

# Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations

## Call for Papers

The Journal is pleased to invite articles for the upcoming  
Fall/Winter 2017 issue:

## Flashpoints: Conflicts in a Changing World

Throughout history, certain places, Flashpoints, have been where events of great significance have taken place, events that have fundamentally changed the international system. It is, of course, impossible to predict the future, but analysts and scholars have always tried to identify points of conflict and theorize likely outcomes.

There is no shortage of flashpoints for conflict today. Populist revolts against the old order have called for protectionism, raising the specter of a trade war. Pakistan and India, two antagonistic nuclear powers, still have a tense border where violent clashes still take place. On the Korean Peninsula, the Kim Regime's nuclear saberrattling continues. In the Baltics, governments fear the ever-present threat of Russian hybrid warfare. How are such situations likely to play out? How might policymakers prepare? What are the spillover effects? What do they teach us about the field of International Relations?

For our 21st issue, the Journal is accepting articles that cover topics related to international affairs and points of conflict. Submissions should be between 3,000 and 6,000 words and are due January 12th, 2018.

For more information regarding submission requirements and deadlines, please visit our website: [www.journalofdiplomacy.org](http://www.journalofdiplomacy.org) or forward all inquiries to:

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# Go Global, Meet the Locals: Pragmatism, Plunder, and Anti-Chinese Populism in Africa

by Richard Aidoo

## INTRODUCTION

From Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward to Deng Xiaoping's Opening Up, through Jiang Zemin's Going Out (also known as the Going Global strategy) to Xi Jinping's recent Chinese Dream, China has pursued diverse diplomatic engagements with African countries within these broad development visions. These engagements have evolved along with Africa's changing political and economic circumstances, as well as China's resurgence as a global economic power. Most significantly, in large parts of the developing world (including Africa), China has shifted away from its support for the struggle for ideological identity to assume geopolitical and geo-economic weight, as anti-imperialism rhetoric and support have given way to its business-is-business mantra, and noninterference diplomacy.<sup>1</sup> In other words, from the late 1970s, Africa encountered Beijing's gradual shift away from an ideological proselytizer to a global economic adventurer. After the Cold War, Chinese influence in Africa has grown significantly as it has traded, invested, and constructed its way to the most relevant economic partner to African economies. Chinese capital, aid, expertise, and diplomacy have brought increasing numbers of Chinese to the continent to serve as expatriate workers as they heed the call to "go out" and enhance the national ambitions and seek personal fortunes.<sup>2</sup>

In the past two decades, it has been remarkably evident that the relationship between China and Africa has entered into a different phase. Contrary to the rather simplistic and unilinear account of China's scramble of the African continent, current engagements are rather complex with China as a pragmatic economic actor with both complementary and competitive impacts that draw different reactions from African populations – from the often reported embrace to intense local anger in certain parts. Along

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with a political independent and largely democratically governed Africa, China is also currently engaging mostly empowered African populations who will readily assert and preserve their sovereignties, political rights and civil liberties through public protests, pronouncements and political competitions like elections, and referendums. So, in spite of Beijing's touted African embrace as the partner-in-development option for African states, some growing popular resentment for "most things Chinese" in some parts of Africa is confronting China as it deals with a continent in transition. Alternatively, though the effectiveness of popular African reactions towards the Chinese in African countries may be shaped by factors such as regime type, and economic status of the state in question,<sup>3</sup> sustainability and long-term impacts of these people centered movements depend on more than any visceral efforts. Consequently, how will Beijing's motives and strategies in Africa be impacted by popular reactions as African populations look to the past and present?

This article highlights the fact that as Chinese engagements continue to increase in Africa, the disenchanted portions of African populations will likely continue to perceive China as a domestic competitor and plunderer of African resources, even as China continues to pursue a diplomatic agenda that mainly attempts to distinguish itself and its actions in Africa away from past Western influences on the continent. Moreover, the emerging anti-China populism in various African countries can have a lasting effect on the support of the proper socio-political and economic institutional frameworks, which protect the political rights and well being of the people.

#### CHINA IN AFRICA: THE PAST, PRESENT AND POPULISM

From its earlier trade links with Africa dating back from 206 BCE to 220 CE, China's relationship with the continent has been a significant and enduring one, albeit with some diplomatic twists and turns in particular countries and regions in Africa. While the earlier origins of this relationship have been mostly characterized by trade, exploration and discovery during different Chinese dynasties, there is also collections of bitter accounts of exploitation, forced labor and diplomatic wrangling, specifically this is evident in country cases across the continent. Shipments of elephant tusks, rhinoceros horns, precious stones, and rare plants with medicinal potency from Africa to China preceded and continued along with the tales of about 63,695 indentured Chinese laborers in the Transvaal gold mines in South Africa in the early 20th century.<sup>4</sup> In most of the 20th and early 21st centuries, China's interests have evolved along with the major changes on the continent – anti-colonial

struggles, end of colonialism, cold war politics, and the third wave of democratization, globalization and ascendancy of populism characterized by the domino effect of the Arab Spring across North Africa. In spite of the intermittent exchanges through the many decades of China-Africa engagement, the Afro-Asian meeting at Bandung in Indonesia, in 1955 serves as an important milestone, and a guidepost to the development of Chinese diplomacy toward Africa, and the developing world in general. Though the fostering of fraternal relations at Bandung and its immediate aftermath has largely been posited as possessing deep ideological undertones,<sup>5</sup> this meeting indelibly imbued China-Africa diplomacy with two signature narratives that continue to shape contemporary aspects of this relationship – South-South cooperation and the noninterference principle.

At Bandung, the African leaders envisioned their people's embrace of China as their ideologies and diplomatic objectives were akin to each other. For instance, Kahin notes that then leader of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) Kwame Nkrumah's clarion call to racial equality and political revolution were consistent with China's position on Afro-Asian unity which further highlighted fraternal links in the Third World.<sup>6</sup> Prime Minister Nehru also captured this likeness in vision in his speech at Bandung as he asserted that: "We are brothers not only because we are Asians and Africans, but also because we are linked by the immeasurable wish for peace, resolute resistance to all dictates, firm determination to raise ourselves from backwardness."<sup>7</sup> These were not only in broad rhetorical anecdotes but were closely knitted into the anti-colonialist struggles that were raging in Africa as African nationalists were inspired by Chinese visions and visionaries. Kwame Nkrumah's requirement of a "bitter and vigorous struggle" for freedom was ideology gleaned from Mao Zedong.<sup>8</sup> Along with the ideological solidarity, loans and other forms of economic support were also extended to African countries right after the Bandung gathering, making this one of the most productive historical confluences between China and Africa. Beijing has continuously evoked memories of the bond that was established at Bandung to remind Africans (and their leaders) of China's long suffering and destined support to see African people through their march toward economic self-determination – a major effort to establish dissimilarity to the West's past and present encounters in Africa.

Another effort to clearly distinguish and detour away from the patterned behavior of a colonizer in Africa has been continuous Chinese insistence on the noninterference principle, which is meant to be a sacrosanct preservation of sovereignty (especially in a continent that has witnessed so much interference from West powers). Drawn from the Five Principles of

Peaceful Coexistence, this principle has been repeatedly used to qualify China's action or otherwise in apposition with the seeming unceasing Western interference in the politics and economics of African countries. From Bandung to the recent economic diplomacy, China has rhetorically devised a different path to global power status, one that is characterized by the noninvolvement and passivity in the affairs of other states, toward their development.<sup>9</sup> George Yu asserts that post-Bandung, China saw itself as an alternative development model to the Western liberal ideology connected to the colonizers and United States.<sup>10</sup> As the actors and outcomes of Bandung have evolved, the ideological fervor has ebbed into economic dialectics with Beijing stepping into its present role in Africa – a pragmatic economic actor.

Following Jiang Zemin's urgings to usher China into a new global post Cold War order, which will see it to the forefront of a globalized world with increased movement of people, capital, goods and experiences. This is after a decade that many in the developing world agitated for a new international economic order to account for equitable development between the developed and the developing world. Zemin's "going out" (*zou chuqu*) policy witnessed Chinese capital access foreign markets and resources. In Africa, there were natural resources to access, growing markets to trade with, and abundant investment opportunities for foreign capital and entrepreneurship, particularly after the decade of the 1980s, perceived as Africa's lost decade.<sup>11</sup> With the Cold War and Tiananmen protests in its rear view, China took advantage of the relative disinterest in Africa by the usual Western powers, with clear geopolitical motives rather than its initial ideological intents and encounters in Africa. Beijing beckoned to a world order based on the three worlds frame earlier enunciated by Deng Xiaoping. China saw itself as a major part of the developing world (third world) where it would be an "all weather friend" – engaging in both political and economic diplomacy while respecting each other's sovereignty (nonintervention).<sup>12</sup> So, as China became a net importer of petroleum in 1993, it equally expanded its trade and access to other raw materials, as well as export of its manufactured goods to Africa. As African countries held on to their colonial ties, and developed closer relations with the United States (away from the Soviet Union), China honed in on being a more pragmatic economic actor and partner-in-development with a rhetorical de-emphasis on politics, and broader engagement in economics – trade, investment, extension of aid and loans, and technical expertise.<sup>13</sup> This has led to an impressive expansion of trade from a meager \$1 billion to over \$ 200 billion elevating China to the biggest investor status in Africa.<sup>14</sup> However, as the Chinese investments, trade, and constructions have increased, so have Chinese living and working

in Africa seen an equally exponentially expansion.<sup>15</sup> With scholars' reference to the 1 million Chinese living in Africa,<sup>16</sup> there are reports and research on emerging anti-China populism,<sup>17</sup> a phenomenon that indicates two significant developments in the evolution of China's relations with Africa. First is the obvious friction created by competition between African and Chinese workers as capital, labor and trade grows in Africa. The second is significantly democratically empowered African populations who can now assert their political rights to vote and protest against any matter perceived as inimical to their development and well being.

In the past decade, Beijing has had a honeymoon with what has been depicted as a continental embrace in diverse surveys and anecdotes. This has been particularly so, as most African governments have found Beijing as a welcome alternative to the conditional help and resources from Western capitals like Washington and London. However, contrary to this generalization of a total continental embrace along with the expansion of China's economic engagement, African populations still consider their colonial ties and relationship with the West as the most significant. Hence though African leaders and elites may fully embrace China's approach to diplomacy and business, the general masses in these populations have a much different gauge. Though Chinese trade and investments have far outpaced the US, a 2014 Gallup survey of 11 African countries shows higher approval rating for US leadership over China's.<sup>18</sup> Further confirmation exists in a 2016 Afrobarometer survey of 36 African countries which concludes that the United States is the most popular model for national development while former colonial powers remain the greatest external influence for most of these countries – a shift in mood right within the decade.<sup>19</sup> The ensuing parts of this article explore and explain some of the reasons for this change in popularity. As China experiences global economic expansion and political relevance, the evolution of its relations with Africa remains a test tube that has witnessed experiments with ideological diplomacy, giving way to wider economic engagements, both of which has increased Beijing's influence and led to varied African popular reactions.

## BUSINESS IS BUSINESS: CHINA IS NOT THE WEST

How has China been able to steer clear popular anger, and calmly engage African countries, away from the accusations and pronouncements of colonialism, imperialism and scramble for African resources that are hurled at its engagements? China has made every effort to establish a different identity and narrative away from past Western engagements through

insistence on its noninterference policy in diplomatic engagements in Africa, and has also invoked the spirit and tenets that undergird the South-South cooperation. As much as popular reactions toward these two arrangements have been reported as generally positive, the responses are much more nuanced than the general perceptions, which offer some clarity about why anti-Chinese fervor is on the rise despite all the complementary efforts such as construction of infrastructure, provision of loans and technical aid.

Noninterference principle has enabled China to operate its business-is-business mantra throughout Africa. From safe, stable and small economic engagements like Ghana, Mauritius, and Cape Verde to large, complex, and uncertain partners like Nigeria, South Africa and Angola, China's call to action on different issues taking place in Africa has simply received the retort of noninterference in the domestic affairs of partners. The principle which has a deeper historical place in China's diplomacy toward the developing world beginning with an encounter between India's Jawaharlal Nehru and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in 1954,<sup>20</sup> has been suspiciously perceived by actors in the developed world (especially the West) as Beijing's irresponsibility in a region of world that should be responsibly nudged into pertinent reforms for the well being of its people. Comparably, contemporary African leaders are perceived as having embraced noninterference as their predecessors did decades ago at Bandung, which has granted China more access in African administrative capitals as well as resource deals made in spite of the domestic political situation(s).

Popular sentiments among African populations are however diverse and more nuanced as they often show concerns with the policy. When Sautman and Hairong surveyed respondents in nine African countries, they indicated that though many saw the policy as a good one, many more had qualms with the policy, except for Sudan, which has vast Chinese oil investments.<sup>21</sup> Popular vexation with the policy of noninterference can be attributed to two nagging concerns among African populations. First, Beijing's policy of noninterference is often perceived as connivance with leaders and elites who appreciate China's noninterference in domestic politics, unlike Western actors that repeatedly prod and penalize leaders and their cronies for rogue behavior. So, this celebrated identity of Chinese engagement of African countries, which sets China apart from the West is also a perceived degeneration of government accountability towards the people. Second, linked to the first challenge, noninterference as a policy does not encourage institutional reforms as political leaders are not pushed to institute economic and political reforms as is often requested under Western pre-conditioned aid and other forms of financial arrangement.

In many ways, and hotspots around Africa, China's inaction at local levels such as in South Sudan has agitated sympathizers at the international level, and incensed people at the local level. These reactions represent frustration toward China's seeming disregard for accountability and institutional reforms – both essential elements for the sustenance of democracy.

One narrative with implications for policy and institutional development is South-South Cooperation, which is the bedrock of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) conceived during the Bandung conference in 1955. The sentiments and rhetoric that powered this movement and organization from Bandung have continuously served as the geopolitical conscience of the global South that impinges on the actions or inactions of the developed North. Thus, it galvanizes support and intents from the developing South to help present a united front on issues that impact it. In definition of China's global identity, Deng Xiaoping announced during his speech to the United Nations in 1974 that China was a socialist and developing country that identified with the Third World. Additionally, he asserted that "China is not a superpower, nor will she ever seek to be one."<sup>22</sup> A rather astute and indelible way to couch an "us versus them" scenario, which places China in the South, and in opposition to the Soviet Union (now Russia) and the United States identified as the second and first worlds respectively. With its stated allegiance toward the developing world, popular support for the Chinese has been eminent at different points in the history of post-colonial Africa. This support is encapsulated in the African popular respect for China's tried and tested development path, which is known to have lifted millions of Chinese out of poverty, and the possibility of its replication in Africa. An essential survey question that captures this among different African populations is whether China is a positive development model for your country or is China's development path a negative one for your country? In the 2009 survey by Sautman and Hairong, almost all 9 selected African countries (except for South Africa) posted high levels of positive perception of China as a development model for African countries.<sup>23</sup>

Interestingly, half a decade later, the Afrobarometer survey of 36 African countries reveals that China ranks second to the United States, which is the preferred model for national development.<sup>24</sup> The Afrobarometer survey mirrors the 2014 Gallup survey, which also registered higher approval rating for the United States as a model for development.<sup>25</sup> So, though China remains very influential in the economies of these countries, the respect accorded to Beijing as the ideological or pragmatic high ground for development has seen some depreciation – an effect of the increase in anti-Chinese populism. China's allegiance to the global developing South

may hold some relevance and currency for its recent engagements in Africa because it clearly sets its agenda apart from the historical course chart by Western powers from the pre-colonial to post-colonial Africa. Most significantly, it has enabled Chinese private and state-sponsored business interests to conveniently claim the business-is-business mantra. As China complements development in African economies along with its strategic diplomatic devices like noninterference and South-South Cooperation to help distinguish and distance itself from the past efforts of the West, it must do more to avoid any realities or semblances of colonialism which will further increase popular resentment toward all things Chinese.

#### POLITICS OF PLUNDER: GHOSTS OF COLONIALISM AND ANTI-CHINESE POPULISM

With the initiation of the “Going Out” policy, China’s outward look at the global economic system led to reaching out and increasing engagements around the world, particularly in resource-endowed regions of Africa, which fit perfectly in Jiang Zemin’s vision as he sought for more cooperation during his six-nation African tour.<sup>26</sup> With a promising start at the Afro-Asian conference at Bandung, and a confluence of diplomatic wants and resource needs in a post Cold War era, China expanded its interests in Africa through the “Going Out” policy in the 1990s. This increase was characterized by a surge in investments by Chinese companies (mostly state backed), proliferation of Chinese infrastructure projects, extension of diverse forms of loans to African governments, and most vividly the presence of Chinese labor across the continent. This momentous economic engagement in Africa by China has revived memories of colonialism and its attendant exploitative measures as the latter has visibly and directly engaged the former in two significant ways akin to Western colonizers – resource extractive deals, and labor arrangements – which is both perceived to benefit Beijing more than its African partners. In the past decade, China has been contending with accusations (particularly from the West) of colonialism and the initiation of a new scramble for Africa. These claims have heightened as China’s investments in Africa have expanded and diversified along with other storylines depicting China as an opportunist, resource exploiter, and a foreign investor with utter disregard for local legal precepts that safeguard the environment and worker’s right. However, besides the global scrutiny, are the varied local African responses to Chinese engagement, which seem to be generally positive through the various surveys (from both individual researchers and institutions), as well as the anecdotes from African leaders and elites. Con-

versely, these surveys and general rhetoric also reveals growing patterns of Anti-Chinese populism as diverse populations in Africa rise to protest, vote against, and in some extreme instances engage the Chinese violently leading to deaths and destruction of properties. How have the complementary efforts of the Chinese in African countries elicited these populist movements, and what does this mean for the China-Africa relationship?

The single most recurring subject about Chinese objectives and engagements in Africa is access to resources like oil, hard minerals, and land (but mostly oil). As significant Chinese oil fields pass their peak production, 31 percent of the country's oil comes from Africa with Angola as the major supplier.<sup>27</sup> Taylor argues that this has become a problem for the West (especially the US) with concerns of China's attempts to lock up barrels of oil at their sources, and thereby limiting supply unto the global market.<sup>28</sup> Like most Western critics, the US Council on Foreign Relations states that "China seeks not only to gain access to resources, but also to control resource production and distribution, perhaps positioning itself for priority access to these resources as they become scarcer."<sup>29</sup> The Chinese oil grab in Africa goes in tandem with its reach for other minerals like gold, copper, diamond and many more across the continent. With significant holds in places like the Zambian Copperbelt and Bauxite Mine in Ghana, China has made significant inroads into the petroleum and mining sectors of most African economies. In several of the cases, African leaders hail China's interests in these sectors as complementary, as Beijing extends enormous financial resources to their African countries through loans and grants. Angola has been a serial beneficiary of major Chinese loan packages, even when it was impossible to access Western financial resources to rebuild infrastructure after years of civil war, due to the poor human rights and democratic records of President Dos Santos and the People Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).<sup>30</sup> After securing one of the largest Chinese loan deals in Africa in 2012, then Vice President John Dramani Mahama of Ghana quickly admitted the enormity of the \$3 billion credit facility to his country as he stated that "With the current financial crisis, it's very difficult to go anywhere in this world and get \$3 billion."<sup>31</sup> The \$3 billion loan meant for infrastructure development was then guaranteed with Ghana's newly discovered oil. Though these Chinese loans and investments in oil and other mineral resources are seen as complementary efforts toward development, their tendency to wilt established institutions as the mostly non-conditional (or with less conditions) financial packages serve as disincentives to rogue regimes in countries like Zimbabwe, Sudan, and Equatorial Guinea.

With weakened institutions and powerful friends in high places,

Chinese businesses and actors outcompete the locals and sometimes disregard the local laws to gain access to minerals and other forms of natural resources. In Ghana, large numbers of Chinese have been deported for illegal gold mining (locally referred to as *galamsey*) as Chinese involvement in the unregulated mining activity has incited local anger, especially as the local population blame some local traditional leaders for being complicit and enabling the Chinese operatives.<sup>32</sup> In the 35-country Afrobarometer survey, 10 percent of the respondents say China's extraction of resources in Africa contributes to a negative perception of China in the various countries. In Ghana where the issue of Chinese illegal gold mining is rife, 43 percent of the respondents saw extraction of resources as helping depict the Chinese in a negative image.<sup>33</sup> Beijing's resource diplomacy in Africa has been seen as a welcome competition in a global resource market that has been dominated by Western buyers, yet as the deals are reached between the Chinese and African government elites without regard to the local people and the institutions, it then becomes an issue of contention, which easily gins up anti-Chinese sentiments that easily galvanizes support for anti-Chinese populism.

In the 2016 Afrobarometer survey on China-Africa relations, 14 percent of respondents complained that taking jobs or businesses away from the locals gives China a negative image in the various African countries. An interesting twist in this data was from Algeria and Egypt, two of the Arab Spring countries where youth unemployment led to popular uprisings that deposed various elites and leaders. In Algeria, 27 percent of the respondents (the highest in this category of the survey) said taking jobs or businesses from locals affected China's image negatively while 26 percent of Egyptian respondents (the second highest in this category of the survey) saw China's image affected by taking jobs or businesses away from locals.<sup>34</sup> Two major issues stem out of the China-Africa labor issues. First is the significant manner in which Chinese labor displaces African labor at different skill competencies. Most infrastructure or construction sites see a combination of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled Chinese labor, which are often part of the Chinese financial agreements that support these projects. Competition between locals and Chinese businesses are obvious across multiple sectors. After their 10-country safari recording Chinese engagements across Africa, Michel, Beuret and Woods report that even Chinese sex workers in Cameroon outcompete their local counterparts by charging only 40 percent of their price, a rate they are able to maintain since most of them also hold "day jobs" in Chinese-owned shops where they are able to supplement their incomes.<sup>35</sup> This resulted in local protests by domestic sex workers against their Chinese counterparts. The second China-Africa labor issue that incense

popular anger is the treatment of African labor by their Chinese employers or fellow workers.<sup>36</sup> For instance, in 2005, 49 workers died at a Chinese explosive factory in Zambia. In Zambia's Copperbelt, labor wrangling between local workers and Chinese managers over wages and safety protocols led to kidnappings and shootings. Popular protests against labor malpractices have occurred in Zambia, Kenya, South Africa, and Ethiopia just to mention some of the African countries that have witnessed excesses as a result of Chinese labor arrangements and practices. Sadly, some of these labor issues have occurred and festered as a result of weak monitoring institutions needed to establish and enforce labor laws. The investment codes in some African countries allow for foreign capital to be only invested in manufacturing industries and not general trading, which is largely the preserve of the locals, but the Chinese (and other foreigners) often flout these investment codes without any punitive measures from monitoring agencies, which are sometimes in connivance with these investors. Excessive disregard of labor laws by the Chinese is bound to incite local anger leading to anti-Chinese protests.<sup>37</sup>

To conclude, China-Africa relations have evolved through many centuries of change, with recent decades featuring years of anti-colonial struggles where Chinese ideological engagements won African support and fraternity with aid to fight off colonizers, to recent years of economic pragmatism as Beijing is focused on setting a distinct economic agenda away from past Western involvement in Africa. China's interests in African resources, investments and markets have been controversial and provoked different popular reactions. The recent upsurge of anti-Chinese populism may continue, discounting the fact that Beijing's economic and diplomatic path and performance in Africa differs from that of the West, if China's present engagements on the continent have semblances and reminders of the past, particularly during colonialism.

#### NOTES

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# Latin American Resource Populism in the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century

by Marten Brienens

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, a wave of populism has come over much of the world. In the United States, Donald J. Trump's populist message reverberated among voters sufficiently to see him ascend to the presidency. In Europe, a clearly populist campaign led by Nigel Farage resulted in the looming exit of Great Britain from the European Union. Elsewhere on the continent, Marine Le Pen may not have won the presidential election, but her participation in the runoff was a clear victory for her anti-European and anti-immigrant nationalist platform. Likewise, while many observers were positively gleeful to note that Geert Wilders had not won the Dutch parliamentary elections, as many had feared he might do, but those observers failed to note that his party grew into the second largest in the country, while the traditionally powerful socialists were utterly destroyed.<sup>1</sup>

Latin America seems out of step with the world, as it appears to be currently emerging from a cycle of populist rule commonly referred to as the Pink Tide, which began with the inauguration of Venezuela's Hugo Chávez in 1999.<sup>2</sup> While observers have been declaring the end of the Pink Tide for a few years now, the reality is that the movement is not quite dead yet: Nicolás Maduro remains in power, as does Evo Morales – who appears not quite ready to throw in the towel.<sup>3</sup> While Rafael Correa has stepped aside in perfectly democratic fashion, his successor, Lenín Moreno, is very much a believer in what has been termed “twenty-first century socialism.”<sup>4</sup>

In this article, I will focus on the more outspoken of the members of the Pink Tide, and suggest that within the resurgence of the left in Latin America there is a distinct subset of populists who have married resource nationalism to populism to produce something altogether separate from the

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rest of the members of the Pink Tide.

### THE NATURE OF LATIN AMERICAN POPULISM

Populism is hardly a new phenomenon, and this is especially true in Latin America, which has gone through waves of populist upheaval since the crystallization of more-or-less stable political systems in the late nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, most Latin American countries have gone through cycles, alternating between populists – such as Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico (1934-1940), Germán Busch in Bolivia (1937-1939), and Juan and Evita Perón in Argentina (1946-1955)—military dictatorships, and technocratic regimes. Indeed, the past forty years were marked by a transition from military rule in the 1970s, to technocratic regimes in the 1980s and 1990s, and ultimately to leftist regimes at the start of the twenty-first century.<sup>6</sup>

In wealthy countries, populism tends to be a movement of the (extreme) right in which nationalism, anti-foreign sentiment, and law and order tend to be at the top of the agenda. This very much characterizes the rhetoric we have heard from modern Western populists such as Donald Trump, Geert Wilders, Nigel Farage, and Marine Le Pen. Latin American populism, while it shares many of these characteristics, tends to emerge from the left of the political spectrum and tends to be very singularly focused on foreign economic interests.<sup>7</sup> In the modern political climate, the Latin American populist narrative denounces such ills as neocolonialism, neoliberalism, imperialism, and a variety of other offenses committed against Latin Americans primarily by what Evo Morales likes to call “the Empire” – the United States of America.<sup>8</sup>

In effect, Latin American populism shares many traits with populism elsewhere, but given the very real differences between economic realities as they have existed in countries like Venezuela and Bolivia on the one hand, and countries such as the United States and France on the other, it is not altogether very difficult to understand why Latin American populism would be more likely to emerge from the left. Populism, after all, can be understood as a phenomenon in which charismatic leaders – that is to say, leaders with “perceived special personal qualities” who present themselves as political outsiders—appeal to the specific grievances of popular masses, generally by invoking national dignity (in an often rather xenophobic manner), the absence of justice for the common citizen, and a promise to either create or restore economic greatness.<sup>9</sup> In rich countries, this tends to hinge on a narrative in which foreigners supposedly abuse the welfare state at the expense taxpayers and in which governments overregulate and overtax

businesses in order to provide handouts to (often foreign) freeloaders.<sup>10</sup> In poor countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, the argument is decidedly different: here, the problem is presented not as foreign individuals who displace workers and abuse the welfare state, but rather as foreign corporate interests that plunder and loot the country's natural resources.

Popular grievances are widespread and rooted in the basic failings of the state in large portions of the region.<sup>11</sup> Political systems are – correctly – perceived as riddled with corruption and not meeting the needs of the people.<sup>12</sup> This is a difficult point to argue, given that corruption does run rampant throughout the region, and that services are generally both limited to urban areas and of low quality. Citizen security in the region is the lowest of any region: Latin America has the highest murder rates in the world and scores abysmally poorly when it comes to ability and willingness of law enforcement to solve even serious violent crime.<sup>13</sup> Justice is widely regarded as wholly absent, and indeed the judicial systems in the region are deeply flawed and rife with corruption and scandal.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, vigilantism in the region is widespread, as citizens do not believe that they can count on law enforcement and the courts to deliver justice – in this, they are unfortunately not mistaken.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the labyrinthine bureaucratic systems that have emerged make it virtually impossible to function in the formal economy without legal aid and deep pockets. In much of the region, the state effectively functions as an obstacle to the normal functioning of society: access to basic services requires payment and endless paperwork that serves no purpose other than to force citizens to visit yet more offices to make yet more payments, each individual visit constituting another opportunity for officials to extract a bribe in addition to a payment.<sup>16</sup>

Then, of course, there is the problem of crushing poverty and inequality. Latin America is not only the most dangerous region in the world for its citizens, but also the most unequal in terms of economic disparities.<sup>17</sup> The wealthy are able to navigate the lack of basic services by creating their own infrastructure within heavily guarded compounds, where private police forces patrol to ward off threats from the outside.<sup>18</sup> They are insulated from the problems faced by the impoverished who surround their opulent compounds. The impunity that abounds serves their business interests, as tremendous wealth can be generated simply by ignoring environmental and other regulations that go largely unenforced. In this part of the world, the phrase “do you know who you are talking to?” is one that is wielded to great effect to ward off the consequences of unethical and illegal behavior by those who have money and connections.<sup>19</sup> Enough so that the poor police officer

who fails to observe the tradition of impunity on the part of the powerful will soon find herself looking for new employ.<sup>20</sup>

Amid all this, the inhabitants of the region have long been told that their misery is an anomaly. While the problems they face are real and the poverty they live in is deep and generational, the environments they inhabit are described as laden with unimaginable wealth. From the vast plantations of sugar cane and soybeans and the mines that produce everything from gold and emeralds to lithium and copper to the vast deposits of natural gas and oil that lie beneath the ground, the popular narrative has long been that Latin American poverty simply should not be and can only be explained as the result of nefarious schemes carried out by perfidious exploiters and their collaborators. In Bolivia, this narrative has often taken the form of the image of the “beggar on a throne of gold,” to illustrate the absurdity of terrible poverty amid vast natural treasure.<sup>21</sup>

While the blame for poverty and lack of economic opportunity is squarely placed on the shoulders of outsiders – whether Spanish colonialists, British industrialists, or U.S. imperialists – the political establishment is understood to be complicit in the looting of the continent, allowing it to be stripped bare of its resources to feed industrial engines in far off places in return for its share. After all, political parties on both the left and right have not only failed to stop this outrageous pillaging, but are consistently embroiled in corruption scandals that demonstrate that powerful politicians, regardless of the ideology they espouse, benefit from the exploitation of natural resources at the expense of the poor. It is no surprise that in a region where scandals dominate the news with frightening regularity, that people should have very little faith in the political establishment and its desire to serve the national interest. The corrupt nature of politics is widely regarded as an unalterable fact of life.

The difficulty in countering this narrative is that an uncomfortable amount of it is not, technically speaking, incorrect. Latin American natural resources were indeed hauled off by colonial powers for their own benefit. The Spanish Crown did indeed purposefully prevent the emergence of manufacturing in its colonies. Moreover, the role of the United States in Latin America – and especially so in Central America – has not exactly been that of a friendly neighbor. Such a neighbor would not have been involved in the overthrow of democratically elected presidents to serve the needs of, say, a company like United Fruit.<sup>22</sup> It also would not instruct military regimes on how to more effectively torture its political prisoners.<sup>23</sup> For all of the nonsensical accusations leveled against the United States by the Latin American left, it is undeniable that the United States has indeed meddled

in the domestic affairs of Latin American countries and has indeed been supportive of regimes that blithely trampled human rights. This unfortunate reality makes it very difficult for the United States to credibly present itself as a champion of justice, equality, and democracy. It is not altogether surprising that inhabitants of countries that have been at the receiving end of U.S. intervention are susceptible to conspiracy theories involving the United States, thus making for fertile ground for those who wish to explain away systemic problems, corruption, and mismanagement simply by pointing towards the North and proclaiming that the invisible hand of the Central Intelligence Agency is at work to undermine progress and independence.<sup>24</sup>

In effect, an argument can be made that the persistent weakness of political and economic institutions in large parts of the region along with racism have created an environment that is conducive to populist appeal: populists address very real grievances with regard to impunity, corruption, racism, poverty, and inequality and offer solutions that fit a well-practiced narrative of exploitation. In the context of political systems that inspire little confidence among the electorate and a perceived threat of foreign enemies, it is not difficult to understand the lure of the 'savior.' A charismatic individual and political outsider who successfully presents himself as incorruptible, fearless, willing to stand up to foreign exploiters, and presenting a vision for economic and social justice. Indeed, the practice of political patronage that marks Latin American history further predisposes the region to precisely such highly personalistic leadership:<sup>25</sup> political parties are not to be trusted, but faith can be placed in particular individuals who will resist the forces that work against the people. This phenomenon also serves to insulate these charismatic leaders from the scandals that invariably beset the individuals surrounding the leader himself.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, given that there is a widespread belief that the reason for poverty in the region is a very simple one, namely exploitation by foreign interests, populists are able to easily capitalize on this belief with simple solutions. The common narrative, especially in resource-rich countries such as Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela, is one in which the ongoing plunder of natural resources by neocolonial and imperialist interests can be halted only by a morally empowered individual, free of corruption and invested in the wellbeing of the *patria*, who can stand up to these foreign powers and their collaborators. What is needed, the argument invariably goes, is the nationalization of these subsoil resources so that the state can guarantee that the benefits will flow to the people rather than overseas. In effect, what we see appearing in cycles on the Latin American political stage in those countries especially dependent on exports of natural resources is what I would describe

as *resource populism*; effectively, a form of resource nationalism combined with classic Latin American populism à la Juan Perón.<sup>27</sup> A populism that is singularly focused on state ownership and control over natural resources and that promises that this will allow the state to right historical wrongs and bring prosperity to the nation as a whole.

#### THE RETURN OF RESOURCE POPULISM

The Pink Tide is often understood as a wave of electoral victories for left-of-center politicians throughout Latin America (and the Caribbean), and while it is true that many observers have added to this the understanding that this movement is populist in nature, the reality is that both of these descriptions fall short of the complexity of the Pink Tide and its members.<sup>28</sup> While it is true that the rhetoric employed by members of the Pink Tide would place them firmly on the left, the actual policies implemented very rarely went much further than the implementation of a number of conditional cash transfers to alleviate poverty, and to great effect. However, such policies were also adopted by leaders outside of the Pink Tide. Moreover, some self-proclaimed socialists turned out to be very pragmatic leaders engaging in fairly staid economic policy – this is true, for example, of Evo Morales of Bolivia.<sup>29</sup> Although the movement has been described as populist, many members of the Pink Tide did not engage in classic Latin American populism: president Lula da Silva of Brazil, for example, was a pragmatic leftist who happened also to be very popular, which is not quite the same thing as a being a populist. His successor, Dilma Rousseff, was similarly pragmatic but, lacking the charisma of her predecessor, was never particularly popular.

The re-emergence of leftist politics in the region can be traced back to the economic policies implemented during the 1980s and 1990s – often described as the neoliberal era – during which Latin American states emerging from the era of military rule that had marked the 1970s were forced to deal with the financial ruin left behind by spendthrift military juntas, who had left many national economies with spiraling inflation and crushing debt burdens.<sup>30</sup> Often with guidance from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, nascent democracies had little choice but to shrink the state apparatus, reduce or eliminate subsidies, open up markets, and privatize the many failing state owned enterprises. Known as structural adjustment or shock therapy, these economic reforms were intended to stabilize currencies, bring the crippling debt under control, curtail spending, and inspire enough confidence to attract foreign investment. The inevitable result of these austerity measures was spiking unemployment and poverty rates in those

countries most affected.

The economic reforms of the mid-1980s and 1990s proved to be excruciating for the tens of thousands of government workers who were laid off, the families who depended on subsidized basic necessities, workers of textile factories previously protected by high tariffs, and so on. While these economic adjustments were intended to produce better outcomes in the long term, improvement was too long by far in coming for the millions who suffered as a result, leaving the political and economic environment exceptionally favorable for a return of leftist populism by the late 1990s. Poverty levels remained very high, as did unemployment numbers – although improvements had begun to arrive.<sup>31</sup> The widespread suffering was very much regarded as the result of economic impositions by Northern institutions – such as the IMF – and the spate of privatizations were especially regarded as despoilment of national assets to benefit foreign investors. Likewise, the process of privatization of state owned enterprises was deeply unpopular, since to many citizens it had the simple appearance of political elites selling off the national patrimony to foreign interests in what many regarded as repeat despoliation of the continent.<sup>32</sup>

As national economies began to recover from structural adjustment towards the end of the twentieth century, the uneven distribution of the benefits created widespread popular discontent: it was the poorest who had suffered the consequences of shock therapy, but it was the establishment along with foreign investors who ended up reaping the benefits of renewed economic growth, especially as the price of commodities began to rise: oil and natural gas prices steadily rose, while increased consumption by an emerging China drove up the prices for both agricultural and mineral exports. Disenchantment with technocratic regimes that had no ready answers for the problem of poverty grew rapidly, while voices on the left successfully addressed the grievances of large segments of the population.

Beginning with the election of Hugo Chávez – on what was then still a rather modest leftist platform – the Pink Tide slowly swept Latin America over the following decade, with the elections of Brazil's Inácio Lula da Silva and Argentina's Néstor Kirchner in 2003, Bolivia's Evo Morales in 2005, Chile's Michelle Bachelet in 2006, Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega, Ecuador's Rafael Correa, and Argentina's Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in 2007, Paraguay's Fernando Lugo in 2008, Uruguay's José Mujica in 2010, and Peru's Ollanta Humala in 2011.

As I stated previously, membership in the so-called Pink Tide is not in and of itself particularly predictive of policy preferences. There are enormous differences between the approaches chosen by these leaders, many

of them following a course of steady pragmatism and steering clear of the anti-imperialist rhetoric that has characterized the most visible members of the cohort. Within the Pink Tide, there are really only a few charismatic leaders who qualify as classic Latin American resource populists, employing fierce anti-imperialist rhetoric and engaging in economic policies rooted in resource nationalism. The most visible of these have been, without a doubt, Hugo Chávez and his successor, Nicolás Maduro, Evo Morales, Rafael Correa, and arguably Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. With the exception of Fernández de Kirchner, all of these leaders had come from humble beginnings and counted as true political outsiders. All of them regarded the United States and the global capitalist system as the largest obstacle to economic development. All of them regarded the Bretton Woods system as instruments of domination by Europe and the United States, with both Fernández de Kirchner and Correa declaring their country's international debt as effectively illegitimate.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, they were heavily focused on state intervention in the economy and the (re-)nationalization of natural resources to be administered by state owned enterprises: Bolivia nationalized hydrocarbons and reincorporated its state oil company (*Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos* or YPFB) in 2006;<sup>34</sup> Venezuela began a spate of nationalizations of oil reserves in 2007, continuing on to take control of further oil projects between 2008 and 2010;<sup>35</sup> Ecuador recreated Petroecuador in 2010 and forced renegotiations of contracts with foreign oil companies under threat of expropriation in 2012;<sup>36</sup> Argentina (re-)nationalized its state oil company, *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales* (YPF), in 2012.<sup>37</sup>

The Bolivian case is especially telling, given that the rise of Evo Morales – a former coca farmer – was made possible precisely by the discovery of vast deposits of natural gas – made possible itself by the privatization of the state oil company YPFB<sup>38</sup> – and the subsequent debate about how to monetize this newfound resource. The government's 2001 proposal to export the natural gas to Chile for liquefaction, and then to California, which was experiencing shortages at the time, resulted in widespread protests often referred to as the “Gas Wars” (2003-2005) in which the very notion that Bolivian natural gas would power the economic engines of the United States was considered such an affront that popular protests effectively brought down two governments – that of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in 2003 and of his successor, Carlos Mesa Gisbert, in 2005 – in rapid succession, allowing Evo Morales to present himself as the public face of outrage, calling for the renationalization of hydrocarbons and vociferously arguing that the only hope for economic development lay with state control over natural resources such as the country's natural gas.<sup>39</sup>

The results of these interventions have been mixed, depending on the extent to which these four resource populists decided to intervene in their national economies. Correa and Morales focused mainly on their oil and natural gas exports as a means of generating revenue for the state, allowing them to institute a series of subsidies and other conditional cash transfers that significantly reduced the number of people living in poverty. It should be noted, of course, that such interventions were also undertaken elsewhere in the region, and that the reductions in poverty achieved by Morales and Correa were largely in line with the region as a whole.<sup>40</sup> The high price of oil throughout the first decade of the century allowed them to spend magnanimously, undertake a number of significant infrastructure projects, and to post impressive GDP growth numbers.

Chávez – along with his successor, Nicolás Maduro – and Fernández de Kirchner, on the other hand, were much more interventionist. Windfall profits from oil allowed Chávez to spread his magnanimity across the border and into other countries around Latin America and the Caribbean, thus creating a number of client states highly dependent on subsidized Venezuelan oil. Chávez pursued an all-encompassing vision of social justice that included a national healthcare system, housing subsidies, and a series of currency manipulations and price controls to make up for the inflationary cycle that had come into motion fairly early on. These price controls proved fatal to Venezuelan economic development: as merchants could not charge the true cost of imported items, they were forced not only to sell at a loss, but became unable to import many basic necessities due to lack of currency with which to pay for them. The response was to simply accuse them of economic warfare against the Venezuelan people and to subsequently nationalize grocery chains, breweries, and any other economic entity that became unable to import goods. Farms and ranches faced the same problem: forced to sell produce at regulated prices, they could not procure enough revenue to buy fertilizer, feed, and other basic necessities.<sup>41</sup> Here, too, the response was to expropriate them and concentrate the means of production into the hands of the military, resulting in additional shortages caused by corruption. So dire has the situation become, that basic necessities of life are no longer available in Venezuela, which can at this time be said to be suffering a widespread famine: three-quarters of the population lost an average of 19 lbs. over the course of 2016 due to simple lack of food. The advances in reduction of poverty at the beginning the Chávez era have been completely undone by the massive mismanagement and corruption.<sup>42</sup> While not as extreme as Chávez-Maduro, the Fernández de Kirchner administration was also significantly more inclined than Morales and Correa to intervene in

the national economy, primarily through currency controls that made it especially difficult to obtain U.S. dollars and steep tariffs to protect domestic industry from competition.<sup>43</sup>

### THE AFTERMATH

The end of the commodities boom has effectively laid bare the shortcomings of the policies pursued by the resource populists. A spate of nationalizations has created state owned entities rife with corruption. In addition, many of the benefits bestowed on the populations – generally in the form of rather minimal direct transfers – have indeed reduced poverty rates throughout the region, but not by creating new economic opportunities. The underlying assumption by which resource populists live has remained unaltered, and future hopes are pinned very heavily on the discovery and exploitation of more hydrocarbons and minerals, rather than the type of economic diversification that generates employment opportunities. Exploitation of subsoil resources, after all, is by its very nature an economic enclave, producing very little in the form of economic growth or opportunity, the primary beneficiary being the state itself as it consumes the revenues from various forms of taxation on these resources.<sup>44</sup>

That is to say that for all of the anti-imperialist rhetoric that flowed from the mouths of the most prominent leaders of the Pink Tide – Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales, Nicolás Maduro, and Rafael Correa above all others – what they produced in the end has been a simple rinse-and-repeat of economic projects undertaken on a number of occasions already by the populists who preceded them throughout the twentieth century: nationalization of natural resources, nationalization of key industries, price controls, and protectionism. All this along with heavy doses of revolutionary symbolism and suppression of dissenting voices. Many of the popular measures taken are mere symbolism: what does it matter what the minimum wage is in a country where the vast majority of economic activity takes place in the informal sector? The basic structure of these economies, however, has been left exactly as it was: the Bolivarian revolution and its twenty-first century socialism may have redistributed some wealth, but has done nothing to alter the economic fundamentals or to address the continuing problem of complete dependence on commodities exports, nor indeed to tackle the problem of the informal markets.

The basic list of grievances that brought these leaders to power remains unaddressed: citizen security is significantly worse, while impunity flourishes as never before. Trust in the political parties remains nearly non-

existent. Meanwhile, the expansion of the state and the resurrection of highly corruptible state owned enterprises has done nothing but to create new opportunities for political elites to enrich themselves over the backs of the poor. The penchant of resource populists towards nationalization of economically viable foreign enterprises has in turn created conditions in which it is frankly unwise for foreign investors to send their money into these markets. There is danger in turning a profit: doing so is interpreted as exploitation and opens one up to the risk of expropriation. This is the legacy of resource populism: the economic diversification needed to bring about sustainable economic growth is actively hindered by the exceptionally hostile climate for foreign investment – no better evidence for this exists than the continued inability of the Bolivian state to attract investors for the exploitation of the largest deposits of lithium on the planet.<sup>45</sup>

#### NOTES

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<sup>4</sup> John Murphy, “New Philosophy and Socialism of the Twenty-First Century” in Bruce Bagley and Magdalena DeFort, *Decline of U.S. Hegemony? A Challenge of ALBA and a New Latin American Integration of the Twenty-First Century*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015): 13-32.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Conniff, “Introduction” in Michael Conniff (ed.), *Populism in Latin America* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1999): 7-9.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Rodríguez, “Re-Assessing the Rise of the Latin American Left.” *The Midsouth Political Science Review* 15/1 (2014): 58-60.

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<sup>9</sup> Conniff, “Introduction,” 4.

<sup>10</sup> Bonikowski, “Three Lessons,” 10-12.

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew Layton and Mariana Rodríguez, “Citizen Security, Evaluations of the State, and Policy Preferences” in Zechmeister, *Political Culture*: 88.

<sup>15</sup> UNODC, *Global Study*, 18.

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# Populism and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America

by Carlos de la Torre

## INTRODUCTION

In Latin America, as in other areas of the world, populists have challenged exclusionary forms of democracy promising to give power to the people. Yet different from other regions, where populists have been marginalized from power until the last two decades, in Latin America populists of different ideological persuasions and who followed distinct economic policies have ruled since the 1930s and 40s. Latin Americanists have debated the relationships between populism, democratization, and authoritarianism since the late 1950s. This article analyzes how scholars interpreted the relationship between populism and democracy to draw lessons to other regions. No longer confined to Latin America or to the margins of European politics, populism spread to Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and with Donald Trump, to the cradle of liberal democracy, the United States. Latin America might offer clues to what effects populism would have for democracy worldwide. Are we witnessing processes of democratic erosion, or on the contrary are populists invigorating exclusionary democracies?

The article first analyzes different interpretations of the relationships between populism, democracy, and authoritarianism during classical populism in the 1930s to 1970s, neoliberal populism of the 1990s, and left-wing radical populism of the late 1990s to present. The second section explores the internal contradictions of the logic of populism that combines the democratic precept of using elections as the only legitimate tool to get to power, with autocratic practices to undermine pluralism and to transform a leader into the embodiment of the will of the people. The last section draws lessons from Latin America to global debates on populism and democratization.

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Scholars of Latin America explored the relationships between populism and democratization in different populist waves: classical populism, neoliberal populism, and radical populism.

### *Classical Populism*

Most scholars that analyzed the first wave of populism of the 1930s-1970s, argued that it had ambiguous relationships with democratization. At the same time that populists incorporated excluded sectors to the political community, they attacked the independence of civil society and the media, and concentrated power in the hands of presidents that used laws instrumentally to punish critics and to benefit cronies. Populists like Juan Perón in Argentina, Getulio Vargas in Brazil, and José María Velasco Ibarra in Ecuador expanded social and political rights while restricting civil rights.<sup>1</sup>

Populism emerged in oligarchic societies where the franchise was restricted, elites decided on the political destinies of their nations, in contexts of extreme inequalities, and when the poor and the excluded were considered a dangerous and irrational threat to civility, progress, and democracy. Under these systems of economic, political, and cultural exploitation and exclusion, common people were humiliated in daily life. An Argentinean worker interviewed by historian Daniel James remembered the 1930s as a time when, “I always felt like strange when I went to the city, downtown Buenos Aires – like you didn’t belong there, which was stupid but you felt that they were looking down on you, that you weren’t dressed right. The police there treated you like animals too.”<sup>2</sup>

Populism emerged as a democratizing force that promised free elections to eliminate electoral fraud, the socioeconomic incorporation of workers and the poor, national sovereignty, and the symbolic dignity of the excluded. Populists transformed the stigmas that the elites used to despise the poor into sources of virtue. In the 1930s and 1940s, the elites of Buenos Aires used the term *cabecita negra* to refer to the internal migrants’ “dark skin and black hair.”<sup>3</sup> They racialized Perón’s followers as “black Peronists,” or as “greasers,” evoking not only the dirt and oil on workers’ overalls but all that is cheap or in bad taste. Juan and Eva Perón transformed the shirtless masses despised by the elites into the embodiment of the Argentinean nation. Eva Perón, for instance, used “the term *grasita* to affectionately refer to the poor.”<sup>4</sup>

Once in power populists like Perón, Velasco Ibarra or Vargas

simultaneously enacted policies to incorporate the excluded and policies that restricted their fundamental civil rights. Peronism, for example, expanded the franchise and voter turnout during his first government grew from 18 to 50 percent of the population. In 1951, under Perón, women won the right to vote.<sup>5</sup> “During Perón’s terms in office, the share of the national GDP represented by wages increased from 37 to 47 percent, while real wages increased by 40 percent between 1946 and 1949.”<sup>6</sup>

This inclusionary populist democracy was at odds with notions of accountability, the division of power and bypassed mechanisms of checks and balances.<sup>7</sup> Populists constructed politics as confrontations against enemies that needed to be destroyed. Perón said that when political adversaries became “enemies of the nation” they were no longer “gentlemen that one should fight fairly but snakes that one can kill in any way.”<sup>8</sup> The logic of populist confrontation denied democratic spaces for opponents who were constructed as enemies of the poor and the nation. Sectors of the opposition for their part were also anti-pluralist and denied populists of any democratic legitimacy. Historian Luis Alberto Romero wrote, “much of the opposition was concerned to eliminate Perón by whatever means necessary.”<sup>9</sup> Perón, like other populists, was deposed by a coup d’état in 1955. Velasco Ibarra who was president of Ecuador on five occasions was allowed to finish only one term in office.

### *Neoliberal Populism*

The military dictatorships of the Southern Cone dismantled the social and economic foundations of populism – import substitution industrialization, the industrial bourgeoisie, and working-class organizations. Yet they were unable to end with populism. With the return of democracy, a new generation of politicians such as Alberto Fujimori in Peru, Fernando Collor de Melo in Brazil, Carlos Menem in Argentina, and Abdalá Bucaram in Ecuador adopted the strategies, symbols, and discourses of their populist predecessors while implementing neoliberal economic policies that reduced the role of the state in the economy in favor of the free market.

Without characterizing these regimes as a variant of populism, Guillermo O’Donnell coined the term “delegative democracy” to refer to their particular blend of authoritarian and democratizing traits.<sup>10</sup> In O’Donnell’s view, delegative democracies do not respect civil rights and democratic procedures. They are based on the idea that whoever wins an election has a popular mandate to govern according to his or her interpretation of the people’s will and interests, constrained not by institutions but by raw

power relations. The president's policies are unconnected to promises made during the campaign or to the agreements made with organizations and associations who supported his or her election. According to O'Donnell, "the president is taken to be the embodiment of the nation and the main custodian and definer of its interests."<sup>11</sup> To "save the country" in the context of economic crises that constrain the institutionalization of democracy, he or she looks for neoliberal technocrats who can design and implement the required economic therapy. Because the government needs to rescue the nation from crisis, its actions do not always respect democratic institutions and procedures or compromises with the opposition.

### *Radical Populism*

When Hugo Chávez started a new wave of leftwing populism that also brought Evo Morales, and Rafael Correa to power, scholars split into those who interpreted these regimes as democratizing ruptures of exclusionary systems, and those who analyzed how these regimes displaced towards competitive authoritarianism. Ernesto Laclau wrote the most articulated defense of populism. He developed a formal theory of populism and its logic of articulation. Populism is a political practice that creates popular political identities. He contrasts the logics of difference and the logics of equivalence. The first presupposes that "any legitimate demand can be satisfied in a non-antagonistic, administrative way."<sup>12</sup> Unlike differences that could be resolved with an administrative logic on an individual basis, there are demands that could not be resolved individually and aggregate themselves forming an equivalential chain. Under the logic of equivalence "all the demands in spite of their differential character, tend to aggregate themselves" becoming "fighting demands" that cannot be resolved by the institutional system.<sup>13</sup> The social space splits into two camps: Power and the underdog.<sup>14</sup> The logic of populist articulation is anti-institutional; it is based on the construction of an enemy, and in an equivalential logic that leads to the rupture of the system because individual demands cannot be processed.

Recent examples of populist ruptures in Latin America are Venezuela under Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales's Bolivia, and Ecuador under Rafael Correa. These nations underwent major crises of political representation. Political parties were perceived as instruments of local and foreign elites that implemented neoliberal policies and thereby increased social inequality. Traditional political parties collapsed as political outsiders rose to power on platforms that promised to eliminate corrupt politicians, use constitution making to revamp all existing institutions, experiment with participatory

forms of democracy, abandoned neoliberal orthodoxy, and implement policies to redistribute income.

A second factor that led to populist ruptures was previous widespread popular resistance to neoliberalism. Examples of these popular insurrections against neoliberalism were the Venezuelan Caracazo – a massive insurrection against a hike in the price of gasoline that was brutally repressed where at least 400 people died in February of 1989–.<sup>15</sup> Massive movements of resistance against the three presidents of Ecuador that attempted to implement neoliberal structural reforms and were prevented from finishing their terms in office between 1997 and 2005.<sup>16</sup> The cycle of protest and political turmoil in Bolivia that resulted in the collapse of both the party system that was established in 1985 and the neoliberal economic model.<sup>17</sup>

A third factor that led to populist ruptures and to the rise of left-wing populism was the perception that politicians and neoliberal elites had surrendered national sovereignty to the US government, and supranational institutions like the International Monetary Fund. These left-wing leaders proposed a counterproject to US dominated neoliberal trade initiatives. The Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) aimed for a real Latin American and Caribbean integration based on social justice and solidarity among the peoples. Their goals were to stop US domination in the region by promoting Latin America unity and to create a multi-polar international system.

In a break with the neoliberalism that is based on the privatization of social services, the reduction of the size of the state, and decentralization, they enacted policies that strengthened the state and its role in the economy as the main engine of growth. They used the state to reduce inequalities, redistribute wealth, and to increase the consumption of the poor in the market. Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador were rich in hydrocarbons and reaped huge benefits from the commodity boom of the 2000s that sent oil and natural gas prices to record levels. As a result of enhanced revenues, public investment and social spending skyrocketed and poverty rates and, to a lesser extent, inequality, fell when the prices of commodities were high. World Bank figures indicated that the poverty rate fell from 55.4 percent of the population in 2002 to 28.5 percent in 2009 in Venezuela. Poverty in Ecuador was reduced from 37 percent in 2006 to 29 percent in 2011. In Bolivia, it dropped from 60 percent in 2006 to 50.6 percent in 2009, with an even greater decrease in levels of extreme poverty.<sup>18</sup>

Scholars that focused on democratic institutions and the relationship between the state and civil society draw different interpretations of the

effects of populism on democracy during the last wave of leftwing populism. Political scientists argued that in poorly institutionalized political systems, populists displaced democracy towards competitive authoritarianism.<sup>19</sup> Steven Levitsky and James Loxton argued that populism pushed weak democracies into competitive authoritarianism for three reasons: 1) populists were outsiders with no experience in the give and take of parliamentary politics; 2) they were elected with the mandate to refound existing political institutions, meaning the institutional framework of liberal democracy; and 3) confronted congress, the judiciary, and other institutions controlled by parties. In order to win elections populists skewed the electoral playing field. As incumbents, they had extraordinary advantages such as using the state media, selectively silencing the privately-owned media, harassing the opposition, controlling electoral tribunal boards and all instances of appeal, and using public funds to influence the election. When these presidents won elections, the voting moments were clean, but the electoral processes blatantly favored incumbents.<sup>20</sup>

Once in power presidents Chávez, Maduro, and Correa turned to discriminatory legalism, understood as the use of formal legal authority in discretionary ways.<sup>21</sup> In order to use laws discretionarily, populist presidents packed the courts and institutions of accountability with loyal followers. Chávez for example incrementally gained nearly absolute command of all institutions of the state. He had a supermajority in the legislature, and in 2004 put the highest judicial authority, the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, in the hands of loyal judges. Hundreds of lower court judges were fired and replaced by unconditional supporters.<sup>22</sup> The National Electoral Council was politicized. Even though it made sure that the moment of voting was clean and free from fraud, it did not enforce rules during the electoral process, routinely favoring Chávez and his candidates. Similarly, Correa put loyal followers in charge of the electoral power, the judicial system, the electoral board, and all the institutions of accountability such as the Ombudsman and the Comptroller.<sup>23</sup> As in Venezuela elections were free from fraud but took place in tilted electoral fields that favored Correa and his candidates.

Control and regulation of the media by the state was at the center of the populists' struggle for hegemony. Chávez led the path in enacting laws to control the privately-owned media. In 2000 the Organic Law of Telecommunication allowed the government to suspend or revoke broadcasting concessions to private outlets when it was "convenient for the interest of the nation." The Law of Social responsibility of 2004 banned "the broadcasting of material that could promote hatred and violence."<sup>24</sup> These laws were ambiguous at best, and the government could interpret their

content according to its interests. Correa's government emulated Chávez. In 2013 the National Assembly, as congress is named in Ecuador, controlled by Correa's party approved a communication law that created a board tasked with monitoring and regulating the content of what the media could publish.

To challenge the power of the private media, Chávez's took away radio and television frequencies from critics. The state became the main communicator, controlling 64 percent of television channels.<sup>25</sup> Correa followed Chávez in using discriminatory legalism to take away radio and television frequencies. He created a state media conglomerate that included the two most watched TV stations, as well as a several radio stations and newspapers.<sup>26</sup> Without a tradition of a public media, and in the hands of governments that did not differentiate their interests from those of the state, these outlets were put to the service of populist administrations.

Chávez and Correa enacted legislation that used ambiguous language to control, and regulate the work of NGOs. In 2010 the Law for the Defense of Political Sovereignty and National Self-Determination in Venezuela barred NGOs that defended political rights or monitored the performances of public bodies from receiving international assistance.<sup>27</sup> Three years later in 2013 Correa enacted Executive Decree 16. This decree gave the government authority to sanction NGOs for deviating from the objectives for which they were constituted, for engaging in politics, and for interfering in public policies in a way that contravenes internal and external security or disturbs public peace.<sup>28</sup>

In Venezuela and Ecuador, social movements were created from the top down to counteract the power of worker's unions, unionized teachers, students, and indigenous groups. Protest was criminalized in Venezuela and Ecuador. Union leaders and striking workers, even when they were sympathizers of Chávez, were charged with terrorism.<sup>29</sup> Hundreds of peasant and indigenous activists were accused of terrorism and sabotage in Ecuador. Laws were used discretionally to arrest and harass leading figures of the opposition in the Bolivarian nations. The most notorious cases occurred under Nicolás Maduro. Opposition leader Leopoldo López is facing time in jail on trump charges for inciting violence.

After reviewing the scholarship on the relationship between populism and democracy, we can conclude that it is important to differentiate populism as movements seeking power from populists in power. When out of power populists showed its inclusionary and potentially democratizing face. They demanded the inclusion of the excluded, politicized inequality, and gave symbolic dignity to those who are constantly humiliated by elites. Once in power, populists expanded political and socioeconomic rights, while

restricting civil rights and colonizing the public sphere and civil society. At the same time that they incorporated the excluded, they undermined the institutions and rights that would have allowed citizens to struggle for better forms of democracy. They restricted rights to freedom of association, and limited the rights to freedom of speech and communication. The logic of populism, as will be analyzed below, undermined pluralist debates, and reduced the complexity of democracy to a struggle between two antagonistic camps.

### THE LOGIC OF POPULISM

Populists politicized the indignities that the poor and nonwhite had to endure in daily life. It transformed the humiliations that those stigmatized as the rabble, and the uncultured have to endure daily into sources of dignity and even redemption. Paraphrasing Rancière “it consists in making what was unseen visible, in making what was audible as mere noise heard as speech.”<sup>30</sup> Those who are excluded and stigmatized with administrative categories such as “the poor,” “the informal,” and “the marginal” became “the people” conceived as the incarnation of all virtue. And those who constantly humiliate them become the hideous oligarchy.

Populist rhetoric assembles all social, economic, cultural, and ethnic differentiation and oppression into two irreconcilable poles: the people versus the oligarchy. The notion of “the people” incorporates the idea of antagonistic conflict between two groups, with a romantic view of the purity of the people. As a result, “the people” of populism has been imagined as an undifferentiated, unified, fixed, and homogenous entity.<sup>31</sup>

The populist leader is constructed as the personification of the people. Chávez, for example, professed to be the embodiment of the Venezuelan people. He is quoted boasting, “This is not about Hugo Chávez; this is about a ‘people.’ I represent, plainly, the voice and the heart of millions.”<sup>32</sup> On another occasion, Chávez commanded, “I demand absolute loyalty to me. I am not an individual, I am the people.”<sup>33</sup> Because populists use a moral and Manichean discourse “the people” does not face political adversaries but enemies. Hugo Chávez, for example, “constantly separates the ‘people,’ the ‘true’ patriots, from the ‘oligarchy,’ those self-serving elites who work against the homeland. During the general strike called by the opposition, Chavez declared, “this is not about the pro-Chavez against the anti-Chavez . . . but . . . the patriots against the enemies of the homeland.”<sup>34</sup> Different from adversaries who fight according to a shared set of rules, and whose positions could be accepted, enemies represent a threat that must be eradicated.

Once in power populists fulfilled their promises to include the poor politically, economically, and culturally. Yet these processes of inclusion led to autocratic regimes because the logic of populist confrontation transformed democratic rivals into enemies. Populists polarized politics as existential struggles between the people and the nation embodied in their leadership, against anti-national and anti-popular oligarchic enemies. They closed institutional spaces for the opposition. Without institutional channels to process conflicts, in conditions of profound polarization, and when elites and even the middle class felt that their class and status privileges were under attack, radical sectors of the opposition invited the military to resolve civilian problems.

Populists constructed political rivals as enemies but did not actualize their physical elimination, and did not use mass terror and disappearances to create a homogenous and uncorrupted national community. The foundational moment of populism rests in winning open and free elections considered as the only expression of the popular will. Classical populists like Juan Perón and Velasco Ibarra fought against electoral fraud, expanded the franchise, and incorporated the excluded to the political community. Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales, and Rafael Correa used ballots to displace political elites. Venezuelans voted in 16 elections between 1999 and 2012, Bolivians in 9 between 2005 and 2016, and Ecuadorians in 6 between 2006 and 2014. Constantly traveling the election trail these presidents ruled as if they were in permanent political campaigns. They used populist discourse and strategies to manufacture rivals into enemies of the people and the homeland while transforming elections into plebiscites on their personas – the embodiment of the revolutionary future, pitted against the defenders of the old regime.

Even though their legitimacy was grounded in winning elections, populists had hard times accepting that they could lose popular elections. If the people are always imagined to be right, and thus having one unified voice and will, it is “morally impossible” that they could vote for those constructed as the enemies of the people.<sup>35</sup> In order to win elections Chávez and Correa, for example, skewed the electoral playing field. As incumbents, they had extraordinary advantages such as using the state media, selectively silencing the privately-owned media, harassing the opposition, controlling electoral boards and all instances of appeal, and using public funds to influence the election. When these presidents won elections, the voting moments were relatively clean, but the electoral processes blatantly favored incumbents.

John Keane writes that “enforcing the distinction between holding and leaving office is a key indicator of whether or not a form of government could be considered democratic.”<sup>36</sup> Populist leaders like Perón or Chávez did

not see themselves as ordinary presidents elected for limited terms in office. On the contrary, they perceived themselves as leading the refoundation of their republics. Perón boasted of securing sixty years of Peronist power,<sup>37</sup> and only cancer prevented Chávez from becoming Venezuela's permanently elected president for life. Populists see the presidency as a possession that should remain in their hands until fulfilling the liberation of their people. Yet populists claim legitimacy through winning elections that they could conceivably lose and thus be bound by electoral results.<sup>38</sup> Populism hence grounds its legitimacy in the democratic precept of winning elections, and in the autocratic view of power as a possession of the leader. The contradiction between governing as if they were the embodiment of the people, and asking the people to approve of their presidencies in open elections that they could lose explain their ambiguities toward democratic institutions and practices. They honored elections free of fraud, but could not accept pluralism and assumed that since they are the embodiment of the people, the people would only vote for them. Populists closed spaces to rivals that were manufactured as conspiratorial and antinational enemies that were attempting to regain power to reinstate the old regime. Populism thus simultaneously accepts democracy and subverts it to remain in power until liberating the people.

#### WHAT CAN OTHER WORLD REGIONS LEARN FROM LATIN AMERICAN POPULISM?

Populism is not a pathology, it is part of democracy.<sup>39</sup> Populists politicize exclusions, point to the malfunctions of democracies, and demand for better forms of democratic representation and participation. The populist critique of existing democracies cannot be ignored or dismissed. It is pointless to defend existing democracies without taking into consideration the populist critique.

Populism will be more inclusionary when it emerges in exclusionary political systems. Thaksin Shinawatra included the rural poor, Bangkok taxi drivers, and the urban informal sector. His economic policies "were successful in opening up material inclusion – both in terms of resources and finances – to previously excluded groups in society... particularly those of often ignored rural areas."<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Michael Sata in Zambia aimed to rectify the economic marginalization of the majorities who made a living in the informal sector of the economy while also appealing to previously marginalized ethnolinguistic groups like the Bembas.<sup>41</sup> These varieties of inclusionary populism had ambiguous effects on democracy. Sata used elections as plebiscites on his rule, and was antipluralist even jailing Hakainde

Hichilema, the leader of an opposition party on the dubious grounds that he defamed the president.<sup>42</sup> Thaksin attacked the independent media, bullied nongovernmental organizations, and his politics of polarization and closure of democratic spaces for the opposition led to coups against him in 2006 and his sister Yingluck in 2014.

Neoliberal and radical populism in Latin America were revolts against political elites. Traditional parties were portrayed as “a closed, self-interested, and self-reproducing governing caste insulated from popular needs and concerns.”<sup>43</sup> Fujimori and radical populists attacked and displaced parties and created new political systems and institutions. Fujimori abolished democracy with a coup that closed congress and allowed him to reorganize the judiciary. Chávez, Morales, and Correa used democratic practices like elections and the courts to concentrate power in the executive, to control civil society and the public sphere. Their systematic attacks on rights and civil liberties, the curtailment of institutions of accountability, and the tilting of the electoral playing field to favor incumbents led to the displacement of democracy towards authoritarianism.<sup>44</sup>

Populists in Europe, the U.S. and Australia attacked political elites and parties. Rightwing variants of populism in Europe and the United States politicize fears of immigration, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism. Leftwing parties like Syriza in Greece or Podemos in Spain politicized the exclusions of neoliberalism but are not xenophobic. Whereas leftwing variants promise better forms of democracy, rightwing variants use nativism and xenophobia to appeal to a common past from which immigrants and nonwhites do not belong.

Populists were elected in coalition governments in Italy, and Viktor Orbán has ruled Hungary since 2010. Like other populists, Orbán confronted NGOs, the privately-owned media, packed the state with cronies, and displaced democracy to “the grey zone between liberal democracy and fully blown authoritarianism.”<sup>45</sup> It could be expected that stronger and more consolidated institutions and civil societies could shield nations like the United States from populist attacks to the institutional framework of democracy. Yet, even if Donald Trump does not displace democracy towards authoritarianism, he has already damaged the inclusive democratic public sphere. Hate speech and the denigration of minorities are replacing the politics of cultural recognition and tolerance built by the struggles of feminists and anti-racists social movements since the 1960s.<sup>46</sup>

Laclau and his followers argue that given the inevitability of populist revolts to the marginalization of citizens from politics, the task of the left is to construct popular democratic subjects. Otherwise rightwing populist

would give expression to popular grievances,<sup>47</sup> and working-class politics would be expressed through nationalist and xenophobic languages.<sup>48</sup> They sustain that with the global rise of neoliberalism understood as a rational and scientific mode of governance, public debate on the political economy was closed and replaced by the imposition of the criteria of experts. When all parties accepted neoliberalism and the rule of technocrats, citizens could not choose between alternatives. Politics was reduced to an administrative enterprise.<sup>49</sup> Democracy became depoliticized and citizens were transformed into consumers. Choosing between parties, as Chantal Mouffe sarcastically said, became like selecting Coke over Pepsi.<sup>50</sup>

Populism, they argue, entails the renaissance of politics. It is a revolt against technocratic reasoning, the surrendering of national sovereignty to supranational institutions, and of the popular will to neoliberal political elites. Instead of allowing the right to politicize fears to migration and multiculturalism, they argue for the necessity of leftist variants of populism. Latin America's experience with populist in power should give words of caution to praises of leftwing populism. Whereas Laclau was right in arguing that populism politicized neoliberal administrative orders, populist Schmittan views of the political are dangerous because they are anti-pluralist, and in the end antidemocratic. Populism attacks the institutions that are "an indispensable bulwark against political despotism."<sup>51</sup> Constitutionalism, the separation of powers, freedom of speech, assembly, and the press are necessary to the politics of participatory democracy, to strengthen the public sphere, and to allow independent social movements to push for their democratizing demands. Populists in power, even those that promised more democracy and the end of neoliberalism, targeted precisely the constitutional

#### NOTES

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# Against Foreign Capital?: The Populist Temptation in Tanzania

by Alexander B. Makulilo

## INTRODUCTION

Populism has always been a contested concept. However, its core message across definitions is simply in defense of the “common people” who are often regarded as marginalized. Hence, as a movement, it claims to seek for “inclusion.” In this regard, its core assumption is just doing away with elites and establishes a more direct democracy thereby reducing inequality and exclusion.<sup>1</sup> As a leader, a populist is associated with “a strongly personalistic leadership style; outsiderism, or the claim that the new leader does not originate from among the existing political class; an anti-system, anti-institutions and anti-organisations rhetoric, often targeting political parties and political corruption; a call for restoring ‘the power of the people.’”<sup>2</sup> This indicates that an individual leader becomes the center of politics in a polity thereby undermining political institutions. This, in turn, suggests “decisionism” and lack of predictability in the political system. As such, a populist leader tends to free himself from any kind of institutional control hence promoting institutional decay. As such, populism is “anti-party, anti-elite, anti-establishment, anti-political.” Indeed, populists are hostile to the rich, to finance capital, and to big corporations.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, its egalitarianism is questionable since populism mobilizes support based on a specific constituency. Given that lines of cleavage vary from polity to polity, it is common therefore to find that populism manifests itself in different forms. It can be civilian or military, progressive

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or regressive, left or right, rural or urban, ethno-religious or secular, indigenous or foreigners, youths or elders, bourgeois-proletariat or peasant based, electoral or insurrectional.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the notion of “the power of the people” is problematic. It implies homogeneity and unanimity. Practically, however, societies are heterogeneous. In Africa where the colonial strategy of divide and rule remained an institution of ruling since the 1880s and largely remained in place for post-independent leaders, societies are highly fragile. The problems of ethnicity, abject poverty, corruption, regionalism to mention just a few are common on the continent. And therefore the “people” can be “some people.” As can be noted, populism is not always a natural phenomenon like “charisma.” It is a deliberate project created to symbolize someone as unique in leading the population. Normally, it is achieved through the use of media as a tool of propaganda. Indeed, in times of misfortune such as economic crises, poverty, and conflicts, media tend to portray populists as saviors of a country. Though they enjoy legitimacy, the same is not founded on organic values between the ruler and the ruled. Consequently, such legitimacy is only short-termism. In some cases and especially in poor societies, populism is attained by the use of corruption and patronage. It should be understood that in some instances, populists tend to attack foreigners and foreign capital to camouflage their underperformance. For example, in 1972, Idi Amin of Uganda expelled Asians on the ground that they were exploiting Ugandans. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe has constantly used the land issue to label Britain and the United States of America as enemies of Zimbabweans. This paper examines socialist populism and its relation to foreign capital. I argue that *Ujamaa*, a form of socialism, has been foundational to the rise and development of populism in Tanzania. Socialist populism has, in turn, acted against foreign capital. Despite the fact that Tanzania adopted liberal policies since the 1980s, there is still a strong sense of nostalgia for *Ujamaa* thereby acting as a normative basis for populist actions against foreign capital in contemporary times. The paper is divided into four main sections. Section one covers the introduction. This is followed by the theoretical premise of anti-foreign capital. The third section covers the rise and development of socialist populism in Tanzania. The last part provides a conclusion.

#### ANTI-FOREIGN CAPITAL: THE CORE PREMISE

The theoretical foundation of populism towards anti-foreign capital rests essentially on dependency theory school of thought. Rooted in neo-Marxist political theory, dependency theory strategically adopts a historical

perspective in order to explain unequal relations between Africa and the rest of the world over time. As a departure from traditional Marxism which focuses on factors of production such as means of labor, productive forces and relations for production, dependency pays much attention to the exchange variables like trading systems and investment flows between countries. Backed with its arch proponents like Andre Gunder Frank (1969), Walter Rodney (1972), Amin Samir (1972), Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1977), Gabriel Palma (1978), Issa Shivji (2006), Daniel Offiong (1982) and Yash Tandon (1979), dependency theory asserts that political and economic failures in Third World countries and particularly Africa are by and large a function of historical phenomena. In a more precise way, Offiong argues that historical situations of dependency have conditioned contemporary underdevelopment in Africa and other underdeveloped societies.<sup>5</sup> Thus, underdevelopment is not an original state. The beginnings of African underdevelopment can be traced to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the abandoning of that trade in favor of “legitimate trade” and the eventual partition of Africa. In other words, the basis of African underdevelopment can be found in the slave trade, colonialism, and neo-colonialism.

Viewed from the above perspective, dependency is a “conditioning situation” whereby a certain group of countries have their economies and political systems conditioned by the development and expansion of other economies to which the former is subject. Attesting to this position, Tandon says that in the imperialist epoch proper, that is 1880s, this expansion typically took the form of export of capital from the Western capitalist countries to the less developed parts of the world.<sup>6</sup> Through this process, capital has brought all production and marketing in the colonies and semi-colonies under the sway of highly centralized monopoly of finance capital. Out of that monopoly, there has arisen an international financial oligarchy in the imperialist countries, which has continued to exploit and oppress the peoples in the colonies, semi-colonies and now in the neo-colonies, no matter what political forms exist in these countries. Admittedly, this Western ability to subordinate the rest of the world did not appear overnight. It took them centuries to develop superior technology with which such subordination was gradually made possible. Rodney acknowledges this fact when he sums up that, at the 15<sup>th</sup> century the level of economic development between Africa and Europe was almost the same.<sup>7</sup> However, by the second half of the same century Europeans had developed superiority over maritime technology which enabled them to gain control of all the world’s waterways starting with the western Mediterranean and the Atlantic coast of North Africa and later on the Indian Ocean. Being the first in the world to move from feudalism to

capitalism, Europeans, therefore, stood at the control of scientific knowledge of this universe. Ever since, Western countries have come to dominate the rest of the world politically, economically and socially. Arguably, the IMF/World Bank conditionalities and aid from “donor” countries are part and parcel of the mechanisms by which the rest of the world is dominated.

The fact that the African continent is still dominated by Western countries cannot honestly be disputed. Robert Kappel contends that “from an international perspective, Africa as a whole is being increasingly marginalized. Most Africans have a very low per capita income and the continent is now of only minor importance in international trade, except in regard to oil and some foodstuffs.”<sup>8</sup> This means that the continent is unable to compete with the giant industrialized countries. Most exports from Africa to Europe are essentially raw materials rather than finished-goods which could otherwise add utility.

Dependency, just like any other theory has its weaknesses. By over-emphasizing on the asymmetrical relations and external factors, the theory is deprived of its analytical power to understand political and economic processes within Africa. While no one can dispute a historical account when analyzing Africa’s development, that should not be taken as an alpha-and-omega explanation. Mayer et al. posit that the logical predictions from dependency theory do not conform to the real world.<sup>9</sup> The theory maintains that underdevelopment was created by the exploitative relationship between the Third World and the West. Surprisingly, those Third World nations that had the closest and most extensive relationships with the West should be the most underdeveloped, while conversely, those few Third World nations that have had minimal contact with the West should be the most developed. In fact, the opposite is closer to reality. Those nations which were never colonized and had minimal contacts with the West, such as Ethiopia and Liberia, are not relatively better off. But nations like India and Hong Kong benefited from a technological transformation from contact with the West. It is evident that there is an overgrowing tendency to wholly blame external forces for Africa’s underdevelopment situation. This would mean that internally Africa has no challenges that bar the continent from taking off.<sup>10</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, in my view this is a misleading and dangerous account. In the long run, it may, for example, result in irresponsible and unaccountable leadership.<sup>11</sup> One can ask, what is so foreign when public media fail to act impartially during a given election? I could quickly respond by submitting that the cause of this problem can either be in the designing of the rules of the political game or simply one has failed to act professionally and ethically. In either case, the leadership is responsible. This tells us that

being under colonialism should not be taken for granted to block domestic initiatives towards development and democracy. Secondly, are there no opportunities to make a difference? If a man is believed to be an agent of political action and change, why has this situation persisted for centuries without significant development?<sup>12</sup>

Responding to the above puzzle, Rodney suggests that Africa's development is only possible with a radical break with the international capitalist system which has been the principal agency of underdevelopment of Africa over the last five centuries.<sup>13</sup> This recommendation is attractive, yet its feasibility is far from reality. Important to note is the fact that most budgets of African countries are funded within the range of thirty to fifty percent by Western countries and their related financial institutions. Apparently, this assistance de-radicalizes efforts to realize such a breakaway. Going by Rodney's solution, it would, therefore, be seen that it is until the relationship between Africa and the capitalist world is cut that democracy could be a reality in Africa. However, Frederick List provides six ways of integrating into global capitalism based on initial protectionism.<sup>14,15</sup> They include that: (a) Regulation of import duties and subsidies is one, but not the only, means of government intervention in favour of industrialization; (b) protection of manufacturing products should be on a selective and discriminatory rather than a universal basis; (c) protectionism should not only be temporary, but also the level of protection should not be excessive to eliminate competition from abroad, or too low to avoid exposing the industry concerned to the danger of foreign competition; (d) there is no general rule to determine the level of protectionism. Everything depends on the circumstances and the relations between the less and the more advanced country; (e) duties should not be imposed on imports of raw materials; and (f) absolute privilege should be provided "neither for the benefit of producers nor for the detriment of consumers" by leaving the protected industry in the hands of monopolists.

From the perspective of dependency theorists, Africa is a continent arising from a colonial setting. Around the 1880s, it was subjected to colonialism mostly by Western European imperialism.<sup>16</sup> Since then, the continent was appended to metropolitan capitalism. Thus, one clear manifestation of populism in Africa and Tanzania, in particular, is anti-Westernism. This is because Africa was historically subjected to all forms of exploitation and de-humanization during the slave and colonial eras. Under the current era of globalization, it is even more risky for populists to approve of the West. Usually, populists in the continent would tend to disapprove of the West during electoral campaigns but suddenly bow down for assistance to run their respective countries once in power. It has to be noted that

every political system is potentially subject to populism. However, in most developed democracies, where institutions are relatively strong, populists are limited. In contrast, in underdeveloped societies, where institutions are usually weak, populists have adequate power to play their politics. In Africa, institutions are still weak thereby creating a potential environment for populism.

#### THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF POPULISM IN TANZANIA

Tanganyika gained its independence on December 9, 1961 from British colonialism. At that particular time, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) was the ruling party which formed the government. In 1962 Tanzania became a republic. This political development was carried out to make Tanzania a “total” independent state. Unlike in 1961, where the Queen of England was considered the head of Tanganyika (represented by the governor), and the prime minister was the head of government, under the republic, the Queen ceased to be the head of the state. The president at that time became the head of state, government, and commander-in-chief of all armed forces. It should be noted that this was the first major tendency towards power concentration and centralization by the post-independent government. The reasons as to why this move was undertaken is to be found with the legitimacy crisis and the crisis of accumulation.<sup>17,18,19</sup>

On April 26th, 1964 Tanganyika and Zanzibar united to form the United Republic of Tanzania (URT). It was not until 10 July 1965, the URT officially became a one-party state. The interim Constitution of 1965 recognized Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and Afro Shiraz Party (ASP) in Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar respectively. In 1967, *Ujamaa*, a form of socialism through the Arusha Declaration was introduced. This brought in the nationalization of private companies, and the command economy was established.

On February 5, 1977, TANU and ASP merged to form CCM. It has to be stated that between the 1970s and 1980s, Tanzania experienced economic crises triggered by factors like the oil crisis of 1973, the Kagera War 1978/1979 between Tanzania and Uganda, the collapse of the East African Union in 1977, and persistent drought conditions. To address this crisis the country approached the IMF/WB and the international donor community. The IFIs initiated the Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) packages which demanded political and economic liberalization as well as the devaluation of currency among other things. This phenomenon was compounded with the collapse of the socialist bloc in 1989, which denied assistance to many

countries that relied on it. It was against this background that CCM and its government set off on the road to a multiparty system. On 1 July 1992, the URT officially adopted a multiparty system. Likewise, the government had since the 1980s implemented a liberalized economy based on market forces. In this section, therefore, the rise and development of populism in relation to foreign capital are discussed under three main phases: Socialist populism, liberalization and the period since 2015.

## SOCIALIST POPULISM

Africans have at all the times been opposed to any form of domination. It was especially so after World War II in 1945 that the scale and scope of such resistances went beyond demands for independence. In a way, the struggle was against foreign domination which for centuries played the politics of demobilization significantly. For the first time, Africa witnessed the rise of populist leaders who tried to mobilize the masses against the colonial state. By then, it was easier for political parties to identify the colonial masters as the source of all problems in Africa, hence becoming anti-colonial regimes. During the struggle for independence, therefore, some leaders were perceived as “anti-colonial, anti-political and anti-elites.” In Tanzania, Julius Nyerere was so popular and charismatic, his political party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), won all the seats during the pre-independence elections. There were two critical issues that were to be addressed by the post-independence government namely unity and development. Nyerere himself once remarked:

*New nations like Tanganyika get their independence after a sustained struggle against colonialism. This is a nationalist struggle which unites all the people in the country and does not leave room for differences; and the nationalist movements after achieving independence, form the independent governments of their countries. But immediately after its formation, the new government is faced with a major task that of the economic development of the country and the general uplifting of the standard of living of all the people, through eliminations of poverty, ignorance, and disease. In order for this objective to be successfully accomplished there is as much need for unity as was required during the struggle for independence. Similarly, therefore, there is no room for differences.<sup>20</sup>*

However, the year 1967 is considered a critical juncture of Tanzania's development. In that year Tanzania adopted *Ujamaa*, a form of socialism through the Arusha Declaration.<sup>21,22</sup> Under *Ujamaa* and particularly through the Arusha Declaration of 1967, Tanzania nationalized all major means of life, hence the introduction of the state-owned economy. As such, Nyerere

was totally against the introduction of privatization of the economy as this would have horrific consequences for the poor who were the majority in the country. Hence, the grand goal of *Ujamaa* was to introduce a society which believed in freedom, equality, and unity. Nyerere put it that *Ujamaa* was founded on a philosophy of development that was based on three essentials – freedom, equality, and unity.<sup>23</sup> *Ujamaa* philosophy was seen as central to the attainment of a self-reliant socialist nation.<sup>24</sup>

The first sectors to be nationalized were the banks and industries. By the end of 1967, the “commanding heights” of the economy had come under the direct control of the state. As a reaction, three large British banks – Barclays, Standard, and National and Grindleys – adopted a strategy of noncooperation aimed at ensuring that public sector banking in Tanzania failed. Rapid withdrawal of personnel, instructions to staff to “work to rule” and highly polemical statements apparently designed to destroy international confidence in Tanzania’s export economy, followed in quick succession. Their concern was to prevent the spread of bank nationalizations in Africa – a spread they justifiably feared would be inevitable if Tanzania’s nationalized public sector banking turned out to be a success.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the policy of nationalization many of the nationalized corporations went into partnership with a number of foreign firms, some of which were the original owners of the companies that had been nationalized. It is partly for this reason that some commentators argued at the time, that in spite of the nationalizations, control over Tanzania’s most important decisions was still in the hands of foreigners.<sup>26, 27</sup> Shivji aptly holds that the process of nationalization neither really gave the government complete control over the “commanding heights” of the economy nor did it successfully exclude the continued penetration of foreign capital into Tanzania’s political economy.<sup>28</sup> Certainly, Nyerere once remarked “It seems that independence of the former colonies has suited the interests of the industrial world for bigger profits at less cost. Independence made it cheaper for them to exploit us. We became neo-colonies. Some African leaders did not realize it. In fact, many argued against Kwame (Nkrumah)’s idea of neo-colonialism.”<sup>29</sup>

*Ujamaa* was therefore geared to be anti-foreign capital since this was interpreted as foreign exploitation. Indeed, it was inward looking in perspective. It is thus argued that *Ujamaa* was the populism of the first post-independence president (Julius K. Nyerere) of Tanganyika and later Tanzania. This version of populism was overwhelmingly agrarian and even anti-industrial.<sup>30</sup> Being rural in nature, *Ujamaa* was implemented through among other means, villagization. The policy led to creation of “*Ujamaa*” villages where people were persuaded to live together in communes. The rationale behind

“*Ujamaa*” villages was to make sure that the benefits from agricultural development could be shared communally.<sup>31</sup> By 1974 there were 2.5 million people living in 5000 villages. This number increased to 13 million people by 1976.<sup>32</sup> Notwithstanding, things did not turn out as planned. Instead, productivity fell in relation to population growth. For example, agricultural output increased only by 2.7 percent between 1967 and 1973.<sup>33</sup> The government even resorted to the importation of food. Consequently, government expenditure leapfrogged. For example, in 1973 Tanzania spent 27 million Tshs in foreign exchange while in 1974 and 1975, 733 million Tshs and 766 million Tshs were simultaneously spent to import food. More particularly, about 25,000 tons of maize in 1973 and 483,000 tons in 1974 was imported.<sup>34,35</sup>

It is not a secret that *Ujamaa* failed. The socialist period encouraged a tenfold expansion of the number of parastatals, from 42 in 1967 to 425 in 1984, which captured considerable rents and stifled incentives for innovation and entrepreneurship. Although by 1993, public enterprises accounted for about 25% of non-agricultural employment, they were highly inefficient and only contributed to 13% of GDP.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the villagization project was not successful. Notwithstanding, it was due to his populism that Nyerere remained head of the state and government from 1961 to 1985 when he decided to resign from active politics. It is said that one of the reasons to explain this phenomenon was the economic crisis of the 1970s which needed him to appeal to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank for assistance.

#### FROM SOCIALIST POPULISM TO LIBERALISM

After independence, most African leaders opted for strong centralized states.<sup>37</sup> It was believed that such states would hasten development. The dual impact for this was simply concentration and centralization of power into a single hand. However, the outcome of centralization was a failure in the 1980s. National governments tried to restructure economies, but it did not work out. This led them to appeal to Western powers for some help. The package of this assistance is commonly known as the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs). SAPs were given by the IMF and the World Bank. Associated with SAPs were the mandatory requirements by recipient countries to introduce economic as well as political liberalization.<sup>38</sup> African countries had no choice. However, instead of providing relief, SAPs deepened crises.<sup>39</sup> Arguably, SAPs created fertile grounds for the emergence of populism. In Zambia, for example, the situation was so critical that riots on basic needs

like foods took place.

In Tanzania, the period from 1985 to 2015 marks clearly a shift from *Ujamaa* to liberalism. Under this period, all the three presidents Ali Hassan Mwinyi (1985-1995), Benjamini Mkapa (1995-2005), Jakaya Kikwete (2005-2015) supported neo-liberalism mainly in favor of foreign capital. It was Mwinyi who through the Zanzibar Declaration of 1991 officially abandoned socialism in favor of the market-led economy. He indeed opened up the country for foreign capital by accepting the SAPs and IMF/WB conditionalities. The state, therefore, ceased to have a monopoly over the economy. He is popularly remembered as *Mr. Ruksa i.e. laissez-faire*. On the other hand, Mkapa was the one who actually consolidated this phase by adopting several policies and institutions to privatize the public parastatals. He initiated several investment regimes such as the National Investment Promotion Policy of 1996 which opened almost all sectors to foreign and private participation. The Tanzania Investment Act of 1997 is the backbone of the legal investment regime by making provisions related to the establishment of enterprises, investment benefits and guarantees, transfer of capital profits, guarantees against expropriation, dispute settlement, and employment of foreign staff. The 1997 Act also establishes the Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC) as a “one-stop” office for investors. TIC provides information about land acquisition, taxes, and investment incentives in priority sectors, and spearheads investment promotion and facilitation efforts in the country. Under Mkapa, the country was hailed for making positive progress to the extent that Tanzania qualified to benefit from the Millennium Challenge Account. Kikwete further made sure that a conducive environment was in place to ensure smooth implementation of capital. Capital was attracted and foreign countries were highly welcomed. Under him, the Tanzania’s foreign economic diplomacy was highly pursued. It has to be understood that after liberalization foreign direct investment (FDI) was minimal prior to 1992 but has rapidly increased since then. After remaining below \$200 million a year throughout the 1990s, net FDI inflows have especially accelerated since 2000, standing at \$1 billion by 2011.<sup>40</sup> Over 1990-2011, the leading source of FDI was the United Kingdom, followed by India and Kenya.<sup>41</sup>

It should be noted that of the three former presidents, Kikwete was regarded as a populist.<sup>42</sup> However, his populism unlike that of Nyerere was not ideological. It was essentially meant for political mobilization during elections. The populism of Kikwete has no long history. In 1995, Kikwete unsuccessfully aspired for the presidential post within his party. It is said that Mwalimu Julius Nyerere had Benjamin Mkapa as his favorite candidate. It was towards the end of the second term of Mkapa in 2005 that Kikwete

started to rebuild himself as a “man of the people.” To achieve that he and his colleagues in the party initiated a working network of support popularly known as “*mtandao*.” Acting like a tsunami, the “*mtandao*” used every means to portray Kikwete as the people’s choice. It used a lot of money to mobilize support from all walks of life particularly the youths. In the first place, Kikwete was symbolized as a “youth candidate.” This campaign went hand in hand with the excessive use of media and overambitious promises. This was the first time in the history of the country where under the multiparty system, the president was able to get elected by 80.28 percent of the popular votes.<sup>43</sup> Towards 2005, Kikwete’s populism gained momentum as media and polls described him as the most trusted leader in the government. His slogan of “*Maisha Bora kwa kila Mtanzania*” literally meaning “Better life for every Tanzanian” and “*Ari Mpya, Nguvu Mpya na Kasi Mpya*” literally meaning “New Zeal, New Vigour and New Speed” (see Nyang’oro, 2011) were among other aspects that made his populism real.<sup>44</sup> To be sure, one of his overambitious plans was on agriculture and employment of the youths. With regards to promises and policies, Kikwete used agriculture, which is regarded as the backbone of Tanzania’s economy. This is because about 80 percent of the population live in rural villages and about 90 percent of them depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Yet, agriculture contributes about 30 percent of the total GDP of Tanzania’s economy. Therefore, in the 2005 elections, Kikwete and his party pledged that for the economy to grow to 10 percent it, required the agricultural sector to grow to least 20 percent by the year 2010. Hence, Kikwete came up with his innovation, the “Green Revolution.” Associated with this, he also promised to create 1 million new jobs, especially for the youth. The USAID report on democracy and governance assessment of Tanzania provides an insightful observation about Kikwete’s populism:

*Kikwete’s victory was due first and foremost to his personal charisma, youthful looks, and charm. A second important factor was his superior campaign organization (network, or mtandao) as it has come to be known. He started organizing soon after he lost the CCM presidential nomination to Benjamin Mkapa in 1995. Over a 10-year period, he amassed many friends and allies, money, and political capital, all of which came to his aid in 2005. Third, he also developed very clear messages captured by his lead slogan “New Zeal, New Vigor, New Speed” (which sounds much better in Swahili) and (ii) “Better Life for All is Possible.” He promised everything to everybody—a fact which has come to haunt him in recent years.*<sup>45</sup>

The government generally has a favorable attitude toward foreign direct investment and has had success in attracting FDI historically. The 2015

World Investment Report of UN Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) reported that Tanzania attracted \$2.142 billion of FDI inflows in 2014, a 14.5 percent increase from the previous year, accumulating FDI stock of \$14.86 billion, the highest in the East Africa region.<sup>46</sup> Notwithstanding, in 2009 the Netherlands suspended aid to Tanzania over the move by the government to deny a Dutch investor named Roland De Jong more forest land for harvesting 'raw materials.' The Dutch Embassy in Dar es Salaam said the aid in question was €30 million in direct support for the country's 2009/10 (July-June) fiscal budget. The then Natural Resources and Tourism Minister, Shamsa Mwangunga, explained that her ministry had allocated up to 75% of the total raw material available in Shume Forest Plantation to Tembo Chipboards Ltd, more than enough to run the project profitably. She maintained that all countries have their own laws and procedures. She puts, "The country very much needs investors for its development and we have high regard for them, but they have to respect us."<sup>47</sup>

#### SINCE 2015 - THE RETURN OF POPULISM?

The new government under this phase came to power after the 2015 general elections. This election, unlike all the previous ones since the return of multi-party system, was very competitive. President John Magufuli won this election by 57 percent of the popular vote. Since he came into power, President Magufuli has managed, first of all to work against the elites – the bureaucratic, political, and business elites. Among the measures he has been able to take include, cutting down expenditures especially after reducing foreign trips by about 96 percent for the civil servants and politicians in his government as well as banning allowances for meetings and workshops for the same. Previously, civil servants and politicians earned a lot of money out of allowances paid for meetings and foreign trips. In a way, this measure has denied resources that such elites used to enjoy. Members of Parliament and civil servants have since Magufuli's government came into power lamented this kind of starvation. Moreover, President Magufuli has banned public political rallies. He ordered that politics has to stop until the next elections in 2020.

Again, President Magufuli has been able to fight against corruption and institute ethics within the civil service. Some civil servants occupying senior positions have been fired owing to underperformance or for going against the leadership's ethics. This, in turn, has raised fear among those who serve under President Magufuli. For example, President Magufuli fired the Chief Anti-Corruption officer immediately after he came into power; he also

fired about five Permanent Secretaries; he also fired two ministers as well as one regional commissioner. Moreover, President Magufuli has been able to ensure that all business which is conducted in Tanzania is properly registered and pay the required taxes. This, in turn, has frustrated the business elites who used to enrich themselves using illegal means. He has strengthened mechanisms to monitor the port and Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) to ensure effective revenue collections.

An opinion poll survey published by Twaweza in September 2016 found the president had the approval of 96 percent of Tanzanian citizens, higher than any approval rating for any African head of state ever reported by Afrobarometer, an Africa-wide opinion polling initiative. The same survey found high levels of support for the president's actions against corrupt public officials, against ghost workers, and for the removal of school fees. The president has positioned himself as being on the side of the ordinary citizens, taking on big business, corruption, and waste, and his actions and slogans have captured the public imagination.

With regards to foreign capital, President Magufuli's government employs the same investment regime. During his inaugural speech of Tanzania's Parliament, President Magufuli remarked that:

*I understand that there are many people who now want to come and invest in Tanzania, there were some others even in previous years, but there are times when we – including us leaders by cooperating with scrupulous traders – have sabotaged plans and desire of these investors in their endeavors. Even though they had the hope and readiness to invest in Tanzania we put stumbling blocks on their way and fought them thus forcing them to go and invest in other neighboring countries. For our part in the Fifth Phase Government, we will strive and remove all these disturbance and red tape and work harder to mobilize both domestic and foreign investors to build industries in our country... We will continue and nurture cooperation and friendship with our Western, Far East and Middle Eastern friends, and we will continue furthering relationship for the purpose of protecting the interests of our people... We will do so also through the international cooperation by furthering our relationship with the United Nations (UN) and its agencies, the Commonwealth Community, World Bank (WB); the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the African Development Bank.<sup>48</sup>*

Notwithstanding the same investment regime, the fifth phase government has acted more like it is heading towards socialist populism. Recently, the President imposed a surprise export ban on gold and copper concentrate thereby forcing several Australian mining firms to seek urgent assurances about the future of their operations in the African nation. The export ban is seen by some as the latest manifestation of a populist drive

affecting politics worldwide, amid a backlash to globalization most obviously characterized by Donald Trump's rise to the White House.<sup>49</sup> The President's main concern is that Tanzanians are not benefiting from their own resources. He, therefore, formed a special committee of experts to deeply investigate how much gold and copper has been shipped abroad since 1998. During a swearing event of the members of the committee on 11 April 2017, the President said, "Make a follow-up on the number of containers that have been shipped from our country starting from 1998, and find out if these containers had gold, silver or copper and establish how many tonnes were exported every month."<sup>50</sup>

This phenomenon has shocked the foreign investors. US investors have always commented that while the business climate has generally improved over the past decade, in certain sectors the legacy of socialist attitudes have not fully dissipated, sometimes resulting in suspicion of foreign investors and slow decision making.<sup>51</sup> *Ujamaa* has been retained in the country's constitution. Principally, *Ujamaa* is anti-neo-liberalism. It is likely that in times of conflicts, the government may use the *Ujamaa* clause in the constitution to nationalize foreign capital, which undermines the on-going efforts to attract foreign investments. In 1999 a special presidential committee on constitutional reforms conducted a study, and one of its findings was that 88.8 percent of Tanzanians identified themselves with *Ujamaa* and therefore wanted it to remain in the constitution as a national vision. However, the committee recommended that *Ujamaa* being the ideology of one party, under the current multiparty system, favors CCM at the expense of other parties and it should be removed.<sup>52</sup> Despite the fact that *Ujamaa* is no longer a practical ideology, it remains a significant mobilizing tool for the ruling party during elections. This observation is consistent with the findings by the Afro-Barometer survey and its conclusions of 2002 that Tanzanians are "uncritical citizens" partly oriented towards the socialist ideology and one-party structures inherited from the old regime. The ordinary people have not yet developed a healthy skepticism about authority, independent preferences, and the courage to take action that are the lifeblood of functioning democratic and market systems.<sup>53</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Socialist populism is among other things anti-foreign capital. Responding to the crisis of developmentalism after independence in 1961, Julius Nyerere initiated *Ujamaa*, a form of socialism. Nyerere which insisted that Tanzania's task was to become 'self-reliant' and to develop its traditional economy.

Tanzania's *Ujamaa* and its legacy, in turn, have been foundational to the rise and development of socialist populism. Despite the fact that *Ujamaa* was "replaced" by neo-liberal policies since 1980s, Tanzania's leadership has sometimes acted in a populist fashion mainly due to the strong legacy of *Ujamaa*. This has in turn affected foreign investments. Foreign investors are still not often certain of the future of their capital in Tanzania.

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<sup>51</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Tanzania Investment Climate Statement 2015" <https://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2016/af/254253.htm>.

<sup>52</sup> Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania .1999. Kamati ya Kuratibu Maoni Kuhusu Katiba, Kitabu cha Kwanza: Maoni ya Wananchi na Ushauri wa Kamati, Dar es Salaam, p.7.

<sup>53</sup> Amon Chaligha et al "Uncritical Citizens or Patient Trustees? Tanzanians' views of Political and Economic Reform" *Afrobarometer* Paper No. 18. (2002).



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# Answers of Ron Boquier, human rights lawyer for Cofavic, and Raul Castillo, of the vicariate office of the Bishop of Human Rights.

Interview by Joel Martinez

*How influential has the international community, particularly the United States, been in promoting democratic reforms in Venezuela?*

**Boquier:** Well, in Venezuela's case, it has been particularly valuable. We came here to denounce human rights violations taking place in our country. International organizations, such as the United Nations, the Committee on Human Rights, and the Committee Against Torture, have strongly expressed their support for Venezuela's human rights cases. In addition, here in Washington D.C. is the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a group we have worked closely with for years. The international community is extremely important because, without its help, we would not have the ability to say to the world, Listen, we have been victims of human rights abuses.

The United States government, in particular, has placed several economic sanctions against certain individuals who have received complaints of violating human rights. This includes members of the military, who have been involved in human rights violations. This sends a message to those governments that have failed to uphold human rights by saying, We do not agree with this, and we want to see changes. Therefore, for us, this is extremely important during a time when civil servants, leaders who protect, or ought to protect, us within our own country have not been functioning properly. And so, in the absence of judicial independence, the international community is constantly asking Venezuela, 'What is happening to the human rights of your citizens and why are you not protecting them?' In the end, I believe that our fundamental objective, God willing, our leaders can respond to these human rights organizations as a way of diminishing state impunity. However, in the face of such large-scale impunity, the international community serves as a very critical option available to us in order to have the strength to move forward.

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**Joel Martinez** is a senior editor at the Journal of Diplomacy. A recipient of the Sergio Vieira de Mello Fellowship, Joel recently concluded a summer internship with the Deputy Director's Office at the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. As a second-year graduate student at Seton Hall University School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Joel is specializing in Foreign Policy Analysis and International Security.

*Has the United States contributed to this international discussion regarding Venezuela or has its voice been more hushed?*

**Boquier:** No, we have seen it quite active. The Obama administration has placed, as I previously mentioned, sanctions that were very important because they targeted specific individuals who carried out military duties as well as important governmental duties. This helps because it seems as though when this overwhelming sense of responsibility becomes personal, acts of state repression experience some setbacks. This has helped us significantly. The US government has attempted to ensure that organizations have free access to information. Well, we were invited here through a program in order for us to share the experiences as well as the realities facing everyday Venezuelans.

And so to reiterate, yes, the US' involvement has been active. Could it be more active? Well, I believe the line between assistance and intervention is quite thin. Our country has always accused the United States of being an interventionist and what have you. Therefore, clearly, they attempt to generate these changes internally.

**Castillo:** One important aspect I'd like to mention regarding the US' role in this situation is the fact that there is no current US ambassador in Venezuela. This complicates the US' direct involvement in international collaborative efforts. Despite these difficulties, however, the United States has not ceased to collaborate with us, at least in this particular program; nor is it a form of international assistance from several countries that have given life to the United Nations; those who have given support to international institutions, such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Venezuela has had a problem since 2012 due to a formal complaint handed down by the Venezuelan government to the Convention. From our point of view, this was unconstitutional because you cannot deny something that you yourself once supported. Therefore, there is a powerful judicial matter at hand. Without a doubt, the role and support of international institutions has been a big help because we felt alone after having helped all other nations throughout our shared history. Case in point, Simon Bolivar who was the liberator of the Americas. And so there are many things that have been forgotten which, thank God, have improved.

**Boquier:** Another important point is that we are representatives of non-governmental organizations. We do not receive state funding. State collaboration, including that of the United States, is very important because, in addition to keeping our program financially stable, it helps us in providing

support to the people. For instance, we belong to an organization which assists victims of human rights abuses as well as their families. This would not be possible without the help of international collaborators. And it is through this kind of collaboration that keeps our organization afloat and our aid projects alive.

**Castillo:** It is, indeed, necessary. Moreover, the support should increase. However, we must wait and see how things play out.

*The matter concerning Venezuela's rich and poor populations was described today as one that is not so black-and-white. How has the framing of the conversation as a rich versus poor dynamic impeded democratic reforms from taking place in Venezuela?*

**Boquier:** Sure. I can tell you that, based on our work, we realized that the majority of victims of human rights abuses are from the working class and the sole actor responsible for the violation of those human rights is the state. Therefore, the government has used a bit of rhetoric in setting the country's social tone as a war between the rich and the poor. It turns out that the shortages of food and medicine and the displays of violence and impunity do not affect merely a single social class. We are not saying that the upper class is the only sector of society with no access to medicine. Rather, it is the upper, lower, and middle classes that are in the same situation. We have reached a critical point where all members of society are enduring the same problems and suffering from the same violence and impunity. This is the reason why the majority of the population, apart from seeing political changes take place, says that "I want a that allows me to have food, or medicine, or security." This much has been expressed throughout the electoral process.

**Castillo:** I think that the disappearance of the social classes in Venezuela is a result of the government's economic policies. Frankly, there no longer exists a separation of Venezuela's social classes in the sense that some parts of the society are immune to the crisis. Those from the upper class who, at one point, were company owners had their currency taken away by the government. As a result, these companies halted production, closed down factories, and laid people off. Once you are left without a job, you are no longer part of the upper class and your quality of life is automatically reduced. This creates a Domino Effect where one follows after the other, affecting the society as a whole. The escalation of the crisis is partly due to that because people who were never concerned about the lack of food or medicine are now experiencing a reality which was always foreign to them.

These social issues have functioned as a wake-up call for Venezuelan society, which is currently demanding democratic options through the revocation referendum, for example.

The people have demanded for institutions which provide them true representation, in addition to demanding security and water. Look, one of the things we discussed about our trip that left an impression on us so far was the moment we asked for a pitcher of water. We were told, 'No, just drink from the faucet. It's no trouble.' In Venezuela, people are bathing in contaminated water where larva permeates from the showerhead. The drinking water, in most parts of the country, is not potable. These are circumstances that were non-issues in the past. People from the upper class will say, I prefer to buy a water cistern, test it, and use it. But not everyone has this option available to them and it is an issue that affects us all.

**Boquier:** There is a statistic we bring up from Cofavic, the organization I work for. It is astounding that, in 2015, we registered 1,510 human rights abuse cases. Eighty-one percent of these cases, which is 1,221, consists of victims under the age of 25. Ninety-nine percent are men. And the majority of these young men belong to the lower class. And so this is indeed something that affects everyone on a grand scale. However, the ones who have suffered the most from the crisis and the violence have been young, working-class people. Therefore, this is where, ultimately, these measures adopted by the government have harmed the upper class. But the ultimate consequence has been the most underprivileged class. For instance, although I can only acquire a small amount of food for my family and I, I still manage to find food. But for someone who does not have the means to do the same is forced to find food from garbage bins. We've seen such things in Venezuela take place. In the face of this dilemma, Venezuela has maintained its rhetoric that the government is one in favor of the poor. Well, the current situation would suggest that they have lost that.

*How has this humanitarian crisis affected the flow of migrants out of Venezuela, particularly those from the middle and upper class?*

**Castillo:** Yes, the immigration problem is a sad situation in which few people have access to. The problem has revolved around well-educated individuals leaving the country, resulting in a leakage of talent. In fact, most companies that have closed, the workers who range anywhere from 20 to 45 years of age, request their payoffs, purchase their plane tickets, and land in the most common destinations for emigrants which have been Argentina, Chile,

Ecuador, and Peru. And the few that can afford to do so travel to the United States. Every case, however, is different and every issue is distinct. Emigration is an escape not everyone has the option to participate in because people with little resources are, perhaps, very skilled manual laborers, such as auto-mechanics or construction workers. But their work does not afford them the ability to migrate. And the reality is that they are not alone. These are fathers and husbands with families of their own. Although he may be able to travel alone, the manual laborer cannot leave his family behind. Therefore, this is a complex issue where each case ought to be examined thoroughly.

**Boquier:** We return to the same concept that young people are the most affected by the crisis. College-educated youth are leaving Venezuela at an alarming rate. We are seeing economists, lawyers, and doctors emigrate which results in a country with no professionals left. So, it is something that for us is quite sad. It's interesting that here in the US we had a colleague whom we are very happy for. However, this talented individual who left our country is the sort of person we all need in Venezuela.

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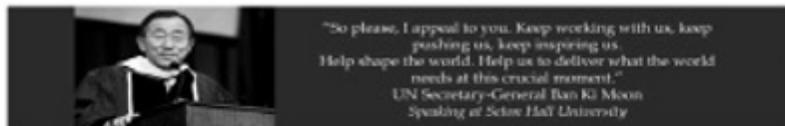
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