

Contemporary Latin America: Global Changes and Democratic Disenchantment

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I. Introduction

II. The current wave of democratization and types of democracy

III. Contradictory effects of global changes

IV. Conclusion

I. Introduction

The last several years have been extremely challenging ones for Latin America, as numerous countries have been confronting serious economic and security situations affecting the quality and the level of satisfaction with their democratic governments. Argentina witnessed an extraordinarily economic collapse, and a succession of presidential resignations as mobilized popular assemblies took the attitude of “get rid of all politicians,” while at the same time basic democratic rules of the game were respected. Venezuela represents perhaps the most dramatic case of the collapse of a previously established solid party system; the political situation remains highly volatile as the populist and anti-party president Hugo Chávez retains power after having survived a short-lived coup, though with diminished popular support in a highly polarized societal context. In neighboring Colombia, in sharp contrast, a hard-line and economically orthodox law and

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order dissident candidate of the Liberal party, Alvaro Uribe, has completed over a year in office, retaining extremely high levels of popularity. He had handily defeated the official candidate of his own party in the 2002 elections as the Conservative party, in the face of the tremendous unpopularity of the incumbent Conservative president Andrés Pastrana, found itself unable to even field a contender. In Mexico and Peru, democratically elected presidents inaugurated with great expectations have confronted sharp declines in their popularity reflecting disappointment by citizens in their governments' performance; in Bolivia, a similar, more intense dynamic led to the resignation under pressure of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada in October 2003.

Latin American continues to confront significant challenges associated with democracy and development, to which could be added for some countries a third challenge related to drug-trafficking and violence. At the same time, political democracy has persisted in the region in circumstances which in previous historical periods would have led to successful military coups. And, though most in the region remain dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their country, support for authoritarian government over the past several years has only grown slightly (Latinobarometer data as reported in *The Economist*, 2002: 29; *The Economist*, 2003: 33-34). For all of Argentina's recent dramatic socio-economic problems, few have raised the imminent danger of a return to military government. And, though Venezuela highlights the return of classic risks of conspiratorial politics and coup-mongering, the coup of April 2002 was short-lived. At the same time, growing disenchantment with politicians and political and state institutions raises serious concerns about the poor quality of the political democracy persisting in many of these countries and of the potential risk of it "hollowing out."

Linked to the growing disenchantment and problems with democracy in the region are continuing challenges of development. The region's problems with poverty and with inequality have a long history and profound structural roots; yet, over the past two decades there has been disappointingly little progress in alleviating these issues in spite of the implementation of market-

oriented(neoliberal) economic reforms which were intended to help launch countries on a sustained path of economic growth. Whether the lack of progress has been in spite of market-oriented reforms – due to external financial shocks – or whether to a greater or lesser extent due to these reforms, is becoming an issue of increasing debate within many Latin American countries, as well as among emerging mainstream critics, such as Joseph Stiglitz. The Latinobarometer public opinion data cited above also suggests there is growing skepticism more broadly within the region with neoliberal reforms, though most respondents still place themselves in the center-right ideologically.

Within certain countries, particularly in Colombia, drug trafficking has provided extraordinary resources to powerful, violent societal actors. In addition, throughout the region, there are growing concerns with issues of violence and insecurity, linked in some cases to issues of economic insecurity and in others to flourishing underground economies associated with narcotics.

In general terms, the contradictory effects of market capitalism on democracy have been noted by many scholars. Dahl(1998: 178), for example, writes that market-capitalism favors the establishment of political democracy(what he terms polyarchy) because of its impacts on society facilitating resource dispersion and the ability of the many to organize, but is unfavorable for further advances in democratization “because of its adverse consequences for political equality.” In these pages, I will review the links from the international arena – from neoliberalism and also from other aspects of globalization – to domestic political issues in Latin America in order to make a related argument that the domestic impact of these global changes in the region over these past several decades has been contradictory. On the one hand, they have helped sustain what one might term electoral democracy, even as they have also helped to strengthen a normative expansion of citizenship in the direction of new types of rights(e.g., with regard to the rights of indigenous groups or of women) or issues(e.g., with regard to local governance or the environment). On the other hand, they have eroded advancement toward what one might term rule of law

democracy and improved democratic quality, due to their socio-economic effects, weakening many social actors and generating new inequalities and concentrations of power within society, and also by their effects inhibiting the representation of citizen demands and accountability of elected leaders, affecting political parties and political institutions. After first presenting recent trends in democratization for Latin America and drawing a distinction between electoral and rule of law democracy, in a second section I discuss in broad terms the domestic impact of different global changes through which an analogous but more constraining dynamic to that presented by Dahl has emerged in Latin America, in which electoral democracy has been favored and sustained, but advancement toward rule of law democracy has been inhibited (for a preliminary version, see Hartlyn, 2002; Weyland 2002, focused exclusively on the impact of neoliberal reforms; Huber, et al., 1997, as applied to their earlier arguments about social classes, states, the international system and democracy).

What might be the impact over the short-term in terms of economic policy-making and the health of democracy? Radical change remains unlikely, as has been underscored over 2002 and to date in 2003 by the policies of the Duhalde and Kirchner administrations in Argentina and by the new administrations in Brazil and Ecuador, though democratic disenchantment is likely to continue to grow. Globalization and the concomitant shifts in domestic power have all made dramatic challenges to the market economy, to foreign investors, and to domestic economic elites less feasible, while to date the risks of economic volatility have also grown concomitant with globalization as the region has suffered the recessionary consequences of outside shocks. The worldwide economic agenda has narrowed the perceived room for choice of countries, and as a consequence ideological antagonisms that used to be rampant around highly controversial issues such as trade and financial opening, inflation, and privatization have lessened. Yet, they clearly have not entirely disappeared. Politicians often experience a sharp disjunction between the promises they make to their domestic constituency of voters and the powerful actors involved in transnational economic processes. Now, they are doing so in a particularly

difficult context, as the region remains mired in recession, while world recovery remains uncertain, and the United States seeks to address its own problems of accounting scandals and other corporate misconduct and national security concerns drive its attention elsewhere. It is possible that aspects of the dominant economic approach will be re-thought, driven in part by mobilizations and protest from civil society(as in Argentina), by reassertions of nationalism and sovereign rights(as attempted by Chávez in Venezuela), by newly elected administrations(such as that of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil), as well as by changes in mainstream thinking in the face of economic distress and protest; it remains highly unlikely that it will be abandoned and that the region will see a return to statist policies and to runaway inflation fostered by uncontrolled public spending.

II. The current wave of democratization and types of democracy

As is widely known, over the 1980s, Latin American countries underwent significant processes of both economic and political liberalization. Over the past eighty years in Latin America, one can observe two historical cycles with regard to democracy(considered at least in the minimalist sense of electoral democracy): one from the late 1920s to the late 1950s(with a subcycle in the late 1940s) and another from the late 1950s to the late 1980s and continuing to the present. Each began with a predominance of civilian regimes many of which succumbed to military rule only to return subsequently to rule by civilians, though the number of countries involved was greater in the more recent period. Prior to the 1990s, the most auspicious moment for democracy in the region occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The pendulum swung sharply back in the 1960s in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution and this time the nature of dictatorship changed in qualitative terms. Between 1962 and 1964 eight military takeovers took place, and these were followed by many more in the subsequent decade. Military coups in Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Chile, and Uruguay inaugurated bureaucratic authoritarian or other military regimes

which sought to rebuild the institutional order, either in direct response to threats from the left or in an attempt to preempt that threat. During the 1970s, depending upon the year, there were from twelve to sixteen authoritarian governments in Latin America, most of them intent on modernizing and transforming their societies by excluding not only the old politicians but the citizenry as well.¹

Then, in the 1980s, in the throes of the worst economic crisis since the 1929 Depression, the most dramatic political reversal took place on the continent since the 1930s. Over the period 1988 to 1991, for the first time in the history of the continent, presidential elections were held in every single country except for Cuba, although some of the electoral processes were problematic (see Cerdas-Cruz et al., 1992). Political democracy, although limited and constrained even in terms of a minimalist conception of this definition in several countries, appeared triumphant on the continent as never before in the history of the region as the last decade of the century began.

This shift in the region ran parallel to a broader international trend toward democracy. The number of states that the Freedom House annual survey rated as "free" (an approximation of political democracy), grew from 42 in 1972 to 52 in 1980 to 65 in 1990 to 81 in 1997 (Diamond, 1999: 26).² In

¹ The following paragraphs are drawn from Hartlyn (2002). For a review of democracy in Latin America from 1930 to the late 1980s, see Hartlyn and Valenzuela (1994).

² Freedom House ranks countries on separate scales for political rights and civil liberties, in which 1 is the highest score and 7 is the lowest. Countries with combined scores on these two scales of 2 to 5 are rated "free," a useful if imperfect proxy for democracy. As is true of all subjective measures of political democracy, those by Freedom House are not problem free (see the critique in Munck & Verkuilen, 2000). Studies evaluating these scores during the 1970s and 1980s have concluded that during this time period they tended to rate more highly countries in some regions (including Latin America) than in others (Bollen, 1993: 1223) and also countries that were "Catholic and monarchies, and not Marxist-Leninist" (Bollen and Paxton, 1998: 475). To the extent we are making comparisons within the Latin American region and in the post-Cold War era, these sources of bias may be less problematic, though still apparent (for example in terms of Freedom House scores for Nicaragua over the 1980s compared to Brazil). The table below also reports scores from the "Democracy" variable of the Polity IV data set. The over-all correlation between the two data sets for twenty Latin American countries over the 1972-99 time period is an extremely high .940. Yet, the correlation is .965 over the 1972-89 time period, when both indices reflected high numbers of authoritarian regimes moving in more democratic directions, but only .439 over the politically more ambiguous and difficult to categorize 1990-99 time

Latin America, Freedom House measures over the period from 1980 to 2003 also provide an indication of a mixed record which is first one of considerable progress, then of partial retrogression, followed by improvement(see Table 1).³ The average Polity IV measures reported in Table 1 suggest a similar over-all pattern of dramatic improvement followed by a leveling off at a less than fully democratic level, even if with slightly more progress over the 1990s than indicated by the Freedom House scores.

These indicators help us to understand why scholars of the region have been straining to come up with descriptive “adjectives”(see Collier and Levitsky, 1997) to highlight the reality of democracies with deficiencies, as the vast majority of these regimes have not moved smoothly to an equilibrium point high on the democracy scale. Although neither the two indices nor country specialists may well concur on the placement of individual countries in a given year, two trends appear clear from this imperfect exercise. One is that there has been considerable movement in year-to-year scores for many countries, indicating political systems in flux; another directly related to that is that the countries in the region have not therefore moved smoothly from democratic transition to the consolidation of unrestricted democracies, but rather have sustained far more imperfect forms of democratic governance.

<Table 1> Summary Freedom House and Democracy scores for Latin America, selected years

Year	197	198	198	198	199	199	199	199	199	199	200	200
Scores	7	0	5	8	0	5	6	7	8	9	2	3
Free(2-4)	2	3	5	6	6	3	3	4	3	5	7	6
Free(5)	1	3	6	5	4	3	4	5	8	4	2	4
Partly Free (6-7)	2	3	1	1	7	7	10	7	6	6	7	6
Total	5	9	12	12	17	13	17	16	17	15	16	16
MeanFH	9.1	8.1	6.7	6.5	5.9	6.8	6.3	6.3	6.2	6.3	6.0	6.0

period. For Latin America as a whole, Polity IV sees a more authoritarian region than Freedom House in the 1980s, and a more democratic one in the 1990s.

³ This table and discussion reports on data for 20 countries in the region, the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries of the region plus Haiti.

score (n=20)												
*Mean Pol IV score (n=20)	120	103	8.1	7.8	60	5.8	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.7	-	-

*Polity IV Democracy scores as reported range from a low of 0 to a high of 10 but the scale has been inverted and converted to the 2 to 14 Freedom House scale to facilitate comparison.

Source: Combined Freedom House scores for political rights and civil liberties from <http://www.freedomhouse.org/ratings/index.htm>. Each score ranges from 1 (most free) to 7, and the combined scores range from 2 to 14. Polity IV Democracy scores from <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/polity/>.

This overall pattern both of transition away from authoritarian rule combined with partial and uneven movement toward unrestricted democracy, although not without historical precedent for many of the countries in the region, has demanded scholarly attention because of its unprecedented regional scope, sustained nature, and (for some) distance from initial more hopeful expectations. In a search for understanding, scholarly attention has increasingly focused on the contrast between the broader historical context and evolution of Latin American and current Western European democracies in a context of expanded understandings of democracy and expectations about what it should deliver.

Thus, for a substantial group of scholars, there has been a continued acceptance of the value of a conceptualization of political democracy focused on procedural issues rather than substantive outcomes and which does not conflate democracy with social and economic dimensions. At the same time, there have been fruitful debates regarding how to expand beyond the limits of narrow types of procedural conceptualizations (Diamond et al., 1999: vii-xiii). These debates have led scholars to pay much more attention to a broader set of institutions and factors than those simply associated with free elections. Thus, one can make a distinction between electoral democracy and rule of law democracy. In electoral democracies, there are free elections for the principal government offices, one can expect rotation in office, and minimal conditions to assure fair competition are present. In contrast, in rule of law democracies, there is clear, effective, democratic civilian control over the armed forces; an effective system of executive accountability through checks and balances; and an effective rule

of law, which implies substantial movement toward effective citizen equality before the law and equal access to justice, and that rulers are not above the law.⁴ Rule of law democracy understood in this way extends beyond the political regime to consider elements of the state as well. This makes explicit what was present by assumption in several earlier procedural conceptualizations of democracy based on the European experiences with democracy.

As the brief review of contemporary news items and of democracy scores above highlights, many more Latin American countries are closer to “electoral democracies” than to “rule of law democracies.” These are countries whose presidents may have extensive formal institutional powers, while also being politically quite weak – with extensive decree powers and with efforts to manipulate or intimidate the judiciary, and employ the military for partisan purposes, even as in some countries they may also be vulnerable to being forced out of office early; there may also be substantial issues with unchecked corruption and with limited effective citizen input into public decision-making.

III. Contradictory effects of global changes

Globalization and global political and economic effects have played a contradictory role in this evolution of Latin American polities. They have had important roles both in providing support for electoral democracy while generating constraints on movement toward rule-of-law democracies and on democratic quality.

1. Sustaining electoral democracy

Several factors have been cited as important in explaining why electoral

⁴ See O’Donnell, 2001; Diamond, 1999: 7-15. For some, the term “liberal democracy” may suggest an excessively narrow focus on individual political and civil rights which is not a necessary part of the conceptualization. Thus, I employ the more accurate, but also more awkward, term of rule-of-law democracy.

democracies have survived in the region, even in circumstances of socio-economic crisis which in the past might well have led to regime breakdown (Mainwaring, 1999a, 1999b). These include the structural transformations of modernization over the past several decades, though it should be noted that as a region, Latin America has had a relatively low correlation between per-capita income and democracy scores.⁵ Another relates to important ideological changes in the region in the post-Cold War era, relating to ideological depolarization, the revaluing of political democracy, and the absence of legitimate ideological alternatives to political democracy in Latin America. The main contemporary world contender, Islamic fundamentalism, does not have much resonance in the region, even as economic crisis and democratization have both dramatically weakened “Asian values,” which in the 1990s had been advanced by some as a possible contender as well.

Associated with these changes has been another effect of globalization at the societal level, the forging of strong ties across social movements and organizations across countries, encouraging a normative expansion of different forms of democratic citizenship. Paradoxically, even as globalization has weakened many social actors and helped to induce new forms of social inequality, it has also helped provoke or strengthen expanded views regarding the kinds of rights to be expected and demanded under democracy--what Garretón (1999) terms the “normative expansion” of citizenship in the region--with regard to issues such as gender, ethnicity, the environment, and local power. Understandings of democracy today are deeper and more extended, though also more fragmented (Garretón et al.,

⁵ One of the strongest empirical relations consistently found in the comparative literature is that between per capita/GDP and democracy. Employing a minimal definition of democracy and a world-wide data set, Przeworski and Limongi (1997: quote on 167, 170-71) find that “once established, democracies are likely to die in poor countries and certain to survive in wealthy ones.” Yet, of the ten times that countries with incomes above \$3,000 (1985 PPP in US dollars) experienced democratic breakdowns, seven of them were in Latin America: Argentina (five times), Chile, and Uruguay. Mainwaring (1999a: 21) reports low correlations between Freedom House scores and per-capita income for Latin America, as low as .10 for 1979 (when countries like Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay were authoritarian) and with correlations in the .40 to .51 range from 1989 to 1996--the latter indicating an important relationship, though with scores lower than found in studies incorporating other regions.

2003: 88-92).

This can be seen in the multiplicity of social movements and demands, or in the many constitutional and legal reforms extending special rights to indigenous groups, or providing for quotas for women candidates to public office in numerous countries throughout the region. Eight constitutions in Latin America now contain language recognizing “the multiethnic, pluricultural, and/or multilingual nature of their societies”(Van Cott, 2000: 265). By 1998, women held an average 15 percent of legislative seats in Latin America, up from 4 percent in 1970, and nearly all Latin American countries had established women’s agencies in recent decades(Diamond et al., 1999: 32). It is also evident in the enactment of political and fiscal decentralization in such countries as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Venezuela, though with quite mixed results as the devolution of power to the regions has not automatically enhanced participation or responsiveness.⁶ The effects of globalization enhancing perceptions of citizenship are to be celebrated and encouraged as a real opportunity to deepen democracy, even as they also represent a profound challenge for the countries’ political institutions and parties.

In this context, the strong rejection of a return to outright authoritarianism and the support of at least minimal electoral democracies by the United States, and increasingly by regional organizations and blocs of Latin American countries, has also been important. Building on previous measures and resolutions, the most recent step in this direction was the approval of an Inter-American Democratic Charter by the OAS at a special session of the General Assembly in Peru on September 11, 2001. The Charter defines the basic elements of democracy and establishes procedures for the OAS to carry out not only when democracy has broken down but also when it appears to be at serious risk.

Thus, the United States has played a role sustaining a political-ideological floor for electoral democracy, in the absence of perceived security threats, and it has frequently been joined by neighboring countries

⁶ This is not the place to analyze the partial, uneven, and sometimes even counterproductive consequences of some of these efforts; for a brief discussion, see Diamond et al.(1999: 15-33), Htun(2003), Van Cott(2000), and Yashar(1996).

and regional organizations such as the OAS and Mercosur. They have played this role in some countries in circumstances of socioeconomic or political crisis which in other time periods might well have led to successful military coups, and this international pressure is widely recognized as a crucial factor in explaining the persistence of current regimes in several countries in the region. Some quick examples would include the fact that attempted coups or an *auto-golpe* were beaten back in Paraguay and in Guatemala, and that saber-rattling in Peru during the Alan García administration(1985-90) or in Colombia under President Ernesto Samper(1994-98) were met with a clear message of opposition from Washington. U.S. pressure was important in moving the Dominican Republic toward free and fair elections in 1996, after the highly questionable results of 1994. And, United States and other international pressure played an important role in de-legitimizing the increasingly more fraudulent electoral process in Peru in 2000 through which President Alberto Fujimori sought his re-election. Similarly, these international forces played an important role in Fujimori's ultimate resignation from office and the scheduling of new democratic elections in April 2001.

Yet, even this floor is wobbly and insecure. This is apparent in the case of Peru in the links between security and intelligence operatives of the United States government and Vladimiro Montesinos, as well as in the initially ambiguous United States response to the short-lived military coup against Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in April 2002. Another example is Haiti, in which over 1999, the president ruled by decree as the term of congressional representatives had expired and the country had extremely difficulty in setting the date for new elections. When these elections were finally realized in 2000, their fairness was sharply questioned. And, in Ecuador, international pressure was insufficient to prevent a coup that ousted President Jamil Mahuad in January 2000, though it did force the short-lived military-civilian junta to cede power to the vice-president. Unlike the traditional image of the conservative coup, the military overthrow in Ecuador was driven by mass mobilization, especially by indigenous groups, and the military plotters were populists who identified with the rejection of

the government's controversial economic austerity and reform program. In Bolivia, the resignation of President Sánchez de Losada in October 2003 followed constitutional procedures, but was the result of mass mobilizations and protest.

2. Inhibiting rule-of-law democracy

The examples of Ecuador and Bolivia point to the fact that, at another level, international economic currents have played a different role, with profound consequences on the state, society, and political institutions of Latin American countries, helping us to understand some of the reasons for their "low quality" and the difficulty in moving toward rule-of-law democracy.⁷ There is no question that the region's terrible levels of income distribution – among the highest in the world controlling for level of GDP/per capita – have profound historical roots. And, in some countries, patterns of deterioration in social conditions must be blamed, in the first instance, on socio-economic crises which came prior to processes of economic adjustment and of neoliberal market-oriented reforms. Yet, it is clear that little progress has been achieved with regard to improving income distributions over this past decade.⁸ Certainly, as is evident in Figure 1, the region's highly uneven economic performance over the 1990s is clearly associated with the three international shocks the region has experienced over this past decade.⁹ Yet, it is also true that the region has found itself more vulnerable to these shocks because of the reforms it

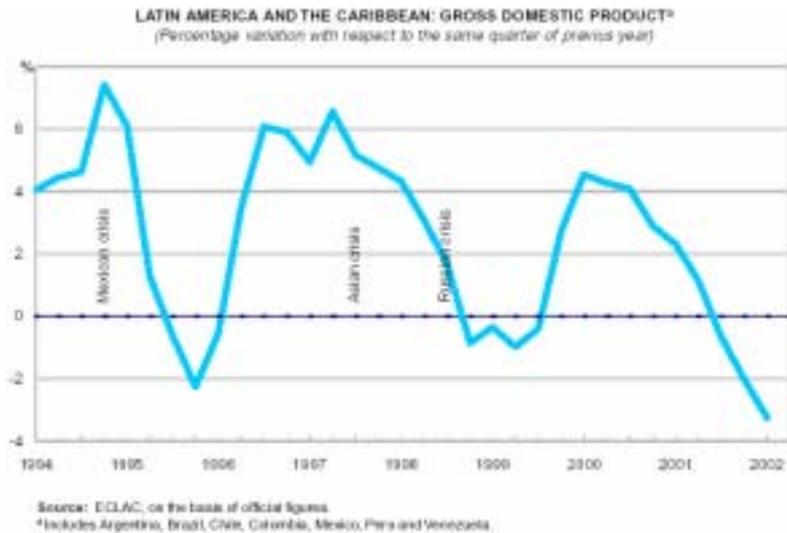
⁷ This is not to argue that some kind of economic stabilization and market-oriented reforms were not necessary, nor that initial conditions nor continuing domestic policy decision did not matter, but to underscore in broad brush terms the consequences of the policies which were implemented. For a critical discussion of the claims of both defenders and critics of neoliberalism, see Haggard and Kaufman(1995: 309-34), although it may underplay somewhat the role of international constraints on domestic policy choices.

⁸ According to ECLA, in the decade of the 1990s, of the 13 countries of the region for which it had information, in 8 of them income distribution worsened, in one there was no significant change, and in only 4 did it improve. See CEPAL(2001: 67-84).

⁹ These are: 1995, which began with the Mexican peso devaluation of December 1994; 1997-98, which began in Asia in the second half of 1997 and was exacerbated by the debt moratorium and devaluation in Russia in August 1998; and the current one of 2001-02, which appears to be more global, with implications for trade as well as finances.

implemented(Stiglitz, 2002: 7).

<Figure 1>



Associated with this most recent economic downturn, survey evidence from Latinobarometer indicates that there have declines from 1998 to 2002 in the region away from agreeing that a market economy is best for the country(from an average of 66% in the region in 1998 to 57% in 2002), that the state should leave economic activity to the private sector(from 51% in 1998 to 35% in 2002), or that privatizations of state companies have been beneficial(from 46% in 1998 to 28% in 2002)(see Table 2). In turn, data from the CIMA Iberoamerican barometer points to high volatility in the public's views regarding private enterprise and especially banks. Economic crises fed sharp declines in confidence in countries such as Argentina, Ecuador, and Uruguay, with improved stability gradually bringing improvements in confidence from 2002 to 2003 in the first case. At the same time, in Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Venezuela, over half of respondents asserted confidence in both institutions for the most recent year surveyed(Table 3).

<Table 2> Attitudes toward the State and the Market: **Latin America**

	1998	1999-2000	2001	2002
Market economy is best for the country	66	56	---	57
State should leave economic activity to the private sector	51	---	46	35
Privatization has been beneficial for the country	46	35	29	28

Q. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following phrases that I am going to read:

“The privatization of state companies has been beneficial to the country”

“The State should leave economic activity to the private sector”

“The market economy is best for the country”

Percent reported are for “Strongly agree” plus “Somewhat agree”

Source: Latinobarometer.

<Table 3>

Confidence in Institutions (%): Private Enterprise and Banks								
Country	1997 – 1998		2001		2002		2003	
	Private Enterprise	Banks						
Argentina	59	61	53	-	24	8	33	17
Bolivia	32	49	65	41	43	45	52	44
Brazil	56	45	43	39	39	36	38	41
Chile	-	72	38	75	50	70	59	75
Colombia	61	64	56	-	49	49	63	63
Costa Rica	69	64	-	-	67	78	-	-
Ecuador	50	58	50	14	47	18	51	20
Honduras	-	-	-	-	46	52	-	-
Mexico	36	38	37	53	58	54	56	52
Panama	61	75	54	70	43	48	63	72
Peru	-	-	35	42	45	43	51	50
Uruguay	44	62	46	61	52	55	54	57
Venezuela	72	42	62	57	89	80	42	9

Sources: CIMA Iberoamerican Barometer, "Diez Años de Opinión Pública en Iberoamérica," 2002(downloaded from cimaiberoamerica.com, September 2002); and, CIMA Iberoamerican Barometer, May, 2003(downloaded from cimaiberoamerica.com, October 2003).

These reforms have had significant effects on society, on the state, and on institutions in the countries in the region. They have debilitated organizations in society, such as labor unions, and weakened the state, constraining the ability of political processes to regulate and conduct development policies, while tilting the balance of power between the state and society toward society and within society concentrating power within economic powerful groups. It is also clear that new patterns of production are generating more diverse links to the global economy which do not necessarily respect national borders and which restrict the capacity for action of national economic policies; at the same time, economic integration schemes (weakened by the current economic conjuncture of crisis) open both additional opportunities and restrictions which I do not analyze here.

The links between neoliberalism and drug trafficking and their consequences for the quality of democracy, especially in the Andean region, need also to be examined. Market-oriented reforms and processes of globalization more generally have probably facilitated drug trafficking, because they have weakened states, displaced labor, augmented international commerce, and facilitated other types of transnational networks and exchanges, such as drug trafficking for small-arms purchases – what might be termed the dark side of globalization. Due to high profits and the inability of weak states to regulate drug trafficking, this trade has continued to expand, with new consumer markets opening up in Latin America, Europe and Russia, markets which together may now nearly approximate the U.S. market. Elements of the U.S. strategy to combat drug trafficking may be linked to neoliberalism, such as the initial reluctance to follow and seek to restrict international financial flows more vigorously (though following the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 this reluctance is clearly being superseded). Yet, the bases of U.S. policy toward drug trafficking in the region have always been derived from its domestic politics and from traditional imperatives of policy based on its hegemonic power – imperatives which at least in the Andean region, in Colombia more specifically, have modified the focus of the U.S. government toward clearly

providing military aid for anti-insurgency purposes while more ambiguously trying to reduce the ties between the Colombian military and right-wing paramilitary groups, and at the same time continuing to target drug trafficking and eradication of coca plants in the country as a means to dry up revenue sources for the guerrillas. And, though Colombia is an extreme example, criminal and homicide rates have increased dramatically throughout the region over the past several decades. Latin America had one of the highest mean(average) rates of homicides in the world in the 1970s; these rates increased dramatically over the 1990s, such that Latin America as a region has a homicide rates four times greater than any other region in the world, with the exception of Africa(see IDB, 2000: 13-14).

Latin American countries are experiencing acutely the inevitable tension between governability – which seeks to maximize consensus and efficient decision-making – and democracy – whose exercise involves the expression of multiple interests and conflict. One of the key ways democratic regimes have moderated this tension – indeed we could say a requirement for consolidated democracy – is to have strong political institutions and parties in a coherent party system. In the dilemma between governability and democracy, these are intended to serve as channellers of demands and forgers of compromise. In previous decades, one risk which occurred in several countries was that political institutions became instruments of polarization in society(perhaps the most dramatic example was Chile in the early 1970s). However, the greater risk in the region today, is that political institutions and established parties, under the weight of globalization and their perceived incapacity to address domestic demands, will be circumvented by plebiscitarian leaders or avoided by alienated voters, in either case potentially becoming irrelevant at great cost to democracy. One study of 15 countries over the 1982-1995 period, determined that dramatic policy switches contrary to campaign pledges(in the direction of neoliberalism) occurred in 12 of 42 elections(in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela). As the list of countries highlights, policy switches occurred primarily, though not exclusively, in countries with poorly institutionalized

parties(Stokes, 2001: 13, 114-121). Thus, what merits further study is the role played by policy switches in subsequently weakening the party which enacted the switch or the entire party system.¹⁰ Of course, strong political parties can also potentially exacerbate problems with either governability or democracy or both(as was arguably the case in Colombia and Venezuela), and thus strengthened political parties *per se* are not necessarily a panacea, without considering the purposes to which they address themselves.

The region has witnessed the erosion of political institutions, including particularly political parties, though in an uneven pattern across the continent. Average electoral turnout rates in the region from 1985 to 2000 declined by about 7 percent for presidential elections and around 11 percent for legislative elections, with clear negative trends in countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, and no country reflecting a strong positive trends(Payne et. al., 2002: 59). And, over this period(or from the moment of democratic transition to the present), in Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru, and Venezuela, initially dominant parties suffered extremely high losses or disappeared by 2000. In turn, in Chile, Costa Rica(which may be changing based on this most election), Honduras and Uruguay, the level of electoral support for the parties which were politically dominant at the beginning of the period has remained fairly stable over the entire time period, and in other countries patterns fell in-between these two extremes(Payne et. al., 2002: 134). The degree of confidence in political parties and political institutions such as Congress are at extremely low levels in the region; this is especially the case in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, and Panama, where typically less than 15% of those surveyed expressed confidence in both of these institutions. In the period from 1997-98 to 2003, confidence remained low or fell even

¹⁰ Stokes is correct in noting that in the short-term, purposefully misleading voters in campaigns and then carrying out policy switches enhanced welfare in countries such as Argentina and Peru in the first terms of Menem and Fujimori, respectively, and they were rewarded by being returned to office. But, I believe the more important point, as she notes later, is that "only if governments that switch also go to some lengths to make [voters] better judges, in the future, of the real alternatives" will the quality of democracy be improved(Stokes, 2001: 196). A short-term focus on Menem and Fujimori also underestimates the subsequent damage done to governability and democracy in their countries by the unraveling of the economies subsequent to these reform episodes.

further in most of the 13 countries surveyed, with Bolivia, Mexico, and Venezuela serving as exceptions(see Table 4).

The logic of the market which affects the region has helped to reduce the importance of the state and the sphere of politics as a forger of identities, organizer of conflicts, or even as an arena or locus of conflict and of decisions. At the same time, there is a counter-hegemonic discourse which we could call social-participatory centered around groups in civil society(and facilitated by what was above referred to as a third effect of globalization, the transnational support and domestic impulse for a normative expansion of citizenship)(Garretón et al., 2003: 64-71). These actors and this discourse tend to be very skeptical of states and politicians viewed as patrimonial, clientelist, and often corrupt, although sometimes they reluctantly involve themselves in electoral politics. Thus, they have often been important in pressuring for valuable reforms that would enhance citizen participation, improve access to a more accountable state, and increase transparency in state decision-making.

<Table 4>

Confidence in Institutions (%): Political Parties and Congress								
Country	1997 – 1998		2001		2002		2003	
	Political Parties	Congress						
Argentina	27	25	10	10	8	7	13	12
Bolivia	16	19	8	16	6	16	6	15
Brazil	10	13	10	8	6	11	28	34
Chile	11	35	12	69	12	29	15	28
Colombia	11	24	19	20	19	22	12	22
Costa Rica	16	30	-	-	19	31	-	-
Ecuador	6	15	3	3	6	5	5	5
Honduras	-	-	-	-	18	28	-	-
Mexico	9	19	17	37	21	26	17	22
Panama	11	15	15	-	8	8	6	7
Peru	13	38	17	27	10	24	13	21
Uruguay	25	30	25	36	25	29	25	27
Venezuela	5	9	15	9	11	15	19	17

Sources: CIMA Iberoamerican Barometer, "Diez Años de Opinión Pública en Iberoamérica," 2002(downloaded from cimaiberoamerica.com, September 2002); and, CIMA Iberoamerican Barometer, May, 2003(downloaded from cimaiberoamerica.com, October 2003).

To the extent these movements are directly involved in electoral politics, typically they have done so through "single-issue" political parties involving themes revolving around the quality of politics(Sabatini, 2002). Their emergence has varied across countries, a complex function of such factors as structural transformations weakening previously organized social sectors such as organized labor; the decline in program differentiation among old parties; with new parties focusing then on anti-corruption themes responding in part to new demands from newly mobilized groups in civil society; in a context in which election campaigns need party organization less thanks to new technologies and the mass media. In turn, all four of these features respond at least in part to pressures or changes induced from abroad. A final important factor has been whether these parties have a chance to gain representation due to changes in electoral laws which make it easier for new parties to enter the electoral arena and have a chance of winning(in this regard, Chile, with its binominal legislative districts, and Colombia, with its lax electoral rules, provide dramatic contrasting examples).

These processes reflect important changes from the past. They form part of a larger world-wide phenomenon – of declining levels of party affiliation, of structural and technological changes, of institutions and parties experiencing widespread repudiation as politicians have been perceived as corrupt and inept and blamed for their inability to solve their country's major problems. Thus, one finds some of the same in industrialized countries, although the commitment to political democracy in these countries remains high. Explanations for the deep and widespread decline of public confidence in political leaders and institutions in these countries tend to focus on three types of factors: more information, higher standards, and/or declining performance(Pharr, Putnam and Dalton, 2000). The decline may be due to the extent and nature of information available about democratic performance – there may not necessarily be more corruption, for example, but more information about corruption. At the same time, the criteria for evaluation of politicians and their institutions may also have

evolved to become harsher and more skeptical. Although these are relevant to an extent in Latin America, it is probable that the most important factor in fact is that the performance of these institutions has in fact sharply deteriorated; in particular, that the capacity of political agents to act on behalf of citizens has declined due to globalization.

Thus, even as the risk of military coups have receded due in part to global changes, one way in which socio-economic crises and political tensions have been addressed in the region over the past decade has been through the early termination of the president's term in office. Sometimes this has occurred through societal mobilization, retaining constitutional rules, with the most dramatic recent examples being those of Presidents De la Rúa and Rodríguez Súa in Argentina and of President Sánchez de Losada in Bolivia; as already noted, these may be combined with military coup plotting, as was true in the ouster of President Mahuad in Ecuador. These have sometimes been associated with issues of corruption or other charges by congressional opponents, leading to impeachment and conviction or resignations under such a threat, in such countries as Brazil (Collor de Melo), Ecuador (Bucaram), Paraguay (Cubas), Peru (Fujimori), and Venezuela (Carlos Andrés Pérez). Indeed, by one estimate 13% of all elected presidents in Latin America since 1980 or the democratic transition in their country have ended their term prematurely. To the extent this occurs constitutionally, it is better for democracy than a breakdown and could even enhance legitimacy, at least in the short-term. Yet, there are also risks to its use as a mechanism to address crises or to be deployed in political struggle, as it may ultimately foster even more de-institutionalization and negatively hurt the possibilities for democratic governance.

IV. Conclusion

Recent global changes have helped to sustain electoral democracy through various means, but at the same time they have weakened movement toward rule-of-law democracy and have enhanced democratic

disenchantment. In the current period of economic crisis in the region, because of the enhanced international vulnerability and domestic changes carried out over the past decades, it is difficult to imagine economic policy-makers in the region completely turning their back on macro-economic fundamentals; thus, there have been important elements of continuity through mid-2003 in such countries as Brazil or Ecuador (in part out of fear of being harshly punished if they did).¹¹ Yet, as politicians find themselves increasingly squeezed between citizen expectations and economic constraints, they may indeed increasingly look at ways to modify the constraints.

To imagine a region in which development advances and current patterns of democratic disenchantment can be reduced would require sustained progress on a number of fronts, none of them easy. Creative ways will be needed to determine how to magnify the positive effects of globalization and to minimize the negative ones. In his recent address to ECLAC in Santiago, Stiglitz argued for economic policies in the region that reflected a better balance between markets and governments and recognized the need to develop strategies that would focus simultaneously on strengthening both (Stiglitz, 2002: 14). For this to occur, would require enlightened leadership at both the international and domestic level.

In addition, processes to improve governability and the quality of democracy must inevitably involve some degree of citizens reconnecting with both states and political parties – even if these must be reshaped and dramatically modified. Similarly, it would be useful to further deepen our vistas regarding the types of political connections possible, rethinking citizenship rights for communities in the diaspora, or collective rights for indigenous groups or new forms of local governance.

¹¹ The temptations of manipulating fiscal resources for re-election purposes, risking macro-economic stability, remain in some countries, such as the Dominican Republic where President Hipólito Mejía appeared deeply committed to seeking his re-election in May 2004.

Abstract

This article argues that in contemporary Latin America the impact of different links from the international arena – from neoliberalism and also from other aspects of globalization – to domestic political issues over these past several decades has been contradictory. Some international influences have helped sustain electoral democracy and strengthened a normative expansion of citizenship within the region, while others have eroded advancement toward rule of law democracy and improved democratic quality, due to their socio-economic effects and their impact on political institutions.

Key Words: Electoral Democracy, Rule of Law, Latin America, Globalization, Governability

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