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„The Pink Tide and the Left Behind: The Rise and Fall of the Latin American Left"

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"On my honor as a student of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it."

Giovanni Grisendi

This thesis sets out to investigate the revolutionary wave in Latin America that became widely known as the 'pink tide'. This phenomenon, which took place simultaneously in several countries across the continent, was marked by a successive turn to the left of the political spectrum. By relying on the theories of complex interdependence and political culture, this thesis seeks to analyze the rise and fall of left-wing governments in three case studies, namely, Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina. Key findings suggest that while the counter-hegemonic forces of social mobilizations interacted in consonance with a situation of complex interdependence, the resulting left-wing governments became marked by a revival of their traditional political cultures. Together, these theories proved immensely valuable to comprehending the complexities of the pink tide.

Diese These soll die revolutionäre Welle in Lateinamerika untersuchen, die allgemein als „Pink Tide“ bekannt wurde. Dieses Phänomen, das gleichzeitig in mehreren Ländern des Kontinents auftrat, war durch eine sukzessive Wende nach links von der Politik gekennzeichnet Spektrum. Unter Berufung auf die Theorien der komplexen Interdependenz und der politischen Kultur versucht diese Arbeit, den Aufstieg und Fall linker Regierungen in drei Fallstudien zu analysieren, nämlich Venezuela, Brasilien und Argentinien. Die wichtigsten Ergebnisse legen nahe, dass die Gegen- Die hegemonialen Kräfte der sozialen Mobilisierungen interagierten im Einklang mit einer Situation komplexer gegenseitiger Abhängigkeit. Die daraus resultierenden linken Regierungen enthüllten eine Wiederbelebung ihrer traditionellen politischen Kulturen. Zusammen erwiesen sich diese Theorien als wertvoll, um die Komplexität der Pink Tide zu verstehen.

A mamma, papà, e Giulia
che hanno creduto in me e sostenuto dall'inizio alla fine

And to Daniella,
for the interest, patience, and constant encouragement

Vienna, 17 July 2020

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List of Acronyms

AD: *Acción Democrática*

AUH: *Asignación Universal por Hijo*

CNBP: *Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil*

COPEI: *Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente*

CPT: *Comissão Pastoral da Terra*

CRBV: *Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela*

FHC: Fernando Henrique Cardoso

FPV: *Frente para la Victoria*

FREPASO: *Frente País Solidario*

ISI: import substitution industrialization

MBR-200: *Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario 200*

MST: *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*

MVR: *Movimiento Quinta República*

PDVSA: *Petróleos de Venezuela S.A.*

PJ: *Partido Justicialista*

PSDB: *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira*

PSOL: *Partido Socialismo e Liberdade*

PSUV: *Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela*

PT: *Partido dos Trabalhadores*

UCR: *Unión Cívica Radical*

URD: *Unión Republicana Democrática*

Chapter 1

Introduction

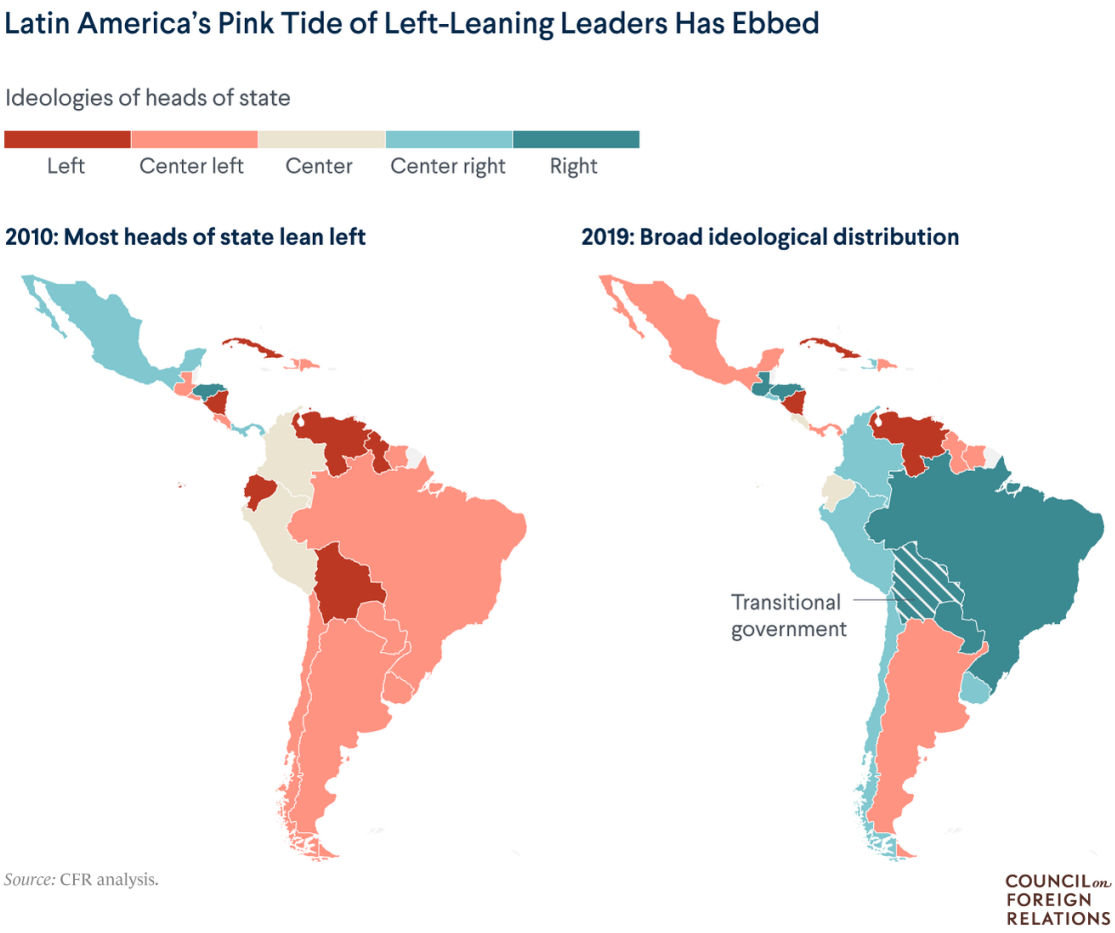
1.1. Opening Remarks

The year of 1999 represented not only the last year of the millennium, but also the year that kickstarted a series of political events in South America that would transform the continent's political scenario for at least the forthcoming decade. The election of Hugo Chávez to the Venezuelan presidency on December 1998 is widely understood as the event that marked the beginning of the so-called "pink tide" phenomenon; the turn towards left-wing governments in several Latin American democracies. Although this term was first used in 2006 to depict the government of Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay, it has quickly been embraced to characterize the wave of left-of-center governments. As Gonzalez puts it; "[…] the reality is that it has now been generally adopted as an analytical tool in the discussion and interpretation of the experience of left governments in Latin America […]"[1] What renders this phenomenon unique is not only the large number of countries it enclosed, but also the fact that it hit such countries in a rather simultaneous fashion. The swaying election of left-wing presidents that followed Chávez's duly justifies the selection of a wave as the metaphor that best characterizes such phenomenon.

	Pink tide (late 90s – early 2000s)		
Country	**Right-wing government**	**Left-wing government**	
		President	**Year**
Argentina	Eduardo Duhalde	Néstor Kirchner	2003
Bolivia	Carlos Mesa	Evo Morales	2006
Brazil	F.H. Cardoso	Lula da Silva	2003
Chile	Ricardo Lagos	Michelle Bachelet	2006
Ecuador	Alfredo Palacio	Rafael Correa	2007
Paraguay	Nicanor Duarte	Fernando Lugo	2008
Uruguay	Jorge Batlle	Tabaré Vázquez	2005
Venezuela	Rafael Caldera	Hugo Chávez	1999

[1] Mike Gonzalez, *The Ebb of the Pink Tide: The Decline of the Left in Latin America* (London: Pluto Press, 2019), p.1

Following Chávez's election, it was Brazil's Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva in 2002, then Néstor Kirchner in Argentina in 2003, followed by Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay in 2005, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Michelle Bachelet in Chile in 2006, followed by Ecuador's Rafael Correa in 2007, and Fernando Lugo in Paraguay in 2008. In the period of nine years, eight out of the twelve countries that comprise South America have had a left-wing president replacing a right-wing one. And if we expand to Latin America, for instance, this figure becomes even more pronounced, as six out of the eight additional Latin American countries have experienced this phenomenon. While this unique sociopolitical wave can be understood as a whole, each nation portrayed their own local specificities. Mainly due to the fact that the pink tide swept Latin America as a wave, simultaneously taking place in several countries throughout the same time period, this thesis intends to investigate how complex interdependence and political culture can explain the rise and fall of the left in Latin America.



Source: Edward Alden et al., "Visualizing 2020: Trends to Watch," Council on Foreign Relations (Council on Foreign Relations, December 10, 2019), https://www.cfr.org/article/visualizing-2020-trends-watch)

Chapter 2

Analytical Framework

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Complex Interdependence

In an attempt to assist and structure my analysis into a broader academic spectrum I have selected two theories which I believe to be strongly compatible with the topic of my thesis. The first is the idea of complex interdependence put forth by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in 1977. The second is the concept of political culture, widely popularized by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in 1963. Complex interdependence, for instance, denotes a situation where several connections and interdependencies among states ultimately transform international politics. This theory emphasizes the role of interdependence, since it assumes that whereas military power predominates over economic power, the use of force has become increasingly costly for major states, and therefore obsolete. According to Keohane and Nye:

> *"Complex interdependence refers to a situation among a number of countries in which multiple channels of contact connect societies (that is, states do not monopolize these contacts); there is no hierarchy of issues; and military force is not used by governments towards one another."*[2]

It is imperative to note, however, that complex interdependence represents an ideal situation rather than a fitting and consistent depiction of political relations. This is particularly due to the fact that it contends that all real situations in the political sphere fall within a spectrum that features classic realism on one end and complex interdependence, a rather liberal concept, on the other. And when relations between actors is one of complex interdependence, any asymmetry in their reciprocal dependence is deemed by the authors to represent a valuable

[2] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "Power and Interdependence Revisited," *International Organization* 41, no. 4 (1987): pp. 725-753, p.731

source of power in their bilateral relationships. In addition, complex interdependence advances that world politics is affected by relations conducted among states throughout three main channels of contact, namely, interstate, trans-governmental, and transnational. The first refers to unofficial ties between governmental elites. The second channel, on the other hand, depicts the informal ties among nongovernmental elites. And the third represents the relations among transnational organizations.

2.1.2. Political Culture

The second theory this thesis hinges on is the sub-field of political culture. Broadly disseminated by Almond and Verba in their book *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, the concept of political culture refers to the shared set of attitudes and beliefs of a population that ultimately determine its relationship with the local political system. According to Almond and Verba: "The political culture of a nation is the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation."[3] In order to uncover the dominant political culture of a society, Almond and Verba analyze the link between three main groups of orientation and three broad classes of objects. The three types of orientation include; the knowledge of and the belief about the political system, the feelings about the political system, and finally the judgments and opinions about political objects. In parallel, the three classes of objects are the specific structures, the incumbent leaders, and the particular public policies within a society. These three classes, in turn, can be broadly categorized as being involved into the political "input" or the administrative "output" process.

By analyzing the relationship between these six variables, Almond and Verba identify what political objects individuals are oriented to, and how they are oriented to them. As a matter of fact, the results of their study reveal the existence of three main types of political cultures: the parochial, the subject, and the participant. The parochial political culture, for instance, is characterized by the absence of specialized political roles, the lack of expectations from the political system, and the coalescence of both political and religious orientation. The parochial political culture can be found, according to the authors, in African tribal societies. The subject

[3] Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), p.13

political culture, on the other hand, refers to societies marked by a general orientation towards the political system and its outputs rather than towards input objects and the self as an active participant. While individuals of the subject political culture acknowledge and evaluate the presence of a governmental authority, they are naturally inclined to prioritize the system and the resulting outputs. The authors cite a French royalist as the epitome of the subject political culture. The participant political culture, is distinguished by a general orientation towards the system as a whole, including its input and output aspects, its political objects, and unlike the subject political system, the role of the self as an active participant.

2.2. Methodology

The selection of the two theories described above provides great guidance to the methodology outlined here. This thesis intends to explore the chief elements that explain the rise and fall of left-wing governments in Latin America. In addition, it aims to investigate the main sociopolitical implications resulting from these regime changes. Since the theory of complex interdependence characterizes a situation in which several channels and linkages among states ultimately transform international politics, it provides a coherent baseline for the study of a phenomenon taking place in neighboring countries in a rather simultaneous manner. Furthermore, the fact that complex interdependence portrays an idealized situation rather than a meticulous depiction of the existing political relations among states render it a valuable tool to understand a phenomenon of a rather extraordinary nature. Last but not least, Keohane and Nye's identification of the three main channels of contact, namely, interstate, trans-governmental, and transnational, allow for a comprehensive analysis, as they can be applied to Latin America as linkages between nations which ultimately played a central role in the contingency of the pink tide.

While complex interdependence enables the study of the pink tide from a rather politico-governmental perspective, the theory of political culture, on the other hand, adds a valuable cultural dimension to the thesis. This outlook is particularly important when one considers the heterogeneity of the Latin American region as a whole. Historically considered a "land of opportunity" throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, Latin America has welcomed immigrants who over the time have integrated and played a crucial role in the

region's political processes. Through the lenses of political culture, this thesis will investigate to what extent the civic society influenced the modes of governance of the pink tide.

For the sake of depth, this thesis will take into consideration three Latin American countries that have experienced the phenomenon of the pink tide. Such countries are Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela. This selection is reasonable, as all three countries fit the events of the the pink tide rather coherently. An additional reason for this choice is that fact that although Venezuela has been suspended, all three countries are part of Mercosur; the main South American trade bloc. The selection of countries who are members of Mercosur place them in an equivalent starting point for the conduction of my research. In addition, while it is well-acknowledged that Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina fall within different varieties of left-wing government, this thesis, for the sake of simplicity, will consider them as generally belonging to the left of the political spectrum.

After having selected the countries to be used as case studies, this thesis will analyze the role of four main aspects in all three countries. In particular, it will discuss, taking into considerations the specificities of each country, how complex interdependence and political culture can help us understand the ebb and flow of the pink tide. The overall approach of the study will be deductive, comparative, and will employ mainly qualitative methods. Furthermore, the analysis will make use of primary, secondary, multilingual, and multicultural sources.

2.3. Analysis

As the main overall approach of this study will be analytical, it will seek to assess the main driving forces behind both the rise and the fall of left-wing governments. This thesis is premised upon the assumption that the dominant left-of center parties that embodied the pink tide phenomenon in Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela were mainly influenced by their respective social mobilizations. While this holds true for the three case studies, the driving force behind the respective social movements varies from country to country. In Argentina, for instance, the *piqueteros*, the unemployed workers movement, were mobilized as a response to the economic situation resulting from neoliberal policies and the unemployment of the 1990s. In Brazil, on the other hand, the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (Landless Workers' Movement, MST), were stimulated by the synthesis of liberation theology that

emerged to counterbalance the divisive socioeconomic climate during the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964 until 1985. In Venezuela, the *Caracazo* and later the *Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario 200* (Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement 200, MBR-200) emerged as counter-hegemonic forces to the neoliberal model. Although different, these forces would coalesce into a strong collective rejection of the status-quo.

2.4. Summary

Since the pink tide took place simultaneously in a variety of Latin American countries, it represents a phenomenon that is worth studying. Starting with the election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 1999 and over a period of nine years, the pink tide hit eight out of the twelve South American countries like a true wave. By leaning on the theories of complex interdependence and political culture, this thesis will conduct a study to analyze the factors behind the pink tide from both a politico-governmental and a cultural perspective. The comparison of the role of the civic culture, the social movements, the economy, and the religion in three central Latin American countries will shed light on the fuzzy trajectory and implications of the pink tide.

2.5. Conclusion

So far, the development of this research has exposed the lack of literature on currents of regime change in Latin America. While the literature on twentieth century events in Latin America, including its dictatorships, its import-substitution-industrialization and structuralism period, and its neoliberal phase are extensive, little has been published on the generalized movement of a political current, regardless of its orientation. This thesis intends not only to shed light on these intriguing developments and what's behind them, but also to suggest possible future pathways for both left and right-wing governments. Ultimately, Keohane and Nye's theory of complex interdependence as well as Almond and Verba's concept of political culture will reveal the applicability of their contributions to understanding the ebb and flow of what came to be known as the pink tide.

Chapter 3

The Rise of the Left

3.1. Venezuela

3.1.1. The Collapse of the Regime of *Punto Fijo*

In sharp contrast to its current reality, Venezuela once enjoyed one of Latin America's highest standards of living. After the dictatorship of military strongman Marcos Pérez Jimenez, who ruled Venezuela from 1952 until 1958, the country embarked on its longest period of democratic stability. Between 1945 and 1989, Venezuela underwent a gradual transition from a rural to an urban society, simultaneously experiencing a sharp increase in its literacy rates. This was predominantly the result of an agreement known as the Pact of *Punto Fijo*. Signed in 1958 by representatives of Venezuela's three main political parties, the *Acción Democrática* (AD), the Social Christian Party (COPEI), and the *Unión Republicana Democrática* (URD), this formal arrangement sought the acceptance of the 1958 presidential elections and the prevention of another dictatorship.[4] In the 1960s, the regime of Punto Fijo, as it became known, adhered to the model of import substitution industrialization (ISI). Although it widened the middle class and improved living conditions for the underprivileged, it also deepened corruption and widespread privilege among the political establishment.[5]

Despite having experienced one of Latin America's longest traditions of *caudillismo* under Pérez, the quintessential charismatic strongman, Venezuela's political path was soon reversed. The subsequent regime of Punto Fijo allowed the entry of new actors into the ruling class and consolidated the country's democratic regime, establishing the most stable period in Venezuela's history. As a result of an emphatic effort to avoid single-party hegemony,

[4] Javier Corrales, "Strong Societies, Weak Parties: Regime Change in Cuba and Venezuela in the 1950s and Today," *Latin American Politics and Society* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2001): pp. 81-113, p.90

[5] Peter R. Kingstone, *The Political Economy of Latin America: Reflections on Neoliberalism and Development after the Commodity Boom* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), p.120

however, the Pact of Punto Fijo led to the unanticipated strengthening of all the existing political parties. Because of the omnipresent influence of such parties, some academics find it even more appropriate to refer to the *puntofijista* period not as a democracy, but as a "partyarchy".[6] While this concept might be contestable, what is certain is that the Puntofijo Pact significantly expanded the role of the state, while concurrently appealing for its redistributive capacity. These two features, as Maya suggests, would become ingrained in the Venezuelan political culture:

> *"The country's liberal democracy and its relatively stable two-party system were characterized by a particularly strong distributive and statist discourse that had been widely socialized by Venezuelans and was an intrinsic part of their political culture."*[7]

Despite fostering the development of national industries upon its implementation, under the ISI model, the economy underwent a technological switch that companies could not sustain, forcing them to require more coordination from a state that was becoming increasingly more selective.[8] The problem soon revealed itself to be deeper. Although able to promote a better standard of living for the poor, the liberal democracy put forth by the Punto Fijo regime was highly contingent on the revenue from petroleum. The latter, however, has undergone several fluctuations since 1958. While the rise in petroleum revenue fostered a consolidation of liberal democracy in the 1970s, for instance, its subsequent decline led to its deterioration in the 1980s, giving birth to the notorious 'lost decade'. In the 1990s, however, its decrease significantly compromised the country's welfare programs, thus disaffecting a great share of Venezuelans from the Punto Fijo democracy. Further disenchantment arose when at the beginning of his second presidency, Carlos Andrés Pérez, declared a national state of economic crisis. As explained by Myers:

> *"[…] Pérez announced that foreign reserves were severely depleted; that in 1988 the country had run a fiscal deficit exceeding 9 percent GDP; that the current account*

[6] Michael Coppedge, *Strong Parties and Lame Ducks: Presidential Partyarchy and Factionalism in Venezuela* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997)
[7] Margarita López Maya, "Venezuela: Hugo Chávez and the Populist Left," in *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), pp. 213-238, p.214
[8] Jonathan Di John, *From Windfall to Curse?: Oil and Industrialization in Venezuela, 1920 to the Present* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), p.184

of the balance of payments had its largest deficit in history; and that all prices in the economy, from interest rates and black beans to medicines and bus fares, were artificially low and impossible to maintain."[9]

The president proceeded by explaining that only bitter medicine could solve these conditions, but upon applying the first dose, the population erupted into clashes that led to hundreds of deaths. The medicine chosen by Pérez was a neoliberal economic package based on a set of four main policies: macroeconomic stabilization, trade liberalization, privatization, and deregulation. These policies, in turn, exposed the deficiencies of state institutions, which increasingly failed to deliver technical and professional services in a variety of areas, including transportation, agriculture, housing, and healthcare. The government's reforms were followed by an increase in the price of gasoline and transportation, which came to depict the culmination of popular unrest. In February 1989, the capital of Caracas witnessed the eruption of weeklong clashes that resulted in hundreds of deaths and thousands of injured.

This wave of protests, which became known at the *Caracazo*, quickly exposed the political instabilities of Carlos Andrés Pérez and his *Acción Democrática*. Venezuelans uprising against the Pérez government portrayed a microcosm of Latin America's rejection of neoliberal policies. It is interesting to note, in fact, that as Burbach points out, the pioneer role of Venezuela's social movements in Latin America's left turn has long been undermined. Organized yet broad social movements took the stage in the "moderate lefts" of Argentina and Brazil and in the more "radical" ones of Bolivia and Ecuador, as they are usually categorized. Venezuela, on the other hand, witnessed the early emergence of a movement with a clearly defined anti-neoliberal agenda. According to Burbach, the country boasts what would become the precursor of Latin America's anti-neoliberal social movements:

"While anti-globalization activists were drawing inspiration from the struggles of the piqueteros and neighborhood assemblies in Argentina, indigenous organizations in Bolivia and Ecuador, and the MST in Brazil, Venezuela appeared to be a regional backwater in terms of powerful social movements. Venezuelans, however, can claim credit for the first major anti-neoliberal uprising to occur in Latin America."[10]

[9] David Myers, "The Legacy of Charisma: Venezuelan Politics After Hugo Chávez," in *Latin American Politics and Development*, 8th ed. (New York, NY: Wesview Press, 2014), pp. 207-236, p.213

[10] Roger Burbach, Michael Fox, and Federico Fuentes, *Latin America's Turbulent Transitions: the Future of Twenty-First Century Socialism* (London: Zed Books, 2013), p.79

Despite not immediately changing Pérez's neoliberal policies, such spontaneous mobilizations paved the way for a period of political instabilities that would last fifteen months. Throughout over a year, the country witnessed two attempted coups and Pérez's suspension from office. The first coup, on February 1992, was planned by a group of low-ranking military officers calling themselves the *Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario 200* (Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement 200, MBR-200) as a commemoration to the bicentenary of Simón Bolívar's birth in 1983.[11] Led by a junior military officer by the name Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, the movement fiercely demanded the imprisonment of corrupt politicians. 'Our objectives have failed, '*por ahora'* (for the moment). These words, famously pronounced by Hugo Chávez on national television while assuming responsibility for the failed coup, would later become the slogan of a militant working class who longed for change. The second coup, on the other hand, was orchestrated by the navy, the air force, and the marines on November 1992. Even though both attempts failed, they proved significant in establishing a vociferous opposition to Pérez and his neoliberal plan.

This 15-months-long nightmare ended with the disclosure of embezzlement by Pérez, causing his suspension from office in 1993. In the following year, the return of Rafael Caldera, who governed the country from 1969 to 1974, represented a breath of fresh, but ephemeral air. While denouncing the corruption and neoliberal policies of Carlos Andrés Pérez, Caldera clashed with his predecessor's allies from the financial sector. This animosity led to the unforeseen breakdown of the entire banking system, which ultimately affected the country's economy. In an attempt to offset the damage, in July 1996 President Caldera, in consultation with the International Monetary Fund, reimplemented a series of neoliberal reforms under a program called Agenda Venezuela. Needless to say, Caldera's austerity policies caused both inflation and the national debt to skyrocket.[12] The *Caracazo* in 1989, together with the attempted coups of 1992 and 1993, represented the definite collapse of the *Punto Fijo* regime. A pragmatic system once based on political equilibrium was now replaced by a weak and oil-dependent government, whose historical source of prosperity became the reason for its failure. With the 1998 national elections on the horizon, Venezuelans knew it was time for change.

[11] D. L. Raby, *Democracy and Revolution: Latin America and Socialism Today* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), p.15

[12] Vandiana Borba Wilhelm, "A Trajetória Do Neoliberalismo Na Venezuela E Sua Conjuntura Atual: Uma Análise Das Políticas Governamentais Desencadeadas a Partir Do Ano De 1998," *Rebela* 1, no. 2 (October 2011): pp. 252-275, p.260

3.1.2. Hugo Chávez and the *Chavistas*

By 1998, it had become increasingly evident that the political compromise established in the 1958 Pact of Punto Fijo had largely collapsed. The country now experienced a political and ideological crisis devoid of any dominant discourse. Right-wing candidates, on the one hand, failed to represent a convincing alternative for two main reasons. First, the country's past experiences with neoliberal policies and their socioeconomic repercussions stripped them of a necessary credibility. Second, they were unable to capitalize on the populist narrative deployed throughout the *puntofijista* period. Its equilibrium was notably reliant on oil profits, a stimulus which by the 1990s, no longer existed. A left-wing alternative, on the other hand, had long been envisioned by a growing opposition. The resulting political vacuum, therefore, was ready to be seized by whoever best epitomized what the people longed for. It was precisely by personifying the antagonism to the *puntofijista* regime that Hugo Chávez rose to the Venezuelan presidency. As Gonzalez puts it:

> *"The political terrain was therefore unoccupied in any real sense, and the language of nationalism, the symbolism of Bolivar, a broad anti-imperialist, a rejection of the old politics, and a populist imaginary, combined convincingly in the person of Chávez who could represent all of these things, occupied the political space."*[13]

By portraying himself as the establishment's most belligerent contender while at the same time responding to the people's needs in a moment of turmoil, the former military officer managed to amass considerable popular support. In 1997, Chávez founded the *Movimiento Quinta República* (Fifth Republic Movement, MVR), which would serve as the parallel electoral structure to the MBR-200. As the MVR's central figure, Chávez, on 6 December 1998, was elected president by a decisive margin. Despite important, the political void resulting from the collapse of the *Punto Fijo* Regime represented only one of Chávez's strategies to rise to the presidency. His rise must also be understood in the light of Venezuela's rich political culture. The latter's composition, for its part, was largely instigated by two main events.

The first was the discovery of monumental oil reserves throughout the Venezuelan territory in the early 20th century. The second, on the other hand, was the brutal dictatorship,

[13] Gonzalez, *The Ebb of the Pink Tide,* p.32

that starting in 1948 and lasting for a whole decade, would significantly impact both its people and their relationship towards the national political system. The former event, on the one hand, would render oil, instead of land, as it was the case in other Latin American countries, the country's primary means of accumulation. The dictatorship, on the other hand, especially throughout its second half under military Marcos Pérez Jiménez, would decimate a large portion of Venezuela's powerful landowners. The long-term consequence of these two events was not only that oil had come to represent the national form of leverage, but also that this industry was quickly controlled not by the economic elite, but by the state itself. In the societal realm, this dangerous combination would mean that besides from placing the country's main bargaining chip in the hands of the already bloated state, corporatism and clientelism would come to play a major role in Venezuela's political culture. As Wilpert further highlights:

> *"Another consequence of the oil-oriented economy was that wealth was accumulated and directed by the state, rather than through an economic elite. This meant that it was the political parties that had control over the country's oil wealth and these kept challengers at bay via a corporatist and clientelist culture, which, in turn, reinforced the strength of the state and of the parties."*[14]

The state held the oil, and as Wilpert asserts, this advantage vis-à-vis the people allowed the former to 'purchase the loyalty' of large sectors of society, which in turn further increased its very statist nature. This modus operandi of individually succeeding through whichever means available, together with a gradual widespread acceptance of an expanded state, would become two central elements in Venezuela's political culture. In addition to shaping the national political behavior, the overdependence on oil had also a significant impact on the country's economic sectors. This was because such an overreliance further exacerbated the industries' asymmetrical development by virtue of the so-called Dutch disease. Applied to the Venezuelan context, this phenomenon meant its domestic and agriculture industries were unable to keep up with the oil industry. Because of this, both industrial and agricultural goods had to be imported.[15] What further worsened this industrial disparity was Venezuela's fixed

[14] Gregory Wilpert, "Chávez's Venezuela and 21st Century Socialism," *Research in Political Economy* 24 (2007): pp. 3-42, p.14

[15] Adam Kott, "Assessing Whether Oil Dependency in Venezuela Contributes to National Instability," *Journal of Strategic Security* 5, no. 3 (Fall 2012): pp. 69-86, p.82

exchange rate in the early 1970s and early 1980s. This regime, in fact, overvalued its currency, thus making it cheaper to import goods than to produce them domestically.

As a consequence of the Dutch disease and the system of fixed exchange rate, both industrialization and agriculture in Venezuela failed to effectively develop, further deepening its already heavy reliance on oil. Therefore, in addition to representing the country's bargaining chip, oil became the foundation of a corporatist and clientelist political system. This vicious cycle, nonetheless, could be sustained only until the revenues from oil remained high. When the money that was used to keep the political class in line ran out, so did the loyalty. The steady decline of per capita oil income since the 1970s hit an unprecedented low in 1998, thus leaving the system susceptible to external influences. This, according to Wilpert, is what led to Chávez's political climb:

> *"Eventually, not enough resources were available to maintain the clientelistic-corporatistic political culture, which then dealt a deadly blow to the two main political parties and enabled the rise and election of a political outsider."*[16]

The fall of per capita oil income hindered the state's redistributive capacity, increasing poverty and perpetuating the already accentuated social inequality. The lack of resources to maintain the existing political clientelism exposed the wounds of a debilitated and corrupt state. These changes, in turn, rendered the population increasingly more receptive to radical political alternatives. These were the forces behind Venezuela's political culture that in 1998, prompted the poor and the military to propel Chávez into the *Palacio de Miraflores*; the country's presidential palace.

[16] Wilpert, "Chávez's Venezuela and 21st Century Socialism," p.15

3.1.3. The Bolivarian Revolution and 21st Century Socialism

The dismantling of the oil-dependent *puntofijista* regime not only portrayed an opportunity to new political outsiders to rise, but also to the emergence of ideologies that defied the status-quo. The ideas of Bolivarianism, for instance, were advanced by Hugo Chávez, and became incarnated in the MBR-200 movement and their struggle against Pérez in the early 1990s. The Bolivarianism so incessantly proposed by Chávez, nevertheless, has its roots in three historical figures: Simón Bolívar, Ezequiel Zamora, and Simón Rodriguez. The essence of this movement is therefore strongly predicated on a nationalist stance inspired by Venezuela's war of Independence against Spain.

Bolivarianism offered a plausible solution for Venezuela's economic crisis at the time. In fact, it was the only political project that convincingly portrayed the country's chaotic situation as a direct result of several decades of misappropriation of the national opportunities, mainly oil reserves, by the privileged classes. The dissemination of this narrative proved pivotal in unifying several social movements that had emerged in defiance of the existing political system.[17] Through hinging on the institutionalized politics of clientelism, Bolivarianism gained prominence by ultimately challenging the subordination of the people to the elites. As Sanoja contends:

> *"Thus Bolivarianism's attention to the 'people' and its rejection of elites was a direct reaction to the existence of an institutional framework in which pacts among elites had become central for political stability."*[18]

Chávez's Bolivarianism therefore merits credit for advancing a discourse that not only breaks with the vertical process of policymaking based on bargaining, but that also places the people at the core of the political system. It is particularly for this reason that Chávez, as it is often advanced in the literature, can be seen as the personification of what the Argentinian philosopher Ernesto Laclau coined as an 'empty signifier'. According to the author, this is a typical phenomenon of populist discourses, as it emerges by loosely responding to the "need to name an object which is both impossible and necessary", and for Laclau, such object is the

[17] Jennifer L. McCoy, "Latin America's Imperiled Progress: Chavez and the End of "Partyarchy" in Venezuela," *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 3 (July 1999): pp. 64-77

[18] Pedro Sanoja, "Ideology, Institutions and Ideas: Explaining Political Change in Venezuela," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 28, no. 3 (July 2009): pp. 394-410, p.404

very concept of "the people".[19] By presenting himself as a reference point with which people could entrust their "varying and shifting political demands and aspirations", as Ciccariello-Maher argues, Chávez effectively identified with the disenchanted strata of the society that subsequently supported his political climb.[20] The Venezuelan president falls within Laclau's categorization of a signifier that's empty precisely because of the inclusive nature of his discourse, which, for its part, allows each person to identify with and shape it according to their specific unmet needs.

What many fail to grasp, however, is that as a result of both the population's receptiveness to alternative political narratives following the *puntofijista* monotone, and Chávez's attempt to engage the masses, the Bolivarian discourse has become substantially different from its original version. Original references to liberalism and political equality, for instance, were extrapolated to fit a discourse on freedom, natural equality, and social justice. In addition, Chávez also recognized the importance of identifying an antithetical enemy. This would not only render his Bolivarian narrative more historically accurate, as Bolívar himself confronted the Spanish rulers, but would promote his political project to the detriment of his enemy's. Such a pervasive misuse, therefore, sought to reconcile Venezuelans with their historical emancipator through the opportunistic appropriation of his discourse. As written by Sanoja:

> *"The use of Bolivar by political leaders is an ingrained behaviour that appeals, at every instance, to a shared perception that by doing this Venezuelans are reaching deep into their primordial national origin. This practice, aside from being ubiquitous, has as well followed a tendency to extract from Bolivar's life and works whatever suits the circumstances and needs of the times."*[21]

This institutionalized legitimization of Bolivarianism, in turn, allowed Hugo Chávez to identify and engage with the working classes, and further advance his political agenda. Thus, Bolivarianism's success largely relied on the initial appropriation of the historical discourse of liberating figures to unify and mobilize the people. The invocation of Bolívar, Zamora, and Rodríguez serve therefore as a legitimization tool to present the Bolivarian Revolution as the

[19] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), p.72
[20] George Ciccariello-Maher, "Venezuela: Bolivarianism and the Commune," in *Rethinking Latin American Social Movements: Radical Action from Below* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), pp. 251-265, p.257
[21] Sanoja, "Ideology, Institutions and Ideas," p.401

contemporary continuation of Venezuela's historic popular struggle. Consequently, this set of ideals identified a common enemy, the privileged class, and offered a clear solution, in the pursuit of a new form of socialism, to the sociopolitical problem they had caused. It was not until 2005, six years into his presidency, however, that Chávez introduced the concept of what he called the 21st Century Socialism.

At the outset, the Bolivarian Revolution was a nationalist and patriotic project, which opposed to the neoliberalism imposed by Washington and to U.S. intervention by and large. Despite it initially displayed a notable social character, Bolivarianism was characterized by a pragmatic political and economic agenda rather than a declared socialist political movement. It was indeed only in the 5th World Social Forum in Porto Alegre that president Chávez announced his desire to follow this revamped version of socialism. Nevertheless, his explanation of what the concept entails, as one could expect, was quite vague. On the same occasion, the former military man stressed the necessity to transcend capitalism and preserve a model of democracy unlike the one imposed by Washington. This goal, nevertheless, would only be achievable through his innovative version of socialism. As he passionately expressed in his speech:

> *"We must reclaim socialism as a thesis, a project and a path, but a new type of socialism, a humanist one, which puts humans and not machines or the state ahead of everything."*[22]

The prioritization of the people was perhaps embodied in the large number of *misiones*, the cornerstone of the Bolivarian welfare policy. These 'missions', created in 2003 as provisional social programs designed to alleviate the critical needs of poor neighborhoods, soon became Chávez's main priority. By providing services such as food distribution, literacy programs, healthcare, and housing construction, this initiative admittedly has an emotional ingredient that seeks to strengthen or even create a personal link between the beneficiaries and the political leaders[23], thus complying with the proposed socialism of the 21st century. Nonetheless, rather than providing a clear definition, Chávez merely adorned his ideology by

[22] Cleto A. Sojo, "Venezuela's Chavez Closes World Social Forum with Call to Transcend Capitalism," Venezuelanalysis.com, January 31, 2005, accessed June 18, 2020, https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/907

[23] Alba Carosio, "Política Social En Venezuela. Las Misiones Sociales," *Entornos* 29, no. 2 (November 2016): pp. 61-73, p.68

associating it with values such as solidarity, fraternity, justice, liberty, and equality.[24] In this regard, Chávez further consolidates his congruity with Laclau's 'empty signifier' in two steps. First, by oversimplifying a complex concept, the president decides to leave its meaning vague and all-encompassing. Second, he entices the masses by offering social values of positive connotations that can be both universally understood and yearned according to one's particular needs.

By presenting himself as the main vehicle channeling people's frustrations against an elitist government, employing a rhetoric conceived by liberation leaders, and by tapping into people's needs with hollow promises, Chávez managed to involve the population and lead it against a common opposition. What is oftentimes disregarded, however, was that Chávez's rise to fame, as the leader of MBR-200 in 1992, succeeded the *Caracazo* uprisings by three years. And his election to the Venezuelan presidency, in 1998, took place ten years after the protests that shook the country. It is precisely due to Chávez' ideological borrowing, the chronology of events, and his empty promises that he cannot be considered the architect of social change, but rather its inheritor. As Kingsbury accurately puts it:

> *"Chávez is the beneficiary of social change, not its source. By the time of his election, Venezuela had already been transformed; Chávez inherited the Bolivarian Revolution, he did not create it."*[25]

[24] Margarita López Maya, "Venezuela: Hugo Chávez Y El Bolivarianismo," *Revista Venezolana De Economía Y Ciencia Sociales* 14, no. 3 (August 2008): pp. 55-82, p.69

[25] Donald Kingsbury, "Between Multitude and Pueblo: Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution and the Government of Un-Governability," *New Political Science* 35, no. 4 (2013): pp. 567-585, p.574

3.2. Brazil

3.2.1. Lula and the Workers' Party

Much like Chávez, Lula's rise to politics was meteoric. The latter, however, gained prominence throughout the military dictatorship that lasted from 1964 to 1985. What was particularly significant for Lula's ascension to politics was his early affiliation to the Metalworkers' Union of the so-called ABC Region of São Paulo. While an industrial pole, this region, formed by three small cities, has been the epicenter of the labor union movement and its clashes with the military dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s. After joining the Metalworkers' Union in 1968, Lula, endowed with exceptional charismatic and leadership skills, became increasingly influential.

In 1969, he was elected to the union's board of directors, and only six years later, in 1975, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva became the union's president. Upon the beginning of his presidency of the Steel Workers Union, Lula led massive strikes advocating for better wages and against the regime's brutal repression. One particular strike, for instance, managed to shut down the automobile industry for several weeks. As a result, Lula was arrested and imprisoned for 31 days under the dictatorship's act of crime against the national safety. What followed his detention was the foundation of the Workers' Party, which would serve as the opposition's vehicle in their attempt to radically transform the state. As reported by Wiarda:

> *"Their leader, Lula, was jailed, but the strike showed that workers were again willing to take risks. From this fairly successful strike action emerged the new PT, the Workers' Party, which remained the most coherent opponent of the government."*[26]

The strike played a pivotal role in exposing the resilience of the vociferous opposition. This was promptly reflected after Lula's release, as he finally realized what had been contemplated during his days as a union leader. In 1980, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, together with fellow unionists, representatives of social movements, intellectuals, and catholic militants from liberation theology, founded the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT). The

[26] Iêda Siqueira Wiarda, "Brazil: A Unique Country," in *Latin American Politics and Development*, 8th ed. (New York, NY: Westview Press, 2014), pp. 97-126, p.114

former metalworker was now the president of what would become one of the largest political parties of Latin America. The PT, as it became known, adopted a red five-pointed star for its flag and proclaimed in their founding manifesto that "its participation in elections and its parliamentary activities will be subordinated to the objective of organizing the exploited masses and their struggles […] so that the people can build an egalitarian society, where there are neither exploited nor exploiters."[27] Notwithstanding being marked by great ideological heterogeneity, there was widespread concordance among its leaders that the party would campaign in favor of the socially excluded and go to great lengths to change the country's political culture of injustice and corruption. As Guidry asserts:

> *"Despite the public arguing among different political tendencies within the PT from its very outset, the PT carved out an 'ethos' of 'defiance against the dominant traits in Brazil's political culture'."*[28]

In 1982, two years after inaugurating his own party, Lula decided to run for Governor of the state of São Paulo. Despite unsuccessful in his bid for Governor, he was elected federal deputy for São Paulo four years later. Nevertheless, Lula's ambitions went further, and in 1989 he ran for president but lost to Fernando Collor de Mello, who became the first President democratically elected after the military dictatorship. The former steel worker's insatiable desire to reach the presidency encouraged him to run again in the 1994 and 1998 elections, losing both times to the neoliberal intellectual Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC). Whilst failing in three consecutive candidacies, Lula stood out for managing to uphold his role as the embodiment of Brazil's left through his leadership of the Workers' Party.[29] His increasing popularity encouraged him to run for the presidency for a fourth time, which he finally won with more than 60 percent of the votes against José Serra, his adversary from the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (*Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira*, PSDB). Lula's rise to the presidency, in the same vein as Chávez's, was widely regarded as a landmark in the role of the left in Latin America. As Druck points out:

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[27] "Manifesto De Fundação Do Partido Dos Trabalhadores," Partido Dos Trabalhadores, accessed July 03, 2020, https://pt.org.br/manifesto-de-fundacao-do-partido-dos-trabalhadores/

[28] John A. Guidry, "Not Just Another Labor Party: The Workers' Party and Democracy in Brazil," *Labor Studies Journal* 28, no. 1 (2003): pp. 83-108, p.92

[29] Giovanni Grisendi, "Comparing and Contrasting Brazil's Subsidy Program 'Bolsa Família' Under Former Presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Lula." B.A. diss., Franklin University Switzerland, 2018: pp. 1-41, p.27

"Lula da Silva's election was welcomed by all left movements in Latin America, and was seen as a historic moment that could usher in a post-neoliberal era, alongside the election of Chaves in Venezuela, reinforcing a framework of advances in popular mobilizations that were resumed in various regions of the continent."[30]

Lula's background, similarly to Chávez's, played a crucial role in his popularity. His story reflected the experience of millions of Brazilians, who yearned to succeed despite their disadvantaged upbringing. His confrontations with the military for better working conditions further strengthened such a reputation. In an unforeseen fashion, Lula managed to combine the experience of workers organizations with a fresh political project. This was reinforced by the parallel growth of the Landless Workers' Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, MST), one to which Lula developed a close affinity, and which will be further discussed in the following sections. While initially engaging the lower-middle class, the newly elected president gradually moderated both his image and his policies to appeal to a broader public. His appearance in 2002, for instance, stood in sharp contrast with his look from the metalworkers' union days. The long white beard and open shirts worn to deliver his assertive speeches against the military were replaced by a fitting haircut and formal suits. These changes illustrated Lula's desire to portray a rather nuanced and accessible image. As Silva and Boni elucidate:

"With modern suits signed by well-known stylists, modified appearance after a dental treatment, haircuts that favored his hairstyle, proposals that seemed very reasonable for the country's reality (and quite different from those of 1989), he seemed to gather the qualities demanded in a president. [...] Lula looked like he had the capacity to govern and would do it in a democratic way, defending the workers, who had always been the target of his main policies, but also meeting the needs and demands of investors, entrepreneurs, and other organized segments of society."[31]

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[30] Graça Druck, "Os Sindicatos, os Movimentos Sociais e o Governo Lula: Cooptação e Resistencia," *Observatorio Social De America Latina*, no. 19 (2006): pp. 329-340, p.330; freely translated from Brazilian Portuguese by the author; *"A eleição de Lula da Silva foi saudada por todos os movimentos de esquerda da América Latina, e foi vista como um momento histórico que poderia inaugurar uma era pós neoliberal, ao lado da eleição de Chaves na Venezuela, reforçando um quadro de avanços das mobilizações populares que eram retomadas em várias regiões do continente."*

[31] Cristiane Sabino Silva and Paulo César Boni, "A Trajetória Imagética De Lula: De Líder Sindical a Presidente Da República, " *Discursos Fotográficos* 1, no. 1 (2005): pp. 89-113, p.107; freely translated from Brazilian Portuguese by the author; *"Com ternos modernos e assinados por estilistas famosos, aparência modificada depois de um tratamento dentário, cortes de cabelo que favoreceram o penteado, propostas*

In part due to his three consecutive electoral defeats to two conservative candidates, Lula acknowledged the importance of widening his support base. This came after the president had mastered the art of capitalizing on his humble origins to his political advantage. The image of a former steel worker who became president already served as an inspiration for a great share of the population. While preserving his rapport with the working class, which propelled his exponential rise and to which he belonged, the president now sought to attract the country's socioeconomic elite that was disenchanted by his election. In addition to adopting a temperate appearance, Lula also eased the opposition by moderating his political agenda. This was fulfilled through what will be discussed later as his 'Letter to the Brazilian People', published on the eve of the elections.

3.2.2. Liberation Theology

The liberation theology movement was instrumental not only in the founding of the Workers' Party, but especially in providing the ideological foundation for the Landless Workers' Movement. Liberation theology has its roots in the early 1960s, when the Catholic Church began discussing its political orientations. More specifically, it was in the Second Vatican Council held between 1962 and 1964, whereby religious representatives engaged in dialogues to develop a theology associated with the social struggles in Latin America. Gustavo Gutiérrez, widely regarded as one of the founding fathers of liberation theology, advocated that the people should write their own history rather than waiting for a divine intervention. Gutiérrez proceeded to rely upon examples in the Bible to show the people's fight for their liberation, and in the figure of Christ to portray the resistance to the powerful ones.[32] Although the liberation theology movement spread throughout several countries in Latin America, it became particularly associated with Brazil as it had a major influence on the country's church. According to sociologist Michael Löwy:

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que pareciam bem razoáveis para a realidade do país (e bem diferentes daquelas de 1989), ele parecia reunir as qualidades exigidas de um presidente. […] Lula aparentava assim que tinha capacidade para governar e o faria de forma democrática, defendendo os trabalhadores, que sempre foram alvo de suas principais propostas, mas se atendo também às necessidades e exigências de investidores, empresários, produtores, industriais e outros segmentos organizados da sociedade."

[32] Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Como Fazer Teologia Da Libertação* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1986)

"The Brazilian Church is a unique case in Latin America, in so far as it is the only Church on the continent where liberation theology and its pastoral followers have won a decisive influence."[33]

The significant influence of liberation theology in Brazil was both a cause and a consequence of its role in the country's military dictatorship. Despite newly founded, this movement of the Catholic Church was actively involved in providing services and assisting victims of the repressive regime who were often under the threat of persecution. Throughout the military dictatorship, Brazil experienced a number of changes, including a significant population growth in the countryside and the progressive modernization of agriculture. Starting from 1974 and ending with the adoption of the 1988 Constitution, the country underwent a gradual process of liberalization of its military regime, which became known as *abertura* (opening). With the *abertura*, Brazil saw not only the emergence, but also the forceful mobilization of several social movements devoted to particular causes. The movement of liberation theology, therefore, took advantage of such gradual democratization to advance its agenda of assisting the underprivileged in their social struggles. Mainly due to their large numbers and the fact that they were heavily repressed by the military, liberation theologists became particularly involved with the landless workers. These, in turn, founded their own movement, MST, to fight for land reform. As Carter puts it:

"These changes, in turn, enabled progressive religious agents – inspired by innovative Catholic trends, including liberation theology – to play a pivotal role in reigniting Brazil's struggle for land reform. Indeed, these and other church initiatives at the grass roots helped foster an array of rural social movements, the MST being the most prominent offspring."[34]

The movement of liberation theology, therefore, proved significant not only to the movement's founding ideology and organizational structure, but also in unifying the country's landless workers under the same social movement.

[33] Michael Löwy, *The War of Gods: Religion and Politics in Latin America* (London: Verso, 1996), p.81
[34] Miguel Carter, "The Landless Rural Workers Movement and Democracy in Brazil," *Latin American Research Review* 45 (2010): pp. 186-217, p.194

3.2.3. The Landless Workers' Movement (MST)

As briefly mentioned before, although the *abertura* of the late 1970s gave birth to several social movements devoted to a variety of social struggles, representatives of liberation theology devoted particular attention to the issue of land reform. Since its foundation, the Landless Workers' Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, MST), attracted the biggest number of devotees. The main reason behind the church's preference for land reform, however, lies in the fact that landless workers protesting for land reform were particularly subject to prosecution. This is because the land was seen by the military as closely related to the issue of national security.

Considering that the military coup of 1964 was orchestrated to prevent the geopolitical advance of communism, epitomized at the time by the Soviet influence and the Cuban revolution, the mere advocacy for land reform was interpreted as a communist proposal that threatened the concept of private property. In view of this perception, the National Conference of Bishops in Brazil (*Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil,* CNBB) set up a specific organ to deal with land reform. This issue fell within the competence of the *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (Pastoral Land Commission, CPT), widely regarded as the main vehicle for converting the set of ideas of liberation theology into practice. The CPT, for its part, assisted in the struggle by mobilizing bishops, priests, and pastoral agents while also serving as the gathering point for peasants to organize their protests. As Flynn puts it:

> *"The Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT – Pastoral Land Commission) had become more involved in people's struggles for land following the second Vatican council and the more general popularisation of liberation theology, and certain elements within the Catholic church slowly became key allies for landless families in the struggle against the military government for agrarian reform […]"*[35]

The Pastoral Land Commission, together with the landless workers, organized their first national meeting for the struggle for land in 1982. Out of this meeting emerged the proposal to establish a commission of the landless workers within the CPT, which eventually lost to the idea of creating an autonomous entity. The latter was preferred as an attempt to prevent it from

[35] Alex Flynn, "Mística, Myself and I: Beyond Cultural Politics in Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement," *Critique of Anthropology* 33, no. 2 (2013): pp. 168-192, p.175

being excessively tied to the church. In January 1984, they organized the First National Congress of the Landless. This event proved decisive, as the entity was established as a social movement united under the name 'Landless Workers'. In addition, the Congress opted for the occupation of land as their main action and "occupation is the only solution" as their slogan. In the movement's Third Congress, in 1995, on the other hand, their fight turned mostly against neoliberalism. By that time, and by virtue of several international developments, liberation theology as a movement had lost much of its influence. For instance, the election of the traditional pope John Paul II in 1978, the conservative movement of the 1980s, the fall of the Soviet Union, and the neoliberal hegemony in the 1990s, had all worked as antagonist forces to the main tenet of liberation theology. It is imperative to note, however, that due to its ability to advance on a secular route, the Landless Workers Movement successfully managed to avoid the crises that disrupted its religious component. As further explained by Neto:

> *"[…] In its trajectory, the MST sought a secular path and, today, there is a change in the political formation of its leadership and in the bases of the Movement. This fact managed to circumvent the crisis in which Liberation Theology has been plunged in the last decade, the result of the conservative action of the Vatican and the crisis of the socialist idea."*[36]

Although the Landless Workers' Movement borrowed significantly from the synthesis of liberation theology in the establishment of its own organizational ideology, the movement's detachment from the church has proven highly beneficial. While liberation theology has weakened due to Catholicism's ideological shifts, the MST's closer affinity to political land reform has ensured its survival.

[36] Antonio Julio Menezes Neto, "A Igreja Católica e Os Movimentos Sociais Do Campo: a Teologia Da Libertação e o Movimento Dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra," *Caderno CRH* 20, no. 50 (2007): pp. 331-341, p.340; freely translated from Brazilian Portuguese by the author; *"[…] em sua trajetória, o MST buscou um caminho laico e, hoje, observa-se uma mudança na formação política de suas lideranças e nas bases do Movimento. Esse fato conseguiu contornar a crise em que a Teologia da Libertação se viu mergulhada na última década, fruto da ação conservadora do Vaticano e da crise da idéia socialista."*

3.3. Argentina

3.3.1. Perón, Peronism, and Carlos Menem

Just like in many other countries, Argentina's government has constantly swung across the edges of the political spectrum. Despite experiencing a variety of shades on both the left and the right, it is imperative to recognize an influential political movement that belonged simultaneously to both and neither. Peronism, as it became known, involved elements ranging from both sides of the political pendulum. This was because Peronism, like several *'isms'* in Latin America, did not follow a set of ideas, but rather, a particular leader, who could then explore its emotional load to create a sense of belonging and instigate social mobilization.[37] In Argentina, this leader was the nineteenth century military strongman Juan Domingo Perón. Rising to the presidency in 1946 and serving a total of three times, Perón significantly expanded the public sector and introduced several safety and health measures for workers that won him the support of labor unions and more importantly, the working class.

His inclination towards the left was further highlighted by the early support to the *Montoneros*, a left-wing urban guerrilla group. At the same time, nevertheless, Perón expressed sympathy towards Mussolini[38] and surrounded himself with his former far-right military colleagues. While his political inclination has long been contested, his character as a charismatic and populist leader remained largely unchallenged. In addition to his his wide-ranging policies, Perón gained even more popularity through his wife, Eva, who fiercely advocated for the rights of women and migrant workers.[39] Evita, affectionately called by her supporters, came to represent the perfect complement to Perón, as she was widely perceived as "the great mediator between the mass and the leader".[40] Perón's second term, however, was cut short, as economic problems led to his overthrow by the military in 1955. Upon returning to Argentina in 1973 after eighteen years in exile, Perón was again elected president, where he ruled until his death in the following year.

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[37] Marta Elena Casaús Arzú, *El Lenguaje De Los Ismos: Algunos Conceptos De La Modernidad En América Latina* (F & G Editores, 2010), p.4

[38] Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright, *Contemporary Political Ideologies* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1994), p.184

[39] John T. Deiner, "Eva Perón and the Roots of Political Instability in Argentina," *Civilisations* 23/24, no. 3/4 (1993/1994): pp. 195-212, p.200, 202

[40] Rodolfo Puiggrós, *El Peronismo: Sus Causas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez, 1969), p.164

Two years after the death of Perón, Argentina witnessed the Dirty War; a brutal military dictatorship that lasted until 1983. The movement Perón left behind, however, proved nothing but resilient. As a matter of fact, it was inherited by Carlos Saúl Menem, the then governor of the province of La Rioja. Despite belonging to the same Justicialist Party (*Partido Justicialista*, PJ) and evoking Perón's populist symbolisms in an effort to match his popularity[41], Menem ran his government under different economic policies. The economy under his predecessor, on the one hand, rested upon the principles of dependency theory. This model, largely advanced by the Argentinian economist Raúl Prebisch, suggested that the flow of resources from developing to developed countries was a result of an existing asymmetric relationship, which enriched the latter at the expense of the former. Prebisch, thus, proposed to offset this detrimental exchange with import substitution industrialization (ISI); a policy advocating the increase of national production to simulate the internal market.[42] Menem, on the other hand, opted for the neoliberal path by downsizing the public sector, privatizing several industries, and adopting free-market policies. At the turn of the millennium, Menem's neoliberal package proved disastrous, and in 2003 a Peronist successor, Néstor Kirchner, was elected to mitigate the damage. The antagonistic policies of the latter, as we shall see situated on the polar opposite of his predecessor, precisely portrayed the erratic nature of Peronism. But in between the presidencies of Menem and Kirchner, the country saw the emergence of a social movement by the name of *los piqueteros*: an actor worthy of attention.

3.3.2. Neoliberalism's unemployment and the *Piquetero* Movements

During Carlos Menem's second presidential term, which began in 1995, Argentina faced a serious economic crisis. As a coping mechanism, the Congress passed the state reform and the economic emergency law. While the former allowed the president to privatize a great number of state enterprises, the latter enabled the discharge of public workers and the reduction, or even the complete withdrawal of public subsidies at his discretion.[43] In addition to these measures, the Congress adopted the *Plan de Convertibilidad*, the convertibility plan

[41] Jennifer Adair, *In Search of the Lost Decade: Everyday Rights in Post-Dictatorship Argentina* (University of California Press, 2019), p.115

[42] Raúl Prebisch, *The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principal Problems* (Santiago: United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1950)

[43] Pablo Gerchunoff and Juan Carlos Torre, "La Política De Liberalización Económica En La Administración De Menem," *Desarrollo Económico* 36, no. 143 (1996): pp. 733-768, p.136

that pegged the Argentinian peso to the American dollar. Although initially successful, these measures eventually exposed the structural deficiencies of the country's economy. Despite increasing tax revenues, the countless privatizations were insufficient to sustain the economy. The removal of public subsidies, benefits, and services infuriated the population, and the expensive costs in dollar forced companies to dismiss workers. As a result, external debt increased, and unemployment skyrocketed.[44]

Then president Menem found his way out with the 1999 elections, in which *Alianza*'s Fernando de la Rúa won by forming a coalition with the *Unión Cívica Radical* (Radical Civic Union, UCR) and the FrePaSo (Front for a Country in Solidarity). Needless to say, de la Rúa inherited an economy in shambles, whose transient growth depended on large scale borrowing. Menem had left a deficit of 5 GDP points and by 2001, the government defaulted on $100 billion of its external debt: one of the largest defaults in history.[45] In an effort to halt capital flight, economic minister Domingo Cavallo announced the introduction of a measure that would become the tipping point of civil unrest. The *corralito*, as it was informally called, restricted all cash withdrawals to $1000, and gave birth to the massive wave of protests that came to be known as the *Argentinazo*. As noted by Álvarez:

> *"Social conflict and institutional crisis began in December, when the national government decreed the so-called corralito, which prohibited withdrawals of personal savings and limited the availability of wages."*[46]

In Argentina, it was the organization of the unemployed that on 19 December 2001, went out onto the streets of Buenos Aires to protest against the economic situation. These were protesters who had learned their organizational methods as trade unionists and now voiced their dissatisfaction through highly public and dramatic means. After witnessing their engagement in supermarket lootings, violent riots, in the occupation of public buildings, and street-blockades, De la Rúa deployed the Federal Police to contain the escalating violence. On the same day, the President declared a state of emergency and went on national television to

[44] Sebastián Galiani, Daniel Heymann, and Mariano Tommasi, "Great Expectations and Hard Times: The Argentine Convertibility Plan," *Economía* 3, no. 2 (2003): pp. 109-160, p.120

[45] Cristina Arellano, "Default Risk and Income Fluctuations in Emerging Economies," *American Economic Review* 98, no. 3 (June 2008): pp. 690-712, p.700

[46] Gonzalo Pérez Álvarez, "Continuity and Rupture in the Labor and Piquetero Movements in Argentine Patagonia, 1990–2011," *Latin American Perspectives* 42, no. 2 (March 2015): pp. 42-59, p.49

propose the negotiation of a "government of national unity". The day concluded with the resignation of Minister Cavallo.

The *piqueteros*, nevertheless, did not cease to express their discontent. This was shown by the banging of pots, the notorious *cacerolazos*, accompanied by the chants of *¡Que se vayan todos!* (All of them must go!) that lasted into the early morning. What had begun as a riot by the unemployed turned into a massive wave of protests by the Argentinian middle class, demanding the resignation of the entire political strata. In the following day, De la Rúa went live again to reiterate his desire to negotiate. This time however, the protesters' decisive unwillingness to compromise was reflected in the announcement by the head of the Peronist bloc of the House of Deputies, refusing to join the president's unitary government. Following the opposition's response, De la Rúa, unable to leave the *Casa Rosada* due to the ongoing violence at *Plaza de Mayo*, fled the country on board an Air Force helicopter. This image would later become iconic for portraying a memorable moment in the history of popular struggles: the *piqueteros*' transcending social borders to overthrow the state.

From this moment onwards, the *piqueteros* would constitute the most militant social movement of the working classes. To a great extent, the unemployed had proven successful by virtue of their clear understanding of the movements' limitations. From the very start, the unemployed workers movement boasted a well-organized structure to undertake widespread demonstrations, but never to effectively govern. Aware of such constrain, the protests were instigated by a will to voice shared disillusionment towards both the government and neoliberalism, rather than a will to ultimately accede to power. As Firchow further elucidates:

> *"[…] there was never a call for the seizure of state power, since there was no one well organized enough to accomplish this and no political will to express discontent by nondemocratic means. The Argentinazo was rather a rejection of the existing state power and representation—not so much a challenge to the state in itself as a rebirth of popular power and protest."*[47]

Since the *Argentinazo* in 2001, the downfall of De la Rúa came to symbolize the main popular backlash against the unemployment caused by the neoliberalism of the 1990s. The street-blockades, the *piqueteros'* main form of protest, for instance, interrupted not only the flow of goods, but also their production and consumption, thus standing in stark contrast to the

[47] Pamina Firchow, "Power and Resistance in the Shaping of Argentine Domestic Policy," *Latin American Perspectives* 42, no. 1 (January 2015): pp. 74-83, p.75

'economic freedom' staunchly advanced by neoliberalism. And to a greater degree, this episode epitomized the revival of the people's reformist power. Such a visible mobilization sought to compensate for the persistent subordination of labor brought about by the military dictatorship, the massive privatizations, and the soaring unemployment. Finally, the movement could strongly oppose to the sovereign force, be it the government, its adoption of neoliberalism, the resulting unemployment, or to all of them at once. Where it ultimately failed, however, was to offer an alternative political direction. As argued by Álvarez:

> *"This was evident in the slogan proposed to bring the movement together, "¡Que se vayan todos!" (roughly, "Everyone go away!"), which expressed opposition to current governance but at the same time demonstrated the absence of an alternative proposal. The movement rejected what existed, but no one knew what should go in its place."*[48]

On the other hand, it is also indispensable to take a closer look at the government's long institutionalized manner of coping with civic uprisings. Throughout the military dictatorship, the country followed neoliberal policies and continued to develop its national industries. While at the same time, the military regime had to stifle popular unrest resulting from its repression that murdered around 30,000 people between 1976 and 1983.[49] To advance both its economic and political agenda, the government decided to industrialize areas isolated from the inner cities. By creating new industrial poles that lacked a tradition of labor organization and whose union leaders were close to the country's political and economic power, the government sought to have a stricter control over the working class.[50] This intention to stifle the working class unequivocally resurfaced in the *Argentinazo*.

Following the crisis of 2001, though, the provisional government of Eduardo Duhalde sought to silence the opposition by resorting to the provision of a temporary monetary 'assistance'. This financial support, however, was conditional on their participation in employment programs of a duration between three and six months. Rather than designed to offer employment opportunities, this modest compensation, as it is often argued, served largely to conceal the existence of a disenchanted class. As Medina and Breña underline:

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[48] Gonzalo Pérez Álvarez, "Continuity and Rupture in the Labor and Piquetero Movements in Argentine Patagonia, 1990–2011," p.53

[49] Gonzalez, *The Ebb of the Pink Tide*, p.152

[50] Gonzalo Pérez Álvarez, "Lucha Y Memoria Obrera En El Noreste Del Chubut. Una Aproximación Desde La Fábrica Modecraft 1990-1991," *Historia, Antropología Y Fuentes Orales*, no. 41 (2009): pp. 25-48, p.26

"The amount of this 'assistance' only guaranteed the reproduction of poverty while enabling the survival of its beneficiaries - a type of survival that could prevent death but meant a malnourished and sickly existence lacking human dignity. In short, these programs were state instruments that, while functioning within the wide, arbitrary margins established by the ambiguous rules that regulated them, served to reduce the visibility of the organized unemployed."[51]

This state-sponsored assistance was put in place in return for the demobilization of the *piqueteros*. Furthermore, the government's commitment to mask the effects of neoliberalism was further highlighted by De la Rúa's final effort to censor the media outlets reporting from Buenos Aires. In particular, the President attempted to seize the state of national emergency to divert television networks from current events and show emergency programming instead. This proved unsuccessful, as De la Rúa's own Media Secretary refused to follow through with the plan. The government's only remaining alternative, therefore, was to choose specific images to portray the *piqueteros* as criminal actors. By focusing on specific protesters with covered faces burning tires, the state partially managed to criminalize the movement to the outside world.

In the two following years, while the country was under transient Peronists elected to finish De la Rúa's term and call for elections, the mobilizations continued to take place. By 2003, however, the *piqueteros* had lost much of its powerful cohesion. Their resistance became less spontaneous and their demands more fragmented between specific groups. This was the year, nonetheless, that Argentina saw the election to the presidency of a minor yet ambitious Peronist: Néstor Kirchner.

[51] Paula Abal Medina and Mariana Ortega Breña, "Thoughts on the Visual Aspect of the Neoliberal Order and the Piquetero Movement in Argentina," *Latin American Perspectives* 38, no. 1 (July 2010): pp. 88-101, p.95

3.3.3. The Kirchners

His rise to the Argentinian presidency seemed as remote as Santa Cruz; the province he governed in the region of Patagonia. Néstor Kirchner, whose personality reflected more that of a political activist rather than a revolutionary, owes a share of his victory to two propelling forces. The first was the resignation of interim president Eduardo Duhalde, who before stepping down over the death of two unemployed protesters, set a date for the elections and supported Néstor Kirchner. The second was the withdrawal from the presidential race of old stager Carlos Menem, who dropped out from the run-off upon realizing his likely defeat. In this regard, the 2003 Argentine general election epitomized once again the diverse and volatile character of Peronism. The fact that they were disputed between Kirchner, Menem, and a third Peronist candidate is a case in point.

Albeit favorable, the aforementioned two conditions catapulted Kirchner to power with a mere 22 percent of the vote share; "the lowest of any Argentine president since redemocratization"[52]. Nevertheless, despite inheriting the country in a state of disarray, similarly to his predecessor De la Rúa, the national economy soon showed Kirchner a few signs of recovery. In the first trimester of 2003, it is reported that GDP started to grow again while the unemployment rate slowly diminished after reaching a peak in May 2002.[53] Notwithstanding the country's timid economic improvement, Kirchner inaugurated his presidency with the mission of steering Argentina out of the extraordinary crisis of 2001. This time, however, this Peronist set out to accomplish such a task by governing on the opposite of his predecessor's neoliberal platform, thus taking Perón's ideology back to its very origins. According to Bonvecchi and Zelaznik:

> *"[…] the malleable nature of Peronism helped Kirchner to move forward with his reshaping strategy. Menem had converted Peronism from a labor-based party to a "neoliberal" force. Kirchner's agenda, contrary to Menem's, was in tune with the*

[52] Sebastián Etchemendy and Candelaria Garay, "Argentina: Left Populism in Comparative Perspective, 2003-2009," in *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), pp. 283-305, p.299

[53] CENDA - Centro De Estudios Para El Desarrollo Argentino, *Las Consecuencias Económicas Del Sr. Lavagna. Dilemas De Un País Devaluado* (Buenos Aires, 2004), p.28

traditional state-centered Peronist preferences. Kirchner was therefore able to return Peronism to its political tradition."[54]

While Kirchner's alignment duly reclaims Peronism from its roots, his government displayed nevertheless a progressive proclivity. This attribute, in turn, led some to fittingly argue that he "represents the current version of left Peronism, modernised for the times".[55] In fact, Néstor Kirchner and his newly found party, the Front for Victory (*Frente para la Victoria*, FPV), quickly embarked on a progressive left-leaning agenda. Not only did he favor south-south cooperation, but he also denounced U.S. interventionist policies. This came to light, for instance, with Argentina's active foreign relations with Brazil and Venezuela in dealings with Mercosur. In addition, Kirchner also denounced foreign intervention in his persistent antagonism with the IMF, blaming its austerity measures for the economic crisis of 2001 before renegotiating the country's foreign debt.[56] Last but not least, Kirchner capitalized on human rights by waging a discourse that promised to punish those responsible for the military dictatorship. In this regard, he notably annulled laws *Punto Final* (Full Stop) and *Obediencia Debida* (Due Obedience), both of which halted the trials against those accused against crimes against humanity.[57] Altogether, these policies further crystallize why Néstor Kirchner's presidential victory was regarded across the Latin American left with great enthusiasm. As Dinerstein puts it:

"The new presidential appointment was celebrated in Buenos Aires by Latin American presidents Fidel Castro, Lula Da Silva and Hugo Chavez and has re-energized populist sentiments and policies to tackle the problem of unemployment, public work, tax and education together with the restructuring of the external debt and the revitalisation of MERCOSUR."[58]

[54] Alejandro Bonvecchi and Javier Zelaznik, "Argentine Democratic Politics in an Era of Global Economic Crisis," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 1 (July 2012): pp. 1-25, p.7

[55] Federico L. Schuster, "Argentina: The Left, Parties and Movements: Strategies and Prospects," in *The New Latin American Left: Utopia Reborn* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), pp. 158-185, p.182

[56] Jennifer Leigh Disney and Virginia S. Williams, "Latin American Social Movements and a New Left Consensus: State and Civil Society Challenges to Neoliberal Globalization," *New Political Science* 36, no. 1 (2014): pp. 1-31, p.18

[57] Marcela López Levy, *Argentina under the Kirchners: The Legacy of Left Populism* (Practical Action Publishing, 2017), p.28

[58] Ana C. Dinerstein, "Power or Counter Power? The Dilemma of the Piquetero Movement in Argentina Post-Crisis," *Capital & Class* 27, no. 3 (2003): pp. 1-8, p.5

Néstor Kirchner continued to run his government on a progressive left-leaning platform; favoring southern cooperation, defying IMF's policies, adopting a human rights discourse, and lining up, in diplomatic terms with Castro, Chávez, and Lula.[59] Instead of seeking reelection at the end of his term, Kirchner decided to step aside to support the presidential candidacy of his wife Cristina in 2007. She would later win and become Argentina's first directly elected female president. Despite her husband's death in 2010, Cristina continued his same legacy of traditional state-centered Peronism. Her trajectory was marked by large-scale privatizations, such as the Spanish-owned energy firm YPF[60], the provision of far-reaching social policies, a strong human rights discourse, and even corruption scandals. Concerning the ongoing unemployed workers, it remains yet to be seen how the Kirchners government, under both Néstor and Cristina, revived old-style Peronism to strategically dismantle their movements.

3.4. Conclusion

An analytical study of the pink tide as a political wave requires not only a subdivision of the phenomenon into its ascent and descent phases, but also an individualized assessment of the main forces behind these changes. The rise of Hugo Chávez, "Lula" da Silva, and Néstor Kirchner must therefore be understood in light of the existence of a relationship of complex interdependence among their respective countries. In this regard, it seems appropriate to reiterate that complex interdependence, the first theory this work relies on, explains the linkage between countries as predicated not on power structure or military force, but on the presence of means of contact. As advanced by Keohane and Nye, it refers to:

> *"[…] a situation among a number of countries in which multiple channels of contact connect societies (that is, states do not monopolize these contacts); there is no hierarchy of issues; and military force is not used by governments towards one another."*[61]

[59] Gonzalez, *The Ebb of the Pink Tide*, p.158
[60] Luigi Manzetti, "Renationalization in Argentina, 2005–2013," *Latin American Politics and Society* 58, no. 1 (2016): pp. 3-28, p.8
[61] Keohane and Nye, "Power and Interdependence Revisited," p.731

In addition, complex interdependence puts forward that global politics is ultimately shaped by relations between states, which are in turn, conducted among three channels of contact, namely, interstate, trans-governmental, and transnational. The first refers to unofficial ties between governmental elites, the second, to the informal ties among nongovernmental elites, and the third, to the relations among transnational organizations. This scenario of interdependence, was above anything else, accurately portrayed by the social mobilizations and the subsequent success of left-wing governments experienced in Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina. The developments of the pink tide as a regime change movement portrayed a collective rejection to the neoliberalism widely implemented in the 1990s. This, for its part, was a response that ultimately transcended national boundaries, as it was channeled mainly through informal ties between nongovernmental actors.

While the collective rejection to neoliberalism was a phenomenon observed also in other parts of the globe, the Latin American case boasts an idiosyncrasy of its own. What is particular to its case is that only here, this counter-hegemonic force, uttered by a diversity of disillusioned people, effectively mobilized on multiple channels of contact. These linkages are what Anderson refers to as "different dimensions". In Latin America, this collective response is not only conceived from the cultural, social, and national, but is also conveyed across states through these same spheres. As Anderson puts it:

> *"Here and only here, the resistance to neoliberalism and to neo-imperialism melds the cultural with the social and national. That is to say, it implies the emerging vision of another type of organization of society, and another model of relations among states on the basis of these three different dimensions."*[62]

The clearest evidence of the heterogeneity of the resistance to neoliberalism can indeed be found in the social mobilizations behind the pink tide. The *Caracazo* and the MBR-200 in Venezuela, the Workers' Party and the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil, and the *Argentinazo* and the *piqueteros* in Argentina are all cases in point. Together, these counter-hegemonic forces collectively encouraged the sequential success of left-leaning leaders through what, as argued in this paper, would fall into Keohane and Nye's "channels of contacts".

[62] Perry Anderson, "The Role of Ideas in the Construction of Alternatives," in *New World Hegemony: Alternatives for Change and Social Movements* (Merlin Press, 2004), pp. 35-50 p.42

In Venezuela, the *Caracazo* served as the precursor to the continent's anti-neoliberal social movements. It not only exposed the disenchantment of the population towards Pérez's neoliberal package to stabilize the economy, but together with the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement – 200 and its failed 1992 coup, conferred Chávez widespread notoriety. The rise of "Lula" da Silva in Brazil, on the other hand, was not only propelled by his strongly organized Workers' Party (PT), but also by the parallel emergence of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST). The foundation of the latter, for instance, would come to mean that the PT, partly due to liberation theology, could count on a loyal base of supporters unified under the same movement. Last but not least, the neoliberal policies in Argentina would lead to the resignation of the economy minister and then president de la Rúa. The unforeseen protests that took Buenos Aires in what came to be called the *Argentinazo* gave rise to the organized unemployed workers' movement, the *piqueteros*.

The existence of a relationship of complex interdependence among the states of the pink tide can be further reinforced by Gramsci's understanding of the materialization of a historical act. To the author, the fact that collective wills were dispersed could not be seen as an obstacle to change for the reason that they are ultimately held together by a common purpose. Developments in global politics, are therefore contingent once again, on a cultural and social connection between states. A historical act, as written by Gramsci

> *"[…] can only be performed by "collective man", and this presupposes the attainment of a "cultural-social" unity through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world […]"*[63]

It is precisely due to the fact that social change is encouraged by a collective counter-hegemonic will that the wave of left-wing governments should be understood in a scenario of complex interdependence. The ebb and flow of the pink tide, as this phenomenon came to be called, should not be seen as stationary or fragmented event. But rather, it must be construed as a fluid dynamic where governments, nongovernmental elites, and transnational organizations mutually influence the political experiences of their respective countries. For this reason, Chodor stresses the importance of avoiding oversimplifications. As he puts it:

[63] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1971), p.349

"[…] the relationship between the members of the Pink Tide – and Venezuela and Brazil – should not be conceived of in dichotomous terms – as a stark choice between 'reform' or 'revolution,' or as a simple difference between 'good' and 'bad' leftism. Rather, it can be more accurately understood dialectically, in terms of the potentials for radical transformations that arise out of their interaction."[64]

The left turns experienced in Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina must therefore be understood as a combination of dispersed wills, propagated through cultural, social, and national channels of contact, and held together by a shared goal. While words largely fail to do justice to the potential of these forces, their cumulative effect is best displayed by the ubiquity of the pink tide itself.

[64] Tom Chodor, *Neoliberal Hegemony and the Pink Tide in Latin America: Breaking up with TINA?* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.148

Chapter 4

The Fall of the Left

4.1. Venezuela

4.1.1. Increasing Authoritarianism

The newly elected Hugo Chávez sought to carry out his Bolivarian Revolution in an effort to bring about social changes immediately upon taking office. To this end, one of Chávez's first edicts was a call for a popular referendum to convene a National Constituent Assembly in order to formulate a new constitution. After being approved with 88 percent of the votes[65], the 1999 *Constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela* (Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, CRBV) implemented several amendments that would significantly consolidate Chávez's authority. In fact, the new constitution duly strengthened the *Movimiento Quinta República*, dismantled checks and balances to consolidate power in the executive branch and eliminated both the Senate and the congressional supervision of the armed forces.[66] Moreover, the CRBV also increased presidential terms from five to six years and allowed one immediate reelection. As a result, Venezuela became the Latin American country with the longest presidential period.[67] Since it had already been the inclination of Venezuela's petro-state to have a strong regulatory capacity over the economy, it is often argued that the 1999 constitution further reaffirmed this tendency, thus becoming more compatible with the country's traditional political culture than with the neoliberalism of the 1990s.[68]

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[65] Bart Jones, *Hugo!: The Hugo Chávez Story from Mud Hut to Perpetual Revolution* (London: Vintage, 2009), p.238

[66] Roger F. Noriega, "Venezuela under Chávez: The Path toward Dictatorship," *American Enterprise Institute*, no. 3 (2006): pp. 1-9, p.1

[67] Francisco Monaldi et al., "Political Institutions, Policymaking Processes, and Policy Outcomes in Venezuela," January 2006, Research Department, Inter-American Development Bank, p.44

[68] Maya, "Venezuela: Hugo Chávez and the Populist Left,", p.221

Chávez's efforts to consolidate power, however, were not only evident in the formulation of the new constitution, but also in the transformation of his own political platform. The MBR-200, his clandestine movement behind the 1992 attempted coup, was dissolved in 1997 and replaced with the MVR to support Chávez's presidential candidacy. The organizational structure behind these two platforms, nevertheless, also underwent major changes to fulfil the president's autocratic ambitions. As advanced by Maya:

> *"Unlike the MBR 200, the MVR was a vertical, centralized electoral structure serving the Chávez candidacy, without internal debate or any pretensions of providing an ideological formation for its members. Its ideological heterogeneity was more marked than that of the MBR 200, and thus it facilitated an organizational style in which the personal nature of authority became decisive."*[69]

Predominantly due to their different aspirations, the MBR-200 and the MVR developed rather antithetical institutional structures. Whereas the former was founded more as a political study circle on how best to employ Bolivarianism to reform the country[70], the latter, on the other hand, was established first and foremost to support Chávez's candidacy. This, in turn, meant that in contrast to the MBR-200 which was marked by a more cooperative exchange of ideas, the MVR was characterized from its inception by a personalistic top-down approach. The intrinsic need for a stronger hierarchical structure led the MVR, the political party that had already been conceived to drive Chávez to the top, to further center around his persona. This phenomenon would later evolve into a widespread devotion to the figure of Chávez as a political ideology, known as *chavismo.* There is, however, a contentious debate concerning the nature of the loyalty of the so-called *chavistas*. Some academics, for instance, claim that *chavistas* are mischaracterized by the opposition and argue that they describe themselves first as supporters of the Bolivarian Revolution and secondly as supporters of President Chávez.[71]

Another edge of the literature, on the other hand, contends that such an allegiance to Chávez developed into a blind veneration that in accordance to his borrowing from Bolívar, promotes the open antagonism towards a common enemy, generally identified as the privileged

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[69] Maya, "Venezuela: Hugo Chávez and the Populist Left," p.217

[70] Richard Gott, *In the Shadow of the Liberator: Hugo Chavez and the Transformation of Venezuela* (London: Verso, 2000), p.40

[71] Cristóbal Valencia Ramírez, "Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution," *Latin American Perspectives* 32, no. 3 (May 2005): pp. 79-97, p.93

class. As Hawkins puts forth, this relationship is characterized by a strong personalistic character:

> *"Chavismo relies on a charismatic mode of linkage between voters and politicians, a relationship largely unmediated by any institutionalised party, and that it bases itself on a powerful, Manichaean discourse of 'the people versus the elite' that naturally encourages an 'anything goes' attitude among Chavez's supporters."*[72]

According to this view, interviews with party leaders suggest that membership to the MVR was predicated far more on people's identification with Chávez than with the political party itself. For Hawkins, therefore, its supporters encourage the narrative that *chavismo* represents the popular will and those who object to it inexorably constitute the corrupt elites. This attitude, in turn, is said to foster an idea of mobilizing through whichever available means, which needless to say, tends to undermine the Bolivarian movement. Such an increasing authoritarianism around the figure of Chávez threatens to impair his agenda largely due to the absence of constructive criticism. Questioning from outside the movement is swiftly rejected and questioning from within the movement is almost nonexistent. Although socialism of the 21st century was intended to promote a participatory democracy by placing humans ahead of everything, it seems to accurately tap into Venezuela's personalistic political culture to advance the ideals of Chávez's personal doctrine.

The values of *chavismo* were further propagated by the widespread use of state television. To this regard, Chávez had his own propaganda talk show, known as *Aló Presidente*, hosted every Sunday by the president himself. Among the several motives behind the broadcast of the show, which aired from 1999 until 2012, were indeed the publicization of the accomplishments of the Bolivarian Revolution and the strengthening of the bond between the president and his followers.[73] In addition to propagating his project, Chávez sought to minimize dissent by progressively stripping the private media from the powerful opposition. This move, as De La Torre suggests, granted him control of the largest share of television outlets:

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[72] Kirk Hawkins, "Populism in Venezuela: The Rise of Chavismo," *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 6 (December 2003): pp. 1137-1160, p.1137

[73] Eduardo Frajman, "Broadcasting Populist Leadership: Hugo Chávez and Aló Presidente," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 46, no. 3 (August 2014): pp. 501-526, p.503

"Control of the media was at the centre of his struggle for hegemony. Chávez's government regulated the content of what the media could publish, and took away radio and television frequencies from critics. The state became the main communicator controlling 64% of television channels."[74]

The government amassed sovereignty over the national television by releasing mandatory programs that all media venues were compelled to broadcast. The vast majority of such programs, in turn, had a strong propagandistic aspiration. In *Aló Presidente*, for instance, Chávez entertained the audience for four to six hours by announcing the government's main policies while both singing popular songs and sharing personal life experiences. The mandatory broadcast of *Aló Presidente* epitomizes Chávez's increasing populist authoritarianism. The control of the media in general, falls within the president's widely recognized method to consolidate power: the use plebiscitarian mass support to modify traditional institutions, dismantle checks and balances, centralize influence in the executive, and promote direct reelection.[75]

4.1.2. Clientelism and Self-Interest

Chávez's government seemed to portray a return to Venezuela's traditional political culture not only through its personalistic element that centered around the figure of Chávez, but also by displaying highly clientelistic practices. This phenomenon was best depicted throughout the Bolivarian "missions". By financing these social programs directly through revenues from the state-owned oil company *Petróleos de Venezuela S.A.* (PDVSA), the government managed to use this rent to effectively engage the population. Such a clientelistic practice was initially conceived to overcome the erosion of Chávez's popularity in the first year of his second term. By then, the opposition's discontent had been expressed by gathering signatures to initiate a recall referendum to ultimately revoke Chávez's presidential mandate. With the support of loyal personnel at the National Electoral Council (CNE), however, Chávez

[74] Carlos De La Torre, "Hugo Chávez and the Diffusion of Bolivarianism," *Democratization* 24, no. 7 (2017): pp. 1271-1288, p.1274

[75] Kurt Weyland, "The Threat from the Populist Left," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 3 (July 2013): pp. 18-32, p.22

managed to publicize the name of more than three million people who had signed the recall referendum. As a consequence, signatories were often subjected to public derision as some even got dismissed from public offices.[76]

Chávez's real instance of political manipulation, however, was carried out in different ways according to the specific social program. Cash transfers for *Misión Ribas*, implemented to offer high-school-level classes to adults, for instance, were distributed mainly in areas with the largest presence of *chavistas*. In *Misión Mercal*, which sought to create discounted stores to expand access to food, for instance, resources were allocated to strengthen areas governed by loyal mayors. The resources of the missions, nevertheless, could also be employed to win the support in hostile areas, as was the case in the healthcare program *Misión Barrio Adentro*. Ultimately, coordination between the government and the CNE served not only to ensure that beneficiaries of social programs could exercise their right to vote, but also to threaten the withdrawal of signatories' names from such programs. This practice was particularly recurrent in *Misión Identidad*, the program designed to provide Venezuelans with identity cards: a document that was required for voting and for accessing personal cash transfers. As Penfold-Becerra contends:

> *"To make sure that voters would support the regime in exchange for the social benefits, the Chávez administration increased the costs for citizens to cast their vote for the opposition by threatening to remove their access to some of the misiones or to fire them from jobs in the public sector. This coercive practice embedded in the social programs became a cornerstone for the regime to consolidate its clientelistic networks and effectively to buy votes."*[77]

In addition to the personalistic style of his government and the clientelistic aspect of his Bolivarian missions, Chávez represents a backslide to Venezuela's political culture by reviving other values and attitudes that were typical of the regime of Punto Fijo. Both self-interest and corruption, for instance, became explicit mainly in the economic model proposed by the socialism for the 21st century. In an attempt to establish a social-based democracy, the regulatory capacity of the new constitution encouraged the practices of co-management and self-management. In practice, greater public participation in the economic and the political

[76] Miriam Kornblith, "Elections Versus Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 1 (January 2005): pp. 124-137, p.128

[77] Michael Penfold-Becerra, "Clientelism and Social Funds: Evidence from Chávez's Misiones," *Latin American Politics & Society* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2007): pp. 63-84, p.80

sphere was to be achieved respectively by the creation of cooperatives and community councils. Many of these enterprises, in turn, were former bankrupt firms that had been appropriated by the government.[78] Their maintenance, on the other hand, was ensured mainly by *Misión Vuelvan Caras*, which provided training for their very creation and administration.

Regarding their institutionalization, Chávez stressed that social needs would only be satisfied if such enterprises were controlled by the communities affected by their production, where individual profit was replaced by values such as cooperation and solidarity.[79] Despite Chávez's embellished words and numerous incentives, the cooperatives' success was early hindered by their deficiencies. Wilpert, for instance, notes that up to half of them are "phantom cooperatives", created merely to grant their directors access to preferential loans and other government incentives.[80] In a similar fashion, Ellner argues that some cooperatives turned out to be private companies that disguised themselves as cooperatives to receive contracts, loans, and tax-exempt status.[81] And in reference to Chávez's utopian socialist values, Lebowitz argues that rather than prioritizing solidarity among the society, many cooperatives continued to operate largely focusing on the self-interest of their own workforce.[82] These unsurprising instances of capitalism that run counter to the very nature of 21st century socialism further demonstrate the challenges of reversing a country's political culture. As Chodor puts it:

> *"Given the partial nature of the transformation towards socialism, the presence of capitalists within the movement is unavoidable, but it also highlights the persistence of individualism and self-interest in popular common sense. This illustrates the difficulty of constructing a radical alternative culture in a short historical period, and the absence of Chávez only increases this difficulty."*[83]

If Venezuela has taught us anything, it is that in reality, the Chávez government has exposed values and practices that are antagonistic to his idea of 21st century socialism. While

[78] Eduardo Silva, *Challenging Neoliberalism in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.228
[79] Camila Piñeiro Harnecker, "Workplace Democracy and Social Consciousness: A Study of Venezuelan Cooperatives," *Science & Society* 73, no. 3 (July 2009): pp. 309-339, p.332
[80] Gregory Wilpert, *Changing Venezuela by Taking Power: The History and Policies of the Chávez Government* (London: Verso, 2007), p.78
[81] Steve Ellner, "Venezuela's Social-Based Democratic Model: Innovations and Limitations," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 43, no. 3 (August 2011): pp. 421-449, p.430
[82] Michael A. Lebowitz, *Build It Now: Socialism for the Twenty-First Century* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 2006), p.105
[83] Chodor, *Neoliberal Hegemony and the Pink Tide in Latin America*, p.118

his ideology promised to 'put humans ahead of everything', his presidential inauguration witnessed the formulation of a new constitution that consolidated unprecedented power in the hands of the executive. And whereas his social-based democracy was based on the principles of cooperation and solidarity, it rapidly became characterized by instances of self-interest and corruption. Rather than with his proposed 21st century socialism, Chávez's presidency seems to be more alienated with Venezuela's traditional political culture. In fact, the regulatory capacity of the 1999 constitution, the personalistic nature of the MVR and *Chavismo*, and the clientelistic manipulations of the Bolivarian missions, for instance, are all remarkably compatible with the political culture of the *puntofijista* period. Such a deviation of the Venezuelan political culture from progressive principles, according to LaMassa, stems mainly from the influence of Cuba and poses a threat to other regional countries:

> *"The influx of Soviet Marxist ideas that Cuba transferred to Venezuela have perverted the political culture of the country. This is not only problematic for the situation of human rights and the rule of law in the country but also for the democratic stability of Latin-America in general."*[84]

Venezuela has indeed had a strong relationship with Cuba. Among the several instances in which the two countries have cooperated, the most widely known is perhaps in the establishment of *Misión Barrio Adentro*. Through the exchange of Venezuelan oil for thousands of Cuban doctors, this program not only officially inaugurated Chávez's series of Bolivarian missions, but it also represented one of the largest degrees of medical cooperation.[85] This proximity, according to LaMassa, corrupted Venezuela's political culture, which in turn threatens to undermine the democracies of fellow Latin American neighbors. While for some it represents a mere pessimistic forecast, for others this phenomenon has already materialized. Corrales argues, for instance, that by using its oil resources, Venezuela managed to create what he calls an "alliance of tolerance".[86] Countries that profited from Chávez's oil policy refused to denounce, and in some cases even supported his violations of human rights. Would Brazil and Argentina follow down the same path?

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[84] Ernesto LaMassa, "The Venezuelan Political Culture and Its Incompatibility with the Rule of Law," *Global Governance* 1, no. 2 (April 22, 2014): pp. 1-11, p.8

[85] John M. Kirk, "Cuban Medical Cooperation Within ALBA: The Case of Venezuela," *International Journal of Cuban Studies* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2012): pp. 221-234, p.222

[86] Javier Corrales, "Autocratic Legalism in Venezuela," *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 2 (April 2015): pp. 37-51, p.46

4.2. Brazil

4.2.1. Moderation and Pragmatism

Despite becoming president by casting more than 60 percent of the ballots, Lula was well aware of the hostile climate of political polarization of the time. Indeed, before defeating the ideologically ill-defined José Serra in 2002, Lula had lost once to Fernando Collor de Mello and twice to Fernando Henrique Cardoso; two presidents who ascended by running on a neoliberal platform. After acknowledging the support that neoliberalism still enjoyed in Brazil, the Workers' Party, which had "always defined itself as socialist"[87], started to undergo a process of gradual moderation. The PT embraced, upon its foundation in 1980, a socialist agenda committed to increasing the role of the state to redistribute the country's wealth through policies that included welfare programs and land reform. One decade after its creation, however, the party's partisan approach slowly started to fade. As Hunter puts it:

> *"By the mid-1990s the PT had begun to undergo fairly significant shifts. While criticizing fiercely the market reform program enacted by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, it softened the call for socialism and scaled back its most far-reaching demands for economic redistribution."*[88]

While the Workers' Party continued to denounce the neoliberal agenda adopted by Cardoso, it simultaneously retreated from the kind of socialism it vehemently advanced in the 1980s. In fact, in the following decade, the party's trajectory would be characterized by a shift from controversial ideological matters to a focus on specific projects and proposals.[89] Lula's unsuccessful presidential campaign in 1994, for instance, is notably argued to have prompted a slow process of self-examination.[90] If any deliberation materialized, it became evident in 1998, when the word *socialism* had disappeared from Lula's campaign program for his third

[87] Margaret Keck, *The Workers' Party and Democratization in Brazil* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), p.246
[88] Wendy Hunter, "Brazil: The PT in Power," in *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), pp. 306-324, p.308
[89] Oswaldo E. Do. Amaral, *A Estrela Não é Mais Vermelha: As Mudanças Do Programa Petista Nos Anos 90* (São Paulo, SP: Garçoni, 2003), p.18
[90] Clóvis Bueno De Azevedo, *A Estrela Partida Ao Meio: Ambigüidades Do Pensamento Petista* (São Paulo, SP: Entrelinhas, 1995), p.210

presidential bid. It is imperative to note, however, that the PT's move to the center of the political spectrum was not marked by a clean break with the past, as was the case with other historical socialist parties after the end of the cold war, but by a gradual process filled with inconsistencies and intraparty discrepancies.[91]

The clearest evidence of moderation, nevertheless, arose just prior to the 2002 elections, when financial markets were reacting to Lula's electoral lead in a rather erratic fashion. As a matter of fact, in that year, capital flight amounted to $9.1 billion transferred abroad and the country's foreign reserves decreased from $28.8 billion to $16.3 billion.[92] In June, four months before the elections, Lula published the well-known *Carta ao Povo Brasileiro*, the "Letter to the Brazilian People". Mainly as an attempt to calm foreign and domestic investors, who were concerned about "both the risk of financial crisis because of low reserves and the PT's use of capital controls to defend reserves in the past"[93], this letter pledged to maintain several of Cardoso's neoliberal economic policies, which the Workers' Party had previously condemned. More precisely, the Letter to the Brazilian People stated that the PT was "fully aware that overcoming the current model, emphatically demanded by society, will not happen magically, from one day to the next", and thus promised to "respect the country's contracts and obligations"[94]. This, above all, represented a bold move for a party that had been committed to socialism since its foundation.

The extent of Lula's moderation did nothing but intensify after his presidential victory. Indeed, after being elected, Lula committed the party to maintaining budget surplus, low inflation, price stability, and to paying Brazil's external debt. In addition, adherence to economic orthodoxy in general was portrayed by the appointment of Henrique Meirelles, an eminent laissez-faire advocate and former president of the Bank of Boston, to head Brazil's Central Bank. Lula's moderation was simultaneously evident in the political realm as well. This was expressed mostly through the establishment of new and pragmatic alliances. The main one being with the right-wing Liberal Party (*Partido Liberal*, PL), who was allowed to nominate Lula's running mate. Ultimately, the Workers' Party sought to integrate such market-

[91] Carlos Henrique Goulart Árabe, "A Evolução Programática Do Partido Dos Trabalhadores," *Conjuntura Política*, no. 29 (2001)

[92] Lecio Morais and Alfredo Saad-Filho, "Lula and the Continuity of Neoliberalism in Brazil: Strategic Choice, Economic Imperative or Political Schizophrenia?" *Historical Materialism* 13, no. 1 (2005): pp. 3-32, p.8-9

[93] Nathan M. Jensen and Scott Schmith, "Market Responses to Politics: The Rise of Lula and the Decline of the Brazilian Stock Market," *Comparative Political Studies* 38, no. 10 (December 2005): pp. 1245-1270, p.1259

[94] "Há 16 Anos, Lula Lançava a "Carta Ao Povo Brasileiro","Partido Dos Trabalhadores, June 22, 2018, accessed July 02, 2020, https://pt.org.br/ha-16-anos-lula-lancava-a-carta-ao-povo-brasileiro/

oriented policies with their traditional redistributive efforts. This particular strategy of continuing economic orthodoxy while at the same time appealing to the less fortunate became so distinctive to the Lula government that it was quickly dubbed "Lulism".[95] Along the same lines, this combination led a number of scholars to refer to the Lula government as a typical case of "democratized developmentalism".[96]

Although the reasons behind Lula's progressive moderation vary, they tend to follow two similar lines of thought. On the one hand, it is often argued that throughout the years, and particularly before the 2002 elections, the PT acknowledged the necessity to pursue a vote-maximization strategy at the expense of forsaking their early socialist aspirations. Especially after allying itself with the Liberal Party, long characterized by the dominant presence of evangelical Christian priests, the Workers' Party efforts to widen their support base came to light. In accordance with this argument, the Workers' Party underwent a gradual shift; away from policy seeking and towards vote maximization. As Hunter puts it:

> *"Once the core leadership decided that far-reaching redistribution was outside the realm of reason, its outlook became more electoral. Setting its sights on winning the absolute majority of votes necessary to secure the presidency, the PT began to behave more like a catchall Brazilian party."*[97]

According to the author, this was the result of new pressures and incentives that emerged in the mid-1990s, which therefore led the party to adopt common strategies of fellow comprehensive parties. As a result of such conformity to excessive moderation, a common practice in the Brazilian political scenario, the Workers' Party progressively moved toward normalization and effectively ceased to be an anomaly. Yet on the other hand, a second share of the literature suggests that the key to understanding the PT's transformation lies in the internal institutional structure of the party itself. For Samuels, for instance, this shift was initially fostered by both the party's growth and its increasing participation in the country's democratic institutions, and later promoted by its high degree of rank-and-file participation. These workers' growing accountability ultimately encouraged collective moderation. This, in

[95] André Singer, "The Failure of Dilma Rousseff's Developmentalist Experiment: A Class Analysis," *Latin American Perspectives* 47, no. 1 (2019): pp. 1-17, p.2

[96] Alexandre Fortes, "In Search of a Post-Neoliberal Paradigm: The Brazilian Left and Lula's Government," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 75, no. 1 (2009): pp. 109-125, p.116

[97] Wendy Hunter, "The Normalization of an Anomaly: The Workers' Party in Brazil," *World Politics* 59, no. 3 (April 2007): pp. 440-474, p.444

turn, provided Lula with more room to maneuver and thus to govern in a more moderate fashion. According to Samuels, therefore, dominant change materialized from within:

> *"That is, the PT's moderation was not simply a result of Lula moving to the center and dragging the party with him. Instead, the rank and file moderated and then chose to delegate additional autonomy to Lula."*[98]

Whether moderation stemmed from the party's core leadership and developed following a top-down approach, or from its rank-and-file participation in a bottom-up fashion, what is certain is that this transformation was a reaction to both different stimuli of the 1990s and a vote-seeking strategy in furtherance of the 2002 presidential elections. What is even less contestable, however, is that in the long-term, this decision proved not only ineffectual, but also counterproductive. In fact, it is widely argued that the PT's growing entanglement in electoral competition prompted the prioritization of new institutional struggles at the expense of the party's traditional social struggles.[99] As a consequence, the Workers' Party alienated a large share of its grassroots support, especially from the Landless Workers' Movement. A longtime supporter of the PT, the MST grew disillusioned as Lula's land reform efforts fell short of their expectations. As the evidence shows, the average number of hectares expropriated annually during Lula's first years was merely two-thirds the figure of his predecessor's, and its greatest share derived mainly from public sources of land.[100] Lula's continuation of Cardoso's neoliberal policies, as Fortes contends, granted him the reputation of just another president who abandoned their original convictions for the sake of wide-encompassing support:

> *"The profound disenchantment caused by the contrast between what the government was expected to be and what it really was led many sectors inside the Left to view Lula's approach as a simple continuity of the neoliberal policies engendered during Fernando Henrique Cardoso's terms of office. Lula was portrayed as only the most*

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[98] David Samuels, "From Socialism to Social Democracy: Party Organization and the Transformation of the Workers' Party in Brazil," *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 9 (November 2004): pp. 999-1024, p.1018

[99] Alan Daniel Freire De Lacerda, "O PT e a Unidade Partidária Como Problema," *Dados - Revista De Ciências Sociais* 45, no. 1 (2002): pp. 39-76, p.63

[100] Gabriel A. Ondetti, *Land, Protest, and Politics: The Landless Movement and the Struggle for Agrarian Reform in Brazil* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), p.206, 218

recent example of a long tradition of leftist leaders' betraying their former beliefs once they arrived in power."[101]

The election of Lula was received across the Latin American left with great enthusiasm, and above all, great expectations. The Workers' Party gradual moderation throughout the 1990s had been broadly overlooked until Lula's release of the 'Letter to the Brazilian People'. Both in the economy with its orthodox policies, and in the government with its pragmatic alliances, the PT showed its clear and steady process of transition: one from its socialist roots to a vote-maximization strategy. From then onwards, every step towards the political center would cost the party a valuable share of their support.

4.2.2. Corruption and Alienation

The second major reason behind Lula's loss of support was a series of corruption scandals that came to light at the end of his first term. The main one, the so-called *mensalão*, or literally "big monthly payment" which broke in mid-2005, exposed an illicit vote-buying scheme in exchange of support for passing key legislation. Considering that the Workers' Party comprised less than 18 percent of the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the National Congress, it required support from other parties to advance legislation.[102] In the Brazilian political system, it is common practice to garner such needed support through what is known as *"presidencialismo de coalizão"* (coalition presidentialism). Coined by the political scientist Abranches, this term refers to a governing style characterized by the proximity between the executive and the legislative power, in which the president assigns government positions based on the number of minimum votes required to pass legislation.[103] The challenge faced by Lula, nevertheless, was that he was constrained by the more ideological faction of the PT to pursue such an opportunistic arrangement, as they claimed it would have weakened the party's agenda. Short of votes to advance legislation, Lula resorted to bribing:

[101] Fortes, "In Search of a Post-Neoliberal Paradigm: The Brazilian Left and Lula's Government," p.113
[102] Hunter, "Brazil: The PT in Power," p.319
[103] Sérgio Henrique Hudson De Abranches, "Presidencialismo De Coalizão: O Dilema Institucional Brasileiro," *Dados - Revista De Ciências Sociais* 31, no. 1 (1988): pp. 5-34, p.28

"[…] the PT wanted to govern but to avoid playing coalitional politics as usual. The result was the mensalão: illegally purchasing collaboration with others through individual bribes rather than legally sharing power via the time-honored practice of coalitional presidentialism."[104]

Indeed, it was reported that the Workers' Party paid several deputies 30,000 Reais per month, approximately US$ 12,000 at the time, in exchange for their legislative support. The *mensalão* was by and large a blow to the reputation of the party, which had long "staked its electability on ethics and transparency"[105] and was therefore perceived as the country's righteous political alternative. In addition, the severity of the scandal was further exacerbated by the discovery that the *mensalão* represented only one of the PT's 'slush fund' operations. As a matter of fact, investigations on the origins of the funds used to operate the *mensalão* revealed an elaborate illegal financing system that the party had maintained since 1994. Known as *caixa dois* ("second cash till"), it consisted mainly in diverting funds from companies that had been granted municipal contracts in order to finance electoral campaigns.[106]

When confronted about the scandals, Lula initially dismissed it as a case of political persecution, and then evaded responsibility by blaming it on both the old-fashioned political system and on instances of mismanagement by members of his own party. His ultimate response, nevertheless, was to fully embrace the *presidencialismo de coalizão*, appointing more cabinet ministers from other political parties in an attempt to appease the tumultuous situation. The chosen conduct placed the PT in an uncomfortable position; neither fully integrated into the strategic coalitions of old-fashioned politics nor holding true to its original ideological program. Needless to say, corruption scandals, coupled with the eventual adherence to coalition presidentialism alienated the party not only from its middle-class supporters, but also from a significant portion of its ideological members. The latter, for instance, was evidenced when dissident *petistas* decided to part ways and found the Socialism and Liberty Party (*Partido Socialismo e Liberdade,* PSOL). Although Lula managed to get reelected in 2006, the general involvement in corrupt practices perpetually blemished the image of a party originally committed to changing Brazil's political culture. As Bethell puts it:

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[104] Wendy Hunter, "New Challenges and Opportunities: The PT in Government, 2003–2009," in *The Transformation of the Workers' Party in Brazil, 1989–2009* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 146-176, p.167

[105] Gregory Michener and Carlos Pereira, "A Great Leap Forward for Democracy and the Rule of Law? Brazil's Mensalão Trial," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 48, no. 3 (July 2016): pp. 477-507, p.481

[106] Luis Felipe Miguel and Aline De Almeida Coutinho, "A Crise E Suas Fronteiras: Oito Meses De "Mensalão" Nos Editoriais Dos Jornais," *Opinião Pública* 13, no. 1 (June 2007): pp. 97-123, p.101

"The middle class, certainly the professional middle class, had turned against Lula largely because of corruption and his association with some of the worst elements in the old political oligarchy. The PT had, after all, presented itself as an ethical party, determined to change Brazil's political culture."[107]

A party that once represented the best alternative, became progressively entangled in practices that it had long denounced. In an effort not to isolate its ideological faction, the Workers' Party initially refrained from engaging in coalition presidentialism. The two subsequent steps that Lula took to compensate for this decision, however, are best seen as instances of political suicide. First the involvement in corruption scandals, namely the *mensalão* and the *caixa-dois*, and then its adherence to coalition presidentialism. Both events revealed the true face of the Workers' Party. This, afterwards, was the same face of a political culture the party had promised to change.

[107] Leslie Bethell, "The Failure of the Left in Brazil," in *Brazil: Essays on History and Politics* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2018), pp. 195-222, p.216

4.3. Argentina

4.3.1. Contain, Co-opt, Demobilize

The ascendance of Néstor Kirchner to state power led many to interpret it as the final demise of Peronism, as it had in its numerous attempts, continuously failed to provide an effectual solution to Argentina's socioeconomic problems. What the optimists who celebrated Kirchner overlooked, nevertheless, was that the former activist member of the *Juventud Universitaria Peronista*, had come to implement the system in which he had long believed. Peronism experienced in fact, an assertive revival under the Kirchners. More than its political or economic policies, what truly rebounded were its clientelistic and patronizing elements. Broadly used by its conceiver to control trade unions and state institutions, Peronism seemed nothing but appropriate to contain the existing restless social movements. As Castorina puts it:

> *"[…] what the Left called "old" politics—that is, the politics of Peronism, clientelism, and patronage—was far from exhausted. In fact, it was the key vehicle for political recomposition since taming and harnessing social movements was a fundamental condition for stabilizing the economy."*[108]

The way this was done was firstly, by gaining the active support of the *piqueteros*, the organized unemployed workers, through rhetoric and government funding, and secondly, by co-opting them through state appointments. To initially win them over, Néstor Kirchner, as a good populist, adopted an assertive anti-neoliberal discourse.[109] By attacking the 1990s, the IMF, and Menem and his market-driven reforms, the president presented himself as a political outsider, effectively mobilizing the classic "us versus them" narrative. In addition, Kirchner sought to gain the *piqueteros*' support by capitalizing on Argentina's economic turmoil and enacting much-demanded social reforms. In fact, indicators show that contrary to popular expectations, Argentina's socioeconomic performance had above all else deteriorated with the turn of the millennium. Compared to 1998, Lozano reports that in 2005 unemployment was 30

[108] Emilia Castorina, "Crisis and Recomposition in Argentina," in *The New Latin American Left: Cracks in the Empire* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), pp. 233-254, p.240

[109] Nicolas Grinberg and Guido Starosta, "From Global Capital Accumulation to Varieties of Centre-Leftism in South America: The Cases of Brazil and Argentina," in *Crisis and Contradiction: Marxist Perspectives on Latin America in the Global Political Economy* (Brill, 2014), pp. 236-272, p.264

percent higher, the average income was 30 percent lower, and there were five million more poor people.[110]

In light of this situation, the organizations of the unemployed mobilized eagerly in demand for social reforms. It is indeed reported that when presidential elections were held, between January and April 2003, these movements organized 70 acts of protests.[111] The Kirchners, for their part, did not fail to deliver. Between 2002 and 2010, the government, under both Néstor and later Cristina, significantly subsidized a variety of social services. Among these, the income transfers, the pensions, and the health care systems were notably expanded to attend to an additional share of the population. These reforms distinguished themselves for their encompassing and inclusive aspect. As Garay notes, by 2010; "close to 74 percent of children accessed income transfers; 97 percent of seniors aged sixty- five and older received pension benefits; and free prescription drugs were extended to 15 million people, about 41 percent of the country's population."[112] Despite the wide reach of its reforms, the government was nonetheless accused of exploiting the sociopolitical status of their recipients to sustain a relationship of dependence. This perverse practice, according to Sitrin, was put into effect through the creation of jobs and the distribution of subsidies:

> *"For example, for those who identified as middle class, real jobs were created so as to make for longer-lasting reforms, but for the unemployed, jobs were never created—only more subsidies were distributed. Thus the stabilization was for the middle class, while the unemployed and working classes were kept dependent, and the working class generally left out as well."*[113]

The most important subsidy that fell into this broad category was the *Asignación Universal por Hijo* (Universal Child Allowance, AUH). This social welfare program consisted in the provision of a monthly subsidy to unemployed or informal-working families with children under the age of 18. Its amount was based on the number of children and conditioned upon both school attendance and the completion of health check-ups. In comparison to neoliberal welfare programs, it is argued that the AUH stood out for transcending the restrictive

[110] Claudio Lozano, "Los Problemas de la Distribución del Ingreso y el Crecimiento en la Argentina Actual." CTA, Instituto de Estudios y Formación (2005), p.3

[111] Candelaria Garay, "Social Policy and Collective Action: Unemployed Workers, Community Associations, and Protest in Argentina," *Politics & Society* 35, no. 2 (June 2007): pp. 301-328, p.310

[112] Candelaria Garay, "Social Mobilization and Inclusive Social Policy in Argentina," in *Social Policy Expansion in Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 165-221, p.165

[113] Marina Sitrin, "Argentina: Against and Beyond the State," in *Rethinking Latin American Social Movements: Radical Action from Below* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), pp. 209-302, p.222-223

limit of beneficiaries, becoming the greatest implementation of social rights since the return of democracy in 1983.[114] At the same time, the literature suggests that apart from fostering dependency, the social policies implemented under the Kirchners boasted a valuable promotional component, which thus served to advance the government's electoral agenda. This is highly consistent with Kenneth Roberts' argument that "besides their lower cost, targeted programs have the advantage of being direct and highly visible, allowing government leaders to claim political credit for material gains."[115] Although the clientelistic aspect of the Universal Child Allowance is further reinforced by the fact that it was implemented after the Kirchnerist defeat in the 2009 legislative elections, this program is known as a mean to an even greater end. By rendering almost 40 percent of poor households dependent on public subsidies, the Kirchner government eventually sought to weaken the *piqueteros*:

> *"The real effect of this social policy was to disempower organizations of the unemployed—not only by institutionalizing their social activities, which are an essential constituent of their politics, but also by making them more dependent on state resources and the way in which they are allocated—therefore making them more vulnerable to clientelistic penetration since local political bosses from the PJ ultimately decide who is and who is not to be a recipient of these resources."*[116]

In addition to merely appealing to voters, as was majorly the case in Lula's Brazil, the various social reforms implemented in Argentina between 2002 and 2010 were ultimately designed to demobilize the organizations of the unemployed. There is general consensus among the literature that this was first and foremost enabled by the reform's intrinsic separationist nature, intended to create discord among the different *piquetero* movements. Where this feature was most evident, however, was not in the provision of subsidies, but rather in Kirchner's second method to demobilize the protesters: the cooptation through state appointments. In fact, the way this was carried out was by primarily separating the unemployed workers movements into two broad categories: the "radical" *combativos piqueteros* and the "moderate" *dialoguistas piqueteros.* Depending on their classification, the unemployed

[114] Mabel Thwaites Rey and Jorge Orovitz Sanmartino, "Kirchnerism in Latin America's Anti-Neoliberal Cycle," in *Latin America's Pink Tide: Breakthroughs and Shortcomings* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), pp. 137-158, p.146

[115] Kenneth M. Roberts, "Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America: The Peruvian Case," *World Politics* 48, no. 1 (October 1995): pp. 82-116, p.91

[116] Castorina, "Crisis and Recomposition in Argentina," p.248

protesters would be managed by the state in different manners. As Etchemendy and Garay put it:

> *"Kirchner's strategy was to court these groups, especially (though not only) the largest ones, which were not linked to any political party, and to eventually ignore the more radical ones, which tended to be associated with small left-wing parties."*[117]

While the government denied legitimacy to the radical groups by blatantly ignoring their demands, it engaged in negotiations with the moderate ones. The latter, in turn, would often result in the appointment of unemployed workers' leaders to public offices. As Escudé points out, by 2006 there were more than fifty *piqueteros* occupying positions in ministries and government agencies.[118] Over time, this tactic of incorporating *piquetero* leaders into the state machinery would prove highly efficient in demobilizing their overall movement. By disregarding and refusing to negotiate with the more radical faction, the government encouraged a collective process of moderation. Most importantly, however, the co-optation of unemployed workers served to create tensions and discord among the different organizations. In view of the fact that there was, among them, a general refusal to work with the government, whoever opposed was automatically regarded as a renegade. Relying on the example of a rather radical *piquetero* movement, Epstein argues:

> *"Excluded from any such influential role on this strategic body, the hard-liners making up the Bloque Nacional Piquetero (National Piquetero Bloc) have resented this official favoritism, repeatedly accusing their rivals of having "sold out" to the government."*[119]

In conjunction with the provision of monthly subsidies, the appoitnment of *piquetero* leaders to government positions were part of a grand scheme by the Kirchners designed to demobilize the organized unemployed workers. While the former was intended to further highlight the social divide and establish a relationship of dependence, the latter, on the other

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[117] Sebastián Etchemendy and Candelaria Garay, "Argentina: Left Populism in Comparative Perspective, 2003-2009," in *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), pp. 283-305, p.286

[118] Carlos Escudé, "Kirchner y La Cooptación De Piqueteros, 2003-2007," *CEMA Working Papers: Serie Documentos De Trabajo*, no. 359 (2007): pp. 1–22, p.10

[119] Edward C. Epstein, "The Piquetero Movement of Greater Buenos Aires: Working Class Protest During the Current Argentine Crisis," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 28, no. 55/56 (2003): pp. 11-36, p.26

hand, sought to encourage an organizational shift towards moderation, fostering organizational dissent. It is indeed reported that already by the end of the Néstor Kirchner presidency, there had been an overall decline of unemployed movements.[120] Together, these two methods were effectively used *à la Julius Caesar* to drive wedges across the unemployed movements. A simple, yet brilliant strategy of divide and conquer.

4.3.2. Old Politics in Disguise

In a similar fashion to his Brazilian counterpart, Néstor Kirchner chose to maintain several of his predecessor's political and economic policies. Yet while Lula did it explicitly in an effort to maximize electoral votes, Kirchner did it covertly, so as to further appease the unemployed movements. In fact, upon reaching the presidency, Néstor Kirchner developed an elaborate government plan that integrated economic development with a strong social aspect. Together with Brazil, Argentina became the quintessential example of what came to be called "neodevelopmentalism". Though similarly implemented, this hybrid policy still had to answer for the specific needs of their own countries. More specifically, these needs had been shaped by the relationship of the government with the social movements. Whereas the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil had been founded alongside the Workers' Party in the 1980s, the *piqueteros* in Argentina emerged as a response to the neoliberalism of the 1990s. In practice, this meant that instead of sharing similar counterhegemonic trajectories, as the MST and the PT, the Kirchners were subjected to popular pressure from the very beginning. As a response, both Néstor and Cristina upheld a system that despite its similarities to neoliberalism, could still engage the working class. This, once again, evidenced not only the malleability of Peronism, but also its distinctive social appeal. As Gonzalez puts it:

> *"[…] it was the only political force that was capable of mobilizing the state's resources to restore a shattered capitalism, while convincingly articulating their actions in the populist language of a Peronism that retained, for all its tremendous contradictions, some degree of credibility among working people, and which*

[120] Fynn Kaese and Jonas Wolff, "Piqueteros after the Hype: Unemployed Movements in Argentina, 2008-2015," *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, no. 102 (October 2016): pp. 47-68, p.48

therefore could allow a process of capitalist restoration to be represented as a program of national restoration."[121]

This "capitalist restoration", carefully implemented by the Kirchner government, is sometimes referred to as a "transitional phase", since it is argued to have been composed of concessions and demands of a more political rather than economic character.[122] Furthermore, it was encouraged by what Cristina Kirchner would later call a "serious capitalism", a system that guarantees social inclusion through job creation; "a type of anarcho-capitalism, in which no one has control over anyone".[123] Most commonly, however, this system became known as "neodevelopmentalism". Kirchnerism showed promising results in addressing the people's antagonistic demands when it initially assimilated the state's productive with its redistributive capacity. By recreating the local conditions for the accumulation of capital, this model aided the government in further taming social protest.[124] In a more general glance, the demobilization of social movement was widely assisted by the illusory promotion of neodevelopmentalism as a "productive transformation with equity"[125].

Regardless of the specific reasons for its appeal, the success of neodevelopmentalism in practice proved nothing but ephemeral. Although it showed promising results in the first years of its implementation, this arrangement ultimately revealed that it could only be sustained for a limited period of time. Over time, neodevelopmentalism exposed what according to Katz, were its three main critical points: an elevated inflation rate, high fiscal deficits, and an unfavorable exchange rate policy.[126] Its final demise was brought about in mid-2008, when the consequences of the global economic crisis revealed the weakness of a fragile capitalism that depended on the international economic cycle and the prices of raw materials.[127] As Féliz argues:

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[121] Gonzalez, *The Ebb of the Pink Tide*, p.156

[122] Eduardo M. Basualdo, "La Reestructuración De La Economía Argentina Durante Las Últimas Décadas De La Sustitución De Importaciones a La Valorización Financiera," in *Neoliberalismo Y Sectores Dominantes: Tendencias Globales Y Experiencias Nacionales* (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2006), pp. 123-177, p.173

[123] "Cristina Kirchner Exhortó Al B-20 a 'volver Al Capitalismo Serio'," Perfil.com, November 03, 2011, accessed July 10, 2020, https://www.perfil.com/noticias/politica/cristina-kirchner-exhorto-al-b-20-a-volver-al-capitalismo-serio-20111103-0013.phtml

[124] Mariano Féliz, "¿De La Década Perdida a La Década Ganada? Del Auge Y Crisis Del Neoliberalismo Al Neodesarrollismo En Crisis En Argentina," *Cuestiones De Sociología*, no. 9 (2013): pp. 243-248, p.245

[125] Juan Grigera, "Conspicuous Silences: State and Class in Structuralist and Neostructuralist Thought," in *Crisis and Contradiction: Marxist Perspectives on Latin America in the Global Political Economy* (Brill, 2014), pp. 193-210, p.194

[126] Claudio Katz, "¿Qué Es El Neodesarrollismo? Una Visión Crítica. Argentina Y Brasil," *Serviço Social & Sociedade*, no. 122 (June 2015): pp. 224-249, p.227-228

[127] Rey and Sanmartino, "Kirchnerism in Latin America's Anti-Neoliberal Cycle," p.148

"[…] its reformist rather than anticapitalist character led it down the road of dependent capitalism and was subject to its limitations. Those limitations were revealed by the global crisis of 2008, which required a deepening of strategy on the part of the political forces defending it. Their failure to accomplish this weakened the political and social bases of the hegemonic project […] and brought on a crisis that persists today."[128]

In parallel to the provision of welfare subsidies and state appointments to demobilize the unemployed movements, the Kirchners decided to follow a particular growth model. The so-called neodevelopmentalism implemented Argentina, was carefully presented as the embodiment of inclusive economic development. To advance this agenda, it is needless to say that Néstor and later Cristina relied heavily on the populist and clientelistic machinery of Peronism. The Kirchnerist project saw its end when its dependence on commodity exports fell at the mercy of the 2008 financial crisis.

[128] Mariano Féliz, "Neodevelopmentalism and Dependency in Twenty-first-Century Argentina: Insights from the Work of Ruy Mauro Marini," *Latin American Perspectives* 46, no. 1 (2018): pp. 1-17, p.3

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1. Concluding Remarks

If the political developments in Latin America at the turn of the millennium have taught us something, it is that the move towards left-wing governments in Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina holds true to the figure of a wave as the analogy of choice. The fact that this wave was distinguished by the color pink, in reference to the different shades of left-wing politics it encompassed, reveal only partially the complexity of this event. In order to better understand this unique phenomenon that took place simultaneously in several countries of the continent, we are better served by two separate analysis. In light of this fact, by hinging on the theories of complex interdependence and political culture, this thesis set out to explore the ebb and flow of the so-called pink tide. Upon its completion, it is safe to conclude that the contributions of both theories have proved immeasurably valuable.

The model put forth by Keohane and Nye grew particularly pertinent to understanding the overall electoral success, that is, the rise of left-wing governments in Latin America. This is because the forces that propelled Chávez, Lula, and the Kirchners to state power accurately portray a relationship of complex interdependence among their respective countries. Indeed, Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina all witnessed the presence of assertive social mobilizations that emerged in response to the neoliberalism as implemented in the 1990s. These counter-hegemonic forces arose in succession to one another not because they are autonomous or intransigent events, but because their societies are interlinked by what Keohane and Nye refer to as channels of contact. The case studies here analyzed express a collective rejection to the status-quo mainly through what is advanced by the theory as one of the three channels of contact: informal ties between nongovernmental actors.

What renders the phenomenon of the pink tide increasingly unique is the fact that it materialized in multiple and different dimensions. In this regard, only the Latin American continent offers a case in which resistance to neoliberalism has simultaneously hinged on the cultural, the social, and the national spheres. Similar events such as the *Caracazo*, the

Argentinazo, caused by heterogeneous actors, including the MBR-200, the Workers' Party, the Landless Workers' Movement, and the *piqueteros* are all cases in point. The precise reason as to why these forces coalesce through complex interdependence instead of vanishing in their own domain is perhaps best found in the work of Gramsci. In his view, the collective popular masses are prone to incite historical acts as their dispersed wills are intrinsically welded together by a common purpose. In current times, this dialogue between societies concerning their political aspirations is further expanded by what is known as information revolution. This new age, as Keohane and Nye argue, significantly revamp such social interactions:

> *"The information revolution alters patterns of complex interdependence by exponentially increasing the number of channels of communication in world politics – between individuals in networks, not just individuals within bureaucracies. But it exists in the context of an existing political structure, and its effects on the flows of different types of information vary vastly."*[129]

As indicated by the authors, these new economic, social, and technological trends significantly expand the exchange among actors that can eventually summon their counter-hegemonic forces. In addition, Keohane and Nye's passage nevertheless stresses the need to account for the old as much as the new. None of the aforementioned exchanges between societies would take place if it wasn't for the existence of well-established political cultures. This set of attitudes and beliefs that a society holds towards its political system, best outlined by Almond and Verba's, turned out to be exceptionally useful in comprehending not only the modes of governance, but also the eventual fall of pink tide governments. The contributions of political culture, in turn, encourage the adoption of a perspective that complements the one advanced by complex interdependence. While the latter promotes the identification of a more contemporary social interconnection, the former urges the spectator to consider the pink tide in light of the historical political origins of the countries it embraced. As French puts it:

> *"To understand twenty-first century left turns in Latin America demands that we move beyond excessively narrow temporalities while taking into account the historical roots of contemporary politics, both in term of legacies and that which is new. The region's variety of lefts must also be disaggregated into the diverse*

[129] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age," *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 5 (September/October 1998): pp. 81-94, p.85

historical trajectories that affected these plural lefts within the ebb and flow of end-of-the-twentieth century Latin American and global economics and politics. And above all we must attend to the social and the cultural as much, if not more, than the political, institutional and economic."[130]

The imperative role that political culture plays in the left turns of the pink tide has indeed become increasingly transparent through the experience of Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina. If anything, their left-wing governments have but revived the enduring political culture of their respective countries. Despite rising to fame in Venezuela by denouncing the *puntofijista* political culture, the precursor Hugo Chávez quickly embraced its perverse attributes. Not only did he establish a constitution and a party of strong personalistic character, but he also used his Bolivarian missions to mute dissent in a clientelistic fashion. Along the same lines, "Lula" da Silva, who presented the Workers' Party as the standard bearer of ethics committed to changing Brazil's political culture, fell prey to the same peril. After embarking on a gradual process of moderation, which cost the party a great share of its grassroots supporters, the PT became progressively involved in corruption scandals that perpetually blemished its once-clean image. Just as importantly, Argentina saw the Kirchners' strategic revival of Peronism to disempower the unemployed workers' movement. Through rhetoric, welfare subsidies, and state appointments, the Kirchners effectively capitalized on Peronist clientelism to mobilize, instill discord, and ultimately demobilize the *piqueteros* whose support they had once enjoyed. It is for all its intricate complexities that the understanding of pink tide profits from an approach that comprises not only complex interdependence, but also political culture, since:

"[…] different national experiences with authoritarianism, democratization, and economic liberalization during the waning decades of the 20th century shaped and constrained the characteristics of leftist alternatives and the paths they took to power, with major implications for their policy orientations and approaches to democratic governance."[131]

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[130] John D. French, "Understanding the Politics of Latin America's Plural Lefts (Chávez/Lula): Social Democracy, Populism and Convergence on the Path to a Post-Neoliberal World," *Third World Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2009): pp. 349-369, p.356

[131] Steven Levitsky and Kenneth M. Roberts, "Latin America's "Left Turn": A Framework for Analysis," in *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), pp. 1-28, p.16-17

The use of the theories of complex interdependence and political culture reveal the buried nature of the so-called pink tide that remains unnoticed by the philistine observer. The turn towards the left experienced in Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina must therefore be construed as a combination of dispersed wills, expressed through cultural, social, and national dimensions, interlinked by multiple channels of contact, and held together by a common goal. It is for this very concentration of powerful forces that the pink tide, as this phenomenon became known, reveals once again the eccentricity of Latin America: a continent who lived it all.

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Almond, Gabriel, and Sidney Verba. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Almond and Verba's book *The Civic Culture* offers a coherent theoretical framework for my thesis. The authors, considered by many the pioneers of the sub-field of political culture, assess the democratic systems of five countries, namely, Germany, Italy, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and the United States. By conducting a study examining the relationship between three groups of orientation and three classes of objects in these five nations, Almond and Verba identify three types of political cultures: the parochial, the subject, and the participant political culture. While my second theory of complex interdependence offers an insightful perspective on a governmental dimension affecting regime change in Latin America, *The Civic Culture* fills the gap by providing my research with a valuable cultural dimension. This is particularly essential considering the cultural heterogeneity of Latin America and the important role it plays in the various regional political processes.

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Amann and Baer’s article explains the transition from import substitution industrialization (ISI) to neoliberalism in Latin America and particularly its effects in Brazil. The authors describe how Brazil conformed to the Washington Consensus in 1990 with former president Fernando Collor, who also initiated privatization processes that were later expanded by his successor Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC). Moreover, the article highlights FHC’s forceful program of investment liberalization and price stability, known as ‘Plano Real’. In sum, the article examines the effects of Brazil’s neoliberal policies on the country’s economic figures, such as GDP, unemployment, inflow of foreign direct investment, distribution of income (Gini coefficient), human development index (HDI), and poverty rates. Despite providing a good background for neoliberalism in my thesis, one possible limitation of this article is its extensive focus on economic data. A more theoretical and politically driven approach would have been more beneficial.

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In their article, Boito and Resende discuss how the neoliberal capitalist model introduced in Brazil by the presidents Collor and FHC, and later maintained and even expanded by Lula, affected the relationship between the country's different social classes. Throughout the article, the authors make clear that neoliberalism not only changed Brazil's class relations, but also evidenced them in a fashion that has never been done before. Moreover, the article explains in detail how Lula's union reforms, privatization processes, and free trade policies were essential mechanisms for consolidating the support from all social classes. Despite the 'popular' impact of neoliberalism in Brazil, Boito and Resende clarify that the general feeling towards the country's economic situation is still one of anxiety. Nevertheless, the population has never associated neoliberalism as one of the reasons for the current poor performance of

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Castañeda's influential article starts by describing how Latin America's swerve towards the left was received with much hysteria throughout the globe. Despite not making direct reference to the pink tide, possibly as it was written on the same year the term was first coined, the article offers a valuable insight on Latin America's regime change. The main factor behind this occurrence, as Castañeda argues, is the emergence of two lefts. The first, for instance, originated from the Bolshevik Revolution, was intellectually influential, underwent a process of reconstruction, and emphasizes social policy. The second, on the other hand, is peculiarly Latin American, populist, nationalistic, interested in power rather than policy or democracy, and has proven disastrous for Latin America. The author concludes by urging the international community to state its expectations from the "wrong left" and support the "right left" by committing to human rights, democracy, and the construction of a new international legal order.

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Despite succinct, Fernandes' article offers an intriguing perspective on the failures of neoliberalism in Latin America, their transition to left-oriented policies, and the emergence of the "pink tide leaders" as a direct opposition rather than a mere alternative. While many of these leaders relied on images of their countries' nostalgic past for their election, Fernandes points to how their strategies were marked by several divergencies. Venezuela's Chávez and Ecuador's Correa, for instance, stand out for not only basing their campaigns on an anti-neoliberalism platform, but also on an opposition against US hegemony. In addition, the author stresses the importance of both the mobilization and the support from the grassroots to ensure the survival of the pink tide leaders. Whereas grassroots are pivotal for their election and the realization of their campaigns, they can be highly detrimental if their participation is denied.

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Gonzalez’s book proved to be one of the main sources for my thesis. The author starts off by describing the Latin American political situation of the 1970s, including the phases of import-substitution-industrialization, structuralism, and neoliberalism. The book continues by highlighting how the so-called “*Caracazo*”, the wave of protests and riots in Venezuela in February 1999, marked the beginning of the wave of left-wing presidents that gave birth to the pink tide phenomenon. Throughout his book, the author provides a thorough analysis of the reasons behind the ascendance and the descent of left-wing governments in a variety of countries, including Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina. The author provides not only a descriptive account of these events, but also an analysis of their weaknesses and strengths in order to suggest possible future pathways for the left.

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