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This paper questions the orthodox institutionalist perspective and its reliance on rational choice theory in the literature on Latin American populism. Examining two articles on populism by Kurt Weyland and Kenneth M. Roberts, it argues that this dependence on rational choice theory promotes an overemphasis on elite leadership to the detriment of ideology and popular agency. Using a Marxist perspective, based on Laclau (2005) and using two case studies, President Fujimori of Peru (1990-2001) and President Chávez of Venezuela (1999-present), this paper argues that movements articulated with neoliberalism have much lower levels of popular involvement, while those influenced by socialism have a greater balance between populist leadership and bases, hence proving that ideology does have a determining impact on populist formations.

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Introduction

Much analysis on populism is dominated by an institutionalist perspective. According to this perspective populist regimes, regardless of their ideological persuasion, are dominated by the leader to the detriment of popular participation and engagement. Hence it is argued that populism is in essence anti-democratic, that it inhibits genuine democratic participation and consequently the construction of solid, long-lasting democratic institutions. This paper seeks to question this perspective and show that the relationship between leader and led is much more complex than that portrayed by this new-institutionalist perspective and that ideology can have a determining impact on the organisational forms that emerge from that relationship.

In order to do this the paper will first of all review and critique two articles which are emblematic of this approach, by two of the best known analysts of populism, Kurt Weyland and Kenneth M. Roberts. In this review we will identify rational choice as the principal theory which underpins this perspective, leading to an overemphasis on the protagonism of the leader, based primarily on the leader's 'thirst for power', while underemphasising the role of popular agency and the motivational effects on both of ideology. While neither of these authors can be deemed a 'strict' rational choice theory, in these papers at least their analysis depends to a great degree on such a perspective.

We will then go on to critique rational choice theory in detail, arguing that its claims to universality and its over-emphasis on individualistic 'utility maximisation' limit its explanatory power in theory on populism. Instead, in the following section, we offer an alternative Marxist perspective, based on the works on populism by Ernesto Laclau, arguing that concepts of ideology and class are determining factors in the formation of populist movements. Finally, using as examples the populist movements of President Chávez of Venezuela (1999-present) and President Fujimori of Peru (1990-2001) we seek to show that a populist movement which is articulated to socialism will tend towards denser organisational networks than one articulated to neoliberalism. Our main conclusion, therefore, is that it is ideology and not simply the 'goal-seeking behaviour' of leader, or led, which can dictate the shape and form of populist movements.

Institutionalist perspectives in theory on Latin American populism

In order to identify specific characteristics of the institutionalist perspective in the literature on populism, we shall now examine in a comparative manner an article each by two of the foremost scholars in the field. In the first article, by Kurt Weyland, it is claimed that populism, or as he terms it, neopopulism – neoliberal populism - has affinities with neoliberals which are primarily based on mutual advantages which maximise their goals (Weyland, 2003). In the second article Kenneth M. Roberts analyses the differing types of organisation found in populism, maintaining that these organisations are in essence instruments to "push through social reforms and to wage conflict in extra-electoral spheres of contestation" (Roberts, 2006: 129). While both analyses we shall contend, are valuable contributions which enliven debate on populism, both limit their explanatory power because of their narrow rational choice focus and the universalist assumptions behind it. Firstly, let us briefly summarise both articles before analysing them in a comparative manner.

Weyland's and Robert's theories on populism

In the first article by Kurt Weyland, published in 2003, he argues three main interrelated points. Firstly, populism should only be viewed politically and

that this perspective flows from the supposition that populist leaders are solely pragmatic actors whose actions are based on their own 'thirst for power'. Class differences and popular mobilisation and organisation are of import only insofar as they tie into populist leaders' strategies for seeking and maintaining power. Secondly, based on this supposition of populist leaders' thirst for power, neopopulists adapted to neoliberalism purely because it served those purposes, and not because of any ideological affinity they may have had with it. Ideologies, therefore, are simply sets of policies assumed by populist leaders to ensure their power, and, hence, can equally be discarded at will. Thirdly, Weyland maintains that neopopulists will continue to emerge and will remain tied to neoliberalism as it is the only possible option in the current context for them to maintain power. Populist leaders in this conception therefore are archetypical 'utility maximisers' devoid of ideology or class loyalty.

In a more recent article Roberts echoes many of Weyland's points, but in a more subtle and nuanced manner (Roberts, 2006). Roberts's thesis revolves around the impact of elite resistance to socio-economic change on the depth and extent of popular mobilisation and organisation in populist movements. In effect Roberts is attempting to "explain why populism takes divergent organizational forms in different national settings or stages of socioeconomic and political development" (Roberts, 2006:128). Using Fujimori and Chávez as case studies, Roberts argument is as follows: Populist leaders eschew or create popular organisations in function of their need to survive politically. If elite resistance is likely populist leaders will mobilise and organise followers for 'political combat'. If on the other hand little elite resistance is expected, due to, for example, reforms being of a neoliberal variety, then popular organisations will not be used by the leaders. Mass organisation therefore emerges solely as a 'utility maximisation' tactic on the part of the leader to gain and maintain power and the extent of organisation is simply contingent on the degree of resistance expected from elites.

In Weyland's and Roberts's conceptions of populism, there is an overemphasis of the power hunger of the leader and the subservience of the 'masses' to the leader's power strategies at the expense of popular protagonism and ideology. The existence or not of popular organisation and the ideological colour of the populist movement are mere mechanisms which serve the perpetuation of the leader's power. Their accounts therefore are underpinned by 'utility maximisation' explanations for leader and follower actions drawn from rational choice theory. In order thus to examine the limits of this perspective, in the next section we will look at what Green and Shapiro call the 'pathologies of rational choice theory'.

Populism and the 'Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory'

The limits of rational choice theory

Rational choice theory is based on a number of key assumptions, according to Green and Shapiro (1994). The first is that people act rationally when they attempt to achieve 'utility maximisation' in what they do. That is that we human beings will usually do what we think will best serve our objectives, whatever they may be. A further assumption is that the relevant maximising agents are individuals. Collective action is simply the action of individuals when they choose to achieve their objectives collectively rather than individually – but the objectives remain those of the individual in league with others with similar individualised objectives. A major task then of rational choice theory is to explain collective outcomes by reference to

the maximising actions of individuals. A further important assumption for our present purposes is that rational choice theory aspires to be universal and interpersonal variations are 'assumed away'. As we have seen, all individuals act to achieve what they judge to be in their own individual best interests. Even when they act collectively to achieve what could be called 'a greater good'- say universal health care – it is presumed that they do so in order to improve their own individual lives primarily and not those of others.

These assumptions present some difficulties for rational choice theorists. One difficulty is that the assumption that all individuals act in order to maximise their own benefit, is contradicted by the fact that people vote in large numbers despite the fact that there is little statistical chance that their vote will directly benefit their lives. Furthermore, individuals do act collectively despite knowing that the goal could be achieved without their participation, and hence they could benefit from it with no effort on their part. In both cases rational choice theory has posited that it is more rational for the individual to 'free-ride', that is to do nothing, as one individual cannot, logically speaking have a decisive impact on the outcome, but can still benefit from a positive outcome nonetheless. Despite this, however, in both cases millions of people do vote and do participate in collective actions, undermining the rational choice theorists' assertions to the contrary. Green and Shapiro therefore justifiably claim that: "Neither in voter turnout nor in collective action problems has the incentive to free-ride been established by rational choice theory as the causal mechanisms inhibiting mass behaviour" (ibid: 96).

A further observation they make, which is useful for our discussion, is on the use by rational choice theorists of other sets of theory to cover phenomena which cannot be explained by rational choice. In other words in these cases rational choice abandons its claims to universality. "One cannot have it both ways", they claim, meaning that rational choice analysts must decide that rational choice theory is universal or that it is not. These attempts to cover anomalies in rational choice reasoning may indeed be examples of method driven rather than problem driven research, which undermines the validity of its findings. Indeed, the authors claim, that much of rational choice theory rather than thriving in fields providing abundant data – such as in voter turnout – are more prevalent in areas where evidence about the preferences and strategic reasoning of policy makers is difficult to discern even in retrospect, such as in international relations, undermining even more their claims for its universality (ibid: 196).

In the end the authors advise that rational choice theorists should relinquish the commitment to pure universalism and the discrediting or absorption of competing theoretical accounts. Instead rational choice theorists should aim to make a clearer distinction between rational choice actions and other modes of behaviour, designing more convincing and informative empirical tests which probe the limits of what rational choice can explain.

These 'pathologies in rational choice theory', I would contend, limit the explanatory power of the institutionalist perspective. As we have seen in our brief review above of the two articles on populism above, the main basis of the perspective is on the actions of one individual, 'the leader', and the basis of his or her action is seen exclusively in terms of the leader's 'thirst for power'. In this article, I do not seek to dismiss the possibility that leaders do have such a drive – far from it. Nonetheless, I would also venture to say that there is a need to examine other equally crucial aspects in politics to help analyse and explain complex phenomena such as populism, most specifically the role of ideology both in the causation of conflict and polarisation, and in the creation of specific populist movements. As Susan Stokes points out,

politicians have beliefs and these beliefs come from broader ideological structures, which rational choice theory has limited power to explain (Stokes, 2006:192-3). In the end one must examine the nature of beliefs and in this context we should instead look at the role of ideology in the formation of populist movements, which the remainder of this article will attempt to do. Firstly it will provide an alternative account for distinctions in populist organisation from a Marxist perspective, placing ideology at its centre, and secondly it will use chavismo and fujimorismo as case studies to help prove this theory.

Ideology, people and leader in the formation of populist movements

In this section, concentrating specifically on Laclau's (2005a, 2005b) theories on populism, we will firstly explore the concept of the people within populism, showing the centrality of discourse and antagonism in the construction of popular identities and that, contrary to the institutionalist perspective leader and people are not distinct entities but can in effect be viewed as one. I will argue that this 'populist logic', as Laclau terms it, is not linked to a specific ideology, but rather is a political 'logic', a way of doing politics, but that unlike in Weyland's conception, this political logic is used by politicians in support of differing ideological projects and not just in support of the leader's 'thirst for power'. The nature and extent of political organisation will depend therefore on the content and aims of that political project, in other words on its ideological make up, rather than on 'utility maximisation' strategies of either elite or 'masses' as put forward by institutionalist readings of populism.

The people and the leader

In *On Populist Reason*, Laclau (2005a: 68) argues that the 'people' are defined through the discourse of the leader. By discourse Laclau does not simply refer to language that is to speech and writings, but also to the relations built up between the different elements of a populist movement. A first step in building up this relationship is an 'appeal to the people' by the populist leader. The main objective of the 'appeal to the people' is to isolate the established institutions and establish a direct unmediated relationship between the populist leader and the people. It is through these appeals that the entity of the 'people' is defined in each individual populist episode.

Again like Weyland (2003), Laclau argues, that antagonism is used by leaders, but in Laclau's case the process of 'antagonism' is used to define the 'people'. Laclau maintains that there are three moments in the formation of the 'people'. Firstly there must be a plurality of democratic demands being put forward to the government which remain unsatisfied. These demands coalesce to form an equivalential chain of popular demands that is that each demand become of equal weight while maintaining its particularity. Secondly, the leader, through discourse, divides society into two camps, what Laclau calls the 'people/power bloc' dichotomy. The relationship between both camps is one of antagonism, as the people reject the status quo and seek out new forms of representation.

But who are 'the people'? The people are not so much a coalition of identities, as portrayed by many analysts, but rather invest their diverse identities into one privileged identity. Laclau illustrates this with the distinction between the people as *populus*, the body of all citizens, and as *plebs*, the underprivileged. The 'people' of populism comes about when the plebs come to represent the *populus* – "that is, a partiality which wants to function as the totality of the community" (Ibid: 81).

Central to this process of construction of the 'people' is the role of the leader. Populist leaders, as we have seen in the accounts reviewed, are portrayed as strong, charismatic, and paternalistic macho men, with an autocratic, authoritarian bent. They are seen as 'outsiders' and are portrayed as manipulative of the 'people', autocratic, power hungry and ambitious. Laclau, however, resists attributing the prominence of the leader in populist movements to these characteristics. As we have seen, for him, populism is a chain of demands whose unity is expressed through one element of those demands (the plebs). In other words the totality is expressed through a singularity and the extreme form of a singularity is an individuality. The group then, the totality of the populus, becomes symbolically unified around an individuality, in this case the leader. The 'leader' therefore "is inherent in the formation of a 'people' (ibid: 100). 'Leader' and 'people' are one, two sides of the same phenomenon in a populist formation and the relationship between the leader and the people and the other elements of the leader's discourse are formulated through the filter of ideology. It is to how ideology relates to populism that we now turn.

Ideology and Populism

Up until relatively recently populism was generally accepted as linked to a set of economic policies which emphasised growth and redistribution to the detriment of fiscal rectitude, thus ignoring risks of inflation, and followed a policy of ISI, as both Weyland and Roberts point out. They were seen by some as 'fiscally irresponsible' policies and were blamed for the economic crises of the 1980s.ⁱ Others, however, show us that these policies were not uniform,ⁱⁱ and others still point out that state intervention was quite acceptable globally during this period.ⁱⁱⁱ As such these policies cannot be taken in isolation as indicative of populism, nor as the sole cause of the crises of the 1980's in Latin America.

The re-emergence of populist, or neopopulist, regimes in the late 1980's and in the 1990's, often in tandem with neoliberal restructuring policies, forced analysts to reconsider this orthodox view of populism. Neoliberal restructuring policies were, it was said, incompatible with traditional or classical populism, yet it was clear that the new breed of leaders in Latin America, such as Fujimori in Peru, Collor in Brazil, and Menem in Argentina, amongst others, were using populist strategies to achieve and maintain power. As we have seen Weyland, in the article reviewed above, argued that populism, or 'neopopulism' as he termed this new phase, had certain underlying affinities with neoliberalism.^{iv}

It can also be argued, however, that as 'classical' populism was as much a product of a supportive state-led international political economy context, so contemporary populism is a product of a globalised neoliberal age. Populism therefore cannot be identified with a specific ideology, but rather can adapt itself to a variety of ideologies or mix of ideologies, and can be found within a wide range of socio-political and geopolitical contexts.

This is in line with what Weyland (2003) and Roberts (2006) also maintain. Nonetheless, in this article the argument is that differing ideological outlooks can give distinctly different flavours to different populist regimes, but no one ideology is in itself populist. Institutionalists regularly differentiate between different types of populism – be it 'classical' populism and neopopulism - to explain these different types of populist regimes. Yet this separation of 'movement' and 'ideology', with for example Weyland's separation of neopopulism and neoliberalism in the article reviewed, is a false one, as it separates artificially the ideas in people's heads and the actions in which they participate. Hence, it logically follows that a populist movement which is articulated to socialism will tend towards denser

organisational networks than one articulated to neoliberalism. What unites these populisms is a fluidity of discourse which emphasises concepts of popular sovereignty, which is “always going to be imprecise and fluctuating” (Laclau 2005: 118); what divides them is how to achieve that, the shape, construction and density of the populist movement which will give physical and programmatic shape to this discourse, and it is here that ideology comes into play. Let us now turn to our examination of the Fujimori and Chávez regimes to illustrate this case.

Discourse and Ideology in the Fujimori and Chávez presidencies

Before examining these two populist governments, let us briefly recap on the main points of our discussion so far. The essence of populism according to Laclau is the construction of populist identities through antagonistic discourse, with the antagonism directed normally at the existing institutional status quo in a given territory. Such populist logic in politics can be used in support of any ideology or mix of ideologies, but, and here we depart from Laclau, the shape and substance of the populist movement will be heavily influenced by the nature of these ideologies to which the populist movement is articulated.

In the following two sub-sections we will examine the regimes of Alberto Fujimori of Peru and Hugo Chávez of Venezuela. These examinations will concentrate on the following areas: the creation of popular identities through discourse, the ideologies, or mix of ideologies with which both regimes were articulated and how these influence the organisational natures of these respective populist movements.

Fujimorismo: ‘el poder soy yo’

Introduction

One of the central claims made by Roberts in another article is that fujimorismo is “a paradigmatic case of electoral populism”. Fujimori chose this path, according to Roberts, because he had successfully ‘neutralised’ elite opposition, obviating the need for popular organisation (Roberts, 2005:137). In this section I will argue that far from ‘neutralising’ elite opposition, there was little of that opposition to begin with, and furthermore Fujimori was not at all ‘autonomous’ but fully in alliance with, and dependent on, the military, the international financial community, and Peru’s transnationalised elite, including international corporations. Through an historical account of the regime, I will show how Fujimori used populist discourse to install an authoritarian, technocratic regime which implemented a highly ideologically driven neoliberal model.

El Chino and his cholosv

Peru, in 1990 was experiencing one of its most profound crises after decades of tumultuous change. The disastrous regime of Alan García (1985-1990 and current president since 2006) left a legacy of increased unemployment, poverty, hyperinflation and a worsening guerrilla war against the Maoist Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path). Fujimori's discursive message for the 1990 election campaign was centre-left, advocating a negotiated gradualist form of change, based on national aspirations and dialogue, and presented in alliance with a coalition of evangelicals and small business people from the shanty towns. This contrasted greatly with his rival presidential candidate, Mario Vargas Llosa who advocated a neoliberal, ‘shock therapy’ economic package.

Peruvians rejected this policy offer and the white, patrician Vargas Llosa in favour of Fujimori's more centralist message and cholo (mixed race) allies. Once in power, however, he quickly abandoned these policy positions and this alliance, and begun to implement a swift neoliberal programme, constructing a high powered alliance with the Armed Forces, the international financial community, the elites of the core capitalist countries, especially the United States, and a close circle of advisors (Cameron, 1997; Rochabrún, 1996). Cambio 90, never a movement in the sense of having militants and an organic national structure, became a mere label under which the President constructed an electoral vehicle and a set of legislators who would owe their loyalty to him and him alone.

The changing of alliances was accompanied by the so-called fujishock, a draconian set of neoliberal economic measures announced in August 1990, barely a month after having taken presidential office. As a result of these economic measures the number of people living in poverty jumped from 9 to 14 million, in a country of 22 million inhabitants (Rochabrún, 1996:17). The effect of these measures was felt not only in the increase in poverty and unemployment, but also in exacerbating the already advanced decomposition of civil society and its ability to resist such authoritarian impositions and articulate a coherent collective response.

Despite his movement being in a minority in both houses, Fujimori managed to get most of his legislative programme approved and was given extraordinary decree powers to facilitate the speed of legislative change. Yet this consensus and co-operation was responded to by Fujimori with an anti-system discourse attacking the very parties and institutions which were co-operating with him. In a number of speeches he attacked Congress members and the judiciary. Meanwhile he reinforced negative images of the Peruvian political elite and democratic institutions and built up a deeper rapport with the people based on a populist discourse which as Sánchez comments, presents itself "as anti-politics, as a suspension of competition for a reason of primordial importance: the defence of the State" (Sánchez, 2000:210).

It is important to note, however, that it was this discourse which created resistance in the parliamentary elite not the overall content of the neoliberal programme. The difficulty was that the neoliberal programme had to be implemented swiftly and Fujimori and his new alliance knew that in the notoriously slow Peruvian legislative system, where Fujimori's movement was in a minority, that this would take too much time. As a result Fujimori engineered numerous disagreements between legislature and executive giving the impression of a Congress which frustrated and blocked the President (Kenney, 1996).

The greatest row developed over the decree powers given to the President in June 1991. Fujimori promulgated 117 decrees between June and November, and Congress refused approval or changed 28 of those, mostly to do with pacification but also with financial matters including privatisation of educational services and mining companies (Kenney, 1996:94).vi From the beginning then we see a President liberally using decree powers intent on implementing swingeing neoliberal measures. A case was rapidly building for the abolition of the democratic institutions which were increasingly being seen as irrelevant. As Fujimori's stature grew support for authoritarianism was also rising, standing at 22% in September 1991 (Carrión, 1996:297). vii

Antagonism and autogolpe

On the evening of 5 April 1992, the President announced his autogolpe (self-coup), followed up by a statement of support from the joint command of the Armed Forces. Tanks were placed outside the Palace of Justice and Congress, legislatures were closed, key legislators detained, and key media

outlets occupied. The following day the government issued a decree establishing an emergency government which would execute a ten point plan to pacify, rebuild and develop the country.viii In his address to the nation on April 5, Fujimori had no doubt who was to blame for blocking the march of progress and reconstruction being carried out by his government: "The present democratic formality is deceptive, false; its institutions too often serve the interests of all privileged groups [...] Without a doubt neither the Parliament, nor the Judicial Power are agents of change nowadays, but rather obstacles to transformation and progress". It is for him Fujimori, backed by "the great national majorities", to take up the challenge of the "profound transformation of the State and its institutions, so that they may become true motors of development and social justice" (Fujimori, 1992a: no page number).

In speeches on the Peruvian national holiday, 28th July of the same year, the antagonistic polarised lines are clearly drawn (ibid). As Sánchez comments, on one side "...a reflexive president, unambitious, honest, hard working, responsible, just like other citizens and a people waiting, sacrificing, who know the truth; both waiting for a justice beyond the law. In the other bloc [...] are the politicians and the institutions mired in corruption and irresponsibility, who self-interestedly use the Constitution and the law to evade justice" (Sánchez,2000: 211). As Panfichi and Sanborn (1996:42) observe Fujimori "looked to deinstitutionalise the norms of political co-existence and personalise the expectations of the masses in his person".

Fujimori tirelessly promoted himself as a man of the people, dressing up in traditional garb and constantly visiting the most remote parts of this enormous country (Oliart, 1996:19). President Fujimori showed that he was neither afraid of Peru, nor had Peruvians reason to be afraid of him. By visiting marginalised areas Fujimori reassured poor Peruvians with two convincing messages: "I am where you are" and "I am a president like you" (Grompone, 1998:21). However, Oliart warns that:

[I]n general, Fujimori symbolically fulfils the strong desire of Peru's historically excluded majorities to be included in the political system. He does not, however, pretend to incorporate the poor in governmental decision-making, or even to encourage them to strengthen their own self-help organisations. The style of his presidency - coupled with the substance of his economic and social policies - reassures the upper classes that his government will protect their interests. At no time does Fujimori's relationship with his country's impoverished majority threaten the status quo (op cit: 19).

Neoliberalismo a secasix

Indeed, while Fujimori was constructing this image of a man of the people, with the support of most of the media, his government was rapidly dismantling the old economic order, destroying the few protections the popular classes possessed. The financial sector was totally liberalized favouring multinational and privatised companies, foreign creditors and imports, but working against local industry and agriculture (Pascó-Font and Saavedra, 2001:64). Banks were privatized and sold to foreign corporations, resulting in a bonanza for the top earners, but for the majority of Peruvians, credit facilities remained out of reach (ibid:201). By 1999, public companies had been sold off to the value of US\$8,917.1 million, and private companies were increasingly involved in electricity and water provision and distribution, either through ownership of companies or through contracts (ibid:90–91). Prices rose as a result.

Employment in Peru during the Fujimori years was characterised principally by underemployment, casualisation and informalisation of the workforce,

lower pay and more precarious conditions for the bulk of Peruvian workers. Unemployment and underemployment increased slightly, with the latter affecting around three-quarters of the workforce. Temporary contract work doubled during the decade, as formal employment decreased to over half the EAP.^x Strikes declined, as there was a notable movement of resources from workers to capital.^{xi} Employment moved from larger manufacturing firms and agriculture to commerce, restaurants and hotels (Abugattas, 1998:71; Pascó Font and Saavedra, 2001:150). In sum, as Gonzales puts it, there was "...a rise in independent workers, a reduction of public and industrial employment, and stagnation of rural employment...In general there is a stagnation of salaries for the labour force, and a tendency to inequality of remuneration and a greater uncertainty in labour stability" (Gonzales 1998:117).

It was primarily an authoritarian governmental model which facilitated this, which through the anti-status quo discourse against the institutions of the country, was met with resounding public approval.^{xii} Through the coup Fujimori established full control over all the apparatus of state, which he never lost until he finally removed himself from power in 2001.^{xiii} Neoliberal policies of privatisation, structural reforms and the reduction of the State under Carlos Boloña as Minister of Finance (1991-1993) were implemented more speedily and, due to the autogolpe, with virtually no opposition.^{xiv} From February 1991 to December 1992, Boloña, implemented 923 decree laws. International opposition was tepid to say the least, with Fujimori managing to dispel the little there was at an OEA meeting in the Bahamas in May 1992, by promising elections for a Constituent Assembly for the following November.

In sum, while discourse had set the context in which the autogolpe received popular approval, it was the autogolpe, which sealed the primacy of Fujimori as hegemonic ruler of Peru. Fujimori's new grouping Cambio 90/Nueva Mayoría (Change 90/New Majority) had few links with the grassroots or the previous fujimorista electoral grouping, consisting of ex-ministers, ministerial assessors, and associated businessmen and women (Planas, 1996:195). They had little problem winning most seats in the Constituent Assembly and wasted little time in drawing up a Constitution designed to permanently install a neoliberal, centralised model of state.

Adrianzén described the 1993 Constitution as "conservative, privatist, authoritarian and ideological" (Adrianzén, 1993:10). According to this analyst it was conservative due its eradication of explicit paragraphs guaranteeing solidarity and egalitarian principles for all groups. It was privatist due to the elimination or relativisation of social rights in health, housing, education, and work, its explicit prohibition of State participation in economic activity, and in its granting of greater rights to business than to workers. It was authoritarian in its accentuation of presidential and military prerogatives, the President being allowed to dissolve parliament, control senior Armed Forces promotions, decide exclusively on public spending, and crucially allowing presidential re-election. Representation was drastically curtailed, and centralisation in the executive even further advanced, with the reduction of Parliament to one chamber and the practical elimination of regionalization. Finally Adrianzén argues the Constitution was ideological in that it provided a model of society entirely based on the ideology of the market and private interest, giving for example free competition full constitutional guarantees and thus "legitimising and legalising the implantation of a savage capitalism" (Adrianzén, 1992).

In every sphere the balance between State and markets was altered in favour of the latter. The State was relegated constitutionally to the role of regulator and promoter of private business activity, and prohibited from acting as

capitalist investor in the economy. In the social sphere, the State pursued a policy of poverty relief, increasing social spending. Fujimori's room for manoeuvre to distribute goods was limited, however, to welfare programmes, making his presidency essentially assistentialist and clientelistic. Furthermore, these programmes were controlled primarily by the markets and IFIs, as most of the revenue paying for them came from privatisation receipts and international credits. Moreover, the private sector and not for profit sector was given a stronger role in welfare, health and education provision.

The hegemony of neoliberalism was further secured through a mostly compliant, corrupt media, providing consensus opinions on the benefits of the markets which did not seriously question the new orthodoxy. Education too was increasingly privatised. In this way, culturally Peruvians were being trained to accept the primacy of the market as the 'natural' order of things.

Far from eradicating opposition from the elites to his plans, Fujimori secured the position of transnational elites against those involved in national production, while destroying any possibility of organized resistance from the popular classes. Popular organization was not eschewed by Fujimori therefore due to elite resistance but because it was antithetical to the implantation of this neoliberal model which depended on an authoritarian and centralized state.

In this Fujimori was not unusual; other so called neopopulists implemented neoliberal SAPs in similar fashions. As Laclau (2006) points out this was a continuation of a policy inherited from the preceding authoritarian period, whereby neoliberal programmes were applied through authoritarianism in which “social repression and deinstitutionalization were the conditions for the implementation of social adjustment policies”. He goes on to cite Menem in Argentina, trade union repression in Bolivia in 1985, anti-terrorist legislation in Colombia, and Carlos Andres Perez’s repression of the caracazo in 1989 in Venezuela (see below) alongside Fujimori as examples of this (ibid:59). Fujimori’s neoliberalism therefore was not simply a means to secure power, as institutionalist readings suggest – it was to radically alter the nature of the Peruvian economic and social model and was deeply ideological in its intent. This profound neoliberal restructuring of Peruvian society and economy as we have seen had devastating effects on Peru’s once vibrant social movements and were the determining factor in the anti-popular formation of the fujimorista ‘movement’.

The next section will examine similar tactics on the level of discourse in the emergence and consolidation of the Chávez regime in Venezuela, but in order to implement an anti-neoliberal, socially progressive socio-economic model based on principles of participative democracy as opposed to the anti-popular, elite led, neoliberal model of Fujimori.

Hugo Chávez: "Con Chávez Manda el Pueblo" xv

Introduction

As we have seen, Roberts (2006) claims that: “The depth of socio-political organization by populist leaders is contingent on the level and character of the political conflicts triggered by their social reforms. Mass organization is first and foremost a political instrument for mobilizing the weight of numbers against elite actors who derive political power from their strategic economic or institutional location” (Roberts, 2006:144: my italics). Chavismo, for Roberts is a paradigmatic case of this. This section, however, will prove that grassroots organisation in the case of chavismo is not ‘first and foremost’ to defend social reforms against elite actors threatened by such measures, as Roberts maintains. Popular organisation is rather, I argue,

the very *raison de ser* of bolivarianismo. It is the cornerstone of the participatory democracy which underpins Bolivarian philosophy and ideology. It does not 'defend' the reforms, it enacts and implements them – it is the very embodiment of the reforms themselves.

To prove this I will firstly examine Bolivarian ideology, showing how the concept of the people as a full participant actor in government is central to its philosophy. I will then examine and assess how that ideology is put into practice by the Venezuelan government, and show how a distinct anti-neoliberal model is being formed which is looking for new ways, as Mouffe (2005:70) puts it in another context, to advance "the struggle for another globalisation".

Bolivarianismo and the Left

Bolivarianismo emerged from the revolutionary leftist tradition which developed in resistance to the Perez Jimenez dictatorship (1948-58) and later to the Puntofijo (1958-1998) democratic regime, from which the left was initially excluded. Chávez had contact with many stalwarts of leftist and guerrilla movements before coming to power, often through his brother Adánxvi, and many of these would later serve in the Chávez government.xvii Indeed the revolutionary tradition goes far back into Chávez's family as his grandfather was Maisanta or General Pedro Pérez Delgado (1881-1924), a colourful guerrilla leader and local caudillo. The revolutionary and leftist tradition, therefore, was firmly established within Chavez's political vision from the beginning.

Moreover, Chávez's military experiences reinforced and encouraged this leftist vision. The Venezuelan military had a strong egalitarian tradition (Müller Rojas, 2001:17). It had socially progressive policies, such as social mobility for young men from poorer sectors, and liberal educational programmes, such as the Andrés Bello Plan, introduced in 1971 allowing future officers the opportunity to take civilian degrees in Venezuela's universities (López Maya, 2003:76).xviii Such educational plans facilitated a greater awareness of social situations of the poorer sectors amongst army personnel, especially in a context of crisis, and greater association with civilians (*ibid.*).

In 1982 Chávez began to organise the clandestine military organization MBR-200 with fellow officers with considerable success numerically. The caracazo of February 1989, where the military, under the second government of Carlos Andrés Pérez (1989-1993), were used to suppress anti-neoliberal protests resulting in the death of up to 3,000 people, encouraged many more soldiers to seek out and join the MBR-200. Contacts with civilian groups, as described above, intensified as disenchantment with the Punto Fijo regime amongst all sectors grew in the wake of the caracazo, and these groups sought solutions and alternatives more urgently, to the economic decline of Venezuela and the neoliberal programmes being put in place by Carlos Andrés Pérez (Gott, 2001:62-63). The MBR-200 therefore grew within a general context of dissatisfaction with the existing regime and an active seeking of alternatives by most sectors of Venezuelan society (Müller Rojas, 2001:27).

Venezuela during the 1980s and 1990s was experiencing one of its most profound crises since the founding of the puntofijista state. Living standards had plummeted due to the collapse in oil prices, with Venezuela's human development index falling from 0.8210 in 1990 to 0.7046 in 1996 (PNUD/OCEI, 2001:92), the country's middle class declining from 40% to 10% of the population in the same period and income inequality increasing (World Bank, 2001: 283). After the caracazo, street protest became the norm in the country, as people lost faith in the country's institutional

arrangements. In 1992 around 60 % of Venezuelans had a negative image of political parties and almost 40 % had a negative opinion on the constitutional arrangement (Njaim, Combellas and Alvarez, 1998:17 and 99-100). Voting abstention reached around 40% in the same year, up from an astonishing low of 3% in 1973 (Mc Coy and Smith, 1995:137).

This crisis made all the more urgent a move for change, prompting the MBR to carry out a coup against the Pérez government on February 4, 1992, which was seen to be corrupt, autocratic and excessively neoliberal. While the coup failed overall, it did bring Chávez to national attention. Chávez requested a short television appearance to advise his colleagues to lay down their arms and this brief, instantly famous television appearance by Chávez created a new hero amongst the popular classes. A further failed coup in November of the same year, this time amongst the upper ranks of the Air Force and Navy led by Admiral Hernán Grüber, would mortally wound the Pérez government, leading to the president's eventual impeachment and further encouraging pressure for change.

In sum, leftist ideology and philosophy has a great influence not only on Chávez but also on the majority of the officers and soldiers involved in conspiring to overthrow the Pérez regime. The decomposition of the puntofijo regime under the weight of the profound systems crisis which developed during the 1980s radicalized sectors of the military and other elements of Venezuelan society, such as sections of the trade union movement, rejecting neoliberalism. But how did this leftism crystallize itself into bolivarianismo? The next section will look at Bolivarian ideology more closely.

Bolivarian ideology and discourse

The MBR-200's ideology, formed particularly after the 1992 coup, was designed to provide a system of thinking specifically Venezuelan and Latin American, rather than one based on imported ideologies. The MBR-200 turned to the thinking and teachings of three major figures from Venezuelan history to form the concept of the "three rooted tree": Ezequiel Zamora and Simón Rodríguez, educator, friend and mentor to the final member of the trinity, the Liberator, Simón Bolívar. Each figure provided a specific element to the new ideology: Zamora the element of rebellion, popular protest and protagonism, summed up in the slogan attributed to him: "Land and free men! Popular elections! Horror to the oligarchy!" Rodríguez, the requirement for autochthonous ideological originality when he warned that "either we invent or we commit errors (...) America should not servilely imitate, but be original"; and Bolívar, the Liberator, the symbol of equilibrium between the dualism of rebellion and ideology, force and consent (MBR-200/Pirela Romero, 1994).

Central and crucial to this ideology is the concept of 'el pueblo', the people. Chávez qualified "popular protagonism as the fuel of history" (Chávez Frías, 1994: 3) and only when this protagonism exists is a people truly el pueblo. "A people exist when they share customs and an effective process of communication exists between them (...) a collective spirit and a consciousness of the social, or the common existence" (ibid: 4). The Venezuelan people specifically are a true people, a people who have shown, and are capable once again of greatness (Chávez Frías, 2000: 21).

Leadership is vital to achieve the necessary protagonism lying dormant in the people, so that they become a people actively struggling. Chávez, however, rejects the notion of the caudillo, the leader/masses model put forward by many of his critics.^{xix} Leadership must be provided in order to galvanise the collective into action, but the leader is but a conduit. The people are an "unleashed force, equal to the rivers" being channelled by

leaders such as Chávez because either "we provide a course for that force, or that force will pass over us" (ibid: 17). Chávez is "not a cause, but a consequence" (ibid: 18), "an instrument of the collective" (ibid: 23), reversing the conceptions of analysts such as Roberts. Leadership is multiple and is part of a greater movement, in which "there is a leadership which has been extending on a number of levels, there is a popular force, there are some very strong parties, there are institutions; it would be a sad revolutionary or political process which depended on one man (...)" (Chávez interviewed in Rojas, 2004). This vision contrasts greatly with that of Fujimori who created a unique closeness between leader and people to the exclusion of all others.

Puntofijismo was but another version of the same old model based "on imposition, on domination, on exploitation, and on extermination" (Chávez in MBR-200, 1996: 4). The most recent incarnations of the model, in the presidencies of Pérez (1989-1993) and Caldera (1993-1998) were simply part of a wider neoliberal offensive throughout Latin America (ibid: 5). Once again, as with Fujimori, the lines are clearly drawn between the 'people' as underdog and the powerful political and business elites. Chávez, nonetheless, offers a more epic version of this dichotomy placing it firmly within a sweeping historical vision of class struggle and not centring it simply on his person. Instead of the status quo, the MVR and the Chávez government offer an alternative which is fundamentally political placing the social above the economic, and which seeks to be Venezuelan and Latin American in its ideology and practice.

The Bolivarian doctrine is a doctrine in construction, a heterogeneous amalgam of thoughts and ideologies, from universal thought, capitalism, Marxism, but rejecting the neoliberal models currently being imposed in Latin America and the discredited socialist and communist models of the old Soviet Bloc (Blanco Muñoz, 1998). Initially Chávez presented this new model as firmly capitalist, not "savage neoliberal capitalism" but "capitalism with another face, with other mechanisms [which] (...) is equitable and gets to all Venezuelans" (Chávez in Croes, 1999). On January 30, 2005, however, in a speech to the 5th World Social Forum, Chávez announced that he supported the creation of Twenty-First Century Socialism in Venezuela, a "socialism [that] would be different from the socialism of the twentieth century [...] [it would] not be a state socialism as was practiced in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe or as is practiced in Cuba today. Rather, it would be a socialism that would be more pluralistic and less state-centred" (Wilpert, 2006; no page number).

According to Wilpert, three factors play a crucial part in the building of this new Twenty-First Century Socialism: "the tremendous oil revenues, the creation of a more participatory democracy, and the 'civilizing' of the military" (2006, no page number). As a result of these three factors "the Chavez government is far freer to pursue policies that are independent of the powerful private interests... clearly moving away from private ownership and control over the means of production, away from market-determined allocation and distribution, and towards what could be called more socialist economic and governance forms...[but] a more libertarian form of socialism, in that it actively seeks citizen participation and even forms of direct democracy" (ibid.). The next section will examine these forms of direct democracy in more detail, arguing that their function is to fulfil these ideological ends rather than "first and foremost" to defend the Bolivarian revolution against elite attacks, as Roberts maintains, or to support the power hunger of the leader as Weyland would have it.

Structure and organisation of bolivararianismo

Popular participation and organization are the cornerstones of the Bolivarian revolution, as stated above. But how does this participation manifest itself in Venezuela? Wilpert (ibid.) identifies three ways which Venezuela guarantees popular participation thus limiting and controlling the negative impacts of capitalism.

Firstly, Wilpert identifies a clear movement towards the transformation of the ownership of production away from private interests and towards more citizen control. The Bolivarian government has increased almost one hundred fold the number of cooperatives working in Venezuela. In 2005 there were 100,000 cooperatives established involving almost 10% of the country's adult population. Co-management arrangements between the state and workers have been implemented in some state-owned enterprises, such as CADAFE the electricity company. Idle factories have been expropriated and handed over to their workers; in 2006 four were in worker control with up to 700 being evaluated. The Chávez government set up new state enterprises in telecommunications, air travel, petrochemicals and reasserted its control over the state oil company PDVSA, using its revenues to fund social programmes.

Secondly, the Chávez government is redistributing wealth through a wide variety of social programmes and urban and rural land reform. Gibbs (2006: 272) reports that in its first 18 months, the Barrio Adentro (Into the Neighbourhood) health mission made services available to 17 million Venezuelans and provides medicines at an 85% discount. Education missions have seen a 90% reduction in Venezuela's illiteracy rate (ibid: 274). Citizen participation is facilitated through health committees, land committees and educational task forces which direct these missions. Furthermore, through the Bolivarian Circles local people have input to community projects and have workshops to discuss government reforms and strategies for making the process sustainable (ibid.). More latterly all of these are being replaced with the new popularly elected and run 'community councils' – *consejos comunales*.

The Bolivarian Constitution was drafted with extensive citizen input and facilitates it further in many of its clauses. García-Gaudilla (2003) finds that the Constituyente (the process facilitating the drafting of a new constitution in 1999) had a high level of popular participation from civil society. Furthermore, within the text there are many clauses which further the ideal of "participation and protagonism", through direct democracy mechanisms such as popular assemblies, referendums, recall referendums etc.

López Maya (2003) observes that the 1999 Constitution provides a different focus on democracy and inclusion than that found in the past in Venezuela, and goes against the grain of neoliberalism, emphasising the political and the social over the economic and procedural (Title I, Chapter VIII), human rights were brought up to date and widened (Title III) and the universal character of social rights were preserved and extended (Chapter V, arts. 86, 87 and 88). The Constitution prohibits the sale of actions in the State oil company PDVSA and guarantees State control of the social security system. New institutions were introduced in the form of the Electoral and Citizen Powers, as well as the more traditional Executive, Legislative and Judicial powers.

Finally, all these participatory mechanisms at home are being developed within a network of regional agreements which promote similar values abroad. Agreements such as PetroCaribe, which provides discounted oil to Venezuela's neighbours at favourable rates, often receiving goods in exchange instead of cash and the ALBA initiative (Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean), which promotes reciprocity and national

rights in regional trade, all of which “conflict with the neoliberal paradigm” (Gibbs, 2006: 276).

Popular organisation and participation therefore have a clear ideological function as their primary aim is to create alternatives to the hegemonic, neoliberal paradigm, at a local, national and regional level. They do not therefore simply have a ‘utility maximisation’ role as a rational choice perspective would have it, bolstering the leader or aiding ‘political combat’. This is not to say that such organisation will not assist in these tasks; it is not unreasonable to suppose that leaders seek to gain and maintain power and to use popular organisations to this end. To base analysis entirely on that perspective, however, in the case of Venezuela underestimates popular commitment to reforms over and above the loyalty to the leader. Many of the popular organisations playing fundamental roles in the Bolivarian revolution pre-date chavismo and will most likely continue if it disappears (Terry Gibbs, personal communication, 20 December, 2006). As Wilpert (2006) indicates, however, “the latent personality cult around Chavez and the tendency towards personalistic politics in Venezuela in general” could wrest a certain amount of autonomy from the popular organizations currently being built in Venezuela.

Laclau (2006: 60) identifies this phenomenon as “the legitimate question [of] the tension between the moment of popular participation and the moment of the leader, if the predominance of the latter will lead to the limitation of the former”. While Laclau maintains that all populisms are exposed to this danger, he warns, however, that “there is no golden rule which determines that succumbing to such a scenario is the manifest destiny of populism” (ibid.). Rather, he warns, that: “If there is a danger for Latin American democracy, it comes from neoliberalism and not from populism” (ibid: 61).

To sum up therefore, in Venezuela we find a clear case of populism, but one which has, from the beginning, been associated with a formative ideology based on leftist, socialist, nationalist and regionalist principles and clearly opposed to neoliberalism. Popular participation, rather than simply functioning as a defence mechanism against elite opposition or in function of perpetuating the leader in power, is crucial to the successful development of bolivarianismo on the ground and creating permanent structural change in Venezuelan society.

Conclusion

To sum up then the following key points have been argued in this paper. Rational choice analyses of populism have severe explanatory limitations as they are based on a narrow leader-centred interpretation of its nature. Specifically the assumption that populist leaders are simply ‘thirsty for power’ and that collective organisation develops (or not as the case may be) due to the leaders’ power hunger, do not provide sufficient elements to explain such a complex phenomenon. In this paper instead, using Chávez and Fujimori as case studies, we have offered an alternative account for popular organisation in populism based on a Marxist perspective. Firstly, in both cases we see clear indications of populist ‘ruptures’: the equivalence between different unsatisfied demands, the crystallisation of all of these demands around certain common symbols, and the emergence of a leader who incarnates the process of popular identification. Unlike institutionalist accounts, however, in this article I have argued that both populist regimes are highly ideologised but in almost diametrically opposed directions. Whereas Fujimori used his power to implement a programme implanting a fully fledged ‘savage’ neoliberal model in Peru, Chávez on the other hand, through bolivarianismo, is leading a process of implementation of a counter-

hegemonic project against neoliberalism and in favour of a form of “Twenty First Century Socialism”.

It is unsurprising therefore that such differing ideological projects should have equally differing forms of popular organisation and mobilisation (or the lack of it). Neoliberalism, as Harvey (2005: 188) points out has “all along primarily functioned as a mask for practices that are all about the maintenance, reconstitution and restoration of elite class power”. Such a project, therefore, would be by its very nature against popular organisation and mobilization. In the case of Peru, Fujimori came to power after an intense period of civil strife, which in the early 1980s saw very high levels of popular mobilization and organisation. It was in the utmost interest of the neoliberal project to neutralize and demobilize the remnants of that organisation and this is exactly what Fujimori achieved.

Chávez on the other hand, came to power when the neoliberal order established under the Washington Consensus was beginning to unravel. Even the main architects and sponsors of that Consensus, the IMF and World Bank, were seeking new more inclusive mechanisms to reinvent neoliberalism. The Bolivarian experiment in Venezuela was at the forefront of a wave of change that has seen a shift to the Left in some of the most important countries of South America. Bolivarianismo is one of the most radical and innovative experiments in that so-called ‘pink tide’, as it seeks to place popular participation and mobilization at the centre of its policies, going against the tenets of neoliberalism. Popular mobilization and participation is integral to bolivarianismo and not, as Roberts insists, simply a means to resist elite pressures. By ignoring the centrality of ideology to the formation of populist movements and instead overemphasising the leader’s “power hunger” to the detriment of popular agency as the principal agent for change, the institutionalist perspective wrests legitimacy from its analysis and limits the value of its contribution to contemporary debates about populism’s significance.

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- i See for example Dornbusch and Edwards (1991) and Sachs (1990)
- ii Dix (1985) and Castañeda (1993: 40), for example,
- iii Cammack, 2000: 146.
- iv These were: a reliance on unorganized largely poor informal groups and an adversarial relation to organized groups, such as unions and the political class; a strongly top-down approach and strong state to effect economic reform and boost the position of a strong leader; and distribution of costs through restructuring to organized sectors and benefits, and benefits to informal sectors through the end of hyperinflation and targeted welfare programmes. See Weyland (1996).
- v Fujimori was of Japanese descent and as it is common in Peru to refer to anyone of Chinese, Japanese descent, or indeed anyone who has East Asian type eyes, as *chino* (Chinaman), he happily adopted that nickname. *Cholo* refers to people of mixed indigenous and European descent, usually from the Peruvian highlands.
- vi One example was a decree law demanding that everyone must provide information, economic or financial resources, goods and services whenever necessary to military personnel in emergency zones, or face penalties. Prominent Congress member Javier Diez Canseco described these security laws as a "white coup" (cited in Burgos, 1992: 10).
- vii. While Fujimori had not won the battle for the hearts of the public entirely, he had managed to 'fix the agenda' (Grompone 1998: 22). Polls showed that faith in political parties had fallen from 21% in 1990 to 12% in March 1992, in the judicial system from 23% to 14% and in Congress from 45% to 17% (Mc Clintock, 1996: 57). Fujimori's level of support oscillated at the beginning of his tenure, but by September 1991 approval had risen in February 1992 to 64% (Apoyo, 2000: 25).
- viii The ten points were: Modifying the present Constitution; Radically 'moralising' the Judicial Power'; modernising the public administration; pacifying the country; fighting against drug trafficking; punishing the immorality and corruption of public administration; promoting a market economy; reorganising the educational system; decentralising the faculties of the Central Government; raising living standards in the medium term (Fujimori 1992a).
- ix "Pure neoliberalism".
- x In 1990 10.4% of the 54.4% of employees in formal private employment were temporary, but by 2000 24.3% were temporary out of the 45.5% of the workforce in such employment (Pascó-Font and Saavedra, 2001: 173)
- xi Strikes decreased from 11.6% of total man-hours in 1990 to 8.9% in 1995. In 1989/1990 profits were 64.6% of national income and pay 34.4% but by 1996 profits increased to 77.8% while pay fell to 21.2% (Gonzales, 1998: 113). Furthermore between 1990 and 1996 the minimum wage was reduced by 30%.
- xii Fujimori's decision to launch the autogolpe, on April 5 1992, saw his poll ratings soar from 53% in March to 81% in April, 1992 and would remain above 60% for the rest of the year (Apoyo, 2000: 25).
- xiii Immediately after the coup Fujimori ruled by decree with the full support of the Armed Forces, concentrating all the powers of the state in his hands. In the following weeks he

dismantled the judiciary, sacking thirteen Supreme Court judges and more than 100 lower-court judges and prosecutors, and he moved ahead to establish secret military tribunals to try suspected terrorists (Kláren, 2000: 414).

xiv This reinforced the perception that it was the implementation of structural reform in a speedy manner that was the real reason for the autogolpe and not a result of Fujimori's inherent authoritarianism (Conaghan, 1996) (Ellner, 2003).

xv "With Chávez the People Rule". Campaign slogan for 2000 Election Campaign.

xvi Interview with Margarita López Maya, conducted in Caracas, April 2002.

xvii By the turn of the 1980s the following leftist intellectuals were contacted all of whom at some time or other would occupy positions in Chávez's government after 1998: Luis Miquilena, Manuel Quijada, Lino Martínez, José Vicente Rangel, and Omar Mezza as well as university figures such as Luis Fuenmayor, Héctor Navarro, Jorge Giordani, Trino Alcides Díaz, and Adina Bastidas (López Maya, 2003: 76).

xviii Chávez himself was one of the first graduates of this plan and went on to take a Masters degree in Political Science at the Simon Bolívar University in Caracas, although he did not graduate.

xix See for example Carrasquero and Welsch (2001); Kaplan (2001); Koeneke (2000)

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