Between Populism and Authoritarianism – The vertex of the Southern Hemisphere

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Addressing the functioning of the international community implies understanding the different models of governance that exist, in a process that has seen significant changes throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The current context allows us to verify a remarkable diversity of governance models and the growth of populist and authoritarian alternatives. This trend marks a resistance to the global democratic wave. We can identify causes and stimuli for changes in the structure and functioning of political regimes, but also an opportunity to identify possible reasons behind the setbacks in the globalisation of democracy. This article focuses on two topics: discussing the relationship between populism and authoritarianism and further analysing this movement in the Southern Hemisphere, contributing to the study of political regimes in Africa and Latin America.

Entre o populismo e o autoritarismo: O vértice do Hemisfério Sul

Abordar o funcionamento da comunidade internacional implica compreender os diferentes modelos de governação existentes, num processo que tem conhecido, ao longo dos séculos XX e XXI, mudanças significativas. O contexto atual permite-nos verificar uma notável diversidade de modelos de governação e o crescimento de alternativas populistas e autoritárias. Esta tendência marca uma resistência à vaga democrática global. Podemos identificar causas e estímulos para as mudanças na estrutura e funcionamento dos regimes políticos, mas também uma oportunidade para identificar possíveis razões que sustentam os retrocessos registados na globalização da democracia. Este artigo centra-se em dois tópicos: discutir a relação entre populismo e autoritarismo e aprofundar a análise deste movimento no Hemisfério Sul, contribuindo para o estudo dos regimes políticos em África e na América Latina.

Studying regimes and political systems occupies a central place in the political science field. In recent years we have witnessed a significant increase in the number of studies and publications on the diversity of forms of organisation in society and the exercise of political power. These studies focus on three central dimensions: the theoretical perspective on models for exercising political power; the practical dimension, in a process of characterisation and detailed description around political regimes and systems; and the comparative aspect, with particular emphasis on differentiated organisation models or that represent an innovative model compared to the dominant literature (Gricius, 2022; Levitsky & Way, 2020).

Throughout the twentieth century, we have witnessed a significant advance of democracy on a global scale, in a process marked by the defence of a set of civil and political rights and greater participation of citizens in public and political life. This process has also been marked by establishing structures and procedures that guarantee the separation of powers in a decisive path towards the affirmation of the democratic model. However, there has not been a linear, single and exclusive path towards affirming democracies. There have been setbacks in the defence of some fundamental freedoms and the rise to power of various extremist groups, and these phenomena are directly associated with periods of economic and social crisis or deep divisions within the framework of political disputes.

The approach to these events becomes a central theme in the context of political science and international relations, in a process that combines the analysis of the causes associated with electoral (or social) support for populist and authoritarian solutions and the study of the proposals presented by the political actors and parties. In this context, we should emphasise the importance of "reading" the needs of citizens, creating a programmatic agenda that meets these needs and captures the electoral support necessary to reach positions of power or influence decisions.

Alongside these aspects, emphasis is placed on the charisma dimension of populist and authoritarian leaders, in a process of emotional solid connection between citizens and political leaders, with particular focus on political communication, persuasion and propaganda strategies. The entire political debate is influenced by the media agenda and the speed with which information circulates. This reality has allowed various parties and political movements to assert themselves outside the traditional networks of power, challenging, precisely, that same power.

Although one can analyse the success and failure of these new political movements by the ability to exercise or influence power, the dimension of analysis of

these new movements requires a more transversal look at the specific character-
istics of regimes and political systems and the historical path of the society in
question.

The study of regimes, political systems, and political ideologies implies an
interdisciplinary approach both in the domain of institutions and in the context
of the affirmation of new leadership and the citizens' (electorate) reaction to new
governance models.

However, we will focus the debate in this article on the dynamics between the
approach to populism and authoritarianism within the framework of the interna-
tional political system. One of the first points is related to the need to revisit the
very concept of "populism", noting the variety of contributions and perceptions
about the values associated with this ideology.[1] This multiplicity of visions in-
dulges to follow a path based on the need to integrate a broader look at the theo-
retical frameworks of populism and the various examples of the applicability of
these theoretical assumptions, comprising a time period from the second half of
the twentieth century to the present moment.

Based on the existing diversity, it is essential to spare the use of the term
"populism" in the context of the political-electoral game, where there is an immi-
nently negative and derogatory tone when associated with populist ideas, which
did not always happen. The characterisation of the concept was, for many years,
associated with a division of power between groups that made up societies, em-
anating this struggle from the will and decision of the people.

This contribution focuses on two dimensions: the debate around the con-
cept of "populism" and its relationship with the emergence of authoritarian re-
gimes and the analysis of populist and authoritarian regimes in the Southern
Hemisphere, with particular emphasis on the Latin American region and the
African continent.

Populism and authoritarianism – from the theoretical basis to conceptual elasticity

The debate around the emergence and affirmation of populism has been the
subject of multiple contributions, and we have chosen to focus our contribution
on the field of political science. This does not invalidate the possibility of discuss-
ing the concept using contributions from other areas of knowledge. Still, the need

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[1] It should be noted that the perspective of the existence of a populist ideology is not consensual, being the
subject of debate on the possibility that we are facing a "quasi-ideology", marked by a division between two
groups of society: the people and the corrupt elite (Mudde, 2004).

to circumscribe the prism of analysis leads us to confine this contribution within the framework of political science, more specifically through the resources and the examples registered since the second half of the twentieth century.

We recognise the importance and contribution of the historical approach to the concept, namely through the approach of the populist movements in the Russian Empire and the United States of America, in the framework of the second half of the nineteenth century. These movements stood out for the existence of a popular struggle against political elites and the concentration of powers. The struggle of the agrarian movement significantly marked the process. This movement was divided between the need to adapt to new market rules and a strategy associated with victimisation within the framework of a capitalist system. We therefore seth a path centred on divisions and struggles between groups that make up society within a framework of exercising or influencing the exercise of power.

The current framework does not fail to resort to this historical contribution to understand the applicability of the concept. However, it is important to deepen the scope of the concept within the framework of contemporary political systems. The concept was regularly used after the end of World War II to characterise various movements and political leaders that emerged in Latin America because of popular mobilisation in the face of economic deprivation and the desire to combat the current status quo (Tella, 1965).

This characterisation of movements in Latin America, as well as the analysis carried out on the governance model, fostered the negative perspective associated with the concept, and, until the mid-twentieth century, the concept was understood positively, as a mechanism to characterise the pretensions of a particular group of the population (symbiosis between political actors and their fellow citizens).

This conceptual framework, associated with a positive or negative aspect of the concept, has contributed to the existence of a profound debate on populism, which was marked by the complexity of finding a space of understanding in academia that could strengthen the ideology and its applicability to other political contexts (Costa, 2023). We are faced with a polysemic concept, where multiple visions are being linked in theory and practice, which leads to greater difficulty in finding common understandings about populism in the near future (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018).

This is a cumulative concept, i.e. aggregating different contributions and perspectives, being addressed within the framework of several scientific areas, namely the need to frame the study of populism to understand the changes and the registered political phenomena (Weyland, 2001), in a process marked by a

strong influence of the socio-economic dimension and the living conditions of citizens. This path was visible in the first decades after the Second World War. From the 1980s onwards there was the emergence of populist movements based on different motivations, namely the issues of nationalism, the defence of national sovereignty and an attempt to emphasise social and cultural differences as justifications for the adoption of certain public policies.

Within the existing literature, we can identify three distinct conceptual perspectives that mark the development of studies on populism, namely: the ideational, the political-strategic and the sociocultural (Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017).

The ideational aspect corresponds to a vision based on the definition of populism as "a set of ideas that not only portrays society as divided between the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite', but also affirms politics as a mechanism for respecting popular sovereignty" (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018, p. 1669). In this context, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2018) highlight the path leading to a more constant and coherent use of the ideational perspective, highlighting that the various contributions constitute a complementary and cumulative path to understand populism. In the same framework, Norris and Inglehart (2019, p. 4) perceive populism as "a style of rhetoric that reflects first-order principles about who should govern, claiming that legitimate power rests with the people and not with the elites".

Through the present contributions, we can understand populism as a belief system of limited scope, both because of the differences about other ideologies, and because it assumes a simpler conceptual aspect (thin-centered ideology), without the capacity to provide a set of answers to central questions about the functioning of society (Freeden, 2003; Mudde, 2004).

Therefore, populism is framed as an ideology under construction, and it becomes necessary to create a coherent and structured body of ideas and theoretical assumptions to affirm populism as an ideology (Gerring, 1997).

The second dimension, the political-strategic, is based on the aspect of political action, more specifically in the domain of the discursive aspect, and there are several models of affirmation of populism regarding the mode and content of action. Therefore, we still find some gaps in the study of populism and the different phases of the affirmation of democracy on a global scale (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017), which results from the debate on the affirmation of populism as an ideology, but also of the different characteristics of the democratisation waves.

In this context, we highlight the contribution of Laclau (2004, p. 105) in the study of the different dimensions to understand populism, namely the need to

study populism through small groups (small scale), the ability to analyse populism through the articulation of social, political and ideological content, and the impact produced, namely in the way political actors are represented.

It is noted that the operationalisation of populism as an ideology and as a political strategy constitutes one of the most solid ways to understand the debate around the concept, considering that a set of factors have been assisting the emergence and consolidation of populist movements, namely the crisis of representation, disbelief in democracy, the influence of the media and the effects of the economic and social crisis (Kriesi, 2015).

The third approach (sociocultural) highlights the formative aspect of political agents and actors, characterised by a distinct action from traditional political actors; a theatrical dimension associated with the political game (Ostiguy, 2017). This type of action or political strategy aims to reach different target audiences, as well as ensure the leadership of the media agenda, controlling or influencing the news process in the country.

However, it should be noted that all the conceptualisation associated with populism is influenced by the analysis of regimes and political systems in Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century, namely the perspective of a division between "us" and "them", in a process that went beyond the mere division in the perspective of class struggle or citizens of certain regions (Knight, 1998). In these terms, there was a way for a theoretical affirmation of the concept that did not apply to a mere dichotomy associated with a given context.

One of the main contributions is presented by Weyland (2001), who identifies three perspectives to define (theoretically) populism: the cumulative perspective, the radial perspective, and the classical perspective. The characterisation of Latin American governments made it possible to verify the existence of contributions based on the cumulative perspective, a concept built using multiple scientific areas, making it difficult to build a coherent argument applicable to different realities. The radial aspect is based on the definition of a set of characteristics specific to populism, with Kenneth Roberts (1995) identifying five essential traits: the existence of a personalist and paternalistic leadership, a heterogeneous political and interclass coalition, the existence of a "top-down" strategy in the process of political mobilisation, the existence of an amorphous or eclectic ideology and an economic project based on the principle of redistribution.

The classical dimension is the one that contributes to greater harmonisation in terms of understanding populism, making use of the framework of populism in political science, which would be understood as a specific way of exercising political power (Weyland, 2001). Populism "is more than a rhetorical style and

a political protest… a political theory of populism has to focus on populism in power, or on how populism interprets, uses and changes representative democracy" (Urbinati, 2019, p. 113).

Alongside populism, we note a growing interest in the analysis of authoritarian regimes, not only in revisiting the authoritarian regimes registered in the twentieth century but due to the need to analyse how various states maintain authoritarian models of exercising power today.

This interest is even more evident when there is a debate around a distinction between authoritarian populism and democratic populism (Norris & Inglehart, 2019) and a process of affirmation from authoritarian populism in several countries.

The way to understand the dynamics of authoritarian regimes in a global context of progressive democratisation corresponds to a significant challenge in political science. The end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century allowed for notable progress in terms of the transformation of political regimes; however, recent years have seen examples of a setback in terms of democratic values and principles, which may result from an adaptation of authoritarian leaderships to the new forms of assertion on political stage, namely through processes of sharing power or responsibilities (Svolik, 2009).

If we pay attention to the evolution of democracies in the global context, namely the process characterised by the third wave of democratisation (Huntington, 1991), we see a "snowball" effect in terms of the modelling of political regimes. However, when observing the predominance of authoritarian regimes, there is a concentration of them in the African continent, in a process that can be explained by the failure of globalisation, by the difficulties of ensuring a democratic model applied to different political, social, economic, and cultural contexts, and the strong income disparities in these countries (Kaplan, 2014).

Associated with this dynamic is the proliferation of populist and authoritarian ideas in the fragile states,[2] and even in this reality there are notable differences in the consequences of the impact derived from the emergence of revolutionary movements or those that challenge existing institutions through multiple socio-political dynamics (Kaplan, 2014). We can find fertile ground in these states for the dissemination of populist movements. Still, the path must go through the reinforcement of studies that focus on the political, economic, and social reality of these countries, allowing us to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the

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[2] The classification of fragile states can be consulted in the Fragile States Index (https://fragilestatesindex.org/, accessed on February 18th, 2023).

relationship between populism and authoritarianism and between populism and the instability of political regimes.

The analysis of the concept of authoritarianism also follows the evolution of the twentieth century, and the characteristics and scope of the concept mark the debate. The concept applies to "three contexts: the structure of political systems, psychological dispositions about power and political ideologies" (Bobbio et al., 1998, p. 94). From the point of view of the structure, emphasis is given to the appreciation of government authority to the detriment of consensus solutions, with this process being marked by a lesser relevance given to representative institutions (Bobbio et al., 1998).

In this field of operationalisation of the concept, there is a perspective centred on the power assigned or exercised by a leader or a reduced group of actors, and the model violates democratic principles, being characterised by a reduced (or limited) political pluralism. Even if the existence of opposition political forces is registered or verified, they are limited in action; often the existence of these forces corresponds to the objective of ensuring a "false appearance of democracy", a determining aspect of the relationship between states in the international community.

Populism, authoritarianism, and the space for democracy

The approach to the phenomenon of populism refers to a cross-sectional historical view, covering the last two centuries, with a steep multiplication of studies on populism in the last two decades, now focusing on the theoretical and conceptual aspects (Brubaker, 2017; Müller, 2017; Pappas, 2016; Urbinati, 2019), sometimes focusing on the applicability and objective characterisation of populist movements and leaders (Aslanidis, 2016; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). The diversity of studies has given rise to a broad debate on the matrix of populism. Some contributions have validated the possibility of populism being a foundation for fostering the inclusion of marginalised social groups or increasing political participation, boosting citizens' political/civic participation, which would correspond to strengthening the democratic pillars (Laclau, 2004). In other words, populism would assume a neutral nature, open to be used in democratic and non-democratic contexts, which frees the analysis from "ideological shackles" and the usual stances of the political-electoral dispute.

There is the affirmation of multiple paths regarding the form of organisation of society, while the same could not be said regarding the affirmation of liberal democracy as the goal of the societal organisation of the international communi-

ty. The way forward is to study and analyse the functioning of political regimes within a framework of organisational diversity and in the face of the multiplicity of facts and political phenomena that have fuelled the emergence of an anti-systemic and populist discourse.

Thus, different currents have contributed to the study of populism, both from a theoretical and practical analysis of regimes based on the principles and values described above. While it is true that these perspectives do not limit or circumscribe future analyses in a closed way, they allow us to contribute to a path based on the debate between the main authors and theoreticians who study the different forms of populism.

Addressing the various contributions of populism, we can identify two groups of scholars, one focusing on the conditions leading to populism, namely the adjacent economic and social aspect, and the second group focusing on the political aspect of populism (Urbinati, 2019). While there has been a process of consolidation and expansion of democracies globally, there have been resistance movements and the emergence of anti-establishment political parties, challenging the status quo and a set of prevailing democratic premises.

While this dichotomy (status quo/systemic challenge) can be noted, there is the emergence of several governments based on populist ideas/policies (Mudde, 2007; Pappas, 2014; Şahin et al., 2021; Weyland, 2001), which signifies a capacity for populist leaders to act within the democratic system. This perspective may embody the path towards the establishment of a breakdown in democratic systems, that is, the very functioning of democracy allows for the existence of actors who end up questioning democratic principles and values.

To understand the dynamics and different perspectives associated with populism it is important to bear in mind the economic, social, cultural, and religious diversity of each context, since the terrain for the emergence of populism and the conditions surrounding it are very diverse. Although context can make a difference, political decisions and choices in a democratic system must be validated by the electorate, and citizens play a decisive role in the approval or rejection of political programmes or measures.

It can therefore be said that populism "coexists", in certain contexts, in a healthy way with democratic rules, submitting itself to popular scrutiny and accepting the interplay of forces resulting from elections. This process also results from the professionalisation of political action, and various populist leaders have effectively used the various information networks available (traditional and digital), allowing them to expand the reach of their message. The use of social networks and alternative information media has allowed them to reach an audience

far removed from traditional political activity. The media have become, with the widespread use of the internet, the privileged stage for political discussion, allowing direct communication (without intermediaries) between political actors and citizens (Langlois et al., 2009).

In the framework of the consolidation of democracies, we can identify a set of fundamental traits, namely: the opposition to capitalism and a certain model of globalisation, the struggle against the elites in power (people versus elites), an opposition to immigration or too flexible models of immigration and the constant defence of the principle of popular sovereignty (Martynov, 2017). Naturally, the ideological orientation influences the thematic grid adopted, and, for example, populism associated with right-wing parties focuses the discourse on the themes of traditions and the family. In contrast, populism associated with left-wing parties focuses the discourse on the economic aspect and opposition to capitalism.

Considering these assumptions, it is important to bear in mind a central question: what is the impact of populism or authoritarianism in the process of erosion or deconstruction of democracies? At this point, populism "can coexist" within the democratic framework. At the same time, the affirmation of authoritarian regimes/models represents a path opposed to constructing a democratic model, representing the antithesis of the principles associated with democracies. However, this does not prevent various democratic elements or rules from existing within the framework of authoritarian regimes, namely as a function of some international pressure or the attempt by the political leaderships of these regimes to appear democratic.

While analysing and evaluating democratic regimes we have witnessed an effort to develop and present comparative frameworks that can help measuring the quality of democracy. With the initial challenge consisting in the very definition of "quality of democracy", there is a notable effort to avoid conceptual simplification, associated with the electoral aspect of democracy (Munck, 2016). At the same time, there is an effort to avoid the simplification of the use of Eurocentric definitions or inputs, i.e., to promote the inclusion of definitions or indicators that can reflect the political, cultural and social differences in the international community (Baker, 1999; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

It is in this web of models of organisation of society that there is a need to examine in depth the impact of populism on the quality of democracy, and there is a need to verify whether the emergence of populist parties is a central element in the greater instability of political regimes.

Populism and authoritarianism in the Southern Hemisphere

When we approach the set of classifications and rankings on the quality of democracy in the global context, we see a predominance of countries from the Southern Hemisphere in the classification of hybrid and authoritarian regimes. While it is true that we must consider diversity at the level of the operationalisation of concepts and the existing indicators to measure the quality of democracy, it is important to bear in mind the creation of conditions conducive to the affirmation of populist solutions or ideas.

Operationally, we can carry out the analysis of authoritarianism based on three dimensions/levels: "the structure of political systems, psychological dispositions about power and political ideologies" (Bobbio et al., 1998, p. 94). Within this framework, there is a clear opposition between authoritarianism and democracy, a path that is difficult to reconcile, although it is more present in hybrid regimes and systems.

If we look at the literature on authoritarian regimes and fragile states, we can see some similarities. However, the context is crucial to distinguish systemic fragility, produced or caused by multiple political, economic and social factors, from authoritarianism underpinned by the exercise of political power. In this domain, Miranda Delgado (2020) presents an important distinction between authoritarianism and legalised authoritarianism – the latter would represent a mechanism for maintaining the established power under the guise of some level of plurality and democratic competition if the power of the President was not at stake.

Looking at the *Economic Intelligence Unit*,[3] only 43% of the countries analysed are considered democracies (flawless democracies and flawed democracies), with many states classified as hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes. The distribution of this classification is not proportional, with most countries classified as democracies being located on the European continent and in the Western world. In contrast, hybrid and authoritarian regimes are mostly located on the African continent. In the framework of the African continent, only seven countries considered to be democracies are present, namely: Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Mauritius, Lesotho, South Africa and Namibia.

The need to take a more detailed look at the African continent stems from the existence of a gap in the development of comparative studies on how internal political-institutional dynamics constitute a key element for understanding the various waves of democratisation in the Southern Hemisphere and the resistance

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[3] Information available at: https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2022/. Accessed on January 30, 2022.

movements that ensure the continuation of authoritarian regimes in this part of the world (Vidal, 2023).

Any historical-chronological approach to the emergence and evolution of populism focuses on the twentieth century and Latin American leadership. Still, there is a multiplication of studies dedicated to analysing populism in the framework of Western democracies, mainly due to the emergence of new populist political parties and leaders using populist ideas.

Addressing the African and South American context requires a long process of recourse to historical, social and cultural contributions, to understand the instituted power dynamics, as well as the existence of institutional pillars distinct from those verified in the Western world. Resorting to the contribution of Resnick (2018), it is noted that the African context is fertile in the existence of profound social inequalities, which is one of the vectors that justify the emergence of populist movements, as well as anti-systemic political solutions. Naturally, how these parties/movements operate in fragile political systems results in greater weakness and challenges to the pillars of the system.

Within the framework of the existing literature, emphasis is placed on the contribution of Hess and Aidoo (2014) in the study of the causes of the growth of populism in Ghana and Zambia, due to strong Chinese investment in these countries. The political-electoral strategy of some political actors was outlined around the creation of a common enemy, identified as the external power. This approach focuses, essentially, on reviving nationalism and anti-imperialist struggles, with a focus on defending the autonomy and sovereignty of the state and creating a strong division in society (ideological, political and social polarisation).

In a study involving the analysis of polls in 10 African countries, Eifert, Miguel and Posner (2010) found that ethnic identity continues to represent a central axis for understanding political dynamics in Africa and that these are more evident in periods of electoral competition, which justifies greater polarisation and political dispute based on broader and more diverse criteria than the different electoral policy proposals.

We, therefore, note the need to bear in mind not only the programmatic aspect but also the discursive aspect associated with the existing diversity in the Southern Hemisphere, as well as the existing space for ethnic and social tensions to build a determinant framework for the registered electoral results.

This ethnic issue is highlighted by Cheeseman (2018), namely when presenting the impact of ethnicity on the division of groups and as a factor of exclusion. The question of identity and the reasons that lead individuals to group, in a process that takes into consideration the set of values and priorities that everyone

stipulates, as well as the organisation of the society under study, are determining factors that often overlap with the deterministic dichotomy on which the central perspective of populism is based (people versus corrupt elite).

Given the historical background of the African continent, there is also a certain interconnection between the emergence of military leadership and the affirmation of populist movements, in a process of legitimising political power overlapping the role of political parties and civil society itself. The analysis of new political leaders has led to the creation of analytical frameworks that make possible to verify the impact of the charisma of these new leaders, as well as the dynamics associated with the role of rhetoric in political competition (Bienen, 1985).

Alongside the African context, in Latin America, there is a strong presence of new forms of populism, as well as the existence of polarised political frameworks that "survive" due to strong antagonisms in society. These processes are not exclusive to a particular region nor exclusively affect certain political regimes, but are rather a global phenomenon centred on a matrix based on political change through the fight against the current political situation.

However, although there are similar patterns in movements observed throughout the second half of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first century, it is important to bear in mind that political regimes and societies, in general, are more or less prepared/vulnerable to face threats to their functioning according to a set of specific characteristics, both in the social, cultural, institutional, economic and political fields.

This concentration of authoritarian states or states with fragile political systems in the Southern Hemisphere can be understood as a failure of globalisation, as well as attesting to the difficulty of transposing the democratic model predominant in the Northern Hemisphere to other realities (Kaplan, 2014).

Recurring to the contribution of Ihonvbere (2020), there are two trends at the level of the formulation/construction of the powers of a given community: a lesser relevance of the state in determining the living conditions of the populations and the substitution of elites and representatives of political power. We, therefore, witness the identification of a set of barriers to political regime change in specific contexts, even considering the strength and impact of globalisation, as well as the influencing processes of international organisations (Ihonvbere, 2018).

When addressing the political instability of some political regimes, as well as the emergence of some political leaderships, it is possible to find similarities in the topics addressed, as well as in the communication strategy used. At this level, there is a reproduction or mimicking of the existing conditions for the emergence of populist solutions.

We can succinctly identify some common features for the affirmation of a populist agenda in the Southern Hemisphere, namely the maintenance of an anti-colonial (anti-imperialist) discourse, the defence of a process of autonomisation of these states in the framework of international relations, as well as their respective positioning in positions of political leadership in international organisations, the existence of strong economic and social disparities in society, the permanence of ethnic divisions, the increased use of alternative media, particularly in the Latin American context, the preponderance of charisma in the analysis of political leaderships and the challenge posed to the separation of powers in the existing institutional archetype.

The *Fragile States Index* and the *Economic Intelligence Unit Democracy Index* show a greater number of African states in the context of fragile or authoritarian regimes. In contrast, most South American states are situated on the level of flawed democracies, which may result from greater consolidation of democratic processes (longer-established democracies) and less ethnic division.

Conclusions

The approach to the phenomenon of populism has motivated the development of numerous studies on the political organisation of states, the way political power is exercised, the impact of the new political parties and movements on the quality of democracy and the relationship between elected representatives and voters, in a process in which the very definition of populism represents a challenge for academics. In the debate, we find two prevailing views: framing populism from the point of view of an emotional discourse, simple and focused on "activating" people's instincts, and envisaging populism through proposals to the liking of voters, fostering a division between "people" and "elite" (Mudde, 2004, p. 542).

However, when studying the evolution of populism there are multiple views, including a focus on trying to build an ideological basis for populism, as well as studying populism from the point of view of political practice and approaching the context to understand its roots and ramifications. In this diversity of analyses, there is a gradual approach between an initial positive framing of the concept and the negative perspective that we see today, as well as the existence of various factors that promote the emergence of populist political solutions, with the geographical, political, cultural, economic, social and ethnic context playing a relevant role in the interpretation of the phenomenon.

Populism objectively emerges from a set of tensions existing in society, the contestation of the established power and the defence of policies that aimed at mitigating the disparity between the groups that composed society. It is, imminently, a political and social movement, which encompasses the political framework of the left and the right and is present in both democratic and authoritarian regimes.

In other words, the attempt to "accommodate" populism in a political spectrum or a particular form of organisation of political power does not correspond to the essence of the analysis that has been carried out, since populism coexists in democratic spaces and is exercised, in various contexts, within absolute respect for the democratic game. The literature identifies a series of factors that trigger the emergence of these phenomena, such as the social and economic crisis, ethnic and cultural differences, the phenomenon of globalisation, the power struggle, the dispute over natural resources, the snowball effect between movements in neighbouring countries, and the impact of new communication and electoral campaign techniques, centred on the "game of emotions".

The impact of populism varies according to the stability of institutions and the democratic consolidation of the country. In countries with weakened regimes, movements tend to take advantage of the weaknesses of the country and the political structure to assert new ideas and projects for organising society. In this area, according to specific contexts, the "attraction" for populism based on authoritarianism and the development of revolutions or coups as a means of achieving power is highlighted. Since the establishment of democracy is not given on a global scale, it is important to bear in mind the specificities of authoritarian regimes and the political and social instability experienced in various countries to understand the dynamism of populism in countries on the African continent and Latin America.

The reality shows the existence of a polysemic concept, applicable to multiple realities and approached according to different contributions and scientific perspectives, making it difficult to create a consensus on the mechanisms and effects associated with the proliferation of populist ideas in the global context.

In this domain, there is a broader scope for the study of populism in the framework of fragile states and more unstable political regimes, where a transversal ideological matrix is used by various populist leaders but conditioned to the specific context of each country.

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