

POLI 332. Politics and Governments of Latin America

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Session 12. Conclusions

In this course, we focused on two issues: the evolution of **democratic governance** and **economic development**.

We started with a number of questions about:

- General patterns in the region
- Variation within the region

General Patterns in the Region

DEMOCRACY:

- Generally weak states (insecurity, crime, civil conflict, informal economies)
- At least until recently (dual transitions), difficulties to achieve civilian control over the military (with some exceptions)
- Resilience of electoral democracy since 1990s
- At least until recently (Left-turns), marginalized populations with little access to political decision-making
- Quality of democracy (corruption, checks and balances, competitive authoritarianism)

General Patterns in the Region

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- Commodity boom after 2003 driven by growth in demand in Asia: fuels (oil, gas), mineral resources (copper, lithium), proteins (cattle, soybeans)
- Reliance on commodity exports to finance welfare programs; however, not necessarily growth in public sector as in ISI
- Low skilled labour force; little productivity growth in most places
- Boom and bust cycles (inflation & debt) under control since 1990s (except Venezuela)
- Porous relationship between economic interests and political actors

Variation within the Region

DEMOCRACY

- The 20th century:
 - Very unstable regimes in Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador.
 - Stable democracies in Costa Rica, Chile and Uruguay for several decades (until military coups of 1973 in Chile and Uruguay)
 - Oligarchical democracies in Colombia and Venezuela
 - Long-term stability of PRI regime in Mexico and Castro regime in Cuba
- Turns to the Left in the 2000s:
 - Countries that did not make the Left Turn
 - Differences between Left-wing Regimes
 - What are the implications in terms of human well-being?

Variation within the Region

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- More advanced economies: Chile, Uruguay
- Rapid growth and an emergent power: Brazil
- High performing countries: Peru, Bolivia
- Polarization between populism and oligarchy: Venezuela
- Informal economies and security concerns: Mexico, Colombia
- Stalled growth and poverty: Central America, Paraguay

THANKS!!