



PROFILE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN CHARISMATIC LEADER

Vol 1: Cristina Kirchner, Evo Morales & Rafael Correa



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Executive Summary

Leaders are fundamental figures in a political system as they make up the elites in charge of crucial decisions, thus determining the way the country is going to operate. So, why do voters choose a leader? We can consider that it is because voters think that the leaders they are choosing represent the best option available in order to have a better quality of life, however, many times other elements that make up the political discourses can have a significant weight in these decisions. We are talking about the affective bonds that leaders are able to establish with the electorate; their ability to make them feel heard, even when their political project is not the one that will truly lead to progress in the country. In this sense, the charismatic leader can be highlighted as a type of leadership that needs to be analyzed in order to understand how this preference is affecting democracy in Latin America.

This report is dedicated to the analysis of the emergence of charismatic leaders in Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador, with the purpose of highlighting the similarities between them and elucidating the reasons that led to the hegemony of a political project.

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WHAT IS A CHARISMATIC LEADER?

There are several ideas regarding the elements that make up the profile of a charismatic leader. Weber's (1919) definition is considered classical, as it summarizes briefly what characterizes this style of domination:

“ (...) The domination produced by the surrender of the subjugated to the purely personal charisma of the leader. In its highest expression the idea of vocation is rooted. **The surrender to the charisma of the prophet, of the warlord in war, or of the great demagogue in the Ecclesia or the Parliament, means, in effect, that this figure is seen as that of someone who is internally called to be the leader of men, who do not give him obedience because he is commanded by custom or a legal norm, but because they believe in him, and he himself,** as he is not an ephemeral and presumptuous petty upstart, but lives for his work. It is to his person and his qualities that the discipleship, the entourage, the party is given.”

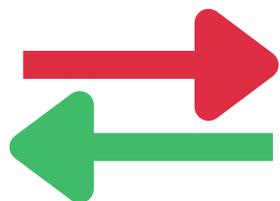
Weber (1919) "Science as a profession, politics as a profession."

In other words, a charismatic leader is someone who manages to generate adhesions to his ideas by cultivating an image that presents him as a character with extraordinary qualities. Considering this idea in the Latin American context, we have several characters who stood out in the political history of their countries, not because of the effectiveness of their government plans, but because of their personal attributes. According to Castillo (2009), a charismatic leader is someone who has the following qualities:

- 1. Is able to perceive the deficiencies in the existing context,** feel the need for change and formulate a new vision. A vision that is understood as a new image of the organization's future formulated by the leader.
- 2. He must be able to transmit to the members of the organization the importance of his vision** and to instill in his followers the need for change in the direction he has indicated, for this it is necessary for the charismatic leader to be a good communicator.
- 3. He must be able to inspire in the members of his organization a great faith and confidence in him and in the vision he holds.** This can be achieved in several ways: by taking personal risks, showing that he does not do things for personal gain, demonstrating total dedication to the cause, and demonstrating that he or she is the most knowledgeable in matters related to the vision.
- 4. By accomplishing all of the above, it makes the followers gain a great deal of self-confidence and ultimately, the initial vision is fulfilled.**

WHAT IS CHARISMATIC LEADER?

Based on this definition, it can be affirmed that Latin American charismatic leaders possess the profile of a person who:



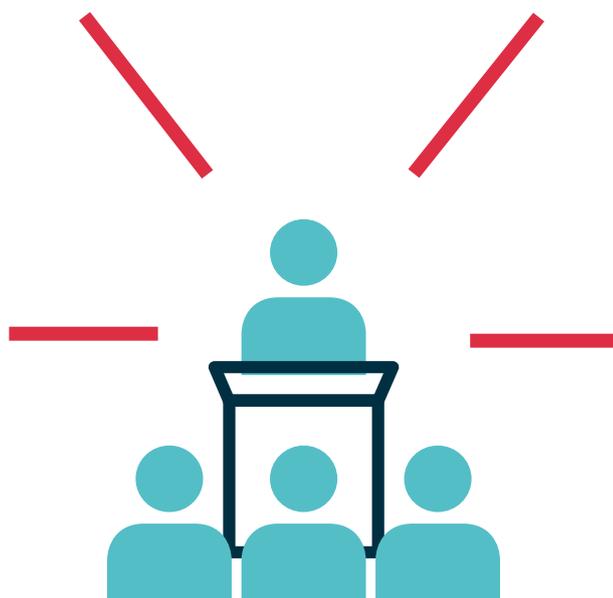
Seeks a change or revolution of the model currently implemented



Exploits current situations and traditions for his or her own benefit



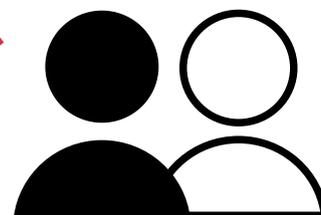
Shows him or her self as someone who gets involved in politics out of his or her own conviction and not because of profit.



Is a mediatic character



It is defined as indispensable for the fulfillment of its project.



His or her discourse is polarizing and implies an antagonism between "victims" and "victimizers".

CRISTINA KIRCHNER

Cristina Fernández Kirchner, president of Argentina from 2007 to 2015 has been classified as a charismatic leader, due to the characteristics she shares with the charismatic leader profile:

TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND TRADITIONS FOR HER OWN BENEFIT.

Fernandez has evoked ideas of Peronism in her speech and emulated certain characteristics of Eva Peron, wife of Juan Domingo Peron. **These leaders, despite their physical disappearance decades ago, are still remembered and admired by Argentines belonging to the Peronist movement, of which Cristina has also been a part since her youth.** Eva Perón, in particular, was important in promoting policies that favored workers' unions in Argentina and women's rights.

"When she speaks of Néstor she does not name him, but speaks of 'him', **she acquires a very strong personality and speaks with a tone that is not political, that is more emotional.** Those speeches are **reminiscent of Evita's rhetorical style** in some moments, especially in her last years, when her death was approaching" (Marysa Navarro, 2011, BBC interview.).

Both figures share similarities, such as **losing their husbands prematurely and being very devoted to them even after their death, having played the role of First Lady and being important female figures in Argentine politics,** which has led to comparisons that the President has used to her advantage.

NO APPARENT PROFIT MOTIVE

Cristina has shown herself as a leader with a projection towards social justice, distancing herself from the **neoliberal policies implemented by other Argentine presidents, which have been widely rejected by the population.** In her government, public spending on social programs was 41.2% of GDP, almost double the amount spent before the Kirchnerist governments (Buscaglia, 2020).

"To me what always moves me are the people's feelings. **The love of the people, that love, that feeling is the best thing someone can have.**" (Cristina Kirchner, 2019, During a homage to Eva Perón)

POLARIZING DISCOURSE

Fernández created a narrative of conflict between large corporations and her search for better conditions for the Argentine working sector, also evoking one of the objectives of Perón's government. With Cristina a conflict is created between the private sector and the State, which, through interventionist policies, such as restrictions on meat exports and the nationalization of important companies such as Aerolíneas Argentinas and the oil company YPF, seeks to have greater control over these entities for the "benefit of the workers".

"(...) I am the President of the 40 million Argentines, not of the corporations" (Cristina Kirchner, 2011, Speech at her inauguration as President).

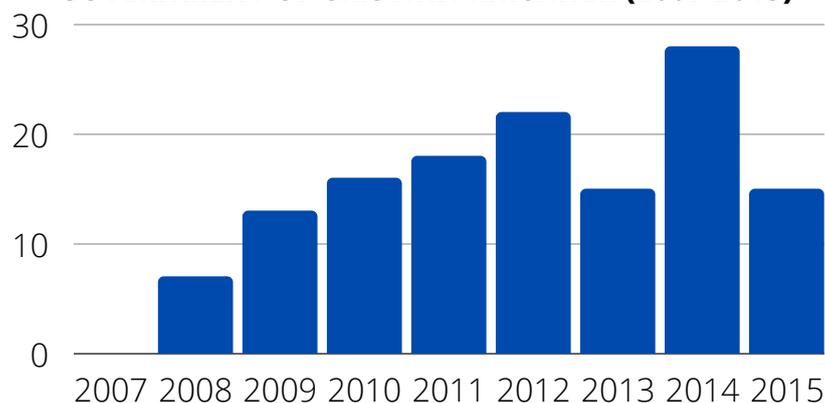
1000%

THE AMOUNT THE KIRCHNER FAMILY'S FORTUNE INCREASED FROM 2003 TO 2015 (BBC, 2015).

MEDIATIC FIGURE (1)

The president also distinguished herself during her administration for her presence in the media. A total of 121 speeches were broadcasted by all national media; the topics varied from announcing the payment of the foreign debt with funds from the Central Bank in 2009, to the inauguration of a municipal building. Likewise, throughout his administration, her time on television increased, as did the lack of relevance of the topics covered, even though the law requires that the broadcasts deal with topics of "national transcendence".

NO. OF NATIONAL BROADCASTS DURING THE GOVERNMENT OF CRISTINA KIRCHNER (2007-2015)



(1) InfoBae (2015)

4.600

MINUTES KIRCHNER SPOKE IN TOTAL DURING THE BROADCASTS

CRISTINA KIRCHNER

IN SEARCH FOR CHANGE

Kirchner has shown herself to be against the neoliberal policies presented both in the government of Mauricio Macri and in 2001 with Fernando de la Rúa, who could not finish his mandate due to the riots that demanded his resignation in the face of an adverse economic and social situation.

According to the president, **these policies are contrary to welfare and are destined to fail, therefore, she has always promoted a model oriented towards social justice.**

"The neoliberalism of (Michel) Temer, of (Mauricio) Macri, is doomed to failure. Not because they are more or less virtuous, neoliberal policies are going to fail regardless of whether Macri or a Nobel Prize winner implements them." (Cristina Kirchner, 2018, in the program "Conversando con Correa, Cronista)

THE CENTRAL PIECE TO HER PROJECT

"Con Cristina no es suficiente, pero sin ella no se puede" (Alberto Fernández, 2018, Perfil)

This fact is demonstrated by Kirchner's refusal to separate from politics despite her defeat in 2015. Specifically, **with the election of Alberto Fernandez in 2019, it can be evidenced how crucial the figure of Cristina is for Argentine politics, since she joined him as his running mate and now holds the position of vice-president of the country.**

Alberto Fernández served as campaign strategist for both Nestor and Cristina Kirchner, however, he had a short controversy in 2008 with the president when he opposed to a restructuring of the judicial system. Nevertheless, **in the 2019 him and Cristina won the elections with 47.4% of the popular vote, bringing Kirchnerism back to the Casa Rosada.** (Marca Claro, 2019)

Evo Morales was the President of Bolivia from 2006 to 2019. His government was focused on policies of inclusion of indigenous communities and the poorest and most vulnerable populations, an action that gave him enough popular support to carry out ambitious changes in the country, such as the reform of the Constitution in 2009 and his reelection for 3 consecutive terms.

USE OF HIS INDIGENOUS HERITAGE IN HIS SPEECH

Morales is of Aimara descent, an indigenous population located in Bolivia and Argentina. **His speech and actions have been accompanied by an intention of inclusion and celebration of these groups, according to him marginalized by previous governments.**

One of the most ambitious projects of his government was the reform of the country's Constitution. **This proposal obtained the support of 61.43% of the population** (BBC, 2019) and the text became the Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, in which the 36 indigenous languages spoken in the territory, together with Spanish, were declared official.

In addition, several rights of indigenous peoples were formalized, **such as a quota of indigenous parliamentarians, an indigenous native peasant justice system, the inclusion of a community-based social economic model based on the indigenous vision, the exclusive ownership of forest resources for this community, among others.**

"It really has to do with racism. I was impressed that in some cities small groups are racist. **They speak of wearing down the Indian, of overthrowing the Indian (...) they do not accept that an Indian can be governing well"** (Morales, 2007, La Nación).

\$6,8 M

MONEY FROM PUBLIC FUNDS ALLOCATED TO UNFULFILLED PROJECTS IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES (BBC, 2015).

EVO MORALES

HE IS IN POWER BECAUSE OF HIS PERSONAL BELIEFS, NOT BECAUSE OF MONEY.

Evo Morales has based his actions on an **economic policy in accordance with the principles of socialism**. In doing so, he has also disavowed capitalist practices in his discourse, especially regarding indigenous peoples and environmental conservation.

"(...) the struggle of the indigenous movement **is also an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist struggle**" (Evo Morales, 2017, El Comercio).

The president believes that **the crises being experienced worldwide**, such as the refugee crisis in Syria and the increase in economic inequality in the world, **are the fault of the failure and exhaustion of the capitalist system.**

POLARIZING DISCOURSE

In Evo's discourse **there is a profound rejection to the neoliberal policies of previous governments**, which ceded certain social rights of citizens in exchange for apparent economic stability. **This has led to a radical discourse that seeks to promote an economic and political project based on socialism**, through which the inclusion of indigenous peoples is promised, but which has also pitted them against other communities in the country.

An example of this are the protests seen in 2019, after the electoral fraud in the fourth candidacy (considered illegal) of Evo Morales. La Paz (opposition majority) and El Alto (indigenous majority, where the MAS has not lost a single election) clashed in the streets causing riots, injuries and deaths.

"I am surprised, now two, three people tying 'pitas', putting 'llantitas', what kind of strike is that? (...) **I am capable of giving workshops, seminars on how marches are done, to them so they can learn**" (Morales, 2019. On the protests against him, Página Siete).

After 6 weeks of protest (1):

34

Deaths

89

Injured

206

Arrested

(1) Reuters (2019)

WAR AGAINST PRIVATE MEDIA

Evo Morales does not present himself as a telegenic candidate in the same sense as the other leaders studied in this report. He has taken action to promote himself through the state channel Bolivia TV and he has openly opposed the country's independent media, claiming that they are waging a "media war" against him. And in addition, his government transferred 611.2 million Bolivians to public broadcasters in exchange for favorable advertising to him in 2017, 2018 and 2019. (Page Seven, 2020)

AGAINST TRADITIONAL POLICIES

After his election, Morales decided to break with the neoliberal measures of the previous governments and change them for a model based on socialism. Although Bolivia has improved its economic indicators, this is not precisely due to the adoption of a socialist model, but to the rise in the prices of products of state-owned companies, such as gas.

This has given the impression of welfare and stability under this government due to his measures different to those implemented previously. However, this is the result of revenues based on international situations and the rise in public spending by the government which has increased from 30% of GDP to almost 40%. (Datos Macro, 2021)

"Media that do not receive publicity from the State are those who lie, insult, defame and discredit authorities. Will they be prebendal?" (Evo Morales, May 4, 2017 on Twitter @evoespueblo)

"I call for a reflection: where neoliberalism returns, if here the past returns means that neoliberalism returns, how would Bolivia be? How is Argentina now? [during the Macri government] You know that many brothers and sisters live in Argentina and some are returning [to Bolivia]" (Evo Morales, 2019, Sputnik News)

THE CENTRAL PIECE OF HIS PROJECT

Evo Morales is shown as the centerpiece of his political project, this can be seen in his idea of perpetuating himself in power, although the Constitution establishes that a candidate can run for reelection only once, that is, by fulfilling a maximum of two consecutive periods.

However, Morales argued that his first term, which occurred before the creation of a new Constitution "does not count" and ran for a fourth candidacy, despite the fact that 51.3% of Bolivian citizens opposed this in a referendum in 2016. The Electoral Tribunal empowered Morales for the 2019 elections, noting that banning his candidacy goes against his "human rights" and that the "No" option won by a very narrow margin.

"It's not like Evo just let go of power. The presidents of both legislative chambers are close to him, recently appointed his personal attorney as Attorney General... Morales has a lot of power. What you need to see now is how far Arce is going to govern or just be a Superminister of Economy sitting in the presidency" (Marco Montellano, Analyst, 2019, DW)

Likewise, **his influence in the MAS party is undeniable**, while governing the country, he has become one of the emblematic figures of the political coalition. **In addition, with the return of this political party in the last elections, people close to Morales have become part of the government of Luis Arce** (for example the daughter of the president, Evaliz Morales, serves as an official of the Attorney General's Office), despite the fact that the now President has stated that his government seeks to be different from its predecessor.

"The official count of @TSEBolivia concluded by confirming the resounding victory of the MAS-IPSP and @LuchoXBolivia with 55.10% of the vote. It is the victory of a country that wants economic stability and peace. We returned in millions thanks to the people!" (Evo Morales, October 23, 2020. on Twitter @evoespueblo)

RAFAEL CORREA

Rafael Correa emerged as a leader capable of conquering the masses through the introduction of emotional elements that managed to attract the most vulnerable classes of Ecuadorian society. This telegenic candidate came to the presidency in 2007, under the scheme of the "Citizen Revolution" and managed to govern for 10 years.

SELF-COMPARISON WITH HISTORICAL FIGURES

Correa emerged in a political landscape marked by economic and social instability. After a series of neoliberal governments, which promoted policies that exacerbated inequalities in the population, **Correa arrived as a renewal option, oriented towards social justice, combining this with a sharp and sometimes extreme discourse.**

"Simón Bolívar, brandishing his effulgent sword, our Manuela Sáenz, Bartolina Sisa of Bolivia, Policarpa Salavarrieta of Colombia and Micaela Bastidas of Peru, the "Libertadoras de los Andes", Eloy Alfaro Delgado, **are wills and examples that accompany our people in these transformation processes, their integrationist and libertarian example, shelters us.**" (Rafael Correa, 2011, Inauguration Ceremony of the Citizen Participation Days)

He has frequently compared his political practice to the actions of historical figures such as Simón Bolívar, Eugenio Espejo and Eloy Alfaro, and claims that his historical feat was to confront neoliberalism.

IN POWER BECAUSE OF HIS OWN BELIEFS

Continuing with his policy aimed at social justice and the reorientation of the economy towards a more equitable distribution of wealth, the **President states in his speech that he did not achieve this role out of personal ambition, but for the conviction of wanting to improve the situation of the country.**

"This was always my dream, working for my country, one of the most unjust in the world [...] I insist, this was always my dream, not an ambition. **You can be sure that my desire is only to serve"** (Rafael Correa, 2010, Enlace Ciudadano, in Meléndez)

However, **Correa faces 8 years in prison after being convicted for the "Bribes Case 2012-2016"** in which the company Odebrecht, among others, irregularly financed the president's party "Alianza País" in exchange for millionaire contracts. (BBC, 2020)

RAFAEL CORREA

IN FAVOR OR AGAINST

Correa has creative a series of enemies as part of his narrative. Among the entities he has faced in his government are the United States, opposition to his government, the media and part of the Armed Forces. This has generated a great polarization among Ecuadorian citizens.

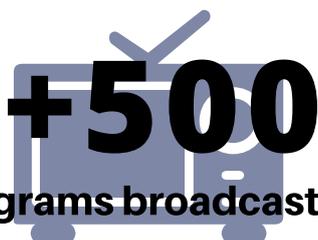
"These ink hitmen who cowardly take refuge in an inkwell for words or caricatures because they are joking and what they try is to vent their sickly, cowardly hatred, **they are like snipers who shoot**" (Rafael Correa, 2014, referring to the caricaturist of "EL Universo", Xavier Bonilla in an Enlace Ciudadano program. IFEX)

This is a common tactic among charismatic leaders, who tend to label as "enemy" any organization or person that is critical of their government, generating a dynamic of "permanent struggle" against these beings, giving a sense to their government and an idea of threat to their followers, who in turn trust the "hero" to wage this "dispute" and emerge victorious.

ENLACE CIUDADANO

As a fundamental part of the construction of the close relationship between the president and his followers, Correa conducted a weekly program entitled "**Enlace Ciudadano**" broadcasted on national television. During this program, the President gave updates on the progress of his government's policies, showed its agenda which included conferences and trips and expressed ideas on issues of national relevance.

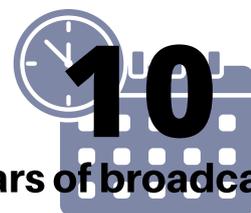
"The work that the president does, week by week, of reporting **is getting into people's hearts**. Consequently, our reaction **is to despise the media that are not truthful, in my opinion and that of a large majority of the Ecuadorian people...** And hence the result of the elections." (Anonymous participant in FLACSO Ecuador opinion poll, 2016)



Programs broadcasted



Hours long



Years of broadcasting

THE PRESIDENT FOR CHANGE

Through his political program, called "Citizen Revolution," Correa wanted to put the citizen and his needs at the center of policies, in contrast to previous governments.

The first example of this was the **Constituent Assembly developed in 2008**, from which emerged a new Constitution with which Correa sought to "refound" Ecuador. This gives a central role to the State in the country's economy, presents "socially advanced" norms in education and health and introduced immediate re-election for a second term.

"A new Constitution is required to overcome this sad and long neoliberal night, in which believe me that the country has been destroyed, everything has been dismantled, everything has been left boneless". (Rafael Correa, 2007, presenting to the CONESUP Commission to codify the proposal for the Constituent Assembly)

DIFFICULTIES LEAVING POWER

Correa has shown himself as a necessary piece for the continuation of his political project. **This is first demonstrated by the introduction of re-election in the Constitution approved during his government and in 2017, with the appointment of his expected successor, Lenin Moreno.**

"Only if I had been in Ecuador, **only with that**, I assure you that we would have won the elections". Rafael Correa, 2021, on the election results, BBC.)

At first, **Lenin's independence was under discussion**, as Correa still showed himself to be an influential figure within his government, however **this changed in October 2019, with the social outbursts** that occurred in the country due to the neoliberal reforms that the president wanted to impose in exchange for a loan from the IMF, **which marked a separation between Correa and Lenin and the consequent "end" -for the moment- of the correismo movement**, losing the 2021 election to Guillermo Lasso.



Conclusions

- In Latin America, charismatic leadership has led the government to parties and politicians with ideologies based on social justice and socialist elements; these are the cases of Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador. People like Cristina Kirchner, Evo Morales and Rafael Correa are politicians who knew how to take advantage of a historical moment and the needs and desires of the population, in which large sectors in a condition of vulnerability stand out, to establish a political project . In this project, they are the cornerstone of an order of social justice that announced the salvation of the population in the face of capitalism, neoliberal policies and in some cases the United States.
- Through their charisma, these leaders have established affective relationships with their followers, which can even cope with the bad policies implemented by them in some cases. As an example, it can be noted that Kirchner is the vice president of Argentina at the moment, despite the number of trials in which she has been involved in cases of corruption.
- While among these three leaders, Kirchner is the only one who currently holds a key position, it is possible to wonder whether the political projects of these three politicians have survived. It is important to note that Lenin Moreno and Luis Arce seemed to follow the same political project (although this was not the case with Moreno), obtaining a crucial base of electoral support. However, with the victory of Guillermo Lasso, a significant change and significant distance from the figure of Correa is observed.

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