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2. *Fundamental characteristics of unions in Latin America: an historical perspective* (e sottoparagrafi 2.1, 2.2, 2.3), Frangi Lorenzo

3. *Confidence in Trade Unions: a description of the trend*, Vincenzo Memoli

4. *Methodology*, Vincenzo Memoli

5. *The explicative model: results and discussion*, Vincenzo Memoli

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Unfolding the growing confidence in Latin American unions: a longitudinal analysis*

di Lorenzo Frangi[†] e Vincenzo Memoli*

Abstract

The relevance of unions in labour dynamics has been widely explored. However, little attention has been given to the relationship between society, broadly considered, and unions. Drawing on this perspective, this paper offers a longitudinal analysis (2004-2009) of the social confidence in unions in 17 Latin American (LA) countries. Despite the different union specificities in these countries, we focus on the most important common aspects of these unions, through a historical lens. This analysis allows us to develop some hypotheses about the tenets of the growing level of confidence in unions. We test them through a double-level empirical regression model based on Latin Barometer surveys and national economic indicators. The economic perception and the political and trustful orientations of the citizens play an important role in their confidence orientation towards unions.

JEL Classification: J51, J59.

Keywords: unions, trust, confidence, Latin America, latin barometer.

La spiegazione della crescente fiducia nei sindacati latinoamericani. Un'analisi longitudinale

Riassunto

La rilevanza dei sindacati nelle dinamiche del lavoro è un ambito di studio ampiamente esplorato. Scarsa attenzione è stata invece riservata al rapporto tra società, considerata in senso ampio, e sindacati. Il presente lavoro analizza quindi la fiducia sociale nel sindacato in diciassette paesi dell'America Latina in prospettiva longitudinale (2004-2009). Anche se i sindacati presentano delle caratteristiche proprie in ogni nazione, l'attenzione è rivolta ai loro molti aspetti comuni, evidenziati attraverso una prospettiva storica. Tale approccio consente di strutturare una serie di ipotesi in merito alla determinanti della crescente fiducia sociale nei sindacati. Tali ipotesi sono successivamente testate attraverso un modello di regressione logistica a due livelli, sviluppato a partire dai dati del "Latinobarometro" e della Banca Mondiale. I principali risultati evidenziano che la percezione che i cittadini hanno dell'economia, i loro orientamenti politici, nonché la loro fiducia negli altri (trust) svolgono un ruolo importante nel loro orientamento (confidence) verso i sindacati.

Classificazione JEL: J51, J59.

Parole chiave: sindacato, fiducia sociale, fiducia istituzionale, America Latina, latinobarometro.

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Introduction

Unions are at least as old as industrial economies. Their principal aim has largely been the improvement of workers' terms and conditions of employment, through the exertion of institutional pressure on employers as well as governments (Bennet and Kaufman, 2007a).

Sharp controversies about unions' effectiveness have historically marked the academic debate as well as public opinion (Bennet and Kaufman, 2007b). In particular, unions' effectiveness has largely been under discussion since the 1980s, due to economic and global structural changes that deeply influenced the labour market. Many of the international studies focusing on this issue have, moreover, largely tended toward the same conclusion of a widespread "crisis of unionism," most typically illustrated by a falling trend in unionization rates (e.g., Turner et al., 2001; Ebbinghaus and Visser, 2001; Hyman, 2002; Visser, 2006).

These studies have two important limitations. First, they are broadly focused on Western countries. Second, they are principally centred on the decrease of union density. However union density per se is a rough measure of union support in a society. Many workers are not eligible for unionization and, second, non-worker citizens (such as the unemployed, students, homemakers, and retirees) also have to be considered¹. Thus, the analysis of public opinion can substantially contribute to better understanding the characteristics of the relation between unions, citizens, and society. North American and European research studies have examined several aspects of unionism from a public opinion standpoint, such as whether unions are considered good or bad for the society, opinions about union leaders, perceptions of the social need for unions (e.g., Rouillard 2008; Givan and Hipp, 2012; Turner and D'Art, 2012). However, an indicator such as "social confidence in unions" has remained mostly underexplored.

Latin America is a compelling non-Western environment for observing social confidence toward unions. In contrast with many Western traditions, Latin American unions are distinguished by a high level of corporatism, high state dependency, and a limited shop floor presence. Moreover, it is interesting to observe the trustful relation that has linked the society to

¹ Not to mention the numerous methodological limitations associated with the method used to calculate unionization rates, which can vary greatly from one country to another or even from one jurisdiction to another within the same country. The methodological note published recently by the Bureau of Statistics of the International Labour Office is particularly enlightening in this regard: <http://laborsta.ilo.org/applv8/data/TUM/Methodological%20Note%20%20UNIONS2011.pdf>.

unions in recent years, due to political and economic changes. In fact, almost all Latin American countries experienced a transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic systems during the 1990s. As a result, citizens' opinions and unions are less politically constrained. Moreover, since 2003, the GDP index has been constantly growing in Latin America, and the current economic crisis has had a more minor impact than in Western countries (ECLAC, 2011).

In the next section, we address the debate about trust and confidence in institutions. Afterwards, we observe the most important historical characteristics of unions across Latin American countries. We then describe the trend of confidence in unions between 2004 and 2009, and we develop some hypotheses to explain it. In order to test them, we apply a logistic regression model to identify the determinants that principally explain social confidence in unions. The most important empirical results highlight that the economic, political, and trustful orientations of the respondents are the tenets on which the confidence in unions consolidates.

1. Form trust to confidence in unions

In order to study the trustful relation between Latin Americans and unions, the first step is to focus on the trust concept. Trust is a fundamental dimension of social capital (Putnam, 1993). According to Gambetta (1988), we can generally define trust as the subjective probability of social actor A expecting that another social actor B performs a given action on which actor A's welfare depends. Though its borders are blurred and it has become through time a user-friendly device for explaining many social dynamics, trust remains an outstanding concept in the debate of many social sciences (Smith, 2005). Moreover, it is generally acknowledged that a high presence of trust in a society is an important advantage. It is a social good that oils the wheels of cooperative social and economic behaviour (Fukuyama, 1995). In fact, trust can be analytically observed at different levels as an element that promotes society's functioning.

Giddens (1991) argues that society has become more and more socially and technologically complex, and that everyday life is increasingly dependent on abstract systems "disembedded" from local context and personal relations². Therefore, it is essential for citizens to trust in abstract systems in order to face their everyday lives.

² Abstract systems, such as legal and banking systems, are combinations of technical

At a lower level of abstraction, "trust in others" is another largely debated dimension of trust. It characterizes individual relationships with most people (generalized trust). People who trust others exhibit a propensity for vulnerability in conditions of interdependency and for assuming the risk that the trustee could act opportunistically (Rousseau *et al.*, 1998).

In a highly interdependent world, where people frequently come into contact with strangers, "trust in others" assumes an essential facilitating role. "Trust in others" is conceptually opposed to trust towards people we know (particularized trust) (Yamigichi and Yamigichi, 1994), and it has important social payoffs. It is a moral resource that leads us to look beyond ourselves. In turn, it helps to create a vibrant and virtuous community, where citizens are respectful towards one another, prone to cooperation and to joining associations (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1995a; Uslaner, 1996a). Thus, as Putnam (1995a, 1995b) argues, the trend of social trust tracks the decline in membership in associations particularly well. Moreover, Uslaner (1996b) underlines that generalized trust positively and deeply affects collective actions in a society³. Specifically, Hoell (2004) finds some positive evidence of a link between the individual generalized trust orientation and the level of union involvement.

At an even more abstract level, within the broader concept of trust, it is possible to differentiate confidence. Despite the theoretical difficulty in tracing clear borders between the two concepts (e.g., Lyons and Mehta, 1996; Tonkiss and Passey, 1999), the debate that analyses the empirical evidence of international public opinion surveys convergences on a fundamental denominational distinction: the trustful relationship that links citizens to institutions is referred to as confidence.

This analytical level of trust is highly situational and dependent on the characteristics of specific institutions in a society, in opposition to the trust in abstract systems and, partially, also to the trust "in others". The relation

means, procedures, professional expertise, and other structures. Trust in abstract systems enables dynamism in modern societies, by allowing social individuals to act with confidence in the absence of personal knowledge of, or contact with, the structures, people, and actions embodied in the system. Trust in abstract systems allows, for example, the use of a bank without detailed knowledge of its procedures or established relationships with its employees. Abstract systems are thus disembedding mechanisms, enabling time-space distancing and providing security and guarantees to their users (Schlichter 2010, p. 6).

³ Despite some critics (e.g., Smith, 1996), the following question in international surveys: "most people can be trusted", is confirmed as a good measure of confidence in strangers (Warren, 1999).

between confidence in institutions and generalized trust has been largely debated.

Although Hadenius (2001) sustains that confidence in institutions is not a consequence but an alternative, for those people who do not trust others, many empirical pieces of evidence have supported the notion that "generalized trust" is the propellant base that structures confidence in institutions (Putnam, 1995a). This is especially the case of social institutions that are not too far removed from political dynamics, such as, traditionally, unions (Lipset and Schneider, 1983).

Citizens are confident in institutions if they perceive that institutions do not assume an opportunistic behaviour and if their interests are encapsulated by the ones pursued by the institution (Hardin, 1999). The confidence is the outcome of the interaction of essentially three different mechanisms: cognitive, emotional, and identity (Dietz, 2004; Laplante and Harrison, 2008). In the first case, the individual's confidence orientation is based on a rational calculation of the impact of institutional performance on personal, or the larger groups', well-being (Newton and Norris, 1999).

The second and third mechanisms are different. In fact, the second is centred on the individual's emotions raised by a specific institution, and the third, on the perception of shared values. Moreover, these three mechanisms interplay in different relational dimensions. In fact, confidence can be structured on a direct personal relationship with the exponents or members of an institution, or on a mediated relationship through other trusted persons, or simply on distant relations structured on opinions based on institutional reputation and mass-media information (Warren, 1999). In the first two cases, institutional confidence can become a fundamental propellant for more active participation (Warren, 1999), such as affiliation or activist participation in unions. However, as in the third case, people often trust unions without directly knowing unions executives or other trusted persons that can mediate the relationship. Sometimes citizens recognize only a mutual allegiance to the norms and values associated with the unions' goals, and so they conclude that unions can be trusted.

2. Fundamental characteristics of unions in Latin America: an historical perspective

Our analysis of the confidence in unions between 2004 and 2009 in Latin America takes off with a path-dependent perspective. In fact, as stated by North (1990), institutions are historically rooted in a society and

are the point of continuity between the past and the future. Their change is gradual and follows an incremental logic. Moreover, the lack of a historical perspective in the analysis of fundamental dimensions of social capital, such as confidence, as Tarrow (1996) criticized of Putnam (1993), can lead to conclusions about social values that lack substance.

2.1 Origins of unionism and corporative industrial relations

Industrialization in Latin America began late, in comparison to Europe and the USA. It was concentrated in a few cities of the Southern cone, between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century (Berquist, 1986). This timid industrialization was accompanied by the rise of the first experiences of unionism. These were limited to the big industrial cities, largely ineffective, and marked by spontaneous mobilizations. However, elites pressured the state to adopt labour codes to tightly regulate industrial relations dynamics (Kaufman, 2004). Highly detailed labour codes were thus introduced during the '40s in the majority of Latin American countries, based on a "carrot and stick" approach toward labour (Wiarda, 1976). On one hand, these codes established a high level of state control over industrial relations actors; on the other, they paternalistically introduced some "tutelary" measures for workers (Bronstein, 1995; Kaufman, 2004; Piore and Schrank, 2006).

A corporatist structure of industrial relations was thus established: the state is the most relevant actor, it mediates between labour and capital to foster social peace, protects individual workers' rights, and limits collective ones. The main *locus* of industrial relations became the political sphere and not the direct interaction between employers and labour. Unions have thus tried to enhance, since their inception, their link with political parties to centrally influence governments (Murillo, 2005)⁴.

Also, the effectiveness of the "tutelary" measures in favour of workers have faced two limitations. First, they have frequently been only partially applied by employers. Second, formal workers have been a minority in comparison to informal ones. And the latter have not been historically targeted by unions (Portes and Hofmann, 2003).

⁴ It is to be noted that political parties in Latin America also have historically fragile roots in civil society and little programmatic cohesion, and their relations with supporters are largely based on clientelism (Mainwaring and Torcal, 2006).

2.2 Import substitution phase and the return to democracy

In order to overcome their fragile industrial economies and their peripheral role in the world economy, many states since the 1950s, especially in the biggest countries of South America, have endorsed neo-Keynesian import substitution policies. States not only increased their direct participation in the economy, through public enterprises, but also publicly subsidized and protected big private national companies. As a consequence of these economic policies, formal employment grew steadily, even though it never succeeded in absorbing the bulk of the Latin America labour force (PREALC, 1990). In turn, labour unions increased their affiliation and presence in a wide array of public and big private state-protected firms. The public sector became the sector with the highest union density⁵. Although unions increased their presence among workers, however, rank-and-file participation was quite an exception and its impact on labour dynamics was not noticeable. Once more, unions tried to influence labour dynamics by counting on their influence in the political arena through strategic party alliances (Robert, 2002)⁶. The link between unions and labour-backed parties was particularly strong during the opposition to the liberticidal regimes and in the processes of democracy re-establishment⁷.

⁵ The relation between import substitution policies – and *etatisme* more generally – and union density has been empirically demonstrated, and a general negative trend between union affiliation and economic openness has been observed (Murillo and Schrank, 2010).

⁶ Examples of this tight relationship are the Argentine Partido Justicialista (PJ), the Mexican Partido Revolucionario Institucionalista (PRI), Peru's Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA), and Venezuela's Accion Democratica (AD) (see Collier and Collier, 1991).

⁷ Examples are the link between CUT and military opponents in Brazil, or the increase in popular support toward unions during the '80s in Bolivia and Nicaragua due to their defence of social revolution in the '50s and in the '70s respectively – for more on this point see June Nash, *We eat the mines and the mines eat us: dependency and exploitation in Bolivian tin mines* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Richard Stahler-Sholk, *The dog that didn't bark: labour autonomy and economic adjustment under the Sandinista and UNO governments*, *Comparative Politics*, 1995, 28(1), pp. 77-102. Also in Central American countries, militant unions have substantially contributed to national peace, and many political leaders – who restored civil society and democratic institutions damaged by long-lasting civil wars – came from unions (for a detailed country analysis, see Henry J. Frundt, *Central American unions in the era of globalization*, *Latin American Research Review*, 2002, 37(3), pp. 7-33).

2.3 The neoliberal economic turn and beyond

The import substitution policy not only did not overcome the minority role played by Latin American countries in the world-system, but it also drove many states toward hyper inflation and debt crises during the 1980s. In this context, neoliberalism achieved hegemony during the late 1980s and 1990s in political circles. As Weyland (2007) argues, it was the great economic transformation of Latin America, and it negatively impacted the already limited effectiveness of unions.

The neoliberal prescriptions – strongly supported by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund – was based on a great economic and political turn: from import-substitution industrialization toward an export-oriented strategy of economic development; and from a state centredness to a free-market equilibrium (Murillo, 2005). State retrenchment was evident in the decrease of financing to big private state-supported companies as well as in the privatization of many public companies, with a substantial reduction of public employees (Murillo, 1999; Cook, 2002). Moreover, the state limited its actions in the mediation of opposing interests in industrial relations, in favour of a direct interaction between employers and employees. Most of the unions were unprepared and insufficiently organized to face this (Schneider, 2009; Schneider and Karcher, 2010).

Reorganizing to compete in the international market was the first aim of big private enterprises. Flexibility, subcontracting, and outsourcing have been largely applied so as to achieve a just-in-time production model. Unions, unorganized at shop floor level and unused to firm bargaining, were largely ineffective in managing these changes. The consequence has been the shrinkage of the protected (or "tutelated") workforce, and higher informality and unemployment rates.

As reported by ECLAC (2000), during the '90s the formal sector reduced its share of employment creation to 20%, and in turn the informal sector – already a historically persistent characteristic of the LA economy – has noticeably increased. The division between formal and informal work has become frequently blurred since the neoliberal turn and some working conditions have fallen into this situation, as in the case of many microenterprises and of self-employment (ILO 2002). Moreover, the neoliberal turn substantially increased the unemployment rate, and in particular open unemployment. Millions of jobs were lost all over Latin America (IDB 2003)⁸.

⁸ Also, throughout the '90s up until 2009, unemployment was the most frequently mentioned problem in public opinion polls (ECLAC, 2011).

This economic turn deepened the historically marked social inequalities. Portes and Hoffmann (2003) estimated that the subordinate classes (broadly defined) comprised approximately 80% of the Latin American population. Although since 2003 the social inequality trend has begun to slightly decrease in many countries, 177 million people continue to live in poverty and, among them, 70 million are indigent (ECLAC, 2011).

In this scenario, unions suffered hard times. The decrease in union affiliation has been largely evident across Latin America since the neoliberal turn. It has been not only a quantitative loss but also a qualitative one. In fact, the ideological appeal of unions, which attracted many dissidents of the military and liberticidal regimes to unions, was substantially diluted with the return of democracy (Murillo and Shrank 2010).

Unions have tried to survive since the neoliberal turn through two strategies: focusing on the narrower criterion of formal and "protected" workers, mainly addressing the public employees who "survived" (Eckstein, 2004); and continuing to revitalize their link with political parties and politicians, especially with the labour-backed parties, so as to endure in the political arena as a politically influential institution (Portes and Hoffman, 2003; Murillo, 2005; Murillo and Shrank, 2010)⁹. In particular, unions have played a central role in the movements that brought many South American presidents to power, such as Lula (and later Dilma), Nestor (and later Cristina Fernandez de) Kirchner, and Evo Morales (Murillo and Shrank, 2010).

3. Confidence in trade unions: a description of the trend

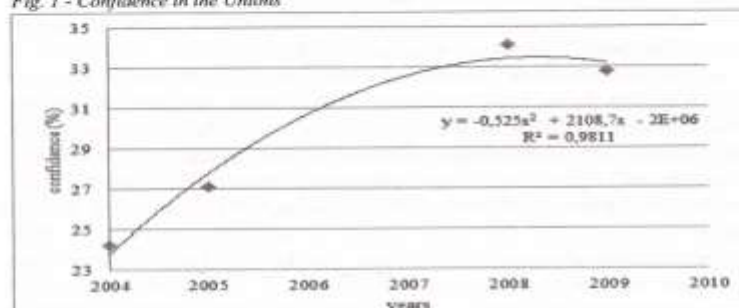
In figure 1, the entries aggregate those who express "a lot of" or "some" confidence in unions. Some of the evidence is remarkable. First, between 2004 and 2009, the confidence level substantially increased in the 17 Latin American countries considered, as well as in each individual country¹⁰. The increase is about 9%, and the trend line underlines this evident positive increase. This trend cannot be explained by a simple fluctuation; something

⁹ However, the labour-linked parties substantially blurred their ideological profiles in order to embrace most of the neoliberal agenda and structural reforms (Portes and Hoffman, 2003; Roberts, 2002; Murillo, 2005; Murillo and Shrank, 2010).

¹⁰ The countries are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

changed in the public opinion concerning unions, and more people started perceiving their values as being encapsulated by unions.

Fig. 1 - Confidence in the Unions



Note: The percentages entries are who have 'a lot' or 'same' confidence in trade unions.
Source: Latin Barometer (2004-2009).

If we take into consideration a wider international perspective, this increase in confidence level has another important outcome. Though the level of confidence in unions in Latin America remains inferior to that in the Nordic European countries, it is not very dissimilar to that in the central ones, and sometimes it is even higher than the Mediterranean level. This is particularly compelling because European unions have been historically more effective in influencing labour dynamics¹¹.

These two pieces of evidence raise questions about how corporative and marginally effective Latin American unions, especially after the neoliberal turn, have increased their social confidence and achieved levels quite similar to that in many European countries. The answer to the following question will help us to better understand this phenomenon: what are the tenets that contribute to explaining the trend of confidence in unions during this period?

Drawing on the discussion above, we developed three groups of hypotheses:

¹¹ According to World Value Surveys data, the confidence in unions in Nordic countries is the following – Finland: 51% in 1996, 53% in 2000, and 62.6% in 2005; Sweden: 44.4% in 1996, 42.5% 1999, and 52.3% in 2006; in continental countries – Germany: 37.6% in 1997, 37% in 1999, and 32.1% 2006; France: 34.1% in 1999 and 38.7% in 2006; and in Mediterranean – Italy: 28.7% in 1999 and 34.2% in 2005; Spain: 32.2% in 1995, 27.4% in 1999, and 29.7% 2007.

1. As theorized by Cella (1999), it seems evident in Latin America also that there is a positive relationship between unionism and different economic phases (section 2). Focusing on the economic situation, we consider national indicators, such as GDP growth (current US\$) and unemployment rate, as well as individual perceptions of the economy. The formalized hypotheses are as follows:

H1_a: Citizens who live in countries where there is higher per capita GDP growth are more prone to have confidence in unions.

H1_b: Citizens who live in countries with higher unemployment rates are less prone to have confidence in unions.

H1_c: When people positively perceive their national or personal economic situation, they are more inclined to have confidence in unions.

2. Confidence in unions cannot be studied without addressing the political values and attitudes of the respondents, especially in Latin America. In fact, as discussed above, unions are highly embedded in political dynamics, due to their corporative origins as well as to their constant effort to influence governments through links with progressive parties. Moreover, the 17 Latin American countries considered are all led by presidents. The discussion of the gap between electoral winners (people who declare that they would vote tomorrow for the presidential party or one of the parties that support the president) and losers (those who would not vote tomorrow for the president party or for one of the parties that support the president) can enhance our analysis (e.g., Anderson and Tverdova, 2001; Anderson et al., 2005; Mochler, 2009; Curini et al., 2011). It is argued, among other aspects, that in Latin America the winners express significantly greater support than losers of political institutions or of institutions close to the political sphere, such as unions. Thus, the hypotheses are:

H2_a: Citizens who place themselves on the left side of the ideological axis have higher confidence in unions.

H2_b: People who would vote for presidential coalition parties are more willing to trust in unions.

3. Finally, we have to explore the relationship between general trust and confidence. As argued in Section 1, we expect that trust in others is a significant propellant for specific confidence in unions. In fact, as proposed by Putnam (1995a), there is a positive relationship between people who trust others and people who are confident in institutions. The formalized hypothesis is as follows:

H3: People who are trustful in others are more prone to have confidence in unions.

4. Methodology

In order to test these hypotheses, and due to the complexity of the issue of confidence in unions, we must consider both national and individual variables. Considering that individual-level data are available for 17 countries and for four waves of the Latin Barometer (LB) surveys, and also that the dependent variable is binary ("a lot of" or "some" vs. "little" and "none," with respect to confidence in unions), a random effects logistic regression model is applied. Unlike conventional random effects regressions, the random effects logit estimator does not depend on the assumption that the random effect is uncorrelated with the independent variables (Wooldridge, 2002). It is thus possible to obtain a consistent estimator of the dependent variable without any assumption of how the cross-sectional component is related to the independent variables.

In the logit model, the dependent variable is the confidence in unions (0 = "little" or "none," 1 = "some" or "a lot"), and the explanatory variables of the model (model A) are:

- Per capita GDP: this is a cardinal variable that represents the percentage variance of per capita GDP between each survey year and the year before the survey (World Development Indicators);
- Unemployment: this is the national unemployment rate of the year before each survey year (World Development Indicators);
- National economic perception: this is a dichotomous variable; 0 = those who have a negative or neutral perception of the national economic situation (very bad, bad, neither good nor bad), 1 = those who have a positive perception of national economic situation (good, very good) (LB data source);
- Personal economic perception: this is a dichotomous variable; 0 = those who have a negative or neutral perception of their personal economic situation (very bad, bad, neither good nor bad), 1 = those who have a positive perception of their personal economic situation (good, very good) (LB data source);
- Ideological self position: this is a cardinal variable referring to the political self-positioning of the respondents (0 = extreme left; 10 = extreme right) (LB data source);
- Winner: this is a dichotomous variable; 0 = the respondent would not vote for a party that supports the president in charge, 1 = the respondent would vote for a party that supports the president in charge (LB data source);

- Trust: this is a dichotomous variable; 0 = those who are "careful" of putting in trust others; 1 = those who "always trust" in others (LB data source);
- Occupation: this is an ordinal variable that represents the occupation of respondents (LB data source);
- City size: this is a cardinal variable with 8 modalities, where 0 aggregates cities up to 5000 inhabitants and 7 capital cities (LB data source);
- Sex: this is a dichotomous variable; 0 = female, 1 = male (LB data source);
- Education: this is a cardinal variable; from 0 = illiterate to 8 = those who have a university degree (LB data source).

Model A controls for two variables, one for each level of the model. Model B enriches Model A through the addition of:

- Age: a cardinal variable (LB data source).
- Geographical area: a dichotomous variable (0 = Central America; 1 = South America).

5. The explicative model: results and discussion

As it is possible to observe in model A (table 1), the effect of the explanatory variables on confidence in unions paints a compelling picture.

Focusing on the national aggregated variables, we observe that economic trend (in terms of percentage of GDP growth) does not have a statistically significant effect among the respondents.

On the other hand, it is the trend of unemployment that slightly conditions the confidence in unions. When the unemployment rate increases by one unit, the odds of confidence in unions decrease by a factor of 0.023. Hence, hypothesis H1_b is verified, but not H1_a. As debated in section 2, the effect of an unemployment increase on unions is substantially negative. Faced with the reorganization of enterprises, with massive de-recruitment and outplacement, unions show their great weakness in influencing firm dynamics. Moreover, many of the ousted workers join the informal job market or they remain unemployed. These are two dimensions in which Latin American unions remain historically ineffective. Taking into account the deep political involvement of unions, Latin Americans may thus interpret unions as institutions that are not able to sufficiently influence the government to foster labour policies that can prompt an increase in employment levels.

Tab. 1 - Explanatory model

	Model A		Model B	
	Odds	Standard Error	Odds	Standard Error
GDP per capita	1.004	0.004	1.003	0.004
Unemployment	0.973 *	0.015	0.968 **	0.015
National economic perception	1.354 ****	0.048	1.355 ****	0.048
Personal economic perception	1.189 ****	0.035	1.186 ****	0.035
Ideological self-position	0.976 *	0.005	0.969 **	0.004
Winner	1.185 ****	0.036	1.188 ****	0.036
Trust	1.317 ****	0.040	1.319 ****	0.040
Occupation (public wage earner)				
self employed	0.842 ***	0.042	0.842 ***	0.039
private wage earner	0.917	0.049	0.910 *	0.048
temporary doesn't work	0.802 ****	0.054	0.796 ****	0.053
Retired	0.793 ***	0.052	0.820 ***	0.058
in charge house	0.859 ***	0.048	0.858 **	0.048
Student	1.073	0.070	1.046	0.070
Sex	0.988	0.029	0.986	0.028
Education	0.973 *	0.015	0.968 **	0.015
City size	0.976 ****	0.006	0.976 ****	0.006
Geographic area			1.274 **	0.132
Age			0.999	0.001
/lnsig2u	-1.822		-1.903	
Sigma u	0.402		0.386	
Rho	0.047		0.043	
Likelihood-ratio test of rho (sig.)	0.000		0.000	
N	29,238		29,238	

Note: Dependent variable is confidence in Union. *p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; ****p<0.001.
Source: Latin Barometer (2004-2009).

The impact of perceptions of national as well as personal economic conditions on confidence in unions, on the contrary, is highly significant. In fact, the perception of an increase in national as well as personal economic situations drives citizens to be at least 1.186 times more likely to trust in unions, in comparison to citizens who have a negative perception of their national and personal economic situations. In other words, perceived well-being induces citizens to have a positive image of unions. These opinion orientations can be related to the highly state-dependent and political involvement of unions, which can stimulate among citizens a perception of

unions as key actors in national – subsequently reflected in individual – economic trends. Hence, economic perception is a factor that polarizes citizens' confidence in unions (H1_c verified).

The effects of respondents' political values on confidence in unions are also highly significant. The relationship between ideological position and confidence in unions is negative. In other words, those who declare belonging to the left-wing are more prone to trust unions than those who are on right-winged (H2_a verified).

This is not a novelty. First, generally speaking, unions institutionally endorse an equitable role in the labour market. Second, as discussed, unions in Latin American countries have largely embodied the struggle against military regimes and liberticidal governments to restore democracy. In these historical contingencies, many dissidents, progressive and more generally left-winged, have tightened their relationship with and support of unions. Although many unions slightly changed their ideological positions, they still retained some values from when they were stronger political-opposition forces, and mainly, continued to benefit from their ongoing links with some of the progressive parties. Emotional and identity mechanisms thus seem to stimulate more confidence among the most progressive citizens.

Turning the attention now to the relationship between confidence in unions and the political support for the parties of the president's coalition, the regression model shows that this relationship is very strong and positive. The "winners" (those who politically sustain the parties that are in the president's coalition) have a significantly higher probability of trusting in unions with respect to the "losers." This is in line with expectations. The expression of greater confidence in the political parties closer to the president also increases the satisfaction and confidence in other political, or politically relevant, institutions (H2_b verified). Moreover, we highlight that among the 17 countries considered from 2004 onward, the majority had left-wing governments. These parties, in addition, obtained political and electoral support through unions. This reinforced their closeness to unions in the political arena. And this, in turn, could have increased through a doubly reinforced link the confidence in unions among people who support the president.

The data allows us to accept hypothesis H3 about the effect of general trust on confidence in unions. People who declare trusting in "others" have an higher probability of also having confidence in unions, in comparison to those who do not trust "others." Statistically speaking, trustful people are 1.319 times more likely to declare themselves trustful of unions. Therefore,

in Latin American countries also, trust in "others" seems, at least in the unions' case, to be a propellant for the confidence in institutions.

The effect of sociodemographic variables on the dependent variable is also compelling. The different occupational categories, a fundamental dimension of the labour market, have a important effect on social confidence in unions. The reference category is the public sector, where unions have historically been more organized, especially after the neoliberal turn. In comparison to them, the expressed confidence in unions among respondents is significantly lower for almost all the categories that are outside of the labour market (such as "unemployed", "retired" and "in charge of house") or in other words, for those who in different ways and degrees operate in the grey zone between the formal and informal labour markets, such as the self-employed. These are categories that the unions have not centrally addressed in their policies. In turn, these workers cannot personally experience the impact of unions in their labour conditions. On the contrary, the higher confidence in unions among workers of the public sector is probably largely explained by the fact that unions essentially have addressed their activities mainly to them, especially in the last two decades. Their confidence is probably largely based on personal relations with unions executives and considerations of advantages achieved through union representation. The data do not allow us to state that the confidence in unions of employees in private sector or of students is higher or lower than the one expressed by public-sector employees.

Gender is not a statistically significant variable in the model for distinguishing between people who have, or do not have, confidence in unions. On the contrary, education level is statistically significant, and when it increases, the confidence in unions decreases. This is an expected result, because people with higher educational levels generally belong to the elite class and tend not to be interested in the values promoted by unions. On the contrary, the less-educated lower classes perceive a higher correlation between their values and union goals.

It is an interesting finding that Latin American citizens seem to demonstrate more confidence in unions when they reside in smaller cities (strong, statistically significant association). It seems a counter-intuitive result, because unions are more organized in bigger, more urban areas. However, two considerations can help explain this. Confidence in unions in big cities probably suffers from some form of more direct personal, or mediated, experiences of unions' negative performances and limitations in directly influencing labour dynamics in workplaces, especially after the neoliberal turn. Whereas, in the countryside, where unions are generally

less organized, the opinion of citizens may be more guided by unions' reputation, especially as it is reflected by the mass media. The idea of unions as an institution in favour of poor people could thus have a bigger appeal among the large pool of poor people living in the countryside.

The relationships in Model A are further controlled for in (Model B) by two variables: one for the national level and another for the individual level. The first is a dichotomous variable that distinguishes between countries of Central and South America; the second is the age of the respondent. The results of Model A are not only confirmed but also reinforced in Model B. The only relevant change in variable significance concerns the category, "private wage earners." These people have a significantly lower probability of being confident in unions in comparison to "public wage earners" (this association is not significant in Model A). This represents a further confirmation of the tighter trust relationship between public workers and unions, in comparison to other occupations.

The variable "geographic area" is statistically significant and its odds ratio is 1.274. This means that South American citizens are 1.274 times more likely to be confident in unions than respondents from other Latin American countries. Among different possible interpretations of this result, the most interesting ones seems to look at presidency. In fact, South American countries have been largely led by charismatic left-wing presidents between 2004 and 2009, in contrast to Central American countries. Due to the blurred borders between unions and the political sphere in Latin America, citizens of countries with a left-wing president perceive the double knot between the president and unions as stronger. On the contrary, the age of the respondent does not have a statistically significant effect in the model.

Conclusion

The origins of Latin American unions are marked by a state-driven top-down intervention and not by a bottom-up self-organization of civil society; a historical framework that still characterizes them. Unions have been highly limited in their rank-and-file organization, whereas they have also been highly embedded in political dynamics. Although during the import substitution period they increased their presence in public and state-sustained big enterprises, unions have never achieved a relevant role in industrial bargaining, particularly at shop floor level. On the other hand, they have focused their efforts on influencing labour dynamics through a

"political bargaining" process addressed to state actors, essentially through political parties. Unions were outstanding social actors in restoring democracy in many countries, but the subsequent neo-liberal economic turn substantially undermined their organization and their already feeble institutional agency. In this scenario, the evidence of a significant growing confidence in unions from 2004 to 2009, even achieving levels similar to those in European countries, was quite unexpected. In order to explain it, we developed a two-level regression model. We focused on three dimensions: economic, political, and trust orientations. Our analyses revealed interesting findings. First, the trustful relationship between society and unions is not affected by national GDP trends. On the contrary, an increase in the national unemployment rate slightly decreases the confidence in unions, and only when citizens' perception of their economic condition is positive do they appreciate and support these institutions. From this perspective unions can seem to be a problem-solver of labour market conditions, but this is simply not the case. In fact, secondly, the political orientations of respondents deeply affect their trustful relations with unions. People who are more progressive have a higher match in values with unions and so are more trustful; and, at the same time, those who express higher confidence in the president in charge have a higher probability of trusting in unions. Finally, and thirdly, our analysis allowed also for confirming that "trust in others" is a propellant for trust in unions. Moreover, we verified that public-sector owners, the main target of unions particularly after the neoliberal turn, are considerably more likely to be confident in unions than other occupations. In any case, Latin American countries are not completely the same. Unions in South American countries seem to enjoy a stronger confidence among citizens, and the doubly reinforced link between unions and left-wing presidents seems an important propelling element: a further confirmation of the blurred borders between the political sphere and the unions.

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La valutazione della performance economica dei governi italiani degli anni 1992-2013

di Massimiliano Di Pace*

Riassunto

Lo studio ha l'obiettivo di presentare elementi oggettivi per una valutazione dei risultati economici dei 13 governi che si sono succeduti in Italia negli anni 1992-2012, e a questo scopo considera 5 parametri, di cui 4 relativi alla finanza pubblica (crescita del debito pubblico nominale, crescita del debito pubblico reale, rapporto debito/pil, rapporto deficit/pil), ed uno relativo all'andamento dell'economia (tasso di crescita del pil reale).

L'analisi viene condotta non solo a livello di singolo governo, ma anche a livello dell'insieme di esecutivi accomunati dallo stesso orientamento politico (centrosinistra, centrodestra, tecnici), e si conclude con alcune considerazioni teoriche.

Classificazione Jcl: H600.

Parole chiave: finanza pubblica, debito pubblico, deficit pubblico, Pil, crescita economica, Governo.

Assessment of Italian Governments' Economic performance during 1992-2012

Abstract

The paper is aimed at presenting objective methods for assessing economic performance of the 13 Italian governments which ruled Italy between 1992 and 2012. To this purpose 5 parameters are considered: 4 relate to Government finance (nominal Government debt growth, real Government debt growth, Government debt/Gdp, Government deficit/Gdp), while 1 relates to economic trend (real Gdp growth rate).

The analysis is carried out for single government, as well as for categories of governments, classified according to their political orientation (centre-left, centre-right, technical).

Some theoretical considerations are shortly reported at the end.

Jcl Classification: H600.

Keywords: Government finance, Government debt, Government deficit, Gdp, economic growth, Government.

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