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Parties and Populism in Latin America

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Since the onset of mass politics in early 20th century Latin America, populism has exerted a transforming effect on party systems and political representation. Populism has contributed to the breakdown of party systems in some countries, the realignment of political competition in others, and the reconfiguration of party systems in a number of cases. It has brought new voters into the political arena, shifted the political loyalties of old ones, and altered the associational bases of civil society. Populism has created new social and political cleavages, and it has forged new patterns of linkage between parties, citizens, and social actors. Much of what we recognize in the political landscape of Latin America can be traced to the impact of populist movements.

Clearly, populism's political effects are highly varied, and they are often unpredictable. Populism sometimes erupts with little or no warning, and while some populist movements are ephemeral in character, leaving few traces behind, others become embedded in political institutions with remarkably durable effects. Given this variability and unpredictability, it is inherently difficult to develop generalizable theories about the causes and consequences of populism. Indeed, scholars have struggled even to reach a consensus on the meaning of the concept and its essential empirical properties (Weyland 2002).

Populism, however, is not a random political occurrence. Neither is it a simple product of political voluntarism, despite its association with charismatic leadership. By focusing on the relationship between populism and party system transformation, this essay tries to advance our theoretical understanding of the causal conditions that give rise to populism and the political effects of different variants of populist mobilization. Populism, I argue, is a permanent possibility where representative institutions are weak, fragile, or ineffective at articulating and responding to social concerns. The prospects for populism, however, are magnified during the “critical junctures” that have marked the transition from one political and economic era to another in modern Latin America. These periods of transition are often characterized by institutional crisis or dealignment, and by the political mobilization of different types of social actors—conditions are especially conducive to populist movements.

In turn, the institutional effects of populism— that is, whether it contributes to the decomposition, realignment, or recomposition of party systems— depends on the relative mobilizational capacities of populist figures and their opponents, as well as the character of the socio-political cleavages they form. In general, the labor-incorporating variants of populism associated with the critical juncture that marked the onset of industrialization and mass politics in early 20th century Latin America produced patterns of party system realignment and recomposition with highly durable institutional legacies (Collier and Collier 1991). The late 20th century critical juncture triggered by the demise of import substitution industrialization and the transition to market liberalism had quite different effects. Although it also spawned new variants of populism, these tended to be embedded in larger processes of social dislocation and political deinstitutionalization, even where significant political cleavages were formed. The institutional legacies of contemporary populist movements, therefore, remain highly uncertain.

As we will see, populism— a form of political mobilization that posits and fosters division between “the people” and entrenched elites— nearly always poses a challenge to established party systems. Rarely, if ever, is populist mobilization effectively channeled into or contained by well-established parties;¹ it remains the quintessential expression of “outsider” politics. As such, populism typically undermines established party systems by mobilizing the excluded or the alienated behind a new political leadership in frontal opposition to the status quo. In the process, however, it may spawn new parties, civic groups, or social networks that thoroughly transform the political landscape. To paraphrase Schumpeter, then, populist mobilization is a force of “creative destruction” that can breakdown, realign, and rebuild more institutionalized forms of mass political representation. Populism may leave party systems standing— albeit in altered form— but it rarely leaves them unscathed.

Populism, Party Systems, and Critical Junctures in Latin America

To understand why populism tends to thrive during critical junctures in Latin America, it is useful to first identify two different mechanisms by which populist figures can become serious competitors in the electoral arena. To achieve electoral success as a populist outsider, a political entrepreneur must either 1) mobilize support among non-participants, or 2) win over voters who previously supported an established party. The first mechanism, which might be labeled an *activation* process, can be viable in a context of widespread political exclusion or withdrawal. In such contexts, large blocs of potential voters, or latent constituencies, are available for mobilization, conditional upon their electoral enfranchisement and the capacity of a populist leader to activate non-participants around an agenda of political inclusion and/or social reform. By definition, then, an activation process entails a significant expansion of electoral

participation, unless (hypothetically) the mobilization of new voters is offset by a demobilization of traditional voters. In the latter case, a basic shift would occur in the social composition– but not the size– of the electorate.

The second mechanism, which might be labeled a *conversion* process, requires that a populist outsider win over voters who are alienated from established parties that they previously supported. Conversion assumes that voters are potentially mobile and that partisan loyalties are contingent rather than fixed. As such, it challenges the notion that electoral mobilization under conditions of universal suffrage will “freeze” partisan alignments as socio-political cleavages become institutionalized and voting behavior becomes habituated (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Converse 1969). Conversion may occur if a populist outsider articulates new issues that are salient to voters but neglected by established parties, or that otherwise fail to map onto existing cleavage lines (see Hug 2001). More likely perhaps– at least in contemporary Latin America– conversion may occur when a populist outsider mobilizes disillusioned voters against the political class and the established parties they lead. Where support for established parties has been eroded by economic crises, perceptions of widespread corruption, or a chronic inability to resolve social and economic hardships, populist outsiders can employ anti-system appeals to mobilize newly-detached or alienated voters.

Clearly, activation and conversion processes are not mutually exclusive. An astute populist outsider may well prove capable of both mobilizing non-participants and converting erstwhile but alienated supporters of established parties. What matters, however, is that both of these strategies pose formidable challenges to established party systems. At a minimum, populist mobilization realigns party systems by forcing established parties to share the electoral arena with a major new power contender. Under conversion, realignment occurs as votes are

transferred from an established party or parties to an emerging populist rival, invariably weakening the former. Under activation, established parties may retain their votes but lose vote shares as a populist rival captures a slice of an expanded electorate.

Such forms of realignment, while disruptive for established party systems, at least leave one or more traditional parties intact to compete against a rising populist alternative. As such, they represent a process of change that comes mixed with elements of continuity. More thorough patterns of change are found, however, when populist mobilization is associated with a wholesale rejection of the political establishment, culminating not in systemic realignment but rather in a breakdown or decomposition of the party system. Under decomposition, voters abandon traditional parties *en masse*, relegating them to the margins of the political system— and possibly leading to the extinction of some parties. Decomposition may, of course, be only a temporary stage before the recomposition of a new party system— an interregnum, so to speak, between two quite different party systems. Party systems that decompose, however, generally do not quickly recombine. Indeed, it is not clear that they must recombine at all, in any but the most minimal sense of providing partisan labels to register candidates running for public office. What follows decomposition, therefore, is highly uncertain, as organizational constraints on political choices are relaxed, and the maneuvering space of political actors is magnified.

What is it about critical junctures, then, that make them susceptible to these mechanisms of populist mobilization and party system change? Critical junctures are watershed periods of political change, when political institutions across a range of countries adjust– in different ways– to a common set of societal pressures or challenges. More specifically, as used here, critical junctures correspond to major, cross-national shifts in the logic of capitalist development that realign states, markets, and social actors. These realignments, in turn, alter the ways in which party systems organize and represent societal interests, define programmatic alternatives, and mediate between states and citizens. These changes often prove disruptive for established party systems, while providing opportunities for emerging competitors, including populist movements.

For example, the labor-incorporating critical junctures studied by Collier and Collier (1991) were tailor-made for the activation mechanism of populist mobilization outlined above.

The oligarchic party systems that emerged during the era of agro-export development in the 19th century were predicated on elite domination and the political exclusion of popular sectors. This exclusion was grounded in both institutional and structural conditions– namely, suffrage restrictions that denied citizenship rights to popular sectors, and a pre-industrial social order that provided few workers to be mobilized and kept peasants subject to semi-feudal forms of landlord control. The critical juncture that marked the onset of mass politics in the early decades of the 20th century was triggered by underlying patterns of economic modernization and social mobilization: industrialization and urbanization created new middle and working classes, while trade unionization generated powerful pressures for an extension of social and political citizenship rights. In many countries, populist movements took the

lead in activating urban (and sometimes rural) popular sectors and articulating their social and political claims. In the process, they often eclipsed traditional oligarchic parties and realigned party systems along a new axis of competition that divided elite and popular sectors. They also played a central role in the adoption of import substitution industrialization (ISI) policies that sharply expanded the developmental, regulatory, and social welfare functions of capitalist states following the collapse of the agro-export development model in the Great Depression of the 1930's.

This process of activation and political incorporation proved highly conducive to institution-building, and it bequeathed highly durable institutional legacies in many countries. Labor-incorporating critical junctures transformed civil society by creating new class-based collective actors—most prominently, labor unions, but also peasant movements in a number of countries. These societal actors, in turn, were linked to parties and sometimes states via new corporatist institutions of interest intermediation that provided representation and material rewards in exchange for a measure of political control. Likewise, new mass-based populist parties were formed – such as the PRI in Mexico, the Peronist party in Argentina, APRA in Peru, and Democratic Action in Venezuela—that challenged traditional oligarchic parties by mobilizing latent popular constituencies. Finally, states developed new and stronger institutional capacities to promote industrialization, regulate markets, provide social services, and mediate social conflicts.

This state-centric matrix of development (Caverozzi 1994) and its political correlates endured for half a century, until the ISI model exhausted its dynamism and eventually collapsed in the debt crisis of the early 1980's. With the demise of ISI and the adoption of neoliberal stabilization and structural adjustment policies, the representative institutions

associated with nationalistic state-led capitalist development—many of them forged during earlier cycles of populist mobilization-- were plunged into crisis, and a new critical juncture emerged to realign states, markets, and social actors for a new era of globalized economic liberalism. Labor movements were dramatically weakened, and their corporatist linkages to parties and states were loosened or severed as economies were opened to international competition (Oxhorn 1998; Roberts 2002). Meanwhile, historic populist parties were pummeled by economic crises and the social dislocations that accompanied market restructuring; in a strange twist of fate, many of those saddled with governing responsibilities during the critical juncture actually took the lead in the imposition of structural adjustment policies (Murillo 2001; Burgess 2004), further scrambling traditional alignments of support and opposition in party systems.

In short, neoliberal critical junctures during the final decades of the 20th century produced fundamental shifts in the social moorings and socio-political alignments of Latin American party systems. Party systems were undermined by three primary features of the critical juncture. First, severe and in some cases prolonged economic crises—including recessions, financial crises, and hyperinflationary cycles—imposed heavy political costs on incumbent parties throughout the region following the democratic transitions of the 1980s. Where crises were iterative or prolonged, retrospective voting patterns produced anti-incumbent vote shifts that progressively weakened successive governing parties and undermined entire party systems. Second, traditional forms of party-society linkage were eroded by economic crises, market reforms, and their attendant social dislocations. With unions in decline and austerity imposed by fiscal and balance of payments constraints, states retreated from a broad range of regulatory and social welfare functions that previously

allowed parties to secure the support of popular constituencies. Corporatist, clientelist, and programmatic linkages between parties and voters all suffered erosion during this period. Finally, as the “Washington consensus” (Williamson 1990) for market liberalization spread across the region, and even historic populist and leftist parties converged around pro-market policies, the programmatic distinctions that undergirded competitive alignments and provided a basis for partisanship became increasingly blurred. Parties could compete for support on the basis of competence and good governance in the management of market reforms, but they were hard-pressed to offer viable alternatives to a neoliberal model that appeared to be secured by global market constraints and the economic and political leverage of international financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF.

Although these features of the critical juncture were especially disruptive for historic populist and labor-based parties, their effects were hardly limited to them. Even conservative, business-allied, and pro-market parties were challenged by the political costs of economic crises, the erosion of clientelist linkages to low income voters, and the blurring of programmatic distinctions that occurred when their erstwhile populist competitors assumed political responsibility for the adoption of market reforms. Indeed, remarkably few traditional conservative parties took the lead in the process of market liberalization, and even fewer reaped political rewards from the decisive shift in public policies toward their ideological preferences in the 1980s and 1990s. As such, the destabilizing effects of neoliberal critical junctures for party systems were truly systemic in character, rather than concentrated on the parties that were the most deeply embedded in the state-centric logic of the ISI era.

These multi-pronged destabilizing effects proved highly conducive to new cycles of populist mobilization, demonstrating that populism was not restricted to an earlier stage of state-capitalist development, and that it would not be extinguished by the transition to neoliberalism (Weyland 1996; Roberts 1995). In contrast to earlier patterns of populist mobilization, however, which capitalized on the initial activation and political incorporation of excluded latent constituencies, new expressions of populism during the neoliberal critical juncture operated in an institutional environment where universal suffrage was the norm and low-income voters had been previously mobilized by established parties. Consequently, although new populist outsiders might hope to re-activate disenchanted citizens who had withdrawn from politics, successful electoral mobilization inevitably required the conversion of voters who were accustomed to supporting established parties. Typically, this conversion operated through rhetorical attacks on the political establishment or its alleged *partidocracia*, which was blamed for a plethora of societal ills—in particular, political corruption and economic mismanagement. In the discourse of populist outsiders, party elites were an entrenched and self-serving oligarchy that monopolized power and grew increasingly detached from *el pueblo*, whose political redemption could only be secured by a new leadership that emerged from outside the established system.

Nevertheless, populist outsiders did not emerge as major power contenders throughout the region during neoliberal critical junctures, as party systems survived and adapted to the economic transition in a number of countries. Furthermore, where populist outsiders did arise—in countries like Peru, Venezuela, and Ecuador—they varied widely in their policy orientations and patterns of political mobilization and organization. As such, new populist leaders had disparate effects on socio-political cleavages and the nature of

political competition. To explain this variation, a more in-depth comparative analysis of political dynamics during neoliberal critical junctures is required.

Populism and the Political Outcomes of Neoliberal Critical Junctures

The collapse of ISI and the transition to market liberalism posed formidable challenges to party systems throughout Latin America, but they did not foreordain their demise. Whereas party systems in several countries thoroughly decomposed, in other countries they weathered the storm more or less intact, typically by adapting their programmatic orientations and party-society linkages, and sometimes through significant realignments of electoral competition. By the end of the 1990's, the neoliberal critical juncture had drawn to a close, as the momentum for market reform waned, and the Washington consensus was placed on the political defensive by the fallout of the Asian financial crisis, the revival of social protest movements, and the beginnings of a dramatic political shift to the Left. These factors weighed heavily on the “reactive sequences” of the aftermath period that followed the critical juncture—sequences that were often driven by strengthening societal resistance to market liberalism, heavily conditioned by the institutional outcomes and legacies of the critical juncture itself.

These institutional outcomes are analyzed in other work (Roberts, forthcoming), and will be only briefly summarized here. The key point is that neoliberal critical junctures differentiated political outcomes along two primary dimensions: the extent to which party systems adapted or decomposed during the transition to market liberalism, and the extent to which political competition was structured by a stable programmatic divide between supporters and critics of the neoliberal model. The first dimension was shaped by both

historic features of the party systems that developed during the ISI era, and by more short-term political and economic dynamics during the critical juncture itself. Where strong labor movements and labor-mobilizing party systems emerged during the ISI era, the state-centric matrix of development tended to be more advanced, and the transition to market liberalism was more traumatic and politically disruptive in the 1980s and 90s. Economic crises were more severe and prolonged, social dislocation and de-unionization were more pronounced, and party systems were plagued by massive anti-incumbent vote shifts and generalized electoral volatility that opened political space for the rise of new populist outsiders. By contrast, where traditional oligarchic parties of the 19th century remained electorally dominant during the ISI era, the state-centric logic of development was less advanced, and the transition to market liberalism was accompanied by less severe economic crises and higher levels of party system continuity. These conditions made the rise of new populist outsiders less likely. Antecedent party system characteristics and development trajectories thus weighed heavily on the fate of party systems and the prospects for populist outsiders during neoliberal critical junctures, although they were not fully deterministic; where massive social protests accompanied the process of market reform, as in Ecuador, party system decomposition was also a likely outcome of the critical juncture.

Considerable variation also existed on the second key dimension, related to the extent of programmatic structuring of party systems around support and opposition to the neoliberal model. In some countries, electoral competition pivoted on an axis that consistently divided supporters and critics of the neoliberal model, or at least provided voters with a relatively coherent choice between pro-market orthodoxy and alternatives that favored a stronger role for the state in reducing inequalities and extending social citizenship rights. In other

countries, alternatives to neoliberal orthodoxy were poorly defined or electorally insignificant, and no consistent programmatic divide structured electoral competition.

These two dimensions were not tightly coupled together, as the degree of programmatic structuring was at least partially independent of the level of party system institutionalization. As such, these two dimensions can be combined in a 2 x 2 table that identifies four different political outcomes of neoliberal critical junctures, each of which established a new institutional baseline for the aftermath period. Where institutionalized parties remained intact and competed along a programmatic axis, as depicted in the top left cell in Figure 1, the outcome might be labeled *contested liberalism*. Under this outcome, market reforms adopted during the critical juncture were defended by relatively well-organized orthodox supporters within the party system, as well as organized rivals that contested orthodox liberalism and advocated more expansive state developmental and social welfare roles. Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Mexico and El Salvador provide examples of this institutional outcome. In these countries, the critical juncture ended with a programmatic divide between an intact partisan center and/or right that defended market reforms, and a strengthening partisan Left that had largely abandoned socialist objectives and accepted core elements of market liberalism, but which nonetheless gave expression to societal claims for redistributive measures and expanded social citizenship. Crucially, in all of these countries centrist or conservative parties—or, in the Chilean case, military rulers—had overseen the process of market liberalization, allowing leftist parties to mark off their programmatic differences and align electoral competition even as they moderated historic commitments to socialist reform. In all of these countries, relatively stable electoral competition continued in

the aftermath period, with the main leftist party eventually capturing the presidency everywhere but in Mexico, where it fell just short in 2006.

* * * Figure 1 about here * * *

Alternatively, where institutionalized parties remained intact at the end of the critical juncture, but none consistently challenged the neoliberal model, the outcome might be called *neoliberal pluralism*. This outcome is found in the lower left cell in Figure 1. Pluralist competition between established parties existed under this outcome, but it was weakly structured programmatically, as all the major parties had supported or managed the process of market liberalization. Honduras, Costa Rica, Colombia, Argentina, and Paraguay provide examples of this outcome. In these countries, established party systems—typically with two primary parties—survived the critical juncture, with the major parties participating in the reform process and adapting their societal linkages and programmatic positions to the new socioeconomic landscape. Strikingly, however, these party systems proved to be highly prone to disruption, including new expressions of populism, in the reactive sequences of the aftermath period. Colombia’s longstanding two-party system was eclipsed by a conservative outsider candidate running on a national security platform, while left-leaning populist outsiders eroded support for established parties in Costa Rica and Paraguay, with Fernando Lugo breaking the historic stranglehold of the Colorado party in the latter case. In Honduras, the iconoclastic populist leadership of Manuel Zelaya emerged within and deeply split the traditional Liberal Party. Meanwhile, in Argentina, the reactive sequences that followed in the wake of the 2001 financial crisis caused a breakdown of the Radical party and a shift back towards more traditional forms of populist leadership and economic heterodoxy under Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. This pattern of instability in these

countries strongly suggests that neoliberal critical junctures produced more durable institutional legacies where they bequeathed a party system with at least one major contender that consistently offered a programmatic alternative to market liberalism—that is, where contested liberalism rather than neoliberal pluralism was the outcome.

A very different set of outcomes was found in countries where critical junctures led to the decomposition of established party systems and to their displacement by personality-based electoral vehicles or new popular movements. Where dominant personalities did not consistently structure competition along an axis of support and opposition to market liberalism, *serial populism* was the result. This outcome, found in the lower right cell of Figure 1, was characterized by a cycling of dominant personalities in highly fluid competitive arenas that were structured neither by party institutions nor by a central programmatic divide. Peru and Ecuador are the paradigmatic examples of this phenomenon. In these countries, new populist figures emerged during the critical juncture and in the immediate aftermath period to challenge traditional parties and political elites. However, leaders like Fujimori and Toledo in Peru and Bucaram and Gutiérrez in Ecuador generally supported market reforms, and thus did not sharply polarize the political arena along programmatic lines or an elite-mass cleavage. Likewise, all either eschewed party organization or led parties that were little more than vehicles for their personal political aspirations. Consequently, serial populism produced neither durable political alignments nor stable representative institutions; once a dominant personality lost popular support, they were quickly replaced by another.

In Ecuador, where market reforms triggered (and were limited by) the rise of powerful indigenous-led protest movements (Yashar 1995; Van Cott 2005; Lucero 2009), serial populism eventually veered to the left under Rafael Correa in the aftermath to the

critical juncture. Although Correa's populist leadership was largely detached from the country's indigenous movement, his attempts to refound the constitutional order and steer economic policies in a more heterodox direction sharply polarized the political arena. As such, a new and potentially more durable political cleavage grounded in both leadership and programmatic distinctions appears to be forming.

Ecuador, therefore, may well be in transition to the cell of *polarized populism* found in the upper right quadrant of Figure 1, where Venezuela and Bolivia are located. Under polarized populism, the demise of traditional parties during the critical juncture (or, in the Bolivian case, in the reactive sequences of the aftermath period) clears the slate for the rise of new dominant personalities who sharply contest the neoliberal model. Electoral competition is thus poorly institutionalized but highly structured by a central political and programmatic divide that has at least some grounding in elite-mass distinctions. Venezuela under Hugo Chávez clearly provides the paradigmatic example of this outcome, with popular mobilization being heavily directed from above by a charismatic figure who rose to power as a populist outsider. The Bolivian case is a close approximation, but it differs in one fundamental respect: unlike Chávez, the leadership of Evo Morales in Bolivia was spawned by a more autonomous, bottom-up pattern of social mobilization during the anti-neoliberal protest movements that followed the country's critical juncture. Morales' leadership, therefore, may have some populist tendencies and an anti-elite populist discourse, but its origins lie in a pattern of autonomous, bottom-up social mobilization that is not conventionally understood as populist.

What are the implications, then, of serial and polarized forms of populism for the rebuilding of party systems that decomposed during neoliberal critical junctures or the

reactive sequences of their aftermath period? Clearly, party systems that decompose and get displaced by populist figures are very difficult to piece back together. A party like APRA in Peru might retreat to the political margins and then re-emerge to compete much later, but APRA's revival under a chastened and more conservative Alan García in 2006 is better understood as yet another cycle in the pattern of serial populism than as a return to prominence of the party itself. It is far from clear that APRA remains a viable power contender in the absence of its dominant leader. Likewise, there is little to indicate that the traditional parties in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador are capable of leading the conservative, establishment opposition to the more polarizing populist figures that have emerged in those countries.

In contrast to serial populism, the more polarizing forms of populist leadership in these latter countries at least create a central political and programmatic cleavage along which party systems could be rebuilt and aligned. To date, however, conservative oppositions in these countries have woefully failed to congeal around new party organizations. In part, this may reflect the fact that conservative oppositions tend to be the mirror image of their populist rivals; if diverse popular constituencies are held together by their loyalty to a dominant personality, fractious conservative opponents may share little in common other than their antipathy for a populist figure. The failure of conservative party building efforts, however, may also reflect a lack of confidence in their ability to compete in the electoral arena against the crushing popular majorities that have been mobilized by Chávez, Morales, and Correa. Rather than invest in party building efforts with highly uncertain electoral payoffs, conservative elites may well opt to employ other power

resources—such as their economic leverage, media influence, or military ties— to destabilize populist rulers and precipitate their downfall by extra-institutional means.

Likewise, new populist figures have mixed incentives for engaging in party-building activities. Party organizations inevitably constrain a leader's political autonomy; they create bureaucratic interests that may be distinct from those of a leader, and they establish a tier of secondary officials with political interests that need to be accommodated and mediated. Indeed, parties create organizational and human resources that can be utilized by potential political rivals to challenge a leader (McGuire 1997). Furthermore, organization-building is a costly, long-term process that may pay few dividends for leaders with short time horizons that are dictated by electoral calendars or more immediate political battles. Historic populist figures may have needed party organizations to mobilize voters when electoral campaigns were labor-intensive affairs, but in an era of mass communication technologies, leaders can appeal directly to popular constituencies without an expansive network of grass-roots party branches.

Not surprisingly, then, populist figures often dispense with significant party-building activities and opt for direct and unmediated relations with popular constituencies. This is especially the case where populist outsiders challenge established political elites but adopt policy orientations that pose little threat to economic elites. In Ecuador, for example, the legendary populist figure José María Velasco Ibarra adopted an anti-oligarchic discourse and railed against the Liberal and Conservative party establishments (De la Torre 2000). In contrast to his populist counterparts in the ISI era, however, he made little effort to mobilize workers behind a reformist agenda, and no serious attempt to form a party organization. In more recent times, Alberto Fujimori waged battle against Peru's party establishment, but

allied with business elites in the implementation of neoliberal reforms. Fujimori famously created a new party label for each of his four national election campaigns, but did little to build a party organization beyond a small circle of close political collaborators. For these leaders, populist mobilization was largely limited to the electoral arena, and did not entail the organization of followers in either civil society or the partisan sphere.

Where populist leaders build party organizations—or, for that matter, labor unions and other grass-roots civic associations—it is typically because they are contesting both political and economic elites and need to mobilize popular majorities inside and out of the electoral arena as a counterweight to elite power resources (Roberts 2006). For this reason, more polarizing contemporary populist figures like Chávez, Morales, and Correa have made at least some effort to organize their adherents in partisan networks. Not surprisingly, party-building is most prominent in the Bolivian case, where the pattern of social mobilization has been less classically populist. In Bolivia, the social movements that toppled two governments and brought down the party establishment provided a dense network of activists that could be readily incorporated into a new movement-party led by Evo Morales, the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS). Having captured executive office, the MAS now faces the challenge of defining its relationship to the movements that spawned it, as well as its relationship to the leader it elected.

In contrast to the MAS, party building in Venezuela and Ecuador has been much more of a top-down affair, reflecting the independence of Chávez and Correa from social movements at the time they took office. Chávez came into power with a long-standing network of collaborators but little in the way of a party organization. In power, he has engaged in extensive grass-roots organizational work, creating a diverse and constantly-

shifting set of civic groups to mobilize voters and administer social programs, but much of this organizational energy has been deployed outside the ranks of his official party. Attempts to institutionalize his party and consolidate within its ranks other smaller leftist groups have been repeatedly hamstrung by the independence of the latter, and by Chávez's style of autocratic leadership. Correa, on the other hand, launched his electoral campaign in 2006 with only a small circle of friends and collaborators, relying heavily on mass media appeals to mobilize the electorate. Nevertheless, he took significant measures before and after his election to organize followers in proto-party networks that could provide a foundation for party institutionalization in the future.

Clearly, more time is needed to determine whether or not new parties will become institutionalized in these countries. In contrast to the pattern of serial populism, however, these more polarized variants of populism provide a basic socio-political and programmatic cleavage to structure electoral competition—and thus, potentially to align newly-configured party systems.

Endnotes

ⁱ An interesting exception is the populist movement led by Jorge Gaitán in Colombia, who built his political career largely within the traditional Liberal Party. Tellingly, however, Gaitán's charismatic leadership, anti-oligarchic discourse, and support for popular mobilization proved highly divisive within the Liberal Party, and his career was cut short by an assassin's bullet in 1948 when he was the frontrunner in a presidential election campaign.

Figure 1. Political Outcomes of Neoliberal Critical Junctures

Programmatic Structuring of Political Competition	Institutionalized Party System	Non-Institutionalized Party System
Contestation of Neoliberal Orthodoxy	Contested Liberalism (Chile, Uruguay, Brazil Mexico, El Salvador)	Polarized Populism (Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador under Correa)
Low Contestation of Neoliberal Orthodoxy	Neoliberal Pluralism (Honduras, Costa Rica Argentina, Colombia, Paraguay)	Serial Populism (Peru, Ecuador)