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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Cerbone, P., & Lopez, M. P. (2019). Understanding Populism in Ecuador: How the Ecuadorian Population Perceives Presidents Rafael Correa and Lenín Moreno. *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review*, 19(3-4), 371-393. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-68378-1>

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Understanding Populism in Ecuador. How the Ecuadorian Population Perceives Presidents Rafael Correa and Lenín Moreno

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Abstract

This article explores the perception of Ecuadorian population concerning the political style of Presidents Rafael Correa and Lenín Moreno and their links to populism, one of the most interesting features of the Ecuadorian political arena. The analysis is based on a survey designed and applied by the authors at a national level. The quantitative data was interpreted using linear multiple regression models, to understand which of the variables analyzed can explain the perception of the interviewees. The results were extrapolated by using a descriptive statistical analysis (means, standard deviation and correlation matrix). The article shows that a difference between Correa and Moreno's styles exists and this difference is clearly perceived by Ecuadorian population. While populist features are strongly identified in Correa's political style, they are less remarked in Moreno's rhetoric and action. This difference marks a discontinuity in the use of populism in the political style of the two presidents.

Keywords: Populism, Rafael Correa, Lenín Moreno, Ecuador.

Background

The Ecuadorian presidential elections of 2017 resulted in the victory of Lenín Moreno, the current president. Moreno, who belongs to the "Alianza PAIS" party - the same party founded by Moreno's predecessor Rafael Correa - was vice-president during the previous term and was supported by the former president during the electoral campaign. Lenín Moreno was presented as the only possible leader who could continue to lead the "Revolución Ciudadana."¹ As a consequence,

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¹ The "Revolución Ciudadana" (citizen revolution) is the name of the political program of Rafael Correa. Fernando Hallo and Rafael Camino, "La campaña electoral del 2017 en el

many politicians speculated on the eventual continuity of the governmental and political style of Rafael Correa during Moreno's presidential term; indeed, partially, the conditions for a post-populism case, according to the definition given by Filc² subsisted. According to the opposition parties, this continuity would have meant a catastrophe for national democracy. Surprisingly, the newly elected president made important changes both in the political system and in the form of government.³ Using as a pretext the very negative economic reality, Moreno made reforms that went in total opposition with Correa's policies and declarations at the end of his term.⁴ Moreover, the small margin by which Moreno won the second round of national elections (51% vs. 49%) and the accusations of electoral fraud made by his direct opponent⁵ created conditions in which the new president could not count on the same popular consent of his predecessor, diluting any post-populist conditions. Likewise, low incomes, caused by the decline in the international oil price, along with a high rate of external debt, forced the new president to operate progressive cuts of the public budget, which generated a diminution in the political support of the members of his own party⁶ and a decline of the public approval rating.⁷ Consequently, the accusations of bad administration and continuous meddling in the political scene made by Correa, motivated Moreno to direct his political action towards changing the legal structure that regulates governmental dynamics. First of all, he called for a constitutional referendum (2018) to derogate the possibility of being reelected indefinitely,⁸ thereby preventing his predecessor from being elected in the future.⁹ Likewise, he proposed reforms which aimed at granting greater

Ecuador. Un análisis desde la perspectiva el marketing sensorial”, in *Economía y Negocios*, (2017), online, <https://doi.org/10.29019/eyn.v8i1.317>.

² Dani Filc, “Post-populism: explaining neoliberal populism through the habitus,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* (2011): 221-238, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2011.575685>.

³ Sebastián Angulo, Moreno: “La mesa servida” obliga a ajustes tributarios, *Expreso*, (2017), online, <https://www.expreso.ec/economia/leninmoreno-economia-ajustes-tributarios-empresas-KN1825518>.

⁴ Redacción El Universo, “A Lenín Moreno le toca pagar ‘consumo’ de una mesa que no estaba ‘servida’,” *El Universo*, July 16, 2017, online.

⁵ The accusations were motivated by the hypothetical control that Correa had on the National Electoral Council. Redacción El Universo, “Guillermo Lasso denuncia fraude electoral ante misión de observadores de la OEA,” *El Universo*, Abril 3, 2017, online.

⁶ Redacción El Periódico, “Seguidores de Correa protagonizan marcha contra el Gobierno de Ecuador,” *El Periódico* (2018), online, <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/internacional/20180411/seguidores-de-correa-protagonizan-marcha-contra-el-gobierno-de-ecuador6749397>.

⁷ According to the pollster CEDATOS, in august 2017, credibility on Lenín Moreno figure presented a 67% value, meanwhile after less than a year the value has declined below the 40%. “Encuestas 2018”, CEDATOS, last modified March 6, 2019, http://www.cedatos.com.ec/detalles_noticia.php?Id=369.

⁸ In 2015 the ex-president Rafael Correa changed Ecuadorian Constitution by allowing the indefinite presidential reelection. According to Carvajal (2015), the procedure followed to amend the Constitution was quite questionable.

⁹ The first version of Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008 contemplated only a possibility of reelection for presidents. Rafael Correa modified this principle through a constitutional amendment process in 2015. The referendum of 2018, asked to people to return to the

independence to public institutions (e.g. he proposed to reform the Consejo de Participación Ciudadana y Control Social), in order to balance the sharing of power and functions among different branches of the State, and particularly among the president and other state institutions. Moreover, Moreno's less personalistic political style seems to put his style in contraposition with Correa's style. Given that Correa has been presented by many scholars as a populist politician, one might affirm that the current president is adopting a change against this particular political style, and the works of many experts confirm this perception.¹⁰

In order to explore this topic, we propose an investigation in which, through an opinion poll conducted from May - July 2018 by the research support team of Universidad UTE, the scholars' general theory about populism is compared with the perception of the Ecuadorian people. Indeed, the current Ecuadorian research concerning the topic of "populism" is reduced to a theoretical production, based on qualitative methods that, although they are valid and useful, do not complete the analytic view of this phenomenon, in which the perception of the electorate plays an important role. Moreover, given that populism is a particular and multiform phenomenon, characterized by a huge number of elements, this study clarifies the elements which appeared to be more sensitive to the perception of the electorate. This definition could help analysts to consider those elements when making voter forecasts, although only in terms of "tendency".¹¹ Finally, for the purpose of this study, given that populism is a phenomenon which uses tools (rhetoric, image, etc.) that can produce strong effects on people, it was necessary to consider how public opinion considers Moreno, in comparison with his antecessor. This approach would clarify if the discontinuity in populism observed by scholars is also perceived by population at large.

Theories of Populism in Ecuador

Ecuadorian political context is characterized by a presidential form of government and a high level of socio-political and normative instability.¹² Since 1830, Ecuador has had 20 constitutions, about 50 presidents and several military boards;¹³ that is to say that on average every ten years the country approved a new

anterior version of that principle, so preventing Rafael Correa, who was elected three times, to run again for presidential elections.

¹⁰ Manuela Celi Moscoso, "Lenín Moreno: un punto de inflexión para Alianza País?", Nueva Sociedad, (2017): 4-16, <https://nuso.org/articulo/lenin-moreno-un-punto-de-inflexion-para-alianza-pais/>.

¹¹ Manuel Mora, *El poder de la conversación. Elementos para una teoría de la opinión pública* (Buenos Aires: La Cruzija, 2005).

¹² Juan Paz y Miño Cepeda, Ecuador: una democracia inestable (Quito, Haol, 2006), 89-99, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2380207>.

¹³ It occurred during the periods of democratic crisis. Walsh School of Foreign Service: Center for Latinamerican Studies. (2009). Political Database of the Americas, República del Ecuador. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University.

constitution and every three years voted for a new president. There is no doubt that this constitutes a particular political idiosyncrasy, which remarkably conditions and explains the current and, potentially, the future political situation of this Latin-American country.

One of the main researchers of the Ecuadorian political scene, Carlos de la Torre¹⁴ states that one of the elements that historically influenced the instability of the country is populism, which still negatively affects the Ecuadorian democratic process; for this reason we are investigating if in Ecuador, according to Ecuadorian perception, we are at the front of a continuity or discontinuity in terms of populism.

As a matter of fact, from the point of view of a liberal democracy, populism constitutes a disruptive factor: if we accept the idea argued by Sartori¹⁵ that liberal democracy is better than the other imaginable versions of democracy because of its unique political form able to grant the political rights of minorities, we should deduce that populism cannot be conciliated with such a system. As a matter of fact, the pretention of this “political style”¹⁶ is to embrace the majority of the electorate in a unique majoritarian subject: the “people”,¹⁷ and to exclude minority, that is to say the “anti-people”,¹⁸ from political action. Minority, which frequently takes the name of “elite” or “oligarchy”, is accused of corrupting the political system and to be the cause of a contextual degradation, according to a Manichaeon vision of society.¹⁹ Furthermore, considering that one of the most important pillars of democracy is horizontal accountability,²⁰ the typical political personalism used in the populist experience hugely reduces this practice. Indeed, populism changes liberal democratic process in a continuous “plebiscitary acclamation”,²¹ whereby

¹⁴ Carlos de la Torre, *La seducción velazquista* (Quito: FLACSO, 1993).

¹⁵ Giovanni Sartori, *¿Qué es la democracia?* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1993).

¹⁶ Kurt Weyland, “Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics,” *Comparative Politics* (2001): 1-22.

¹⁷ That is to say a political, massive, undetermined and majoritarian group belonging to the electoral body. Margareth Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the two Faces of Democracy,” *Political Studies* (1999): 2-16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00184>.

¹⁸ Luís Zanatta, “¿Populismos de izquierda? El caso de América Latina,” *Dialogos* (2018): 74-91, <https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/dialogos/article/view/34768/34437>.

¹⁹ Carlos de la Torre, “Populism and the politics of the extraordinary in Latin America,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* (2016): 121-139, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2016.1150137>.

²⁰ Manuel Sánchez de Dios, “Nueva perspectiva de la responsabilidad política: la ‘teoría de la agencia’,” *Revista de las Cortes Generales* (2006): 139-181, <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/862-2014-10-10-Cortes%20Generales-2006.pdf>.

²¹ Carlos de la Torre, “Populismo radical y democracias en los Andes,” *Journal of Democracy en Español* (2014): 24-37, <https://www.flacsoandes.edu.ec/agora/populismo-radical-y-democracia-en-los-andes>.

taking the form of a “delegative democracy”,²² which would consist of the claim, of populist leaders, to justify their actions by using popular consent and by stating that in this way they allow greater participation.²³ Indeed, in the case of weak public institutions, populist leaders take the form of “caudillos”, who are leaders that can act regardless of the law.²⁴

Nevertheless, beyond its relation with democracy, in order to theoretically systematize the topic of populism some considerations have to be added: the variability of this phenomenon maintains the debate about its nature, structure and contents constantly open.²⁵ Moreover, even if political scientists offer no univocal vision about the concept of populism, there is no relevant theory either that can demonstrate its needlessness to understand some political contexts. So, the lack of a generally accepted definition of the concept of “populism” is only a theoretical difficulty, meanwhile its phenomenological analysis responds to the practical need to be able to recognize it when it occurs. This explains the opportuneness of the presented investigation.

It is for this reason that this article proposes a brief description of the theories about populism, focusing particularly on the elements that can typify it.

Gino Germani, a pioneer in the analysis of this phenomenon, explained its genesis in the Argentinean social popular movements during the 1930s and 1940s as a consequence of the changes in the socio-economical structure of this country.²⁶ This is the reason why, initially, populism was considered specifically a social problem. Nevertheless, the popular nature from which this phenomenon took its name was not able to completely explain its essence. This motivated Torcuato di Tella to continue investigating this topic: he concluded that the masses of workers that led the protests in Argentina at that time were actually manipulated by the excluded political elites, in order to obtain power.²⁷ He thus deduced that populism arises from the coincidence between the reformist will of those excluded elites and the consent of “plebs”. Similarly, Laclau²⁸ stated that the socio-historical approach, which was thought to be

²² Guillermo O’ Donnell, “Horizontal Accountability in New Democracies,” *Journal of Democracy* (1998): 112-126, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1998.0051>.

²³ Pablo Castaño, “Populism and democracy,” *Revista Internacional de Sociología* (2018): 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.3989/ris.2018.76.4.18.089>.

²⁴ Jorge Carpizo, “Características esenciales del sistema presidencial e influencias para su instauración en América Latina,” *Boletín Mexicano de Derecho Comparado* (2006): 57-91, <http://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/bmdc/v39n115/v39n115a2.pdf>.

²⁵ Carlos de la Torre and Oscar Mazzoleni, “Do We Need a Minimum Definition of Populism? An Appraisal of Mudde Conceptualization,” *Populism* (2019): 79-95, <https://doi.org/10.1163/25888072-02011021>.

²⁶ Gino Germani, *Sociología de la modernización: estudios teóricos, metodológicos y aplicados a América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Paídos, 1969).

²⁷ Germani, *Sociología de la modernización*.

²⁸ Ernesto Laclau, *Política e ideología en la teoría marxista. Capitalismo, fascismo, populismo*, (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1978).

necessary to understand this phenomenon, cannot explain it exhaustively, because populism took place as much in developed as in developing countries. For this reason, the element that can explain it better is not the class struggle (which is typical of social transition periods), but the existence of unsatisfied elites which are able to drag popular groups, by using, as the only ideological element, the need to undermine the political system in power. This theory motivates the following scholars to give populism a political focus.

As Laclau²⁹ argues, for populism to arise distinct popular groups have to identify themselves as a unique subject. This, along with the subjective feature of populism that is its quality of being disruptive, defines its object: the formation of a base, through the aggregation of different popular sets, in order to win elections. This process of homogenization, through which the “people narrative” is built,³⁰ is the consequence of a certain grade of emptiness or ambiguity of populist political content, which is never totally preset and that is typical of populist political programs. This allows politicians to delineate themselves as “empty significant”, who are able to absorb all the unsatisfied demands of the different popular groups to which they are referring. So, from this point of view, populism could be also identified with a strategy to obtain power,³¹ especially, when existing socio-economic conditions allow some figures to try to rise to political power by taking advantage of topics to which the people appear to be more sensitive. Recently, praxis has offered scholars sufficient examples to be able to define a set of features related to populism, although these features are not always entirely present in different experiences.

First of all, populism constitutes a weak ideology³² that is sustained by strong ideological elements. Thus, populism can fit in different political and economic schemes, without losing its essence. Indeed, Gratius and Rivero³³ state that it is inadequate to classify populism according to specific ideological categories (like “right-populism” or “left-populism”), inasmuch as populism is a phenomenon which does not accept the dialectics typical of pluralist systems. In practice, the political antagonism which characterizes it is not ideological but

²⁹ Ernesto Laclau, *La razón populista*, (Londres: Verso, 2005).

³⁰ Francisco Panizza, “Fisuras entre Populismo y Democracia en América Latina,” *Stockholm Review of Latin American Studies* (2008): 81-93, http://pdfhumanidades.com/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/apuntes/135_panizza%20fisuras%20populismo%20y%20democracia.pdf.

³¹ IPSOS, “The Rise of Populism: A Global Approach,” (2017).

³² Ben Stanley, “The thin ideology of populism,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* (2008): 95-110, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310701822289>.

³³ Susanne Gratius and Ángel Rivero, “Más allá de la izquierda y la derecha: populismo en Europa y América Latina,” *Revista CIDOB d’Afers Internacionals* (2017): 35-61, <https://doi.org/10.24241/rcai.2018.119.2.35>.

social-based, or moral-based³⁴ and it is articulated on the dichotomy “people vs. elite”. As a matter of fact, even if populists frequently wave different ideological flags, in practice they can act according to one ideological scheme or another, so by denying their association to a particular creed.³⁵

Many authors³⁶ recognize the creation of a dichotomy: “popular majority” vs. “oligarchic or elitist minority” (both categories, with extremely labile confines) as the most descriptive feature of populism. Particularly, the majoritarian subject would embody all the positive values of society, whilst the minority is presented as encompassing all the existing social anti-values.³⁷

In this dichotomy an important role is played in designation of a charismatic leader³⁸ who can create a direct link with the “people”.³⁹ In populism this link plays a crucial role, because through this connection the “people” start to accept the leader’s decisions simply because they emanate from his person.⁴⁰ In this way a delegative democracy is produced.

The identification of the “people-leader” allows the leader to set himself as the only person able to interpret the popular will.⁴¹ This creates a circular process of self-legitimation.⁴²

For this reason, the discursive dimension of populism is characterized by a simple metanarrative, able to influence people’s imagination and which

³⁴ Cass Mudde and Cristobal Rovira-Kaltwasser, *Populism in Europe and the Americas. Threat or Corrective for Democracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³⁵ Rodrigo Borja, “Democracia y Populismo,” *Nueva Sociedad* (1983): 126-130, <https://nuso.org/articulo/democracia-y-populismo/>.

³⁶ Kurt Weyland, “Neopopulism and Neoliberalism in Latin America: Unexpected Affinities,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* (1996): 3-31, Margareth Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the two Faces of Democracy,” *Political Studies* (1999): 2-16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00184>, Anthony Peter Spanakos, “New Wine, Old Bottles, Flamboyant Sommelier: Chávez, Citizenship, and Populism,” *New Political Science* (2008): 521-544, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07393140802493308>, Cass Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist. Government and Opposition,” *Blackwell Publishing* (2004): 541-563, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>.

³⁷ Carlos de la Torre, “Populism and Nationalism in Latin America,” *Journal of the European Institute for Communication and Culture* (2017): 1-16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2017.1330731>.

³⁸ Carlos de la Torre, “The Ambiguous Meanings of Latin American Populisms,” *Social Research* (1992): 385-414, Margareth Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the two Faces of Democracy,” *Political Studies* (1999): 2-16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00184>.

³⁹ Kurt Weyland, “Neopopulism and Neoliberalism in Latin America: Unexpected Affinities,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* (1996): 3-31, Francisco Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (Londres: Verso, 2005).

⁴⁰ Panizza, “Fisuras entre Populismo.”

⁴¹ Carlos de la Torre, “Populism and the politics of the extraordinary in Latin America,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* (2016): 121-139, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2016.1150137>.

⁴² Spanakos, “New Wine, Old Bottles.”

contains the following narrative patterns: first, the element of a “new beginning” is strongly used⁴³ to represent the “people’s” chance to demolish the existing political context and to create a new or redeemed reality,⁴⁴ which can allow people to overcome hostile situations. Second, the logic of “radical change” is employed during electoral campaigns, as an instrument intended to obtain political power. Third, the idea of an “imminent enemy” (either internal or external to the national context), who embodies the characteristics of the antagonist of the people⁴⁵ is an element used to maintain power, by creating the idea in peoples’ imagination that it is always possible to go back to a “catastrophic past” if a change occurs in the current regime. Fourth, the idea of “revolution” is frequently adopted in Latin American populist experiences with the aim of overcoming critical moments. Indeed, in this case, the revolution idea consists of a process with indefinite durability, whose fulfillment can only be achieved by the figure of the populist leader.⁴⁶ As a matter of fact, in one of his books, Nuñez Sánchez⁴⁷ stated that without the charismatic leadership of Correa, the achievement of the “Revolución Ciudadana” would not have been possible. Moreover, this last element is frequently contextualized in the epical popular imagination, through which the populist metanarrative is strengthened by assuming that logical continuity exists between the populist leader and important historical or religious figures of the past.⁴⁸ Finally, it is interesting to take into consideration the populists’ use of clothing as a symbolic element to convey meaning and to communicate a sense of belonging.⁴⁹

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Margareth Canovan, “Trust the People! Populism and the two Faces of Democracy,” *Political Studies* (1999): 2-16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00184>.

⁴⁵ Camil Ungureanu and Iván Serrano, “El populismo como relato y la crisis de la democracia representativa,” *Revista CIDOB d’Afers Internacionals* (2018): 13-33, <https://doi.org/10.24241/rcai.2018.119.2.13>.

⁴⁶ Panizza, “Fisuras entre Populismo”, Luís Zanatta, “¿Populismos de izquierda? El caso de América Latina,” *Dialogos* (2018): 74-91, <https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/dialogos/article/view/34768/34437>.

⁴⁷ Jorge Nuñez Sánchez, *Ecuador: Revolución Ciudadana y Buen Vivir* (Quito: Yulca Editorial, 2014).

⁴⁸ De la Torre, “Populism and Nationalism in Latin America,”: 1-16, Jenny Alexandra Jiménez and Santiago Patarroyo, “El populismo en contextos democráticos en América Latina: revisión a los significantes vacíos en el discurso de tres líderes populistas, un estudio desde el análisis político del discurso,” *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales* (2018): 255-287, <https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2019.235.64566>.

⁴⁹ Irina Bajini, “Para una aproximación a la (r) evolución del discurso político latinoamericano desde Fidel Castro hasta Rafael Correa,” *Altre Modernità* (2010): 133-155 <https://doi.org/10.13130/2035-7680/519>, Alejandro Espí, “La dimensión emocional de los movimientos políticos populistas de S.XXI en América Latina y Europa,” *Miguel Hernández Communication Journal* (2019): 101-121, <http://dx.doi.org/10.21134/mhcj.v10i0.277>.

Methodology

The following article is the result of data exploration, made from an opinion survey conducted from May 15, 2018 to July 20, 2018. This investigation was executed in collaboration with researchers of the Universidad UTE (Quito, Ecuador) and Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (Santiago de Compostela, Spain). The study is based on five thematic blocks: 1) political preferences; 2) democracy; 3) populism; 4) state institutions; 5) presidential style. The survey consisted of 161 questions, which were designed to analyze the interviewees' perception of the specified topics. Blocks 3 and 5 used the same questions to first analyze the perception of surveyed about Rafael Correa and then analyze their perception of Lenín Moreno. The importance of this study is determined by the lack of data concerning these topics and by the creation of a new survey instrument, through which it is possible to match the ample theory produced on this theme with data that can confirm its consistency, limit its treatment or direct it to further and new considerations. The considered universe was the total of Ecuadorian electoral body. To determine the sample (n=1068) we used the population projection data for 2018 from the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos de Ecuador*.⁵⁰ A confidence level of 95% was used, and an error range of $\pm 3\%$ was assumed, by the most unfavorable assumption of $p=q$. We used a simple random sample, geographically and population-based stratified. Moreover, to prevent a minimal representation of less inhabited provinces of Ecuador, the sample was allocated in the following way: 50% equally distributed over all the provinces and 50% according to the number of habitants of each of the 24 provinces. To allow a better representation of the sexes and the age-groups,⁵¹ we used a proportional standard.⁵² The questionnaire was administered personally by the pollsters through direct interviews, and the answers were measured through an interval scale from 0 to 10. To define each question, a pilot survey was carried out. Once the data was classified in a matrix all missing data was removed and bivariate and multivariate analyses were done.

To clarify meaning for readers, the following outcome table was created. It contains the list of used variables, their category and codification, and when it was necessary a part of the literary sources used to identify them (the same cited in this article) (Table 1).

⁵⁰ "Proyección por edades Provincias 2010-2020 y nacional", INEC, accessed January 10, 2018, <http://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/proyecciones-poblacionales/>.

⁵¹ The considered age-groups start from the category "18 to 19" and end with the category "more than 80".

⁵² Javier Portela García, *Técnicas básicas de Muestreo con SAS* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 2007).

The first block named “populist rhetoric”, gathers some variables considered to be fundamental to identify populist actors. Indeed, as it was explained in the previous section, rhetoric is composed of different elements, which all participate in creating the dichotomist vision of populist discourse. Particularly, the variables: “He mentioned the existence of foreigner enemies, hostile to his person and ideas”, “He mentioned the existence of hostile situations to his person and ideas”, “He mentioned the existence of one national élite hostile to his person and ideas”, and “He mentioned that his government team and he are totally honest, capable and coherent, whilst his opponents are totally dishonest, incapable and incoherent” express the way in which populist politicians strengthen the feeling of identification with the electoral body, through the creation of the image of an indefinite enemy who prevent the populist “hero” from its affirmation.

The variables: “He mentioned to represent majority popular will”, “He mentioned that minority corresponds to an oligarchy or elite, that is part of a corrupted power” and “He mentioned that his opponents’ attitudes are misleading and can produce damage to the country” regard the discursive elements, in populist rhetoric, through which the idea of “the people” is created. Finally, the variables: “He mentioned important past politicians (e.g. Simón Bolívar or Fidel Castro)” and “He mentioned that his ideals are revolutionary”, allow us to analyse the way in which populist leaders try to transmit the message of a logical continuity between his person and important past politicians, in order to self-legitimatize themselves.

The second group of variables analyses another facet of populism: personalism. As theory shows, it is very important for populist actors to personally create a strong link with the people, thereby producing a complete identification between the people and their figures. So, the variables: “He based his political campaign on his image”, “He showed himself as the only possible leader of his party”, “He showed himself as captivating”, “He used clothing (shirts, hats, ties, etc.) to be identifiable”, identify the form by which populists, by concentrating public attention on such links, distract people from the frequent indetermination of their political programs. Moreover, through their strength of image, the before mentioned delegation of power is created.

Then, we chose to use the variables: “Populism is a positive factor in politics” and “You think that Correa/Moreno is a populist”, to define the perception of populism, as a form of contrasting the given answers. Instead, the variable “How do you assess the figure of Correa/Moreno?” is used to understand if the general expressed perception is influenced by the preferences of the interviewed. The variable “You think that during Correa/Moreno’s government political participation has grown” was included in the survey tool with the aim of taking into consideration an element that theory has put in

evidence: the feeling of growing participation of the people during populist governments.

Finally, the variables “You feel identified with Correa/Moreno” were used as dependents, in forthcoming multivariate regression, because the aim of this study is to understand if the preference expressed by the interviewed of each president is influenced by the perceived existence of populist variables.

So, according to the chosen methodology two hypotheses were generated:

H₁: Ecuadorians recognize a difference in political style in the comparison between Correa and Moreno.

H₀: Ecuadorians do not recognize a difference in political style in the comparison between Correa and Moreno.

If H₁ hypothesis were true, it would be important that, in terms of the discontinuity in populism, the outcomes express that the difference between the presidents is based on the perception of the existence of a populist style in Rafael Correa, but not in Lenín Moreno.

Analysis of the Outcomes

In order to observe the degree of correlation among the chosen variables and to test their correct use, two correlation matrixes are presented (one for each of the assessed presidents). For each combination of variables Spearman's coefficient was used (** = $p > 0.05$ o * = $p > 0.01$) and the number of subjects was indicated with which the correlation was checked (Table 2; Table 3).

As it can be observed in the first matrix, there is no correlation in only five combinations of variables: the no correlation between PPR – PFP and CPP – PFP indicates that people do not recognize a relation between, on one hand, the use of clothing and, on the other hand, Correa's populist quality, and the goodness of populism; moreover, the lack of correlation in the combinations VFP – MSA, VFP – CIP and VFP – ULP, shows that people think that the fact of having mentioned the existence of hostile situations, having used the image of his person during political campaign and having shown himself as the unique possible leader of his party, do not influence the general approval that people have of Correa (which can be considered as reasonable). Regarding the matrix related to the figure of Lenín Moreno, a greater number of combinations are not significant. Particularly, sixteen out of seventeen variables (PFP – MHC, PFP – MPP, PFP – MIR, PFP – CIP, PFP – ULP, PFP – PPR, VFP – MEE, VFP – MSA, VFP – MEC, VFP – MMO, VFP – MAE, VFP – MPP, VFP – CIP, VFP – ULP, VFP – PPR, VFP – CPP), which could have influenced the general approval that people have of Moreno present no correlation with this variable. It explains, although only in a preliminary way, that the approval of the current president does not depend on the existence of populist elements in his political

style. To have a clearer idea about the general assessment given to each considered element, a table is presented containing a brief descriptive analysis, with the means and standard deviations of each variable (Table 4).

To start with, considering the used rating scale evaluating the figures of both presidents we can see the existence of an ambiguity factor: as a matter of fact, it can be observed that the average level of identification of the interviewees with Rafael Correa (4,6) is higher than the one expressed about Lenín Moreno (4,0); nonetheless, this data contrasts with the question about the general assessment of their figures, which presents a higher value for Moreno (5,1) than for Correa (3,8). Despite that, based on the observation of each mean value, it can be clearly observed in the variables related to “rhetoric” and “personalism” that people perceive the existence of populist elements in Correa’s political style. Instead, in the case of Moreno a different situation can be observed, inasmuch as the same variables used to assess the current president present lower values.

So, in order to establish definitively if people perceive Correa and Moreno as populists, and to indicate which variables most explain this perception, multiple linear regression models were executed. To validate the models, initially the adjusted determination coefficient (R^2) was checked according to the scale proposed by Rojo (2007),⁵³ and then the existence of collinearity among the variables (Table 6). To fit the model and select the independent variables that can explain it, the technic of manual progressive elimination was used.⁵⁴ To facilitate the analysis, a double comparative table was designed, which contains the coefficients and standard error of each one of the presented models, likewise the level of significance of each variable. The adjusted determination coefficient and the value of the constants⁵⁵ were also presented (Table 5; Table 6).

The table confirms the existence of a model valid and “good” in the case of Rafael Correa, which presents an adjusted R^2 of 0,425: it means that the variables included in this model explain the 42, 5% of the variance of the dependent variable. Then, the variables that most explain the model are the positive appreciation that interviewees have of Rafael Correa, the fact that he shows himself as captivating (DCA) and the feeling that participation has increased during his term (APP). As it can be observed in the Beta values (Table 6), these are the variables that present the major weight on the dependent

⁵³ Scale: (< 0.3 = very bad, 0.3 - 0.4 = bad, 0.4 - 0.5 = regular, 0.5 - 0.85 = good, > 0.85 = suspicious).

⁵⁴ José Manuel Rojo, *Regresión con variable dependiente cualitativa*, (Madrid: Instituto de Economía y Geografía de Madrid, 2007).

⁵⁵ In the Table 6 it is added the value of the standardized coefficient which were used also to compare the variables and, as a consequence, to indicate the relative weight that each one of them has on the dependent variable, likewise the values of the multicollinearity analysis executed.

one. Among all the variables only two: the rhetorical use of the “hostile elite” (MEC) and the use of the personal image (CIP) present an inverse relation with the dependent variable.

Concerning the model related to Lenín Moreno, the adjusted R^2 present a value of 0,285, which means that the selected variables explain only the 28,5% of the dependent variable. So, the model can be considered as “bad”, which is to say that the elements related to populism cannot explain the feeling of identification that the interviewees have with the current president. Nevertheless, by observing the model we can notice that the variables that explain it the most are the positive appreciation that people have of the president (VFP), the fact of being captivating (DCA), the use of clothing to be identifiable (PPR) and the feeling that participation is increasing during his government (APP). This can indicate that, even if an obvious difference exists with his predecessor, Lenín Moreno is still trying to use some populist features to attract people.

It can thus be concluded that the electorate perceives something in common between Moreno and his predecessor (as far as populist style is concerned) but Correa used a stronger populist style than Moreno, according to the analysed perception.

Limitations and Recommendations

These outcomes come from a study that was executed during the very initial period of government of the current Ecuadorian president, Lenín Moreno. The analysis was conducted at this time to analyse the political style of Rafael Correa before the perception of people was influenced by the actions and decisions of the current president. Moreover, the perception of Lenín Moreno can only be considered as partial, because his term will finish in 2021. This is the reason why variables related to the institutions were not used to analyse the perception of the population about populism. Indeed, the institution’s erosion is a process that is fulfilled in the long term, and it would have created a big disparity between Correa and Moreno’s model, due to the difference of time available to observe their action. It is recommendable to repeat the same study at the end of the term of the president Moreno, in order to control if the new results demonstrate significant modifications, compared with the ones presented in this paper.

Conclusions

This study shows that the Ecuadorian electorate confirms the idea that a difference exists in the populist style between Rafael Correa and Lenín Moreno. So, we can accept the first hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. In addition,

it can be noticed that people who identify themselves with Rafael Correa appear sensitive both to rhetoric and personalist elements. Nonetheless, we can also say that even if Correa had, according to the analyzed perception, a stronger populist style, populist elements can still be observed in Moreno's style. So, we can say that in Ecuador, the population at large generally perceives a discontinuity in political style between Correa and Moreno, but not a total forsaking of populism in the current president. It could be interpreted in the sense that president Moreno desires to differentiate himself from his predecessor. Despite this, in order to limit the future use of populist rhetoric and personalism in Ecuadorian political competition, he has to make more efforts due to the appeal that populism has on the Ecuadorian public. Indeed, populism does not only depend on the attitude shown by political actors, but also in political culture, the strength of the state institutions, and finally the form by which the country is governed. In this regard, it is recommendable to undergo further studies that analyze the relationship between populism and the strong presidentialism that characterizes Ecuador, and how the perception of the people can play an important role on their degree of approval.

Table 1. Variables related to populism

Category	Variables	Code	Literary sources
Populist rhetoric	He mentioned the existence of foreigner enemies, hostile to his person and ideas.	MEE	(de la Torre, 2017; Zanatta, 2018)
	He mentioned the existence of hostile situations to his person and ideas.	MSA	(Gratius & Rivero, 2018; de la Torre, 2017)
	He mentioned the existence of one national élite hostile to his person and ideas.	MEC	(Spanakos, 2008; Stanley, 2008; Weyland, 1996; Panizza, 2005; Zanatta, 2018)
	He mentioned that his government team and he are totally honest, capable and coherent, whilst his opponents are totally dishonest, incapable and incoherent.	MHC	(de la Torre, 2016; Laclau 2005; Stanley, 2008; de la Torre, 1992; Gratius & Rivero, 2018; Mudde, 2004)
	He mentioned to represent majority popular will.	MVM	(de la Torre, 2016; Canovan, 1999; Weyland, 1996; Panizza, 2005)
	He mentioned that minority corresponds to an oligarchy or elite, that is part of a corrupted power.	MMO	(de la Torre, 2017; Spanakos, 2008; Panizza, 2009)
	He mentioned that his opponents' attitude are misleading and can	MAE	(Canovan, 1999; de la Torre, 1996)

	<p>produce damage to the country. He mentioned important past politicians (e.g. Simón Bolívar or Fidel Castro). He mentioned that his ideals are revolutionary.</p>	<p>MPP MIR</p>	<p>(de la Torre, 1992; de la Torre, 2017; Jiménez & Patarroyo, 2018) (Zanatta, 2018; Nuñez-Sánchez, 2014; Panizza,2008)</p>
Personalism	<p>He based his political campaign on his imagine. He showed himself as the only possible leader of his party. He showed himself as captivating. He used clothing (shirts, hats, ties, etc.) to be identifiable.</p>	<p>CIP ULP DCA PPR</p>	<p>(de la Torre, 2017; Nuñez-Sánchez, 2014) (de la Torre, 2017; Panizza, 2005) (de la Torre, 1992; Canovan, 1999; Spanakos, 2008) (Bajini, 2010; Espí, 2019)</p>
Others	<p>Populism is a positive factor in politics. You think that Correa/Moreno is a populist. How do you asses the figure of Correa/Moreno? You think that during Correa/Moreno’s government political participation has grown. You feel identified with Correa/Moreno</p>	<p>PFP CPP VFP APP IRC/ILM</p>	<p>(Canovan, 1999; Spanakos, 2008; Weyland, 1996; Panizza, 2005; Gratius & Rivero, 2018; de la Torre,2016)</p>

Source: Author’s own compilation.

MMO	,273** 890	,145** 868	,543** 838	,588** 840	,687** 851	,702** 882	,724** 884	1,000 909										
MAE	,230** 912	,115** 872	,572** 845	,593** 842	,690** 851	,679** 889	,710** 889	,766** 881	1,000 926									
MPP	,283** 883	,088** 849	,467** 821	,475** 821	,608** 825	,603** 864	,647** 866	,626** 859	,679** 868	1,000 900								
MIR	,242** 923	,115** 878	,541** 850	,568** 850	,675** 859	,716** 901	,735** 900	,672** 882	,719** 903	,666** 883	1,000 941							
CIP	,148** 957	,079** 922	,475** 865	,499** 860	,577** 867	,519** 911	,541** 915	,541** 897	,550** 905	,515** 885	,596** 918	1,000 978						
ULP	,149** 965	,133** 919	,456** 867	,493** 862	,559** 870	,500** 912	,483** 912	,514** 893	,508** 905	,508** 879	,562** 920	,738** 962	1,000 984					
DCA	,321** 959	,096** 914	,369** 861	,400** 856	,497** 867	,499** 908	,507** 909	,478** 894	,503** 904	,499** 880	,518** 918	,614** 956	,629** 961	1,000 977				
PPR	,156** 967	,023** 914	,395** 861	,410** 855	,501** 868	,440** 911	,450** 912	,401** 887	,420** 901	,476** 878	,506** 919	,598** 956	,645** 964	,560** 958	1,000 989			

APP

MHC	850 *,219*	824 *,034	826 *,399*	843 *,480*	869 *,528*	1,000											
MV M	875 *,287*	840 *,071*	823 *,436*	836 *,457*	845 *,506*	894 *,603*	1,000										
MM O	900 *,232*	861 *,081*	824 *,497*	833 *,519*	840 *,587*	857 *,507*	919 *,582*	1,000									
MAE	861 *,201*	830 *,096*	799 *,489*	803 *,553*	806 *,570*	826 *,463*	863 *,552*	873 *,633*	1,000 0								
MPP	873 *,323*	839 *,016	808 *,462*	812 *,456*	816 *,443*	834 *,353*	864 *,404*	850 *,542*	889 *,536*	1,000 0							
MIR	841 *,303*	807 *,059	779 *,403*	774 *,425*	778 *,432*	802 *,400*	824 *,497*	809 *,471*	824 *,547*	852 *,626*	1,000 0						
CIP	892 *,165*	846 *,049	810 *,345*	816 *,409*	822 *,371*	846 *,298*	870 *,413*	845 *,365*	858 *,394*	908 *,364*	966 *,416*	1,000 0					
ULP	951 *,331*	901 *,052	834 *,318*	840 *,340*	848 *,307*	871 *,241*	889 *,344*	857 *,372*	871 *,357*	835 *,408*	885 *,396*	966 *,572*	1,000 0				
DCA	970 *,336*	915 *,073*	845 *,290*	851 *,328*	858 *,286*	882 *,287*	902 *,299*	866 *,307*	881 *,326*	842 *,316*	900 *,367*	957 *,548*	988 *,557*	1,000 0			

	961	912	840	847	851	874	893	863	873	839	884	943	964	977				
PPR	,321*	,037	,224*	,263*	,198*	,187*	,269*	,300*	,300*	,382*	,386*	,457*	,479*	,460*	1,000			
	953	898	827	834	840	865	886	851	863	832	885	936	954	945				
APP	,431*	,132*	,234*	,257*	,196*	,273*	,338*	,259*	,285*	,331*	,335*	,292*	,357*	,420*	,286*	1,000		
	928	884	815	819	826	846	869	845	857	821	869	918	928	920	917	942		
CPP	,255*	,120*	,265*	,316*	,258*	,254*	,315*	,264*	,281*	,380*	,349*	,414*	,367*	,372*	,356*	,505*	1,000	
	911	878	807	809	816	832	855	828	839	803	845	901	909	904	902	899	924	
VFP	,249*	,067*	-,048	-,002	-,030	,125*	,130*	,037	,012	,044	,085*	,061	,056	,132*	,010	,239*	,021	1,000
	968	944	837	844	849	875	897	853	869	835	888	941	963	955	947	923	905	1035

Source: Author's own compilation.

Table 4. Descriptive analysis of the variables referring to populism in Correa and Moreno's political style.

Categories	Variables	Rafael	Correa	Lenín	Moreno
		μ	σ	μ	Σ
Populist rhetoric	He mentioned the existence of foreigner enemies, hostile to his person and ideas.	6,5	2,98	4,7	3,09
	He mentioned the existence of hostile situations to his person and ideas.	6,8	2,74	4,8	3,01
	He mentioned the existence of one national élite hostile to his person and ideas.	6,5	2,94	4,7	2,94
	He mentioned that his government team and he are totally honest, capable and coherent, whilst his opponents are totally dishonest, incapable and incoherent.	6,2	3,21	5,0	2,87
	He mentioned to represent majority popular will.	6,3	3,09	5,3	2,72
	He mentioned that minority corresponds to an oligarchy or elite, that is part of a corrupted power.	6,2	3,06	4,6	2,74
	He mentioned that his opponents' attitude are misleading and can produce damage to the country.	6,4	2,89	4,8	2,77
	He mentioned important past politicians (e.g. Simón Bolívar or Fidel Castro)	6,5	2,93	4,2	2,80
He mentioned that his ideals are revolutionary.	6,8	3,01	4,5	2,85	
Personalism	He based his political campaign on his imagine.	6,8	2,89	5,2	2,85
	He showed himself as the only possible leader of his party.	7,2	2,85	4,9	2,81
	He showed himself as captivating.	6,6	3,00	5,1	2,80
	He used clothing (shirts, hats, ties, etc.) to be identifiable.	7,3	2,92	4,8	3,07
Others	Populism is a positive factor in politics.	4,8	3,18	4,8	3,18
	You think that Correa/Moreno is a populist.	6,3	3,03	4,7	2,69
	How do you asses the figure of Correa/Moreno?	3,8	3,25	5,1	2,64
	You think that during	5,4	3,05	5,0	2,64

Correa/Moreno's government political participation has grown. You feel identified with Correa/Moreno	4,6	3,49	4,0	2,86
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Source: Author's own compilation.

Table 5. Adjusted multiple linear regression models, related to Rafael Correa and Lenin Moreno.

Variables	Modelo 1 Rafael Correa	Modelo 2 Lenín Moreno
How do you assess the figure of Correa/Moreno?	0,314*** (0,033)	0,140*** (0,034)
He mentioned the existence of one national élite hostile to his person and ideas.	-0,116* (0,049)	
He mentioned that minority corresponds to an oligarchy or elite, that is part of a corrupted power	0,111* (0,047)	
He mentioned important past politicians (e.g. Simón Bolívar or Fidel Castro)	0,103* (0,046)	0,119** (0,039)
He mentioned the existence of foreigner enemies, hostile to his person and ideas.		0,077* (0,034)
He based his political campaign on his imagine.	-0,122** (0,048)	-0,134*** (0,040)
He showed himself as captivating.	0,187*** (0,046)	0,167*** (0,042)
He used clothing (shirts, hats, ties, etc.) to be identifiable.	0,084* (0,042)	0,191*** (0,037)
You think that during Correa/Moreno's government political participation has grown.	0,376*** (0,037)	0,262*** (0,040)
Constant	-0,088 (0,308)	0,210 (0,294)
Adjusted squared R	0,425	0,285

Significance level 0,001***; 0,05** and 0,1*.

Source: Author's own compilation.

Table 6. Standardized beta coefficients and collinearity analysis of the models referring to Rafael Correa and Lenin Moreno

	Model 1: Rafael Correa			Model 2: Lenín Moreno		
	Standardized Beta coefficients	Collinearity Analysis Tolerance Beta		Standardized Beta coefficients	Collinearity Analysis Tolerance Beta	
VFP	0,301	0,774	1,292	0,134	0,927	1,078
MEC	-0,099	0,429	2,329			
MMO	0,098	0,433	2,311			

MPP	0,089	0,475	2,106	0,119	0,667	1,500
CIP	-0,102	0,470	2,126	-0,131	0,643	1,556
DCA	0,162	0,489	2,044	0,162	0,592	1,690
PPR	0,073	0,576	1,736	0,201	0,672	1,487
APP	0,335	0,702	1,424	0,243	0,716	1,396
MEE				0,082	0,743	1,346

Source: Author's own compilation.