

POLI 332. Politics and Governments of Latin America

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Session 9. Left-Turns

Plan of the lecture

1. Recap: The political environment of the late 1990s
2. What is “the Left”?
3. Who are these Left-wing regimes?
4. Classifying the Left in Latin America.
Two cases to compare:

Brazil & Venezuela
5. Discussion: Venezuela, 2014

Recap: Political environment of late-1990s

- Negative consequences after 20 years of neoliberalism: unemployment, poverty, inequality, etc.
 - Is the turn to the Left part of a normal electoral cycle?
- In many places, the erosion of the party system (Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru), as a result of:
 - Crisis of representation: pacted transitions; *“partidocracia” (partyarchy)*
 - Non-institutionalized political participation (social movements, demonstrations, protests)
 - Corruption scandals, anti-politics, distrust in political establishment and the electoral success of *outsiders*
- Commodity boom in the 2000s.

What is “the Left”?

- History of the “Left-Right” spectrum:
 - French Revolution:
Left (change)-Right (order)
 - Marxism:
Left (equality: public ownership of means of production and central planning)-Right (liberty: market allocation of means of goods and services)
- But since the 1960s, a “New Left” also appeared on the map, less concerned with material redistribution as with:
 - Civil rights: race, ethnicity, gender, LGBT
 - Environmentalism
- So, what is left of the Left?

The Left in Post-Cold War Latin America

- Jorge Castañeda (2006):

“...that current of thought, politics, and policy that stresses **social improvements over macroeconomic orthodoxy, egalitarian distribution of wealth over its creation, sovereignty over international cooperation, democracy** (at least when in opposition, if not necessarily once in power) **over governmental effectiveness**”.

The Left in Post-Cold War Latin America

Maxwell Cameron (2009):

“...the leaders, parties, and movements that **seek to ameliorate inequality in its diverse manifestations, and promote social inclusion**, either through bottom-up mobilization by grassroots organizations, top-down policy initiatives by personalist leaders, or legislation by parliamentary parties; **they advocate the use of state power to attenuate the effects of markets**, either on behalf of broad multi-class coalitions or in response to demands from specific social classes, sectors and groups; and **they promote transformation in state-society relations through popular participation**, sometimes challenging underlying structures of domination with appeals to *‘lo popular’*, class, citizenship, and occasionally ethnicity”.

The Left in Post-Cold War Latin America

- Steven Levitsky & Kenneth Roberts (2011):

“...political actors who seek, as a *central programmatic objective*, to reduce **social and economic inequalities**. Left parties seek to use public authority to redistribute wealth and/or income to lower-income groups, erode social hierarchies, and strengthen the voice of disadvantaged groups in the political process. In the socioeconomic arena, left policies aim to combat inequalities rooted in market competition and concentrated property ownership, enhance opportunities for the poor, and provide social protection against market insecurities...”

The Left in Post-Cold War Latin America

- Benjamín Arditi (2008:67):

Certain common features of the Latin American lefts today:

- Emphasis on **equality and solidarity**, but without the Marxist ideology.
- Accepting of **private property and the market**, but challenges neoliberal economic policy.
- The **state** remains crucial for regulating markets and pursuing redistribution.
- **Suspicion of US foreign policy**, but willing to negotiate trade agreements in advantageous terms.
- Experimentation with multiparty electoral democracy along with **other formats of political participation**.

Who are these Left-wing regimes?

Table I.1.
Left governments in Latin America, 1998–2010

Country	Party	President	Year elected
Venezuela	Fifth Republic Movement / United Socialist Party of Venezuela	Hugo Chávez	1998; reelected in 2000, 2006
Chile	Chilean Socialist Party (PSCh)	Ricardo Lagos Michelle Bachelet	2000 2006
Brazil	Workers' Party (PT)	Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva Dilma Rousseff	2002; reelected in 2006 2010
Argentina	Justicialista Party (PJ)	Néstor Kirchner, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner	2003 2007
Uruguay	Broad Front (FA)	Tabaré Vázquez José Alberto (Pepe) Mujica	2004 2009
Bolivia	Movement toward Socialism (MAS)	Evo Morales	2005; reelected in 2009
Nicaragua	Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN)	Daniel Ortega	2006
Ecuador	Country Alliance	Rafael Correa	2006; reelected in 2009
Paraguay	Patriotic Alliance for Change	Fernando Lugo	2008
El Salvador	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN)	Mauricio Funes	2009

Classifying the Latin American Left: Castañeda or Levitsky & Roberts?

Castañeda: *Populism (Ven., Bol., Ecu.) v. Social-democracy (Chile, Uru., Brazil)*

Levitsky & Roberts:

two dimensions:
(1) *Institutionalization
of the party &*
(2) *Concentration of
power*

	Established party organization	New political movement
Dispersed authority	Institutionalized partisan Left Electoral-professional Left (PSC in Chile; PT in Brazil) Mass-organic Left (Broad Front in Uruguay)	Movement Left (MAS in Bolivia)
Concentrated authority	Populist machine (Peronism under Kirchner; FSLN in Nicaragua)	Populist Left (Chávez in Venezuela; Correa in Ecuador)

Fig. I.1. A typology of governing left parties in Latin America

From Levitsky & Roberts 2011:13

BRAZIL: The Workers' Party in Power I

- Origins of the Workers' Party
 - 1980: labour leaders, Catholic activists, urban intellectuals, social movements (MST)
 - Emphasis on state intervention on the economy, societal participation (participatory budgeting, “basismo”) and “ethical government”
 - Becomes more moderate between 1980 and 2002
- The 2002 Election
 - Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva runs for the fourth time.
 - Lula announces that he will honour existing agreements with the IMF
 - Detachment from left-wing radical organizations (MST)
 - Benefits from the economic downturn generated by the 2001 Asian crisis

Workers' Party in Power II

- **Lula's first administration (2002-2006)**
 - **Orthodox macroeconomic management:** no significant expropriations, tight fiscal policy:
 - Controlled inflation (7.2%, 2003-2007)
 - Economic growth (4.1%, 2003-2008)
 - **Limited land reform:**
 - Distribution of public lands; reliance on agribusiness
 - **Social policy and social assistance:** Bolsa Família-conditional cash transfer program
 - No major increases in social spending
 - Poverty reduction: from 35.69% to 22.70%
 - Growth in formal-sector labour market
 - **Corruption scandals in 2005:**
 - PT played a key role in Collor de Mello's impeachment in 1992
 - *Mensalao* (allowance) scandal
 - **Popular participation:**
 - Participatory budgeting in municipalities since the 1990s; difficulties in scaling up to federal level
 - National Conferences, however.
 - **Foreign policy** oriented towards other developing countries: G-20 (2003), MERCOSUL

Workers' Party in Power III

- **Lula's second administration (2006-2010)**
 - Lula wins poor vote in the rural North, loses some of his traditional support in the urban South.
 - Investment in infrastructure and R&D
 - 83% approval rating by the end of the term
 - However still facing important challenges:
 - Security
 - Corruption

- **Dilma Rousseff's administration (2011-present)**
 - Labour activist under the military dictatorship, Lula's chief of staff (2005-2010)
 - First female president
 - Continuity with Lula's program
 - 2013 demonstrations against infrastructural projects for 2014 World Cup and low-quality of public services

VENEZUELA: The Bolivarian Revolution

- Punto Fijo Pact:
 - Stable democracy, coalition governments, but partyarchy
- Economic growth during the 1970s, crisis during the 1980s
- *Caracazo* (1989), need to impose austerity measures; protests; repression
- Coup attempt led by Chávez (1992):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyBgbhEEg3s>

Venezuela under Chávez (Politics)

- Initially wins the elections of 1998 under a coalition of several left-wing parties. The number of parties in the coalition increasingly diminished, until the PSUV became the only dominant force.
- Fragmentation and coordination problems for the opposition.
- Elections: rarely fraud, but usually not free or fair (competitive authoritarianism)
 - Gerrymandering; harassment of the opposition; control of the media; control over CNE; use of public resources to finance campaigns
- Circumventing checks and balances (delegative democracy):
 - Rule by decree
 - Stacking the legislature
 - Stacking the Supreme Court
 - Plebiscitary politics
- Key institutions are used for political purposes: CNE, Central Bank

Venezuela under Chávez (Economics)

- Dependence on commodity exports (oil)
- Nationalization of the economy
- Excessive expenditures (public debt):
 - Social spending: health, education, social assistance
 - Elections spending
 - Foreign Policy: South-South Foreign Aid
- Inflation, employment & scarcity
 - Overspending helps to create jobs, but generates inflation and debt (5.9% of unemployment in 2013).
 - In order to tame the effects of inflation, three types of controls (alleviate short term effects but make the problem worse in the long-run):
 - Currency exchange regulations (further inflation; black markets; capital flight)
 - Labour regulations (further inflation + low productivity)
 - Price controls (scarcity)

Venezuela, February 2014

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ_d7YPxU7o

Who are the true democrats?

Let's assume that Maduro legitimately won the elections in 2013. Is it democratic to try to topple through street demonstrations a democratically and constitutionally elected president?

The success of the Left in many parts of L.A. relied on its ability to mobilize outside electoral channels. Is the Right following the same strategy now? What do you think are going to be the consequences in the long-term?