

# ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

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INTERNATIONAL STUDIES 610

SENIOR PROJECT

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**The Theory of Populism - A case study of Cardenas (1934-1940) and Peron  
(1946-1955)**

**Department of International Studies**

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**The Theory of Populism - A case study of Cardenas (1934-1940) and Peron  
(1946-1955)**

Submitted to the Department of International Studies of Allegheny College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

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*I hereby recognize and pledge to fulfill my responsibilities as defined in the Honor Code and to maintain the integrity of both myself and the College community as a whole.*

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## **Abstract**

## **Introducción**

En esta Tesis estudie el populismo como una ideología política dentro del contexto de Latinoamérica. Más allá, mi objetivo es analizar las principales variables que definen el populismo y examinar cómo se manifestaron en la región a través de dos estudios que a primera vista se ven extremadamente similares. Sin embargo, son muy diferentes una vez que son estudiados a fondo. En primer lugar, voy a estudiar el caso de Lázaro Cárdenas en México (1934,1940) y luego analizaré el caso de Juan Perón en Argentina (1946-1955). Además, quiero investigar el estado socio-político en el que se encontraban ambas naciones cuando Cárdenas y Perón llegaron al poder respectivamente. Asimismo, examinaré a ambos líderes como líderes de facto de movimientos y cómo es que cada uno empleó el populismo o las tácticas políticas asociadas al populismo para llegar o mantenerse en el poder. Finalmente, evaluaré los legados dejados por Perón y Cárdenas, examinando cómo son percibidos en la literatura contemporánea y sus impactos duraderos en sus respectivos países.

El populismo, según la literatura académica, se caracteriza por su búsqueda de unir a la gente en torno a un líder carismático, a menudo elevado a un estatus casi divino o de dios. Esta ideología no solo busca la unión emocional hacia el líder, sino que también pretende institucionalizar a las masas y crear una unión entre la clase baja y los trabajadores. Francis Fukuyama aborda este tema al referirse a la noción de "la gente", destacando la importancia de la movilización popular en el populismo. Por otro lado, Cas Mudde ofrece una descripción más específica al vincular el populismo con el nacionalismo y el autoritarismo, utilizando ambas ideologías para mantenerse en el poder. Además, Cas Mudde también menciona que según sus estudios, el populismo es una estrategia política, a diferencia de la idea de Fukuyama, que lo

caracteriza como una forma de liderazgo o una forma en la que los líderes simplemente logran ser adorados por sus seguidores. En este sentido, el populismo, según Mudde, busca capitalizar en las divisiones sociales y políticas para consolidar el poder. Además, autores como Urbanti señalan la utilización del liberalismo como una idea sociopolítica central en el discurso populista. Por su parte, Musse destaca la necesidad de los líderes populistas de cultivar un apoyo casi sectario, similar a un culto, entre sus seguidores, lo que refuerza su carácter carismático y mesiánico. Cabe recalcar que la ideología del populismo también suele crecer con éxito en lugares con polarización o una vez que el líder logra generar polarización. Finalmente, se destaca la tendencia de los populistas a utilizar los medios de comunicación, incluyendo las noticias y el internet, como herramientas para silenciar a sus oponentes políticos y difundir su mensaje de manera efectiva.

En el capítulo uno de la tesis habló sobre el populismo como estilo político y de liderazgo. En este capítulo contextualiza el populismo en Latinoamérica y habla sobre la historia del mismo. Más allá, habla sobre cómo es que el populismo se movió de Estados Unidos a Latinoamérica y cómo es que las figuras populistas lograron llegar al poder. En este capítulo se discute la teoría del populismo y cómo es que la literatura sobre el tema ha cambiado. En el capítulo dos discutí el caso de Cardenas y como es que el populismo se presentó en Mexico durante su tiempo en el poder. Además, habla sobre los factores económicos, políticos y sociales que ayudaron a Cardenas a alcanzar el poder. En este capítulo, también examine los eventos y políticas más relevantes que dieron forma al cardenismo. Además, analice el legado de Lázaro Cárdenas y cómo impactó en la cultura y el sistema político mexicano. Más allá, analice como es que el cardenismo se conecta al populismo, ya sea por las reformas y políticas, sociales y económicas o por las leyes que incluso cardenas. Por otro lado, estudie el legado de Cardenas y

como es que es visto por México y la literatura hoy en día. En el capítulo tres hice un estudio similar sobre Peron. Primero que nada vi la historia de Argentina, y contextualizo el Peronismo. Más allá, vi como es que este se conectaba al Populismo y cómo es que la ideología era diferente al mismo. Por otro lado, analiza cómo es que Perón impactó la sociedad de Argentina y en que sentido su caso fue único en Latinoamérica. Finalmente, el Capítulo 4 sirve como punto culminante de este estudio, ofreciendo un análisis comparativo del peronismo y el cardenismo. Adentrándose en los caminos divergentes que tomaron a Perón y a Cárdenas al poder. Más allá, este capítulo explora cómo cada líder retrató respectivamente el populismo, como es que su tiempo en el poder es similar, pero mucho más relevantemente, en que se diferencian y cómo es que el populismo se mostró de forma tan diferente en dos regiones del mismo continente. Además, quiero ver cómo son diferentes sus legados.

### **Razón por elegir el tema**

Considero que mi estudio es importante ya que el tema de la política y los movimientos políticos es sumamente importante y no es estudiado ni discutido lo suficiente. Más allá, la ideología del populismo se ha convertido en una de las más populares en la región y en el mundo en los últimos 20 años. Con el crecimiento en la globalización y en la popularidad del internet el populismo ha crecido en popularidad ya que las noticias y cualquier sistema o cuenta en línea que sea utilizada para crear contenido puede ser utilizada para pasar información. La cual en el caso de los populistas muchas veces es falsa. Es sumamente importante entender cómo es que los políticos utilizan la psicología y diferentes estrategias políticas para generar ideas populares en las masas políticas. Considero que mi estudio también es importante ya que mis estudios muestran la diferencia entre un líder que busco ser figura central y ser populista en muchos sentidos (Perón) y el caso de un líder político el cual fue forzado a ser el lider de un movimiento

del cual no necesariamente quería formar parte, sino que las variables lo forzaron a ser líder en un momento clave en la nación. Finalmente, el populismo puede socavar el estado de derecho y los derechos humanos al promover políticas autoritarias y restricciones a la libertad de prensa y la libertad de expresión.

El populismo radica en su impacto en la estabilidad política y social de los países, así como en la calidad de la democracia. A medida que el populismo gana terreno en diferentes partes del mundo, se observan efectos significativos en la polarización política, la erosión de las instituciones democráticas y la ruptura del consenso social. El surgimiento de líderes populistas ha generado tensiones políticas y sociales, las cuales han generado polarización y conflictos a nivel nacional en diversos países, como Estados Unidos con Donald Trump. Por otro lado, el populismo históricamente es sumamente relevante ya que como ideología ha estado presente por casi 150 años, lo cual la hace una de las ideologías más viejas y al mismo tiempo populares entre figuras políticas ya que ha generado victorias en muchas ocasiones y se esparce con facilidad. Ya lo mencioné antes pero con la globalización y el internet hace que esta característica del populismo, que se esparce con solo generar información, esto se hace cada vez más fácil mientras avanza la globalización y mientras más fácil es esparcir información.

Desde que llegué a Allegheny estaba seguro que quería trabajar con algún tema que tuviera algo que ver con el populismo y su historia. Cuando estudié en Alemania hace 7 u 8 años y Trump fue elegido como presidente de Estados Unidos, me interese mucho en la política y como es que ciertas figuras políticas llegan al poder aunque parece ser imposible, o aunque lleguen con ideas tan radicales que para la gente normal parezcan fuera de lo realista que ganen. Sin embargo, figuras así ganan, y lo han hecho a lo largo de la historia. Originalmente quería hacer un estudio sobre el populismo en Europa y como es que este movimiento empezó en el

continente. Finalmente, una vez que me centré en el estudio de latinoamerica decidí que tenía que estudiar con algún caso en esta región. Soy Mexicano, entonces uno de los casos de estudio tenía que ser ahí y el otro decidí que fuera Peron ya que a lo largo de los últimos tres años y medio fue el personaje político en Latinoamérica que más me ha llamado la atención.

### **Resultados y descubrimientos**

Durante el mandato de Lázaro Cárdenas como presidente de México, que abarcó desde 1934 hasta 1940, el país experimentó una serie de cambios impulsados por su administración. Este período estuvo marcado por la secuela de la Revolución Mexicana y la consolidación de sus ideales a través de políticas progresistas y reformas sociales. Cárdenas se convirtió en un líder revolucionario comprometido con la representación y el empoderamiento de las clases desfavorecidas. Una de las acciones más destacadas de su gobierno fue la expropiación petrolera en 1938, un acto que reflejó su compromiso con la soberanía nacional y la justicia económica al nacionalizar la industria petrolera y poner fin a la explotación extranjera de los recursos del país. Además, Cárdenas implementó reformas agrarias y laborales para apoyar a los campesinos y trabajadores, promoviendo la redistribución de tierras y la sindicalización para proteger los derechos de los trabajadores. Durante este período, también se fortalecieron las instituciones sociales, como el Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (IMSS) y la Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM), que fueron creadas para brindar servicios de salud, educación y protección laboral a los sectores más vulnerables de la sociedad.

Por otro lado, el peronismo en Argentina emergió en un contexto histórico marcado por el caudillismo, los golpes de estado y la inestabilidad política. Además, al haber ocurrido justo después de la depresión de 1929 y la segunda guerra mundial. Argentina había experimentado períodos de gobiernos autoritarios y militares, lo que generó un ambiente propicio para el

surgimiento de líderes carismáticos como Juan Perón. Su ascenso al poder en la década de 1940 estuvo precedido por su participación en el gobierno y en las filas militares, lo que le proporcionó una plataforma para consolidar su liderazgo. Una vez en la presidencia, Perón implementó políticas y estrategias populistas que se centraron en la relación cercana con los sindicatos y en la implementación de políticas sociales para mejorar las condiciones de vida de la clase trabajadora. Sin embargo, su gobierno también se caracterizó por la silenciación de sus oponentes políticos y el uso del nacionalismo y el autoritarismo para mantenerse en el poder. Perón buscó institucionalizar su movimiento político a través de la creación del Partido Peronista, que se convirtió en una fuerza dominante en la política argentina. Además, el impacto de su segunda esposa, Eva Perón, conocida como "Evita", fue fundamental en el apoyo a la clase baja y trabajadora, así como en la promoción de políticas sociales y la construcción de escuelas y hospitales en zonas rurales.

### **Comparación entre Peronismo y Cardenismo**

Las diferencias más notables en cuanto a los estilos de liderazgo de Juan Peron y Lazaro Cardenas son: la institucionalización del poder. Ya que mientras Perón optó por crear su propio partido político, el Peronismo, Cárdenas promovió la creación de la Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM), una organización sindical que buscaba representar y proteger los intereses de los trabajadores. Además, mientras Perón tendía a silenciar a sus oponentes políticos y concentrar el poder en torno a su figura carismática, Cárdenas adoptó un enfoque más democrático y buscó fortalecer las instituciones del país, incluso designando a un sucesor más centrista para garantizar la estabilidad política a largo plazo. Finalmente, Perón buscó ser el centro del movimiento y cultivó una imagen de líder carismático y mesiánico, mientras que Cárdenas se convirtió en una figura popular debido a su liderazgo durante momentos críticos de

la historia mexicana y su compromiso con la democracia y la justicia social. Sin embargo, a pesar de estas diferencias en el estilo de liderazgo, los legados de ambos líderes comparten similitudes significativas. Ambos son ampliamente recordados y admirados por la clase baja y trabajadora por sus políticas de apoyo a los sectores más desfavorecidos de la sociedad y por sus reformas laborales. Sin embargo, su legado también es objeto de controversia entre la clase alta y los sectores más conservadores de la sociedad.

### **Conclusión**

En conclusión, tanto Cárdenas como Perón tuvieron ascensos al poder muy complicados pero diferentes en medio del desafiante panorama socio-político en sus respectivos países. En el caso de Perón, Argentina experimentó un período de inestabilidad política y económica caracterizado por movimientos sociales, huelgas laborales y luchas de poder entre diferentes facciones políticas. Argentina, emergiendo de la Gran Depresión y enfrentando las secuelas de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, luchó con desafíos económicos y tensiones sociales. Perón, un oficial militar y funcionario gubernamental, utilizó su fama y oportunidad para cumplir sus ambiciones políticas. Cultivó alianzas con sindicatos y facciones populistas, posicionándose como un campeón de la clase trabajadora y los sectores marginados de la sociedad. El mandato de Perón como Ministro de Trabajo y Previsión Social bajo el presidente Ramón Castillo le proporcionó una plataforma para movilizar apoyo y promover su agenda populista. Su estilo de liderazgo carismático y su retórica populista resonaron con los ciudadanos argentinos desilusionados con las élites políticas tradicionales. Por otro lado, el contexto que llevó a la presidencia de Lázaro Cárdenas en México fue moldeado por las secuelas de la Revolución Mexicana y las luchas en curso por la justicia social y la igualdad económica. México, emergiendo de un período de guerra civil y agitación política, buscaba consolidar sus logros de la revolución y abordar quejas de

larga data entre los pobres rurales y urbanos. Cárdenas, un líder revolucionario y exgobernador de Michoacán, se alzó con prominencia dentro del Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) al abogar por la reforma agraria y defender los intereses de la clase baja.

El populismo trasciende los espectros políticos convencionales, representando un diverso espectro de ideales políticos y estilos de liderazgo. Además, argumentó que la forma en la que Peron llegó al poder, utilizando el pasado de Argentina a su favor, ya sea por su uso de la figura central, o de caudillo, que se conecta a la cultura Argentina., caracterizado por un liderazgo carismático y autoridad centralizada, muestra perfectamente la idea del populismo, ya que buscaba encontrar las mejores formas de liderazgo para convertirse en la figura más popular. Además, la institucionalización del poder de Perón también ejemplifica la fusión del populismo con el gobierno institucional, ya que buscaba crear el Partido Peronista para consolidar las instituciones estatales bajo su control. En comparación, sostengo que el caso del Cardenismo fue extremadamente diferente en cierto sentido. Aunque puede parecer populismo a primera vista, y tiene muchas de las mismas características, Cárdenas persiguió un tipo diferente de institucionalización, uno que se centraba en empoderar a los trabajadores y los marginados. Además, continuamente tomó decisiones por el bien de la nación, especialmente evidente en su elección de sucesor, ya que Camacho era mucho más centista que él. Finalmente, también argumentó que Cárdenas no quería ser la figura principal de un movimiento, fue obligado a ocupar este lugar de poder debido a las circunstancias que enfrentaba México cuando llegó al centro de atención.

Durante mi investigación me di cuenta que era extremadamente difícil encontrar documentos contemporáneos, especialmente relacionados con las clases bajas y trabajadoras. Además, me hubiera gustado tener acceso a más documentos provenientes de personas que

fueron realmente impactadas por las presidencias de Perón y Cárdenas respectivamente. Además, también hubiera deseado tener más registros escritos provenientes de áreas rurales, ya que las personas sin educación nunca compartieron sus experiencias en registros escritos, silenciando efectivamente su opinión para un investigador contemporáneo.

### **Citas en Espanol**

Alabart habla sobre la historia de los caudillos, Auyero habla sobre cómo es que la política afecta a los pobres y miembros de la clase trabajadora. Basurto habló sobre el populismo y cómo es que este impacto la historia de Argentina, al igual que Bartolome y Barta. Por otro lado, analiza los documentos de Cardenas para ver cómo es que él quería ser observado en la historia. Además, Marasca, Maurer y Kuzio hablaron sobre el Cardenismo, su historia y cómo es que este se conectó al populismo. Finalmente, analiza los documentos de Perón para ver cómo es que él quería verse a diferencia del legado que quería dejar Cardenas.

En un futuro, me gustaría estudiar el caso de Donald Trump específicamente. Por otro lado, me gustaría analizar qué es lo que hace que el populismo siempre sea tan favorable para quien lo utilice. Finalmente, quiero entender qué estrategias políticas hacen que la psicología de las masas cambie.

## **Introduction**

In this project, I delve into the emergence and impact of populism as a political ideology within the context of Latin America. My objective is to analyze the main variables that define populism and examine how they were manifested in the region through two significant case studies. Firstly, I will accomplish this by looking at two case studies. Firstly, I will look into the case of Peron in Argentina (1946-1955) and then Cardenas in Mexico (1934-1940) respectively. To boot, I want to look into the socio-political state that both nations were in when they reached the peak of the political world. Moreover, I will examine both leaders as figureheads and whether they embraced the cult-like support they experienced. Furthermore, I want to look at the legacies each of them left and how they are viewed by the literature nowadays. Finally, I will assess the legacies left by Perón and Cárdenas, examining how they are perceived in contemporary literature and their lasting impacts on their respective countries.

Chapter 1 delves into the theoretical underpinnings of populism, providing a comprehensive overview of historical contexts and the history of the ideology. Moreover, I will look into the theoretical frameworks of populism and how they changed depending on the region. This chapter sets the stage for a nuanced understanding of populism as a political ideology and practice. Moreover, chapter 2 focuses on the phenomenon of Cardenismo in Mexico, particularly the ascension of Lázaro Cárdenas to the pinnacle of Mexican politics from 1934 to 1940. I will explore the economic, political, and social factors that helped reach power. In this chapter, I will also look at the most relevant events and policies that shaped Cardenismo. Also, I want to look at the legacy of Lazaro Cardenas and how he impacted the Mexican culture and political system. Furthermore, in Chapter 3, the spotlight shifts to Peronism in Argentina, with a meticulous examination of Juan Perón's presidency from 1946 to 1955. This chapter

elucidates the multifaceted nature of Peronism as a political movement and ideology, comparing Justicialismo with the theory of populism. By analyzing Perón's policies, political strategies, and socio-economic impacts, this chapter unravels the legacy of Peronism and its lasting influence on Argentine politics and culture. Finally, Chapter 4 serves as the culminating point of this study, offering a comparative analysis of Peronism and Cardenismo. Delving into the divergent paths Perón and Cárdenas took, this chapter explores how each leader portrayed populism respectively. Moreover, I want to look at how their legacies are different. This chapter sheds light on the complexities of populism in Latin America and its enduring relevance in contemporary politics.

Historically, the literature regarding populism has debated its conceptualization as either a political ideology or a form of leadership. Scholars have grappled with defining populism, understanding whether it constitutes a coherent ideological framework or a political mobilization style. Authors like Fukuyama argue that populism represents a unique political ideology characterized by its appeal to the masses against established elites, focusing on polarizing the nation and creating institutionalization. Moreover, it is argued that by framing political discourse in terms of "us versus them," populists often take advantage of social divisions to consolidate power.

On the other hand, others, such as Ernesto Laclau, contend that populism is primarily a mode of leadership centered around charismatic figures who champion the grievances of the common people and, in truth, holds no real place in the political spectrum. Part of this argument is that populist leaders usually dance around the spectrum in order to find the largest groups of support, as the term "populist" rooted from the word popular would imply.

## **Chapter I - Populism**

In this chapter, I will explore populism, trace its historical emergence, and contextualize its roots in the socio-political climate of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Delving into the nuanced evolution of this phenomenon, we examine how populism appears and assess the political climates in which it tends to rise. I begin with precursors that paved the way for populism and unveiled its critical characteristics as an evolving political ideology, first globally, then with a more region-specific examination, focusing on Argentina and Mexico. I then transition into a more conceptual part of the paper and discuss the theoretical underpinnings of populism. This section dissects the rhetorical strategies, economic theories, and charismatic leadership pivotal to populist movements and provides a theoretical lens to comprehend their manifestations across diverse contexts. By navigating through these interconnected themes, I aim to equip readers with a comprehensive understanding of the origins, evolution, and theoretical foundations of populism. This will allow a deeper exploration of its impact on specific regions and nations.

According to Francis Fukuyama, in his document "What is Populism," populism is a set of characteristics that leaders of this ideology follow. He does not describe it as an ideology per se but as a set of parameters that allow politicians to attain power. The first of these characteristics consists in putting forward policies that are extremely popular in the short run but utterly unsustainable in the long run. Fukuyama then discusses the idea of "the people" and how populists use this term. One example we will analyze in this document is Perón's use of this term to gather support from Argentina's lower and working class. Finally, Fukuyama also discusses the fact that most populist leaders enjoy some sort of cult-like support.

A recent example is Trump, with the Make America Great Again (MAGA) community and how they have rallied around him.

Moreover, populist leaders use their charisma and likeability to obtain the support of the masses. With this same goal, populist leaders denounce the elites, as in Juan Perón's case in Argentina and Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) in Mexico. Populists' leadership style is based on maintaining themselves as popular and relevant as possible. (Fukuyama, 2017) Francis Fukuyama is a prominent political scientist, philosopher, and author with extensive work on the Cold War, which he discussed in his article "End of History ".Moreover, he is a respected literature member who has worked extensively on populism.

Alternative definitions of populism include Cas Mudde, who mentions that populism is present in at least three continents, as Latin-American presidents, American challengers, and European challenging parties, as in the AfD in Germany most recently. Mudde defines populism as a thin-centered ideology that pits a virtuous and homogeneous "people" against a nefarious and corrupt elite. According to Mudde, populism is characterized by its anti-establishment rhetoric, its appeal to the "common sense" of ordinary citizens, and its rejection of pluralism and political compromise. Additionally, Mudde's research often emphasizes the role of populism within specific political contexts, such as its interaction with other ideologies, such as nationalism and authoritarianism, and its impact on party systems and electoral dynamics. One of the main differences between Mudde's definition of populism and Fukuyama's is their conceptualizations of the phenomenon. Mudde's definition tends to be more focused on the specific attributes and strategies employed by populist movements and leaders. Cas Mudde is a highly reliable source as he centers most of his work around populism in Europe and its contemporary manifestation. (Mudde, 2017)

### **Theoretical Framework of Populism**

When discussing populism and a political framework, it is necessary to acknowledge that what it means to be a populist is a hotly debated topic. When we focus on the empirical impact, we can narrow populism in Latin America down to a political science that follows neoliberalism and state-central development. Neoliberalism is “a political approach that favors free-market capitalism, deregulation, and reduction in government spending,” as the Stanford dictionary mentions. Moreover, Urbanti also discussed the topic of populism and noted that it also ensures state-centered development, which encourages state spending. (Urbanti, 2021)

Moreover, populism also encourages clientelism, which encourages people to consume and interact with businesses, especially at the national level. As Cas Musse discusses, populism is part of a complicated three-step plan that leads radical politicians to develop a group of people who support them with a cult-like band. Cas Musse mentioned three steps: claiming to speak for the people, constructing an enemy, and creating a solution to the enemy and issue. Populist leaders usually seek their enemies within the higher class and the elites. (Musse, 2012)

Regarding the economic framework of populism, there are two sides that we must focus on. Firstly, the demand side of a populist economy entails that economic hardship, especially sudden shocks such as immigration and financial crises, will lead to economic inequalities, which cause further discontent and economic anxiety (Finchelstein, Knight, 2019). Furthermore, scholarly sources suggest that voters will vote against incumbent presidents and elites, not because of financial struggles but instead due to actions and decisions they perceive will affect them; the causes that lead people to decide who they vote for are more emotional than factual. Also, short-term memory is a factor in people’s voting decisions, so populists will constantly make big statements to bring attention to themselves. (Margalit, 2019; Zanotti and

Rama, 2020). On the other hand, on the economy's supply side, populist leaders have made an apparent effort to pursue expansionary policies and trade protectionism for local businesses. Finally, populists promote laws and policies that, at face value, improve the state of a nation (I like to describe it as what appears to be a simple solution to a complex situation). Interestingly, it is prevalent for populist leaders to remain extremely popular and even be re-elected, even when they fail in their political promises. (Von, Drehle, 2019)

As discussed by Sven Essen, another vital aspect of populism, or tool that populist figureheads like to use to reach out to their supporters and the masses, is the media. Over the last 20 years, especially in the case of U.S. President Donald Trump, we have witnessed many messages filled with misinformation, lies, and other factors reaching the public through social media. Another case occurred in Venezuela, as the show ‘Alo Presidente’ was launched, allowing President Hugo Chavez to connect with his followers daily. We see similar instances with the “mañaneras” in Mexico with AMLO. (Engesser, 2017)

One of the main factors that led populism to appear is mass discontent. Historically, there were political protests due to reforms and lousy administration. Other factors included lower-class farmers and workers who believed their rights were not respected. (McCarthy, 2003). Another typical case where populism has appeared is as a resolution to crises, as in Brazil, with President Jair Bolsonaro. In her article “Authoritarian Populism as a Response to the Crisis,” Esra Akgemci discusses how it is that Bolsonaro was able to place himself as the ultimate solution to his problem, which in this case was the “outsiders” or anyone who wasn’t of Brazilian descent. Bonsonaro concluded that they had to be kicked out, and he put himself in place as the solution and the “messiah” that would clean the country and lead people to back him.

## **The Origin and Evolution of Populism**

When we look at populism, its history, and how the term has evolved over the years, it is essential to note that it has been used broadly. The first instance and place where the term populist was used was in the United States in the late 19th century. (Couch, 2017) It originally referred to members of the “People’s Populist Party.” Furthermore, this term was connected to the left-wing anti-establishment movements of the time. The term became more precise in the mid-1950s and referred to anti-establishment ideology. This change occurred thanks to the increase of populist leaders that started to win globally; this forced people to come up with a term for their ideology and form of government, which came to be connected with authoritarian ideals.

It is also imperative to note that the United States underwent some stark changes in the late 19th century, especially in its industrial and agricultural sectors. This period was known as the Gilded Age, a time that divided North America's working class and elites. Politicians and Congress in the US began to rely much more on large investors than smaller donors, mainly because the concentration of money and corruption left the lower class empty-handed.

Efforts were made on a national level to decrease corruption. In 1883, the Civil Service Act legislation was passed in the US; it created a merit system, allowing about 10% of federal employees to be selected based on their skills and not an election. This legislation was put in place in an attempt to decrease corruption and leverage. Moreover, acts were passed to stop large corporations from monopolizing goods and restraining the markets. Sadly, most of these attempts failed to make a difference, leading to social discomfort and a disconnect between the government and the lower class. Due to all the problems that were plaguing the lower class, an attempt was made by James Weaver and Leonidas Polk, who, with the support of the American

agricultural sector in the late 1890s, created the People's (populist) Party, which sought to put in place graduated income tax, government ownership of railroads, respect for labor rights and labor unions, and free coinage of silver. Free coinage silver was seen as a great way to maintain coinage flexibility. In addition, as discussed by APMEX leadership (a metals and primary goods company in Mexico), "This system allowed gold and silver to circulate as legal tender at fixed exchange rates, ensuring economic stability by providing flexibility in the currency supply. Under bimetallism, the government guaranteed the convertibility of both metals into currency, maintaining their value.

Moreover, it was a clash of ideologies with those who believed the legal monetary standard would only be held with gold. This led to a debate, which concluded with gold being the only legal backing of the dollar until Nixon changed this in 1971." Finally, there was also the farmer alliance, created by farmers in the west of the US, who strove for fair railroad and shipping prices, which were monopolized and too high for the common folk. (APMEX, 2023)

### **Precursors to Populism**

Economic nationalism is one of the central economic theories associated with populism. It involves policies aimed at protecting and promoting domestic industries and interests. Key elements include imposing tariffs or trade barriers to restrict imports and implementing subsidies or incentives to support domestic production. Also, economic nationalism often emphasizes the importance of self-sufficiency, reducing dependence on foreign goods or resources, and prioritizing national interest over international trade agreements or alliances. Another economic precursor is protectionism, which involves implementing trade barriers such as tariffs and import restrictions to shield domestic industries from foreign competition. Protectionism aims to protect national companies from being defeated by international competitors within international

borders. In addition, protectionism aims to defend national capital and investment by keeping companies within their markets by sending them money and products in case their competition gets ahead. Tariffs and laws imposed on companies that are not within their territories aim to make a profit off these companies and force them out of national territory or at least penalize them for competing out of their nation. Furthermore, governments demand that national companies be self-sufficient to compete against international competitors, leading their top companies to represent them in global markets. Finally, populism encourages national pride and consumerism to combine to boost the economies of certain nations.

Populism in Latin America arose in the decades following, especially in the 1930s and 40s, for reasons similar to populism in the United States. Firstly, as discussed by Carlos De La Torre and Keneth Roberts in the book published in 2017, populism results in those people who were unrepresented finally being represented. It is essential to point out that there is a pattern among those nations in Latin America that had populist leaders, and it is that the lower and working classes were the main protagonists when it came to the group of voters and people who were openly vocal against the elites. There was a movement against the oligarchy, weakening the connection between both classes. Another reason why Latin American countries saw a boom in populist followers, and leaders was because of the weak citizen rights that the lower class was forced to endure. There is a lack of support and help for the disenfranchised.

To boot, I also want to discuss the great depression and its impact on Latin-America and how the ideology of populism took over the continent. The great depression caused fear among all peoples of society, creating financial and social discomfort towards fear of a recession. Moreover, the great depression caused ideals of protectionism and fear to grow and become increasingly popular. The great depression helped populist leaders grab people's

attention and allowed them to generate fear through political and economic insecurities. They planted a seed of fear and grew their support stemming from the roots of uncertainty, exploiting anxieties and grievances to consolidate power and sway public opinion.

The lower classes began to band together in a movement against large businesses and the government, leading to the expression “the people” becoming increasingly popular. It is vital to mention, as well, that even though the legal system, in theory, would protect the lower classes, to this day, a lot of these laws that benefit the lower classes and hamper the higher classes and the authority are not respected, leading to further anger among labor groups. It is important to note that, in relatively more advanced societies, such as Mexico and Argentina, populism took the form of import substitution industrialization, or ISI to promote domestic businesses. ISI focuses on supporting and increasing sales of local businesses and encouraging consumers to purchase local goods, thus helping to limit imports. For example, in the case of Argentina, Perón made a conscious effort to raise tariffs on international goods and, hence, increase the sales of national products. Mexico pursued similar policies, which ensured national businesses could outperform international ones while also improving infrastructure and creating state-owned enterprises, most notably the oil company Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX).

### **Key characteristics of populism and populist figureheads**

Populist figureheads succeed by placing themselves as champions of the ordinary people and by openly opposing entrenched elites and established institutions. This leads people of lower classes to empathize with, support, and vote for these figures. López Obrador, Perón, and other populist figures want to put themselves in a place where they are on one side of a conflict to gather support from one side. This antagonistic stance reinforces the perception that the populist leader is an outsider fighting for the marginalized majority. Populist figures also paint themselves

as antagonistic figures and figures of truth (almost gods in some instances), and they want to be some sort of religious figurehead to their supporters. This leads to the cult-like support that populists sometimes have. By weaving these elements together, populist politicians seek to connect with the masses, presenting themselves as community members, a part of the people, and a figure that the masses can trust and follow. (Pappas, 2016)

Another key factor I have already discussed but is essential to highlight is that populist movements are usually spearheaded by a charismatic and appealing leader who can captivate the masses with their speeches and way with words. They also find ways to connect with people; sometimes, it has to do with their ability to be personable in their words to appeal to specific groups. It is a formidable skill, making populist leaders rare and incredibly transcendent when they come around.

Regarding personalism, populist leaders can appeal to people with policies and words that captivate their attention and gather the support of large groups of people with simple and condescending statements. One example is U.S. President Donald Trump's claim that Mexico would pay for a wall; populist leaders can easily connect with large and vocal masses. They can also move large groups of people, as did Cárdenas in Mexico and Perón in Argentina even after his time in power.

Populist figureheads also tend to create conflict and reject established political elites and institutions, often portrayed as corrupt, self-serving, or out of touch with the people's needs. Populist leaders position themselves as outsiders who will disrupt the status quo and bring about fundamental change. This also feeds into their idea of us vs them, as they create a bond with the lower class, claiming they are a part of their movement.

### **Economic theories associated with populism**

Populist movements and figureheads naturally gained the support of the lower class by putting forward ideas of progressive taxes, which encouraged people to pay taxes based on their income, meaning that higher-income individuals would pay a higher percentage of their income. Moreover, populists also encourage welfare programs, healthcare, and education to address the needs of the lower-income segments. They promote the support of the lower and working class, leading these individuals to feel more heard and understood. In most instances, these policies will also encourage redistribution tax, leading to promises of money or land for the lower class to cut the gap between them and the higher class. Most importantly, populist leaders focus on giving short-term benefits to their followers, disregarding the nature of the long-term consequences of their actions and votes, which will, in many instances, leave them in an even more dire financial situation than before. (think of cheques being handed out to the lower class to spend and how that causes inflation in the long term) (Lawrence, 2012)

It is also important to mention that the higher class also can be enticed by populists. At times, populist leaders will also encourage the elites to vote for them by putting forward ideas of tax cuts, which are very much the opposite of those I just mentioned. As I already discussed, populists are not necessarily connected to one side of the spectrum and will simply make economic and social decisions based on public opinion. Also, their efforts to pass protectionist policy entices the elites. Finally, policies that benefit local businesses will benefit elites and business owners.

Another idea and distinction that must be made is the way populists use the word “people” as compared to their use of “citizens” or “individuals.” Populists love to make their nation a battle of elites against the people, taking the individual out of the agenda and leading

people to unite and create a polarized country. We have seen this polarization in the United States, which also has a two-party system that encourages contrasting groups to fight against each other and contradict each other's policies and ideas.

Finally, I also want to discuss ISI briefly and how it is that ISI played a crucial role in populism, specifically in Latin America, which also led populist leaders to gain support and money from the working class through exporting national goods. The way Argentina and Mexico were able to benefit from ISI was by sending national goods to countries that were participating in WWII, who were unable to use their own countries' products to work on regular goods, forcing them to import and spend on goods that countries such as Mexico and Argentina produced and exported for much larger profits during wartime.

ISI became popular in the early 20th century and encouraged progress, particularly in the chemicals, pharmaceuticals, foodstuffs and electrical equipment sectors. Finally, following the great depression in 1929, the political climate of Latin America changed, with many people believing industry and business had to be developed to keep up with the economic powers of that time. In the case of Argentina, most people thought that progressiveness was necessary, shedding light on the need for industrialization and progressive government involvement. According to findings found by Katz and Kosacoff, ISI led to a period of economic boom, growing GDP and expanding economy/ international business from 1930 to 1950. Comparatively, in the case of Mexico, they also believed that change was mandatory. Cardenas pursued similar policies and encouraged national companies to succeed. The most important event of Cardenas' presidency, the oil expropriation, was in a way facilitated by ISI, as it was protectionism that tipped him over the line when it came to purchasing all oil within the Mexican border.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, exploring populism reveals that a complex interplay of historical, socio-political, and economic factors led to its emergence and shaped its evolution. From its roots in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly in the United States, to its manifestations in Latin America and beyond, populism has responded to perceived grievances and disparities between the elites and the lower classes.

Critical characteristics of populism include charismatic leadership, a focus on short-term popular policies often unsustainable in the long run, and the cultivation of a cult-like following. Populist leaders frequently denounce elites and present themselves as champions of the people, employing rhetoric and media strategies to forge connections with the masses. Moreover, populist figureheads attempt to polarize national issues and pit groups of people against each other to generate attraction and become increasingly popular.

Economically, populism is associated with protectionist policies, economic nationalism, and state-centered development, often aiming to address economic inequalities and promote domestic industries. Populist economic agendas may prioritize welfare programs and progressive taxation, promising short-term benefits to the lower and working classes.

The theoretical framework of populism encompasses a range of perspectives and debates surrounding its definition and impact on society. Populism is an ideology full of complexity and styles due to its complicated yet generalized leadership. Moreover, populism intersects with broader political ideologies and systems, shaping discourse and governance in diverse contexts.

## **Chapter II - Cardenismo in Mexico**

In this chapter, I will discuss Lázaro Cárdenas's case in Mexico and specifically focus on factors that played a role in his reaching the peak of Mexican politics in 1934-1940 and the timeline that led him to power in 1934. Furthermore, I examine the historical, economic, political, and social context that led to Cardenismo. In addition, I will look into the variables that influenced his time in power and the most important events that occurred during his presidency. Moreover, I looked over the academic literature and analyzed different interpretations of Cárdenas to see what other authors said about his power term. In sum, I look at the context of Cardenismo, the factors and variables that characterized Cardenas' time in power, and how he has impacted Mexican culture to this day.

### **Context**

One of the first events that is very relevant to discuss is the Mexican Revolution and how this conflict lasted from 1910 to 1917 and impacted Mexican culture, economy, and political sphere. The Mexican Revolution gravely impacted Mexican culture as it led to polarization among the peoples of society regarding social policies and laws. Before the Mexican Revolution, the polarization between the people was primarily driven by stark economic disparities and social inequalities. The majority of the population, including peasants, indigenous communities, and urban workers, faced exploitation, poverty, and marginalization. At the same time, a small elite class controlled most of the wealth, land, and political power. The revolution generated extensive ethnic and regional tensions within Mexican society. Indigenous communities, marginalized and oppressed for centuries, seized the opportunity to assert their rights and demand land and autonomy.

It is important to note that the revolution was not a unified movement but a series of conflicts involving various rebel groups, regional leaders, and political factions, each vying for power and influence. At the same time, the ruling elite and conservative forces sought to maintain their privileges and resist revolutionary changes. They organized counter-revolutionary militias, hired mercenaries, and conspired with foreign interests to suppress the revolutionary movements. In short, there was some polarization before the revolution, but the conflict exacerbated the issues that plagued the nation before it occurred.

It is essential to mention that the Mexican Revolution aimed to unite Mexican people and culture, as it wished to create a sense of country and unity among the working and lower classes. JW Sherman discusses how Cardenismo also encouraged the lower and middle class to be more represented, leading to a shared unity among people. (Michaels, Sherman, 1970,1998) John W. Sherman is a professor of history at Wright State University. His most important publications include *The Mexican Right*, *Latin America in Crisis*, and *Mexico: A Concise Illustrated History*.

It is also essential to consider the Maximato and the events that occurred from 1920-1934, which directly led to the election of Cárdenas into power, and how he eventually became such an important figure in Mexican history. In 1920, Plutarco Elías Calles, Álvaro Obregón, and Adolfo de la Huerta, generals from the state of Sonora, revolted against Carranza, who was attempting to transfer the executive power away from the military and towards civilians. Venustiano Carranza was a prominent Mexican revolutionary leader who played a crucial role in the overthrow of the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. Moreover, he served as President of Mexico from 1917 to 1920, during which he implemented significant reforms, including drafting the Mexican Constitution of 1917. Carranza's presidency was marked by efforts to consolidate power and establish a stable post-revolutionary government. On May 10th,

1920, Obregón's forces captured Mexico City. Ten days later, on May 20th, 1920, Carranza was killed in the state of Puebla in an ambush led by General Rodolfo Herrero. Following Carranza's death, Álvaro Obregón emerged as the nation's new leader. Álvaro Obregón was president from 1920 to 1924 when, given that the Revolution had been fought with the motto “Sufragio efectivo, no reelección” (“effective suffrage, no re-election”), he selected Plutarco Elías Calles as his successor (1924-1928). Calles created multiple institutions, such as the Bank of Mexico; Obregon built numerous infrastructure and roads. Finally, he decided to limit the use of religion and incarcerated priests, most importantly, popes and other members of the church. His effort against the church eventually led to the public disliking him. Eventually, it led to the Cristero rebellion, which lasted three years. The church fought against the state, and Calles saw them as an obstacle when it came to passing legislation and getting the support of the general population of Mexico. In part, thanks to this conflict, Obregón could seize power again.

In 1927, the Constitution was changed to allow re-election in alternating terms and extend the duration of the presidency from four to six years. Obregón sought re-election and obtained the presidency for 1928-1934, but he was assassinated by a Cristero named Jose de Leon Toral while celebrating his victory. Jose de Leon opposed the anti-clerical efforts made by the Obregon administration. Instead of extending his constitutional mandate or seeking re-election for himself, Calles founded the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR, National, and Revolutionary Party), the ancestor of the PRI. In the years 1928-1934 (the Maximato, during the presidencies of Emilio Portes Gil (interim), Pascual Ortiz Rubio (resigned), and Abelardo L. Rodríguez (interim)), Calles remained the actual holder of power. In 1934, Calles named Lázaro Cárdenas. Lázaro Cárdenas del Río was born in Jiquilpan, Michoacán in 1895, son of Dámaso Cárdenas and of Felicitas del Río Amezcua. In 1913, he became part of the Mexican Revolution

to continue his legacy, but he was initially meant to be just another puppet leader. Instead, Cárdenas made agrarian and social reforms that gained him so much support that Calles could not remove him from power, leading to him simply complaining in the newspaper. Still, eventually, Calles was exiled from the nation. (Kuzio, 1996)

### **Factors that led to the rise of Cardenas**

#### **Economic Factors**

Now, let us dive into the prominent economic factors and challenges that led to the election of Lázaro Cárdenas. Firstly, it is essential to mention that the Great Depression took place in 1929, and it limited trade due to the negative impact on exports and imports due to how their trade partners were faring through the crisis. Economies tanked as with the entire world, and the United States struggled to move past the economic downturn. Moreover, European superpowers saw similar results. Furthermore, the fear of World War II breaking out and constant efforts to recover from World War One also caused regional issues. Global crises led to the economy taking a hit. Moreover, the prices of commodities and other goods sold by Mexico decreased, which led to Mexico struggling financially as a nation. Other factors that negatively impacted the Mexican economy, most importantly, were land ownership. Also, agrarian issues, mainly the need for better working conditions and salaries and the lack of support and rights for those who worked the grounds. The agricultural sector became the largest source of support for Cárdenas, as he gathered support from the working and lower class, supported their views, and empowered them with his efforts to make their voices heard. He sought to support those who struggled under the leadership of Calles and those who were taken advantage of by foreign-owned companies. (Cardenas, 1982)

### **Political factors**

The emergence of Cardenismo in Mexico was driven by a confluence of political factors reflecting the country's socio-economic landscape. Foremost among these factors was the pressing issue of land redistribution, as large estates were concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy landowners, leaving many rural peasants disenfranchised. Additionally, the disenfranchisement of the poor populace fueled a demand for political representation, with marginalized communities seeking a voice in governance. Moreover, amidst economic hardships, there was a growing clamor for financial stability and improved systems to support and educate the lower class, underscoring the need for institutions that advocated for the rights and welfare of citizens. At the heart of Cardenismo lay a populist appeal, as the movement sought a leader who could articulate the people's grievances and champion their cause, thus addressing the widespread desire for a representative to speak on behalf of the masses. (Edwards, 2019) This relates to the constitution of 1917 as Cardenas made constant efforts to bring back efforts made in the constitution as he formed part of the forces that overthrew Porfirio Diaz.

### **Social Factors**

Other factors that contributed to the nation's unrest were social unrest and the constant labor movements throughout the country. In 1934 alone, there were 202 strikes nationwide, more than one every two days, an alarming rate. There was growing discontent among most lower-class groups; whether that meant peasants or lower-wage workers, it did not matter; about 90% of the population could not live off their wages. Laborers also made a considerable public effort to be further represented by associations and other labor unions. Finally, one of the variables that brought Cárdenas to the forefront of Mexican politics was his ability to speak on behalf of the people in the working class. He was able to represent and make

their voices heard, with their needs being put at the vanguard of political issues. He raised awareness and the lower class's voice by creating the labor unions and worker unions I already mentioned to represent the lower class in government. Also, he continuously made efforts to educate the lower class and bring infrastructure to less fortunate sectors.

### **Cárdenas and his term in power (1934-1940)**

Just 14 years after having formed part of the Mexican Revolution, he made a career decision to join the government and became a general. In 1928, he received the honor of becoming the governor of Michoacan and pushed forward agrarian reforms within the state. Years later, he became the PNR president, later renamed the PRM, which was finally PRI. He became a prevalent political figure and was then selected as a candidate by Calles in December of 1933. He won the 1934 election. His term in power was marked by crucial aims, which included social reforms such as the ones I have already discussed that the Mexican people were after. Cárdenas promised to redistribute land among peasants, workers, and the lower class to redistribute wealth to more community members.

Moreover, Cárdenas also wanted to empower and educate rural and marginalized areas. In addition, Cárdenas was the leading advocate for oil and petrol takeover, among other goods and resources, which he believed the Mexican government should keep within their national borders and businesses. Also, Cárdenas aimed to make inroads when it came to the democratic process of the nation. He sought to strengthen the government's position while emphasizing the lower class's voices by creating unions, eventually leading to the foundation of organizations such as the CTE, CTM, and CNC. (Michaels, 1970) CTE and CTM are acronyms for the same organization, the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (Confederation of Mexican Workers). It is one of Mexico's largest and most influential labor federations. CNC, on the other

hand, stands for Confederación Nacional Campesina (National Peasant Confederation). It is an organization that represents the interests of rural farmers and peasants in Mexico, advocating for agrarian reform, land rights, and agricultural policies. It is important to note that he made very similar efforts on a national scale to the ones he made in Michoacan, which made him famous in the first place, mainly on land reforms. Once he became president, he could pursue the oil takeover as well.

### **Cardenismo and how it connects to populism**

When delving into the economic framework of populism, as I already discussed, it is crucial to examine two fundamental aspects. Firstly, on the demand side, a populist economy is often characterized by exacerbating economic inequalities due to immigration and financial crises, which breed discontent and economic anxiety (Finchelstein & Knight, 2019). Additionally, scholarly sources indicate that voters frequently oppose incumbent presidents and elites not solely due to financial struggles but also because of the perceived impacts of their decisions, which are often emotionally charged rather than strictly factual. (Margalit, 2019; Zanotti and Rama, 2020). On the supply side, populist leaders actively pursue expansionary policies and advocate for trade protectionism to bolster local businesses. Furthermore, they often promote laws and policies that, at the surface level, offer straightforward solutions to complex issues, presenting themselves as champions of national improvement. Intriguingly, populist leaders frequently maintain significant popularity and may even secure re-election despite failing to deliver on their political promises fully. (Von, Drehle, 2019)

Regarding the theory of populism and how Cardenas follows it, One of the first variables one can see is Cárdenas's natural ability to communicate with the lower and working class. He commonly uses the term "the people" and often speaks on behalf of the lower class. In

his inaugural address as President of Mexico on December 1, 1934, Cárdenas emphasized his dedication to the welfare of "the people" and the need for unity and solidarity to address the country's challenges. Finally, in his all-important address regarding oil expropriation, he also referred to the event as a victory for "the people."

Moreover, he also pursued expansionary policies and trade protectionism, advocating for economic nationalism and asserting Mexico's sovereignty over its natural resources. The most important event that occurred regarding this topic was the oil expropriation, which was spearheaded by Cardenas and achieved in 1938. Finally, Cárdenas recognized and responded to the economic hardships faced by many Mexicans. He implemented agrarian reforms to redistribute land to alleviate rural poverty and empower marginalized communities. By directly addressing economic inequalities, Cárdenas appealed to the discontent and economic anxieties prevalent among the population. (Olcott, 2010)

Cardenas used legislation and laws to accomplish his vision for the nation; he translated this vision into concrete policies, such as agrarian reform, labor rights, legislation, and the nationalization of key industries like the agricultural sector and petroleum. To boot, he made a conscious effort to connect with people on a grassroots level and engaged with the lower and middle classes in order to create a movement against the elites. In addition, Cárdenas forged alliances with various sectors of society, including labor unions, peasant organizations, and nationalist groups. He co-opted vital leaders and organizations into his political coalition, ensuring their support for his policies. Cardenas connected with the elites through his protectionist policies of national businesses. Also, he communicated with the lower class through all his efforts regarding worker rights. Finally, he connected with anyone with a nationalist identity due to his constant efforts to unite society.

### **Key events and variables to shaped Cardenismo**

A strong focus on social reform and the empowerment of the lower classes characterized Cárdenas's presidency. He sought to amplify the voices of the people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and address their grievances. Cárdenas championed the rights of workers and peasants, advocating for labor rights, social welfare programs, and land redistribution. By prioritizing the needs of the lower class, Cárdenas not only improved their material conditions but also elevated their status within Mexican society. Economically, one of the defining features of Cárdenas's presidency was the comprehensive land redistribution program. Through agrarian reform, Cárdenas redistributed millions of acres of land to landless peasants, indigenous communities, and communal farming organizations. This policy addressed longstanding land inequalities, promoted rural development, and empowered communities. Land redistribution had profound economic and cultural implications, as it shifted land ownership patterns, promoted agricultural productivity, and empowered previously marginalized groups.

It is essential to discuss how Cárdenas impacted the rural communities of Mexico in terms of living conditions, voting rights, working conditions, and other living standards. Some of the most critical factors affected and improved by Cárdenas include education, which saw a significant improvement. Furthermore, evident efforts were made to increase the voting numbers in rural areas so that the voices of the people in small towns could be heard. Literacy rates following the Revolution in Mexico were below 20%. Following Cárdenas's presidency, this rate surged to 44.8%, more than doubling. (McDonald, 1993)

Furthermore, this rate has skyrocketed in rural areas, going from single-digit percentages to about 20% in some areas. Individuals became better equipped to engage in diverse economic activities, contributing to local development. Cardenas built schools and created jobs in rural

areas to include members of society. The best example comes in his time in Michoacan, where he made plenty of efforts to educate and lift the lower and middle classes. (Greer, 1969) and (McDonald, 1993)

Moreover, individuals learned to impact their communities and, therefore, impacted their hometowns directly. Furthermore, Cárdenas emphasized fostering a sense of civic responsibility and social solidarity among young people. He encouraged youth organizations and community groups to organize volunteer projects, community service activities, and cultural events that promoted community cohesion and collective action. Rural areas were impacted much more directly under the leadership of Cárdenas than any Mexican leader before him. Looking at the long-term effect of the educational reforms put in place by Cárdenas, ever since his time in power, we have seen the literacy rates increase by about 10% per decade until 1980 when it rose to over 80%. Finally, Mexico nears 100% in 2024, showing Cárdenas's actual effect on the educational system. It is important to note that other factors also impact literacy rates, such as Mexico's engagement with international organizations and educational initiatives, such as UNESCO, which facilitated the exchange of ideas and resources to promote literacy and academic development. Finally, there were also efforts to educate teachers at the time further.

Another change Cárdenas brought to Mexican culture was women's suffrage, as in 1937, women gained the right to vote in municipal elections. Furthermore, following Cárdenas' time in power, in 1953, women gained the right to vote. I have discussed educational reforms' impact on indigenous peoples and lower-class individuals. Nonetheless, this change also brought about an improvement in women's education. Women were allowed to get formal education, leading to a shift in gender roles. Lázaro Cárdenas put social welfare programs in place that benefited women and children to improve their living standards. Finally, women also became much more involved

in activism and social movements, which led to an uptick in the participation of women in politics. These efforts included appointing several women to prominent government positions and breaking down barriers to women's participation in government. Additionally, he implemented labor reforms to improve working conditions for women, including equal pay for equal work and protections for pregnant women in work environments. Furthermore, Cárdenas prioritized education for girls, investing in schools and expanding educational opportunities in rural areas.

It is important to note that Cárdenas experienced support unforeseen by any other Mexican president leading up to him. He experienced support from many sectors and was one of few leaders in Mexico who was not killed during his time in office. One can see this support because by completing the oil expropriation and creation of the Institute of Petroleum, Cardenas, and his cabinet required the financial support of the Mexican population. He was able to raise funds, improve worker conditions, worker wages, and living standards, nationalize industry, and improve the national economy at the time. Besides, Cárdenas's support for national businesses and industries played a crucial role in shaping Mexican culture and economic policy. He implemented protectionist measures and promoted domestic industries to foster economic self-sufficiency and reduce reliance on imports. Cárdenas believed in developing Mexico's industrial capacity and creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs and businesses. Cárdenas aimed to stimulate economic growth, create jobs, and strengthen the Mexican economy by supporting national companies. Also, during his presidency, Lázaro Cárdenas utilized Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) as a critical strategy to promote the Mexican economy. He implemented protective tariffs and trade barriers to promote domestic industrialization by substituting imported goods with domestically produced ones. This emphasis on economic

nationalism and support for national companies contributed to a sense of economic pride and patriotism among Mexicans, fostering a culture of self-reliance and resilience in the face of external pressures.

Lázaro Cárdenas left a long-lasting legacy that has profoundly impacted the grassroots of politics in Mexico. One of the most enduring aspects of his legacy is his commitment to agrarian reform, which empowered rural communities and indigenous groups through significant land redistribution programs. Cárdenas's support for labor rights and the formation of labor unions established during his presidency, such as the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), has had a lasting impact on Mexican labor relations, enabling workers to advocate for better working conditions and wages.

Another iconic act of his presidency was the nationalization of the oil industry in 1938, which asserted Mexico's sovereignty over its natural resources and symbolized Mexican nationalism and economic self-determination. Cárdenas emphasized strengthening political institutions and promoting grassroots participation in governance, which is evident in established organizations like the National Peasant Confederation (CNC) and the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM). Lastly, his administration's focus on social justice and economic equality resulted in policies aimed at reducing poverty, promoting education, and improving healthcare access for the disenfranchised, shaping Mexican social policy. (Sherman, 1998 )

Under his leadership, Mexico embarked on a path of economic development through import substitution industrialization, aiming to reduce import dependence and foster domestic industrial growth. Cárdenas's legacy is marked by his populist nature, characterized by his ability to connect with the people and voice the discontent of the marginalized. Through his populist approach, Cárdenas left a lasting impact on Mexican politics and society, shaping the country's

trajectory and inspiring generations of leaders to prioritize the needs of the people. He left a generational effect on the political side as the PRI, the party he helped grow, continued to lead Mexican politics for decades. In addition, movements and unions were created as he changed how Mexican politics and political messages spread. (Sherman, 1998) As I also discussed, his impact on the political spectrum included the fact that he changed the length of presidencies and chose his successor, Manuel Avila Camacho, who was less revolutionary and led to more stability in the nation.

I also want to briefly discuss Cardenas' support system and the people surrounding him. However, he did not have a figure like Evita. He had members of state who supported his ideals. Firstly, Manuel Avila Camacho he served as Cárdenas' Secretary of National Defense and later succeeded him as President of Mexico. He was a trusted ally and played a significant role in implementing Cárdenas' policies. Also, Lombardo Toledano, a prominent labor leader and intellectual who worked in the Cardenas government, played a significant role in the policies and ideas Cardenas enacted. Other members of his close groups were Miguel Aleman Valdez and Francisco J Mugia.

The following variable that must be discussed that marked the presidency of Cárdenas was the takeover of the oil industry in Mexico, leading the nation to become the sole owner of gasoline coming from their lands for the first time. British and American sectors were forced to hand over ownership of oil refineries and other machinery/industries that work in refining gasoline to the Cárdenas administration. As part of the oil expropriation, the Cárdenas administration demanded fair treatment of oil workers and a higher wage, leading to strikes and other uprisings and extended conflict between Cárdenas and international businesses. On March 18, 1938, oil expropriation in Mexico was made official. Global reaction to the decision made it

difficult for Mexico to trade shortly after expropriating all 16 industries. Among these were internationally renowned companies such as Royal Dutch Shell, Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL), Standard Oil Company of New Jersey (later Exxon), Gulf Oil Corporation, Cities Service Oil Company, Texas Company (later Texaco), El Aguila, Atlantic Refining Company (later ARCO), Union Oil Company of California, Standard Oil Company of New York (later Mobil), Standard Oil Company of Indiana (later Amoco), Standard Oil Company of Texas (later Chevron), Pearson and Sons, Mexican Eagle Petroleum Company, Pan American Petroleum and Transport Company, and Sinclair Oil Corporation. Due to the conflict of interest generated by the takeover, Cárdenas and the US government were forced to settle the fight between the Mexican government and American oil industries. The Cooke-Zevada agreement urged the Mexican government to pay about 29 million dollars as compensation for all 16 refineries. Cárdenas defended his actions by emphasizing his right to protect national goods and resources, urging Mexican people to defend his choice. The lower and middle classes supported his decision and saw noticeable improvements in their quality of life. (Mauer, 20Moreover, and (Woosley, 1938) Cardenas argued that the oil reserves belonged to the Mexican nation as stipulated by the Mexican Constitution of 1917, which declared that all subsoil resources, including oil, were the state's property. He established PEMEX (Petróleos Mexicanos) as Mexico's state-owned oil company. Cárdenas' creation of PEMEX was a significant step towards asserting Mexico's sovereignty over its natural resources and ensuring that the benefits of the oil industry would be directed towards the Mexican people. PEMEX played a central role in the development of Mexico's oil industry, including exploration, production, refining, and distribution, and continues to be a key player in the country's energy sector.

What's more, when we look at the consequences of his political career, another vital process Cárdenas helped set off in the nation was ISI. Due to his policies and reforms, national industries could thrive, and the country could industrialize much more efficiently. The effects of ISI on Mexico are extensive. Following the 1950s, ISI led to a vast manufacturing sector, which allowed Mexico to produce consumer goods such as textiles and cars. Moreover, the economic boom that was seen in part thanks to ISI led politicians to continue to fund these reforms.

The government created Banamex (one of the largest banks in Mexico) to facilitate funding for national industries. Tragically, in the 1980s, ISI began to see a backlash, including political instability, inflation, trade imbalances, and further social struggles. This extremely complicated set of circumstances led to what is now known as the Mexican miracle, discussed by Sarah Newberger in her article "The Real Mexican Miracle." This miracle saw some of the fastest industrialization and development. This response helped Mexico become one of the few countries to transition out of ISI successfully. (Wolfe, Santacruz, 2021) The Mexican Miracle refers to a period of rapid economic growth experienced by Mexico from the 1940s to the early 1970s, characterized by industrialization, urbanization, and modernization. While Lázaro Cárdenas implemented policies that laid the foundation for ISI during his presidency in 1934. It is important to note that the failure of ISI occurred long after his tenure. Cárdenas' administration focused on agrarian reform, nationalization of key industries, and social welfare programs, which were instrumental in promoting industrial development and social equity. However, the transition away from ISI and towards neoliberalism occurred under subsequent administrations in the late 20th century. To conclude, the failure of, ISI as I already mentioned led to a period of urbanization and neoliberalism. (Alexander, 2021)

### **Historical opinion and legacy of Lázaro Cárdenas in the literature**

Charles Weston, a prominent author on populism and Cardenismo and the legacy of Cardenas discusses Lázaro Cárdenas and talks about him as one of the most honest revolutionaries. Cárdenas believed that government members had moved away from the needs of the lower class and needed to get back on track. Cárdenas united the masses through a message of equality and promises of land distribution. Lázaro Cárdenas spoke on behalf of people experiencing poverty, which led him to become a prevalent figure. Finally, the rule of Lázaro Cárdenas saw a considerable change in how the Mexican government functioned, as there was a shift from indirect to direct leadership. Charles Weston also discusses Cárdenas as a radical who found a way to encourage a nation to take change culturally in a way that was more conservative, nationalized, and democratic. Cárdenas is described as a figure who established a new standard of political figures in Mexico. He stepped down from leadership after one term and named a successor, Manuel Ávila Camacho, could to keep the democratic system. (Weston, 1983) In addition, Daniela Spencer discusses that the legacy of Lázaro Cárdenas also created overwhelming support for his son, Cuahutemoc, who was able to impact Mexican politics himself. The Cárdenas family is one of the most influential families in the history of Mexican politics. (Spencer, 1999)

When looking at the literature and Cárdenas' legacy, it is crucial to look at the work of Eldad Levy, professor of psychology and Latin-American studies at Rollins College, who discusses how complicated the legacy of Cárdenas is. It is essential to note the expropriation of oil. was the most important legacy of Cárdenas, although it was seen as a great piece of legislature at the time and initiated significant reforms aimed at opening up Mexico's energy sector to private investment and competition.

In 2013, Peña Nieto passed reforms, known as the Energy Reform, and amended Articles 27 and 28 of the Mexican Constitution. These amendments allowed for private companies to participate in various aspects of the energy industry, including exploration, production, refining, and distribution. PEMEX still retained its status as the state-owned oil company. With the recent debates regarding forms of energy and laws regarding the topic, Cárdenas and his decision to oust oil about 90 years ago is now seen more negatively than it did in the decades following the decision. Moreover, Levy also discusses ways in which adversaries of Cárdenas tried to diminish his reputation, primarily through fake advertisements; these attempts included questioning his policies and his populist ideology because some believed he only wanted to benefit himself and not the lower class.

It is also vital to discuss much of the Spanish literature, which includes most of the authors, such as those who discuss the importance of Lázaro Cárdenas and the impact he had on the lower class and the educational level they received. Finally, they also focused a lot on his efforts in rural areas, as sparsely populated areas were not an area that many politicians focused on before him. The impact Cárdenas had in the long term regarding education in rural areas is shown by the level of literacy we saw in the decades following his presidency. (Rein, 1996), (Gambini, 2017) and (Cordova, 1972) were some of the principal authors who discussed this topic

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, understanding the historical context, notably, the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution and the Maximato period, provides crucial insights into the socio-economic landscape that propelled Cárdenas to power in 1934. The Revolution fostered a sense of unity and solidarity among the Mexican people while igniting demands for land redistribution and

political representation, setting the stage for Cárdenas's ascent to power. Secondly, the factors that contributed to Cárdenas's presidency encompassed a convergence of economic, political, and social variables. The Great Depression, rural issues, and foreign ownership of companies exacerbated economic inequalities compelled Cárdenas to champion agrarian reform and economic nationalism. Politically, the disenfranchisement of the lower class and demands for representation propelled Cárdenas's populist appeal, which he utilized to amplify the voices of marginalized communities and advocate for social justice. Socially, unrest and labor movements underscored the discontent among the lower class, prompting Cárdenas to address their grievances and prioritize their needs in governance. Finally, Cárdenas's tenure in power was characterized by a transformative agenda aimed at social, economic, and political reform. His commitment to agrarian reform, labor rights, and nationalization initiatives reshaped Mexican society and politics, leaving a lasting imprint on Mexican culture. Moreover, Cárdenas's populism, marked by his ability to connect with the people and champion their cause, solidified his popularity and enduring legacy in Mexican history. By analyzing the context, factors, and variables that defined Cárdenas's presidency, we understand his profound impact on Mexican culture and society, shaping the nation's trajectory for decades.

Lázaro Cárdenas and his style of populism fit the mold of most populist leaders in Latin America through the 20th century. He follows patterns of putting forward laws and legislations that lead to nationalistic ideals. Moreover, his leadership is also highlighted by his effort to support the lower and working class. In addition, Cardenismo was also rooted in the idea of expropriating oil and supporting local businesses. Finally, what makes Cárdenas and his movement slightly different from others is that he could have made a more conscious effort than others, such as Perón, to connect with his supporters vocally. The nature of Cardenismo was

indeed based on benefitting the lower class and putting forward the needs of those silenced by society. Cardenismo was a perfect balance between creating a popular figure and caring for the rights of the lower class. This made Cárdenas one of the most influential figures in Mexican politics. Cárdenas is seen as a champion of the lower class and one of the main actors in creating the current democratic process in Mexico.

Finally, when discussing the legacy of Cárdenas and how he is seen in the literature, we can see mixed opinions. Charles Weston portrays Cárdenas as a revolutionary figure who championed the needs of the lower class and ushered in a new era of direct leadership in Mexico. Weston also highlights Cárdenas's role in fostering cultural change while maintaining a conservative, nationalistic, and democratic approach. Daniela Spencer underscores the enduring influence of the Cárdenas family in Mexican politics, mainly through Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who followed in his father's footsteps. However, Eldad Levy's analysis adds nuance by emphasizing the controversial nature of Cárdenas's legacy, particularly regarding his decision to oust oil. Levy suggests that while Cárdenas was initially celebrated for this bold move, contemporary debates around energy policy have led to more critical assessments of his actions and motivations, with adversaries questioning both his policies and populist ideology.

### **Chapter III - Peronism in Argentina**

In this chapter, I will discuss the case of Juan Perón in Argentina. We will focus on precisely what factors played a role in his being the Argentinian president from 1946 to 1955 and what timeline in Argentina led up to the 1946 presidential elections. Furthermore, I want to examine the most relevant events that marked his time in power, focusing on how these factors relate to Argentinian culture, politics, and economy. In addition, I will look into Peronism as a movement and ideology, comparing it to the theory of populism. Moreover, I want to examine the political, economic, and social variables and policies Perón focused on during his first time in power. It is important to note that he was also president in the 1970s, but we will only focus on his first presidential term. Finally, I want to review the literature and analyze different interpretations of Perón to see what various authors say about his term in power. In conclusion, I want to look at the context of Peronism, the factors and variables that characterized Perón's time in power, and how he impacted Argentinian culture to this day.

#### **Historical Context of Peronism and Juan Perón's Rise to Power**

Argentina gained its independence from Spain in 1816. In the following century, Argentina experienced the rule of strongmen, otherwise known as "caudillos." Caudillos were military leaders prominent in the Latin American continent and known for their forceful rule of the people through tactics of repression and patronage. (Alabart, 2015) Caudillos were also known for maintaining their popular support through tactics of repression and patronage. As the 19th century rolled around, the most notable caudillo in Argentina was Julio Roca, who served as president for two terms (He first served from 1880 to 1886 and then again from 1898 to 1904) and oversaw the construction of railroads and annexed territories from the indigenous population. Roca was a conservative member of the government. The leadership of caudillos in

Argentina led to several conflicts, most notably in Patagonia and their numerous civil wars. Moreover, he is best known for his efforts in the conquest of the desert and his efforts in killing native peoples. Fast forward to the 1930s, known as the infamous decade in Argentina. In the 1910s, Argentina experienced a period marked by a mix of political philosophies such as conservatism, liberalism, and socialism. Moreover, during this time, the Sáenz Peña Law of 1912 was implemented. This legislation aimed to reform the electoral system by introducing universal male suffrage, encouraging proportional representation, and enhancing fairness and transparency in the political process. The law was significant for addressing electoral fraud and promoting greater political participation. During this period, we saw leaders such as Figueroa Alcorta, Qoque, Victorino de la Plaza, and Yrigoyen.

It was a period of political trouble, military coups, and economic instability, which became one of the main reasons people sought a change in the political system and the start of democratic practices. When looking at how they connect to Juan Perón, over a century later, we can see a pattern of military and authoritarian regimes that impact and shape the culture of Argentina.

When looking at the context that led to Peronism, it is essential to talk about "The Great Depression" (1929-1939) following the market crash 1929, which saw skyrocketing levels of unemployment, low demand, oversupply, and inflation. In the case of Argentina, in addition to the problems already mentioned, they saw full-scale riots and were forced to default on their debts. Moreover, as discussed by Raul Prebisch, Argentina saw a steep decline in exports, causing them to pursue ISI policies. The Argentinian government began to promote national industries, promoting competition among national firms and encouraging new enterprises. (Prebisch, 1951) Furthermore, the government looked to expand the city labor force and aimed to

improve business infrastructure. Another important figure in Argentinian history is Hipolito Yrigoyen, former president of Argentina, on two different occasions, the last from 1928 to 1930. Yrigoyen marked the beginning of democratic practices in Argentina. Although his term was marked by political turmoil and economic instability, his time in power was considered a success because it led to progressive movements and belief from the Argentinian population that change could occur. In addition, the 1930s and 40s saw a period of political and military turmoil in the region. Argentina saw two coups during this time; further issues led the military to take over the government in multiple instances. Finally, I will briefly discuss the Pinedo pact, signed in 1930 by Argentinian leader Jose Felix Uriburu, which encouraged political and economic changes similar to Peron's. This pact allowed politicians and people of similar ideas to unite. In the long term, the Pinedo plan helped spotlight Juan Perón and his ideology. (Prebisch,

Notably, the world was recovering from WWII when Perón came to power and moved into the Cold War. The United States grew into a dominant political and economic force in Latin America, leading them to look at the American continent as their backyard. This is similar to the case of the Monroe Doctrine, which was passed in 1823 by President Monroe. It was put in place to protect the Western hemisphere from European influence. Moreover, the US sought to establish an international trade market with the goal of globalization. This is one of the forms in which the US looked to expand its influence. It resembles their efforts during World War II when the US expanded to become the largest weapon seller in the world. This strongly clashed with the ideals of Peronism, which sought to become an international powerhouse in itself. The most prominent example of Peron's effort to bring Argentina to the forefront of Latin American markets is his efforts to stay neutral in international conflicts. Moreover, he sought to expand his trade routes and reduce Argentina's dependency on the United States and Britain. He managed to

do this through organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Pan-American Union. He emphasized the importance of Latin American solidarity and advocated for greater autonomy from external powers.

### **Variables Leading to Perón's Rise**

#### **Political Factors**

When we begin to discuss the variables that led Perón to power, we must start by discussing the political state of Argentina at the time. As I already discussed, Argentina has historically undergone a rule of strongmen. Moreover, they went through two coups d'etat in the two decades leading to Perón's reign, which left them in a highly precarious position regarding their political system. Moreover, as discussed by JW McGuire, Argentina underwent a very peculiar change to its political system as party institutionalization was extremely weak, leading to movements and revolts that plagued the nation continuously. In addition, due to the military regime in place, Argentina also found itself more focused on becoming an economic powerhouse than on the good of its citizens. It is important to emphasize that the military was most focused on their goal to stay in power and maintain their authoritarian regime in place. Moreover, they also tried to stop the conflicts and constant revolts in the country. (McGuire 1999),

Moreover, the democratic system was at an all-time low, which caused people to be upset with politicians and the military. The people of Argentina sought a strong leader with a stable government and ideas that would put the nation first. It is also important to note that Argentina, culturally, sought to look for a strongman to follow, and it goes back to the past of Caudillos. They want to be represented by someone who is looking to rewrite the Constitution, which is something Peron will go on to do. Finally, Perón's connection with the military Junta made him one of the most prominent candidates leading up to the 1946 election. Perón's military service

began in the 1920s where he served as an officer and later became involved in military education. His skills in the military led him to prominent positions within the military, including serving as an instructor at the Superior War School and as the Secretary of War during the presidency of Pedro Pablo Ramírez.

The following source we will analyze is "Argentina's Quest for Stability" by Potash. (Potash, 1962) He argues that one of the main factors that led to the election of Perón was internal migration towards urban areas. Perón was the secretary of labor in the Argentine government, which allowed him to connect with the lower and middle class and Labor Unions. Other reasons for discontent that Potash discusses are the lack of housing and sanitation caused by internal migration. Finally, on an international level, Argentina stayed neutral during World War II, only entering and declaring war on Germany in March of 1945, which led to international discontent with the military regime in Argentina, eventually leading to the removal of President Pablo Ramírez and the elections that led to the selection of Juan Perón.

### **Economic Factors**

The most important economic factors that plagued Argentina leading up to Perón's term in power include, as I already discussed, the Great Depression, which heavily affected nations at an international level, especially in Latin America; it led to a change that included industrial improvement and changes to the economic sector. Moreover, other changes to the economy included efforts made by the government to pursue ISI and other strategies that encouraged national businesses and an economic boom. Furthermore, he also implemented protectionist policies such as tariffs and quotas. Besides, the period also saw significant urbanization in Argentina as people migrated from rural areas to cities in search of better economic opportunities. This demographic shift contributed to the growth of urban

working-class populations and increased political mobilization among urban workers. It is also important to mention that about ⅔ of the people living in Argentina moved to Buenos Aires as part of this movement. Other financial factors also present during Perón's rise to power included low worker wages, high levels of unemployment, and, most importantly, the gap between the lower class and the elites was so large that the gap caused substantial social unrest, which we can see in the number of movements and conflicts that plagued Argentina for most of its history (Caudillos, military leaders and authoritarian regimes).

### **Social Factors**

During Perón's election, the most relevant social factors influencing Argentine culture included public anger at the nation's political forces. Moreover, workers and people who formed part of the lower class felt ignored and believed that a different figure was needed to lead their nation. Most working-class members formed part of the urban working class and agricultural sector. They held a grudge against the political and economic elites, leading them to seek an alternative government and leader to represent their needs. As the 1946 elections neared, most people in Argentina formed part of movements that advocated for nationalism, improved worker rights, socialism, and communism. As the military Junta and other members of the political process would not support their needs, Argentines looked for a leader who would commit to a rooted change, which would see fundamental shifts to their political system. Most importantly, Argentinian people sought a charismatic leader who could connect with the masses. (Gaudio, 1984) A great example of his effort to help the masses was connecting and forming an alliance with the CGT (Confederación de Trabajadores) and recognizing worker needs. Perón implemented policies that benefited workers and organized labor, including extending collective bargaining rights, establishing social security benefits, and promoting workers' rights to unionize.

### **Cultural Factors**

Argentinian people were looking for a shift to their nation's system early in the 20th century. It is essential to mention that Argentinians were looking to become a much larger exporting economy in Latin America and looked at Europe as a blueprint. Argentina sought to become a powerhouse like the United States or Britain, but pursued a . This aspiration was fueled by a desire to increase exports and enhance Argentina's role as a leading economic power in Latin America. Moreover, Argentina became an extremely polarized nation. The conflict between proponents of democracy, advocating for representative government and civil liberties, and supporters of dictatorship (usually the elites and higher class), favoring strongman rule and centralized authority, defined Argentine politics for much of the century. It is important to note that Peron cultivated a relationship with the church through the humanitarian values of his presidency and led him to be viewed as a great ally of the church. They did not, however, approve of his authoritarian tendencies. This ideological divide permeated every aspect of society, from political discourse to cultural expression, exacerbating tensions and hindering efforts to achieve consensus or national reconciliation. This polarization helped Perón get to power as he used the divide to split the nation into Peronists and those against Perón, using his umbrella term and populist rhetoric to give himself a chance at gathering enough support to win the popular vote.

### **How Peronism connects to populism**

When we look at Peronism and how it connects to the technicalities of populism, we can see that Perón's ideology closely follows the principles of populism. Firstly, Peronism emphasizes a strong leader figure. Perón portrayed himself as a champion of the lower and working class and their rights. Moreover, Peronism advocates for social justice and economic

reforms, mainly benefiting the working class and marginalized sectors of society. This populist approach seeks to address economic inequalities and grievances, often through redistributive policies and government intervention in the economy. Perón also put in place a sense of nationalism and ensured that Argentine businesses and people could succeed over their international adversaries in the economy. In addition, Perón also fostered a sense of mass participation and mass communication. Perón encouraged and ensured that the lower class found a way to have their voices heard, which resonates with the ideology of populism. According to McGuire, Peronism lacked party institutionalization purposely. Peronism was an umbrella term created in the 1940s by Peron; it pulled people from all groups and income brackets; this is an essential factor as populist figureheads are known to appear on both sides of the political spectrum and are grouped by their political style and not their political beliefs (Caruso, 2017; Besoky, 2013). (McGuire, 1999)

It is important to note that Justicialismo, the political ideology pursued by Juan Domingo Perón, emphasizes social justice, economic nationalism, and a strong state presence in the economy. It mobilizes support through a cult of personality and employs populist tactics like mass rallies. In contrast, Populism is a much more generalized ideology, which, as I have mentioned before, lacks an agenda and political structure. Populism is much more related to a leadership style than a political tactic.

Moreover, a charismatic authority at the top is necessary (in this case, Perón and later Evita). Eva Perón, often affectionately referred to as "Evita," was the wife of Juan Peron. She was born María Eva Duarte. Evita's main accomplishments included her advocacy for the poor and marginalized by establishing the Fundación Eva Perón, which provided essential social

services and housing for millions of Argentines. She is remembered chiefly for her social welfare initiatives, impassioned speeches, and enduring impact on Argentine politics and society.

Finally, Perón also showed some fascist tendencies as he sought to have some centralized power with him as the movement's leader. It is important to note that he had to be cautious with these tendencies. Argentina endured many military regimes before he found his way into power, and the Argentine people wanted change in their political system.

### **Characteristics of Perón's term in power**

#### **Political Variables**

When looking at Perón's term in power, we must first understand the political variables that marked his presidency. Firstly, it is essential to talk about the populist rhetoric. Most populists find a way to create some institutionalization and cult-like support. In the case of Perón, he made his party, the Justicialist Party (Partido Justicialista), to which he was able to incorporate elements of nationalism, social justice, and corporatism. He also appealed to a broad coalition of supporters ranging from blue-collar workers to middle-class citizens. Perón's charismatic leadership and ability to mobilize mass support cultivated a cult-like following among his supporters, who viewed him as a champion of the people and protector of their interests. Moreover, Perón's charismatic leadership and ability to mobilize mass support cultivated a cult-like following among his supporters, who viewed him as a champion of the people and protector of their interests, tying him with populist theoretical approaches. Finally, it is critical to note that he also used an ideology of "us vs. them" against the elites to split the population into two groups and pull half the population, which was an extremely efficient way to gather support. (Azzolini, 2016) A specific instance of a time where he referred to a conflict as an "us vs. them" conflict occurred on October 17th, 1945, when he gave a speech at the Plaza de

Mayo in Buenos Aires. He referred to himself as the defender of the "descamisados" (shirtless ones), referring to the working-class masses. He also reassured the masses that his loyal servants would be rewarded for their loyalty to their nation.

### **Economic Variables**

One of the main variables that stood out during Perón's term in power was the implementation of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) policies. ISI aims to protect and promote domestic industries by substituting imports with locally produced goods. ISI in Argentina was achieved by placing high tariffs on imported goods to facilitate the country's goods. It is important to note that, as early as the 1920s, like Europe, Argentina began building infrastructure for small-scale industry, which allowed for national GDP to rise drastically before and especially during the tenure of Perón. Perón believed that Argentina should pursue ISI, which matched his idea of economic nationalism, as he tried to make Argentina self-sufficient. In turn, this promoted national industry and lowered the need for imports. An example of these is the tariffs Peron placed on international businesses.

As mentioned, the Argentinian people believed they needed a new implementation to achieve their financial goals. Perón implemented a political/economic strategy that ensured exports took over the Argentinian economy, encouraging the nation to use its primary resources and labor force instead of relying on imports from other countries.

### **Social Variables**

The social variables that characterized Perón's time in power included his efforts to generate welfare programs and implement policies that would benefit the lower class and working sectors. Perón passed legislation and transformed labor movements (These include agrarian reforms and efforts to raise worker salaries and benefits). Perón formed a symbolic and

deep relationship with workers; his efforts to increase wages, worker safety, and political inclusion made him extremely popular. Perón's government implemented social housing programs to address housing shortages and provide affordable housing options for low-income families (Palacio, 2011). The National Institute of Housing was established to oversee the construction of housing developments and provide housing subsidies to eligible individuals and families. Also, educational programs and the generation of more jobs leading to more financial benefits for a booming middle class were among the most essential projects Perón pursued during his time in power. Additionally, Perón's government undertook extensive infrastructure development projects to modernize Argentina's transportation, energy, and communication networks. Investments in roads, railways, ports, and public utilities facilitated economic growth, expanded market access, and improved connectivity across the country.

### **Cultural Variables**

Populism as an ideology and movement has certain variables present in most of their leaders. Media censorship is one of the factors that most often presents itself among populist leaders. Perón put a considerable emphasis on the media and how it reached the public. One of the main characteristics of Perón's first stint in power was how he silenced his political adversaries, including those who criticized Eva and her work. He only let messages that would benefit his political movement and spread his ideology reach the public. Moreover, Peronism as an ideology closely resembled the ideals of Che Guevara, who stood far left in the spectrum and strongly supported fascist movements. He went on to become a figure of revolution in Latin America. Moreover, Peronism also took in the influence of the Italian leader Benito Mussolini, with the cult-like personality his followers had for him and the vital role the state had on the economy. In addition, Peronism also aligned with the church and Christian values.

Besides, one of the main factors that truly characterizes and makes the case of Perón truly one of a kind is his effort and the way he embraces being the figurehead of a movement, which Cardenas did not want to become. Perón, unlike other Latin-American populists, looked to connect with his supporters, consistently organized rallies and speeches, and made it an essential piece of his leadership to become a cult-like leader. He enjoyed the support and attention; he loved that people rallied around him and constantly tried to stay in power. His second stint in power over a decade later shows his ambition to remain in control. In addition, Perón looked to empower the lower class to speak for their rights. This empowerment helped workers negotiate their wages and working environment. Also, this effort has left a long-term impact on the relationship between workers and employers in the region, as it spotlighted the needs of those who had been quieted instead of those who benefitted from previous political regimes.

Finally, Peronism, specifically Eva Perón, Juan Perón's second wife, left a tremendous legacy in Argentina. Affectionately referred to as Evita, she left an indelible mark on the culture and society of Argentina, solidifying her legacy as one of the most revered and influential figures in the country's history. Beyond her role as the First Lady of Argentina during Juan Perón's presidency, Eva Perón played a pivotal role in championing social justice and advocating for the rights of the working class. Her impact on Argentine culture and society was profound, as she symbolized hope and empowerment for the marginalized segments of society. Eva Perón's efforts extended beyond mere rhetoric; she actively worked to address societal inequalities by spearheading initiatives in the educational and healthcare sectors, mainly by leading the construction of hospitals and schools. She implemented policies attempting to support rural and less fortunate sectors of society.

Moreover, Eva Perón's charismatic persona and tireless advocacy earned her widespread adoration and reverence, transforming her and Juan Perón into iconic figures in Argentine politics and culture. Their popularity transcended traditional political boundaries, with many viewing them almost as religious figures. Finally, it is essential to note that Eva Perón used her beauty and charisma to connect with the lower class. Also, she brought the blonde-white beauty image that is now present in Argentina. In a way, she personified when Argentinians wanted to perceive not only as beautiful but as their ideal way of life, with her singular dressing style and efforts in the working sector.

Eva Peron established the “Fundacion Eva Peron” in 1948. It aimed to address poverty, inequality, and social injustice by assisting the country's most vulnerable populations, especially in rural areas. Evita's primary efforts through the foundation focused on improving access to healthcare, education, and housing for people experiencing poverty. Evita's advocacy and fundraising efforts mobilized vast resources to support these initiatives, earning her widespread admiration in Argentina.

### **Historical opinion and legacy of Juan Perón in the literature**

Looking at Perón's legacy and how different sectors see him in the population, we can see that the lower class still admires and reveres him. His policies, including the recognition of labor unions, social security reforms, and improvements in working conditions, solidified his support among this demographic. Moreover, his efforts to fight against the elites made him widely popular among the working class. On the other hand, we can look at the elites, who see him as the opposite. His nationalization policies, labor rights, and protectionism were viewed as detrimental to private enterprise and economic growth. The consolidation of power under Perón's regime was perceived as a threat to the interests of the economic elite. Overall, the higher the

class of individuals, the less liked Perón was. Moreover, the more educated individuals also tended to dislike Perón, as populist regimes tend to be unpopular with the highly educated populations.

Let us fast forward to Perón's fall and analyze the factors that eventually led to his downfall. According to Salvatore, Perón's form of populism led to a highly polarized society, which led to a halt in political debate. Moreover, he argues that there was a lack of political accountability and a high rate of corruption. Furthermore, Salvatore also mentions that Perón failed to implement institutional reforms that could have promoted greater transparency, accountability, and good governance. (Salvatore, 2009) The lack of reforms made it difficult for Argentina to address its structural economic problems and prevented it from developing a robust institutional framework. Other opinions include Adelman, who believed that Perón and his government were intolerant of dissent and limited the political freedoms of political adversaries. This made it incredibly difficult for political diversification and opposition to appear. (Adelman, 1992) In addition, Potash argued that Perón's government relied too heavily on state control of the economy, which prevented the development of a dynamic and competitive private sector. This contributed to a need for more innovation and productivity growth. (Potash, 1962)

Last but not least, most members of the literature heavily discuss the effect that ISI had on the eventual downfall of Perón. Overall, ISI heavily impacted Perón's downfall, as Salvatore discusses, because ISI created a system of economic and political privileges dependent on state intervention and control. This system benefited small groups of elites and union leaders, who were heavily invested in the state-led economic model. ISI, nonetheless, created a significant obstacle to economic reform and limited Perón's ability to respond to external economic challenges and crises. (Salvatore, 2009)

Moreover, the same labor unions that Perón created were gaining significant political power, which allowed them to demand even more workplace benefits. In turn, it took much work for Perón to find common ground among all areas of society. In the short term, both ISI and Perón were highly successful. Sadly for Peronists, He eventually became less popular due to several factors, including the numerous adversaries he generated during his political career, the corruption that plagued his government, and his political personality. Perón, being of populist rhetoric and incapable of working with the opposition, led to declining popularity. His adversaries included the business elite and members of conservative factions. It is important to note that the death of Evita also impacted his popularity decline as she was seen as an incredibly popular figure. Once she passed, many of Peron's adversaries sought to find ways to undermine his legitimacy, such as the military coup in 1955.

### **Conclusion**

Perón's ascent to the presidency was shaped by a tumultuous period in Argentine history, marked by political instability, economic upheaval, and social unrest. The historical context of Peronism traces back to Argentina's experience with caudillos and authoritarian rule, followed by periods of democratic experimentation and economic challenges such as the Great Depression. Perón emerged as a populist leader who capitalized on the discontent and grievances of the working class, offering a vision of social justice, economic nationalism, and strong leadership.

Moreover, the variables that led to Perón's election were multifaceted and interconnected. Political factors, including weak party institutionalization and disillusionment with the existing political system, created fertile ground for Perón's populist rhetoric and appeal. Economic factors, such as the Great Depression and the pursuit of Import Substitution Industrialization, fueled discontent and provided opportunities for Perón to present himself as a champion of the

people against entrenched elites. Social factors, including urbanization, migration, and grievances among the working class, further contributed to the rise of Peronism as a mass movement.

The attributes that characterize populism, as exemplified by Perón and Peronism, include charismatic leadership, a focus on the needs and grievances of the "common people," and a rejection of established political elites. Peronism also embraced nationalism, corporatism, and state intervention in the economy, appealing to a broad coalition of supporters while polarizing society. Perón's historical legacy is subject to diverse interpretations, with admirers praising his social reforms and advocacy for the working class. At the same time, critics point to his authoritarian tendencies, economic mismanagement, and polarization of Argentine society. Finally, I believe Perón was a great example of "right place, right time." During his rise to power, Argentina was in the middle of industrialization, leading to bad working conditions for the lower class. Evidence of this comes during the Great Depression of the 1930s; Argentina faced economic challenges that led to reevaluating its financial strategy. The government of President Agustín P. Justo (1932-1938) implemented measures to promote industrialization, including tariff increases and import restrictions. These policies laid the groundwork for ISI well before Perón's term in power.

Furthermore, pressure from the US and other Latin American countries to remove the military regime led to discontent among the Argentinian lower class. Perón was the perfect candidate, secretary of labor, vice president, and minister of war. He was also seen as a great candidate by the lower and working class. He also possessed the support of union leaders due to his ideas about economic development. With the backing of the lower class due to his policies

supporting the workplace, he gathered a vast base of support from so many different sectors of society.

## **Chapter IV - Peronismo vs. Cardenismo: A Comparison**

In this chapter, I will compare Peronism in Argentina and Cardenismo in Mexico, focusing on the main political, economic, social, and cultural variables that led to their time in power. Moreover, I will also focus on the events that characterized their terms in power respectively. I will also delve into the origins and ideologies of Peronism and Cardenismo, comparing their leaders' backgrounds and the foundational principles of each movement. Subsequently, I will compare their legacies and how they are regarded by different groups in society and within the academic literature.

Lázaro Cárdenas's presidency, known as Cardenismo, was shaped by a confluence of factors that propelled him to power amidst a backdrop of economic, social, and political upheaval in Mexico. The Great Depression and long-standing agrarian issues cast a shadow of economic hardship over the nation, intensifying social disparities and igniting widespread worker unrest. Frustrated by their lack of rights and persistent inequalities, workers staged frequent revolts, underscoring the urgent need for reform and representation. The lower classes clamored to be heard on a socio-cultural level, advocating for land redistribution and more significant inclusion in governance. Cárdenas's tenure as president was marked by pivotal events, including the takeover of oil resources and the establishment of labor unions, aimed at redressing these grievances and empowering the marginalized segments of society. His bold initiatives endeared him to the lower and working classes, who revered him for his unwavering commitment to social justice and his efforts to uplift the most vulnerable members of Mexican society.

On the other hand, Peronism emerged in Argentina amidst a complex web of political, economic, social, and cultural factors that paved the way to power for Perón. Moreover, the lower class yearned to be heard and sought representation in a landscape marked by instability,

frequent coups d'état, and the dominance of military regimes. In addition, Peronism advocated for Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) and protectionist policies to foster domestic industry and shield Argentina from global economic fluctuations. Also, deep-seated resentment among the lower class towards the elite and the desire for a charismatic leader to champion their cause led Argentina to follow a leader such as Peron. It is also important to note that their history of following caudillos and strongmen made Peron an increasingly popular figure. Culturally, Argentina's aspirations for economic growth and its polarized societal fabric fueled the rise of Perón as a figurehead. Perón's tenure was characterized by significant events, including the creation of the Peronist Party, which was done to create institutionalization.

On the other hand, there was also heightened polarization within Argentine society. Despite the controversy, Perón's legacy endures, particularly among the lower and working classes, who regard him highly for implementing welfare programs and prioritizing public needs, cementing his place as a transformative leader in Argentine history. It is also important to note within his legacy that his wife, Eva Peron, also played a massive role in his tenure in power and created various institutions and hospitals to support the disenfranchised.

### **Comparison of Variables Leading to Power**

When comparing Argentina's and Mexico's socio-cultural, economic, and political states, respectively, when Cárdenas and Perón got to power, we can see two drastically different worlds. In Argentina, we saw a nation plagued by political and military turmoil, from caudillos to coup d'états in the centuries leading to Perón's term in power. The frequent political instability and the army interventions created fertile ground for Perón's emergence as a charismatic leader. In contrast, in Mexico, the legacy of the Mexican Revolution and the clamor for agrarian reforms propelled Cárdenas to power. What's more, when comparing the case of Mexico to the case of

Argentina, we can also see a much more steadfast government, which has been much more stable in the century leading to Cardenas.

Furthermore, Mexico and Argentina were quite similar in some senses, as both were recovering from the great depression and sought financial alternatives that would lead to national business success. They differed because Argentina had already embarked on Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) efforts to reduce import dependency and stimulate domestic industry. This strategy, often called a "sugar daddy for the poor," involved protectionist measures to nurture local sectors and promote economic self-sufficiency. The country experienced significant industrial growth during this period, with a focus on developing sectors such as manufacturing and infrastructure. On the other hand, Mexico faced very different challenges. Mexico experienced a much harsher reality thanks to the great depression and the international financial situation. It led Mexico's economy to tank, the growth of global businesses, and struggles for the lower and working class, who sought worker rights.

Finally, comparing the cultures of both countries, we can see that Argentina was characterized by a diverse cultural heritage influenced by European immigration. The nation aspired to become a significant economic power in Latin America. Moreover, European powers heavily influenced them in their financial and cultural ideals. Something that becomes very important is their standard of beauty, how Argentinians perceived European traits, and how they look more beautiful than Latin Americans. The impact of Europe on Argentina becomes increasingly relevant when we consider how vital Eva Perón was during Perón's time in power and the image that she went on to have among the lower and working class. Comparatively, Mexico had a much more connected national identity defined by a rich blend of indigenous, Spanish, and mestizo influences, reflecting its complex history of colonization and indigenous

heritage. Mexican culture was marked by vibrant art, music, and cuisine rooted in pre-Columbian traditions and Catholicism.

### **Key events and actions that characterized Cardenas' and Peron's time in power**

One of the critical distinctions between Perón and Cárdenas' terms of power was their approaches to institutionalization. Cárdenas focused on empowering labor unions and enacting progressive legislation to formalize representation for the lower class within existing institutions in Mexico. These institutions included the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM). Lázaro Cárdenas facilitated the creation of several other labor unions during his presidency in Mexico. These included regional and industrial unions representing workers in specific sectors such as mining, agriculture, transportation, and manufacturing. Cárdenas also supported revitalizing the Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers (CROM), a historic labor federation advocating for labor rights and social justice. Furthermore, his administration backed the formation of unions like the Mexican Electrical Workers' Union (SME), which played a crucial role in defending workers' rights in the electrical industry, and the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE), representing educators and promoting education reform. These labor unions, alongside the CTM, provided platforms for workers to organize, collectively bargain, and assert their interests, contributing significantly to efforts to promote social and economic justice in Mexico during Cárdenas's presidency. In contrast, Perón relied on creating his political party, the Peronist Party, to institutionalize his ideology and consolidate power in Argentina. While Cárdenas worked within established structures, Perón established a new political entity to advance his vision.

Another distinction in institutionalization under Perón in Argentina was his efforts to create a narrative of “us vs. them” between the lower class and the elites. This created a polarized and divided nation where people would be forced to pick a side, which is one of the

main reasons he eventually became so powerful. He was able to control the media and make himself a prevalent figure. Perón strategically utilized propaganda and state-controlled media to cultivate his image and propagate his populist ideology.

It is important to note that this is where the most significant difference comes from. Perón aimed to become a figurehead in society, and he enjoyed the attention and met with his supporters in many instances. Perón cultivated a cult of personality around himself, presenting himself as the embodiment of the will of the people and the primary agent of change. Comparatively, Cárdenas focused more on passing legislation and protecting the lower class. We can see this in his efforts to empower grassroots organizations, labor unions, and indigenous communities, giving them a significant role in shaping policy decisions and driving social change.

Additionally, Cárdenas prioritized transparency and accountability in government, leading to a decentralization of power and a much more inclusive and participatory political system. To boot, I find it crucial to mention that Cardenas also showed his true intentions to help the nation by putting in place his successor, Manuel Avila Camacho, his secretary of war, who was much more conservative than him, allowing stability to occur in Mexico. Comparatively, Peron tried to stay in power and constantly tried to diminish his opposition by attacking them in the media. ( In most instances, it was the wealthy elites and political adversaries)

In terms of their approaches to passing policy, Justicialismo (Peronismo) and Cardenismo differed tremendously. Under Peronismo, problems would be simplified, and so would their solutions. Peron made a real effort to make everything seem as simple as possible, which in turn helped him mobilize supporters. In contrast, Cárdenas recognized the multifaceted nature of Mexico's social and economic problems, which led him to be a much more patient leader.

Cardenas was more focused on passing reforms, such as labor rights legislation, to address underlying inequalities and promote long-term development. It is essential to mention, though, that socially, both Perón and Cárdenas aimed to uplift the lower and working class both economically and culturally to address inequalities and disparities present in society.

Ultimately, another key difference to note is that Juan Perón's wife, Eva Perón, also made his presidency unique. She had a much more significant impact than Cardenas' wife, Alejandra Solorzano, on his presidency (Mexican wives of presidents were never around). Eva Perón's influence extended to various aspects of Argentine society and politics. She championed women's rights and played a prominent role in advancing women's suffrage in Argentina, leading to legislation granting women the right to vote in 1947. She spearheaded numerous social welfare initiatives and charitable programs to address poverty and inequality, including establishing hospitals, orphanages, and shelters for the disadvantaged. Although she passed in 1952, she still went on to impact Argentinian politics and society in the decades following her passing.

### **Comparing Justicialismo ( Peronism ) and Cardenismo to Populist Rhetoric**

Perón skillfully employed populist rhetoric, emphasizing the dichotomy between the ordinary people and entrenched elites, fostering a sense of unity and loyalty among his followers. Perón leveraged extensive media control and propaganda to disseminate his populist message, put down his adversaries, and amplify his image as a transformative figure. Central to his populist agenda was the promotion of protectionist policies and the continuation of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), aimed at bolstering domestic industries and shielding Argentina from global economic pressures. His populist legislation, such as labor rights reforms and social welfare programs, further endeared him to the masses, consolidating his popularity

among the lower and working classes. Moreover, he created institutionalization through the Peronist party and used Peronism as an umbrella term to pull in more supporters. Peronism as an ideology shares vast similarities with populism as it emphasizes the centrality of the leader as the embodiment of the people's will and the primary agent of change. However, what distinguishes Peronismo from traditional populism is how Peronism prioritizes the state's role in promoting economic development, social justice, and national sovereignty through centralized decision-making. Finally, one last difference is the way Peron advocated for corporatism. His attempt to unite the government and labor unions to benefit the economy makes this clear.

Comparatively, Cárdenas had a populist rhetoric that resonated with the masses, as he championed initiatives such as agrarian reform and the advancement of labor movements. By advocating for women's suffrage and using terms like "the people," Cárdenas portrayed himself as a champion of social justice and equality. Moreover, his actions to institutionalize populism were significant, as seen in his establishment of labor unions and the creation of institutions aimed at amplifying the voices of ordinary citizens. The landmark oil expropriation further underscored his commitment to populist ideals as he reclaimed control of Mexico's natural resources to benefit the nation's people. What sets Cardenismo apart from traditional populism is its emphasis on institutional reform and systemic change. Cardenismo prioritizes transforming Mexico's political and economic structures to empower marginalized groups and promote long-term development. Unlike Peronism, which emphasized the role of the leader and centralized state control, Lázaro Cárdenas promoted a much more participatory and decentralized government. Finally, Cárdenas prioritized the transformation of Mexico's political and economic structures to empower marginalized groups and promote long-term development. In short,

Cardenas and his legacy as a populist are much more related to the situation he was put in than his actions in government, which, in retrospect, helped the nation on a grassroots level.

### **Contrasting the Legacy of Peron and Cardenas**

Perón's legacy in Argentina is characterized by his enduring impact on the country's political landscape, as he established Peronismo (Justicialismo) as a dominant political force, shaping Argentine politics for decades to come and its social and economic development. He also created institutionalization through the creation of the Peronist Party. Moreover, Perón's legacy includes a mix of nationalism and corporatism, as well as his emphasis on the centralization of power and creating a cult-like following to his movement (of which he was the figurehead). He implemented populist policies to mobilize support from the working class and marginalized sectors of society while consolidating his authority through authoritarian measures. Looking at his legacy, it is essential to note that his second wife, Eva Peron, also impacted Argentinian society and built hospitals, schools, and other infrastructure to support the lower class and rural sectors. In contrast, Cárdenas's legacy in Mexico is defined by his transformative presidency, which laid the groundwork for Mexico's modernization and development. He implemented progressive reforms such as agrarian reform labor rights legislation and spearheaded the nationalization of the oil industry and the creation of PEMEX. He also addressed structural inequalities and empowered marginalized groups by creating labor unions. What's more, he also found other ways to institutionalize Mexico through his empowerment of rural communities. Cárdenas's legacy also includes his commitment to social justice, democracy, and nationalism and his promotion of Mexico's cultural heritage and indigenous rights. Unlike Perón, who centralized power and emphasized the role of the leader, Cárdenas pursued a more

participatory and inclusive approach to governance, empowering grassroots organizations and promoting broader social mobilization. In addition, I also find it crucial to mention that in contrast to Peron, Cardenas was put in place as a figurehead because of his circumstances and not because of his own doing, unlike Peron, who truly embraced the cult-like support. Lastly, Cardenas also spearheaded Mexico's transition out of ISI, and even though many more presidents after him also had a tremendous impact on the nation's progress, Cardenas' influence can not be understated.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Both Cardenas and Peron had very complicated yet different rises to power amidst the challenging socio-political landscape in their respective countries. In the case of Peron, Argentina experienced a period of political and economic instability characterized by social unrest, labor strikes, and power struggles between different political factions. Argentina, emerging from the Great Depression and facing the aftermath of World War II, grappled with economic challenges and social tensions. Perón, a military officer and government official, capitalized on these conditions to advance his political ambitions. He cultivated alliances with labor unions and populist factions, positioning himself as a champion of society's working class and marginalized sectors. Perón's tenure as Minister of Labor and Social Welfare under President Ramón Castillo provided him with a platform to mobilize support and promote his populist agenda. His charismatic leadership style and populist rhetoric resonated with Argentine citizens disillusioned with traditional political elites.

On the other hand, the context leading up to Lázaro Cárdenas's presidency in Mexico was shaped by the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution and ongoing struggles for social justice and economic equality. Mexico, emerging from a civil war and political upheaval period, sought to

consolidate its gains from the revolution and address long-standing grievances among the rural and urban poor. Cárdenas, a revolutionary leader and former governor of Michoacán, rose to prominence within the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) by championing agrarian reform and advocating for the interests of the lower class.

In short, Populism is a political ideology characterized by its appeal to the concerns and grievances of ordinary people against perceived elites or established institutions. Populist leaders often present themselves as champions of the ordinary people, promising to address their grievances and restore power to the masses. Populist movements typically employ rhetoric that pits "the people" against "the elite" or "the establishment," emphasizing themes of nationalism, anti-establishment sentiment, and the need for radical change. Populist leaders often cultivate a cult of personality, projecting themselves as charismatic figures who embody the people's will. Finally, its central tenets usually include a distrust of traditional political institutions, a focus on the needs and desires of the majority, and a rejection of perceived elite dominance.

Perón sought to embody the archetype of the populist leader, presenting himself as the champion of the ordinary people against entrenched elites. Perón cultivated a cult of personality around himself, emphasizing his connection with the masses and positioning himself as the embodiment of the nation's will. His populist rhetoric and policies aimed to mobilize popular support from the working class and marginalized sectors of society, rallying them behind his vision for social and economic transformation. Furthermore, Perón sought to institutionalize his power by creating the Justicialist Party (Partido Justicialista). Perón's administration also employed authoritarian tactics to silence opposition voices and consolidate his control over the political landscape, further centralizing power within his regime.

In contrast, Cardenismo emphasized collective action and systemic change, which led to a grassroots shift in the empowerment of marginalized groups and promoted social justice through progressive reforms and institutional transformations. Rather than relying solely on the leader's figure, Cardenismo promoted participation and collaboration between the government and institutions created by Cardenas, such as the CTM. Cárdenas's administration implemented policies such as agrarian reform and labor rights legislation and, most importantly, spearheaded the nationalization of oil, leading to the nation's empowerment.

The legacies of Perón and Cárdenas resonate differently among the lower class and the elites, reflecting the complex dynamics of power and representation in Argentina and Mexico. Cárdenas is revered as a champion of the lower class and labor unions, with his administration enacting transformative policies to improve the socio-economic conditions of marginalized communities. His commitment to agrarian reform and the empowerment of workers solidified his status as a symbol of social justice and equality. In contrast, Perón's legacy is often elevated to that of a deity or figurehead, embodying a cult of personality that transcends political boundaries. While indicative of Perón's enduring influence, this portrayal underscores the dangers of authoritarian leadership and personality cults, an image Cárdenas consciously avoided. Despite their differing personas, both leaders are celebrated for their advocacy of worker rights and social welfare, much to the chagrin of the elites who viewed their populist policies as a threat to their interests.

I contend that populism transcends conventional political spectra, representing a diverse array of leadership styles united by a commitment to championing the interests of the common people. Moreover, I argue that Perón's embodiment of the caudillo archetype, characterized by charismatic leadership and centralized authority shows the idea of populism perfectly, as he

sought to find the best forms of leadership in order to make himself the most popular figure. What's more, Peron's institutionalization of power also epitomizes the fusion of populism with institutional governance as he sought to create the Peronist Party to consolidate state institutions under his control. Comparatively, I argue that the case of Cardenismo was extremely different in a sense. Although it may seem like populism at first sight, and has a lot of the same characteristics, Cardenas pursued a different type of institutionalization, one which focused on empowering workers and the disenfranchised. Also, he continuously made decisions for the good of the nation, most evidently in his selection of successor, as Camacho was much more central than he was. Finally, I also argue that Cardenas did not want to be the figurehead of a movement, he was forced into this place of power due to the circumstances Mexico was facing when he got to the spotlight.

During my research I found that it was very difficult to find any documents which were of the same time period, especially related to the lower and working classes. Moreover, I would have liked to have access to more documents coming from the middle class and people who were really impacted by the presidencies and Peron and Cardenas respectively. What's more, I would have also wanted more written records coming from rural areas, as uneducated individuals never shared their experience on written record, effectively silencing their opinion to a contemporary researcher.

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