

Chapter 1 : Defending Democracy in Latin America – but Which Democracy? | IPI Global Observatory

The Latin America of today, with a plurality of left-wing, democratic governments elected without provoking the hostility of the U.S. government, was unthinkable in the s. At that time, many countries were still ruled by right-wing military governments and by politics framed by the parameters of the Cold War.

The idea that a part of the Americas has a linguistic affinity with the Romance cultures as a whole can be traced back to the s, in the writing of the French Saint-Simonian Michel Chevalier , who postulated that this part of the Americas was inhabited by people of a " Latin race ", and that it could, therefore, ally itself with " Latin Europe ", ultimately overlapping the Latin Church , in a struggle with " Teutonic Europe ", " Anglo-Saxon America " and " Slavic Europe ". The Allure and Power of an Idea His argument is that French imperialists used the concept of "Latin" America as a way to counter British imperialism, as well as to challenge the German threat to France. Idea for a Federal Congress of Republics. The second event happened the same year both works were written, in opposition to the decision by U. Both authors also ask for the union of all Latin American countries as the only way to defend their territories against further foreign U. Both rejected also European imperialism, claiming that the return of European countries to non-democratic forms of government was another danger for Latin American countries, and used the same word to describe the state of European politics at the time: He asked Latin American intellectuals to search for their "intellectual emancipation" by abandoning all French ideas, claiming that France was: However, in France the term Latin America was used with the opposite intention. It was supported by the French Empire of Napoleon III during the French invasion of Mexico as a way to include France among countries with influence in the Americas and to exclude Anglophone countries. It played a role in his campaign to imply cultural kinship of the region with France, transform France into a cultural and political leader of the area, and install Maximilian of Habsburg as emperor of the Second Mexican Empire. Latin America is, therefore, defined as all those parts of the Americas that were once part of the Spanish, Portuguese and French Empires. This definition emphasizes a similar socioeconomic history of the region, which was characterized by formal or informal colonialism , rather than cultural aspects see, for example, dependency theory. Spanish, Portuguese, French , and the creole languages based upon these. The distinction between Latin America and Anglo-America is a convention based on the predominant languages in the Americas by which Romance-language and English-speaking cultures are distinguished. Neither area is culturally or linguistically homogeneous; in substantial portions of Latin America e. The term is not without controversy. Historian Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo explores at length the "allure and power" of the idea of Latin America. But it is not easy to declare something dead when it can hardly be said to have existed," going on to say, "The term is here to stay, and it is important. Hispanic America with the inclusion of nations that according to him do not share the same pattern of conquest and colonization. If defined as all of the Americas south of the United States, the basic geographical subregions are North America , Central America , the Caribbean and South America ; [31] the latter contains further politico-geographical subdivisions such as the Southern Cone , the Guianas and the Andean states.

Chapter 2 : Latin American Political Views

The complex and heterogeneous reality of Latin American democracy demands a new type of debate, not on traditional authoritarian regressions but on new types of challenges (processes of stagnation).

Today, most countries in the region have established democratic institutions, and a return to full-fledged authoritarianism is unlikely. However, these regimes are often at odds with the electoral, constitutional, liberal, and representative attributes that are associated with democratic regimes. Even though elections are the only means of access to public office in most of the region, they frequently involve high levels of clientelism, harassment of the opposition, and unfair advantages for incumbents. Although the separation of powers is central to the constitutional design in most countries, a generalized tendency exists toward the concentration of power in the national executive through formal or informal mechanisms. In some countries, party systems have collapsed. The institutional ecology of many of these countries has also become one of the most diverse in the world, as representative institutions coexist with other forms of democratic decision making, such as plebiscites, participatory budgeting, citizen assemblies, national conferences, community councils, local and indigenous autonomies, town hall meetings, and constituent processes. These challenges to the liberal model of democratic governance have in most cases followed victories by left-wing parties and candidates, who have launched major efforts to overhaul their political systems. The region has also inspired new research agendas on the rise of ethnic-based social movements and democratic consolidation, on the electoral consequences of neoliberalism, and on the implications of direct and participatory democracy for effective governance. Most importantly, the particularities of Latin American democracies have problematized our definitions of democracy itself. This article offers an overview of current research on Latin American democracies. The first section presents general introductions to the topic, as well as efforts to produce normative assessments of changes in the quality of democracy in each country. The second section cites works that have drawn on the peculiarities of the Latin American experience to reconceptualize the notion of democracy itself. In the rest of the article, empirical research on specific aspects of democratic politics is organized in eight general categories:

General Overviews Since the early 1980s, academic and nonacademic publications have highlighted a puzzling aspect of Latin American democracy: Despite economic crises, popular revolts, corruption, crime, insecurity, low-quality public services, and generalized distrust against political institutions, openly authoritarian regimes have become increasingly unlikely. The works in this section examine, at a general level, the survival of democratic institutions as well as their chronic underperformance in most of the region. Kingstone and Yashar is the best point of entry to the literature on Latin American politics and democracy. The other sources in this section evaluate the interaction among democratic institutions, their contexts, and their outputs. Hagopian and Mainwaring explores the effects of political and social conditions on the consolidation of democratic institutions, while Payne, et al. Levine and Molina and Morlino adopt a more normative purpose, developing a framework to substantiate claims about lower or higher levels of democratic quality in specific countries. Finally, the index provided by Polilat is a useful source of data about changes in the quality of democracy in the region since 1980. Hagopian, Frances, and Scott Mainwaring, eds. Cambridge University Press, 2008. Through case studies, the contributors to this volume explore the conditions under which democratic institutions can survive poor governmental performance and economic adversities. The editors argue that strong links among civil society, political parties, and the state contribute to the survival of democracy even under inhospitable circumstances. Kingstone, Peter, and Deborah J. Routledge Handbook of Latin American Politics. Offers overviews of academic debates on political institutions, economic development, social policy, civil society, interest groups, social movements, and international relations. It includes chapters about how the study of Latin American politics has influenced research methods in comparative politics. Quality of Democracy in Latin America. The book opens with two theoretical chapters about how to measure the quality of democracy, then presents country-specific chapters for Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Venezuela, and concludes with a discussion by the editors on the general trends in the region. Mainwaring, Scott, and Christopher Welna, eds. Democratic

Accountability in Latin America. Oxford University Press, The contributors develop, in detail, the concept of accountability and then analyze how the interaction between different institutions—elections, checks and balances, and oversight agencies—and civil society organizations affect democratic accountability. Politics and Reform in Latin American Countries. Inter-American Development Bank, The authors argue that more democratic and efficient institutions can, over time, mitigate the negative effects of antidemocratic factors related to political culture, socioeconomic development, or international pressures. Democracy in Latin America: United Nations Development Programme, Users without a subscription are not able to see the full content on this page. Please subscribe or login. How to Subscribe Oxford Bibliographies Online is available by subscription and perpetual access to institutions. For more information or to contact an Oxford Sales Representative [click here](#).

Chapter 3 : Democracy in Latin America - Political Science - Oxford Bibliographies

Democracy has survived instead because Latin American societies have learned to bolster the line of defense against democracy's internal enemies. They've done it through institutional innovation.

Margaret Canovan on how the term populism was used, [2] The term populism is a vague and contested term that has been used in reference to a diverse variety of phenomena. Have people the right, in a democracy, to hold an opinion? If that is the case, then yes, I am a populist. The ideational definition of populism used by Mudde and Kaltwasser [16] A common approach to defining populism is known as the ideational approach. It thus differs from the "thick-centred" or "full" ideologies such as fascism, liberalism, and socialism, which provide more far-reaching ideas about social transformation. As a thin-centred ideology, populism is therefore attached to a thick-ideology by populist politicians. The existence of two homogeneous units of analysis: The antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite. The idea of popular sovereignty. The ideational definition of populism used by Ben Stanley [21] As a result of the various different ideologies which populism can be paired with, the forms that populism can take vary widely, [16] and populism itself cannot be positioned on the left-right political spectrum. For populists, on the other hand, the consciousness of the people, generally referred to as common sense, is the basis of all good politics. Political scientist Cas Mudde [28] In simplifying the complexities of reality, the concept of "the people" is vague and flexible, [29] with this plasticity benefitting populists who are thus able to "expand or contract" the concept "to suit the chosen criteria of inclusion or exclusion" at any given time. In such a framework, all individuals regarded as being "native" to a particular state, either by birth or by ethnicity, could be considered part of "the people". For instance, in Britain, the centre-right Conservative Party conceived of "Middle England" as its heartland, while the far-right British National Party conceived of the "native British people" as its heartland. Because of that its judgement is pure, its will is strong, and none can corrupt or even threaten it. Rather than choosing laws for themselves, these citizens are only mobilized for elections in which their only option is to select their representatives rather than taking a more direct role in legislation and governance. Responding to this critique, Mudde and Kaltwasser argued that the ideational definition did allow for a "non-populism" in the form of both elitism and pluralism. Whereas populists regard the elites as bad and the common people as good, elitists view "the people" as being vulgar, immoral, and dangerous and "the elites" as being morally, culturally, and intellectually superior. In this context, diversity is seen not as a weakness but a strength. Pluralists encourage governance through compromise and consensus in order to reflect the interests of as many of these groups as possible. In this understanding, populism is usually perceived as a positive factor in the mobilization of the populace to develop a communitarian form of democracy. He regarded it as a positive force for emancipatory change in society The Laclauan definition of populism, so called after the Argentinian political theorist Ernesto Laclau who developed it, uses the term in reference to what proponents regard as an emancipatory force that is the essence of politics. Australia is my home and the Australian people are my children. Populist leaders are sometimes also characterised as strongmen or "in Latin American countries" as caudillos. Populists are not generally opposed to political representation, but merely want their own representatives, those of "the people", in power.

Chapter 4 : Populism - Wikipedia

Democracy has come a long way in Latin America and we can draw encouragement from the region's historic rejection of military dictatorships and bloody civil conflicts (although the one in Colombia continues unabated). Yet, for all of the steps in the right direction, democracy in Latin America still faces many challenges.

EPA Images More Latin American democracy is in peril, a crisis driven by rising social polarisation and a growing intolerance of dissent. Institutional mistrust is also rising and risks deepening the disconnect between citizens and government. According to the Latin American Economic Outlook , three out of four Latin Americans have very low confidence in institutions and show little or no confidence in their national governments. This widespread shift to the right in Latin American politics, and in Western societies too, is not simply a partisan change – it is also evidence that democratic principles are themselves collapsing. Reconnecting the bond between citizens, public institutions and government is now critical if meaningful democracy is to serve as a means of making society fairer. A new kind of democracy: This frustration was exacerbated by post-financial crisis austerity policies , which are cutting away at the welfare system and social contract that have hitherto guaranteed social stability. It is often nationalist, racist. View photos Moving right. Shutterstock More The extent to which post-neoliberalism delivered on these pledges is disputed. There were, however, some real achievements – particularly anti-poverty programmes that included tax incentives, conditional cash transfers , social pensions, and other forms of targeted spending and wealth redistribution. Story Continues But these advances are now at stake. Leftist, egalitarian policies were resisted by the elite – particularly landowners and those in agrobusiness and mineral export – who felt that their privileges were being threatened, especially as there was a global decline in commodity prices. Nor was the left immune to economic mismanagement and corruption , which led to growing disenchantment with left-wing governments and the leaders behind them. Corruption, and the perception of it, erodes confidence in government and leaves behind it a political vacuum. And so Latin America is moving sharply to the right under pro-business leaders who demonise the left and are reclaiming power , particularly in the strongest economies , such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Argentina. The real shame is that a winner-takes-all dynamic took over, increasing social polarisation and snuffing out constructive dissent. This right-wing backlash has not only led to a decline in social democratic representation, but also to the reemergence of discriminatory narratives that poison the political climate, bolster growing intolerance and undermine the social foundations of democracy. Back in the s, as Latin America redemocratised, political scientists such as Norbert Lechner and Adam Przeworski asked whether it is possible to reach a cross-party, inter-societal consensus on a programme of social and economic redistribution – or whether an entrenchment of socioeconomic and political privilege is the price that must be paid in Latin America for liberal democracy. Today, the latter seems increasingly to be the sorry answer. Nevertheless, as citizens, we must find new ways to hold governments to account and lead social resistance to any attempt to reintroduce austerity or limit civic freedoms. Without productive dissent, democracy in the region may vanish altogether. This article is republished from The Conversation under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article. The Conversation More Pia Riggiozzi does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

Chapter 5 : Latin America | Democracy Now!

Democracy in America By: Alexis De Tocqueville Democracy in America, by Alexis De Tocqueville is a book about how the American States and the federal government would grow politically and socially under the umbrella of democracy.

November 9, last updated Compared to the paucity of democracies in Latin America at the start of the Third Wave in the mids, the near-universal presence of democratic regimes today highlights the tremendous democratic progress made in the region over the past three-dozen years. Nevertheless, within this broader regional success exists considerable country-by-country variation in democratic experience and quality. It will then discuss the evolution of democracy in the region over the past three and a half decades. Next it will examine the considerable variance in the degree of democratic consolidation and democratic quality in the region as of A final section will draw some general conclusions about some of the most significant factors that drove the democratization of Latin America. This latter group is dominated by the dozen ex-British colonies, which with the exception of Guyana have avoided any serious democratic breakdowns since achieving independence between and , and at present all possess robust democratic systems. Democracy and Dictatorship in Latin America at the Dawn of the Third Wave In January , only two of the 19 former Spanish and Portuguese colonies could truly be classified as democracies. Costa Rica and Venezuela were islands of consolidated democracy within a sea of dictatorship, with the former continuously democratic since and the latter since A third country, Colombia, was in the midst of a democratic transition following the end in of its experience with a quasi-democratic power-sharing pact between the Liberal and Conservative parties, which had been established in as a means to help end a decade-long civil conflict. The remaining 16 countries were governed by military or civilian dictatorships of diverse stripes. Examples of the former set of countries include Brazil and Mexico. In Brazil, different generals occupied the presidency for a fixed term during most of the dictatorship. Nicaragua and Paraguay are examples of the latter type of country. In Paraguay, Alfredo Stroessner had held the reins of power continuously since and would continue to do so until his removal by a military coup in The Third Wave Democratic Transitions Between and , 15 of these 16 nondemocratic Latin American countries would embrace democracy, with the exception being totalitarian Cuba. The nature of the initial transitions from authoritarian to democratic governance, however, varied tremendously among the 15 countries that became democracies during the post period. Several countries experienced gradual, managed transitions, with Brazil and Mexico two examples of this model. In Brazil, where restricted elections had been held to select national legislators and local officials throughout most of the military dictatorship, these elections became increasingly free and fair over time. Under the iron control of the PRI, Mexico had held regular restricted and fraudulent elections since the s, with never any doubt that the outcome would be a PRI victory. Mexico would pass the final democratic litmus test in when, after over 70 years in power, the PRI lost the presidential election and transferred the presidency to the victorious Vicente Fox of the opposition National Action Party. Other democratic transitions were much more abrupt. Argentina was governed between and by a military dictatorship responsible for the murder of between 10, and 20, citizens and the torture, imprisonment and exile of tens of thousands more. Elections were scheduled for October , with power handed over to a democratically elected civilian president in December of that year. The 15 countries that transitioned to democracy during the Third Wave also differed dramatically in terms of their ability to construct their new democracies on the foundations of substantial past democratic experiences. At one end of the continuum were countries such as Chile, Uruguay and, to a slightly lesser extent, Argentina and Brazil. During the transitional period, these countries were guided by their rich democratic pasts and, with the exception of Brazil, their robust political party systems, which had remained vibrant during the dictatorial interludes. When Argentina , Chile and Uruguay transitioned from dictatorship to democracy, they did so with well-institutionalized political parties that possessed deep roots in society and party elites with considerable democratic experience, and all four countries did so with a historical legacy of functioning democratic institutions. In , the Colorado Party won the presidency with 41 percent of the vote, followed by the Blanco Party with 40 percent and the Broad Front with 18 percent. Thirteen years later, the results were strikingly similar: The other end of the

continuum was occupied by countries with limited to almost nonexistent prior experience with democratic electoral processes and governance. The gradual democratic evolution which took place in Mexico along with the rather unique role played by the PRI make the country something of a sui generis case in the region in regard to historic experience with democracy. The cases of the Dominican Republic and El Salvador make clear that the lack of a democratic legacy does not pose an insurmountable barrier to future democratic success. However, it is readily apparent that the absence of a shared national history of successful democratic institutions and of political elites with experience operating within a democratic environment has represented a hindrance to democratic consolidation in a majority of these eight countries. One institutional feature shared among all 15 transitioning countries, along with Colombia, Costa Rica and Venezuela, was their use of the presidential form of democratic government. While there have been isolated experiences with nonpresidential government in the region -- the Uruguayan experiment with a Swiss-type collegial executive between and being the most notable -- Latin Americans have almost exclusively been governed by pure presidential regimes. In the current democratic era, these systems feature the separate election of presidents and legislatures for fixed terms and a constitution with a checks-and-balances framework. During the early days of the Third Wave, many scholars and policymakers expressed concerns that presidentialism would result in problems of severe executive-legislative gridlock, winner-take-all elections, crises of democratic legitimacy and the election of anti-democratic outsiders. These critics generally proposed the adoption of parliamentary or semi-presidential constitutions to help avoid these potential problems. However, these reform proposals have met with virtually no success in the region. In general, the initial fear that many of the Third Wave Latin American democracies would fail due to their use of presidentialism appears today to have been unfounded. Often presidents were removed from office either through impeachment or a credible threat of impeachment that resulted in an anticipated resignation by the president. However, within this broad democratic rubric exists a considerable level of variance in the quality and performance of democracy across the region. Freedom House places every country on two scales, ranging from 1 to 7, measuring their level of political rights and civil liberties, which are then combined and divided by two to provide a Freedom Score, where 1 is most free and democratic and 7 is least free and democratic. Three of the 18 Latin American democracies under consideration receive the highest Freedom Score possible: Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay. A second set of countries has not achieved the same level of democratic success as these three, but at the same time they have created thriving democratic systems in which elections and the rule of law play a dominant role within the political system. At the other end of the spectrum are Nicaragua 4. Cuba has a Freedom Score of 6. Large majorities in all 18 electoral democracies believe democracy is preferable to any other form of government, with more than four-fifths of the population holding this opinion in eight countries, and all countries registering a majority greater than two-thirds. However, while Latin Americans overwhelmingly prefer democracy to other forms of government, a substantial proportion are not especially satisfied with how their own democracy is functioning today. For example, in a third of the countries, a majority of the population is either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their country, with Peru 61 percent, Venezuela 59 percent and Mexico 56 percent possessing the most unsatisfied citizens. In contrast, seven of the 18 were found in the lower third of countries, with scores below 2. Factors Behind the Democratic Transition

The transitions to democracy that took place in Latin America between the late 1970s and early 1990s were as diverse in their origins as they were in their outcomes. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify some trends present across subgroups of the countries that were integral to the initial transition. In one set of cases, countries that had enjoyed robust democracies at varying points in time during the post-World War II era experienced military coups in the 1970s and 1980s designed not just to remove democratically elected leaders, but also to impose a new type of technocratic rule by the military as an institution, a regime type commonly referred to as bureaucratic authoritarianism. These regimes were found in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, all countries with a large and politically influential middle class as well as a working class that became increasingly opposed to military rule and dissatisfied with government performance -- with Chile representing a partial exception -- during these dictatorships. The growing pressure by the middle class and working class became too much for the military governments to bear, with the result eventually being a peaceful transition to democracy in all four

countries. Another set of cases is found in Central America north of Costa Rica, where there was limited to nonexistent prior experience with democracy. Here the successful revolution led by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua sent shock waves through the economic oligarchies and militaries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. For Reagan, Nicaragua was a Soviet beachhead on the continent that in turn threatened its three northern neighbors, all of which had communist guerrilla insurgencies operating at varying levels of intensity. These twin forces of elite fear of revolution and U. Reagan played a particularly prominent role in managing the Salvadoran transition to democracy as well as in placing pressure on the authoritarian government of then-Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, who eventually felt compelled to hold free and fair elections in , which he lost. Conclusion Latin America has come a long way from the dark days of the mids, when dictatorships reigned and democracies were an endangered species. Today, the threat of military coups has been greatly diminished compared to the past, as support for authoritarian rule among both ordinary citizens and elites is minimal. In , the greatest threat to democracy in Latin America no longer lies in the barracks, but rather in the presidential palace. In a not insignificant number of countries, elected presidents have over time increasingly concentrated in their hands an excessive and dangerous level of political and economic power. To date, the region has for the most part avoided the reverse swing of the pendulum in its latest period of democratization. All of the countries that transitioned to electoral democracy over the past three-dozen years remain democracies today. That said, there exists a growing level of variance in the degree of democratic performance, quality and satisfaction within the region. Several democracies rival the best in the world, with others increasingly close behind and all enjoying a seemingly positive future trajectory. However, other countries find themselves barely above the threshold required to be considered even a minimalist democracy, with trajectories that are taking them every day closer and closer to authoritarianism. It is likely that these trends will continue in Latin America, with the result being an increasingly diverse set of democracies and democratic experiences coexisting within the region. Jones is the Joseph D.

Democracy was the "spirit of the time", and Latin American governments were happy to show off their democratic credentials in all possible forums, including regional organizations, which became clubs of democracies.

In the chapter Raby argues that "Cuba and especially Venezuela represent the real revolutionary alternative for our times. In the chapter Raby argues that "Cuba and especially Venezuela represent the real revolutionary alternative for our times". The London book launch takes place on Wednesday October the 11th click here for more info. To purchase the book click here. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Left has been in crisis. The orthodox Communist model was discredited even among its traditional supporters, and as the Eastern European countries were seduced one after another by the siren song of capitalist consumerism, it soon became clear that Western Social Democracy had also lost its way. Neo-liberal globalisation appeared to make the viability of any kind of socialism problematic: With some transnational corporations being bigger than the GDPs of all but the largest countries, it was said that the state could no longer even regulate the economy, let alone control it. The electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua early in seemed to confirm that even Latin America, with its vigorous independent revolutionary tradition, was not immune to the debacle of socialist values. Although Communist regimes survived in China and Vietnam, they appeared to be adopting capitalist market mechanisms with indecent haste, while the other case of East Asian socialism, North Korea, seemed to be locked in a Stalinist time-warp. In Europe and North America the anti-globalisation movement revealed the hostility of a significant minority to the new orthodoxy and their allegiance to collective, egalitarian and anti-capitalist values. But none of these new movements presented a coherent alternative strategy: The spirit of the times is radically democratic and suspicious of self-proclaimed vanguards, or indeed of vanguards of any kind " but the apparent alternative favoured by many in the anti-globalisation, anti-war and anti-capitalist movements is a kind of idealistic anarchism, a conception which has not ceased to be profoundly problematic. Without a doubt the great strength of these movements, which have achieved such an impressive degree of support in Europe and North America, has been their loose, decentralised and flexible character. But such a structure or lack thereof may be very effective in an oppositional or contestational movement, yet thoroughly dysfunctional for a coherent political project, let alone a government exercising state power. Insistence on direct, unmediated popular protagonism is admirable, but it becomes a futile distraction if it is elevated to the status of absolute dogma, evading questions of representation, leadership, organisation and structure which are crucial to the success of any alternative movement. This romantic but ultimately defeatist approach has since been formulated in more elaborate philosophical form by John Holloway in *Change the World Without Taking Power* Holloway But it still lacks a political strategy, a strategy for taking power and an alternative socio-economic model. This book will attempt to address the problem of a political alternative for the Left and the popular movement, an alternative which is not limited to cosmetic reforms of neo-liberal capitalism. Such an alternative is scarcely likely to emerge from within existing Social Democratic parties, which are so thoroughly incorporated into the system as to be incapable of renewal. Equally, in those countries where Communist parties still retain a residual strength and adhere to a traditional anti-system line the Portuguese party is a good example , they may constitute admirable bastions of resistance to neo-liberal hegemony, but their almost total lack of theoretical renovation shows that they have failed to come to terms with the lessons of the Soviet collapse and have nothing creative to offer. With some exceptions, this also applies to most of the Communist offshoots " the many varieties of Trotskyists and Marxist-Leninists " who are still wedded to variations on the theme of the democratic centralist party, the ideological monopoly of dialectical and historical materialism and the centralised model of state socialism. This does not by any means imply a complete rejection of Marxism or indeed of some aspects of Leninism, but it does mean that it is essential to recognise that no single ideology, much less a single partisan organisation, can any longer lay claim to a monopoly of wisdom. Leadership is not necessary, the movement will constantly throw up new leaders and rotate them at will, or will function on the basis of spontaneous unanimity: But a decade later, not only have they failed to undermine the Mexican state or to dissolve its

power from below, they have achieved only very modest results in terms of autonomy or improved rights for the native people of Chiapas who continue to be their main social base. The Argentine barrio movement has been very impressive in its capacity for non-partisan mobilisation and has contributed to the downfall of five presidents, but when a serious political alternative finally emerged in that chronically divided country, it did so from a totally unexpected source: There is no alternative to the search for an alternative. The Marxist critique of bourgeois democracy had too easily become an excuse for bureaucratic despotism in the name of socialism. But does this mean that the critique of bourgeois democracy has no relevance? Is the concept of revolution now to be consigned to the dustbin of history, now that the only revolutions that attract attention are those that overthrow bureaucratic state socialist regimes? We are all democrats now – advocates of democracy on the Western liberal model – and so revolution, or any political change that implies the use of force or direct action, is apparently out. The universal assumption that democracy is the only valid regime – accepted even by most ex-Communist parties – obscures the question of what democracy really means, of whether Western liberalism is the only valid form of democracy, and of whether revolutionary change is possible by democratic means. These are also central questions which will have to be addressed in the search for a political alternative. At this point we come to the binary pair of revolution and reform: Social Democrats are by definition reformist. But the violent seizure of power does not guarantee revolutionary change, and in most countries the technological capacity of the modern state makes defeat of the regular military an extremely costly, if not impossible proposition. In Cuba and Nicaragua – countries with a weak state, with corrupt personalist dictatorships – outright military victory was possible. In this conception being revolutionary does not exclude negotiation and compromise; it does exclude acceptance of compromise as a permanent solution. Reforms are perfectly acceptable, indeed essential; reformism, on the other hand, means limiting the struggle to reforms within the system. On this basis, the debate on democracy and revolution acquires new meaning: If a process of democratic change threatens to undermine the established system of power it will eventually lead to ruptures which imply at least some degree of violent confrontation, but the precise form this will take is unpredictable and cannot necessarily be determined by the movement or its leadership. But the issue of democracy goes beyond this: In the nineteenth century democracy was not equated with liberalism: But if democracy does not include direct participation by workers, the poor, the marginalised and excluded of capitalist society, then it excludes all possibility of real change, of a genuine political alternative. As recently as the s C. Macpherson could write his now classic *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* Macpherson , demonstrating how from its seventeenth-century origins liberalism was based on a market society of individual proprietors, and arguing that this was no longer an adequate basis for a theory of political obligation. In recent decades parliamentary liberalism has assimilated the Left in the name of democracy, when the real task is for the Left to reclaim democracy from liberalism. It follows from this discussion that the collapse of the Soviet and Eastern European models should not be taken as proof of the failure or irrelevance of all socialist or revolutionary experiences. Few would want to defend the Stalinist rigidity of North Korea, and the apparent acceptance of many aspects of robber-baron capitalism by China and Vietnam is cause for grave doubts about their continuing socialist credentials although it has to be recognised that the jury is still out on their long-term evolution. But Cuba is still widely admired for its social achievements and its valiant resistance to US hostility, and its former association with the Soviet Union should not be taken as proof that its social and political model is identical or that it will suffer a similar fate. If Cuba has survived, it is precisely because its socialism differs in important respects and its revolution had different origins and characteristics; indeed, it will be argued in Chapter 4 that the true originality of the Cuban revolution has yet to be appreciated, and that its political relevance for the Left today is much greater than is normally assumed. Along with Cuba, what are arguably the most original and most successful revolutionary experiences of our times have occurred in Latin America: None of these revolutions was made by a Socialist or Communist party; two were led by guerrilla insurgents and two by rebels from within the military establishment; all were inspired by original and apparently eclectic ideologies; all have involved a great emphasis on direct democracy and popular power; and all have featured the prominent role of one or a few charismatic individual leaders. The fact that much of the Left rejects Cuba and Venezuela, dismisses Nicaragua as a defeat without considering its

contemporary relevance, and regards Portugal as no more than a demonstration of the success of the liberal capitalist model, only confirms the poverty of contemporary Socialist and progressive thought. It will be argued here that Nicaragua and Portugal in their respective revolutionary phases offered examples of popular and democratic politics which are still relevant, and that Cuba and especially Venezuela represent the real revolutionary alternative for our times. It is not accidental that all but one of these examples arose in Latin America: In most of Asia traditional cultures and social structures have remained too solid to permit the emergence of revolutionary movements transcending the nationalist and anti-colonialist phase, and the major East Asian exceptions are profoundly problematic. India is in the grip of right-wing Hindu nationalism, while other countries of South and West Asia appear torn between Islamic fundamentalism and Western neo-liberalism. In South Africa the African National Congress, once a totemic source of anti-imperialist inspiration, has embraced the free market, while the rest of the continent wallows in neo-colonial poverty, internecine strife and corruption, and progressive movements remain weak. Recent advances in Latin America have not come without problems. Lula was elected President of Brazil at the fourth attempt, but lacks a clear majority in Congress and has to negotiate any legislative project with a bewildering variety of political forces, and his government has been weakened by corruption scandals. The Cuban revolution is clearly the starting-point for contemporary Latin American revolutionary movements, yet remarkably little attention has been devoted to its political originality. In the enormous literature on Cuba there is general recognition that the old Communist Party, the Partido Socialista Popular PSP, was incapable of making the revolution, both because it opposed armed struggle and because of its former compromises with Batista. It is also generally recognised that revolutionary victory was the work of Fidel Castro and the 26 July Movement, a broad, popular, nationalist and social-reformist movement which did not adopt a strictly defined ideological label and did not mention Socialism or Communism until more than two years after the victory of 1 January. Surely the fact that a broad national movement with individual charismatic leadership was capable of leading one of the most popular and radical revolutionary processes in history deserves careful analysis. It raises fundamental questions about the concept of a revolutionary vanguard, about the role of political parties and the relationship between leadership and mass. A second crucial formative experience for the contemporary Latin American Left was Chile; the defeat of the Popular Unity, widely seen at the time as demonstrating the futility of the electoral road, offers other equally important lessons. In both cases reliance on elections and constitutionalism seems to be undermined by the refusal of hegemonic interests to accept a democracy which they do not control. But the Chilean experience also underlines the fateful consequences of partisan divisions the rivalries of Socialists, Communists, MAPU and other parties, and the dangers of attempting a transformational project without a clear popular majority. It must never be forgotten that Allende was elected in a three-way race with only 36 per cent of the popular vote, and although his support increased somewhat in subsequent municipal and legislative elections, he never had a solid absolute majority. Opposition control of Parliament also made it impossible for Allende to impose his projected constitutional changes. If Chile demonstrated the hazards of the purely electoral road, that does not necessarily imply that armed insurgency is the only solution. The idea of the people taking up arms to achieve liberation is central to Latin American political culture, and it by no means excludes other forms of struggle and participation. It embodies a distrust of institutionalized politics and a radical rejection of all forms of paternalism: It is intimately linked to the concept of popular sovereignty, that sovereignty really does reside in the people as a whole and not in the propertied classes or in any hereditary group or privileged institution. The people, moreover, constitute themselves as political actors by collective mobilisation, not merely by passive reception of media messages or individualised voting. The secret ballot is undoubtedly regarded as essential, but as inadequate unless accompanied by mass organisation and mobilisation; and this will ideally be peaceful but may encompass an entirely legitimate recourse to arms if faced with repression or arbitrary authority. The concept is also indissolubly linked with the rights and cultures of oppressed ethnic and social groups, with indigenous, black and mestizo empowerment. Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia. Victory in Nicaragua revived the hope of continental liberation inspired by the Cuban revolution, and significantly it also came about in unorthodox form. As in Cuba it was a national uprising against a brutal dictatorship in a small and extremely dependent country, a client regime in a region

which had suffered frequent US intervention. The Nicaraguan agrarian reform and literacy campaign, and the rank-and-file organisational structure of the Sandinista Defence Committees similar to the Cuban Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, clearly drew on Cuban experience, but were combined with efforts to work with the private sector and with a pluralist political system. Sandinista defeat at the polls in was undoubtedly due above all to unrelenting US hostility and the devastating effects of the Contra war, but there were other contributory factors, notably internal divisions and the abandonment after of popular participatory and welfare policies in favour of conventional liberal democracy and an IMF deflationary package. The subsequent defeat or neutralisation of the Salvadorean and Guatemalan insurgencies was more straightforward, consisting essentially of the application by the US of overwhelming pressure in order to forestall revolutionary victory. These reverses, coinciding as they did with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, led to profound demoralisation and disorientation among the Latin American Left and contributed to the worldwide crisis of progressive ideas from which we are only now beginning to emerge. If a victorious armed revolution could be defeated in little more than a decade and two other apparently solid insurgent movements could be neutralised, what hope was there for radical social change of any kind? And since the final Sandinista defeat came at the ballot box, hope of progress through elections was also undermined. Were free elections and multi-party systems incompatible with revolutionary power? If the Sandinistas were to win elections again, would they “indeed could they” reinitiate the revolutionary transformation of “84? With the universal imposition of neo-liberalism and with the Left in disarray, liberal democracy seemed to be reduced to a formal electoral game with little relevance to the real conditions of existence for the popular classes. What the PT has achieved, most notably in Porto Alegre, is of enormous significance for popular movements everywhere. The systematic practice of reporting back by elected representatives and the possibility of recall, and even more important, the participatory budget, together constitute a revolution in local government whose full consequences have yet to be worked out. However, the possibility of a radicalization of the popular movement, beyond the control of the PT government, could lead to a more complex situation. Both the MST Movement of the Landless and certain sectors of the PT have revolutionary positions which more truly represent the aspirations of the popular movement, but which also face violent hostility from the Brazilian oligarchy “and this could lead to a very dangerous confrontation with unpredictable consequences in the absence of a coherent unified strategy by the Government and its supporters. Given the lack of a serious transformative strategy on the part of Lula and the PT Government and the current corruption crisis, the prospects for Brazil are not encouraging. If the Brazilian situation offers the prospect of no more than limited reform, it is in Venezuela that a revolutionary transformation is not only possible but is already well under way. It is also Venezuela which most clearly raises the theoretical issues formulated above: In Venezuela there has been a real although still incomplete change in the structure of power, with a new Constitution, a population which is mobilised and organised in a participatory democracy, a government of popular origin which is pushing forward an ongoing process of transformation, a political reorientation of the armed forces, and the beginnings of an economic restructuring with the effective renationalisation of the vital oil industry. An agrarian reform is under way, producer and consumer cooperatives are being promoted, and a reform of urban property is giving effective ownership and control to slum dwellers.

Chapter 7 : The Diversity of Latin American Democracy

The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) survey of political attitudes in Latin America reveals a strong commitment among Latin American citizens to the abstract concept of democracy.

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: Lowenthal bio The turn toward democracy in the Americas has been widely applauded in both the United States and Latin America. And no one doubts that in recent years democratic politics has gained important ground throughout most of Latin America and the Caribbean. Yet democracy in Latin America is far from robust. It is nowhere fully achieved, and it is perhaps most firmly established in those few countries where it was already deeply rooted and vibrant a generation ago. In most other nations, democracy is endangered by political and criminal violence, conflicts between civilian and military authorities, prolonged economic decline, and gross social and economic inequalities. Democratic institutions in much of Latin America remain weak—plagued by rampant corruption, political polarization, and growing public skepticism about government and politics. In some countries, democratic forms are still a facade; in others, they are precarious and vulnerable. In country after country, military regimes and personalist dictatorships gave way to elected civilian governments. In the final months of the decade, Brazil held its first direct presidential elections since and Chile its first since—thus bringing civilian presidents to office in every country of South America for the first time in a generation. Government office, if not always power, is now usually transferred peacefully from one elected president to another throughout Latin America. In recent years, incumbent administrations have yielded office to elected opponents in countries as diverse as Argentina, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica, Peru, and Uruguay—in some cases for the first time in memory. Not since had one democratically elected president succeeded another in Argentina before Carlos Menem replaced Radl Alfonsfn in In the face of economic crisis and terrorist threats, Peru has held three consecutive presidential elections for the first time in nearly a century. In economically traumatized Bolivia, frequent military coups have given way to three successive elections. Even in countries where elections have remained flawed, important democratic gains have been registered. Although the balloting was marred by credible charges of fraud, Mexico held its most competitive presidential contest in more than a generation in , and popular pressures are building for the further opening of Mexican politics. Despite severe restrictions on political participation in most Central American countries, elections have come to be accepted as the only legitimate route to office in that region. After several failed attempts to hold free elections in Haiti following the downfall of the Duvalier dynasty, an [End Page 17] internationally supervised presidential vote finally took place in December No longer is it commonly accepted that Latin America is You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

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Chapter 9 : Project MUSE - Latin America's Fragile Democracies

Populism, whether of the left or the right, is a threat to democracy. Yet in Latin America today, the graver and more sustained danger is coming from the leftist variant. ChÃ¡vez set the model.