

Caitlin Andrews-Lee, *The Emergence and Revival of Charismatic Movements: Argentine Peronism and Venezuelan Chavismo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Tables, figures, bibliography, index, 251 pp; hardcover \$99.99, ebook.

Julio F. Carrión, *A Dynamic Theory of Populism in Power: The Andes in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. Figures, acronyms, bibliography, index, 296 pp; hardcover \$74, ebook \$80.

The current political processes throughout the world once again arouse interest in the category of populism, in both its theoretical and practical repercussions. The issue reemerges today at a historic juncture of a global crisis of the liberal status quo, where its replacement by “something different” seems legitimate in the eyes of broad sectors, including elites from the center and the periphery. Being a political topic that has been approached from perspectives focused on the socioeconomic, the strategic, and the ideational, two innovative works provide new evidence in this direction.

In *A Dynamic Theory of Populism in Power*, Julio F. Carrión studies five recent experiences of populism in Latin America. In four cases (Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela), the election of populist outsiders affected democratic institutions; in only one case (Colombia) did democracy survive. The book offers a theory to explain this divergent outcome. When an elected populist leader is bent on using the state apparatus to subvert democracy, enjoys significant public support, and also has the strong allegiance of elected representatives, then an extraordinary effort by both the opposition and the judiciary is required to defend polyarchy. However, the election of a populist president does not necessarily lead to the end of democracy; defeating citizen and institutional resistance is (particularly) determined by executive capacity.

Carrión explains how the impact of populism on democracy depends on the variety of populism in power. The book's central claim is that unconstrained populism in power leads to regime change, whereas contained populism does not. After being in power for a decade or more (Bolivia, Venezuela), populist leaders find it extremely difficult to portray themselves as antiestablishment and anti-status quo figures. The hybrid regimes generated by some populist governments may be enduring, but they are not balanced as in within their constitutive forces in equilibrium, and therefore are prone to sudden change. The legitimacy of populist rule is not recognized by other political actors, and so populists always try to change the political status quo.

Carrión argues that the rise of populism comes in great part as the consequence of deteriorating social and economic conditions that existing governments cannot properly address. Populist leaders promise to improve things, and some things usually do get better. But if they are not constrained, populists erode democracy

and create hybrid regimes. Only when populism in power is constrained, as in Colombia, can democratic reversals be avoided. Populist leaders say they are the people's true representatives, but they fear the people's judgment, which is why they rig the electoral process to stay in power.

Democratic decay is related to unconstrained populism. When significant power asymmetries develop, populism will lead to autocratization. When populist chief executives successfully overcome the moment of acute political conflict created by their push to aggrandize their power and the efforts of the opposition to resist such a move, democracy's survival is seriously challenged. Given the zero-sum character of this confrontation, the victorious party faces almost no opposition in influencing subsequent developments. A victorious opposition will gain the ability to constrain the populist and sustain or regain free and fair elections. A triumphant populist president (such as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela) will continue to accumulate power. By contrast, when populism in power is constrained (in Colombia under Álvaro Uribe), democracy, even affected, will survive.

Facing few constraints on their efforts to bring state institutions under their control, populist leaders will create the conditions to reproduce their regimes by tilting the playing field. As Carrión recognizes, public opinion support for radical institutional change provides a condition for the success of populist executives. Their victories against the opposition are supported using the repressive state apparatus and, in some cases, the mobilization of loyal civil society groups. Countries with weak democratic institutions are more likely to succumb to the forces unleashed by populist chief executives.

Electoral victories legitimize populist leaders' heavy-handed tactics against the opposition and give them further momentum for dismantling checks and balances. The transfer of political resource stocks—that is, the accumulation and enhancement of political power—occurs through a variety of mechanisms, which *A Dynamic Theory of Populism in Power* shows: the granting of new constitutional powers to the executive; the co-optation of state institutions, particularly the judiciary; the systematic control—through fear, corruption, and repression—of the media; and the restriction of freedom of association. This transfer of political resource stocks creates an oversized executive branch, with the populist leader at its core.

The book shows that the levels of electoral democracy after a decade of unconstrained populism in power (clearly in Venezuela and Bolivia, less in Ecuador and Peru) are significantly lower than those found in the years immediately before the rise of populism to power. Once populist chief executives prevail and transfer political resource stocks to their favor, they start tilting the electoral field in a recognizable fashion to stay in power. And because populist regimes rely so heavily on the electoral appeal of the personalistic leader, they also systematically violate their own constitutions, allowing these leaders to stand for extended, and even permanent, reelection.

Although the book's argument is tested primarily in the Andes, it can be generalized to understand the relationship between populism in power and

democracy in other countries. Carrión adheres to the approach by which he understands populism as a political strategy rather than a discourse; his contribution transcends the strategic approach. We need to examine how different power capabilities are employed to prevail and rule. An exclusive focus on how populist leaders articulate their political worldviews runs the risk of missing the important dimension of governance and power: how populist leaders deal with societal and political actors in pursuit of their antipluralistic and hegemonic political goals, and how they use state power to achieve them. Populism in government initiates a battle for the redistribution of political power, not wealth. Once populist leaders accumulate that power, societies have to fight ferociously to regain it.

From another perspective, in *The Emergence and Revival of Charismatic Movements*, Caitlin Andrews-Lee investigates the nature and trajectory of two Latin American populist movements (*Peronismo* and *Chavismo*) from the perspectives of both leaders and followers. The author reveals that these charismatic movements can emerge, survive, and politically revive by sustaining their personalistic character, dominating Argentine and Venezuelan politics for years after the passing of their founders and developing an enduring affective political identity that successors (from Carlos Saúl Menem to Nicolás Maduro) can reactivate, portraying themselves as symbolic reincarnations of the founders.

Andrews-Lee discusses conventional understandings of charisma, which predict that the survival of these movements would require their transformation into institutionalized parties. Yet both movements have persisted by sustaining their original, deeply personalistic nature. In both cases, the affective quality of citizens' attachments to the founders has proven strikingly resilient. The personalistic character of *Peronismo* and *Chavismo* remains strong, suggesting that followers' loyalty is still rooted in the movements' charismatic foundations and casting doubt on the argument suggesting that the movements have routinized.

The founder of such a movement fulfills three conditions to establish these attachments with his supporters. He/She directly recognizes the people's suffering; promises and enacts bold policies that provide the people with desperately needed relief; and crafts a narrative that praises him as a savior, depicts his opponents as enemies, and stresses his quasi-religious mission to provide the people with transcendence.

To explain this surprising outcome, *The Emergence and Revival of Charismatic Movements* examines the nature and trajectory of followers' support for the founders (Perón, Chávez) and the movements (the demand side of charisma), as well as the strategies and conditions used by successors to connect with the followers and consolidate power (the supply side of charisma). Drawing insights from political psychology on the nature and behavior of political identities, Andrews-Lee explains why citizens' attachments to charismatic leaders persist and demonstrates how new leaders can reactivate those bonds by claiming to be heirs of the adored founder. In turn, she analyzes the interplay between structure and agency to determine the conditions under which successors can revive the

movement and establish their own charismatic authority. Furthermore, she weaves together the perspectives of followers and leaders to illustrate how charismatic movements can develop self-reinforcing, spasmodic trajectories that weaken democracy.

Based on this research, the book shows that charismatic movements can persist in personalistic forms and dominate politics for years and even decades after their founders disappear. The history of both countries (Argentina since 1950, Venezuela since 2000) is a faithful example. The followers' original charismatic attachments have a profound and lasting influence on their attitudes and behavior because these bonds develop into a resilient political identity. As suggested by political psychologists, the nature of this identity is enduring; however, its intensity fluctuates over time. Thus, when the charismatic founder disappears and his policies collapse, the personalistic nature of citizens' attachments remains intact.

By combining the perspectives of movement followers and leaders, this book demonstrates that charismatic movements tend to develop spasmodic trajectories that are self-reinforcing. Over time, the followers preserve this narrative and pass it to new generations by recounting cherished memories and holding on to symbols that commemorate the founder's selflessness and extraordinary qualities. This personalistic mechanism preserves the charismatic nature of citizens' identification with the movement and sustains their hope that a new savior will eventually rise up, assume the founder's mantle, and restore the movement to power. To substantiate their charismatic potential, successors implement daring reforms that lack long-term sustainability but carry a powerful initial impact. In addition to preserving personalistic leadership, the fitful life cycle of charismatic movements perpetually undermines party system development, encourages authoritarian leader tendencies, accelerates institutional decay, and generates economic instability.

The book provides a novel explanation for the remarkable persistence of political movements founded by charismatic leaders. Instead of transforming them into routinized parties, *Charismatic Movements* demonstrates, the original, personalistic nature of these movements fuels their perpetuation. Thus these movements can live on and dominate politics for long stretches of time. However, their fitful trajectories generate perpetual institutional weakness, social upheaval, and economic volatility. Unlike routinization, which encourages the gradual development of programmatic continuity and organizational infrastructure, the revival of charismatic movements infuses democracies with enduring illiberal tendencies and perpetually destabilizes party systems.

If we conceive populism as a different form of imagination and political activity—located in the transit between liberal democracy and authoritarianism—these two books show populism as a specific way of understanding, exercising, and structuring modern politics. Thus, populism would be a hybrid species from a constitutive standpoint, and transitional in a procedural sense, in the catalog of contemporary political forms.

The combination of these factors (leadership, movement, and party) can sometimes lead to a process of constitutional reform to rethink the rules of the

political game. Both these books address this problem throughout their pages. The process, in Carrión's and Andrews-Lee's rethinking, can lead to more authoritarianism, but in any case, their approach questions the hackneyed idea that populism does not need or generate any organization or institutions. In reality, populism does not respect the institutions and norms of the original or foster political regime—liberal democracy, whether consolidated or degraded—but it does create its own rules and defends them tooth and nail.

However, by substituting a poorly processed social polarization for a reinforced political-partisan polarization, minimizing the rights and channels of participation for the opposition, subjugating the institutions that operate as a counterweight to the executive branch, and discursively caricaturing or dehumanizing critical voices, the narrative and praxis of populism reinforce illiberal democratizing routes. Both Carrión and Andrews-Lee address this problem: those are the regimes that can reach, after a certain threshold, the open autocratization of the political system and society. Just as these two books reveal, populism not only comes into tension with democracy, due to its reticence toward pluralism and dissent and its propensity to concentrate power in the executive and delegitimize the opposition. It is averse not only to the liberal legacy but also to the very basis—popular—of its legitimacy.

In both books, but especially in Carrión, I miss some greater reference to the exogenous dimension—geopolitical, ideological—of cooperation and autocratic influence in national processes. Given the influence of allied regimes (Cuba's dictatorship) in populist consolidation and authoritarian drift, in the case of the Bolivarian axis, and more indirectly through the replication of that influence with the populisms already consolidated, with the *Chavista* regime playing the role of Havana in the case of Argentina, this reference should, at least, be recognized. In Andrews-Lee's work, I wish I had read an interpretation of *Chavismo*—in demographic, electoral, and ideological terms—closer to the present state of the crisis in the current Venezuelan conjuncture.

From a comparative politics with attachment to historical neoinstitutionalism—especially in regime change—to the analysis of the actors—their preferences, discourses and actions—Carrión and Andrews-Lee provide relevant innovations. Both recover and develop the strategic political perspective of the analysis of populism advanced by the seminal works of Kurt Weyland. *A Dynamic Theory of Populism in Power* gives an account of the varieties of populism (contested or dominant, with the hegemonic and authoritarian variants of the latter), the antidemocratic dialectic generated between incapable elites and disaffected masses that drives it, and the phases (early irruption, critical conjuncture, and consolidation or reversal) in which it manifests itself. *The Emergence and Revival of Charismatic Movements* develops a suggestive concept of charismatic movement, in which the enduring dialectic between a populist leadership style and form of participation must be read—from asymmetry, emotionality, and low institutionalized mediation. It gives an account, from a perspective of historical phases of greater duration than those studied by Carrión, of dynamics of

foundation, survival, and resurrection (we should call it reinvention) of the offers and demands of populist politics.

Last but not least, without a fruitful—and methodologically rigorous—dialogue between political science, as a central focus, and the contributions of sociology and history, these works would not have the explanatory potential that we now enjoy. It is not difficult to predict that both works, to which I will dedicate a particular and more in-depth review in the future, have come to enrich research, teaching, and in general, rigorous knowledge about Latin American political dynamics.

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Luciano Da Ros and Matthew M. Taylor, *Brazilian Politics on Trial: Corruption and Reform Under Democracy*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2022. Tables, figures, appendix, bibliography, index, 281 pp.; hardcover \$95, ebook \$95

In attempting “to make sense of Brazil’s complex history of corruption and anticorruption since the return to democracy in 1985” (3), Matthew Taylor and Luciano Da Ros set themselves a daunting task. After all, the sheer number of scandals over the last four decades, along with their distinctive characteristics and complexities, would seem to defy systematization. The idea that frames this book, however, is that the emergence of numerous variations is in large part attributable to environmental factors of a political-institutional kind. The authors argue that a “combination of complementary institutions has provided, and continues to provide, motive and means for corruption” (211). If true, this not only helps explain the past but also suggests lessons for the future.

Among seven chapters, the first raises three basic questions, sequentially addressed over the book’s course: “What explains the seeming constancy of corruption and scandal in democratic Brazil?” (2); “Why have reforms and anticorruption efforts not had the desired effect of lessening political corruption?” and “What are the implications of Brazil’s experience for anticorruption reformers elsewhere around the world?” (3).

Chapter 2, “The Prevailing Elite Cartel Syndrome,” derives its title from Michael Johnston’s work on syndromes of corruption; that is, “networks of political and economic elites [that] develop privileged relationships that are protected through corruption” (13). Da Ros and Taylor argue that certain features reinforce Brazil’s variant of this syndrome: “coalition presidentialism in a highly fragmented party system, a large developmental state with oligopolistic and intricately intertwined firm structures, and a loosely regulated and opaque yet highly concentrated
