

**UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICS OF LATIN AMERICA'S PLURAL LEFTS
(CHÁVEZ/LULA): SOCIAL DEMOCRACY, POPULISM, AND CONVERGENCE
ON THE PATH TO A POST-NEOLIBERAL WORLD**

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ABSTRACT

The division of Latin America's contemporary left into the "populist" or "social democratic" originated as a disciplinary move by neoliberals. Such dichotomous categorizations derive from an impoverished notion of the political in which a positivist sphere of exalted expertise and enlightenment, based on reason, rationality, and objectivity, is juxtaposed against a lesser sphere of emotion, passion, and personalism. This underlying dualism, which derives from liberalism, permeates academic disciplines and crosses lines of ideology while tracking established markers of hierarchical distinction in a region profoundly divided along multiple lines of race, class, and cultural capital. Politics is better understood as embodied work, done with words, based on real and imagined relationships between flesh-and-blood humans as they are inserted into a larger cultural and symbolic universe.

Embracing the notion of many lefts but one path, the article argues that the unity of a heterogeneous and plural Latin American left is defined within an anti-neoliberal politics forged since 1990 through the Foro de São Paulo and eventually the World Social Forum. While Chávez and Lula share broad similarities, their distinct styles are marked by key differences but not those captured by established taxonomies. Leadership—understood as unity, as in the case of Chávez—is distinguished from Lula's praxis of convergence across difference derived, in part, from the subaltern origin of Lula's distinctive trajectory from trade unionism to the presidency. Such divergences need not endanger the shared left terrain that has provided the basis for the unprecedented success of this generation of Latin American leftists.

RESUMEN

La división de la izquierda latinoamericana contemporánea entre "populista" y "socialdemócrata" se originó como una medida disciplinaria de los neoliberales. Tales categorizaciones dicotómicas derivan de una noción empobrecida de lo político en la que una esfera positivista de conocimiento experto e ilustración, basada en la razón, la racionalidad y la objetividad, se contrapone a una esfera inferior de emoción, pasión y personalismo. El dualismo subyacente, que deriva del liberalismo, permea las disciplinas académicas y atraviesa las barreras ideológicas, al tiempo que refuerza las marcas establecidas de la distinción jerárquica en una región profundamente dividida por múltiples líneas de raza, clase y capital cultural. La política se entiende mejor como un trabajo encarnado, hecho con palabras, basado en relaciones reales e imaginarias entre seres humanos de carne y hueso que se insertan en un universo cultural y simbólico más amplio.

Abrazando la idea de que existen muchas izquierdas pero un solo camino, este artículo sostiene que la unidad de una izquierda latinoamericana heterogénea y plural se define dentro de una política anti-neoliberal forjada desde 1990 a través del Foro de San Pablo y en el Foro Social Mundial. Mientras que Chávez y Lula comparten amplias similitudes, sus estilos distintos son marcados por diferencias claves, pero no aquellas que capturan las taxonomías actuales. El liderazgo—entendido como unidad, como es el caso de Chávez—se distingue de la práctica de la convergencia a través de las diferencias de Lula, la que en parte deriva del origen subalterno del trayecto distintivo de Lula desde el sindicalismo a la presidencia. Tal divergencia no necesariamente pone en peligro el terreno compartido de la izquierda que ha provisto las bases para el éxito sin precedentes de esta generación de izquierdistas latinoamericanos.

**EPIGRAPH: WHAT IS POLITICS?
IDENTIFICATION, PASSION, AND TEARS IN SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL
(OCTOBER 2002)**

I was in Sao Paulo for the victorious presidential campaign of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva [in 2002]. . . It was a massive, ecstatic victory, under red banners of ‘citizenship,’ ‘democracy,’ and ‘social justice.’ I realized that Brazilians voted for Lula not only to demand future change but also to acclaim as emblematically theirs a life story about what had already changed. . . Brazilians voted for Lula not only to celebrate an ascension story. . . Rather, they were finally willing to elect to highest office a man who campaigned explicitly as a non-elite—not merely as ‘the Brazilian equal to you,’ which had been the slogan of Lula’s first failed campaign . . . but as a man who had triumphed without becoming elite, who had succeeded through his experience of the common, and who presented his individual success as expressly collective. Lula won because Brazilians recognized in this common aspect of achievement the best possibility for remaking a nation rotted by the convergence of great wealth and grotesque inequality.

In that recognition, Lula’s story touched the deeply messianic nerve of Brazilian popular imagination. What impressed me on election night in October 2002 was how many people, mostly working-class, I saw openly weep on the streets of São Paulo after Lula’s victory. And they cried on national television over the next days when asked to recall the Lula they once knew as a worker and a common Brazilian. They cried when trying to explain what that experience of commonality was and what it meant to them that such a man could become president. The tears of tough working-class men and women sprang from their painful, passionate longing for Brazil to *dar certo*, to ‘succeed and become right,’ as much as from their own suffering.

There is such frustration among laboring Brazilians. They long for their nation to make good after so many misses, for their work to be valued, accomplishments recognized, and injustices righted. They long for a just share in their country’s immense resources, forever monopolized by a habitually disparaging, pampered, and immune elite who always seem relentlessly in control of Brazil’s destiny.¹

—James Holston

INTRODUCTION

This article takes up the heated political and academic debate regarding the twenty-first-century turn towards the left in Latin America. It opens with a January 2006 speech by Hugo Chávez that rejects the dichotomous categorization of the contemporary Latin American left championed by former Mexican Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda, former Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo, and many political scientists. This juxtaposition of the “social democratic” against the “populist” in Latin America originated as a disciplinary move by neoliberals but its appeal went beyond that limited group. Reflecting entrenched predispositions and long-established liberal values, sectors of a discouraged Latin American intelligentsia responded to the global transformations of 1989–1991 by embracing a variant of neoliberalism under the label of “social democracy,” a term they propose to apply to an anti-neoliberal left that has now risen to national elective office.

After clarifying its political genealogy, the article links this classificatory taxonomy to an impoverished and antiquated notion of the political. In postulating a politics of exalted expertise and enlightenment, the idea of reason, rationality, and objectivity (the “cold” and disinterested) is juxtaposed against a lesser sphere of emotion, passion, and ‘personalism’ (the “hot” and blindly partisan, if not backward and corrupt). Beyond historicizing the relation between intellectuals, liberalism, and populism, this essay argues that the essence of the *art* of politics does not lie in the conceptual schemes, analytical categories, and abstract grids derived from social theory and economics; it is to be found in the relationships between humans, understood as flesh-and-blood individuals, friends and foes, and groups in formation (or decay). Whether lived or imagined, these relationships are constructed through *embodied work done with words*. Thus, politics is necessarily discursive and gains strength from its dynamic insertion into the cultural and symbolic universe that characterizes a Latin America profoundly divided along multiple lines of race, class, and cultural capital.

Embracing the notion of many lefts but one path, the article uses Hugo Chávez’s discussion of Lula to better understand the lived politics of Latin America’s plural lefts. The key to the unity that exists within the left’s diversity, it is argued, can be found in the

notion of the left as a space of *convergence* across difference. In 1990, this took shape in the Forum of São Paulo, which brought together the region's leftist organizations, and a decade later in the World Social Forum (WSF) founded in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001. Finally, it argues that leadership—understood as unity, as in the case of Chávez—can be distinguished from Lula's praxis of convergence but that this divergence need not endanger the shared left terrain that has provided the basis for the unprecedented success of this generation of Latin American leftists.

THE “HOT” AND THE “COLD”: CHÁVEZ VERSUS JORGE CASTAÑEDA ON ‘CRAZY’ OR ‘SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC’ LEFTS

“I never know where to begin [when] speaking in events as beautiful as this,” Hugo Chávez told an overflowing crowd in the Caracas Poliedro on January 27, 2006. The Venezuelan president began his address to the polycentric VI World Social Forum by citing “the grand emotion” he felt facing an audience “overflowing with passion.” In a speech full of references to past heroes, Chávez delivered a message to “Mr. Danger,” the term he selected for a US president he would label the devil in his speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2006. On occasions like this rally, he observed, “I always come with the desire, the intention, and commitment to reflect on issues and ideas. And there lies the perpetual dilemma—passion vs. reason— but both are necessary.” While citing martyrs, condemning crimes, and promising inevitable retribution, Chávez attacked those who failed to understand that the Latin American lefts that had come to power were all moving “along the same path, in the same direction.” It is here that the Empire has shown itself to be very intelligent, he went on: “intellectuals of diverse origin and the media have spent two years promoting the divisive idea that . . . several lefts exist: Fidel and Chávez are the crazies— and now they include Evo [Morales] too; and others, like Lula, Lagos, Tabaré, and Kirchner are ‘statesmen’; but Chávez and Fidel are crazy, the ‘crazy left.’” Having weighed in on the key debate about Latin America's left turns, Chávez went on with vigor to discount such labels: “call us what they will, but we are going to give the right the greatest defeat ever on this continent, which will be remembered for 500,000 years.”²

As if following up on Chávez's remarks, the May–June 2006 issue of *Foreign Affairs* included an article by Mexican intellectual Jorge Castañeda, well known among academics in the United States as author of an influential 1993 book on the twentieth-century trajectory of the Latin American left and its subsequent crisis in the late 1980s.³ Yet the appearance of “Latin America’s Left Turn” in the journal of the US foreign policy establishment was not surprising. In the late 1990s, Castañeda had broken with his Mexican comrades to support the conservative businessman Vicente Fox, winner of the landmark 2000 presidential election that ended one-party rule, and was rewarded with the position of foreign minister (2000–2003). The *Foreign Affairs* article by Castañeda—currently Global Distinguished Professor of Politics and Latin American and Caribbean Studies at New York University—has been widely cited and debated in both the Ivory Tower and along the Washington-New York corridor.

Castañeda’s article opened with a backward glance that took on the air of a fairy tale: “just over a decade ago, Latin America seemed poised to begin a virtuous cycle of economic progress and improved democratic governance. . . The landscape today is transformed” with the region “swerving left” in a backlash “against the predominant trends of the last 15 years.” Dating this shift to the 1998 election of Chávez in Venezuela, Castañeda described “a veritable left-wing tsunami” in which “a wave of leaders, parties, and movements generically labeled ‘leftist’ have swept to power.” Yet he was quick to sharply distinguish a “good left,” which was “modern, open-minded, reformist and internationalist,” from a Chávez left, “born of the great tradition of Latin American populism,” that was “nationalist, strident, and close-minded.”⁴ Far less balanced than his 1993 book, his 2006 article attacked populism as “a bizarre blend of inclusion of the excluded, macroeconomic folly,” and “virulent strident nationalism.”⁵

The vigor of Castañeda’s disdain reflected how badly things had worked out for the neoliberal “social democratic left” he had believed was the wave of the future in the early 1990s. Indeed, Castañeda was forced to admit in 2006 that he had been “at least partially wrong” to have believed that the Latin American governments carrying out free market reforms in the 1990s would have to adopt “social democratic” policies as the necessary compliment to the modernizing reforms vigorously denounced as neoliberal by the “old, radical, guerilla-based, Castroist, or communist left,” a category to which he had

long consigned Lula and the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT, or Workers' Party).⁶ In the 1990s, the two most successful examples of Castañeda-style social democracy were the post-Pinochet Concertación in Chile, a coalition built around a Socialist-Christian Democratic alliance, and the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC), the neo-Marxist creator of dependency theory who served as Brazil's president from 1994 to 2002. Yet a decade later, Castañeda noted ruefully, only Chile had succeeded and few Latin Americans recognized that country as the "true model for the region."⁷ As for Brazil, the 2002 election had seen a poorly educated former manual worker from the "bad" left beat José Serra, an extremely competent administrator with a US PhD who had been chosen by Cardoso's Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB).

The sequence of sweeping electoral victories that marked the left's arrival in the first decade of the twenty-first century sprung from precisely the hard-core left of the past that had condemned the Castañeda-Cardoso brand of politics as neoliberal betrayal.⁸ The former Mexican foreign minister, in positioning himself vis-à-vis the new governing leftist leaders, was reduced in 2006 to miraculously re-christening swaths of the old "bad" left he had opposed as newly "social democratic," and thus part of what he now called the "right left" in Latin America. Castañeda was full of praise for Tabaré Vázquez and the Frente Amplio (Broad Front, or FA) in Uruguay, for example, but he was most eager to claim Brazilian President Lula for a renovated left that existed largely in his head. Yet his support for Lula was tinged with resentment and the attempt to co-opt Lula for the "right left" was marked by clear uncertainty. Despite evidence of Lula's moderation, he claimed only that the PT had "*largely* followed him [Lula] on the road *toward* social democracy," while admitting that it still maintained a "lingering emotional devotion to Cuba," as did Lula (emphasis added).⁹ To illustrate the mixed nature of Brazilian developments, he cited the fact that "when Lula welcomed Bush" to Brasília in November 2005, there were demonstrators from Lula's own party burning "the US president in effigy" across the street from the presidential palace. As he summed it up, 'the conversion is *not complete*' (emphasis added).¹⁰

So far, I have traced the roots of dichotomous treatments of the Latin American left in the contemporary political dialogue between two Latin American politicians, each with their eye on Washington DC (if for different reasons). Yet this type of simplified

hierarchized difference does not necessarily disappear when we move from the heated sphere of political antagonism into the more ethereal arena of academic social science. As political scientist Kenneth Roberts has recently observed, “political diversity within Latin America’s ‘left turn’ is sometimes reduced to a core differentiation between social democratic and populist alternatives. This dichotomy is too quick to attach familiar labels to new phenomenon in different contexts,”¹¹ not to mention, one might add, the multiplicity of meanings that the term occupies historically within the Western European context, much less its transformations over the last two decades.¹² The second difficulty with this dichotomy, Roberts goes on, is that it “lumps together too many disparate cases under the populist concept,” which is transformed into a “residual category” and “political epithet” used to “demarcate the ‘good’ or ‘responsible’ left from the demagogues and ‘idiots’ (in [Mario] Vargas Llosa’s contemptuous parlance).” In doing so, an effort is made to “delegitimize socio-economic alternatives that depart from neoliberal orthodoxy” while “artificially reducing Latin America’s options to one or another variant of populism or neoliberalism.”¹³

The political ploy described by Roberts was dramatically illustrated by a commentary on Lula’s election by Ernesto Zedillo, a Yale economics PhD who served as the last PRI president before the election of Vicente Fox. Appearing in the US business magazine *Forbes*, the article began by calling populism “the most pervasive political ideology [sic] in Latin American politics for nearly a century” [sic]. Zedillo also noted, and by no means approvingly, that populism had proven “extremely effective at attracting mass support” by using “a socially divisive rhetoric” that promised “a better life for their people simply by wishing for it—never as a result of discipline, thrift, and hard work.” Having sternly invoked a particularly disciplinary version of Weber’s Protestant ethic, the director of Yale’s Center for the Study of Globalization described Lula as having run for president on three previous occasions “on a populist platform” [sic]. As a result, investors had overreacted to the news of Lula’s impending victory by driving down the value of the Brazilian real, although this might be “a spillover effect from Argentina’s irresponsible default on its foreign debt” in December 2001.¹⁴

Yet Zedillo reported himself hopeful that Lula might prove less than “a traditional die-hard populist.” It may be, he went on, that in addition “to being a charismatic

politician, [Lula] may have evolved into a responsible one.” If so, the new president will rightly “disappoint his now-enthusiastic grassroots supporters” by doing the right thing: dosing “his country with even more bitter medicine than that prescribed by the International Monetary Fund” in August 2002. If he refuses, however, the result will be “quite simply hell” for the economy and people of Brazil, and this will leave populism discredited. And if President Lula does perforce act “responsibly,” he might—with generous US financial support—“become the unwitting hangman of Latin American populism.”¹⁵ As I have demonstrated, the sharp juxtaposition of social democracy and populism originates in such policing efforts by the neoliberal establishment in Latin America. “Liberalism, though not always an explicit point of reference, thus lurks near the surface of this debate” and serves as the covert norm.¹⁶

Few academics involved with current discussion of the left in Latin America share Zedillo’s pronounced doctrinal neoliberalism or his willingness to cut corners intellectually to make a political point against the left. Yet there are significant academic figures on the left, such as Fernando Panizza, who share Zedillo and Castañeda’s preference for juxtaposing Latin American “social democracy” against the “increasingly radical left-populist government” of Chávez, as Panizza puts it. In 2005, Panizza described the Socialist Party of Chile (SP), the Frente Amplio in Uruguay, and the PT in Brazil as “social democratic parties of the left,” although his article offered an abundance of caveats that undermined his categorizations. For one thing, Panizza recognizes significant differences between the three parties and within them, while noting that only the Chilean SP belongs to the Socialist International. Nor is he blind to the fact that the Latin American lefts’ “project of inclusive development [is undertaken] under very different economic and social conditions than the successful early European social democratic governments or [even] the most recent ‘Third Way’ ones,” as well as the fact that Latin American “social conditions” are “very different from those in Europe.”¹⁷

While venturing no explanation, Panizza even notes that important sectors in both the Frente Amplio and the PT “would strongly reject the social democratic label.” But undeterred, he concludes that “the parties’ goals, policies, and political strategies [nonetheless] merit the characterization.” His judgment is based, he suggests, on the fact that these once radical groups have now “discarded any notion of revolutionary rupture in

favor of reform, electoral politics and respect for the institutions of liberal democracy.” Although granting that this “social democratic” moderation has occurred in each case “at different times, to different extents and at a different pace,” he insists that they have “for all practical matters abandoned the language of socialism, class struggle and ownership of the means of production” and “ditched the old language of class alliances, seizing state power and transition to socialism;” that this might just as well describe the differences between the Hugo Chavez of 1992 and 1998 or 2008 goes unobserved.¹⁸

Panizza also leaves room for doubt as to the completeness of the conversion in the Brazilian and Uruguayan case. If the “move to the center of the PT and the FA has been a longer, more uneven and incomplete affair” than with Chilean SP, this is mainly because—in his account—the Chilean SP has been committed to the “market economy” for so long that the “institutionalization of free market reforms [has] turned . . . tactical concession into a strategic choice” based on a “cross-party hegemony of free market ideology.” He also decries the left’s refusal to accord the Concertación “left-wing credentials,” based precisely on its adherence to a neoliberalism that the left emphatically rejects. Like Castañeda, he expresses his hope that Lula’s biography and the PT’s history will now make “it much more difficult to ignore or disqualify” the Concertación “as an irrelevance for progressive forces.”¹⁹

The broadly liberal positions defended by Panizza are underlined when he goes on to defined the key challenge he believes faces the region’s “social democratic” left: “to overhaul the culture and informal institutions of currently existing liberal democracy” since progress will only made “upon the foundations of strong representative and properly accountable institutions.” It is also possible to detect below the surface an underlying concern about extra-institutional mobilization and popular majoritarianism, as shown by the author’s unease about unruly *piqueteros* being used by radical minorities in Argentina. His article also contains an especially emphatic warning about the “risks incurred by attempts at instituting a *political ground zero* in complex modern societies” (emphasis added); that is, anxiety about the “re-foundationalism” characteristic of what the author dubs as the non-social democratic left in Latin America.²⁰

In practice, many social scientists prove almost as uncomfortable with the charismatic, the demagogic, and the excessive (emotion, not reason) as Michael Reid, an

English journalist who has served since 1996 as the Latin American bureau chief for *The Economist*, neoliberalism's most ideologically rigorous publication. While skipping the Europeanizing "social democratic" label favored by Castañeda, his 2007 book described "the battle for Latin America's soul" as pitting "democratic reformism" (social democracy) against "populist autocracy, as personified by Hugo Chávez"; herein lies "the populist challenge to liberal democracy. . . Strip away the verbiage, and Chávez looks a lot like a typical military caudillo and his project an updating of populism," consisting of a charismatic and messianic savior directly bonding with the masses through the media, combined with a lack of restraint, unsustainable redistribution, and a polity made up of clientele not citizens.²¹

REASON, PASSION, AND THE QUESTION OF POPULISM: THE 1990S BIRTH OF "LEFT" NEOLIBERALISM

"A holy alliance is trying to exorcize the ghost of populism," Carlos de la Torre said recently, noting it is possible to "identify important debates over the meanings and interpretations of democracy. . . behind the smokescreen."²² In truth, the question of "social democracy" has less to do with Latin America than it has to do with Latin American and Latin Americanist intellectuals across lines of ideology and politics. The emergence of this regionally esoteric term, with its current valences, dates to the late 1980s evolution of part of the 1960s generation that cut its teeth on the "populism" debate that marked the emergence of the Latin American New Left.²³ Across the subsequent decades, a vast amount of research has been conducted on how to best understand mid-twentieth century populist leaders, movements, governments, culture, and regimes. Very little of this, however, has penetrated the world of those who refurbished a revolutionary version of anti-populism as "social democracy," while effectively—perhaps inadvertently—converting the new Latin American social democracy into "a recipe for the consolidation of neoliberalism in practice."²⁴

Those who set out in the 1990s to create a social democratic Third Way between the old liberalism, or new invading "neoliberalism," and its national-populist rival were aware that their efforts seemed "unrealistic" and "incongruous."²⁵ As FHC noted, this new "social democracy" emerged in a region "besieged by apparently triumphant

neoliberalism and weakened by the criticism and death of real socialism,” while facing “a political tradition” (populism) that was “unfavorable to it.”²⁶ The term itself was “not viewed very positively” in Latin America, while the region hardly seemed its “most ideal breeding ground” since it was “socially and politically . . . very close to a situation that conforms to the national populist model.”²⁷ Of the voices heard in Menno Vellinga’s 1993 *Social Democracy in Latin America*, the soon-to-be-president FHC was clearest in identifying the practical neoliberal tasks ahead: to criticize past lefts, reduce the state, restrict redistribution associated with corporatism (such as wage increases), and move away from nationalist flag waving, usually by leftists.²⁸

What needs to come to the fore, FHC said, was a concern for efficiency while attending to “the rational aspects of accumulation, productivity, and investment” so often missed in the regressive critique of wealth associated with the “egalitarian utopia” of Catholic socialism.²⁹ Like Cardoso, the Argentine Marcelo Cavarozzi was especially critical of the “grassroots left” linked to liberation theology, labor, and mass protest. Focusing on the PT as “the most dramatic example,” he criticized a “Manichean view” that perceived “political representation, at its best, as a distortion of true and real democracy, which . . . is associated with modalities of direct participation.” The result was that this grassroots left played an “ambivalent” role in the transition to democracy while “increasingly virulent and self-referential assemblyism” provided a playground for militants who used a language “alien to the popular and working sectors” they claimed to represent.³⁰

Despite the fragility of their 1990s project, Latin America’s self-styled “social democrats” did aspire to something truly utopian. The goal was not to refound nations or grace them with new constitutions, but to erase their history, politics, and popular culture as part of putting an end, once and for all, to the era of populism (as FHC put it in 1994).³¹ The dim prospects for success could be measured by the array of past presidents Castañeda identified with populism in his 2006 *Foreign Affairs* article: it included such twentieth-century giants as Mexico’s Lázaro Cardenas, Argentina’s Juan Perón, Brazil’s Getúlio Vargas, and Bolivia’s Victor Paz Estenssoro! The irony, of course, is that you cannot erase or even a refound a country’s past, only its future. As I observed in 2006,

the difficulties of transposing a North Atlantic social democratic vision into a [mid-twentieth century] Latin American context [was] due to the presence of a *sui generis* political phenomenon that will come to be known as populism. In terms of practical political realities, the center-left terrain that might have been social democracy was occupied instead by what [U.S. scholar Robert] Alexander (and most foreign observers) could only see as a group of unscrupulous demagogues, opportunistic and often semi-democratic, who were given to anti-American posturing and a tendency to conciliate as well as fight with the anti-imperialist communist left.³²

The oddity of the utopian aspiration of Castañeda and FHC was not completely missed by the intellectual architects of the new “social democracy” of the 1990s. One noted that state action on behalf of redistribution and a lessening of inequality did not differentiate social democratic “policies from the old national populist ones.”³³ Another recognized that several of the established social democratic parties in Latin America, such as APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana, or American Popular Revolutionary Alliance) in Peru and Accion Democrática (AD, or Democratic Action) in Venezuela (members of the Socialist International), were “tied up” with populism and founded by commanding caudillos like Haya de la Torre and Rómulo Betancourt.³⁴ Such fine points, however, are routinely passed over by those who fail to distinguish between social democracy as a flattering self-conceit, an alternative political economy, a set of principles and values, a discourse, or a facade. In truth, social democracy in Latin America tracks most clearly with liberal values held dear by the intelligentsia: abstraction and rationality, civility and controlled emotions, distance and irony, and an obsession with North Atlantic modernity in one form or another.

By contrast, populism and the popular, with which it is still often confused, are coded quite differently and therein lies their singular strength. It took an English journalist with neoliberal politics to recognize most forthrightly that populism today “has become a loaded, normative term, rather than an analytical one.” Reid’s 2007 book even recognized that populism was often “a creative political response to inequality and the dominance of powerful conservative groups. . . [It served as] the political vehicle through

which many Latin American countries entered into the modern era of mass politics.”³⁵ As Miguel Centeno and Fernando Lopez-Alves have noted, “the collapse of liberalism in the interwar years generated perhaps the region’s first ‘homegrown’ regime model. While clearly influenced by both the Popular Front Left and fascism, Latin American corporatist populism had indigenous ingredients and sought to formulate answers clearly linked to the nature of the [local] economic, political, and social problems they were meant to solve.”³⁶ “Whereas liberals and positivists had often looked abroad for inspiration,” notes Reid, “populists promoted national culture” and played “an analogous role” to European social democracy.³⁷

While Alain Touraine considered populism to be in a “terminal phase of decomposition” in the early 1990s,³⁸ Castañeda’s 1993 book could not ignore its many positive features and lasting legacies. While decrying populism’s timid reformism and frequent resort to authoritarianism, this Mexican leftist en route to a social democratic version of neoliberalism nonetheless emphasized that “the national-populist tendency undoubtedly belongs on the left of the political spectrum . . . These movements’ original leaders, together with the historical periods of collective consciousness and popular enfranchisement, are symbols of an era and a certain idea of modernity in Latin America: the inclusion of the excluded. . . Finally, the populist epoch was a golden age of national self-assertion. It was a time when Latin American countries stood up to the rest of the world, gained attention and respect, and defended their pride, dignity, and many of their true interests.”³⁹

To understand twentieth-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 historical trajectories that impacted these plural lefts within the ebb and flow of end-of-the-twentieth-century national, 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. As Carlos Torre has noted about populism, politics “cannot be reduced to the words, actions, and strategies of leaders. The autonomous expectations, cultures, and discourses of followers are equally important in understanding

the populist bond. In order to comprehend the appeal of populism, serious attention should be paid to the words, communications and conversations between leaders and followers.”⁴⁰ It requires, in other words, that we attend to lived relations between flesh-and-blood individuals and groups, while analyzing politics as *embodied work done with words* by individuals in their relations with others.

As we do so, Luis Reygadas reminds us, we need to pay special attention to the gaps between our analytical vocabularies and the discursive realm of the “subaltern” who have emerged as a central force in Latin American politics over the past century. Reygadas notes that intellectuals, and the documents and manifestos they write, often prefer a language of liberal “citizenship, equality, inclusion and intercultural dialogue.” Yet these weak narratives, he suggests, cannot yet substitute for the “them-us” logic that structures “subaltern discourses of inequality [that] go back to a long history of plundering, discrimination, and exclusion.” These images and tropes are not, he insists, “a simple reflection of that history. On the contrary they are active constructions that interpret the Latin American condition from the perspective and the interests of the excluded.”⁴¹

TWO LEFTS, ONE PATH? CHÁVEZ, LULA, AND THE POLITICS OF LATIN AMERICA’S LEFT TURNS

Now we can return to the Caracas WSF speech by a politician far more successful than Castañeda or FHC. Those “who have lifted the flags of revolution,” Chávez thundered, are on “a victorious offensive against the Empire” with battles looming in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. “Representative democracy,” he went on, “always ends up being a democracy of the elites and therefore a false democracy.” We want a new model, a revolutionary and “people’s democracy, [one that is] participatory and protagonistic,” not one defined by “an elite that represents the ‘people.’”⁴² This forceful anti-imperialist, anti-liberal, and socialist rhetoric suggests less a revival of Latin American populism, the eternal *bête noire* of the enlightened, than a rebirth of the Tricontinental Third Worldism of the Cuban Revolution that inspired what Castañeda called the “radical, guerilla-based Castroist, or communist left” of the 1960s.⁴³ Indeed, Chávez uses the language of struggle, rupture, and the seizure of power whose absence serves as the basis of many

attempt to define the “social democracy” of other lefts in the region, especially that of Lula and the PT.⁴⁴

Chávez’s radical words do in fact stand in stark contrast with the moderation of the rhetoric of his Brazilian counterpart, which would seem to support the notion of a Chávez radical left and a Lula left (however labeled). Before doing so, however, we might consider that the Venezuelan president, in the very same speech, directly criticized leftists who unfavorably compared the words or actions of Lula to those of his own government. “Nobody can ask me to do the same as Fidel does, the circumstances are different; like Lula cannot be asked to do the same as Chávez; or Evo cannot be asked to do the same as Lula.” He recalled the Porto Alegre World Social Forum the previous year, where a largely Brazilian audience had received him more enthusiastically than they did Lula. As he observed in Caracas, “I told my compañeros and brothers of Brazil,” at the 2005 rally in the Gigantinho stadium, that Lula “is a great man and that they have to work with Lula and support Lula” who was facing reelection in 2006 as was Chávez (both won with 61% of the final vote; Chávez on the first round). Above all, he insisted, our struggle must be understood *as a process* in which presidents and countries have “their [own] circumstances, but we *walk the same path, in the same direction* and that’s what’s important” (emphasis added).⁴⁵

In Caracas, Chávez was speaking to an audience favorable to a more resolute and consequential “leftism” than was characteristic of the Lula government. Despite the moral authority derived from his “in-your-face” leftist posture, Chávez drew a significantly different boundary between left and right than might be expected given the political genealogy invoked in his speech. Yet does Chávez’s effort to cast the left’s net so widely, even promiscuously, make any sense at all? Perhaps it merely reflects his personal friendship with Lula, which goes back to before 1998, or his admiration for Lula’s past history of struggle that links both men as insurgents. It might even be an expression of a “big man” theory of history in which peoples have states and states have rulers, and high level hemispheric and global politics is the game that powerful men play with each other. This latter possibility seems unlikely, however, since the volatile Chávez has routinely violated diplomatic protocol with harsh comments about the presidents and

politicians of other Latin American countries. There is little reason to believe he would hold his tongue if he felt betrayed or disappointed by Lula.

Yet we need not take at face value the Venezuelan president's claim of a single left on the march. Perhaps it is merely opportunistic statecraft that led him to minimize his differences with Lula. And is it really possible for Lula to have the "warm personal friendship with Chávez" of which he boasts, while simultaneously being on excellent terms with the US president denounced by Chávez as the devil? In other words, perhaps the claim that President Lula is of the left stems solely from Chávez's need to curry the favor of Lula and his government. A not entirely dissimilar calculus might be said to drive Bush's favorable stance vis-à-vis Lula, which has allowed Lula's government to retain the advantages of apparently incongruous alignments, while refusing to allow either of the parties in conflict to force Brazil into a definitive position. In this fashion, the Lula government becomes an indispensable point of convergence—between the volatile Chávez and less enthusiastic Latin American governments, as well as between Chávez and a US government eager to see him out of power.⁴⁶

That Chávez recognizes his own dependence upon Brazilian support leads him to emphasize that Lula is not FHC and that his government has not betrayed the left. Although he might prefer a Lula who was more forthright, Chávez is confident that Lula will not harm him or his government; otherwise, he would be first to denounce him. In truth, Brazil has repeatedly served as a vital guarantor of Chávez in the face of his enemies, just as Lula has emerged as a support for the government of Evo Morales, despite that government's abrupt nationalization of the Bolivian properties of the Brazilian state-owned oil enterprise Petrobras. And President George Bush, dealt these cards, has no choice but to return over and over again—as recently as 2007—to Lula, a man he describes as a friend and ally. Moreover, Venezuela's twice freely elected president is well aware that Lula attracts support in sectors of global politics that are unenthusiastic about Chávez's policies and discourse. In this sense, all three men occupy a place within the space of convergence constructed around Lula, each at various distances to his left and right but all intertwined in the net.

The pro-Lula position assumed by Chávez further clarifies the meaning to be accorded to the idea of the left in Latin America during the late twentieth-century

conjuncture of neoliberal globalization. Here we can return to a story that Chávez recounted in his 2006 speech to the Caracas WSF. After hailing Schafik Handal of El Salvador, a legendary communist and one-time presidential candidate of the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN, or Farbabundo Marti National Liberation Front), the Venezuelan president gave an account of the first time he met his fellow revolutionary at the VI Encuentro (encounter) of the Foro de São Paulo (FSP, or Forum of São Paulo) held July 26–28, 1996 in San Salvador. The FSP began as a conference of the region’s leftist parties and organizations that was held in São Paulo in July 1990 at the initiative of the PT. (See Table 1.)

The FSP Encuentro in San Salvador was the sixth such meeting and Chávez and his compañeros decided to attend:

We went just after being released from jail, and a strange thing happened . . . the leftists of Latin America looked on us with trepidation, they kicked us out of the assembly. They had their reasons: “A colonel who led a military coup. A *caudillo*.” . . . There we were, and I remember that I was not allowed to address the assembly by majority decision by the Forum organizers. I told them: That’s fine; I didn’t come here to talk to the assembly. I came to see what this is all about, to learn, to learn about movements, political parties, and leaders, to listen to speeches, to take good notes, to learn to integrate myself.⁴⁷

Chávez’s story revealed fissures that separated his biographical trajectory from those of the party left, which predominated in the forum, with the leading roles accorded the PT (Brazil), the Cuban Communist Party, the FMLN (El Salvador), Mexico’s PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, or Party of the Democratic Revolution), the Nicaraguan FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, or Sandinista National Liberation Front, and Uruguay’s Frente Amplio. At the same time, it also highlighted the legitimacy that the ex-prisoner and disgraced military man accorded the FSP as the representative body of Latin America’s pluralistic anti-neoliberal left, and what he believed its recognition might offer to him.

TABLE 1

**MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE AT THE FORO DE SÃO PAULO ENCOUNTERS,
1990–2007**

	Date and Place	Parties and Countries Represented or Attending as Members of Guests
1st 1990	São Paulo, Brazil (July) “Encontro de Partidos de Organizações de Esquerda da América Latina e Caribe” “convocados por el PT”	“Declaración de São Paulo” “representantes de 48 organizaciones, partidos e frentes de izquierda en America Latina y el Caribe”
2nd 1991	Mexico City, Mexico (June 12–15) “II Encuentro de Los Movimientos y Partidos Políticos del Foro de São Paulo” “celebrado por invitación del Partido de la Revolución Democrática de México” following up on I Encuentro in SP “por iniciativa del PT, en el sentido de aglutinar a un mayor numero de fuerzas políticas interesadas en discutir. . .”	“Declaración de México” “el Foro congreco a 68 organizaciones y partidos políticos provenientes de 22 países” in Latin America complemented by “asistencia de 12 organizaciones y partidos políticos de Europa, Canadá ye Estados Unidos”
3rd 1992	Managua, Nicaragua (July 16–19) “II Encuentro de Los Movimientos y Partidos Políticos del Foro de São Paulo” FSLN “fue anfitrión del Encuentro”	“Declaración de Managua” “61 organizaciones y partidos políticos provenientes de 17 países de America Latina y el Caribe, con un total de 122 delegados” “43 organizaciones y partidos que participaron en calidad de observadores, de los cuales 2 son de África, 9 de Asia, 21 de Europa, y 11 de Estados Unidos y Canadá, con un total de 60 observadores que sumados a los 122 delegados hacen un gran total de 182 asistentes al evento”
4th 1993	Havana, Cuba (July 21–24) “IV Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo”	“Declaración Final del IV Encuentro del Foro de Sao Paulo” “con la presencia de 112 organizaciones miembros y de 25 observadores de la region. . .” “la asistencia de observadores representantes de 44 instituciones y fuerzas políticas de America del Norte, Europa, Asia y África” Being in Cuba “logró la incorporación de 31 fuerzas políticas, entre las que incluyen 21 partidos y movimientos anticolonialistas, populares, y democráticas del Caribe.”

5th 1995	Montivideo, Uruguay (May 25–28) “V Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo” “calidamente recibidas por sus compañeros, militantes de los partidos que integran el Frente Amplio del Uruguay”	“Declaración de Montevideo” “con la presencia de 65 delegaciones de America y Latina y el Caribe y observadores de Europa, África, Asia, America y Australia” “Centenas de delegados de toda America Latina y el Caribe”
6th 1996	San Salvador, El Salvador (July 26–28) “VI Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo”	“Declaración Final” “187 delegados pertenecientes a 52 organizaciones miembros, 144 organizaciones invitadas representadas por 289 participantes y 44 observadores pertenecientes a 35 organizaciones de America, Europa, Asia y África”
7th 1997	Porto Alegre, Brazil (July) “VII Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo”	“Declaración Final del VII Encuentro del Foro de Sao Paulo” “contó con la participación de 158 delegadas y delegados de 58 partidos procedentes de 20 países de America Latina y del Caribe, además de 26 organizaciones fraternas.”
8th 1998	Mexico City Mexico (November) “VIII Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo”	“Declaración Final del VIII Encuentro del Foro de Sao Paulo” No information on representation in final declaracion.
9th 2000	Managua, Nicaragua (February) “IX Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo”	“Declaración de Niquinhohomo,” dated 20 February 2000 No information on representation in final declaracion.
10th 2001	Havana, Cuba (December 4–7) “X Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo” Thanks to the PC of Cuba for its hosting and contribution.	“Declaración Final, X Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo” “con la participación de 518 delegados provenientes de 81 países de America Latina y el Caribe, America del Norte, Europa, Asia, Africa, Medio Oriente, y Australia, representantes de 84 partidos y movimientos politicos miembros y de 127 partidos y organizaciones invitados.”
11th 2002	Antigua, Guatemala (December 2–4) “XI Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo” Praise "calido recibimiento dispensado" by URNG	“Declaración Final, XI Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo” “595 representantes de 142 partidos y movimientos politicos de izquierda de 45 países de America, Europa, Asia, Africa, Medio Oriente y Oceania”

12th 2005	São Paulo, Brazil (July 1–4) “XII Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo”	<p>“Declaración Final, XII Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo”</p> <p>“con la participación de 364 participantes de cerca de 150 partidos políticos, entidades y organizaciones sociales.”</p> <p>“Participaron los partidos políticos miembros de Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, México, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Perú, Puerto Rico, Republica Dominicana, Uruguay, Venezuela.”</p> <p>“además participaron entidades y partidos invitados de Alemania, Bélgica, Canadá, Cataluña, China, España, Francia, Galicia, Italia, Portugal, Suiza y Vietnam”</p> <p>And “representantes diplomáticos de nueve países” participated in the “Acto Político” to commemorate the FSP’s 15th anniversary where Lula spoke.</p>
13th 2007	San Salvador (January 12–16) “XIII Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo”	<p>“Declaración Final, XIII Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo”</p> <p>“participación de 596 delegados. Entre ellos, 219 representan 58 partidos y movimientos políticos, sociales e iglesias, procedentes de 33 países, así como 54 invitados de otras regiones del mundo”</p>
14th 2008	Montevideo, Uruguay (May 22–25) “XIV Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo”	<p>“Documento del XIV Encuentro del Foro de São Paulo, Montevideo, mayo-2008”</p>

Two years into the presidency of Hugo Chávez, in 2000, the “singular political process” in Venezuela was hailed in the final declaration of the IX FSP Encuentro in Managua⁴⁸ and Chávez himself would attend the Havana FSP Encuentro of 2001 as a head of state (Lula was also there, having already met Chávez earlier). Yet Chávez’s words in Caracas remind us that the ties that bind him to the FSP are not only ideological or strategic but personal. Indeed, this is precisely why Chávez chose to discuss a slight from 1996 that might otherwise have been a source of bitterness. As Chávez recalled with warmth, it was the former communist party guerilla Schafik who had “the delicacy, the firmness, the courage, the spirit to approach me . . . and he invited me to the table he had coordinated, and offered excuses for the debate that resulted from my surprise appearance in the Assembly.”⁴⁹

And these personal ties, built up one-on-one and in meetings like the FSP, are a deeper part of what tie the two presidents together. This is illustrated by an earlier Chávez speech to 15,000 people who gathered in the Gigantinho in Porto Alegre, Brazil on January 30, 2005 to hear him address the fifth WSF. The Venezuelan president ended his two-and-a-half hour Porto Alegre speech by noting that “there are phases and rhythms that don’t have to do only with the internal situation in each country, but with the international situation.” While acknowledging that some in his Brazilian audience might heckle, he ended with a declaration that, in being so human, was all that much more deeply political: “I love Lula. I appreciate him. Lula is a good man with a great heart. He is a brother and *compañero* and I leave him my embrace and my appreciation.”⁵⁰

CONVERGENCE AS ANTI-NEOLIBERAL PRAXIS: THE WORKERS’ PARTY, THE FORO DE SÃO PAULO, AND THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

While shaped by personal ties and trust, the political foundation that defines the contemporary politics and practice of the Latin American left was laid during a process of convergence over the last twenty years. The Forum of São Paulo was founded in a darkly pessimistic period for the left and its key role was to serve as a space of convergence marked by a pluralism of traditions, ideologies, forms of struggle, and styles of leadership. In its convocation and conduct, the FSP reflected the style of leftist organizing that characterized Lula, the PT, the Brazilian left, and its allied social movements. Addressing the 15th anniversary Encuentro in 2005, President Lula recalled 1990 “when we were few, discredited, and we talked a lot. . . In truth,” he went on, the FSP “taught us to act like *companheiros* [colleagues, mates], even in our diversity.” After all, those involved “did not think in the same manner (*jeito*), didn’t believe in the same prophecies, but they did believe that the Foro de São Paulo could be a path.” At the outset, “some parties didn’t wish to participate, because they thought we were a bunch of crazies (*malucos*)” and the meetings were anything but easy since “the divergences were often greater than the agreement but there was always a group that played mid field to contemporarize, to seek the right word.”⁵¹

TABLE 2

PARTY MEMBERS OF THE FORO DE SÃO PAULO IN 2001

Country	Partido Miembro	Total by Country
Argentina	Partido Comunista de Argentina	8
	Partido del Trabajo y del Pueblo	
	Partido Humanista	
	Partido Intransigente-FREPASO	
	Partido Obrero Revolucionario-Posadista	
	Partido Socialista Democrático	
	Partido Socialista Popular-FREPASO	
	Unión de Militantes por el Socialismo	
Brazil	Partido dos Trabalhadores	6
	Partido Comunista Brasileira	
	Partido Comunista do Brazil	
	Partido Democrático Trabalhista	
	Partido Popular Socialista	
	Partido Socialista Brasileira	
Chile	Partido Comunista de Chile	2
	Partido Socialista de Chile	
Colombia	Partido Comunista Colombiano	2
	Presentes por el Socialismo	
Cuba	Partido Comunista Cubano	1
Ecuador	Partido Socialista-Frente Amplio	2
	Partido Comunista Marxista-Leninista del Ecuador	
El Salvador	Frente Farabundo Marti de Liberación Nacional	1
Guatemala	Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca	1
Haiti	Organization du Peuple en Lutte	1
Mexico	Partido de la Revolución Democrática	2
	Partido del Trabajo	
Nicaragua	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional	1
Puerto Rico	Nuevo Movimiento Independentista Puertorriqueño	1

Peru	Partido Comunista del Perú-Patria Roja	1
Dominican Republic:	Fuerza de la Revolución	1
Uruguay	Asamblea Uruguay-FA Movimiento 26 de Marzo-FA Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupumaros-FA Movimiento de Participación Popular-FA Partido Comunista de Uruguay-FA Partido Socialista del Uruguay-FA Vertiente Artiguista-FA	8
Venezuela	Partido Comunista de Venezuela Patria para Todos	2

Source: “Partidos Miembros del Foro de São Paulo”
<http://web.archive.org/web/20010330200029/http://forosaopaulo.org/> (accessed 15 May 2008).

Across the *encuentros*, the central opponent was invariably defined as neoliberalism and, to a somewhat lesser degree, US imperialism. In the 2007 words of another founder, the FSP encompassed “the entire ideological spectrum of the left. With an anti-imperialist and anti-neoliberal definition, the FSP represents a space where the different member organizations can meet each other, a space for debate, and a mechanism for communication, coordinating, and solidarity.”⁵² The founding of the FSP came a year after Lula’s first presidential campaign in 1989, which he lost by only six percent of the national vote. At the time, Brazil had seen the rise of mass anti-systemic social movements, a radical and militant grassroots-oriented “New Unionism,” and a party whose radicalism placed itself outside of the boundaries of even a refounded Brazilian democracy (e.g., the refusal to vote for Tancredo Neves in indirect elections in 1985; the refusal to sign the democratic constitution of 1988). In many ways, the PT in 1990 represented the ideal case to address the relationship between popular insurgencies, social movements, and a radical leftist political party pledged to socialism. Based on a “logic of difference” in the words of Mimi Keck, the PT was a movement-uneasily-turned-party that exemplified the tension between rejection and participation that bothered Marcelo Cavarozzi in 1993 while the PT’s documents took a militantly leftist stance, except for its rejection of the Soviet model (though sympathetic to Cuba and Sandinista Nicaragua).⁵³

TABLE 3

**PARTIES BELONGING TO THE LEADERSHIP BODY OF THE
FORO DE SÃO PAULO, 1991/2001**

Country	Party on the Grupo de Trabajo	1991	2001
Argentina		No	No
Brazil	Partido dos Trabalhadores	YES	YES
Chile		No	
Colombia		No	
	Partido Comunista Colombiano		YES
	Presentes por el Socialismo		YES
Cuba	Partido Comunista Cubano	YES	YES
Ecuador		No	No
El Salvador:	Frente Farabundo Marti de Liberación Nacional	YES	YES
Guatemala:	Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca	No	YES
Haiti		YES	
	Movimiento Lavalas de Haiti (1991)		YES
	Organization du Peuple en Lutte (2001)		
Mexico	Partido de la Revolución Democrática	YES	YES
Nicaragua	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional	YES	YES
Puerto Rico		No	
	Nuevo Movimiento Independentista Puertorriqueño		YES
Peru	Izquierda Unida	YES	No
Dominican Republic		No	No
Uruguay	Frente Amplio	YES	YES
Venezuela		No	No

Source: Foro de São Paulo, “Declaración de México. II Encuentro de Los Movimientos y Partidos Políticos del Foro de São Paulo,” (Mexico City, June 12–15, 1991); “Partidos Miembros del Foro de São Paulo (2001)” <http://web.archive.org/web/20010330200029/http://forosaopaulo.org/> (accessed May 15, 2008).

As the first election after a twenty-one year military dictatorship, the 1989 campaign was a tense and polarizing one. It was in this charged context, at the most radical moment in the PT's history, that Lula was asked on a radio interview how he intended to save Brazil from "savage capitalism" and take it towards socialism. He replied: "I never liked the nomenclature 'savage capitalism.' I always thought such savage capitalism doesn't exist, I know of a capitalism that bites and that doesn't bite, that which is bad and that which is good. I think that there has been a retrograde mentality on the part of Brazilian businessmen, the government, and the dominant class. As I've said, when it comes to earning money, Brazilian businessmen are as modern as the Europeans but, when it comes to paying wages, they are backwards like the English of a century ago. So what I think is that we need a new dynamic, not just economic but cultural, so that those people begin to understand that it is essential to distribute income." Having used his words to deflect impressions of radicalism, Lula went on to offer an accurate preview of the objectives of his future presidential administration—thirteen years before its inauguration: "I would say that we are elaborating a program of government that will prioritize some things in the social camp. I would not say that we're going to make socialism."⁵⁴

My point is not that Lula was a social democrat before his time nor is it to repeat my earlier criticism of the scholarly utilization of stylized European categories that obscure the actual complexity of any given left. Rather, those who attempt to baptize Lula and the PT in their "social democratic" faith (however defined) fail to understand the specificities of the Brazilian as well as Latin American context. As French and Fortes observed in 2005, "the PT was a pluralistic party that included Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries, practitioners of liberation theology and New Deal-style social reformers," as well as social democrats and even liberals. It eschewed ideological definitions, idealized a bottom-up participatory politics, and was constructed as "a point of convergence characterized by an absence of doctrinal rigidity and a high social density."⁵⁵

The PT was founded on an event, a personality, and an image and was characterized, by one Marxist *petista* (party member or supporter) in 1987, as a "heterogeneous organization" with a "hybrid outlook" based on a "remarkable—and

probably unstable—ideological identity.” What “distinguished the PT from the outset was a unique compound of two outlooks that would normally be regarded as incompatible”: a “potentially sectarian workerism” and what Eder Sader called “an uncritically received liberalism.”⁵⁶ The ability to maintain this heterodox confluence of forces, tendencies, and ideologies depended upon the forging of bonds of group-belonging, the crafting of a shared story, and a partisan *petista* identity if not project. Lines needed to be drawn, but the PT’s strengths lay in its leader (which was usually ignored out of leftist orthodoxy), and the open-ended terrain of the PT functioned best as a space of convergence that tolerated difference and even formally constituted internal factions. The presiding inspiration was well put in Lula’s remarks to the VI Encuentro of the FSP in 1996: “We must place much less importance on our ideological differences and much greater emphasis on united action. We must abandon the sectarian spirit that so often has dominated and divided us. That means ending the traditional arrogance that has characterized the left.”⁵⁷

In the 1990s, the PT stood with those sectors of Latin American politics that consistently criticized the neoliberal policies of the center-right government led by FHC. Yet what was gained in strategic political terms by the left’s deployment and popularization of the term neoliberalism? If opposition to neoliberalism rather than capitalism marks the fundamental boundary of the contemporary left, as I would argue, the terminology could be said to obscure the essential capitalist and imperialist enemy if viewed in orthodox Marxist terms. Yet the emphasis on neoliberalism is especially appropriate to Latin America, where autonomous or semi-autonomous national development (be it capitalist or socialist) has long been a shared goal across the political spectrum. While anti-capitalism has had its place in the discourse of the region’s twentieth-century left, the practical emphasis has more often been on the incapacity of capitalism to achieve the sought-for autonomous national development, while the bourgeoisie was long criticized for failing to spark a bourgeois democratic revolution or deliver prosperity to the masses or democracy to the polity.

As first popularized in Latin America, neoliberalism brilliantly delineated a vague and shifting opposing camp that today frustrates those who favor the political forces associated with the Washington Consensus of 1989. The *Economist* bureau chief in São

Paulo in the late 1990s, for example, was especially irritated by the slipperiness of the term. In his 2007 book, Reid recognizes that the Washington Consensus is now “indeed an irrevocably damaged brand.” Yet a frustrated Reid rightly notes that its “central tenets—of macroeconomic stability and open, market economies—have [now] become an enduring part of the scenery in many countries in the region. That this is not more widely perceived,” or convertible into political capital, “owes much to the baleful influence of a meaningless term: ‘neoliberalism.’” While recognizing neoliberalism’s ties to the discredited Augusto Pinochet and Carlos Menem, Reid seeks to rescue its policies from the obloquy to which neoliberalism is currently subjected: “‘neoliberalism’ is widely used by its critics either simply to describe an open capitalist economy, or as a term of abuse.” While citing the Chilean Concertación as the best positive example, Reid dubs Lula “a convert to this consensus” although, he adds, “in some way an ambivalent one.”⁵⁸ In offering the same caveat as Castañeda, Reid thus confirms that the neoliberal camp is well aware that Lula’s leftism falls short of being fully assimilable.

With the passage of time, the PT and the Brazilian left creatively developed the language and practice of anti-neoliberalism so that they were prepared, by the dawn of the new millennium, to take it to the global level.⁵⁹ The World Social Forum was the product of dialogue between Brazilian social movements, mostly but not entirely hegemonized by the PT, and the talented French group around the leftist *Le Monde Diplomatique*.⁶⁰ In its basic principles, the WSF charter defines a very broad space of convergence (my term) that disregards past ideological disputes or current rivalries within the left. The goal is a space in which a vast array of forces, projects, and currents can come together around a lowest common minimum. Indeed, the first point of the 2001 charter of the non-party WSF was to bring together “groups and movements of civil society that are *opposed to neoliberalism* and to *domination of the world by capital* and *any form of imperialism*, and [that] are committed to building a *planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among humankind and between it and the earth*” (emphasis added).⁶¹

The WSF is not necessarily defined—nor is the contemporary Latin American left—by opposition to capitalism per se but to *neoliberalism*. It is not defined by opposition to all capital but to “domination by capital,” and, while unequivocally opposed

to “*any form of imperialism,*” it does not assert that all capitalist countries are *necessarily* imperialist. As a result, over the years the WSF process has come to encompass countless celebrities, French cabinet ministers, Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz (formerly of the World Bank), and the international financial speculator George Soros. In ideological terms, it attracted anarchists, socialists, communists, social democrats, and liberals, not to mention the unaffiliated and a vast array of labor, environmental, women’s, and indigenous groups. Under such circumstances, those obsessed with defining the left in terms of “revolution” or “social democracy” are caught up in a mid-twentieth-century past whose relevance is fading in the face of today’s challenges.⁶²

COMPARING THE MEN AND THE WORDS: CHÁVEZ AND LULA’S DISTINCTIVE STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

Chávez’s refusal to label Lula a neoliberal does not mean that the Venezuelan president likes Lula’s policies. Nor does it indicate his acceptance of the model of politics implied by the new global thinking on the left represented by the WSF. In hosting the WSF, Chávez clearly accords status and legitimacy to this Brazilian-identified global convergence, but his speech also illustrates the difference between his politics and those of Lula, the PT, and the largest current within the WSF. The Venezuelan president not only positions himself to the militant Marxist left of the WSF but explicitly criticizes the WSF’s self-definition as a process rather than an organization: as “an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, [and the] free exchange of experiences.”⁶³ Rather than constituting the WSF as a new leftist international, the forum aspires to serve as a pluralistic space of encounter by civil society, a movement of movements, with stress on horizontality and autonomy, its particular strengths.⁶⁴

While affirming his government’s respect—in “an almost sacred way”—for “the autonomy of the social movements” represented in Caracas, the Venezuelan president showed little patience for rules that preclude formal WSF manifestos and plans of action. Making abundant use of military metaphors (offensives, victories, battles, retreats), Chávez insisted on the need for “the perfect strategy for the coming years. . . We have to link up all our causes, [we need] unity, unity, unity.” The WSF, he warned, runs the risk

of becoming simply a “folkloric tourist encounter” unless it can “agree to a united work plan, a united universal plan of action” for the upcoming battles so “vital for the future of the world.” Otherwise, “we would just be wasting our time.” While mentioning respect for diversity and autonomy once, the word *unity* appears a dozen times in this section of Chávez’s remarks. After doing so, he immediately offers a none-too-believable reassurance: “*no one is planning to impose anything on anyone, only coordination, unity*” (i.e., an imposition; emphasis added). A brief reference to vital pending battles then ends abruptly with “Look, Karl Marx coined the phrase: ‘Socialism or death.’”⁶⁵

Chávez is clearly critical of what he takes to be the WSF’s diffuseness and excessively cautious politics; indeed he is more openly critical of the WSF than of Lula himself. And these remarks demonstrate why his presence at the WSF sparked controversy, as did Lula’s second appearance in 2005 but for different reasons. Although welcome in a personal capacity under the charter, both men are elected heads of state as well as charismatic leaders whose rise is based upon a relationship—constituted through identification, emotion, and imagination—with a mass base of tens of millions. Both are men of passion as well as reason, with anger being more starkly identifiable in Chávez while Lula is known for his smiles, humor, and moments of empathy that call forth his tears. While their discursive repertoire and use of metaphor and symbolism differ to a degree, the greatest difference is to be found in how they position themselves in relationship to their listeners. While Lula touches a “deeply messianic nerve of Brazilian popular imagination,” the former metalworker does so as one of the subaltern who had “succeeded through his experience of the common” and whose individual success is presented as “expressly collective.”⁶⁶

As a former military man from a lower-middle-class family of teachers, Chávez, by contrast, rose to middling success within a core institution of the state as a person of rank and command. Unlike Lula, his persona was not constructed through a sequence of combative mass struggles in dialogue with 125,000 followers. Rather, his political activism originated in a clandestine politics of small groups and his rise from obscurity came as a revolutionary conspirator and the leader of a failed 1992 military coup d’etat against an elected government. The process of identification and the forging of imagined relations with Chávez began with his famous assumption of personal responsibility, on

national television, for the failure of his first coup attempt in 1992.⁶⁷ After a second failure, Chávez discovered his true talent: as a politician with a way with words, who would rise to power through electoral means. Not surprisingly, Chávez has a very different relationship to the national imaginary, and the structure of feeling surrounding his success is quite different than in Lula's case where "one of us" has succeeded.

While Chávez initially aspired to a military seizure of power, the twists of history led him to revolutionize his country through successive elections in a tumultuous sequence of struggles, near defeats, and triumphs as president. Yet Chávez's "most potent weapon" noted Venezuelan literary critic Yolanda Salas in a 2004 interview, was "his use of language. He is someone who is skilled at wielding discourse and fascinating the [deprived and excluded] masses. . . I call him the great storyteller of Venezuelan politics. He's always got a great narrative, a great story, something great to say, something that seduces. . . And if anyone knows the popular imaginary, it's Chávez" who has stolen it "from us, because he uses it, he controls it, he manipulates it."⁶⁸

In her anguish, Professor Salas showed a critical self-awareness of the punctured illusions that had too long characterized the Venezuelan intelligentsia. Chavismo laid bare the exclusions that underlay the "myth of democracy" and our fantasies that we lived in a country that had had attained "an advanced stage of development, that we were cosmopolitans." Chavismo revealed another Venezuela whose collective consciousness was characterized by "certain profound traditional images. Just when we thought we were no longer a rural country, Chávez comes along and capitalizes on a popular symbology which is rural in origin." Those on the top, she concluded, had missed those Venezuelans and hadn't seen the members of the popular classes "as real human beings, hadn't recognized them"; even the intellectual's treasured discourse about "civil society" didn't reach them.⁶⁹

The emerging Chavista discourse called for an end to the "pillaging, appropriation and extermination" of the "*pueblo-pobreza*" [poor common people], which originated with the conquest but continues to this day under a squalid, corrupt oligarchy backed by foreign exploiters.⁷⁰ The dialogue between Chávez and subaltern representations of inequality analyzed by Reygadas are striking. These representations, he observed, "synthesize complex social processes into simple dramatic images with emotional and

ethical elements” through resorting “to the archives of historical memory to recuperate easily identifiable images: the abuse of colonial powers, the mistreatment of indigenous populations, black slavery. On this basis. . . contemporary grievances” are interpreted through anachronistic images “of another era with little correspondence to the present. . . These temporal imbalances have symbolic and political efficacy: they settle accounts with the ghosts of the past and. . . should not be interpreted as [signs of] immobility or immutability” but rather as products of “a continuous reconstruction that reclaims many elements of previous configurations, but is also open to contingency and change.”⁷¹

In this world of subaltern representations, Reygadas emphasizes, “the intentional aspects of inequality are generally underscored,” whether through actions or inactions, and all guilt is attributed to the powerful. Material, moral, and psychological suffering is not represented as the result of the disembodied processes and abstractions (market failures, globalization, capitalism) favored by intellectuals of all political outlooks. And the government and its leaders are considered the most responsible for poverty and suffering, with the expectation that they will “be the chief component in its resolution”⁷² and will do so in a direct, immediate, and visible way. It is here that we arrive at the grandiose and direct identification between leader and nation, between leader and *pueblo-pobreza*, between *comandante* [commander] and follower in Chavismo.⁷³ But for this to occur requires concrete results not mere words (whose power can easily be overestimated as with notions of manipulation and “demagoguery” that were so often used by a conservative Latin American liberalism to disparage populism).

In a sense, the role of pedagogue that thrilled Chávez early in his military career has been scaled up in his presidency, but he is still on center stage talking down to often adoring audiences. In a July 1977 letter to his parents, the young Chávez described giving a patriotic lecture to an audience of 500 high school students in the name of the nation. “When I was standing on the stage before beginning, the school choir sang the National Anthem. I felt a great emotion, I felt the blood surge through my veins, and my spirit burned so much, and I gave one of the my best presentations. . . At the end, the students couldn’t stop applauding . . . [and] it seemed to me that I was carried away to a future time . . . [and] that it might be that I would achieve what I desired and become happy.”⁷⁴

Two years earlier, Lula had entered the leadership of the metalworkers union as an apparent patsy for its former president. Having rarely spoken publicly, Lula prepared to speak to the union's members, nervously fingering something written for him, but ended up not saying a word because others more comfortable with words had already spoken. For Lula, as with the poor and subaltern, there first had to be a fight to gain voice in a society characterized by stigmatizing hierarchies and despotic rule both politically and in the factory. Putting aside the individual Lula, it is vital to understand how the world looked at mid-century to these workers, largely rural migrants like Lula. To use Brazilian parlance, the common people (*povo*) had few illusions about the power realities they faced, although they had an acute awareness of their own *miseria* (misery), combined with a deeply engrained sense of being unjustly treated (*injustiçado*) at the hands of the more powerful. Manifest discontent coexisted with high levels of dissimulation within a mass consciousness permeated by a sense that the world was stacked against the poor, the weak, the colored, and the uneducated.

Another defining feature of the consciousness of these working folk was their perception of themselves as small and weak; hence, the cultivation of guile and cunning as their weapon of choice vis-à-vis the powerful. *Malícia* or *astúcia* (cunning) was admired in those who wished to be leaders, as with Lula who proved a master of being everything to everyone. To make these possibilities real required a leader capable of maneuvering within existing power relations to take advantage of small rifts among the super-ordinate, without being reduced to them. Since defiance of superiors was immediately punishable, to be a leader required the ability to relate to and manipulate those antagonistic to your interests and desires—all the more so if committed to a transformative or struggle-oriented practice. At the same time, the price of such maneuvers was the suspicion of the led so it was essential that they believe in your integrity, commitment, and loyalty. Here, I return to my proposed formula that leadership is a relationship and politics is an *embodied work that is done with words*; hence, the fundamental importance for mobilization of a leader, in this case one of your own, who you come to judge as reliably worthy of *depositing your faith as part of a pact of reciprocity*.⁷⁵

The central thrust of my overarching argument about the nature of politics is that leadership, understood as process and relationship (two-way even if asymmetrical), is the causal link between mass consciousness and mobilization. As in all mass political phenomena, Lula's practice of leadership shares much with that of Hugo Chávez. The key differences between the two are a.) Lula's strategy of drawing people into a space of convergence across difference, which I argue is a key contribution to a twenty-first-century left; b.) Lula's central focus on organizing the popular sectors on a more enduring and autonomous basis; and c.) Chávez's preference, in attracting diversity into a following around him, to act as their "representative," their epitome—while conducting a relation between leader and led on a more top-down basis, characterized by individualism and a resort to "unity" (command) more than convergence (persuasion).

CONCLUSION

My forthcoming book, "Lula's Politics of Cunning: From Trade Unionism to the Presidency," will explore how the mass movements of the 1970s came into being in symbiosis with Lula, who became a larger-than-life personality whose trajectory both epitomized and transformed the movement's participants. Brazil's Lula, in other words, was born by accompanying workers of the suburban industrial region known as ABC through a particular sequence of events. During the extraordinary strikes that occurred annually between 1978 and 1980, Lula drew strength from the workers, and helped to forge a new collective identity that took the "leader" and the "led" to places that they had never dreamed or anticipated. Coming out of this localized process, the same skills and talents—backed up by the symbolic capital and moral authority of those events—was then applied by Lula to building more ambitious and coherent instruments for carrying out popular struggle (Lula is very much a disciplined organization man, unlike Chávez). Over the same period, Lula has honed his ability to speak directly and from the heart to tens of millions of voters and, with time, to win over tens of millions of others, as his appeal broadened to include both those above and below him on his path to the presidency.

Keeping an eye on society as much if not more than the polity, my interpretive political biography of Lula will argue for a counter-definition of politics as embodied

work that is done, with words, by individuals in their relation with others. In valorizing the social, cultural, and discursive, such an anthropological approach is used to capture the subaltern origin of Lula's distinctive style of political leadership from trade unionism to the presidency. Across the last three decades, Lula has practiced *a transformative politics of cunning* characterized by *an additive politics*, executed through the *creation of spaces of convergence* across difference, and carried out through *an embodied work that is done with words*. Most importantly, this notion of **convergence** has much to contribute as we define the goals for a twenty-first century left that seeks to build a post-neoliberal world: to create spaces of convergence across difference in pursuit of common values and an unknown post-neoliberal, *not post-liberal*, future.

ENDNOTES

¹ Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*, 5–6.

² Chávez, “Act for the People’s Anti-Imperialist Struggle; Chávez, “Rise up against the Empire.”

³ Castañeda, *Utopia Unarmed*. The book is contextualized in French, “The Latin American Labor Studies Boom,” 289, and insightfully reviewed by Jimenez, “A Sense of Loss,” 203–05. For an assessment of the Latin American left in 1993, see Carr and Ellner, *The Latin American Left*.

⁴ Castañeda, “Latin America’s Left Turn,” 28–29. As coeditor of a 2008 edited collection entitled *Leftovers: Tales of the Latin American Left*, Castañeda emphatically defends “the adequacy of a dichotomous classification for the Latin American left,” whatever the labels (Castañeda and Morales, *Leftovers*, 10).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 34; for Castañeda on populism: *Utopia*, 39–40, 43–45.

⁶ Castañeda, “Left Turn,” 30–31, 38. For a fair minded but critical discussion of Castañeda’s proposed strategy for the left, see Ellner, “Leftist Goals.”

⁷ Castañeda, “Left Turn,” 35.

⁸ Castañeda, “Left Turn,” 35. Inspired by an anti-neoliberal politics, one recent book has stretched the “social democratic” label to include contemporary parties that reject it on ideological grounds; e.g., Sandbrook, Edelman, Heller, and Teichman, *Social Democracy in the Global Periphery*. This interesting comparative study of Chile, Costa Rica, India, and Mauritius include quite distinct political formations under the social democratic rubric, including a Marxist-Leninist Communist party in Kerela, India. See my forthcoming review in *Labor: Studies in Working Class History of the Americas*.

⁹ Castañeda, “Left Turn,” 42, 36–37. For a fascinating personal account of the relationship between Fidel and Lula since their first meeting in 1980, see the recollections in four parts by Fidel Castro, “Lula.”

¹⁰ Castañeda, “Left Turn,” 37.

¹¹ Roberts, “Repoliticizing Latin America,” 4–5.

¹² Those writing about Latin America routinely use “social democratic” as if it were a known and unchanging category, when this very issue has been the subject of immense debate within Western Europe since the 1980s: Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*; Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy*; Eley, *Forging Democracy*.

¹³ Roberts, “Repoliticizing Latin America,” 4–5.

¹⁴ Zedillo, “Lula,” 55.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Cameron, Beasley-Murray, Hershberg, “Left Turns.”

¹⁷ Panizza, “The Social Democratization of the Latin American Left,” 95. As this exegesis of Panizza’s “social democratization” article suggests, the author is well aware of the weaknesses of his argument in favor of “social democracy.” Indeed, Panizza published a different article—also in 2005—in which drops the “social democratic” label in favor of the more neutral “left-of-center political parties” (Panizza, “Unarmed Utopia Revisited”; see the subsequent criticism from the left by Motta, “Utopias Re-Imagined,” and his reply: Panizza, “Parties, Democracy and Grounded Utopias.”

¹⁸ Panizza, “Social,” 95, 101.

¹⁹ Panizza, “Social,” 97, 98, 101. Like Panizza, Patricio Navia defines the Chilean Socialist Party as neoliberal while defending its right to be considered leftist. “Although the Chilean Socialist Party has championed and defended economic policies that could be easily associated with moderate conservative parties elsewhere in Latin American, it would be unfair to define the PS in Chile as a non-socialist party” as it forges “ahead on the path of neo-liberalism with a human face that is the trademark of the Concertación” (Navia, “The Successful Chilean Left,” 140, 129). Panizza’s other social democratic case, the Uruguayan Frente Amplio, is discussed in an excellent and empirically rich recent article by three scholars who argue that “it is problematic to frame the Frente Amplio as either a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ left” since they convincingly demonstrate the “co-existence of different lefts . . . within the Frente’s government.” On the larger question, Altman, Castiglioni, and Luna conclude that “more than two types of leftist governments co-exist today in Latin America” (Altman, Castiglioni, and Luna, “Uruguay,” 151, 170).

²⁰ Panizza, “Social,” 100–1. Cameron et al., “Left Turns,” discusses the “refoundationalism” of many current Latin American leftist governments.

²¹ Reid, *Forgotten Continent*, xiv, 13, 12, 79–80.

²² Torre, “The Resurgence of Radical Populism in Latin America,” 385.

²³ Mackinnon and Petrone, eds., *Populismo y Neopopulismo en America Latina*.

²⁴ Cammack, “Cardoso’s Political Project in Brazil,” 241.

²⁵ Vellinga, “The Internationalization of Politics and Local Response,” 3; Touraine, “Latin America,” 297.

²⁶ Cardoso, “The Challenges of Social Democracy in Latin America,” 274–5.

²⁷ Vellinga, “Internationalization,” 4, 12; Touraine, “Latin America,” 304.

²⁸ Cardoso, “Challenges,” 284–6, 289.

²⁹ Cardoso, “Challenges,” 284–5.

- ³⁰ Cavarozzi, "The Left in South America," 145–5.
- ³¹ The end of the Vargas era was the theme of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's farewell address to the Brazilian Senate on December 14, 1994. See Cardoso, *Charting a New Course*, 214–27.
- ³² French, "The Laboring and Middle-Class Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean," 304, 306.
- ³³ Touraine, "Latin America," 303
- ³⁴ Vellinga, "Internationalization," 13.
- ³⁵ Reid, *Forgotten*, 12.
- ³⁶ Centeno and Lopez-Alves, *The Other Mirror*, 5–6.
- ³⁷ Reid, *Forgotten*, 79–80.
- ³⁸ Touraine, "Latin America," 304.
- ³⁹ Castañeda, *Utopia*, 43, 39–40, 44, 42.
- ⁴⁰ Torre, "Resurgence," 392.
- ⁴¹ Reygadas, "Imagined Inequalities," 504.
- ⁴² Chávez, "Act."
- ⁴³ Castañeda, "Left Turn," 38.
- ⁴⁴ The genealogy claimed in Chávez's 2006 speech raises yet another uncomfortable question that is not addressed by the currently favored dichotomy: should Chávez perhaps now be classified as a "radical socialist," a Third World fighter for "national liberation," or perhaps a Castroite?
- ⁴⁵ Chávez, "Act."
- ⁴⁶ See Lula's adept handling of this challenge in a 24 February 2006 interview: Silva, "The Working Man's Statesman Gives a Rare Interview to the Economist."
- ⁴⁷ Chávez, "Act."
- ⁴⁸ Foro de São Paulo, "Declaración De Niquinohomo."
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ Chávez, "Foro Social Mundial."
- ⁵¹ Silva, "Discurso Do Presidente Da República," 2, 4–5.
- ⁵² Regalado, *Latin America at the Crossroads*, 249. The author is a Cuban Communist Party Central Committee member.
- ⁵³ Keck, *The Workers Party and Democratization in Brazil*; Cavarozzi, "Left."
- ⁵⁴ Nêumanne, *Atrás do Palanque*.
- ⁵⁵ French and Fortes, "Another World Is Possible," 14, 18.
- ⁵⁶ Sader, "The Workers Party in Brazil," 126, 100, 97–8.

⁵⁷ “XIII Foro De São Paulo.”

⁵⁸ Reid, *Forgotten*, 10–22.

⁵⁹ After the first WSF in Porto Alegre in 2001, the “Final Declaration” of the 10th Foro de São Paulo in Havana that same year described the WSF as “an open and plural space for coordination of political initiatives of the progressive and left forces of our America.” At this early point, organizers had clearly not imagined the global reach and impact that the WSF would so quickly achieve worldwide (“Foro de São Paulo, Declaración Final”).

⁶⁰ On the origin of the WSF, see the book by one of its Brazilian founders: Leite and Gil, *World Social Forum*.

⁶¹ WSF, “Revised World Social Forum Charter of Principles,” 70.

⁶² For a contemporary Cuban Communist perspective that emphasizes revolution and armed struggle, see Regalado, *Latin America*, 222, 232. This is part of a wider leftist debate in and about Latin America that is discussed in detail in Ellner, “Leftist Goals.”

⁶³ WSF, “Revised,” 70.

⁶⁴ The Portuguese legal anthropologist of Brazil Boaventura de Sousa Santos, a leader of the WSF, has provided a thorough discussion of these evolving debates in his stimulating book, *The Rise of the Global Left*.

⁶⁵ Chávez, “Act.”

⁶⁶ Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*, 5–6.

⁶⁷ See Naim’s account of the impact of “unfortunately, for now” in Hawkins, “Populism in Venezuela,” 1148.

⁶⁸ Rivas Rojas and Salas, “On Chavismo,” 328. Like Salas, Fernando Coronil has similarly noted the importance of Chávez’s “prolific verbal production—as far as I know, he speaks publicly more than any national leader ever anywhere.” His “exuberant proliferation” of words “conjure up a world of their own,” he suggests, although he adds that Chávez’s words, “to his credit,” are “also acts and guide actions” through which he has “brought the *pueblo* to center stage again” in Venezuela (Coronil, “Chávez’s Venezuela,” 3).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 328–9.

⁷⁰ Hawkins, “Populism,” 1147.

⁷¹ Reygadas, “Imagined,” 502–04.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Hawkins, “Populism,” 1154.

⁷⁴ Zago, *La Rebelión de Los Ángeles*, Caracas: Fuentes Editores, 1992, 25; as cited and translated in Hawkins, “Populism,” 1147.

⁷⁵ I offer a brief example of how this relationship to Lula, be it real or imagined, is linked to his words in an extended review of the excellent 2005 documentary *Lula’s Brazil: The Management of Hope*, directed by Gonzalo Arijón: French, “Review of ‘Lula’s Brazil,’” 134–36.

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