

The Latin American Left in the 2000s: Have We Seen This Before?

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ABSTRACT

Though the left wave in the 2000s appears to be a new phenomenon in Latin America, there are parallels with the past. First, it is still accurate to divide it between one more radical and one social-democratic left. Second, it is furthermore still divided into two paths, which were somewhat established under different circumstances and reasons in Central America, the Andes and in the Southern Cone. Third, the division between the moderate and radical left has clearly been witnessed before. In previous (Costa Rica 1949-, Venezuela 1958-) as well as contemporary cases (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay) social-democratic parties have always promoted liberal democracy and the economic order of today, but have never challenged the elite actors' position in society or the democratic stability. In addition, the contemporary radical cases (Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador) have similarities to old cases (Guatemala 1944-1954, Chile 1970-1973) in the attempt to challenge liberal democracy and accomplishing drastic socio-economic reforms, but while the old cases ended in military coups the radical left is still in power in the contemporary cases. Ultimately, the left in government is not a new phenomenon, and today it has two paths, but the scope of its influences, in the radical cases, will probably have deeper consequences for society and democracy than ever.

Key Words: left, democracy, radical, social-democracy, Latin America

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the entire 2000s, the left won elections, or became the first runner-up to right-wing parties in almost all Latin American countries (see Castañeda and Morales 2008). This left-wave trend began with the 1998

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election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, and was followed by victories in Chile, Brazil, Ecuador, Panama,¹ Argentina,² Uruguay, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guatemala,³ Peru,⁴ Nicaragua, Paraguay,⁵ and in 2009 even the former guerilla-group FMLN (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional) won the presidency in El Salvador.

However, so far the most radical cases of the contemporary Latin American left can be found in Venezuela and Bolivia.⁶ In these administrations, the implementation of massive socio-economic reforms and ideas about other forms of democratic rule than pure liberal democracy, including more of people's participation, has challenged the stability of the liberal democratic rule. The most controversial case seems to be Chávez' Venezuela, where the parliamentary right and the economic elite, with silent support of the Bush administration, even attempted a coup⁷ in 2002 and tried to unconstitutionally replace the elected Chávez-administration. Furthermore, in cases such as Bolivia and Ecuador the political climate has also started to become tense following the implementation of massive socio-economic reforms, including economic and geographical redistribution policies, and land reforms. It seems then, at least superficially, that the most radical cases of this left-wave in the 2000s have started to have consequences for stability of the democratic rule. Still, it has to be recognized that the radical left support the ideas behind institutional democracy with elections and freedom of political rights etc.

At the same time, it is important to state that the contemporary left is not a cohesive force, nor should the wave of left administrations be seen as having one unified direction for democratic or socio-economic development. For example, compared to the radical cases, in the Southern Cone and in Costa Rica, the social-democratic left has so far had a much more moderate

1 Between 2004-2009, Martín Erasto Torrijos was president supported by the social-democratic left-center, Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD).

2 I choose to include the presidencies of Néstor Kirchner as well as Christina Fernández de Kirchner as a part of the left, since the party behind them, Frente para la Victoria (FPV) is considered as a social-democratic and left-center party coalition within the broader Peronist movement.

3 Álvaro Colón is elected as president 2008-2012, representing the left-leaning, Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE).

4 Alan García represented the third way social-democratic, Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana.

5 As president Fernando Lugo ran for the center-left, but social-democratic, Alianza Patriótica por el Cambio (APC).

6 This statement is based upon party platforms and policies carried out while in office.

7 A similar military coup took place in Honduras in June 2009, in which a right-leaning interim administration replaced the Zelaya's administration. Although Zelaya was elected as a liberal in 2005, he had started to move closer to the agenda of the radical left, which included membership in the radical social trade-bloc ALBA. While the coup had support of the parliamentary right, the economic elite and the military, it did not receive any support from either the Obama administration or the international community.

and pragmatic political and socio-economic agenda. These countries also have much longer experiences of democratic rule and political parties, which dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century. These things matter if we would like to understand the contemporary left of today.

As such, by the year 2009, this massive wave of left presidencies, including both the radical and moderate left, seems to have been, at least on the surface, a unique contemporary phenomenon. To certain degree, it is true. Latin America has never at the same time had as many democratically elected left presidencies; it is a historical record never matched before. But so far most the contemporary research about the left-wave has neglected the historical perspective and legacy of the left and comparisons with the past (see for example Castañeda and Morales 2008; Cleary 2006; Schamis 2006; Arditi 2008; March 2007; Seligson 2007; Walker 2008; Baker and Greene 2011). Since at least the radical contemporary cases seems to be controversial, for different reasons, it makes sense to relate these with previous radical experiences of the left in Latin America, as in the historical cases of Guatemala (1944-1954) and Chile (1970-1973). In these cases, the radical lefts' ambition to implement socio-economic reforms ended with military coups, the end of democratic rule and the establishment of military rule. But, also the moderate cases can be found in historical time as in Costa Rica and Venezuela (1950s-), in which the social-democratic parties stood behind, at least into the 1980s, a stable liberal democratic route, and market economy with some modest socio-economic reforms.

As a consequence, and by using historical parallels, this article, first, offers an analysis of the background to the emerging of two different paths of the contemporary left—one more radical and one more moderate and social-democratic. Second, it brings us to the issue about how the left's radical or moderate reforms have been carried out in practice in contemporary Latin America. Third, the question is to what extent the left-wave of today can be understood as a contemporary issue, and to what extent there are historical similarities. This brings us to the discussion about constraints that, at least historically, have hindered the accomplishment of radical democracy in Latin America and further created political chaos and military regimes, for example in Guatemala and Chile. If there are more parallels than we can imagine, we might be worried about the future of further radicalization of Latin America, and how it will affect our understanding of Latin American politics, in different ways and countries, and in particular to the fundamental questions related to future possibilities of military coups and democratic stability.

WHY A DIVIDED LEFT WITH TWO DIFFERENT PATHS?

The Latin American left has always been divided and split into different parties, factions or groups. In particular, its relation to democracy has historically been problematic. As we know, before the Cold War ended, the left interpreted democracy as a mean, for the elite and external powers, to subordinate the people. Instead, and particularly during the 1950 to 1970s, the left emphasized socio-economic development and national independence, rather than the struggle for democratic development. A few exceptions were the social-democrats in Costa Rica, Venezuela, the Chilean left during Allende, and a few intellectuals (Castañeda 1993, 327), who accepted representative democracy and market economy.

For most part, however, of the left, the debate was largely confined to how to best translate Marxism-Leninism to Latin American conditions (López Castellanos 2001). For most left parties the ideological orientation and the concept of class were key concepts. But after the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the ideology of Communism; the left became ideologically exhausted. The immediate consequences resulted in the gradual decline of Marxism-Leninism, the Marxist utopia and serious doubts about the entire idea of social revolution. In the 1990s, only a few organizations, parties and left leaders maintained close ties to the idea of a violent social revolution (see Brown 1996). As a result of these events, in an era of globalization and neo-liberal policies, the left had difficulties redefining its role in society. However, the left did not only have to deal with its internal failure as a socialistic project, it also had to challenge the hegemony of neoliberalism in an era when military dictatorships had been replaced by democratically elected governments. After the transition to democracy in the 1980s, most of the democratically elected administrations became right-wing or conservative. This was changed in the late 1990s, as the left was suddenly confronted with the task of finding an alternative to the economic neoliberal model and how to deepen democracy in Latin America. Although it lacked a clear and unitary path toward this aim, the legacy of violent revolution, class and strictly ideological orientation were vanished and the ballot box enabled a wave of successful elections.

The trend began in 1998 with Hugo Chávez's populist leftist victory by an overwhelming majority in Venezuela, and was followed by Chile in 1999, when the moderate socialist Ricardo Lagos was elected president. It was followed by leftist winners in additional twelve countries, and might have ended with the victory of the right-wing candidate in the presidential election in Chile, in early 2010. These victories, taken together, represent a monumental trend that has not been matched historically (see Cleary 2006,

35). However, this wave cannot be seen as uniformed left, nor a united left. Among the literature the categorizations of the left have included several acronyms such as moderate left, reformist left, social-democrats, socialists, left-wing populism, leftist neopopulism, the participatory left, the radical left, the petro-left, and the nationalist left. However, this article moves beyond the multiplicity of conceptualizations toward two broad categories that encompass distinct tendencies in terms of the party's view of democracy, economy and socio-economic reforms (see Roberts 1998, 18-19; Castañeda 1993; Castañeda and Morales 2008; Walker 2008). The two categories used are the radical left and the social-democratic left. Following Arditì (2008) the categorizations are constructed as the left has manifested itself in different cases through party programs, speeches or in other actions or policies in government or in opposition.

The first is the radical left, a broad category, in which the left in all cases challenges liberal democracy and the hegemony of market economic policies, i.e. neoliberalism in the 1990s-2000s, but still supports the idea about institutional democracy with elections and other political rights. However, above all, the radical left has always been struggling for state-intervention in the economic sector, social reforms, and redistribution of wealth to the masses. This radical left is today represented by the primary and dominated left parties in for example Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador and Bolivia, though the left in office in Brazil for example seems to be more moderate and social-democratic. These parties' platforms and policies carried out in office, or proposals in opposition, have similarities with Salvador Allende's presidency in Chile (1970-1973), and the left-coalition in Guatemala during the radical democratic period (1944-1954), but has also some parallels to traditional European social democratic socio-economic policies, advocating an active and strong state to promote social and economic development.

The radical left has, at least, three different tendencies, which sometimes exist in the same party, but sometimes only one at the time. The first is populism meaning that the radical left quite often adheres to a populist agenda with drastic socio-economic reforms and re-distribution of land that is attractive to the broad masses of workers and indigenous people, but not seen by many others as possible to achieve in reality (see March 2007; Walker 2008). According to Walker (2008, 9) the resurgence of this contemporary popular left largely depends on the collapse of the old political institutions as well as new social demands from young people, workers and indigenous people. The broad left movement behind Chávez in Venezuela and Morales in Bolivia are two good examples. Allende's Unidad Popular that aimed to carry out drastic socio-economic reforms also fits into this tendency as well as

the ruling coalition during the radical president Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala (1951-1954).

The second is participation, in which the left advocate people's participation, i.e. participatory democracy, particular with emphasize to get people engaged at local level and in the socio-economic spheres (see for example Barber 1984; Pateman 1970). This idea stands opposed to the idea of representative liberal democracy, though it is still within the framework of institutional democracy. In particular, the Worker's party in Brazil stands behind this idea, but it also has some features in most of the other cases, such as in Venezuela and Bolivia. In Venezuela this process has been initiated from above after the left under Chávez has won several elections during the last decade, while in Bolivia the left was mobilized long before Morales was elected as president in 2005. The idea of participation was also a key character of Unidad Popular, the coalition behind Salvador Allende's presidency (1970-1973). The Allende government was about to launch a new constitution, emphasizing participatory democracy in Chile, almost similar to the case of both Venezuela and Bolivia in the 2000s, but the military coup in 1973 prevented such development.

The third tendency is that the radical left quite often has traditional linkages to the ideology of Marxism and to other Marxist parties around the world. Two good examples are the former guerilla groups in Nicaragua and El Salvador, which still have a major internal debate about their Marxist in heritage. Also the contemporary left in Venezuela and Bolivia has connections to the communist left, and in the case of president Allende, the communists was actually a part of the ruling coalition. This was also the case for the Árbenz government in Guatemala. However, as has been stated the radical left has not per se be seen as one single and united political force in Latin America, with exactly the same political agenda all over the region. But the radical left has been and still is united in a broader sense, mainly because it has always been challenging the liberal doctrines of democratic institutions and market-driven economic policies (neoliberalism in the 1980-1990s) trying to address much more of state-led economic policies, social reforms, and redistribution of wealth from rich to poor people, however, still accepting the rule of institutional democracy.⁸

8 See for example, Unidad Popular's "Programa Basico de Gobierno de La Unidad Popular" (1969), "Estatutos del FMLN" (2002) and the election manifest. "Democracia, Prosperidad y Justicia Social: Proyecto del País" (Documento, Agosto 2002) and "24 Aniversario del FMLN: Por La Vida de la Gente la Lucha Continúa" (Salvador Sánchez Cerén, Coordinador General del FMLN, 10 de Octubre del 2004). Others examples are FSLN's "Estatutos del FSLN" (2002), "Programa Político" and "Estrategia del FSLN 2002-2006" (aprobado en el Congreso del 16 y 17 de marzo 2002), PRD's "Estatuto del Partido de La Revolución Democrática" (Aprobado en el VIII Congreso Nacional, marzo 28 de 2004), or PT's "O Socialismo Petista" (Resulção de no 7 Encontro Nacional - 31 mayo e 3 junho, 1990, São Paulo) and paragraph 1 and 240: "Estatuto do Partido dos

The second category is the left-of-centre's social democrats. Though the social democratic parties stand for a number of different political agendas all over the world, still, they have all belonged and still do belong to the international socialist and social democratic party group. In Latin America, the third way social-democrats have also adhered to policies of developing liberal democracy, market economy and maintaining most of the characters of their predecessors' neoliberal economic policies from the 1990s, though some modification have taken place. These modern Social Democrats –“La Tercera Via” (see for example Carazo 2000)- tend to stand for reformism and pragmatism, having eliminated former vocabulary such as “class struggle” and “socialism”. This tendency follows the route of Anthony Giddens' (1994) analysis of third way of social democracy, standing to the right of the radical left in the global era. In theory, this implies a modern stance on issues related to globalization, economic integration and the free market. In reality, however, it means acceptance of the neoliberal economic world order, but also encompasses ideas such as protection of the weak, social justice, rights with obligations, and cosmopolitan pluralism. Of course there exist differences and some of the social democratic parties are today still much more ideological oriented (Chile), elite-oriented (Costa Rica), or is seen as united force of “catch-all left groups” (Uruguay, Argentina) or is just as a pragmatic party to the left distinguished from the radical left and the right (Peru).⁹ Finally, a third main category could be the orthodox left-wing Communist parties (in Chile for example), who plays a minor role in a few countries, but they are no longer any major force against either the right or the left in today's democratized Latin America.

Thus the radical as well as the social-democratic left became two real political alternatives to win elections all over the Latin America in the 1990s, the questions are, however, how we could explain this left-wave of electoral successes and why did it have two types of paths? In the early 1990s, Steven Ellner (1993) argued that both domestic circumstances and international events could explain why the more traditional and Marxist-Leninist left lost to a more reformist and moderate Left in the 1990s (see also Roberts 1998; López Castellanos 2001; Remmer 1992; Bergesen 1992; Vasconi, and Martell 1993; Lievesley 1999). At first, the left suffered major setbacks, including the death of Che Guevara in 1967, and the 1973 military coup d'état in Chile. These were seen as major failures, since both the force of guerilla warfare, and Allende's peaceful socialism had failed to solve any social problems. Instead military rule was established in several countries such as Brazil, Chile, Uruguay

Trabajadores” (Aprovado Pelo Diretório Nacional EM 11/03/01).

9 See for example “Estatuto del Partido Socialista de Chile” (Septiembre de 2000), and Roberts (1998), or PLN's “Carta Fundamental” (1998: III. Nace Un Nuevo Mundo, IV. La Sociedad Que Queremos, V. Nuestros Compromisos).

and Argentina. Second, after years of torture, imprisonment and exile, the left was convinced of the importance of representative democracy rather as an alternative to military dictatorship. Third, the third wave of democratization gradually established formal electoral democracy in almost all Latin America countries during the 1980 and 1990s, except for Cuba (see for example Huntington 1991). In some countries, such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, years of turmoil, military dictatorship, guerilla warfare and civil war concluded peaceful transitions to electoral democracies. Consequently, when military rule was abandoned, it became difficult for the left to oppose democratic rule and participating in the elections became the only relevant choice. Fourth, the fall of the communism and the Soviet empire caused Marxist ideology to lose grounds in Latin America. Although some factions had serious doubts about the Marxist ideology before the fall of communism, others still contained to the revolutionary model. Fifth, the Latin American left was gradually weakened when U.S. military hegemony became a reality after the fall of the communism. The U.S. blockade towards Cuba, and the Sandinistas loss of the election to the U.S. sponsored conservative Violeta Chamorra in Nicaragua also made a negative impression to the soul of the Latin American Left. Furthermore, Lievesley (1999, 70) states that the failure of the socialist experiment in Chile (1970-1973), in Nicaragua (1978-1990) and in Cuba (1959-) had a major impact on the thoughts of the Latin American left in the 1990s. But later on when electoral democracy was established across the region in the early 2000s, after 9/11, Latin America lost its importance from U.S. priorities and among other things the effort to create a free trade area all over the Americas was diminished (Arditi 2008; Moreno-Brid, and Paunovic 2008). Sixth, the transformation of the international economy and the adoption of a neo-liberal model during the 1980s changed the reality of politics in Latin America, especially for the social democrats' ambition with more state-led economic policies. The debt-crisis and the neo-liberal transformation totally undermined the idea of a state controlled economy; at least until it later in the 2000s became obvious that also this economic model had failed. At that point, both the moderate and radical left could advocate more state intervention again.

As a consequence the two main parties of the left were established all over the region, and could from now on also participate in the elections. And when left parties started to win local and national elections in the 1990s across Latin America, it became obvious that the left really had the capacity to win elections, and was even able to reach the presidency, and in some cases also win re-election in the 2000s. Though it is not yet possible for a complete and causal explanation for why different types of left have emerged in different countries or sub-regions of Latin America, e.g. Central America vs. the Andes

vs. the Southern Cone, one could at least try to analyze it in a more systematic way. There seems to be a pattern. But let us first be clear about the dimension of radical versus the social-democratic left. Previous, during the Cold War, both the radical left and the social-democratic parties, all over the world, were much more attached to ideology and class struggle compared to today's left, though they had somewhat different ideological foundations. This is in particular still the case for the radical party left, which still maintain its ideas about struggling against liberal democracy and market economy, but today it rather advocating much more of peoples' participation in politics, state intervention and drastic socio-economic reforms, still within the framework of institutional democracy. However, the social democrats are much more pragmatic than ever and have accepted representative democracy, the economic order of today (with neoliberalism since the 1980s) and with some modest social welfare programs.

There are a few major key differences between the radical cases of the Andes with Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador, and the moderate cases of the Southern Cones' Chile, Argentina and Uruguay. First of all, the left in the Southern Cone and in Costa Rica was not established parallel to the democratization in the 1980-1990s, as the radical left was. Rather, it emerged as early as in the 1950s or even before this in most cases. In these cases the left has also reached the presidency under circumstances when the countries have a strong historical democratic legacy and a stable party system compared to other regions in Latin America. Costa Rica, with its long-lasting democratic roots, since 1948, also belongs to this path (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Collier 1999; Peeler 1992). Second, in contrast, the left in the Andes has seized the power after a situation around mid-1990s in which the state, the political parties and the democratic system has been fragile, and when there has been a climate for populist leaders to mobilize indigenous, youths, unemployed workers and poor people against the established global economic order of neoliberalism as well as the national political order of the established political elites (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; see also Katz 2007). In Central American countries with guerilla wars in the 1980s, the former guerilla commendantes first transformed the old parties into radical left Marxist parties, but where now the left in Guatemala and El Salvador seems to move more into the moderate direction. Brazil seems to be in between, with a radical Workers Party at regional- and local level, but with a much more pragmatic stance in the federal government. Brazil shares both some of the characters of the countries in the Andes and the Southern Cone.

One more analytical and possible explanation to the shift to the left is the one about democratic values; it has further been elaborated by Seligson (2007; see also Baker and Greene 2011). According to surveys in the 2000s, such as

the Latinobarometro, generally speaking, there has been a slight shift to the left in Latin America. Still the region as such belongs somewhat to the right of the center. However, there exist internal variations, as in the case of Costa Rica, in which the social-democratic party and the social-conservative opposition stand slightly to the right of the center on the ideological disposition. In other cases, such as in El Salvador, Nicaragua and in Chile, the ideological distance is much far away between any left (radical or moderate) and the right in each case. Among the countries in the Andes, Ecuador stands out in comparison, because its people seem to have an extraordinary low thrust for liberal democratic institutions and a political system without political parties, i.e. support for populist government.

However, this possible explanation about the lefts' resurgence does not seem to be accurate, simply because peoples' attitudes still seem to be at the center of the left-right scale. Rather, two other explanations seem to give us some understanding of why we had two different paths. First, theories of party system help us to understand it (see Mainwaring and Scully 1995). In the mid-1990s, when the left wave took shape Chile, Argentina and Uruguay and Costa Rica had a relative institutionalized party system, and the share of votes for each party was relatively stable from one election to another. Furthermore, the parties had reasonable roots in society, and they were the key actors in the political process. In opposite, Mainwaring and Scully came to the conclusion that Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela in the Andes had a fragile and less institutionalized party system with lack of stability. Worth mentioning is that Venezuela since the democratic transition in 1958 used to have a stable party system, which collapsed gradually during the 1990s, due to corruption, economic crises, and Chávez's anti-establishment campaign (Sánchez 2008).

Second, the rise of new parties or reformation of a new and radical left was possible through several contributing factors (see for example Ignazi 1996; Flanagan and Dalton 1990; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Quiet often new parties emerge as a respond to more participation or a new form of politics, including bringing in another perspective of existing cleavages, which the old party system did not pay attention to. One of these important issues is the demand from poor and indigenous people in the Andes to politics, and to aggregate their interest. While the former central nation-building in the Andes was constructed by the old ruling political and economic elite, excluding a large part of the population ethnically, linguistically and culturally, as well as young people and urban employed, the new left and its radical ambitions could also be seen as a reaction to this. As Walker (2008, 9) concludes, this "cry of the people" explains this pattern. Together with charismatic leaders, the forces of social movements and a populist agenda brought the radical left to power in for example Venezuela and Bolivia. In particular much of the agenda of the radical

left in the late 1990s and beyond can be seen as a reaction to the failure of the neoliberal model to carry out socio-economic development. For example, Moreno-Brid and Paunovic (2008) have argued that the disappointing socio-economic outcome of the Washington Consensus neoliberal reforms is the main reason to understand the emergence of new left governments, and in particular the radical left. In the Southern Cone and in Costa Rica most part of the people were included in the state-nation building, though it even here has been elite-led (Collier 1999; Peeler 1992). In these cases, there was no need for major challenges against the established party system, though some minor changes have taken place.

However, it still created the space for the social-democrats to advocate a much larger role for the state in the economic policy-making. The historical roots make sense, both for the establishment of radical and moderate left governments in the Andes as well as the Southern Cone.

HOW RADICAL OR MODERATE HAVE THE LEFT BEEN IN OFFICE?

By the year of 2009, fourteen presidencies were occupied by the left. In Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, Chile, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Peru, and Paraguay, and probably in El Salvador¹⁰ the reformist and social democratic presidents attempted to carry out modest social and economic reforms. The reforms have been seen as moderate in the sense that they have not challenged the global political or economic order of today – liberal democracy and market economy – though some attempt to modify the neoliberal economy, especially on issues related to free trade and privatization, might take place.

However, in other Latin American countries, such as in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua, the presidents have been more radical and have challenged or might challenge the political, social, and global economic order (Katz 2007; Walker 2008; Moreno-Brid and Paunovic 2008). These are considered as radical for several reasons. One is the radical socio-economic agenda and how democracy as a concept is understood, in reality an ambition to deepen democracy through peoples' participation. Another one is because the left in these cases, during the presidential terms, the party agendas or through other means such as public speeches, both have opposed the ideas behind free trade as well as the supranational organizations behind the market-based policies. The radical countries' creation of the ALBA (Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América), together with Cuba, differs

10 The FMLN-presidency since June 2009 seems so far to be more moderate than radical in practise.

from other trade blocs (Salazar 2006). Rather than only dealing with economic issues, it intends to express the feeling of the Latin American people, with an emphasis on fighting poverty and social injustice. It heads projects such 'Petro America' and other energy issues, collective efforts to collectively bargain with the international community (such as the IMF), and dealing with social issues such as literacy. Furthermore, a new currency might be established as an alternative to the dollarization in Latin America. Furthermore, these radical presidencies also attempt to challenge the domestic elites who support the global free market economy. However, still in reality the left regimes as such have not accomplished as much as one would expect in practice when it comes to the issue about income redistribution, with a few exceptions such as Venezuela and Bolivia (Cornia 2010).

For several reasons Venezuela is seen as the most controversial case of the radical political left. First, Hugo Chávez's populist "Bolivarian revolution" is by nature deeply anti-globalization and against most of the global institutions and norms coming from the Western hemisphere, and no other government has so far challenged the contemporary international hegemony as much as Chávez. Second, it is the only case so far that has challenged and largely replaced the previous game of democracy and socio-economic system in a country, in the Venezuelan case the liberal political system rooted in the "Pacto de Punto Fijo" of 1958 (see also Moreno-Brid and Paunovic 2009; Kornblith and Jawahar 2005; McCoy 2005; Levine 2002). This democratic pact, between all the old elites including the social-democrats, contained representative democracy, market economy, some social reforms, and aimed to maintain the existing economic world order of today (ISI up to the 1980s). Third, the Bolivarian revolution has carried out the most and deepest political transformation and social and economic reforms to reduce poverty. In fact, Chávez's "Bolivarian revolution" has decreased poverty and some social problems as well as taken measures to strengthen grassroots democracy in the countryside and in the poor city barrios. Fourth, no other leftist government has taken such measures and policies to strengthen the power of the presidency, while weakening the power of Congress and the judicial system, along with some political and civil rights as Chávez. Fifth, at the same time no other government has challenged or met as hard resistance as Chávez's, and the radicalization began at once to challenge the domestic economic elite, the Washington consensus, and neoliberal economic policies (McCoy 2005; Kornblith and Jahawar 2005; see also Levine 2002). Finally, what also is significance for Chávez is that he has survived several major political crises or attempted military coups. Since the revolution began, he has survived a military coup (2002), won referendums on staying in office and on a new constitution (2004), and, in 2006 he was re-elected as president. But, the failure

to win approval for additional constitutional changes in December 2007 seemed to have weakened Chávez's authority temporarily, but it all changed again when he in late 2008 won another constitutional referendum (this time about the possibility for presidents to be re-elected more than twice). Still he seems to have support from many poor sectors of Venezuelan society.

However, the most recent reforms to nationalize a banks, food factories and natural mineral companies have further increased polarization between the pro-Chavistaz and the domestic opposition and international actors such as the United States, and foreign companies. Furthermore, the harder climate for a free media in constraints to other political rights has further polarized society in Venezuela. For these six reasons Venezuela is the most radical case of the contemporary left. As a result of this radicalization, Venezuela might able to develop democracy beyond institutional democracy, and poor people might get it better, but it could also sooner or later meet the same destiny as Chile in 1973, with political chaos and political instability.

The second most radical and controversial case is Bolivia (see for example Walker 2008; Sánchez 2008; Rochlin 2007). In contrast to Chávez, the left government has so far not decreased civil and political right in Bolivia, nor have any major military coups taken place against the democratically elected government. In late 2005, Evo Morales won the presidency supported by the indigenous people and the Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS). During the first years of this new radical presidency, Bolivia boasted mostly positive macroeconomic indicators related to growth, unemployment and trade. The most concrete examples of this radical policy initiatives was the nationalization of the country's natural gas supply (some from international companies), which will bring billions of dollars to the state and likely be expanded to cover other natural resources in the future. Furthermore, in late 2006, the Bolivian Congress voted in favor of a controversial land reform program, which aimed at redistributing land to mostly poor and indigenous people in the countryside. Other social reform policies have included a campaign against illiteracy and an initiative to provide access to medical care in the countryside. In December 2007, an elected constitutional assembly, representing the major parties voted for major changes to the constitution; thereby establishing Bolivia as a multiethnic country, as well as implementing social reforms financed by the national mineral resources. As a consequence, some of the richer regions held referendums, which resulted in proclaiming of autonomous regional status. But these were not recognized by the central government, or by the judicial system, and were followed by demonstrations and coups against the Morales administration. Finally, however, a new Bolivian constitution was approved in a referendum in 2009. As well as departmental autonomy, the new constitution recognizes municipal, provincial and indigenous autonomy.

President Morales was re-elected in 2009 and has aimed to continue the radical policies, declaring that the people of Bolivia will not have any real political power until they have control over the economy and the natural resources. During 2008-2009, the debate about the constitution changes and its radical measurements further increased the conflict in Bolivian society. As a result, on one side one finds the radical left struggling against the old elite system and the neoliberal policies established in the 1980-1990s. The radical left has support from peasants, coca peasants, mine workers and indigenous people. On the other side one finds the rich upper class representing mainly a few regions and the former political and economic elite of the country, with a minority in the national parliament, trying to maintain the existing political and economic order.

Finally, another case is Nicaragua, where the former Sandinista revolutionary leader Daniel Ortega was installed as president in January 2007 (see Kampwirth 2008). However, the political pact in effect between Ortega and former president Aléman and his conservative factions of the liberal party since 1990s constrains politics and democratic development in Nicaragua, while also constraining the possibility of accomplishing radical reforms. Though domestic politics is somewhat different in Nicaragua compared to other radical cases, it is still relevant to categorize the Ortega administration as radical.

First, during Ortega's first months in office, several political and social reforms were put enacted. Some of these, such as free school for children, free medical care and a fifty percent reduction in public servants' salaries have not been controversial. Second, other more contentious reforms include Ortega's decision to increase citizens' participation in government through the creation of new state authorities and committees, and the move to strengthen the president's control over the police and the military. Ortega's move to centralize the presidential power at once inspired criticism from his right-wing opponents, who draw analogies to the revolutionary regime of the 1980s. In November 2007, via a president decree, President Ortega began to implement one of his controversial ideas, *Consejos Ciudadanos* (People's Committees) a parallel power structure to the political institutions. Third, also during the past years, Ortega has been accused by the media and human rights groups for "institutionalizing a dictatorship", increasing corruption, for violating freedom of speech, assembly and for not respecting the constitution and human rights. Another controversial example is the local elections in 2008, in which violations of the electoral laws were obvious, at least, according to the civil society, the church, United States, OAS and the political right. Another example is the government's attempt to control civil society, by for example forbidding civil organizations from receiving money from foreign sources if the intention is to use them for political purposes. However, if Nicaragua will be further radicalized

and how it then will judge in the long run is too early to call.

These radical governments have of course both similarities and differences. First, the radical political, economic and social agenda have challenged the global order of liberal democracy and neoliberal economy, and the main actors behind it; the international and domestic elite actors, such as landlords, military forces, businessmen, international economic organizations, and, of course, the United States of America. However, the radical governments also have a lot that divides them; the degree of radicalism differs somewhat with Venezuela as the most radical and Nicaragua as the least radical. Furthermore, the effects of this radicalization for each country and Latin America as a region are still, of course, undetermined.

Turning to other Latin American countries, however, one finds that a different progression has taken place. For example, in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Costa Rica, the ruling centre-left administrations have maintained a more social-democratic and moderate path, including support for the liberal democratic route, market economy and only demonstrated modest ambitious for social reforms (for further remarks, see Navia 2008; Altman, Castiglioni and Luna 2008; Baiocchi and Checa 2008). These administrations have thus not challenged major actors, including the economic elite, the military, the U.S. or other international economic forces. These social democratic governments in Latin America have tried to cope with globalization and have accepted liberal democracy, as well as some features of the neoliberal economic model. At the international level, MERCOSUR and the future creation of a free trade block all across the Americas is a stated objective of these administrations' policies, but it will be accomplished through their interest, not only for the best conditions for the United States. All this stands in sharp contrast to the view of the radical left administrations' policies of struggling against free trade and Latin American integration as it has been seen the last decades along with their ambition to further develop the ALBA to other Latin American countries. To conclude, though most of the left-administrations in Latin America seem to be moderate in practice, the few more radical might have deeper consequences for the future of the region, and as a consequence it might be valuable to analyze what we could learn from similar (or almost similar) historical cases.

HAVE WE SEEN THIS BEFORE?

The answer to this question depends how one understands the situation. On the one hand, never before have we seen such a massive and long-lasting wave of democratically elected left leaders in Latin America. Before the 1990s, there had been a few elected left leaders in countries such as El Salvador

(1930-1931), Costa Rica, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Chile, Peru and Guatemala. However, they were not in office at the same time and did not establish a trend of electoral successes of the left. As a consequence, the contemporary elections and the left administrations' policies may have short- and long-forms consequences for society as well as the democratic future in each of the countries, for example to diminish military coups or to establish a consensus of at least institutional democracy.

On the other hand, there are similarities between the cases today and those in the past. First, the radical, popular and participatory left's ideas about a politics, economics and social life espoused by Chávez in Venezuela, Morales in Bolivia, Ortega in Nicaragua and Lula's Workers party in Brazil (though the Lula-administration was more moderate in practice) have similarities to prior cases when left-wing parties in power tried to develop radical democracy with strong economic and anti-poverty measures, such as in Guatemala (1944-1954) and in Chile (1970-1973) (see Oxhorn 2003). In the late 1960s, for example, Chile already had a relatively stable liberal democracy with a market economy (ISI) – supported by all the political parties, the economic elite, the military and by the U.S. authorities. But democracy soon came to a halt when the presidency of Allende tried to enforce popular participation in the political, economic and social spheres, initiated anti-capitalist economic policies, increased state intervention and began to implement radical social and economic reforms (see Oppenheim 1993).

Similarly, in Guatemala –after General Ubico was forced to resign by the revolution of 1944– a democratically-elected president and a new Congress took office mainly supported by voters and parties of the left, as well as the radical elements within the military. As in the case of Chile, when Guatemala's new government, especially during the Árbenz-administration (1951-1954), began to change the political system and install radical social and economic reforms, such as nationalizing land and enforcing other measures that threatened the economic power of the landlords and U.S. interests, the democratic experiment came to a halt (see Gleijeses 1991). In both two cases the military seized power, and maintained in power to early 1990s. A similar event occurred in 1930 in El Salvador, in which the first elected left president was replaced by a military regime: supported by the right, economic elite and the United States. The same thing happened as well in the Dominican Republic in 1963, when a leftist democratic government was overthrown by the United States. In all cases with previous radical left administrations, there seems to be a pattern, in which these radical political and economic changes to society repeatedly were challenged by the same actors – the economic elite, the military and external (mainly U.S.) forces and the parliamentary right.

Second, the moderate cases are not unique either. The more pragmatic

social-democratic left and the Christian democratic alternatives in Costa Rica (1949-), and in Venezuela (1958-) have similarities with the cases of Chile, Argentina and Uruguay in the 2000s (including Costa Rica as well). They were all condemned to deepen liberal democracy and to carry out market driven economic policies (ISI to the 1980s and neoliberalism in the 1990s-2000s). In practice, Brazil under Lula's presidency also belongs to this route. This stance with social democratic policies of today can be paralleled with Costa Rica's democratic trajectory that began in the late 1950s, as well as Chile's in the 1990s. Costa Rica's democratic transitions were made through pacts between the major societal actors, including the conservative parties, landlords, and military, and the reformist left. From this, a democratic system beyond mere elections was established—namely, liberal democracy with socio-economic reforms and a market economy. Though the social democrats were the main actors' behind further democratization in Costa Rica, all elite groups, at least until the mid-1980s, stood behind the ideas of liberal democracy and market economy, with some social reforms (see for example Peeler 1992). Another historical case is Venezuela from 1958 to 1990s, in which the social democrats together with the Christian democrats developed liberal democratic rule, but in the long run it ended in the collapse of the political system and to the election of Chávez. Chile likewise is today about to consolidate its democracy through compliance with the dominant social, economic and political global order of the day and hence with the interests of major Chilean actors. However, instead of influencing the democratic transition as an equal partner, the left accepted the global norms of liberal democracy and the neoliberal economic system, which may constrain the possibility of future socio-economic reforms. However, the most important question seems to be what the old cases might tell us about the contemporary left administrations?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The new tendencies of the left in Latin America have followed two distinct paths. One is the reformist, social-democratic left, which supports liberal democracy and market economy. This path has historical roots to early democratization in for example Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Costa Rica. This variation of leftist politic complies with the global and national political, social, and economic order of the day—liberal democracy with neoliberalism. In contrast, the radical left in the Andes and parts of Central America emphasizes participatory democracy with socio-economic reforms that may challenge the rule of liberal democracy and market economy- and the major actors' supporting these structures, both on the global and the domestic arena.

Still, these radical administrations support institutional democracy. This path has historical similarities with the radical cases of Guatemala in the 1940-1950s and Chile under Salvador Allende. However, as a consequence, democracy could be deepened, in both the radical and social democratic alternatives. The consequences of the social democratic attempt to deepen liberal democracy, advocating more civil and political rights for the citizens and a more well-functioning democracy, means deepening of democracy beyond just competition in free and fair elections as in an elite democratic system. This stance has probably strengthened third wave democracies as such in Latin America in the 2000s.

However, democracy could also be deepened in the case of the radical left's participatory democracy because it means more possibility for people to actively participate in political decision-making at a local grassroots-level on issues related to daily-life socio-economic issues. This path seems to be more problematic and controversial, both in historical time and today. This radical left's political, economic and social agenda has mainly risen in the 2000s as a consequence of the neoliberal economic model's failure to solve the highly stratified socio-economic situation in Latin America. Historically, this type of radical agenda with a more anti-capitalistic approach, and socially conscious has a great amount of similarities with previous attempts by left-wing parties to develop radical democracy with strong economic and social anti-poverty measures, as in Guatemala (1944-1954) and in Chile (1970-1973). In both cases the radical political and economic changes of society were challenged by the same actors –the economic elite, the military and external (mainly U.S.) forces and the parliamentary right- and these actors stood in both cases behind the military interventions as well as the fall of the democratic governments in Guatemala and Chile.

The paradox is that the radical attempt to deepen democracy as, for example in Venezuela and Bolivia, beyond the liberal focus on only political institutions, i.e. free and fair elections and freedom of political rights, may actually cause the failure of this democratic rule. Though motivated by good intentions to for example redistribute economic resources from the rich to the poor people and to carry out social reforms, it may also mark the beginning of the end of democracy. In the short run, radical administrations have been able and may be able to carry out some socio-economic reforms as in the historical cases of Guatemala and Chile, but over the long term the question is if democracy, as it has been seen in Latin America during the past two decades, will survive unless these radical governments also manage to develop the democratic rule. The challenge is, though, that the threat might not just seem to come from the external enemies of current radical administrations such as landlords, the military, the U.S.A and the private sector, but more problematic

sometimes from the left's own attempts to constrain political rights, as a reaction to the polarized situation itself, as in the case of Venezuela.

To conclude, as such, the great number of democratically elected left leaders in Latin America, with as much as fourteen elected left presidents at the same time, is a new phenomenon, but the division between more radical and moderate views of democracy, however, has been witnessed before. The moderates of the left will most likely survive and win new elections as before. But the question remains: what will happen to the radical left-administrations – will they survive long enough to implement radical reforms and win or lose new elections, or will they meet the same destiny as Guatemala (1954), Chile (1973) or as President Zelaya in Honduras (2009)? Or will the old historical pattern re-occur or a new pattern be shaped? So far the radical left has managed to win new elections, but yet they have not implemented as drastic socio-economic reforms as in the historical cases of Allende and Árbenz; this is a key difference. By analyzing the historical cases of leftist administrations and why they have emerged one can at least put some new shadows on the historical as well as contemporary cases. Hopefully the radical and the moderate left, as well as other liberal and conservative actors, will continue to contribute to the democratic path across Latin America.

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