



## The populist ambivalence. Presidents and democracy in Latin America

José Manuel Rivas, Asbel Bohigues & Rodolfo E. Colalongo

**To cite this article:** José Manuel Rivas, Asbel Bohigues & Rodolfo E. Colalongo (2024) The populist ambivalence. Presidents and democracy in Latin America, *Contemporary Politics*, 30:1, 65-86, DOI: [10.1080/13569775.2023.2260205](https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2023.2260205)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2023.2260205>



View supplementary material [↗](#)



Published online: 11 Feb 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 106



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



# The populist ambivalence. Presidents and democracy in Latin America

José Manuel Rivas <sup>a</sup>, Asbel Bohigues <sup>b</sup> and Rodolfo E. Colalongo <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of General Public Law, University of Salamanca, Salamanca, Spain; <sup>b</sup>Department of Constitutional Law, Political Science and Administration, University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain; <sup>c</sup>Faculty of Finance, Government and International Relations; CIPE, Externado University of Colombia, Bogotá D.C., Colombia

## ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore the conditions under which populist presidents undermine, preserve or improve democracy, with evidence from Latin America. We address five varieties of democracy in the region (electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian) from 1994 to 2019 in 18 countries and focus on the backsliding or its absence during each presidential term. To do so, we rely on a QCA approach, through which we interpret the changes on each variety, acknowledging the presence/absence of populist presidents, presidents' popularity, political and economic critical junctures, support for democracy, an institutionalised party system and political stability. Results show an ambivalent relationship between populism and democracy as highlighted by part of the literature. Although populism emerges as an almost necessary condition for democratic backsliding in any variety, there are several cases where the presence of populist presidents led to an improvement of democracy in the different aspects analysed.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 13 February 2023  
Accepted 1 September 2023

## KEYWORDS

Populism; democracy; V-Dem; QCA; Latin America

Populism has become a central phenomenon in contemporary democracies. Since the early 1990s, in Europe, Latin America and beyond, there has been a resurgence of populist movements that has allowed a flourishing of a specialised academic literature both to understand the phenomenon itself and its relationship with democracy.

The relationship between populism and democracy is still not entirely clear and is presented as ambiguous and paradoxical. However, it is known to be determined by popular sovereignty and the role it plays within the democratic system. For some authors, populism represents the authentic form of democracy or, at least, a corrective to democracy (Canovan, 1999; Tännjö, 1992), whereas others see populism as a threat to democratic institutions (Taguieff, 1995; Urbinati, 1998; Müller, 2017). Those who have a positive view of populism in relation to democracy, highlight the context of the crisis of representation in which democracy finds itself and understand that the political disintermediation of popular sovereignty could help to fix, and even improve it. On the other hand, for those with a different point of view, populism threatens the institutional framework (political

**CONTACT** José Manuel Rivas  [jmrvivas@usal.es](mailto:jmrvivas@usal.es)  Department of General Public Law, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Law, University of Salamanca, Pº Tomás y Valiente s/n, Salamanca 37007, Spain

 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2023.2260205>.

© 2023 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

representation, individual rights and checks and balances) that sustains democracy. Müller (2017) even describes populism as a disease of democracy, not only representative but also classical, arising from the problems of representation in contemporary democracies. For this reason, populism is associated in one way or another with the deepest aspects of the functioning of democracy (Anselmi, 2017).

There is no established dynamic or constituted style that allows the evaluation of democratic success, since it depends on each case and context (Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012). In this sense, works such as those of Meléndez and Kaltwasser (2021) have focused on the radical populist right as a threat to democracy, since this form of populism also combines other pernicious elements such as nationalism and nativism. Before evaluating the impact of populism on democracy, it is necessary to understand what the literature refers to when it speaks of democracy. In this respect, Colalongo and Rivas (2022) are clear in expressing the liberal-western sense of democracy, since it is based on the need for mechanisms of representation of the popular will that institutionally order social powers.

Most of the studies (De la Torre & Peruzzotti, 2008; Mény & Surel, 2001; Panizza, 2005; Taggart, 2001; Urbinati, 1998) that work on the ambiguous relationship between populism and democracy tend to express normative and theoretical assumptions instead of analysing and arguing from empirical evidence (Mudde & Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012).

Thus, the impact of populism on democracy has tended to be less of an empirical question and more of a theoretical question, answered mostly with speculations derived from an ideal view of what democratic institutions should look like. However, some studies (Huber & Schimpf, 2016; Ruth-Lovell, 2018; Ruth-Lovell et al., 2019) have tested this complex relationship with empirical data, confirming that populist governments deteriorate the quality of democracy in its different liberal, electoral, and deliberative aspects. On the other hand, in their recent article, Colalongo and Rivas (2022) question the central idea of the deterioration of democracy by populist governments by showing that this relationship is not as evident as the theoretical-normative approaches suggest.

Using data drawn from Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) as well as other public datasets, this article aims to explore the conditions in which populist presidents, that almost always undermine democracy, preserve, or improve it in Latin America. We aim to evaluate the extent to which a populist president affects democracy while considering the interaction of other structural conditions. Our purpose is to verify how the presence of a populist president interacts with some of the classic variables in studies of the quality of democracy (Bohigues, 2021). Furthermore, we follow a multidimensional approach on the study of democracy and analyse not one but five dimensions, varieties, of democracy: electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative and egalitarian. This strategy provides us with the full picture of the main focus of the paper: the relationship between populism and democracy. Thus, previous works have already tested the impact of populism on different varieties of democracy using V-Dem data (Colalongo & Rivas, 2022; Ruth-Lovell et al., 2019). To do so we rely on a comparative approach, namely QCA.

Results show an ambivalent relationship between populism and democracy as highlighted by part of the literature. Two moments are observed in the relationship between populism and democracy: a populist president is an almost necessary condition for democratic backsliding<sup>1</sup>, but the foregoing is not incompatible with the fact that there are cases in which democracy is maintained or improved despite a populist president. The

first finding supports the common theme withing the pre-existing literature, while the second finding raises the question of why, in some cases, populist presidents do not deteriorate, but instead improve democracy. We conclude that populism does not always lead to democratic backsliding, but that, in certain contexts, it may contribute to the non-deterioration and/or improvement of some varieties of democracy.

## Populism and democracy

This section reviews the literature on the relationship between populism and democracy, highlighting the main discussions. To do so we gave priority to the richness of the existing debates among different authors, rather than theoretical approaches, transferring their Manichean view of this relationship. We also discuss those who argue the need to analyse populism and democracy, taking into account the cases, places, and contexts before generalising results.

The democratic project transformed the political arena into an open and dynamic space due to the tensions and uncertainty that sustained it. There is no doubt that nowadays, democracy, especially liberal-western, is considered as the guiding principle of any fair political order. The truth is that its founding principle (freedom) was always controversial and imprecise. It was always a problematic solution to the aim of establishing a society of free and equal people (Rosanvallon, 2020).

The uneasiness expressed about democracy is rooted in its foundational fluctuations (Rosanvallon, 2020). The series of charms and disenchantments that have been provoked throughout history are also associated with its lack of definition. Faced with the number of definitions made over time, it is currently impossible to pinpoint exactly what we mean when we talk about democracy, which explains the emergence of its different understandings, be they liberal, electoral, popular, or plebiscite, among many others. It is precisely between the disenchantment and democratic indeterminacy where the populism is inscribed. This explains why the existing literature on the relationship between populism and democracy is divided between those who understand populism as a threat to democratic institutions and those who see it as a corrective (Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012).

At first glance, the contradiction between these two views seems easily explained by an ambiguity in the conceptualisation of democracy. In this sense, advocates of populism understand democracy as the direct rule of the people, and thus tend to equate populism with democracy (Canovan, 2005). On the contrary, opponents of populism have a more institutional conception of democracy, emphasising the importance of representation, individual rights and the balance of powers and interests.

Although some authors consider populism to be a threat to democracy understood in an institutional/constitutional sense, most experts argue that the relationship is more ambiguous (Mény & Surel, 2001; Panizza, 2005). That is, while populism can potentially pose a danger to democracy, it can also be a redemptive force or promise of greater democracy (Arditi, 2003). In this sense, populism has been analysed as a means of revealing and even redressing the deficiencies and unfulfilled promises of the representative system (Taggart, 2001). By definition, populism is not anti-democratic (Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012). If anything, it is the opposite, as it offers a series of responses to the main tensions present in democracy (Postel, 2007).

Among the variety of views and interpretations are those that understand that populism simultaneously represents the regeneration of participatory ideals and equality of democracy. Likewise, there are those that possibly deny the plurality of the social body without which the democratic ideal may degenerate into autocratic and plebiscitary forms of acclamation to a leader constructed democracy as the incarnation of the people and the nation (De la Torre & Peruzzotti, 2008). To answer the question of whether populism is a *good* or a *bad* thing for democracy depends on the subtype of democracy one favours. Taking a liberal view, we can understand how populism could be seen as a threat to ‘checks and balances and to the protection of minorities’ (Moffitt, 2020, p. 96). Whereas from a more radical perspective, populism can be seen as ‘opening a space for the reconstitution of “the people” and the shaking up of a moribund post-democratic political landscape’ (Moffitt, 2020, p. 96).

Others (Canovan, 2004), inscribe the debate to only one conception of democracy, the liberal, and affirm that modern liberal democracy results from a combination of two different sets of fundamental principles, one liberal and the other populist-democratic. Modern liberal democracies have always wrestled with a tension between the two fundamental principles, and populist movements threaten this fragile compromise by arguing the need to create pure democracies with a direct exercise of public power (Canovan, 2004).

Modern democracy requires a level of institutionalisation and complexity to function that ends up undermining its main mission of empowering the people, causing disillusionment and disenchantment among its members. This facilitates the emergence of populists who claim that the cause of popular discontent lies in the fact that power was taken away from them. In other words, it is not possible to build a democratic system without some degree of populism (Canovan, 1999; 2004; Laclau, 2012).

On the other hand, there are those (Plattner, 2010) who claim that populism fills the gap left by the growing gulf between the rulers and the ruled in today’s democratic systems and is therefore neither negative nor positive, but rather fulfils a practical function, especially in highly bureaucratised European democracies. Inversely, the minimalist approach, which identifies populism as an ambivalent democracy (Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012), differs from the two previous definitions as it does not make major claims about the effects of populism on democracy, but rather considers that this impact will be transitory and will depend on the cases analysed (Cardoso & Faletto, 1996; Dornbusch & Edwards, 2007; Weyland, 2001).

Thus, the minimalist approach (Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012) has certain advantages over other definitions. First, the organisational elements of populist movements and their structural conditions are contingent, which sometimes but not always, accompany populism (Hawkins & Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 514). It allows us to understand the ambivalences of democracy. In addition, the effects – positive or negative – of populism depend on each case, place, and context. This approach also offers a two-pronged analysis – political competition and participation – which helps to understand that the balance between popular will and constitutionalism is always precarious and in a continuous process of adjustment. Fourth, it proposes a minimal definition of populism that allows us to consider different democratic governments. Finally, considering Dahl’s approach to the study of democracy, Rovira-Kaltwasser (2012) argues that populism is shown to be negative in relation to public contestation, but positive in terms of political inclusion.

It is necessary to define what is meant by populism and democracy before proceeding further in the research. In this case, a minimal approach understands populism as being a 'thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite", and argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people' (Mudde & Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 8). While this is not the only definition of populism, it is the most complete, in our opinion, because it allows us to consider the basic elements that are common to the rest of the conceptualizations. For example, a moral vision of politics where society is divided into two large antagonistic groups, the pure people and a corrupt elite. Both groups share the characteristic of being 'empty signifiers', since it is populism (Laclau, 2012) that defines the people and the elite (De la Torre, 2010; Stanley, 2008). In Laclau's theory, the populist leader is the more important empty signifier to represent the people and articulate heterogeneous social demands in the struggle for political hegemony (Laclau, 2012). However, in a media context of fragmented audiences, hyper-partisanship and echo chambers, the leader becomes an 'overflowing signifier', with different meanings and readings depending on who perceives him, his followers or his political opponents; likewise, new forms of communication through the Internet and social networks allow the populist leader to interact with his followers without intermediaries, creating in them a sense of direct representation and thus manifesting an 'overflowing excess' (Ostiguy & Moffitt, 2020, p. 67).

Therefore, populism understood as a focused ideology (thin-centered) has three main elements: the people, the elite and the general will with two direct opposites, elitism and pluralism (Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2018). However, when an attempt is made to empirically test the three elements, we find that 'the items do not fully cover the constitutive dimensions of the concept. Moreover, not all items clearly separate populism from adjacent concepts often associated with populism, such as corruption and referendums' (Meijers & Zaslove, 2021, p. 376) the same is true of the opposites of elitism and pluralism (Akkerman et al., 2014).

Although this is not the place to delve into the debate about what is meant by democracy, we believe that, to make more sense of our research, it is relevant to mention something about the way democracy has been conceptualised, particularly when it comes to studying its relationship with populism. We will offer a brief summary of our understanding of three key concepts used in debates about populism: democracy, liberal democracy and radical democracy.

Democracy 'without adjectives' (Mudde & Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012) is understood as the combination of popular sovereignty and majority rule – as simple and comprehensive as that. Liberal democracy is a system characterised not only by free, fair, and periodic elections, popular sovereignty, and majority rule, but also by constitutional protection of minorities, 'and consequently, cannot allow a majority to deprive a minority of any of its primary political rights, since this would imply a violation of the democratic process' (Mudde & Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 13). Finally, there is radical democracy, developed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) to oppose the concept of liberal democracy. In general terms, we can say that the core attribute of radical democracy relies on the denunciation of oppressive power relations and the struggles for transforming this situation (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mudde & Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012).

It is important to keep in mind that this article addresses the relationship between populism and democracy in Latin America, a region characterised by presidentialism. In European parliamentary democracies, and in the United States to a certain extent, populism is a relatively recent phenomenon, supported by various social sectors, focused on moral debates and immigration and, with some exceptions in southern Europe, ideologically linked to the extreme right. In Latin America, populism and populist presidents have been present for decades, its social bases have been the popular classes and those marginalised from the political system; in this region populism has prioritised issues of socio-economic inequality and social justice and has adopted positions on both the left and the right (Mudde & Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2013; Weyland & Madrid, 2019; Rovira-Kaltwasser & Van Hauwaert, 2020). All these features make Latin America the best case study to explore the relationship between populism, namely populist presidents, and democracy with a comparative approach, given the disparities between Latin American countries in terms of levels of democracy, economic performance, and party systems, among others.

### **Populist presidents and democracy in Latin America**

Before we begin to talk about populist presidents, we must establish why we consider these presidents as populist. First, because part of the literature establishes that they are populist (Laclau, 2012; De la Torre, 2017, 2014; Peruzzotti, 2017; Casullo, 2019; Rosanvallon, 2020; Colalongo & Rivas, 2022; Ruth-Lovell & Grahn, 2023). Second, because they fit within the definition of populism as a thin-centred ideology, that is, in their way of understanding the world. Elements such as the people, an elite and the general will be clearly noted, where the elite, understood in a pejorative and corrupt way, snatches power from the people and transforms them into political-economic hostages of their selfish actions. The people, in their condition of sovereignty and through the general will, perceive this situation of injustice and decide to change it through the election of a populist leader who watches over, respects and puts into practice the interests of the people as a nation. A context of political-economic-institutional crisis can foster the awakening of the people and the emergence of leadership with these characteristics. Both elitism and political pluralism automatically become the enemies of the people because they threaten their unity and are presented as external threats that seek to break the people-leader and people-people bonds.

On the other hand, each of the cases analysed as populist finally lead to the embracing of broader and more complete ideologies, that may even be contradictory among themselves, to materialise the will of their people, thus allowing the emergence of populists of different ideological cuts. For example, Kirchner in Argentina, Uribe in Colombia, Morales in Bolivia, or Zelaya in Honduras all show diverse results in their impact on the strength of democracy. The definition, their contexts, their speeches, and their political actions were taken into account to include them in the category of populist presidents. Nevertheless, it is important to clarify that our main objective is not to determine why some presidents are populists or not. Thus, we justify our cases in the literature review.

Thus, our thesis is that populism is not by itself always 'negative' or 'positive' for democracy, but it depends on a combination of factors. In this sense, the literature on democratisation and the quality of democracy do provide us with some conditions

that, combined with a populist leader, may prevent democratic backsliding or, on the contrary, strengthen it. The article does not aim to explain democratic backsliding, but to explore the channels through which populist presidents, who almost always undermine democracy, preserve, or improve it, with evidence from Latin America.

## Methodological approach

To analyse the link of populism and democracy we rely on a crisp set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (csQCA) (Ragin, 2000). The main advantage of this technique is that, unlike statistical methods, QCA is based on the interaction between conditions to produce an outcome and not on the isolated effect of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable (Ragin, 2008). By applying a csQCA, both the conditions as well as the outcome are binary coded, classifying their presence (= 1) or absence (= 0) for each case. The solutions obtained are causal configurations that combine different conditions that may be present or absent.

This technique has been used in recent work on other topics such as the representation of women in national parliaments (Krook, 2010), the politics of private-heavy pension systems (Gelepathis, 2018) and the Constitutional Integration and Resurgence of Traditional Political Institutions (Holzinger et al., 2020), and also to study topics similar to ours, such as the conditions that enable or hinder populist presidents from eroding horizontal checks and balances (Ruth-Lovell, 2018).

QCA speaks of necessary and sufficient conditions, or configurations (if they combine more than two conditions) that are necessary or sufficient (Goertz & Starr, 2002). Another advantage of QCA is that it allows us to identify different configurations that point toward the same outcome, i.e. equifinality (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012).

Thus, since QCA combines conditions, present or absent, into configurations that are sufficient for the outcome, we can identify the different paths toward an improvement or backsliding of democracy, name varieties of democracy, and suggest whether a populist president is a necessary and/or sufficient condition for such democratic change. In other words, QCA allows us to observe the effects of populist presidents in different contexts.

We consider a total of 92 cases, namely presidential terms or rather presidencies, between 1994 and 2019 in 18 Latin American countries (see online Appendix). It must be noted that QCA was originally designed for small-N or even medium-N studies; however, QCA has also been successfully applied in large N investigations (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009).<sup>2</sup>

For the condition ‘populist president’, we code all presidential terms as populist or not populist, based on the literature view (see section ‘Populist presidents and Democracy’ and online Appendix).

In addition to populist presidents, we include five additional conditions: the absence of a critical juncture, political stability, the president’s popularity, popular support for democracy, and the institutionalisation of the party system. We expect that the absence of presence of such conditions will have an impact on the relationship of populist presidents and democracy.

For presidents’ popularity we rely on the Executive Approval Project-EAD (Carlin et al., 2019); approval above 50% is coded as 1. We expect that unpopular presidents will have

less impact on democratic backsliding, either present or absent, since unpopular presidents are, almost by definition, weak presidents (Carlin et al., 2020, p. 1359).

To consider the political and economic juncture during the presidential term, we rely on the World Uncertainty Index-WUI (Ahir et al., 2018), which counts the frequency of the word *uncertainty* (or its variant) in the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) country reports. The indices are normalised by total number of words and rescaled by multiplying by 1,000. A higher number means higher uncertainty and vice versa. Here we use the median of our cases and years (0.214): where higher values indicate the presence of uncertainty (1), and lower values, its absence (0).

We also consider political stability and the absence of violence during the presidential term, with evidence from the World Bank (Kaufmann et al., 2011). This indicator ranges from  $-2.5$  (low) to  $+2.5$  (high), and we split the results at  $-0.5$ . Overall, the presence of *uncertainty*, instability and violence, we expect, will hinder democracy (Munck, 2007; Bohigues, 2021, pp. 90–95), and may pave the way for democratic backsliding by populist presidents.

Regarding support for democracy, we rely on Latinobarómetro and the question ‘Which of the following statements do you agree with most?’. If more than two thirds (66%) of citizens agree that ‘Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government’, we code it as the presence of democratic support (1). Accordingly, high support for democracy will have a positive impact on democracy (Claassen, 2020), and, we argue, will hamper the possibility of democratic backsliding by populist presidents.

Finally, regarding party systems, we take data from the V-Dem Party Institutionalisation Index, which ranges from low to high (0–1); the natural break here is 0.5. Weak deinstitutionalised party systems will hinder, rather than strengthen, democracy (Piñeiro Rodríguez & Rosenblatt, 2020), and just like the juncture, may pave the way for democratic backsliding by populist presidents.

Table 1 displays all the conditions and the QCA calibrations<sup>3</sup>:

Importantly, since our cases are presidencies, not country-years, in all cases we have calculated the average data for the years (quarters for EAD and WUI) of the presidential term. The full dataset, with original values and dichotomised scores (truth table plus prime implicants) is available in the online Appendix.

Along similar lines with previous work (Bohigues, 2021; Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2023), we expect that the presence of uncertainty, and the absences of democratic

**Table 1.** Measurement of conditions.

| Condition                                         | Indicator                                                | Calibration                                                          | Source                        |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Populist president (POP)                          | Own elaboration from literature                          | Non-populist = 0;<br>Populist = 1                                    | Own elaboration               |
| President popularity (EAD)                        | Average approval rating<br>(smoothed)                    | $<50\% = 0$ ; $\geq 50\% = 1$                                        | Executive Approval<br>Project |
| Critical juncture (WUI)                           | World Uncertainty Index                                  | $<\text{median } (0,214) = 0$ ;<br>$\geq \text{median } (0,214) = 1$ | Ahir et al. (2018)            |
| Popular support for<br>democracy (DEM)            | Support for democracy                                    | $<66\% = 0$ ; $\geq 66\% = 1$                                        | Latinobarómetro               |
| Institutionalisation of the<br>party system (PII) | Party Institutionalisation Index                         | $<0,5 = 0$ ; $\geq 0,5 = 1$                                          | V-Dem                         |
| Political stability (PSAV)                        | Political Stability and Absence of<br>Violence/Terrorism | $<-0,5 = 0$ ; $\geq -0,5 = 1$                                        | World Bank                    |

Source: own elaboration.

support, political stability and an institutionalised party system will contribute to the presence of democratic backsliding in all five varieties of democracy. Undoubtedly, democracy will be in jeopardy in contexts of uncertainty, political instability, lack of mass support, and weak parties.

As a result of an interest in both the improvement and backsliding of democracy, we run QCA for the presence and the absence of the outcomes, with a special emphasis on the condition ‘populist president’. We consider there to be a presence of the outcome (backsliding) if the difference of the variety of democracy between the beginning and the end of the president office is negative, whereas the absence of such a difference is classed as positive (no-backsliding), including no changes (0).

In the following section we present the sufficiency analysis for both the presence and the absence of the outcome for each variety. Given that the paper builds on the idea of populist ambivalence regarding democracy, and due to spatial limitations, we will be focusing on a subset of configurations. Those which we are especially interested in include: the configurations that need the absence of a populist president when outcome = 1 (there is backsliding), and in the configurations that need the presence of a populist president when outcome = 0 (there is no backsliding).

Although we have 92 cases (i.e. presidencies) distributed across 18 Latin American countries, we only examine in detail the most telling and revealing configurations in terms of our thesis, the ones that can help us understand when and how populism can undermine or strengthen democracy. We specifically focus on configurations where there was a democratic backsliding with a non-populist president and where there was no democratic backsliding with a populist president. Following Seawright and Gerring (2008), these would be deviant cases. For this reason, the cases of Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela are examined in detail, while the other countries are not.

### Sufficiency analysis: populism and presence of democratic backsliding

Table 2 displays the sufficient configurations that lead to backsliding in all five varieties of democracy. Because we want to explore on the impact of populism on democracy, we cannot rely on a single index of democracy. Focusing only on electoral or liberal aspects, as previous works (Ruth-Lovell, 2018), is not enough to disentangle the latent link of populism and different aspects of democratic regimes. Populism, as seen before, may behave differently with elections, referendums, deliberation, or minority rights. This is the reason why we rely on the V-Dem multidimensionality of democracy (Papada & Lindberg, 2023). Moreover, in view of the number of definitions and conceptualizations of democracy seen in the literature review, if we are to understand how populism and democracy, thick concepts on their own, are related, one must include all dimensions of democracy.

Turning to the results, according to the sufficiency analysis on Table 2, in almost all scenarios in which democratic backsliding took place in Latin America there was a populist president. This trend is similar in all varieties of democracy. In line with previously discussed works, the presence of democratic backsliding goes hand in hand with populists in power. However, some democratic backsliding can be observed with non-populist presidents (cells in grey). Because QCA is a case-based method, following Schneider and Rohlfing’s (2013) proposal on the combination of QCA and other methods, we now

**Table 2.** Sufficiency analysis: presence of backsliding.<sup>5</sup>

|     | Configuration                       | Coverage    |             | Cases with membership = 1 in configuration and outcome   |
|-----|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
|     |                                     | Raw         | Unique      |                                                          |
| EDI | POP*WUI*PII*PSAV                    | 0.17        | 0.15        | KIRCHNER, EVO3, EVO1, CHAVEZ, NMADURO, CHAVEZ3, CHAVEZ2  |
|     | ~EAD*~WUI*~DEM*PII*PSAV             | 0.09        | 0.10        | ZELAYA, MADURO, <b>LOBO</b> , <b>RCALDERA</b>            |
|     | POP*~EAD*WUI*~DEM*PII               | 0.05        | 0.02        | EVO3, ORTEGA1                                            |
|     | <b>~POP*EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>LEONEL3</b>                                           |
|     | POP*EAD*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV         | 0.02        | 0.02        | ORTEGA2                                                  |
|     | POP*~EAD*~WUI*DEM*PII*~PSAV         | 0.02        | 0.02        | EVO2                                                     |
|     | <b>~POP*~EAD*WUI*DEM*~PII*PSAV</b>  | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>SAMPER</b>                                            |
|     | Solution coverage                   | 0.39        |             |                                                          |
|     |                                     | 0.2         |             |                                                          |
| LCI | POP*WUI*PII*PSAV                    | 0.2         | 0.17        | KIRCHNER, EVO3, EVO1, CHAVEZ1, NMADURO, CHAVEZ3, CHAVEZ2 |
|     | POP*~EAD*WUI*~DEM*PII               | 0.06        | 0.03        | EVO3, ORTEGA1                                            |
|     | <b>~POP*EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b> | <b>0.03</b> | <b>0.03</b> | <b>LEONEL3</b>                                           |
|     | POP*EAD*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV         | 0.03        | 0.03        | ORTEGA2                                                  |
|     | Solution coverage                   | 0.29        |             |                                                          |
| DCI | POP*WUI*PII*PSAV                    | 0.16        | 0.14        | KIRCHNER, EVO3, EVO1, CHAVEZ1, NMADURO, CHAVEZ3, CHAVEZ2 |
|     | POP*~EAD*WUI*~DEM*PII               | 0.04        | 0.02        | EVO3, ORTEGA1                                            |
|     | POP*~EAD*~DEM*PII*PSAV              | 0.04        | 0.02        | EVO3, ZELAYA                                             |
|     | POP*EAD*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV         | 0.02        | 0.02        | ORTEGA2                                                  |
|     | POP*~EAD*~WUI*DEM*PII*~PSAV         | 0.02        | 0.02        | EVO2                                                     |
|     | <b>~POP*~EAD*WUI*DEM*~PII*PSAV</b>  | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>SAMPER</b>                                            |
|     | Solution coverage                   | 0.27        |             |                                                          |
|     |                                     | 0.05        |             |                                                          |
|     |                                     | 0.02        |             |                                                          |
| PCI | POP*~EAD*WUI*~DEM*PII               | 0.05        | 0.02        | EVO3, ORTEGA1                                            |
|     | POP*WUI*~DEM*PII*PSAV               | 0.05        | 0.02        | EVO3, CHAVEZ1                                            |
|     | POP*~EAD*WUI*PII*PSAV               | 0.10        | 0.07        | EVO3, NMADURO, CHAVEZ3, CHAVEZ2                          |
|     | POP*EAD*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV         | 0.02        | 0.02        | ORTEGA2                                                  |
|     | POP*~EAD*~WUI*DEM*PII*~PSAV         | 0.02        | 0.02        | EVO2                                                     |
|     | <b>~POP*~EAD*WUI*DEM*~PII*PSAV</b>  | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>SAMPER</b>                                            |
|     | Solution coverage                   | 0.22        |             |                                                          |
|     |                                     | 0.07        |             |                                                          |
| ECI | POP*~EAD*WUI*~DEM*PII               | 0.07        | 0.03        | EVO3, ORTEGA1                                            |
|     | POP*~EAD*~DEM*PII*PSAV              | 0.07        | 0.03        | EVO3, ZELAYA                                             |
|     | POP*WUI*~DEM*PII*PSAV               | 0.07        | 0.03        | EVO3, CHAVEZ1                                            |
|     | POP*~EAD*WUI*PII*PSAV               | 0.14        | 0.11        | EVO3, NMADURO, CHAVEZ3, CHAVEZ2                          |
|     | POP*EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV         | 0.03        | 0.03        | CORREA3                                                  |
|     | POP*EAD*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV         | 0.03        | 0.03        | ORTEGA2                                                  |
|     | POP*~EAD*~WUI*DEM*PII*~PSAV         | 0.03        | 0.03        | EVO2                                                     |
|     | Solution coverage                   | 0.36        |             |                                                          |

Notes: Symbol {~} means absence of the condition. In grey configurations with non-populist presidents. Complex solutions. Consistency of all configurations and solutions is 1 (100% of cases of each configuration have the outcome). Frequency and consistency cut-off: 1.

focus on the cases of Ernesto Samper and Leonel Fernández, which are the most telling for the purpose of this article: these two non-populist presidents have democratic backsliding. In the classification of case selection by Seawright and Gerring (2008), these would be deviant cases.

During the Ernesto Samper<sup>4</sup> presidency (1994–1998), Colombia experienced a setback in electoral, deliberative, and participatory democracies. Shortly after starting his mandate, the president was involved in a legal process for financing his electoral campaign with money from drug trafficking (8,000 Process). Although Samper was exonerated by Congress for lack of evidence, some of those responsible for his campaign were prosecuted and convicted (CIDOB, n.d; Pérez-Liñán, 2007). This scandal hampered Samper's government, and internationally discredited the country. This critical juncture was accompanied by low presidential popularity and a crisis of the party system.

Another case of democratic backsliding with a non-populist president occurred in the Dominican Republic during the third presidency of Leonel Fernández (2008–2012). On this occasion, the electoral and liberal democracies were affected. Although his mandate coincided with the international financial crisis, the country did not suffer critical junctures and his popularity remained high. This favourable context and the poorly institutionalised party system led the president to promote a constitutional reform in 2009 that expanded the powers of the executive and restricted some civil rights, stipulating, for example, that the ‘right to life is inviolable from conception to death’, which prevented any attempt to regulate abortion in the future. This reform was passed by Congress, constituted through a Review Assembly, while a Constituent Assembly was not convened, which caused an important social rejection. Likewise, the corruption scandals of the ruling party and the deterioration of public security undermined political stability (CIDOB, [n.d.](#); Jiménez-Polanco, [2010](#)).

In both cases, there was democratic backsliding with an absence of a populist president, along with additional conditions. In Colombia, during Samper’s presidency, democracy regressed due to the critical juncture the country experienced (8000 Process). The president lacked popularity and the party system was in a crisis. Although there was no critical juncture and the president was popular, the same thing happened in the Dominican Republic during Leonel’s third term as the country had a poorly institutionalised party system and suffered political instability due to the 2009 constitutional reform.. These cases show that, although in recent decades in Latin America when there has been democratic backsliding there was a populist president present, in certain circumstances the backsliding can also occur with non-populist presidents, as Samper and Fernández show.

### Sufficiency analysis: populism and absence of democratic backsliding

**Table 3** displays the sufficient configurations that lead to the absence of backsliding in all five varieties of democracy. In sharp contrast to the previous section, this table shows that the presence of populist presidents is not at all an obstacle for democracy to be maintained or improved. Thus, although the presence of democratic backsliding goes hand in hand with populism in power, such populism in power does not necessarily go hand in hand with democratic backsliding. There were numerous cases in Latin America in which varieties of democracy were maintained or improved under populist presidencies (cells in grey). Furthermore, there are examples of populist governments on both the right and the left. We now focus on these cases of presence of populism and absence of backsliding; that is, the deviant cases (Seawright & Gerring, [2008](#)).

Returning to the initial question regarding the conditions under which populism does not lead to democratic backsliding affect each of the varieties of democracy in Latin America, QCA shows different paths. First, for a populist president to maintain or improve the electoral democracy, the context is one of absence of critical juncture, presidential popularity, popular support for democracy, absence of institutionalisation of the party system and political stability (Correa and Fujimori during their third period and Uribe during his second period).

As for liberal democracy, the context in which a populist president maintains or improves it is one absence of critical juncture, popular support for democracy, institutionalisation of the party system and political stability and absence of violence/terrorism

**Table 3.** Sufficiency analysis: absence of backsliding.

|     | Configuration                         | Coverage    |             | Cases with membership = 1 in configuration and outcome                                                        |
|-----|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|     |                                       | Raw         | Unique      |                                                                                                               |
| EDI | ~POP*~EAD*~WUI*~DEM*~PII*~PSAV        | 0.02        | 0.02        | PPK                                                                                                           |
|     | <b>POP*EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b>    | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>CORREA3</b>                                                                                                |
|     | ~POP*EAD*WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV           | 0.04        | 0.04        | DILMA1, FFLORES                                                                                               |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*WUI*DEM*PII*~PSAV           | 0.02        | 0.02        | EPBALLADARES                                                                                                  |
|     | <b>POP*~EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b>   | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>FUJIMORI3</b>                                                                                              |
|     | <b>POP*EAD*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV</b>    | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>URIBE2</b>                                                                                                 |
|     | Solution coverage                     | 0.14        |             |                                                                                                               |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*WUI*DEM*PII                 | 0.05        | 0.02        | DUHALDE, RUA, EPBALLADARES                                                                                    |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*WUI*DEM*PSAV                | 0.05        | 0.02        | DUHALDE, RUA, SAMPER                                                                                          |
|     | <b>POP*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV</b>        | <b>0.03</b> | <b>0.03</b> | <b>URIBE2, ZELAYA</b>                                                                                         |
| LCI | ~POP*~EAD*~WUI*~DEM*~PII*~PSAV        | 0.02        | 0.02        | PPK                                                                                                           |
|     | <b>POP*EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b>    | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>CORREA3</b>                                                                                                |
|     | ~POP*EAD*WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV           | 0.03        | 0.03        | DILMA1, FFLORES                                                                                               |
|     | <b>POP*~EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b>   | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>EVO2</b>                                                                                                   |
|     | ~POP*EAD*~WUI*DEM*PII*~PSAV           | 0.07        | 0.07        | LEONEL2, FACUSSE, TABARE1, MUJICA                                                                             |
|     | <b>POP*~EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b>   | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>FUJIMORI3</b>                                                                                              |
|     | Solution coverage                     | 0.28        |             |                                                                                                               |
|     | <b>EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b>        | 0.04        | 0.04        | LEONEL3, <b>CORREA3</b>                                                                                       |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*DEM*PII*~PSAV               | 0.21        | 0.21        | CHINCHILLA, FIGUERES, ABELPACHECO, ARIAS2, MARODRIGUEZ, EPBALLADARES, TORRIJOS, CALDERON, SANGUINETT2, BATLLE |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*~WUI*~DEM*~PII*~PSAV        | 0.02        | 0.02        | PPK                                                                                                           |
| DCI | <b>POP*~EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b>   | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>FUJIMORI3</b>                                                                                              |
|     | <b>POP*EAD*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV</b>    | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>URIBE2</b>                                                                                                 |
|     | ~POP*EAD*WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV           | 0.08        | 0.08        | MESA, SANTOS1, FCALDERON, FOX                                                                                 |
|     | Solution coverage                     | 0.39        |             |                                                                                                               |
|     | <b>EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b>        | 0.04        | 0.04        | LEONEL3, <b>CORREA3</b>                                                                                       |
|     | ~EAD*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV              | 0.08        | 0.06        | <b>ZELAYA, RMADURO, LOBO, RCALDERA</b>                                                                        |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*WUI*DEM*PII                 | 0.06        | 0.06        | DUHALDE, RUA, EPBALLADARES                                                                                    |
|     | <b>POP*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV</b>        | <b>0.04</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>URIBE2, ZELAYA</b>                                                                                         |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*~WUI*~DEM*~PII*~PSAV        | 0.02        | 0.02        | PPK                                                                                                           |
|     | <b>POP*~EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b>   | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>FUJIMORI3</b>                                                                                              |
| PCI | <b>POP*EAD*WUI*DEM*PII*~PSAV</b>      | <b>0.04</b> | <b>0.04</b> | <b>KIRCHNER, EVO1</b>                                                                                         |
|     | Solution coverage                     | 0.27        |             |                                                                                                               |
|     | ~POP*EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PSAV               | 0.08        | 0.08        | LEONEL2, LEONEL3, FACUSSE, TABARE1, MUJICA                                                                    |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*WUI*DEM*PII                 | 0.05        | 0.01        | DUHALDE, RUA, EPBALLADARES                                                                                    |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*WUI*DEM*PSAV                | 0.05        | 0.01        | DUHALDE, RUA, SAMPER                                                                                          |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*~WUI*~DEM*~PII*~PSAV        | 0.01        | 0.01        | PPK                                                                                                           |
|     | ~ <b>POP*~EAD*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV</b> | 0.05        | 0.05        | <b>RMADURO, LOBO, RCALDERA</b>                                                                                |
|     | ~POP*EAD*WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV           | 0.03        | 0.03        | DILMA1, FFLORES                                                                                               |
|     | <b>POP*~EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b>   | <b>0.01</b> | <b>0.01</b> | <b>FUJIMORI3</b>                                                                                              |
|     | <b>POP*EAD*WUI*~DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b>    | <b>0.05</b> | <b>0.05</b> | <b>URIBE1, CORREA1, CORREA2</b>                                                                               |
| ECI | <b>POP*EAD*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV</b>    | <b>0.01</b> | <b>0.01</b> | <b>URIBE2</b>                                                                                                 |
|     | <b>POP*EAD*WUI*DEM*PII*~PSAV</b>      | <b>0.03</b> | <b>0.03</b> | <b>KIRCHNER, EVO1</b>                                                                                         |
|     | Solution coverage                     | 0.34        |             |                                                                                                               |
|     | ~POP*EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PSAV               | 0.08        | 0.08        | LEONEL2, LEONEL3, FACUSSE, TABARE1, MUJICA                                                                    |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*WUI*DEM*PII                 | 0.05        | 0.01        | DUHALDE, RUA, EPBALLADARES                                                                                    |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*WUI*DEM*PSAV                | 0.05        | 0.01        | DUHALDE, RUA, SAMPER                                                                                          |
|     | ~POP*~EAD*~WUI*~DEM*~PII*~PSAV        | 0.01        | 0.01        | PPK                                                                                                           |
|     | ~ <b>POP*~EAD*~WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV</b> | 0.05        | 0.05        | <b>RMADURO, LOBO, RCALDERA</b>                                                                                |
|     | ~POP*EAD*WUI*~DEM*PII*~PSAV           | 0.03        | 0.03        | DILMA1, FFLORES                                                                                               |
|     | <b>POP*~EAD*~WUI*DEM*~PII*~PSAV</b>   | <b>0.01</b> | <b>0.01</b> | <b>FUJIMORI3</b>                                                                                              |

Notes: Symbol {~} means absence of the condition. In grey: configurations with populist presidents. Complex solutions.

Consistency of all configurations and solutions is 1 (100% of cases of each configuration have the outcome absent).

Frequency and consistency cut-off: 1

Source: Own elaboration.

(Zelaya, Correa, and Fujimori during their third term, and Uribe and Evo during their second term). Regarding deliberative democracy, populist presidents will improve it when there is an absence of critical juncture and political stability (third term of Fujimori and second term of Uribe).

Participatory democracy will improve under populist presidents when a president is popular and there is political stability, absence of critical juncture and an institutionalised party system (Kirchner, Zelaya, Evo in their first term, Fujimori in his third term, Correa in

his first two terms, and Uribe in his two terms). Finally, populist presidents do not deteriorate the egalitarian component of democracy when there is political stability, and the president is popular (same examples from on participatory democracy except for Fujimori and Zelaya).

We now turn to specific cases to better understand the ambivalence of populism and democracies in each case. Alberto Fujimori's case in Peru is counterintuitive and deserves some attention. During the first years of Fujimori's presidential term (1995–2000), Peru continued to be an authoritarian regime. The Peruvian president, who had come to government for the first time in 1990, led a self-coup two years later, in which, with the support of the Armed Forces, he ordered the dissolution of Congress and the suspension of the activities of the Judiciary (CIDOB, [n.d.](#); Degregori, 2013). Numerous human rights violations were committed during his government (Laplante & Theidon, 2007), so, why was there an improvement in democracy indices between 1995 and 2000? The 2000 elections, in which Fujimori was re-elected for the third time, were described as fraudulent by the opposition and international observers. Opposition parties organised mass protests against the government, who they accused of being authoritarian. The political crisis intensified when a corruption scandal was uncovered involving one of his closest collaborators, Vladimir Montesinos. Fujimori reacted to the crisis by dismissing his collaborator and announcing new elections, but strong political pressure caused him to resign a few months later. Congress rejected his resignation and removed him for 'moral incapacity' (Degregori, 2013). Consequently, the improvement of varieties of democracy in Peru in 2000 was due to the fall of the authoritarian regime and the beginning of the transition to democracy that would culminate in the democratic elections of 2001.

Another case that appears in [Table 3](#) and is worthy of attention is that of Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010). He came to the presidency of Colombia with the promise of fighting the guerrilla groups after the failure of the peace negotiations led by the previous government. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Colombia, which has suffered an armed conflict since the 1960s, was considered a failed state due to its inability to exercise sovereignty over part of its territory (Bejarano & Pizarro, 2004). Uribe had authoritarian temptations: during his government he 'attacked critics as subversive and terrorist, spied on opponents and journalists, tried to weaken the courts, and twice sought to modify the constitution to run for another term' (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2019, p. 176). Furthermore, we know today that there were numerous cases of corruption in this government (Uribe is currently charged by the justice department for procedural fraud and bribery), as well as murders and forced disappearances. Between 2002 and 2008, the Special Justice for Peace (JEP in Spanish) estimated 6402 'false positives', that is kidnappings and systematic homicides of young people from marginal neighbourhoods committed by members of the Armed Forces to pass them off as guerrillas fallen in combat (JEP, 2018; Pizarro, 2017). However, during his two terms, electoral rules were respected, direct participation mechanisms were used (referendum, Community Action Boards) and judicial rulings against the president were respected (Uribe complied with the Constitutional Court and did not try to reform the Constitution to stand for a third re-election). Despite Uribe's actions, Colombia not only did not experience democratic backsliding after his term in office, but even improved in some of the varieties of democracy. The favourable socioeconomic situation, the stability of the party system and political stability contributed to sustaining Colombian democracy, which had deteriorated in its electoral,

participatory, and egalitarian dimensions during the government of the non-populist Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002).

Néstor Kirchner (2003–2007) is an example of the ambivalence of populism with democracy. During his presidency, Argentinian democracy slightly deteriorated in its electoral, liberal, and deliberative components (see [Table 2](#)) but improved in its participatory and egalitarian components. Kirchner won the presidency in 2003 with only 22.25% of the vote, after his rival in the second round, Carlos Menem, withdrew from the race. Argentina was beginning to emerge from the serious economic crisis of 1999–2002 and, due to the lack of initial legitimacy, he built his own social base by appealing directly to citizens, and allying to unions, human rights defence associations, and other social organisations (Romanin, 2012; Lucca, 2014). Policies promoted by his government, such as the increase in the minimum wage, the promotion of collective bargaining, the increase in pension coverage and universal social policies, among others (Alonso & Di Costa, 2012), contributed to improving the egalitarian dimension. At this time, populist president Kirchner, although facing a critical juncture, maintained high popularity ratings, and built cross-cutting alliances in Congress that stabilised the party system and favoured political stability.

Another case of ambivalence is Manuel Zelaya (2006–2009). During his term, Honduras experienced backsliding in the electoral and egalitarian varieties of democracy (see [Table 3](#)). It should be noted here that the president suffered a military coup that removed him from power in June 2009. This fact conditions the scores in the V-Dem democracy indices. Despite the above, the country maintained or improved in the liberal and participatory components of democracy. Zelaya's first measure as president was to sanction the Citizen Participation Law, promoted by his party in Congress. His government alternated traditionally right-wing policies, such as the militarisation of public security, with left-wing policies such as decreeing free enrolment in educational centres, raising the minimum wage, promoting environmental protection policies, and confronting foreign transnationals (CIDOB, n.d). However, his riskiest political move was in foreign policy, promoting the entry of Honduras, first, in Petrocaribe, and later, in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), which brought his government closer to the governments of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela (Peetz, 2014). Likewise, Zelaya showed authoritarian attitudes by confronting Congress, the high courts, the media, the Armed Forces and even his own political party (Balderacchi, 2017). His proposal to install a 'fourth ballot box' to consult the people on the opening of a National Constituent Assembly, rejected by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal and the Supreme Court of Justice, was the argument used by the military to remove him from power by force (Felipe Otero, 2013). In a politically stable country, but with little popular support for democracy, Zelaya's populist government reflected the dilemma between two ways of understanding democracy very well: as a system of checks and balances to prevent abuses by the executive power or as a mechanism to achieve popular sovereignty and provide greater participation to citizens (Rivas, 2020). He opted for the second option, undermining some components of democracy, while, at the same time, improving other aspects including the participatory component.

Evo Morales is a peculiar case that appears as an example of both democratic backsliding and, at the same time, of no backsliding or improvement, depending on his presidential period and the varieties of democracy considered. During his first period (2006–2009),

Bolivia maintained or improved the participatory and egalitarian components of democracy but regressed in the liberal and deliberative components. Morales promoted a constitutional process that culminated in a new constitution approved with strong popular support. The new constitution expanded civil rights, gave the regions greater self-government, recognised the national peculiarities of indigenous populations, and abolished the official status of the Catholic religion (Albro, 2010; Wolff, 2016). However, the increase seen in the mechanisms of participatory democracy was accompanied by an increase in the attributions to the executive power and the deterioration of the autonomy of civil society (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2011). Likewise, the social policies of his government reduced illiteracy, poverty, and inequality, while expanding health coverage and promoting a more inclusive democracy that was not exempt from contradictions due to the sustainability problems of the economic model (Anria, 2016; Bohoslavsky, 2020). In his first years of government, Morales faced a critical juncture with high popularity rating, an institutionalised party system, popular support for democracy and favoured political stability.

After the second presidential period (2010–2014), and on the contrary, Bolivia experienced democratic backsliding in all varieties of democracy, except in the liberal component. The 2012 Media Law that reduced private sector licences and expanded state licences (Molina, 2014), and Morales' candidacy for a second re-election even though the new constitution prevented a third consecutive term, were some of the facts that contributed to the backsliding during this period. Conditions had changed: Bolivia was not experiencing a critical juncture, but the president had lost popularity and some of his policies had caused political instability.

Morales' third presidential term consolidated the trend and Bolivia regressed in all dimensions of democracy. His candidacy for a third re-election, after having been rejected by the people in a referendum, the accusations of fraud during the 2019 elections and, above all, the coup that removed him from power that same year (Colalongo & Rivas, 2022), caused Bolivia to suffer significant democratic backsliding. Added to the president's low popularity was a deterioration in popular support for democracy. Unlike what had happened in Argentina during the Kirchner government, the populist Morales government in Bolivia started out ambivalent in democratic terms but ended up deteriorating all varieties of democracy.

The case of Rafael Correa in Ecuador is quite different from that of Morales. After his two first presidential periods (2007–2009 and 2009–2013), Ecuadorian democracy suffered a slight degree of backsliding, except in the egalitarian component. As had happened during the governments of Zelaya, Kirchner and Morales, the improvement of the socioeconomic situation and the development of infrastructure and social protection policies (Grugel & Riggirozzi, 2018; Nehring, 2012) contributed to the improvement of the indicators of this last component. However, as in other populist cases mentioned, Correa exercised an authoritarian style of government, took advantage of the constitutional process to strengthen the powers of the Executive, changed the constitution to be re-elected for a third time and strongly confronted the opposition and the media (De la Torre, 2014). Additionally, and unlike Kirchner and Morales, his government also confronted Ecuadorian social movements, especially the indigenous movement (Becker, 2013). During his third presidential period (2013–2017), in contrast to what was observed in Bolivia, Ecuador improved in all varieties of democracy, except in the egalitarian component. Rather than seeking re-election for a fourth time, Correa decided to cede the

party's leadership to Lenin Moreno. In addition, new civil rights were consolidated, such as granting the vote to people between 16 and 18 years of age, the equalisation of rights in de facto unions between heterosexual people, the recognition of the rights of emigrants and immigrants and the prohibition of working for those under 15 years of age, among other policies (CIDOB, [n.d.](#)). In his first two terms, Correa had faced a critical juncture with high popularity ratings, political stability, a non-institutionalised party system and little popular support for democracy; while in his third term, in the absence of a critical juncture, he preserved his popularity in conditions of popular support for democracy and a lack of political stability.

The last case of populist ambivalence with democracy which is examined here is the first government of Nicolás Maduro (2013–2019). It must be noted here that Venezuela is an exceptional case. Unlike most Latin American countries with left-wing populist presidents, the country not only experienced deterioration in all dimensions of democracy, but also went from a democratic regime to an authoritarian one (Colalongo & Rivas, [2022](#)). During the Maduro government, Venezuela has maintained or improved the participatory and egalitarian components of democracy. Maduro came to the presidency after the death of Hugo Chávez in 2013 and won the elections in April of that year with serious suspicions of fraud. The serious economic crisis that the country has experienced since 2014 provoked massive protests against the government that were answered with strong police repression. In the 2015 parliamentary elections, the opposition won a majority in the National Assembly and began a recall process against the president, but the process was rejected as the ruling party controlled, and still controls, the mechanisms that could enact such a recall (judicial power, electoral power). Unable to control the legislative power, Maduro called a Constituent Assembly in 2017 in which only pro-government parties participated, with the aim of emptying the National Assembly of power (Pantoulas & McCoy, [2019](#); Salmerón & Salmerón, [2019](#)). The government's authoritarian turn was met by massive protests at home, and with international sanctions against officials and companies abroad, which further aggravated the country's economic crisis (Seelke, [2020](#)). Despite the serious crises, Maduro's authoritarian government has survived not only due to repression, but also to the tactic of 'granting existing institutions the ability to perform a variety of functions traditionally reserved for other institutions' (Corrales, [2020](#), p. 40). The communal councils are a good example of this. These mechanisms of participatory democracy have existed since 2006 and play an important role in decision-making at the local level, especially in rural areas (Rivas, [2016](#); López-Maya, [2018](#)). In fact, one of the main policies to fight the economic crisis, the Local Supply and Production Committees (CLAP) – a mechanism for distributing subsidised food – is based on the participation of these community organisations (Pérez, [2019](#)). The country's non-regression in the participatory and egalitarian components could be due to these types of policies that have been implemented since the Chávez governments.

## Conclusions

A detailed examination of the cases shows that the effects of populism depend on the circumstances. Regardless of the ambivalence of this phrase, what it actually means is that there does not seem to be an unequivocal relationship between populism and democracy, but that it is, precisely, ambivalent. The QCA sheds light on the fact that

not only does the presence of populism not always lead to democratic backsliding, but also that populism can even contribute to the improvement of democracy.

The analysis has confirmed that most of the populist leaders who did not cause democratic backsliding in some periods, specifically maintained, or improved the participatory and egalitarian components of democracy. The necessary condition for the above to occur is that there needs to be political stability. In line with previous studies (Huber & Ruth-Lovell, 2017), populists may promote the participation and the equality of participation but erode others such as electoral or liberal. This is not contradicted by the fact that, in almost all scenarios in which there was democratic backsliding in Latin America, there was a populist president. As Rovira-Kaltwasser (2012) notes, the impact of populism on democracy depends on the cases analysed. We add that it also depends on the presence or absence of other specific conditions.

One of the conditions present in most causal configurations in which populism does not lead to democratic backsliding is the absence of critical junctures. We can conclude that the absence of critical juncture is a necessary condition for a populist president not to deteriorate the electoral democracy or the liberal and deliberative components of democracy. When populist leaders rule in stable times, they tend to moderate their authoritarian impulses related to the concentration and perpetuation of power and promote their democratic aspirations for social and political inclusion. When populist leaders rule in unstable times, they tend to liberate their authoritarian impulses, in terms of transforming the existing institutional framework into one that is more oriented to their personal interests and those of their people.

Our analysis thus confirms that the absence of critical junctures, political stability, presidential popularity, popular support for democracy, and institutionalisation of the party system prevent democratic backsliding when populists are in office. The main finding is that populist presidents may erode any variety of democracy, given the aforementioned (absent or present) conditions. It is not populism per se that erodes democracies, but a combination of conditions, that may include or not a populist president. However, at the same time, populism may also lead to a strengthening of democracy, any variety of democracy, actually. These findings may seem ambivalent, but that was precisely the main aim of this research: to explore the theoretical and empirical ambivalence of populism regarding democracy, more specifically varieties of democracy.

Thus, electoral democracy requires all the sufficient conditions except institutionalisation of the party system, the absence of which favours the maintenance/improvement of electoral democracy. In liberal democracy, three sufficient conditions are needed: popular support for democracy, political stability, and an institutionalised party system. In participatory democracy, in addition to these three, the popularity of the president is needed. Finally, in deliberative and egalitarian democracies, the only sufficient condition is political stability.

The findings also stress the need to continue with empirical studies, either quantitative or qualitative, to nuance the existing literature to bring it more in line with existing populist governments, and not so much with the researchers' prejudices. Discussions about the effects of populism on democracy take place in a theoretical-normative field and the positions respond, above all, to speculations based on how democratic institutions should work (Mudde & Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012).

Literature on populism and democracy needs more in-depth empirical studies to disentangle the puzzle. In this sense, scholars should continue to conduct studies that allow us to understand how populism works in democracy. Only in this way will we be able to see the whole picture. For now, this article shows that populism is not a homogeneous phenomenon, it seems to be neither *good* nor *bad* per se for democracy.

## Notes

1. We chose 'democratic backsliding' instead of other concepts such as 'autocratization' because it is not limited to electoral democracy (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019, p. 1096) and it is also a broad term that can 'constitute democratic breakdown or simply the serious weakening of existing democratic institutions for undefined ends' (Bermeo, 2016, p. 6).
2. We are fully aware of the temporal variance and time-sensitivity of the outcome condition; still, since the cases are presidencies and not presidents themselves, we believe by implementing a crisp-set QCA the time variance can be addressed, because in the sufficiency analyses, we can identify individual presidents in different presidencies and different varieties of democracy.
3. We tried alternative calibrations of the conditions, and results do not significantly differ from those displayed in the article.
4. Do not confuse the last name of the presidents with the last name of authors cited in the text.
5. Coverage represents the proportion of cases that have documented outcomes and are included in the configuration; the higher the coverage, the higher the proportion of outcomes explained (i.e., covered) by the configurations and the solution (group of configurations). Consistency measures the proportion of cases that belong to the configuration or solution, and in fact do have the outcome; the higher the consistency, the more explanatory power (i.e. consistency) the configuration/solution has. In our case, consistency is always 1.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Notes on contributors

**José Manuel Rivas** is an assistant professor at the University of Salamanca. He received a Ph.D. in political science from University of Salamanca. His research lines are political leadership, elites, representation and conflict resolution.

**Asbel Bohigues** is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Valencia. He holds a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Salamanca. He is also the assistant editor of the journals *América Latina Hoy* and *Revista Latinoamericana de Opinión Pública*. His research lines include comparative politics, democracy and elites, with a regional specialisation in Latin America.

**Rodolfo E. Colalongo**, a Ph.D. in Sociology, Theory, and History of Political Institutions from the University of Salerno, Italy, is a lecturer at the Faculty of Finance, Government and International Relations and a researcher at the Center for Research and Special Projects – CIPE – on issues related to populism, democracy, foreign policy and international relations.

## ORCID

José Manuel Rivas  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5115-8022>

Asbel Bohigues  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9875-7743>

Rodolfo Colalongo  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6200-4363>

## References

- Ahir, H., Bloom, N., & Furceri, D. (2018). *World Uncertainty Index*. Stanford.
- Akkerman, A., Mudde, C., & Zaslove, A. (2014). How populist are the people? Measuring populist attitudes in voters. *Comparative Political Studies*, 47(9), 1324–1353. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414013512600>
- Albro, R. (2010). Confounding cultural citizenship and constitutional reform in Bolivia. *Latin American Perspectives*, 37(3), 71–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X10364034>
- Alonso, G., & Di Costa, V. (2012). Cambios y continuidades en la política social Argentina (2003–2010). *GIGAPP Estudios Working Papers*, 2(11), 1–23. <https://www.gigapp.org/ewp/index.php/GIGAPP-EWP/article/view/19>.
- Anrí, S. (2016). Delegative democracy revisited: More inclusion, less liberalism in Bolivia. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(3), 99–108. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0037>
- Anselmi, M. (2017). *Populism: An introduction*. Routledge.
- Arditi, B. (2003). Populism, or, politics at the edges of democracy. *Contemporary Politics*, 9(1), 17–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1356977032000072486>
- Balderacchi, C. (2017). Political leadership and the construction of competitive authoritarian regimes in Latin America: Implications and prospects for democracy. *Democratization*, 25(3), 504–523. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2017.1388229>
- Becker, M. (2013). The stormy relations between rafael correa and social movements in Ecuador. *Latin American Perspectives*, 40(3), 43–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X13479305>
- Bejarano, A. M., & Pizarro, E. (2004). *Colombia: The partial collapse of the state and the emergence of aspiring state-makers*. Springer.
- Bermeo, N. (2016). On democratic backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), 5–19. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0012>
- Bohigues, A. (2021). *Élites, radicalismo y democracia: un estudio comparado sobre América Latina*. Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.
- Bohoslavsky, J. P. (2020). Development and human rights in Bolivia: Advances, contradictions, and challenges. *Latin American Policy*, 11(1), 126–147. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lamp.12181>
- Canovan, M. (1999). Trust the people! populism and the two faces of democracy. *Political Studies*, 47(1), 2–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00184>
- Canovan, M. (2004). Populism for political theorists? *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 9(3), 241–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1356931042000263500>
- Canovan, M. (2005). *The people*. Polity.
- Cardoso, F. H., & Faletto, E. (1996). *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina: ensayo de interpretación sociológica*. Siglo XXI.
- Carlin, R. E., Carreras, M., & Love, G. J. (2020). Presidents' sex and popularity: Baselines, dynamics and policy performance. *British Journal of Political Science*, 50(4), 1359–1379. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123418000364>
- Carlin, R. E., Hartlyn, J., Hellwig, T., Love, G. J., Martinez-Gallardo, C., & Singer, M. (2019). *Executive Approval Database 2.0*. [www.executiveapproval.org](http://www.executiveapproval.org).
- Casullo, M. E. (2019). *¿Por qué funciona el populismo? El discurso que sabe construir explicaciones convincentes de un mundo en crisis*. Siglo XXI.
- CIDOB. (n.d.). *Biografías de líderes políticos*. [https://www.cidob.org/biografias\\_lideres\\_politicos](https://www.cidob.org/biografias_lideres_politicos).
- Claassen, C. (2020). Does public support help democracy survive? *American Journal of Political Science*, 64(1), 118–134. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12452>
- Colalongo, R., & Rivas, J. M. (2022). Populismo y democracia en América Latina. Los casos de Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador y Venezuela (1994–2020). *Desafíos*, 34(2), 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/desafios/a.11079>
- Corrales, J. (2020). Authoritarian survival: Why maduro hasn't fallen. *Journal of Democracy*, 31(3), 39–53. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2020.0044>
- Degregori, C. I. (2013). *La década de la antipolítica: auge y huida de Alberto Fujimori y Vladimiro Montesinos*. IEP Ediciones.
- De la Torre, C. (2010). *Populist seduction in Latin America*. Ohio University Press.

- De la Torre, C. (2014). The people, democracy, and authoritarianism in Rafael Correa's Ecuador. *Constellations (oxford, England)*, 21(4), 457–466. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12117>
- De la Torre, C. (2017). Populism in Latin America. In C. Rovira-Kaltwasser, P. Taggart, P. Ocha Espejo, & P. Ostiguy (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of populism* (pp. 195–213). Oxford University Press.
- De la Torre, C., & Peruzzotti, E. (2008). *El retorno del pueblo: populismo y nuevas democracias en América Latina*. FLACSO Ecuador-Ministerio de Cultura del Ecuador.
- Dornbusch, R., & Edwards, S. (2007). *The macroeconomics of populism in Latin America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Gelepathis, M. (2018). Institutional mismatch, party reputation, and industry interests: Understanding the politics of private-heavy pension systems. *Political Studies*, 66(3), 735–751. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321717726923>
- Goertz, G., & Starr, H. (Eds.). (2002). *Necessary conditions: Theory, methodology, and applications*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Grugel, J., & Riggirozzi, P. (2018). New directions in welfare: Rights-based social policies in post-neoliberal Latin America. *Third World Quarterly*, 39(3), 527–543. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1392084>
- Hawkins, K. A., & Rovira-Kaltwasser, C. (2017). The ideational approach to populism. *Latin American Research Review*, 52(4), 513–528. <https://doi.org/10.25222/larr.85>
- Holzinger, K., Kern, F. G., & Kromrey, D. (2020). Explaining the constitutional integration and resurgence of traditional political institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Political Studies*, 68(4), 973–995. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719884712>
- Huber, R. A., & Ruth-Lovell, S. P. (2017). Mind the gap! populism, participation and representation in Europe. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 23(4), 462–484. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12280>
- Huber, R. A., & Schimpf, C. H. (2016). Friend or foe? Testing the influence of populism on democratic quality in Latin America. *Political Studies*, 64(4), 872–889. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12219>
- JEP. (2018). *Asesinatos y desapariciones forzadas presentados como bajas en combate por agentes del Estado*. <https://www.jep.gov.co/macrocasos/caso03.html>
- Jiménez-Polanco, J. (2010). República Dominicana: crecimiento macroeconómico y estabilidad política cersus desigualdad social e insatisfacción popular. *Revista de Ciencia Política*, 30(2), 479–498. [http://doi.org/10.4067/s0718-090\(2010000200016](http://doi.org/10.4067/s0718-090(2010000200016)
- Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A., & Mastruzzi, M. (2011). The worldwide governance indicators: Methodology and analytical issues. *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law*, 3(2), 220–246. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1876404511200046>
- Krook, M. L. (2010). Women's representation in parliament: A qualitative comparative analysis. *Political Studies*, 58(5), 886–908. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2010.00833.x>
- Laclau, E. (2012). *La Razón Populista*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist theory: Toward a radical and plural democracy*. Verso.
- Laplanche, L. J., & Theidon, K. (2007). Truth with consequences: Justice and reparations in post-truth commission Peru. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 29(1), 228–250. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2007.0009>
- Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2019). *How democracies Die*. Crown.
- López-Maya, M. (2018). Socialismo y comunas en Venezuela. *Nueva Sociedad*, (274), 59–70. <https://biblat.unam.mx/hevila/Nuevasociedad/2018/no274/5.pdf>
- Lucca, J. B. (2014). Conflictos y realineamientos de los actores sociales y políticos durante el gobierno de Néstor Kirchner. *Sudamérica: Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, (3), 27–50. <http://fh.mdp.edu.ar/revistas/index.php/sudamerica/article/view/1049>
- Lührmann, A., & Lindberg, S. I. (2019). A third wave of autocratization is here: What is new about it? *Democratization*, 26(7), 1095–1113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1582029>
- Mainwaring, S., & Pérez-Liñán, A. (2023). Why Latin America's democracies are stuck. *Journal of Democracy*, 34(1), 156–170. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2023.0010>
- Meijers, M. J., & Zaslove, A. (2021). Measuring populism in political parties: Appraisal of a new approach. *Comparative Political Studies*, 54(2), 372–407. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414020938081>

- Meléndez, C., & Kaltwasser, C. R. (2021). Negative partisanship towards the populist radical right and democratic resilience in Western Europe. *Democratization*, 28(5), 949–969. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.1883002>
- Mény, Y., & Surel, Y. (Eds.). 2001. *Democracies and the populist challenge*. Springer.
- Moffitt, B. (2020). *Populism*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Molina, F. (2014). Las relaciones entre los medios y el gobierno de Evo Morales: de la polarización a la hegemonía. *Journal de Comunicación Social*, 2(2), 45–76. <https://doi.org/10.35319/jcomsoc.201421091>
- Mudde, C., & Rovira-Kaltwasser, C. (2012). *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or corrective for democracy?* Cambridge University Press.
- Mudde, C., & Rovira-Kaltwasser, C. (2013). Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary populism: Comparing contemporary Europe and Latin America. *Government and Opposition*, 48(2), 147–174. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2012.11>
- Müller, J. W. (2017). *What is Populism?* Penguin.
- Munck, G. L. (Eds.). 2007. *Regimes and democracy in Latin America. Theories and methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Nehring, R. (2012). *Social protection in Ecuador: A new vision for inclusive growth*. Policy Research Brief (No. 28). International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth. <https://econpapers.repec.org/paper/ipcpcbri/28.htm>.
- Ostiguy, P., & Moffitt, B. (2020). Who would identify with an “empty signifier”? The relational, performative approach to populism. In P. Ostiguy, F. Panizza, & B. Moffitt (Eds.), *Populism in global perspective: A performative and discursive approach* (pp. 47–72). Routledge.
- Otero, P. (2013). El sistema de partidos de Honduras tras la crisis política de 2009. ¿El fin del bipartidismo? *Colombia Internacional*, 79(79), 249–287. <https://doi.org/10.7440/colombiaint79.2013.09>
- Panizza, F. (2005). Introduction. In B. Ardit, S. Barros, G. Bowman, & D. Howarth (Eds.), *Populism and the mirror of democracy* (pp. 1–31). Verso.
- Pantoulas, D., & McCoy, J. (2019). Venezuela: An unstable equilibrium. *Revista de Ciencia Política*, 39(2), 391–408.
- Papada, E., & Lindberg, S. (Eds.). (2023). *Defiance in the face of autocratization. Democracy report 2023*. University of Gothenburg-Varieties of Democracy Institute.
- Peetz, P. (2014). ¿De hacendado a revolucionario? Mel Zelaya y el giro hacia la izquierda del gobierno hondureño. *Iberoamericana (madrid, Spain)*, 9(33), 181–186.
- Pérez, G. (2019). Los Comités Locales de Abastecimiento y Producción (CLAP) bajo el enfoque basado en Derechos Humanos. *Revista Estudios de Políticas Públicas*, 5(1), 71–88. <https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-6296.2019.52575>
- Pérez-Liñán, A. (2007). *Presidential impeachment and the new political instability in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press.
- Peruzzotti, E. (2017). Conceptualizing Kirchnerismo. *Partecipazione e Conflitto*, 10(1), 47–64. <https://doi.org/10.1285/i20356609v10i1p47>
- Piñero Rodríguez, R., & Rosenblatt, F. (2020). Stability and incorporation: Toward a new concept of party system institutionalization. *Party Politics*, 26(2), 249–260. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068818777895>
- Pizarro, E. (2017). *Cambiar el futuro*. Debate.
- Plattner, M. F. (2010). Democracy’s past and future: Populism, pluralism, and liberal democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), 81–92. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.0.0154>
- Postel, C. (2007). *The populist vision*. Oxford University Press.
- Ragin, C. C. (2000). *Fuzzy-set social science*. Chicago University Press.
- Ragin, C. C. (2008). Measurement versus calibration: A set-theoric approach. In J. M. Box-Steffensmeier, H. E. Brady, & D. Collier (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political methodology* (pp. 174–198). Oxford University Press.
- Rihoux, B., & Ragin, C. C. (2009). *Configurational comparative methods*. SAGE Publications.
- Rivas, J. M. (2016). Hacia la democracia directa: los Consejos Comunales en Venezuela. *Temas*, (85–86), 99–106.

- Rivas, J. M. (2020). El dilema del político en las democracias representativas. In M. Alcántara, & P. Cardona (Coords.) (Eds.), *Dilemas de la representación democrática* (pp. 181–207). Tirant lo Blanch.
- Romanin, E. A. (2012). De la resistencia a la integración. Las transformaciones de la Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo en la “era Kirchner”. *Estudios Políticos (Medellín)*, 41(41), 36–56. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.espo.14337>
- Rosanvallon, P. (2020). *El Siglo Del Populismo*. Galaxia Gutenberg.
- Rovira-Kaltwasser, C. (2012). The ambivalence of populism: Threat and corrective for democracy. *Democratization*, 19(2), 184–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2011.572619>
- Rovira-Kaltwasser, C. (2018). How to define populism? Reflections on a contested concept and its (mis)use in the social sciences. In G. Fitz, J. Mackert, & B. S. Turner (Eds.), *Populism and the crisis of democracy. Volume 1: Concepts and theory* (pp. 62–78). Routledge.
- Rovira-Kaltwasser, C., & Van Hauwaert, S. M. (2020). The populist citizen: Empirical evidence from Europe and Latin America. *European Political Science Review*, 12(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773919000262>
- Ruth-Lovell, S. P. (2018). Populism and the erosion of horizontal accountability in Latin America. *Political Studies*, 66(2), 356–375. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321717723511>
- Ruth-Lovell, S. P., & Grahn, S. (2023). Threat or corrective to democracy? The relationship between populism and different models of democracy. *European Journal of Political Research*, 62(3), 677–698. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12564>
- Ruth-Lovell, S. P., Lührmann, A., & Grahn, S. (2019). *Democracy and populism: Testing a contentious relationship*. V-Dem Working Paper, 91. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3471132](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3471132).
- Salmerón, M., & Salmerón, C. (2019). ¿Por qué Nicolás Maduro sigue en el poder pese al colapso de Venezuela. *Notes Internacionales*, (211). [file:///c:/users/user/downloads/notes+211\\_melissa+salmerón+&+carlos+salmerón\\_cast.pdf](file:///c:/users/user/downloads/notes+211_melissa+salmerón+&+carlos+salmerón_cast.pdf)
- Schilling-Vacaflor, A. (2011). Bolivia's new constitution: Towards participatory democracy and political pluralism? *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies | Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, 0(90), 3–22. <https://doi.org/10.18352/erlacs.9248>
- Schneider, C. Q., & Rohlfing, I. (2013). Combining QCA and process tracing in set-theoretic multi-method research. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 42(4), 559–597. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124113481341>
- Schneider, C. Q., & Wagemann, C. (2012). *Set-theoretic methods for the social sciences. A guide to qualitative comparative analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Seawright, J., & Gerring, J. (2008). Case selection techniques in case study research: A menu of qualitative and quantitative options. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2), 294–308. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912907313077>
- Seelke, C. R. (2020). Venezuela: Overview of US sanctions. *Current Politics and Economics of South and Central America*, 13(1), 21–27.
- Stanley, B. (2008). The thin ideology of populism. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 13(1), 95–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310701822289>
- Taggart, P. (2001). Populism and the pathology of representative politics. In Y. Mény & Y. Surel (Eds.), *Democracies and the populist challenge* (pp. 269–288). Springer.
- Taguieff, P. A. (1995). Political science confronts populism: From a conceptual mirage to a real problem. *Telos*, 103(103), 9–43. <https://doi.org/10.3817/0395103009>
- Tännsjö, T. (1992). *Populist democracy: A defence*. Taylor & Francis.
- Urbinati, N. (1998). Democracy and populism. *Constellations (oxford, England)*, 5(1), 110–124. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.00080>
- Weyland, K. (2001). Clarifying a contested concept: Populism in the study of Latin American politics. *Comparative Politics*, 34(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/422412>
- Weyland, K., & Madrid, R. L. (2019). *When democracy trumps populism: European and Latin American lessons for the United States*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wolff, J. (2016). New constitutions and the transformation of democracy in Bolivia and Ecuador. In A. Schilling-Vacaflor (Ed.), *New constitutionalism in Latin America: Promises and practices* (pp. 183–202). Routledge.