

Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin America



AN INTER-AMERICAN DIALOGUE BOOK



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Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin America

Fourth Edition

EDITED BY

Jorge I. Domínguez

and

Michael Shifter

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*To the memory of Carlos Iván Degregori (1945–2011), a dear friend
and colleague whose rare intellect and commitment to democracy
remain an inspiration*





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Preface

It is fitting that this fourth edition of *Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin America* coincides with the Inter-American Dialogue's 30th anniversary. In 1982, when authoritarian governments largely dominated the region, the Dialogue convened its first conference. From the outset, democracy was a fundamental, animating concern that has shaped the organization's programming and policy efforts over the subsequent three decades. With the transition to civilian, constitutional rule in the early 1990s, the focus of the Dialogue's work has shifted to improving the quality of democratic governance.

The centerpiece of the Dialogue's work in this area has been a series of systematic exercises aimed at tracking the progress of democracy throughout the Americas. The idea has been straightforward: to engage topflight analysts from Latin America, the United States, and Europe to appraise the advances and setbacks in democratic governance in the Americas, as well as to examine the impact of highly pertinent, cross-cutting regional themes related to the topic. The chapters would not only adhere to the highest academic standards, but would also have practical value. The products were intended for scholars, for use in the classroom, and for key decision makers in the policy community.

This fourth edition takes on the measure of the quality of democracy over roughly the last five years since the third edition came out in 2008. The first was published in 1996 and the second in 2003. We hope this edition, as previous ones, offers valuable baselines and reference points against which to judge democratic performance in countries and particular issues while shedding light on the complexities and nuances that should inform assessments of democratic performance in these countries. Although we have sought to achieve some continuity in the themes and countries covered—and in the authors commissioned to write them—each edition contains a distinct mix of the two. This volume contains eight country studies and four on crosscutting themes. The chapters are necessarily selective—some key countries and issues are not included—but they are at

least in part representative of the evolving priorities in the study of democratic governance.

In each edition we have used terms of reference that seemed most pertinent. Since the first edition we have asked authors to consider critical dimensions of democratic governance such as the performance of political parties, civilian control over the armed forces, the protection of human rights, emphasis on social inclusion and equity, productive relations between the executive and the legislature, and harmony between democratic practices and state reforms. These dimensions have been integrated, as warranted, into the individual country chapters on Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela. The thematic chapters focus, respectively, on the effects of constitutional rewriting, commodity booms, the spread of criminal violence, and the changing role of the media on the quality of democratic governance.

In all four editions we have profited enormously from the magnificent intellectual direction and leadership provided by Jorge I. Domínguez, Antonio Madero Professor for the Study of Mexico and vice provost for international affairs at Harvard University. Domínguez, a prodigious and indefatigable scholar and founding member of the Inter-American Dialogue, contributed to this exercise in immeasurable ways. No one is more experienced and skilled in conceptualizing and producing a volume of this kind. It has been an immense delight to collaborate and coedit this edition, as the previous two, with him. Domínguez thanks the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies for general support, and in particular Kathleen Hoover for her superb assistance.

The chapters went through several drafts and benefited a great deal from vigorous discussions among the authors at a workshop in Washington, DC, in October 2011. The constructive feedback on the original drafts considerably enriched the final product. Participants in that workshop included Peter Hakim, Dialogue president emeritus, and Abraham F. Lowenthal, the Dialogue's founding director and coeditor of the 1996 edition, who provided acute and helpful comments on the drafts.

In keeping with previous attempts to give this project a policy focus, we were honored and pleased that Bill Richardson—former New Mexico governor, cabinet official, Organization of American States envoy, and Dialogue member—addressed a dinner gathering of the Washington policy community at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Governor Richardson's thoughtful remarks on US policy challenges in Latin America, which explored ways of helping to foster

democratic practices and institutions in the region, offered a valuable backdrop to the following day's discussion. We were also delighted that Lázaro Cárdenas, former Michoacán governor and Dialogue member, agreed to share some opening remarks and introduce Richardson.

At the Johns Hopkins University Press, we are deeply grateful to Suzanne Flinchbaugh for her steadfast support, exemplary professionalism, and unfailing patience in shepherding this edition through. We note with sadness the passing of Henry Tom in 2011. Tom worked closely in the production of the first three editions at the Press and was a strong advocate for this project.

At the Dialogue, we are indebted to several staff members. We particularly express our thanks to Alexis Arthur and Cameron Combs for their outstanding management and coordination of the effort as well as excellent editing. Adam Siegel helped organize the project during its initial phase, and Rachel Schwartz ably edited several chapters. We also appreciate the valuable contributions made by Dialogue interns Sarah Cardona, Mariel Aramburu, Laura Zaccagnino, and Tim Heine.

The Inter-American Dialogue is profoundly grateful to the Vidanta Foundation, whose generous support made this effort possible. Roberto Russell, the Foundation's president, was an active participant in the authors' workshop and source of enormous encouragement. We also thank Daniel Chávez Morán, the president of the Vidanta Group, for believing in this project.

Michael Shifter
President
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Michael Shifter is president of the Inter-American Dialogue. He is the author of numerous articles and reports on US-Latin American relations, democratic governance, and the politics of hemispheric affairs, and has been coeditor of the last three editions of *Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin America*. He is adjunct professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, where he teaches Latin American politics.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

General

ACP	African, Caribbean, and Pacific
BTU	British Thermal Units
CCT	conditional cash transfers
CSO	civil society organizations
FDI	foreign direct investment
GDP	gross domestic product
HDI	Human Development Index
HHI	Herfindahl-Hirschman Index
IFI	international financial institution
ISI	import substitution industrialization
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NC	national conferences
NGO	nongovernmental organizations
NTO	nontraditional opposition force
PR	proportional representation
TCO	transnational criminal organization
VAT	value added tax
WWII	World War II

International Organizations

ALBA	Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
EU	European Union

GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IMF	International Monetary Fund
Mercosur/Mercosul	Common Market of the South
OAS	Organization of American States
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SIP	Inter-American Press Society
UN	United Nations
UNASUR/UNASUL	Union of South American Nations
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women

Argentina

APR	Acción por la República (Action for the Republic)
CGT	Confederación General del Trabajo (General Labor Confederation)
CONADEP	Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas (National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons)
DNU	Decreto de Necesidad y Urgencia (Need and Urgency Decree)
FREPASO	Frente País Solidario (Front for a Country in Solidarity)
INDEC	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (National Institute of Statistics and the Census)
MTD-Evita	Movement of Unemployed Workers-Evita
PJ	Partido Justicialista (Judicialist Party, Peronist)
PRO	Propuesta Republicana (Republican Proposal)
Telefe	Televisión Federal (Federal Television)
UCEDÉ	Unión del Centro Democrático (Center Democratic Union)
UCR	Unión Cívica Radical (Radical Civic Union)

Bolivia

ABC	Administradora Boliviana de Caminos (Bolivian Administrator of Roads)
ADN	Acción Democrática Nacionalista (Nationalist Democratic Action)

CIDOB	Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia)
CONAMAQ	Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu)
CONDEPA	Conciencia de Patria (Fatherland Consciousness)
CSUTCB	Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores (Unified Syndical Confederation of Rural Workers)
MAS	Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement toward Socialism)
MIP	Pachakutik Indigenous Movement
MIR	Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (Leftist Revolutionary Movement)
MNR	Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement)
TIPNIS	Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro-Secure (Isiboro Secure National Park and Indigenous Territory)
UCS	Unidad Cívica Solidaridad (Civic Unity of Solidarity)
UN	National Unity
YPFB	Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos (National Oil Fields of Bolivia)

Brazil

CLT	Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho (Consolidated Labor Law)
CUT	Central Única dos Trabalhadores (Unified Worker's Central)
DEM	Democratas (Democrats)
PL	Partido Liberal (Liberal Party)
PMDB	Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party)
PSDB	Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (Brazilian Social Democracy Party)
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party)
PTB	Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (Brazilian Labor Party)

Chile

AFP	Administradora de Fondos de Pensiones (Pension Fund Administrators)
AUGE	Plan de Acceso Universal con Garantías Explícitas (Universal Access Plan with Explicit Guarantees)
CODELCO	Corporación Nacional del Cobre (National Copper Corporation)
PDC	Partido Democrático Cristiano (Christian Democratic Party)
PEM	Programa de Empleo Mínimo (Minimum Employment Program)
RN	Renovación Nacional (National Renovation)
UDI	Unión Democrática Independiente (Independent Democratic Union)

Colombia

ANDI	Asociación Nacional de Industriales (National Association of Industrialists)
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia)
CC	Corte Constitucional (Constitutional Court)
CR	Cambio Radical (Radical Change)
CRIC	Regional Indigenous Commission of Cauca
DAS	Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad (Administrative Security Department)
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
PC	Partido Conservador (Conservative Party)
PDA	Polo Democrático Alternativo (Alternative Democratic Pole)
PL	Partido Liberal (Liberal Party)
PU	Partido de la Unidad, Partido de la U (Unity Party)
PV	Partido Verde (Green Party)
RCN	Radio Cadena Nacional

Costa Rica

PLN National Liberation Party

Ecuador

CONAIE Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador)

El Salvador

ARENA Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (Nationalist Republic Alliance)

FMLN Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front)

Mexico

AFI Agencia Federal de Investigación (Federal Investigative Agency)

AMLO Andrés Manuel López Obrador

ASF Auditoría Superior de la Federación (Superior Auditory Agency)

IFAI Instituto Federal de Acceso a la Información Pública (Federal Institute for Access to Public Information)

IFE Instituto Federal Electoral (Federal Electoral Institute)

PAN Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party)

PFP Policía Federal Preventiva (Federal Preventive Police)

PGR Procurador General de la República (Attorney General)

PJF Policía Judicial Federal (Federal Judicial Police)

PRD Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution)

PRI Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Revolutionary Institutional Party)

SNSP Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública (National System of Public Security)

SSP Secretaría de Seguridad Pública (Secretary of Public Security)

Nicaragua

FSLN Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista Front for National Liberation)

Peru

AP Acción Popular (Popular Action)
APP Alianza para el Progreso (Alliance for Progress)
APRA Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance)
CODE Democratic Coordinator
CONAPA National Commission on Andean, Amazonian, and Afro-Peruvian Peoples
ESAN School of Business Administration
FIM Independent Moralizing Front
IU Izquierda Unida (United Left)
PPK Pedro Pablo Kuczynski
PP Perú Posible (Possible Peru)
PPC Partido Popular Cristiano (Popular Christian Party)
SIN Servicio de Inteligencia Nacional (National Intelligence Service)
UN Unidad Nacional (National Unity)
UPP Unión por el Perú (Union for Peru)

United States

ATPA Andean Trade Preference Act
CALEA Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies
CIA Central Intelligence Agency
DEA Drug Enforcement Agency
FBI Federal Bureau of Investigation

Venezuela

AD Acción Democrática (Democratic Action)
BR Bandera Roja (Red Flag)
Causa R Causa Radical (Radical Cause)
CD Coordinadora Democrática (Democratic Coordinator)

CESAP	Centro al Servicio de la Acción Popular (Center at the Service of Popular Action)
CNE	Consejo Nacional Electoral (National Electoral Council)
COPEI	Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente or Partido Social Cristiano de Venezuela (Social Christian Party of Venezuela)
CTV	Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (Venezuelan Confederation of Workers)
MAS	Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement toward Socialism)
MEP	Movimiento Electoral Popular (Popular Electoral Movement)
MIGATO	Movimiento Independiente Ganamos Todos (Independent Movement We All Win)
MPJ	Primero Justicia (Justice First)
MRT	Movimiento Revolucionario Tupamaro (Revolutionary Tupamaro Movement)
MUD	Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (Democratic Unity Platform)
MVR	Movimiento V República (Fifth Republic Movement)
PCV	Partido Comunista de Venezuela (Communist Party of Venezuela)
PDVSA	Petróleos de Venezuela (National Petroleum Corporation of Venezuela)
PODEMOS	Por la Democracia Social (For Social Democracy)
PPT	Patria para Todos (Fatherland for All)
PROVE	Proyecto Venezolano (Venezuela Project)
PSUV	Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (Unified Socialist Party of Venezuela)
PURS	Unified Party of the Socialist Revolution
RCTV	Radio Caracas Televisión (Radio Caracas Television)
UNT	Un Nuevo Tiempo (A New Time)
UPV	Unidad Popular Venezolana (Popular Venezuelan Unity)
URD	Democratic Republican Union
VTV	Corporación Venezolana de Televisión (Venezuelan Television Corporation)



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Introduction

New Issues in Democratic Governance

Michael Shifter

A More Prosperous Region

In recent years, the state of democratic governance in Latin America has been decidedly mixed. Discussion has turned away from elections and the leftward swings in several countries. Electoral contests are increasingly a matter of routine, and ideology has become notably less salient. As this fourth edition of *Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin America* makes clear, the debate now centers on how leaders and institutions confront the complicated tasks of managing their economic and social affairs while representing heterogeneous societies with heightened demands and expectations.

It is striking that while a bulk of the region's governments have taken markedly different directions, most of them have performed reasonably well. They have benefited from a mostly favorable economic environment over the last decade as well as social policies that have succeeded in reducing poverty and even, in a number of countries, inequality (López-Calva and Lustig 2010). The wide disparity between the region's rich and poor has long been—and arguably still remains—Latin America's Achilles' heel. Yet for the first time since this effort was launched in the early 1990s—and in contrast to the analyses in the three previous volumes—there is considerable progress to report on the social front.

Brazil's notable success is a significant piece of the regional picture. As David Samuels elucidates in this volume, under the effective leadership of Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva and the Workers' Party, Brazil has registered remarkable social

gains. Bolsa Família largely accounts for this success, lifting some 20 million out of poverty through prudent macroeconomic management and the cash transfer program. Brazil's strides have been accompanied by persistently high levels of corruption and profound challenges in undertaking thoroughgoing institutional reforms of the political and justice systems. But Brazil's regional and global rise would have been unimaginable without a solid foundation of economic and social development and effective democratic governance.

The Brazilian case also underlines a phenomenon that increasingly characterizes much of the region—an expanding middle class. Though there are debates about what precisely constitutes a middle class, few dispute that as Latin America deepens and multiplies its global ties, the number of its citizens with access to consumer goods and higher levels of education is growing considerably. A recent study by the World Bank estimates that Latin America's middle class expanded by 50 percent between 2003 and 2009, from 103 million to 152 million people ("Class" 2012). Indeed, in several countries the middle class constitutes roughly half of the total population. The implications for the region's politics and the quality of its democratic governance are immense (Fukuyama 2012). In fundamental respects, the expanding middle class is a salutary development that gives citizens a more substantial stake in their political systems, but its strength increases pressures on governments that, in many cases, have scant capacity to respond and deliver the public services demanded. Depending on how such expectations are managed, this could well be a recipe for public frustration and political uncertainty.

In Mexico, too, such a trend is evident (which in part explains why migration to the US has sharply declined and is now a net zero). This factor is, however, frequently eclipsed by reports of spreading criminal violence. But Shannon O'Neil's chapter on Mexico counters the dominant media portrayals of a country utterly overwhelmed by unrelenting drug-fueled chaos. The appraisal instead showcases the economic and social advances as well as the strengthening of democratic institutions. The country's 2012 elections, for example, revealed a highly competitive political party system and a vibrant press. Profound problems in democratic governance remain. These focus in particular on building the rule of law and constructing an effective justice system and police forces. Fiscal, energy, and labor reforms will also be required for Mexico to achieve and sustain high growth rates and to pursue more vigorous antipoverty policies. Nevertheless, observers remain largely optimistic about the possibility of coalitional responses to these challenges.

Deficit of Stable Political Parties

In his treatment of Colombia, Eduardo Posada-Carbó is similarly sanguine and highlights the country's rich democratic and institutional strengths, in particular, the progress made in recent years that defied the dire predictions of a decade ago. The "transition" from the more personalized leadership represented by President Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010) to the more institutional, consensus-building approach favored by his successor Juan Manuel Santos is quite remarkable. Despite such political stability and the laudable performance of key institutions such as the Constitutional Court, the country's political party system remains in considerable flux, serious security issues persist, and the social agenda is formidable. Colombia is still the only Latin American country with an ongoing armed conflict and continuing political violence. Whether Santos will be able to achieve the durable peace that has eluded his predecessors is a major question.

Colombia's evolving parties still remain preferable to the Peruvian case. Steve Levitsky points out in his chapter that Peru's democratic system is virtually devoid of coherent political parties. Since the collapse of the political party system in the late 1980s, personalistic instruments and ad-hoc movements as electoral vehicles largely predominate. Without doubt, Peru stands out for its performance not only in sustaining impressively high levels of growth but also in substantially reducing poverty—from more than 50 percent to just 34 percent over a decade—and even modestly narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor.

Yet paradoxically, such positive economic and social gains have not been accompanied by institutional reforms and a more consolidated democratic system. Indeed, as outlined in the Peru chapter, the Latinobarómetro comparative survey indicates some of the region's lowest levels of trust in political institutions and politicians. Despite its leftist roots and promises of radical change, the government led by Ollanta Humala, elected in 2011, largely represents continuity with its more conservative predecessors, Alan García (2006–2011) and Alejandro Toledo (2001–2006), deepening disenchantment among Humala's original supporters.

Even in Chile, arguably the region's best economic performer over the last several decades, there is growing dissatisfaction with political parties and leaders, who for many seem removed and indifferent to ordinary concerns. In his chapter on Chile, Peter Siavelis considers—albeit with some qualifications—the term "partidocracia," previously employed to describe ossified political structures in Peru (1990) and then Venezuela (1998), for a country frequently touted for its democratic success and institutional progress. The nation's continued economic

advance is not at risk, though in the political realm there are growing calls—particularly by a vigorous student movement and youth in general—for political reform and renewal, more than two decades after the end of the Pinochet dictatorship.

Political party challenges are also a major theme in the country chapters focused on Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela. María Victoria Murillo and Ernesto Calvo amplify the notion of “dealignment” of the Argentine political party system, juxtaposing Argentina’s impressive growth rates in recent years with profound institutional weaknesses and rampant factionalism and infighting within the dominant Peronist Party. On Bolivia, George Gray Molina asserts that the government headed by Evo Morales since 2003 appears increasingly stuck and stagnant. Opposition comes not from the remnants of the traditional party system or the local leaders from eastern Bolivia but rather from splinter groups within Morales’s own Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS; Movement toward Socialism) coalition. The grandiose dreams of a sweeping transformation in the country have not been realized and have now mostly receded. Nonetheless, the chapter argues that, while difficulties have mounted, the Morales experiment has signified much higher levels of social inclusion and participation of previously marginalized groups—especially the country’s majority indigenous population.

Mounting Security Concerns

In Venezuela, governance depended for more than a dozen years on the “one-man rule” exercised by the late President Hugo Chávez who, Ángel Álvarez makes clear, was himself the beneficiary of an implosion of the traditional political parties in the late 1990s. An army lieutenant colonel, Chávez gave his government a decidedly military cast and governed autocratically, through confrontation and conflict. He controlled key institutions, including the justice system and electoral council. Though Chávez retained a strong emotional and sentimental connection with many Venezuelans, governance was dismal by most measures, crime and violence have skyrocketed, and the economy remains deeply troubled (in addition to shortages of basic goods, Venezuela’s inflation rates are the region’s highest). While the opposition over the last dozen years has been highly fragmented, and in many instances inept, it has recently shown a stronger capacity to unify and develop leadership and a clear-headed political strategy.

Venezuela’s grave internal security crisis—clearly the most acute in South America—illustrates a broader regional trend that poses perhaps the greatest risk to democratic governance in most countries. According to all reliable polls,

including Latinobarómetro and AmericasBarometer, citizen security is the principal concern among most Latin Americans, even more so than unemployment. Citing these statistics, Lucía Dammert systematically dissects this challenge and points to its many complexities and varied manifestations throughout Latin America. The situation in the “Northern Triangle” of Central America—Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador—is especially dire and threatens the very integrity of the state. (According to the United Nations, in 2011 Honduras and El Salvador had the highest homicide rates in the world, and Guatemala was not far behind.) In countries in the Southern Cone, in sharp contrast, the chief concern is one of “victimization,” of crime against patrimony such as robbery instead of homicide.

Dammert goes beyond a straightforward analysis of the security challenges facing the region and explores the complex relationship between violent crime and democracy. Why is it that democratic consolidation has not reduced violence in Latin America and, in fact, in many cases has been accompanied by a rise in citizen insecurity? Some experts assume that weak institutions created a space for illegality and organized crime, as reflected in such cases as Mexico and Central America. But other countries characterized by weak political systems do not exhibit comparable levels of violence. The chapter attempts to chart a strategy by which important processes in democratic governance can help, not hinder, efforts to reduce citizen insecurity in the region.

Media, Constitutionalism, and Commodities

Taylor Boas explores the role of the media in Latin America and its relationship with democratic governance. The media have performed a variety of constructive functions in the region, enhancing accountability, exposing wrongdoing and, as a “fourth power,” providing a further check on executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The media can, however, be quite problematic in terms of building more effective democratic governance. In some countries the media have become a tool for the consolidation of power, sometimes through intimidation and censorship. And journalists in some countries—Honduras stands out—are in physical danger because of their work.

The remaining thematic chapters in this volume—which deal with constitutionalism, resource nationalism, and commodity price booms—generate important comparative insights on a set of crucial issues. The region’s various experiments with constitutionalism, Javier Corrales argues, have not fared well of late, resulting in greater concentration of power in the executive, with scant constraints or checks. Revamped constitutions can, however, yield more positive outcomes in

countries with robust institutions and longstanding democratic traditions. Sebastián Mazzuca provides an illuminating chapter on the political and democratic governance implications of the worldwide commodities boom in several South American countries and the possible consequences of another global economic downturn. The politics and various regime types associated with both the natural resource blessings and curses are likely to mark much of the continent in coming years.

In discussing the nexus of commodity booms and democratic governance, a critical turning point for the region may have been in 2009 when, as Alejandro Foxley has argued, the dire predictions made by many economists proved wrong (Foxley 2009). Rebutting bearish forecasts, the crisis that emerged in the United States—not Latin America—was weathered remarkably well by most of the region (with the notable exception of Mexico, mainly because of close economic links to its northern neighbor). To be sure, the decade’s prevailing economic order—especially China’s huge appetite for the region’s commodities—was a critical contributing factor to Latin America’s economic success and resiliency to crisis. Yet the region’s improved policymaking (using lessons learned from previous decades) and effective social programs also help account for its sound performance.

Convergent Challenges?

For many Latin Americans, the 2008 crisis exposed as never before the weaknesses of fiscal management and democratic governance in the United States. Indeed, this volume—surely more so than the previous ones—suggests a growing convergence between the chief democratic governance challenges facing Latin America and those faced by the United States. This is particularly evident in the surveys highlighting the declining levels of trust in public institutions and confidence in democratic leaders across the Americas.

Levels of trust in political parties and institutions such as Congress, for example, are at rock bottom in the United States. A 2012 Pew Research Center study found that approval for the US federal government had fallen to 33 percent, down from 64 percent a decade ago. Approval of Congress is even lower, with a mere 6 percent of Americans having “a great deal” of confidence in the institution. The lack of popular support for Congress is unsurprising given the increasingly dysfunctional nature of the decision-making process, with less and less room for compromise and consensus. US citizens also feel increasingly distant from their elected representatives, dissatisfied with how democracy works—or rather fails to

work—in the nation. For some observers, the paralysis in US decision making is affecting progress in the country and also limits the United States' ability to participate effectively in global affairs.

As the United States slowly emerges from the recession, further negative consequences are becoming clear. Americans have long accepted higher levels of income inequality than other developed countries on the assumption that the US offered greater opportunities for social mobility. Recent studies, however, show these opportunities to be far lower than commonly assumed. Indeed, those born poor are much more likely to remain so when compared to their European counterparts (*The Economist* 2010). Despite steady economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s, 80 percent of income gains in the last thirty years have gone to the top one percent of US citizens (Hacker and Pierson 2010). As Latin Americans well know, the widening gap between the rich and poor in the United States poses a fundamental problem for democratic governance.

Washington's prescriptions for Latin America's woes are a not-too-distant memory and serve as a stark contrast to the current situation. The causes for common problems such as inequality and political dysfunction are anything but uniform. The hyperpartisan environment of the United States stands out as a notable difference to the overall lack of functioning parties in the Americas. Nonetheless, it is hard to overstate the fact that the United States is no longer seen as the hemisphere's economic and political exemplar.

A Laboratory of Democracy

This edition of *Constructing Democratic Governance* marks a dynamic and exciting time for the subject. The convergence of several forces—a decrease in US power, an increase in viable choices for development models coming from Asia and Europe, and a commitment to democracy by Latin Americans—has made the region fertile ground for experiments in democratic governance. This has been facilitated by generally good economic growth, which in some cases has greatly expanded the capacity of governments to pursue the pressing challenges they face.

The issue of illegal drugs and trafficking is a salient example in which Latin American leaders have directly defied the United States while pushing for a wider array of options to combat issues of violence and public health. The bold positions taken not only by several former Latin American presidents, but also by acting heads of state in Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Uruguay, and other countries exemplify an unmistakable trend toward increased autonomy and policy innovation and experimentation. Washington's drug policy remains on

automatic pilot, though public opinion—at least in some states—is at odds with federal law. US policymakers may well want to follow and assess the efficacy of initiatives coming from a region searching for practical solutions to common problems.

This phenomenon has been played out in the realm of social policy as well, upsetting long-held perceptions of a set of socially conservative peoples. In the arena of gay rights, for instance, some Latin American countries have even moved faster than the United States, often defying public opinion by passing antidiscrimination legislation, providing constitutional recognition for LGBT citizens, and even legalizing same-sex marriage on the national level. The hemisphere's proponents of equality are not limited to the examples provided by a handful of US states, when pressuring their lawmakers: they may draw from the experience of Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico City. Furthermore, it is hard not to be struck by the increasing prominence of women's leadership in Latin America's political life. This trend is dramatically reflected by former and sitting female presidents in Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica, Chile, and Panama, as well as several highly competitive women candidates in many countries in the region. In this respect, both the United States and the global community can learn much from Latin America's progress. The same is true when speaking of approaches to poverty alleviation, indigenous rights, and energy development.

The Americas have, in short, become a veritable laboratory for democratic government. As the hemisphere struggles with myriad issues—some country-specific, others regional—the successes and failures provide compelling insight when examined both individually and collectively. As such, both the thematic and country chapters of this volume reflect the acumen, innovation, and contributions of specific countries to expanding the repertoire of global leaders.

Much Remains to Be Done

Nonetheless, despite Latin America's impressive social performance in recent years, there are grounds for caution. It is by no means clear the conditions that have propelled growth and the policies that have led to a greater redistribution of resources will necessarily be sustained. There is a risk of complacency and failure to adopt necessary and difficult reforms in areas such as infrastructure, health, justice, and education, which are vital for yielding higher levels of productivity and competitiveness. The successful cash transfer programs that have been such a positive factor in Brazil, Mexico, and other countries may well have

run their course. More developed social insurance programs—for example, pensions and unemployment protections—are critical. Yet the politics of making progress on these reforms will not be easy.

Although some progress in reducing poverty and even inequality in certain countries is undeniable, the fruits of such progress have not been evenly distributed. The most marginalized sectors—including indigenous and Afro-descendant populations—still perform well below national and regional averages. Such groups also have significantly lower levels of educational attainment and health indicators. Should the macroeconomic outlook darken—perhaps because of a crisis in the Eurozone, continuing problems in China, or other developments in the global economy—Latin America may be less equipped to weather the storm as well as it did in 2008. The ensuing consequences could be very serious for the quality of democratic governance in the region.

Even though the overall assessment of democratic governance in the region is, on balance, positive, a number of this volume's scholars reflect on citizen malaise regarding the state of politics. The economic and even social outlook may be upbeat, but the political realm remains more problematic. Such issues as corruption and citizen security—though repeatedly the subject of political discourse—essentially remain unaddressed. Although positive legislation reforming justice systems and political parties has been passed, meaningful change is hard to discern. As a result, disenchantment sets in.

Latin America's relative success in the globalized economy has led to improved well-being for many of the region's citizens. But it has also generated unprecedented demands and expectations for more effective, democratic governance. As the chapters in this volume make clear, some of the region's political institutions and leaders are better prepared to respond to such claims than others. Those divergence responses account for the separate paths being pursued throughout the region. The authors of this volume provide perceptive and rigorous analyses that shed considerable light on the complicated journeys involved in constructing democratic governance in Latin America.

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