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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

POPULISM AND LEADER POLARIZATION IN VENEZUELA, ECUADOR, AND TURKEY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

POLITICAL SCIENCE

by

Orçun Selçuk

2019

To: Dean John Stack
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by Orçun Selçuk, and entitled Populism and Leader Polarization in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

_____
Tatiana Kostadinova

_____
Barry Levitt

_____
Qing Lai

_____
Eduardo Gamarra, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 6, 2019

The dissertation of Orçun Selçuk is approved.

_____
Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

_____
Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2019

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DEDICATION

To my family and friends,

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dissertation writing is a long and solitary journey. Nevertheless, without the support of certain individuals and institutions, I would not be able to complete this dissertation on time. First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor Eduardo Gamarra who supported me at all stages of the graduate program. After taking his seminar on South American Politics, I delved into the cross-regional study of populism and eventually published my research paper as an article. As his teaching assistant and student, I had the privilege of listening to his lectures on Latin America and discussing contemporary challenges to democratic governance in the region. Following the comprehensive exams, Gamarra helped me decide on a dissertation topic that allowed me to combine my expertise in Turkish and Latin American Politics. Once I defended my proposal, he encouraged me to travel to all three countries and promote my research beyond Florida International University at conferences. Within the time-span of three years, despite his busy schedule, he always provided me with constructive feedback to improve the quality of my theoretical framework and the analyses of individual countries. I cannot think of any other mentor who could have given me intellectual autonomy while pushing for excellence. I am so grateful to him for turning me from a graduate student to a scholar.

Besides my dissertation advisor, I am also thankful to other committee members: Barry Levitt, Tatiana Kostadinova, and Qing Lai. During my first semester in the graduate program, I took Levitt's Seminar in Comparative Politics and Democratic Institutions in Latin America classes, which taught me the foundational works in the field of comparative politics and the region. In the dissertation stage, he always kept the bar

high and offered a detailed critique of the drafts I shared with him. Similarly, Kostadinova met with me several times and provided her insight on my preliminary ideas as well as more developed pieces of writing. Thanks to her support, I could obtain additional funding through the English Department and dedicate sufficient time for my dissertation research as well as side projects. Finally, I am indebted to Qing Lai for accepting to be a member of the committee and making suggestions on the research design. Even though he was "an outside member," his office door was always open for me whenever I had questions on public opinion survey data, tables, regressions, and STATA.

At FIU, I would also like to acknowledge the support of Adrian Ang and Kevin Evans who did not serve in my committee but introduced me to the literature on polarization in the United States and allowed me to write papers on that subject for their graduate seminars. In addition, I would like to recognize Astrid Arrarás whose co-authorship made me further explore the impact of personalism on democratic backsliding. Outside of the Department of Politics and International Relations, I am grateful to my Spanish teachers Angelica Nelson, Licet Garcia, José Villar, Juan Godoy, and Maria Gómez. Thanks to their efforts, I was able to read, write, and speak Spanish to conduct the relevant dissertation research.

After earning the Tinker Field Research Grant, SIPA Broad Fellowship, ASMEA Research Grants, and various travel grants, I could travel to Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey to interact with local scholars and institutions. During field research trips and conferences, I benefited from the support and feedback of the following individuals: Guillermo Aveledo, Rodolfo Magallanes, Margarita López Maya, Francisco José Alfaro

Pareja, Manuel Llorens, Mireya Lozada, Sonia Medina, José Manuel Puente, Angel Álvarez, Miguel Ángel Martínez, Doris Carolina Ponce Lozada, Aime Tillett, Mary Alessandra Sánchez, Armando Romero, Diego Guerrero, Diego Pérez Enríquez, Veronica Larrea, Maria Laura Patiño, Felipe Burbano, Pablo Andrade, César Montúfar, Bekir Ağırdır, Eren Pultar, Aydın Erdem, Tarhan Erdem, Asım Karaömerlioğlu, Aydın Babuna, Behlül Özkan, Kerem Yıldırım, Berk Esen, Sultan Tepe, Karabekir Akkoyunlu, Kerem Öktem, Ayşe Kadıoğlu, Yunus Sözen, Selin Karana, Paul Levin, Kurt Weyland, Elizabeth Zechmeister, Kirk Hawkins, Patricio Navia, Banu Eligür, and Zoila Ponce de Leon. In Caracas, Quito, and Istanbul, I had the privilege to conduct research at the libraries of Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración, Universidad Central de Venezuela (IESA), Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales Ecuador (FLACSO), Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE), Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, and Boğaziçi University. I am also thankful to the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), Comparative Studies of Electoral Systems (CSES), and KONDA for the availability of survey data on Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey.

On a more personal level, I appreciate my family and friends who rooted for my academic success and provided the much-needed moral support throughout the Ph.D. program. Among my family members, I would like to express my appreciation to my mother, Gülay Manisalı, who never questioned my decision to pursue an academic career and offered her unconditional support throughout the entire process. I also owe Berkay Selçuk, Ümit Selçuk, Halil Uçar, and Başar Manisalı for having my back at all times despite the geographical distance. Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge Dilara Hekimci, Onur Erpul, Senem Çevik, Hunter Adak, Nevena Trajkov, Sercan Canbolat,

Kabil Demirkıran, İbrahim Sarpkaya, Necati Soydemir, Hüseyin Kahraman, Şeniz Pamuk, Canan Balkan, Zeynep Kılıçoğlu, Aycan Katıtaş, and Melissa Boissiere for their amazing friendship and Alejandra Cruz for becoming my life partner. Because of their love and positive energy, I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

POPULISM AND LEADER POLARIZATION

IN VENEZUELA, ECUADOR, AND TURKEY

by

Orçun Selçuk

Florida International University, 2019

Miami. Florida

Professor Eduardo Gamarra, Major Professor

This dissertation studies the extent of polarization in Venezuela under Hugo Chávez (1999-2013), Ecuador under Rafael Correa (2007-2017), and Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2002-2015). Theoretically, it develops the concept of leader polarization to describe cases where the elite or/and public opinion polarize over their levels of affection toward charismatic and dominant chief executives. To explain the occurrence of leader polarization, the dissertation unpacks the inclusionary vs. exclusionary nature of populism toward the members of the in-group and the out-group on symbolic, political, and material levels. It also examines how leader polarization contributes to democratic backsliding.

Empirically, the dissertation uses qualitative and quantitative methodologies to understand the dynamics of leader polarization in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey. Through qualitative case studies, it describes how Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan simultaneously offered inclusion vs. exclusion to chavistas/correístas/pro-Erdoğan groups and anti-chavistas/anti-correístas/anti-Erdoğan groups. Furthermore, it discusses how leader polarization pushed the three countries away from liberal democracy toward an

authoritarian direction. At the public opinion level, the dissertation uses LAPOP, KONDA, and CSES survey data and aims to find out the predictors of leader polarization. The results of multinomial logistic regressions reveal that political interest and sociotropic evaluations of the economy predict individuals' expression of extreme affection toward Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan. Overall, the findings of the dissertation contribute to the literature on polarization, populism, and democratization.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

30S	September 30, 2010 police rebellion
AD	Democratic Action
AKP	Justice and Development Party
ALBA	Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas
ANAP	Motherland Party
ANEL	Independent Greeks
AP	Justice Party
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party
Causa R	Radical Cause
CFP	Concentration of People's Forces
CHP	Republican People's Party
CNE	National Electoral Council
CONAIE	Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador
COPEI	Christian Democratic Party
COPRE	Presidential Commission to Reform the State
CSES	Comparative Studies of Electoral Systems
CTV	Workers' Confederation
DP	Democrat Party
DYP	True Path Party
EU	European Union
FALN	Armed Forces of National Liberation
FEDECAMARAS	National Chamber of Commerce

FP	Virtue Party
FPÖ	Freedom Party of Austria
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDP	People's Democratic Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KONDA	KONDA Research Consultancy
LAPOP	Latin American Public Opinion Project
MAS	Movement Toward Socialism
MBR-200	Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement
MHP	Nationalist Action Party
MIR	Revolutionary Left Movement
MNP	National Order Party
MSP	National Salvation Party
MUD	Democratic Unity Roundtable
MVR	Fifth Republic Movement
OAS	Organization of American States
PAIS	Proud and Sovereign Fatherland
PASOK	Panhellenic Socialist Movement
PCV	Venezuela Communist Party
PDVSA	Petroleum of Venezuela
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PODEMOS	We Can

PSUV	United Socialist Party of Venezuela
RCTV	Radio Caracas Television
RP	Welfare Party
SECOM	Secretary of National Communication
SYRIZA	Coalition of the Radical Left
TİP	Turkish Labor Party
UCV	Central University of Venezuela
URD	Democratic Republican Union
V-Dem	Varieties of Democracy

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

"Love President Trump or hate him, we're forced to pick a side. Neither his ardent supporters nor his most vehement detractors will countenance any middle ground" (Markowicz 2018).

"There are two countries [Venezuela]: one that loves the President of the Republic [Chávez] and one which hates him" (Briceño-León 2005, 21).

"He [Lula] is simultaneously the most loved and hated figure in Brazil, and people's perceptions of him tend to manifest themselves in extremes" (BBC 2016).

"For many Ecuadoreans, there is no middle ground with the tough-talking Correa -- you either love him or hate him" (Reuters 2010).

"Erdoğan is a leader whom one either adores or intensely hates, with few remaining indifferent" (Bechev 2014, 2).

"Filipinos are rarely neutral about Duterte. They either love him or hate him" (Brainard 2016).

Observers around the world describe countries as diverse as the United States, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Turkey, and the Philippines as polarized between supporters and opponents of Donald Trump, Hugo Chávez, Lula da Silva, Rafael Correa, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Rodrigo Duterte among others. While existing works on polarization tend to conceptualize it along the left-right continuum, a preliminary look at leaders like Trump, Correa, and Erdoğan does not necessarily show the presence of ideological polarization. Unlike the Cold War era when polarization was mainly between

the extreme left and the extreme right, it seems that the polarization we witness today is mainly over the levels of affection toward populist chief executives. To further address this puzzle, this dissertation examines polarization in two Latin American countries and a cross-regional case from Southern Europe/the Middle East: Venezuela under Chávez (1998-2013), Ecuador under Correa (2007-2017), and Turkey under Erdoğan (2002-2015). Instead of describing these countries as polarized or not, the dissertation aims to find out the type of polarization (ideological or leader) and its degree (severity). In simple terms, the dissertation poses the following research question: To what extent are Venezuela under Chávez, Ecuador under Correa, and Turkey under Erdoğan polarized?

1.2 KEY CONCEPTS

Before answering the above-mentioned research question in detail, it is important to provide a brief definition of key concepts that appear throughout the dissertation: polarization, ideological polarization, leader polarization, populism, inclusionary vs. exclusionary populism, and democratic backsliding.

1.2.1 Polarization

Polarization indicates a clustering at the extremes instead of the center on a single axis. Scholars can study polarization as an instance or a process. At a given time, a polarized distribution peaks at both ends of the spectrum while the center categories are weak. Over time, a distribution becomes more polarized as fewer actors situate themselves in the middle and more in the extremes. Concerning the level of analysis, we can study elite and public opinion polarization. The former refers to polarization among political parties, elected officials, and appointed judges. The latter denotes polarization among citizens and voters. In various contexts, the elite and public opinion polarize over

salient issues and pre-existing social cleavages. This dissertation focuses on two specific types: ideological polarization and leader polarization.

1.2.1.1 Ideological Polarization

Ideological polarization describes a situation where political actors situate themselves at the extreme left and the extreme right instead of the center. In the comparative politics literature, it builds on the works of Anthony Downs (1957) and Giovanni Sartori (1966) who conceptualize polarization along the left-right continuum. At the elite level, we can observe the rise of anti-system parties on each end of the ideological spectrum that polarizes the party-system. With the rise of radical ideologies, it becomes difficult to hold the center and ensure the survival of the democratic regime. During the first and second reverse waves of democratization, scholars identified a causal link between ideological polarization and democratic breakdown. Prominent examples include Weimar Republic of Germany (1933), Spain (1936), Brazil (1964), Greece (1967), Chile (1973), Uruguay (1973), Argentina (1976), and Turkey (1980) (Linz and Stepan 1978, Özbudun 1981; Bermeo 2003). At the public opinion level, ideological polarization corresponds to self-identification with the extreme left and the extreme right as opposed to the center, the center-left, and the center-right. We can also observe ideological polarization in the public space since the members of the extremist groups often engage in kidnappings, robberies, assassinations, and other forms of political violence to disrupt the social order.

1.2.1.2 Leader Polarization

As an alternative, this dissertation puts forward the concept of leader polarization. Leader polarization is present when the elite or/and public opinion polarize over their levels of affection toward chief executives who attempt to dominate the political environment with their charismatic persona. While the followers of the leader express extremely positive feelings (i.e., like, trust, love, admiration, and respect) toward them, the members of the other group feel the exact opposite (i.e., dislike, distrust, hatred, disgust, and disrespect). Due to its focus on affect instead of ideology, leader polarization as a concept borrows from affective polarization literature in American politics, which studies polarized perceptions of Democrats and Republicans toward members of the in-group vs. the out-group (Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012; Mason 2015; Hetherington and Rudolph 2015; Jacobson 2011). To study leader polarization at the elite level, we need to observe whether political parties and other major actors in society divide into two rival groups as supporters (pro-) and opponents (anti-) of the leader. At the public opinion level, we can study to what extent citizens locate themselves at the extremes than the middle over their levels of like, trust, love, admiration, and respect among other affections. As the above-mentioned quotes on Trump, Chávez, Lula, Correa, Erdoğan, and Duterte exemplify, leader polarization leaves little room for neutral feelings.

1.2.2 Populism

The dissertation mainly works with ideational and politico-strategic definitions of populism. Scholars who subscribe to the ideational approach predominantly view populism as "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and

which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (Mudde 2004, 543). Cas Mudde's branch of the ideational approach allows studying populist actors on the right and the left in multiple regions (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012; Mudde 2017). Especially, it is popular among scholars who study the populist radical right parties in Europe (Akkerman, de Lange and Roodujin 2016). Another branch within the ideational camp follows the works of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe who equate populism with politics and study the antagonistic relationships at its center (Laclau 1977; Mouffe 2005; Panizza 2005). Laclau and Mouffe's symptomatic reading of populism expresses a more favorable view of the concept and considers it as a counter-hegemonic project. In the European cases, these scholars express their normative preferences for leftist populist parties in Greece and Spain (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014; Kioupkiolis 2016).

The politico-strategic approach to populism emphasizes the idea of domination. According to its leading scholar, Kurt Weyland, populism is "a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large number of mostly unorganized followers" (Weyland 2001, 14). This leader-centered conceptualization stresses the importance of the direct relationship with followers through elections, plebiscites, mass rallies, television broadcasts, social media, and public opinion polls. Therefore, populist leaders aim to dominate the country's politics with their omnipresence and a mission to transform the nation. Instead of committing to a certain ideology, populist leaders aim to win and exercise power in an opportunistic and pragmatist fashion (Weyland 2017). In that sense, Weyland's definition of populism parallels other scholars who attach a special

role to leaders and their pragmatic strategies to gain or maintain power (Germani 1978; Taggart 2000; Barr 2009). Weyland's leader-centered definition has strong analytical leverage to study populist leaders in Latin America and Asia. For the purposes of this dissertation, it also helps to theorize leader polarization.

1.2.2.1 Inclusionary vs. Exclusionary Populism

Regardless of the specific definition they use, most scholars would acknowledge that populism operates through simplistic binaries. Indeed, the most basic rationale behind populism is its attempt to polarize the society into two rival camps. To unpack its polarizing nature, this dissertation examines inclusionary vs. exclusionary populism. Building on the existing body of scholarship on Latin American and European populism (Malloy 1977; O'Donnell 1979; Filc 2010; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013), it analyzes to what extent populist leaders offer symbolic, political, and material inclusion vs. exclusion to the members of the in-group vs. the out-group. Symbolically, the dissertation looks at how populist leaders give a sense of belonging and representation to the marginalized sectors of the society while framing others as the enemies of the nation. Politically, the dissertation scrutinizes how populist leaders create more opportunities to participate in the decision-making process while limiting the opposition's ability to contest. Materially, the dissertation investigates whether supporters of populist leaders benefit from clientelistic exchanges in the form of state resources, public employment, infrastructure, and social programs.

1.2.3 Democratic Backsliding

Democratic backsliding describes a movement away[1] from liberal democracy to full-scale authoritarianism on a continuous scale (Bermeo 2016). Other terms that denote a similar process include democratic recession (Diamond 2015), democratic erosion (Handlin 2017), and authoritarianization (Kendall-Taylor, Frantz and Wright 2017). In addition to Venezuela under Chávez, Ecuador under Correa, and Turkey under Erdoğan prominent cases of democratic backsliding include Donald Trump (the United States), Viktor Orbán (Hungry), Jarosław Kaczyński (Poland), Aleksandar Vučić (Serbia), Evo Morales (Bolivia), and Uhuru Kenyatta (Kenya). This dissertation focuses on three mechanisms of democratic backsliding as a consequence of leader polarization. It looks at how leader polarization (1) undermines the supporters' ability to hold the leader accountable for authoritarian practices and accusations of corruption; (2) weakens the anti-leader opponents' belief in the legitimacy of the democratic process; and (3) gives rise to excessive personalization of power that makes it hard to govern in the absence of the charismatic leader.

1.3 CONTRIBUTION TO THE LITERATURE

To summarize the main argument of the dissertation succinctly:

(1) The inclusionary vs. exclusionary nature of populism explains the emergence of leader polarization.

(2) Once leader polarization is present, it leads to democratic backsliding.

[1] This dissertation does not assume that democratization is a teleological process. Based on Huntington's (1990) seminal research on the global waves of democratization, it considers the discussions on democratic backsliding as a possible third reverse wave.

Overall, the theoretical framework of the dissertation and the empirical findings contribute to three areas of research: polarization, populism, and democratization.

The dissertation challenges the dominant way of conceptualizing polarization along the left-right continuum. Building on the debates in American politics, it proposes an alternative concept (leader polarization) that captures the extent of affective polarization over chief executives. Unlike in cases of ideological polarization where political actors situate themselves at the extreme left and the extreme right, leader polarization centers on how people express extreme feelings over a president or prime minister. At the age of the personalization of politics, leader polarization has the potential to study additional cases around the world such as Alberto Fujimori (Peru), Álvaro Uribe (Colombia), Néstor Kirchner (Argentina), Cristina Kirchner de Fernández (Argentina), Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Mexico), Jarosław Kaczyński (Poland), Andrej Babiš (Czech Republic), Thaksin Shinawatra (Thailand), Narendra Modi (India), and Michael Sata (Zambia).

In terms of the populism literature, the dissertation refines the existing works that attach an exclusionary label to radical right parties in Europe and inclusionary label to (mostly leftist) Latin American populist leaders (Filc 2010; Filc 2015; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2011; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013). Instead of describing regional manifestations of populism either inclusionary or exclusionary, it considers both mechanisms to explain the occurrence of leader polarization. On symbolic, political, and material levels, populist leaders simultaneously offer inclusion vs. exclusion toward the members of the in-group and the out-group. Leaving our normative preferences aside, the dissertation invites scholars to acknowledge that right-wing populist leaders like Trump,

Le Pen, Wilders, Fujimori, Erdoğan, or Duterte successfully offer inclusion to the members of the in-group too. Even though their discourse is often politically incorrect, they undoubtedly give a sense of belonging to a large number of followers who vote for them in the opposition and the government. By simply labeling them as exclusionary populists, political scientists tend to miss that "disturbing" point. Similarly, left-wing populist parties in Southern Europe, namely SYRIZA and PODEMOS, should not only be considered as all-inclusive actors who do not otherize.

Finally, the dissertation aims to contribute to the study of democratization. During the Cold War period, the literature associated ideological polarization with democratic breakdown, which led to the establishment of full-scale authoritarian regimes in South America (i.e., Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, and Argentina) and Southern Europe (i.e., Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey). In the post-Cold War era, instead, we increasingly witness leader polarization and democratic backsliding, which pushes countries to an authoritarian direction but does not necessarily institutionalize a full-scale authoritarian regime. In that sense, leader polarization speaks to the literature on democracies with adjectives (illiberal or delegative) and hybrid regimes (competitive authoritarian or electoral authoritarian) (Zakaria 1997; O'Donnell 1994; Levitsky and Way 2010; Schedler 2006).

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

In total, the dissertation consists of six chapters: Introduction (Chapter 1), Populism, Leader Polarization, and Democratic Backsliding (Chapter 2), Leader Polarization in Venezuela over Chávez (Chapter 3), Leader Polarization in Ecuador over Correa (Chapter 4), Leader Polarization in Turkey over Erdoğan (Chapter 5), and

Comparative Conclusions (Chapter 6). For a more detailed explanation, below is the outline of the dissertation:

The next chapter of the dissertation (Chapter 2), first, examines the existing body of work on polarization. Building on the affective polarization literature in American politics, it reconsiders the dominant left-right polarization framework in comparative politics. More specifically, it identifies the rise of populism and the personalization of politics as two global trends that challenge the conventional line of thought. Second, the chapter puts forward the concept of leader polarization and highlights how populist leaders simultaneously offer symbolic, political, and material inclusion vs. exclusion toward the members of the in-group and the out-group. It also argues that leader polarization contributes to democratic backsliding. Third, the chapter concludes with a section on research design that identifies the universe of cases, justifies the case selection, describes data sources, and operationalizes key variables at the public opinion level.

The empirical chapters on Venezuela (Chapter 3) and Ecuador (Chapter 4) analyze populism and leader polarization with a focus on Chávez and Correa's presidencies. Historically, the chapters situate both leaders within broader trends of personalism and dependence on commodity exports (rentierism). Following the historical sections, the chapters trace the origins of Chávez and Correa, their election to the presidency, and eventual consolidation of power. The qualitative findings on Venezuela and Ecuador reveal that due to the inclusionary and exclusionary nature of populism, we observe leader polarization between *chavistas/correístas* and *anti-chavistas/anti-correístas*. At the public opinion level, the analyses of the LAPOP (Latin American Public Opinion Project) data confirm the presence of leader polarization in Venezuela

and, to a lesser extent, in Ecuador. In addition, multinomial regression analyses identify the levels of political interest, sociotropic evaluation of the economy, and education as statistically significant predictors of leader polarization, especially to explain extreme levels of trust toward Chávez and Correa.

Another empirical chapter examines Turkey (Chapter 5) as a cross-regional case. Similar to Venezuela and Ecuador, it starts with a historical overview of personalist leadership and polarization in Turkish politics. Then, the chapter analyzes Erdoğan's successful rise to power and consecutive victories in parliamentary elections. During the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) third parliamentary term, especially from the 2013 Gezi Park protests onward, the chapter documents how inclusionary vs. exclusionary populism explains the occurrence of leader polarization between pro-Erdoğan and anti-Erdoğan camps. Descriptive results of the CSES (2011) and KONDA (2013) survey data further confirm the salience of leader polarization in Turkey. When it comes to expressing dislike/like towards Erdoğan and rating him insincere/sincere, survey respondents cluster at both extremes instead of central categories. Predictors of leader polarization over Erdoğan include individuals' levels of political interest, sociotropic evaluation of the economy, education, and religiosity.

The last chapter of the dissertation (Chapter 6) provides comparative conclusions on populism and leader polarization. After revisiting the key concepts, it discusses the qualitative and quantitative findings on Venezuela under Chávez, Ecuador under Correa, and Turkey under Erdoğan. Specifically, the chapter summarizes how Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan offered symbolic, political, and material inclusion vs. exclusion to *chavistas*/*correístas*/pro-Erdoğan groups and *anti-chavistas*/*anti-correístas*/anti-Erdoğan

groups. It also evaluates how leader polarization contributed to democratic backsliding in the three countries. The dissertation ends with a discussion of limitations and areas of future research.

CHAPTER 2

POPULISM, LEADER POLARIZATION, AND DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING

This chapter of the dissertation puts forward a concept called leader polarization. To situate the concept within a broader body of literature, it first examines contemporary debates on polarization in American politics literature. Particularly, the section on the United States identifies and discusses various conceptualizations (i.e., ideological, partisan, issue, and affective polarizations) and measurements that offer a nuanced understanding of the term. Building on the theoretical and empirical debates among the scholars of American politics[2], the chapter then shifts the focus to the study of polarization in comparative politics. As such, the comparative section starts with a review of the dominant ideological left-right polarization and party-systems framework. Afterward, it identifies two general phenomena in advanced and new democracies that challenge this conventional line of thought: the rise of populism and the personalization of politics. Accordingly, the comparative section reaches the conclusion that the ideological approach, based on the classical works of Anthony Downs and Giovanni Sartori, fails to capture the dynamics of polarization especially in countries where populist leaders dominate the political environment with their charismatic persona and simultaneously offer inclusion vs. exclusion to the members of the in-group and the out-group.

[2] This chapter starts with a section on American politics for two main reasons: (1) Over the course of the last two decades, scholars of American politics have extensively debated the issue of polarization at the elite and public opinion levels. (2) The existing debates in American politics, especially the literature on affective polarization, is helpful to develop the concept of leader polarization and lay out strategies to measure it.

Parallel to the inclusionary and exclusionary nature of populism, the third section of the chapter conceptualizes leader polarization. To put it in simple terms, leader polarization is present when political actors are strongly divided over their levels of affection toward the chief executive. While the followers express extremely positive feelings (i.e., like, trust, love, admiration, and respect) toward the leader, members of the out-group feel the exact opposite (i.e., dislike, distrust, hatred, disgust, and disrespect). Under extreme cases of leader polarization, being pro- vs. anti-leader becomes a social cleavage that reduces the political spectrum to one's position toward a single person. Contrary to historical examples from the inter-war period and the Cold War era where the presence of Communist and Fascist Parties polarized party systems with their ideological rigidity and non-pragmatic approach to politics, leader polarization centers on an individual who does not necessarily advocate a coherent set of ideas. Furthermore, compared to ideological polarization, which scholars associated with outright democratic breakdown, leader polarization leads to various forms of democratic backsliding.

After conceptualizing leader polarization, the last section of the chapter introduces the empirical strategy to measure it in the context of Venezuela under Hugo Chávez (1999-2013), Ecuador under Rafael Correa (2007-2017), and Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2002-2015). More specifically, it discusses the case selection of Venezuela and Ecuador from Latin America and adding the cross-regional case of Turkey. Then, it describes qualitative and quantitative data sources to identify and measure the extent of polarization in these three countries. Finally, the section operationalizes key predictors of leader polarization at the individual level, to be tested in the upcoming chapters on the three countries.

2.1 POLARIZATION IN AMERICAN POLITICS

The study of polarization is a contested subject in American politics. At the elite level, various studies have pointed out that Democratic and Republican members of Congress have polarized along partisan and ideological lines. To study elite polarization, scholars measure the growing ideological distance between Democrats and Republicans as well as higher levels of partisan unity in congressional roll-call votes (McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2006; Theriault 2008). Due to polarization in the House and, to a lesser extent, in the Senate, Conservative Democrats and Liberal Republicans have gone virtually extinct, bipartisanship has experienced a significant decline, and gridlock has become more commonplace. Besides Congress, there is also empirical evidence of polarization in the Supreme Court (Bartels 2015) and state legislatures (Shor and McCarty 2011).

While scholars have reached a near-consensus on elite polarization, there is a vast literature on how to conceptualize and measure polarization among the American public. As Yphtach Lelkes rightly puts it "[t]he debate on mass polarization itself is polarized" (Lelkes 2016, 392). The leading advocate of the polarized electorate hypothesis is Alan Abramowitz, who argues that Americans increasingly polarize around ideology especially among the most engaged citizens. Accordingly, polarization is greater among Americans who "care deeply about political issues, follow news about government and politics closely, and not only vote but discuss politics with their friends and relatives, display yard signs and bumper stickers during campaigns, and donate money to parties and candidates" (Abramowitz 2010, 16).

Abramowitz mostly focuses on the disappearance of the center and the growing distance between strong Democrats vs. strong Republicans as well as religious voters vs. secular voters over critical issues such as gay marriage, health care, military spending, and gun control. In addition to polarization over ideology and hot-button issues, his works make a case for polarization between red states and blue states since fewer states remain competitive in presidential elections (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Abramowitz 2010; Abramowitz 2011).

On the opposite side of this debate, Morris Fiorina and his colleagues challenge the notion that the American people are polarized or experiencing a "culture war" in popular terms. Instead, they underline the resilience of the center and the existence of multiple common grounds between Democrats and Republicans as well as people living in the Red States and the Blue States (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2005; Fiorina and Abrams 2008; Fiorina, Abrams and Pope 2008; Levendusky and Pope 2011). In the article, "Where's the Polarization?" Fiorina and Abrams make the following assertion:

> Polarization is not a synonym for disagreement. The raw material of politics is disagreement; if there were no disagreement about what government should and how it should do it; politics would be unnecessary. For public opinion to be polarized, two conditions must be met. First, the substance of the disagreement must be major. Second, the public must be closely divided (Fiorina and Abrams 2011, 309).

Based on this conceptualization, Fiorina and Abrams argue that the distributions of seven-point liberal-conservative scales or specific policy positions are far from being polarized. Since a majority of Americans take a middle-of-the-road position when they are asked to self-identify ideologically or express their views on government spending, healthcare, and aid to minorities. The authors criticize Abramowitz and Saunders for

focusing on a small number of citizens with high political interest and exaggerating the extent of polarization at the public opinion level (Fiorina and Abrams 2011).

Theoretically, Fiorina and his colleagues' argument builds on the conclusions of the seminal work on the American voter (Campbell et al. 1960), especially Philip Converse's findings that an overwhelming majority of Americans lack interest in politics, a sophisticated understanding of multiple issues, and coherent ideological thinking. In Converse's categorization of American voters in 1956, ideologues (3.5 percent) and near-ideologues (12 percent) made up only a small portion of the electorate. In contrast, the American political elite showed a greater level of issue constraint and ideological consistency (Converse 1964).

More recent studies support Converse's findings on citizens' lack of interest in politics as well as a constraint (DiMaggio, Evans and Bryson 1996; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2004; Baldassarri and Gelman 2008). In fact, Delia Baldassarri and Andrew Gelman posit that increased partisanship on key issues could be attributed to "parties' being more polarized and therefore doing a better job at sorting individuals along ideological lines" (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008, 411). From this perspective, partisan individuals have become more polarized for the last three decades, whereas their views on specific issues have mostly remained moderate and centrist like the rest of the American electorate (Kaufmann, Petrocik and Shaw 2008).

Against the literature that focuses on issues and ideology, there is an alternative body of work that conceptualizes polarization regarding how partisans view each other and elected officials. What Shanto Iyengar, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes call affective polarization measures the extent of like/dislike among Democrats and

Republicans toward members of the in-group vs. the out-group. Building on social identity theory (Tajfel et al. 1971), Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes argue that the essence of public opinion polarization in the United States lies on how partisans have increasingly disliked their opponents while feelings toward fellow Democrats and Republicans have remained stable (Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012).

To demonstrate affective polarization empirically, the authors rely on feeling thermometers of the American National Election Studies surveys, which range from 0 (coldest) to 100 (warmest). Their results reveal a downward trend in the ratings of the opposite party among the partisan respondents over the course of the last three decades. They also find that partisans tend to attribute negative traits to the members of the opposite political party. Another indication of affective polarization, following Almond and Verba's (1963) work on civic culture, is partisans' growing dissatisfaction among Americans "if their son or daughter were to enter into marriage with someone with a dissimilar party affiliation." On this specific measure, Americans are affectively polarized over time (Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012, 416).

In follow-up studies, Iyengar and his colleagues designed a set of experiments to further measure the extent of affective polarization among the American public. In the first study, Iyengar and Westwood (2015) show that the implicit bias toward the members of the opposite party is as strong as racial bias in the absence of social norms to discourage a discriminatory behavior. In another study, Lelkes and Westwood argue that "even the most affectively polarized—those with the strongest disdain for the opposition—are no more likely to intentionally harm the opposition than those with minimal levels of affective polarization" (Lelkes and Westwood 2017, 485).

Similarly, Lilliana Mason demonstrates how identifying with the Democratic and Republican parties lead to increasing levels of bias, activism, and anger even if someone's ideological or issue positions remain centrist (Mason 2013; Mason 2015). For instance, in an experimental setting, strong Republicans and Democrats are more likely to respond enthusiastically and angrily to hypothetical scenarios of their parties winning and losing elections (Mason 2016). These findings on in-group vs. out-group thinking among the American electorate also explain the success of Donald Trump's 2016 presidential election campaign. Even though Trump's campaign arguably lacked a coherent set of ideas and policy proposals, it "generated antagonistic and angry reactions that divided family members of friends on a social level" (Mason 2018, 281).

Relatedly, Gary Jacobson examines George W. Bush and Barack Obama as polarizing leaders (Jacobson 2011; Jacobson 2015). He analyses the growing partisan divide in the job approval and perception of these two presidents. In the latter case, he makes the following observation:

> To a great many ordinary Republicans, Obama is not merely a conventionally objectionable Democrat but a person whose background, race, upbringing, name, associations, alleged objectives, and/or presumed values put him outside the boundaries of what is acceptable in an American leader. The widespread acceptance among Republicans of bogus claims about his place of birth and religion reflects this mindset (Jacobson 2015, 6).

Lastly, Marc Hetherington and Thomas Rudolph (2015) scrutinize the divergence of trust as a form of affective polarization. Based on the theories of motivated reasoning (Kunda 1990; Lodge and Taber 2013), they argue that Democrats and Republicans perceive the political world differently depending on which party would control the White House and the Congress. Accordingly,

> partisans whose party is out of power have almost no trust at all in a government run by the other side. Absent this supply of trust, public consensus on issues rarely forms. Lawmakers, in turn, feel little pressure from their constituents to rise above their basest partisan instincts. Ultimately, little gets done, but partisans blame only the other side for the lack of productivity (Hetherington and Rudolph 2015, 1).

Hetherington and Rudolph explain the causes of polarized trust in government with colder feelings toward the members of the opposing party and the assessment of the government's performance from a partisan lens. As an example, Americans have a more favorable view of the Affordable Care Act compared to "Obamacare" even though they are the literally the same thing. Simply naming the Democratic President Obama in the survey question leads to increasing resistance among the Republican voters. It also shows the importance of motivated reasoning to help citizens develop political attitudes (Hetherington and Rudolph 2015).

All in all, there is an agreement among scholars of American politics on conceptualization and measurement of elite polarization through growing ideological distance and partisan unity in roll-call votes. Almost all observers agree with the assertion that since the 1970s, the American elite has ideologically polarized. However, at the public opinion level, scholars disagree on the extent of ideological polarization as most citizens define themselves as centrists and moderates on a left-right scale. Under those circumstances, ideological polarization seems to be limited to strong partisans or politically interested individuals who are more likely to identify at the extreme left and the extreme right as opposed to the central categories. With regards to affective polarization, there is consistent evidence that Democrats and Republicans increasingly view each other negatively, which leads to implicit bias, discrimination, anger, and low

levels of trust toward the members of the out-group. There is also a recent attempt to connect these two approaches since ideology (as an independent variable) could predict individuals' level of affection toward the members of the opposing party. Therefore, one's position on a liberal-conservative scale influences their affective orientation toward the out-group as well (Rogowski and Sutherland 2016; Webster and Abramowitz 2017).

2.2 POLARIZATION IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Building on the discussions in American politics, this section of the chapter first reviews the dominant way of conceptualizing polarization in comparative politics along the left-right continuum. Then, the section focuses on the global rise of populism and the personalization of politics as two developments that challenge the mainstream approach.

2.2.1 Left-Right Ideology and Party System Perspective

In the comparative politics literature,[3] conceptualization and measurement of polarization heavily build on the classic work of Anthony Downs. In his book *Economic Theory of Democracy*, Downs (1957) develops a theory of voting behavior in which rational individuals consider and rank alternatives before making political decisions. According to Downs, citizens benefit from a left-right scale and vote for the political party closest to their ideological affiliation. When the distribution of left-right ideology is close to a bell curve, Downs expects political parties to attract the median voter who would be a centrist. In an alternative scenario, Downs makes the following observation about polarized distributions of left-right ideology:

> Preliminary to upheavals, once centralized distribution begins to polarize into two extremes as the incumbents increasingly antagonize those who feel themselves oppressed. When the distribution has become so split that one extreme is

[3] In the American politics literature, scholars who conceptualize polarization on a left-right (liberal-conservative) axis also build on Downs' spatial model.

> imposing by force policies abhorred by the other extreme, open warfare breaks out, and a clique of underdogs seizes power. This radical switch from one extreme to the other is partly responsible for the reign of terror which marks most revolutions; the new governors want to eliminate their predecessors, who have bitterly opposed them (Downs 1957, 120).

Further developing Downs' conceptualization of polarization in the study of political parties, Giovanni Sartori defines a party system as polarized "[w]hen the spectrum of political opinion is extremized, that is, when the Right and Left poles of a political system are literally 'two poles apart'" (Sartori 1966, 138). In other words, if the distribution has centrifugal tendencies, it implies a growing radicalization of the party system. Examples of what Sartori calls polarized pluralism include Weimar Republic of Germany (1920-1933), Spain (1931-1936), French Fourth Republic (1946-1958), Italy (1948-1972), Finland (1952-1972), and Chile (1961-1973). In these countries, the presence of anti-system parties on each end of the ideological spectrum, mainly of Communist and Fascist variants, demonstrate a high degree of ideological rigidity and non-pragmatic approach to politics, thus polarized party politics (Sartori 1966; Sartori 1976).

Following the publication of Sartori's seminal work on political parties, various other works applied his framework to study the dynamics of left-right ideology and party system polarization. In one of the earliest works of party system polarization, Sigelman and Yough examine thirty-five nations and find that the ideological variance increases in countries where the incumbents are more tolerant of the opposition. As such, in polarized party systems, extremist parties attract a larger amount of votes in comparison to moderate ones (Sigelman and Yough 1978). In a later study, Sartori and Sani analyze left-right polarization among the Austrian, Italian, Finnish, German, Dutch, Swiss,

British, and American electorate. Their findings identify a relationship between individuals' self-identification at the left-right continuum and a number of variables: feelings toward Russians, clergy, women's movement, unions, and big business (Sani and Sartori 1983). In another work, Powell (1987) studies polarized pluralism at the public opinion level. Similar to Sartori, he identifies France, Finland, and Italy as cases of polarized multi-party-systems due to ideological extremism. Nevertheless, two-party systems like the United States, Austria, and Britain exhibit a centrist distribution and a depolarizing pattern on a left-right spectrum.

In the post-Cold War era, scholars of advanced industrial democracies emphasize a shift in the meaning of left-right ideology as the traditional class cleavage[4] has become less relevant and other identities have turned out to be more salient (Panebianco 1988). According to the advocates of the postmaterial value change, with the collapse of communism, environmental issues and immigration have become the main areas of conflict especially among younger generations (Huber and Inglehart 1995). Against the rise of postmaterialist parties in Western Europe toward the extreme left, the extreme right parties have gained prominence as well (Ignazi 1992). Even though the latter group of parties does not openly advocate to establish a non-democratic regime, they have redefined the nature of polarization in Western European party systems (Knutsen 1998).

Key texts of Latin American political parties also make significant use of the party system framework. Like Sartori and Downs, Latin Americanists predominantly

[4] In their work on the development of European party systems, Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan four main cleavages: center-periphery, church-state, urban-rural, and owner-worker cleavage (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). During the Cold War, scholars viewed the owner-worker (class) cleavage as the main area of conflict along the left-right continuum.

conceptualize polarization along the left-right continuum. In a nutshell, polarization increases as parties move away from each other toward both ends of the left-right ideological spectrum (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Coppedge 1998; Kitschelt et al. 2010). Although the meaning of left-right differs within an internally diverse region, common denominators exist among the Latin American political parties across the spectrum such as the extent of state intervention in the economy, tendency to support democracy, religious conservatism, the image of the United States, and the attitude toward the armed forces (Alcántara and Rivas 2007). Regardless of its specific meaning in each country's party system and political culture, the use of the Sartorian framework in Latin American politics is widespread.

In the broader democratization literature, polarization is an important variable to explain policy inconsistency (Frye 2010), political violence (Özbudun 1981; Tachau and Heper 1983), and breakdown of the regime (Linz and Stepan 1978; Linz 1990; Bermeo 2003; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2005; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2013). Prominent cases of polarization that led to democratic breakdown include Italy, Germany, and Spain during the interwar period as well as Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Turkey, and Greece in the second reverse wave of democratization (Huntington 1991). In all these cases, scholars identified ideological polarization among the primary causes of democratic breakdown alongside with economic crisis and unfavorable international context.

Contrary to these negative views on polarization among the scholars of democratization, an emerging body of literature examines the positive effects of the same phenomenon on voter behavior. From an empirical point of view, those works argue that

higher levels of polarization increase the significance of left-right semantics (Zechmeister and Corral 2012), clarify party positions (Freire 2008), encourage ideological voting (Singer 2016), cultivate partisan attachments (Lupu 2015), and boost electoral turnout (Dalton 2008).

Regardless of one's research agenda, in one way or another, left-right ideology and party system perspective continue to be hegemonic in the field of comparative politics to study the polarization of the elite and the public opinion. Nevertheless, the global rise of populism and the personalization of politics challenges this dominant way of thinking about polarization both in new and advanced democracies. The following two sub-sections aim to refine this dominant approach.

2.2.2 The Global Rise of Populism

According to the Oxford Handbook of Populism, since the 1990s, there has been a resurgence in the study of populism with the publication of thousands of books and scholarly articles (Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017). Across different regions of the world, scholars of populism have attempted to understand the causes and consequences of populist actors both in government and opposition. The word populism not only appears in academic settings but also widely used in newspaper articles and other political texts. At first glance, a definitional problem exists among individuals who employ the concept during their analyses of specific leaders, parties, and movements located in different time and space. So, what does populism mean? To answer that question, first, this section reviews the two most prominent lines of research[5] within the comparative populism

[5] Another prominent line of research views populism as a type of economic policy-making that aims to redistribute wealth and makes irresponsible promises to gain short-term benefit (Dornbusch and Edwards 1991).

literature: the ideational and the political-strategic approaches. Then, it analyzes the relationship between populism and polarization.

For the advocates of the ideational approach, populism's core consists of the Manichean dichotomy between the people and the elite. In his impactful article "The Populist Zeitgeist," Cas Mudde defines populism as "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (Mudde 2004, 543). Hence, Mudde's conceptualization emphasizes the struggle between the two groups in a moralistic fashion. Based on this minimal definition, populism as a concept can take multiple forms and travel across regions. Moreover, Mudde distinguishes populism from thick ideologies like liberalism and socialism, which offer a coherent and sophisticated set of ideas. As long as populism retains its core, Mudde argues that it can coexist with any ideology on a left-right spectrum (Mudde 2017). Regarding its relationship with democracy, populist actors represent and give a voice to formerly excluded sectors. On the other hand, populist actors undermine institutions of horizontal accountability and violate minority rights especially when they are in power (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012).

Another school of thought within the ideational camp emphasizes the discursive elements in its conceptualization of populism. The leading scholars of the symptomatic reading of populism are Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe whose works equate populism with politics. Laclau and Mouffe argue that all political actors are by definition populistic since they must, somewhat, construct and create dichotomous frontiers between "the people" and "the other." Thus, they reject the categorical question whether

a leader or party qualifies as a populist in the first place (Laclau 1977; Laclau 2005; Mouffe 2005). The key term for the followers of Laclau and Mouffe is antagonism as political actors constantly redefine the meanings of us vs. them. In other words, antagonism is at the center of politics as well as populism. When antagonism ends, both of them lose their meanings (Panizza 2005).

In contrast to Laclau's normative approach, other scholars attempt to measure populist discourse using empirical[6] political science methodology, particularly content analysis. Through holistic grading of speeches by multiple research assistants, Kirk Hawkins assigns populism scores to forty leaders (with a maximum score of 2). In the Latin American context, Hugo Chávez (1.9), José María Velasco Ibarra (1.7), Evo Morales (1.6), and Juan Domingo Perón (1.5) rank at the top of Hawkins' populism index. In other countries, Alexander Lukashenko (1.7), George W. Bush (1.2), Mahmoud Ahmedinejad (1.2) are the ones with the highest populism score. Overall, Hawkins distinguishes these leaders based on their moralization of politics between good and evil, emphasis on the will of the people against the conspiring elite, and demonization others among other discursive elements (Hawkins 2009; Hawkins 2010).

Akin to Hawkins' empirical strategy, an article by Yannis Stavrakakis, Ioannis Andreadis, and Giorgos Katsambekis (2017) integrates quantitative techniques to measure populist discourse. Using candidate surveys in Greece, they identify SYRIZA and ANEL as populist parties whereas PASOK and River do not qualify as such. From a communication standpoint, Jan Jagers and Stefaan Walgrave (2007) content analyze

[6] Most empirical works on populism has an underlying assumption that liberal democracy is the best form of government. In that sense, most empirically-oriented scholars take liberal democracy for granted.

political party broadcasts in Belgium in terms of their appeal to people, anti-elitism, and exclusivity. Their findings categorize the Vlaams Blok as populist in all three dimensions compared to other Belgian political parties.

A second camp in the literature studies populism around the idea of political domination. The leading scholar of this approach is Kurt Weyland who defines populism as "a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large number of mostly unorganized followers" (Weyland 2001, 14). This leader-centered conceptualization stresses the importance of the direct relationship with followers through elections, plebiscites, mass rallies, television broadcasts, social media, and public opinion polls. Therefore, populist leaders aim to dominate the country's politics with their omnipresence and a mission to transform the nation. Instead of committing to a certain ideology, populist leaders aim to win and exercise power in an opportunistic and pragmatist fashion (Weyland 2001; Weyland 2017).

Weyland's non-ideological definition of populism parallels to Gino Germani who also argues that "[p]opulism itself tends to deny any identification with or classification into the Right/Left dichotomy" (Germani 1978, 88). According to Germani, populist leaders claim to represent the common people to achieve political rights and universal participation. As charismatic leaders, they frequently display signs of authoritarianism (Germani 1978). Along the same line of reasoning, Paul Taggart highlights the chameleonic nature of populist leadership and its conflict with representative institutions (Taggart 2000). Furthermore, Robert Barr defines populism as "a mass movement led by

an outsider or maverick seeking to gain or maintain power by using anti-establishment appeals and plebiscitarian linkages" (Barr 2009, 38).

Overall, the ideational approach is widely accepted among the scholars of European populism while the political-strategic approach is commonly used to study the Latin American cases. Under parliamentary systems that incentivize party-building, scholars of European politics mainly study populist parties on the right and the left of the ideological spectrum. As the most prominent scholar of the radical right, Mudde's definition of populism characterizes studies on the Austrian Freedom Party, the Flemish Bloc (Belgium), the Danish People's Party, the True Finns, the National Front (France), the Party for Freedom (the Netherlands), the Progress Party (Norway), the Swiss People's Party, and the United Kingdom Independence Party (Mudde 2007; Akkerman, de Lange and Roodujin 2016). On the other hand, studies on leftist political parties in Southern Europe tend to rely on Laclau's symptomatic reading of populism. These works, which express a more favorable view of populism as a term, distinguish PODEMOS (Spain) and SYRIZA (Greece) from the xenophobic, racist, and reactionary radical right parties that are listed above (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014; Kioupkiolis 2016).

Under Latin America's presidential regimes, scholars mostly focus on personalist leaders who run as outsiders against the traditional political establishment. The classical cases of populism in the region include Juan Domingo Perón (Argentina), Getúlio Vargas (Brazil), Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre (Peru), José María Velasco Ibarra (Ecuador), Víctor Paz Estenssoro (Bolivia), Rómulo Betancourt (Venezuela), and Jorge Eliécer Gaitán (Colombia). The common characteristic of these leaders was their appeal to the

common people to win elections between the 1930s and the 1970s and incorporating them into the political system (Conniff 2012).

Following the transition to democracy, another wave of populism in Latin America emerged in the 1990s. Scholars labeled Presidents Carlos Saúl Menem (Argentina), Alberto Fujimori (Peru), and Fernando Collor de Mello (Brazil) as neo-populist leaders due to their combination of populist strategies and neoliberal economic policies (Roberts 1995; Weyland 1996). More contemporary examples of populist leaders in Latin America are Hugo Chávez (Venezuela), Evo Morales (Bolivia), and Rafael Correa (Ecuador) who have personally dominated their countries with their charismatic persona (Weyland 2013; de la Torre 2013). Similarly, in the Asian context, scholars classify Thaksin Shinawatra (Thailand) and Rodrigo Duterte (Philippines) as populist leaders who have developed a direct relationship between themselves and their followers to achieve and maintain power (Phongpaichit and Baker 2008; Curato 2017).

Irrespective of one's conceptual framework and regional focus, most scholars would acknowledge that populism operates through simplistic binaries. Indeed, the most basic rationale behind populism is its attempt to polarize the society into two rival camps. While most of the time the polarizing effect of populism is an embedded argument, in some instances the relationship between the two is very straightforward. At the very least, polarization appears just in the title of articles, like in the case of Carlos de la Torre and Andrés Ortiz Lemos' "Populist Polarization and the Slow Death of Democracy in Ecuador," where the authors examine the weakening of liberal democratic institutions during Correa's presidency (de la Torre and Ortiz Lemos 2016). In other instances, scholars attempt to further theorize on the relationship between the two concepts and

their implications for a democratic form of government (Palonen 2009; Pappas 2014; Enyedi 2016; Ostiguy and Roberts 2016; Handlin 2017; Handlin 2018; Stavrakakis 2018; Slater and Arugay 2018).

Among these scholars, Samuel Handlin analyzes the emergence of Chávez, Morales, and Correa as radicalized left-wing outsiders in the middle of the crisis of state in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Handlin argues that populism in combination with extreme ideological positions leads to polarizing party system dynamics and erosion of democracy. Despite its empirical rigor, Handlin's framework remains within the Sartorian party-system framework as he treats populist leaders as anti-systemic actors instead of anti-establishment figures with ideological flexibility and pragmatism. Another major limitation of Handlin's work is the time frame since he mostly focuses on the rise of Chávez, Morales, and Correa instead of how populist presidents governed their countries (Handlin 2017; Handlin 2018). In the Asian context, Slater and Arugay analyze polarizing leaders in Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Taiwan who abused power while in office. In the absence of a programmatic left-right orientation and the prevalence of personalist leadership, they rightly argue that "[r]ather than polarizing along deep social or ideological cleavages, today's democracies often polarize over perceived abuse of power by popularly elected chief executives" (Slater and Arugay 2018, 92).

2.2.3 The Personalization of Politics

Alongside the rise of populism, the personalization of politics is another global trend that challenges the way in which we think about polarization. In a nutshell, the personalization of politics refers to "the notion that individual political actors have become more prominent at the expense of parties and collective identities" (Karvonen

2010, 4). As politics becomes more personalized during the last couple of decades, campaigns tend to revolve around the party leaders than platforms, partisan attachments among the voters are getting weaker, and observers frequently name governments after prime ministers and presidents. The personalization of politics has not only taken place in advanced industrial democracies with the ascend of leaders like Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, and Silvio Berlusconi but also in third wave democracies across the world (Aarts, André and Hermann 2005; Mainwaring and Torcal 2005; McAllister 2007; Garzia 2011; Bittner 2011; Tverdova 2011; Kostadinova and Levitt 2014; Ortiz Ayala and García Sáncez 2014; Costa Lobo and Curtice 2015; Costa Lobo 2017).

We observe the personalization both in candidate-centered presidential systems (Wattenberg 1991; Arbour 2014) and parliamentary systems with a strong tradition of political parties (Rahat and Sheafer 2007; Enli and Skogerbø 2013). Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb even argue that parliamentary systems in Western Europe and elsewhere undergo a *de facto* presidentialization without any change in the formal rules of the game. At the executive branch, prime ministers enjoy the growth of resources, appoint technocrats to the ministries, frequently reshuffle cabinets, and invoke personalized mandate. Within their political parties, they benefit from a centralized decision-making process, thus reducing the role of lower-rank leadership and activists (Poguntke and Webb 2005).

One of the main factors that have contributed to the personalization is the growth of television[7] to disseminate political information and knowledge. Due to its focus on individuals instead of political parties and simplification of complex issues, television facilitates the rise of personalist leaders who appeal to emotions of the citizens in order to win their support (Sartori 1998; Fabbrini 1999; Adam and Maier 2010). This candidate-centered logic is mostly visible during election campaigns when personal attributes and characteristics receive more coverage than substantial discussions of major problems (Kriesi 2011). According to a study of the media's campaign coverage in Canada, Britain, Austria, France, and the United States, there is increasing mention of the candidates at the expense of the parties. As evidence of the personalization, in Austria, between 1966 and 1995, the ratio of candidate mentions over political parties went up from 0.4 to 1.3 (Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg 2000).

Another concept related to this discussion is charisma, which could be considered as a specific type of personalism (Ansell and Fish 1999). According to Max Weber, there are three pure forms of authority: legal-rational, traditional, and charismatic (Weber 1968). Unlike the other two sources of authority, charismatic authority "rests on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns of order revealed or ordained by him" (Weber 1968, 46). That is to say, a charismatic leader is distinguished by "virtue of which he is

[7] A more recent trend that further personalizes politics is the use of online political communication tools, particularly the social media. In the age of Internet, politicians can directly appeal to their followers and set their personal agenda that bypasses political parties and other institutions (Enli and Skogerbø 2013; Kruikemeier et al. 2013). For instance, Donald Trump's successful use of Twitter during the 2016 presidential election campaign not only distinguished himself from other Republican candidates and Hillary Clinton but also helped him generate free coverage in the news media (Francia 2018). During his presidency, Trump continued to actively use Twitter and made important announcements on domestic and international developments.

set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities" (Weber 1968, 48). In Weber's conception of charisma, those gifted individuals emerge in the middle of crises and establish an irrational relationship with their disciples. Historical examples of such charismatic figures include Julius Caesar of Rome and Napoleon III of France, who have contributed to the decline of republican regimes in their countries through personally dominating the political scene (Baehr 2008).

While Weber's work deals with the emergence of charisma, more recent works study it as a dynamic process within a political setting. Douglas Madsen and Peter Snow's prominent work on Perón in Argentina argues that charisma is subject to various interpretations especially in the physical absence of the leader. Once the leader returns from exile, it may lead to disappointment to the followers who have competing idealized images of the leader in their minds (Madsen and Snow 1991). Also treating charisma as a variable, Jennifer Merolla, Jennifer Ramos, and Elizabeth Zechmeister show that perceptions of George W. Bush's charisma depend on the presence or absence of a crisis condition. Americans perceived President Bush more charismatic if they were assigned a crisis scenario in an experimental setting (Merolla, Ramos and Zechmeister 2007). In the same manner, higher perceptions of Chávez's charisma led to a more favorable evaluation of the economy and conditions of citizen (in)security in Venezuela (Merolla and Zechmeister 2011).

2.3 LEADER POLARIZATION

Building on the scholarly literature in American and comparative politics, this section of the chapter proposes a new concept: leader polarization. In countries where we

observe leader polarization, the elite or/and public opinion polarize over their levels of affection toward presidents or prime ministers who attempt to dominate the political environment with their charismatic persona. While the followers of the leader express extremely positive feelings (i.e., like, trust, love, admiration, and respect) toward him,[8] the members of the other group feel the exact opposite (i.e., dislike, distrust, hatred, disgust, and disrespect). In extreme cases of leader polarization, the elite and the citizens must take a side either for or against the chief executive. Under those circumstances, being pro- vs. anti-leader becomes the most salient social cleavage that cuts across or reinforces pre-existing cleavages such as class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and region.

Because of its focus on affect instead of ideology, leader polarization as a concept borrows from affective polarization literature[9] in American politics. More specifically, it builds on the works of Iyengar, Sood, Lelkes, Westwood, Mason, Jacobson, Hetherington, and Rudolph who conceptualize polarization in terms of how Democrats and Republicans increasingly dislike and distrust one another; attribute negative traits to the members of the opposite party; demonstrate bias toward the out-group; express enthusiasm and anger when they win and lose elections (Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Lelkes and Westwood 2017; Mason 2015; Mason 2016; Hetherington and Rudolph 2015). Within that body of scholarship, Jacobson's research on polarized perceptions of Presidents Bush and Obama is particularly relevant. Besides

[8] The dissertation consistently uses the masculine personal pronouns. This usage is not accidental or biased, but rather on purpose. In fact, an overwhelming majority of populists are men as populism is a strongly paternalistic phenomenon and it operates within the gender relations embedded in society. See Kampwirth (2010) for a detailed discussion on gender and populism.

[9] There is also a considerable size of literature in the field of political psychology that examines affect and political choice as well as emotions, group identity, and cohesion (Crigler and Hevron 2017; Brader and Marcus 2013; Huddy 2013).

growing partisan divide in their job approval, Americans have conflicting views about factual information such as Obama's place of birth or religious belief (Jacobson 2011; Jacobson 2015). Overall, leader polarization could be considered as a type of affective polarization in which the elite and the public opinion sharply divide over their feelings toward the leader.

In the comparative context, leader polarization differs from Downs (1957) and Sartori's (1976) conceptualization of polarization along the left-right continuum. Contrary to historical examples from the inter-war period and the Cold War era, where the presence of Communist and Fascist Parties polarized party systems with their ideological rigidity and non-pragmatic approach to politics, leader polarization centers on an individual who does not necessarily advocate or implement a coherent ideology. Therefore, at the elite level, examining party platforms and election manifestos cannot capture leader polarization. Instead, we need to observe whether political parties and other major actors in society divide into two rival groups as supporters and opponents of the leader. It is important to note that, in many cases, the opposition consists of ideologically diverse groups that unite only regarding their stance against[10] the leader. Hence, what keeps these groups together is not their ideological convergence per se but overlapping negative affection toward the leader.

[10] In a similar vein, Cyr and Meléndez (2016) scrutinize, what they call, anti-identity movements to describe groups that form against a specific movement or political party. Prominent examples of anti-identity movements are anti-uribismo (Colombia), anti-fujimorismo (Peru), and anti-chavismo (Venezuela).

Considering its emphasis on polarizing individuals,[11] leader-centered definitions of populism are significantly relevant to theorize leader polarization. Especially, Germani (1978), Weyland (2001), de la Torre's (2010) conceptualizations are valuable since they underline the opportunistic and pragmatist nature of populist leaders who aim to dominate and transform the political environment with charisma. Similarly, Taggart's (2000) description of populist leadership as "chameleonic" explains why leader polarization cannot be grasped on a left-right ideological spectrum. Rather, one needs to analyze the simplistic binaries that are at the core of populism to find out how the elite and public opinion divide into two camps over their levels of affection toward populist leaders.

One way to examine populism's binary logic is to analyze its inclusionary and exclusionary nature. The intellectual history of inclusion and exclusion goes back to the early works on Latin American populism. As James Malloy argues, classical populist movements in Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela, and Bolivia offered symbolic, political, and material gratification to "hitherto excluded groups (organized labor, marginal urban residents, peasants, etc.)" (Malloy 1977, 13). Similarly, Collier and Collier (1991) document how populist actors throughout the region adopted strategies to incorporate organized labor movement into the political process. Due to the activation of urban popular sectors, scholars tend to characterize Latin American populism in the 1940s and 1950s as inclusionary whereas the military regimes that followed this period of mass mobilization as exclusionary. According to O'Donnell (1979), bureaucratic

[11] Even though not all polarizing leaders are populists, all populist leaders are to some extent polarizing. Non-populist examples of polarizing leaders include Augusto Pinochet (Chile), Francisco Franco (Spain), and António de Oliveira Salazar (Portugal) who governed under non-democratic regimes.

authoritarian regimes in Brazil and Argentina aimed to exclude popular sectors from the decision-making process through deactivation, coercion, and suppression of the electoral arena. In the Bolivian context, Malloy and Gamarra (1988) characterize the military's reaction to the MNR's inclusionary populism as exclusionary anti-populism. Overall, the rise of populism and the responses to it shaped Latin American politics between the 1940s and the 1970s.

In more recent times, Dani Filc's research on Israel is a primary example of studying populism through the lens of inclusion and exclusion. In his book, *Political Right in Israel*, Filc (2010) analyzes the trajectory of populism in Israel with a focus on Likud's gradual shift from an inclusionary populist movement to an exclusionary one due to its adoption of neoliberal policies in the 1980s. Building on his findings on Israel, in line with the scholarship as mentioned earlier, Filc labels classical populist leaders in Latin America such as Perón, Vargas, and Haya de la Torre as inclusionary actors. Specifically, Filc underlines their attempt to incorporate formerly excluded groups into the political process as well as promote economic policies that would reverse the wrongdoings of colonialism and oligarchical order. Unlike Latin America's inclusionary populism[12], Filc argues that European populism typically exhibits an exclusionary type[13] based on the preservation of ethnocultural and nativist identities against the newcomers

[12] From a normative standpoint, similar to Laclau, Filc views inclusionary populism in Latin as "an alternative hegemonic project by and through which subordinate and excluded groups become political subjects that oppose the dominant bloc" (Filc 2010, 13). On the flip side of the coin, his use of exclusionary populism has strong pejorative connotations.

[13] Before Filc, Betz (2001) identified the rise of radical right-wing parties in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland as instances of exclusionary populism. Thus, Filc essentially connects the body of scholarship on European and Latin American populism through symbolic, political, and material levels.

(Filc 2010; Filc 2015). Even though Filc recognizes the partial nature of inclusion and exclusion in both regions, he still prefers to attach an exclusionary label to radical right parties in Europe and inclusionary label to Latin American populists on symbolic, political, and material grounds.

Applying Filc's framework to the study of contemporary populism in Latin America and Europe, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser maintain that PSUV/Chávez and MAS/Morales are examples of inclusionary populism. Symbolically, Chávez and Morales claim to represent the ordinary people through their charismatic persona. Politically, they promote the voice of the marginalized people and advocate alternative (more participatory) conceptions of democracy. Materially, they aim to boost the living conditions of the poor segments of the population. On the other hand, the National Front/ Le Pen in France and FPÖ/Haider in Austria epitomize the exclusionary type of populism. Symbolically, populist parties in Europe exclude immigrants and non-native groups with their discourse. Politically and materially, they strongly oppose granting rights and benefits to so-called aliens (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2011; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013). Similar to Filc, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser acknowledge[14] that "populism is always inclusionary and exclusionary at the same time" (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2011, 23). Despite the absence of clear empirical criteria, they continue to view Latin American populism as predominantly inclusionary and European populism as primarily exclusionary.

[14] In the article, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser cite Canovan, who makes the following assertion on populism: "Consequently, those who use populist rhetoric rarely stick exclusively either to its integrative or to its divisive variant" (Canovan 1984, 320).

In the last instance, Filc, Mudde, and Kaltwasser's typology boils down to left-wing populism being inclusionary and right-wing populism being exclusionary. Indeed, scholars who cite Mudde and Kaltwasser almost unanimously attach the inclusionary label to left-wing populists and the exclusionary label to right-wing populists. For example, in the European case, the presence of left-wing populist parties in Greece and Spain made scholars characterize SYRIZA and PODEMOS as examples of inclusionary populism. Mostly inspired by works of Laclau and Mouffe or the Essex School, those scholars view left-wing inclusionary populism as a welcoming development to counter colonialism, neoliberalism, and right-wing exclusionary populism (Stavrakis, Andreadis and Katsambekis 2017; Markou 2017). As an exception to the favorable view of left-wing populism in Europe, Sanders, Molina Hurtado, and Zaragastua (2017) demonstrate how PODEMOS, also, resorts to exclusionary narratives and us vs. them discourses. Furthermore, in the Asian context, Moffitt (2015) attaches the inclusionary label to Thaksin (Thailand) and recognizes his similarities with left-wing populist in Latin America in terms of their socioeconomic conception of the people. On the other hand, Moffitt describes Pauline Hanson (Australia) as an exclusionary populist due to her ethnic and socio-cultural definition of the people.

For the present work, instead of describing an example of populism either as inclusionary or exclusionary, it is necessary to examine *to what extent* a populist leader offers symbolic, political, and material inclusion vs. exclusion to the members of the in-group and the out-group. That is to say, populism is polarizing because of its ability to offer simultaneous inclusion and exclusion to different groups of people. Depending on whether the populist leader includes or excludes members the in-group vs. the out-group,

they could develop strongly positive or negative affection (i.e., like/dislike, trust/distrust, love/hatred, admiration/disgust, and respect/disrespect) toward him. To further theorize on populism and leader polarization, we need to expand[15] on the symbolic, political, and material dimensions.

Symbolically, the populist leader offers inclusion to his followers in many ways. The first one has to do with his use of colloquial language to separate himself from the corrupt elite. The populist leader not only speaks like average, ordinary, and non-privileged people but also behaves like them by violating the existing norms[16] of appropriateness. Sometimes this includes rejecting to dress like his predecessors but also developing his own authentic attire that makes nostalgic references to good old days. Through various rhetorical appeals, the leader claims to represent the pure people against a common enemy that needs to be excluded. In line with the Schmittian (1998) dichotomy of friends vs. foes, depending on the regional and national context, the populist leader may exclude members of the political class, oligarchy, wealthy, minority ethnic or religious groups, and other enemies of the nation whom he frequently blames, insults, and calls names. Overall, symbolic inclusion gives a sense of belonging and representation to the formerly excluded sectors of the society while others feel irritated and disrespected by the leader's constant attacks.

[15] The three paragraphs below represent a refined version of Filc's framework as well as Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser's application of it.

[16] Socio-cultural definitions of populism view these symbolic gestures as the core of populist leadership. To distinguish himself from the elite, the populist leader exemplifies various elements of low culture (Ostiguy and Roberts 2016; Ostiguy 2018). Similarly, in his book, Moffitt (2016) defines populism as a performance and a political style in the age of media technologies.

Politically, the populist leader provides citizens with more opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. Increased participation may involve organizing mass rallies, calling frequent referendums, convening a constituent assembly, passing a new constitution, granting a diverse array of rights, and lifting existing bans that limit certain groups' visibility in the public space. While enhancing political participation, the populist leader also clashes with liberal democratic institutions that aim to curb the executive power and protect minority rights. By concentrating power at the executive branch *vis-à-vis* the legislature and the judiciary, the populist leader limits the opposition's ability to contest[17] his government. Under those circumstances, members of the opposition cannot compete on an equal ground where they face severe hurdles as well as restrictions on their rights and liberties. In severe cases of political exclusion, the leader and his followers accuse the members of the opposition of treason, put them into jail or house arrest, force them to live in exile, and bar them from participating in elections. Therefore, the populist leader opens the political space to certain groups in society yet closes it to his adversaries and "the enemies of the nation."

Materially, the populist leader offers inclusion through distributing natural resources[18], providing public employment, increasing access to healthcare, education, and housing, subsidizing food, and reducing poverty. Especially in developing countries, the

[17] Political inclusion vs. exclusion follows Dahl's (1971) framework of participation and contestation. While populist leaders tend to promote political participation, they tend to limit contestation. To use O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), populism fosters democratization but curbs liberalization. Due to this tension, populism can be both a threat and corrective for democracy (Rovira Kaltwasser 2012).

[18] Especially in countries where the state controls oil and natural gas revenues, populist leaders benefit from boom cycles and sustain their social coalitions (Mazzuca 2013). Once the boom ends, it becomes very difficult to deliver and maintain popularity among a broad sector of the population. In the long-run, the rentier model of development leads to conflict, poverty, and inequality (Karl 1999; Laserna 2011).

construction of hospitals, schools, highways, bridges, tunnels, railroads, airports, subways, stadiums, parks, sewers, dams, power plants, and other public works projects make a direct and measurable impact on day to day living of average citizens. When the supporters of the leader disproportionately benefit from these resources, the expectation is that they would reward the leader and his movement/party at the ballot box in a clientelistic manner. On the other hand, the opponents of the populist leader may be subject to partial, if not full, exclusion from those material benefits. For instance, opposition-controlled municipalities might receive limited or no funding from the central government. Moreover, public employees could lose their job unless they prove their loyalty to the leader by attending mass rallies or turning out to vote in critical elections. Furthermore, business people who are sympathetic to the opposition might not be able to win public sector contracts. Contingent on whether someone is materially included or excluded, there would be contrasting perceptions of the national economic performance as well.

While symbolic, political, and material inclusion vs. exclusion explains the emergence of leader polarization, its presence leads to various forms of democratic backsliding.[19] Specifically, leader polarization (1) undermines the supporters' ability to hold the leader accountable for authoritarian practices and accusations of corruption; (2) weakens the anti-leader opponents' belief in the legitimacy of the democratic process;

[19] Democratic backsliding describes a movement away from liberal democracy (polyarchy) to full-scale authoritarianism (autocracy) on a continuous scale. In her article on democratic backsliding, Bermeo (2016) describes three common (executive aggrandizement, strategic manipulation of elections, and promissory coups) and three less-common (military coups, electoral fraud, and self-coups) mechanisms in the post-Cold War era. Other terms that denote a similar process include democratic recession (Diamond 2015), democratic erosion (Handlin 2017), and authoritarianization (Kendall-Taylor, Frantz and Wright 2017).

and (3) gives rise to excessive personalization of power that makes it hard to govern in the absence of the charismatic leader.

First, when the supporters of the leader express extremely positive affection toward him, they are less likely to hold him accountable for authoritarian behavior and accusations of corruption. As long as the leader has the ability and resources to symbolically, politically, and materially include a sizeable portion of the electorate, the concentration of power at the executive branch and weakening of constitutional veto players would not pose a significant problem at the ballot box. In that sense, followers of the leader are less likely to go against institutional changes that would enhance executive power over the legislature and the judiciary. In extreme cases, followers of the leader would even support the declaration of a state of emergency to address an immediate crisis and rule the country through executive decrees.

Instead, the opponents of the leader, who are subject to symbolic, political, and material exclusion, are less likely to believe in the legitimacy of the democratic process. When elections and referendums do not seem to make a difference, the anti-leader groups might resort to extralegal ways to get rid of him through military coups, assassination attempts, and violent protests. If their attempt to oust the polarizing leader succeeds, they may send him to exile, put him on trial, or, in the worst case, terminate his life. If the extra-legal attempts fail to reach their goal, it would further victimize the populist leader and allow him to crack down on all types of opposition in the name of punishing the conspirators. Regardless, a disloyal opposition to the populist leader would jeopardize the constitutional order and the rule of law.

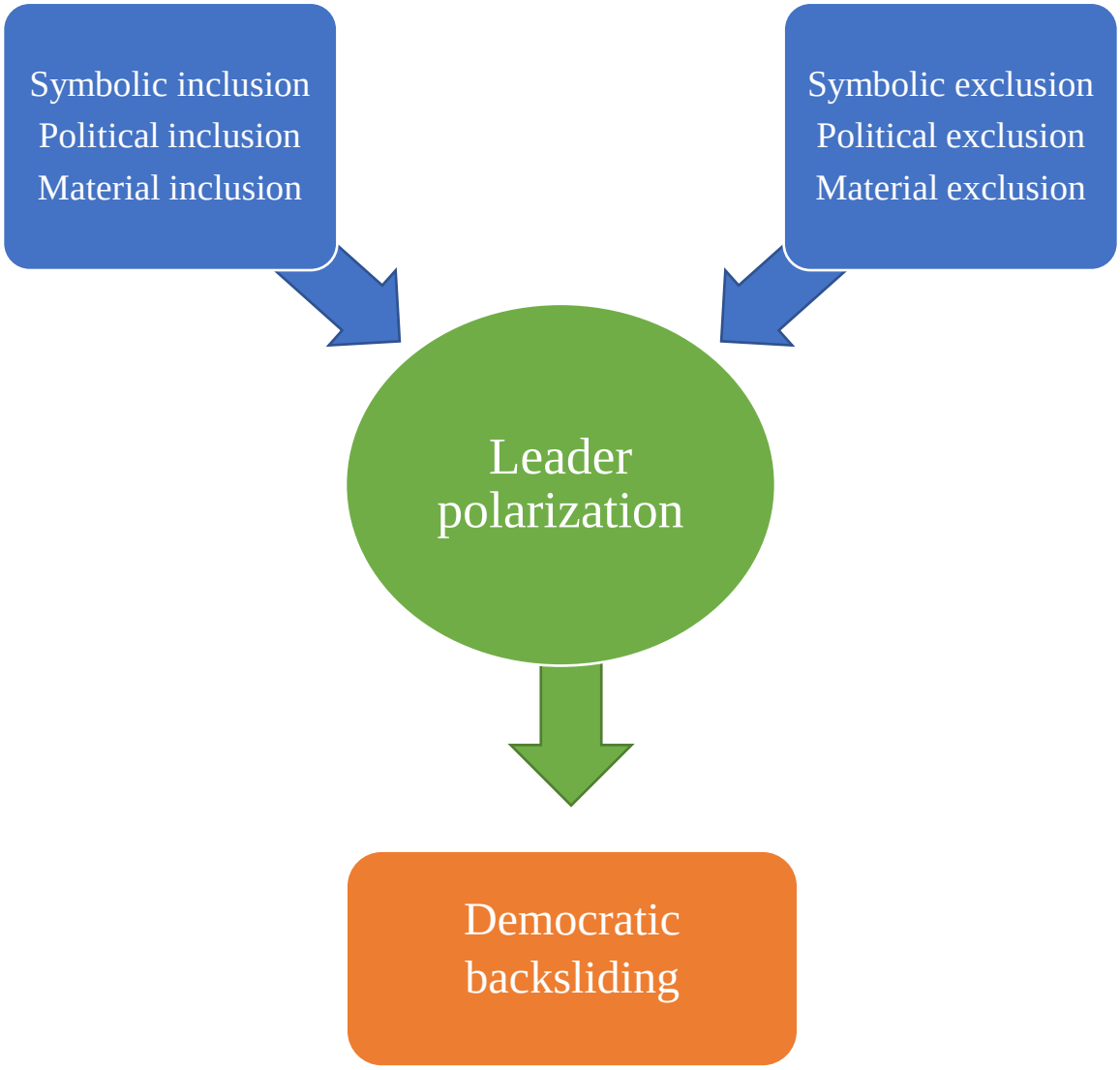
Another way leader polarization contributes to democratic backsliding is through its tendency to personalize power. As the personalization tends to weaken institutions including the leader's own political party, whoever succeeds him has a daunting task to fill up his void and keep the governing coalition together. In the case of the leader's sudden death or resignation from office, a succession crisis is very likely to occur because of the lack of a strong candidate. If the leader handpicks a successor before leaving office, the next president or prime minister may eventually need to create a new network of insiders and outsiders and distinguish himself from his predecessor. For the members of the opposition, being against the leader as a unifying identity does not automatically translate into a common vision to govern the country. Therefore, when the leader is gone, (formerly) opposition parties might have a difficult time to agree on a coherent platform, restore democratic institutions, and ensure an effective government.

To summarize the theoretical framework (Figure 1) succinctly:

(1) The inclusionary vs. exclusionary nature of populism explains the emergence of leader polarization.

(2) Once leader polarization is present, it leads to democratic backsliding.

Figure 1. Mechanisms of Leader Polarization.



2.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This section of the chapter discusses methodological issues related to case selection, data sources, and operationalization of key variables.

2.4.1 Case Selection

This dissertation studies populism and leader polarization in Venezuela under Hugo Chávez (1999-2013), Ecuador under Rafael Correa (2007-2017), and Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2002-2015). I chose these three cases from a broader universe that includes but not limited to Evo Morales (Bolivia), Álvaro Uribe (Colombia), Néstor Kirchner (Argentina), Cristina Kirchner de Fernández (Argentina), Lula da Silva (Brazil), Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua), Juan Domingo Perón (Argentina), José María Velasco Ibarra (Ecuador), Getúlio Vargas (Brazil), Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil), Lázaro Cárdenas (Mexico), Víctor Paz Estenssoro (Bolivia), Rómulo Betancourt (Venezuela), Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre (Peru), Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Adnan Menderes (Turkey), Andreas Papandreou (Greece), Alberto Fujimori (Peru), Carlos Saúl Menem (Argentina), Fernando Color de Mello (Brazil), Abdalá Bucaram (Ecuador), Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Mexico), Donald Trump (United States), Alexis Tsipras (Greece), Silvio Berlusconi (Italy), Viktor Orbán (Hungary), Jarosław Kaczyński (Poland), Andrej Babiš (Czech Republic), Thaksin Shinawatra (Thailand), Rodrigo Duterte (Philippines), Narendra Modi (India), Jacob Zuma (South Africa), Toweri Museveni (Uganda), and Michael Sata (Zambia).

While all these cases exemplify populism and leader polarization in varying degrees, this dissertation mainly focuses on Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan due to several reasons. In the context of the rise of leftist and populist actors in the region (Seligson 2007; Castañeda and Morales 2008; Levitsky and Roberts 2011; de la Torre and Arnson 2013), scholars of Latin American politics frequently label contemporary politics in Venezuela and Ecuador polarized. Among these two countries, Venezuela under Chávez

is the most extreme example of polarization between *chavistas* and *anti-chavistas* (Ellner and Hellinger 2004; Mallen and García-Guadilla 2017). To a lesser degree, during Correa's government, Ecuadorians were polarized between *correístas* and *anti-correístas* (Montúfar 2015; de la Torre and Ortiz Lemos 2016). Since these cases correspond to the two most prominent examples of leader polarization in contemporary Latin American politics, their selection is particularly useful for hypothesis-generating and theory-building (Lijphart 1971; Eisenhardt 1989; George and Bennett 2005; Flybjerg 2006; Mahoney 2007; Gerring 2008). Therefore, this non-random selection of cases would further conceptualize leader polarization and understand its empirical causes and consequences.

Venezuela under Chávez and Ecuador under Correa resemble each other regarding their geographical location, colonial legacy, presidential system, demographics, left-wing government, and a commodity-dependent economy. In addition to these two cases which have little variation in the independent variable, the dissertation studies Turkey under Erdoğan, which is another example of a populist leader who personally dominates the political environment and polarizes the country between his supporters vs. opponents (Erisen 2016; Türk 2017; Gürhanlı 2018). From a methodological point of view, the Turkish case differs from the two countries in terms of its location at the crossroads of Europe and the Middle East, the imperial legacy of the Ottoman Empire, predominantly Muslim population, right-wing government, and structure of its economy. In that sense, the Turkish case also increases our analytical leverage to study the relationship between inclusionary vs. exclusionary populism and leader polarization.

2.4.2 Data Sources and Operationalization of Key Variables

To maximize theoretical and empirical insights (Tarrow 2010; King, Keohane and Verba 2010), this dissertation triangulates qualitative case studies and quantitative analysis of public opinion surveys. The qualitative data sources consist of books, articles, reports, theses, videos, and official government documents in English, Spanish, and Turkish. During my trips to Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey, I had the opportunity to conduct research at Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración (Caracas); Universidad Central de Venezuela (Caracas); Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales Ecuador (Quito); Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (Quito); Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar (Quito); and Boğaziçi University (Istanbul). I also gathered qualitative sources throughout my doctoral studies at Florida International University (Miami).

While the qualitative data sources help me identify the general characteristics of polarization in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey at the elite level, quantitative data sources allow me to measure the extent of polarization at the public opinion level. For Venezuela and Ecuador, the dissertation utilizes the Americas Barometer of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) between 2008 and 2016. For Turkey, it relies on a variety of surveys from the Comparative Studies of Electoral Systems (CSES), and KONDA Research and Consultancy between 2011 and 2015. All quantitative datasets except KONDA are publicly available. I obtained the data from KONDA during my field research in Turkey.

In the upcoming chapters, this dissertation measures the extent of public opinion polarization in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey. At the descriptive level, it examines the

level of ideological polarization as well as leader polarization. For Venezuela and Ecuador, it uses the ten-point left-right ideology scale of the LAPOP surveys. For Turkey, it relies on the eleven-point left-right ideology scale of the CSES survey. To measure leader polarization, the chapters on Venezuela and Ecuador use LAPOP surveys' seven-point scale on the extent of trust toward Chávez and Correa. The chapter on Turkey analyzes the eleven-point dislike-like scale of CSES toward Erdoğan. It also considers an additional survey question from KONDA (Erdoğan's level of sincerity on a 5-point scale). Generally speaking, the present study considers a distribution more polarized when the center categories are weak, and the extreme categories are strong. On the other hand, distribution is less polarized when the center categories are strong, but extreme categories are weak.

To study the individual predictors of polarization, the dissertation employs multinomial regression analyses (Kwak and Clayton-Matthews 2002; Long and Freese 2006). Hence, it recodes the left-right scales (ideological polarization) as well as trust/like/sincerity scales (leader polarization) into trichotomous variables. It does so by picking extreme categories on each side of the spectrum and using the middle categories as a reference. The goal of using multinomial logistic regression analyses is to explain why certain respondents identify at the extremes instead of the central categories. As possible predictors of polarization, the dissertation puts forward two main independent variables: political interest and sociotropic evaluation of the economy, which I define below. In addition to these two variables, depending on the availability of survey questions, regression analyses control for age, gender, urban/rural residence, income, education, religiosity, ethnicity, and skin color of the respondent.

The first independent variable, political interest, draws on the findings of existing studies on American and comparative politics. Starting with Converse's (1964) seminal work on political behavior, there is a consensus in the literature that a significant portion of Americans does not pay a lot of attention to politics. To quote Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, "people do not like politics even in the best of circumstances" (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2004, 3). In the context of studying the extent of public opinion polarization in the United States, political interest appears as a significant variable that increases someone's likelihood of identifying at the extremes vs. the center categories. In other words, polarization in the United States is highest among politically interested citizens (Kaufmann, Petrocik and Shaw 2008; Abramowitz 2010; Fiorina and Abrams 2011).

Comparative studies of polarization also support this hypothesis (Bermeo 2003; Dalton 2006). In her research of polarization and democratic breakdown in inter-war Europe, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, Bermeo makes the following argument: "Ordinary people spend most of their lives in personal endeavors-earning money, supporting families, and pursuing whatever leisure activities their social status allows. They are the people who compose the vast majority of the citizenry in virtually any country in the world" (Bermeo 2003, 3). Applying this logic to the current study, in general, we might expect a positive relationship between political interest and leader polarization. Notably, due to the inclusionary nature of populism to the members of the in-group, individuals who express extremely positive feelings toward the leader should be distinguished by their high levels of political interest. Therefore, I expect hardcore

supporters of Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan to be politicized compared to people who express more neutral feelings toward these populist leaders.

In addition to political interest, the dissertation also examines the relationship between the sociotropic evaluation of the economy and leader polarization. Existing work on political behavior shows how citizens hold incumbents accountable for their retrospective economic performance. While voters who are satisfied with the economy are more likely to support a president or prime minister, others are more likely to punish the incumbent leader at the ballot box. Besides vote choice, citizens who have a favorable view of the economy are more likely to trust the incumbent leader and identify with his political party (Key 1966; Fiorina 1978; Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Lewis-Beck 1986; Lewis-Beck and Ratto 2013). Citizens who evaluate the national economy favorably are also less likely to punish an incumbent for corruption even if they believe such accusations. In the context of Latin America, "[c]itizens are willing to "look the other way" when economic times are good, while exacting a significant toll for government malfeasance when times are bad" (Zechmeister and Zizumbo-Colunga 2013, 1210).

For the purposes of leader polarization, we can hypothesize that a more favorable evaluation of the national economy increases one's likelihood of expressing extremely positive affection toward the populist leader. On the other hand, we would expect individuals who evaluate the national economic situation "worse" to situate themselves at the other extreme. Thus, hardcore supporters and opponents of the populist leader would have contrasting views on the economy. In that sense, perceived economic conditions would matter as much as, if not more than, objective measures such as high growth, low inflation, and low unemployment. Regardless, if the populist leader fails to offer material

inclusion to his followers, it would become harder to sustain the governing coalition and continue to win elections. The upcoming chapters on Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey further describe the data sources for each country and operationalization of variables before reporting the statistical results.

CHAPTER 3

LEADER POLARIZATION IN VENEZUELA OVER CHÁVEZ

This chapter of the dissertation analyzes the extent of polarization in Venezuela with a specific focus on the Hugo Chávez era. Historically, it situates Chávez within a broader trend of personalist leadership in Venezuelan politics. Empirically, it traces the origins of the Chávez phenomenon, his election to the presidency, his confrontation with the establishment, and eventual consolidation of power. Following the theoretical framework of the dissertation, the chapter puts forward an argument that the essence of polarization in Venezuela under Chávez was over affection toward him (leader polarization) instead of abstract divisions over left-right ideology (ideological polarization). Throughout his presidency (1999-2013), Chávez dominated Venezuelan politics as a populist leader. He offered symbolic, political, and material inclusion to his followers while excluding others. As a result, Venezuelans divided into two camps as *chavistas* vs. *anti-chavistas,* who sharply differed over perceptions of President Chávez. Leader polarization in Venezuela also contributed to democratic backsliding.

Before exploring the dynamics of polarization during the Chávez era, this chapter provides a historical overview of Venezuelan politics in the 20th century. It briefly analyzes the personalistic legacies of Juan Vicente Gómez *(gomecismo)* and Marcos Pérez Jiménez *(perezjimenismo)* before Venezuela's transition to democracy in 1958. Then, the chapter examines the rise and fall of Venezuela's consensual democracy *(puntofijismo)* from 1958 until Chávez's rise to power in the 1990s. It pays attention to how the political elite successfully avoided polarization, which ensured the survival of democracy while the rest of South American countries, except for Colombia, were

governed by military dictatorships. Overall, the section on historical background contextualizes Chávez through emphasizing recurring themes in Venezuelan politics such as personalism and rentierism.

Next, the chapter analyzes polarization during the Chávez era in three parts. The first case study describes the rise of Chávez in the context of the coup attempt in 1992. The second case study analyzes Chávez's first and second presidential terms. It focuses on critical events such as the 1999 constitutional referendum, the 2002 coup attempt, and the 2004 recall referendum to illustrate the nature of polarization, which centered on President Chávez personally. The third case study scrutinizes Chávez's third term in office in the course of his turn to the left and his promise to build the Socialism of the 21st Century. It considers the utility of leftist ideology to explain polarization *vis-à-vis* Chávez's efforts to dominate the Bolivarian Revolution personally. The qualitative account of the Chávez era emphasizes how Venezuelan political actors mainly polarized over their affection toward the president (leader polarization).

To further test this argument at the public opinion level, the chapter also utilizes quantitative survey data from Chávez's third term in office. The results of the descriptive statistics show that the extent of polarization in 2008, 2010, and 2012 was greater over the citizens' expression of trust toward Chávez than how they placed themselves on a left-right ideological spectrum. In addition to these descriptive results on ideological and leader polarizations, the chapter also aims to find out the variables that affect people's likelihood to express extreme levels of trust to the president. Hence, the statistical section uses multinomial logistic regression models to discover the predictors of identifying at the center vs. expressing extreme distrust and extreme trust. Regression analyses show

that individuals' level of political interest is a strong predictor of leader polarization in Venezuela, especially, to express extreme trust toward Chávez. In addition, more/less favorable evaluation of the national economy also predicts leader polarization. The last section restates the qualitative and quantitative findings on polarization in Venezuela under Chávez. Then, it discusses the implications of these findings for the study of Venezuelan politics. Precisely, it addresses how leader polarization contributed to democratic backsliding.

3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After gaining its independence from the Spanish Empire in 19th-century, Venezuela was dominated by military strongmen and power struggle among them. Thus, the consolidation of the national government in Caracas did not complete until General Juan Vicente Gómez, who singlehandedly ruled the country between 1908 and 1935. Under Gómez, Venezuela accelerated its state-building process through the construction of infrastructure and bureaucratic apparatus, which unified the country under one national authority. Particularly, after the discovery of oil in 1914 near Lake Maracaibo, General Gómez possessed ample resources to finance his state-building project and to strengthen his authority (Coronil 1997).

During Gómez's twenty-seven-year rule, political repression was at its height, and the opposition was mainly confined to a pocket of university students, who organized in the relatively autonomous Central University of Venezuela (UCV). Known as the Generation of 1928, a group of UCV students launched protests in 1928, which turned into an uprising against *gomecismo*. Although the students failed to topple Gómez and most of them had to live in exile afterward, some of the leading figures of this generation

would play crucial roles in the upcoming decades, especially during the formation and consolidation of the democratic regime (Martz 1964). When Gómez (peacefully) died in 1935, Venezuela entered a process of liberalization under two *gomecista* military officers: Eleazar López Contreras (1936-1941) and Isaías Medina Angarita (1941-1945), who gradually opened the political space to new actors and ensured the further development of the oil-based economy.

Amid growing discontent with the Medina government's reluctance for rapid political change, a progressive military coup overthrew him in 1945, and democratic elections were organized in Venezuela for the first time (Ellner 2012). In the 1947 presidential elections, novelist Rómulo Gallegos won the presidency with the universal popular vote, symbolizing the end of the era of personalist leaders. Nevertheless, Gallegos' presidency lasted only for eight months as the same group of military officers who had overthrown Medina this time ended the three-year period known as the Triennium.

Democracy in Venezuela was short-lived mainly because of the conflictual attitude and mutual distrust among the main political parties, namely the ruling Democratic Action (AD), Christian Democratic Party (COPEI), and Democratic Republican Union (URD) (Kornblith 1991). A ten-year military rule followed the 1948 coup, which essentially turned into the personalist dictatorship of General Marcos Pérez Jiménez from 1952 onward under the banner of the New National Ideal (Alarico Gómez 2007). Like *gomecismo*, *perezjimenismo* was based on establishing political order while utilizing oil revenues to fund massive infrastructure projects and modernize the country's

outlook (Coronil 1997). Unlike Gómez who remained in power until his death, Pérez Jiménez was ousted[20] in 1958.

After the fall of Pérez's personalist rule, the political parties faced a difficult task to construct a democratic regime and not to antagonize the major interest groups such as the military, church, labor, and business community, which had the potential to undermine it. Drawing on the failure of the Triennium and subsequent military rule, the main principles of the new era would be inclusion and appeasement to ensure the survival of democracy (Skidmore, Smith and Green 2010). Between 1958 and 1989, Venezuela experienced an exceptional period of political stability as the presidency peacefully alternated between the candidates of the two major parties, AD and the COPEI, every five years. During this period, Venezuela was characterized by strong political parties, stable economic growth, and rising oil revenues mainly because of pacts and agreements among the main actors (Levine 1994). The most successful of those pacts was the Pact of Punto Fijo, that also gave its name to this period, was signed before the 1958 presidential election among the leaders of the AD, the COPEI, and the URD. After failing to put forward a unity candidate, they agreed on a minimal governmental program and the formation of a coalition government regardless of which candidate would receive the plurality of the votes in the election (Stambouli 2002).

The Pact of Punto Fijo symbolized a consensual approach to govern Venezuela, adhering to the statist model of development and sharing of the oil wealth among political parties that were committed to ideological moderation. It was inclusionary in the sense

[20] Following an insurrection within the military, Pérez Jiménez left the country to Dominican Republic. The fall *perezjimenismo* symbolized the end of an arbitrary dictatorship and transition to democracy.

that it rejected a winner-take-all mentality among mainstream actors but also exclusionary as the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) was left out despite the party's significant role during the fall of the dictatorship (Coronil 1988). In the 1958 elections, the AD's candidate Rómulo Betancourt won the presidency. As he promised before the election, Betancourt established a coalition government by reserving the Ministries of Interior and Hydrocarbons for his party and allocating the remaining ministries between the URD and the COPEI (Urbaneja 2007).

Despite this pact that aimed to minimize ideological polarization, Betancourt's presidency (1959-1964) was far from being uneventful. Early in his term, there was a rebellion in the military, which he managed to take under control. As Betancourt represented a democratic leftist model in Latin America, he was targeted by regional actors representing the far right and the far left. He survived an assassination attempt with serious injuries, which was orchestrated by the right-wing dictator of Dominican Republic Rafael Trujillo (Castro Ventura 2008). Another adversary was Fidel Castro who viewed the Venezuelan model as a "standing challenge to the continued assertion of the Cuban leadership that only destruction of the old armed forces, total liquidation of the old ruling classes, and installation of a revolutionary dictatorship could bring rapid economic development and social justice to Latin American nations" (Alexander 1969, 75). This ideological difference between Betancourt and Castro led to a split within the youth wing of the AD and the formation the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR), that advocated for a Cuban inspired guerilla insurgency in Venezuela (Urbaneja 2007).

Surrounded by attempts to polarize the democratic regime from inside and outside of the country, a new constitution was adopted in 1961, which institutionalized

puntofijismo, the consensual environment promoted by the elite (Kornblith 1991). The upcoming presidential elections were scheduled for 1963 and, the incumbent president, Betancourt was ineligible to run. During the presidential election campaign, the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) aimed to prevent the peaceful transfer of power from Betancourt to his successor. FALN resorted to urban guerilla tactics but failed to achieve its goal (Premo 1988).

The winner of the 1963 presidential elections was Raúl Leoni (AD). For the first time in Venezuelan history, the presidential sash passed from one democratically elected president to the other. During Leoni's presidency (1964-1969), democracy in Venezuela further stabilized as the guerrilla movement's ability to challenge the government impaired. The pacification of the guerrilla movement took place under Leoni's successor Rafael Caldera (COPEI) who won the 1968 presidential elections that transferred power from one party to the other. During his presidential term (1969-1974), Caldera had managed to co-opt the insurgents and incorporate them into the legitimate democratic arena (Premo 1988).

In the 1973 elections, the AD's Carlos Andrés Pérez won the presidency whose term (1974-1979) coincided with a boom in the global price of oil. Amid skyrocketing revenues[21] from oil, Pérez engaged in massive borrowing and spending to lead the formation of "the Great Venezuela." Pérez's promise to transform Venezuela into a developed nation was a continuation in the political culture[22] as other personalist leaders

[21] In 1975, Carlos Andrés Pérez ordered the nationalization the oil industry. At that time, Venezuela was the world's third largest exporter of petroleum.

[22] Venezuelan sociologist Fernando Coronil cites the following excerpt from a playwright to underline the significance of oil for Venezuelan political culture: "With oil a cosmogony was created in Venezuela. The

like Gómez and Pérez Jiménez also governed the country like "magicians" fulfilling the dream of progress (Coronil 1997). This statist model of development started to fall apart in the upcoming decade amid a sharp drop in oil prices, and Venezuela suffered the consequences of being a petro-state (Karl 1999).

Under the next two presidents, the COPEI's Luis Herrera Campins (1979-1984) and the AD's Jaime Lusinchi (1984-1989), Venezuelan economy entered a deep crisis as fiscal deficit, external debt, inflation, and poverty rose significantly and the currency was devalued (McCoy and Smith 1995). The collapse of the economic model also shook the foundations of *puntofijismo*, that was based on the distribution of the oil wealth among major groups in society through consensus. During Lusinchi's presidency, the Presidential Commission to Reform the State (COPRE) was established to address the situation. The commission diagnosed the centralized state structure and the rentier economic model as the primary causes of the crisis (Stambouli 2002).

The 1988 presidential elections were held in the context of an urgent need to reorganize the economy and decentralize the state. The winner of the elections was a well-known figure, Carlos Andrés Pérez (AD), who ran a personalist campaign to bring back Venezuela to its "good old days" (McCoy and Smith 1995). Contrary to those lofty promises, Pérez's presidency started with the announcement of a neoliberal package,

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state acquired a providential hue. A candidate in Venezuela cannot talk about reality, that would be suicidal. Because the state has nothing to do with reality. The state is a magnanimous sorcerer, a titan who fills with hopes the bag of lies that are our government plans. Oil is fantastic and induces fantasies. Oil wealth had the power of a myth. "The Great Venezuela." Carlos Andrés Pérez was not a president. He was a magician. A magician capable of shooting us towards a hallucination that made the exhibitionism of Pérez Jiménez seem pale in comparison. Pérez Jiménez decreed the dream of Progress. The country did not progress, it got fat. Pérez Jiménez was a début, Carlos Andrés Pérez was a reprise, but more sensational" (Coronil 1997, iii).

which was a major breakaway[23] from his campaign platform, political party program, and most importantly *puntofijismo* (Kornblith 1995). Shortly after this major shift, urban riots[24] erupted resulting in the death of at least hundreds of people. The social explosion was a direct consequence rapid decline in the standard of living average Venezuelans and mainly the urban poor (McCoy and Smith 1995). In 1992, there were two coup attempts[25] against the Pérez government, which further revealed discontent among the mid and low-level officers within the military (Agüero 1995). One year later, Pérez was impeached for corruption[26] charges, and *puntofijismo* came to an end (Lalander 2010).

One of its biggest accomplishments of this period was to promote ideological moderation rather than extremism among the political parties, military, church as well as the labor and business communities. The main reason why the Venezuelan democracy did not break down in the 1960s and 1970s, unlike Brazil, Chile, and Argentina, was because of its ability to contain extremist groups through the distribution of oil revenues. Another success of *puntofijismo* was its successful prevention of personalism as the

[23] In sharp contrast to "the Great Venezuela" in the 1970s, the austerity measures came to be known as "the Great Turn of Pérez."

[24] In response to Pérez's adoption of austerity measures, specifically the rise of the price of gasoline and public transportation rates, urban riots in Caracas and the rest of the country disturbed social order. In the events of *Caracazo*, the government declared a state of emergency and used the army to take control of the situation.

[25] Next section further elaborates on the two coup attempts in 1992.

[26] According to Lalander (2010), Pérez's impeachment should be considered as a "civilian coup" rather than a transparent corruption investigation. Three years after his impeachment, the Supreme Court found Pérez guilty for mismanagement of public funds and allocating $17 million to support the campaign of Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua.

constitution banned immediate[27] presidential reelection. In the context of strong political parties, Venezuela also did not experience leader polarization, with the partial exception of Carlos Andrés Pérez, who resorted to populist tactics to promote himself as "the savior" of Venezuela on two separate incidents. While *puntofijismo* came to an end, the next section examines the emergence of Hugo Chávez Frías.

3.2 POLARIZATION UNDER CHÁVEZ

3.2.1 The Rise of Chávez

The origins of the Hugo Chávez phenomenon go back to 1982 with the establishment of a clandestine organization in the military called the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement (MBR-200). The MBR-200 was founded by Chávez and other young officers, who were concerned about the country's political situation and searched for various alternatives centered around nationalism and leftism. The movement drew heavily from Simón Bolívar,[28] the liberator of South America from the Spanish Empire. Members of the MBR-200 including Chávez also investigated the leftist military experiments in Panama under Omar Torrijos and Peru under Velasco Alvarado as possible models for the Venezuelan military to emulate (López Maya 2003).

Initially, the MBR-200 had served as a study group to discuss the contemporary problems in Venezuelan politics (Gott 2005). After the traumatic events of *Caracazo* in

[27] The 1961 constitution banned immediate reelection of incumbent presidents. Therefore, presidents had to step down once their five-year term ended. The 1999 Constitution changed this rule, allowed immediate re-election, and increased the presidential term to six years. In 2009, President Chávez, via referéndum, abolished term limits altogether.

[28] According to Sánchez, Venezuelans monumentalize Bolívar and recall him as an "epic warrior and austere tribune of the republic, forever wrapped in his glory and suspended for posterity in one or another exemplary gesture of supreme republican virtue" (Sánchez 2016, 2). In Chávez's reimagination, Bolívar represented a Venezuelan national hero and a symbol of Latin American resistance against imperialism.

1989, when Carlos Andrés Pérez's government used the military to suppress the urban riots violently, the MBR-200 evolved into a conspiracy among the mid-level soldiers to overthrow the government (Romonet 2013). The coup plot was finally executed on February 4, 1992, and a group of soldiers led by then Lieutenant Colonel Chávez attempted to capture the president and take control of the command of the armed forces. The rebellion failed to achieve its goal especially in the capital city and Chávez, on live television, called his compatriots to surrender, *por ahora* "for now," to avoid further bloodshed (Romonet 2013). In his 50-second speech, Chávez assumed personal responsibility for the failure of the rebellion, which gave him national recognition as a young soldier who dared to challenge *puntofijismo* (Hellinger 2003). Even though his plans fell through, Chávez managed to capture the popular discontent toward the crumbling political system and promised hope for the future. Consequently, the myth of Chávez was born in the collective imagination of Venezuelans as a leader whom they could identify with (López Maya 2003).

After the coup attempt in February 1992, Chávez and others involved in the rebellion were sent to prison. The MBR-200 continued to operate behind bars and conspire to overthrow the "oppressive and corrupt government" (Romonet 2013). While in prison, there was another, but more violent, coup attempt in November 1992 led by a group of military men sympathetic to Chávez and the MBR-200 (Gott 2005).

While *puntofijismo* was on the verge of collapse, one of its architects, Rafael Caldera, emerged as a wise and honest politician to help the country get out of its grave crisis. Indeed, right after the failed military coup in February 1992, Caldera gave a speech at the Congress, denounced the poor living conditions in the country, and expressed his

solidarity with the rebels (López Maya 2003). Later, he resigned from his political party, the COPEI, and won the presidency in 1993. Caldera's victory terminated the two-party dominance on the executive branch since 1958.

Once Caldera took office in 1994, he pardoned the members of the military who were involved in the two coup attempts (McCoy and Smith 1995). Subsequent to this decision, Chávez left prison in March 1994. Instead of forming a political party and participating in local elections, Chávez and other members of the MBR-200 developed a non-electoral strategy to cultivate grassroots support across the country (Romonet 2013). They formed close relations with the leftist[29] political parties namely Radical Cause (Causa R) and Movement toward Socialism (the MAS), which had won key governorships and mayorships in the context of the decentralization of the state (Urbaneja 2007). The MBR-200 refused to participate in elections and called for the establishment of a constituent assembly. Similarly, the Venezuelan voters showed increasing levels of dissatisfaction, abstention, and alienation, which opened a path for outsiders in the upcoming presidential elections (Myers 1995; Briceño-León 2005).

3.2.2 Chávez's First and Second Terms

Starting in 1997, the MBR-200 and Chávez shifted toward an electoral strategy to gain political power. In April 1997, Chávez declared his intention to run for president in the upcoming elections. He also transformed the movement into a political organization that would launch congressional candidates. In line with populist rhetoric, during the inaugural meeting of the political organization, Chávez described the two poles that

[29] Handlin (2017) argues that Chávez's close ties with Causa R and the MAS would explain his radical opposition to neoliberalism during his presidency.

would fight for power in Venezuela. On the one hand, it was "the patriotic pole" led by his movement whereas the old political parties represented "the pole of national destruction" (Gott 2005). Since the law of political parties had banned the use of Bolívar in the name of political parties, the new organization was called the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR). Phonetically, MVR sounded the same[30] as MBR, more importantly, it promised to replace the Fourth Republic (1830 until that day) which was "anti-Bolivarian and oligarchical" (Romonet 2013, 691).

The 1998 presidential election campaign marked the demise of the traditional political parties in Venezuela. Initially, the frontrunner was a former Miss Universe and mayor of a wealthy neighborhood in Caracas, Irene Saéz, whose popularity sharply declined after receiving an endorsement from the COPEI (McCoy 1999). As Saéz was losing popularity, Chávez quickly capitalized on the anti-establishment sentiment with his promise to transfer power away from the elite to the people (Mayorga 2006). Essentially running a populist campaign, Chávez positioned himself as the man of the people with a humble background and claimed to represent the marginalized sectors of the society. Ideologically, he refrained from defining himself as a socialist, but a follower of Bolivarianism. This electoral strategy paid off, and Chávez (57 percent) won a landslide victory in the 1998 presidential elections (McCoy 1999).

During his inaugural address in February 1999, Chávez called for a referendum to establish a constituent assembly and rewrite the constitution (Brewer-Carías 2010). This unilateral call by the president was approved by 82 percent of the electorate in April

[30] In Spanish, the letters "v" and "b" sound the same. Replacing MBR with MVR also signified "the Fifth Republic" in Roman numbers.

1999, though the turnout was only 39 percent. Then, the elections for the Constituent Assembly were held in July 1999, this time with a 46 percent turnout. Thanks to the majoritarian electoral formula, supporters of Chávez obtained 94 percent of the seats despite obtaining 66 percent of the votes. Thus, the followers of the president dominated the constitution-making process instead of seeking dialogue and negotiation with other actors. The final text was put into another referendum in December 1999 and approved by 71 percent of the voters (Brewer-Carías 2010).

In less than a year, President Chávez fulfilled his campaign promise of a new constitution through a series of plebiscitary contests centered on *chavismo*. Álvarez elaborates on such process, indicating early signs of leader polarization between *chavistas* and *anti-chavistas*:

> The multiple elections carried out in Venezuela after 1998 took on a plebiscitary character to the extent that they were perceived of as a vote in favor of or against President Chávez. Indeed, in each campaign, the president and his backers were at the center of debate. Even his adversaries contributed to this process. Few political actors based their arguments exclusively on the pros and cons of specific issues, but rather stressed their support for or opposition to Chávez (Álvarez 2003, 159).

The 1999 Constitution empowered the executive branch by increasing the presidential term from five to six years, introducing immediate reelection, abolishing the Senate, and granting extensive administrative authority to the president over the military and other state agencies (Penfold 2010). On Chávez's personal request, the new constitution also changed the country's name into the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (López Maya 2003). On a symbolic level, this new name represented a refoundational change in Venezuela. In the regional context, it signified a step toward establishing Bolívar's dream of Latin American integration (Romonet 2013).

Besides strengthening the executive branch, the 1999 Constitution offered symbolic and political inclusion to especially the formerly excluded segments of the population. It defined Venezuela as a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, recognized the rights of the indigenous population, and conceptualized democracy in a participatory and protagonistic way at the national and the local levels (López Maya 2003). Notably, it underlined the importance of forming initiatives, associations, cooperatives, open forums, and the ability to revoke the mandate of elected officials (Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela 1999). Therefore, the new constitution combined top-down executive dominance with enhanced opportunities for bottom-up political participation. Moreover, it prepared the institutional background for Chávez's power grabs in the years to come.

Following the adoption of the new constitution, elections were renewed at all levels of the government including the presidency and the National Assembly. In the presidential elections, Chávez won a six-year mandate (2000-2006) with 60 percent of the vote. The runner-up was Francisco Arias Cárdenas, who was also a former member of the MBR-200 and a participant in the February 1992 coup attempt. As the traditional political parties severely weakened, the presidential race was between two former military officers, who had conspired against the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez (Corrales and Penfold 2015).

In his second presidential term, Chávez shifted his focus from passing a new constitution to specific economic and social reforms. Since the new constitution had expanded the decree powers of the president, the National Assembly granted the president such authority in November 2000 for a year (Roberts 2012). Just before the

expiration of his decree authority in November 2001, Chávez announced a package of forty-nine special laws, including far-reaching measures on agricultural reform and petroleum industry. The goal of the package was to reverse the neoliberal reforms of the previous decade and increase the state involvement in the economy (Ellner 2011). Besides inaugurating an anti-neoliberal stage, the November 2001 decrees also marked the radicalization of the president's populist discourse, who increasingly divided the nation into two opposing camps such as "privileged vs. pure people" and "traitors vs. patriots" (Martínez Meucci 2012).

The opposition to these drastic policy changes and the president's confrontational rhetoric triggered a series of contentious political events between *chavistas* and *anti-chavistas* (Corrales 2005). In response to what they perceived as a power grab by the president, the opposition led by the National Chamber of Commerce (FEDECAMARAS) and the Workers' Confederation (CTV) organized several marches and a 24-hour national strike in December 2001 (Mallen 2013). The intensification of the conflict with the opposition caused divisions within the ruling coalition, which led to a split between Chávez and his Minister of Interior Luis Miquilena[31] (Gott 2005). During this period, Chávez's popularity declined not only because of his divisive language but also his inability to deliver materially amid low oil prices. His image in the West was not favorable either since he was reluctant to support the Bush administration's War on Terror. In this environment, it looked feasible[32] for *anti-chavistas* to force Chávez's resignation (Martínez Meucci 2012).

[31] Miquilena advocated for lowering the tension and entering a dialogue with the opposition.

In this regard, on April 11, 2002, the opposition decided to organize a march to the center of Caracas, symbolically a *chavista* territory (García Guadilla 2003). According to various estimates, seven hundred thousand to one million people participated in the march toward the presidential palace, which Chávez labeled as insurrectional, crazy, and irrational (Martínez Meucci 2012). As the demonstrators approached the Miraflores Palace, violence broke out between *chavistas* and *anti-chavistas*, leaving 19 dead and wounding over 150 people (Corrales and Penfold 2015). In alliance with the business community and the civil society, the private media outlets portrayed the bloody events as "Chávez murdering his own people" to destroy the president's legitimacy in the eyes of the public and more importantly the military (Wilpert 2009). The following day, the military chose Pedro Carmona, the head of the FEDECAMARAS, as the provisional president surrounded by rumors of Chávez's resignation (Cannon 2004).

Carmona's government proved to be short-lived after he announced the dissolution of the National Assembly and other democratic institutions. These authoritarian measures divided the coup-plotters, who lacked ideological cohesion apart from being united against the president (Cannon 2004). Also, supporters of the president began to mobilize in the streets, mainly near the Miraflores Palace, to defeat the coup since Chávez's resignation appeared to be false. Particularly, the Bolivarian Circles,

[32] In the Latin American context, the opposition was also inspired by the ongoing events in Argentina that led to President Fernando De la Rúa's resignation.

which were established[33] in 2001 as a bottom-up organization to participate in the revolution, played a significant role to express support for the constitutional president of Venezuela (Hawkins 2010). In response to growing divisions within *anti-chavistas* and the mobilization of *chavistas*, the military reconsidered its decision and reinstated Chávez back to power at the dawn of April 14, 2002. Following the failed coup in 2002 "*[c]havistas* became more hateful of the opposition, and the opposition more resentful that the status quo had been restored rather than reformed" (Corrales and Penfold 2015, 23). The events in the following months and years further showed the salience of leader polarization between *chavistas* and *anti-chavistas*.

Between December 2002 and February 2003, the opposition launched a three-month strike, which halted the operations of the national oil company, the PDVSA, and paralyzed the oil-dependent economy. Chávez's response, to what he called an "oil coup," was to fire almost 60 percent of the PDVSA personnel including top managers and hand over the company's control to the military (Gott 2005). The opposition-led strike eventually failed because it caused an economic recession, without being able to topple Chávez.

In the aftermath of the oil strike, the opposition shifted to a constitutional way to take Chávez out of power, whose approval ratings were below 40 percent. The members of the opposition started collecting signatures[34] to initiate a recall referendum since the

[33] In December 2001, Chávez initiated the Bolivarian Circles as a bottom-up organization to participate in the revolutionary process. According to Hawkins, as hardcore supporters of *chavismo* at the local level, "the Circles tended to reinforce the polarization of Venezuelan society into Chavistas and opposition" (Hawkins 2010, 194). The critics of the president view the Bolivarian Circles as an attempt to form an armed militia to defend the revolution by force (BBC 2002).

1999 Constitution allowed it as a participatory mechanism to revoke the mandate of the president (Corrales and Penfold 2015). International observers such as the Organization of the American States (OAS) and the Carter Center facilitated the recall referendum negotiations between the government and the opposition (Martínez Meucci 2012). Parallel to this peaceful process, there was also a radical group within the opposition that rejected the viability of a constitutional exit and resorted to street violence (López Maya and Panzarelli 2013).

To counter the opposition's institutional and extra-institutional attempts to terminate his presidency, in 2003 Chávez launched the clientelistic social programs, known as the missions. Until then, the president could offer little material inclusion to the poor, whose policies were limited to the military's greater involvement in repairing infrastructure and providing healthcare in the context of the *Plan Bolívar*[35] (Diamint and Tedesco 2015). Since there was a real possibility of losing the upcoming recall referendum, thanks to the rising oil prices and a greater control over the PDVSA, the government created the missions to increase access to healthcare *(Barrio Adentro)*, decentralized university education *(Sucre)*, remedial primary education *(Robinson II)*, remedial secondary education *(Ribas)*, and subsidized food *(Mercal)* (Hawkins 2010). Owing to the success of the missions, Chávez managed to "consolidate electoral and

[34] A member of the National Assembly, Luis Tascón, published the list of citizens who signed against Chávez. The opposition argued that the government used the Tascón List to deny public sector jobs and services to the signatories.

[35] Soon after becoming president, Chávez established *Plan Bolívar 2000*, which entailed the active use of the military to assist developmental projects. One of the main goals of the initiative was to for to boost the military's image in the eyes of the people (Harnecker 2005).

political support among a group of poor voters previously excluded from the political and economic realm" (Penfold-Becerra 2007, 65).

In the recall referendum, the opposition needed to achieve two things to revoke Chávez's mandate: 1) to win more votes than the president won in the 2000 election (nearly 3.75 million) and 2) the yes votes would have to surpass the no votes. As the referendum in August 2004 was approaching, it was apparent that Chávez had the momentum on his side, as the oil prices neared 50 dollars per barrel compared to 26 dollars during the 2002 coup attempt (Martínez Meucci 2012). Confirming the expectations, the presidential recall was rejected by the Venezuelan people with 58 percent of the electorate voting against it. Furthermore, the yes vote did not reach 3.75 million (Hellinger 2005). The results of the 2004 recall referendum reinforced leader polarization in Venezuela as the country divided between "the ones who loved Chávez and those who hated him" (Briceño-León 2005, 21).

After surviving a coup attempt, an oil strike, and a recall referendum, President Chávez secured his dominance over Venezuelan politics. The results of the local elections in October 2004 further confirmed this trend as *chavismo* won 21 out of 23 governorships and 80 percent of the municipalities in the country (Martínez Meucci 2012). The following year, the demoralized opposition decided to boycott the legislative elections by reason of the unfairness of the electoral process. This decision happened to be a grave mistake since *anti-chavistas* simply handed over the control of the National Assembly to *chavistas* (Corrales and Penfold 2015). While the opposition was in shambles, Chávez announced a new economic and social model, which he later defined it as the Socialism of the 21st Century, as an alternative to communism and capitalism of

the 20th century.[36] Subsequently, Chávez passed a decree against excessive land ownership and redistributed land to poor farmers (Ellner 2011). He also established the Communal Councils,[37] another bottom-up organization for citizens to partake in the socialist revolution at the local level (Hawkins 2010).

Chávez's turn to the left after the 2004 recall referendum also manifested itself internationally. To promote an anti-imperialist foreign policy and multipolar world order, Chávez increasingly challenged US hegemony in his public speeches and developed close relations with Russia, China, and Iran (López Maya 2011). At the regional level, he put forward diplomatic initiatives to reduce the influence of the United States and promote Latin American integration, aiming to fulfill Bolivar's dream. Particularly, Chávez established a personal relationship with Fidel Castro in Cuba, and they created the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), as an opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas promoted by the United States. In addition, Venezuela and Cuba founded the Petrocaribe, to provide cheap oil to the Caribbean countries, and Telesur, to challenge the alleged imperialist hegemony in the media. Besides these regional initiatives, Chávez greatly benefited from Cuban participation in the successful implementation of missions, primarily to provide quality healthcare and reduce illiteracy (Azicri 2009).

[36] Originally coined by Heinz Dieterich, in the Venezuelan context, Socialism of the 21st Century meant a radical project to build participatory democracy at the local level. As an alternative to neoliberal hegemony, it aimed to build a socialist society from below. While promoting inclusion on paper, practically speaking, it excluded the members of the opposition to equally partake in the revolutionary process. It also reproduced existing patron-client relations (García-Guadilla and Mallen 2013).

[37] In April 2006, the National Assembly adopted the Law of Communal Councils. The advocates of the project see it as an important attempt to construct radical and participatory democracy in Venezuela akin to the Paris Commune. On the other hand, the opponents view it as a clientelistic practice that reinforces dependency to the state and oil rents (Burbach and Piñeiro 2007).

In conclusion, during Chávez's first and second terms as president, leader polarization characterized Venezuelan politics. Chávez was elected as a populist candidate who promised symbolic, political, and material inclusion to the previously excluded segments of the population. In his first term, he managed to pass a new constitution, containing inclusionary elements while strengthening the executive branch. After his reelection in 2000, Chávez attempted to govern the country singlehandedly and passed a series of significant reforms to reverse the country's neoliberal trajectory. He also started to adopt a more confrontational language toward his opponents, thus framed politics as a battle between moralistic dualities. The opposition's response was to organize and protest Chávez's power grab through a series of contentious events. Between 2001 and 2004, there were several instances of leader polarization in Venezuela between *chavistas* and *anti-chavistas,* that occupied the public space: street protests, a general strike, a coup attempt, an oil strike, and a recall referendum. President Chávez was always at the center of these events as people did not mobilize over their abstract ideological commitments but essentially for and against *chavismo* as a polarizing force on its own. Chávez could overcome the opposition's challenges mainly thanks to rising oil prices, which allowed him to create social programs and offer material inclusion to the poor.

3.2.3 Chávez's Third Term

The 1999 Constitution allowed the reelection of the president for an additional six-year term. Since Chávez had served his first term (1999-2000) under the previous constitution, he was eligible to run again in December 2006. The 2006 presidential election campaign was visibly more ideological compared to the 1998 and the 2000

campaigns, and it involved Chávez's promise to deepen the ongoing socialist revolution (Ellner 2011). Besides the increasing turn to the left, which started in the aftermath of the 2004 recall referendum, the 2006 campaign also contained strong emotional elements centered on Chávez's relationship with the people. As a striking example, Chávez appealed directly to the Venezuelan people with a campaign spot (YouTube 2012) entitled "Message of Love to the People of My Venezuela." In a 60-second video, the president recited the following poem (Carroll 2006):

> Always, I did everything for love
> For love toward the tree, the river, I became a painter
> For the love of knowledge, I left my dear hometown, to study
> For the love of sports, I became a baseball player
> For the love of the homeland, I became a soldier
> For the love of the people, I made myself president, you made me president
> I have governed for love
> Out of love, we did Barrio Adentro
> Out of love, we did Mission Robinson
> Out of love, we did Mercal
> We have done everything out of love
> There is a lot more to do
> I need more time
> I need your vote
> Your vote for love

The poem illustrates the affective bond that Chávez wanted to cultivate with the people to win their hearts. As a continuation of the existing cult of personality around him, it depicted Chávez as a painter, a baseball player, a soldier who was in love with Venezuela and its people. In the wake of the 2006 presidential elections, Chávez attempted to convey the message that he had a duty to serve Venezuelans not for personal gains but out of love. According to Zúquete, Chávez viewed himself not as an ordinary president but "a missionizing figure, a leader who intends not only to repair failed policies but, at a much 'deeper level', to save his nation from decadence and to assist in

its rebirth as a 'new Venezuela'" (Zúquete 2008, 98). This missionary politics entailed presenting himself as an idealist, an exemplary figure, an ordinary man, an anti-imperialist, a rebel, and the reincarnation of Simón Bolívar in the 21st century (Zúquete 2008).

In the 2006 presidential elections, Chávez received 63 percent of the votes over the opposition candidate Manual Rosales, the governor of the oil-rich state of Zulia. Chávez's win in 2006 was greater than the previous two presidential elections regarding the margin of victory as well as the voter turnout. Winning more than seven million votes nationwide, he received at least 50 percent of the vote in each state. This time there was no claim of electoral fraud by the opposition despite the lack of trust in the National Electoral Council (CNE) (Corrales and Penfold 2015). Chávez's unprecedented performance in 2006 was tied to satisfactory socioeconomic indicators such as the declining levels of unemployment and poverty, mainly thanks to the redistribution of the abundant oil wealth through participatory social programs. From 2003 to 2006, the unemployment rate declined from 18 percent to 11 percent while the share of households living below the poverty line reduced from 55 percent to 32 percent. Instead of considering the role of economic factors, Chávez interpreted the results of the 2006 presidential election as the popular mandate to implement the Socialism of the 21st Century (López Maya 2011).

On the night of his election victory in December 2006, Chávez gave an electrifying balcony speech at the Miraflores Palace to his supporters (YouTube 2013). During his address to a *chavista* crowd, the president announced the commencement of a new era to deepen and expand the Bolivarian Revolution. He argued that more than 60

percent of Venezuelans had voted for the socialist project which was "original, indigenous, Christian, and Bolivarian." As a textbook example of populism, he proclaimed: "Chávez is not Chávez. Chávez is the Venezuelan people" (YouTube 2013). Furthermore, he attributed victory to the entire people of Latin America and the Caribbean and explicitly mentioned his allies in the fight against American imperialism: Presidents Nestór Kirchner (Argentina), Rafael Correa (Ecuador), and Fidel Castro (Cuba). In the same balcony speech, he referred to President of the United States, George W. Bush as "Mr. Danger" and "the devil" (YouTube 2013).

Before his inauguration in 2007, Chávez proposed a set of changes to radicalize the Bolivarian Revolution. He asked for a set of measures to institutionalize the Socialism of the 21st Century. First, Chávez requested the National Assembly's authorization to rule by decree. Then, he announced his plan to change the constitution, which would abolish the presidential term limits and make it harder to initiate a recall referendum. Other proposals of the president included reducing the autonomy of the locally elected officials, spreading the socialist values through the public education system, and granting constitutional status to the communal councils (Corrales and Penfold 2015). Parallel to these proposals, Chávez took other measures to accelerate the socialist project. In the economic realm, he nationalized telecommunication and electricity companies and increased state involvement in agriculture and banking sectors (Corrales and Penfold 2007). He also established the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), to incorporate various *chavista* social movements and political parties into a new organization (Ellner 2011). Moreover, the president targeted private media outlets and

specifically refused to renew the broadcast license of the Radio Caracas Television (RCTV), citing its alleged involvement in the failed coup in 2002 (Edwards 2007).

Within the first year of his third term, Chávez proposed a comprehensive constitutional reform package, which would increase the presidential term from six to seven years and abolish the presidential term limits, give constitutional recognition to the missions as well as the Communal Councils, and declare the oligarchy and imperialism as the enemies of the state (Corrales 2011). The constitutional reform was narrowly rejected in December 2007 by 51 percent of the electorate. *Anti-chavistas* celebrated the results since, for the first time, they managed to defeat Chávez in an electoral contest. After the defeat of the referendum, there was an internal debate and self-criticism within the governing alliance to explore the reasons for failure (Ellner 2010). Prominent *chavistas* attributed the defeat to several factors including low turnout, poor campaigning, lack of enthusiasm at the local level, accusations of corruption, problems with food distribution, and high rates of crime. Subsequently, Chávez reshuffled his cabinet so that the government could address those administrative and organizational issues (Gott 2008).

Even though his plans fell through in the 2007 referendum, without the opposition in the parliament, Chávez still passed a bulk of those proposed amendments through legislation (Hidalgo 2009; McCoy 2010). Nonetheless, a constitutional change was still required so that Chávez could run in the future presidential elections and continue to lead the revolution. After the local elections in 2008, Chávez announced his decision to launch another constitutional amendment process, this time proposing to abolish term limits not only for the presidency but all elected offices, including the governors, regional legislators, mayors, and members of the parliament (Carroll 2009). Then, another

constitutional referendum was scheduled for February 2009. This time the yes option received 55 percent of the vote, opening the path for Chávez to run in the upcoming presidential elections in 2012, possibly in 2018 and 2024. The victory in 2009 was crucial for Chávez since he "essentially did away with one of the few remaining potential checks on presidential powers still available, as well as challenges originating within his own movement" (Corrales and Penfold 2015, 38).

The fourteen-month process between the 2007 and 2009 referendums further confirmed that the revolutionary process in Venezuela strongly depended on the personality of Chávez. In a highly personalized political setting, he had the ultimate authority to determine what socialism actually meant and how it should be implemented. Starting from the referendum defeat in 2007, Chávez also displayed increasing signs of authoritarianism by further skewing the playing field against the opposition. In this period, Venezuela under Chávez became a pronounced case of a competitive authoritarianism since the incumbent government continuously increased its control over the media, accused vital opposition figures of corruption, denied federal funds to opposition governors, disproportionately used state resources for campaigning, and manipulated the electoral law for its own benefit (Corrales 2011).

While it appeared more difficult to contest the Chávez's personalist government, *anti-chavistas* started to coalesce around a new organization called the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD). The MUD consisted of twenty-nine political organizations, from

various ideological, organizational, and regional backgrounds.[38] What united those diverse arrays of groups was their opposition to Chávez since a fragmented opposition only benefited the PSUV to further monopolize presidential, parliamentary, and local elections (Álvarez 2013). In fact, the opposition's effort to coordinate paid off in the 2010 parliamentary elections. The candidates of the MUD won a roughly equal number of votes with the PSUV, but only gained 67 out of 165 seats. The opposition's underrepresentation in the parliament was due to the majoritarian electoral system, gerrymandering, and malapportionment, which were all designed to benefit the PSUV (Corrales 2011). Furthermore, before the new members of the parliament took office in January 2011, the outgoing National Assembly granted decree powers to the president until June 2012, allowing him to bypass the incoming legislative branch (Kornblith 2013). While the 2012 presidential elections were approaching, the parties in the MUD agreed to hold nationwide primary elections and present a joint candidate (Álvarez 2013).

For the ruling party, Chávez was the indispensable leader and the natural candidate in the upcoming presidential elections. This extreme dependence on Chávez proved to be a liability when the president announced that he had been diagnosed with cancer and undergone emergency pelvic surgery in Cuba. In June 2011, on live television, Chávez addressed the Venezuelan nation from Havana. Speaking behind a podium and reading from a script instead of improvising, he said "I neglected my health,

[38] Ideologically, members of the MUD included the radical left, center-left, center-right, and right-wing parties. Organizationally, they had different mobilization strategies ranging from radical activism of the left to the traditional party membership. Regionally, with the exception of the AD, the parties within the MUD remained regionally concentrated (Álvarez 2013). According to Cyr, the AD's "organizational resources gave it a competitive advantage vis-à-vis the other regionalized parties in the anti-Chávez camp" (Cyr 2017, 168).

and I was reluctant to have medical check-ups. It was a fundamental mistake for a revolutionary" (Phillips and Lopez 2011). There were already rumors about the president's health condition since he had significantly reduced his public activities and media appearances (Friedman 2011). It was not clear if Chávez would be able to fulfill his duties as president while receiving cancer treatment in Cuba or even able to run for reelection in 2012.

At the backdrop of these events, the MUD held primaries in early 2012, open to all Venezuelans, to choose its presidential candidate. The winner was the governor of the state of Miranda, Henrique Capriles Radonski (62 percent). To challenge the candidate of the PSUV from the left, Capriles adopted a center-left platform modeled on the Brazilian experience under Lula (The Carter Center 2012). Meanwhile, Chávez ended the speculations about his health by announcing his recovery from cancer and his candidacy for the upcoming presidential elections. Compared to the previous elections, Chávez initially appeared less on the campaign trail but eventually convinced people that he was cured (The Carter Center 2012).

During the 2012 presidential election campaign, Chávez had disproportionate access to public resources through the excessive use of mandatory presidential broadcasts and the creation of new social programs funded by oil revenues. In this unequal playing field, it was no surprise that Chávez was reelected (55 percent). Despite the unfairness of the process, Capriles (44 percent) recognized the results (Cyr 2013). As usual, Chávez celebrated his electoral victory with his supporters from the balcony of the Miraflores Palace. He asked God and Jesus Christ to give him health so that could serve the people until 2019 and continue the battle to build socialism in Venezuela (YouTube 2012).

Chávez's plan to serve as president for one more term was hampered when cancerous cells reappeared in his body. To transmit the news, Chávez addressed the nation in December 2012. Surrounded by the President of the National Assembly Diosdado Cabello, Vice President Nicolás Maduro, key ministers, and representatives of the military, Chávez first talked about the recovery of his health during the presidential campaign and how much he had regained his energy from July 2012 onwards. The president said that the examinations in Venezuela and Cuba after the election in October were favorable, but the circumstances had changed after a comprehensive examination the following month. Underlying the absolute necessity of having another surgery in Cuba, he said: "thankfully this revolution does not depend on one person" and named Vice President Maduro, who was sitting on his left, as his successor. Chávez described Maduro as a revolutionary and an experienced man who could manage difficult situations. He added that his decision to choose Maduro was "irrevocable, absolute, and total," something he was asking "by heart" (YouTube 2012). After the surgery, Chávez could not leave Cuba to attend his inauguration in January 2013. Shortly after his return to Venezuela, on March 5, 2013, Vice President Maduro officially[39] announced Chávez's death (El Huffington Post 2013).

In summary, during his third term in office, leader polarization continued to dominate Venezuelan politics. Due to the inclusionary and exclusionary nature of populism, *chavistas* and *anti-chavistas* continued to differ over the perception of Chávez sharply. To the members of the in-group, Chávez offered symbolic inclusion by

[39] The official announcement of President Chávez's death spurred controversies and conspiracy theories. A popular rumor suggests that the president passed away in December 2012, but the government did not share the information with public (El Nacional 2018).

representing their voice and giving them a sense of belonging (López Maya and Panzarelli 2013). Also, he encouraged people's participation in the political process not only through frequent elections and referendums but also via bottom-up participatory mechanisms at the local level (Ellner 2010). With the further expansion of social programs on education, health, food distribution, and housing, Chávez offered material inclusion to the poor especially during the times of oil boom (Univision 2013).

Simultaneously, Chávez was exclusionary toward Venezuelans who were part of the out-group. In his public speeches, Chávez praised the members of the in-group as *pueblo* (people), *patriotas* (patriots), and *revolucionarios* (revolutionaries). On the contrary, he described the members of the out-group as *escuálidos* (the squalid ones), *golpistas* (coup-sympathizers), and *traidores* (traitors) among others (Martínez Meucci 2012). Moreover, Chávez denied his opponents to equally take part in the political process by constantly delegitimizing them, restricting their access to the media, accusing them of corruption, and manipulating the electoral law (Corrales 2011). As a form of material exclusion, he disproportionately used abundant oil revenues to fund his social programs and to skew the playing field (The Carter Center 2012).

Besides leader polarization, in his third term in office, Chávez made increasing ideological references. To transform Venezuela into a socialist state, he nationalized hundreds of companies in the oil, agricultural, financial, telecommunications, transportation, and tourism industries (Reuters 2012). He also increased the regulations on the free market by restricting the free flow of the currency and controlling the prices of basic goods (Corrales 2011). At the foreign policy level, Chávez attempted to spread the socialist model in Venezuela to other countries in the region (Tavares 2014).

Particularly, Evo Morales in Bolivia, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua adopted the label "Socialism of the 21st Century" in their respective countries (Weyland 2013). Chávez's turn to the left in his third term made ideology more relevant in Venezuelan politics. Nonetheless, Chávez's understanding of socialism lacked a coherent set of ideas but rather depended on his personal interpretation. Arguably, the socialist revolution in Venezuela was a spectacle centered on Chávez's performance (Uzcátegui 2010).

3.3 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

This section of the chapter utilizes quantitative survey data from Chávez's third term in office to measure the extent of polarization at the public opinion level. It uses 2008, 2010, and 2012 datasets from the Americas Barometer of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). There are four main survey questions that it relies on to discover the dynamics of polarization among the Venezuelan public.

The first question, to measure ideological polarization, is a traditional ten-point left-right scale, in which the interviewer shows the respondent a card and asks the following question:

> On this card, there is a 1-10 scale that goes from left to right. Nowadays, when we speak of political leanings, we talk of those on the left and those on the right. In other words, some people sympathize more with the left and others with the right. According to the meaning that the terms "left" and "right" have for you, and thinking of your own political leanings, where would you place yourself on this scale? Indicate the box that comes closest to your own position.

The second question, to measure leader polarization, is a seven-point scale on the extent of trust toward the president. For this question, the interviewer also has a similar card to ask respondents a battery of questions ranging from the level of respect to the

political institutions of the country to trust toward the justice system, the parliament, the police, and the Catholic Church among others. The third question, to measure individuals' political interest as an independent variable, asks the following on a four-point scale: "How much interest do you have in politics: none, little, some, or a lot?" The fourth question, to measure sociotropic evaluation of the economy, asks the following on a three-point scale: "Do you think that the country's current economic situation is worse than, the same as or better than it was 12 months ago?"

To measure the extent of ideological polarization and leader polarization, I provide descriptive statistics of the questions on left-right self-placement and the extent of trust toward the president respectively. Specifically, I look at the distribution of aggregate responses to those two questions to see whether there is clustering at both ends of the spectrum rather than the center. An ideal polarized distribution should look bimodal with a weak center, and strong extreme categories whereas a non-polarized distribution should look closer to a bell-curve.

To find out the predictors of expressing extreme distrust and extreme trust, I recode the seven-point presidential trust scale into a trichotomous variable. I do it by picking two extreme categories on each side (1 and 2 for the extreme distrust, and 6 and 7 for the extreme trust) and code the rest in the middle as reference categories. In that way, through multinomial logistic regression models, I would be able to identify the variables, which may predict identifying at the extremes instead of the center. In addition to the two independent variables, political interest, and sociotropic economic evaluation, the regression analyses also control for age (interval), income (ordinal), education (interval), women (dummy), rural (dummy), skin color (ordinal).

Table 1 reports the summary statistics of all variables that are subject to analysis in 2008, 2010, and 2012. Figures 2-4 display the distribution of responses to the question on left-right ideology for each year. Figures 5-7 have the same purpose for the question on trust toward the president. Lastly, Tables 2-3 report the findings of the multinomial regression analyses for leader polarization.

Table 1. Summary Statistics for Venezuela.

Venezuela	N (2008)	N (2010)	N (2012)	Mean (2008)	Mean (2010)	Mean (2012)	Min	Max
ideology	1134	1432	1318	5.25	5.872	5.350	1	10
trust	1397	1479	1459	4.107	3.847	4.548	1	7
extreme ideology	1134	1432	1318	1.949	2.064	1.974	1	3
extreme trust	1397	1479	1459	2.037	1.958	2.184	1	3
political interest	1476	1473	1489	2.179	2.253	2.245	1	4
econ evaluation	1456	1479	1458	1.883	1.692	1.829	1	3
age	1488	1498	1462	38.658	39.390	40.445	17	96
income	961	1360	991	3.709	4.224	6.929	0	16
education	1458	1494	1483	9.960	10.508	10.590	0	18
women	1500	1500	1500	0.546	0.508	0.499	0	1
rural	1500	1500	1500	0.186	0.040	0.087	0	1
skin color	-	1500	1489	-	4.368	4.443	1	11

Figure 2. Left-Right Ideological Self Placement in Venezuela (2008).

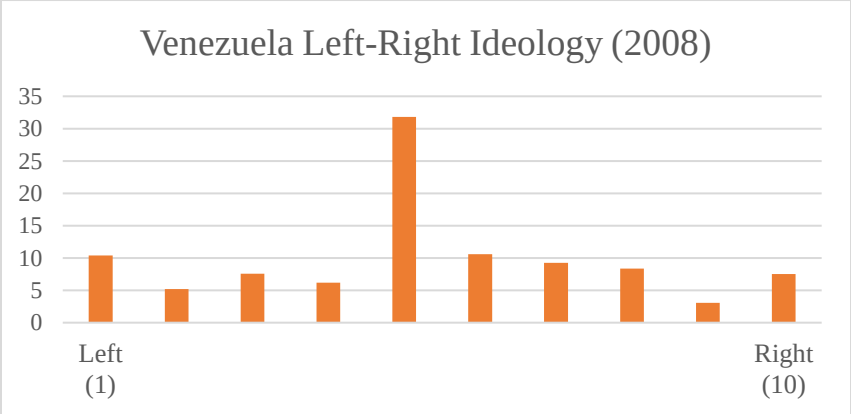

Figure 3. Left-Right Ideological Self Placement in Venezuela (2010).

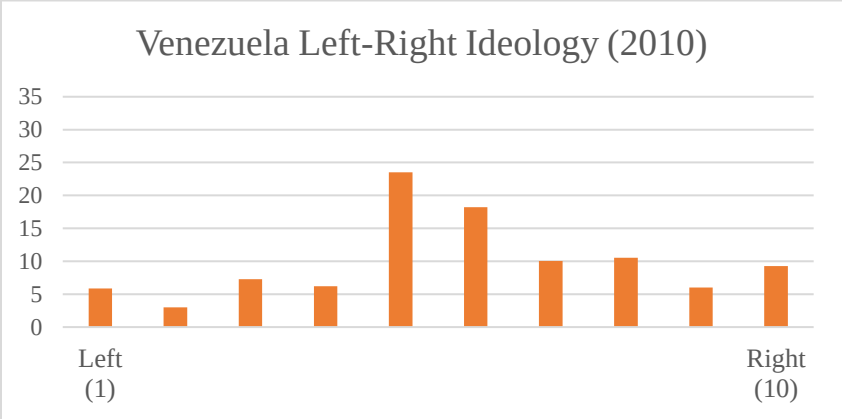

Figure 4. Left-Right Ideological Self Placement in Venezuela (2012).

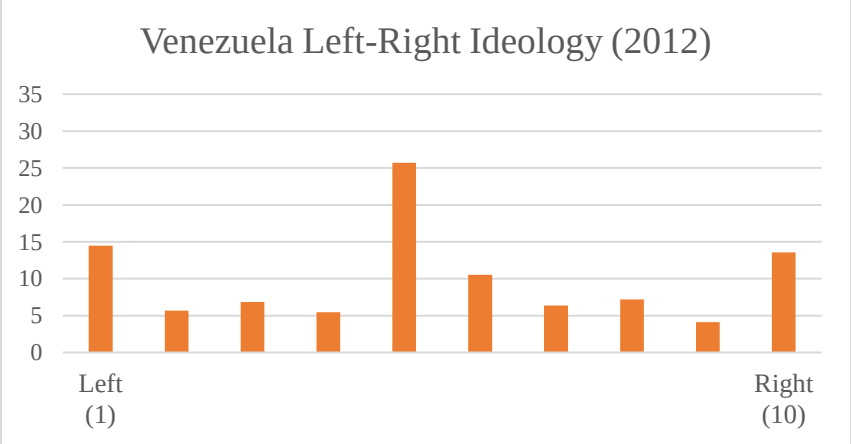

Figure 5. Level of Trust in President Chávez (2008).

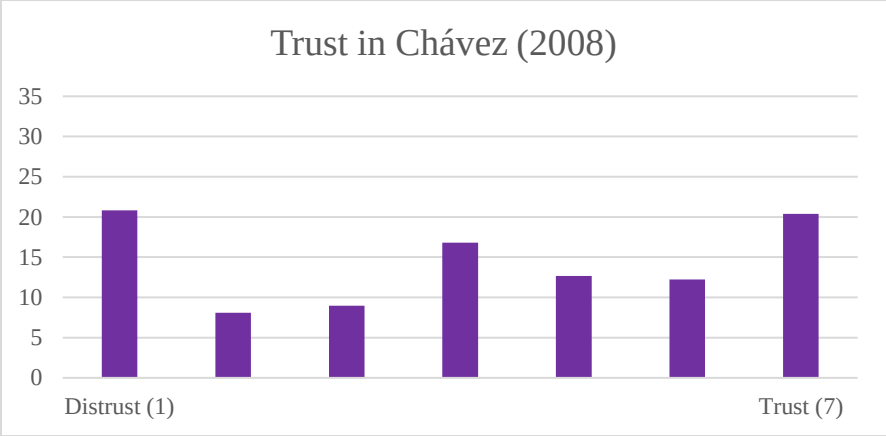

Figure 6. Level of Trust in President Chávez (2010).

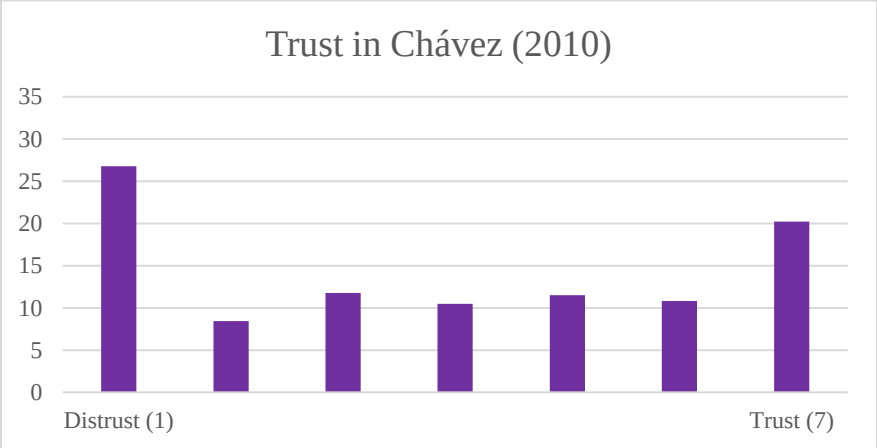

Figure 7. Level of Trust in President Chávez (2012).

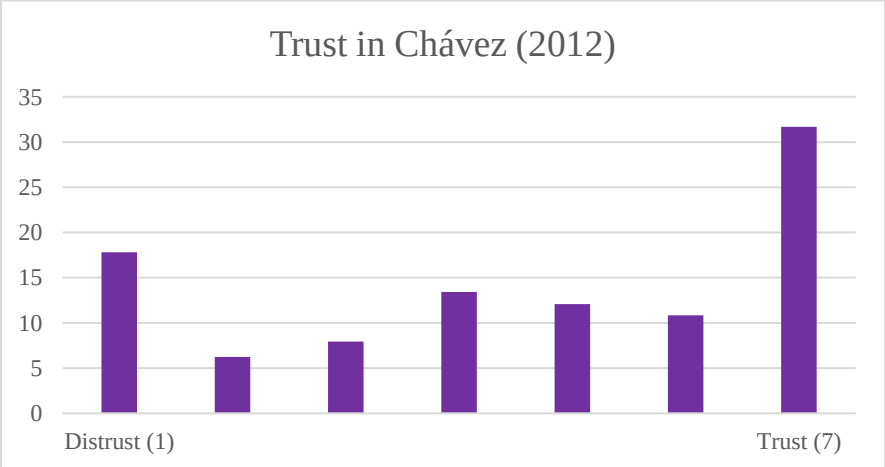

Table 2. Multinomial Logistic Regression Results on Extreme Distrust of Chávez.

extreme distrust	Ven 2008	Ven 2010	Ven 2012
political interest	0.258*** (.092)	0.102 (.075)	0.061 (.104)
econ evaluation	-0.992*** (.136)	-1.150*** (.122)	-0.899*** (.165)
age	0.003 (.006)	0.003 (.005)	0.010 (.007)
income	0.053 (.054)	0.027 (.039)	0.031 (.027)
education	0.064** (.028)	-0.010 (.021)	0.096*** (.028)
women	0.084 (.183)	-0.281** (.142)	-0.332* (.086)
rural	-0.702** (.275)	0.022 (.385)	0.062 (.355)
skin color		0.019 (.041)	0.001 (.059)
N	868	1289	916
Pseudo R^2	0.14	0.14	0.16

Significance levels ***p<0.01 ** p<0.05 *p<0.10
Standard error in parentheses.

Table 3. Multinomial Logistic Regression Results on Extreme Trust of Chávez.

extreme trust	Ven 2008	Ven 2010	Ven 2012
political interest	0.491*** (.091)	0.388*** (.078)	0.663*** (.095)
econ evaluation	0.752*** (.122)	0.858*** (.109)	1.129*** (.136)
age	0.008 (.006)	0.002 (.005)	-0.003 (.006)
income	-0.116* (.060)	0.020 (.043)	-0.030 (.025)
education	-0.021 (.027)	-0.081*** (.023)	-0.055** (.025)
women	0.746*** (.181)	-0.223 (.150)	0.261 (.171)
rural	0.010 (.228)	0.236 (.354)	0.147 (.295)
skin color		0.029 (.044)	0.053 (.051)
N	868	1255	916
Pseudo R^2	0.14	0.14	0.16

Significance levels ***p<0.01 ** p<0.05 *p<0.10
Standard error in parentheses.

With regards to the overall measurement of ideological polarization in Venezuela, in all three years, the distribution is more centrist, and it has weak extremist tendencies. Nevertheless, by the end of Chávez's third term, more people identified at the extreme left and extreme right compared to 2008 and 2010. (Figures 2-4). In comparison, all three distributions on the extent of trust toward President Chávez have strong extreme categories whereas the center is weak. In all three years, at least 60 percent of Venezuelans express extreme levels of distrust/trust toward the president (Figures 5-7). These results give further support to the qualitative evidence in favor of leader polarization in Venezuela as people sharply divided over their affection toward President Chávez. These findings do not entirely disregard the role of ideology in Chávez's third term in office. Rather, they yield the argument that ideology was of secondary importance in a personalized political setting.

Turning to regression analyses (Tables 2-3), economic evaluation (-) has a statistically significant relationship with expressing extreme distrust of Chávez. Political interest (+), age (+), income (+), and skin color (+) also have consistent directions, but they are not statistically significant in all years. Education (+) is statistically significant in 2008 and 2012, but not in 2010 (Table 2). To report the findings on the extreme trust of Chávez, both political interest (+) and economic evaluation (+) are statistically significant in all years. Among the control variables, education (-) is statistically significant in 2010 and 2012. Moreover, rural (+) and skin color (+) have consistent directions (Table 3). In conclusion, economic evaluation (-/+) is a strong predictor of leader polarization on both ends of the spectrum. Political interest (+) is particularly a better predictor of expressing

extreme trust of Chávez than distrust. Furthermore, the level of education (+/-) is another variable that predicts leader polarization in Venezuela.

3.4 DISCUSSION

Through qualitative case studies and quantitative survey analysis, this chapter has analyzed the extent of polarization in Venezuela under Hugo Chávez. First, it provided a historical background of Venezuelan politics by focusing on the personalist rule of Juan Vicente Gómez (*gomecismo*) and Marcos Pérez Jiménez (*perezjimenismo*). Then, it examined the development of consensual democracy in Venezuela after Pérez Jiménez's fall from power. During the Punto Fijo era, the political elite managed to contain extreme ideologies and personalism. Regardless of the strength of democratic institutions, survival of the regime in Venezuela still depended on the redistribution of oil revenues among main actors. In that sense, *puntofijismo* was a continuation of the rentier model of development established by Gómez and his successors.

The rise of Chávez coincided with the crisis of *puntofijismo* amid low oil prices, economic recession, declining living standards, and growing inequalities. Thanks to his televised speech on the night of the coup attempt in 1992, Chávez emerged as a nationalist soldier who could challenge the political establishment and take responsibility for his actions. In the 1998 presidential election, Chávez ran a populist campaign and promised to transfer power away from the elite to the people. After his election to the presidency, he convened a constituent assembly, rewrote the constitution, and enhanced the powers of the executive branch. Contrary to the spirit of the Pact of Punto Fijo, Chávez attempted to govern the country without seeking any consensus. When he

announced a set of decrees in 2001, to reverse Venezuela's neoliberal trajectory, he faced significant resistance from the representatives of the *status quo*.

Between 2002 and 2004, Venezuela experienced contentious political developments that centered on President Chávez. First, a military coup ousted Chávez, but then returned him to power thanks to the mobilization of *chavistas* and divisions among the conspirators. Following the failure of the coup, the opposition, first, launched an oil strike, which paralyzed the Venezuelan economy. Then, Chávez defeated the opposition in a recall referendum. In this period, the confrontation between *chavistas* and *anti-chavistas* occupied the public space. At the end of a conflictual process, *chavistas* triumphed and *anti-chavistas* demoralized.

Following his reelection in 2006, Chávez announced a new stage in the revolutionary process. In his third term in office, Chávez increased the economic role of the state and promoted anti-imperialism at the international front. It was also a period of growing authoritarianism as he denied the opposition to compete on an equal ground. Especially after his defeat in the 2007 referendum, Chávez further concentrated power at the executive branch. In the 2009 referendum, he abolished presidential term limits and ensured staying in power indefinitely. The extreme dependence on Chávez became a liability for *chavistas* when he was diagnosed with cancer. Amid uncertainties about his health, Chávez won the 2012 presidential elections but passed away months later. Between 2006 and 2012, the divisions between *chavistas* and *anti-chavistas* continued to define the spectrum in Venezuelan politics. At the same time, the traditional left-right division increasingly became salient in the course of Chávez's attempts to lead a socialist revolution.

Throughout his presidency, polarization around Chávez was a consequence of the inclusionary and exclusionary nature of his populist leadership. For the members of the in-group, Chávez offered symbolic inclusion by proclaiming "Chávez is the Venezuelan people" and portraying himself as an ordinary Venezuelan, who speaks, looks, and dresses like average people. In addition, Chávez offered political inclusion by establishing bottom-up participatory mechanisms such as the Bolivarian Circles and the Communal Councils. Because of the idea of protagonist democracy in the 1999 Constitution, Venezuelan people had more opportunities to take part in politics under Chávez. Lastly, Chávez offered material inclusion to the poor through participatory social programs known as missions. Akin to other "magicians" in Venezuelan history, Chávez boosted his popularity by redistributing abundant oil revenues to his constituency. Thanks to the combination of symbolic, political, and material inclusion, a group of Venezuelans developed a strong attachment to Chávez.

While offering inclusion to the members of the in-group, Chávez simultaneously excluded others. Symbolically, he divided the Venezuelan nation into two moralistic camps. He treated the members of the out-group as enemies that he had to battle and defeat. Besides a Manichean dichotomy of good vs. evil people, Chávez also excluded the members of the opposition politically. During the constitution-making process, he imposed a majoritarian formula to elect the representatives to the constituent assembly. Then, he packed the judiciary and the electoral council with loyal supporters. Especially after the 2007 referendum, the *anti-chavista* opposition had to compete in a highly-skewed playing field. Although the opposition had the right to participate in elections and referendums, its access to media and other resources were limited. In addition to

symbolic and political exclusion, Chávez excluded members of the out-group materially by restricting private ownership of land and property as well as cutting federal funds to governors of the opposition. Because of his symbolic, political, and material exclusion, another group of Venezuelans developed strong anti-Chávez sentiments.

Quantitative analyses of the LAPOP survey data further confirm the empirical presence of leader polarization around Chávez. The results of the descriptive statistics show that the Venezuelan public opinion in 2008, 2010, and 2012 polarized over the extent of trust toward President Chávez. In all three years, more than 60 percent of Venezuelans expressed extreme distrust or extreme trust toward the president. Neutral attitudes tended to be weak. In contrast, the distributions of responses over left-right ideology were more centrist even though there was a temporal pattern of polarization from 2008 to 2012. In summary, during Chávez's third term in office, at the public opinion level, the extent of leader polarization was greater than ideological polarization.

In addition to descriptive statistical findings, there are also certain variables that explain individuals' likelihood to express extreme distrust and extreme trust toward Chávez. Following the theoretical framework of the dissertation, the first independent variable is the individuals' level of political interest. The findings of the survey data from 2008, 2010, and 2012 suggest that as Venezuelan people are more interested in politics, they are more likely to express extreme levels of trust toward Chávez. The second independent variable is individuals' sociotropic evaluation of the economy. Multinomial logistic regression results on all three survey years suggest that as individuals evaluate the national economy more favorably, their likelihood of identifying expressing extreme

trust to the president also increase. Moreover, individuals who evaluate the national economy less favorably are more likely to express extreme distrust toward Chávez.

Leader polarization in Venezuela also led to various forms of democratic backsliding. First, extreme levels of trust toward Chávez undermined his supporters' ability to hold the president accountable for his authoritarian practices. Even though Chávez gradually concentrated power at the executive branch and weakened the opposition's ability to contest his government, he kept winning presidential elections, referendums, and other electoral contests. Especially in his term presidential term (2007-2013), Venezuela under Chávez represented a prototypical case of competitive authoritarianism. During this period, Chávez bypassed the National Assembly and mostly governed Venezuela through presidential decrees. On the other end of the spectrum, extreme distrust among the members of the opposition[40] pushed them to pursue extralegal strategies to get rid of Chávez. Especially between 2001 and 2004, *anti-chavistas* contributed to the erosion of democratic norms in Venezuela through a general strike, a coup attempt, an oil strike, and violent protests. After losing the recall referendum, *anti-chavistas* lost their belief in the legitimacy of the democratic process and boycotted the parliamentary elections in 2005.

Lastly, leader polarization in Venezuela undermined democracy because it personalized political power around Chávez. When Chávez was alive, he acted as a unifying force both for *chavistas* and *anti-chavistas*. Especially when Chávez abolished presidential term limits, he seemed to perpetuate himself in power. Soon after he was

[40] For a detailed study of the Venezuelan opposition's strategy to deal with Chávez, see Gamboa (2016).

diagnosed with cancer, a succession crisis became a reality. To alleviate a potential conflict within the governing coalition, Chávez publicly announced Maduro as his loyal successor. After he passed away, the voters went ahead with Chávez's endorsement and elected Maduro as the next president of Venezuela. In the physical absence of Chávez and the declining price of oil, Venezuela under Maduro entered a deep crisis of governance. Unlike Chávez who maintained high levels of popularity throughout his presidency, Maduro quickly became an unpopular leader who could only offer a limited amount of inclusion to the members of the in-group. While the Venezuelan economy entered a massive crisis, President Maduro virtually blocked legal mechanisms to transfer power to the opposition peacefully. By 2017, with the practical dissolution of the National Assembly, Venezuela could no longer be classified as a competitive authoritarian regime but an outright dictatorship.

CHAPTER 4

LEADER POLARIZATION IN ECUADOR OVER CORREA

This chapter of the dissertation studies the extent of polarization in Ecuador with an emphasis on Rafael Correa's populist leadership. From a historical standpoint, the chapter situates Correa's polarizing legacy within broader themes such as personalism, regionalism, and dependence on commodity exports. More specifically, it analyzes Correa's successful rise to power as well as his attempts to lead a revolutionary process in Ecuador. Building on the theoretical framework of the dissertation, the chapter makes an argument that the essence of polarization in Ecuador under Correa was mainly over the levels of affection toward him (leader polarization) than abstract divisions on left-right ideology (ideological polarization). Due to the inclusionary and exclusionary nature of populism on symbolic, political, and material grounds, the Ecuadorian elite and the public primarily polarized between *correístas* and *anti-correístas*.

Before analyzing the patterns of polarization during Correa's presidency, the chapter provides a historical overview of Ecuadorian politics. First, it scrutinizes the legacy of personalist leadership from the late 19th century onward. The historical section puts special emphasis on the five-time president José María Velasco Ibarra and his attempts to dominate Ecuadorian politics between the 1930s and the 1970s. After Velasco Ibarra's fall from power, the section briefly examines the military regime, the transition to democracy, and popular resistance to market-oriented reforms. Then, it analyzes the resurgence of populism in Ecuador with the election of Abdalá Bucaram in 1996. The historical narrative also underscores the regional cleavage and the dependence on commodity exports as recurring themes in Ecuadorian politics.

Next, the chapter analyzes Correa's populist leadership and polarization via three case studies. The first case study describes the emergence of Correa as an outsider with the claim to reverse Ecuador's neoliberal trajectory. The second case study examines Correa's first presidential term by focusing on key developments including the 2006 presidential election campaign, the inauguration, and the making of the 2008 Constitution. Subsequently, the last case study examines President Correa's second and third terms in office. In this period, the analysis focuses on the events of September 30, 2010, as well as Correa's subordination of the media, the judiciary, and the social movements. Amid increasing authoritarianism and fluctuating prices of oil, it investigates the nature of polarization in Ecuador, that centered on Correa. Overall, the qualitative account of the Correa period presents evidence in favor of the presence of leader polarization between the followers of the president and his opponents.

To further measure polarization at the public opinion level, the chapter uses the LAPOP survey data from 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016. At the descriptive level, it examines the distribution of questions on left-right ideological self-placement and the extent of trust toward the president. The results show that most Ecuadorians place themselves at the ideological center, whereas they are more likely to pick extreme categories when expressing trust toward President Correa. Furthermore, the chapter uses multinomial logistic regression analyses to find out the predictors of expressing extreme distrust and extreme trust (leader polarization). The most significant and consistent findings across five survey years suggest that individuals with higher levels of political interest or better evaluations of the national economy are more likely to express extreme trust toward Correa.

The last section discusses the empirical findings on populism and leader polarization in Ecuador. From a historical standpoint, it argues that Correa's strong leadership represents a continuity of the personalist tradition in Ecuadorian political culture. Mainly, it emphasizes parallels between Correa and Velasco Ibarra. The section then discusses the inclusionary and exclusionary nature of populism and leader polarization over *correísmo*. Subsequently, it interprets the descriptive findings on polarization as well as the predictors of leader polarization at the public opinion level. Lastly, the section examines how leader polarization over Correa contributed to democratic backsliding in Ecuador.

4.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prior to the 20th century, personalist leaders with a military background ruled Ecuador. Strongmen[41] who identified with the Conservative and the Liberal Parties attempted to consolidate power and bridge the regional divide between the highlands and the coastal areas (Hurtado 1985). From the 1860s onward, the Conservatives, who advocated for a greater role of Catholicism in politics, governed Ecuador. The most well-known Conservative figure of that period was Gabriel García Moreno, who personally dominated the party and the country until his assassination in 1875 (Martz 1972). Conservative hegemony in Ecuador ended with the advent of the Liberal Revolution in 1895. Liberals led by another strongman, Eloy Alfaro Delgado,[42] engaged in a state-

[41] The Spanish term for military strongmen would be *caudillo*. Across Latin America, *caudillos* used military to assert power after the countries gained their independence from Spain. In contemporary times, the term also signified military dictators who governed their countries with an iron fist.

[42] In the 1980, a radical left-wing group called ¡Alfaro Vive, Carajo! claimed Alfaro's revolutionary legacy. After coming to power, Rafael Correa, who is the great nephew of Alfaro, made several references to him as well. For instance, the Constituent Assembly was held in Alfaro's birthplace, Montecristi.

building process through limiting the role of the Catholic Church and expanding the state's presence in education, family affairs, and welfare programs (Skidmore, Smith and Green 2010).

In addition to personalism and regionalism, another major theme in Ecuador's history is its dependence on commodity booms to achieve some degree of material progress. To start with, between 1885 and 1915, the Ecuadorian economy benefited from rising cacao exports, the main ingredient of milk chocolate, to the Western markets. The cacao boom lasted until World War One while funding the modernization efforts and bringing relative political stability. The end of the cacao boom discredited the Liberals, and the military filled that power vacuum in 1925 to fulfill a reform agenda. For the first time in Ecuador, the military took part in politics as a professional institution rather than serving as a tool of a strongman like in the previous century. Following the 1925 coup, the military government made significant reforms in the fiscal and banking systems. However, these reforms did not make a long-lasting impact, since the Great Depression simply devastated the Ecuadorian economy, like every other Latin American country (Skidmore, Smith and Green 2010).

While the traditional political parties lost their appeal, Liberals were accused of committing electoral fraud in the 1932 elections. In this context, a populist outsider offered an alternative to "save" the country with the support of the "common people": José María Velasco Ibarra. Velasco Ibarra served as president of Ecuador on five separate occasions (1934-1935, 1944-1947, 1952-1956, 1960-1961, and 1968-1972), but he could complete only his third term (Sosa 2012). Known as "The Great Absentee," Velasco Ibarra would personally dominate Ecuadorian politics for the upcoming four decades. In

that sense, the trajectory of politics in Ecuador from the 1930s until the 1970s would be strongly tied to *velasquismo* and other actors' reactions to it (Cueva 1982).

Velasco Ibarra was first elected to the presidency in 1934. After he took office, he initiated various public works projects to build roads, docks, customs facilities, police barracks, water systems, and schools (Lauderbaugh 2012). Due to his conflict with the legislative branch, he launched a self-coup in 1935 by shutting down the Congress, jailing the opponents, and seizing dictatorial powers. However, the military did not support his power grab and shortly overthrew him (Skidmore, Smith and Green 2010). According to Lauderbaugh,

> Velasco's brief first presidency was a turning point in Ecuador's political history. He was the first man to win the highest office through an authentic popular election. He had awakened the masses and mobilized the participation of the common man and woman. The old Liberal-Conservative political system, dominated by the oligarchy, had temporarily been thwarted. He had introduced a rare moral authority through his examples of hard work, devotion to duty, and scrupulous personal honesty (Lauderbaugh 2012, 103).

Velasco Ibarra's second presidency came out of a popular rebellion in 1944, known as the Glorious Revolution. Amid allegations of electoral fraud, increasing police repression, the high cost of living, Ecuadorians rebelled against the Liberal government, which oversaw a humiliating military defeat[43] against Peru and lost half of the territory in the Amazons (de la Torre 1994). The people participating in the uprising asked for the return of Velasco Ibarra from exile and once again to redeem the country. Upon his arrival in Guayaquil, he addressed a massive crowd and depicted himself as a Christ-like

[43] In July 1941, Ecuador lost a decisive war to Peru over a territorial dispute. Throughout his career, Velasco Ibarra used the conflict with Peru to unify Ecuadorians behind his leadership. In 1960, he declared the Rio Protocol, which was signed after the war, void. Due to the same territorial dispute, Ecuador and Peru would engage in two short wars in 1981 and 1995.

figure who “had been banished, persecuted, and misunderstood” (de la Torre 1994, 708). Consistent with this missionary narrative, in the 1944 presidential elections, he labeled *anti-velasquistas* as immoral and the representatives of the privileged. On the other hand, he defined *velasquistas* as the advocates of free suffrage, hope, salvation, and progress (de la Torre 1994). After getting elected, he later broke away with the progressive groups that had led the Glorious Revolution. He suspended the 1945 Constitution and replaced it with a conservative one. Months later, the military overthrew him one more time (Martz 1972).

Between 1948 and 1960, Ecuador experienced a relative period of stability as three successive presidents managed to complete their full terms. Following the Second World War, Ecuador became the world’s largest producer of banana. At this conjuncture, the presidency peacefully alternated to Velasco Ibarra in 1952. During his third presidency, Velasco Ibarra launched a massive public works program, that was mainly funded by banana exports (Martz 1972). Thanks to a booming economy, Velasco Ibarra constructed 835 miles of new roads (Lauderbaugh 2012). Due to the constitutional ban on immediate reelection, Velasco Ibarra stepped down in 1956.

In 1960, Velasco Ibarra became president for the fourth time. Like his previous term, he called for ambitious public works projects, but this time he lacked the revenues from banana exports. Since the banana boom came to an end, he was forced to implement an unpopular tax reform. In that context, protests, strikes, and work stoppages eventually led to Velasco Ibarra’s fall from power, thirteen months into taking office (Sosa 2012). His Vice President Carlos Julio Arosemana Monroy, who showed some sympathy for the

Cuban Revolution, succeeded him. However, the military quickly ousted him as well (Martz 1972).

In 1968, Velasco Ibarra, at the age of 75, returned from exile in Argentina to run for president. This time he was challenged by another populist leader at the regional level, Assad Bucaram, who had a strong appeal especially in Guayaquil and other coastal provinces (Martz 1983). Regardless of this challenge, Velasco Ibarra narrowly achieved his fifth presidential election victory. Velasco Ibarra's fifth and last presidency coincided with the discovery of oil in the Amazon region (Skidmore, Smith and Green 2010). To govern more efficiently, he again launched a self-coup in 1970 and closed the Congress as well as the Supreme Court. At first, Velasco Ibarra's power grab was successful thanks to the support of the military. Nonetheless, a few months before his term would come to an end, the military ousted him to govern the country as an above-party institution in the midst of an oil boom (Lauderbaugh 2012).

Velasco Ibarra exemplified one of the most well-known cases of populism not only in Ecuador but also in Latin America. Following his famous motto, "Give me a balcony, and I will be president," he emotionally appealed to the people by giving electrifying speeches and positioning himself as the "savior" of ordinary people on several instances (Sosa 2012). He lacked a coherent set of ideas, instead "pragmatically forge[d] his ideology on a day-to-day basis in accordance with events and circumstances" (Hurtado 1985, 201). His movement was directly tied to his personality and physical presence. In fact, he refused to form a political party to institutionalize *velasquismo* (Hurtado 1985). As Sosa summarizes it "Velasco Ibarra simply built roads, schools, health centers, power plants, and portable water systems, all of which provided jobs. He

remained in the minds of Ecuadorians as a symbol of honesty, austerity, and strength" (Sosa 2012, 168). In addition to material accomplishments, his biggest accomplishments were to incorporate the masses into the political process and give them a sense of belonging (Sosa 2012).

In 1972, the military took over the government to initiate "a long-term reform-minded regime that would spur development" (Lauderbaugh 2012, 132). Between 1972 and 1975, the Ecuadorian economy grew 10 percent annually mainly because of the oil boom, that allowed the military to increase public spending on transportation, communication, and other infrastructure (Mejía 2002). Despite significant material improvements, the military could not keep its internal cohesion due to accusations of corruption and disagreements on the timeline to return to civilian politics. In 1976, the soft-liners in the military managed to establish a new junta to lead a peaceful transition from authoritarianism to democracy (Conaghan and Espinal 1990). Within the same year, the military government initiated a plan to draft a new constitution, convoke a referendum, and realize elections (Freidenberg and Pachano 2016). After the passing of a new constitution in 1978, Ecuador went through a crafted transition under the leadership of the military (Isaacs 1993).

For the upcoming presidential elections, the military disqualified the candidacy of Bucaram since his parents were born in Lebanon. As a result, Bucaram's Concentration of People's Forces (CFP) had to put forward another candidate, Jaime Roldós, who was married to Bucaram's niece (Sosa 2012). In the runoff election, Róldos won the presidency (68 percent) over the Social Christian candidate Sixto Durán Ballén (Freidenberg and Pachano 2016). With the election of Roldós in 1979, Ecuador

completed the first successful transition from military rule in South America during the third wave of democratization (Huntington 1991). Nevertheless, his presidency ended abruptly due to a plane crash[44] in 1981, killing Roldós and his wife among others on board (Lauderbaugh 2012).

After Roldós's premature death, Vice President Osvaldo Hurtado became president and completed his predecessor's term. For a twelve-year period, three successive presidents also managed to complete their terms: León Febres Cordero (1984-1988), Rodrigo Borja (1988-1992), and Sixto Durán Ballén (1992-1996). While the oil boom ended, the presidents had to address the deteriorating social and economic conditions. For Febres Cordero and Durán Ballén, the solution was to implement neoliberal reforms such as reducing tariffs, lifting price controls, floating of the interest rate, and deregulating foreign investment (Echeverría 1997). Especially during Durán Ballén's presidency, there was a consistent effort to abolish the state-led development model and delegate a broader role to the private sector (Andrade 2009). Despite some degree of macroeconomic success, neoliberal reforms faced resistance from the popular sectors, whose living conditions had significantly deteriorated (Silva 2009).

In the 1996 presidential elections, Abdalá Bucaram emerged as another populist leader, who offered hope to the poor people as "the new messiah who would save the Ecuadorian people" (de la Torre 2010, 92). During the campaign, Bucaram rallied the poor against the rich and criticized the neoliberal policies of Durán Ballén administration (Sosa 2012). Bucaram differentiated himself from the Social Christian candidate Jaime

[44] The cause of the plane crash remains a controversy. The Fiscal General of Ecuador, Galo Chiriboga, suggests that the plane crash was "an extrajudicial execution" in the context of Plan Cóndor (El Telegrafo 2015).

Nebot, who was a follower of Febres Cordero and neoliberalism. Bucaram frequently made references to his humble origins and bragged about his masculinity (de la Torre 2010). In the second round of the presidential elections, Bucaram (54 percent) won over Nebot, signaling the rejection of another neoliberal president (de la Torre 2010).

Once he became president, contrary to his campaign rhetoric, Bucaram governed as a neoliberal by reducing public spending and the size of state bureaucracy as well as privatizing state-owned enterprises. To control inflation, he attempted to follow the Argentine model, and he hired Carlos Menem's former minister of finance, Domingo Cavallo, to peg the Ecuadorian Sucre to US Dollar (Sosa 2012). Besides his unpopular economic measures and accusations of corruption, Bucaram exemplified a unique personality, hence earned the nickname "The Crazy One." For instance, while he was still president, he recorded a compact disk called "The Crazy One Who Loves." He also became the chairman of Barcelona, Guayaquil's most famous football team. What is more, he claimed that the Carondelet Palace was haunted and refused to live there (de la Torre 2010). As de la Torre argues "Bucaram's language, gestures, and performances limited his capacity to establish alliances with key institutional players and further antagonized the business elites, the military, politicians, the Catholic Church, and upper- and middle-class journalists" (de la Torre 2010, 104). In response to massive protests in Quito and other major cities, seven months into taking office, the Congress declared him "mentally incapacitated" to be able to serve as the President of the Republic (Mejía Acosta and Polga-Hecimovich 2010).

Following the overthrow of Bucaram in 1997, Ecuador entered another decade of political instability. Vice President Rosalía Artega, the first woman president in

Ecuador's history, first succeeded Bucaram. Two days later, the president of the Congress, Fabián Alarcón replaced her (Pérez-Liñán 2007). In the 1998 elections, a Harvard-trained technocrat and the former mayor of Quito, Jamil Mahuad, won the presidency. Like previous presidents, he lacked a congressional majority to govern effectively. Initially, he allied with the Social Christians to implement neoliberal reforms (Mejía Acosta and Polga-Hecimovich 2010). Those unpopular measures increased the cost of living, as prices for electricity, gasoline, and public transportation went up. Mahuad faced the most serious challenge when he declared a banking holiday in 1999 in response to the failure of the Ecuadorian banking system (Lauderbaugh 2012). The following year, he announced the dollarization of the economy by replacing the national currency with US Dollar (Solimano 2002). Shortly after this measure, indigenous groups mobilized against Mahuad and successfully conspired with junior-level military officers to overthrow him (Barracca 2007). Following the 2000 coup, Vice President Gustavo Noboa completed Mahuad's term (Mejía Acosta and Polga-Hecimovich 2010).

In the 2002 presidential elections, the military-indigenous coalition that ousted Mahuad put forward one of the junior officers participating in the coup, Lucio Gutiérrez, as the candidate representing the marginalized sectors of the Ecuadorian society (Ibarra 2002). During the campaign, Gutiérrez emphasized his sacrifice[45] for the people as a nationalist soldier. In the populist tradition, he rallied the people against the oligarchy, the traditional political parties, and corruption. He promised to refound Ecuador in line with the interest of the ordinary people (Montúfar 2008). Gutiérrez's populist campaign

[45] The obvious comparison was Hugo Chávez in Venezuela who also served in the military, attempted to overthrow the government, and eventually became president.

proved to be a successful one. He won (54 percent) the presidency in the second round over banana tycoon Álvaro Noboa. Unexpectedly, soon after taking office, he implemented market-friendly reforms and broke off with the indigenous groups. To avoid impeachment, he sought alliances with his competitor Noboa and former president Bucaram. Amid continually shifting coalitions, increasingly authoritarian measures, accusations of corruption, and massive demonstrations, Gutiérrez's mandate severely weakened. Akin to the fate of his predecessors, in 2005, the Congress overthrew Gutiérrez at a special session by declaring his seat vacant (Levitt 2007).

4.2 POLARIZATION UNDER CORREA

4.2.1 The Rise of Correa

Rafael Correa's rise to power coincided with extreme levels of instability and fragmentation in Ecuadorian politics. After the transition to democracy, successive presidents either implemented unpopular neoliberal reforms or failed to deliver their campaign promises. Among them, Bucaram, Mahuad, and Gutiérrez could not finish their four-year terms due to growing opposition in the streets and the legislature. At the backdrop of these developments, during the ouster of Gutiérrez, protestors calling themselves *forajidos* (outlaws) raised their opposition not only to the president but the entire political system. At this anti-establishment mood, Gutiérrez's Vice President Alfredo Palacio, who had broken off with him earlier, identified with the demands of the angry crowds. When Palacio became the interim president, he appointed an anti-Gutiérrez *forajido*, Rafael Vicente Correa Delgado as his minister of economy and finance (Conaghan 2011).

Before his ministerial position in Palacio's government, Correa was an unknown figure to most Ecuadorians. He was a professor of economics with an M.A. degree from the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium[46]) and a Ph.D. degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Correa 2001). During his graduate studies in the United States, Correa conducted extensive research on economic and social inequalities in Latin America (Kozloff 2008). In his Ph.D. dissertation, he critically analyzed the relationship between neoliberal reforms in the region and economic growth (Correa 2001). After completing his doctorate in 2001, Correa returned to Ecuador and took a faculty position at the University of San Francisco de Quito. Among the academic circles, he continued to voice his criticism of successive governments and their attempts to implement market-friendly reforms (Conaghan 2011). In 2003, Correa published an academic article on the political economy of Gutiérrez's government. He criticized Gutiérrez's adoption of structural adjustment policies, which were promoted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in contradiction with the president's campaign promises (Correa 2003).

After the fall of Gutiérrez, Correa started his job as Minister of Economy and Finance in April 2005. During his 106-day tenure, Correa became a high-profile minister in Palacio's government due to his confrontational rhetoric toward the IMF and the World Bank (El Universo 2005). Besides his opposition to international financial institutions, Correa also argued against the signing of a free-trade agreement with the United States. In a more controversial move, Correa attempted to sell Ecuadorian debt to

[46] While working on his MA degree, Correa met his future wife, Anne Malherbe Gosselin, in Belgium. After completing his third term as president, Correa moved back to his wife's native country.

Venezuela (Kozloff 2008). At the domestic front, he pushed for higher spending[47] on education and healthcare from the country's oil fund. Accordingly, he reduced the share of international debt repayment from 70 to 50 percent and increased the share of education and health care from 10 to 30 percent (Kozloff 2008). Correa's anti-neoliberal policies and proposals caused some tension within the Palacio administration. As a result, Correa resigned from his position in August 2005. Correa's brief tenure as a minister gave him some degree of publicity as a young economist, who could reverse Ecuador's neoliberal trajectory in the upcoming presidential elections.

4.2.2 Correa's First Term

Following his high-profile position as the minister of finance and economy, Correa announced his pre-candidacy in December 2005 for the upcoming presidential elections. The first round of the elections was scheduled for October 2006, and Correa's victory was far from certain. Correa had to distinguish himself from other candidates in a crowded field and make it to the second round. To achieve this goal, Correa established the PAIS Alliance *(Patria Altiva I Soberana)* in February 2006 with a group of left-leaning intellectuals and *forajidos*. Coalescing around Correa's presidential candidacy, the PAIS Alliance put forward the five pillars of the Citizens' Revolution: constitutional revolution, ethical revolution, economic and productive revolution, educational and health revolution, and revolution of sovereignty and Latin American integration (Montero 2011). With these principles, Correa created a populist platform against the traditional political parties, which he called *partidocracia* (partyarchy) (Conaghan 2011).

[47] Increasing spending on education and health would be one of the major themes of Correa's presidency as well.

In August 2006, Correa officially became a presidential candidate in a field of thirteen candidates. During the first round of elections, Correa launched an aggressive campaign to turn himself into a household name as well as the primary anti-establishment candidate. In fact, Correa was still unknown to half of the electorate, who had never heard of his name before (Conaghan 2011). As part of his anti-establishment message, his chief campaign promise was to convoke a constituent assembly as soon as he got elected. Hence, the PAIS Alliance deliberately chose not to present candidates for the "corrupt" legislature, but only promoted Correa's presidential candidacy (Montero 2011). Capitalizing on the theme of loss, Correa frequently utilized the word *patria* (homeland) and offered a recovery from "the country's loss of sovereignty, national symbols, dignity, and the millions of Ecuadorians so far from home" (Conaghan 2011, 266).

In the first round of elections, Correa presented himself as a masculine figure to punish the members of the corrupt elite with the slogans "*Dale Correa*" (Hit them, Correa), "*Se viene el correazo*" (Here comes a whipping), and "*Ya Basta*" (Enough is enough) (de la Torre 2010). Thanks to the successful use of television, radio, the Internet, and face-to-face campaigning in both Spanish and Kichwa, Correa introduced his brand to the masses (de la Torre and Conaghan 2009; Zurita Camacho 2014). The first round of the presidential elections was held in October 2006, and Correa took the second place (23 percent). Correa was surpassed by the runner-up of 2002, Álvaro Noboa (27 percent). The third and fourth place candidates were Gilmar Gutiérrez (17 percent) and León Roldós (15 percent), brothers of two former presidents (Conaghan 2011).

During the runoff campaign, Noboa depicted Correa as the friend of Hugo Chávez, Fidel Castro, and the Colombian guerrillas. On the other hand, Correa portrayed

Noboa as an ultrarich, who was out of touch with the day to day struggles of average Ecuadorians (Sandoval Cabrera 2012). In the second round campaign, Correa shifted his focus to concrete material promises such as increasing social assistance, microcredits, and housing programs (Conaghan 2011). Furthermore, Correa emphasized his modest origins as a family man, a devout Roman Catholic, and a hardworking student in contrast to Noboa's privileged background. Resorting to the populist dichotomy of people vs. elites, Correa labeled Noboa as a member of the oligarchy, whereas he defined the members of the in-group as "pristine makers of a Citizens' Revolution, one that would be successful because it would be made with clean hands, lucid minds, and hearts passionate for the Homeland" (de la Torre and Conaghan 2009, 348). The runoff election between the two candidates was held in November 2006 and Correa (57 percent) won the presidency. Regional divisions were visible in this election since Correa won the provinces in the highlands and support to Noboa was confined to the coastal areas (Conaghan 2011).

In January 2007, Correa was sworn in as president of Ecuador, at a ceremony attended by prominent Latin American leaders such as Hugo Chávez (Venezuela), Lula da Silva (Brazil), Evo Morales (Bolivia), Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua), Michelle Bachelet (Chile), Alan García (Peru), and Álvaro Uribe (Colombia). In his inaugural speech, Correa underscored the main principles of the Citizens' Revolution with the slogan "Now the homeland belongs to everyone." At the beginning of his speech, Correa announced that he would call a referendum to convoke a constituent assembly. He emphasized the need for a new constitution to address the country's political crisis and offer a radical change. In the economic front, Correa took a tough stance on corruption, and he promised

to end the “long and sad night of neoliberalism.” He vowed to renegotiate Ecuador’s “illegitimate” external debt and increase social spending on education and healthcare. Moreover, Correa made historical references to Simón Bolívar and Eloy Alfaro to promote Latin American integration. At the end of his speech, Correa spoke Kichwa as a symbolic gesture to the indigenous community (Presidencia de la República del Ecuador ©SECOM 2015).

Immediately after taking office, as he promised, President Correa issued a decree and called a referendum to establish a constituent assembly. Since the PAIS Alliance did not have any representation in the legislative branch, his proposal faced significant resistance. After a series of confrontations and legal battles with the opponents, the electoral tribunal made a controversial decision and dismissed fifty-seven deputies for interrupting the electoral process (Salgado Pesantes 2008). In a more favorable institutional setting, a referendum was held in April 2007. The voters were asked whether they approved the installation of a constituent assembly with full powers to transform the institutional framework of the state and elaborate a new constitution. The proposal received an overwhelming support (82 percent) to President Correa’s chief campaign promise. Subsequently, in September 2007, the constituent assembly elections were held, and the PAIS Alliance won 80 out of 130 seats, which gave Correa the ability to dominate the constitution-making process (Machado Puertas 2008).

In November 2007, the Constituent Assembly was established in Montecristi, the birthplace of Alfaro. While assuming full powers, it ratified Correa’s presidency and replaced the sitting Congress as the new legislative branch. In addition to the plenary session, the Constituent Assembly divided into specialized tables on citizen rights, the

model of development, and natural resources among others. Besides its constitution-making duties, the Constituent Assembly also passed significant legislation on taxation, social spending, petroleum, and transportation in line with President Correa's positions (The Carter Center 2008). The Constituent Assembly completed a draft of the new constitution in July 2008. During the referendum campaign, Correa argued that a yes vote would signify change and support to the Citizens' Revolution. On the contrary, a no vote would mean a victory for the oligarchy and the partyarchy. In September 2008, Correa won (64 percent yes vote) the constitutional referendum (López and Cubillos Celis 2009). Overall, the conflictual constitution-making process provided early signs of leader polarization between the supporters of Correa and his opponents.

The 2008 Constitution defined Ecuador as a plurinational state and subscribed to the indigenous philosophy of *sumak kawsay* (good living). To promote a post-neoliberal model of development (Radcliffe 2012), it recognized the right to water, food, a healthy environment, education, healthcare, and social security among others. Accordingly, it gave special emphasis to the rights of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and victims of domestic violence. In addition to its commitment to inclusion and social equity, the constitution recognized the citizens' rights to participate in the political process through elections, initiatives, and referendums. It expanded the electorate by reducing the voting age from eighteen to sixteen and giving Ecuadorian citizens who live abroad the right to vote and representation in the National Assembly (Constitución del Ecuador 2008). Besides providing a diverse array of rights to citizens, the 2008 Constitution significantly enhanced the powers of the presidency. It allowed presidents to serve two consecutive

four-year terms and granted them broad prerogatives over economic policy-making (Basabe-Serrano 2009). In other words, the 2008 Constitution established a hyper-presidential system by concentrating power at the executive branch (Hurtado 2012).

During his first term in office, Correa followed the regional model set by Chávez in Venezuela and Morales in Bolivia to refound Ecuador (Shifter and Joyce 2008). To achieve this goal, Correa won a series of electoral battles (2006 presidential elections, 2007 referendum on the constituent assembly, 2007 constituent assembly elections, and 2008 referendum on the new constitution). Amid frequent elections and referendums, the line between governing and campaigning had disappeared. While Correa campaigned on a permanent basis, the presidency became a plebiscitary institution (Conaghan and de la Torre 2008). Correa's permanent campaign involved an aggressive communication strategy so that he could dominate the political stage as the sole actor. For instance, in 2008 only, President Correa was on air for 174 hours and 40 minutes. It includes his weekly three-hour Saturday show, the Citizens' Link, and mandated national broadcasts (Montúfar 2013). Due to Correa's omnipresence in the media, "political discourse in Ecuador ha[d] become completely centered on the president. No other political figure has had the chance to open an alternative space" (Montúfar 2013, 308).

In his first presidential term, Correa exemplified the inclusionary and exclusionary elements of populism. Symbolically, he wore a multicolored shirt representing the indigenous roots of the Ecuadorian nation (Colloredo-Mansfield, Mantilla and Antrosio 2012). Correa also promoted the idea of national sovereignty by denouncing Colombia's incursion into the Ecuadorian territory in 2008 and announcing the closure of the American military base in Manta (Conaghan 2011). In his weekly TV

show, he traveled to distant parts of the country and used an inclusionary language toward the marginalized sectors of the society (de la Torre 2010). Parallel to his inclusiveness, Correa confronted his opponents with exclusionary rhetoric. While he characterized the members of the in-group as *soberanas* (sovereign ones), *patriotas* (patriots), and *ciudadanos* (citizens), he labeled the members of the out-group as *pelucones* (bigwigs), *corruptos* (corrupt ones), and *mentirosos* (liars) (Isch 2012).

Besides the symbolic nature of populist leadership, Correa also offered political inclusion to Ecuadorian people through the passing of a new constitution, which contained a set of individual and collective rights. Paradoxically, he limited bottom-up participation of citizens and reduced democracy to series of plebiscitary contests. By creating absolute winners and losers, he concentrated power at the executive branch and restricted the political space to his critics (Hurtado 2012). Finally, Correa benefited from the rising prices of oil to make material improvements in the lives of average Ecuadorians. Soon after taking office, Correa increased spending on education, health, urban development, housing, work conditions, and social wellbeing. His redistributive policies resulted in a further reduction of poverty and inequality (Mayoral 2012). Thanks to the efforts of Vice President Lenín Moreno Garcés, the government paid special attention to people with disabilities. The program called "Ecuador without Barriers" identified disabled citizens across the country to address their medical, psychological, and social needs (Moreno 2012).

Overall, Correa's successful rise to power represents continuity in Ecuadorian politics. Correa emerged in the middle of a political crisis as a "savior" and offered symbolic, political, and material inclusion to the formerly marginalized groups of people.

In his first term in office, Correa personally dominated politics as the undisputed leader of the Citizens' Revolution. He won consecutive victories at the ballot box to successfully implement his refoundational agenda. In this personalized setting, *correístas* and *anti-correístas* divided over their levels of affection toward the president. Ideologically, Correa's first term in office marked a shift to the left in line with the regional trends. Following his campaign promises, Correa attempted to reverse the country's neoliberal trajectory. Still, his policies were far from being a radical alternative to Ecuador's commodity-dependent economy. They were rather a return to the state-led model of development, funded by booming commodity exports. As long as Correa could make concrete improvements in the lives of people, ideological or leader polarizations did not pose significant challenges to governing Ecuador.

4.2.3 Correa's Second and Third Terms

After the passing of a new constitution, new elections were scheduled. At the general elections of April 2009, Ecuadorians went to the ballot box not only to elect the president and the vice-president but also the members of the National Assembly, provincial governors and lieutenant-governors, mayors, city councilors, provincial councilors, and deputies for the Andean Parliament. While a series of electoral contests and power grabs had debilitated the opposition, Correa easily won (52 percent) the presidential elections over former president Gutiérrez (28 percent) and his former rival Noboa (11 percent). As a result, Correa became the first candidate since Ecuador's transition to democracy, who could avoid a runoff election. Moreover, in the legislative elections, Correa's PAIS Alliance won 54 out of 124 seats. At the local level, candidates of the PAIS Alliance obtained a plurality of governorships and mayorships (Pachano

2010). The 2009 "mega-elections" confirmed the popularity of President Correa and gave him the mandate to continue the Citizens' Revolution for another term. As such, in his inaugural speech, Correa promised to implement an inclusive agenda to defend the interest of the ordinary people against "the corrupt members of the oligarchy, the banking sector, and the media" (Presidencia República del Ecuador 2009).

The first event, which solidified Correa's populist leadership, occurred on September 30, 2010 (the 30S), when a small group of the police and the military protested the government due to cuts in their social benefits. The protests quickly turned into an uprising, when those groups seized the airports and stormed the National Assembly. Most importantly, they attacked President Correa, with tear gas and took him to a nearby police hospital, who confronted them by saying "if you want to kill the president, here I am." Correa, who had undergone knee surgery and could barely walk, claimed that the rebels kidnapped him. Eventually, a military elite force rescued the president, and Correa gave an electrifying balcony speech to *correístas* at the presidential palace, all on live television in the mode of a spectacle. President Correa called the events of the 30S an attempted coup, which resulted in the death of eight people and the injury of 274 citizens, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ricardo Patiño (de la Torre 2011; Ortiz 2011; Ospina Peralta 2011; Becker 2016). The following quote summarizes the significance of this event for Correa's populist leadership:

> Perhaps the most significant effect of the coup attempt has been the strengthening of Correa's highly personalist government and the consolidation of his image as the Ecuadorian nation's redeemer. The images of him walking with a cane through the violent mob of striking police officers, his face deformed by tear gas, evoked the suffering Christ. After his spectacular rescue and his appearance on the balcony of the presidential palace before his cheering supporters, Correa seemed to have transformed into the extraordinary president, the embodiment of

> democracy and of the revolutionary process, who risked his own life and was attacked by a mob (de la Torre 2011, 32).

In his first Saturday TV show after the 30S, Correa described the situation as a criminal attempt to disrupt the Citizens' Revolution and reverse its achievements in education, health, housing, and road building. Correa expressed his gratitude to the people, who took the streets and defended their democratically elected president against "a minority within the police and the military" (Presidencia de la República del Ecuador ©SECOM 2014). According to Súarez Tipán's analysis over time, that episode marked the radicalization of Correa's discourse and increasing use of revanchist phrases such as *prohibido olvidar* (forbidden to forget) and *no habrá perdón ni olvido* (there will be no forgiveness nor oblivion) (Suárez Tipán 2013). At this new phase of the Citizens' Revolution, President Correa would consolidate further power at the executive branch at the expense of media freedom, judicial independence, and autonomy of social movements.

Four months after the 30S, an opposition columnist, Emilio Palacio, published an opinion piece in the newspaper *El Universo*, calling Correa "The Dictator" and questioning the official narrative about the so-called "coup attempt." In his op-ed "No to the Lies," Palacio blamed the president for permitting troops to fire at the police hospital, in the presence of civilians and innocent people (Palacio 2011). In response to these accusations, Correa sued Palacio and the owners of the newspaper. Palacio and three others were found guilty of defamation and sentenced to three years in prison as well as 40 million dollars of compensation to the president (Hurtado 2012). With the call of the Interamerican Court of Human Rights to suspend the sentences, Correa later pardoned

Palacio and the owners of *El Universo* but continued to restrict media freedom (Freidenberg 2012). In 2013, Freedom House described the media environment in Ecuador as "polarized" and downgraded its press freedom status to "not free" for the following reasons:

> government-sponsored regulations that severely restricted media coverage of electoral campaigns, President Rafael Correa's directive to withdraw government advertising from privately owned media that are critical of the government, and a general reduction in political and investigative reporting due to an increasingly hostile environment for the press created by the Correa government (Freedom House 2013).

The decline in media freedom took place while President Correa initiated a reform process with the declared purpose of addressing corruption, inefficiency, and political influence in the judicial system (Human Rights Watch 2014). The reorganization of the judiciary began with a national referendum in May 2011, involving ten separate items, ranging from a ban on casinos and bullfighting to the regulation of media content. The changes were narrowly adopted, while individual items received between 52 and 56 percent support from the electorate (Freidenberg 2012). Following the 2011 referendum, Correa packed the newly created Transitional Council of the Judiciary with the former members of his administration, a body which was given the power to appoint and remove prosecutors and judges. The politicization of the judicial branch further weakened the rule of law and separation of powers in Ecuador, making it costlier to contest the Correa's populist government (Human Rights Watch 2014).

Another area of conflict in this period was Correa's relationship with social movements and indigenous people. Despite his leftist revolutionary rhetoric, Correa eschewed bottom-up participation in the decision-making process, and instead reduced

democracy to a set of plebiscitary mechanisms to endorse or reject his charismatic authority. As reported by Amnesty International, the president criminalized indigenous protests on mining and water laws, while the courts charged activists with terrorism and sabotage (Amnistía Internacional 2012). In addition to the delegitimization of street protests, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), one of the most established indigenous organizations in Latin America, clashed with the government over its recognition of cultural practices, attempts to subjugate indigenous identity, extractivist policies, and failure to put forward a redistributive agrarian reform (Lalander and Ospina Peralta 2012).

Characterizing the relations between Correa and social movements "stormy," Becker posits that "[f]or those to Correa's left, his government appears to be the attempt of yet another populist to subvert leftists discourse for the sole benefit of a charismatic leader" (Becker 2013, 51). Similarly, former President of the Constituent Assembly, Alberto Acosta criticizes *correísmo* on the grounds that it had abandoned the revolutionary and plurinational ideals of the Constitution of Montecristi, negated the rights of nature and participation, and benefited the one percent of the companies, that controlled the banking sector, construction, and shopping centers (Acosta 2013).

In this increasingly authoritarian context, general elections were scheduled for February 2013. Correa, who became the first president to complete his four-year term since 1996, could run for reelection and serve until 2017. One month before the election, Correa celebrated the sixth anniversary of the Citizens' Revolution with *correístas*. The event was held at Guaranda, a mountainous city in central Ecuador, "a forgotten and excluded place by previous governments," according to the president. Besides the

symbolic nature of this event, Correa dedicated the bulk of his speech to the material achievements of the last six years in education, health, and infrastructure (Presidencia República del Ecuador 2013). The following quote exemplifies Correa's direct and simple message to the people: "They say that we are obsessed with power. Yes! We are obsessed with power to serve our citizens, above all the poorest. We are obsessed with power to construct more schools, more hospitals, more highways, and more bridges" (Presidencia República del Ecuador 2013, 8).

As a matter of fact, by the end of 2012, Ecuador under Correa's government had experienced a significant reduction in poverty, inequality, and unemployment. When the price of oil fluctuated between 80 and 100 dollars per barrel, the government possessed enough revenues to invest in social programs. Notably, there were 1.2 million beneficiaries of the Human Development Bonus, a monthly conditional cash transfer of 50 dollars to low-income families with children under the age of sixteen (Polga-Hecimovich 2013). Another program, the Manuela Espejo Mission targeted 293,578 people with disabilities and provided them with monthly payments, job opportunities, wheelchairs, and prostheses (Vice Ecuador 2012). These social programs, as well as others, contributed to Correa's popularity across the country, especially among the formerly marginalized groups of people.

In the February 2013 general elections, Correa was easily re-elected for another four-year term. Correa won the elections (57 percent) in the first round against the opposition candidate Guillermo Lasso (23 percent). In the legislative elections, the PAIS Alliance (50 percent) won 100 out of 137 seats thanks to the newly adopted majoritarian electoral system (Eichorst and Polga-Hecimovich 2013). The results once again

demonstrated that "[t]he majority of Ecuadorians endorsed Correa's redistributive and authoritarian project, billed as a reversal of neoliberalism through higher social spending and policies targeted at poverty reduction" (de la Torre 2013, 35). The 2013 elections also demonstrated the salience of leader polarization between President Correa's supporters and opponents. As Freidenberg argues, in a polarized environment, 23 percent support received by Lasso could be interpreted as an *anti-correísta* vote, rather than an approval of the candidate's right-wing party platform (Freidenberg 2013).

Following the 2013 presidential and legislative elections, the government further skewed the playing field against the opposition and established a competitive authoritarian regime (Basabe-Serrano and Martínez 2014). Accordingly, in June 2013, the National Assembly, dominated by the PAIS Alliance, adopted the Organic Law of Communication, that created two governmental agencies[48] to regulate media content and conduct (Conaghan 2015). In its report on the status of press freedom in Ecuador, Freedom House criticized the communication law and its uneven enforcement by these agencies, which "added to a hostile environment characterized by self-censorship, intimidation, and legal sanctions" (Freedom House 2015). Furthermore, Correa also issued a presidential decree to enhance the regulatory power of the executive branch over unions, business federations, think tanks, and other civil society organizations (Conaghan 2015). Consequently, the results of the 2013 elections meant further political exclusion for the critics of Correa's populist government.

[48] The governmental agencies include Regulatory Board and Development of Information and Communication (CORDICOM) and Superintendence of Information and Communication (SUPERCOM).

In a growingly authoritarian setting, starting from 2014, decreasing prices of commodities at the global level shook Correa's government. With the end of the commodity boom, which had allowed Correa to offer material inclusion via investments in social programs, the Ecuadorian economy entered a period of slowdown. Since 77 percent of Ecuador's exports consisted of primary products (i.e., petroleum, banana, shrimp, and flowers), the government was forced to cut public spending and increase taxes (Noriege 2015). The government's handling of the economy led to increasing dissatisfaction among the citizens. An indication of that trend was the 2014 local elections when the opposition candidates successfully won the mayorships of the three largest cities in Ecuador: Quito (Mauricio Rodas), Guayaquil (Jaime Nebot), and Cuenca (Marcelo Cabrera). Although the PAIS Alliance won over 30 percent of municipalities nationwide, its dominance could not be taken for granted anymore (Rojas and Llanos-Escobar 2016). While the ideologically and regionally diverse *anti-correístas* were gaining some momentum, the future of Correa and the Citizens' Revolution was at stake in the upcoming presidential elections.

Under the 2008 Constitution, presidents of Ecuador could serve up to two four-year terms. Since Correa was going to fulfill the eight-year limit by 2017, he would be ineligible to run for reelection. In a political system, which personally depended on Correa's leadership, the PAIS Alliance put forward a constitutional amendment to abolish term limits. In December 2015, amid street protests, the National Assembly adopted fifteen constitutional amendments. The changes, which were not put to a referendum, introduced indefinite reelection. Furthermore, they increased the role of the armed forces for domestic purposes and classified communication as a form of "public service" (The

Guardian 2015; Rojas and Llanos-Escobar 2016). Since the specific amendment on term limits would not go into effect until May 2017, the new challenge for the PAIS Alliance was to find the right candidate, who could win an election and ensure the continuity of *correísmo* in the absence of Correa at the Carondelet Palace.

The natural candidate to succeed Correa was the actual Vice President Jorge Glas Espinel (2013-2017), who was a loyal *correísta* and an engineer in charge of the energy sector and telecommunications. Another possible candidate was Correa's former Vice President (2007-2013) Lenín Moreno Garcés, who served as the United Nations' Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility after leaving office. While Correa reportedly preferred Glas over Moreno, the latter performed better in the public opinion polls with his humble character and conciliatory tone. As a result, the delegates of the PAIS Alliance chose Moreno as Correa's successor and Glas as his running mate (Meléndez and Moncatatta 2017). Amid unfavorable economic indicators such as a negative rate of growth and rising unemployment, Moreno's victory in the 2017 presidential elections was not predetermined. Despite a disproportionate media coverage in favor of his candidacy (Fundamedios 2017), Moreno could only win the presidency (51 percent) in the second round over Guillermo Lasso (49 percent), who managed to consolidate the ideologically and regionally fragmented *anti-correísta* vote (Becker 2017). In the legislative elections, the PAIS Alliance lost its two-thirds majority. However, it retained a simple majority of 74 out of 137 seats (Meléndez and Moncatatta 2017).

To evaluate Correa's second and third terms, there is significant evidence in favor of leader polarization as Ecuadorians strongly divided over their levels of affection toward the president. For *correístas*, President Correa was an inclusionary figure, who

continuously praised the members of the in-group as good, honest, and patriotic people. However, for *anti-correístas*, Correa was an angry president, who insulted the people on a regular basis, especially the ones who dared to disagree with him (Montúfar 2015). Besides the symbolic nature of inclusion vs. exclusion by the populist leader, *correístas* and *anti-correístas* also contrasted regarding their enjoyment of political rights and material benefits. In Ecuador's hybrid regime, opponents of the president had to deal with an increasing number of regulations and laws, which restricted their freedoms of speech, media, and association. On the other hand, supporters of Correa enjoyed greater opportunities to express their views and take part in the Citizens' Revolution. Finally, at the material level, *anti-correístas* perceived Correa as a corrupt politician who redistributed the nation's oil wealth to his base in exchange for political support, whereas *correístas* underlined the universal nature of the president's investment in education, health, and infrastructure (Montúfar 2015).

4.3 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

This section of the chapter utilizes public opinion survey data from 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 rounds of the Americas Barometer of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP). To measure the extent of public opinion polarization in Ecuador under Correa, it relies on a number of survey questions across these five years. The first question, to measure ideological polarization, is a traditional ten-point left-right scale, in which the interviewer shows the respondent a card and asks the following question:

> On this card, there is a 1-10 scale that goes from left to right. Nowadays, when we speak of political leanings, we talk of those on the left and those on the right. In other words, some people sympathize more with the left and others with the right.

> According to the meaning that the terms “left” and “right” have for you, and thinking of your own political leanings, where would you place yourself on this scale? Indicate the box that comes closest to your own position.

The second question, to measure leader polarization, is a seven-point scale on the extent of trust toward President Correa. For this question, the interviewer also has a similar card to ask respondents a battery of questions ranging from the level of respect to the political institutions of the country to trust toward the justice system, the parliament, the police, and the Catholic Church among others. The third question, to measure individuals’ political interest as an independent variable, asks the following on a four-point scale: “How much interest do you have in politics: none, little, some, or a lot?” The fourth question, to measure sociotropic evaluation of the economy, asks the following on a three-point scale: “Do you think that the country’s current economic situation is worse than, the same as or better than it was 12 months ago?”

To measure the extent of ideological polarization and leader polarization, I provide descriptive statistics of the questions on left-right self-placement and the extent of trust toward the president respectively. Specifically, I look at the distribution of aggregate responses to those two questions to see whether there is clustering at both ends of the spectrum rather than the center. An ideal polarized distribution should look bimodal with a weak center and strong extreme categories whereas a non-polarized distribution should look closer to a bell-curve.

To find out the predictors of expressing extreme distrust and extreme trust, I recode the seven-point presidential trust scale into a trichotomous variable. I do it by picking two extreme categories on each side (1 and 2 for the extreme distrust, and 6 and 7 for the extreme trust) and code the rest in the middle as reference categories. In that way,

through multinomial logistic regression models, I would be able to identify the variables, which may predict identification at the central vs. extreme categories. In addition to the two independent variables, political interest, and sociotropic economic evaluation, the regression analyses also control for age (interval), income (ordinal), education (interval), women (dummy), rural (dummy), skin color (ordinal).

Table 4 reports the summary statistics of all variables that are subject to analysis in 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016. Figures 8-12 display the distribution of responses to the question on left-right ideology for each year. Figures 13-17 have the same purpose for the question on trust toward the president. Lastly, Tables 5-6 report the findings of the multinomial regression analyses for leader polarization.

Table 4. Summary Statistics for Ecuador.

Ecuador	N (2008)	N (2010)	N (2012)	N (2014)	N (2016)	Mean (2008)	Mean (2010)	Mean (2012)	Mean (2014)	Mean (2016)	Min	Max
ideology	2018	2019	1178	1169	1411	5.308	5.427	5.328	4.955	5.464	1	10
trust	2965	2973	1488	1481	1529	4.396	4.402	4.770	5.166	4.196	1	7
extreme ideology	2018	2019	1178	1169	1411	1.952	2.002	1.962	1.956	2.016	1	3
extreme trust	2965	2973	1488	1481	1529	2.158	2.137	2.270	2.389	2.073	1	3
political interest	2963	2967	1490	1486	1542	1.874	1.912	1.991	2.149	2.135	1	4
econ evaluation	2952	2935	1471	1474	1513	1.819	1.945	2.030	2.192	1.486	1	3
age	2999	2997	1494	1487	1540	38.484	39.426	39.001	39.409	38.640	16	96
income	2825	2818	1409	1357	1421	4.068	4.288	8.409	8.034	7.274	0	16
education	2998	2996	1481	1477	1508	10.168	10.119	10.489	10.674	11.428	0	18
women	3000	3000	1500	1489	1545	0.500	0.508	0.500	0.503	0.502	0	1
rural	3000	3000	1500	1489	1545	0.389	0.379	0.344	0.347	0.335	0	1
skin color	-	3000	1499	1488	1545	-	4.233	5.024	4.398	3.623	1	11

Figure 8. Left-Right Ideological Self-Placement in Ecuador (2008).

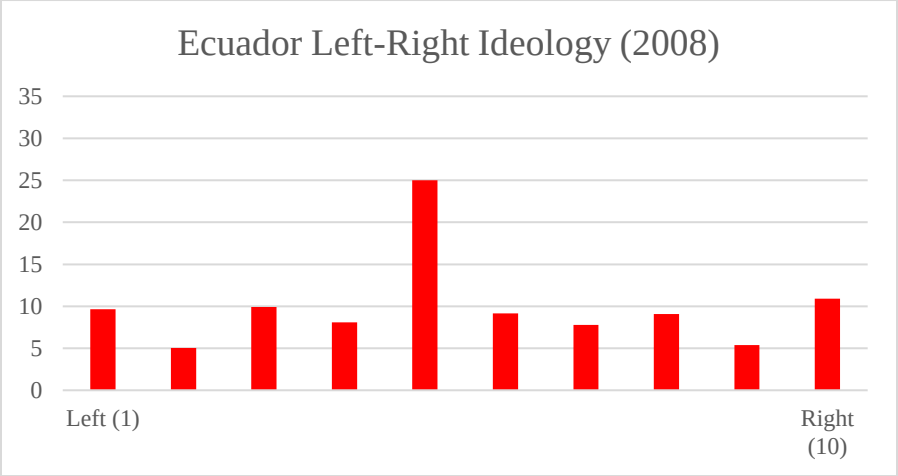

Figure 9. Left-Right Ideological Self-Placement in Ecuador (2010).

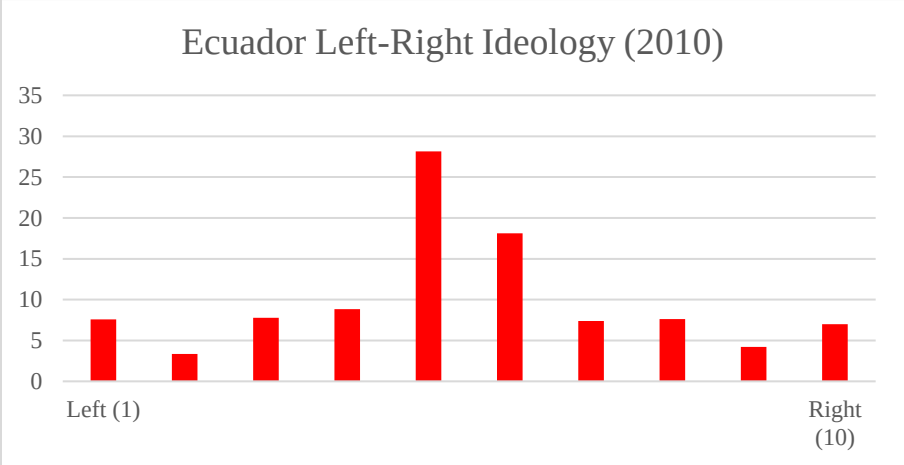

Figure 10. Left-Right Ideological Self-Placement in Ecuador (2012).

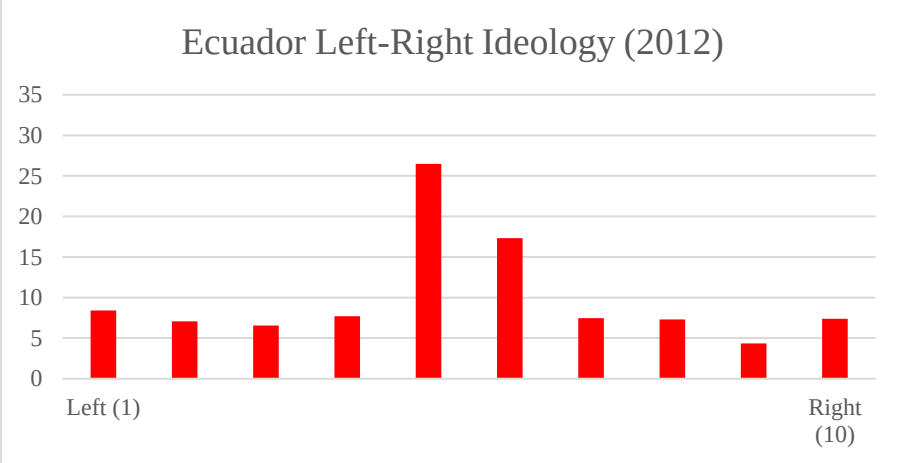

Figure 11. Left-Right Ideological Self-Placement in Ecuador (2014).

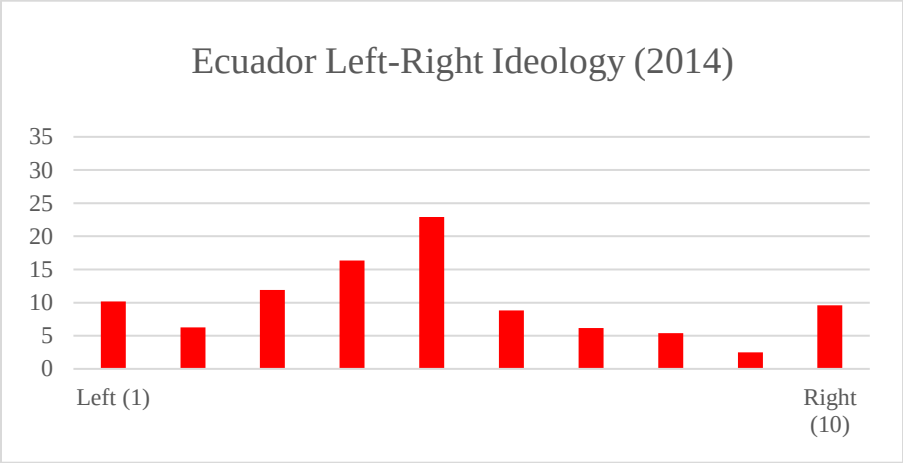

Figure 12. Left-Right Ideological Self-Placement in Ecuador (2016).

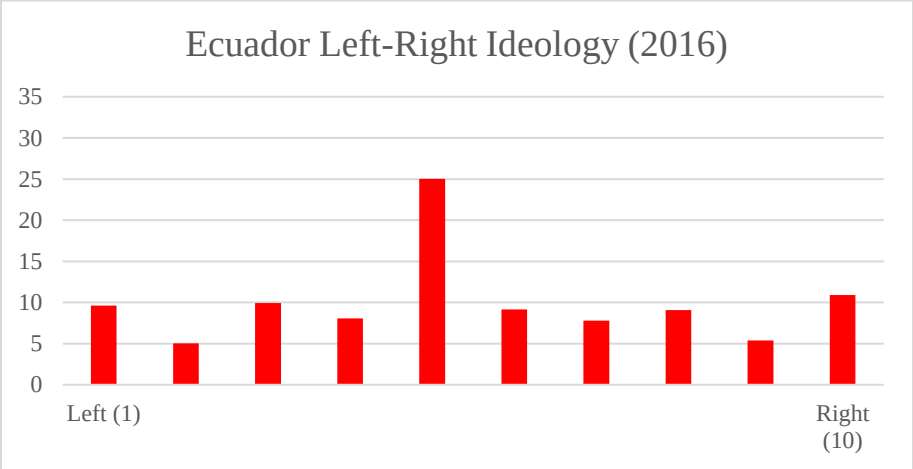

Figure 13. Level of Trust in President Correa (2008).

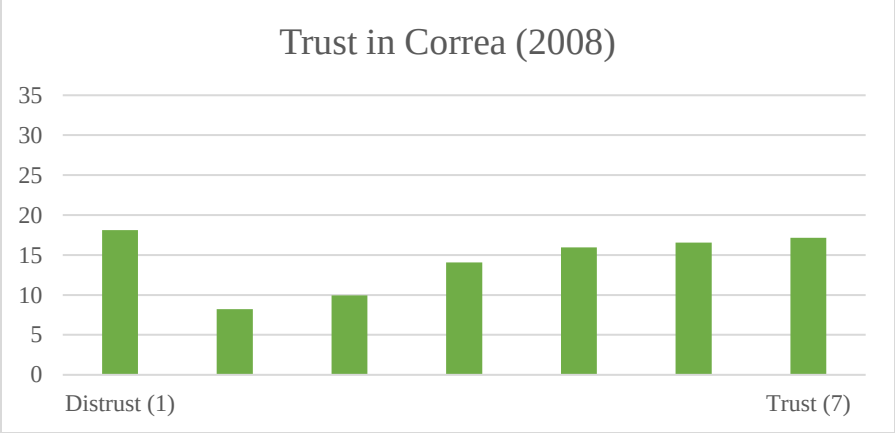

Figure 14. Level of Trust in President Correa (2010).

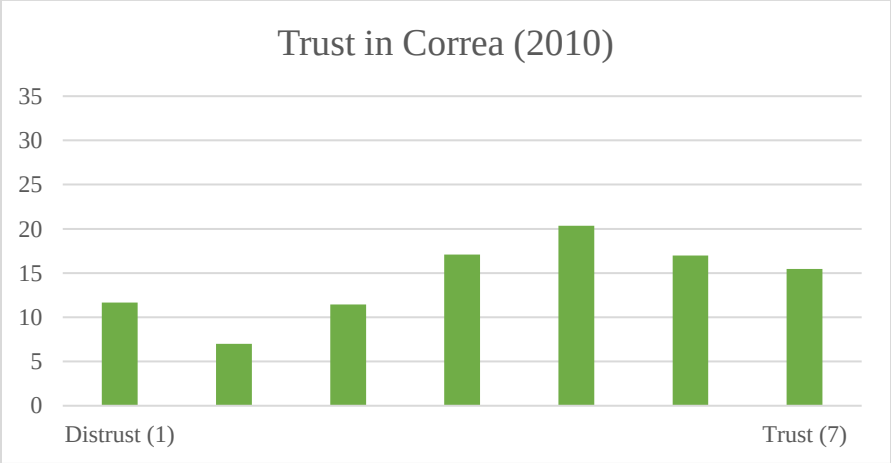

Figure 15. Level of Trust in President Correa (2012).

Figure 16. Level of Trust in President Correa (2014).

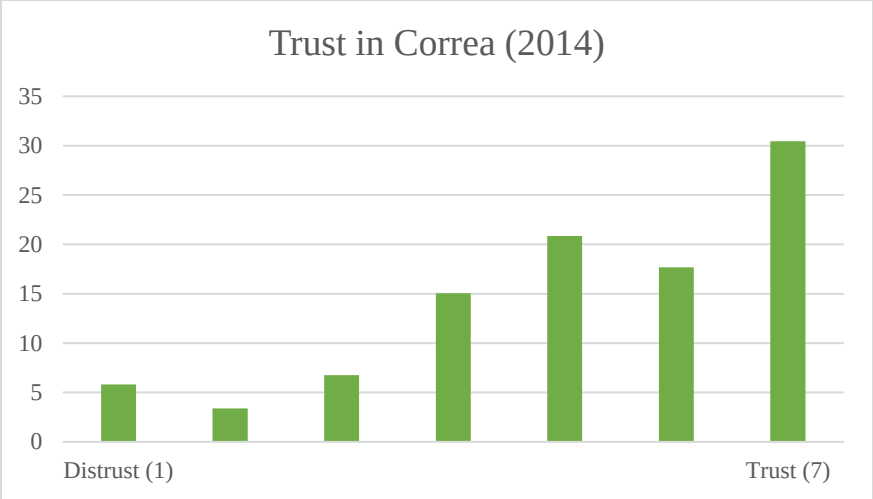

Figure 17. Level of Trust in President Correa (2016).

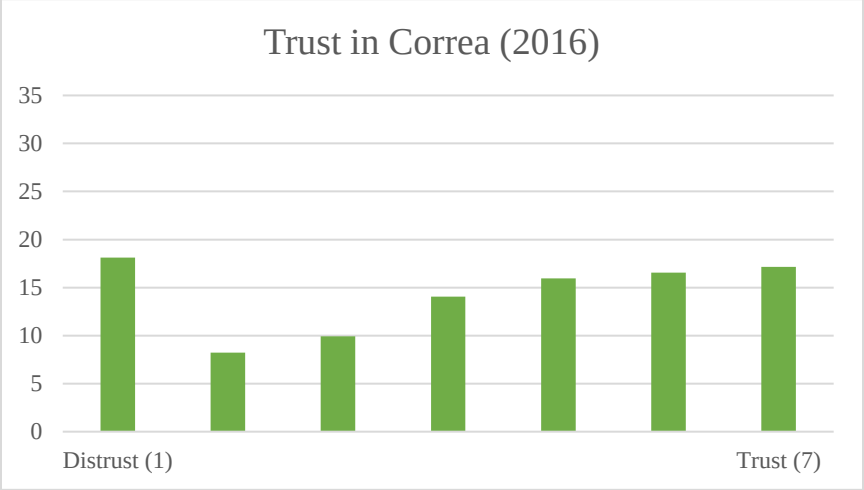

Table 5. Multinomial Logistic Regression Results on Extreme Distrust of Correa.

extreme distrust	Ecu 2008	Ecu 2010	Ecu 2012	Ecu 2014	Ecu 2016
political interest	-0.162** (.066)	-0.018 (.062)	-0.242** (.100)	0.112 (.123)	-0.149** (.076)
econ evaluation	-0.609*** (.081)	-0.339*** (.077)	-0.895*** (.130)	-0.670*** (.144)	-0.857*** (.146)
age	-0.003 (.003)	0.005 (.003)	0.013** (.006)	0.002 (.007)	0.020*** (.004)
income	-0.029 (.038)	0.051 (.035)	-0.006 (.026)	0.058** (.027)	-0.002 (.014)
education	0.019 (.015)	0.020 (.014)	0.009 (.022)	0.069** (.208)	0.037* (.020)
women	-0.124 (.107)	0.098 (.108)	-0.369** (.167)	0.069 (.208)	0.068 (.142)
rural	0.035* (.112)	-0.162* (.115)	-0.075 (.176)	-0.188 (.227)	-0.259* (.150)
skin color		-0.024 (.033)	-0.038 (.052)	-0.021 (.067)	-0.008 (.051)
N	2723	2708	1349	1328	1357
Pseudo R^2	0.03	0.03	0.07	0.05	0.10

Significance levels ***p<0.01 ** p<0.05 *p<0.10
Standard error in parentheses.

Table 6. Multinomial Logistic Regression Results on Extreme Trust of Correa.

extreme trust	Ecu 2008	Ecu 2010	Ecu 2012	Ecu 2014	Ecu 2016
political interest	0.195*** (.050)	0.318*** (.050)	0.232*** (.070)	0.305*** (.070)	0.326*** (.071)
econ evaluation	0.366*** (.060)	0.513*** (.063)	0.627*** (.092)	0.503*** (.084)	0.835*** (.095)
age	0.000 (.003)	0.006** (.003)	0.005 (.004)	0.006 (.004)	0.014*** (.004)
income	-0.012 (.031)	0.022 (.030)	-0.015 (.019)	-0.004 (.015)	-0.019 (.013)
education	-0.009 (.012)	-0.022* (.012)	-0.035** (.016)	-0.063*** (.018)	-0.071*** (.020)
women	0.042 (.087)	0.131 (.091)	-0.116 (.123)	0.216* (.120)	0.057 (.139)
rural	-0.001 (.092)	0.021 (.094)	-0.037 (.130)	0.043 (.127)	-0.153 (.143)
skin color		-0.008 (.019)	-0.028 (.463)	-0.015 (.038)	0.051 (.049)
N	2723	2708	1349	1328	1357
Pseudo R^2	0.03	0.03	0.07	0.05	0.10

Significance levels ***p<0.01 ** p<0.05 *p<0.10
Standard error in parentheses.

To start with the descriptive findings on ideological polarization, all five distributions peak at the center instead of the extreme categories. In other words, most Ecuadorians are ideological centrists (Figures 1-5). In comparison, the distributions on the extent of trust in Correa have relatively strong extreme categories and a weak center (Figures 6-10). Overall, these results confirm the primacy of leader polarization over ideological polarization among the Ecuadorian public. They also support the secondary literature on Ecuadorian politics that emphasizes the salience of leader polarization between *correístas* and *anti-correístas*.

Turning to regression analyses (Tables 2-3), economic evaluation (-), education (+), and skin color (-) have consistent relationships with expressing extreme distrust of Correa. Particularly, economic evaluation is statistically significant across all years. Political interest (-) is statistically significant in 2008, 2012, and 2016 (Table 2). To report the findings on extreme trust, political interest (+) and economic evaluation (+) are statistically significant across all years. In addition to these two independent variables, lower educated people are more likely to express extreme trust toward Correa. This negative relationship is statistically significant every year other than 2008 (Table 3). To sum up, economic evaluation is a strong predictor of both extreme distrust (-) and extreme trust (+). However, political interest (+) has a consistent and statistically significant relationship only with extreme trust. Among the control variables, level of education (+/-) appears to be a key variable especially when expressing extreme distrust and extreme distrust of Correa.

4.4 DISCUSSION

So far, the chapter has analyzed the extent of polarization in Ecuador through qualitative case studies and quantitative survey analyses. From a historical standpoint, it has shown that Rafael Correa's presidency is a continuation of the personalist tradition in Ecuador, that goes back to the strongmen in the 19th century like Gabriel García Moreno and Eloy Alfaro. In more contemporary times, Correa's populist leadership resembles the five-time president Velasco Ibarra, who personally dominated Ecuadorian politics between the 1930s and the 1970s. Akin to Correa, Velasco Ibarra was a populist outsider, who claimed to represent the interest of the common people against the corrupt elites. Although Velasco Ibarra could only complete one full presidential term during the banana boom, *velasquismo* remained as a polarizing force given that he was alive and could anytime return as the "savior" of the Ecuadorian people.

Until the rise of *correísmo*, Ecuador experienced brief episodes of populism with the election of Abdalá Bucaram and Lucio Gutiérrez, who resorted to the populist dichotomy of people vs. elite during their presidential campaigns. Nevertheless, the Congress overthrew both presidents before they could complete their terms. After the fall of Gutiérrez, Correa emerged as a young economist, who could implement the ousted president's populist platform. Correa's brief tenure as the minister of economics and finance gave him the opportunity to lead a new political movement. Thus, he created the PAIS Alliance and put forward his candidacy for the 2006 presidential elections. Throughout the campaign, Correa branded himself as the chief anti-establishment candidate by capitalizing on the theme of loss of sovereignty and national symbols. He

portrayed his opponent, Álvaro Noboa, as a privileged member of the oligarchy in contrast to his modest claim to represent the average Ecuadorian people.

Once he got elected, Correa's primary task was to rewrite the constitution. To achieve that goal, Correa won a referendum to establish a constituent assembly. Then, he closed the sitting Congress. The constitution-making process was conflictual, and it gave early signs of leader polarization centered around President Correa. In the end, Correa managed to pass a new constitution, which provided a diverse array of rights to citizens but most importantly enhanced the powers of the presidency over other branches of government. Meanwhile, Correa pursued an aggressive communication strategy to dominate the political stage as the sole actor. In addition to his weekly three-hour show, Correa made heavy use of mandated national broadcast to promote his own narrative on the current developments. Correa's omnipresence on television, radio, and social media contributed to further personalization of Ecuadorian politics in the subsequent years.

In his second term, the events of September 30, 2010 (the 30S) helped Correa consolidate his image as the redeemer of the Ecuadorian nation. Correa managed to turn, what he called, an attempted police coup into a televised spectacle, in which he had physically suffered for the people and eventually returned to the balcony of the presidential palace as their redeemer. The 30S also marked the radicalization of Correa's Manichean discourse and increasing confrontation with journalists and social movement activists. Following his comfortable reelection in 2013, Correa further restricted the media and civil society through passing new laws and regulations and implementing them arbitrarily. His autocratic practices slipped under the radar and did not cause major problems until the sharp drop in the price of oil in the second half of 2014. Amid cuts in

social spending, growing dissatisfaction with his government in the public space was evident. As Correa constantly confronted and delegitimized the opposition, leader polarization between *correístas* and *anti-correístas* became more salient toward the 2017 presidential elections.

During his ten-year presidency, polarization around Correa was a consequence of the inclusionary and exclusionary nature of his populist leadership. To the members of the in-group, Correa offered symbolic inclusion by praising them and giving them a sense of representation through his charismatic persona. Correa offered political inclusion to his followers by encouraging their participation in frequent elections and referendums. Nevertheless, political participation under Correa was limited to such plebiscitary contests instead of bottom-up mechanisms at the local level. Lastly, Correa offered material inclusion to his constituency by investing in social programs and providing them jobs at the state bureaucracy. Similar to past governments who had also benefited from commodity booms, during an oil boom, Correa transformed the physical landscape of Ecuador by constructing new roads, bridges, hospitals, and schools. Thanks to the inclusionary nature of Correa's populist leadership, a significant portion of the electorate developed a strong sense of attachment toward him.

Alongside with his inclusiveness, Correa simultaneously excluded other members of the Ecuadorian society. At the symbolic level, he frequently insulted the members of the out-group and characterized them as the enemies of the nation, representatives of the oligarchy, and bigwigs. At the political level, Correa skewed the playing field to make it harder for the opposition to contest his personalist government. Especially after the 30S, he strengthened the institutional power of the executive branch to regulate the content of

the media and the activities of civil society groups. In an increasingly authoritarian environment, critics of Correa could not thoroughly enjoy their rights and liberties, which were guaranteed by the 2008 Constitution. Finally, members of the opposition felt materially excluded from the benefits of the oil boom due to perceptions of clientelism and accusations of corruption. Because of a combination of these factors, many Ecuadorian citizens developed strong anti-Correa sentiments.

Statistical analyses of the Americas Barometer survey data provide further evidence for the presence of leader polarization in Ecuador. In all years but 2010, the distributions of presidential trust peak at one of the extreme categories. Especially in 2008 and 2016, there is the nearly equal amount of clustering at both ends of the spectrum, whereas in 2012 and 2014 there are very few people expressing extreme distrust of Correa. In contrast, the distributions on left-right ideology tend to be centrist with few people identifying at the extreme left and the extreme right across all survey years. Therefore, at any given time, public opinion in Ecuador is more polarized over the extent of trust toward Correa than self-identification on a left-right ideological spectrum. To interpret the predictors of leader polarization, individuals' higher levels of political interest, positive evaluation of the national economy, and lower levels of education appear as reliable predictors of expressing extreme trust toward Correa. Furthermore, individuals who express extreme distrust toward Correa are distinguished by their negative evaluation of the economy and partially by their lack of interest in politics, higher levels of education, and lighter skin color.

Leader polarization over Correa also contributed to democratic backsliding in Ecuador. During his ten-year presidency, Correa subscribed to a majoritarian

understanding of democracy. As soon as he came to power, he made a complete overhaul of the political system through the establishment of a constituent assembly and adoption of a new constitution. In that sense, the mega-elections in 2009 allowed *correísmo* to take control of Ecuadorian politics at the local and national levels. During his second term in office, Correa strengthened his grip over the executive branch and often clashed with social movements and journalists. Thanks to his victory in the 2011 referendum, the president further weakened constitutional veto players and packed the newly created Transitional Council of the Judiciary with *correístas*. While Correa undermined democratic institutions and norms, he kept winning elections and other plebiscitary contests. As long as the economy performed well, and Correa could offer material inclusion, the voters did not hold his authoritarian practices accountable. Nevertheless, after the drop in oil prices in 2015, Correa's exclusionary side became more salient, and *anti-correístas* gained some ground.

Retrospectively, Correa's biggest mistake was to step down and pick Lenín Moreno as his successor. Shortly after becoming president, Moreno surprised many observers and turned his back to his predecessor. To alleviate polarization, the new president adopted a conciliatory tone and reached out to the members of the opposition. Contrary to the expectations, the first two years of the Moreno administration turned out to be disastrous for *correísmo*. Against the opposition's strong demands for fighting corruption, Moreno's own Vice President Jorge Glas was arrested and sentenced to six years in jail. While Correa accused his handpicked successor of betraying the revolution, Moreno took additional actions to block Correa's possible future return to Ecuador as a savior. Specifically, President Moreno convoked a referendum to put an end to indefinite

reelection. In February 2018, Moreno's proposal received popular support (63 percent), which prevents Correa's presidential candidacy in 2021 and beyond. Overall, the Ecuadorian experience illustrates the complexities of succession under highly personalized settings. On the surface, Ecuador under Moreno appears to be depolarizing and restoring democratic institutions. Nevertheless, Correa, who currently lives in Belgium and only fifty-five years old, might be the next "Great Absentee."

CHAPTER 5

LEADER POLARIZATION IN TURKEY OVER ERDOĞAN

This chapter examines polarization in Turkey with a specific focus on Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In the context of the personalist tradition in Turkish politics, it analyzes Erdoğan's rise to power and success as a populist leader. Particularly, the chapter examines the personalization of Turkish politics during the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) first three parliamentary terms. Akin to Venezuela under Chávez and Ecuador under Correa, the dissertation aims to show that polarization in Turkey under Erdoğan was primarily over levels of affection toward him (leader polarization) instead of radical divisions over left-right ideology (ideological polarization). Because of the inclusionary and exclusionary nature of populist leadership, especially in the AKP's third term (2011-2015) onward, the Turkish elite and public opinion polarized into pro- and anti-Erdoğan camps.

To contextualize this argument, the chapter first offers a historical background of Turkish politics, which traces the origins of personalist leadership in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. The section makes references to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1923-1938) and İsmet İnönü (1938-1946), who exemplified authoritarian one-man-rule during the early republican period. The section also considers Adnan Menderes (1950-1960) as a historical example of populism and leader polarization. Following the ouster of Menderes, it analyzes ideological extremism in the 1960s and the 1970s. To explain military interventions and democratic breakdowns in 1971 and 1980, it underlines the primacy of left-right polarization, especially in the streets. In the post-Cold War era, the

chapter investigates the salience of political Islam and the Kurdish ethnicity as polarizing cleavages of Turkish politics.

After the historical overview, another section studies polarization during the AKP era. First, it provides a synopsis of Erdoğan's political career within Necmettin Erbakan's Islamist political parties. Second, it examines the AKP's first term in the context of successful economic performance, the EU membership process, and civil-military relations. Particularly, it focuses on the 2007 presidential election crisis and polarization between secular and religious conservative actors. Third, it delves into the AKP's second and third terms amid the weakening of the secular establishment, increasing signs of personalism, the concentration of power at the executive branch, and growing authoritarianism. Especially from the 2013 Gezi Park protests onward, it presents substantial qualitative evidence for leader polarization between the supporters and the opponents of Prime Minister (later President) Erdoğan.

At the public opinion level, the chapter uses the Comparative Studies of Electoral Systems (CSES) 2011 and KONDA 2013 survey data. The descriptive statistical results confirm the salience of leader polarization, as the respondents tend to pick extreme categories when they express dislike-like toward Erdoğan as well as rate him insincere-sincere. In contrast to extreme levels of affection toward Erdoğan, the Turkish people are less likely to locate themselves at the ideological extremes. In other words, the extent of leader polarization among the Turkish public is greater than ideological polarization. In the CSES survey, individuals' level of following the 2011 parliamentary election campaign, as a proxy of political interest, significantly predicts extreme dislike and extreme like toward Prime Minister Erdoğan. In the KONDA survey, the expectation of

an economic crisis in the upcoming year predicts finding Erdoğan an extremely insincere or extremely sincere leader.

Lastly, the chapter discusses the qualitative and the quantitative findings on populism and leader polarization in Turkey. Historically, it situates Erdoğan within the personalist tradition in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. Then, it analyzes the rise of Erdoğan and his attempts to personally dominate Turkish politics during the AKP era. To find out the causes of leader polarization, it assesses the inclusionary vs. exclusionary nature of Erdoğan's populist leadership. After restating the statistical findings, the chapter further elaborates on the relationship between leader polarization and democratic backsliding.

5.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the history of modern Turkey, individual leaders have had a prominent role. During the imperial era (1299-1922), the Ottoman sultans exercised absolute authority over their Muslim and non-Muslim subjects. At the height of the empire, the Ottoman sultan ruled over a vast territory, which included contemporary Balkans, the Middle East, and North Africa. Despite the gradual weakening of its sphere of influence by the end of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire managed to survive until the First World War. Following the defeat in the war and occupation by the Allied countries, a nationalist resistance movement coalesced around Mustafa Kemal Pasha (later Atatürk). Under the political and military leadership of Mustafa Kemal, a new Turkish parliament in Ankara organized an army and launched a successful war of independence against occupying forces (Zürcher 2004).

Once Turkey regained its sovereignty, Mustafa Kemal envisioned a republican regime. Therefore, the parliament abolished the sultanate, proclaimed the Turkish Republic, and elected Mustafa Kemal as the first president. From 1923 until his death in 1938, President Mustafa Kemal singlehandedly governed Turkey through the Republican People's Party (CHP). During his fifteen-year presidency, Mustafa Kemal, who later adopted the last name Atatürk (meaning the Father of Turks), pushed for an ambitious reform process to modernize the Turkish society and the state. To achieve those goals, the ruling CHP developed the six principles of Kemalism: republicanism, nationalism, secularism, populism, statism, and reformism (Mango 2000; Hanioğlu 2011).

After Mustafa Kemal's death in 1938, İsmet İnönü, a staunch follower of Kemalism, became president. As a continuation of the authoritarian one-man-rule, İnönü adopted the title "National Chief" and personally dominated the Turkish government during the Second World War. Although İnönü managed to keep Turkey out of the war, it was at the expense of economic hardship and repression. When the war ended, in line with the global trends, İnönü initiated Turkey's transition to democracy and allowed the formation of opposition parties (Heper 2002). After a series of negotiated reforms to set the legal framework for the transition from single-party authoritarianism to multi-party democracy, Turkey organized its first free and fair elections in 1950 (Ahmad 1993).

The winner of the 1950 elections was the Democrat Party (DP), which was founded by four prominent members of the Kemalist CHP. During the 1950 parliamentary election campaign, the DP retrospectively benefited from the mass discontent with İnönü and the single-party regime even though it did not put forward a party program that was significantly different (Wuthrich 2015). Between 1950 and 1960,

Turkish politics was characterized by the single-party governments of the DP led by Prime Minister Adnan Menderes thanks to three consecutive victories (1950, 1954, 1957) in parliamentary elections. Menderes, who subscribed to the populist dichotomy of people vs. elite, conceptualized democracy around the idea of national will[49] and interpreted the electoral victories as "the right to monopolize all state institutions with total disregard of the opposition" (Ahmad 2008, 236).

Especially in his third term, Prime Minister Menderes and the DP restricted the opposition's ability to contest the government (Ahmad 1993). In essence, Menderes, as a populist leader, led to democratic backsliding in Turkey through his disproportionate use of radio and restrictions on newspapers and universities. Another example of populism, during this period, is the establishment of the Homeland Front, as a mass organization to mobilize people in support of Menderes and the DP. In fact, the formation of the Homeland Front further polarized the country into two camps between "the guardians of the homeland" against "the enemies of the homeland" (Bulut 2009). Adding to this tense political environment, Menderes survived a plane crash in 1959, which contributed to the already existing cult of personality around him as "a super-human figure, chosen by God to lead his people" (Zürcher 2004, 254). In the presence of leader polarization and democratic backsliding, a group of junior officers successfully launched a promissory coup in 1960 (Bulut 2009).

In the aftermath of the coup, Menderes was sentenced to death and became a martyr in the eyes of his followers. Moreover, a constituent assembly drafted a new

[49] The chapter uses "national will" and "will of the people" interchangeably. The Turkish term itself, *milli irade*, would refer to both.

constitution and put it into a referendum. The 1961 Constitution expanded the political space to a new set of actors. It granted the workers the right to unionize, strike, and collective bargaining and allowed the development of student organizations. In this new opportunity structure, Marxist ideas easily disseminated among the working class and students. Anti-Americanism was also on the rise (Landau 1974). At this domestic and foreign conjuncture, the Turkish Labor Party (TİP) launched a campaign on ideological grounds and entered the parliament in 1965 (Karpat 1967; Doğan 2010).

Even though the TİP never received more than three percent of the national vote, its existence as an anti-system party, in the Sartorian sense, had a centrifugal effect on the party system. Amid the rise of the TİP, the CHP explicitly positioned itself as a center-left party to attract the working class and the urban poor. In response to the CHP's ideological message, the successor of the banned the DP, Justice Party (AP), adopted the slogan "left of center is the road to Moscow" (Zürcher 2004, 253). At the other end of the ideological spectrum, the emergence of the ultranationalist Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and the Islamist National Order Party (MNP) challenged the AP. Because of the ascend of anti-system parties on both extremes, in the second half of the 1960s, the Turkish party-system displayed signs of ideological polarization.

Besides the polarization at the party level, members of the extreme left engaged in kidnappings and robberies inspired by Latin American urban guerillas, student movements in the West, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). To counter the influence of the left in the streets, the extreme right formed paramilitary groups targeting politicians, university professors, and bookstores affiliated with the opposite camp (Ahmad 2008; Zürcher 2004). According to Landau, "the number who actively

participated in radical politics was small. However, like the drop of the dye that suffuses the wool, it was they who colored the political life of the decade" (Landau 1974, ix). Similar to Latin American experiences (Bermeo 2003), a small number of radicalized citizens were sufficient to disrupt the social order and lead to a democratic breakdown in 1971.

During the military interregnum from 1971 to 1973, the constitution was amended, and ideologically extremist parties were banned (Ahmad 2008; Sayarı 2010). Thanks to the brutal repression of extremist actors by the military, there was a brief period without a significant amount of political violence. However, it started to intensify by the late-1970s, and the military intervened again in 1980. In that manner, Tachau and Heper describe the decade which preceded the 1980 coup as follows:

> Turkish politics in the 1970s was thus characterized by fragmentation and polarization and by a lack of decisive authority on the part of the government. Polarization came to characterize not only the parties, but was insinuated into other important social sectors as well, including organized labor, the teaching profession, the civil bureaucracy, and even the police (Tachau and Heper 1983, 24).

Similarly, Wuthrich (2015) analyzes the period between 1965 and 1980 through "the ideological imagining paradigm," since the left and right labels dominated the political discourse of the era. Besides the role of ideological polarization, it is important to note that the Kurdish insurgency and sectarian conflict between the Sunnis and the Alevis also contributed to the democratic breakdown in 1980. Last but not least, personal rivalries between the leaders of the two centrist parties, Süleyman Demirel (AP) and Bülent Ecevit (CHP), was another factor that prepared the ground for a military intervention (Arat 2002). When the Chief of Staff Kenan Evren, announced the 1980

coup on television, he blamed the political party leaders for fanning the flames of polarization along ideological, ethnic, and sectarian lines. Evren declared the military's goal as terminating these artificial divisions and uniting the people around the common elements of Turkish nationalism and Islam (T24 2015).

With the successful execution of the coup, the National Security Council suspended the existing constitution and banned all political activities. Under the leadership of Evren, the military regime adopted a new constitution in 1982 (via referendum), which strengthened the state authority at the expense of individual rights and liberties. Until it relinquished power to civilians in 1983, the military targeted the members of the extreme left and the extreme right while promoting a new political center based on neoliberalism, Turkish nationalism, and moderate Islam (Zürcher 2004).

In the 1983 elections, the military allowed only three political parties to compete. Therefore, the newly established parties stayed away from an ideological discourse and pragmatically followed the perimeters set by the military (Wuthrich 2015). The winner of the elections was Turgut Özal's Motherland Party (ANAP), which "attempted to bring together and reconcile the center-right, the center-left, the ultra-nationalist, and the Islamist views" (Heper 2013). Thanks to his pragmatic appeal and economic success, the ANAP won another parliamentary election in 1987 and Özal succeeded Evren, as president, until his unexpected death[50] in 1993. During his ten years in office, Özal also exemplified strong elements of populist leadership with his anti-elitist rhetoric and direct appeal to people. Particularly, Özal's pragmatic combination of neoliberalism and

[50] Özal suffered a heart attack when he was on a treadmill. Referring to Özal's death, a popular slogan says: "You executed Menderes and poisoned Özal. However, we won't let you get rid of Erdoğan." Building on this popular narrative, Erdoğan claims to be the heir of both leaders who were also "the man of the people."

populism resembled his contemporaries in Latin America such as Carlos Menem (Argentina) and Alberto Fujimori (Peru) (Tafolar 2008).

By the mid-1980s, the military regime's promotion of Turkish nationalism started to backfire especially in the southeastern Kurdish provinces. The biggest challenge came from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which launched an armed conflict against Turkey in order to establish an independent state (Ergil 2000). Until the capture of its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in 1999 the clashes between the PKK and the security forces resulted in the death of approximately 35,000 people and cost $120 billion to the economy. Moreover, the Kurdish conflict hampered Turkey's prospects of becoming a European Union (EU) member, since the latter viewed it as "the rebellion of an ethnic group whose cultural and political rights were denied by an authoritarian regime" (Barkey and Taspinar 2014, 31).

In the context of the military regime's promotion of religion as an antidote against the communist threat, an opportunity structure emerged for Islamist political actors (Eligür 2010). The main beneficiary of the new era was Necmettin Erbakan of the Welfare Party (RP), whose former political parties were banned during the 1971 and 1980 military coups (Taşpınar 2005). When the communist threat disappeared, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the military once again viewed Erbakan as a religious reactionary and an adversary of the secular republic. Therefore, it aimed to contain the RP's growing appeal among the electorate.

Even though the RP received the highest number of votes in the 1995 parliamentary elections, due to the concerns of the military, initially it was excluded from the coalition government between ANAP and the True Path Party (DYP) (Sayarı 2007).

Once the ANAP-DYP coalition fell, the president gave the mandate to form a government to Erbakan, who reached an agreement with the DYP. Erbakan's rise to the prime ministry alarmed the secular military, media, and business organizations, which were skeptical of the RP's hidden agenda from the very beginning. Although the RP-DYP coalition seemed to survive this hostile environment, later some controversial remarks by low-ranking members of the RP and accusations of corruption shook the partnership (Zürcher 2004).

In the context of growing conflict with the secular establishment, in 1997, the military-dominated National Security Council forced Prime Minister Erbakan to implement a set of measures to curb "the influence of the Islamists in the economy, in education and inside the state apparatus" (Zürcher 2004, 300). While Erbakan initially resisted this "coup by ultimatum," he had no option but to resign amid systematic efforts to mobilize the media, the public opinion, and the judiciary against the perceived threat of religious fundamentalism. Based on similar accusations, the Constitutional Court announced the permanent closure of the RP and banned Erbakan from politics for five years (Cook 2007).

After the military intervention in 1997, successive coalition governments accommodated the military's secular agenda aiming to contain political Islam. Regardless, in the 1999 elections, the successor of the RP, the Virtue Party (FP) became the third largest party and won the mayorships of İstanbul and Ankara (Yeşilada 2002). Two years later, the Constitutional Court, a bastion of the secular establishment, also banned the FP on the grounds that it was a continuation of the RP (Zürcher 2004). In this

historical conjuncture, the next section examines the rise of Erdoğan as a political figure who would dominate Turkish politics in the upcoming decades.

5.2 POLARIZATION UNDER ERDOĞAN

5.2.1 The Rise of Erdoğan

It would not be an overstatement to characterize Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as a career politician. After spending his childhood in a lower-middle-class neighborhood (Kasımpaşa) in Istanbul, Erdoğan graduated from a religious vocational high school[51] in 1973. While making a living as a professional football player (with the nickname Imam Beckenbauer), he also took an active role at the Islamist and anti-communist students organizations. At the age of twenty-two, Erdoğan joined Necmettin Erbakan's National Salvation Party (MSP) and became the head of its youth branch in Istanbul. After the 1980 military coup and the closure of the MSP, he briefly worked in the private sector (Pamuk 2001; Türk 2014).

Once Erbakan established another Islamist party, the Welfare Party (RP), Erdoğan joined it as well and became the provincial head of Istanbul. On three occasions, Erdoğan attempted to enter the Turkish parliament. He was very close to achieving that goal at the 1991 elections until finding out that he lost his seat to a lower-ranked candidate of the RP, who had apparently received a higher number of preferential votes than him. At the local level, Erdoğan first ran for the mayorship of Istanbul's Beyoğlu district in 1989. Thanks to his innovative campaign techniques, such as the effective use of the youth,

[51] Erdoğan's official biography suggests that he also finished Marmara University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences in 1981 (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey 2018). Erdoğan's college degree became a controversy during the 2014 presidential election since the anti-Erdoğan opposition argued that his diploma was fabricated. The office of presidency dismissed such claims.

women, and public opinion polls, Erdoğan managed to increase the RP's vote share. Based on the initial vote count, Erdoğan had thought that he won the election. Once the electoral board announced the official results, Erdoğan accused them of committing fraud. He even called one of the judges on the board "drunk." Because of that incident, the court sentenced Erdoğan to prison for six months. However, he only served one week and then bailed out (Besli and Özbay 2010; Akdoğan 2017).

After several failed attempts, Erdoğan, at the age of forty, won an election in 1994, that proved to be a turning point in his political career. In a crowded field of candidates, Erdoğan (25 percent) became the mayor of Istanbul, the largest city in Turkey, with a population over eight million at that time. Erdoğan's rise to power paralleled with the RP's increasing electoral appeal, first at the municipal level and then nationwide. During his tenure as mayor (1994-1998), Erdoğan prioritized pragmatism over Islamism with the motto "service to the people is service to God," thus focused on projects to improve the citizens' material quality of life including public transportation, road-building, water system, and collection of garbage. Despite his material accomplishments, Mayor Erdoğan's fate, as an individual politician, depended on his party's standing at the national level, more specifically the RP's participation in the coalition government with DYP and its tense relations with the military (Besli and Özbay 2010).

Following the 1997 military intervention, Prime Minister Erbakan's forceful resignation, and the Constitutional Court's closure of the RP, Erdoğan became a target of the secular establishment. Three months into the end of his five-year term, Erdoğan had to leave his position and go to jail one more time. This time, Erdoğan was sentenced to

ten months in prison, but served only four months, for reciting the following quatrain and inciting religious division and violence during a rally in the southeastern province of Siirt (Heper and Toktaş 2003, 170):

> Minarets are bayonets
> Domes are helmets
> Mosques are barracks
> Believers are soldiers

Due to his prison sentence, Erdoğan lost his eligibility to run for public office in the future. Nevertheless, he continued to engage in political activity behind bars. Once he got out of prison, Erdoğan initially followed Erbakan's leadership and joined the Felicity Party (FP). Inside the FP, he pushed for a reformist agenda alongside with the other members of the younger generation. When the Constitutional Court announced the closure of the FP, Erdoğan and his followers defied Erbakan's authority and decided to establish the Justice and Development Party (AKP)[52] as a brand-new organization of the reformist wing.[53] In the inaugural meeting of the AKP, Erdoğan vowed to end the so-called "oligarchy of the party leaders" in Turkish political history. Hence, he underlined the importance of teamwork and consultation in the decision-making process of the AKP, that would not depend on a single authoritarian figure. Contrary to Erbakan's anti-Western rhetoric, Erdoğan also stated the AKP's commitment to modernity and Turkey's European Union membership (Besli and Özbay 2010; Heper 2013).

[52] The official abbreviation of the Justice and Development Party is AK Party. In the academic literature, the use of AKP is also very common. For the sake of consistency, the dissertation will refer to the AKP from now on.

[53] The members of the reformist wing of the FP included Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, Bülent Arınç, and Abdüllatif Şener among others who founded the AKP in 2001.

5.2.2 The AKP's First Term

The establishment of the AKP was in the context of massive discontent with the existing political parties. After a devastating earthquake in 1999 and an economic crisis in 2001, the coalition government led by Prime Minister Ecevit lost its popular appeal, and early elections were scheduled for November 2002 (Baslevent and Akarca 2008). In that sense, Erdoğan's AKP emerged as an alternative to the political parties which had dominated the previous decade of unstable coalition governments. To fill that gap, the AKP's 2002 campaign emphasized the need for political stability to improve the living conditions of a diverse array of groups including the farmers, small business owners, workers, and women. The party also promised to lift the existing bans regarding the expression of Kurdish and religious identities (AK Parti 2002). Most importantly, the AKP refused to label itself an Islamist party but embraced the concept of conservative democracy. With this new outlook, the founders of the AKP aimed to alleviate the pre-existing polarization over secularism (Insel 2003; Cinar 2006; Dagi 2008).

In the November 2002 parliamentary elections, the AKP received 34 percent of the vote, which gave it the mandate to form a single-party government. The party's electoral victory was aggravated by a ten percent electoral threshold, which pushed all political parties represented in the previous parliamentary term (1999-2002) out. Besides the AKP, the CHP (18 percent) was the only party that could pass this high threshold. As a result, nearly half of the votes were wasted, and the AKP gained almost two-thirds representation in the parliament. Despite the AKP's electoral success, Erdoğan remained out of the parliament, due to his prison sentence in 1999. In the absence of its charismatic leader, the second most prominent person in the party, Abdullah Gül, formed the

government. Erdoğan could become prime minister in March 2003 after a constitutional change[54] and a special election (Cagaptay 2002; Tepe 2005).

In terms of economic policy-making, the first term of the AKP represented a continuity with the late coalition government than a significant rupture. On the macroeconomic front, the AKP did not deviate from the neoliberal model but intensified it with privatizations and the opening of the Turkish economy to global markets (Öniş 2011). During this period, the average growth of the economy was 7.4 percent. The inflation was down to single digits for the first time since the 1970s (Baran 2008). At the local level, there was a significant increase in public works projects and social programs targeting the poor, women, children, elderly, and disabled (AK Parti 2007).

Regarding the EU membership negotiations, the AKP continued the ongoing reform process through further liberalizing the civil-military relations[55] as well as broadening the scope of the freedom of speech, assembly, media, and minority rights (Müftüler Baç 2005; Kubicek 2013). In spite of this initial set of reforms, from 2005 onward, the EU reform process lost[56] its momentum. In response to growing ambiguity

[54] The constitutional amendment to lift Erdoğan's ban passed with bipartisan support. Initially, President Ahmet Necdet Sezer (2000-2007) returned the constitutional amendment to the parliament due to the individual nature of the bill. When the parliament resubmitted the amendment to the president, Sezer decided to approve it rather than calling a referendum. The confrontational attitude of President Sezer continued throughout the first term of the AKP as he utilized the presidential powers as a check on the AKP's parliamentary majority. In total, Sezer exercised his veto power seventy-two times, either delaying or blocking the legislative process (Vatan 2007).

[55] On the realm of civil-military relations, the changes included removing the military member from the Higher Education Council, abolishing the State Security Courts, increasing oversight of the military by the Court of Accounts as well as other legal changes limiting the role, the privileged status, and the power of the National Security Council on civil affairs. It also narrowed the jurisdiction of military courts' ability to prosecute civilians in peaceful times (Sarigil 2012). Overall, these significant changes had reduced the military's institutional veto power vis-à-vis the democratically elected AKP government.

[56] Two major problems were the inability to solve the Cyprus conflict and the election of Nicolas Sarkozy (France) and Angela Merkel (Germany).

on Turkey's membership, the government also showed signs of reform fatigue. Additionally, nationalist circles within the country viewed the EU process as a threat to Turkey's territorial integrity since it involved granting more rights to the Kurdish[57] minority and breaking the Armenian Genocide taboo (Patton 2007).

On civil-military relations, the initial years of the AKP era were relatively peaceful (Heper 2005). However, with the appointment of a hardliner, Yaşar Büyükanıt, to the position of the chief of the general staff in 2006, the military's official discourse once again shifted toward preserving the secular nature of the republic against the religious reactionary (Cizre 2008). President Ahmet Necdet Sezer and the leader of the CHP, Deniz Baykal, also sided with the military to contain the potential Islamist threat from the AKP and Prime Minister Erdoğan (Ciddi 2008).

Amid increasing polarization over secularism between the two camps, the 2007 presidential elections appeared on the horizon. The secular elite wanted to prevent someone from the AKP, especially Erdoğan, becoming the eleventh President of the Republic. Hence, the CHP leader Baykal called for the renewal of parliamentary elections before the National Assembly would elect a new president (Özbudun 2014). Baykal argued that the AKP was only representing 34 percent of the people and lacked the democratic legitimacy to choose the next president on its own. Polarization over secularism was also visible among the public with the organization of "the Republic Rallies" and slogans such as "Turkey is secular, and it will remain secular," "We don't

[57] In 2005, Prime Minister Erdoğan gave a historical speech in Diyarbakır where he recognized the Kurdish issue and expressed his commitment to solving it through democratic means (The Economist 2005).

want an imam as president," and "The path to the presidential palace is closed to Sharia" (Tambar 2009, 525).

In response to the demands of the secular circles, Prime Minister Erdoğan made the case the AKP had the necessary number of seats in the parliament to put forward its own candidate. Therefore, Erdoğan announced the candidacy of Abdullah Gül just three days before the elections without consulting the opposition. Accordingly, Gül was elected to the presidency with 357 votes. Subsequently, the CHP took the election to the Constitutional Court on the procedural grounds that the necessary two-thirds quorum (367 out of 550 seats) was lacking. The court ruled in favor of the CHP's appeal and annulled the election. Meanwhile, the military released a memorandum on its website, reiterating its role as the defender of secularism and expressing its grave concern with the presidential election process (Balkır 2007). At the backdrop of these developments, the AKP had no option but to call new elections. The AKP also passed a constitutional amendment, to be put into a referendum, for the popular election of future presidents (Baran 2008).

During the April 2007 parliamentary elections, the AKP pursued a strategy to avoid a direct conflict with the military, thus restated its commitment to the main principles of the republic. Instead, the party placed the people at the center of its campaign and Prime Minister Erdoğan increasingly resorted to the populist dichotomy of the will of people vs. its enemies. As such, Erdoğan blamed the secular elite for placing barriers to the expression of national sovereignty (Dinçşahin 2012). The emphasis on people was also visible in the AKP's election manifesto, which defined party's mission as "being the servant of the people, especially the marginalized ones" (AK Parti 2007, 7).

Despite these increasing references to populism, polarization during the first term of the AKP primarily centered on the issue of secularism. In the next term, polarization over secularism would persist, and Erdoğan would display further elements of polarizing populist leadership.

5.2.3 The AKP's Second and Third Terms

In the July 2007 parliamentary elections, the AKP increased its vote share to 47 percent mainly because of the voters' satisfaction with the successful economic performance during the first term (Çarkoğlu 2008; Kalaycıoğlu 2010). The results of the 2007 elections once again allowed the AKP to form a single-party government, but with a reduced[58] majority (Balkır 2007). After the elections, the first task of the new parliament was to choose the president. The AKP once again nominated Gül and this time managed to get him elected with the necessary quorum.

With Gül's election, for the first time in history, the first lady of the Turkish Republic would wear the Islamic headscarf, which meant a symbolic loss for the members of the secular establishment. Also, three months after the parliamentary elections, the people voted in a referendum on the popular election of future presidents and reduction of the presidential term from seven-years (no re-election) to five-years (with one re-election). In the absence of strong opposition, the constitutional changes easily passed (69 percent yes vote) (Levitt and Çıplak 2012).

During the AKP's second term, its battle with the secular establishment manifested itself in several instances. Two of them are worth mentioning here. The first

[58] Even though the AKP increased its votes, it won fewer number of seats (from 361 to 341 out of 550 seats) in the parliament. In addition to the AKP, the CHP (21 percent), the MHP (14 percent) and independent Kurdish candidates (bypassing the 10 percent threshold) also gained representation.

major event was the start of an investigation against active and former military officers, journalists, and members of the academia, who had allegedly plotted a coup to overthrow the democratically elected government. The judicial process known as *Ergenekon* deeply shook the military since many of its well-ranked personnel were arrested and put on trial. Later on, the investigations broadened with another alleged coup plot called *Balyoz*. At large, the exposure of the coup plots undermined the military's credibility in the eyes of the citizens and helped strengthen civilian control (Gürsoy 2012).

The second prominent event during the second term was a party closure case against the AKP due to its alleged anti-secular activities. As the Constitutional Court had a track record of closing the AKP's Islamist predecessors, led by Erbakan, the case was a direct challenge to the party's prospects to govern Turkey. The indictment consisted of statements of party members criticizing the headscarf ban in the universities, expressing favorable views on the Sharia rule, using Islam as a reference point in politics, and aiming to abolish the secular lifestyle (Hürriyet 2008). After the hearings, six justices voted in favor of the AKP's closure and five justices voted against it. Since the constitution required seven votes in favor, the AKP managed to avoid such an outcome. Even though the party remained open, the Constitutional Court cut its state funding by half (Milliyet 2008).

After these confrontations with the secular establishment, the AKP prepared a comprehensive constitutional reform package in 2010. The package included further liberalization of civil-military relations but also contained controversial changes in the composition of the Constitutional Court such as increasing the number of justices from eleven to seventeen and granting the president the power to name fourteen of them. At a

lower level, the proposed amendments would restructure the High Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors, which oversaw promotions, appointments, and disciplinary actions in the judicial system.

Although the opposition parties argued that the changes would pack the Constitutional Court with AKP-friendly justices as well as undermine checks and balances, President Gül approved them and called a referendum. In the September 2010 referendum, the constitutional amendments passed (58 percent yes vote) (Özbudun 2015). Overall, the vote choice in the 2010 referendum reflected partisan divisions as well as the conflict between secular and conservative voters (Atikcan and Öge 2012; Kalaycıoğlu 2011). The referendum also displayed increasing signs of polarization around Erdoğan's personality, who portrayed the vote as a stark choice between good and evil (Türk 2014).

Besides the polarizing 2010 referendum, during this period, Prime Minister Erdoğan frequently resorted to populism at the domestic and international fronts. As a leader who had to overcome several hurdles, Prime Minister Erdoğan claimed to represent the marginalized segments of the society. Accordingly, Erdoğan declared a democratic opening to the Kurdish minority and apologized on behalf of the state for the bloody repression of a rebellion during the single-party regime (Satana 2012). On several other instances, Erdoğan's revisionist account of history portrayed the CHP as the party of the elite, who had looked down upon the average people, as opposed to AKP's sincere and honest relationship with them (Türk 2014).

At the international level, Prime Minister Erdoğan made it to the headlines during the 2009 World Economic Forum in Davos, when he harshly criticized the Israeli President Shimon Peres and angrily walked off the stage by saying: "Mr. Peres, you are

older than me. Your voice comes out in a very loud tone. And the loudness of your voice has to do with a guilty conscience. My voice, however, will not come out in the same tone. When it comes to killing, you know well how to kill" (New York Times 2008). After the so-called Davos incident, Erdoğan received a hero's welcome at the Istanbul Atatürk Airport, and his passionate followers started to call him "the Conqueror of Davos" (Sabah 2009).

In the same way, during the Tahrir Square protests in 2011, Erdoğan urged the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to step down and told him: "We should listen to the voice of our conscience and the voice of our people and be ready either for their good prayers or curses. We are for the people; we are in the service of the people" (Hürriyet Daily News 2011). A systematic analysis of Prime Minister Erdoğan's foreign policy speeches reaches similar conclusions regarding his personality and populist leadership style:

> Individuals such as Tayyip Erdoğan, who have low conceptual complexity, tend to see the world in stark, black-and-white terms, with a low tolerance for ambiguity. They make strong distinctions between "us" and "them," succumbing to categorical thinking on most matters (Görener and Ucal 2011, 367). In addition, his consistently high level of distrust leads him to approach politics as a battle between good and evil and as a struggle to defend his kind. He is highly suspicious of the motives and actions of others and tends to see the worst in people and situations that are unfamiliar to him (Görener and Ucal 2011, 375).

In the 2011 parliamentary election campaign, the AKP once again focused on material achievements since it had come to power, such as raising the GDP per capita from $3,492 to $10,079, the total amount of divided roads from 6,101 km to 19,657 km, and the annual number of passengers in air travel from 49.5 million to 165 million in

addition to increasing spending on education, healthcare, and social policy (AK Parti 2011).

A major promise of the AKP campaign was to rewrite the constitution and establish an "advanced democracy," where every citizen could freely enjoy their rights and liberties without any restriction. Paradoxically, the party's election manifesto also contained several references to the national will as "the main guiding principle of the AKP's political vision and approach to democracy" (AK Parti 2011, 19). Similarly, the CHP, under the leadership of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu,[59] chose not to politicize the issue of secularism further, but organized its campaign around material issues like unemployment, poverty, and corruption in addition to improving the quality of democracy and promoting social justice (Aydın-Düzgit 2012; Gürsoy 2012).

Despite the general focus on issues related to the economic well-being of citizens, during the televised campaign rallies, Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu targeted one another at a personal level. While Erdoğan frequently referred to Kılıçdaroğlu's Alevi background to the predominantly Sunni constituency of the AKP, in return, Kılıçdaroğlu "repeatedly accused Erdoğan of corruption and nepotism, and placed particular emphasis on his son's short-term military service, which he defined as an expression of Erdoğan's hypocritical nationalism" (Aydın-Düzgit 2012, 333). In a highly partisan media environment, where newspapers and television stations heavily covered one side of the story (Çarkoğlu, Baruh and Yıldırım 2014), these bitter exchanges between the two leaders contributed to the personalization of politics as well as leader polarization.

[59] In 2010, there was a leadership change within the CHP following a leaked sex tape of Deniz Baykal. Under Kılıçdaroğlu's leadership, the CHP shifted the focus from secularism to social democracy (Esen and Ciddi 2011).

Another source of polarization during the 2011 election campaign was the Kurdish issue. In fact, under the successive AKP governments, there were serious reforms to improve the conditions of the Kurdish minority. Parallel with the EU membership process, under the broad umbrella of human rights, the parliament passed legislation eliminating torture, allowing the broadcast in languages other than Turkish, permitting the use of names in Kurdish, and extending the freedom of expression (Kayhan Pusane 2014).

With the declaration of a Kurdish opening in 2009, there was also a serious possibility of disarming the PKK and solving the decades-long conflict. However, due to the divisions on both sides, the government failed to put an end to it. What is more, the escalation of violence around the parliamentary elections fueled nationalist sentiments on both sides. In this context, the Turkish nationalist MHP criticized the government for tolerating Kurdish separatism and destroying the unity of the Turkish nation (Bacık 2011), while the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) accused it of the ongoing policies of repression, assimilation, denial, and deadlock (Satana 2012).

Against this background, the AKP won (50 percent) the parliamentary elections[60] in June 2011. Including the referendums (2007, 2010) and the local elections (2004, 2009), overall, it was the AKP's seventh consecutive victory at the ballot box. Under the leadership of Kılıçdaroğlu, the CHP remained the main opposition party (Müftüler-Baç and Keyman 2012; Gumuscu 2013). On the election night, from the balcony of the AKP

[60] Even though the AKP increased its vote share, its representation in the parliament diminished from 341 to 326 seats. This meant that the AKP lost its three-fifth majority to make constitutional changes and put them into referendum. In addition to the AKP, the CHP (26 percent), the MHP (13 percent) and independent Kurdish candidates (bypassing the 10 percent threshold) also gained representation.

headquarters in Ankara, Erdoğan gave a depolarizing speech and embraced every single person in the country regardless of their ethnicity, religion, and vote choice. He said: "I hope, from now on, the opposition will review its policies and construct a political style that overlaps with the New Turkey. Today, even people who did not vote for us, do not approve of us and do not like us are among the winners" (AK Parti 2014). In contradiction with these inclusionary remarks, Erdoğan's third term in office would represent continuity in terms of excluding the members of the out-group. As such, between 2011 and 2015, Prime Minister Erdoğan's leadership style showed

> clear marks of *personalismo*, with a strong sense of mission and an excessive concentration of authority in his hands. Parallel to this, he [saw] the ballot box (i.e., vertical accountability) as the only instrument of accountability and the only source of democratic legitimacy. 'National will', as expressed through the ballot box, [was] elevated to a nearly sacred status. Instruments of horizontal accountability, always weak in Turkish politics, [had] further weakened (Özbudun 2014, 163).

In the absence of strong veto players to check Prime Minister Erdoğan's top-down authority, the first main challenge came from a protest movement known as the Gezi Park. In May 2013, a group of activists protested an urban development project that would replace a public park, at the center of Istanbul, with a shopping center and an old military barrack. The protests, which were initially small in scale, quickly turned into a national uprising against the government, soon after the riot police had used excessive force to disperse the crowd. Since the mainstream media, out of fear of the government, had turned a blind eye toward the events, the activists used social media sites to spread the information and reclaim the public space (Göle 2013; Özkırımlı 2014).

Unlike any other protest in the past, the composition of the protestors did not represent a particular political party but a diverse array of groups like environmentalists,

seculars, Kurds, Alevis, LGBT groups, feminists, and football fans. In that sense, the Gezi Park protests were a brand-new type of resistance against traditional forms of authority through the expression of post-material values (Arat 2013). Besides these self-expression values, another common denominator of groups of the protestors was their obvious dislike for Erdoğan on the grounds that he was "increasingly authoritarian and dictatorial; meddling in lifestyles; anti-democratic; displaying an attitude that polarized and evoked tension among the country's population" (Altun 2016, 170).

Confirming these criticisms, Erdoğan's response to the Gezi Park protests was to organize counter-demonstrations called "Respect for the National Will Rallies" (Taş 2015). In the Istanbul rally, which was attended by over a million people, Erdoğan angrily told these to his followers: "We won't fall into the dirty trap of anybody. Turkey is not a state where international media organizations could manipulate. Shamelessly, they talk about an Arab Spring in Turkey or the so-called Turkey Spring. You fool! Turkey has already had the Turkish Spring on November 3, 2002" (Milliyet 2013). As such, Erdoğan interpreted the Gezi Park protests as an alliance of domestic and international actors, who aimed to topple him through false claims of authoritarianism (Ete 2013). Two months after the protests, the military coup in Egypt against Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood further aggravated Erdoğan's threat perception (Özhan 2014).

At the end of 2013, another existential crisis greatly challenged Prime Minister Erdoğan and the AKP. Early in the morning of December 17, the police detained more than fifty people including prominent businesspeople, a bank manager, a real estate tycoon, and sons of three ministers without the knowledge of the government. One week

later, a judge even attempted to detain the prime minister's own son, Bilal Erdoğan[61], on similar grounds. Erdoğan's response to these accusations was to blame the members of the Gülen Movement,[62] who had allegedly infiltrated to key positions within the state bureaucracy, mainly the judiciary and police in the form of a parallel structure (DW 2017). Accordingly, Erdoğan and his followers interpreted the corruption probe as a "police-judiciary coup attempt" (Özhan 2014).

Prior to these investigations, there were already signs of a split between the government and the Gülen Movement over a number of issues including the Kurdish peace process, the relations Israel, closure of university preparation schools, and Erdoğan's authoritarian style. Therefore, the December 2013 corruption probe was a turning point in their ongoing power struggle, as the government, from then on, redefined the Gülen Movement as a terrorist organization and started to target its affiliates in the police, judiciary, media, and the business world. Overall, the corruption scandal and its aftermath further personalized Turkish politics and placed Erdoğan's own family at the center of political debates. While the opposition attempted to spread the news, especially the leaked conversations between Erdoğan and his son as evidence of corruption, the government's response was to block access to Twitter and YouTube right before the 2014 local elections (Keyman 2014).

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[61] Two months later, leaked phone conversations between the prime minister and his son appeared on the Internet, which implicated corruption at the very top level. To read the conversations, see "The Erdogan Tapes" (Çandar 2014).

[62] The Gülen Movement is a religious cult led by Fethullah Gülen, who currently resides in the United States. At the public level, it promotes moderate Islam and interfaith dialogue mainly through running schools not only in Turkey but around the world. Especially during the first two terms of the AKP, members of the Gülen movement were promoted into key positions in the military, police, and the judiciary as part of an alliance against the secular establishment. After successfully weakening the secular establishment, the AKP and the Gülen movement later turned against each other.

Amid allegations of corruption, the 2014 local elections turned into a vote of confidence on Prime Minister Erdoğan's strong leadership. With a record turnout of 90 percent, the local elections confirmed Erdoğan's popularity, as the AKP received 43 percent of the vote nationwide. The election results confirmed that as long as the AKP supporters perceived good economic conditions in the country, corruption allegations would not significantly alter their vote choice or view of Erdoğan (Çarkoğlu 2014). In addition to favorable economic evaluations, another factor that minimized the damage was polarization. On that matter, in the aftermath of the 2014 local elections, Keyman made the following assessment:

> Naturally, polarization has helped Erdoğan to consolidate his constituency and therefore win elections. As an instrumental electoral strategy, he preferred to act in a way that made polarization beneficial to his campaign. However, this strategy comes at a price – strengthening polarization to the point of fragmentation, even division. Turkey has become a highly polarized society with little general trust, creating the risk of becoming a divided society (Keyman 2014, 29).

At the backdrop of these developments, President Gül's seven-year term would end in August 2014. Thanks to the constitutional change in 2007, voters, instead of the members of the parliament, would choose the twelfth president. Erdoğan was the AKP's natural candidate, though it was not clear who would succeed him as the party chairman and, more importantly, the prime minister. To deny Erdoğan the presidency, the CHP and the MHP leaders decided to put forward a unity candidate, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, the former Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Also, the pro-Kurdish opposition nominated its own anti-Erdoğan candidate, Selahattin Demirtaş (Kalaycıoğlu 2015).

During the presidential election campaign, Prime Minister Erdoğan had disproportionate access to state, media, and financial resources (OSCE 2014). Also, Erdoğan frequently resorted to populism and referred his most serious challenger, İhsanoğlu, as "a *mon cher*, implying that he belonged to an upper caste of elites who are not only alien to the people but look down on them as well" (Kalaycıoğlu 2015, 163). Thanks to the uneven playing field, favorable economic conditions, successful use of populism, and polarization, Erdoğan (52 percent) easily won the elections in the first round, followed by İhsanoğlu (38 percent) and Demirtaş (10 percent).

Before taking office, per constitutional requirements, Erdoğan resigned from the AKP and handpicked a successor, then Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. Nevertheless, in practice, President Erdoğan continued to act as the head of the AKP, and personally dominated the country's day to day governance. While he was openly violating the constitution and the presidential oath, Erdoğan argued for an institutional change to legalize his power grab. On that matter, in a mass rally, Erdoğan said the following: "Whether one accepts it or not, Turkey's administrative system has changed. Now, what should be done is to update this de facto situation in the legal framework of the constitution" (Hürriyet Daily News 2015).

In the June 2015 parliamentary elections, President Erdoğan continued to violate the law and campaigned for his (officially) former party. Parallel with Erdoğan's personal ambitions as a politician, the AKP campaign emphasized the need to establish a presidential system. On the other hand, the opposition parties argued against the proposal because it would lead to further authoritarianism and personalism. In this context, the People's Democratic Party (HDP) announced that it would participate in elections by

submitting party lists instead of independent candidates. On the election day, this strategy paid off, and the HDP (13 percent) surpassed the 10 percent threshold. For the first time since 2002, the AKP (41 percent) fell short of a parliamentary majority[63] to be able to form a single-party government, far from the goal of the three-fifths majority to make constitutional changes and put them into a referendum (Kemahlıoğlu 2015; Öniş 2016).

After the June 2015 elections, the opposition parties seemed to have an opportunity to form an anti-Erdoğan coalition government. However, the MHP leader, Devlet Bahçeli, announced that his party would not take part in any coalition government, especially with the pro-Kurdish HDP. Moreover, President Erdoğan actively prevented the formation of a coalition government led by the AKP chairman Ahmet Davutoğlu, since it would undermine his informal authority. Amid political instability and growing terrorist attacks by the PKK and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the president announced the renewal of parliamentary elections.

In the snap elections of November 2015, the AKP (50 percent) increased its vote share while the MHP (12 percent) and the HDP (11 percent) experienced a decline. The CHP (25 percent) remained as the main opposition party. The results of the repeat elections gave the AKP the ability to form a single-party government for the fourth time (Sayarı 2016; Öniş 2016). The two parliamentary elections in 2015 demonstrated the salience of leader polarization in the sense that the political spectrum "often boil[ed] down to a simple formula: that is, you either support President Erdoğan's positions (that are sometimes not even AKP position) or you oppose them" (Erisen 2016, 49).

[63] In the June 2015 elections, the AKP (41 percent) won 258 seats, followed by the CHP (25 percent) and 132 seats, the MHP (16 percent) and 80 seats, the HDP (13 percent) and 80 seats.

To trace the origins of leader polarization, this section concludes by examining the inclusionary vs. exclusionary elements of Erdoğan's populist leadership toward the members of the in-group and the out-group. To the former, Erdoğan offered symbolic inclusion through his claim to represent the marginalized sectors of the society, *Zenci Türkler* (the Black Turks) in his own words. Based on such victimization narrative, Erdoğan promoted himself as the embodiment of the people, who acted and spoke like them. Thanks to this authentic relationship, followers of Erdoğan could easily identify with his charisma and attribute him nicknames like *Reis* (the Chief), *Usta* (the Master), *Uzun Adam* (the Tall Man), and *Davos Fatihi* (the Conqueror of Davos) (Çınar and Sayın 2014; Selçuk 2016). In addition to his populist rhetoric, Erdoğan offered political inclusion to his followers by lifting existing bans to express Kurdish and religious conservative identities as well as referring to the idea of national will during frequent elections, referendums, and mass rallies (Özbudun 2015; Kubicek 2016). Furthermore, Erdoğan's success as a populist leader depended on material accomplishments such as stabilizing the economy, creating social programs, and building new schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, high-speed railways, and airports (Akdoğan 2017; Buğra 2017).

Parallel to his inclusionary leadership, Erdoğan displayed exclusionary elements of populism to the members of the out-group. At the symbolic level, Erdoğan characterized his followers as *kardeşlerim* (my brothers), *benim milettim* (my nation), *benim polisim* (my police), *başörtülü bacım* (my head scarved sister), and *dindar nesil* (religious generation), while he excluded others with phrases like *teröristler* (terrorists), *vatan hainleri* (traitors to the homeland), *çapulcular* (marauders), *alkolikler* (alchoholics), *darbeciler* (coup-sympathizers) (Selçuk 2016). Besides symbolic

exclusion, Erdoğan also politically excluded his opponents by concentrating power in his hands and limiting people's ability to contest his government (Öniş 2014). To give an example, in 2015 alone, "460 people [were] investigated for insulting Erdogan, 50 were journalists, while 281 were members of formal opposition" (Esen and Gumuscu 2016, 1593). Finally, the clientelistic[64] nature of material exchanges limited the opposition's access to resources in the form of basic goods, government jobs, housing, and public procurements (Çarkoğlu and Aytaç 2015; Marschall, Aydogan and Bulut 2016; Esen and Gumuscu 2017).

5.3 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

This section utilizes public opinion survey data on Turkey to measure the extent of polarization. The first data source is the 2011 survey of the Comparative Studies of Electoral Systems (CSES). I rely on two main questions from the CSES survey. The first question, to measure ideological polarization, is an eleven-point left-right scale, in which the interviewer shows the respondent a card and asks the following question: "In politics, people sometimes talk about the left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means the left-most and 10 means the right-most position?"

The second question, to measure leader polarization, is also an eleven-point dislike-like scale, where the interviewer shows the same card to the respondents and

[64] According to Democratic Accountability and Linkage Project, (1) 100 percent of the experts agree with the statement that the AKP does a major effort to attract voters by providing consumer goods; (2) 81.9 percent of the experts agree with the statement that AKP does a major effort to attract voters by providing preferential public benefits; (3) 90 percent of the experts agree with the statement that the AKP does a major effort to attract voters by providing preferential access to employment opportunities; (4) 90.9 percent of the experts agree with the statement that the AKP does a major effort to attract voters by offering them preferential access to government contracts or procurement opportunities; (5) 100 percent of the experts agree with the statement that the AKP does a major effort to attract voters and the businesses for which they work by influencing regulatory proceedings in their favor (Kitschelt 2013).

states the following: “After I read the name of a party leader, please rate them on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you strongly dislike that candidate and 10 means that you strongly like that candidate.” To measure the extent of leader polarization, I use respondents’ ratings of the AKP leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Another measure of leader polarization is from the March 2013 survey of KONDA. Within a battery of questions, the interviewer asks the respondents to rate to what extent they find the AKP (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan), the CHP (Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu), and the MHP (Devlet Bahçeli) leaders “sincere.” Thus, I utilize the sincerity ratings of Erdoğan on a five-point scale.

To measure polarization at a given time, I analyze whether there is clustering at both ends of the spectrum rather than the center. In other words, an ideal polarized distribution should look bimodal with weak central and strong extreme categories, whereas a less polarized distribution should look closer to a bell-curve. To find out the predictors of leader polarization, I recode the CSES 2011 survey’s eleven-point dislike-like scale into a trichotomous variable. I do it by picking two extreme categories on each side (0 and 1 for extreme dislike, 9 and 10 for extreme like). Similarly, I pick the extreme categories on the KONDA 2013 survey’s sincerity ratings of Erdoğan (1 for finding him extremely insincere and 5 for extremely sincere). In that way, through multinomial logistic regression analyses, I would be able to identify the variables, which may predict the movement away from the middle to each extreme category.

In line with the theoretical framework of the dissertation, I put forward two independent variables to explain leader polarization: campaign following and expectation of an economic crisis. In the CSES survey, as a proxy of political interest, I use the question that asks “How closely did you follow the election campaign? Very closely,

fairly closely, not very closely, or not closely at all?" In the KONDA survey, to measure sociotropic evaluation, I use the question that asks "Do you expect an economic crisis in Turkey in the upcoming months? Yes or no?" In addition to the two independent variables, the regression analyses also control for income (ordinal), education (ordinal), urban (dummy), woman (dummy), religiosity (ordinal), age (interval), and Kurdish ethnicity (dummy). Tables 7-8 report the summary statistics of all variables that are subject to analysis.

Table 7. Summary Statistics for CSES 2011-Turkey.

CSES 2011 (Turkey)	N	Mean	Min	Max
ideology	900	5.960	0	10
like	1060	6.170	0	10
extreme like	1060	2.203	1	3
campaign	1067	2.534	1	4
income	995	2.980	1	5
education	1105	4.019	1	8
urban	1109	0.579	0	1
woman	1109	0.551	0	1
religiosity	1038	3.293	1	4
age	1088	39.389	18	85

Table 8. Summary Statistics for KONDA 2013-Turkey.

KONDA 2013 (Turkey)	N	Mean	Min	Max
sincerity	2572	3.375	1	5
extreme sincerity	2572	2.157	1	3
economic crisis	2581	0.378	0	1
income	2397	3.382	1	5
education	2653	3.987	1	7
urban	2669	0.787	0	1
woman	2666	0.487	0	1
religiosity	2648	2.852	1	4
Kurdish	2659	0.135	0	1
age	2661	40.131	18	91

Figure 18. Left-Right Ideological Self-Placement in Turkey (2011).

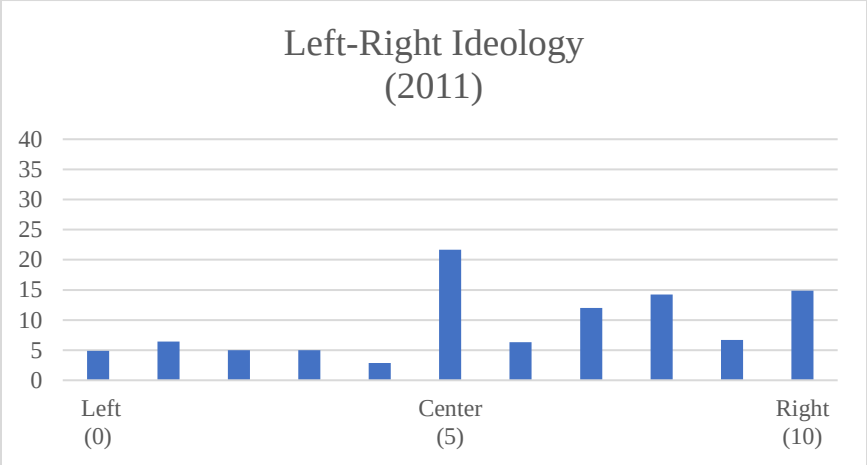


Figure 19. The Extent of Dislike and Like of Erdoğan (2011).

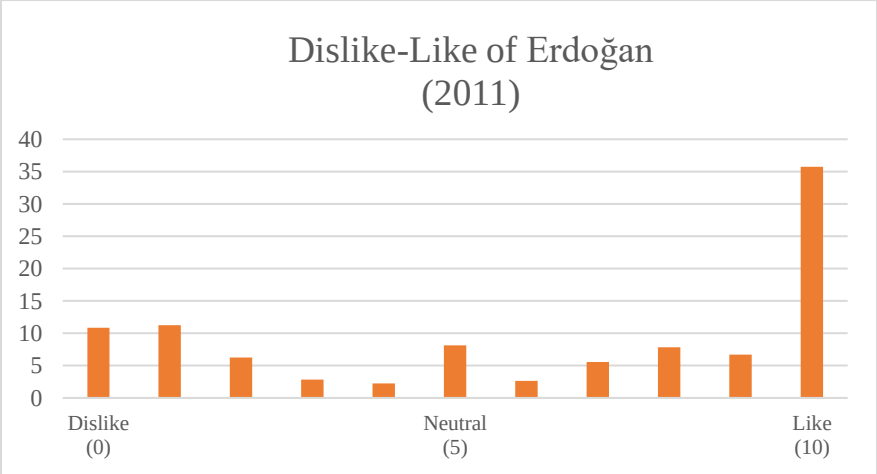


Figure 20. Evaluation of Erdoğan's Sincerity (2013).

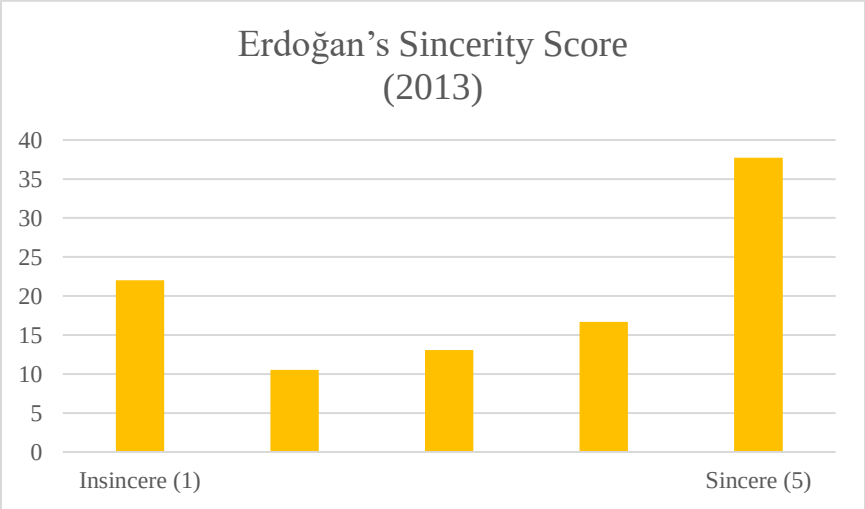


Table 9. Multinomial Logistic Regression Results for CSES 2011-Turkey

CSES 2011	Extreme dislike	Extreme like
campaign	0.510*** (.112)	0.243*** (.091)
income	0.076 (.078)	0.053 (.064)
education	0.137** (.061)	-0.228*** (.058)
urban	-0.256 (.209)	-0.345** (.173)
women	-0.034 (.198)	-0.306* (.169)
religiosity	-0.463*** (.138)	0.691*** (.128)
age	0.010 (.006)	-0.013** (.005)
N	867	867
Pseudo R^2	0.08	0.08

Significance levels ***p<0.01 ** p<0.05 *p<0.10
Standard error in parentheses.

Table 10. Multinomial Logistic Regression Results for KONDA 2013-Turkey.

KONDA 2013	Extreme insincerity	Extreme sincerity
economic crisis	1.242*** (.123)	-0.721*** (.112)
income	-0.115* (.069)	-0.188*** (.057)
education	0.100* (.057)	-0.285*** (.048)
urban	0.425*** (.161)	0.170 (.125)
woman	-0.216* (.125)	0.187* (.106)
religiosity	-0.233** (.100)	0.513*** (090)
kurdish	0.378** (.169)	-0.252* (.148)
age	0.005 (.004)	-0.006 (.004)
N	2200	2200
Pseudo R^2	0.10	0.10

Significance levels ***p<0.01 ** p<0.05 *p<0.10
Standard error in parentheses.

To start with the descriptive findings on ideological polarization (Figure 18), the distribution peaks at the center instead of the extreme categories. More specifically, 22 percent of the respondents identify at the exact ideological center (category 5). There is also significant clustering at the right-wing ideology, particularly the extreme right. In comparison to left-right ideology, the distribution of the dislike-like toward Erdoğan (Figure 19) has weak central categories and strong expression of extreme like. In a similar fashion, Erdoğan's sincerity scores peak at the extremes (Figure 20). Therefore, 60 percent of the respondents either find him extremely insincere (category 1) or extreme sincere (category 5). Due to a polarized distribution, the mean (Table 8) of the sincerity score is 3.37 even though only 13.06 percent of the respondents identify in the middle (category 3). Overall, descriptive statistical results confirm the primacy of leader polarization over ideological polarization among the Turkish public. They also support the qualitative findings on the personalization of politics and Erdoğan's polarizing populism.

Tables 9-10 report the multinomial logistic regression models to identify the predictors of leader polarization. In the CSES 2011 survey (Table 9), statistically significant predictors of extreme dislike of Erdoğan include campaign following (+), education (+), and religiosity (-). At the other end of the spectrum, campaign following (+), education (-), urban (-), woman (-), religiosity (+), and age (-) predict expressing extreme like. In the KONDA 2013 survey (Table 10), the expectation of economic crisis (+), income (-), education (+), urban (-), religiosity (-), and Kurdish ethnicity are significant predictors of finding Erdoğan extremely insincere. Moreover, expectation of economic crisis (-), income (-), education (-), woman (+), religiosity (+), and Kurdish

ethnicity predict ratings of extreme sincerity. To combine the findings from both survey data, individuals' level of following the 2011 parliamentary election campaign and their expectation of an economic crisis have a strong explanatory power to predict leader polarization. Among the control variables, education (-/+) and religiosity (+/-) are also important predictors of extreme affection toward Erdoğan.

5.4 DISCUSSION

This section concludes with a discussion of the qualitative and quantitative findings of the chapter. From a long-term perspective, the Erdoğan era represents a continuity[65] with the personalist tradition in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. Hence, Erdoğan's strongman rule has historical origins going back to the Ottoman sultans, who had governed the empire in an absolutist fashion. Erdoğan's personalist authority also resembles the first two presidents of the republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü, who exemplified authoritarian one-man-rule during the single-party period. Among the party leaders in the democratic era, Erdoğan resembles Adnan Menderes (1950-1960) the most, who championed the idea of national will and polarized the country between his supporters and opponents. While concentrating power at the executive branch and limiting the opposition's ability to contest their government, both Menderes and Erdoğan steered the country toward an authoritarian direction.

Early in his political career, Erdoğan took various local posts in Necmettin Erbakan's successive political parties. After winning the mayorship of Istanbul in 1994, Erdoğan started to receive more attention at the national level and turned into a prominent

[65] In 2015, Erdoğan himself also acknowledged such continuity to make a case for presidentialism: "Actually, presidential system is in our genes, it is part of our historical tradition" (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı 2015).

politician in the Welfare Party (RP). Following the 1997 military intervention and the closure of the RP, Erdoğan became even a more popular figure. In the context of a witch hunt, due to reciting a controversial poem, he was sentenced to four months in prison and banned from running for office in the future. After getting out of prison, Erdoğan continued to engage in political activities within the Felicity Party (FP), which was later closed by the Constitutional Court. When it became clear that the secular establishment would not tolerate an openly Islamist political party, Erdoğan and his reformist fellows established the AKP under a conservative democratic banner.

In the 2002 parliamentary elections, the AKP capitalized on massive discontent with the existing political parties. Initially, Erdoğan remained out of the parliament due to his existing ban. In the policy-making realm, the AKP continued to implement the neoliberal model but also increased spending on public works projects and social programs. Furthermore, the AKP pursued Turkey's membership in the European Union and deepened the ongoing reform process. As a result of this pragmatic approach, the AKP and Erdoğan managed to avoid a major confrontation with the secular establishment. Nevertheless, during the 2007 presidential elections, the relatively dormant polarization over secularism was noticeable once again. In response to the military and judiciary's attempts to deny Abdullah Gül the presidency, Prime Minister Erdoğan increasingly resorted to the populist dichotomy of people vs. elite and called new elections to resolve the crisis.

During the AKP's second term, its conflict with the secular establishment deepened. After the 2007 parliamentary elections, a judicial process began to investigate allegations of coup plots, which resulted in the arrest of several military officers,

journalists, and university professors. Even though the government saw the process as an opportunity to normalize civil-military relations, the critics viewed it as an attempt to weaken the military's secular identity. In this context, the Constitutional Court accepted a party closure case against the AKP because of its suspected anti-secular activities. Unlike the Islamist parties of Erbakan in the past, the AKP managed to avoid closure with a slim margin. The AKP's response to this failed initiative was to reorganize the judiciary, pack the Constitutional Court, and restrict the military's reserve domains through a constitutional referendum. In that sense, the 2010 referendum marked the defeat of the secular establishment via electoral means.

In the course of these confrontations with the secular elite, Prime Minister Erdoğan promoted a victimization narrative and claimed to represent the marginalized people, namely the religious conservatives and the Kurds. Especially after the 2011 parliamentary elections, in the absence of strong veto players, Erdoğan displayed growing signs of personalism and populist leadership. What is more, the CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu heightened this personalization, since he often targeted Erdoğan as an individual instead of further politicizing issues related to secularism. As Erdoğan concentrated more power in his hands, all major debates reduced to one's position in favor or against him. That is to say, from the third term of the AKP onward, leader polarization over Erdoğan became a salient cleavage to understand Turkish politics.

To his followers, Erdoğan offered inclusionary aspects of populist leadership. At the symbolic level, he identified with the ordinary people with no privileged background. In contrast, Erdoğan adopted an exclusionary discourse toward various members of the out-group by calling them terrorists, traitors to the homeland, coup-sympathizers,

atheists, anarchists, liars, and uncivilized among other insults. At the political level, Erdoğan enhanced opportunities for top-down political participation not only via regular elections but also frequent referendums, mass rallies, and public opinion polls. While he lifted the previous bans to express Kurdish and religious identities, Erdoğan embraced a majoritarian conception of democracy and skewed the playing field against his opponents. Lastly, in the context of a growing economy, Erdoğan inaugurated several infrastructure projects as well as social programs. Nevertheless, at the micro level, supporters of Erdoğan disproportionately accessed basic goods, public sector jobs, housing projects, and public procurements in the form of clientelistic exchanges, which indicates material exclusion for the rest.

Descriptive statistics of the CSES and KONDA survey data also provide evidence for the presence of leader polarization. In the 2011 CSES survey, the dislike-like toward Erdoğan cluster at both ends of the spectrum, especially extreme like. The central categories are weak, which means that few people express relatively neutral feelings on Erdoğan. In comparison, the left-right ideology scale has a more centrist distribution. Thus, not many people identify at the ideological extremes. The findings of the 2013 KONDA survey further yield support to the primacy of leader polarization over ideological polarization among the Turkish public. Accordingly, 60 percent of the respondents find Erdoğan either very insincere or very sincere, whereas the middle categories are weak.

Going beyond the descriptive findings, multinomial logistic regression analyses identify the predictors of leader polarization, in other words, answer the question "Who is polarized over Erdoğan?" The chapter has found that increasing campaign following, as a

proxy of political interest, explains the movement away from the center to both extreme dislike and extreme like. Therefore, individuals who closely followed the 2011 parliamentary election campaign are more likely to polarize over Erdoğan. Moreover, the expectation of an economic crisis (-), as well as levels of religiosity (+) and education (-), predict extremely positive levels of affection toward the prime minister.

In line with the theoretical framework of the dissertation, leader polarization in Turkey contributed to democratic backsliding. When a significant portion of the Turkish citizens expressed extremely positive affection toward Prime Minister Erdoğan, they did not hold the president for his authoritarian behavior and serious accusations of corruption. Even though he concentrated power at the executive branch and weakened institutions of horizontal accountability, voters continued to support Erdoğan and the AKP during elections and other plebiscitary contests. While Erdoğan kept defeating his opponents at the ballot box, he perceived events like the 2013 Gezi Park Protests and the corruption scandal as illegitimate attempts to overthrow his government. As a more striking example, the attempted coup in July 2016 further victimized Erdoğan and gave him a valid excuse to crackdown[66] on the opposition. Under a state of emergency (2016-2018), Erdoğan successfully changed the constitution, established a hyper-presidential system, and won re-election. In the near future, President Erdoğan would continue to dominate Turkish politics. However, in the medium and long run, a succession crisis is very likely to occur, which would be a major challenge for both pro- and anti-Erdoğan camps.

[66] The crackdown after the coup attempt mainly targeted the alleged members of the Gülen Movement as well as secular and Kurdish opposition. For different motives, what united these groups was their opposition to Erdoğan's personalist government.

CHAPTER 6

COMPARATIVE CONCLUSIONS

This chapter of the dissertation provides comparative conclusions on populism and leader polarization. Following the theoretical framework, the chapter consists of three main sections. The first section revisits the concept of leader polarization and discusses the empirical findings on Venezuela under Chávez, Ecuador under Correa, and Turkey under Erdoğan. Qualitatively, it describes the nature of polarization in these countries between the followers and opponents of charismatic leaders. Quantitatively, it discusses the results of multinomial regression analyses that identify the predictors of leader polarization: political interest and sociotropic evaluations of the economy. The second section of the chapter unpacks the inclusionary and exclusionary dimensions of populism. To explain the occurrence of leader polarization, it underlines how populist leaders simultaneously include vs. exclude the members of the in-group and the out-group. Empirically, the section summarizes how Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan offered symbolic, political, and material inclusion vs. exclusion to *chavistas*/*correístas*/pro-Erdoğan groups and *anti-chavistas*/*anti-correístas*/anti-Erdoğan groups. The third section analyzes how leader polarization in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey contributed to democratic backsliding by undermining democratic norms and institutions as well as personalizing power. Finally, the section ends with a discussion of limitations and areas of future research.

6.1 LEADER POLARIZATION

Building on the scholarly literature on affective polarization, the personalization of politics, and populism, this dissertation has proposed a new concept: leader

polarization. Leader polarization is present when the elite or/and public opinion affectively polarize over charismatic chief executives. On the one hand, the hardcore supporters express extremely positive affection (i.e., like, trust, love, admiration, and respect) toward the leader. On the other hand, staunch opponents express extremely negative affection (i.e., dislike, distrust, hatred, disgust, and disrespect). When leader polarization reaches high levels, political actors must situate themselves in favor of or against the president or prime minister. In those situations, leader polarization may become a salient cleavage that reinforces or cuts across pre-existing ones such as class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and region.

Leader polarization differs from the traditional conception of polarization in comparative politics along the left-right continuum. In the inter-war period and the Cold War era, political actors, specifically the Communists and Fascists polarized party systems with their extreme ideological orientation and radical agenda. As a result of ideological polarization, many countries in Europe and Latin America experienced a total breakdown of the democratic regime. Unlike Germany (1933), Spain (1936), Brazil (1964) Greece (1967), and Chile (1973) where anti-systemic actors on both ends of the left-right spectrum led to ideological polarization, leader polarization centers on a chief executive who does not necessarily promote a radical ideology. For that reason, to observe leader polarization at the elite level, one needs to look at whether political actors form temporary alliances and position themselves within the pro- or anti-leader camps. Most importantly, the members of the anti-leader camp may be ideologically, regionally, or ethnically diverse but united over a common goal to defeat him in the short term.

Among the three cases the dissertation has examined, Venezuela under Chávez represents the most polarized one. Throughout his fifteen-year presidency, leader polarization over Chávez characterized Venezuelan politics. Especially between 2001 and 2004, polarization between *chavistas* and *anti-chavistas* reached its peak level at the public space thanks to a series of contentious political events such as the general strike (2001), coup attempt (2002), oil strike (2002-2003), and recall referendum (2004). In Chávez's third term (2007-2013), leader polarization continued to manifest in presidential elections (2006 and 2012) and referendums (2007 and 2009), which turned into a plebiscitary endorsement or rejection of the president. From 2004 onward, Chávez also made explicit references to leftist ideology and the goal to build the Socialism of the 21st Century. In that context, left-right ideology became more salient and relevant to understand the dynamics of Venezuelan politics. For *chavistas*, the president's left turn and promotion of socialist ideas arguably strengthened their in-group identity. Meanwhile, *anti-chavistas* preserved their ideological, organizational, and regional diversity under the broad umbrella of the MUD.

After Venezuela, Turkey under Erdoğan is the second most polarized case of the dissertation. In the early years of the AKP, Prime Minister Erdoğan and other prominent figures pursued a pragmatic approach and avoided a major confrontation with the military over secularism. Nevertheless, from 2007 onward, the AKP and Erdoğan clashed with the secular establishment through a presidential election crisis (2007), party closure case (2008), and a referendum (2010). In that context, during the AKP's first and second parliamentary terms, Turkish politics mainly polarized between seculars and religious conservatives. While Erdoğan successfully weakened the military and the high judiciary,

the former bastions of secularism, he gradually concentrated power at the executive branch as well as inside the ruling party. From his third consecutive parliamentary election victory onward, Erdoğan increasingly resorted to populism and polarized Turkish politics between his supporters and opponents. Leader polarization in Turkey became salient during events like the Gezi Park protests (2013), corruption scandal (2014), and presidential elections (2014), which placed Erdoğan at the center of political debates. In the June 2015 parliamentary elections, the anti-Erdoğan opposition had the opportunity to form a coalition government. Nevertheless, ethnic divisions between the ultra-nationalist MHP and the pro-Kurdish HDP prevented such an outcome.

Compared to the two cases above, Ecuador under Correa exemplifies less severe patterns of polarization. Following a period of instability, Correa emerged as an outsider candidate to punish the traditional political parties and reverse the country's neoliberal trajectory. As soon as he won the presidency, like his Venezuelan counterpart, Correa convened a constituent assembly (2007) and managed to pass a new constitution (2008). During his ten-year rule, Correa personally dominated Ecuadorian politics under the banner of the Citizens' Revolution. Ideologically, Correa's policies represented a leftward shift to the state-led model of development but failed to provide a radical alternative to the country's commodity-dependent economy or rentier model of development. Similar to other strongmen (i.e., Alfaro and Velasco Ibarra) who governed Ecuador during the cacao and banana booms, Correa made use of rising oil revenues to boost his popularity and stabilize the country. Even though Correa undermined press freedom, judicial independence, and social movements, he successfully defeated a fragmented opposition in frequent electoral contests. Toward the end of Correa's third

term, thanks to an economic downturn, *anti-correístas* seemed to gain momentum. Nevertheless, they failed to defeat *correísmo* in the 2017 elections.

Quantitative findings at the public opinion level also underline the salience of leader polarization instead of ideological polarization. In other words, Venezuelan, Ecuadorian, and Turkish citizens are more likely to express extreme levels of affection toward Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan than self-identify at the extreme left and the extreme right. Between the two Latin American cases, the extent of leader polarization is greater over Chávez than Correa. In all three survey years (2008, 2010, and 2012), Venezuelans cluster at the extremes rather than the center when they express their trust of Chávez. On the other hand, in Ecuador, only two out of five survey years (2008 and 2016) present strong evidence for leader polarization over Correa. In the remaining years (2010, 2012, and 2014), few people express extreme distrust of Correa. Finally, in Turkey, the distribution of dislike-like scale (2011) also cluster at both ends of the spectrum, especially the extreme like of Erdoğan. Additionally, the citizens' evaluation of Erdoğan's sincerity (2013) provides evidence for leader polarization. On a five-point scale, more than half of the respondents either find the prime minister very insincere (22 percent) or very sincere (38 percent). Strikingly, the middle category is very weak (16 percent).

To find out the predictors of leader polarization, in line with the comparative political behavior literature, the dissertation has introduced two explanatory variables: political interest and sociotropic evaluation of the economy. Each country chapter has utilized multinomial regression analyses to measure the two variables' impact on identifying at the extreme categories vs. the center. In addition to the individuals' levels

of political interest and sociotropic evaluation of the economy, regression analyses included control variables of age, income, education, gender, rural/urban residence, skin color, religiosity, and Kurdish ethnicity.

To start with political interest, multinomial regression analyses on Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey have consistently shown a positive relationship with expressing extremely positive affection. In Venezuela and Ecuador, as individuals are more interested in politics, they are also more likely to extremely trust Chávez and Correa. In Turkey, as a proxy of political interest, individuals who paid higher levels of attention to the 2011 parliamentary campaign are more likely to express their extreme like of Erdoğan. In contrast, political interest's ability to predict extremely negative affection varies by case. In Venezuela, political interest has a consistently positive sign to predict extreme distrust of Chávez. Yet, this relationship is statistically significant only in 2008. In Turkey, higher levels of campaign following predict the expression of extreme dislike of Erdoğan and this relationship is statistically significant. In Ecuador, in four out of five survey years, political interest has a negative sign to predict extreme distrust of Correa. This negative relationship is statistically significant in 2008, 2012, and 2016. A closer look at this counterintuitive finding reveals that a group of Ecuadorian voters declare absolute lack of interest in politics and express extreme distrust of Correa at the same time.

Regarding the sociotropic evaluations of the economy, multinomial regression analyses on all three countries identify a linear trend. In Venezuela and Ecuador, individuals who evaluate the current economic situation "better" than it was a year ago are more likely to express extreme trust of Chávez and Correa. Likewise, individuals who

evaluate the country's economic situation "worse" are more likely to express extreme distrust of the respective presidents. These findings are statistically significant in all three survey years for Venezuela and five years for Ecuador. In Turkey, respondents who expect an economic crisis in the upcoming year are more likely find Erdoğan extremely insincere. Furthermore, those who do not have such expectation are more likely to find the prime minister extremely sincere. Overall, sociotropic economic evaluations have a strong impact on leader polarization.

Besides political interest and sociotropic economic evaluations, among control variables, education also predicts leader polarization. In Venezuela and Ecuador, individuals with lower levels of education are more likely to express extreme trust toward Chávez and Correa. Similarly, higher levels of education predict expressing extreme distrust toward these presidents. In Turkey, higher levels of education predict extreme dislike of Erdoğan and finding him extremely insincere. Moreover, lower educated respondents are more likely to express extreme like of the prime minister and finding him extremely sincere. These findings on education provide further support to the conventional wisdom that populist demagogues target[67] uneducated masses who are more prone to manipulation. It also aligns with Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris' latest book that shows a negative relationship between education levels and support for populist parties (Norris and Inglehart 2018).

[67] For instance, in the 2016 presidential election campaign, Donald Trump famously said: "I love the poorly educated."

6.2 INCLUSIONARY VS. EXCLUSIONARY POPULISM

To explain the occurrence of leader polarization, the dissertation has proposed to analyze the inclusionary vs. exclusionary nature of populist leadership toward the members of the in-group and the out-group. Specifically, the theoretical chapter has built on the classical works of James Malloy (1977) and Guillermo O'Donnell (1979) and refined Dani Filc (2010; 2015), Cas Mudde, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser's (2011; 2013) characterization of Latin American populism (i.e., Perón, Chávez, and Morales) as inclusionary and European populism (i.e., the National Front, the Austrian Freedom Party, and the Danish People's Party) as exclusionary. Unlike these prominent scholars who describe regional or ideological manifestations of populism either inclusionary or exclusionary, I have argued that populist leaders are polarizing because of their ability to offer simultaneous inclusion and exclusion to different groups. In the empirical chapters on Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey, instead of attaching one of the labels, the dissertation has examined to what extent Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan offered inclusion vs. exclusion to their followers and opponents. To explore the causes of leader polarization over the three populist leaders, the country case studies have expanded on Malloy (1977), Filc (2010), and Mudde and Kaltwasser's (2011) framework of symbolic, political, and material inclusion vs. exclusion (Tables 11-13).

Table 11. Symbolic Inclusion vs. Exclusion in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey.

	Symbolic Inclusion	Symbolic Exclusion
Chávez (VEN)	* *por ahora* speech * the Bolivarian Republic * multi-ethnic society * Chávez = people * Aló Presidente * the patriotic pole * revolutionaries * the sons of Bolívar	* *puntofijismo* * *Caracazo* * the Fourth Republic * the oligarchy * anti-Bolivarian * the pole of destruction * the squalid ones * the coup-sympathizers
Correa (ECU)	* *forajidos* * Kichwa * the Citizens' Revolution * Eloy Alfaro * multi-colored shirt * the Citizens' Link * the sovereign ones * the patriots	* *partidocracia* * long and sad night of neoliberalism * the oligarchy * the bigwigs * the corrupt ones * the liars * forbidden to forget * the infantile left
Erdoğan (TUR)	* national will * service to God, service to the people * Neo-Ottomanism * Rabia sign * the Conqueror of Davos * the New Turkey * Black Turks * my brothers	* the Old Turkey * the single-party regime * the Gezi Park protests * the parallel structure * *mon cher* * the coup-sympathizers * the terrorists * the traitors to the homeland

Table 12. Political Inclusion vs. Exclusion in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey.

	Political Inclusion	Political Exclusion
Chávez (VEN)	* new constitution * indigenous rights * frequent referendums * mass rallies * protagonist democracy * bottom-up participation * the Bolivarian Circles * the Communal Councils	* majoritarian constitution-making * weakening checks and balances * indefinite re-election * rule by decree * restricting media freedom * manipulating electoral law * jailing opponents and forcing them to live in exile
Correa (ECU)	* new constitution * plurinationalism * good living philosophy * expanding voting rights * frequent referendums	* majoritarian constitution-making * weakening checks and balances * indefinite re-election * restricting media freedom * manipulating electoral law * clashing with social movements * limiting bottom-up participation
Erdoğan (TUR)	* constitutional amendments * lifting the headscarf ban * granting more rights to the Kurdish minority and religious conservatives * frequent referendums * mass rallies	* majoritarian constitutional changes * weakening checks and balances * seeking greater powers * restricting media freedom * jailing opponents and forcing them to live in exile * clashes with the Gülen Movement

Table 13. Material Inclusion vs. Exclusion in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey.

	Material Inclusion	Material Exclusion
Chávez (VEN)	* Plan Bolívar * redistribution of oil rents * Missions on healthcare, education, subsidized food, housing, mining, land redistribution, disabled people, drug addiction, and rural development among others * nationalizations and increase in public sector jobs	* restriction of property rights * firing PDVSA personnel * particularistic expenditures * the Tascón List * denial of funds to opposition governors * use of oil revenues for campaigns
Correa (ECU)	* redistribution of oil rents * increased spending on education, healthcare, housing, and infrastructure * the Human Development Bonus to low-income families * the Manuela Espejo Mission on disabled citizens * the reduction of poverty, inequality, and unemployment * increased job opportunities in the public sector	* particularistic expenditures * use of oil revenues for campaigns
Erdoğan (TUR)	* increased spending on social programs targeting the poor, women, children, elderly, and disabled * construction of schools, hospitals, divided roads, bridges, high-speed railways, airports, and stadiums * the reduction of poverty, inflation, and unemployment	* particularistic expenditures * vote-buying * preferential access to public benefits, employment, government contracts, and housing

At the symbolic level (Table 11), Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan offered inclusion to their followers while excluding others. For the members of the in-group, Chávez offered symbolic inclusion by proclaiming "Chávez is the Venezuelan people" and portraying himself as an ordinary Venezuelan, who speaks, looks, and dresses like the average people. On the other hand, he excluded the members of the out-group and treated them as his eternal enemies and the representatives of the oligarchical order. In Ecuador, Correa also capitalized on the anti-establishment mood and led a Citizens' Revolution with the support of "the sovereign ones" and "the patriots." Like Chávez, Correa was exclusionary toward the members of the traditional political class and frequently called them "the bigwigs" and "the corrupt ones." Finally, in Turkey, Erdoğan claimed to represent "the Black Turks" who had suffered under the single-party regime or "the Old Turkey." While praising the members of the in-group, Erdoğan constantly delegitimized his dynamically changing opponents and framed them as "the terrorists" and "the traitors to the homeland."

In addition to polarizing rhetoric at the symbolic level, Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan exhibited political inclusion vs. exclusion (Table 12). Both Chávez and Correa managed to pass a new constitution, which increased citizens' ability to participate in the political process. Especially in Venezuela, Chávez established bottom-up participatory mechanisms at the local level such as the Bolivarian Circles and the Communal Councils. While promoting political inclusion, both presidents limited the political space to the members of the out-group by concentrating power at the executive branch, restricting media freedom, manipulating the electoral law, and abolishing term limits. Unlike his Latin American counterparts, Erdoğan failed to pass a new constitution but significantly

increased the frequency of referendums and mass rallies as a way of political inclusion for his followers. Even though Erdoğan granted more rights to religious conservatives and the Kurds, he increasingly weakened the legislature and judiciary. Especially from Erdoğan's third term onward, members of the opposition had to deal with restricted access to media, police violence, defamation suits, and imprisonment.

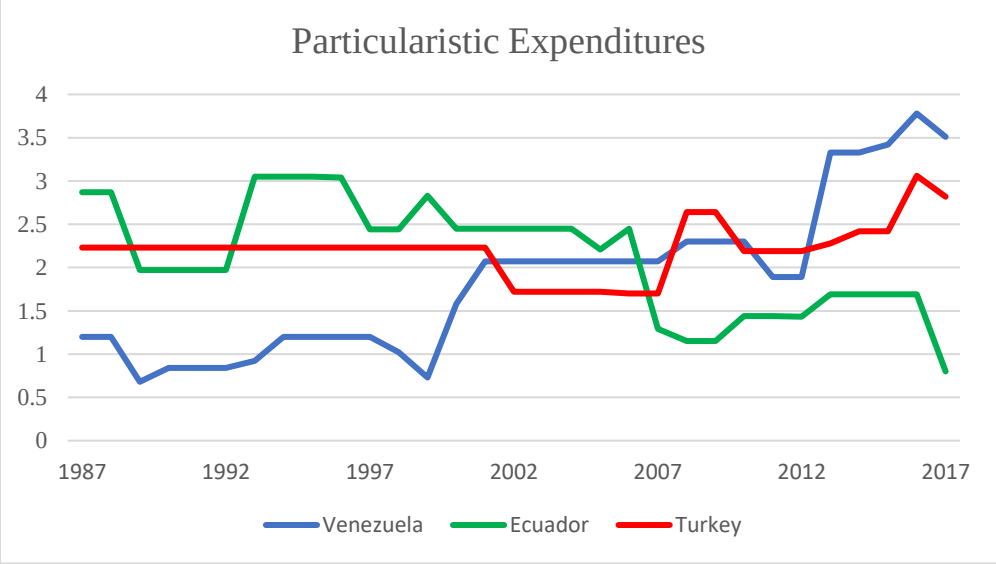
At the material level (Table 13), Chávez and Correa benefited from a commodity boom and redistributed oil revenues to their populations. In Venezuela, Chávez inaugurated the Bolivarian Missions on healthcare, education, subsidized food, housing, mining, land distribution, disabled people, drug addiction, and rural development among others. Thanks to a series of nationalizations, he could also offer material inclusion in the form of public sector jobs. In Ecuador, Correa diverted the oil rents to increased spending on education, healthcare, and roads. Notably, conditional cash transfer programs (i.e., the Human Development Bonus and the Manuela Espejo Mission) targeted low-income families and people with disabilities. In Turkey, Erdoğan offered material inclusion by increasing public spending on social programs as well as the construction of schools, hospitals, divided roads, bridges, high-speed railways, airports, and stadiums.

Simultaneously, Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan partially excluded the members of the out-group from material benefits (Table 13). Among the three cases, opponents of Chávez were subject to the highest level of material exclusion. Chávez not only used oil revenues for his campaigns, but he also restricted property rights, fired PDVSA personnel, deprived opposition governors of funds, and denied public sector jobs to the signatories of the recall referendum process. In Turkey, Erdoğan partially excluded the members of the out-group from access to public benefits, employment, government

contracts, and housing. Likewise, in Ecuador, the opponents of Correa complained about the clientelistic nature of material exchanges between the president and his followers.

The analysis (Figure 21) of the V-Dem data further supports these conclusions on material exclusion. Varieties of Democracy project (Coppedge et al. 2017) asked the following question to country experts: "Considering the profile of social and infrastructural spending in the national budget, how "particularistic" or "public goods" are most expenditures?" On a five-point scale[68] that ranges from 0 (least particularistic) to 4 (most particularistic), country experts ranked Turkey under Erdoğan (2.20 average) and Venezuela under Chávez (1.9 average) more particularistic than Ecuador under Correa (1.46 average). It should be noted that, in Ecuador, during Correa's third presidential term, the amount of particularistic spending was higher (1.69 average) than the first two terms (1.31 average).

Figure 21. Particularistic Expenditures in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey.



[68] To facilitate analysis, I reversed V-Dem's original scale.

Overall, the three leaders simultaneously offered symbolic, political, and material inclusion vs. exclusion toward the members of the in-group and the out-group. To start with the symbolic dimension, Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan made nostalgic references to Simón Bolívar, Eloy Alfaro, and the Ottoman Empire and defined the members of the in-group as the true representatives of Venezuelans, Ecuadorians, and Turks. In contrast, during their speeches and other performative actions, Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan frequently insulted their opponents and labeled them as the representatives of the privileged elite. Furthermore, the three populist leaders opened up the political space to the formerly marginalized groups. While increasing opportunities for political participation, at the same time, they limited contestation. Finally, Chávez, Correa, and Erdoğan offered material inclusion by increasing social and infrastructural spending. The particularistic nature of a significant portion of the expenditures, nevertheless, meant unequal access to material benefits. As the theoretical framework of the dissertation suggests, due to simultaneous inclusion vs. exclusion, *chavistas*, *correístas*, and pro-Erdoğan groups developed strongly positive affection toward the populist leaders whereas *anti-chavistas*, *anti-correístas*, and anti-Erdoğan groups felt the exact opposite.

6.3 DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING

The presence of leader polarization in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey led to various forms of democratic backsliding. Specifically, leader polarization (1) undermined the supporters' ability to hold the leaders accountable, (2) weakened the anti-leader opponents' belief in the legitimacy of the democratic process, and (3) gave rise to excessive personalization of power.

First, in Venezuela and Ecuador, extreme trust of Chávez and Correa undermined *chavistas* and *correístas'* ability to hold the presidents accountable for their authoritarian practices. Despite weakening checks and balances, both presidents maintained their popularity and continued to win presidential elections, referendums, and other electoral contests. As long as Chávez and Correa could offer inclusion to their followers, their autocratic style did not translate into defeats at the ballot box. Second, leader polarization over Chávez also pushed *anti-chavistas* to pursue extralegal means to get rid of the president. Between 2001 and 2004, the members of the opposition weakened democratic norms in Venezuela by organizing a general strike, a coup attempt, an oil strike, and violent protests. In Ecuador, except for the police rebellion (the 30S) in 2010, *anti-correístas* opposed Correa within institutional limits. Third, leader polarization created a succession crisis in both countries. After Chávez died, Venezuela under Nicolás Maduro entered a deep crisis of governance. Amid low oil prices and food shortages, Maduro quickly became an unpopular leader who had to resort to further clientelism and authoritarianism to stay in power. On the other hand, Lenín Moreno surprised most observers of Ecuadorian politics and turned his back to *correísmo*. Soon after his election, he reached out to *anti*-correístas, accused his own vice president of corruption, and brought back term limits to prevent Correa's possible return in the future as a savior.

In Turkey, first, Erdoğan increasingly concentrated power at the executive branch, weakened mechanisms of horizontal accountability, and displayed a majoritarian conception of democracy. Especially after he became president, he pushed for greater powers and the establishment of a presidential form of government. While Erdoğan weakened the rule of law, his staunch followers consistently expressed support and

endorsed his power grabs. Second, leader polarization in Turkey pushed some groups within the anti-Erdoğan camp toward extra-institutional mechanisms to replace him. Specifically, Gülen Movement's alleged involvement in the 2013 corruption scandal and 2016 coup attempt provided Erdoğan the excuse to further strengthen his grip and crackdown on the opposition. Following the attempted military coup in 2016, Erdoğan declared a state of emergency, successfully amended the constitution, and won re-election under a presidential system. In the 2018 elections, the ideologically diverse anti-Erdoğan opposition established an alliance to deny him the presidency but once again failed its objective. For the time being, leader polarization over Erdoğan continues to personalize Turkish politics and makes a future succession crisis very likely to occur. In the absence of strong institutions, a post-Erdoğan period would create new challenges for democratic governance in Turkey.

The liberal and participatory democracy indices of the V-Dem further demonstrate the extent of backsliding in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey. To start with Venezuela (Figure 22), the year Chávez became president, on a scale of 0 (less democratic) to 1 (more democratic), the country had a liberal democracy score of 0.62. By 2012, the score declined to 0.17, which corresponds to a 73 percent decrease in fifteen years. During the same period, Venezuela's participatory democracy score declined from 0.52 to 0.29 (44 percent decrease). In Ecuador (Figure 23), during Correa's ten-year presidency, liberal democracy score experienced a decline from 0.51 to 0.33 (35 percent decrease). Moreover, the country's participatory democracy score declined from 0.47 to 0.43 (9 percent decrease). In Turkey (Figure 24), between 2002 and 2015, liberal and participatory democracy scores declined from 0.46 to 0.27 (41 percent decrease) and 0.31

to 0.25 (19 percent decrease) respectively. Consequently, among the three cases, Venezuela under Chávez experienced the largest amount of democratic backsliding among the three cases, followed by Turkey and then Ecuador. These results show significant parallels with the qualitative and quantitative findings on leader polarization since the least polarized case (Ecuador) also underwent the smallest amount of backsliding.

Figure 22. Democratic Backsliding in Venezuela (1987-2012).

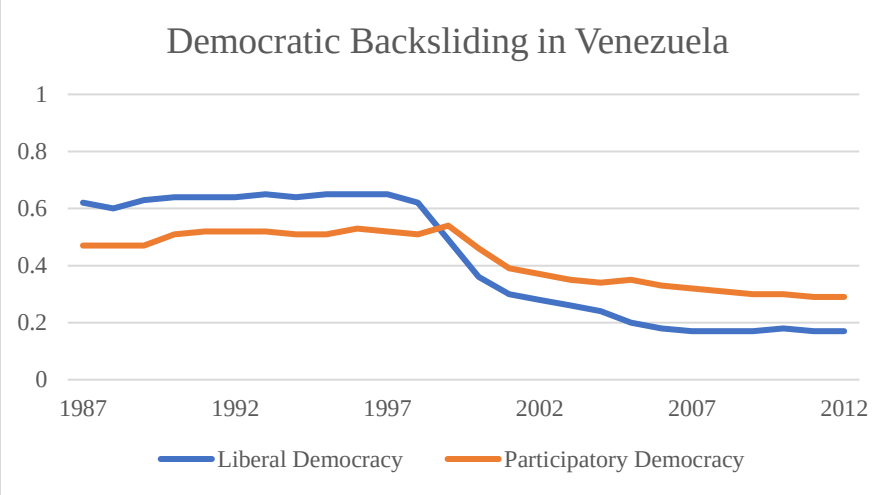


Figure 23. Democratic Backsliding in Ecuador (1991-2016).

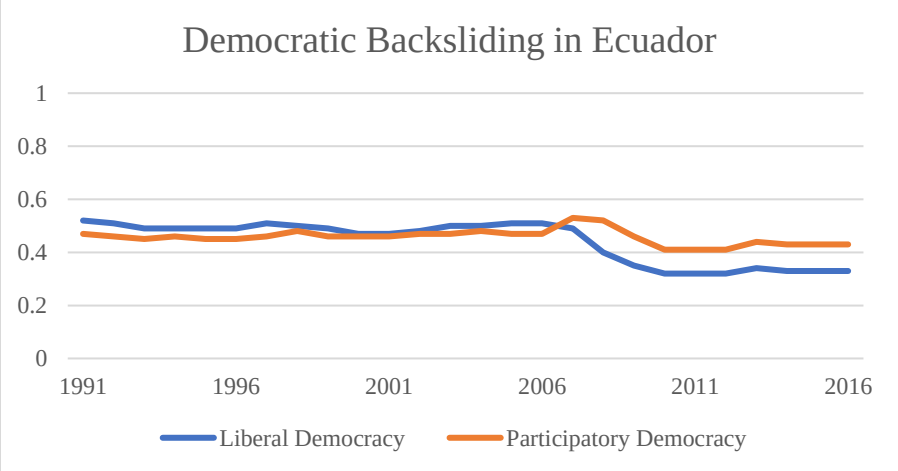
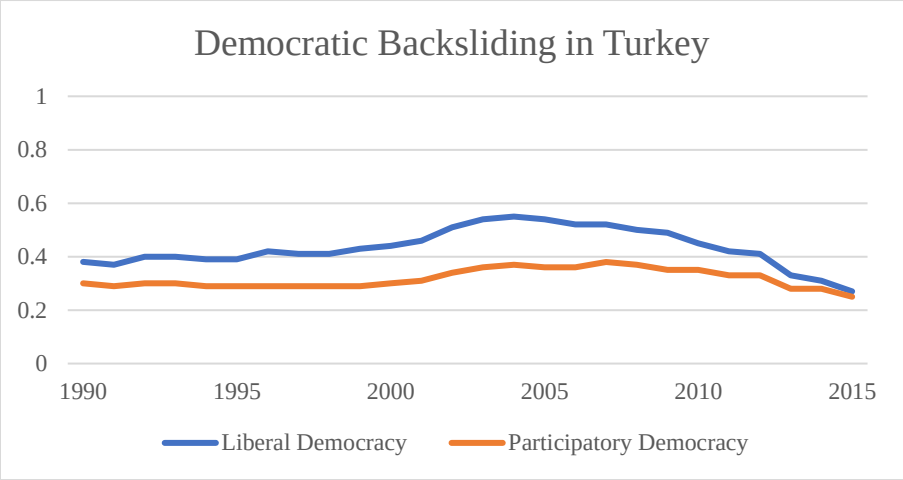


Figure 24. Democratic Backsliding in Turkey (1990-2015).



6.4 LIMITATIONS AND AREAS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of the dissertation are subject to limitations. Methodologically, studying polarization from a comparative perspective suffers from data restraints. Unlike scholars of American politics who have access to time series cumulative survey data since 1948, comparativists who study more than one case or region do not always find the exact measures that they look for. For instance, scholars of affective polarization in the United States rely on the feeling thermometer of the American National Election Studies survey data to identify the growing partisan gap when people evaluate the members of the in-group and the out-group. In this dissertation, instead of relying on a single data source and testing hypothesis over time, I had to use various survey data to test hypotheses on polarization in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey. For the Latin American cases, the Americas Barometer of the Latin American Public Opinion Project was very valuable. It allowed me to use the same variables for Venezuela and Ecuador for multiple survey years between 2006 and 2016. On the other hand, for Turkey, I had to use two separate data sources (CSES and KONDA) and proxy measures to operationalize key variables.

In addition to methodological constraints, practical issues also limited this research. The most obvious limitation is the budgetary concerns. Thanks to the financial support of Florida International University, the Tinker Foundation, and Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa, I could travel to Venezuela, Ecuador, and Turkey for field research. During my stay in Caracas, Quito, and Istanbul, I had the opportunity to interact with local institutions and collect data for my research. Nonetheless, if I had more financial resources, I would have conducted extensive elite interviews, design public opinion surveys, or run experiments to further study leader polarization. Besides budgetary issues, teaching responsibilities restricted my ability to stay longer in the three countries or add new countries to the dissertation.

Despite these limitations, the theoretical framework of the dissertation is easily applicable to other polarizing populist leaders and their countries. I hope that future research on polarization would also study to what extent populist leaders offered inclusion vs. exclusion towards the members of the in-group and the out-group. In historical and contemporary times, political scientists could study the following populist leaders in Latin America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America: Evo Morales (Bolivia), Álvaro Uribe (Colombia), Néstor Kirchner (Argentina), Cristina Kirchner de Fernández (Argentina), Lula da Silva (Brazil), Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua), Juan Domingo Perón (Argentina), José María Velasco Ibarra (Ecuador), Getúlio Vargas (Brazil), Lázaro Cárdenas (Mexico), Víctor Paz Estenssoro (Bolivia), Rómulo Betancourt (Venezuela), Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre (Peru), Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Adnan Menderes (Turkey), Andreas Papandreou (Greece), Alberto Fujimori (Peru), Carlos Saúl Menem (Argentina), Fernando Color de Mello (Brazil), Abdalá Bucaram (Ecuador), Andrés

Manuel López Obrador (Mexico), Donald Trump (United States), Alexis Tsipras (Greece), Silvio Berlusconi (Italy), Viktor Orbán (Hungary), Jarosław Kaczyński (Poland), Andrej Babiš (Czech Republic), Thaksin Shinawatra (Thailand), Rodrigo Duterte (the Philippines), Narendra Modi (India), Jacob Zuma (South Africa), Toweri Museveni (Uganda), and Michael Sata (Zambia).

Another line of future research could examine the impact of leader polarization on the day to day interactions of ordinary citizens. In the case of Venezuela, scholars could build on Ana Mallen and María Pilar García-Guadilla's book[69] (2017) that provides a sociological analysis of how *chavistas* and *anti-chavistas* minimized physical contact with the members of the out-group and promoted alternative narratives on contentious political developments such as the 2002 coup attempt. Similarly, Emre Erdoğan and Pınar Uyan Semerci's (2018) findings on echo chambers[70] in Turkish society could easily be replicated in other polarized contexts. As populist leaders continue to polarize societies into two antagonistic camps, they create two Venezuelas, Ecuadors, Turkeys, Argentinas, Bolivias, Nicaraguas, Brazils, Perus, Thailands, and Indias. As scholars of polarization, we must understand the motivations of both sides as well as those who do not want to identify with any. At the end of the day, the citizens who remain in the middle would be the key actors to rebuild democratic institutions.

[69] For a detailed review of the book, see Selçuk (2018).

[70] The director of KONDA, Bekir Ağırdır, calls it "our aquarium" to describe concerns and fears about the world out there (Ağırdır 2010).

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2013-2019	Ph.D., Political Science, Florida International University.
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2010-2012	M.A., Modern Turkish History, Boğaziçi University.
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PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

2018	"Ana L. Mallen and María Pilar García-Guadilla. 2017. Venezuela's Polarized Politics: The Paradox of Direct Democracy Under Chávez. Boulder: Lynne Rienner." in *Democratization* 25 (7): 1310-1311. DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2017.1399123.
2018	"Populism, Leader Polarization, and Democratic Backsliding." E-poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Boston, Massachusetts.
2018	"Populism and Polarization in Ecuador: Correistas vs. Anti-Correistas." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association in New Orleans, Louisiana.
2017	"The Role of Self-Coups in Enhancing Presidential Powers and Weakening Democracy" with Astrid Arrarás. E-poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in San Francisco, California.
2017	"Here's what Peru can teach Turkey about presidential power grabs" with Astrid Arrarás in the Monkey Cage of *the Washington Post*.
2017	"Left-Right Ideology and Presidential Trust: Who is Polarized in Correa's Ecuador and Chavez's Venezuela?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Latin American Studies Association in Lima, Peru.

2017	"Polarizing Leaders in the Andes: The Cases of Hugo Chavez and Rafael Correa." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago, Illinois.
2016	"Strong Presidents and Weak Institutions: Populism in Turkey, Venezuela, and Ecuador." *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*. 16 (4): 571-589 DOI:10.1080/14683857.2016.1242893.
2016	"Public Opinion Polarization in Ecuador, Venezuela, and Turkey." E-poster presented at the annual meeting of American Political Science Association in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
2016	"U.S. must remain committed to democracy in Turkey" with Eduardo Gamarra in *the Miami Herald*.
2015	"Fatih Öztürk, Murat Yanık and Hüseyin Özcan (eds.). 2014. A Road Map of a New Constitution for Turkey. Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press." in *ASMEA Book Notes*.
2015	"Leonidas Karakatsanis. 2014. Turkish-Greek Relations: Rapprochement, Civil Society and the Politics of Friendship. London; New York: Routledge." in *Insight Turkey* 17 (1): 229-231.
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2015	"Turkey's Plebiscitary Democracy and Lessons from Latin America." Paper presented at the annual meeting of Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago, Illinois.
2014	"Measuring Political Polarization in Turkey." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa in Washington DC.