# 1 Populism and (liberal) democracy: a framework for analysis

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> Populist movements are widely regarded, especially in Europe and Latin America, as threats to democracy. Yet New Populists explicitly claim to be true democrats, setting out to reclaim power for the people.
>
> – Canovan 2004: 244

## Introduction

One of the most used and abused terms inside and outside of academia is undoubtedly *populism*. At times it seems that almost every politician, at least those we do not like, is a populist. The term has been applied to both Venezuelan left-wing president Hugo Chávez and American right-wing vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin, and to both the radical left Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and the radical right Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ). It has also been hailed as a way to include the underclass and scorned as a programme to exclude minorities. No wonder some authors have called for the abandonment of the use of the allegedly meaningless term (e.g. Roxborough 1984).

We acknowledge the broad usage of the term populism, and the problems associated with that, but attempt to construct a framework within which the term populism has a clear meaning and its relationship to democracy can be studied *empirically*. In fact, most studies that have analysed the tension between populism and democracy tend to make normative and theoretical arguments, but little has been said from an empirical point of view. Moreover, although it is true that this growing body of literature has generated new insights, it relies on very different, and sometimes even contradictory, concepts of both populism and democracy (e.g. Abts and Rummens 2007; Albertazzi and McDonnell 2007; Conniff 1999; de la Torre and Peruzzotti 2008; Decker 2006; Laclau 2005a; Mény and Surel 2000, 2002a; Panizza 2005; Taggart 2000). Having this in mind, this framework ensures the broad applicability (in time and place) of the key concepts of this research topic by adhering to Giovanni Sartori's approach (1970) of so-called minimal definitions

(cf. Collier and Gerring 2009). Accordingly, the main aim of this chapter is to provide a clear conceptual and theoretical framework to guide the individual case studies of the book, ensuring a common core yet leaving space for individual accents.

In the first two sections we define the key terms in the framework: populism and (liberal) democracy. We briefly discuss the main trends in the literature and present clear minimal definitions. In the third section we discuss the different ways in which the relationship between populism and (liberal) democracy has been described in the academic debate. Through a critical analysis of the scholarly literature, and the application of our own definitions, we set out our own position on the relationship between the two. In the next two sections we discuss the two key research questions underlying this edited volume: (1) What are the effects of populist actors on liberal democracies? and (2) under which circumstances do populists constitute a corrective or a threat to the liberal democratic system?

It is critical to understand that our primary concern is populism, not the host ideology it has attached itself to or the person who expresses it. One of the crucial tasks is therefore to separate populism from features that might regularly occur together *with* it, but are not part *of* it. For example, populist radical right parties in Europe share a core ideology of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde 2007); all three features have a strained relationship with liberal democracy, but we are only interested in the effect of *populism* (even though, admittedly, the effects are not always easy to disentangle in reality).

In a similar vein, scholars have convincingly demonstrated that populism in Latin America is compatible with both neoliberalism and state-centred development (Roberts 1995; Weyland 1996, 2001). In fact, even contemporary Europe hosts both left-wing and right-wing populist parties (e.g. Albertazzi and McDonnell 2007; March and Mudde 2005). Accordingly, there is no reason to assume that a certain economic doctrine is a defining attribute of populism. This implies that it makes little sense to define the latter on the basis of a specific set of economic and/or social policies.

Finally, it is important to underline that populism and clientelism are not synonymous. As Herbert Kitschelt and Steven Wilkinson (2007) have recently pointed out, clientelism involves a whole organizational structure (mostly of informal character) in charge of both monitoring voter behaviour and delivering the expected goods to the clientele. Without a doubt, populist leaders in Latin America have shown a propensity to use clientelist linkages, but this does not mean that populism is necessarily related to this kind of linkage (Filc 2010; Mouzelis 1985; Weyland 2001).

## 1.1 Defining populism

One of the reasons that so many different politicians have been called populist is that there are so many different understandings and usages of the term populism. Some are extremely broad and vague, including most of the popular usages that equate populism with campaigning, demagoguery, or 'the mob' (e.g. Canovan 2004; Laclau 2005a; Mudde 2004). But even in the academic literature *populism* is used to refer to a range of very different phenomena and is attached to a broad variety of 'host ideologies' and political actors. While it is impossible, and unnecessary, to debate all existing definitions, we will provide a short overview of the main historical manifestations of populism and a concise discussion of three conceptual approaches – populism as a movement, as a political style, and as a discourse – that are commonly used. Finally, we will provide the *minimal* definition of populism to which we adhere and which is employed by all authors in this volume.

### *1.1.1 A brief conceptual history of the term populism*

The origins of the concept of populism are normally traced back to the end of the nineteenth century, when the Populist Party in the United States and the so-called Narodniki in Russia emerged (Canovan 1981: 5–6). Although the word *populism* appears as a self-description in both cases, the two experiences were very different: While the U.S. Populist Party was, first and foremost, a mass movement commanded by farmers who demanded a radical change of the political system (Hofstadter 1969), the Russian Narodniki was a group of middle-class intellectuals who endorsed a romanticized view of rural life (Walicki 1969). To these two original experiences it is quite common to add a third one, namely the peasant movements that appeared in several parts of Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the inter-war years (Ionescu 1969). The commonality of these movements was in their defence of an agrarian programme in which the peasantry was seen as the main pillar of both society and economy (Mudde 2002: 219).

With the rise of the Great Depression of the 1930s, populism started to emerge also in Latin America. Indeed, it is in this region that populism gained most visibility during the twentieth century, with the cases of Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina and Getulio Vargas in Brazil as the most famous examples (Germani 1978; Weffort 1978). These leaders were actually part of a new generation of politicians, who by appealing to 'the people' rather than to the 'working class' were able to build multi-class coalitions and mobilize lower-class groups (Drake 2009: chapter 6).

In effect, populist parties and movements represented a major challenge to the Marxist left in Latin America, since they were never constrained by ideological orthodoxy, and were thus capable of developing a profile appealing to a broad electorate rather than an intellectual vanguard (Angell 1998).

In Western Europe populism jumped onto the scene only at the end of the last century. Among the few exceptions is the case of Poujadism in France, a populist movement with an eclectic ideology that made a brief breakthrough in the 1950s and did not have a major impact on the political landscape (Priester 2007: 142–58). Between the 1930s and 1970s populism also took root in both Canada and the United States. While in the former populism appeared most notably in the form of the Social Credit movement (Laycock 2005a), in the latter populism gained momentum with the rise of very different figures such as Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and George Wallace (Kazin 1995).

Though this brief and schematic overview of populism's main historical manifestations before the 1980s is far from complete, it is helpful for illustrating that the concept of populism has been applied to a wide range of experiences. Hence, developing a plausible and useful definition of populism is anything but simple. To confront this problem, more than forty years ago a group of well-known scholars participated in a conference held in London under the title 'To Define Populism.' As the report of this conference (Berlin, Hofstadter, MacRae et al. 1968) and the famous edited volume resulting from it (Ionescu and Gellner 1969) reveal, the participants used the term *populism* for such a perplexing variety of phenomena that the organizers seem to have made little effort to establish a minimum definitional agreement. More than forty years later the number of scholars of populism has increased manifold and we are probably even further from a definitional consensus within the scholarly community. This notwithstanding, can we identify a central core present in all the manifestations of populism?

Although certain authors have answered this question negatively (e.g. Canovan 1982; Hermet 2003), many others have tried to develop a conceptual approach with the aim of identifying the elements present in all manifestations of populism. Given that a thorough overview of the existing approaches is beyond the scope of this framework, we will critically examine three notions of populism that are very influential not only inside and outside of academia, but also in the analysis of Europe and the Americas.[1]

[1] Strictly speaking, in the case of Latin America it is possible to identify a fourth approach, which relies on an economic perspective. This approach defines populism as a particular

The first approach conceives of populism as a particular type of political movement. In this respect, the foundational work is probably Seymour Martin Lipset's *Political Man* (1960), which proposed a definition of populism that became highly popular in the study of Latin American politics. According to Lipset, the rise of Perón in Argentina and Vargas in Brazil should be analysed as a phenomenon similar to the rise of fascism in Europe, since both cases stand for the emergence of extremist mass movements. Nevertheless, he argues that there is one key difference between Latin American populism and European fascism: While the former relied on the lower classes, the latter hinged on the middle classes. Following this perspective, Gino Germani (1978) defined populism as a *multi-class* movement organized around a charismatic leader. Seen in this light, the main feature of populism is not only the presence of a strong leader but also, and mainly, the formation of a movement appealing to very heterogonous social groups (Collier and Collier 1991; Conniff 1999; Drake 1978; Oxhorn 1998).

Certainly, the idea that populism tends to foster multi-class alliances is not unjustified. By making use of the notion of 'the people,' populist leaders and parties claim to represent a variety of different groups sharing a common idea: Popular sovereignty has been corrupted by the elites. However, the formation of multi-class alliances is not a defining attribute of populism, but rather a central element of mass politics. As Alan Knight (1998: 238–40) has pointed out, successful political parties such as the Christian democratic and social democratic parties in Europe are characterized precisely by their capacity to mobilize and represent a plethora of social groups, yet we do not refer to these cases as examples of populism. Not by coincidence, Otto Kirchheimer (1965; cf. Krouwel 2003) developed the notion of *Volksparteien* (catch-all parties) to describe those parties able to build a programme that is appealing to voters with very different socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds.

The second approach defines populism as a political style characterized by the promotion of a particular kind of link between political leaders and the electorate, a link structured around a loose and opportunistic

type of macroeconomic policy that is extremely harmful, since in the short run it generates growth and redistribution via increasing state expansion, but in the long run it leads to rising inflation and public debt and thus a major economic crisis (Dornbusch and Edwards 1991; Edwards 2010; Sachs 1989). Although this interpretation has some plausibility for analysing specific cases (e.g. the first government of Alan García in Peru), it is difficult to see why this type of macroeconomic policy is the essential attribute of populism. As Roberts (1995) and Weyland (1996) have pointed out, in the 1990s some Latin American populist actors have employed neoliberal recipes, which were neither 'irresponsible' nor very popular among the electorate (Panizza 2009: chapter 3). Put briefly, it is flawed to assume that a particular type of (economic) policy is a definitional attribute of populism (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2011).

appeal to 'the people' in order to win and/or exercise political power. For instance, Peter Mair (2002: 84) defines populism as "a means of linking an increasingly undifferentiated and depoliticized electorate with a largely neutral and non-partisan system of governance." According to this approach, populism designates a dimension of political action or discourse, and in consequence, it is compatible with all forms of leaders, movements, and parties (Taguieff 1995). Social democratic governments such as those of Tony Blair in the United Kingdom (e.g. Mair 2006) and Gerhard Schröder in Germany (e.g. Jun 2006) are seen as prime examples of this populist style of politics, since in both cases political leaders ruled not only based on surveys and spin doctors, but also against (rather than with) their political parties in order to enact reforms that were allegedly relevant for 'the people.'

The main problem of this approach lies in its propensity to conflate phenomena like demagogy or opportunism with populism, so that the latter is defined in a way that almost all political actors, particularly in campaign periods, can be labelled as populist (Mudde 2004: 543). Hence, by proposing such a broad concept of populism, this approach develops more a catchword than an analytical concept that has discriminating power for undertaking comparative research. In other words, neither the use of spin doctors and surveys, nor the development of pragmatic positions and the avoidance of partisan conflicts is specific to populism.

The third and last approach is a discursive one, whose main exponent is Ernesto Laclau (1977, 2005a, 2005b). Criticizing the economic determinism present in most interpretations of Marx, he developed a theory of populism whereby the latter is understood as a particular political logic, not as the result of particular class alliances. In a nutshell, Laclau maintains that this political logic is characterized by the confrontation of the existing hegemony by means of a discursive construction capable of dividing the social into two camps, namely 'the power bloc' versus 'the people.' This discourse does not emerge by accident, but is rather the product of a three-step process involved in radical politics: first the linking of very different demands, then the formation of a collective identity through the recognition of an enemy (e.g. the establishment), and finally the affective investment in an element (e.g. the leader) that represents 'the people' (Kleis Nielsen 2006: 89).

Although Laclau's theory of populism is interesting, it has serious problems when it comes to analysing populism in more concrete terms. As Yannis Stavrakakis (2004) has indicated, since Laclau – particularly in his last writings – equates populism with politics, the very concept of populism is defined in a way that is not helpful for undertaking empirical analysis. In effect, if populism should be seen as synonymous with

the political, only two very doubtful pathways for research remain possible: Either populism is something omnipresent, or anything that is not populist cannot be considered political. To sum up, Laclau's theory of populism is, on the one hand, extremely abstract, and on the other hand, it proposes a concept of populism that becomes so vague and malleable it loses much of its analytic utility (Mouzelis 1978).

### *1.1.2 Towards a minimal definition of populism*

Obviously, populism is not the only contested concept in the social sciences. In fact, most concepts are contested at some level. Nevertheless, in most cases some basic aspects are above discussion; for example, despite all debate about the true meaning of conservatism, virtually all definitions consider it an ideology or an attitude. But, as we noted before, even this kind of consensus cannot be found in the literature on populism. Since the end of the 1990s, however, an important development in the debate on how to define populism has occurred. This development is related to the rise of new contributions aiming to develop a definition of populism capable of avoiding the problems of conceptual travelling (i.e. the application of concepts to new cases) and conceptual stretching (i.e. the distortion that occurs when a concept does not fit the new cases). To cope with these problems, two main approaches have been employed: radial and classical categorization (Collier and Mahon 1993).

Both radial and classical categorizations seek to confront Sartori's (1970) dilemma of the inversely proportional relation between the intension and extension of concepts: The more defining attributes a concept has (i.e. greater *intension*), the fewer instances it encompasses (i.e. more limited *extension*). The main difference between both types of categorization relies on the way in which they deal with the Sartorian intension–extension dilemma. Given that the radial categorization follows Wittgenstein's idea of family resemblance, it assumes that a phenomenon can be conceptualized on the basis of a pool of defining attributes, which are not shared by all the cases. In other words, none of the cases are exactly the same, but each family member shares several defining attributes with all other members. By contrast, the classical categorization postulates that the defining attributes of a concept must be seen as necessary and sufficient criteria; that is, *all* 'family members' should share *all* defining variables. This means that the classical categorization aims to identify the lowest common denominator between all manifestations of a particular phenomenon.

Although the radial categorization has significant potential in certain areas of the social sciences, we are sceptical about its advantages for the

study of populism.[2] First of all, since the populist label has been attached to such a wide variety of phenomena, it is hard to reach a consensus on the defining attributes of populism in order to build a family resemblance (Sikk 2009). In other words, radial definitions of populism may foster a sort of pseudo-consensus: "Agreement on a term may disguise disagreement on its meaning. In encompassing conceptual diversity, they may perpetuate rather than reduce confusion" (Weyland 2001: 3). In fact, by employing a radial definition it might be the case that different authors stick to their own conceptualizations instead of trying to arrive at a common understanding of the core aspects of populism. Hence, classical categorization is the best way to enhance conceptual clarity and foster cumulative knowledge, particularly when it comes to studying populism from a comparative perspective.

This begs the following question: How do we reach a *minimal* definition of populism? In this regard, it is worth mentioning that at least implicitly almost all concepts of populism share the idea that the latter always alludes to a confrontation between 'the people' and 'the establishment.' As Margaret Canovan (1981: 294) has indicated, "[A]ll forms of populism without exception involve some kind of exaltation of and appeal to 'the people', and all are in one sense or another anti-elitist." Seen in this light, it seems that every manifestation of populism criticizes the existence of powerful minorities, which in one way or another are obstructing the will of the common people.

Following this intuition, and in line with the earlier work of one of the authors, populism is defined here as *a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the* volonté générale *(general will) of the people* (e.g. Mudde 2007: 23, 2004: 543). This means that populism is in essence a form of *moral* politics, as the distinction between 'the elite' and 'the people' is first and foremost moral (i.e. pure vs. corrupt), not situational (e.g. position of power), socio-cultural (e.g. ethnicity, religion),

[2] One of the few examples of the use of a radial categorization to define populism can be found in Roberts (1995), who maintains that Latin American populism should be conceptualized on the basis of five defining attributes that are not always present. These defining attributes are: (1) a personalistic and paternalistic, though not necessarily charismatic, pattern of political leadership; (2) a heterogeneous, multi-class political coalition concentrated in subaltern sectors of society; (3) a top-down process of political mobilization that either bypasses institutionalized forms of mediation or subordinates them to more direct linkages between the leader and the masses; (4) an amorphous or eclectic ideology characterized by a discourse that exalts subaltern sectors or is anti-elitist and/or anti-establishment; (5) an economic project that utilizes widespread redistributive or clientelistic methods to create a material foundation for popular sector support.

or socio-economic (e.g. class). Moreover, both categories are to a certain extent 'empty signifiers' (Laclau 1977), as it is the populists who construct the exact meanings of 'the elite' and 'the people' (de la Torre 2000; Stanley 2008). In more specific terms, we conceive populism as a thin-centred ideology that has three core concepts (the people, the elite, and the general will) and two direct opposites (elitism and pluralism) (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser forthcoming).

As populism is a 'thin-centred ideology,' exhibiting 'a restricted core attached to a narrower range of political concepts' (Freeden 1998: 750), it can be attached to other ideologies, be they thick (e.g. liberalism, socialism) or thin (e.g. ecologism, nationalism). This ideological flexibility is what Paul Taggart (2000) refers to as the chameleonic nature of populism. However, this should not distract us from the clear and distinctive core of populism itself. And, to re-state, we are interested here, first and foremost, in what the populist part of political actors contributes to the political agenda, not the nationalist or socialist or whatever other parts.

It is important to note that this minimal concept is close to many definitions used to study populism in both the Americas (e.g. de la Torre 2000; Hawkins 2009, 2010; Kazin 1995) and Europe (e.g. Art 2011; Pankowski 2010; Stanley 2008). In addition, this minimal concept can and has been applied in empirical research around the globe (e.g. Filc 2010; Jagers 2006; Mudde 2007). Furthermore, Kirk Hawkins (2009, 2010) has proposed a very similar approach for the analysis of Latin American populism and offers an interesting methodology to measure populism through the speeches of chief executives.

How does this minimum definition of populism relate to alternatives put forward in the literature? First, it comes very close to most definitions of populism as a discourse and political style/strategy, in the sense that it agrees on the content, but disagrees on the importance or sincerity. Still, whether the populist really believes in the message distributed or whether populism is a strategic tool is largely an empirical question, which is often almost impossible to answer conclusively (without getting into the populist's head). Second, the definition says nothing about the type of mobilization of the populist actor, an aspect that is central in several definitions of populism in Latin American studies (e.g. Roberts 2006; Weyland 2001). While we do acknowledge a logical connection to certain types of mobilization (e.g. charismatic leadership, direct communication leader to masses, suspicion of strong party organizations), we are as yet unconvinced of the exact status of the relationship: Is it a constitutive element of populism or an empirical consequence? We have encouraged the authors in this volume to investigate this relationship in their empirical analyses.

As we have stated elsewhere (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2011), by criticizing Kurt Weyland's (1996, 2001) definition, we are not downplaying the role of leadership in populism. Populist leaders are indeed very relevant. They not only try to mobilize the electorate, but are also one of the main protagonists in the process of defining the morphology of populist ideology. However, an excessive focus on leadership narrows the analysis to the supply-side of the populist phenomenon, generating a kind of modern version of Carlyle's 'great man theory,' which presupposes that the leader is the main and almost only factor that explains political development. In contrast, an ideological definition of populism takes into account both the supply-side and the demand-side of the populist phenomenon, since it assumes that the formation, propagation, and transformation of the populist ideology depends on skilful political entrepreneurs and social groups, who have emotional and rational motives for adhering to the populist ideology.

## 1.2 Defining democracy

Just like populism, democracy is a highly contested concept in the social sciences (e.g. Keane 2009; Tilly 2007). The debates do not only refer to the correct definition of 'democracy,' but also to the various 'models of democracy' (Held 1996) or the discussion on the so-called 'democracy with adjectives' (Collier and Levitsky 1997). Although this is not the place to delve too deep into this debate, we believe that, to clarify our own position, it is relevant to say something about the way in which democracy has been conceptualized, particularly when it comes to studying its relationship with populism. In other words, we are not interested here in developing a new concept of democracy, or in offering a thorough overview of the existing definitions and theories of democracy. Instead, we will provide a brief outline of our understanding of three key concepts used in the debates on populism: democracy, liberal democracy, and radical democracy.

### *1.2.1 Democracy*

*Democracy without adjectives* is a term often used and seldom defined. Moreover, in most day-to-day usage it refers to liberal democracy, or at least representative or indirect democracy, rather than democracy per se. In our opinion, democracy (*sans* adjectives) refers to *the combination of popular sovereignty and majority rule*; nothing more, nothing less. Hence, democracy can be direct or indirect, liberal or illiberal. In fact, the very etymology of the term 'democracy' suggests that it alludes to the idea of 'self-government of the people,' a political system in which people rule (Przeworski 2010: 8–9).

The most common definition of democracy without adjectives, often used in the literature on democratization, follows Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter, who defined democracy as 'an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will' (1949: 250). In this tradition, democracy means first and foremost a *method* by which rulers are selected in competitive elections. Free and fair elections thus correspond to the defining property of democracy. Instead of changing rulers by violent conflict, the people agree that those who govern them should be elected by majority rule. Although this concept might appear to be too minimalistic for certain scholars, it is worth remembering that billions in the world currently live without this narrow form of democracy (Przeworski 1999).

Moreover, while this certainly is a minimal concept, it is a definition of *representative* democracy, not democracy per se. As Nadia Urbinati and Mark Warren (2008: 392) have rightly pointed out, Schumpeter's and other 'thin' concepts of democracy can be criticized for portraying citizens as a passive entity, but not for denying the problem of representation. Since the contemporary world is marked by the existence of political communities that are much bigger than the old Greek and Italian city–states, the implementation of democracy implies the formation of a political system whereby the people elect representatives who – ideally – defend their interests (Pitkin 1967). To what extent and in which ways (e.g. retrospectively and/or prospectively) this ideal process takes place, is one of the main questions debated in the scholarly literature on democracy (e.g. Alonso, Keane, and Merkel 2011).

### *1.2.2 Liberal democracy*

As already stated, most day-to-day use of the term *democracy* actually refers to liberal democracy (or constitutional democracy), a much more elaborate political system. Since it is almost impossible to find a definition that is above debate, we settle for second best and seek inspiration in the seminal work of Robert Dahl. Although sometimes criticized as conservative (e.g. Skinner 1973) or too minimalistic (e.g. Merkel 2010: 30), Dahl's concept of democracy is not only a very elaborate and demanding system of political freedoms and rights, but also sufficiently parsimonious for undertaking empirical and comparative research. Not by coincidence, his approach is probably the one most widely accepted, particularly in terms of providing a useful definition for the analysis of democracy worldwide (Doorenspleet and Kopecký 2008: 699; Norris 2011: 27).

Before continuing, it is worth mentioning that Dahl reserves the concept of 'democracy' for an ideal political system, which is fully responsive to all its citizens and does not exist in actuality. By contrast, the notion of 'polyarchy' denotes regimes in the real world that ensure certain minimal standards, but fall considerably short of the ideal model. Polyarchies, then, may be thought of as relatively (but incompletely) democratized regimes (Dahl 1971: 8). From this perspective, democracy alludes not only to a particular type of political system, but also to a dynamic and open-ended process that always remains incomplete (Tilly 2007; Whitehead 2002). This is a relevant point, because many citizens might value the democratic order, but at the same time they might be dissatisfied with the way existing democracy works. Therefore, it is impossible to avoid the gap between democratic ideals and existing democracies, so that the latter inevitably lead to 'broken promises,' which in turn may be a positive force for scrutinizing governments and demanding reforms (Bobbio 1987). In the words of Dahl (2001: 3408):

> Because the ideal democratic criteria set extraordinarily high and perhaps unattainable standards, it is altogether possible than an increasing number of citizens in democratic countries might conclude that the institutions of polyarchal democracy are inadequately democratic. If so, the acceptable level for meeting democratic criteria might continue on the upward trajectory traced during the twentieth century.

While it is true that Dahl's body of work has been strongly influenced by Schumpeter, there are at least two important differences between the two. On the one hand, unlike Schumpeter, Dahl is aware of the fact that the survival of polyarchy depends partly on the existence of 'checks and balances,' constitutional principles seeking not only to guarantee the separation of powers, but also to avoid situations in which majorities threaten the fundamental rights of minorities (e.g. Dahl 1982: 87–92; 2000: chapter 6). On the other hand, by developing the notion of 'polyarchy,' Dahl (1989: chapter 9) openly criticizes Schumpeter, because the latter devotes much more attention on political competition than on the problem of inclusion, leading him to conclude that 'the people' should have the right to demarcate who are entitled to participate. Interestingly, Dahl draws an important lesson from this critical debate with Schumpeter, namely the so-called all-subjected principle: Except for children, transients, and persons proved to be mentally defective, all those subjected to political rule within the state boundaries should have the right to participate in the collective decision making process (Näsström 2011).

Having laid out some of the key aspects of Dahl's democratic theory, it is time to consider his empirical approach. To analyse existing democracies or polyarchies, Dahl maintains that we should be aware that

the latter are structured around two separate and independent dimensions: public contestation and political participation. While the former refers to the possibility of freely formulating preferences and opposing the government, the latter alludes to the right to participate in the political system (Coppedge, Alvarez, and Maldonado 2008). Moreover, to ensure the optimization of both dimensions, he believes a set of institutional guarantees is required. The most important of these 'institutional guarantees' are:

(1) Freedom to form and join organizations
(2) Freedom of expression
(3) Right to vote
(4) Right of political leaders to compete for votes
(5) Eligibility for public office
(6) Alternative sources of information
(7) Free and fair elections
(8) Institutions for making government policies dependent on votes and other expressions of preference.

To sum up, liberal democracy is essentially a system characterized not only by free and fair elections, popular sovereignty, and majority rule, but also by the constitutional protection of minority rights. Accordingly, we are dealing with a complex form of government based on the idea of political equality, 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. At the same time, the core aspect of liberal democracy revolves around its ability to provide both public contestation and political participation.[3]

### *1.2.3 Radical democracy*

Radical democracy refers more to an ideal type than to 'real existing democracies.' It is mostly developed in (normative) political theory, but has gained a particular importance in the debate about the relationship between populism and democracy. The two main authors in this respect

[3] It is worth mentioning that in his last book, Dahl (2006) maintains that economic inequality has a negative impact on the functioning of 'real existing' democracies. His main argument is that the very existence of the right to participate in the political system does not guarantee that citizens have the capacity to control, contest, and influence the conduct of the government, because important resources, such as political knowledge and skills, are not equally distributed among the population. As Przeworski (2010: xiii–xiv) has recently argued, "[T]oday citizenship is nominally universal, but many people do not enjoy the conditions necessary to exercise it. Hence, we may be seeing a new monster: democracy without effective citizenship."

are Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), who do not actually present a clear definition of radical democracy. They conceive the latter as an approach that relies on a reinterpretation of Marxism and that aims to confront the dominance of the notion of 'liberal democracy' within the scholarly research. Since Laclau and Mouffe develop an intricate jargon – at least for those unfamiliar with the work of both authors – we think it is helpful to simplify and summarize their argumentation in the following four points.

First, the link between the liberal tradition (rule of law, respect of individual liberty, etc.) and the democratic tradition (equality, popular sovereignty, etc.) is a contingent historical articulation. This means that a liberal state is not necessarily democratic and that it is possible to have democracy without a liberal state (Bobbio 1990; Møller and Skaaning 2011). From this angle, the link between the liberal and the democratic tradition is the result of bitter struggles, which do not have a clear end and lead to continuous tensions (Mouffe 2000). One of these tensions is the emergence of populist forces that, based on the notion of popular sovereignty, are prone to question the legitimacy of liberal institutions such as the rule of law (Žižek 2008: chapter 6).

Second, liberal democracy tends to the sacralization of consensus and does not acknowledge that democracy inevitably means fighting for something and against someone. In this sense, the idea of radical democracy is close to the notion of the 'democratization of democracy' developed by Boaventura Sousa de Santos and Leonardo Avritzer (2005): While the institutions of liberal democracy represent an important achievement, they have to be amended and complemented by institutional innovations that aim not only to empower excluded sectors of society, but also to strengthen new forms of political participation and representation, such as social movements and global advocacy networks. However, these institutional innovations do not emerge by themselves. They are the outcome of disputes and conflicts that sometimes might even transgress the established liberal institutions.

Third, radical democracy refers to the construction of a new hegemonic project, which intends to articulate quite different demands. Therefore, radical democracy has to build an adversary in order to counter the '*divide et impera*' principle. In fact, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) note that one of the ironies of the contemporary world lies in the fact that, on the one hand, there is a plethora of groups fighting for a growing number of emancipatory demands (from the right of sexual minorities to the ecological discourse and the defense of animal rights), and on the other hand, these different groups are able neither to develop a common identity nor to share an organizational umbrella in order to challenge the current state of affairs.

Fourth and finally, a radical democratic project is based not on the distinction between friend and foe in the sense of Carl Schmitt (1932), but rather on the notion of 'agonistic pluralism,' a clear distinction of adversaries that fight to achieve a better order, although no victory can be final (Mouffe 2005b). Accordingly, it would be erroneous to think that deliberative procedures can offer a proper solution to the current problems of democracy, since the very process of deliberation relies on the idea of rational consensus and leaves no space for taking into account passions, affects, and power struggles. Hence, radical democracy argues that the conflictual dimension of politics is one of the main drivers of democracy. This implies that social antagonisms can be tamed or sublimated, but can (and should) never be completely eliminated.

In conclusion, the core attribute of radical democracy relies on the denunciation of oppressive power relations and the struggles for transforming this situation. Laclau and Mouffe oppose this model of permanent conflict to liberal democracy's model of enforced consensus. Although we do acknowledge the importance of the contributions of Laclau and Mouffe and their many followers to the debate on populism, we do not consider radical democracy a viable concept for the kind of research that we aim for in this book. First and foremost, it lacks a clear definition. Consequently, this approach might be helpful for opening up the canon of democracy, but is problematic when it comes to studying the ambivalent relationship between populism and democracy in empirical rather than in normative and/or theoretical terms.

Moreover, we are not convinced that liberal democracy *by definition* excludes a conflictual model of politics. In essence, Laclau and Mouffe seem to react most directly to the theoretical models of deliberative democracy of Jürgen Habermas and the 'Third Way' of Anthony Giddens, which have only partial relevance in real life. And even against the consensual model of democracy, so prominent within Western Europe (Lijphart 1999), stands the equally viable conflictual model prevalent in the Anglo-Saxon world, which are also liberal democracies. In addition, Dahl (1970, 1989) is not blind to the existence of struggles that do not always have a clear democratic solution, and this is why he argues that under certain conditions (e.g. multi-ethnic states), it may be worth trying to dissolve the political association into more harmonious units or promote a process of secession.

## 1.3 Populism and democracy: friend *and* foe

In most circles and countries the term *populism* has a negative connotation, whereas *democracy* has a clear positive connotation. Often populism

is seen as a threat to democracy, undermining its key values and striving for an alternative, an authoritarian system. As recently as April 2010, European Union President Herman Van Rompuy declared populism the biggest danger to Europe (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 April 2010). However, this negative position is not shared everywhere and, moreover, is something that has evolved. Particularly in the United States, early scholarship on populism was largely sympathetic towards populism (e.g. John D. Hicks), until the emergence of the highly negative 'revisionist' scholarship of the 1960s (e.g. Richard Hofstadter) followed by a more positive 'school of counter revisionists' led by Norman Pollack (Conway 1978: 101–7).

That said, in all times and across all regions opinions have differed on the relationship between populism and democracy; for example, against Gino Germani's negative interpretation of Latin American populism stood Laclau's positive assessment, and Hofstadter's vehement critique of U.S. populism is countered by highly sympathetic accounts by Lawrence Goodwyn or Michael Kazin. Even in contemporary Europe, where right-wing populism is broadly considered a 'normal pathology' (Scheuch and Klingemann 1967; see Mudde 2010), authors like Torbjörn Tännsjö (1992) argue that populism is the purest form of democracy, while Laclau maintains that populism is the '*sine qua non* requirement of the political' (2005a: 154).

Our aim here is to come to a non-normative position on the relationship between populism and democracy based on our definitions (see Sections 1.1 and 1.2).[4] We develop our position primarily on the basis of a conceptual analysis, without of course being blind to the empirical realities. In short, we argue that populism can be both a corrective and a threat to democracy. More specifically, at the theoretical level, populism is essentially democratic (e.g. Canovan 1999; Laclau 2005a; Tännsjö 1992), but it is ambivalent towards *liberal* democracy (e.g. Canovan 2002; Decker 2006; Mudde 2007; O'Donnell 1994; Plattner 2010).[5]

[4] We accept the argument that all science is implicitly normative. Our point here is that our prime concern is not normative but empirical, and that we do not define liberal democracy as 'good' or 'better' than populism, even if most of the contributors in this book, including us, might actually think so.

[5] Interestingly, in '*A Preface to Democratic Theory*,' Dahl (1956) implicitly refers to the tensions between populism and liberal democracy, distinguishing and confronting two theories of democracy: the Madisonian approach and the populistic approach. While the first postulates the avoidance of the 'tyranny of the majority' as the goal to be maximized, the second aims to achieve popular sovereignty and political equality at any cost. In addition, Dahl develops here his notion of polyarchy as a type of political rule, which inevitably combines elements of the Madisonian and the populistic approach.

As said, the relationship between populism and democracy is straightforward and positive. At least in theory, populism supports popular sovereignty and majority rule. Or, as John Green (2006) has stated: "Populism, at its root, is democratic in nature, even if many populist leaders (once they reach power) may not be democratically inclined." Hence, one would expect populists to play a particularly positive role during the first phases of democratization, by giving voice to the people, attacking the authoritarian establishment, and pushing for the realization of free and fair elections (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2010).

The relationship to representative democracy is also predominantly positive. Many authors have argued that populism is fundamentally opposed to representation (e.g. Taggart 2002), but that is an overstatement. Although many populists indeed rally against the representatives in their country, or argue that the system of representation fails and should be extended with plebiscitary instruments, they oppose the wrong *kind* of representation, not representation per se (e.g. Mudde 2004). Populists accept representation by someone of 'the people,' not of 'the elite' (remember that this distinction is moral, not situational).

Populism and liberal democracy maintain a much more complicated relationship, finally (e.g. Mudde 2007: ch.6). Quintessentially, the ambivalence of the relationship is directly related to the internal contradiction of liberal democracy, that is, the tension between the democratic promise of majority rule and the reality of constitutional protection of minority rights (e.g. Canovan 1999; Mény and Surel 2002b). In this struggle, populism is clearly on the side of majority rule. Moreover, as an essentially monist ideology that believes in the existence of a 'general will of the people,' populism is hostile towards pluralism and the protection of minorities. Accordingly, populism is based on the primacy of the political, which means that any other institutional centre of power, including the judiciary, is believed to be secondary. After all, 'the general will of the people' cannot be limited by anything, not even constitutional protections, that is, *vox populi, vox dei* (Mudde 2010: 1175).

In addition, it might be the case that populism emerges partly as a product of the very existence of democracy. Since the latter is based on the periodic realization of free and fair elections, it provides a mechanism by which the people can channel their dissatisfaction with the political establishment. At the same time, democracy generates aspirations, which if not satisfied might well lead to political discontent and thus a fertile soil for the rise of populism. As Benjamin Arditi (2004) has indicated in his dialogue with Margaret Canovan (1999), there are good reasons to think that populism follows democracy like a shadow.

## 1.4 Populist effects on the quality of democracy: corrective *and* threat

Having laid out the theoretical relationship between populism and democracy, we turn our attention to the empirical question of how populist actors can affect 'real existing democracies,' 'polyarchies' in Dahl's terms. In this regard, it is worth repeating that we use a minimal definition of liberal democracy, which is most useful for distinguishing liberal democracies from competitive autocracies.[6] As O'Donnell (1996: 35) has pointed out, Dahl's concept establishes a crucial cut-off point:

> one that separates cases where there exist inclusive, fair, and competitive elections and basic accompanying freedoms from all others, including not only unabashed authoritarian regimes but also countries that hold elections but lack some of the characteristics that jointly define polyarchy.

Nevertheless, by using Dahl's definition of liberal democracy, we are confronted with the intension–extension dilemma highlighted by Giovanni Sartori (1970): While the notion of polyarchy can be applied to a wide range of cases and avoids conceptual stretching (i.e. high extension), it has little analytical leverage to notice differences within the category of 'real existing democracies' (i.e. low intension). Consequently, we are aware of the fact that liberal democratic regimes, according to Dahl's minimal definition, might show a great level of variety, since they can be organized in very different ways (e.g. parliamentary vs. presidential systems) and might have more or less state capacity to supervise democratic decision making and put its results into practice (Tilly 2007: 15).

Accordingly, the cross-regional nature of this project implies that we are dealing deliberatively with very different liberal democratic regimes. Indeed, the result of the 'third wave of democratization' has been a notable expansion of polyarchies around the world, which share the core attributes of the previously mentioned minimal definition, but differ in many other aspects. Not surprisingly, the academic debate has moved gradually from explaining regime transitions to assessing the *quality* of democracy (Mazzuca 2010; Morlino 2004; Offe 2003). This concern is directly linked to Dahl's approach, since he underlines that (liberal) democracy is first of all an ideal, which never can be fully achieved. In other words, reforms to improve democratic quality are crucial not only

[6] Although potentially interesting, we are not interested in analyzing whether authoritarian regimes employ a populist ideology with the aim of consolidating this kind of political systems (e.g. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Iran or Aleksandr Lukashenka in Belarus; on the latter, see Matsuzato 2004).

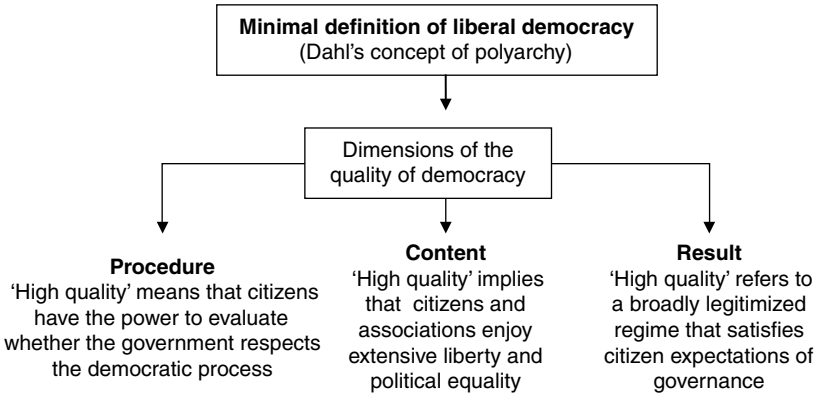


Figure 1.1. Dimensions of the quality of democracy.

for consolidating 'new' democracies, but also for deepening 'old' democracies (Whitehead 2002: 25–7).

In sum, there are very different types of democratic regimes, which can have a higher or lower level of democratic quality. Thus, we are interested in analysing in which ways populism can be a corrective and/or a threat to the quality of democracy. In order to answer this question, it is worth taking into account Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino's (2005) distinction of three dimensions of the quality of democracy: procedure, content, and result. Although these three dimensions may well be complementary, it cannot be ruled out that there are certain tradeoffs between them. Indeed, populist actors usually claim that the results of the democratic regime are poor, and to remediate this situation they propose to adjust the procedural dimension of the democratic system (e.g. strengthen popular sovereignty at the cost of constitutionalism). Beyond the question of possible tradeoffs, as Figure 1.1. shows, each of these dimensions refers to an ideal state of affairs, that is, areas in which a democracy can improve its performance in order to achieve durable legitimacy and solve its internal problems.

Populism can affect each dimension of the quality of democracy in *both* negative and positive terms. Borrowing Andreas Schedler's (1998) terminology, consider two hypothetical scenarios. In one scenario, populism improves the quality of democracy by facilitating its *deepening* (in the case of consolidated democracies) or its *completion* (in the case of unconsolidated democracies). In the other, populism deteriorates the quality of democracy by facilitating a process of democratic *erosion* (in the case of consolidated democracies) or of democratic *breakdown* (in the case of unconsolidated democracies).

The scholarly literature is full of suggestions of how populism can be a corrective or threat to democracy, but many of these are not necessarily relevant, because they relate to effects of the host ideology (e.g. nationalism or socialism) or to aspects not part of our definition of populism (e.g. type of mobilization or clientelism). Nevertheless, we offer in this chapter some of the positive and negative effects populism is expected to have on the quality of democracy. The term 'positive effect' refers to instances when populism strengthens the quality of democracy, whereas 'negative effects' means that populism weakens the quality of democracy. Given that many of these effects are simply claimed, or follow from studies using different definitions of populism, they are to be treated as hypotheses in the case studies. Moreover, while the authors took these possible effects into account in their country studies, they were encouraged to go further and include whatever other positive or negative effects they came across.

Briefly, we expect populism to strengthen political participation, yet weaken public contestation (Rovira Kaltwasser 2012). In terms of Dahl's two dimensions of polyarchy, populism is believed to increase participation by the *inclusion* of marginalized groups in society but limit (the possibilities for) contestation by *centralizing* power in the executive and *undermining* the power of counter-balancing powers.[7] Seen in this light, populism reminds us that there is always a tension between popular will and constitutionalism: While an excessive emphasis on the former could lead to a 'tyranny of the majority,' too much weight on the latter could bring about opaque processes of decision making and therefore increasing discontent among the population (Plattner 2010). In effect, the very concept of 'checks and balances' suggests the existence, or at least the real possibility, of an imbalance (Armony and Schamis 2005: 116).

### *1.4.1 Positive effects*

When populism is seen as a corrective to the quality of democracy, emphasis is mostly put on the inclusion of marginalized groups of 'the people.' However, there are many different aspects related to this point, some more on the input and other more on the output side of democracy (Easton 1965). For heuristic purposes, we have tried to disentangle the various aspects, realizing perfectly well that they are not always distinguishable in practise.

[7] We thank Kurt Weyland for pointing us to the link to Dahl (1971) and Kirk Hawkins for the succinct summary of the argument.

(1) Populism can give voice to groups that do not feel represented by the elites, by putting forward topics relevant for a 'silent majority' (e.g. issues such as immigration in Europe or economic integration in Latin America).
(2) Populism can mobilize excluded sections of society (e.g. 'the underclass'), improving their political integration.
(3) Populism can represent excluded sections of society by implementing policies that they prefer.
(4) Populism can provide an ideological bridge that supports the building of important social and political coalitions, often across class lines, thus providing a key dynamic element in the evolution of party systems and related modes of political representation.
(5) Populism can increase democratic accountability by making issues and policies part of the political realm (rather than the economic or judicial realms).
(6) Populism can bring back the conflictive dimension of politics and thus help revitalize both public opinion and social movements in order to foster the 'democratization of democracy.'

### *1.4.2 Negative effects*

Whereas most positive effects relate to the inclusion of some previously – subjectively or objectively – excluded groups of society, many negative effects mentioned in the literature relate to the marginalization of specific groups of society, the weakening of political institutions, culminating in the undermining of minority rights and protections. Reflecting the main position in the literature, which sees populism as a threat to the quality of democracy, we list the following potential negative effects.

(1) Populism can use the notion and praxis of popular sovereignty to contravene the 'checks and balances' and separation of powers of liberal democracy.
(2) Populism can use the notion and praxis of majority rule to circumvent and ignore minority rights.
(3) Populism can promote the establishment of a new political cleavage (populists vs. non-populists), which impedes the formation of stable political coalitions.
(4) Populism can lead to a moralization of politics, making compromise and consensus extremely difficult (if not impossible).
(5) Populism can foster a plebiscitary transformation of politics, which undermines the legitimacy and power of political institutions (e.g. parties and parliaments) and unelected bodies (e.g. organizations

such as central banks or inspections offices) that are indispensable to 'good governance.'

(6) Ironically, by advocating an opening up of political life to non-elites, populism's majoritarian, anti-elite thrust can easily promote a shrinkage of 'the political' and cause a contraction of the effective democratic space.

## 1.5 Which circumstances determine the effects of populism?

As we have argued, populism can have positive and negative effects on the quality of democracy. Many of these effects have been documented in empirical studies of populist actors, even if many of these studies used a different definition of populism or did not distinguish between the effects caused by populism and those caused by its 'host ideology.' Still, little has been theorized about the circumstances under which populism can and is used for good rather than evil. In other words, under which circumstances does populism become a corrective rather than a threat for (liberal) democracy?

It makes sense to look first at the two key variables in that relationship: populism and democracy. We divide both into a strong and weak group: the distinctions are between populism in government (strong) and populism in opposition (weak) and between consolidated democracies (strong) and unconsolidated democracies (weak). Certainly, democratic 'consolidation' is another contested concept within the realm of the social sciences. In consonance with O'Donnell (1996), we maintain that the notion of consolidated democracy does not allude to a 'complete' or 'perfect' form of government, but rather to a political regime in which free and fair elections are institutionalized as the mechanism whereby access to political power is determined. This means that consolidated democracies show a great level of variance, since they have different institutional arrangements (e.g. parliamentarian or presidential system), and might be more or less prone to the development of specific liabilities (e.g. corruption, abuse of executive decree, weak accountability, etc.) (Mazzuca 2010: 335–6).

Hence, by using the notion of (un)consolidated democracies, we adhere here to the approach developed by Schedler, who maintains that "[t]he term 'democratic consolidation' should refer to expectations of regime continuity – and to nothing else. Accordingly, the concept of 'consolidated democracy' should describe a regime that relevant observers expect to last well into the future – and nothing else" (1998: 102). Our key suppositions are: (i) populists will be more effective when democracy is weak;

Table 1.1. *Relationship by strength of populism and democracy*

| Democracy \ Populism | Opposition | Government |
|---|---|---|
| Consolidated | *The Vlaams Blok/Belang in Belgium (since 1991)*<br>The Reform Party in Canada (1987–2000) | *FPÖ/BZÖ in Austria (2000–2007)*<br>Hugo Chávez in Venezuela (since 1998) |
| Unconsolidated | *SPR-RSČ in the Czech Republic (1992–1998)*<br>Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico (2006) | *Alberto Fujimori in Peru (1990–2000)*<br>Vladimír Mečiar in Slovakia (1992–8) |

or, to put it in another way, the strength of democracy influences the depth of the populism's impact on democracy; (ii) populists will prioritize negative effects in government and positive effects in opposition; in other words, the strength of populism influences the depth of its impact on democracy. This leads us to the following key hypotheses:

*Hyp 1) Populism in government has stronger effects on democracy than populism in opposition.*
*Hyp 2) Populism in government has more negative effects on democracy than populism in opposition.*
*Hyp 3) Populism has stronger effects on unconsolidated democracies than on consolidated democracies.*

On the basis of these two key variables we constructed a two-by-two table that has structured the selection of case studies (see Table 1.1). We have chosen two cases per type of relationship between populism and democracy, always ensuring that one case is from Europe (East or West) and the other from the Americas (North or South). The case studies of the book will analyse empirically the effect of the main populist actor in their country on democracy, guided by the conceptual and theoretical framework of this chapter. We build from the cases with the hypothesized smallest and most positive effects to those with the hypothesized largest and most negative effects.

(1) *Populism in opposition in consolidated democracies.* In this first case liberal democracy is much stronger than populism. We hypothesize that populism will make small positive effects to the quality of democracy, as there is little room for change (including progress). We selected two countries with strong oppositional populist forces to increase the

chances of any effect of the populists. In Chapter 2 Sarah de Lange and Tjitske Akkerman analyse the case of Belgium, with a sizeable *Vlaams Blok/Belang* presence in parliament (i.e. since 1991), while David Laycock focuses on Canada during the height of the Reform Party (1987–2000) in Chapter 3.

(2) *Populism in opposition in unconsolidated democracies.* In this case both populism and democracy are relatively weak. Given that they have no hold on actual power, we hypothesize that populists will be more a corrective than a threat to the quality of democracy. They will focus on criticizing the various problems of the new democracy, including corruption, inefficiency, and exclusion and will push for democratic reforms. Séan Hanley discusses the Czech Republic when the SPR-RSČ was in parliament (1992–8) in Chapter 4, while Kathleen Bruhn analyses the case of Mexico when Andrés Manuel López Obrador challenged for the presidency (2006) in Chapter 5.

(3) *Populism in government in consolidated democracies*. Here, both populism and democracy are strong. We hypothesize that populists will have a moderate either positive or negative effect, as they will be confronted by a resilient liberal democracy. Moreover, it is worth noting that populism's overall impact on the liberal democratic regime will depend on its electoral force of the former, that is, the existence of a majority supporting the populist actors in government, particularly when it comes to undermining the 'checks and balances.' In Chapter 6 Franz Fallend analyses Austria under the Schüssel governments (2000–7), and in Chapter 7 Kenneth Roberts critically assesses the situation of Venezuela under President Chávez (since 1998).[8]

(4) *Populism in government in unconsolidated democracies*. In this last situation populism is believed to have the strongest position vis-à-vis democracy. We hypothesize that populism will be most effective in this situation. However, we also predict the most negative effects, as populism in power leads to polarization and consequently defensive measures from the government, which will threaten the strength or development of liberal democratic institutions and protections. The

[8] It is important to note that there is a significant difference in executive power between presidents in a presidential system and (junior) coalition parties in a parliamentary system. In addition, we are of the opinion that Venezuela is a prime example of a consolidated democracy within Latin America: Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s almost every country of the region saw the rise of authoritarian regimes, Venezuela has maintained relatively free and fair elections since 1958. As Philippe Schmitter (2010: 28) has recently argued, "[t]he revival of 'delegative democracy' or 'hyperpresidentialism' in Latin America with the recent spate of regimes imitating that of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela does not seem (to me) to be the result of failed transitions, but rather a reaction to practices of *consolidated* democracies that were excessively collusive (Venezuela) or that were insensitive to the demands of excluded ethnic groups (Bolivia and Ecuador)" (our italics).

cases that we selected for this category are Peru under President Fujimori (1990–2000), discussed by Steve Levitsky and James Loxton in Chapter 8, and Slovakia under Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar (1992–8), analysed by Kevin Deegan-Krause in Chapter 9.

After having explained the case selection, we can develop a set of more detailed research questions about the ambivalent relationship between populism and liberal democracy. In concrete terms, we propose the following additional hypotheses:

*Hyp 4) Populism in opposition in consolidated democracies will have modest positive effects on the quality of democracy.*
*Hyp 5) Populism in opposition in unconsolidated democracies will have moderate positive effects on the quality of democracy.*
*Hyp 6) Populism in government in consolidated democracies will have moderate negative effects on the quality of democracy.*
*Hyp 7) Populism in government in unconsolidated democracies will have significant negative effects on the quality of democracy.*

Obviously, there are other circumstances that can influence the nature of populist effects on liberal democracy. However, we do not intend to develop more hypotheses in this introductory chapter, since this would probably generate more confusion than clarity at this stage. In other words, we are aware of the fact that many other factors may determine whether populism works as a threat or a corrective for democracy. Future studies can use the framework developed here and propose additional hypotheses.

## Conclusions

In this introductory chapter we have laid out our views on the relationship between populism and democracy, which constitutes the conceptual and theoretical framework of this edited volume. First, we provided definitions of populism, democracy, and liberal democracy. Second, and following from this, we argued that, in theory, populism has a clearly positive relationship to democracy, but an ambivalent relationship to liberal democracy. In other words, populism can be both a corrective and a threat to liberal democracy. Third, we suggested possible positive and negative effects of populism on the quality of existing democracies. And fourth, we hypothesized which conditions influence the *strength* and *type* of the effects.

We have asked the other contributors to the book to accept, at least for this particular endeavour, our definitions and the consequent ambivalent relationship between populism and liberal democracy. This has fostered

a coherent and consistent edited volume and ensured that the different individual case studies speak to each other. However, we also very much encouraged constructive critical feedback on the suggested potential effects and on the hypothesized factors affecting them (Sections 1.4 and 1.5), and provided ample space for each contributor to consider additional and alternative effects and factors. In the concluding chapter, we assess the validity of the presented framework and discuss the various critiques and innovations presented in the empirical chapters. We end the volume with some suggestions for future research on the relationship between populism and democracy.

In summary, this introductory chapter does not intend to say the last word on how to examine the ambivalent relationship between populism and democracy. We simply aim to offer a clear and concise framework for analysing the impact of populism on democracy in *empirical* rather than in normative and/or theoretical terms. Accordingly, the approach presented here can be used and complemented by future studies. Given that there is almost no cross-regional research on populism, we hope that this edited volume contributes to opening up the canon on the study of populism and its impact on democracy.