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## DOES DEMOCRACY TRANSLATE ACROSS BORDERS?

### PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND THE NEW LEFT IN LATIN AMERICA: AN EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH TO DEMOCRATIZATION

ELENA M. DE COSTA\*

#### I. INTRODUCTION

This essay will examine the success of Latin America's New Left political parties and social movements since the mid-1990s to the present. Focusing on notable figures such as Brazil's President Ignacio "Lula" da Silva, Bolivia's President Evo Morales, and Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez, it will examine the policies that broadly define *The New Left* and their impact on *democratic participation*, race relations, poverty reduction, and Latin America's relations with the U.S. and the world.<sup>1</sup> A number of social movements in the region will be explored, including the developing changes in Cuba with the new Cuban-U.S. relations leading to perhaps yet another reassessment of socialism's alternative to democracy.

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1. Cynthia J. Amson, *Introduction*, in *THE 'NEW LEFT' AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN LATIN AMERICA* 3, 3 (Cynthia J. Arnson & José Raúl Perales eds., 2007). The term "New Left" is used for Latin America to refer to the recent "pink tide" of democratically elected, left-leaning governments in Central and South America. Nick Caistor, *Latin America: The 'Pink Tide' Turns*, BBC NEWS (Dec. 11, 2015), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-35060390>. The New Left generally advocates direct action, confrontation with state power, anti-authoritarianism, direct democracy, and/or the undermining of traditional patriarchal norms. Kenneth Roberts, *Conceptual and Historical Perspectives*, in *THE 'NEW LEFT' AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN LATIN AMERICA*, *supra* note 1, at 10. These leftist democracies in Latin America seem gradually to be giving way to pragmatic democracy, a new, experimental form of governance that combines representation, participation, and deliberation as means to achieve social ends. THAMY POGREBINSCHI, *THE PRAGMATIC TURN OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA* 4 (2013).

Since 2005, Venezuelan, Bolivian, and Ecuadorean leaders have espoused support for an alternative to capitalism embodied in the general concept of socialism for the twenty-first century. Following the ratification of Bolivia's new constitution in January 2009, Evo Morales proclaimed the birth of "communitarian socialism"<sup>2</sup> which was underpinned by the regional autonomy promoted by the new document. Evo Morales, Hugo Chávez and Rafael Correa have proposed to adapt socialism to the concrete realities faced by Latin America, at a time when the conventional wisdom in the West has asserted that this model was considered to be obsolete, a dismal failure. However, in recent years an increasing number of Latin American democracies have attempted to address many of the social issues which failed revolutions and their representative institutions have struggled to address. The current experimental model of democracy in Latin America is more representative, participatory, and inclusive of marginalized populations with a more deliberative approach to social issues. As such, the new wave of governments is more pragmatic than the more rigid Cuban socialist model with a lesser degree of focus on idealism and ideology. What are the major tenets of this new model of democracy combining representation, participation, and deliberation over the pseudo-democracies of delegation in paternalistic rule? How does the political experimentalism of *The New Left* respond to the political disaffection of the past? How can this new model of democracy in Latin America contribute to more creative approaches to effective governance and resolution to social conflict elsewhere, particularly in developing countries?

The Latin American experimental governments propose to enhance the ways that democracy responds to social ills that contribute to problems of all sorts—the economy, education, forced displacement, emigration, healthcare, criminal networks, poverty, etc. Their approach is multifold: combine representation and direct democracy; enhance civic engagement; link representation to participation and deliberation; and strengthen representation through a plethora of participatory activities.<sup>3</sup> New forms of democracy can still be forged in tandem with country-specific principles, values, and needs. Latin America is creating its own process of democratization with some growing pains, but independently of democratic models and standards

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2. Roger Burbach, *Evo's Way*, COUNTERPUNCH (Apr. 6, 2010), <http://www.counterpunch.org/2010/04/06/evo-s-way/> ("When Bolivia's president, Evo Morales, was sworn in to a second term in January, he proclaimed Bolivia a plurinational state that would construct 'communitarian socialism.' In an accompanying address, Vice President Álvaro García Linare, envisioned a 'socialist horizon' for Bolivia, characterized by 'well-being, making the wealth communal, drawing on our heritage . . .' The process 'will not be easy, it could take decades, even centuries, but it is clear that the social movements cannot achieve true power without implanting a socialist and communitarian horizon.'").

3. POGREBINSCHI, *supra* note 1, at 4, 6.

developed by other nations at other points in time.<sup>4</sup> Democracy must be placed in the context of a form of governance that is more than simply the celebration of civil liberties and the exercise of political rights. Democracy must espouse social justice and social equality in order to fulfill its egalitarian mission.

To dismiss the political experimentalism that has been taking place in Latin America in recent years “is to deny plurality in democratic forms and also the legitimacy of endogenous democratic models.”<sup>5</sup> The forms of participation that have emerged in communal councils, cultural activities, blogs, community media, and several other fora are laudable. Latin America is showing us that while government corporatism and clientelism are constant threats, political and cultural participation are creating new discourses, networks, organizational spaces.<sup>6</sup> Who speaks, what people believe, who decides, and how power works in *The New Left* intertwines both democratic and non-democratic aspects of politics from neighborhoods to media, activists to government institutions. The conundrum of *how* to respond effectively to centuries of grave country-specific problems rooted in the social inequities of the past while planting and cultivating the seeds of an authentic democracy is the dilemma that faces the *new socialism* movement. Transforming the political landscape without succumbing to dictatorial practices is and will continue to be challenging for these alternative forms of democratic practice. Democracy is not just an abstract system of government; it is an *experience*—and it is experienced by people in different ways, in different environments. Latin America is a veritable laboratory of experimentation in alternative forms of democracy and leaders, demonstrating that there is no one size fits all framework when it comes to the future of democracy in the region. And this is democratic experimentalism at its best, a never-ending work in progress. It is changing the governing structure in order to make the government one that is ruled *by the people*, to make government more widely available to everyone.

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4. See IGNACIO WALKER, *DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA* 3, 6–7, 41–47 (Krystin Krause et al. trans., 2013) (arguing that, throughout the past century, Latin American history has been marked by the search for responses or alternatives to the crisis of oligarchic rule and the struggle to replace the oligarchic order with a democratic one). Walker maintains that it is primarily the actors, institutions, and public policies, not structural determinants, that create progress or regression in Latin American democracy. *Id.* at 95.

5. Julia Buxton, *Foreword*, in *VENEZUELA’S BOLIVARIAN DEMOCRACY: PARTICIPATION, POLITICS, AND CULTURE UNDER CHAVEZ* ix, xv (Daniel Hellinger & David Smilde eds., 2011). Although Buxton decries irregularities and alleged manipulation of internal processes by bureaucrats and politicians, she does not seize on these shortcomings to dismiss Venezuela’s Bolivarian democratic experience as a familiar story of populism and clientelism. *Id.* at xv–vi. Instead, she and other contributors describe a nuanced more complex process than the words and actions of Hugo Chávez might have conveyed. *Id.* at xvi–vii.

6. See generally CARLOS MARTINEZ ET AL., *VENEZUELA SPEAKS! VOICES FROM THE GRASSROOTS* 2–4, 6 (2010) (collecting interviews with activists from Venezuela’s social movements and offering a compelling oral history of this democratic revolution, from bottom up).

## II. ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy has become a norm in Latin America due, in large part to people's movements linked globally into networks that allow them to exchange experiences and support one another's democratic struggles. The international environment of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries has changed in our globalized world linked by technology and travel. The people of Latin America have shown a resilience in drawing upon their colonial and neo-colonial, dictatorial past to shape and re-shape ways of recovering control of their destiny.<sup>7</sup> This is democracy building. The *alternative* forms of democracy in Latin America help us broaden our own concept of what democracy is or is not, viewing democracy as delegative, deliberative, popular, developmental in nature, participatory and protagonistic, prolific, multi-faceted. Regarding state-sponsored participatory democracy in Latin America's *New Left* movement or the "resignifications of democracy" David Smilde asserts:

State efforts to mobilize popular sectors present a paradox. On the one hand, in conditions of radical inequality, relying on autochthonous, independent participation in civil society simply perpetuates this inequality. On the other hand, mobilizing popular sectors through the resources of the state undermines the autonomy that is at the heart of the role that civil society is supposed to play.<sup>8</sup>

This dichotomous verbiage ("on the one hand" ... "on the other hand") is repeated in numerous publications whose authors try to define the amorphous form of democracy that is prevalent in many Latin American countries which espouse the socio-political doctrines of this new socialism called *The New Left* (TNL).<sup>9</sup> The title of Daniel C. Hellinger's recent publication is even more compelling— *Comparative Politics of Latin America. Democracy at Last?*<sup>10</sup> Hellinger's intent is to stimulate debate over the multiple meanings of democracy and its relationship with economic and social equity both at a country specific level and in general. In his concluding chapter Hellinger acknowledges that:

Critics of liberal democracy and polyarchy stress participation and equality as democratic hallmarks and urge us to keep an open mind about alternative forms of democracy.... Even those critical of the Cuban model might see

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7. See generally Roberts, *supra* note 1, at 10–14.

8. David Smilde, *Introduction: Participation, Politics, and Culture – Emerging Fragments of Venezuela's Bolivarian Democracy*, in VENEZUELA'S BOLIVARIAN DEMOCRACY: PARTICIPATION, POLITICS, AND CULTURE UNDER CHAVEZ, *supra* note 5, at 25.

9. Smilde, *supra* note 8, at 25.

10. DANIEL C. HELLINGER, *COMPARATIVE POLITICS OF LATIN AMERICA: DEMOCRACY AT LAST?* (2d ed. 2015). Hellinger uses democracy as his underlying theme for this volume. *Id.* at 553. Rather than reconcile competing conceptions of evaluations on the future of democracy in Latin America, he provides very tentative answers to the question. *Id.*

important elements of democracy in Cuba's relative egalitarian social structure and system of participation, but they would deny the label "democratic" until an opposition party can exercise free speech, assembly, and other civic freedoms. Still other critics look beyond Cuba to the promise of participatory democracy encouraged by the burgeoning social movements in Latin America.<sup>11</sup>

Simply put, a new form of democratic rule has been steadily emerging in some Latin American countries in recent decades, multiplying with increasing speed with a domino effect, becoming institutionalized at every sociopolitical level, as participatory and deliberative experiments in democratic voice as country after country comes to fruition as integral parts of the Latin American democratization process. *The New Left, The Bolivarian Revolution, socialism for the twenty-first century*—these are terms that underscore new and ever-evolving *alternative* forms of democracy, demanding a reassessment of the meaning of democratization in the region. But why such alternative forms of democracy in Latin America now? The rise of the Leftist alternatives to democracy appear to be a resounding response to basic problems that have arisen from the quality of democracy as experienced by the average citizen: the persistence of poverty and inequality; the growth of the informal sector with the resultant decline in labor unions; dissatisfaction with the institutions of democratic governance, especially major political parties; and the difficulty of institutionalizing inclusiveness and egalitarianism in the political process—participation, representation, accountability.<sup>12</sup> *The New Left* governments are, in effect, a backlash of the popular sectors against political parties that continue to purport neo-liberal policies.<sup>13</sup>

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11. *Id.* at 552–53.

12. Arnson, *supra* note 1, at 6.

13. René Antonio Mayorga, *Conceptual and Historical Perspectives, in THE 'NEW LEFT' AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN LATIN AMERICA*, *supra* note 1, at 22. Neo-liberalism advocates a reduced role of the state in guiding economic life and increased reliance on *laissez-faire*. See Ariel Armony, *Politics and Society, in THE 'NEW LEFT' AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN LATIN AMERICA*, *supra* note 1, at 35. Unfortunately, "neo-liberalism" means different things to different people. Stephen Johnson, *Is Neoliberalism Dead in Latin America*, HERITAGE FOUNDATION (Sept. 4, 2003), <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2003/09/is-neo-liberalism-dead-in-latin-america>. To Marxists, it means policies that enrich multinational corporations as they trample over the world's poor and the environment. *Id.* To anti-globalists, it is western expansionism. *Id.* To economic fundamentalists, it is the infallibility of the market. *Id.* Neo-liberalism derives from the classic liberalism of eighteenth century moral philosophers who proposed that individuals should be free to do as they see fit and own and dispose of property as they wish with minimal state interference. *Id.* But neo-liberal foreign policies in Latin America have wreaked havoc with the status of the poor and marginalized through economic exploitation and labor abuses. See William I. Robinson, *Latin America in the New Global Capitalism*, NORTH AMERICAN CONGRESS ON LATIN AMERICA (Summer 2012), <https://nacla.org/article/latin-america-new-global-capitalism>. They have been practiced and thus associated with dictatorial military

The revived populist parties and the new wave of political movements begun in Hugo Chávez' Venezuela and Evo Morales' Bolivia and now sweeping the continent are *not* democracy come of age, but rather democracy re-born in an alternative form. *The New Left* brand of democracy is reflective of the *failure* of representative democratic institutions to respond effectively to social needs and even marginalizing or excluding large segments of the population—indigenous peoples, the poor and disaffected, women.<sup>14</sup> These governments vehemently oppose the political power of aristocracy and support republicanism,<sup>15</sup> constitutional government, civil liberties, political representation, universal suffrage and, ultimately, *democracy*. But what shape has this democracy morphed into within the context of the overwhelming needs and demands of the popular masses?

The pragmatic change in Latin American democracies is a corrective measure to redress the failures of past experiments in socialism while, at the same time, they address vexing social issues that have remained persistently unresponsive to socialist programs as well as programs of democracy by representation.<sup>16</sup> This experimental form of governance tends not to be rigidly ideological to the extent that it ignores the unique problems of a specific country, since *The New Left* movement takes on a different *flavor* in Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Brazil and other countries in the Americas. Yet, what all forms of these experimental approaches to democratic governance have in common in some measure are representation, participation, and deliberation as means to achieve their social agenda with a heavy emphasis on popular participation at the grassroots level. Delegative or pseudo-

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regimes in the region, leading to more distribution of wealth among the oligarchy, discontent among the poor. *Id.*

14. Arnson, *supra* note 1, at 6.

15. James E. Sanders, *Atlantic Republicanism in Nineteenth-Century Colombia: Spanish America's Challenge to Contours of Atlantic History*, 20 J. WORLD HIST., 131, 148 (2009). During the nineteenth century in Spain's former colonies, subalterns, especially popular liberals, and elites debated the meanings of nation, citizen, and democracy. *Id.* at 137, 147. These struggles over visions of *republicanism* and *democracy* racked the region throughout most of the nineteenth century. *Id.* at 132–33. The democratic and republican developments of mid nineteenth-century Spanish America are applauded by the proponents of *The New Left*. See Roberts, *supra* note 1, at 12–14. Hugo Chávez named his revolution in honor of Simón Bolívar, whom he considered to be a visionary, with his ideas of abolishing slavery and uniting Latin America under the same constitution. Ishaan Tharoor, *Simón Bolívar: The Latin American Hero Many Americans Don't Know*, TIME MAGAZINE (May 31, 2013), <http://world.time.com/2013/05/31/simon-bolivar-the-latin-american-hero-many-americans-dont-know/>. In 1807, Bolívar found a population divided between loyalty to Spain and a desire for independence. Christopher Minster, *Biography of Simón Bolívar: Liberator of South America*, ABOUT: EDUCATION (Oct. 19, 2015), <http://latinamericanhistory.about.com/od/latinamericaindependence/a/simonbolivarbiography.htm>.

16. POGREBINSCHI, *supra* note 1, at 4.

democracies of the past wherein full participation of all sectors of the population—particularly those marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender, education level—are more likely to be incorporated in a more *inclusive* form of governance. This escalation of political experimentalism brings us to a serious assessment of democracy—how it is defined, how it might evolve to respond to changing social needs, and if there are alternative forms of democratic governance or *agency* that are more responsive to the needs of societies of the twenty-first century.

If we are to recognize the value of these new, experimental forms of democracy, then Latin America *could* provide us with a template for new and more creative approaches to enhance the quality of existing democracies in other parts of the world. While clientelism, corruption, populism have admittedly hampered the advances of *The New Left* in some countries, each of these countries has reached an advanced stage of the consolidation or institutionalization process to allow for an assessment of their failures as well as their successes, where they are and where they hope to go in the future, popular reactions, and, most importantly, the future for such experiments in democracy in the region.

If we are to understand the experiments in democracy that are occurring in Latin America in recent years, we need to reflect on the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and its political repercussions throughout the region over the past half century. The institutionalization of Fidel Castro's socialist experiment changed the shape of Latin America and other developing countries.<sup>17</sup> Latin America felt the resounding aftermath of Cuba's revolutionary movement, either as a threat or as a hope. However, in 2015 the Cuban Revolution has failed to achieve many of the goals that it had set for itself in 1959.<sup>18</sup> The historical

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17. See Richard Gott, *Histories of the Cuban Revolution*, in CUBA IN REVOLUTION 31, 35 (Mark Sanders & James Sanders eds., 2013). The Cuban Revolution demonstrated that socialism could be a political strategy of economic, social, and cultural development in Latin America. WALKER, *supra* note 4, at 31–32, 34, 84. Furthermore, it shed light on the disparity of class in the region. Both social reforms and political repression were influenced to a greater or lesser degree by this increasing level of class struggles. And, perhaps most importantly, the Cuban Revolution demonstrated that countries in the region could move from dependent colony status to claim their own economic and political independence. See Gott, *supra*, at 35; Peter Kornbluh, *Cuba in the Cold War*, in CUBA IN REVOLUTION, *supra*, at 49. In fact, Cuba continues to be the nerve center of progressive ideology in Latin America. Enrique Krauze, Opinion, *Venezuela's Angry Students*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 27, 2014), [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/opinion/venezuelas-angry-students.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/opinion/venezuelas-angry-students.html?_r=0). As a testament to its weight, almost every Latin American president attended the summit in February 2014 in Havana of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, at which Fidel Castro was hailed as the 'political and moral guide.' *Id.*

18. See generally Samuel Farber, *Cuba's Challenge*, JACOBIN (June 10, 2015), <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/06/cuban-revolution-fidel-che-raul-castro/>. Perhaps the greatest failures of the Cuban Revolution have been in the area of human rights and economic development. *Id.* It was a *successful* revolution in that it was able to institutionalize its policies.



context of revolution and the psychology of the revolutionary in Latin America in general, and in Cuba in particular, are crucial to an understanding of the relentless search for stability, identity, and power in Latin American countries. The consistent emphasis on “foreign subversion” as the instigator of internal unrest is an easy way to interpret internal class antagonisms as international interference. It is not to say that such international intrigues have been non-existent, but rather to affirm that they are not the only contributing factors to the socioeconomic instability and revolution in the region. In pre-revolutionary Cuba, for example, the Batista economy was simply not working.<sup>19</sup> The revolution and its socialist aftermath were merely responses to the country’s internal realities; they were not initially motivated by foreign (i.e., communist) interests. Nationalization and consolidation of industry, collectivization of the large-scale sector of the agricultural economy, reorganization of banking and commerce, and central planning were necessary internal changes to end the corruption and resultant stagnation of pre-revolutionary Cuba.<sup>20</sup> The country’s impressive literacy campaigns of the early years of the Cuban Revolution were necessary for the full participation of the masses to familiarize them with the tenets of socialism and to provide them with options to emerge from the cycle of poverty.<sup>21</sup>

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*Id.* One of the first policies by the newly formed Cuban government was eliminating illiteracy and implementing land reforms. *Cuba Revolution*, NEW WORLD ENCYCLOPEDIA, [http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Cuban\\_Revolution](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Cuban_Revolution) (last visited Feb. 25, 2016). Land reform efforts did not raise living standards because instead of subdividing larger holdings into small private farms, cooperatives were formed. *Id.* The U.S. embargo only exacerbated Cuba’s economic woes as did the stagnant governmental adherence to a socialist ideology that did not respond to the changing needs of the island nation, and the one-party rule of the Castro brothers has led to waning popular support. *See* Farber, *supra* note 18.

19. *See* HELLINGER, *supra* note 10, at 282–94.

20. *See* Gott, *supra* note 17, at 34. Fulgencio Batista took over the Cuban government in 1934. Jorge I. Domínguez, *The Batista Regime in Cuba*, in SULTANISTIC REGIMES 113, 114–15 (H.E. Chehabi & Juan J. Linz eds., 1998). For the next twenty-five years he ruled with an iron fist, establishing lasting relationships with organized crime, brutal human rights abuses, and economic ruin for the peasants and marginalized classes. Fulgencio Batista, HISTORYOFCUBA.COM, <http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/funfacts/batist.htm> (last visited Mar. 24, 2016); Mark Sanders, *The Photography of the Cuban Revolution: Towards an Aesthetic History*, in CUBA IN REVOLUTION, *supra* note 17, at 16; Gott, *supra* note 17, at 32. He suspended constitutional guarantees when student riots and anti-Batista demonstrations became frequent in 1955, established tighter censorship on the media, and unleashed his military police on protestors. Yet, Batista was regarded as a stabilizing force for American interests in the region. Gott, *supra* note 17, at 36.

21. *See generally* Nina Lakhani, *Latin Lessons: What can we Learn from the World’s Most Ambitious Literacy Campaign?*, INDEPENDENT (Nov. 6, 2010), <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/latin-lessons-what-can-we-learn-from-the-worlds-most-ambitious-literacy-campaign-2124433.html>. The Cuban Literacy Campaign of 1961 dramatically changed the nation’s literacy levels within one year by organizing over 100,000 youth to teach classes in

In recent years, the economic reforms of Raúl Castro's government<sup>22</sup> have laid the groundwork for a change in relations between Cuba and the United States, an exit strategy to the Cold War rhetoric, and a stark recognition of some of the failures of socialism. These reforms have also put into motion a profound process of social transformation that will, in the long run, have consequences on the political system of the island nation, once again transforming the face of the Cuban experiment with socialism as an alternative response to Western-style democracy and once again resulting in a different alternative to sociopolitical democratic reform. The U.S. government is not completely lifting the embargo laws' restrictive measures.<sup>23</sup> Such measures are being made more flexible, such as facilitating travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens, raising remittances' limits, permitting information and commerce flows, financial transactions and the transfer of communication technology.<sup>24</sup> These reforms are part of the Cuban government's goal of "updating socialism," to initiate an opposite process of economic denationalization and a more free flow of information—giving socialism a facelift that might lead to unintended consequences and even to its demise as defined by its founding proponents Fidel Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara. However, once again we see history in the making in untested waters as the failures of both forms of governance—capitalism and socialism—come to terms with their drawbacks and re-emerge with perhaps another alternative form of democratic voice that is more responsive to and reflective of the needs of the region.

In response to the Cuban Revolution, President John F. Kennedy launched a bold and new, ten-year initiative called the Alliance for Progress, or *Alianza para [el] Progreso*,<sup>25</sup> that would promote economic growth, social development, and *political democracy*. "We propose to complete the revolution of the Americas," Kennedy proclaimed:

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the rural areas of the country. *The Cuban Literacy Campaign*, THE LITERACY PROJECT, <http://www.theliteracyproject.org/english/cuban-lit.html> (last visited Feb. 21, 2016) (collecting testimonies of women literacy teachers and exploring how this experience influenced their own lives and sense of self).

22. See HARLAN ABRAHAMS & ARTURO LÓPEZ-LEVY, RAUL CASTRO AND THE NEW CUBA: A CLOSE-UP VIEW OF CHANGE 71–93 (2011) (analyzing Raúl Castro's governmental reforms and discussing how Cubans are facing the challenge of an economy emerging into a market-driven reality, how the one-party system can endure, and what the future may hold for Cuba). For Raúl Castro, economic reform and political liberalization seem to be priorities. *Id.* at 94–125.

23. Danielle Renwick & Brianna Lee, *U.S.-Cuba Relations*, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS (Aug. 4, 2015), <http://www.cfr.org/cuba/us-cuba-relations/p11113>.

24. *Id.*

25. PETER H. SMITH, TALONS OF THE EAGLE 149 (2012). In 1961 President John F. Kennedy proposed a 10-year, multibillion-dollar aid program for Latin America. *Id.* The program came to be known as the "Alliance for Progress" and was designed to improve U.S. relations with Latin America, which had been severely damaged in recent years. *Id.*

To build a hemisphere where all men can hope for a suitable standard of living, and all can live out their lives in freedom and dignity. To achieve this goal, political freedom must accompany material progress... Let us once again transform the American continent into a vast crucible of revolutionary ideas and efforts—a tribute to the power of the creative energies of free men and women, an example to all the world that liberty and progress walk hand in hand. Let us once again awaken our American revolution until it guides the struggle of people everywhere—not with an imperialistic force or fear, but the rule of courage and freedom and hope for the future of man.<sup>26</sup>

Among his goals for the 1960s vis-a-vis Latin America, President Kennedy proclaimed:<sup>27</sup>

- Social reform, especially focused on “unjust structures of land tenure and use.”
- Diversification of trade—by broadening the range of export products and overseas markets.
- Industrialization and increased employment.
- Enhanced education, including the elimination of adult illiteracy by 1970.
- Price stability, so as to avoid either inflation or deflation.

Such endeavors are all socially-related to establish the tenets of democracy in Latin America as outlined by President Kennedy. The results were disappointing to say the least. Billions of dollars were spent on the *Alliance for Progress* and its programs, but its success was marginal.<sup>28</sup> American congressmen were reluctant to provide funds for land redistribution programs in Latin America due to its identification with socialist programs. Latin American elites directed most of the funds into their own projects to increase their own wealth but did little to help the vast majority of their people. Kennedy’s *Alliance for Progress* certainly failed in its effort to bring democracy to Latin America; by the time the program ended in the early-1970s, thirteen governments in Latin America had been replaced by military rule.<sup>29</sup> It was socialist Cuba that was able to eliminate illiteracy almost entirely

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26. *Id.* (casting light on contemporary issues as economic integration, drug trafficking, undocumented migration, and the rise of Latin America’s “new left,” and analyzing Latin American reactions and responses to the U.S. and to the rest of the world).

27. *Id.*

28. See L. Ronald Scheman, *The Alliance for Progress: Concept and Creativity*, in *THE ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS: A RETROSPECTIVE* 3, 6 (L. Ronald Scheman ed., 1988) (describing the original goals of this project, its achievements, and failures). *The Alliance for Progress* was a unique experiment in inter-American cooperation in which the United States adopted a policy linking humanitarian and development considerations with strategic goals. *Id.* at 56–62.

29. Howard J. Wiarda, *Did the Alliance “Lose Its Way,” or Were Its Assumptions All Wrong from the Beginning and Are Those Assumptions Still with Us?*, in *THE ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS*, *supra* note 28, at 95, 108.

as well as fulfill some of the other *Alliance for Progress* goals related to social programs and reforms.<sup>30</sup> In 1823, James Monroe told the world that the United States would not permit European colonization in the Western Hemisphere. But the Monroe Doctrine<sup>31</sup> has repeatedly been a tool to justify intervention on behalf of U.S. interests, and rarely a tool for protection. Latin Americans were not consulted before the Monroe Doctrine was proclaimed. Now they have decided to become *agents of their own destiny* with forms of democracy that are responsive to the unique needs of their country as they experiment with ways that the good intentions of President Kennedy's *Alliance for Progress* program might be achieved.

### III. *THE NEW LEFT*: CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY IDEALS AND DEMOCRATIC PRAGMATISM

Undoubtedly, the Cuban Revolution changed the sociopolitical and economic shape of developing countries. Every country in Latin America felt its impact, either as a threat or as a hope. The historical context of revolution and the psychology of the revolutionary in Latin America in general are crucial to an understanding of the relentless search for stability, identity, and power in the region in recent years. Throughout the political revolution that triumphed in January 1959, a small group of men acquired and retained the initiative of destroying the old order of foreign-controlled monopoly capitalism. These men held no allegiance to any specific political ideology and, while forming an alliance with the Cuba Communist Party in late 1958 or early 1959, consistently maintained their own socially-inspired initiatives during the revolution of 1959-1961.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, this social revolution in Cuba was rapid, relatively peaceful, and defended by the vast majority of the Cuban populace. The early years of the Cuban revolution suggest that a social revolution of a specifically socialist character was not merely a foreign ideological product, but a realistic and authentic response to an internal social reality. Pre-

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30. MARK ABENDROTH, *REBEL LITERACY: CUBA'S NATIONAL LITERACY CAMPAIGN AND CRITICAL GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP* 120, 123 (2009) (identifying three themes which ran through the campaign and which are central to the focus on critical global citizenship: civic engagement of youth; popular education; and critical global education). Many of the Cubans who Abendroth interviewed spoke passionately of their sense of global citizenship while remembering their work as instructors or students in the campaign. *Id.* at 93, 120-21.

31. *See generally Monroe Doctrine*, OUR DOCUMENTS, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=23> (last visited Feb. 21, 2016) ("The Monroe Doctrine is the best known U.S. policy toward the Western Hemisphere. Buried in a routine annual message delivered to Congress by President James Monroe in December 1823, the doctrine warns European nations that the United States would not tolerate further colonization or puppet monarchs. The doctrine was conceived to meet major concerns of the moment, but it soon became a watchword of U.S. policy in the Western Hemisphere.")

32. *See* MARK SANDERS, *CUBA IN REVOLUTION* 114 (2014).

revolutionary Cuba experienced a relatively small rate of economic growth, an excessive emphasis on sugar in the generation of GNP (*Gross National Product*) and exports, an overwhelming dependence on the United States in regard to capital and trade, high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and a vast differential in standards of living between urban and rural areas.<sup>33</sup>

The Cuban Revolution was the vanguard to a new type of political system, neither capitalist nor socialist, that emerges where capitalism has not succeeded and socialism cannot succeed. The ongoing development of *The New Left* in Latin America, an experiment in participatory democracy with a Latin flair, continues to hold great appeal for many Latin Americanists as it spreads and evolves, re-inventing itself from South to Central America. The emphasis on egalitarianism is the driving force, the hallmark of *The New Left* movement, as it attempts to eliminate class distinctions, institutionalized race discrimination, income differentials and the gulf between urban and rural living standards, and some of the barriers that have impeded the integration of women into the labor force, higher education, and politics.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, the emphasis on egalitarianism is one of the most significant accomplishments of the Cuban Revolution—shedding light on the disproportionate disparities between the haves and the have-nots, the exclusionary social practices based on skin color, ethnicity, gender.<sup>35</sup> Class distinctions, institutionalized racial discrimination and desperate rural living standards, and some of the barriers that impeded the integration of women into the labor force have been the focus of democratic reforms during both the Cuban Revolution and, in more recent years, under *New Left* governments in the region. Social reforms have focused principally upon full employment, enforcement of minimum wages, reduction of housing costs, utilities and transportation, expansion of free social services (e.g., education, public health, burials), particularly in rural areas, increased investment in agriculture, and expansion of the social security system and of day-care centers. Both the Castro brothers and, to varying degrees, the presidents of *The New Left* have used their power over natural resources to pursue national independence, egalitarianism, and economic development. Centralization and constitutional reforms have been instrumental in mobilizing the once marginalized populations to defend reforms, thus providing needed popular support for the governments' developmental plans.<sup>36</sup>

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33. Archibald R. M. Ritter, *Economy: Revolutionary Period*, in 1 CUBA 222, 222–23 (Alan West-Durán et al. eds., 2012).

34. See Amson, *supra* note 1, at 6.

35. ROBERTO REGALADO, LATIN AMERICA AT THE CROSSROADS: DOMINATION, CRISIS, POPULAR MOVEMENTS, AND POLITICAL ALTERNATIVES 136–41 (2007).

36. Margarita Lopez-Maya & Luis E. Lander, *Participatory Democracy in Venezuela: Origins, Ideas, and Implementation*, in VENEZUELA'S BOLIVARIAN DEMOCRACY:

IV. SOCIAL PROGRESS AND REFORMS UNDER *THE NEW LEFT*: THE PRAGMATIC TURN OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA, POPULAR MOVEMENTS AND POLITICAL ALTERNATIVES

Participatory democracy means bringing community members together and using the knowledge from the community to understand problems, provide immediate benefits for planning and evaluating relevant interventions.<sup>37</sup> It is a populist measure that appeals for mass support by championing the cause of ordinary people against powerful elites—poverty and employment, a livable wage, healthcare, education, hardships in living and working conditions, land ownership. The engagement of formerly excluded populations addresses the economic and social problems experienced by past exclusionary policies of marginalized groups, but it is not without its own set of problems. From community leaders to land reform initiatives, cooperatives to communal councils, from the labor movement to the Afro-Venezuelan network and indigenous communities, grassroots movements have sprung up throughout Latin America, paving the way for a democratic revolution from the bottom up.<sup>38</sup> The idea of participatory democracy, as opposed to representative democracy, has been a pillar of the presidents of *The New Left*—Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales, Rafael Correa, Ignacio “Lula” da Silva, among others. This concept offers the promise that citizens will be given the opportunity to play a greater political role in the direction of their country, rather than being limited to mere voters during election time.<sup>39</sup> The masses of Latin America are Amerindian and black, and their daily struggle has been and still is with the wealthy white elites, the heirs to the settlers from Europe.

This internal struggle of racism and class divide is exacerbated by a wider battle against the white-dominated outside world controlling the global economic system. This foreign economic system, in turn, impacts on the daily life of the region—mining and plantations, the extraction of oil and gas, the destruction of rain forests and other natural resources as the lands of the indigenous populations are slowly destroyed, usurped by international interests. As the Bolivarian Revolution has progressed, the concept of “popular power” has become the defining slogan of the political process, bringing with it a series of innovative policies and initiatives.<sup>40</sup> With the unraveling of representative democracy, the new politics of participatory democracy has taken hold of Latin America. The creation of communal

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PARTICIPATION, POLITICS, AND CULTURE UNDER CHAVEZ, *supra* note 5, at 58–60; HELLINGER, *supra* note 10, at 386–87.

37. Lopez-Maya & Lander, *supra* note 36, at 74.

38. Nadia Martinez, *Grassroots Movements Change the Face of Latin America*, YES! MAGAZINE (July 4, 2007), <http://www.countercurrents.org/martinez040707.htm>.

39. Lopez-Maya & Lander, *supra* note 36, at 58–60.

40. Lopez-Maya & Lander, *supra* note 36, at 59–60, 63, 66–74.

councils has come to define popular power in Venezuela. Local organizations organized into democratic structures of between 200-400 families determine the way government funds are allocated for local development and infrastructure community projects.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, cooperatives have taken ownership of factories, occupied urban and rural lands, launched community radio and television stations; built centers for popular education and cultural development; participated in creating national legislation and found countless other means of bringing the government's discourse of popular power into the forefront of democratic policy with the stamp of *participation* as opposed to representation.<sup>42</sup> It is a revolution within a revolution—the power of voice, *vox populi*—that demands that an overly “institutionalized” approach to revolutionary change be all-inclusive of independent initiatives.

Yet, neo-populism also lends itself to a pattern of paternalistic and anti-institutionalist politics rooted in the appeal to the marginalized masses as they are mobilized in support of their leader. This mass mobilization is focused on a charismatic leadership, regardless of the mobilization style as top-down or bottom-up. Therein lies the crux of the problem—the danger that participatory democracy might transform into clientelism<sup>43</sup> or even a government with dictatorial tendencies. It all boils down to *how* populist governments act while in power and *what* they might do to undermine already established democratic institutions. The support of peasant unions, informal workers' associations, neighborhood associations, and the urban poor loosely linked by decentralized grassroots organizations in Venezuela and Bolivia are not representative of

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41. HELLINGER, *supra* note 10, at 339.

42. See generally Radio Al Reves, *Cooperatives in Venezuela Promote Solidarity, Equality and Dignity*, VENEZUELANALYSIS (Apr. 12, 2011), <http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/6128>. Participatory democracy is important, because it combats exclusionary practices, empowers once marginalized people to have a sense of agency in their future, and it eventually leads to the rectification of income and wealth inequality by social inclusion in every area of social development. Lopez-Maya & Lander, *supra* note 36, at 58–59. Most importantly, participatory democracy develops full citizenship characterized by solidarity, responsibility, and attitudes valuing human dignity and human rights within a social environment of respect and cooperation, in essence, it develops a profound valuation of one's fellowman and the processes of governance. Lopez-Maya & Lander, *supra* note 36, at 60.

43. Kirk A. Hawkins et al., *The Misiones of the Chavez Government*, in VENEZUELA'S BOLIVARIAN DEMOCRACY: PARTICIPATION, POLITICS, AND CULTURE UNDER CHAVEZ, *supra* note 5, at 186–90. *Clientelism* is the practice of politicians exchanging material benefits for support, such as votes. James A. Robinson & Thierry Verdier, *The Political Economy*, 115 SCANDINAVIAN J. ECON. 260, 262 (2013). In Latin America and beyond, societies are deeply unequal, the poor are marginalized, and states face continuous fiscal shortages and real or potential political instability. In this context, democracy functions imperfectly. Tina Hilgers, *Democratic Processes, Clientelistic Relationships, and the Material Goods Problem*, in CLIENTELISM IN EVERYDAY LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS 3, 3 (Tina Hilgers ed., 2012). It intermeshes with clientelism, with the incongruous result that clientelism not only erodes but also accompanies and supplements democratic processes. *Id.* at 18.

multi- class alliances. Populism pervades democratic politics in contemporary Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Venezuela, and other countries of *The New Left*.<sup>44</sup> The exclusionary military regimes that preceded the return to democratic politics had weakened intermediary organizations, such as trade unions and political parties, opening a space for the unorganized poor who were then mobilized by populist leaders.<sup>45</sup> Charismatic leaders such as Hugo Chávez exploit this favorable situation by instilling hope in the masses that they can rapidly become a force to be reckoned with against the unprecedented social and economic crises that they face. Their poverty-stricken state of desperation makes these impoverished masses susceptible to clientelism, populist slogans, and the boundless promises that catapult charismatic politicians into power. The tragic state of economic affairs in the current-day Venezuela of promises unkept, widespread government waste and corruption exemplify such hope turning into despair.

#### V. POLITICAL CULTURE AND PATHS TO DEMOCRACY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: PERSPECTIVES FROM LATIN AMERICA

To say that Latin America and *The New Left* movement in particular are at a crossroads is indeed an understatement. Will these social leftist movements be able to consolidate their power, chart their own course, and actually lead the direction of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela without the charismatic leadership of Hugo Chávez? Will *The New Left* governments be willing to listen to the voices of the people demanding even deeper reforms? And, finally, how can lasting reforms be instituted in these significantly new political spaces when the substantially powerful voices of opposition seek to return to the power structures of the past? Two issues remain at the forefront, regardless of the shape that the alternative forms of democracy take. First, the question of human rights and citizenship in a democratic society; and second, poverty and social policy, that is, how to address the massive poverty that exists, in varying degrees of severity in individual countries in the region. Will the leftist governments succeed now that they have identified democracy's core deficits in social, political, and economic inclusion? What impact will such policies have on existing democratic institutions? How will greater inclusion of marginalized groups in participatory democracy be achieved long-term? Will the voice of the once voiceless silence the voice of the elitist class? If so, is this

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44. Michael L. Conniff, *Introduction*, in POPULISM IN LATIN AMERICA 1, 2–4 (Michael L. Conniff ed., 1999). Populism is the political practice of appealing for mass support by defending the causes of ordinary people against powerful elites. *Id.* at 4. Populism in the political and social culture of Latin American societies is expressed through the populist leaders of several Latin American countries including Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. *Id.* at 2–4.

45. *See id.* at 2–9.



then an authentic form of democracy, an alternative form of democracy, or not democracy at all? Hugo Chávez' hero, Simón Bolívar after whom he named his revolution, was a military aristocrat who owned slaves.<sup>46</sup> Of this nineteenth-century liberator and visionary of a unified continent under one government, Chávez reflects:

At the beginning of 1816, Bolívar went to Haiti... Bolívar was preparing an expedition to Venezuela to carry on the struggle for Liberation... Bolívar had understood that independence would not be possible without the participation of the Venezuelan people—the poor, the *peones*, the slaves and the blacks. The first thing he did when he disembarked was to order the emancipation of the slaves and social equality for all.<sup>47</sup>

Chávez revived the ideals of Simón Bolívar and the phantasmagorical Don Quixote, another hero of his, for his own political program making his galvanizing words on freedom and liberty as relevant for current political and social struggles as they were in Bolívar's own day.<sup>48</sup> But, in the end, Chávez' policies came up against the realities of the “windmills”—cheap oil and unsustainable social programs without capital investments. Good intentions succumbed to poor economic vision and planning and, of course, the inability to predict his own demise from terminal cancer—circumstances that collided in a short span of time followed by the political and economic mismanagement of the *uncharismatic* Francisco Maduro.<sup>49</sup>

Seventeen-years ago, Hugo Chávez kicked off a socialist revolution in Venezuela. It took a dramatically unequal society and attempted to reverse the trend of inequality. On December 2, 2015 Venezuelan voters of *all* socioeconomic classes set Chavismo up for a big fall.<sup>50</sup> The ruling socialist party led by Francisco Maduro—the Chavista champion of the poor—was decisively defeated at the polls. Venezuela faces a new political landscape after a landslide opposition victory in parliamentary elections, but there is no clear indication that the result is enough to turn Venezuela from its path of twenty-first century socialism. Venezuela requires economic reforms as urgently as political and social ones. The stock of foreign exchange is dangerously low,

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46. Hugo Chavez, *Introduction to SIMON BOLIVAR, THE BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION* vii, vii–viii (Matthew Brown ed., 2009).

47. *Id.* at xii.

48. *Id.* at xii–xvi.

49. Nick Miroff, *Falling Oil Prices Put Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro in a Vice*, WASH. POST (Nov. 17, 2014), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/falling-oil-prices-put-venezuelas-nicolas-maduro-in-a-vice/2014/11/16/5c157066-6602-11e4-ab86-46000e1d0035\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/falling-oil-prices-put-venezuelas-nicolas-maduro-in-a-vice/2014/11/16/5c157066-6602-11e4-ab86-46000e1d0035_story.html).

50. Sibylla Brodzinsky, *Venezuela Elections: Opposition Handed Mandate For Change After Landslide Win*, THE GUARDIAN (Dec. 7, 2015), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/07/venezuela-parliamentary-election-opposition-win-political-prisoners-amnesty>.

and the country runs the risk of defaulting on its foreign debt in 2016.<sup>51</sup> The measures required to avert disaster include cutting the public-sector deficit of perhaps 20-30% of GDP, dismantling price controls, and reforming its multi-tiered exchange rate system, which sets an official rate for the *bolívar* that is more than one-hundred times greater than its value on the black market.<sup>52</sup> Chavismo lost even in Hugo Chávez' home-state where he is revered, but economic hardships circumscribe peoples' lives. Loyalty has its limits.

For electoral democracy to function with meaning anywhere in Latin America, there must first be a base of economic democracy. With the possible exception of Costa Rica, the Spanish colonizers who settled in the New World came not to work the land but to amass it and exploit it through the labor of the indigenous people who had traditionally cared for the land as their holy mother. In the twenty-first century Latin America's fertile fields and hardworking people still make economic magic for a tiny group of large landholders and foreign investors. Little has changed over the centuries. If the key ingredient to change is land ownership, the key to authentic democracy of any form is land redistribution. If participatory democracy is to be effective, it must extend to Latin America's vast underclass and above all to its native and Afro-indigenous populations *after* they have been educated in the political process to avoid the dangers of clientelism and attraction to charismatic leaders without substance or even those steeped in corruption. The task is to sow the seeds of a new, more fraternal and democratic society—regardless of how it is labeled—where social justice is its corner stone. The new characteristic of Latin American politics is greater collaboration among countries with the goal of breaking dependence on the North. Historically, Latin America has been in competition for U.S. markets and development aid.

Now, particularly in the collaborations of *New Left* governments, countries in the region increasingly focus on complementing the strengths and weaknesses of one another, seeking common solutions to their shared problems, dialoguing with one another's leaders in solidarity rather than engaging in vituperative discourse. An example of such cooperative ventures is UNASUR (Union of South American Nations), founded in 2008 with its headquarters in Quito, Ecuador.<sup>53</sup> It is an attempt by 12 member countries in the region—Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay,

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51. *Why China is Lending \$5 Billion to Struggling Venezuela*, THE ECONOMIST (Sept. 2, 2015), <http://www.economist.com/news/business-and-finance/21663169-cash-be-invested-oil-will-deliver-dubious-benefits-both-parties-why-china-loaning-5>.

52. *The Opposition's Rout of the Government in Venezuela is a Huge Victory for Democracy*, THE ECONOMIST (Dec. 7, 2009), <http://www.economist.com/news/21679691-reviving-countrys-zombie-economy-will-be-hard-oppositionu2019s-rout>.

53. Nathaniel Parish Flannery, *Explainer: What is UNASUR?*, AMERICAS SOCIETY/COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAS (Nov. 30, 2012), <http://www.as-coa.org/articles/explainer-what-unasur>.

Uruguay, Venezuela, Chile, and Guyana Suriname—to “create infrastructure regional space that is integrated in political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, energy, and infrastructure terms...”<sup>54</sup> UNASUR is a regional organization integrating two existing customs unions: Mercosur and the Andean Community of Nations (CSN, in Spanish) are part of an ongoing process of South American integration and independence from the North and following the European Union model.<sup>55</sup> Following on the heels of this regional union, Evo Morales has departed from a traditional market-based approach to economic development with a “People’s Trade Agreement,” a radically innovative economic alternative based on principles of fair trade, labor, and environmental protections, and active state intervention in the economy to promote development.<sup>56</sup>

The make-up of political leadership too has become more populist, more representative of the common man, the masses—women (Cristina Fernández of Argentina and Michelle Bachelet of Chile); a labor union leader and metalworker (Ignacio “Lula” da Silva of Brazil); indigenous farmers (Evo Morales of Bolivia); an economist (Rafael Correa of Ecuador); ex-revolutionaries and soldiers (Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua and Hugo Chávez of Venezuela); a priest espousing the social justice doctrines of Liberation Theology (Fernando Lugo of Paraguay); medical doctors (Tabaré Vázquez of Uruguay, Michelle Bachelet of Chile). The uniqueness of this approach to governance defies labeling. The grassroots social movements speak for themselves simply by their sheer type variety and volume in these countries—peasant movements, landless’ workers’ movements, human rights movements, indigenous rights movements.<sup>57</sup> These alternative forms of governance are building democracy in politics and workplaces, collaborating across borders, combatting poverty, working together as social movements, and elected leaders with common agenda. *The New Left* combines alternative visions for social, economic, and political integration. These, in turn, reflect the demands of the

54. Declaration of the Ministers of Communication of the UNASUR Member States, Nov. 29, 2011, [http://www.iirsa.org/admin\\_iirsa\\_web/Uploads/Documents/telco\\_brasilia11\\_primer\\_reunion\\_de\\_ministros\\_eng.pdf](http://www.iirsa.org/admin_iirsa_web/Uploads/Documents/telco_brasilia11_primer_reunion_de_ministros_eng.pdf); see generally UNASUR, <http://unasur.org/en> (last visited Mar. 12, 2016) (including the latest UNASUR news and its strategic vision and political, economic, and social agenda).

55. Parish Flannery, *supra* note 53.

56. Nadia Martinez, *Democracy Rising*, YES! MAGAZINE (May 11, 2007), <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/latin-america-rising/democracy-rising-1>. Evo Morales does not support MERCOSUR/EU. *Bolivia’s Morales does not Support Mercosur/EU Deal Based on ‘Competitive’ Trade*, FOREIGN POLICY NEWS (June 10, 2015), <http://foreignpolicynews.org/2015/06/10/bolivias-morales-does-not-support-mercasureu-deal-based-on-competitive-trade/> (“We prefer to expand our regional market by ourselves, rather than be accomplices of an inhuman policy which harms the majority of the people and only benefits a minority False Trade must be focused on solidarity and not in competitiveness if we really want to end poverty False”).

57. *Grassroots Movements Change the Face of Power in Latin America*, *supra* note 38.

region's social movements, with the power of state authority to safeguard its social and economic programs and vision for the future.

However, it is the social movements in Latin America that are redefining democracy. Some of the most propitious democratic advances in Latin America are not the result of official governmental policies from the top down, but of social movements harnessing their own power from the bottom up—*people power*. The people of Latin America are choosing to be creators of their own futures, not the passive victims nor obsequious beggars of the global economy. No longer will they allow outside interests to undermine their elected leaders in favor of military dictatorships. They have not forgotten the human rights abuses of the past. They will no longer sign on to trade deals that lend their natural resources and labor to unregulated exploitation and make protection of their own economies impossible. They have said a resounding, “*Basta ya!*” (“Enough!”) to the economic growth model that promotes greater wealth for those who are already wealthy. Instead, they are working to share the wealth and eliminate joblessness, illiteracy, and preventable disease.<sup>58</sup>

Unknowingly perhaps, they are applying the principles of popular sovereignty outlined by the eighteenth century French philosopher of the Enlightenment, Jean-Jacque Rousseau in his book *The Social Contract*.<sup>59</sup> The *radical democracy* defended in Rousseau's writings rejects many of the basic precepts of *liberal democracy* by its emphasis on social involvement in self-governance, direct participation of the populace, the masses as opposed to elitist *representative* minorities. *The Social Contract* implies a certain kind of superiority of direct democracy over representative legislatures—public deliberation, mass demonstrations, voting plebiscites, all rituals for arousing a popular will are as necessary to authoritarian states as to liberal ones.<sup>60</sup> In effect, people must place the common good above their private interests during the voting process in a healthy state. This is precisely what the voters did in the December 2015 assembly elections in Venezuela with Chavistas voting for candidates of the right in order to restore some balance in the policies of the Maduro government and save the country's economy from its current “basket-case” status.<sup>61</sup> So, even in the midst of economic collapse, amid the many failures of the Chávez-Maduro presidencies, Venezuelan *democracy* can be said to be safeguarded!

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58. See generally Nancy Romer, *Bolivia: Latin America's Experiment in Grassroots Democracy*, 11 NEW POLITICS 23, (2008).

59. See JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, *THE SOCIAL CONTRACT* (Christopher Betts trans., Oxford Univ. Press 1994) (1762).

60. *Id.* at 106–07, 116–17, 121–29.

61. Srdja Popovic & William J. Dobson, *Venezuela Has Just Begun to Fight*, SLATE (Dec. 7, 2015), [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/foreigners/2015/12/venezuela\\_s\\_opposition\\_wins\\_an\\_enormous\\_victory\\_the\\_opponents\\_of\\_nicolas.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2015/12/venezuela_s_opposition_wins_an_enormous_victory_the_opponents_of_nicolas.html).

## VI. SHORTFALLS UNDER *THE NEW LEFT*: LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Despite the aforementioned achievements, both the Cuban Revolution and *The New Left* have both fallen short of fulfilling their agendas. While new forms of participatory democracy are positive steps for Latin America, since they deepen accountability, transparency, inclusion in the political process, and other dimensions of democracy, they also pose problems, crucial questions that have no easy answers. What is the relationship between political participation and democratic decision-making, given that these newly-included populations might be illiterate, uninformed about political processes, speakers of an indigenous language only, easily taken in by a charismatic leader?

Former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice once questioned *The New Left* governments (particularly that of Venezuela's Hugo Chávez) as an "assault on democracy" citing significant human rights issues and authoritarian state powers.<sup>62</sup> Yet, in some measure, all of the governments of *The New Left* demonstrate essential characteristics of democracy—participation; free and fair elections; freedom of the press; varied political parties; freedom of assembly, expression and speech; payment for nationalization of private property and compensation at market rate of large, unproductive *latifundio* holdings redistributed to peasants written into Constitutional laws; equality covering gender, rights for the poor, peasants, and indigenous peoples (although *race* is omitted in many state documents); checks and balances with grant of temporary "rule by decree" power; transparency to a fair degree; a Constitution based on popular participation to protect human rights and promote social justice; economic human rights with free universal education (including university), healthcare, and drug rehabilitation; and community and workplace democracy (co-operatives, community councils, and co-managed factories promoted with state incentives) and government-promoted endogenous development based on democracy and collective production.<sup>63</sup> Some of the aforementioned democratic traits have been more successful in their implementation than others, depending on the country. However, what must be remembered is that these are countries still in their embryonic state of democratic development, still trying to "get it right" with all the successes and failures, steps forward and backward, of any new democracy. Through election upsets (like the December 2, 2015 losses of Venezuela's leftist government<sup>64</sup>), blockaded streets, occupied factories, worker co-ops, and free health care, the once silenced voices of the people of Latin America are recreating their world.

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62. Michael Fox, *Venezuela: Democracy or Dictatorship?*, YES! MAGAZINE (May 11, 2007), <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/latin-america-rising/1743>.

63. *Id.*

64. *Venezuela Election: Maduro's Socialists Trounced*, BBC NEWS (Dec. 2, 2015), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-35019111>.

## VII. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS: POPULAR MOVEMENTS AND POLITICAL ALTERNATIVES: LATIN AMERICA IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Winds of change have swept through Latin America over the past two decades or so, bringing into power a variety of progressive and center-left governments winning on anti-neoliberal political platforms and redefining the face of democracy with alternative forms of democratization. Some of the most hopeful democratic advancements in Latin America today are not the result of official policies or of constitutional reforms, but of social movements harnessing their own power. In the Amazonian region of Ecuador after witnessing multinational oil companies for decades cut through the jungles of their ancestral lands in search of petroleum, indigenous women put their bodies on the line against the armed soldiers sent to escort oil workers.<sup>65</sup> The concentration of *Chavistas* in downtown Caracas on the day of the April 2002 coup intentionally served as a buffer between violent members of the opposition and the presidential palace; and during the two-month general strike beginning in December 2012, brigades consisting of members of surrounding communities protected oil installations. In Bolivia, “peasants and miners converged on the city of Sucre to ensure the personal security of constituent assembly delegates, who faced threats from paramilitary units prior to the final vote on the new constitution.”<sup>66</sup> On September 30, 2010, thousands of Ecuadorians took to the streets and impeded the possible deployment of military forces in support of coup rebels who had virtually kidnapped President Correa in a coup attempt similar to that of Hugo Chávez.<sup>67</sup> Examples of popular mobilization and participation on a mass scale and an ongoing basis abound in *New Left* governments.

Indeed, throughout Latin America scores of indigenous peoples have demonstrated that marginalized populations can organize and mobilize effectively enough to topple governments and influence policies—as they have done in Ecuador and Bolivia— despite their lack of material resources and political power. Although the twenty-first century socialist countries of Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador are historically different in many respects, they share similar political and economic strategies to achieve structural

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65. *Democracy Rising*, *supra* note 56.

66. Steve Ellner, *The Distinguishing Features of Latin America's New Left in Power: The Governments of Hugo Chavez, Evo Morales, and Rafael Correa*, VENEZUELANALYSIS (Jan. 27, 2012), <http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/6754>.

67. *Id.*; Irene Caselli, *The State of Democracy a Year After Ecuador's Coup*, THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR (Sept. 30, 2011), <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/2011/0930/The-state-of-democracy-a-year-after-Ecuador-s-coup> (“Ecuador made international headlines when a police revolt over bonuses turned into what the government maintains was an attempted coup. Early that morning, President Rafael Correa rushed to the main police barracks of Ecuador’s capital Quito False”).

change, challenging both ideologically-based socialism and traditional liberal democracy. They are chartering new territory by challenging the interests of traditional social sectors, while, at the same time, they are rebellious against the old order of governance. This so-called “pink tide”<sup>68</sup> in Latin America—a blending of radical democracy with socialism—is not without its challenges. The diversity of social groups with which they need to contend demand rapid institutionalized change, each with its unique interests and goals. Internal tensions often result—not very different from those suffered by the first democratically elected socialist president of the region, Chilean Salvador Allende in the 1970s.

Expropriations, confrontations with and greater state control of private (both national and foreign) owned companies are viewed as exceeding the limits of popular democracy. Yet, they might also be interpreted as necessary corrective measures to respond to centuries of exploitation and discrimination. The debate on the degree to which social programs should focus on the marginalized and semi-marginalized sectors over long-range economic considerations is a heated one with a valid case being made on both sides. The Latin American political landscape of the twenty-first century is defined by diversity and complexity with sharp political and social polarization in the air despite leftist popular base support. And, it must be noted, that such popular support could wane at any time, due to impatience with reform as was apparent with Venezuela’s 2015 assembly elections. The exercise of Latin American agency and the current experiment with alternative models of democracy defies simple solutions and formulas. The clash between government and opposition with a complex array of actors will continue to evolve into new approaches to democratic expression. The debate over the boundaries between democratic and non-democratic governance will be further complicated. This experiment with democracy in Latin America is very much a work in progress.

But it is a *joint* venture, as President Rafael Correa of Ecuador declares in his blog:

You decide between the dark past or this beautiful Revolution in Democracy. Until Victory always! Everyone, Vote! It is not the work of one man alone or of one government, but of all the people. The Citizen Revolution is on the march.<sup>69</sup>

In the final analysis, *social movements* more than political movements are redefining democracy in Latin America. As the people of Latin America build

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68. Ellner, *supra* note 66.

69. *Rafael Correa Presidente del Ecuador – Lenin Moreno Vicepresidente*, RAFAEL CORREA (Ecuador), <http://rafaelcorrea.com> (last visited Mar. 13, 2016) (“Tú decides entre el oscuro pasado o esta hermosa Revolución en Democracia. Hasta la victoria siempre! ¡Vota todo! No es labor de un solo hombre o de un gobierno, sino de todo un pueblo. La Revolución Ciudadana está en Marcha.”) (translation by author).

democracies from grassroots movements, they are changing the symbols of power as well as developing alternative forms of democracy that better respond to their multi-ethnic heritage and the unequal hierarchical socioeconomic and sociopolitical structures of their colonial and neo-colonial past. Within the framework of historical time, these alternative democratic experiments are still in their embryonic stage and are currently experiencing growing pains. Forms of participation that have emerged in communal councils, cultural activities, blogs, community media, and several other fora validate much of the praise of *The New Left's* form of participatory democracy under Chávez and other *New Left* governments, as well as many of the critiques. While government corporatism and clientelism remain constant threats, the forms of political and cultural participation discussed in this essay are creating new discourses, networks, and organizational spaces—for better and for worse.



