

**Citizens in the New Latin American State:  
Politics, the Economy and the Dynamics of Democratic Legitimacy in Bolivia and Latin America**

by

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## Chapter I . Introduction

In the past few years, the *New Left* has spread across Latin America posing the greatest challenge yet to Latin American democracies since the wave of democratization began in the region. Governments and leaders of the *New Left* have not only started a wave of profound institutional reform; but, most importantly, have begun questioning the validity of core democratic principles and values and their suitability as guidelines for political and social life in the region, especially those that refer to the structure of society, dealing with individualist versus communitarian positions, and issues of distribution of wealth and distributive justice.

The new Latin American State, which has taken the ideology and the political and economic views of the *New Left* as the basis for its construction, seeks to build a democracy that overcomes inequalities even if the price might be liberties, a democracy that is more than a mere set of procedures. The battle between equality and liberty is to be solved in the reform of the democratic model, which will give the State and the government a new *shape*.

A common place conceptual confusion between liberalism and democracy lies at the base of the *New Left's* political project, in which democracy as it is currently in place in Latin America has to be rejected because it is a product of liberal thought, and liberalism is an ideology imposed on the region by the dominant powers, namely the United States. So, upholding democracy means giving in to a modern state of colonization, an ideological colonization.

Nevertheless, it is not the contention of this ideological current or its representatives throughout the region that we need to give up democracy completely, but rather that we need to transform it, make it “ours” in a way in which it is reshaped to mirror our cultural identity, values and principles. Of course, this idea is not negative in itself.

In practical terms, South American countries have shown the clearest ideological conviction and disposition towards reform<sup>1</sup>, putting in place policies of nationalization of major industry enterprises such as the hydrocarbons and energetic industries and policies of redistribution of wealth and alleviation of poverty through

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<sup>1</sup> More than countries in Central America, except for Nicaragua.

different social programs such as the Bolsa Familia in Brazil and the program of *bonos* in Bolivia, as an effort to somewhat alleviate poverty through State controlled distribution of wealth.

Bolivia, Venezuela and Nicaragua have the most outspoken governments and the ones more actively reforming the State to set course away from the neoliberal model and towards what they call the socialist paradigm or the *new* Latin American democracy. But they are not alone. The governments of Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay and Uruguay also show varying degrees of ideological leaning towards socialism, ranging from actual policy design and implementation to simply political discourse. Brazil has a socialist party in government but shows restraint in their turn to the left and only Chile and Colombia have not shown yet any signs of following the same path, although Michelle Bachelet's government in Chile did have a good rapport with the leftist governments of the surrounding countries and did express agreement with their positions and regional views. This reverted only after Piñera was elected president.

Throughout South America, at least seven countries currently share ideological basis as to how to reshape and build the new Latin American State. They favor socially oriented policies, they have anti-neoliberal and anti-imperialist discourses; they display varying degrees of populist leanings supported by strong individual figures leading the process; they share a discourse of change and they prioritize society and politics over the economy (Barrett and Chavez 2008).

But it is through these reforms and policies that governments question and weaken some values and principles that are central to democratic life, because the new Latin American States are adopting democratic *means* to achieve their goals, but are not equally subscribing to democratic *principles*. Whether it is disregarding the principle of alternation through Constitutional reform to extend the incumbent's reelection opportunities as in Venezuela, Bolivia and Argentina, or trying to restrict freedom of speech by introducing new laws, targeting and devaluating the press as president Correa did in Ecuador and Morales did in Bolivia; or effectively reverting the political system from a multi-party to a bi-party or single party system as occurs in Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Argentina and Ecuador, where the opposition does not stand a real chance of winning and the effective number of parties is one or two.

Whether it is by governing through referenda and Executive Orders as happens in Bolivia and Venezuela, disregarding Congress and the representative structure, or weakening institutional stability and authority by setting *reform* as the main principle of rebuilding the State, making institutions and officials replaceable, exchangeable and expendable, governments of the new Latin American State use democratic procedures and rules instrumentally (some more than others), to gain power and strengthen political positions, picking and choosing which principles, values and procedures are important and which are dispensable, thus in the process undermining democracy itself. Nevertheless, the fact that these countries are still democracies is not contested, although they might be *customized* democracies that display a varying degree of democratic qualities, when compared to a model of modern western procedural democracy.

Although Brazil and Uruguay have adopted some more socially oriented policies, their alignment with the New Left radical position is minimal, sharing a leaning towards social justice, redistribution and more State control over the market, but sticking to the rules of the democratic game.

In the rest of the cases, the principles and values that “did not make the cut” in the building of the new Latin American democracies are held to be *alien* to the true Latin American cultural identity and the construction of the *new Latin American State* is already under way, dismissing what are deemed as western cultural traits –mainly economic and individualistic views- and replacing them by *true* Latin American cultural traits, whatever those may be. So, what are the *new Latin American democracies* like? And most importantly, how are citizens accommodating to the change?

My dissertation takes a quantitative approach to understanding how citizens perceive the legitimacy of the State in Latin America within the context of the reforms and the political project of the *New Left* and it takes an in-depth look at Bolivia, as a case study, where the *process of change* has been ongoing since 2005 and is even more pronounced since the issuance of the new Constitution in 2009. Since then, the identity of the Bolivian State itself has changed profoundly begging the question of what the new democracy will bring for its citizens.

The analysis also includes the effect of the economic context in addition to the political context on the individual perceptions of legitimacy, since Latin America is one of the regions in the world with highest levels of economic inequality.

This chapter introduces the main theoretical issues explored in my dissertation and discusses why legitimacy is especially critical as a study object for democracy at this historical point. In a second section, I describe the methods and data used to accomplish the study and finally I present a map of the organization of the document.

### **Why legitimacy?**

Legitimacy holds democracies together. Without it, there may be the State, its institutions and authorities. There may also be laws and regulations, and even an orderly way of life; but without the trust and support of their citizens, democracies *are* not complete, for there is no relationship between the citizenry and the State, no sentiment of adherence that encourages citizens to uphold the rule of law, to live by democratic beliefs or to respect democratic principles. This is critical for a system that claims to be democratic because only in democracies are we concerned about people's standings, opinions and perceptions.

Therefore, the importance of the study of democratic legitimacy and what elements constitute its nature cannot be overstated, particularly when democratic values and principles are being questioned by the government and the institutions of the State.

In political language, legitimacy refers directly to the State over other elements of political life. Legitimacy is an attribute of the State and depends on the population's consensus regarding the validity of procedures, principles, norms and institutions of the political system expressed in the statement "This is why all power seeks to reach consensus, so that it is recognised as legitimate, transforming obedience in adhesion." (Levi 1983:675)

The importance of a system being perceived as legitimate by its citizenry has not only been pointed out by innumerable theorists and political scientists (Lipset 1959, 1961; Easton 1975, 1976; Miller 1974; Weatherford 1992), but the problems derived from a system with low legitimacy are a concern continually

reflected in the press and by politicians everywhere. In considering that “*legitimacy involves the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate or proper ones for the society*” (Lipset 1959) it becomes clearer that low levels of political legitimacy can undermine the political system in a manner that can put democracy at risk by means of the citizenry being dissatisfied with the appropriateness of the political institutions in place. It is through democratic institutions that the rules of the (democratic) game are established, carried out and consolidated over time.

Political institutions embody and implement procedures and regulations of the regime and are the channel through which citizens relate to the State. In time, institutions determine the consolidation of the regime. The performance and efficacy of political institutions of the State and the government is a key element that nourishes the citizenry’s perceptions of political legitimacy of the democratic system (Weatherford 1987; Anderson and Guillory 1997; Cusack 1999; Offe 2006; Pierson 2006; Preuss 2006; Smith 2006).

In turn, legitimacy derives from the support that the citizenry provides to the political system. It can be specific support –directed towards public officials and political leaders- or diffuse, directed rather to values and principles guiding the performance of the system. These constitute the basic structure of the political regime. Regime support “can adopt the shape of *trust*, defined as the feeling that one can count on the system to produce egalitarian results, or it can adopt the shape of *legitimacy*, defined as the personal conviction that the system adapts to moral and ethical principles about what is correct in the political sphere” (Muller, Jukam et al. 1982) .

In the early sixties Lipset had already identified the key role the *legitimacy of the political system* played in the *survival of democracy*. “A crisis of legitimacy is a crisis of change. (..) Crises of legitimacy occur during a transition to a new social structure” (Lipset 1961). These changes may threaten the established institutional structure or may affect the access of majoritarian groups to the political system. They may affect even the very core principles, values and conceptions that individuals have about democracy and the democratic status of their political system.

Academics have established that government performance has an effect on citizens and that it can have serious consequences when it is unsatisfactory. Bastian and Luckham (2003) emphasize the need to study the

effects of democracies on the lives of citizens because democracy can generate negative and positive consequences, depending on the performance of political players, interest groups and economic conditions. Dissatisfaction with government performance can be changed into action at the individual level through system support. Political confidence plays a key role in the perception of legitimacy of norms and policies issued by a government, and therefore, it is key to the degree to which an individual is willing to support the government and the regime.

Dalton's (Dalton 2004) study on the erosion of system support in advanced industrialized democracies analyzes the factors that generate change in support for the system. Other studies (Easton 1976; Weatherford 1992; Anderson and Guillory 1997) also provide evidence that individual assessment of government performance is one of the key factors that influence the level of system support and provide legitimacy to the system.

Crises arise when conflicts escalate to the point of threatening the integrity of the system. It is again Lipset who points to the solution: "Since the existence of a moderate state of conflict is in fact another way of defining a *legitimate democracy*, it is not surprising that the principal factors determining such an optimum state are closely related to those which produce legitimacy viewed in terms of *continuities of symbols and statuses*" (Lipset 1961). Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the symbols, statuses, values, principles and perceptions of individuals during the process of change in order to see if the path of change is leading to a legitimate democratic system or to a democratic crisis.

Many academics have been dedicated to the study of the effect of institutional change and reform and the consequences of institutional structures for the survival and quality of democracy. Anderson and Guillory, for example, focus on how distinct forms of institutions of representation affect citizens' satisfaction with democracy (Anderson and Guillory 1997); Lijphart focuses on institutional arrangements and their consequences for maintaining democratic rule (Lijphart 1990). In these and many other similar works, the driving question has been how institutions mediate citizens' views of and relations with the state.

All of the research offers consistent support for the notion that institutions can have very real and powerful effects on a wide range of democratic outcomes and to the fact that the way citizens view their institutions and the general structure of the political system affect their adherence to or distancing from it.

Institutional reform and experiments of change have long influenced the development and survival of democracies, but they can also get stuck in a seemingly never-ending transition period. For these countries, such as Bolivia seems to be, a question with increasing importance is whether the initial institutional choices made during the democratic transition have become obstacles in efforts to solidify and deepen democracy. What do we make, then, of those democracies that have, in many cases, undergone long processes of institutional reform and that have conducted series of institutional experiments but still suffer from weakening or persistent low legitimacy? Is their low political legitimacy a function of these continuous processes of change and institutional reform?

Poverty and inequality can be seen by individuals as a failure of political performance in a way that goes beyond the government in place and can affect the system at its core, breaking the citizen – State relation and hurting its institutions (North 2005; Segura-Ubiergo 2007), which is many times expressed by the masses expelling presidents (as happened in Bolivia), closings of Supreme Courts (Ecuador) and Congress (Peru), discarding completely old institutional structures such as Constitutions and a “popular claim” to draft new constitutions.

Low levels of political legitimacy are a constant concern in old and new democracies and are considered a threatening factor for the stability of democracies because they can cause political voids and weaken the Rule of Law. As Miller suggests, “Feelings of powerlessness and normlessness are very likely to be accompanied by hostility toward political and social leaders, the institutions of government and the regime as a whole” (Miller 1974).

Thus, citizens’ perception of the system as *legitimate* is crucial for its good performance and the consequences of a negative perception of political legitimacy has been expressed by several academics



(Rohrschneider 2006); Lipset 1959, 1961; Easton 1975, 1976; Miller 1974; Weatherford 1992; (Seligson and Booth 2009).

Being an individual and subjective element, a product of perceptions, expectations and individual evaluations, political legitimacy is often constructed as trust and support to political institutions and other elements of the political system (Weatherford 1992; King 2000; Hetherington 2005; Blakelock 2006; Norris 2006; Schwarz-Blum 2006; Rosanvallon 2008; Seligson and Booth 2009).

In this context, public opinion and public opinion studies play a key role in the measurement of legitimacy because, ultimately, surveys provide us with a better way of assessing legitimacy since they draw data from the perception and evaluation citizens make about the performance of the democratic regime (Seligson and Booth 2009).

Unstable and conflictive elements such as social unrest, dissatisfaction with governmental performance and limitation of political rights such as the right to disagree, participate and freedom of expression in political life and in the public sphere erode the degree of support that the democratic system requires in order to maintain its stability and can weaken the political system in general. Empirical evidence exists to show that individual evaluations of government and institutional performance is one of the key factors that provide legitimacy to the political system and affect the stability of the democratic regime. Evidence also points to the fact that a faulty or unsatisfactory institutional performance can have serious consequences on the legitimacy and stability of the regime (Lijphart 1990; Hadenius 1994; Cusack 1999; Ferejohn 2006), like what happened when Fujimori closed Congress in Peru, or the democratic crisis in Honduras in 2009, or the constant unrest in Bolivia up to 2003 when Sanchez de Lozada had to flee the country and President Mesa resigned later leaving the country without a President.

But it is not easy to identify factors that negatively affect the legitimacy of the democratic regime. Conflict is part of the political game and, according to democratic principles, is part of the political dynamic as much as any other element. And yet, conflict can escalate to the point that it threatens democratic stability, especially in low legitimacy regimes or in moments of change and reform.

Academics have persistently studied the impact of institutional changes and reforms on the quality and stability of democracy (Powell Jr 2000; Shapiro and Macedo 2000; Norris 2004; Wilsford 2005). One of the main issues is to understand how institutions act as mediators between citizens and state. One of the most frequent answers is that political institutions can exercise a powerful effect on a wide variety of democratic results and that individual perceptions of institutions and the degree of trust they achieve affects the individual's willingness to adhere to the regime or keep distant from it.

On top of that, institutions do not perform in a void. The cultural, social, economic and political context influences institutional performance as well as individual perceptions about the regime (Torcal and Montero 2006). For example, the undergoing crisis of the justice system in Bolivia, which included the closing of the Constitutional Tribunal for over a year and a paralyzed Supreme Court due to the resignation of magistrates and their judicial processing for corruption accusations would be unthinkable and damaging in a Western European country or in the United States, but did not cause uproar or even concern amongst the Bolivian population, with the exception of some voices from the private and the academic field, but did hurt the levels of trust for the entire judicial system and has not been able to recover yet. Unfortunately, most of the studies on the contextual effect have been carried out in developed and consolidated democracies in Europe (Anderson and Guillory 1997; Norris 1999; Andersen and Heath 2003; Secor and O'Loughlin 2005; Wells and Kriekhaus 2006; Anderson and Singer 2008).

Both the effect of the economic context measured through level two variables with aggregated data at the national and sub-national levels and the individual evaluation of economic performance of institutions on system support have been studied extensively with significant results that provide evidence to show that economic considerations are among the main considerations citizens take into account when evaluating the democratic regime and its legitimacy (Norris 1999; McMahon and Sinclair 2002; Dalton 2004; North 2005; Segura-Ubierno 2007; Edwards 2010).

Data from European countries shows evidence of an effective influence that a context of economic inequality has on shaping citizens' views about the performance of the political system and on the level of trust

in political institutions (Anderson and Singer, 2008) contributing to the idea that what happens in the big picture affects behavior at the individual level.

Nevertheless, only a few studies focus on the Latin American context (Schwarz-Blum 2008; NU, CEPAL et al. 2010). These show that the national economic context has real effects on legitimacy in the Latin American region and, moreover, effects that were not considered previously by the theory on the subject.

Thus follows the assumption that the economic context is an especially important element for understanding the dynamics of legitimacy in a context of institutional reform and political change in Latin American countries because many of these countries are among the poorest in the world and poverty turns into a key problem, not only in the economic arena, but in the political one as well, since poverty brings inequality and inequality can lead to unequal access to political representation and unequal distribution of resources, eroding the legitimacy of the system in the eyes of those who do not get to be taken into account.

Unfortunately, very little of this literature and empirical studies are concerned with the current Latin American political arena. There has been only little, if any, academic “follow-up” to the transition to democracy and its consolidation in Latin American countries; while the general agreement seems to be that these democracies are hardly consistent with the western model of democracy, evidence to support this claim focuses mostly on what these democracies seem to be producing (corruption and the resurgence of leftist political trends in the region, for example) instead of focusing on the actual structural foundations of democratic systems that are yielding troublesome products.

With few exceptions, Latin America is a poor region, but more importantly, a region with enormous inequality in the distribution of wealth and income among the general population. Governments and politicians recognize poverty as a powerful destabilizing factor of political dynamics at the regional and national levels. Poverty generates inequality, not only in the economic field, but also in the access to opportunities and resources, to political representation and participation and even to justice. Combined, these elements generate profound dissatisfaction among the citizenry in situations related to the regime, its institutions, legitimacy and politics.

In many cases, dissatisfaction is correctly interpreted as failure in the economic performance of political institutions and can affect perceptions of institutional performance in other areas of political influence such as diversity recognition policies, access and distribution of territory, social welfare and others.

### **Methodology**

In my dissertation I assert that institutions matter when it comes to the legitimacy of democracies in Latin America. I also argue that the perception of institutional reform and institutional performance are context dependent and that in order to understand how the perception of institutions relates to the legitimacy of democracies the specific domestic context in which institutions are performing needs to be taken into account, whether it is at the national or the sub-national level.

My dissertation seeks to gather evidence to build on and expand aspects of the theory that it draws from and to strengthen the case of the institutional argument within the discussion of the causes and consequences of democratic legitimacy by testing theoretical assumptions in the Latin American and Caribbean regions, that have been coined based only on evidence from established democracies from industrialized western countries. The dominant view on this issue is that institutional performance and the perceptions about it are the central element determining legitimacy. But this view is based mostly on Western European and American cases, where States are much more stable and institutional structure has been in place for at least a couple of centuries, conditions that are not equaled by institutional structures in Latin American countries. Therefore, my dissertation will contribute by focusing on the Latin American case to explain how much weight perceptions about performance have on explaining legitimacy and what other elements also may be playing into it.

It is so far unclear whether these theories will hold in emerging democracies. Were they not to hold, it would mean that academics are missing an important part of the democratic puzzle by disregarding the influence of the context –whether it be social, economic or other- on the workings of democracies.

I have found that some of these theories and assumptions, when tested in a purely Latin American context, yield results that contradict what has been assumed so far for highly industrialized democracies (Schwarz-Blum, 2007). For example, I have found that amongst citizens of Latin American countries, both their

experience of the economic situation at the national level and their evaluation of their own economic situation matter when they decide to support or withdraw support from the State, whereas in more developed regions the evaluation of the personal economic situation does not matter as much as the national economic situation. My research contributes importantly to furthering what we know about the dynamics of democratic legitimacy by paying special attention to the context in which democracies are established.

Furthermore, I argue that both the institutional structure of democracies and the context in which it performs influence its perceived legitimacy on their own and when they interact. This last point brings to light a new approach to the old issue of the relation between the success of democracy and the environmental requisites aiding to its flourishing.

I take this argument one step further by arguing that the influence of the economic context on democratic legitimacy –for which there is some rough evidence already- is a nuanced one, which can be better identified and understood when analyzed in interaction with the institutional structure of the State. The economic context is actually a result of the performance of governments in the economic field, which in my analysis includes GDP, level of human development measured through the HDI and distribution of wealth, measured by the Gini Index.

Part of testing the influence of the economic environment on democratic legitimacy is to explore the workings of this dynamic at different levels of analysis. I apply the same instruments applied to the cross-country study to analyze how this dynamic works at the **sub-national level**.

To this end I chose to take the case of Bolivia as a quantitative case study and explore how the variables interact in the stage of local politics in contrast to the cross-national study. Whereas there is wide variance across the nine Bolivian regions in regards to the economic contextual variable and acceptable variance in system support, the institutional variables will remain practically constant.

In order to measure the effect of the economic context on legitimacy at the sub-national level, I hold the institutional variables constant, to account for the effect of different economic contexts on the perceived legitimacy of the democratic system. In this setting, the study of the dynamics of legitimacy at the sub-national

level is worthwhile pursuing from the theoretical and the empirical point of view, because since the election of President Morales in 2005 and since the beginning of the process of change, there has also been another change in regional political dynamics that I largely attribute to a fundamental cultural difference between two large sectors of the Bolivian population, which is expressed through two differing and almost opposing conceptions of the democratic model, the management of the economy and prospects of development. The body of literature on legitimacy can be significantly enriched with quantitative data analysis on the workings of legitimacy in regional politics arenas, which can open doors and paths to a different understanding of the legitimacy question altogether.

### **The Nine *Departamentos* in the Sample**

Among the nine *departamentos* into which Bolivia is divided, there are important differences as to their level of economic development, distribution of natural and economic resources, institutional and administrative capacity, population distribution and political views and behaviors.

Vargas V. established in a 2009 article that there are several clear economic differences between *departamentos* and that they can be grouped in macro-regions corresponding accurately to their political standing and economic projection. For example, Tarija, Pando, Santa Cruz and Beni register a “relative higher growth of the departmental GNP” between 1997 and 2006 (Vargas Villazón 2009) and again Tarija and Pando displayed the more active economic dynamic during that period. In addition to this, Oruro, La Paz and Potosi register a decrease of participation in national GNP as do Cochabamba and Chuquisaca for the same time period, while the Eastern macro-region (*Oriente*) registers an increase in national GNP participation and only Santa Cruz and Beni show a slight improvement in the net difference of HDI between 1992, 1995 and 2005 (Vargas Villazón 2009). In all cases, the departments of Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni and Pando proved to have developed the most, both in economic and development terms while the other five, basically belonging to the western region of the country, proved to lag behind both in economic growth and development levels.

The following table shows a summary of the main economic indicators for these variables updated up to 2009, except for the HDI index not available for the *departamento* level after 2004.

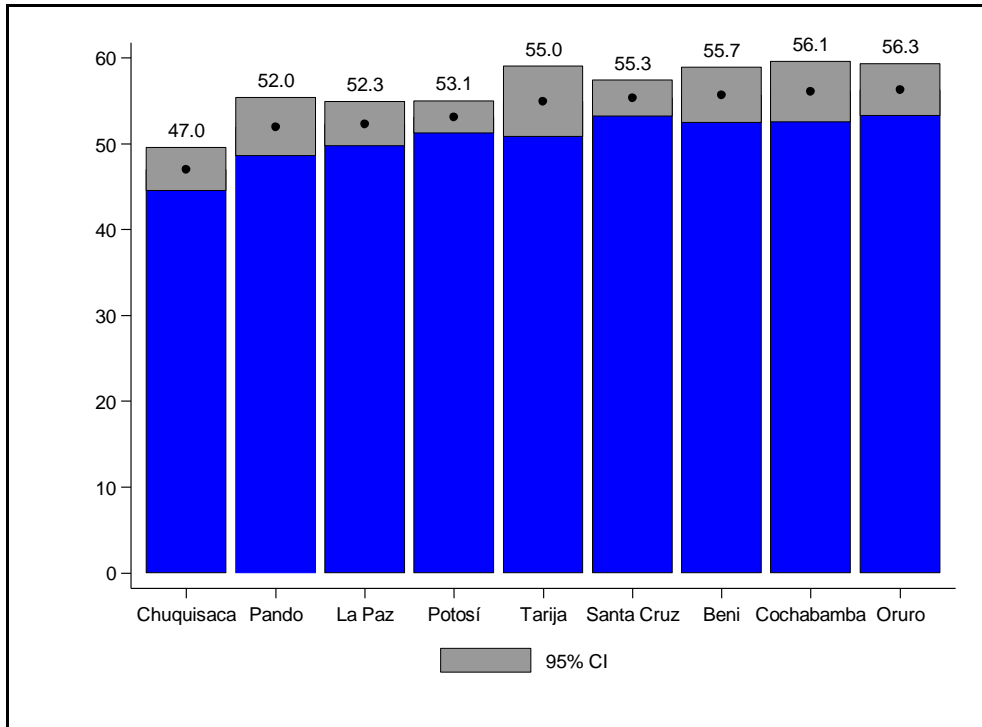
**Table I-1. Departmental differences in GNP, participation in GNP, GNP *per capita* and HDI. Source: INE and UNDP Bolivia.**

<i>Departamento</i>	Participation in national GNP 2009 (p), %	GNP <i>per capita</i> 2009 (p), in Bs.	GNP 2009(p) in thousands of Bs.	Dept. HDI (2004)
<b>La Paz</b>	25.16	10,943	30,626,803	0.631
<b>Oruro</b>	5.61	15,265	6,830,816	0.618
<b>Potosi</b>	6.85	10,625	8,332,607	0.514
<b>Chuquisaca</b>	4.49	8,531	5,466,642	0.563
<b>Cochabamba</b>	15.24	10,167	18,545,544	0.627
<b>Tarija</b>	11.61	27,717	14,127,458	0.641
<b>Santa Cruz</b>	27.2	12,235	33,114,415	0.689
<b>Beni</b>	2.95	8,215	3,595,380	0.639
<b>Pando</b>	0.89	13,892	1,087,079	0.624

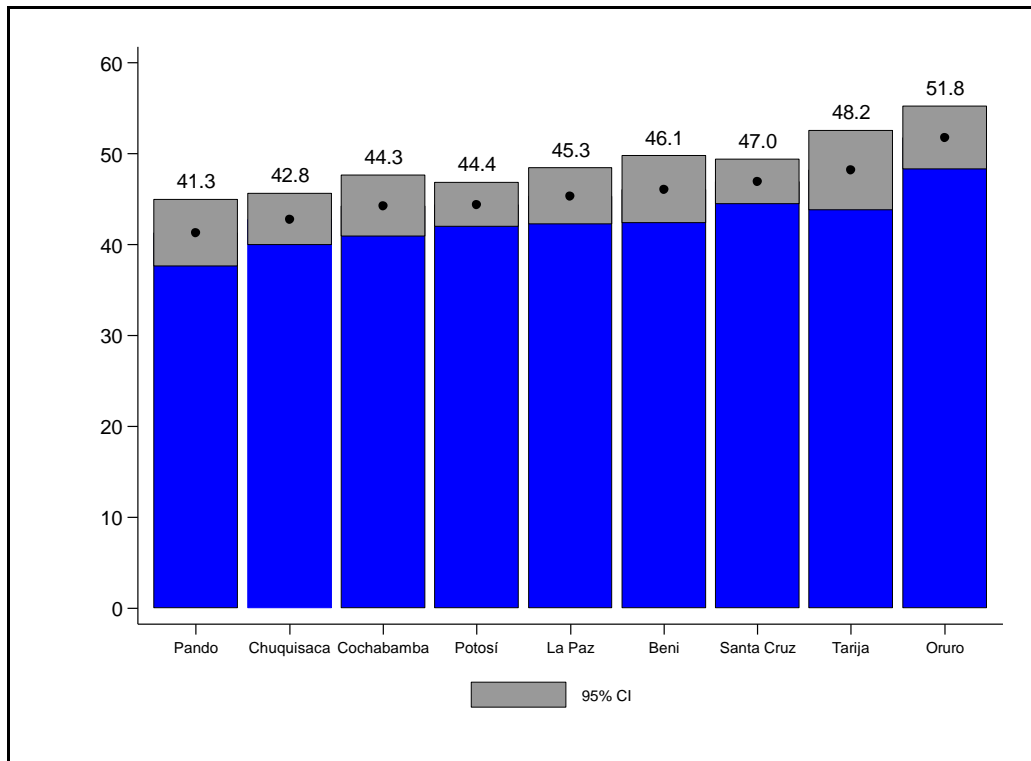
(p): projection

These economic differences draw a sort of spatial map that establishes a persistent grouping of differing macro-regions in relation to their attitude towards the State and the political system; these differences determine differing political attitudes and behaviors of their citizens that determine the regional dynamics of democratic legitimacy in Bolivia. If these differences were to persist for a long period and were the State not to pay attention to these economic inequalities, it is the contention of this study that democratic stability may be threatened due to a growing domestic development gap.

The aforementioned differences are also accompanied by a variation in the departmental levels of system support and institutional legitimacy as shown in the figures below.



Graph I-1. System support by *departamento*. Bolivia 2010. AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.



Graph I-2. Legitimacy of political institutions by *departamento*. Bolivia 2010, AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.



With the exception of Oruro and Pando, the distribution of levels of system support and institutional legitimacy show grouping patterns between *departamentos* that are consistent with the groupings based on economic and development variation at the same level. The high levels of both variables in Oruro were not predictable based on its levels of GNP and percentage of participation in the national GNP, but could be influenced by its relatively high levels of HDI and GNP *per capita*. From this evidence, Oruro seems to be an atypical case that will be analyzed further.

### **Regional configuration**

In recent years, and despite the last decade's efforts to achieve administrative decentralization, Bolivian politics has been going through a process of emerging regional autonomy demands that are closely related to territorial political and economic projects that aim to boost regional development through the constitution of institutionally independent regional governments as a response to the ever growing centralism of the Morales government.

In 1994, the Bolivian State initiated an enduring process of administrative decentralization based on the development of the municipal space as the territorial-administrative unit through which the central government channeled development efforts. Some fifteen years later, the decentralization effort –despite many successful experiences- proved to generate only a low degree of autonomous decision making to generate long lasting development projects beneficial for the regions. At the same time, the municipality, as the arena for the development of local politics dynamics, proved to be a space too small to respond to the aspirations of interest groups of all kinds.

Thus, in the past five years new demands of autonomy have arisen<sup>2</sup>, this time taking the regional level (*departamento*) as the main geographic and administrative unit under the direction of an institutionally independent Regional Government (*Prefectura*) with capacity to manage their own economic resources, to

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<sup>2</sup> At first as a civil demand channeled by the *Comites Civicos* in at least five of the *departamentos* and later as a political demand channeled through political parties and organizations.

generate development projects with a regional scope and to organize their own political processes and configurations.

In 2006, a national Referendum confirmed that at least 4 of the 9 regions<sup>3</sup> agreed on the need to reorganize politics on the base of regional autonomies. This idea has acquired a strength that surpassed the centralizing will of the national government and later more regions started demanding autonomy as well (the case of Cochabamba). In 2010, for the first time, Bolivians elected *Governors* through direct vote. In addition to this, the regional arena has become a space for interest and social groups to reorganize politically and even a space able to reconfigure cultural regional identities.

As a consequence, the dynamics of Bolivian politics has been playing out increasingly at the regional level, which has become more pivotal for national politics in recent years to the point that entire *departamentos* and even macro-regions<sup>4</sup> have been confronting and questioning the national government on issues ranging from specific policies to the use of political influence and even to the –sometimes blatant- disregard for core democratic principles, rights and institutions.

In view of this new configuration of the political game and the relevance of the regional level in Bolivian politics, this work examines the economic and political elements that explain democratic legitimacy – measured in two different dimensions of the concept- at the sub-national level, based on public opinion data from the 2010 Americas Barometer Bolivian sample in attempting to understand the regional dynamics that determine the differences observed in the levels of system support and institutional legitimacy between *departamentos*.

Aside of this, Bolivia is a valuable case to focus on because, together with Venezuela, it is the country in Latin America that has created, designed and implemented more policies and institutional reforms oriented by the *New Left* ideology and political style. Bolivia is one of the few countries that actually has issued a new Constitution and has effectively reshaped its State to put in practice these principles and ideologies. These

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<sup>3</sup> The YES option won in the *departamentos* of Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando and Tarija.

<sup>4</sup> The *departamentos* of Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando, Tarija and Chuquisaca (initially) conformed an alliance of Prefecturas, the “Consejo Nacional Democratico” (CONALDE) in order to negotiate with the national government, representing a broader region called the “Media Luna” by the media and the public. This name was given to the alliance due to the geographical shape formed by these regions on the map. They corresponded to all of the eastern and part of the southern regions of the country.

changes aim so deep that the new Constitution has even changed the base form of the political system and has moved from a Republic to the Plurinational State. Because all of this, Bolivia actually provides the ideal context to study citizens' perceptions, views and assessment of the new Latin American State.

The study of the democratic legitimacy in Bolivia and, in a comparative way, in the Latin American region contained in my dissertation is fully based on LAPOP data gathered during the 2010 round of public opinion surveys, with 3,018 cases. This source of data was selected for this study as the best alternative given the wide range of variables that make possible to study political legitimacy in more than one dimension and at various levels (supranational, national, sub-national) as well as it is possible to study the predictors of political legitimacy at the individual level.

I chose to use the quantitative approach exclusively, taking advantage of the big N provided by public opinion surveys, because big N studies can bring clarity to seeing the *big picture*, especially when dealing with big picture issues such as democratic legitimacy and the effect contextual settings.

I do not seek to find out or even define how citizens specifically and individually define as legitimacy, neither do I intend to redefine once more what legitimacy is, or for that matter what democracy means for individuals depending on their specific social, economic, political or cultural status. On the contrary, I depart from the assumption that despite personal preferences or beliefs, there is a general consensus about what democracy entails and about how legitimacy is perceived by the general public. There is also extensive literature and data supporting this assumption.

Given the recent change in political context, the electoral success of the "New Left" and the wave of institutional reform throughout the region, Latin American democracies are ideal for testing the dynamics of democratic legitimacy from the perspective of the citizens, given the variance in levels of legitimacy across countries and in national economic conditions as well as the variance in degrees of economic inequality among countries.

On the political front, the current political trend in many Latin American countries, and more so in South America, shows that citizens prefer populist, authoritarian “reformer/revolutionary”- type of leaders over the ones willing to stick to established institutional arrangements; citizens supported unconstitutional acts such as the closure of Congress in Peru during the Fujimori era, the closing of the Supreme Court and the replacement of Congress for a National Constitutional Assembly in Ecuador under President Correa, the closing and persecution of Judges of the Constitutional Tribunal in Bolivia under President Morales and the censorship of private press and organizations in Venezuela under President Chavez.

These are only a few examples of how institutions are not only weakened but their importance completely dismissed currently in Latin American countries in which the legitimacy of established democracies is questioned by some of their own citizens and by outsiders.

My analysis of the dynamics of democratic legitimacy and the effect of the economy is implemented at three levels:

1. First, at the multi-national level, conducting analysis across 18 countries in the Americas (Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Chile), comparing them to each other in regards as to how the level of economic development and the institutional performance of democracies affect their perceived legitimacy. The dataset for this part of the study has 1,500 cases for each country and 3,000 cases for Bolivia and Ecuador.

2. I have conducted a case study in Bolivia, at the national level, providing a more in-depth view of the dynamics of democratic legitimacy based on two core elements: institutional trust and institutional performance, but also taking into account the effect of the economy at the individual level and as a context.

I chose this country because the legitimacy levels have been traditionally low but experienced a significant increase in 2005 after a change in representation, after having undergone a series of institutional reforms in a context of poverty (Bolivia is the poorest country in South America). But I also chose Bolivia

because I have deep knowledge of its politics and its economy, as well as of its culture and idiosyncrasy of its people, which gives me an advantage at understanding perceptions and expressions of its citizens.

3. Finally, I studied the dynamics of democratic legitimacy in Bolivia at the sub-national level, because not only is legitimacy not one-dimensional conceptually, but it responds to regional political and economic dynamics as well, adding more dimensions and layers to the construction of democratic legitimacy. For this purpose I used the Bolivian LAPOP sample, representative at the sub-national level, with nine strata, 300 cases for each of the six smaller *departamentos* and 400 cases for each of the three bigger *departamentos* in the country.

The variation in levels of economic development (the contextual variable) within the country regions makes my analysis relevant and provides an innovative look at how local politics may affect the national levels of democratic legitimacy.

In all cases, I have implemented multilevel models, because it allows accounting for the effect of context on individual behavior (Snijders and Bosker, 1999) and it also allows to account for the variability among individuals as well as among contexts. These models contain two types of data: data drawn at the individual level<sup>5</sup> –representing the perceptions and attitudes of individual citizens- and national level data<sup>6</sup> –aggregate data representing the economic context, both at the national and sub-national levels. This way of modeling the relations between the data better accounts for the difference in the type of the data and allows calculating more accurately the relations between variables.

The dependent variable in all models is *democratic legitimacy*, measured at the individual level and defined following Lipset: “Legitimacy involves the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate or proper ones for the society” (Lipset 1959). Given that legitimacy is an affective and evaluative attitude it is measured at the individual level for such evaluation can only be provided by citizens, which are the ultimate recipients and enforcers of institutions. This

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<sup>5</sup> Data for 18 Latin American countries from the 2010 round of public opinion surveys of the AmericasBarometer, by LAPOP.

<sup>6</sup> These source of these data is the UN’s Human Development Index (HDI) for each country in the region and also HDI indexes for the nine *departamentos* in Bolivia. Specific sources in each case are cited in the appropriate chapters. I have personally integrated these datasets into one pooled dataset for each case.

evaluation is made by the individuals by confronting their perception of the political system against their expectations of it, an appropriate measure given that legitimacy depends on the system engendering the belief that it is appropriate.

*Democratic legitimacy* is **operationalized as a variable measuring system support**, following David Easton's categorization. Easton describes system support as a multi-level evaluative concept that integrates three political objects: support for the political community, the regime and the authorities. **All three levels combined account for the legitimacy of the system.** The *political community* refers the extended social group within the borders of a nation, the *regime* is the constitutional order of a nation and the *authorities* are the public officials and people that hold office at any given time (Easton 1965). At the same time, support for the political regime is based on three elements: the regime principles, its norms and procedures and its institutions.

**Table I-2. Levels of system support. Table taken from Russel J. Dalton (Dalton 2004)**

Political community
Regime: principles
Regime: norms and procedures
Regime: institutions
Political authorities

Given that individuals relate to the political system through institutions and that I am working within a moment of profound institutional reform through the region, I have further operationalized the dependent variable to work specifically at the level of support *for the regime* and divided it in two:

- a) ***System support***: expressed as an index of five items that measure the level of support for all three dimensions of legitimacy that was developed by Professor Mitchell Seligson at the LAPOP project.

The item is composed of the following questions:

**Table I-3. Questions that form the system support index and levels of support to which they refer.**

Question	Level of system support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do you think that the courts guarantee a fair trial?</li> </ul>	Regime: institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do you respect the political institutions of [country]?</li> </ul>	Regime: institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do you think citizen's basic rights are well protected by the political system of [country]?</li> </ul>	Regime: principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are you proud of living under the [country] political system?</li> </ul>	Political community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do you think the [country] political system should be supported?</li> </ul>	Political community

These questions and the different levels of support that they refer to make a reliable index of system support that appropriately tackle the system's ability to engender the belief that the institutions and norms in place are the best possible for the community and has the advantage of gathering first-hand data from the citizens that conform the political community under study.

The underlying assumption here is that the higher the level of system support in a country, the more legitimate that political system is in the eyes of its citizens. The index has proven to be a reliable measure in numerous LAPOP reports<sup>7</sup> on Latin American political culture and other works (Seligson 2002; Seligson and Carrión 2002).

b) *Legitimacy of political institutions*: expressed as an index of five<sup>8</sup> items that measure the level of support for the central institutions of the political regime.

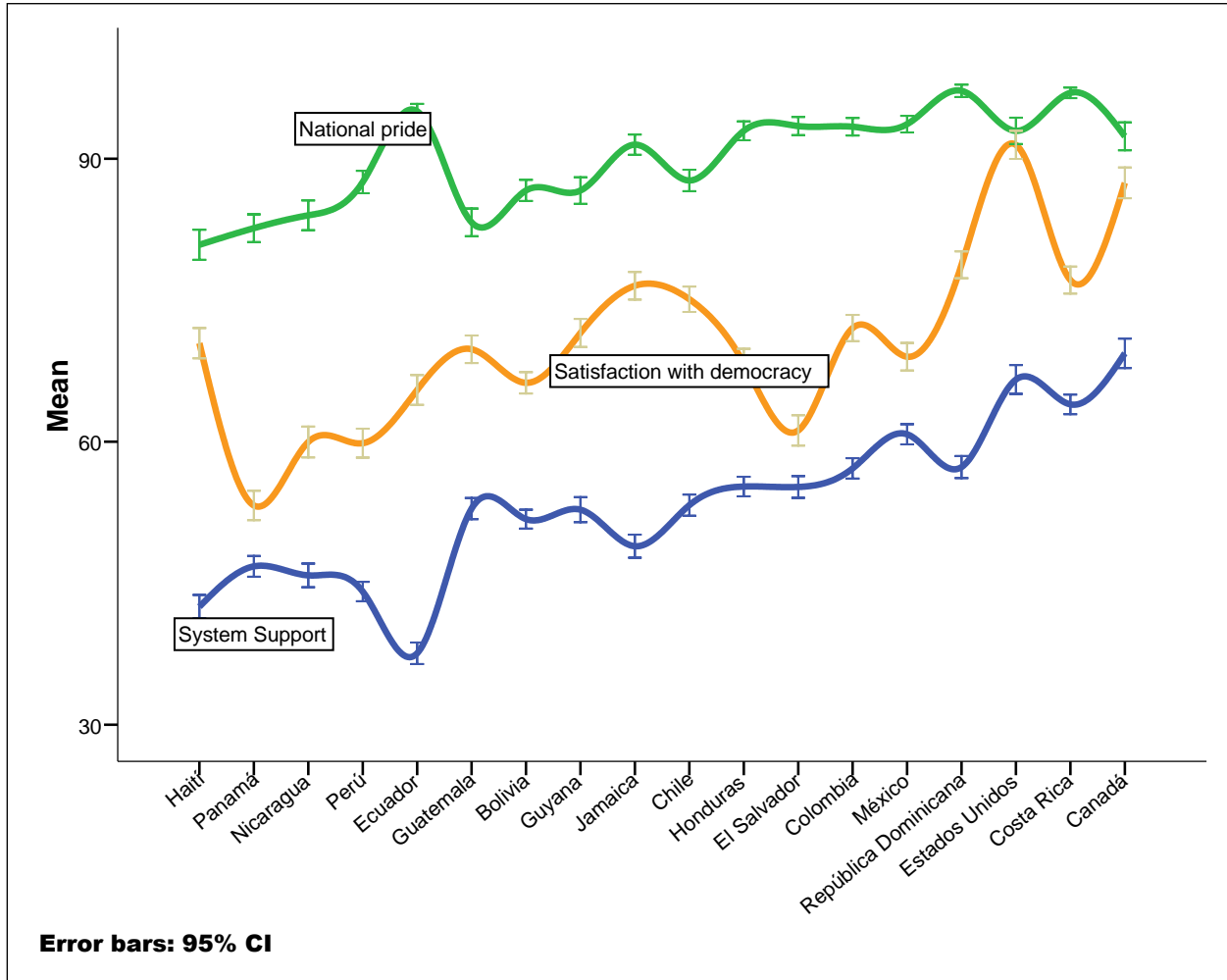
I have used both dependent variables in all chapters and they are defined in greater detail within those chapters.

The following figure shows roughly how citizens in Latin American countries<sup>9</sup> effectively differentiate between the three levels of system support and furthermore, how the support for the institutions of their regimes

<sup>7</sup> See the series of national reports on political culture for Latin American countries in [www.lapopsurveys.org](http://www.lapopsurveys.org)

<sup>8</sup> In the Bolivian case, this index has 6 items, including the Electoral Organ, the newly appointed fourth branch of the Bolivian Plurinational State.

is the lowest when compared with the support for political community and for the regime principles. The “national pride” variable indicates support for political community; the ‘satisfaction with democracy’ line represents support for the regime’s principles and the “system support” line represents what happens when institutions are thrown into the mix.



**Graph I-3. System support, satisfaction with democracy and support for political community. AmericasBarometer 2006 – 2007**

Finally, throughout my dissertation I approach the measurement of democratic legitimacy through two of its dimensions: **trust** and the individual perceptions of institutional **performance**.

**Chapter 2** deals with the levels of trust that Bolivian citizens report on different individual and groups of institutions that are important to different aspects of democratic life, including institutions of representation, electoral institutions, the justice system, the police and the media. These are the focus of the first section of this

<sup>9</sup> Data for this figure is drawn from the 2006 – 2007 LAPOP sample including 19 Latin American and Caribbean countries.



work, since trust is at the very core of legitimacy building and institutions are the channel through which citizens relate with the State and the political system.

The focus of my analysis are the regional configurations of trust in institutions in Bolivia (at the sub-national level), since there is variance among *departamentos* in levels of trust and a macro regional configuration of trust that overlaps with political positioning of the *departamentos* seems apparent.

This chapter shows just how complex the construction of democratic legitimacy can be, when all institutions –even those not directly dependent on the State and government- are expected to embody democratic values, beliefs and principles and what elements hinder or further trustworthiness.

**Chapter 3** explores the other face of democratic legitimacy. In a similar way to the previous chapter, regional configurations of legitimacy measured as the perception of institutional performance of the government in several areas of the public life are apparent in Bolivia and, many times, overlap national political configurations.

This chapter stresses the point that individuals are very aware of the current *process of change*<sup>10</sup> in Bolivia and takes into account both, economic and political conditions that influence and almost *mediate* the individual evaluations of governmental performance: the effect of the economic context and the effect of President Morales. The latter is measured through a variable evaluating the President's *personal* performance and the effect is powerful.

Thus the chapter shows that democratic legitimacy, measured in its performance dimension, is highly sensitive to political and economic settings and conditions in the national context.

**Chapter 4** tests the regional configurations of both, system support and legitimacy of political institutions at the sub-national level; it applies a mixed-effects model to measure the effect of the sub-national context for both variables, and it also analyzes the predictors of both variables individually in each of the nine *departamentos* in the country, providing deep insight into the regional dynamics of democratic legitimacy. The analysis also includes the effect of the sub-national economic context.

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<sup>10</sup> This is the name that the wave of institutional reform and transformation of the Bolivian State has been given by the government itself and it is considered the main policy of State in the government's program.

Strong evidence of regional configurations of both, system support and legitimacy of political institutions clearly arise from these analyses and the results indicate that, within the process of transformation of Bolivian democracy, a regional reconfiguration has taken place heavily influenced by the specific economic environment, but also by the political orientation and ideology of the *departamentos*.

**Chapter 5** takes the analysis into the supra-national level and tests the system support and legitimacy of political institutions variables in eighteen Latin American countries comparing the perceptions of citizens between countries.

This chapter strongly focuses on the effect of the national economic context as aggregate data and at the individual level in order to establish its incidence as a determinant of system support and legitimacy, departing from the hypotheses that some level of economic development is necessary for democracies not only to flourish, but to be consolidated and that poverty and inequality hinder democracy. There is evidence confirming the relation between level of economic development and democratic legitimacy across countries, showing a tendency to see more developed countries, with better economic conditions with higher levels of democratic legitimacy.

Finally, **chapter 6** is a short concluding chapter that reflects on the combined meaning of all the results found in this work and their implications for both, the study of democratic legitimacy in a Latin American context and the paths of democratic legitimacy in the new Latin American State.

## Chapter II . Regional Configurations of Institutional Trust in Bolivia

The government of President Evo Morales inaugurated a new political period in Bolivian history. It is called the “process of change” and it has brought a charismatic leadership, the intention of a deep institutional transformation process and, apparently, the highest level of citizen satisfaction and support to the political system since the return to democracy.

The process of change is part of what is now called the *new* Latin American Left, an international movement that seeks, amongst other things, to transform Latin American democracies into political models that respond more appropriately to genuine Latin American interests and needs and that more appropriately accommodate cultural, economic and political conditions and priorities in Latin American societies.<sup>11</sup>

The new Latin American democracies are conducting a successful social revolution with populist features, strong charismatic leadership figures and a partial embrace of democratic practices, mixed with the approval of extra-institutional resources and procedures to achieve the goals supported by a majority<sup>12</sup>.

The new “Latin American State” draws democratic legitimacy from electoral outcomes. The greater the vote supporting the regime, the greater its legitimacy and popularity. But theory and evidence tell us that trust is the basis of legitimacy at the individual level and elections are one of the ways in which individual citizens express their trust and support.

To assess what the sources of legitimacy are in Bolivia during the process of change it is necessary to study what Bolivians trust now and why. Whether Bolivian citizens display a generalized level of trust spread across a wide set of institutions and principles guiding democratic practices or if they are banking mainly on a strong leadership and a small group of preferred institutions to provide an accurate assessment of whence Bolivian democracy draws its legitimacy.

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<sup>11</sup> As opposed to just implementing an Occidental model of democracy adopting sets of beliefs, values and priorities that do not necessarily feel genuine to Latin American citizens.

<sup>12</sup> Bolivia provides a wide range of examples of these new features displayed by what I am calling the new Latin American democratic model: social protests and movements supported by the government, both financially and in public discourse; constitutional reforms passed by unconstitutional elections; using the Judicial branch to pressure the Legislative branch; seizing the direction of key institutions –formerly run independently from the powers of the State- such as the Electoral Court (today the Electoral *Organ*, the fourth branch of the Plurinational State) and the National Institute of Statistics, responsible for all official statistics of the Bolivian State.

This chapter will study the determinants of political trust in the currently highly personalized political environment in Bolivia to assess the strength of institutional arrangements and the influence of the charismatic leader figure across institutions and levels of political activity.

### **The basis of trust**

Explaining how trust plays a role in the political process can be complicated. Scholars have always agreed on the importance of trust in the political process, the more citizens say they trust their government, the regime, the President and their institutions, the better. There has not always been agreement, though, about a proper definition of political trust, and definitions ranging from purely normative to philosophical to rather instrumental have been used over the years in research.

The general take on political trust goes back to the 60s and 70s when the studies on political support and legitimacy of the regime done by David Easton, Seymour Martin Lipset, Phillip Converse, Jack Citrin and others were first known. Since then, the study of political trust is part of a broader study, that of political support and legitimacy of the regime.

Enough evidence is available to view trust is both, a robust predictor and a proxy of system support and that the higher the levels of trust in political institutions, the higher the tendency to support the political system. Evidence of the existence of this same relationship in the Latin American context, and specifically in the Bolivian political context, is presented in the series of reports that the LAPOP program at Vanderbilt University has been producing periodically since 1998 under the direction of Professor Mitchell A. Seligson (Seligson 1998; Seligson 1999; Seligson 2003; Seligson, Ames et al. 2004; Seligson, Schwarz-Blum et al. 2005).

There is less agreement, though, when it comes to explaining why trust is such a positive feature of the political process and how it works (Dunn 1988; Good 1988; Luhmann 1988; Uslaner 2002; Hetherington 2005; Rosanvallon 2008). The importance of trust can be derived from the importance attributed to political support as an element of the political process, for a democratic political system cannot remain stable for long without the support of a majority of its citizens (Miller 1974; Herreros and Criado 2008).

Since it is very unlikely that support can be present where trust is absent, trust has the same importance for the survival of the democratic regime than support does (Newton 2001). Simply said, the very perpetuation of the democratic system depends on a rather abstract element: support, based on trust.

Mishler and Rose discuss extensively the importance of trust for the political system in the context of post-communist societies, and they argue that “popular trust in social and political institutions is vital to the consolidation of democracy” and furthermore that “trust is important (..) because it serves as the ‘creator of collective power’ enabling government to make decisions and commit resources without having to resort to coercion or obtain the specific approval of citizens for every decision” (Mishler and Rose 1997). Thus, political trust increases government’s efficacy and efficiency.

Trust is important in democratic regimes because it is a key element of the representative relation between elected officials and the citizenry (Mishler and Rose 1997). If citizens would not trust their elected representatives, the decisions made by the latter would lack legitimacy and would therefore be hardly enforced. A model for measuring political legitimacy and empirical evidence of its importance in the representative dynamic of democratic regimes is presented in Stephen Weatherford’s analysis of the measurement of political legitimacy. In his work, Weatherford considers political trust as one of the key components of legitimacy (Weatherford 1992)<sup>13</sup>.

The importance of trust is also evident in civil society, for it provides the basis for the creation of civil institutions such as labor unions, associations, committees and even political parties that are complementary to the political institutions and can increase their effectiveness (Mishler and Rose 1997). Trust encourages voluntary participation in politics, and through the creation of civil institutions, it provides citizens an alternative channel of participation in political life.

David Easton’s distinction between specific and diffuse support (Easton 1975; Easton 1976) introduced the notion that support is not a one-dimensional element, but rather the product of a combination of different

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<sup>13</sup> For a complementary discussion of political legitimacy see Lipset, S. M. (1961). Political Man: The Social Basis of Politics. Baltimore, MD., Johns Hopkins University Press.

evaluations of the political system and the performance of political authorities. Easton provides a clear explanation of how these two attitudes interact within the same political context:

“Some types of evaluations are closely related to what the political authorities do and how they do it. Others are more fundamental in character because they are directed to basic aspects of the system. They represent more enduring bonds and thereby make it possible for members to oppose the incumbents of offices and yet retain respect for the offices themselves, for the way in for the community of which they are a part” ( which they are ordered, and Easton 1975).

The same consideration has been made for the study of political trust, of how it is perceived and expressed and how it can be properly measured. Arthur Miller’s and Jack Citrin’s studies (Citrin 1974; Miller 1974; Miller 1974) discuss the correlation of trust with measures of specific and diffuse support and separately provide empirical evidence to show that trust is a predictor of both types of support and that the consequences of trust in government are different from the consequences of trust in the political regime and therefore the need to address and measure them in a differentiated way.

Studies of political trust tend to focus on trust in the government, in a specific political institution or in a specific element in the government. Studies addressing political trust in the regime are less frequent but have contributed greatly to the understanding of political trust and of the dynamics of legitimacy in democratic regimes<sup>14</sup>. Studies of specific political trust are more common among mainstream studies since they tend to be part of the study of a specific institution or instance of the political process and probably because studies of diffuse trust seem less attractive in contexts in which the democratic regime is rather stable and is safely expected to remain so.

The nature of political trust can be defined more as an attitude rather than a behavior for it is the result of a passive evaluation of the performance of political objects in relation to the expectation of their performance that does not necessarily yield an action as a consequence (Easton 1965; Easton 1975). Trust plays a key role in the perception of the legitimacy of a government or regime’s rulings and therefore of the level of support an

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<sup>14</sup> For an example of studies that focus on diffuse political trust refer to the series of LAPOP studies in eleven Central and South American countries, especially during the 90s and the beginning of the 2000s. LAPOP studies have a battery of questions about institutional trust that provide a good measure of diffuse political trust in each country and can provide a comparative perspective between countries. Data and reports can be found in [www.lapopsurveys.org](http://www.lapopsurveys.org)

individual may express to the regime and the government (Newton 2001; Avery 2009); however, support is likely to translate into an action while the level of trust provides part of the justification of that action.

Taking into consideration what has been discussed so far about the nature of political trust as a concept and how it is studied, Hetherington's definition of political trust as "the degree to which people perceive that government is producing outcomes consistent with their expectations" (Damico, Conway et al. 2000; Hetherington 2005:9) is useful because it introduces the idea of trust as a result of a comparison between people's perceptions and their expectations, thus combining an empirical dimension with a normative one.

Using this definition of trust as an inspiration and for the purposes of analysis in this paper, we will define political trust as *the degree to which people perceive that the political process is structured in a way consistent with their expectations* (Hardin 2000; Newton and Norris 2000). This definition calls for a measurement of political trust as institutional trust, for institutions are the long-lasting elements of a regime and are evaluated independently of the incumbents. This concept of political trust focused on the institutions should allow us to measure diffuse political trust and provide us with an idea of the level of satisfaction with the democratic regime that is going to be tested in the Bolivian political context.

This chapter is concerned with understanding the determining factors of political and institutional trust seeking to understand what citizens take into consideration when evaluating their perceptions of political objects and comparing them with their expectations. These criteria are unlikely to be universal across political systems and will rather vary according to the specific socioeconomic characteristics of political communities. It is even possible that they vary across social groups within the same political unity and should therefore be studied in connection with specific political contexts.

Political trust is not homogeneous but rather unevenly distributed for different institutions or institutional settings. For different sets of policies, it may be considered differently among men and women, young or older people; it can vary across income groups and people with different levels of educations, according to where people live and to their ethnic affiliation (Citrin 1974; Miller 1974; Seligson 1980;

Abramson and Finifter 1981; Seligson 1998; Seligson 1999; Citrin 2002; Moore 2002; Seligson, Morales et al. 2004; Hetherington 2005; Seligson, Schwarz-Blum et al. 2005).

### **Methodology of the analysis**

This chapter aims to determine predictors of political trust in Bolivia. The secondary goal is to uncover regional configurations of trust, if there are any to be found, that will provide information on how political trust and democratic legitimacy may be distributed among the population along territorial lines.

This is a relevant level of analysis because territorial jurisdiction mostly overlaps with cultural groupings in Bolivian society, and therefore it is reasonable to expect variation in values and beliefs (that will determine predictors of trust) across regional borders. Of course, this variation is not expected to present radical differences among regional groups, for they all still belong to the same national community and will therefore display a set of shared values together with a set of values that vary across regions.

The models of analysis used in this chapter include a variety of population demographic characteristics (age, sex, wealth, etc.) as well as a series of economic and political considerations together with more contextual elements, all of which together are expected to predict levels of political trust for a specific group.

All models share a core of independent variables (demographic characteristics), but display a set of field-specific independent variables for each institution that are expected to have an effect on specific institutions. Other contextual variables, such as the weight of the President's popularity or discrimination issues, are expected to be significant across fields and are included in all models for all institutions.

All analysis models are multilevel mixed-effects regressions run at the national level but defining the *departamento* as the grouping variable with an expected fixed effect, measured by a series of dummies for each *departamento* in the country. In the cases in which regional patterns of political trust are found, additional regression models will be run at the sub-national level to further understand what predicts trust in each region of the country.

The index of *institutional legitimacy* combines measurements of trust in five central institutions of the democratic regime: the national government, Congress, the Supreme Court, the judicial system and the political



parties. This set of institutions represents the Executive, Legislative and the Judicial as well as the channeling institution for representation and participation of the citizenry in political life. Each of these powers relies on institutions that play a vital role in the functioning of the democratic regime and that are the means for citizens to relate to the State.

## Results

The data displayed in Table II.1 shows the mean averages of support by *departamento* for five central institutions of the political system, covering the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of government. Additionally, political parties have been added to the index of institutional legitimacy, given that they are the link between the citizenry and their elected candidates, as well as the channel to access national, regional and local levels of decision making.

**Table II.1. Means of trust in the institutions that form the index of institutional legitimacy. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.**

	<b>National government</b>	<b>Legislative Assembly</b>	<b>Supreme Court</b>	<b>Judicial system</b>	<b>Political Parties</b>
<b>La Paz</b>	60.12	51.44	44.80	40.96	29.90
<b>Oruro</b>	65.36	54.74	51.06	47.80	40.86
<b>Potosi</b>	63.04	49.46	45.73	40.63	23.37
<b>Cochabamba</b>	55.47	52.69	41.73	40.60	29.60
<b>Tarija</b>	52.96	53.61	50.88	46.14	39.32
<b>Chuquisaca</b>	48.88	43.93	41.91	41.91	34.31
<b>Santa Cruz</b>	51.51	54.04	48.62	46.69	37.92
<b>Beni</b>	46.67	48.31	48.73	46.61	40.76
<b>Pando</b>	51.43	50.65	34.53	35.54	32.37

Not surprisingly, levels of trust in political parties in Bolivia are very low, but so it is in the entire world. It may be that an additional element in the Bolivian context that contributes to low levels of trust in political parties is the fact that Bolivia is constitutionally defined as a *participative* democracy and the citizenry is encouraged to participate in politics as much and at as many levels as possible. Political parties are not the only channel available for participation, even in national politics.

Finally, the new Latin American democratic model promotes a culture of distrust towards representative policy, and political parties are identified as the instrument of monopoly and dominance of the traditional elites.

From the means of trust displayed in Table II.1, there are no regional configurations of political trust evident for either all five institutions in the institutional legitimacy index or for regions comprising 2 or more *departamentos*. The only discernible pattern is that the highest levels of trust across the board are in the region of Oruro, highly supportive of the President, as has been repeatedly confirmed in electoral processes.

As for the average mean of trust for institutions in the system support index<sup>15</sup>, the only discernible pattern is that trust is lowest in the region of Chuquisaca in 80% of the cases. This is an especially troubling result, since this means that the principles underlying the democratic system are at stake here and that Chuquisaca may be the furthest away from considering Bolivian democracy legitimate.

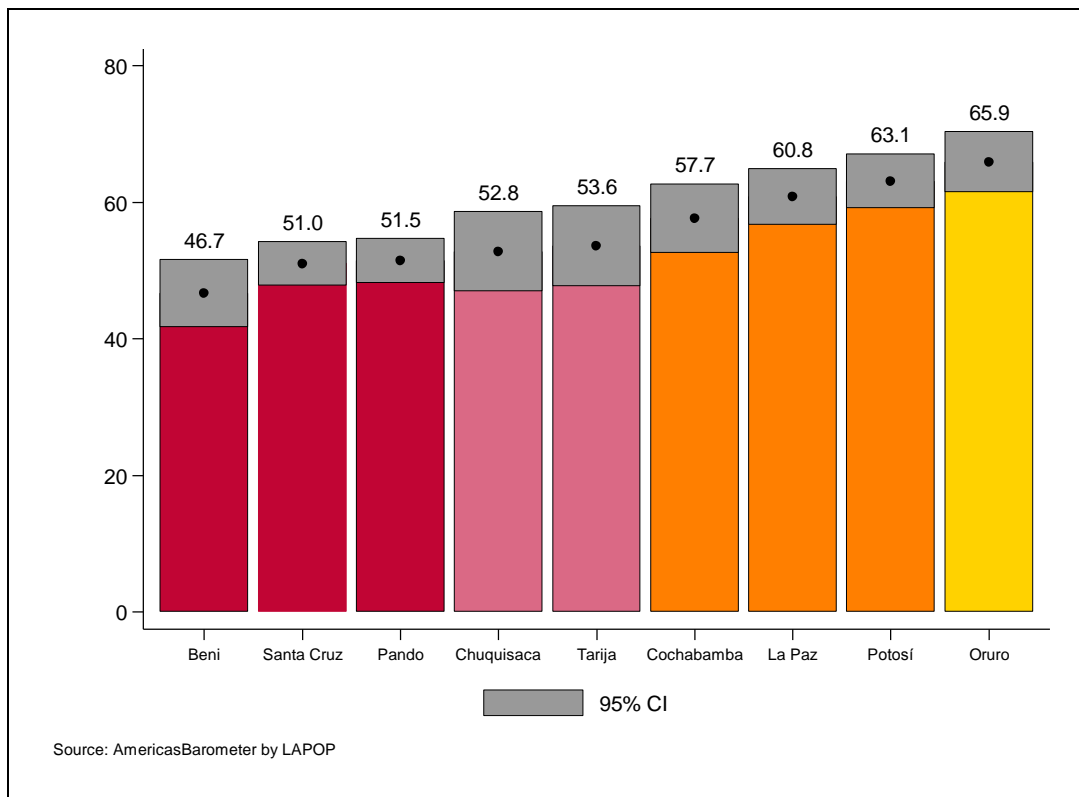
All regression models run for predictors of trust for individual institutions yield a positive result for a fixed effect at the sub-national level. There is variation of trust levels for all institutions analyzed in this chapter by *departamento*, even when there are no macro-regional groupings that define a trend by macro regions. This means that the internal political and economic dynamics of the *departamento* mark a specific trend of political trust for each one of the nine regions in the country creating a national scenario of high complexity in terms of political trust.

### **Trust in institutions of the Executive: the national government**

The only case in which a clear macro-regional configuration of political trust is discernible is found for trust in the national government, clearly defined along political alignment in Bolivia.

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<sup>15</sup> Measured as trust in the guarantee of a free trial, in support for both the political system and its institutions, as pride in belonging to the political system and trust in the protection and guarantee of basic citizen rights.



**Graph II-1. Trust in the national government, by *departamento*. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.**

Trust in national government in 2010 remains the lowest in the eastern macro-region, in Beni, Pando and Santa Cruz, the traditional opposition to President Morales’ government since his first term election in 2005. Together with this group, low levels of trust in Chuquisaca and Tarija also respond to macro-region political alignment, with all five regions making up what was known as the “*media luna*” region, the active opposition to the process of change.

Although political polarization and active opposition have reduced during President Morales’ second term (and after the issuance of the new Constitution), the trend of distrust in national government in these *departamentos* has not reverted and trust has not improved significantly.

Trust in national government is highest in Oruro and higher than in the *media luna* region in all *departamentos* with higher electoral results in favor of President Morales’ party.

Levels of trust in institutions in the system support index and the institutional legitimacy index are consistently lowest in Chuquisaca and Pando, both regions that have systematically had confrontations and

serious social and political conflicts with the national government, while trust is consistently highest in Oruro, already a traditional supporter of President Morales and the process of change.

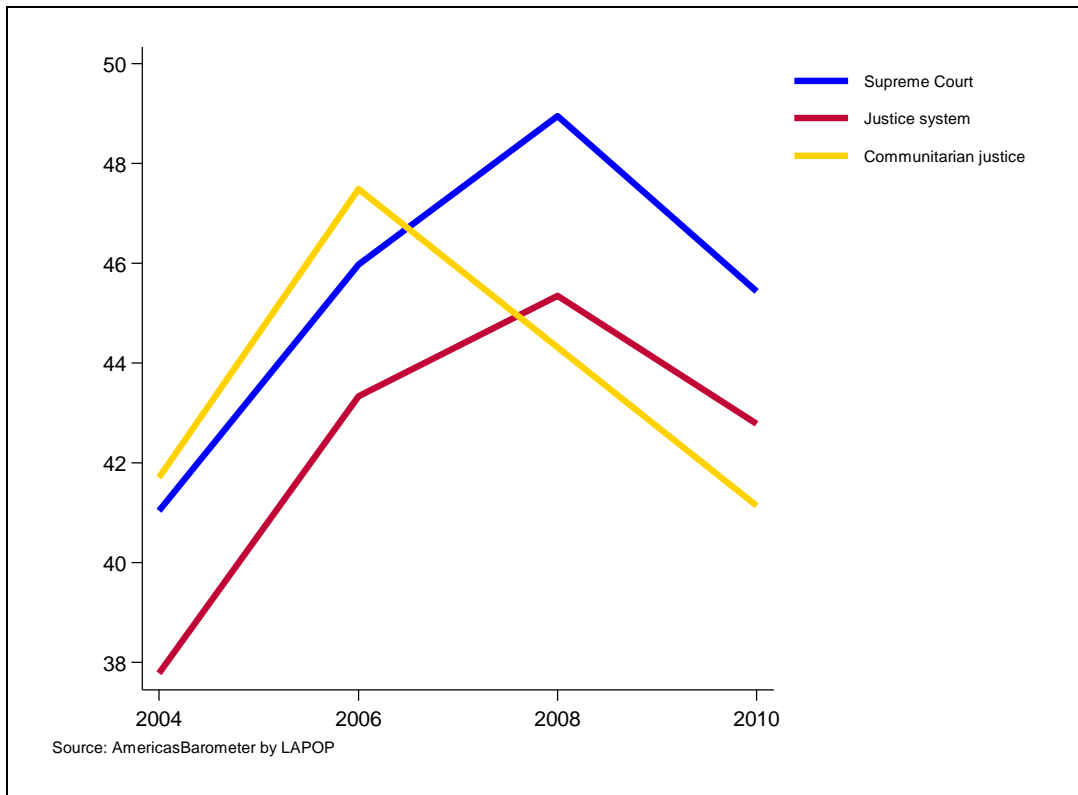
All in all, variation in trust –for both system support and institutional legitimacy indexes- between the lowest and the highest ranking regions are not higher than 10 points on a 100-point scale, which indicates an overall relatively stable level of political trust in the country.

### **Trust in institutions of justice: the case of the justice system**

The Judicial branch of government has been through a trust crisis since the beginning of the process of change. The President's active campaign to discredit the Bolivian justice system, closing of the Constitutional Tribunal (for over three years) and public discredit of several magistrates of the Supreme Court has only added to the already existing distrust and dissatisfaction with the performance of the judicial system in Bolivia.

Over time, trust in the institutions of the Judicial branch has significantly decreased, even trust in communitarian justice, which is not yet considered an official institution of the State and has no links to the overall structure of the Judicial branch or justice system in Bolivia. Communitarian justice obeys customary laws and practices exclusively in rural areas and indigenous population.

What the results seem to be showing is a pattern of trust that is starting to revert to levels of trust prior to Evo Morales' election in 2005. After his inauguration, trust in institutions was boosted across institutional areas due to a generalized state of optimism and high expectation of the change the new government promised, with a Constitutional reform process on the way and with the promise of an important turn in the direction of social policy in the country.



**Graph II-2. Trust in institutions of the Judicial branch. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.**

But the fact that even trust in communitarian justice has decreased between 2008 and 2010 reveals a renewed and generalized distrust in justice administration in Bolivia and maybe even in the belief that justice is one of the core elements of democracy. More importantly, it reveals that the optimistic period and high expectations of what the new Bolivian State would bring was short lived. In fact, this result is very surprising in the light of the last Constitutional reform from 2009, in which communitarian justice was acknowledged as part of the formal justice system in Bolivia for the first time in history, although it is still unclear how it will be worked in with the rest of judicial institutions and procedures.

Predictors of trust in four institutions acting within the field of justice administration in Bolivia are detailed in Table II.2, below. Results of the mixed-effects regression model indicate that there is an effect at the regional level on all four of the institutions analyzed in relation to administration of justice in Bolivia and that variation between regions is statistically significant, even when no evident macro-regional configuration is defined for political trust in judicial institutions.

**Table II-1. Predictors of trust in institutions of the Judicial branch. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

	Supreme Court	Justice system	Trust in tribunals	Communitarian Justice
Sex			.148**	.149*
Age		-.0053**		-.0071**
Education				-.99 (.1)
Wealth	.63**			
Urban/rural	.1599*			
Indigenous self id.	.2253**			
Interpersonal trust	.0023*			
Perception of corruption	-.0054**	-.0043**	-.0039**	-.0042**
Gvt. Performance: rights	.0212**	.0183**	.0102**	.0177**
President's approval	.0045**			.0089**
Discrimination		-.0015**	-.0034**	.0017**
Perceived degree of democracy			.0044**	
<b>N</b>	<b>2,346</b>	<b>2,296</b>	<b>2,188</b>	<b>2,272</b>

Two common elements for all four institutions are reliable predictors of trust in judicial institutions in Bolivia: the perceived level of corruption will harm trust in justice institutions, even the individual basic trust in the guarantee of a free trial. The higher the level of perceived corruption, the less citizens will trust the justice field, whether it works through official or unofficial channels<sup>16</sup>.

Although it may seem that this is a logical outcome, the negative effect of the perception of corruption is not a synonym of distrust, for corruption is not the only source of distrust in an institution<sup>17</sup>. In fact, in settings with a high degree of inefficiency and low performance, as has always been the case of Bolivian justice, corruption sometimes acts as an unofficial channel to achieve what would be made difficult through official channels. In Bolivia, some degree of corruption is accepted as a way to help navigate the bureaucratic process, not only in the judicial field, but in all institutions in the public sphere; citizens do not evaluate corruption comparing it with a baseline of *zero corruption*, but rather their baseline is some existing and accepted level of

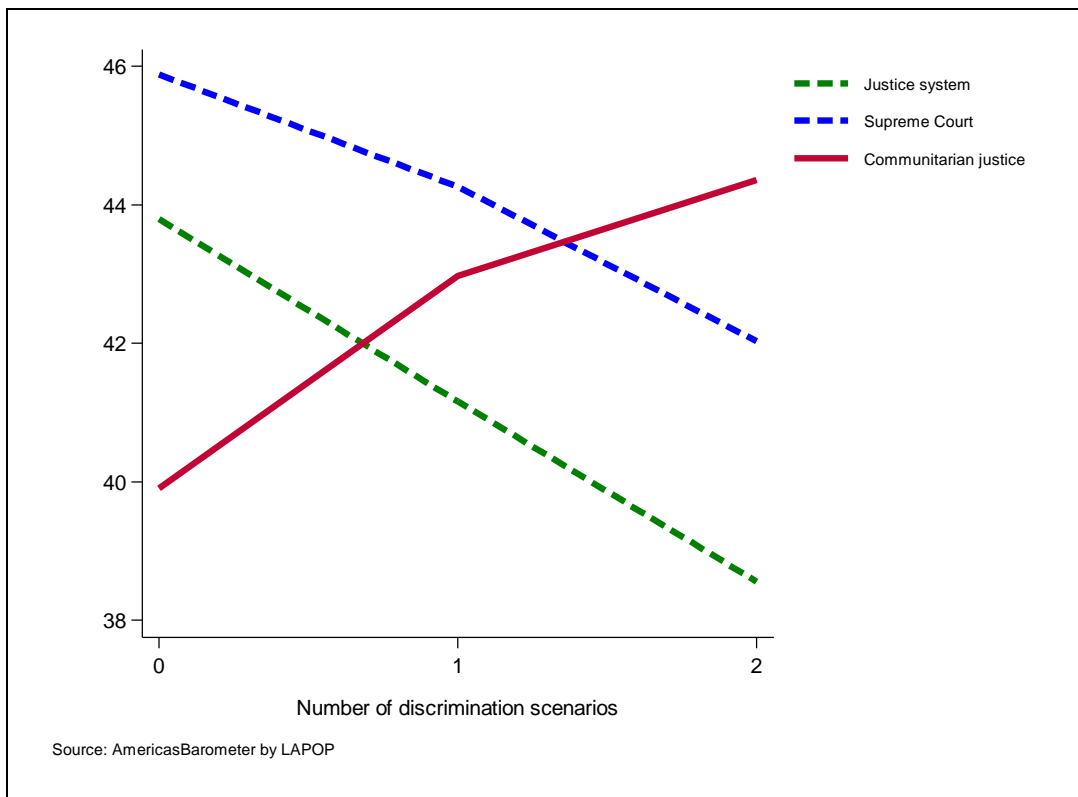
<sup>16</sup> Communitarian justice has always been considered an “unofficial” institution, not recognized by the Constitution and not regulated by any Bolivian State Law. The status of communitarian justice has changed since the issuance of the new Constitution, in which it is recognized to have the same validity as any other justice institution to make decisions and impose punishments. Regulations on how the communitarian justice system will interact with the official justice system and how it is going to be regulated are still pending.

<sup>17</sup> People distrust public officials because traditionally, parties have rewarded their members by distributing public positions in return for their support during electoral processes, making more them loyal to the party and its policies in the first place, and before their commitment to upholding the law and performing efficiently. In other words, since traditionally being a public servant is mostly not a career but a short-term opportunity in Bolivian politics, public officials view their relationship to their party as their priority, rather than their relationship to the citizen or the institution.

corruption and my hypothesis is that it becomes a negative element only when it exceeds the degree of what is considered to be the “normal share” of corruption in institutions. Hence, a significant and negative effect of the perception of corruption on institutional trust is showing that citizens perceive corruption beyond what they are already used to.

On the other hand, good governmental performance in the protection and promotion of democratic rights will boost trust in justice institutions. This positive relation to all four institutions in the justice field confirms the strong link between the idea and the practice of justice and the core principles guiding democracy.

Gender and age are also predictors of trust. Younger people are more trusting of the justice system and communitarian justice than older groups, as are women who are distrustful of the guarantee of a free trial and communitarian justice when compared to men.



**Graph II-3. Trust in justice institutions based on experience of discrimination. Bolivia 2010.**

**Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

A revealing but not surprising result is how the experience of discrimination significantly generates distrust in the justice system. The more discriminated an individual has been (has felt), the less trusting of the justice system he will be.

Bolivia still ranks as the country with the highest levels of discrimination in the Americas<sup>18</sup>, and access to justice has traditionally been mediated by ethnicity, economic standing and education level. The anti-racism and discrimination Law passed in 2010 has helped reduce discrimination, especially against indigenous people, but the effect cannot be estimated yet because it is a very recent law.

Results in Graph II.3 clearly indicate how the communitarian justice system is viewed as a separate and alternative field for justice administration. People who have suffered discrimination will trust the communitarian justice system more and turn to it to seek justice, moving away from the official justice system and the Supreme Court.

Discrimination in Bolivia affects some specific social groups more intensely: the indigenous, women and people living in rural areas or from rural extraction even if they live in big cities. In large portions of the national population these three sources of discrimination overlap in the same individual or group of individuals, intensifying the effect of discrimination in vast sectors of the population. It is precisely these groups that will find communitarian justice not only more accessible in geographic terms but also in cultural terms, since it is based on traditional views on justice.

Additionally, the Bolivian justice system has historically alienated quechua-speaking populations, because all forms and procedures are in Spanish and because of the financial costs. The implications of this is what is in place in Bolivia right now, a parallel justice system, a fractured understanding of what constitutes justice and a large portion of population that is deeply distrusting of the formal justice system, thus causing a historically determined weakness of the institutional justice frame, which among others may have consequences that affect the strength of the rule of law.

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<sup>18</sup> According to data from the 2010 round of the AmericasBarometer public opinion survey.



Among the justice institutions, solely the levels of trust in the Supreme Court are affected by individual wealth and geographic location. Wealthier people living in urban areas trust the Supreme Court more than poorer people in rural areas.

Indigenous people are also more trusting of the Supreme Court than non indigenous population. There is a high probability that this outcome is connected to the fact that the higher the approval of the President's performance, the higher the trust in the Supreme Court will be, since the Supreme Court has lost independence (and magistrates) and fallen under an unofficial control of the Executive.

Since the implementation of the 2010 round, judicial elections were held in 2011 in Bolivia. For the first time in history, Bolivians have been able to elect judges directly to all levels of courts and jurisdictions. The election procedure and the designation of candidates was highly conflictive and turnout was lower than expected. Further data will be useful in assessing whether this change of procedure has improved trust in the justice system.

### **Trust in institutions of representation: the Plurinational Legislative Assembly**

Trust in the Legislative Assembly<sup>19</sup> has consistently increased over time, close to 20 points in the 100-point scale between 2004 and 2010.

Governmental performance is a strong predictor of trust in this institution across a wide range of political and economic activity areas: in the protection of democratic principles, the reduction of poverty, unemployment and corruption and the reduction of criminality.

Ethnicity has become an important predictor of trust since the beginning of the process of change, in 2005 and even before that. President Morales rose to the national political scene from a social movement of peasants and indigenous people. Before MAS, the peasant and indigenous social movement IPSP<sup>20</sup> transformed into a political party under the leadership of Evo Morales and had a significant effect on the indigenous

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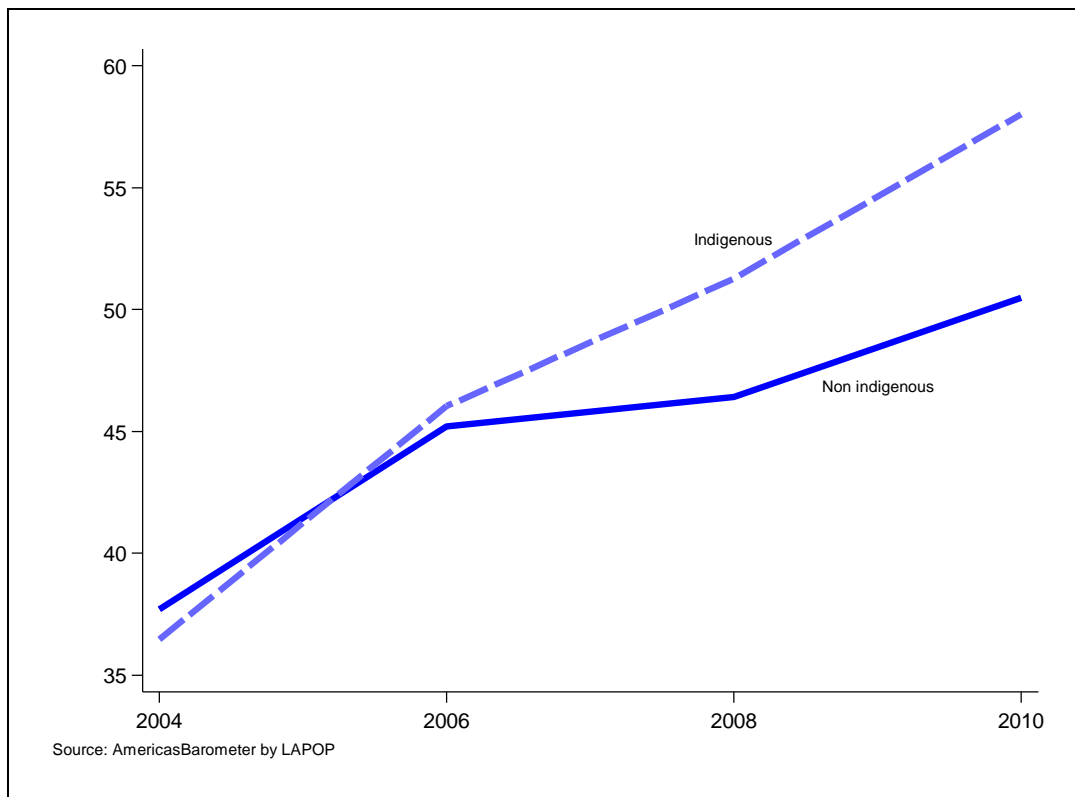
<sup>19</sup> See regression results in the Annex section.

<sup>20</sup> Instrumento por la Soberanía del Pueblo

situation and the political role of indigenous people as well as in the role of the indigenous and peasant movements.

Morales initially ran on a platform for the defense of indigenous rights and the validation of the national predominant indigenous identity, thus forming a very strong link between his political role and the indigenous people.

The 1994 Ley de Participación Popular decentralized the Bolivian State and opened the local arena for political inclusion, which increased indigenous involvement in the political arena, reduced abstentionism and promoted participation. More importantly it generated a feeling of being represented, which reached such a vast sector of the population that it achieved electoral victory at the national level through Evo Morales for the first time in history. Undoubtedly, this is a powerful connection between the indigenous population and their only successful representative which carries to this day vast amounts of support for him and his project, even though in his second term Morales and MAS have sought to broaden their social basis to include urban populations that identify as mestizos and have somewhat moved away from their initial indigenous identity.



**Graph II-4. Trust in the Plurinational Legislative Assembly by ethnic identification. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.**

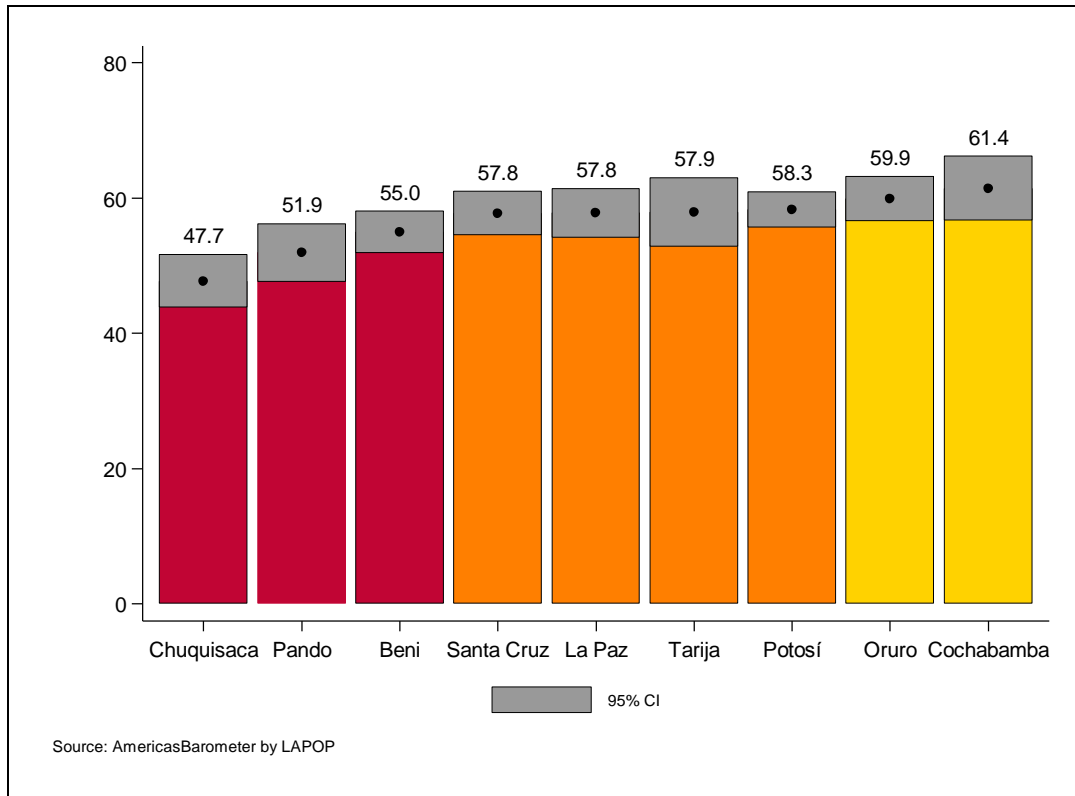
Graph II.4 illustrates the increasing gap of trust in this institution between the indigenous and non indigenous population in Bolivia, although levels of trust have consistently increased even among the non indigenous population.

Approval of the President’s performance exercises a strong influence over trust in this institution, meaning that his popularity benefits the general perception of the Legislative, too.

On top of this, a perceived high degree of democracy at work increases the levels of trust in the Legislative Assembly and so does a high level of political tolerance, whereas a high level of perceived corruption (spread among public officials) decreases trust in this institution.

## Trust in institutions of representation: the case of elections

Electoral processes have become central to building of legitimacy in Bolivia. The new Constitution has transformed the Electoral Court into the Electoral *Organ*, the fourth branch of the Bolivian Plurinational State, emphasizing the importance of the role that elections play in the democratic system. The official public discourse constantly reminds citizens that votes legitimize authorities, policies and institutions.



**Graph II-5. Trust in elections, by region. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

Results of the mixed effects regression model<sup>21</sup> for trust in elections show a significant effect of the sub-national level in defining variations of trust across the national territory. Graph II.5 illustrates the distribution of trust in elections among sub-national units.

Elections are more trusted in Oruro and Cochabamba, traditionally the two regions with consistently higher vote rate in favor of the President, his party and his policies<sup>22</sup>. Conversely, trust in this institution is lowest in the regions that are clearly at odds with governmental policies and procedures: Chuquisaca, Beni,

<sup>21</sup> See regression results in the Annex section.

<sup>22</sup> Both regions voted NO in the autonomy referendum.

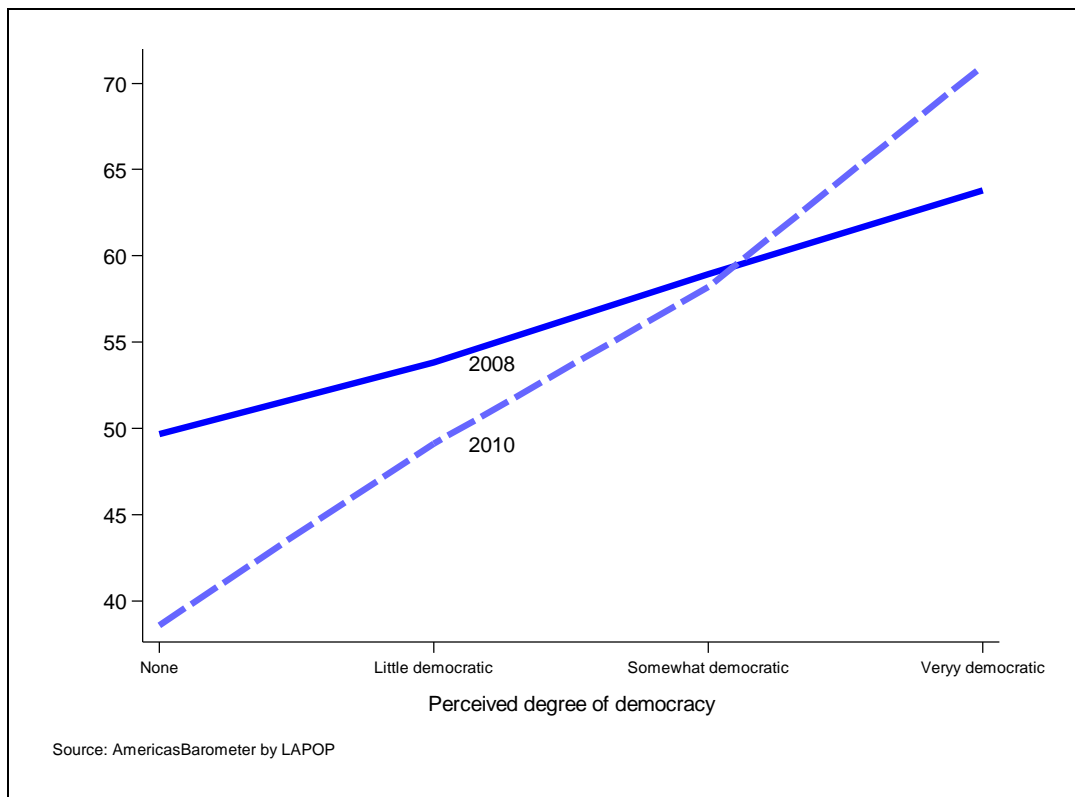
Pando and Santa Cruz where political positioning has affected the general level of trust that elections (as an institution) had constructed in the years since the return to democracy.

MAS supporters are more trusting of electoral processes than those who did not vote for MAS, and individuals with higher levels of political tolerance are also more trusting of this institution. In light of this result, it is interesting that the President's approval does not have a significant effect when it comes to determining levels of trust in elections, which can be interpreted as a level of independence retained by this institution that stands for itself even when it has officially become the center of the fourth branch of government.

Trust in political parties –albeit very low across all regions when compared with other institutions- will still positively influence trust in elections.

A good performance by the government in regards to promoting and protecting democratic principles, of which elections are among the most important, will increase levels of trust in elections and their outcomes.

Satisfaction with overall democratic performance of the political system also increases levels of trust in elections, and the higher the perceived degree of democracy, the higher trust in electoral processes will also be, as shown in Graph II.6, below.



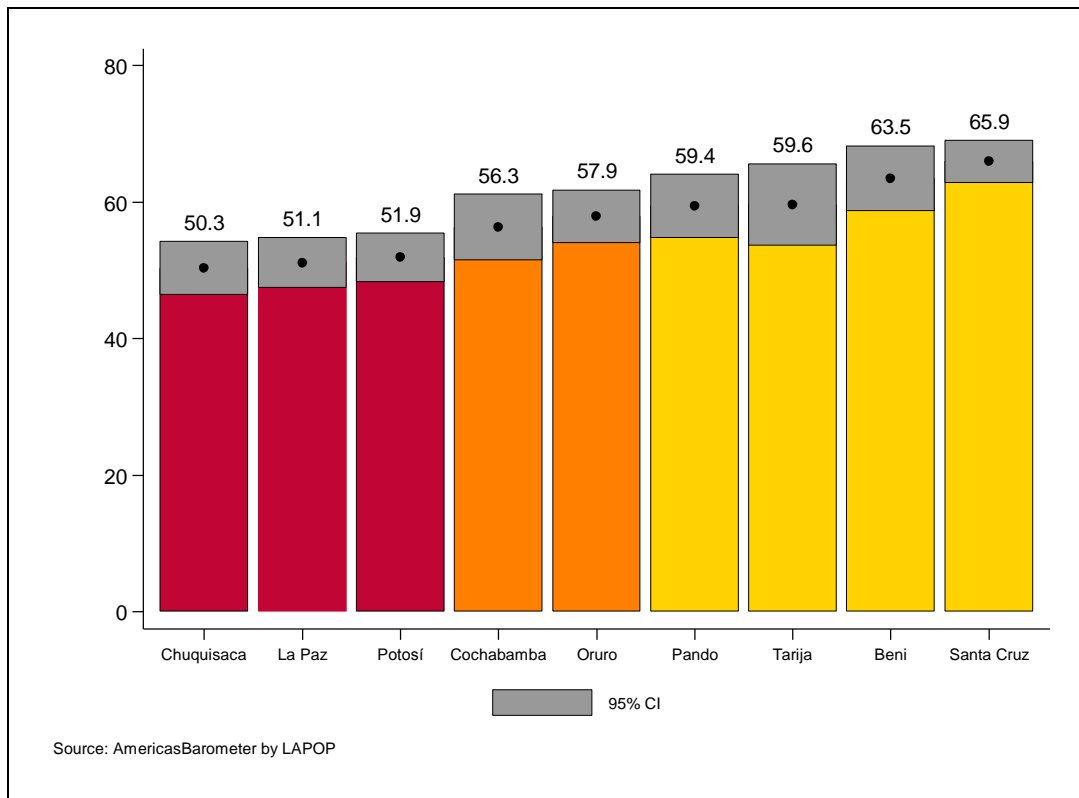
**Graph II-6. Trust in elections based on degree of perceived democracy. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.**

This strong level of influence of democracy’s presence and performance in the political system and the extent to which democratic principles are protected show how closely elections are linked to be the quintessential expression of democracy in the minds of Bolivian citizens. This could also be interpreted to mean that the regularity and permanence of electoral processes are an equivalent of the existence and permanence of democracy in the country.

### **Trust in regional institutions: *Gobernaciones* (Regional governments)**

In the past five years, since the first direct election of regional authorities, the Bolivian main political arena has been somewhat divided between the national and the regional level. *Gobernaciones* play a pivotal role in aggregating and promoting regional interests and projects, especially for regions that are not politically aligned with the central government.

Mixed-effects regression results show a positive fixed effect at the sub national level when determining levels of trust for *Gobernaciones*, emphasizing the growing importance of regional political and economic dynamics in Bolivian democracy.



**Graph II-7. Approval of regional autonomies. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

Trust in these institutions is closely related to the idea and restructuring of Bolivian geopolitics sanctioned by the new Constitution, where departmental autonomies are created and each region has a Departmental Legislative Assembly<sup>23</sup> with competence to create departmental laws, especially regarding regional development and economic projects.

A very clear macro-regional configuration is evident in regards to variations in level of trust in *Gobernaciones* and regional autonomies. Approval of regional autonomies is highest in the eastern region of the country (Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando and Tarija) which shares the liberal development and economic ideology of a modernized conception of procedural democracy and is therefore in disagreement with the Plurinational State

<sup>23</sup> Representatives to the Departmental Legislative Assembly are also elected by direct vote.

democratic project. The level of trust and support for the idea of reshaping regional politics through the consolidation of regional autonomies very strongly influences the level of trust in *Gobernaciones*.

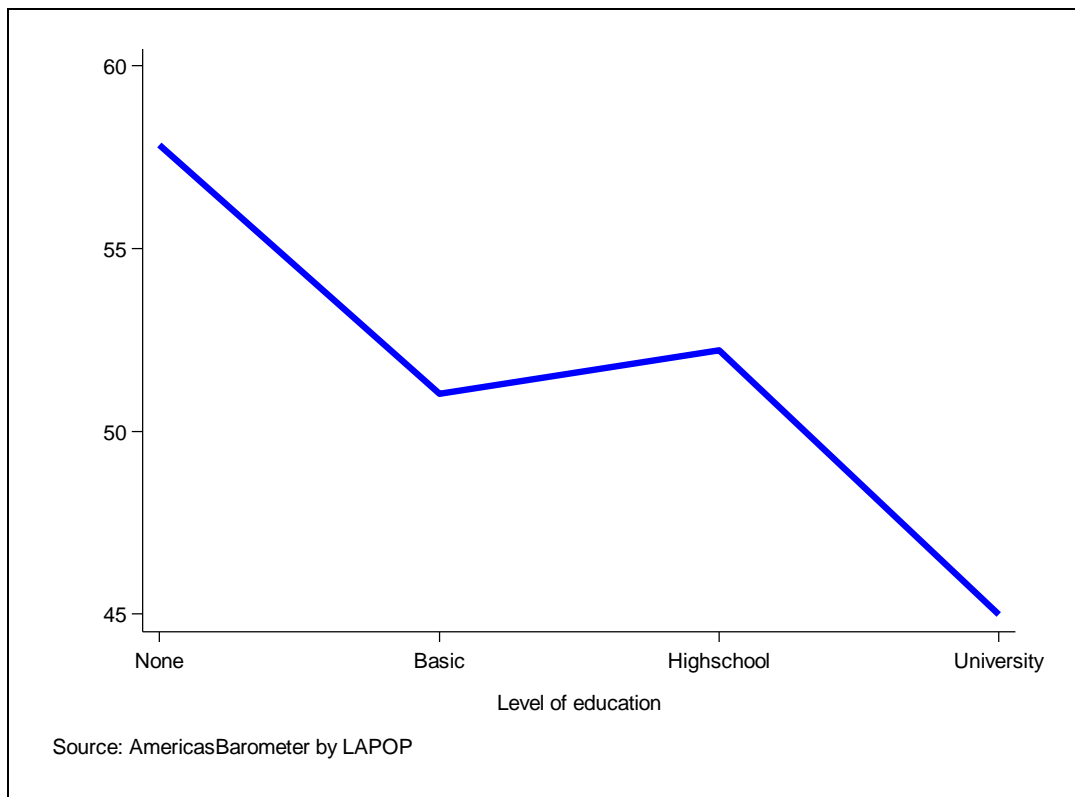
Institutional performance is the strongest predictor of trust in *Gobernaciones*. The higher the approval of governmental performance in economic and social areas, the higher the level of trust in the *Gobernación* will be. In the same way, the higher the level of satisfaction with overall democratic performance nationwide, the higher the trust in these institutions.

Nevertheless, a performance variable with a negative effect on trust in regional governments is the approval of the performance of the President. The higher the approval of the President's performance is, the lower the level of trust in regional governments.

This result has a very clear political explanation. Before the recognition of regional autonomies by the new Constitution, the President was openly and strongly opposed to their creation. Regional autonomy was the banner of the opposition (the *media luna*) and the issue was settled in a binding referendum, in which the vote for approval of regional autonomies won in the *media luna departamentos* and lost in the rest of the country.

Since then, the President has changed his public positioning about regional autonomies, but they have affected his trend of political centralization of decision making in the hands of the national government. Hence, the higher the proximity to the President's position and approval of his policies, the lower trust in regional governments will be.





**Graph II-8. Trust in Regional Government by level of education. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

The individual level of education has a strong negative effect on trust in the *Gobernaciones*. The higher individuals go through the education system, the less they will trust these institutions. This effect is important since the difference between those with no education at all and those with university level education is over 10 points in the 100-point scale.

Another demographic characteristic of individuals that has a bearing on levels of trust in regional government is ethnic identity. Indigenous populations will tend to trust *Gobernaciones* more than non indigenous population.

This result reflects the highly regionalized current dynamics of the political in Bolivia. Ethnic groups and roots vary between macro-regions. The eastern region of the country has indigenous populations from a wide diversity of ethnic roots, but since their numbers are small and their political weight little, they are organized together and present a united political front as “eastern indigenous peoples.” On the other hand,

Quechuas and Aymaras also have their organizations and are much more closely linked to the government and the State than the eastern indigenous peoples.

Therefore, when indigenusness increases the level of trust in *Gobernaciones*, they trust their own regional institution more, and not necessarily the institution itself. More clearly, it is highly unlikely that indigenous peoples in Beni will trust the *Gobernación* of Oruro more than the non indigenous population of this region, but indigenous people trust regional governments more than those who do not consider themselves indigenous within the same region, probably because with a feeling of being represented by a government focused on social justice and indigenous identity they also sense a better opportunity to be included in the regional dynamics of politics.

### **Trust in local institutions: local governments**

Between 2008 and 2010, trust in local governments significantly decreased nationwide. Somewhat relegated as the central sub-national political arena, the local space competes for political importance with the regional space and although the local space is the closer and more accessible political scenario for political participation, corruption scandals and inefficiency have reduced support for these institutions.

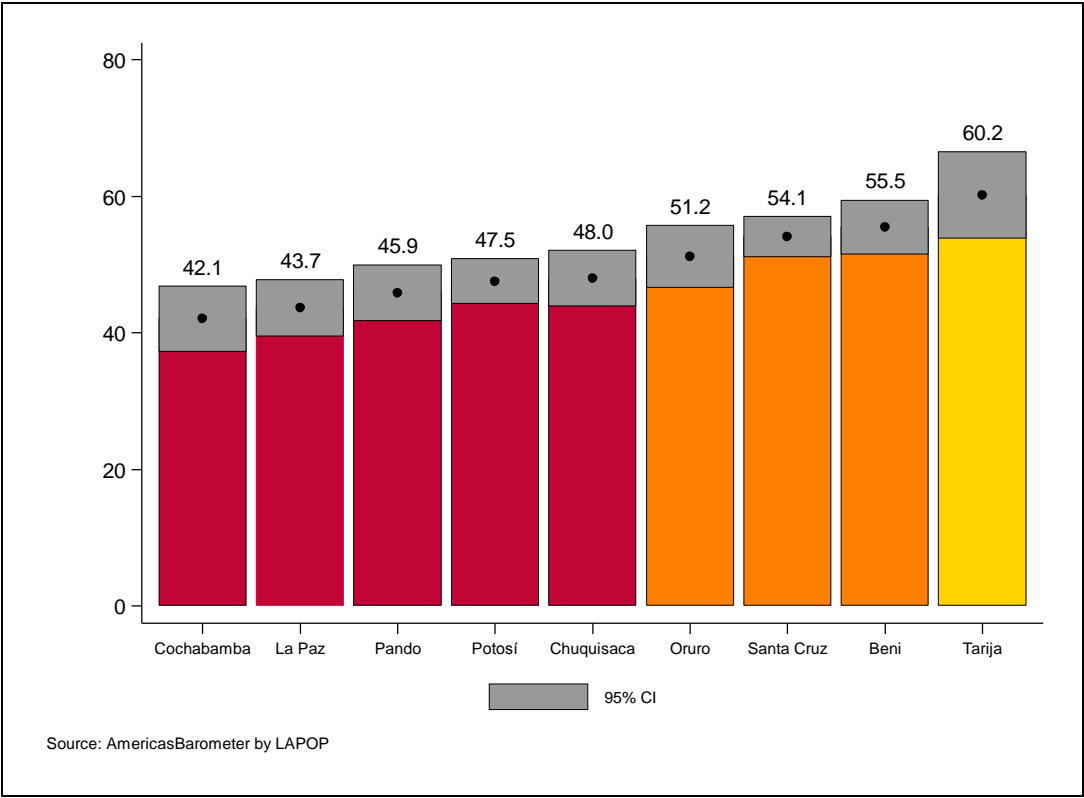
And, it is precisely performance and perception of corruption that significantly affect levels of trust in these institutions. The overall index of governmental efficacy and the specific approval of services provided by local governments have a positive effect on trust. That is, the better institutional performance, both at the national and local levels, the higher trust in local governments will be.

On the contrary, the wider the perceived spread of corruption amongst public officials<sup>24</sup>, the lower trust in local governments will be.

A macro-regional configuration of trust is identifiable in the distribution of trust in local governments in the country, as is shown in Graph II.9.

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<sup>24</sup> Municipal workers and officials have some of the worst reputations when it comes to corruption in the country.

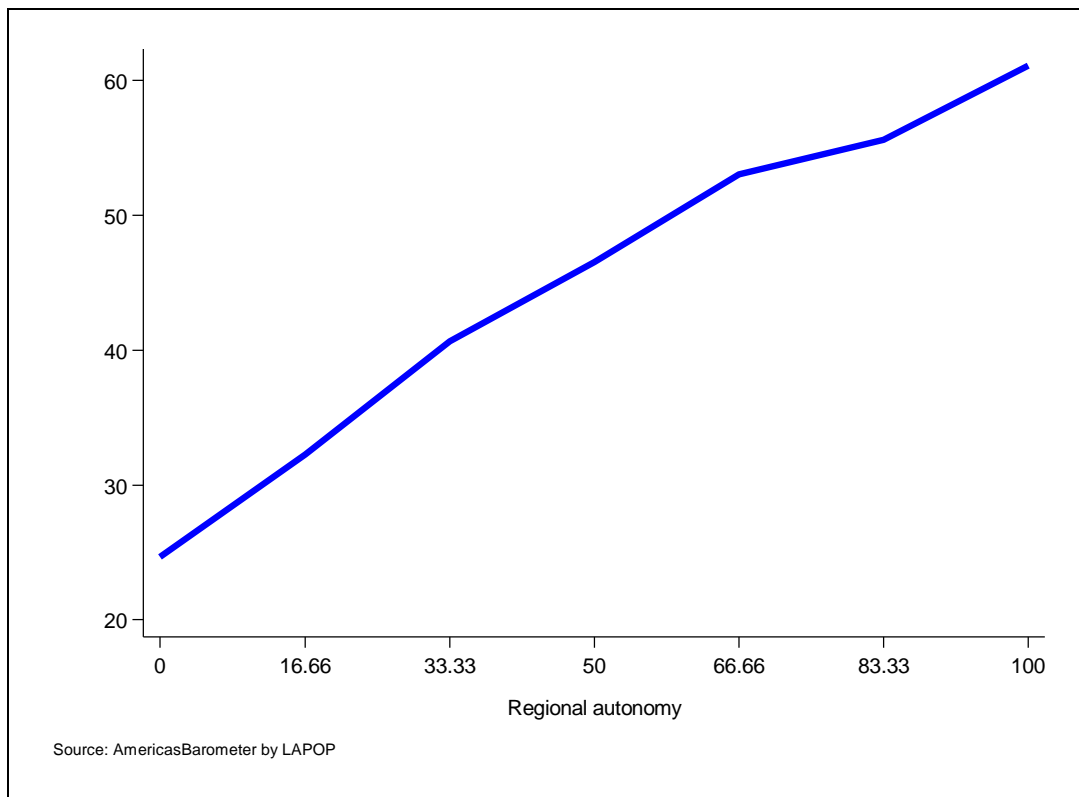


**Graph II-9. Trust in local governments, by region. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

Mixed effects regression results confirm the fixed effect of the sub-national level in determining trust in municipalities across the country, reproducing the influence of the regional political and economic dynamics seen for the case of regional governments in the local arena, too.

Trust for local governments is higher in the political “non-aligned” regions of Tarija, Beni and Santa Cruz. The explanation for this distribution of trust lies in the political struggle in which autonomous regions and national government are currently involved. In the midst of this struggle, regional and local governments are very important political pieces to gather support and adherence from the general population to the regional or national economic and political project.

Therefore, it follows logically that a strong predictor of trust in local governments is the level of adherence and approval of the idea of regional autonomies, which exercises the same effect on local governments that it does on *Gobernaciones*.



**Graph II-10. Trust in local governments based on approval of regional autonomies. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

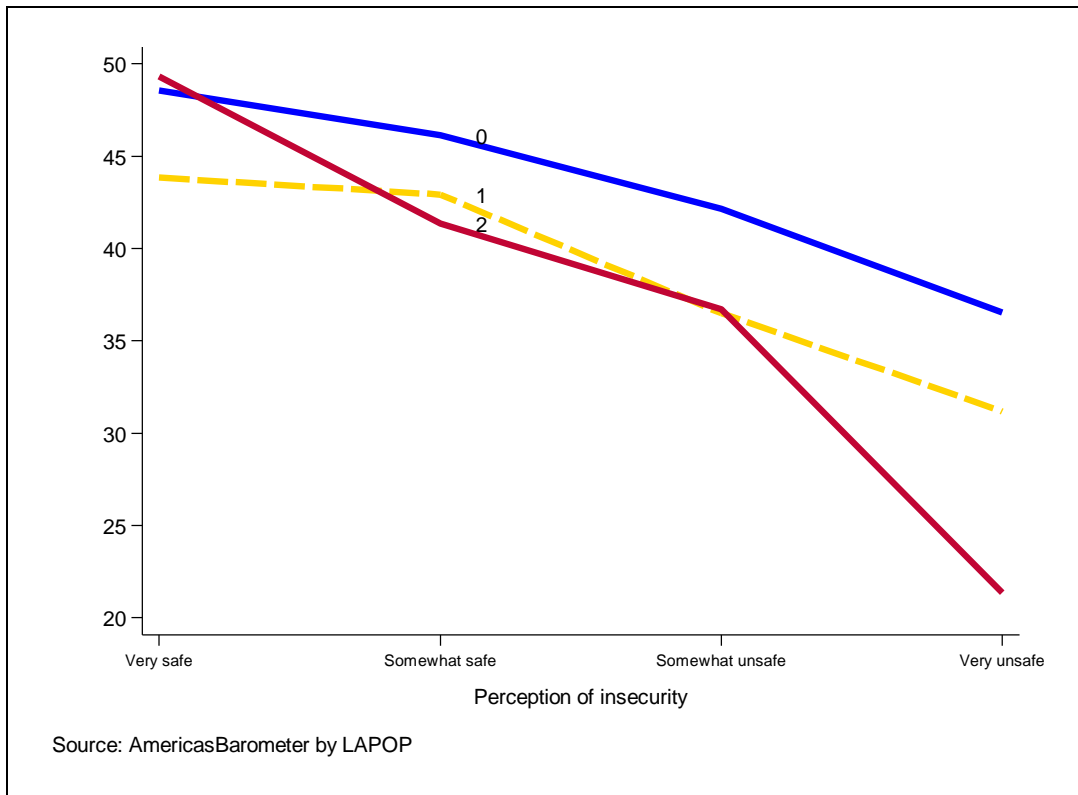
Because of this, local governments increase in importance precisely in those regions that are trying to win space and influence against a very popular and powerful central government.

### **Trust in the police**

The police, together with political parties, are traditionally the institutions with lowest levels of trust in Bolivia. Although there is a positive fixed effect of the sub-national level on the distribution of trust for the police, no regional or macro-regional configurations can be identified in the case of this institution.

Among the predictors of trust in the police, the individual level of education has a negative effect on trusting the police. Citizens with higher levels of education will trust the police less than individuals with a basic or no education.

The perception of corruption practices amongst public officials will also negatively affect trust in this institution. The wider citizens believe corruption practices have spread, the less they will trust the police.



**Graph II-11. Trust in the police, based on discrimination and feeling of insecurity. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.**

As is shown in Graph II.11, the perception of insecurity and the experience of discrimination in different scenarios also reduce trust in the police. The more individuals have been discriminated against, the less they will trust the police while at the same time, the less safe individuals feel in their immediate environment (their neighborhood or community), the less trust for the police they will have, since it ultimately falls to the police to fight criminality and keep neighborhoods and communities safe.

These results paint a grim picture of hopelessness for citizens, especially in high criminality areas, for instead of turning to the police for protection and safety, the more dangerous the environment, the less people trust the police.

This is the only case of all the institutions analyzed in this chapter where most of the predictors in the model have a negative effect on the levels of trust in the institution. In this case, only the approval of the President's performance and ethnic identification as indigenous have a positive effect on the levels of trust in the police.

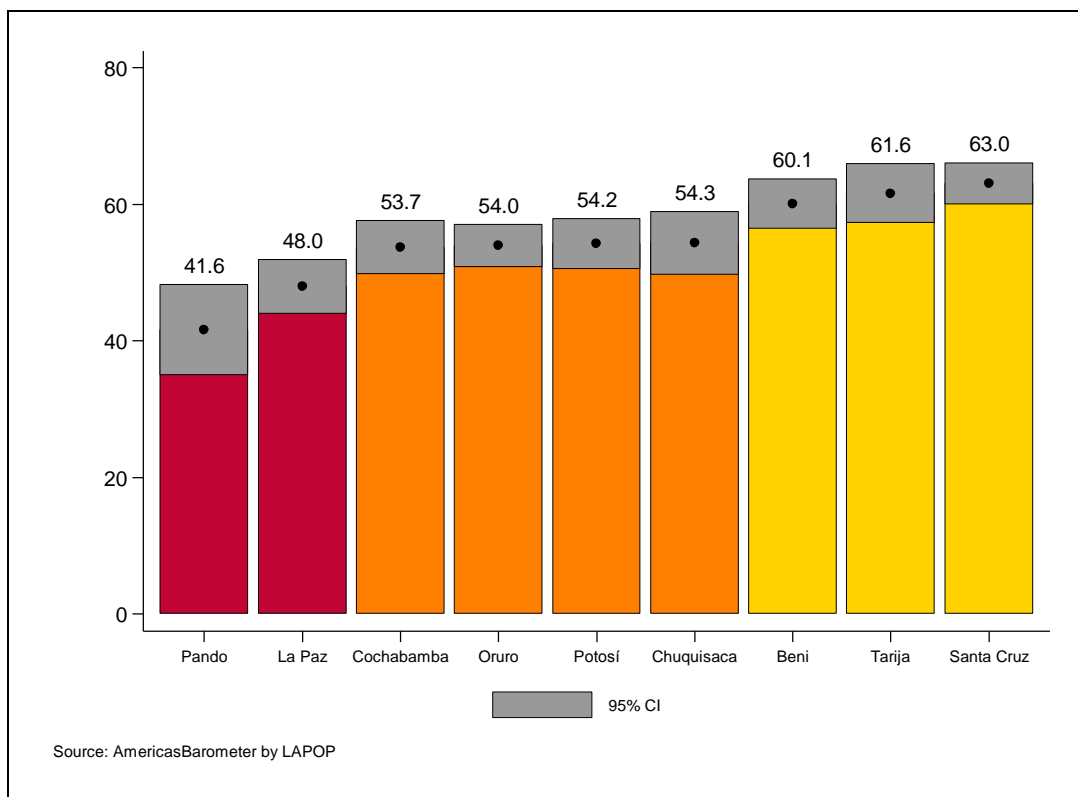
This combination of Presidential approval and indigenusness can be interpreted as a sort of joint effect of a political element by which the majoritarian indigenous population in the country (the Quechua) feel closest to the President's policies and priorities and therefore are more willing to trust the government, the system and the institutions all across the board.

### **Trust in the media**

The last institution studied in this chapter is the media. The role of the media in society is to be a source of independent information and to provide the opportunity and stage for debate, dialogue and exchange of ideas. But it also oversees the political game and exposes irregularities and conflicts. Independence of the media is crucial for them to perform their tasks adequately.

As with many other previous institutions analyzed in this chapter, levels of trust in the media are regionally determined at the *departamento* level, and variations of distribution of trust in this institution are positively determined by regional political and economic dynamics.

As is shown in Graph II.12, a clear macro-regional pattern appears also –as in several other cases before- when it comes to trust in the media.



**Graph II-12. Trust in the media, by region. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

Trust in the media is higher in Santa Cruz, Tarija and Beni, all three part of the “*media luna*” region, identified with the opposition to the Morales’ presidency. This configuration clearly results from political positions and alignments, in which the regional media have very actively taken part in not having maintained distance or independence from the political events in their corresponding regions unlike the “official media,” which has taken the side of the government.

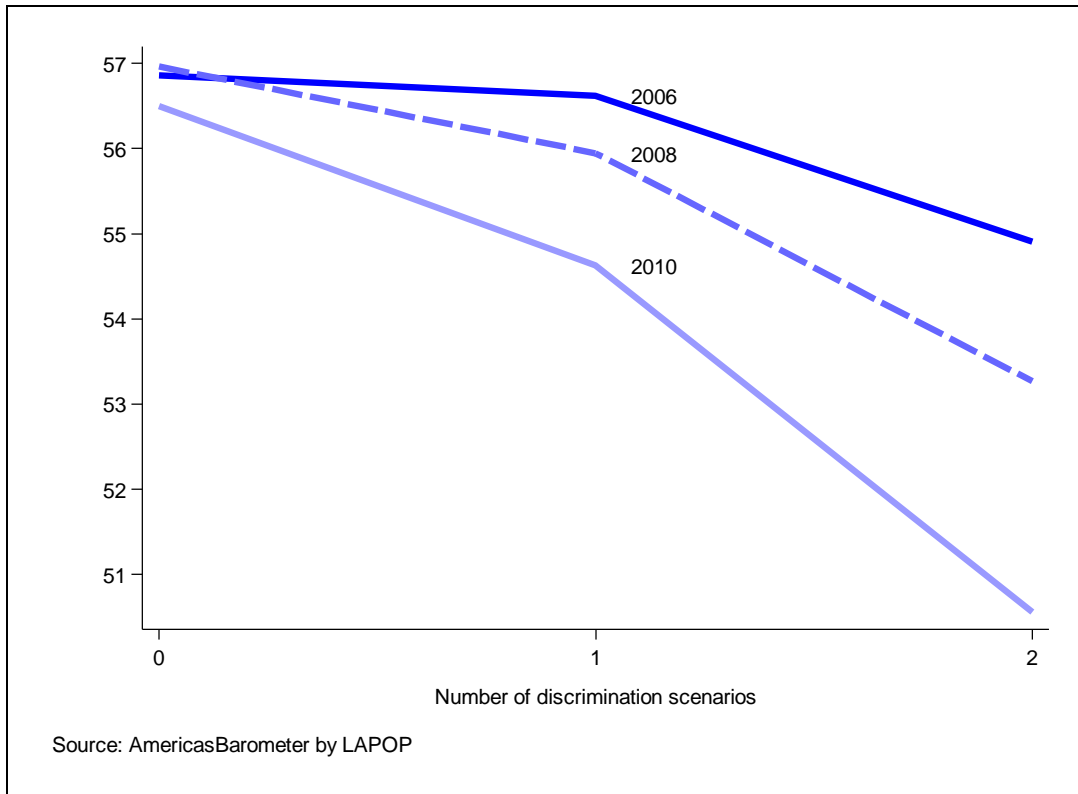
Younger people tend to be more trusting of the media than older citizens and in general, residents of urban areas trust this institution more than residents in rural areas.

In general, good performance of the government in the management of the economy and the promotion and protection of democratic principles will have a positive influence on trust in the media.

Additionally, individuals that have an optimistic view of the national economic situation will trust the media less than people with a pessimistic evaluation of the economy. This strange relation can be explained by the fact that there has been a struggle between official and independent sources concerning the economic

performance of the government and the real extent to which the international economic crisis of 2009 has affected Bolivia.

This struggle has been played out through the media and positions have been taken. The disagreement was never settled, and the citizenry was left with the choice of taking positions, too. Those who are closer to the President and his policies believe in the optimistic economic outlook the government presents. Hence, the better the evaluation of the national economic situation, the less citizens trust the media.



**Graph II-13. Trust in the Media by discrimination and year. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.**

The experience of discrimination has a negative effect on trust in the media, as Graph II.13 illustrates. The more scenarios in which a person has felt discriminated against, the less people will trust the media.

As strange as this relation may seem, it makes sense when in context. Most television stations, newspapers and radio stations are privately owned in Bolivia. The State owns one television station and publishes an official newspaper with very low circulation. In Bolivia, the media is owned by the economically powerful and have traditionally been used to further social and political networks and support the elites. Even



during the authoritarian period and after that, in the return to democracy, the Bolivian media have always been politically positioned.

People who suffer discrimination usually do not belong to the dominant class and will actually distrust anything that is channeled through privately owned media and identify these institutions as biased.

### **Conclusions**

Although the Constitutional reform was expected to increase the legitimacy of the Plurinational State by becoming the foundational base for the building of the *new* Bolivian democracy, the immediate reaction to it has not achieved to increase citizens' trust in the newly reformed institutional frame.

The case of trust in institutions of the judicial system is a good example of this. One of the reforms of the Constitution included the popular election of magistrates of the superior Courts for the first time in Bolivian history. These elections were held in April 2011, and ever since, institutions of the Judicial have continued to lose trust according to LAPOP data for 2012, with the exception of communitarian justice, which after a four year period of losing trust has become the only institution of the Judicial to gain trust, basically due to its being the most accessible of justice institutions for the common citizen (Moreno Morales, Schwarz Bum et al. 2012). Still, it remains unknown how communitarian justice will be integrated in the formal justice system and how communitarian justice procedures - which vary from region to region - will be regulated and acknowledged by civil and penal codes.

President Evo Morales is the leading figure of the process of change, the face and the voice of the *new left* project in Bolivia and he is also carrying most of the weight of the legitimacy of the institutional setting of the Plurinational State. The State draws much of its legitimacy from him, or at least the perception of his performance is determinant in citizens' evaluations to trust or not to trust institutions.

Of course this has negative implication for the new State, for its stability and the support of the system are highly dependent on the presence of one figure, rather than on the strength of its institutional structure. This also means that there are no institutionalization efforts underway although public discourse reinforces the idea institutions of the Plurinational State are strong, stable and trustable.

The case of Chuquisaca and the low levels of trust and support for institutions is a good example of the vulnerability of a State depending so much on an individual figure, rather than on institutionalized structures. Although initially supportive of the Morales government during his first term, Chuquisaca has shown a quick turnaround in four years, due to their confrontation with the President because of a case of severe discrimination against indigenous people and a confrontation between urban and rural population. Since the events of 2009, they have been practically “under attack” from the national government despite having a MAS regional government, with regional authorities involved in litigations against the State.

Additionally, when it comes to trust and support for institutions, a clear regional configuration shows. This configuration has more to do with disagreements between regions and the national government on a national project than with actual economic conditions and institutional performance across regions. Nevertheless, disagreements on the national project are strongly linked to economic views of development and also on issues of regional identity.

As for an evaluation of the reception of institutional reform, the process of change and the implementation of *new left* ideology and policies, citizens do not seem optimistic. Trust and support have more to do with partisanship measured by individual assessments of Presidential performance, ideological tendencies, support for the individual figure of the leader and regional loyalties than with the strength or authority of institutions themselves.

In the next chapter I will study the effect of institutional performance of the national government on issues that are central for improving quality of life that are also closely related to the upholding and promoting of core democratic principles, such as the protection of citizens’ rights, security, alleviation of poverty, redistribution of wealth and justice administration. All of these are tested within the context of institutional reforms and settings implemented by President Morales’ program - called the *process of change* - , as an expression of the Bolivian version of *New Left* ideology.

### **Chapter III . Regional Configuration of Legitimacy and System Support Based on Governmental Performance**

Some Latin American democracies are changing. The new Latin American democracy is being crafted by the new Latin American left and Bolivia is not only at the very center of this movement (Edwards 2010) but also one of the countries that has invested the most in actually rebuilding the State and the political system to carry out *New Left* ideology as a national project. The movement, although being implemented from above, enjoys ample support from the citizenry, as shown by electoral outcomes since 2005, and encourages citizen participation at all possible levels of political decision-making.

Participation legitimizes decisions. And legitimacy is one of the most important concerns for governments of the new democracies. Legitimacy and support for the new system are therefore obtained mainly through electoral processes (presidential elections, judicial elections, referendums, public consultations), and electoral results yield automatic legitimacy to policies, decisions and reforms (Norris 2004).

But elections are not the only source of legitimacy and are not the only determinant of support. Performance is also an important source of legitimacy and support for the system, an element often overlooked in the process of transforming the State and democracy and justified because it is the price of transition and change (Grindle 2000; Moe 2006).

How citizens feel about this part left aside and how it affects system support and political legitimacy is nonetheless a real concern with potentially harmful effects for the general stability of the new democracies in the long run and with high costs for society in the shorter term.

This chapter studies the effect of individual citizen evaluations of institutional performance in Bolivia in the midst of the process of change, on support for the democratic system and on the general legitimacy of its political institutions in an attempt to assess the relative importance assigned by Bolivian citizens to institutionalization versus a personalization trend in the political process in the construction of the Bolivian Plurinational democratic State.

## Legitimacy and the Bolivian *Process of Change*

Constitutional reform and social policy changes are the instruments chosen to transform what used to be the Bolivian Republic into the Plurinational State of Bolivia. At least, that is President Morales' public statement and the instruments expressed in his general plan to implement the process of change.

With a government elected in 2005 by a clear majority, the *process of change* has targeted existing political institutions as the first stage of required transformation to lead the way into the "social State," shaped with clear populist features such as a highly popular leader, a clearly individualistic style of politics at all levels and a clear predominance of "majority" will over concern for minority rights.

Political legitimacy and support for the political system have improved significantly since the election of President Morales and his plans for change in Bolivia seven years ago, and "legitimacy" of policies and reforms has repeatedly been confirmed by electoral results in several occasions since then.

Bolivia's new Constitution took effect in 2009, and it reformed the State in basic areas such as the addition of a fourth branch, the Electoral *Organ*, to accompany the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of the State. More importantly, the new Constitution recognizes the right and autonomy of indigenous nations, qualifies the Bolivian democratic system as a *participative* democracy<sup>25</sup> and acknowledges the right of indigenous peoples to live according to their traditional and customary practices and laws within their territorial jurisdiction.

Health and education institutions have not been transformed, nor has the economic sector, except for the nationalization of the hydrocarbon industry, which is now under the exclusive operation of the Bolivian Plurinational State.

Official statistics report that poverty numbers are decreasing since the beginning of the process of change and that Bolivia has been unaffected by the general economic crisis of 2009, reporting a steady trend of economic growth and inflation in single figures. This success, together with the social concern of the State and

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<sup>25</sup> As opposite to a *representative* type of democracy, although the representative system has not been replaced but rather complemented by the increase of channels and opportunities for participation in decision making.

the social orientation of public policy, yields automatic legitimacy to the government and the system. Or so they say.

Yet, the process of change and Morales' government rely primarily on a type of *charismatic legitimacy* following Weber's typology, a legitimacy derived from the presence and authority of a charismatic leadership, not uncommon in populist regimes, and based on a highly personalized political practice. Performance of the government also plays a role, for some policies are popular amongst the population, like the distribution of wealth program that basically relies on government issued payments for pregnant women, to keep children in schools and for elderly citizens (*bonos*) which are one a year payments of small amounts directly delivered to disadvantaged groups.

But there is little official or unofficial information available to allow a real assessment of the economic efficacy of these *bonos*. Public access to official information such as the yearly amounts being distributed or studies about how these funds are invested by recipients is very limited. In fact, government agencies either do not conduct these studies or they do not make public the results even when citizens request access to information regarding the use of these public funds. Therefore, only very little privately and highly speculative data is available to assess government performance in these areas.

What the general consensus<sup>26</sup> understands nowadays as legitimacy corresponds to Weber's second type of legitimacy, the legal-realist type, which is given by the individual citizen to a set of "impersonal institutions," whose authority and competence are defined by the Constitution. This type of legitimacy is accepted as a more "desirable" setting for modern democracies, or at least as the desirable goal for consolidating or developing democracies.

Whether the process of change has achieved this common ideal understanding of a legitimate democracy is a concern in Bolivia given the great popularity of the President, his policies and his ruling style. But, if legitimacy and support obey popularity and a charismatic quality rather than a rational-practical quality of

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<sup>26</sup> The general consensus among academics, politicians and citizens in general in the westernized world considers the occidental model of democracy, a highly institutionalized democratic system, in which the stability and strength of the process of decision making is more important than the character and permanence of the people in charge of decision making institutions.

legitimacy, then the stability of the democratic system in the long run is guaranteed only insofar as the President keeps winning elections and as far as the Constitution allows him to run for reelection.

This chapter will analyze how important considerations of institutional performance are for Bolivian citizens when assessing the legitimacy of political institutions and their support for the democratic system.

The analysis focuses special attention on the performance of institutions regarding economic issues and will assess whether economic considerations at the individual level and aggregate level (by *departamento*) still remain important in determining political legitimacy and system support when taking into account the effect of institutional performance and the popularity of the President.

### **Methodology of the analysis**

The analysis uses a mixed effects model regression to assess the influence of institutional performance on both system support and institutional legitimacy in Bolivia using data from the 2010 round of the public opinion survey conducted by the AmericasBarometer.

The first model includes variables of institutional performance in the form of a combined efficacy index that takes into account governmental performance in economic and political areas: fight against poverty, unemployment and corruption, improvement of citizen security and promotion and protection of democratic principles. This index measures areas of governmental action in the field of public policies that affects citizens in their everyday life.

A factorial analysis of this index indicates it is highly reliable, with all five components lying mainly on one factor and with a reliability index of .9224 (Cronbach's alpha).

The model also includes performance variables at the local level (individual evaluation of services provided by the local government) and the approval of the President's performance.<sup>27</sup> A variable measuring the Representative's performance in Congress was originally included in the model, but it is not significant, thus strengthening the charismatic leadership hypothesis, since other important authority and leadership institutions

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<sup>27</sup> The question directly asks the individual to assess how well the President performs its duties.

and figures, such as legislators do not have any real effect on people's evaluations on the legitimacy of the political system.

Additional variables are included as indicators of bad performance in two areas: an increased perception of generalization of corruption practices among public officials is an indicator of bad performance in reducing corruption, and an increased perception of insecurity is an indicator of bad performance in reducing criminality.

The second model measures the same elements, but disaggregating the efficacy index and measuring the importance of institutional performance individually in order to assess which areas of performance are more important to the citizenry. This model has an added performance variable measuring the evaluation of government management of the national economy.

Then, the same model is run at the sub-national level, given the diversity of positioning by *departamento*, both economically (affects evaluation of economic policy) and politically (affects strength of the influence of presidential popularity).

The importance of the sub-national analysis of the data lies in the potential to uncover regional configurations of system support and institutional legitimacy due to differing economic and political regional positioning, which has proven relevant in analysis conducted in previous chapters and which plays a role in the stability and strength of the process of change and the construction of the Bolivian Plurinational State.

This analysis also has the potential to uncover a probable regional configuration of support and legitimacy that would differentiate the Bolivian population along the line of adherence to charismatic or legal-rational considerations of democratic legitimacy.

The results of both models are shown in Table III.1, below, and are analyzed in detail in the following section.

**Table III-1. Mixed effects regression model for system support and institutional legitimacy. Bolivia 2010.**

Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.

	<b>Model 1</b>		<b>Model 2</b>	
	<b>System support</b>	<b>Institutional Legitimacy</b>	<b>System support</b>	<b>Institutional Legitimacy</b>
<b>Efficacy of the government</b>	.4005**	.4861**		
<b>Fights poverty</b>			.0417*	.06807**
<b>Promotes democratic principles</b>			.0816**	.09643**
<b>Fights corruption</b>			.04966**	.08292**
<b>Improves security</b>			.0911**	.08347**
<b>Fights unemployment</b>			.0616**	.06751**
<b>Handles the economy</b>			.09144**	.1031**
<b>Local government services</b>	.0662**	.06188**	.06347**	.06549**
<b>Approval of the President's performance</b>	.08813**	.06284**	.0701**	.04548**
<b>Perception of corruption</b>		-.0352**		-.0372**
<b>Perception of insecurity</b>		-.02237*		-.03033*
<b>N</b>	<b>2,383</b>	<b>2,388</b>	<b>2,306</b>	<b>2,304</b>

\* sig. <.005

\*\* sig. < 01

The mixed effects model also included initially an analysis of the effect of time (between 2004 and 2010), but no significant results were found. The question is could a “time-effect” of performance be reasonably expected to influence levels of system support and institutional legitimacy? The answer is yes if one considers an effect of a process of institutionalization that strengthens and improves institutional processes and overall performance, especially if independence and efficiency is gained through institutionalization. From this perspective, performance does not depend on the individuals leading and working in these institutions, but individuals should accommodate to them.

In the Bolivian case, no time effect is found on how institutional performance influences levels of system support and institutional legitimacy. This can be interpreted as a sign of a still highly individualistic political process being in place. In fact, a “personalistic” style of practicing politics has been on the rise since the beginning of the process of change, and it has encouraged the existence of a highly dependent and inefficient body of political institutions.

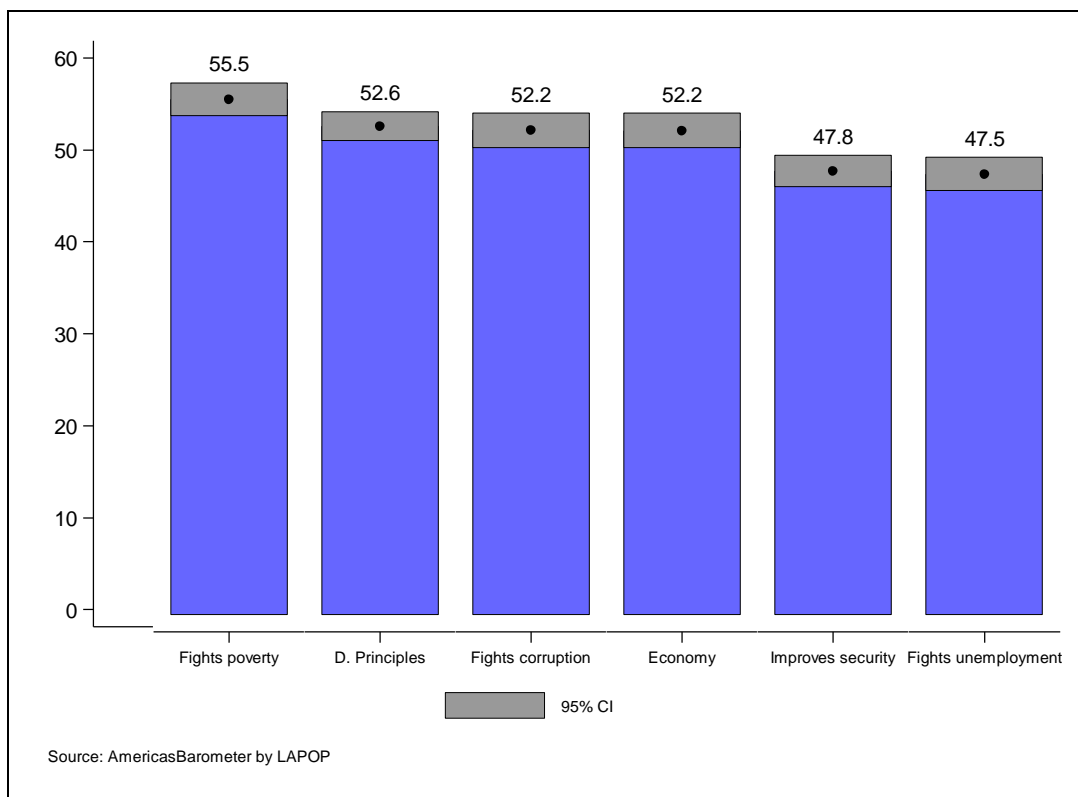


Moreover, the significant effect of Presidential approval on assessment of institutional performance across all the measured areas confirm the assumption that citizens view institutional performance - independently from the area in which institutions perform- as a direct result of the role of the President whether it is his influence or his policies, rather than as solely or mainly as a result of efficient institutions. But this result can also be interpreted as a proxy for partisanship, for individuals who approve of the President also approve of how the institutions perform by way of loyalty and as a vote of confidence rather than by sheer evaluation of institutional performance.

### **Results**

Graph III.1, below, shows the general average of perception for six variables of institutional performance in the fields of reducing poverty, unemployment and corruption, improving security, management of the national economy and promotion and protection of democratic principles.

In general, averages are slightly above the medium point of the 100 point scale, except for governmental performance in reducing criminality (or improving the feeling of security in one's neighborhood or community) and reducing unemployment.



**Graph III-1. Averages of government performance. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

Between 2008 and 2010 there has been no significant change in citizens’ perceptions of how the government and the process of change deal with criminality and are successful in creating jobs for Bolivians, and these have remained as the most-contested areas of government action during the process of change.

The government’s efficacy in reducing poverty<sup>28</sup> in the country receives the most positive rating from citizens. Much the same happens with the evaluation of how much the government promotes and protects democratic principles. Although the average for 2010 is the second highest for the series and it reports a level of satisfaction with performance in this area, the average has not improved since 2008 and is lower than the recorded average for 2006.

In both cases, citizens express that the process of change has not improved its performance in these two areas since its beginning, but that in fact performance has worsened.

<sup>28</sup> President Morales’ government has put in place a set of “wealth redistribution” public policies in the form of bonuses paid to the poor and those in need in society. Bonuses are paid with profits from the hydrocarbon production area and are distributed as monthly payments to the elderly (although this bonus was created during Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada’s second term when was named the “solidarity bonus”), and as yearly payments for families with children enrolled in the public school system, as an incentive to keep children in school. Another one-time bonus is paid to mothers with newly born children, in addition to the universal maternity health insurance which covers pre and post natal care for mother and child until the child’s second year (the universal insurance was also created by Sanchez de Lozada’s government). Amounts paid out are in the range of Us\$ 20 to 30.

This is very clear in the case of reducing corruption practices. The 2010 evaluation average of government performance on this issue is significantly lower than in 2008 and both are lower than the average registered for 2006, indicating a clear decline in the perception of how the government and its policies are unsuccessful in reducing corruption.

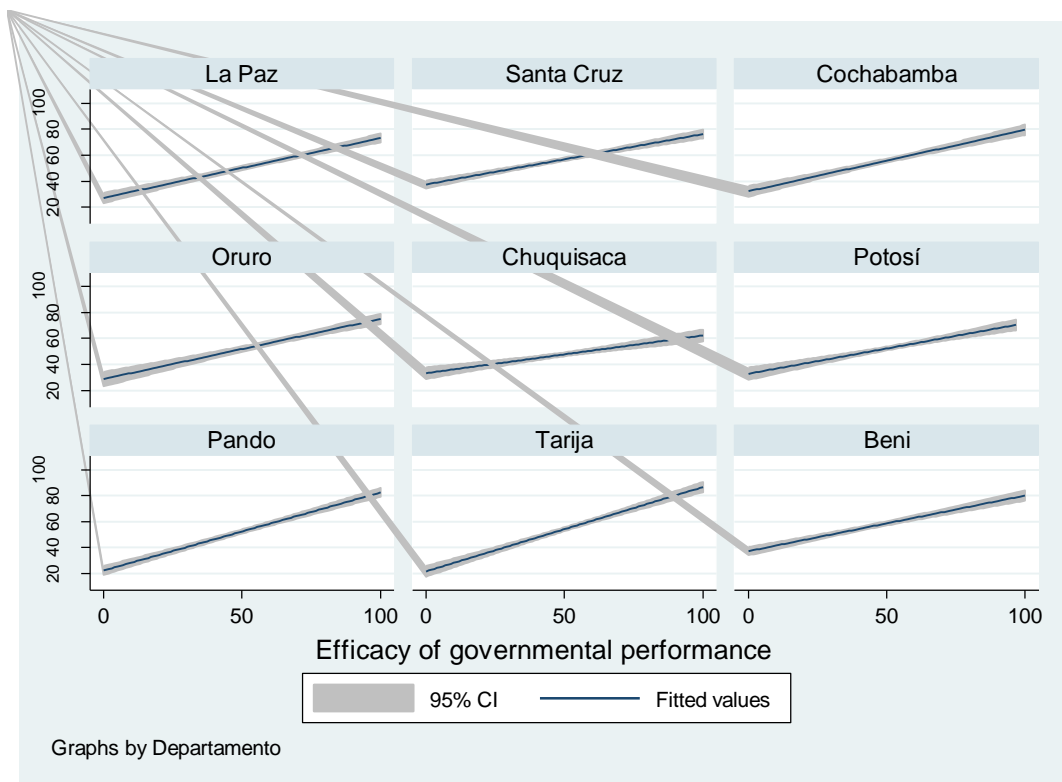
On the contrary, the average evaluation of services provided by local governments in 2010 is higher than in 2006 and 2004 but has not improved in the time between 2008 and 2010.

Finally, the general approval of the President's performance has increased significantly between 2008 and 2010, reaching its highest point since President Morales' election, with an average of 61 points in a 100-point scale. This is a clear sign of the personalistic style of practicing politics in the process of change, in which the salient figure of the President overpowers the presence and actual performance of political institutions and policies.

Results from the analysis at the sub-national level indicate that considerations of institutional performance are relevant in determining levels of system support at this level, too, as is illustrated in Graph III.2<sup>29</sup>. The graph shows that in all cases, evaluations of institutional performance matter for determining system support levels and that the better institutions perform the higher system support will be, although with intensities varying across *departamentos*. This variation in intensity indicates that institutional performance is not the only element determining system support and that the different economic and political contexts introduced in the model by the regional dummies also play a role in determining system support at the sub-national level.

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<sup>29</sup> See same fitted values for institutional legitimacy in the Annex section.



**Graph III-2. Fitted values for system support based on efficacy of the government’s performance.**

**Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

The slopes of the lines in the graph are less steep for four *departamentos* Beni, Chuquisaca, Santa Cruz and Potosí and these are perfect examples of how context influences an otherwise clear effect of institutional performance on system support. Both economic and political contextual elements are at play in all four *departamentos*. Beni, Chuquisaca and Potosí are amongst the poorer regions in Bolivia, while Santa Cruz, Beni and Chuquisaca are additionally the regions with more political conflicts and confrontations with the national government and with President Morales.

Given that the figure of President Morales is key to determine evaluation of institutional performance, a problematic relationship to him and the national government shows in lessening the importance of institutional performance when determining system support in these regions. In the case of Potosí and Beni, a poor economic

performance of the national government<sup>30</sup> and its economic policies are also influencing the region's adherence to the political system.

Although the weight of institutional performance varies from region to region, the data show that individual evaluations are important for Bolivian citizens across the country, thus indicating that, while a charismatic leadership is a strong determinant of democratic legitimacy, citizens do not undervalue the importance of the existence and importance of institutions and their role in the system.

Table III.2, below, summarizes the mean of evaluation of institutional performance in all of the six areas analyzed at the sub-national level.

**Table III-2. Means of institutional performance by *departamento*.**

	<b>Fights poverty</b>	<b>Promotes democratic principles</b>	<b>Fights corruption</b>	<b>Improves security</b>	<b>Fights unemployment</b>	<b>Handles the economy</b>
La Paz	59.68	57.07	56.25	51.17	50.84	57.89
Oruro	68.08	63.45	60.34	55.87	54.02	60.69
Potosi	57.09	53.70	55.94	47.79	46.74	54.85
Cochabamba	56.07	52.59	51.04	47.37	47.99	50.98
Chuquisaca	56.85	51.03	50.96	49.54	47.62	47.50
Tarija	53.43	50.90	53.51	50.28	48.34	50.33
Santa Cruz	50.25	48.59	47.61	43.43	43.53	47.85
Beni	45.19	42.21	44.33	41.81	41.39	43.12
Pando	50.12	48.87	52.71	47.97	47.03	45.31

The institutional performance evaluation results by *departamento* clearly show the diversity of perceptions of the Bolivian citizenry depending on the region where they live. The lowest scores for each variable are shadowed in red, indicating the first glimpse of a regional configuration in which the poorest evaluations –or conversely, the highest dissatisfaction- is concentrated in the eastern *departamentos* Santa Cruz, Beni and Pando and to some extent in Chuquisaca.

<sup>30</sup> Low economic investment in regional development, lack of support for export policies for local production and open political confrontation with regional authorities (in Beni). Potosi also has complaints about the economic performance, for the local population had higher expectations of nationalization of mines and mining industries in the *departamento*. In 2011 there was a confrontation between miners' cooperatives and the national government, when miners occupied private mines and demanded the government nationalize them and "delivered" them to the control of the workers. After months of conflict, the government yielded and the mines in question were nationalized and are currently under control of private cooperatives.

These *departamentos* are the core of what was known as “the *media luna*” during President Morales’ first term, during which political polarization was very high and the *media luna* carried a staunch opposition to the process of change and its policies. This opposition was based mainly on the divergence of economic and political policy goals, with economic growth and development and institutional independence and efficiency being the main concern of the eastern region of the country while the government prioritized social policy and cultural recognition even at the expense of economic growth<sup>31</sup>.

Although polarization has decreased significantly, the disagreement on the understanding of how democracy should work and on the national economic model has not. Therefore, a clear regional configuration appears at the moment of determining levels of support for the system and evaluating the level of legitimacy of the political institutions, since they do not equally respond to appropriateness expectations from citizens across the country.

The *departamentos* in the “*media luna*” region rate the institutional performance of the national government consistently lower across all areas of policy than the rest of the regions in the country. This is a clear effect of the regional political context, because it reflects a disagreement with national policies and with the President himself on a national project and the model of democracy. It is not necessarily that the President does not have electoral support in these *departamentos*, but despite a fair amount of supporters, regional identity also plays a role in the manner in which citizens of these regions view and evaluate the national government and regional identity is strongly based on the role of opposition.

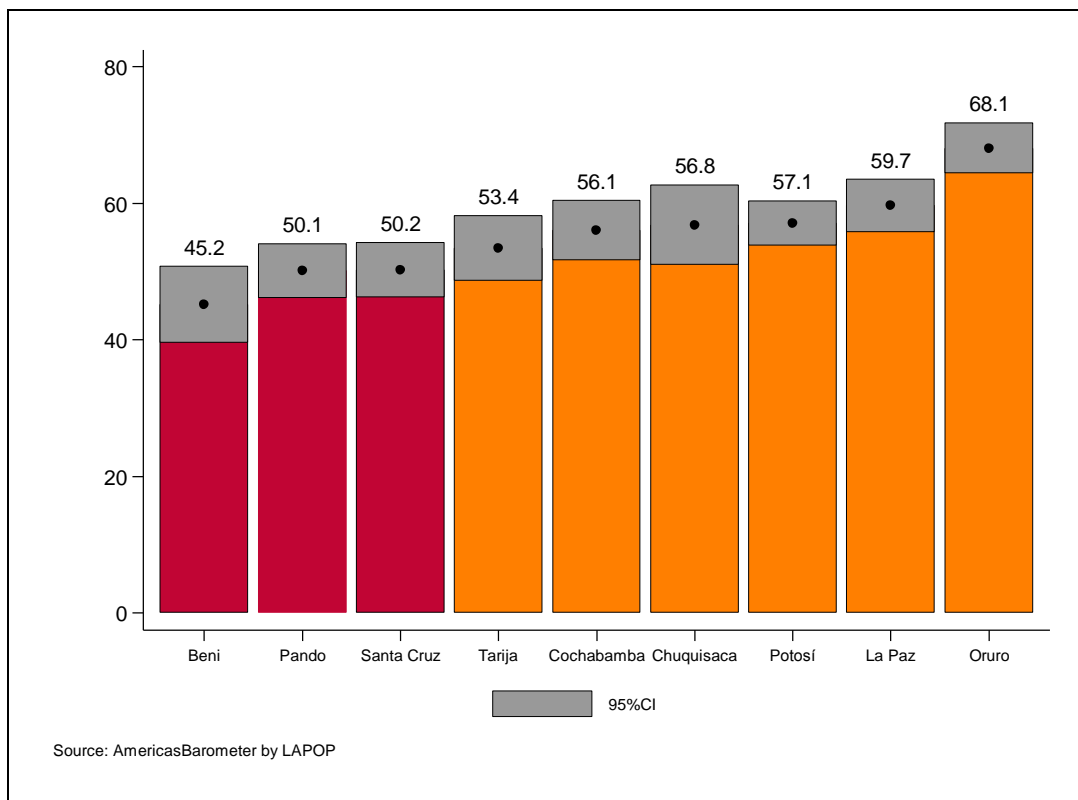
Averages of institutional performance evaluation by region also confirm the centrality of partisanship - as support for the President, not necessarily support for MAS - that I discussed at the beginning of this chapter. *Departamentos* with higher rates of support for President Morales consistently rate institutional performance higher than *departamentos* with lower levels of support for the President.

The cases of Cochabamba, Potosi and Chuquisaca are special cases when it comes to rating institutional performance on fighting unemployment, which population in these regions rate lower for economic reasons. All

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<sup>31</sup> There were of course discrimination and racism issues involved as well as a clear elite replacement process that was strongly resented in the eastern *departamentos*.

three *departamentos* have slow economic dynamics: Potosi is trying to revive the mining industry, Chuquisaca has no real local industry aside of some small factories and lives mainly from public employment (Sucre is the seat of the Judicial Organ) and Cochabamba also lacks local industry, living mainly from the services sector and unfortunately surviving by a constant capital flow of drug trafficking, although there are no official sources to confirm this information.



**Graph III-3. Government performance: fight against poverty. Bolivia 2010.**

**Source: America Barometer by LAPOP**

Graph III.3 strengthens the idea of a regional configuration in the individual evaluation of institutional performance wherein political and economic factors are at play. While Pando and Beni rank amongst the regions with lowest GNP, Santa Cruz is the richest region in the country; however, low levels of satisfaction with institutional performance will lower the levels of support and legitimacy perceived by their citizens, although they were traditionally regions with high levels of both support and legitimacy. Undoubtedly, the political factor plays a role again in the case of Santa Cruz, and despite its wealth, its political position will cause perceived levels of legitimacy to drop.

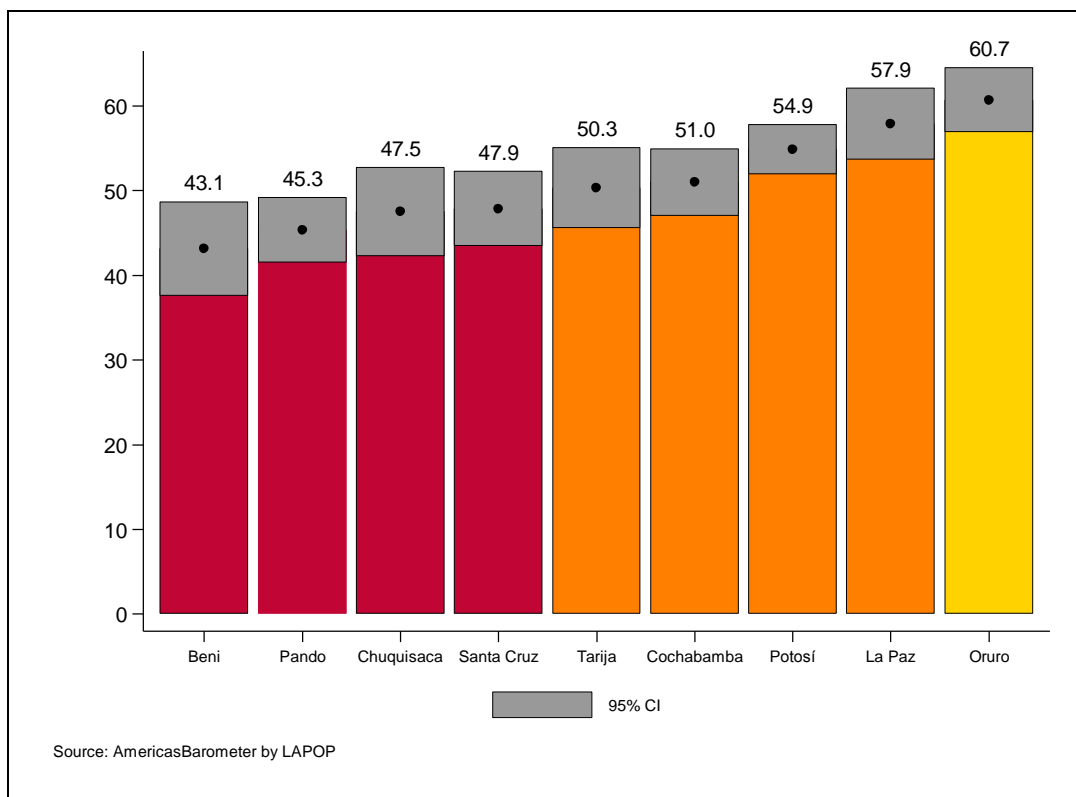
To balance out this situation, high levels of approval for institutional performance of local and regional governments (the *Gobernación*) improve the general perception of institutional legitimacy in these areas.

In the rest of the country a general higher level of approval of the performance of political institutions consistently across the entire series of institutional performance is registered, in some cases displaying enormous differences such as in the case of the fight against poverty in which Beni's evaluation is 23 points lower than that of citizens living in Oruro.

Oruro is the top ranking region in all cases, with the highest approval level of institutional performance and higher levels of system support and institutional legitimacy. Despite being the sixth-ranking region by GNP, the political factor is strong in this region, and since the beginning of the process of change it has been consistently the most supportive region for the President, especially amongst the rural population.

Graph III.4 further confirms the existence of a regional configuration in institutional performance evaluation, this time in a purely economic policy field. Although the difference between the lowest and highest evaluations is only 17 points on a 100-point scale, the same regions display the same attitude towards institutional performance as to how the government manages the national economy.





**Graph III-4. Government performance: management of the economy. Bolivia 2010.**

**Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

Approval of national economic policies is lowest in the eastern region of the country, including Chuquisaca in this group, while the rest of the regions qualify these policies above the medium point of the scale.

The same configuration can be observed for the other variables measuring institutional performance by the government, thus indicating a clear divergence of understandings of how democracy should work in regards to the policy fields analyzed in this chapter.

The following section analyzes the results of linear regressions for the effect of institutional performance at the national, regional and local levels on system support and legitimacy by *departamento* (individually). The goal of this analysis is to understand the regional dynamics of both levels of democratic legitimacy within each *departamento* and identify specific determinants of both, system support and institutional legitimacy, based on perceptions of institutional performance.

Table III-3. Regression results for the effect of institutional performance on system support and institutional legitimacy, by *departamento*.

Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

Indep. variables	Dependent variables																	
	La Paz		Oruro		Potosí		Cochabamba		Chuquisaca		Tarija		Santa Cruz		Beni		Pando	
	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg
Fights poverty			.143*									.139*				.231*	.290*	.435**
Promotes democratic principles			.154*	.180*							.129*		.181**	.188**				
Fights corruption				.121*		.146*		.150*	.091*						.135*			
Improves security								.099*			.133*		.131**	.168**	.177*		.205*	
Fights unemployment	.128*					.090*	.214**					.147*						
Handles economy	.143*		.111*	.136*		.125*		.104*	.107*	.116*		.150*						
Local gov. services	.100*										.149*	.148*	.091*	.096*			.180**	
President approval			.148*					.096*		.161*	.130*							
Perception of corruption												-.117*			-.083*			-.159*
Perception of insecurity	-.061*	-.059*						-.057*			-.071*		-.058*				-.117*	
R-squared	.374	.471	.3948	.4428	.2579	.3791	.2806	.4781	.2319	.2626	.5644	.6082	.4208	.4975	.4113	.4465	.6798	.5938
N	331	331	241	242	265	263	314	315	224	222	233	234	316	315	207	207	175	175

\*sig. <.005

\*\* sig. <.000

Data at the *departamento* level show that there is a difference in how evaluations of institutional performance affect levels of system support and levels of institutional legitimacy. There is not a clear set of evaluations of performance that seem to affect both dimensions of democratic legitimacy in the same way, although in all cases the relation is positive. That is, the higher the level of evaluation, the higher the levels of system support and perceived institutional legitimacy will be.

This result is not surprising if one understands that both dimensions of democratic legitimacy measure different levels of it. It can be reasonably expected that what determines adherence to the democratic system underlying principles will be similar but not necessarily the same as what determines a perceived level of democratic legitimacy, which is a more practical dimension of political activity.

On the other hand, this means that citizens are aware of both dimensions and consider different elements to be relevant for each dimension. Therefore, government policies and political practices should not ignore the importance of performing with equal efficiency in all possible fields, because neglect in some areas or unsatisfactory performance can be harmful for the general level of democratic legitimacy.

A regional configuration seems more diffuse when analyzing *departamentos* individually than when analyzing the national sample. No doubt there is a clear influence of the evaluations of institutional performance on perceived levels of institutional legitimacy and system support, but each region seems to have a unique set of interests that will determine adherence to the democratic system and institutional legitimacy<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> In all cases the models have high levels of significance, with Rsquared scores greater than 0.3, except for Chuquisaca, which should be better explained by other elements.

Again, this is a reasonable outcome given the wide variation of contextual economic, political, social and cultural conditions across the nine regions in Bolivia as well as political leanings and positioning, which creates a unique general environment in each of the *departamentos*.

The most shared element determining system support or institutional legitimacy amongst regions –and the only indication of a regional configuration around economic issues- is the evaluation of how the government manages the national economy. This is a statistically significant element in all regions except Santa Cruz, Beni and Pando where concerns with bad performance in reducing corruption practices and dealing with criminality issues (common to all three regions) are more important to their populations at the time adherence to the system is expressed and institutional legitimacy is perceived.

This concern with institutional performance for providing solutions to the rising levels of criminality and reducing the feeling of insecurity is easily explained by the fact that all three of these regions share an extended border territory with Brazil and that most of Bolivia's drug production and international traffic flows through this border. High criminality rates are commonly associated with drug traffic activity and given the evident lack of capability of the Bolivian police and the Army to patrol and control the border, towns and small communities in rural areas and even population in big cities are victims of the violence derived from this activity.

Reports of drug related crime rates in Santa Cruz, nowadays the most populated city in Bolivia, have increased dramatically in the past five years, as has the presence of Colombian and Brazilian drug cartel elements in rural areas along the border in all three regions.

The feeling of insecurity or fear of being victim of crime is also a significant element in La Paz, Cochabamba and Tarija, which is a clear indicator of a perceived increase in criminality rate across all regions.

On the other hand, Potosi presents a unique case since none of the institutional performance variables or perceptions of corruption, insecurity or the approval of the President yields any effect on the adherence to the democratic system. Potosi has increasingly been politically at odds with the national government, and economically it is the highest population expelling region in Bolivia. Since the decline of mining, Potosi has become a very poor region, with the lowest HDI level in the country and a high proportion of rural population living in isolated and difficult-to-reach areas.

As for the determinants of perceived institutional legitimacy, all significant factors in this *departamento* are of an economic nature (performance on the reduction of corruption, unemployment and management of the national economy), logically following the current economic crisis in this region.

Dealing with rising unemployment problems is also an important consideration in La Paz, Cochabamba and Tarija.

The influence of the President's approval is an important consideration in determining system support in Oruro and Cochabamba, the most supportive of the President and the regions with a higher vote for the President's party, but for the most part, the effect of this variable fades when the regions are analyzed individually in the presence of a more regional or local nature.

A clearly harmful element shared by the majority of regions is institutional performance in relation to effectively fighting and reducing corruption practices in the country. In seven of the nine regions, institutional performance and the perception of generalized corruption practices

amongst public officials are significant predictors of institutional legitimacy and system support (in 2 cases). The more successful the reduction of corruption practices, the higher the perceived level of institutional legitimacy will be, while the higher the perception of spreading corruption practices in the public field, the lower legitimacy will be.

Finally, given the relevance of considerations of institutional performance in the management of the national economy and fields related to economic issues, a multilevel analysis tests the importance of the regional economic context and individual level economic considerations to assess their relative importance in determining system support and institutional legitimacy while still considering the effect of institutional performance.

Table III.4 summarizes the results for both levels of democratic legitimacy measured.

**Table III-4. Multilevel analysis: institutional performance and economic contextual effect on system support and institutional legitimacy. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.**

	<b>System Support</b>	<b>Institutional Legitimacy</b>
Efficacy of institutional performance	<b>.428**</b>	<b>.517**</b>
GNP (by <i>departamento</i> )	<b>5.5<sup>-08*</sup></b>	<b>6.38<sup>-08*</sup></b>
Perceived national economic situation	<b>.036*</b>	<b>.035*</b>
Individual economic situation	<b>.056*</b>	
Wealth	<b>.525*</b>	
<b>N</b>	<b>2,761</b>	<b>2,777</b>

Results of the multilevel analysis confirm the existence and importance of a contextual economic effect (by *departamento*) that holds, even when taking into account the effect of institutional performance in determining levels of system support and institutional legitimacy for the whole country.

The same is true for the sociotropic variable measuring individual perceptions of the national economic situation, statistically significant in determining legitimacy in both dimensions, as measured by the system support and institutional legitimacy indexes.

On the other hand, individual level considerations of the personal economic situation and personal wealth are only significant for the dimension of system support, but not for the perceived level of institutional legitimacy. These results attest to the fact that individuals make a distinction when considering both dimensions of legitimacy and seem to attribute responsibility of their personal economic situation to the general design of the democratic system, but not necessarily to the effect of the performance of central democratic institutions, including institutions in the Judicial and the Legislative branches.

### **Conclusions**

Individual level evaluations of institutional performance are a powerful predictor of democratic legitimacy in Bolivia, measured in two dimensions by the system support and institutional legitimacy indexes.

Although the process of change implemented by President Morales' government encourages personalistic political practices, exercises a charismatic leadership and seeks to draw legitimacy for policies and decisions from electoral outcomes and popularity expressions, Bolivians still consider institutional performance to be a **central** source of democratic legitimacy, affecting their adherence to the system in general as well as their perceived level of institutional legitimacy.

Performance remains a strong predictor of system support and institutional legitimacy when taking into account each field of institutional activity individually and when considering the nine regions individually. But, its effect is lessened when the political and economic contexts

at the sub-national level are included in the analysis, meaning that not only institutions need to perform efficiently, but they also need to respond to regional specificities and needs in order to strengthen legitimacy and support.

At the same time, a good institutional performance will not be enough to guarantee legitimacy and support when other factors such as regional economic and political dynamics are taken into account and especially if these dynamics depart from the ideology and the model underlying the design and function of institutions.

Regional variation determined by economic and political conditions suggests a clear regional configuration when it comes to assessing the relative importance of institutional performance in determining democratic legitimacy.

There is a consistent dissatisfaction with general institutional performance in the eastern region of the country or the “media luna” region, expressed in poorer evaluations of institutional performance, both for the institutional efficacy index and when analyzing the individual components of the index, in the eastern regions compared to the rest of the country. Nevertheless, this configuration weakens when the regions are analyzed individually, in part due to the unique economic, social and political context in each region. The economic contextual effect of the region holds as a valid predictor of democratic legitimacy when taking into account the effect of institutional performance.

As for what these results say about the performance of the new Bolivian State and *New Left* program, I think the most telling element is the predominance of the President’s figure when evaluating institutional performance and consequently, legitimacy and system support. Efficient and independent institutions are vital to the stability of the political system, but Bolivian institutions seem to be only mildly efficient and not independent. On the contrary, people



evaluate them through a political filter and the importance of the effect of the support for the President is not really measuring the performance of institution, but rather saying something about a bigger picture, the project and the model of the new Bolivian State.

Thus, the Plurinational State finds itself with highly dependent institutions which draw authority and approval from the President and his project and much less from their own performance. On top of that, national policy at this moment does not have a plan or project to strengthen institutions or to institutionalize decision making, policy making and other procedures. On the contrary, political discourse suggests that institutions are strengthened by appointing the “right” people to them and personnel replacement is the norm.

Moreover, results show that Bolivians are divided on their support and perceptions about the process of change and the *New Left* policy package. Those who approve and support the new State model rate institutional performance higher and perceive more legitimacy in the system. Those who oppose or distrust the new model are less satisfied with institutional performance and perceive lower legitimacy levels of the political system. Still, divided we stand.

The next chapter studies the effect of specific economic contexts measured with regional dummies and also the effect of individual perceptions about economic conditions on regional dynamics of legitimacy in Bolivia to further understand the effect of economic elements on the citizens’ adherence to the system within the context of the *New Left* policy package that is being implemented in the country.

## Chapter IV . Regional Dynamics of Bolivian Democratic Legitimacy

This chapter studies democratic legitimacy in Bolivia amidst an ongoing *process of change* implemented by the national government that goes beyond changing State policies to changing the principles of the political system, the intent being to build a more “just and socially-oriented” Plurinational State, as it is now styled, starting with its core principles and values continuing through its institutions and administrative organization.

One of the main changes in administrative organization and institutional reform is the recent restructuring of territorial administrative units at the regional level (*departamentos*) with the creation of autonomous *Gobernaciones departamentales* that respond more to regional and popular demands than to an initial will of the national government. As a result, the dynamics of Bolivian politics have been changed, and the political game is now being played, to a large degree, in the regional political arena.

This national project also includes a new policy package especially focused on social policy for the redistribution of wealth with the hopes that it indirectly contributes to the alleviation of poverty, which among other elements includes the nationalization of all major industries and natural resources exploitation, the distribution of public economic resources through direct yearly payments for disadvantaged groups (*bonos*) and effective political inclusion of indigenous people in decision making.

The implications of such a change for the stability of democracy and for its legitimacy are still unknown, and predictions are not all positive, for while the national government still maintains a clear majority and enjoys a healthy popular support, especially the Executive, relations between the autonomous regional governments and the national government are not

easy, and political conflict has been a constant since the process of change started, generating moments of tense political polarization.

In addition to this, cultural, economic and social demands and interests have added to the already large amount of conflict that characterizes the ongoing process of change and, very recently, unexpected economic instability<sup>33</sup> has rekindled the flame of social and political unrest and the fear of instability.

This chapter concentrates on studying the conditions that affect democratic legitimacy at the sub-national (regional) level in Bolivia under the assumption that, given that the *departamento* is the new arena in which the political game is played, the differences and similarities of the evaluations and perceptions of citizens of these regions can strengthen or weaken the legitimacy of Bolivian democracy.

### **Methodology of the analysis**

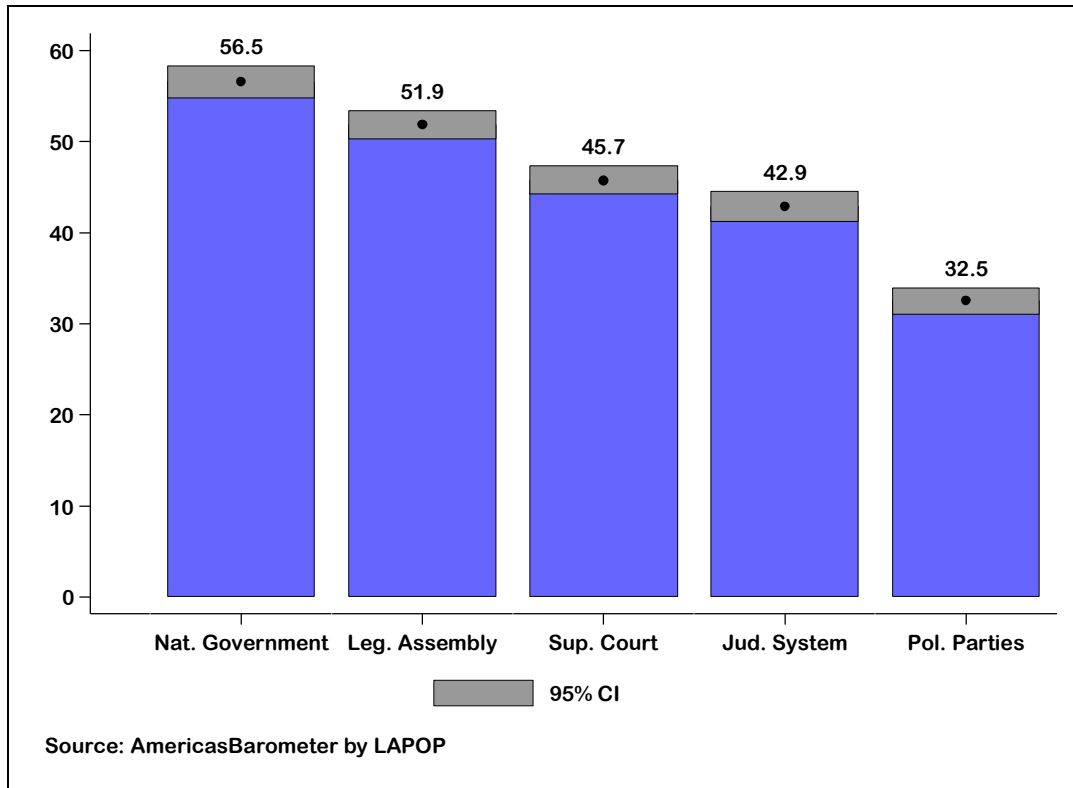
In this chapter, the dependent variable, democratic legitimacy, is measured by the two indexes mentioned in the introduction that address two of the dimensions of the concept, as defined first by Easton and subsequently refined by other scholars (Easton 1965; Lipset 1981; Norris 2004; Seligson and Booth 2009). These two indexes also measure legitimacy at the individual level.

The dependent variable is operationalized in two variables measuring **system support** and the **legitimacy of political institutions** key to the political system.

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<sup>33</sup> Economic trouble was always denied by the national government until very recently. Until the last months of 2010, the official claim was that Bolivia had a stable economic growth and that it was practically “untouched” by the previous years’ international economic crisis. Due to this official position, the general public was not expecting either inflation or economic instability, which led to an 80% increase of gasoline prices (policy that was withdrawn a few days after its issuance) and to the sudden scarcity of basic staple products such as sugar, flour and rice. Recently, the national government has also publicly admitted that it lacks the capacity to produce as much natural gas and gasoline as it projected and that income of this –almost exclusive- export product have caused a deficit in the public budget.

The adequacy of this index can be empirically noticed by observing the distribution of trust among the different components that form this index in this sample of Bolivia in 2010 (see Graph IV.1 below).



**Graph IV-1. Trust in components of legitimacy of political institutions index. Bolivia, 2010.**

**AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

What stands out the most is that the variables leading the index in the sample are precisely the National Government (the Executive) and the Plurinational Legislative Assembly, while the institutions related to the Judicial branch and the political parties lag behind in trust and are significantly different and in a lower level of trust than the Executive and Legislative institutions. These results correspond precisely to the popular and media views of distribution of power and support in the current state of affairs in Bolivia. Thus, from the beginning the index

confirms with empirical evidence this state of legitimacy distribution among the core institutions of the Bolivian State.

Over the years, LAPOP studies have been showing that levels of system support and institutional legitimacy vary across regions following a relatively stable pattern, unless under conditions of crisis or unexpected events in one or another of the *departamentos*. The assumption is that regions showing higher levels of support tend to maintain them over time as do regions with low levels of support.

Drawing from the ample theory produced about this issue, another assumption of this study is that both measurements of democratic legitimacy are influenced by economically relevant factors both at the individual-level (such as satisfaction with the economic situation - domestic and individual- and a retrospective evaluation of the economic situation) and at the aggregate level, such as the economic level of regional development (measured here through DHI departmental scores<sup>34</sup>). A special case is the variable of the government's economic performance, which would turn out to be a combination of a political and economic individual-level evaluation that also influences democratic legitimacy.

Finally, a political variable that is assumed to affect democratic legitimacy is the level of trust of the citizen in the regional government (or *Prefectura*, now called *Gobernación*). Given that we are concerned with the regional variations in legitimacy, this variable is key to following the political regional patterns of the relation between citizens and the State. The assumption is that the higher the adherence and trust in the regional government, the higher legitimacy will be. The measurement of political factors affecting legitimacy is complemented by individual-level evaluations of the performance of the President and an electoral preference for the ruling party.

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<sup>34</sup> The DHI data at the *departamento* level are from 2004. There are no available updated DHI scores differentiated by *departamento* for Bolivia.

The combination of individual and aggregate factors enriches the understanding of the phenomena under study, allowing for the combination of complementary elements that affect political processes in different but simultaneous ways: the subject and the context.

These assumptions are based on the theory presented above and on the enormous amount of empirical research contributing evidence to understanding the dynamics of legitimacy. Nevertheless, some of these theories and assumptions, when tested in a purely Latin American context, yield results that contradict what has been assumed so far for highly industrialized democracies (Schwarz-Blum, 2007), and the assumption in this case is that findings for Bolivian regional samples will continue to contradict what theory indicates should be expected, for although we are attempting to implement a Western model of democracy, and we are largely succeeding at it. Latin American countries are not Western developed countries, but countries with their own unique cultural, social, economic and political configurations. In this sense, Bolivia is far less "Western", since the undergoing process of change intends to willingly distance itself from the Western model of nation.

This chapter focuses on the regional dynamics of democratic legitimacy using the LAPOP 2010 Bolivia sample that is representative of the population at the sub-national level. There is wide variance across the nine Bolivian regions in regards to the economic contextual variable and acceptable variance in system support and institutional legitimacy. The variation in levels of economic development (the contextual variable) and distribution of wealth among Bolivian regions provide enough material to find enlightening details about the workings of legitimacy at the sub-national level.

Finally, the project employs statistical models and instruments (mixed models regressions) that account for the different types of data that are combined here and that will

ultimately contribute to bring about a broader understanding of the question of legitimacy in a Latin American context.

### **Analysis and Interpretation of Results**

In order to go further in understanding the predictors and the meaning of this variation, the analysis of the regional dynamics of system support and institutional legitimacy is based on a mixed effects regression model that assumes there must be an effect of the *departamento* level generating not only the variance between *departamentos* but also one that is expected to reflect the grouping pattern already found in previous research (Vargas Villazón 2009) making up two macro-regions of differing political and economic views. The outcomes of the regression models are presented in the following table (Table IV.1).

**Table IV-1. Predictors of system support and legitimacy of political institutions. Bolivia 2010. AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

Independent variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	System Support	Institutional legitimacy	System Support	Institutional legitimacy
Indigenous				
Wealth	.7108*		.6613*	
President approval	.0992*	.0806*	.0944*	.0872*
MAS vote				
PNE*				
PNE PY**				.0179**
PIES***	.0422*			
PIES PY****				
Gvt Economic performance	.2978*	.3762*	.3094*	.3744*
Trust Prefectura	.1950*	.2201*	.1851*	.2048*
HDI	29.968*	24.973*	-----	-----
La Paz			-4.723*	-3.737*
Beni			2.146**	
Tarija				
Cochabamba				-2.567*
Oruro			-3.504*	
Potosi			-4.010*	-4.989*
Chuquisaca			-5.711*	-2.094**
Pando				-4.436*
N	<b>2,504</b>	<b>2,515</b>	<b>2,504</b>	<b>2,515</b>

\* Perception of national economy

\*\* Perception of national economy, previous year

\*\*\* Perception of individual economic situation

\*\*\*\* Perception of individual economic situation, previous year

\* sig. <.005

\*\* sig. < .01

Outcomes from the previous regression analysis (model 1) show clear evidence of the big impact that the level of HDI<sup>35</sup> has on the variation of system support and legitimacy of political institutions levels. Results also suggest that economic and political considerations take part in the definition of both system support and institutional legitimacy. In the case of system support, the level of individual wealth and a positive evaluation of the individual economic situation would

<sup>35</sup> This is a contextual effect that assumes that all citizens living in the same *departamento* share the same level of human development. Although this assumption cannot be true, for there are differences of development within *departamentos*, the effect of this contextual variable also cannot be ignored.



generate an increase in system support. As for the political considerations, a positive evaluation of the President's performance as well as the government's economic performance<sup>36</sup> would improve support for the political system in place. It is curious though that partisanship measured as electoral preference for the ruling party has no effect on system support. Finally, higher levels of trust in the regional government (*Gobernación*) will logically increase support for the system.

It is important to notice that, despite the official favorable inclination of the current government towards building a State that recognizes and highly values indigenous populations, the variable of self-identification as indigenous has no effect on system support levels.

As for the case of the legitimacy of core political institutions, citizens seem to have a more objective view, since only their objective evaluations of the President's and the government's economic performance and their trust in another important political institution, the *Gobernación*, have an effect on institutional legitimacy perceptions.

Model 2 explores the fixed effect of the regional level variable (*departamento*) on the determination of both, system support and institutional legitimacy. Results confirm this expectation and also show a grouping pattern similar to the one showed above in that, taking Santa Cruz as the reference category, data show a statistically significant negative difference for La Paz, Oruro, Potosi and Chuquisaca. This means that the levels of system support in these *departamentos* are statistically lower than the level in Santa Cruz, which reports the higher level of HDI and of participation in national GNP.

On top of this, the analysis shows that the individual levels of wealth as well as the performance variables and trust in the *Gobernación* continue to have an effect on the variation of system support levels.

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<sup>36</sup> Government's economic performance is based on an index composed of four variables that reflect an objective individual level evaluation of government performance in fighting poverty, fighting corruption within governmental spheres, fighting unemployment and its management of the national economy.

The same goes for the measurement of legitimacy of political institutions. La Paz, Cochabamba, Potosi, Chuquisaca and Pando show a negative, statistically significant difference with Santa Cruz, confirming the grouping pattern that would confirm the existence of two macro-regions dividing the country into East and West. In this case, Pando (expected to be part of the Eastern region) constitutes an exception that can be easily explained by the events of 2008 and the later governmental intervention of its institutions by the central government which has caused citizen distrust towards the institutions of the State.

With the confirmation that a specific regional dynamic of system support and legitimacy of the political institutions is clearly happening at the regional level, this study furthers the analysis to search for the predictors of both levels of legitimacy that are specific to each *departamento*. This analysis takes the same model run at the national level to be analyzed at the sub-national level assuming that combinations of both, an effect of the specific economic situation and of political regional and national elements, affect the determination of regional system support and institutional legitimacy.

The expectation of finding a grouping pattern of *departamentos* that form two macro-regions of conflicting economic, developmental and political views still holds for this level of the analysis. The expectation is to find similarities between *departamentos* that supposedly belong to a same macro-region (whether East or West) and to find differences between *departamentos* pertaining to different macro-regions.

This expectation is not purely speculative. This grouping pattern is evident when observing the regional distribution of trust in the Regional Government (*Gobernación*) and the distribution of approval of the President's performance (see Figures 6 and 7 in the Appendix). The same pattern is also observed when analyzing the levels of trust in individual components of

the system support index, specifically for the indicators of pride of living in this political system and of belief in that one must support the system. Thus, expectation to see a macro-region pattern forming as well among the predictors of the two dimensions of legitimacy is reasonable.

Results of the regression analyses performed for each *departamento* and for each dimension of legitimacy (system support and institutional legitimacy) are presented in Table IV.2, below.

Table IV-2. Linear regression results for the predictors of system support and institutional legitimacy by *departamento*. Bolivia, 2010.  
AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

Indep. variables	Dependent variables																		
	La Paz		Oruro		Potosí		Cochabamba		Chuquisaca		Tarija		Santa Cruz		Beni		Pando		
	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	Sys	Leg	
Indigenous Wealth			3.673**															-10.2*	-6.009**
President approval		.1024**	.1705*				.1022**	.1226*					.1636*	.1833*	.1221*	.1632*			
MAS vote			6.319*																
PNE*												.1511*							
PNE PY**											.0959*	.0709*							
PIES***							.141**		.1366*	.117**	.0776**								
PIES PY****											.0569**								
Gvt Economic performance	.3359*	.3466*	.283*	.4175*	.2546*	.3539*	.2682*	.3689*	.136**	.2842*	.3671*	.4548*	.2648*	.3752*	.3486*	.3593*	.4466*	.3239*	
Trust Gobernacion	.1931*	.3042*	.1939*	.1808*	.1800*	.1687*	.2492*	.3001*	.1712*	.2141*	.1528*	.1284*	.1519*	.1709*	.1566*	.2315*	.2255*	.3106*	
R-squared	.4113	.5473	.4097	.4569	.251	.4156	.3956	.5952	.229	.3732	.595	.6103	.3889	.4794	.3827	.4679	.6584	.6369	
N	331	332	259	260	283	283	331	336	248	250	261	263	334	333	224	224	233	234	

\* Perception of national economy

\*\* Perception of national economy, previous year

\*\*\* Perception of individual economic situation

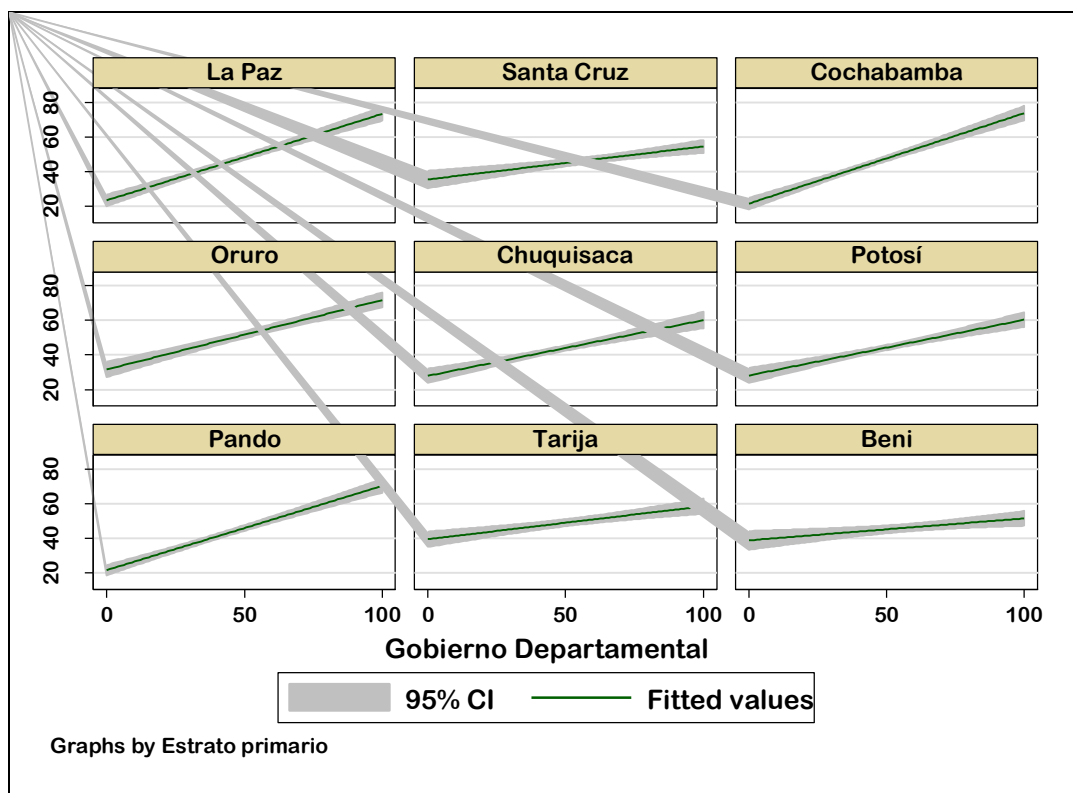
\*\*\*\* Perception of individual economic situation, previous year

\* sig. p <.001

\*\* sig. p <.05

What shows more clearly from the results of the regressions at the *departemento* level is that all *departamentos* share two similarities: positive individual level evaluations of the government's economic performance and higher levels of trust in the regional government (*Gobernación*) determine higher levels of both dimensions of legitimacy, system support and legitimacy of political institutions, independently of the specific economic situation or of any other political regional or national considerations and of the macro-regional alignment. Regression outcomes show that these results are very robust despite the small N of the departmental samples. In other words, a better economic performance of the central government will clearly benefit levels of legitimacy across regions.

As for the case of trust in regional governments, Graph IV.4 below illustrates the relation between this variable and legitimacy of political institutions by *departemento*. As can be seen from these graphs, the relation is positive for all cases, but less pronounced in Santa Cruz, Beni and Tarija, which happen to be the *departamentos* in which regional government is controlled by the opposition to the current government and which are the main core of what is considered the Eastern macro-region. In this way, although the positive relation holds, one can see that trust in opposition-led regional governments will benefit institutional legitimacy in a somewhat weaker way than trust in *Gobernaciones* led by the ruling party.



**Graph IV-2. Fitted values of the relation between trust in regional government and legitimacy of political institutions. Bolivia 2010, AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.**

These results agree with evidence from previous research (Weitz-Shapiro 2008) which already showed the importance of the effect of the sub-national institution performance on system support and adherence to the democratic regime. The regionally differentiated relation between trust in regional government and legitimacy also coincides with Weitz-Shapiro's results in that they show that citizens do not trust the institution blindly but are able to differentiate the quality of the performance and the character of the institution.

Other interesting outcomes from the analysis concern the legitimacy of political institutions index. Note that in Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando and Tarija individual level evaluations of

the national and mainly of the individual economic situation<sup>37</sup> are predictors of institutional legitimacy and not so evidently of system support. Additionally, these variables are not so important in the other *departamentos*, which form the Western macro-region. Thus, not only is there a clear difference between the *departamentos* of East and West, but also a clear grouping based on differing views on the importance of economic considerations when defining adherence to the political system and, more broadly, the perception of democratic legitimacy in the country.

These findings also imply that citizens in these *departamentos* are capable of making a qualitative distinction between the two dimensions of legitimacy, since the economic considerations affect evaluations of the institutional dimension of democracy but do not have the same effect on the dimension that refers to democratic principles and to political community.

Continuing with the importance of the economy on democratic legitimacy, data show that considerations of individual level of wealth<sup>38</sup> are important only to citizens in Oruro and Potosi. These two *departamentos* share the economic characteristics of being among the poorest in the country in absolute terms, formerly the center of national economy during the tin era and currently with a small contribution to national GNP. They also are “population expelling” *departamentos* due to the lack of economic opportunity and both belong to the Western macro-region of the country.

Individual level evaluations of the personal economic situation are relevant to determining system support in Cochabamba, Chuquisaca, Tarija and Pando. For these citizens, their personal economic situation in the present affects the way they perceive the appropriateness of democratic principles that guide the political system.

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<sup>37</sup> This is measured by four variables: two sociotropic variables that measure individual level perceptions of the present national economic situation and in the past year, and two ideotropic variables measuring individual level perceptions of the present individual economic situation and in the past year.

<sup>38</sup> This variable is measured in quintiles of wealth based on an index of possession of material goods.

As for political considerations affecting democratic legitimacy, a favorable evaluation of the President's general performance will affect both dimensions of legitimacy and increase the level of system support as well as the perceived level of institutional legitimacy in *departamentos* in the west (variable is statistically significant in La Paz, Oruro and Cochabamba) and the east (variable is also significant in Santa Cruz and Beni) of the country.

Although expected, there seems to be no specific grouping or difference here between *departamentos* belonging to opposing macro-regions. It is unexpected though, to observe the effect of this variable in Santa Cruz, but especially so in Beni, because it is a low population department with very low levels of internal migration (while Santa Cruz has a large amount of migrants that arrive from western regions) and openly opposed to the current Presidency. And yet, these results agree with the theory on performance and system support that states that a favorable evaluation of governmental performance (of almost any institution) should have a positive effect on legitimacy levels.

It is important to pay attention to two special cases among the results. The only ethnic identification variable included in the model is one variable that asks for self-identification of the interviewee as an indigenous person. This variable had no effect in the regression models run at the national level, but was included in the sub-national level models because the distribution of indigenous populations, their ethnic background and their specific weight in the total population of any *departamento* varies widely. Results show that this variable has no weight when defining perceived levels of legitimacy except for two very special cases: in Oruro, a western region with high levels of Quechua population, with the highest levels of system support, institutional legitimacy and approval of the President's performance in the country. In this case, on top of being a citizen of this *departamento*, being an indigenous person will generate higher levels of



system support or, in fact there is a stronger identification with the system's principles and political community among indigenous individuals in Oruro.

Pando presents precisely the opposite situation. The indigenous variable is statistically significant in Pando for both dimensions of democratic legitimacy, but its coefficient is negative which means that an indigenous person in Pando is less identified with the system's principles and political community and will tend to trust less in the legitimacy of the core institutions of the State. In fact, this finding is explained by the current political situation in Pando, which started with an intervention of all political institutions in the *departamento* by the national government after a still unclear conflict between opposing political factions that ended with several deaths, the *Prefecto* of Pando in jail, politicians that are political refugees in Brazil and all institutions intervened by the national government. In this context, an indigenous in Pando will definitely distrust both the institutions and the principles of a regime that behaves in such a way.

Finally, in the current political situation, with the Executive and the Legislative controlled by the incumbent party (MAS) and with a generalized high level of support for the President, it is surprising that the variable that expresses an electoral preference<sup>39</sup> for this party will have almost no effect on the perceived level of democratic legitimacy in Bolivia. The expected effect of this variable is to show that MAS voters (would be the winners, following Lijphart's classification) identify closely with the system's principles and political community and that they trust that the core institutions of the State are legitimate with more strength than those who did not vote for MAS (the losers).

Empirical evidence resulting from the regression analyses at the sub-national level show two interesting things: partisanship has nothing to do with democratic legitimacy in Bolivia.

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<sup>39</sup> This variable is a dummy created from variable vb3: Whom did you vote for in the past election? It cannot be that respondents forgot who they voted for, because general elections were held in December 2009 and the survey interviews were held during the months of February and March 2010.

Second, in the few exceptions where partisanship does matter, it has an effect only on the ideological dimension of legitimacy (the system support variable) but no effect on the more objective variable of institutional legitimacy. The effect of this political consideration is valid in Oruro, again, where the winners of the last electoral competition are more strongly identified with the system's principles and its corresponding political community. On the other hand, in Beni the effect of having voted for the incumbent party causes a decrease in system support, this probably being the effect of winners being a minority in a political context in open opposition to the ruling party.

### **Conclusions**

There is much insight and detail to be gained by looking at the dynamics of democratic legitimacy at the sub-national level. The regional dynamics of politics do not necessarily always correspond to the national dynamics of the political game.

Findings of this work have confirmed previous evidence that there is a persistent similarity of political views and economic considerations among *departamentos* belonging to the same macro-region (East or West) and that there are persistent differences between *departamentos* belonging to opposing macro-regions. But the evidence very strongly shows that there are also coincidences across-regions that are stronger than any regional differences. Governmental economic performance and trust in the Regional Government are strong and robust predictors of both dimensions of democratic legitimacy across the board.

The results of the regressions at the sub-national level also confirm the fact that national politics is being played out heavily at the *departamento* level thus reinforcing the notion that this administrative level is increasing its importance as the arena where decisions are being made.

Objective evaluations of the economic situation are, in all, a stronger predictor of democratic legitimacy than some more subjective variables, such as ethnic identity, partisanship or even individual level of wealth. Evaluations of the personal economic situation are more important than evaluations of the national economic situation, but only in few *departamentos*. This is a sign of the intensity of the influence of the political momentum that Bolivia is experiencing. Theory tells us that economic considerations should be expected to overpower political considerations, but this true only for a few regions and even there, evaluations of the government's performance and trust in the regional government are stronger and more robust predictors of legitimacy.

Finally, the dynamics of Bolivian politics tend to be excessively focused on three *departamentos* which hold the bigger proportion of population in the country and are called "the axis" (La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz)<sup>40</sup>. Attention to political events and conflicts is practically focused on these three areas both by the media and the government. But the evidence shows that the surprises and exceptions are located in *departamentos* outside the axis, such as Oruro, Beni, Pando, Chuquisaca and Potosi.

Aside from the predictors of governmental economic performance and trust in the regional government shared with the rest of the *departamentos*, there is basically no other predictor working in Chuquisaca and the R-squared for system support is the lowest of all sub-national units, which means that there is something at work in Chuquisaca that this model cannot explain. Something similar happens in Potosi, where the R-squared for the system support model is very low and there is no predictor at all explaining the dynamics of system support in the *departemento* aside from the ones that work across regions.

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<sup>40</sup> The "axis" departments combined are responsible for producing 67.6% of the national GNP and are number 1 (Santa Cruz), 3 (La Paz) and 4 (Cochabamba) in HDI levels. They also are the three richer *departamentos* in the country in terms of absolute GNP.

Meanwhile, nothing in the modeling of the axis region draws special attention and these *departamentos* behave according to what can be expected from theory and evidence from previous studies. Conflict, change or a different configuration of regional politics in regards to legitimacy are brewing outside the axis and are receiving little or no attention<sup>41</sup> at all from both the media and the national government. The most important evidence drawn from this study is that in the new regional configuration of Bolivian political dynamics we need to be looking outside the axis for potential threats or beneficial dynamics for democratic legitimacy.

My final chapter takes this analysis to the international arena and studies perceptions of legitimacy and institutional performance at the supra-national level. The analysis includes all the elements I have studied so far at the sub-national level, including the effect of economic considerations both at the individual and the national level and also the effect of a specific political context by country.

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<sup>41</sup> In January 2011, conflict exploded in Llallagua (Potosi) where peasants went to the city to protest against the increasing prices of basic food products (the only specific predictor working in the institutional legitimacy model in this *departamento* is individual level of wealth). The protest ended with confrontations with local populations, plundering of local commercial businesses and much public and private property destroyed. This conflict only follows previous protests and confrontations with the national government in Potosi for the judicial process initiated against Potosi's elected Governor, Rene Joaquina, member of an opposing party. Joaquina was sentenced and the current Governor of Potosi is a MAS member.

## **Chapter V . Citizen Perceptions of Legitimacy and Institutional Performance in Latin America**

Legitimacy of the State and its institutions is the most frequent and important evaluation citizens make of the democratic political system. Even though it is difficult to measure and capture, legitimacy is the most accurate evaluation of the degree of suitability of the democratic system and its institutions because it is given by the subjects of democracy according to their values and expectations to which the political system is expected to answer.

Over 25 years have passed since the beginning of the wave of transformations and reforms that ended the dictatorial regimes in Latin America and the return to democracy started. This process of reforms has remained constant and has removed reasons to believe that Latin American democracies could be at risk of returning to authoritarian regimes even though some cases, such as Honduras a few years ago, may still face critical moments.

The drive to search and build a real Latin American democracy that responds to the needs and expectations of Latin American citizens and that is designed and conceived according to the Latin American reality has resulted in a profuse multiplication of levels, actors, institutions, processes, regulations, dynamics and even historical periods that overlap on one political system and moreover, happens in a challengingly short period of time for the social capacity to assimilate deep transformations.

These elements have determined that an outstanding characteristic of the consolidations and democratic transformation process in the region is the increasing complexity of Latin American society and reality as a result of a multiplication of fields of opportunity and conflict in the social, economic, cultural and political arenas, all at the same time.

The legitimacy of institutions, actors and decisions involved in this process seems to constitute one of the main concerns and demands of Latin American society. In other words, we

are worried that institutions, actors and decisions are genuine, appropriate and suitable to our reality and the principles and values guiding the actions of the State, its institutions and our representatives appropriately respond to Latin American reality.

In this enterprise, institutional reform processes have been a constant presence in democracies in the region, mostly implemented as institutional packages of structural adjustment. The surge of new institutions and long reform and change processes are viewed with distrust and concern by several civil society sectors, while for others, these reforms mean progress in feelings of inclusion and equality, as well as an opening to more political participation opportunities that go beyond the electoral field (Przeworski 1991; Seligson and Cordova 2010).

These experiences have proven that *translating* ideal models and institutions to diverse realities is no easy task, even less so when dealing with complex realities and diverging preferences as to the basic democratic model chosen to be implemented in the region. While some social sectors prefer a procedural democratic model, others are more inclined towards the construction of *social* democracies. The latter are not limited to the political arena, but rather are oriented to the promotion of equality, inclusion and increasing social participation in decision making processes.

*Institutions* are the central element of all democratic models. They play a crucial role in the construction and consolidation of democracies and are the channel through which the citizen relates to the State. Institutions reproduce principles, ideas and values underlying the democratic model; they enforce them and strengthen them in society through their interaction with the citizenry (Torcal and Montero 2006).

So, what sorts of institutions are appropriate for society and the strengthening of democracy? Which reforms are necessary to respond to needs and interests of the citizenry? Which sectors need to be reformed; what is reformed and what is renewed? Which institutions and policies strengthen democracy, and which weaken it? Which institutions favor the exercise of a comprehensive citizenship?

The answers to these questions are as complex as society is and cannot be considered only under the light of theoretical considerations about the democratic model. One of the most important answers in these situations *must* be the one provided by the citizens that are subject to the norms, procedures and values represented by their political system. These subjects are the ones that relate on a day-to-day basis with the institutions and their State.

Another valid answer is provided by those institutions and is expressed through their performance, which determines not only their political legitimacy but also their democratic quality and the quality of life of the civil society. Thus, this chapter concentrates on the democratic legitimacy in Latin American countries as perceived by their citizens. It focuses with special emphasis on the *institutional face* of the democracies in the region through citizen evaluation of the performance of central institutions of the State and the principles of the political system.

This chapter takes into account the elements that affect democratic legitimacy and individual perceptions of citizens of 18 Latin American countries about institutional performance in the economic field (including the fight against poverty and distribution of wealth) in order to evaluate the degree of democratic legitimacy in the region and in each of the countries individually.

This includes a focus on the main subjective and objective factors that affect individual perceptions about the legitimacy of the central democratic institutions and the willingness to support the political system as a frame of coexistence in the public sphere. A special emphasis is placed on measuring the weight of the national economic context and the impact of individual economic conditions on democratic legitimacy in Latin American democracies.

### **Assumptions and Methodology**

Theory suggests that, given its subjective character, measurement of regime legitimacy cannot be directly made through objective or tangible indicators and that, for a more precise approach, it needs to be assumed as a multidimensional study requiring a combination of several measurements in order to more accurately represent reality.

Legitimacy is not only generated at the State level as the only source but is composed of several variables at different levels (Gilley 2006), which have been already defined in the introductory chapter of this work.

The country is the main level of analysis in this chapter. This allows comparisons to be made of national averages between countries to analyze the political behavior of citizens of one country with the rest of the countries in the sample. At the same time, this focus allows for studying behaviors, attitudes, perceptions and opinions of citizens in practically all Latin American countries providing a general view of democracy, its institutions and legitimacy in the whole region.

Additionally, the analysis of this data at the individual level allows perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of citizens with similar characteristics to be studied, even when they are not in the same country. For example, data indicate that the higher the perception of corruption in political institutions, the lower legitimacy will be. This means that citizens that perceive high levels of



corruption in political institutions will believe less in their legitimacy regardless of the country in which they live. At the same time, analysis at the individual level makes it possible to know behaviors and political attitudes of Latin Americans in general<sup>42</sup> at the regional level independently of the immediate national context.

This index measures legitimacy of the political institutions at the individual level, based on trust evaluations made by citizens. Its reliability is also supported by the fact that these are public, visible institutions and that it is safe to assume that citizens have enough knowledge about all of them to allow them to evaluate their performance in a reliable way.

Since the index represents a trust average of all institutions it is important to observe whether the distribution of trust is relatively equal for all institutions or whether some of them may be leading the index's value or biasing it. Ideally, in a democracy with stable and strong institutions, citizens should trust each of them to a relatively equal degree<sup>43</sup>.

The following section presents detailed results of the analyses implemented for this chapter based for both legitimacy indexes. It also discusses results about the main factors that influence the indexes and the contextual elements that determine them, evaluating also differences and similarities of conditions among countries in the region.

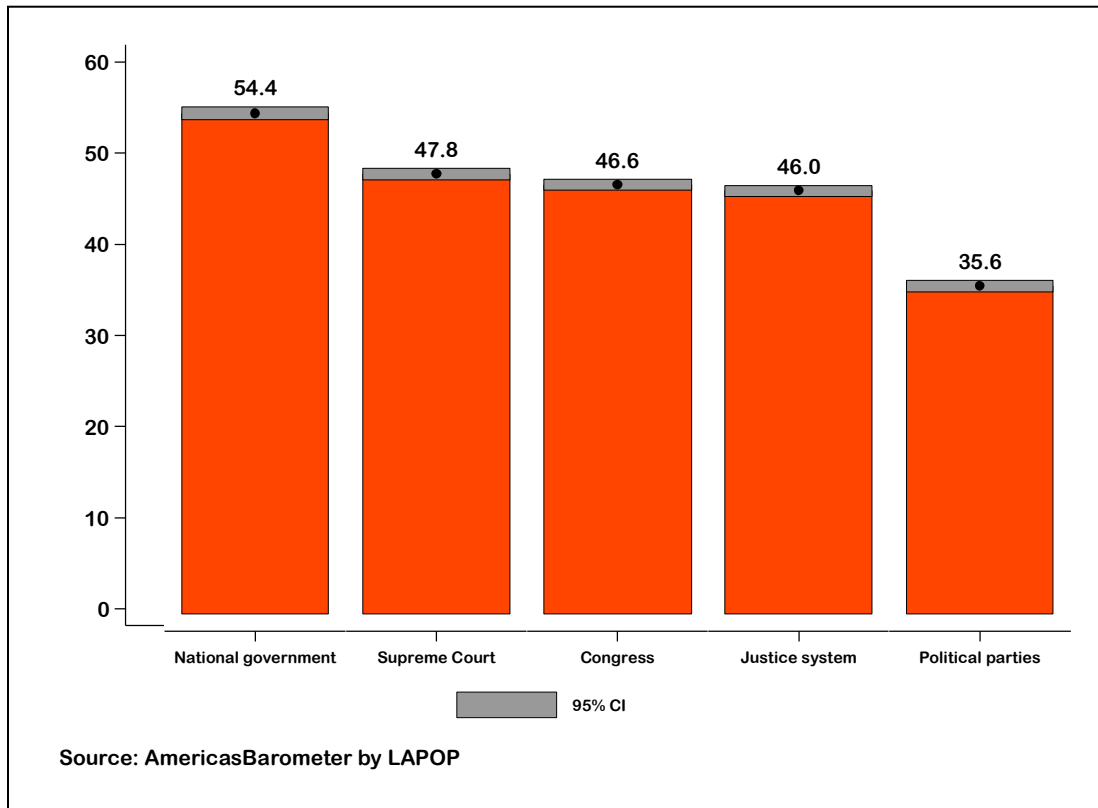
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<sup>42</sup> The analysis includes only 18 countries from Mexico to Chile. The only country in the Caribbean region is the Dominican Republic.

<sup>43</sup> It is important to notice that an equal distribution of trust among all institutions in the index is considered "ideal." In reality, distribution of trust is never equal for all institutions. Nevertheless, if there was one special institution with a trust average significantly higher or lower than the rest of the institutions in the index, this could bias the entire index and its significance.

## Legitimacy of Political Institutions and System Support in a Comparative Perspective

The following graph represents the distribution of the average trust in political institutions for Latin American countries in 2010.



**Graph V-1. Average trust in political institutions in the index of legitimacy of political institutions. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010.**

The data in the public opinion survey round of 2010 show that citizens trust the national government more than any other institution in the index as an average for all countries in the sample. This result is significant for it suggests that Latin American democracies still have a tendency to trust mostly in strong personalistic leaderships<sup>44</sup> that concentrate power in the Executive over the Legislative and that they prefer executive institutions over those that

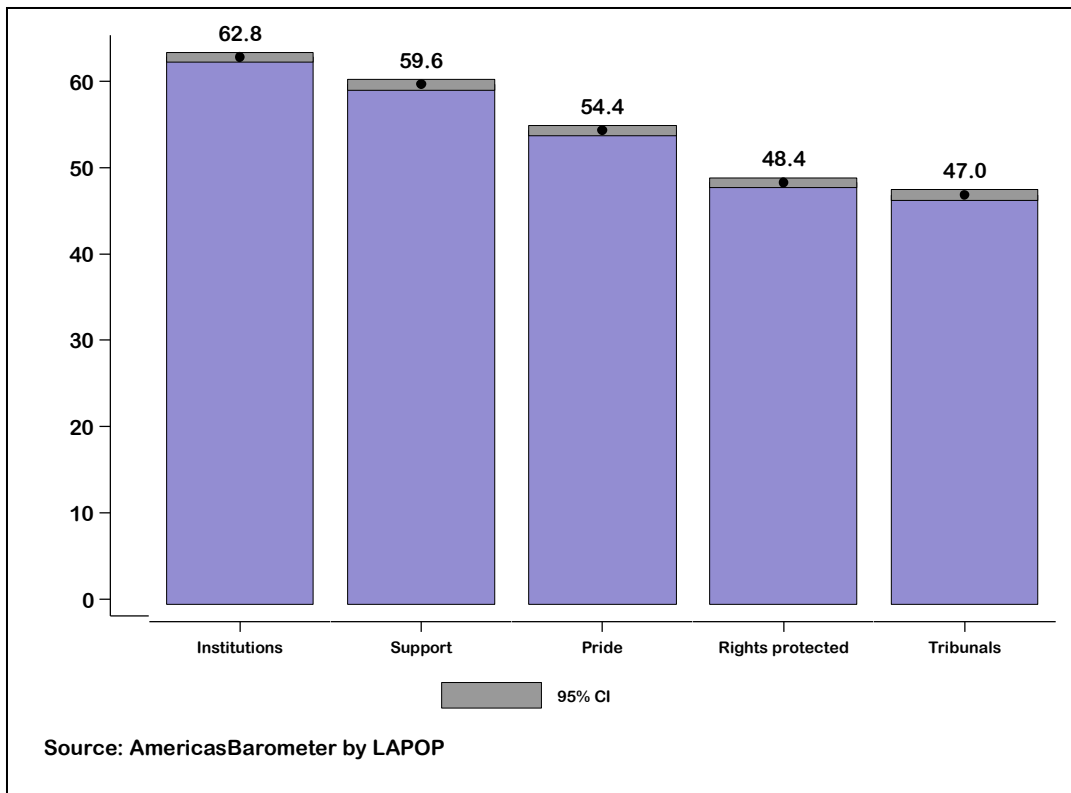
<sup>44</sup> This result is not exclusive for 2010. The data show that this is also true for the survey rounds of 2006 and 2008 and support the existence of a trend over time.

emphasize representation and distribution of power, which would be represented by Congress and the political parties.

The temporal perspective shows that the average trust in national governments has been constantly increasing between 2006 and 2010 for Latin America considered as one region. The countries with higher levels of trust in this institution are Uruguay, El Salvador and Chile, while Peru and Argentina present very low levels of trust in their national governments.

Moreover, to strengthen this result, respondents do not express a clear preference between institutions of the Legislative and the Judicial, since average levels of trust in Congress, the Supreme Court and the justice system are similar among all of them and are only slightly under the medium point of the 100-point scale.

Political parties are not trustworthy in the views of Latin American citizens. But, this is not an exclusively Latin American phenomenon, since political parties are suffering from lack of trust in all regions of the world. Trust in these institutions has remained practically at the same level between 2006 and 2010. Uruguay and Honduras register levels of trust significantly higher than the rest of the countries in the region, while Ecuador, Argentina and Guatemala have lower levels of trust in the sample. This is not a constant tendency in the case of Honduras; this situation can rather be a product of the general surge of trust in political institutions experienced in that country after stabilization of the democratic regime after the 2009 crisis.



**Graph V-2. Average of system support for Latin American countries. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010.**

Graph V.2 presents disaggregated average levels of trust for the elements that form the system support index for Latin American countries as a region. Among these components, the strongest is trust in political institutions of the democratic regime, followed by the belief in supporting the political system and the pride in being part of the political community.

Results suggest that the role of political institutions is not a minor one and, from the citizens' perception, they play an important role in considerations about the democratic system and its legitimacy.

On the other hand, it is concerning to see that variables referring to the justice system (belief in a fair trial) and to the protection of basic citizen rights are the less trusted elements in the index on average for all Latin American countries in the sample, suggesting that Latin

American democracies are still weak in guaranteeing the respect for vital principles without which presence a regime could not be called essentially democratic.

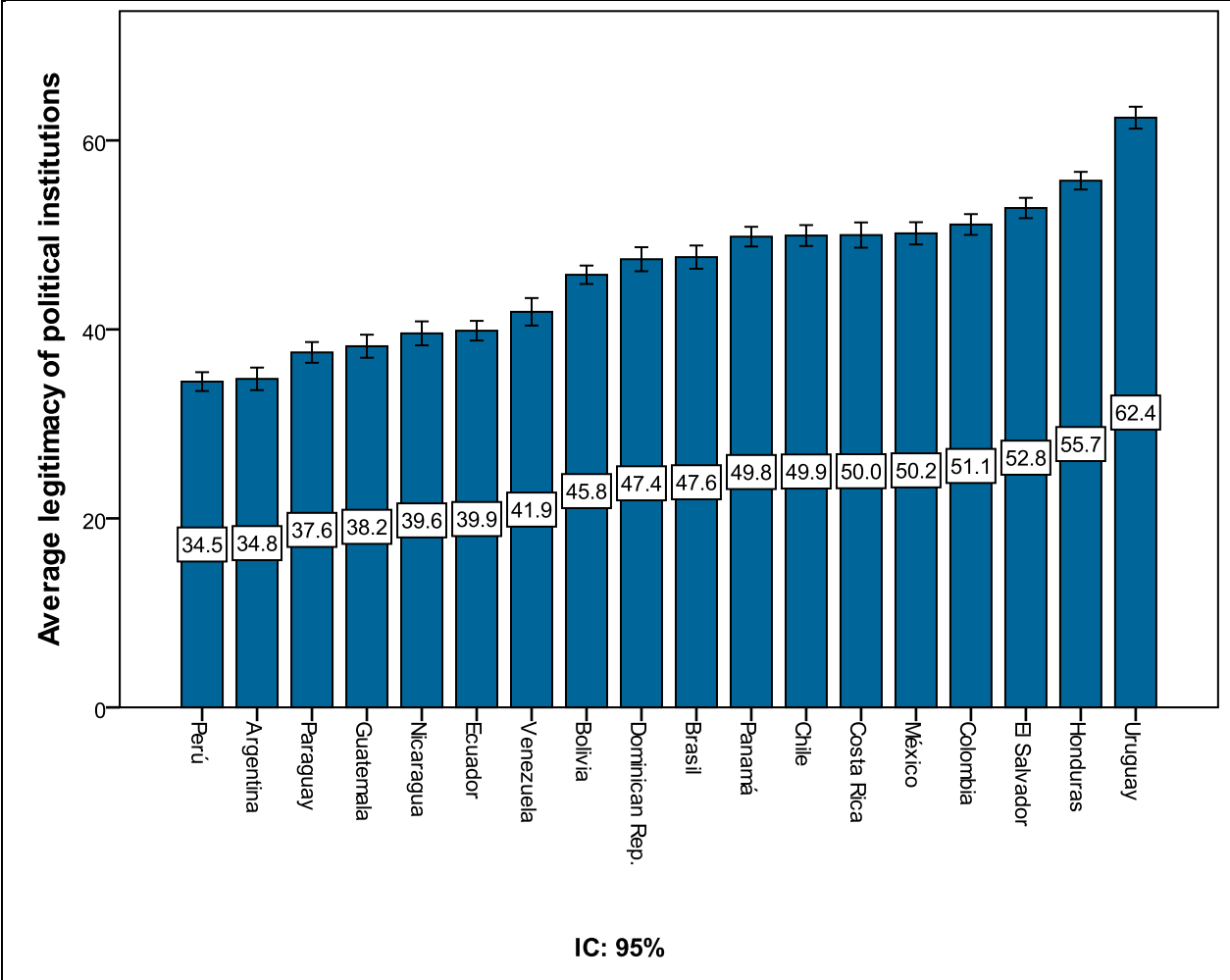
These results also indicate that, despite a sizable portion of the Latin American population expressing their preference for a democratic model that emphasizes equality, involvement, participation and social welfare, Latin American democracies are perceived by their citizens as mostly procedural -given that their institutional face is the most trusted- and still lack significantly in areas that directly address the importance of the citizen and the quality of citizenship for the political system and for society.

Between 2006 and 2010, all components of this index have registered a regular increase in trust levels for the whole region. Like the institutional legitimacy index, the highest levels of trust in political institutions are found in Uruguay, El Salvador and Costa Rica<sup>45</sup> while Argentina, Peru and Ecuador register the lowest levels of trust in the whole region. It is also interesting to observe that lower levels of trust in political institutions studied in this chapter are mostly registered in South American countries, raising the question if South and Central America should be considered two separate regions as far as democratic legitimacy is concerned or, more cautiously, as far as the institutional structure of democracies is concerned.

The lower levels of trust in the judicial system guaranteeing a fair trial are registered in Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Argentina (again South American countries) and with this, a pattern seems to emerge wherein these countries are repeatedly among those with low levels of general trust in the political system and its institutions, as illustrated in Graph 3.

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<sup>45</sup> In all three cases, trust levels are over 70 points in the 100-point scale.



Graph V-3. Legitimacy of political institutions, comparative perspective. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010.

Uruguay and Honduras are, again, the countries with higher levels of legitimacy of the political institutions. As previously stated, this is not a permanent pattern in the case of Honduras, but a data point that must be taken within the recent historical context of that country. After the 2009 constitutional crisis and the tense period of the *de facto* government that it experienced up to January 2010, the Supreme Court declared that the newly established government was legal and constitutional. This statement jump started a new democratic strengthening for the country. Honduran citizens responded to it with a vote of confidence in the

State and its main institutions, as was registered by the 2010 round of the LAPOP public opinion survey held almost immediately after the reestablishment of democracy.

Historically, legitimacy levels of political institutions in Honduras were low<sup>46</sup> in 2006, slightly lower in 2008 (previously to the crisis) and in 2010 they experience a statistically significant increase of at least 10 points on the 100-point scale that can only be attributed to a confidence vote of the citizenry in the new government in order to overcome the State crisis (see Figure R in the Annex section).

Something similar happens in the case of El Salvador. Legitimacy levels are slightly higher than in Honduras, but an important increase is registered between 2008 and 2010. Trust in the national government, Congress and the Supreme Court has increased by at least 10 points in this two year period after experiencing a drop between 2006 and 2008, probably due to the effects of the economic crisis and high levels of criminality and corruption that the long political management of ARENA could not improve.

In 2009, Mauricio Funes and the FMLN won the election under the banner of fighting corruption and reducing crime. The 2010 survey was implemented approximately 10 months after the Funes government was inaugurated and reflects two things: 1) a confidence vote from the citizenry for the new government and the new direction laid out by it for the country and 2) a satisfactory evaluation of the new political program in El Salvador.

Results for the system support index show the general pattern of distribution of legitimacy (see Figure Q, Annex section). The countries with lower support levels are Argentina, Paraguay, Peru and Ecuador in that order.

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<sup>46</sup> Trust averages in Honduras are historically low both for the legitimacy index as well as for the individual variables in the index.

In the case of Argentina, data are available only for the 2008 – 2010 period during which levels of legitimacy of the political institutions has remained low and even register a slight decrease between 2008 and 2010. Variations of trust in political institutions in the index show a strong decrease of trust in the national government in the two year period (8 points on the scale), as does trust in the Supreme Court and political parties. Trust in Congress and the justice system has also remained low. This is an indication that, although Argentina is going through reform and institutional strengthening processes that seem to have popular support, despite data from studies that emphasize the degree of citizen satisfaction with the political system and the increasing legitimacy of the first years of the decade, the LAPOP public opinion survey data register citizen scepticism or dissatisfaction when evaluating institutional performance between 2008 and 2010.

As for Peru and Paraguay, average levels of legitimacy of political institutions was consistently low in the 2006 – 2010 period. The only exception in the level of trust is Congress in Paraguay, which is high and has been increasing significantly since 2006. The other institutions continue to be poorly evaluated by the citizenry in both countries.

Countries with low levels of legitimacy of their political institutions and system support have been consistently among the lowest levels since 2006, suggesting a pattern of institutional weakness and instability in the political life of these countries, with the exception of Honduras in 2010.

When taking into consideration the average levels of system support and institutional legitimacy for the Latin American region, results show an optimistic view for democracies in the region. The 2006 – 2010 period can be considered a beneficial one for the region taken globally even when some cases, taken individually, show negative results.



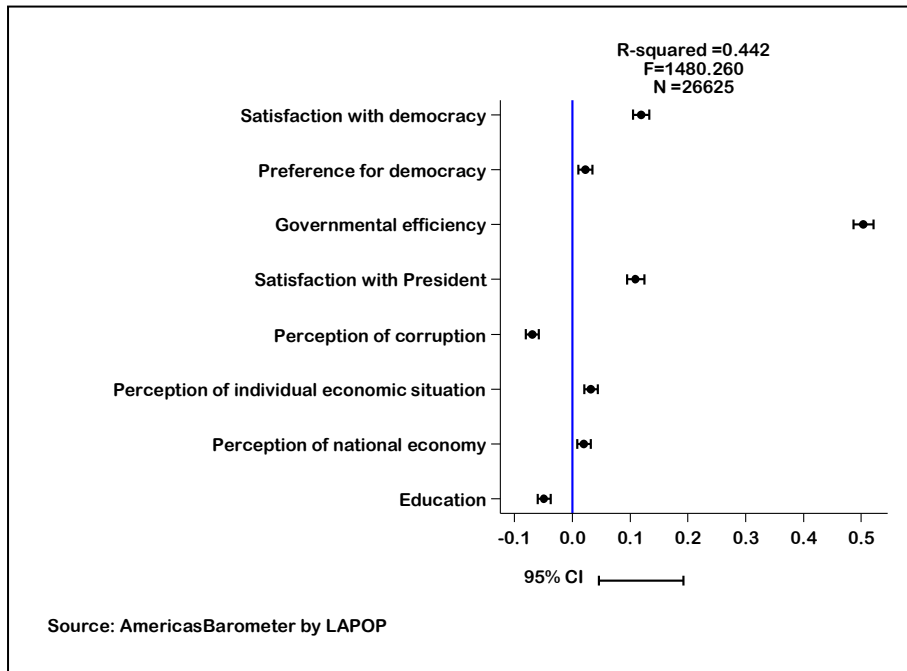
This conclusion is supported by the fact that *all* components in both indexes taken individually have increased on average for the whole region since 2006, including trust in political parties and the belief in receiving a fair trial from the justice system.

Also, in all cases for all countries in the sample, the average levels of system support are higher than the averages of legitimacy of political institutions. A logical way to understand these results is concluding that citizens are comfortable with the principles structuring the democratic system, which should reflect values and principles of their societies. But when it comes to assessing institutional performance, their vision is more critical because political institutions are perceived as more tangible elements, managed by individuals that mishandle them or take advantage of their position. Corruption has a persistently negative influence on legitimacy in all countries.

Additionally, political institutions, their performance and the individuals running them are constantly subject to criticism and attacks from the media, while the principles that underlie the structure of the political system are seldom discussed in the public sphere.

## Predictors of Institutional Legitimacy and System Support

A linear multivariate regression analysis has been conducted in this section for each of the dependent variables, *i.e.* system support and legitimacy of political institutions. The objective is to discover which factors influence citizens at the individual level to evaluate institutional performance favorably or unfavorably and to discover what causes the variations in perception about democratic legitimacy as measured by these two indexes.



**Graph V-4. Predictors of legitimacy of political institutions at the individual level.**  
**Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010.**

Results are similar for both indexes and are summarized in Table V.1, in the section below. The same variables influence them in the same direction but with different intensities. Variables with statistical significance exercise their influence on the system support and institutional legitimacy variables independently of the effect of other significant variables in the model.

The multivariate linear regression model includes the same variables for both indexes,

because both refer to the same concept, but from two different dimensions and approaches. Hence, they should be sensitive to the influence of the same elements although they are not identical. If they were, there would be no reason to measure them with different indicators or from different approaches.

**Table V-1. Predictors of system support and legitimacy of political institutions.**  
**Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010.**

Independent Variables	Model: linear regression	
	System support	Legitimacy of political institutions
Education	-.884*	-1.316*
Approval of the president's work	.0608*	.1066*
Perception of national economy	.037*	.0271*
Perception of personal economy	.048*	.0378*
Efficacy of the government's performance	.354*	.4525*
Perception of corruption	-.0327*	-.0564*
Preference for democracy	.0451*	.0217*
Perception of the degree of democracy	.1234*	.116*
Country	-.355*	-1.951*
<b>Rsquared</b>	<b>0.3418</b>	<b>0.4445</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>26.444</b>	<b>26.577</b>

Being a multidimensional concept, the different dimensions of the concept will arguably respond to at least two sets of variables: a common set that influences the entire concept and separate sets that act on a specific dimension. This chapter focuses on finding the important elements in the set of variables that influence the entire concept of legitimacy, and therefore, it makes sense to assume that these “core” variables will be significant for both indexes modeled in the analysis.

The model also includes the fixed effect of the variable *country* for both indexes<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> The reference category is Peru as the country with lower levels of legitimacy.

Results show that, independently of the effect of individual predictors of legitimacy in both dimensions, the national context is a real effect that is specific for each case. In other words, independently of the individual level of education or the satisfaction with democracy in each country, the fact of being a citizen of any given country in the sample also influences the individual perception about democratic legitimacy.

This is the truly “political culture” variable that achieves to measure – in an aggregate way- what academics have been trying to disaggregate for so long: people behave differently from one country to another just because they are culturally part of that *national political community*, and this is so even among groups of citizens that share characteristics at the individual level. That is, a rich and educated female in Uruguay will not necessarily support the system in the same degree that a rich and educated female in Brazil would, or in Costa Rica or in Argentina. Their levels of system support will differ not because they are different among each other –they share three individual level variables: they are all rich, educated and female- but because they live in different countries and belong to different political communities.

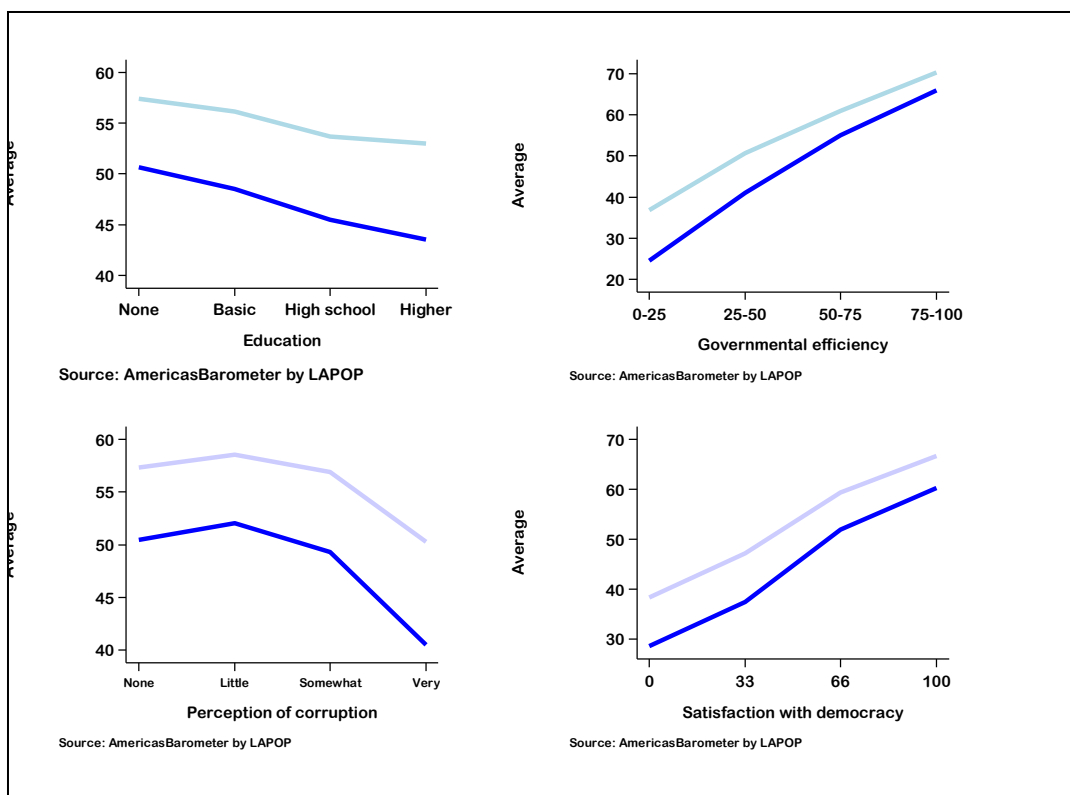
The fixed effect of each country has also been calculated in another model and is summarized in Figure U in the annex section. Results indicate that citizens in Uruguay, Honduras, Mexico, Costa Rica and Colombia will report higher levels of legitimacy of the political institutions and system support than Peruvian citizens independently of the other intervening variables. In the same way, citizens of Ecuador, Brazil and Paraguay will report lower levels for both indexes than citizens of Peru.

It is important to understand that the contextual effect measured by the fixed effects by country is independent from the other intervening variables in the model. For example, the country effect of Brazil determines lower levels of institutional legitimacy than in Peru, but

legitimacy is higher in Brazil than in Peru due to the combined effect of all variables in the model that counteract the national context effect.

Another example shows that, despite being very different national contexts, Mexico and Argentina display similar perceptions and levels of satisfaction with democratic performance. Argentina is a much more egalitarian society than Mexican society, therefore it could be expected that Argentinians are more satisfied with democratic performance than Mexicans but nevertheless, other elements in the Argentinean political process are generating dissatisfaction with democratic performance in that country. On the other hand, Mexico has a serious problem with criminal levels linked to drug traffic, especially in certain areas of the country; this problem reduces satisfaction with the performance of a system that cannot guarantee the safety of its citizenry. These two cases illustrate the specific nature of the influence of national context on the expectations and individual citizen evaluations of democratic performance of the system and its institutions.

Graph V.5, below, illustrates the influence of four important variables about individual perceptions of system support and institutional legitimacy. The light blue line represents the level of system support and the dark blue line the level of institutional legitimacy. In all cases, the average level of system support for all countries in the sample is higher than the average level of institutional legitimacy.



**Graph V-5. Predictors of system support and legitimacy of political institutions. Latin American average. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010**

Data analysis shows that the effect of education, taken as a global average for all countries in the sample, has a negative effect on individual evaluation of system support and institutional legitimacy. The higher the level of education of respondents, the lower their perception of both legitimacy indexes will be. This outcome is a very interesting one since it contradicts theory from developed countries, which states that the opposite effect is to be expected in the relation between education and legitimacy. In other regions in the world, the more educated citizens perceive higher levels of legitimacy of the political system.

Possible answers to this outcome in the Latin American regions could address the generalized low levels of education in the region when compared with developed countries or a cultural explanation that addresses a general sense of mistrust in governments and public

institutions for the region. For the purposes of this chapter, this specific effect will not be studied more in depth partly due to a lack of sufficient data on the matter.

The perception of corruption in public offices also affects the perception of legitimacy in a negative way. The higher the perception of corruption is, the lower the perception of system legitimacy (in both indexes) will be. This is a good example of the influence that lack of political trust can have on democratic and institutional stability.

Citizens with positive perceptions about the efficacy of governmental performance<sup>48</sup> in important fields of public life will report higher levels of perceived system and institutional legitimacy. The elements in the index cover a wide range of problematic areas common to most of the countries in the sample. Each element addresses a real issue in everyday life; hence, it is not an index that requires individuals to be highly educated or informed about political issues. Rather, it addresses issues that exist in the daily experience of citizens' political life and makes them perfectly fit to evaluate the degree of efficiency in governmental performance.

Citizens in all countries have expectations regarding the degree of democracy expressed in the political system. The regime can call itself *democratic*, but are democratic principles, procedures and values evident in its institutions, laws and performance? The higher the perception of democratic principles active in the political system, the higher the perception of legitimacy will be.

The same logic applies to those who express a preference for democracy as the government principle over other forms of government even when democracy is not perfect as a concept and as an active principle. Individuals who value democracy more as a form of

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<sup>48</sup> Components of this index refer to the current government's performance on fighting poverty, unemployment and corruption in public offices as well as their efforts for improving safety. The index also includes an item that evaluates the degree to which the government promotes and protects democratic principles. The index is reliable and reports an 0.9 Cronbach's Alpha coefficient.

government will be more willing to support the democratic system despite an unsatisfactory performance.

In all countries without exception, the perception of the degree of democracy exceeds the average satisfaction with democratic performance. Citizens recognize the existence of a democratic regime much more in Uruguay and Costa Rica than in Mexico, Nicaragua or Guatemala, but in all cases the system's performance does not match the intrinsic degree of democracy of the political system. In general, countries where the perception of the degree of democracy and satisfaction with democratic performance is higher are those with higher reports of system support and institutional legitimacy.

Finally, as for the importance of the subjective perceptions on the economic situation, individuals with favorable perceptions about the economic situation, both the national and the personal situation, will report higher levels of perceived system and institutional legitimacy. The clear relation between perceptions of legitimacy and perceptions of the economic situation (Duch, Palmer et al. 2000) suggest that this is also an important consideration when evaluating the system and institutional performance.

The first section of this chapter referred to the importance given to the economic dimension in legitimacy and system support studies, mainly in developed countries. Findings of the data analysis suggest that economic considerations are also important for Latin American citizens when evaluating the principles and performance of the political system.

The next section of the chapter will analyze in depth the importance of the economic dimension for legitimacy evaluations in Latin America, based both on subjective measurements of perception of the national and individual economic situation and on objective measurements of the economic situation at the individual level (wealth) measured based on possession of



material goods<sup>49</sup> and classified by wealth quintiles.

Since the previous findings report that contextual effects on legitimacy at the country level exist, an objective measurement of socioeconomic strata at the country level has also been included in the model through the Human Development Index (HDI) for each country for 2010<sup>50</sup>. HDI is used as an expression of the general socioeconomic level of the population in one country and not just as an aggregate measure of wealth generation. HDI is a more appropriate item that covers areas beyond the political arena.

Finally, the model includes another contextual variable, the Gini coefficient<sup>51</sup> by country, a measure of the degree of equality or inequality in the distribution of income among the population in each country. This coefficient has been included in the model with the goal of balancing the relative position of each country in relation to its level of economic and social development but also taking into account the spread of wealth and welfare among the population.

Theoretically, it is to be expected that higher socioeconomic levels will generate a higher perception of legitimacy than lower socioeconomic levels by means of a more favorable evaluation of institutional performance when economic outcomes are better or generate stability. Evidence from previous works combined with findings from the subjective measurements of perception of economic situation suggests that this assumption can be valid both at the country and at the individual level.

The analysis has run a mixed-effects regression model for the system support and the institutional legitimacy index including objective and subjective indicators of socioeconomic

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<sup>49</sup> Individual wealth measurements based on possession of material goods is a more effective measurement than income and even more so when data are gathered by public opinion surveys. Individuals tend to consistently under report income all over the world whereas the report of material goods such as owning a house, a car, appliances, computers, etc. successfully captures the socioeconomic level of the respondent.

<sup>50</sup> Source: HDR 2010, UNDP.

<sup>51</sup> Source: HDR 2010, UNDP.

level by country and individual in the sample. Table V.2 summarizes the findings of this analysis.

**Table V-2 Mixed effects analysis of level of development and wealth distribution on legitimacy of political institutions and system support.**

<b>Mixed Effects regression</b>		# of obs = 30689 (legitimacy)		
Prob> chi2 = 0.0000		# of obs = 30453 (support)		
Variables	Legitimacy of political institutions		System support	
	Coefficients	P>z	Coefficients	P>z
Quintile 1	1.541416	0.000	.7137722	0.031
Quintile 5	-2.740704	0.000	-1.662353	0.000
Perception of national economy	.2268084	0.000	.1845667	0.000
Perception of personal economy	.0889582	0.000	.0888269	0.000
HDI 2010	4.752757	0.034	6.832873	0.001
Gini coefficient	-.2430971	0.000	-.0349883	0.377

Findings of this regression analysis confirm the theoretical assumption that economic considerations, at both the individual and aggregate levels, have a real and statistically significant effect on legitimacy evaluations measured in two dimensions, system support and institutional legitimacy. All economic variables, objective and subjective, are statistically significant in both models.

Outcomes also confirm what the multivariate linear regression indicated. The better the individual perception of the national and individual economic situation, the higher the perception of institutional legitimacy and system support will be.

The objective measurement of socioeconomic level of the respondents at the individual level yields interesting outcomes. This item has been separated into two variables, one that registers the effect of the poorest 20% of the population (quintile 1) and another that registers the effect of the richest 20% of the population (quintile 5). While the effect of the poorest 20% is

positive in the model, the effect of being in the top 20% richer layer is negative.

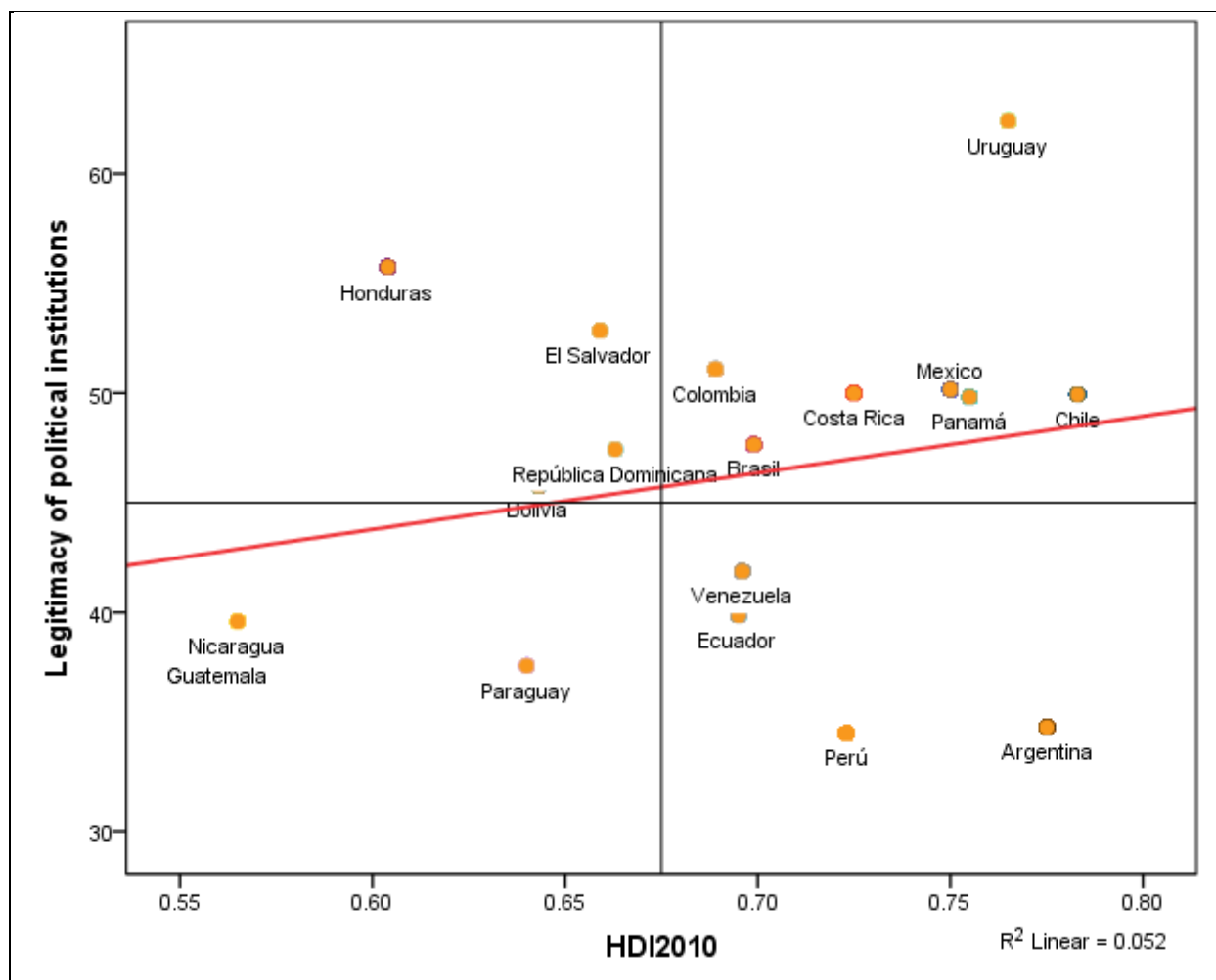
This suggests that there is a real difference of perception and evaluation of democratic performance and legitimacy between the richest and the poorest sectors of population based on individual wealth. Additionally, this finding is not an indication that the effect of wealth in legitimacy evaluation changes gradually with the increase of wealth, but only that there is a difference in appreciation of the democratic system between the richest and the poorest individuals in society.

As for the country level aggregate variables, both the level of development measured by HDI and the income distribution measured by the Gini coefficient are statistically significant in the model. Thus, the effect of the economic context also has a real effect on legitimacy evaluations by the citizenry in both dimensions measured by the dependent variables.

Findings of the analysis confirm the existence of a linear positive<sup>52</sup> relation between the average socioeconomic level of the countries and the degree of legitimacy of their political institutions, showing that as the level of national development increases so does the perception of institutional legitimacy. Nevertheless, the weight and statistical significance of the HDI in the regression are weak so it cannot be assumed that the level of development *by itself* is determinant of the degree of legitimacy of the political institutions in place, although it has incidence on the allocation of legitimacy.

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<sup>52</sup> The slope of the line representing the linear relation is calculated based on the mixed effects regression for the legitimacy of political institutions index. The relation, although weak, is statistically significant.



**Graph V-6. Distribution of legitimacy of political institutions by HDI 2010.**  
**Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010**

The statistical significance of the Gini coefficient, which expresses the degree of equality in income distribution within each country, is higher than that of the HDI variable, but only for the institutional dimension of legitimacy and yields no significant outcomes for the system support model, suggesting that inequality in distribution may be interpreted as a failure in performance of the political institutions exclusively and not as a reflection of the principles and values underlying the democratic system.

Most of the countries in the sample fit into the linear relation and follow the assumption that richer countries will display higher levels of democratic legitimacy following that a certain

economic threshold has been considered a requisite for the existence of democracy itself in earlier academic works. The fact that there are exceptions in the region does not decrease the validity of the finding and, despite few exceptions, the general effect of the economic context exists, has been proven by the statistical analysis and is valid for the region as a whole.

Outliers like Peru, Argentina and Honduras can be explained by other variables especially strong at the time of the survey as a result of the historical process of those countries which includes political instability, mistrust in the institutions or insecurity situations.

Also, a quadratic function of the effect of HDI on democratic legitimacy has been tested and its explanatory force is slightly stronger than the linear model, without turning it into a strong determinant of democratic legitimacy by itself but opening the field for a deeper consideration of the economic threshold going back to the prerequisite hypothesis (see graph of quadratic function of HDI in the Annex section - Figure W).

Figure O in the annex section illustrates the distribution of legitimacy of political institutions taking into account the socioeconomic gap classification. There is no evidence of a coincidence between the distribution of legitimacy and the wealth gap by country which was shown by findings in this study. But there is a coincidence when it comes to countries classified as high inequality countries (*wide socioeconomic gap*<sup>53</sup>) and their registered levels of institutional legitimacy as measured by LAPOP data. Bolivia, Guatemala, Paraguay and Nicaragua are grouped together in the low HDI<sup>54</sup> - low legitimacy countries category. Honduras, as previously explained is a low HDI country but its legitimacy level in 2010 is higher than usual.

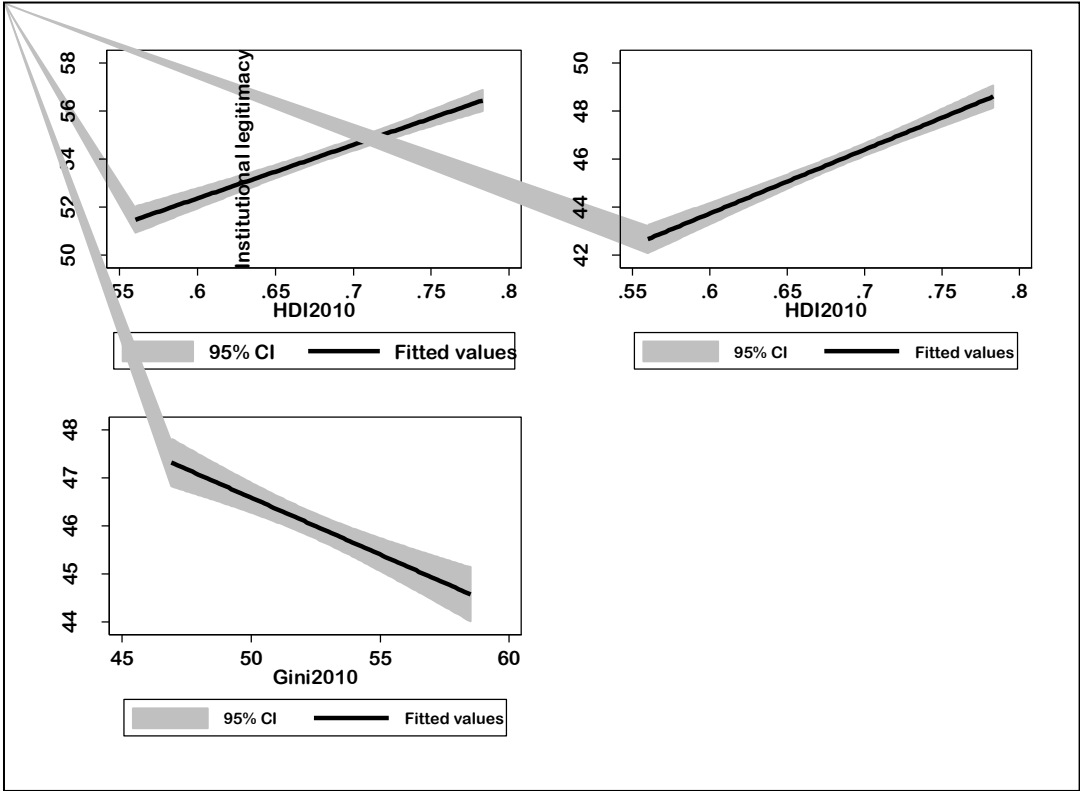
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<sup>53</sup> Countries classified in this category by the UN-ECLA publication are: Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras and Paraguay.

<sup>54</sup> Compared to other regions in the world, the HDI level of these countries is classified as *medium*, but in relative terms, compared to other countries only in the Latin American region, their HDI level is low.

Despite having been determined based on different and unconnected variables, this coincidence strengthens the assumption of the existence of a pattern of classification based on level of wealth, development or socioeconomic stratum at the country level, and it supports the fact that inequality in distribution of wealth is interpreted as faulty performance of the governments in place, which is damaging to the democratic legitimacy of those countries.

The coincidence in distribution of legitimacy among countries with medium and small gaps is less evident, although Chile, Uruguay and Costa Rica (countries with a small gap) are high DHI – high legitimacy countries in the LAPOP sample. Argentina and Venezuela belong to the same group but are outliers because they display low levels of legitimacy on account of their specific political dynamics.



**Graph V-7. Legitimacy of political institutions and system support by DHI 2010 and Gini coefficient. Fitted values based on mixed effects regression. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010**

Graph V.7 shows the statistical relation between the socioeconomic classification at the country level and the legitimacy of political institutions and system support as an average for all the countries in the sample. In both cases, a higher development level or a better distribution of wealth will increase the perceived legitimacy levels for the sample.

If the economic context and economic considerations at the individual level exercise such a clear effect on levels of political legitimacy, there must also be clear differences between countries and individuals of low and high socioeconomic strata.

Table V.3 summarizes the legitimacy averages for four groups established by combining objective measurements of socioeconomic stratum at the country and the individual level. These four groups are: low socioeconomic stratum individual in a rich country, low socioeconomic stratum individual in a poor country, high socioeconomic stratum individual in a rich country and high socioeconomic stratum individual in a poor country.

**Table V-3. Legitimacy of political institutions: legitimacy averages according to individual and country socioeconomic stratum. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010**

	Economic stratum <b>HIGH (country)</b>	Economic stratum <b>LOW (country)</b>
Economic stratum <b>HIGH (individual)</b>	2006: <b>43.53</b> 2008: <b>43.99</b> 2010: <b>46.42</b>	2006: <b>38.78</b> 2008: <b>36.74</b> 2010: <b>44.71</b>
Economic stratum <b>LOW (individual)</b>	2006: <b>44.24</b> 2008: <b>45.03</b> 2010: <b>47.56</b>	2006: <b>39.21</b> 2008: <b>36.43</b> 2010: <b>41.77</b>

According to theoretical assumptions and evidence from statistical analyses, it can be expected that the averages of legitimacy of political institutions registered by the rich

individuals<sup>55</sup> group in rich countries are the highest averages and that legitimacy registered for poor individuals in poor countries are the lowest.

Outcomes summarized in Table V.3 confirm the differences existing among legitimacy averages among the established groups. The main statistically significant differences are found at the country level; legitimacy of political institutions averages differ among rich and poor countries more so than among individuals, strengthening the argument for the influence of the economic context on the level of legitimacy of the political system.

The lowest legitimacy average in 2010 is registered for the group of poor individuals in poor countries, as expected. Nevertheless, the difference of average between poor and rich individuals in rich countries is not statistically significant.

These findings express that when taking objective economic conditions or the socioeconomic level of development into consideration, the country level predominates over the individual level unit of analysis.

### **Concluding thoughts**

Democratic legitimacy is ultimately determined by individual evaluations about the performance of the democratic system based on their expectations and observation of the performance of democratic institutions. The combined performance of democratic institutions in all areas of State activity determines the general level of democratic legitimacy in each country. Some areas of activity are more important than others for individual citizens, depending on their personal everyday experience in the public sphere, and will therefore have more influence on their evaluations.

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<sup>55</sup> The correct term for naming this group is “high socioeconomic stratum”, but rich/poor terms are easily understood.



The study of the effects of the economic and political performance of central institutions of the political system has been prioritized in this approach to Latin American democracies under the assumption that citizens pay special attention to the combination of the economy and politics and to the manner in which political institutions perform in the management of economic issues simply because the latter directly affect the everyday life of citizens in all countries.

This issue is even more relevant in a context of a worldwide economic crisis with consequences that have also been felt in Latin America, mostly in big market countries, but in a lesser intensity than expected thanks to the political capacity of the region to use the necessary institutions and channels needed to overcome the crisis. From this perspective, the high legitimacy and stability moment that countries in the region are living can be easily explained.

The variations in legitimacy levels among countries in the area do not suggest a regional or micro-regional pattern in legitimacy distribution. Rather, the dispersion of legitimacy seems to depend on the context, political and economic processes specific to each country and on the validity of the context effect on the country level, as the findings of the analyses implemented in this chapter indicate.

As a general average, democratic legitimacy in Latin America has been strengthened between 2006 and 2010, even including cases such as Peru, Paraguay and Argentina with the lowest levels of institutional legitimacy in the region. This new strength of legitimacy can also be understood as a strengthened relation between the State and the citizenry or as an improvement in the performance of political institutions acknowledged by citizens and rewarded by a vote of confidence in the democratic system in Latin America.

Evidence suggests the existence of a real relation between economic conditions (objective and subjective) of the individuals and the national context and the legitimacy

attributed to the democratic regime and its institutions, mainly those in charge of managing the economies of the countries. With this, it is not stated that the economy is the only determinant of legitimacy in Latin America, but that it is a central consideration when individuals evaluate democratic performance and legitimacy in the region.

Because of this, poverty issues, inclusion, equality, corruption and even citizen safety are relevant and can affect levels of democratic legitimacy. Directly or indirectly, all these issues are linked to economic problems and areas that generate inequality, marginalization of large portions of the population, insecurity, instability and mistrust in the general population. These are central considerations for the evaluation of institutional performance in areas that directly affect people's lives.

Data for 2010 show a general positive evaluation of institutional performance for most of the countries in the sample. Data also show that there is a clear distinction of preferences and expectations about democratic performance between poor and rich individuals. Democratic institutional performance is satisfying for poorer individuals, who appear to be satisfied with undergoing institutional reform processes that aim to extend the range of their rights, equality and inclusion in political life and society; on the other hand, it seems less satisfying for richer individuals with different expectations and with access to political and social privileges not available to other sectors of society.

These findings can also be an indication of a general approval of institutional reform in the region that aim at deepening democracy in a more inclusive process with more participation opportunities, with policies to fight corruption, reduce criminality rates and improve the delivery of ordinary and distributive justice. All of these are areas of political action that respond to concerns and needs of Latin American society and that, in one way or another, find an answer in

the series of institutional reforms changing the face of Latin American democracies and moving them closer to the citizenry in a highly complex public sphere.

A pattern that clearly shows in the data is that the level of system support is consistently higher than institutional legitimacy on average in all countries and over time. Far from being negative, this is evidence of the ability of citizens to make a distinction between the different dimensions of legitimacy, its conceptual and principle dimension and its more pragmatic and institutional dimension.

## **Chapter VI . Conclusion**

A study of what ultimately determines the legitimacy of a political system involves several challenges in varying dimensions. The most important of these is that legitimacy is subjectively determined through individual evaluations that citizens make about the reliability and performance of political institutions and actors.

Moreover, these individual evaluations are made within a complex context of political, economic, social and cultural elements that combine into a very specific national reality at any given point in time, which will also have an impact on how citizens perceive the political system to which they are subject. In their aggregate form, these individual perceptions and evaluations about the political system will determine its level of legitimacy.

However, the study of political legitimacy is not a new undertaking in the academic field. Decades of collected knowledge and evidence gathered around the globe have proven that political legitimacy is not only crucial for the survival of the political system, but also for maintaining the adherence of the citizenry to the system.

Despite the enormous amount of effort allocated to this enterprise, very little has actually been done in this field in Latin American academia and even less in Bolivian academia. Most of the studies of political legitimacy in the Latin American context are based on qualitative data, through elite interviews or with a narrow coverage of the population, making it difficult to draw conclusions at the national level.

In addition, the only serious and continued efforts to study political legitimacy based on quantitative evidence that is representative of the national population are not undertaken by Latin American political or social scientists, but mostly by foreign academics interested in the region. Of these works, the LAPOP studies have introduced the notion of studying democracy and the

legitimacy of the democratic system through the citizenry and based on quantitative data. Latinobarometro and the World Values Survey are the only other sources of such data in the region that also carries out studies in a periodic and continued manner.

The results presented in this study approach the issue of political legitimacy of the Bolivian democratic system using two dimensions of measurement: one based on political trust and the other on institutional performance. Additionally, the measurement based on political trust is disaggregated at two different levels, system support and institutional legitimacy, which allow a richer insight into what determines political legitimacy and provide evidence of the fact that citizens are aware of at least two different dimensions that are sources of political legitimacy, the dimension of the principles or concepts guiding the system and the more pragmatic dimension of the institutions that carry out and embody those principles.

The evidence shows that citizens evaluate these two dimensions separately, always assigning a higher value to the principles dimension over the institutional dimension in all cases in Bolivia at the national and sub-national level, as well as in all Latin American countries included in the study.

The predictors of the levels of perceived legitimacy of the democratic system vary according to the country in the case of the comparative analysis including all countries in regards to the specific political, economic, social and cultural context, but there are some common elements that indicate that, despite being determined by subjective considerations and while being influenced by the specific national context, citizens all over the Latin American region share some common notions as to what makes a democracy legitimate.

In general terms, the combined performance of democratic institutions in all areas of State activity determines the general level of democratic legitimacy in each country. Some areas

of activity are more important than others for individual citizens, depending on their personal, everyday experience in the public sphere, and will therefore have more influence on their evaluations.

Among these shared elements across the region, the relevance of both objective and subjective economic conditions as one of the main considerations that individuals use to assess the democratic performance and legitimacy of the political system is evident. The relation between the economic situation and perceived legitimacy of Latin American democracies is a positive relation, indicating that the better these countries fare economically, the greater the strength of the democratic systems.

This finding is of the utmost relevance for all countries in Latin America because of the very high levels of inequality, exclusion and poverty that are already a trademark of most of these countries. In addition, these results are the more relevant precisely because they are provided directly by the citizenry of each country in combination with aggregate data (objective measurements of the level of development and economic performance of each country) and not solely by conceptual indexes or exclusively second level and aggregate data.

One of the most important contributions of this work to the body of knowledge about democratic legitimacy in Latin America is that it shows results at different levels, national sub-national and regional, but also at the **individual** level. Results show a clear difference of perceptions about the performance of democracies between poor and rich **individuals**, these results being valid for the entire region. There are no other such studies available for the Latin American region as a whole, combining aggregate and individual level data and using such a broad public opinion dataset that allows both, to study all countries at the same time and to be able to draw conclusion at the individual level.

Taken together, these results clearly show that economic issues in all their different expressions, such as poverty, exclusion, inequality, and economic discrimination, the lack of economic opportunities, unemployment and differentiated access to employment by sex or age, are relevant and can effectively affect the way the average citizen perceives democracy.

This issue becomes more relevant when contextualized within the recent worldwide economic crisis that affected big market countries more intensely, but was nonetheless lighter than expected, in all probability due to the political capacity of the countries in the region to navigate the crisis through institutional provisions like social reform that has also been appreciated by the citizenry. This explains a general improvement in legitimacy levels over the last five years. Political reform, although weak in the economic area, has been able to address social issues of inclusion and participation which are also a central concern of Latin Americans. If anything, these results express the deep complexity of current Latin American societies, which in most cases have highly ethnically and racially diverse populations and complex cultural systems, partly due to their colonial inheritance.

Since economic considerations are not the only factors that influence the perception of democratic legitimacy, findings in this work do not show a clear regional pattern of variation in legitimacy according to economic wellbeing or simple level of national wealth. In other words, the relation is not as simple as to determine that poorer countries show lower levels of legitimacy. Rather, variations in legitimacy levels depend on a combination between economic conditions and the specific political, social and cultural processes of each country. Therefore, countries that are not rich but that have a slightly better distribution of wealth or somewhat more egalitarian societies will improve their perceived level of legitimacy.

There are two other common elements that most Latin Americans consider when assessing the performance of the democratic system, the evaluation of its performance in regards to insecurity (violence) and corruption. Even in countries with low rates of violence, security is a raising concern, and it plays an important role in the evaluation of institutional performance of democracies across the region. Even more so, the persistence of corruption practices among public officials clearly undermines perceived democratic legitimacy for all countries included in the analysis, even in those were corruption rates are low.

Taken all together, these findings make the need to improve economic conditions across the region visible, especially in regards to distribution and to strengthening the degree of institutionalization to minimize the occurrence of extra-institutional channels of action and decision and improve accountability of public officials, as expressed by the citizenry. Although these are common topics of political discourse across the region, citizens seem to be expressing the need to take the discourse into public policy, for it is at the dimension of institutional performance where evaluations of legitimacy are weaker.

The central body of work in this study concentrates on perceived levels of democratic legitimacy in Bolivia. The in depth study of the national and sub-national dynamics of democratic legitimacy in Bolivia is an important contribution to both the study of legitimacy and the advancement of social sciences in the country, especially from the methodological field. Quantitative studies are few and new to Bolivian social sciences, and only recently have Bolivian academics started gathering quantitative public opinion data designed specifically for the study of politics. Political science is in itself a new field in Bolivia, and there are no data sources as complete, extended and wide ranging as the LAPOP data set while being both representative at the sub-national level and specifically targeted for the study of political issues.



Additionally, aside from LAPOP publications, there are no regional studies (at the sub-national level) produced in Bolivia with the capability of comparing all nine regions to each other and being able to reach conclusions for the political dynamics in each region individually. Therefore, this work is an important innovation in Bolivian political science and a contribution to the comprehension of regional political processes and the public perception of democracy. It is also the only one of its type since the implementation of Constitutional reform in 2009, which introduced the figure of regional autonomies to the political configuration of the country.

The findings in this study are deeply insightful into the regional dynamics of Bolivian politics and in many ways differ from the common idea that nothing relevant happens outside the “axis” *departamentos* which are considered to be the only politically relevant regions. The data show that at least two *departamentos* demonstrate a very weak adherence to the political system, and the model of analysis applied across regions cannot explain the political dynamics in Chuquisaca and Potosi, with the lowest levels of system support in the country. In general, results suggest that reform or conflict is likely to originate in regions outside the political axis among those regions currently further from access to political power and influence.

Results show that regional dynamics of politics are not necessarily aligned to national processes, issues or agendas but tend to respond strongly to regional issues. This is especially true for the Eastern region now undergoing a political positioning along regionalist discourse, positioning and policy.

Perhaps the most relevant finding, though, consists of the fact that evidence shows persistent differences in the perceptions and attitudes of two distinct groupings of *departamentos* in the variables guiding their evaluation of democratic institutional and regime performance. This should not be understood as a political polarization in the country, but rather as the

manifestation of two differing ways of understanding politics, democracy, the political system and, by extension, life in general. It can also be characterized as the existence of two different political cultures in the country, an Eastern and a Western political culture.

Strengthening this finding is the fact that analysis results show that decision making heavily has “moved” from the local to the regional arena, with regional institutions increasing in importance and levels of trust in all nine regions overtaking the municipality, which was the strongest political arena since the Law of Popular Participation was created in the mid-nineties.

But the evidence also shows that coincidences in political culture across-regions remain and that they are stronger than regional differences as predictors of democratic legitimacy in the principle and institutional dimensions, indicating the persistence of the national Bolivian culture. Governmental economic performance and trust in the Regional Government are strong and robust predictors of both dimensions of democratic legitimacy across the board.

The relevance of economic considerations as predictors of democratic legitimacy is also confirmed in Bolivia through the analysis of legitimacy at the sub-national level. As a general rule, **objective** evaluations of the economic situation (aggregated data about regional wealth) are stronger predictors of democratic legitimacy than subjective assessments of personal economic conditions and also stronger predictors than socio-demographic variables. This is also a very relevant finding, for results show that the existing serious economic differences among the nine regions in Bolivia have a real effect on how citizens perceive the democratic system. Moreover, this is a reason for concern, because the unequal distribution of wealth and influence among regions is systematic and persistent throughout the modern period in Bolivian history.

Yet, additional results suggest that, despite the robust effect of economic variables as predictors of democratic legitimacy, the political momentum of Bolivia’s current political

process overpowers the effect of economic conditions and political variables turn out to be stronger predictors of democratic legitimacy, countering what is to be expected according to the theory about the strength of the economic effect.

This is the result of a recent process of extreme personalization of politics, in which most political authority and legitimacy depends on the **figure** of President Morales, not his party but he himself, undermining the institutional capacity and effectiveness of the Bolivian State that has been in place since 2005. Approval of the President's performance is among the strongest predictors of democratic legitimacy across regions, independently of their political positioning in the national arena. As a result, perceived legitimacy improves mediated by political alignment with the President.

In measuring democratic legitimacy by way of individual evaluations of institutional performance, outcomes of the analysis show that these are powerful predictors and an important source of perceived democratic legitimacy in the country. The pragmatic dimension of legitimacy (institutional performance) is a robust predictor of legitimacy at the national level and taking the nine regions individually.

When this variable is applied to the analysis, the regional pattern found in the initial analysis is confirmed. There are consistent differences among the Eastern and Western macro-regions with higher levels of dissatisfaction in the Eastern *departamentos* when taking the combined index and also when measuring each of the components individually. The relevance of institutional performance for legitimacy considerations varies between these two groups and cultures.

Ultimately, legitimacy depends on trust, and the distribution of political trust across regions in Bolivia is relatively homogeneous, and no regional configuration of differing political

cultures plays a role in this arena. Citizens are aware of different levels of government and judge institutions distinguishing between the national and the regional arena, and regional configurations of trust are only present when it comes to trusting regional institutions.

As for the combined set of political institutions, the persistent problem of a dual society, colonial inheritance, inequality, exclusion and discrimination, all features of a complex multiethnic society, has a significant effect on variations in levels of political trust. Ethnic identity and discrimination experiences are strong predictors of loss of trust across regions with indigenous individuals, and people who have experienced discrimination repeatedly are less trusting in political institutions and therefore their perception of the legitimacy of Bolivian democracy is lower than that of the non-indigenous population and those who have not experienced discrimination.

In conclusion, the legitimacy of Latin American democracies relies heavily on a complex balance of the economic, social and political wellbeing of their citizens, as has been confirmed in depth by the study of the Bolivian case. Poverty and the national level of wealth matter, but what matter most are distribution of wealth and conversely, exclusion, discrimination and inequality which have the power to effectively weaken democracies. Politically, it is crucial to translate discourse into policy and guard the institutional integrity of the State. Socially, tolerance is key to achieving more horizontal societies, despite any level of cultural or ethnic complexity.

And finally, legitimacy cannot be analyzed without taking into account the specific national, social, economic, political and cultural context. Legitimacy is the result of culture and needs to be treated and interpreted within the context in which it is produced.

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**APPENDIX SECTION**



# APPENDIX

## Chapter II

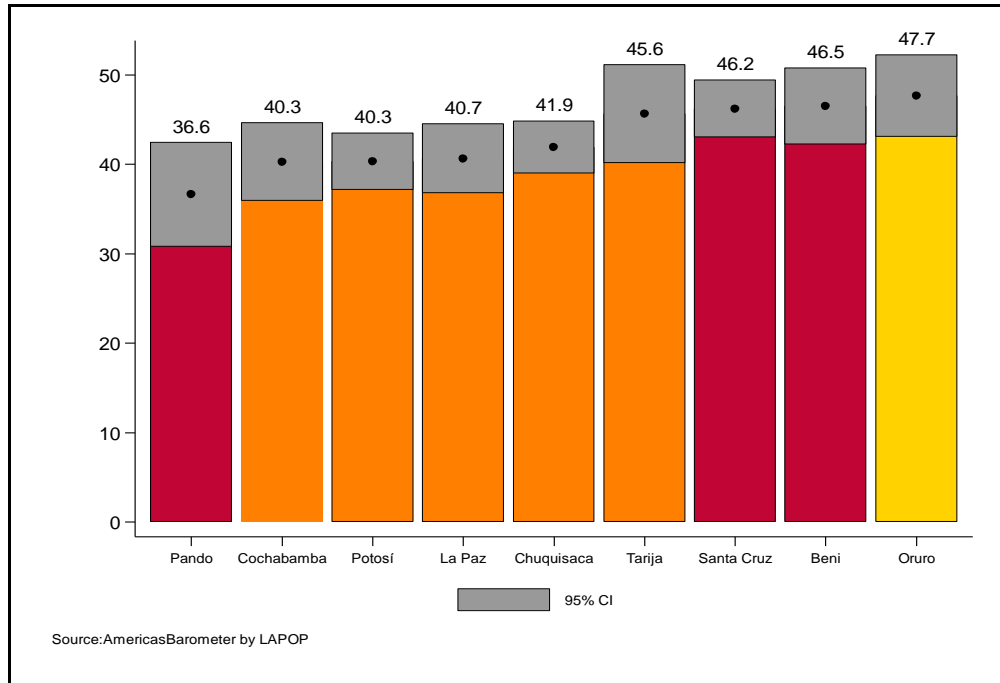


Figure A. Trust in the justice system, by *departamento*. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer, by LAPOP

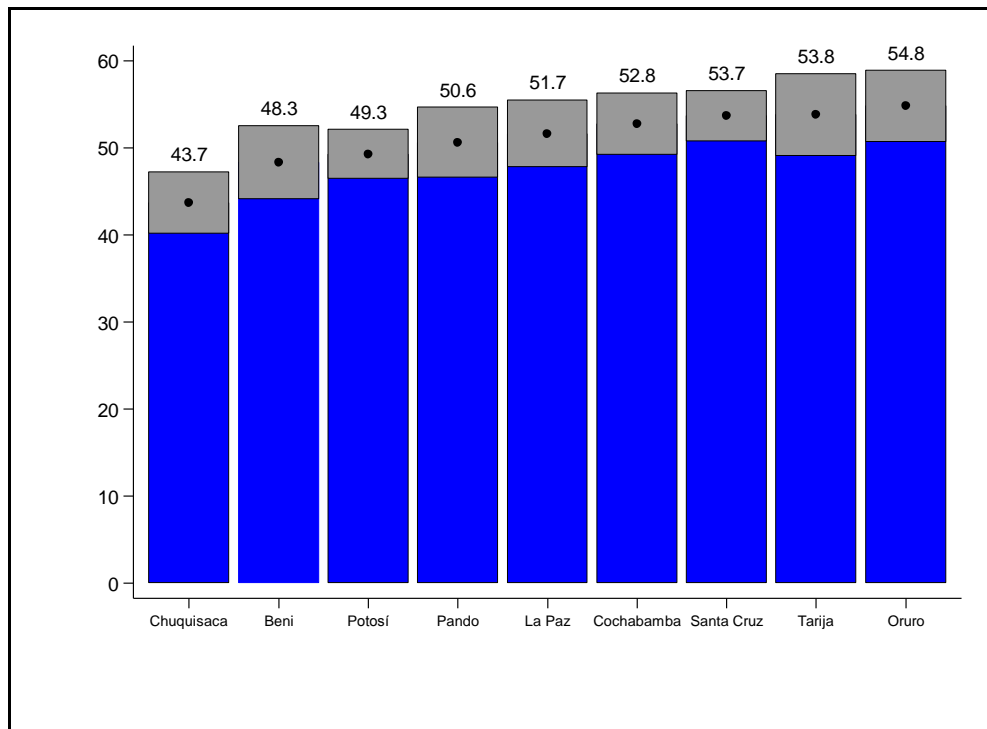


Figure B. Trust in the Plurinational Legislative Assembly, by *departamento*. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP.

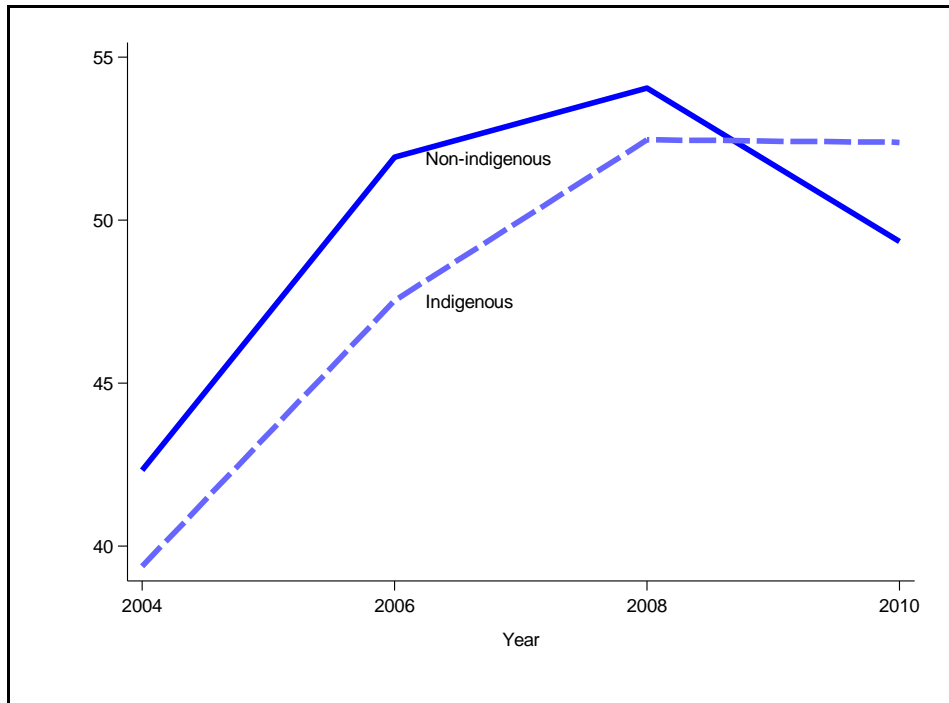


Figure C. Trust in *Gobernaciones* by ethnic identification and year. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

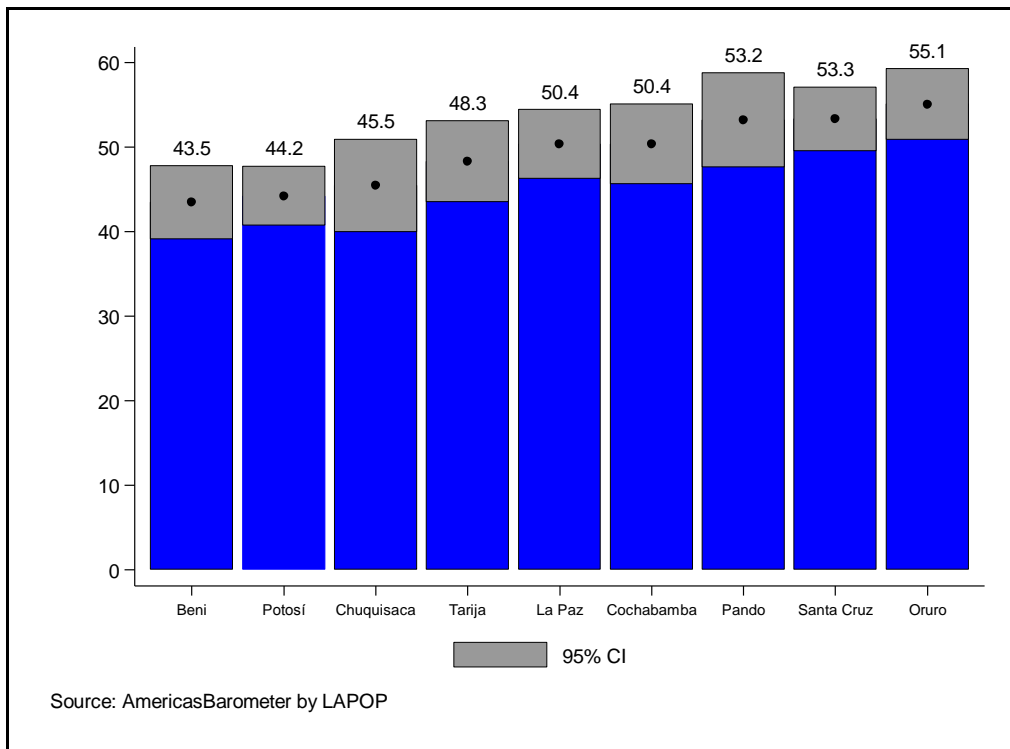


Figure D. Trust in indigenous autonomies, by *departamento*. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer, by LAPOP.

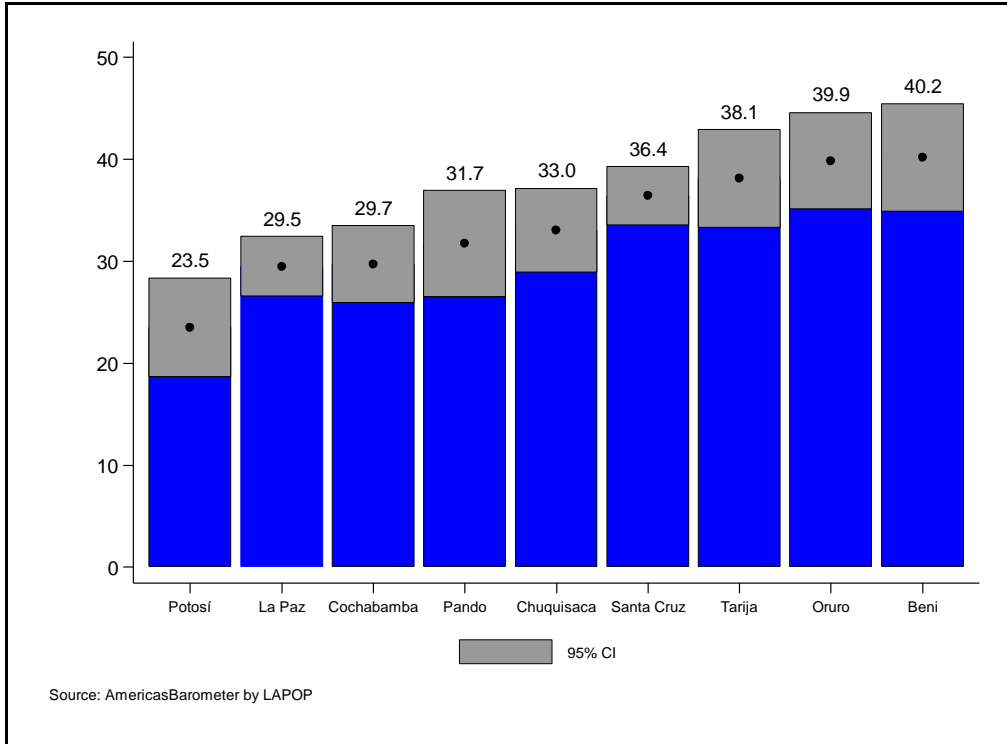


Figure E. Trust in political parties by *departamento*. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

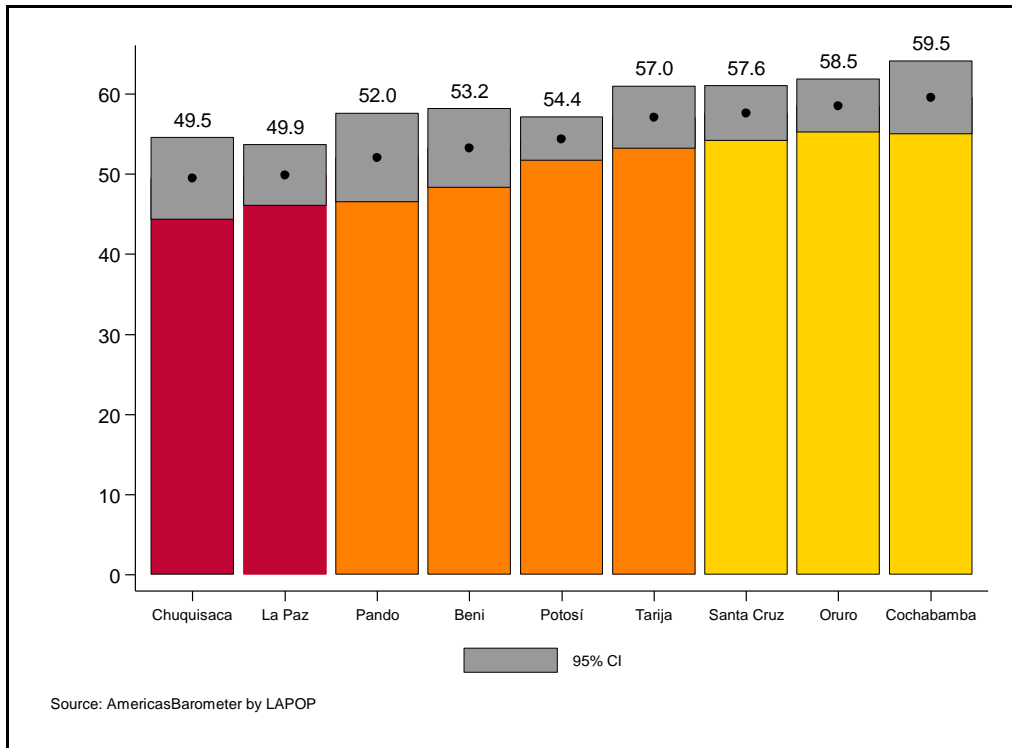
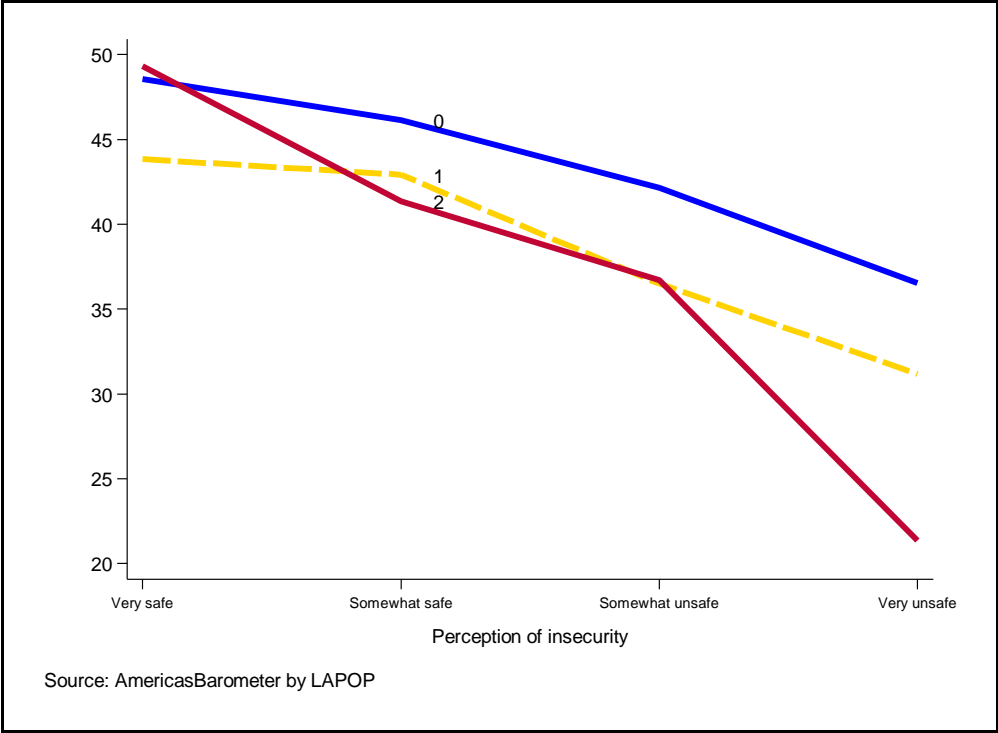


Figure F. Trust in the Military, by *departamento*. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer, by LAPOP

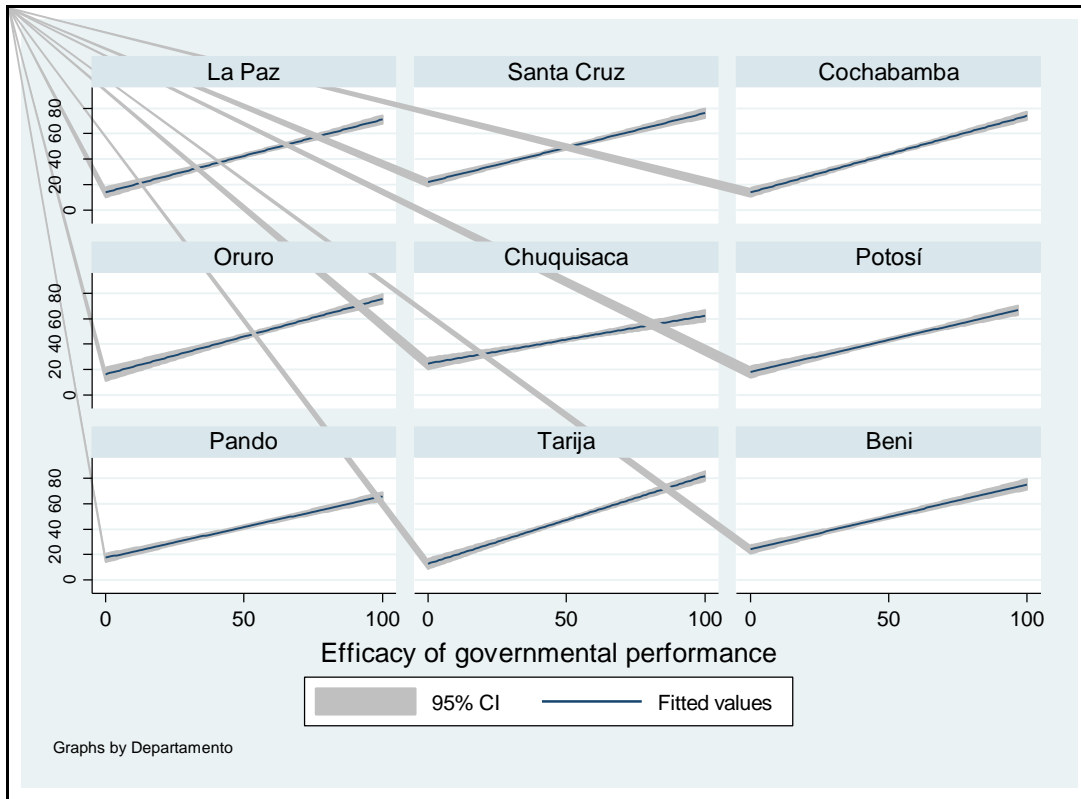


**Figure G. Trust in the police by perception of insecurity and scenarios of discrimination. Bolivia 2010.**  
**Source: AmericasBarometer, by LAPOP**

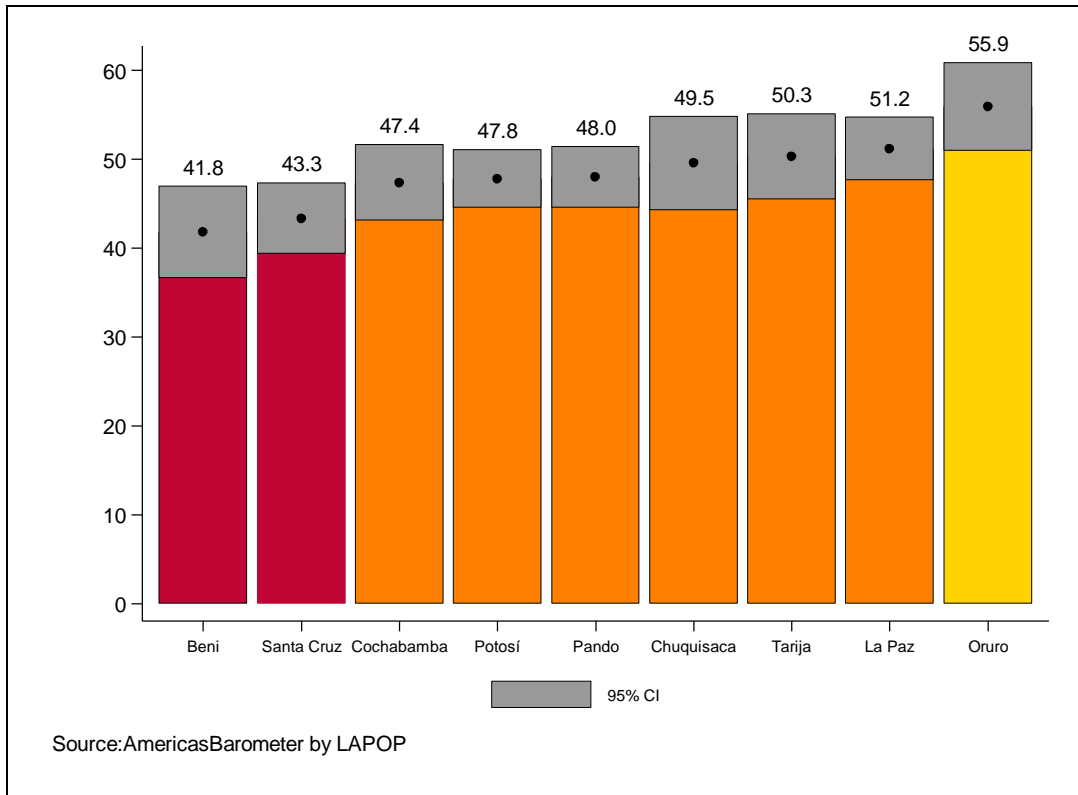
### Chapter III

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Uniqueness
n1r	0.8214	0.1097	0.0155	0.3130
n3r	0.8488	0.1705	-0.0023	0.2505
n9r	0.8301	0.0483	-0.0241	0.3080
n11r	0.8401	-0.1319	-0.0153	0.2766
n12r	0.8449	-0.1686	0.0103	0.2576
n15r	0.8358	-0.0259	0.0160	0.3005

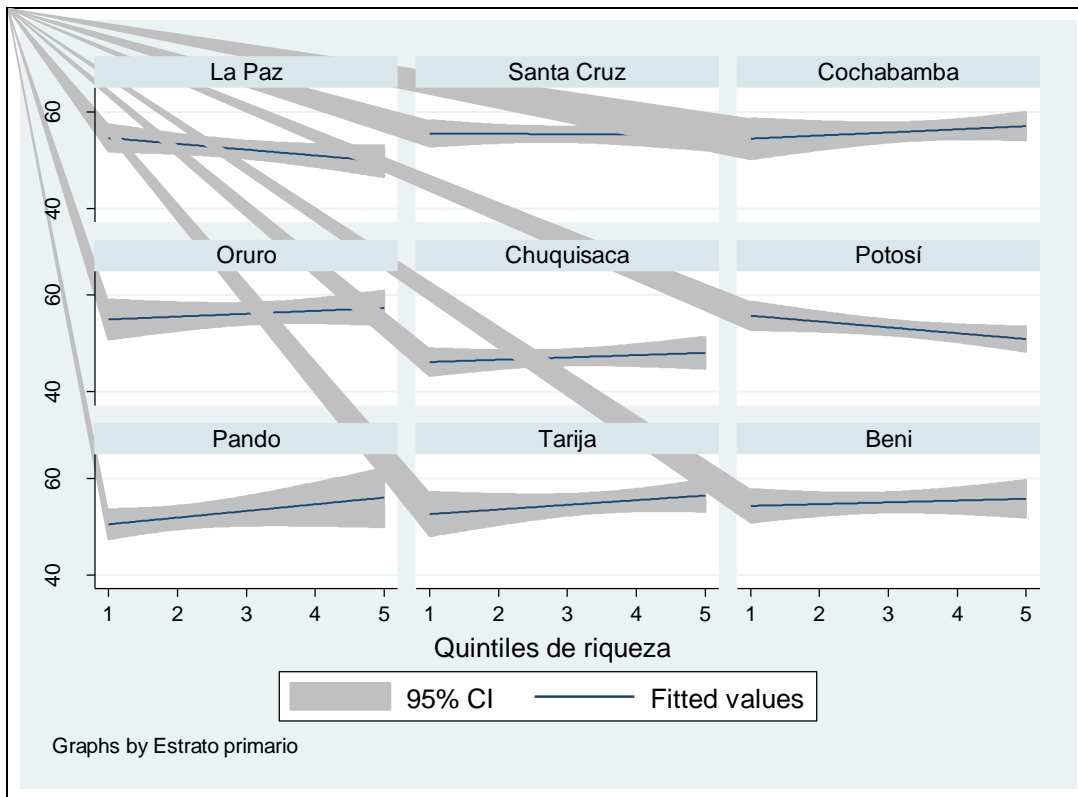
**Figure H. Factor analysis of items on the efficacy of government’s economic performance index. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP. 2010.**



**Figure I. Fitted values Institutional Legitimacy by efficacy of governmental performance. Bolivia 2010. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**



**Figure J. Government performance: government improves security. Bolivia 2010. Source: America Barometer by LAPOP**



**Figure K. Fitted values: effect of individual wealth on system support by *departamento*. Bolivia 2010.**  
**Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP**

## Chapter IV

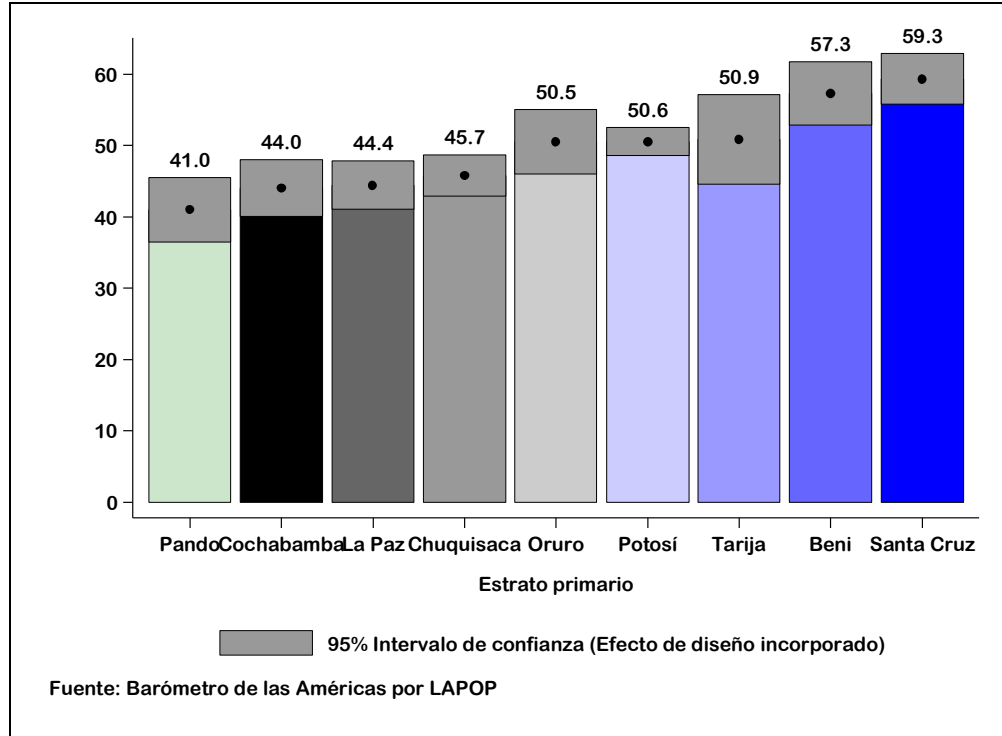


Figure L. Trust in Regional Government by *departamento*. Bolivia, 2010. AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

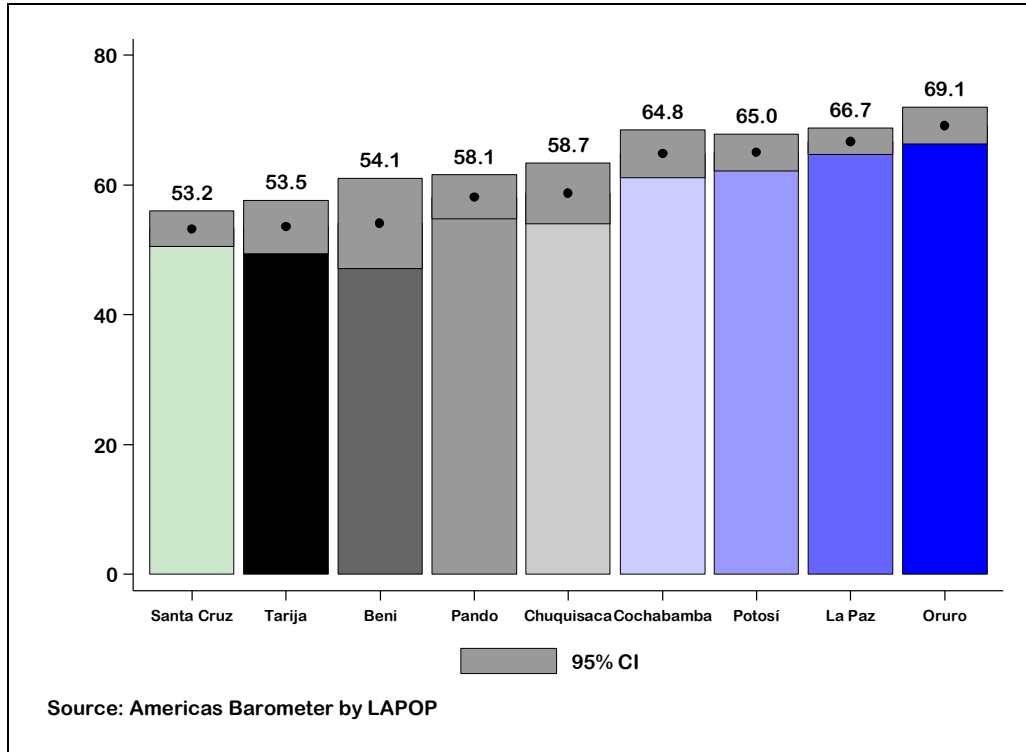


Figure M. Approval of President's performance by *departamento*. Bolivia, 2010. AmericasBarometer by LAPOP



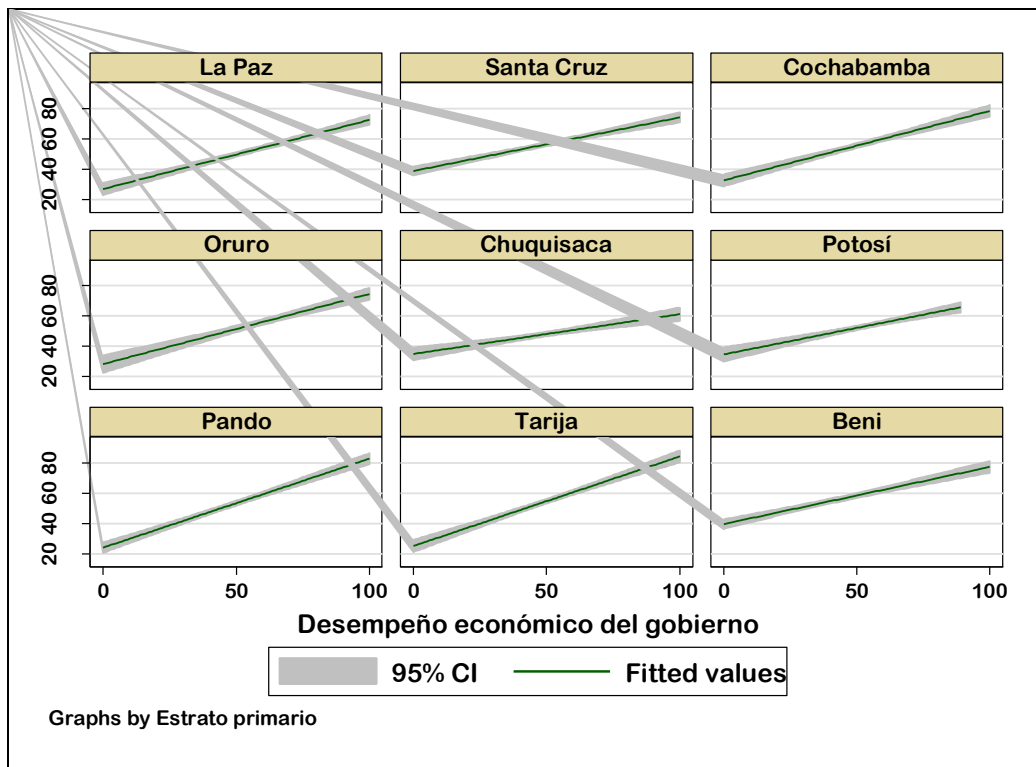


Figure N. Relation between evaluations of governmental economic performance and legitimacy of political institutions (fitted values), by *departamento*. Bolivia 2010. AmericasBarometer by LAPOP

**Chapter V**

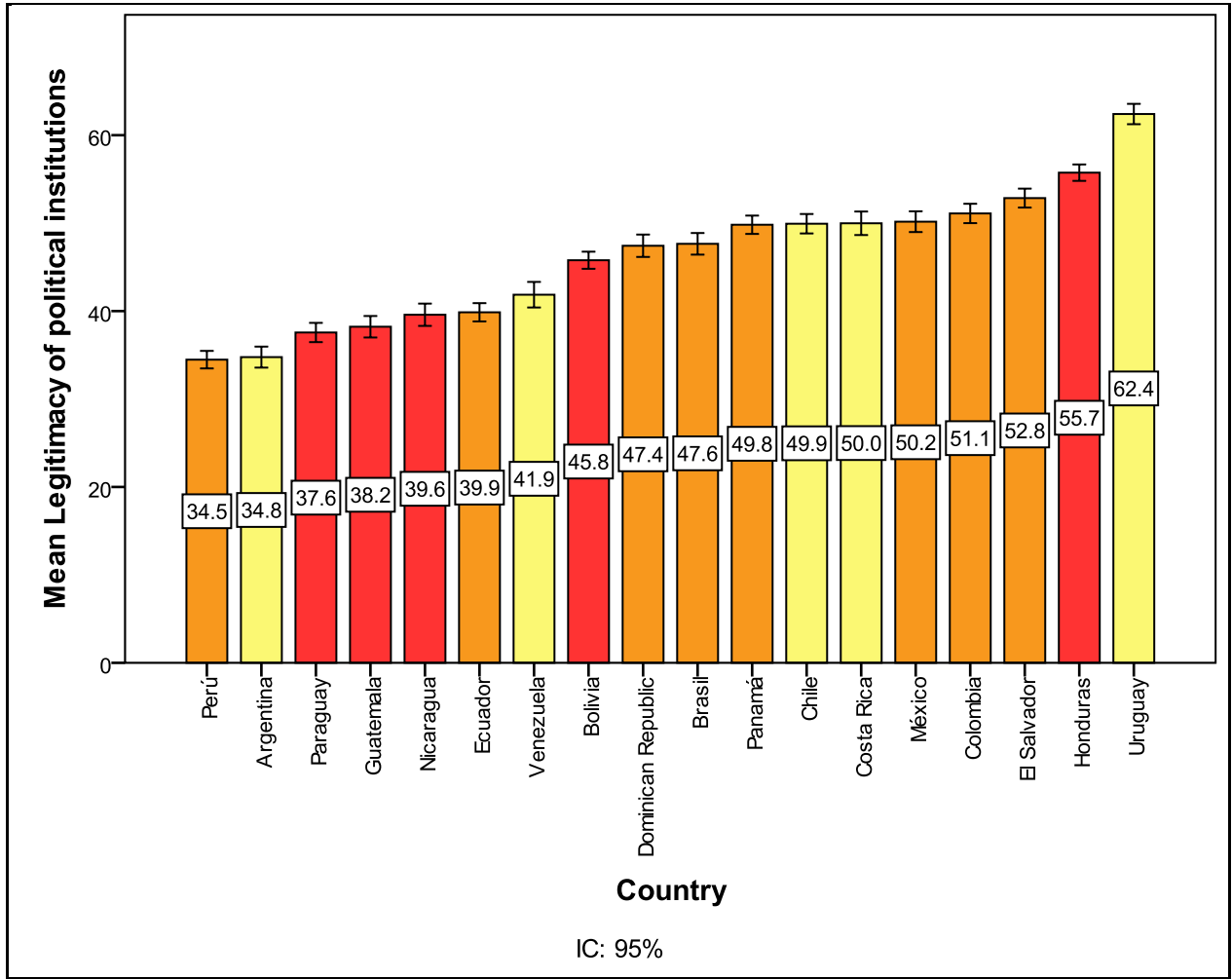


Figure O. Legitimacy of political institutions, comparative perspective. Countries color-coded according to economic gap classification. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010

**Legitimacy of political institutions**

Country	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
México	50.1639	1464	23.01728
Guatemala	38.2179	1449	23.70310
El Salvador	52.8468	1495	21.19237
Honduras	55.7376	1483	18.33320
Nicaragua	39.5810	1454	24.64171
Costa Rica	49.9827	1481	26.23681
Panamá	49.8151	1483	20.46610
Colombia	51.1006	1454	21.39313
Ecuador	39.8621	1486	20.46775
Bolivia	45.7805	1463	18.97651
Perú	34.4748	1494	19.63770
Paraguay	37.5635	1446	21.24121
Chile	49.9315	1474	21.61797
Uruguay	62.4060	1465	22.59714
Brazil	47.6474	1467	23.99525
Venezuela	41.8608	1467	28.40253
Argentina	34.7647	1474	23.34397
Dominican Republic	47.4263	1474	24.90194
Total	46.0751	26475	23.77144

Figure P. Means of legitimacy of political institutions, by country. Source: AmericasBarometer, by LAPOP

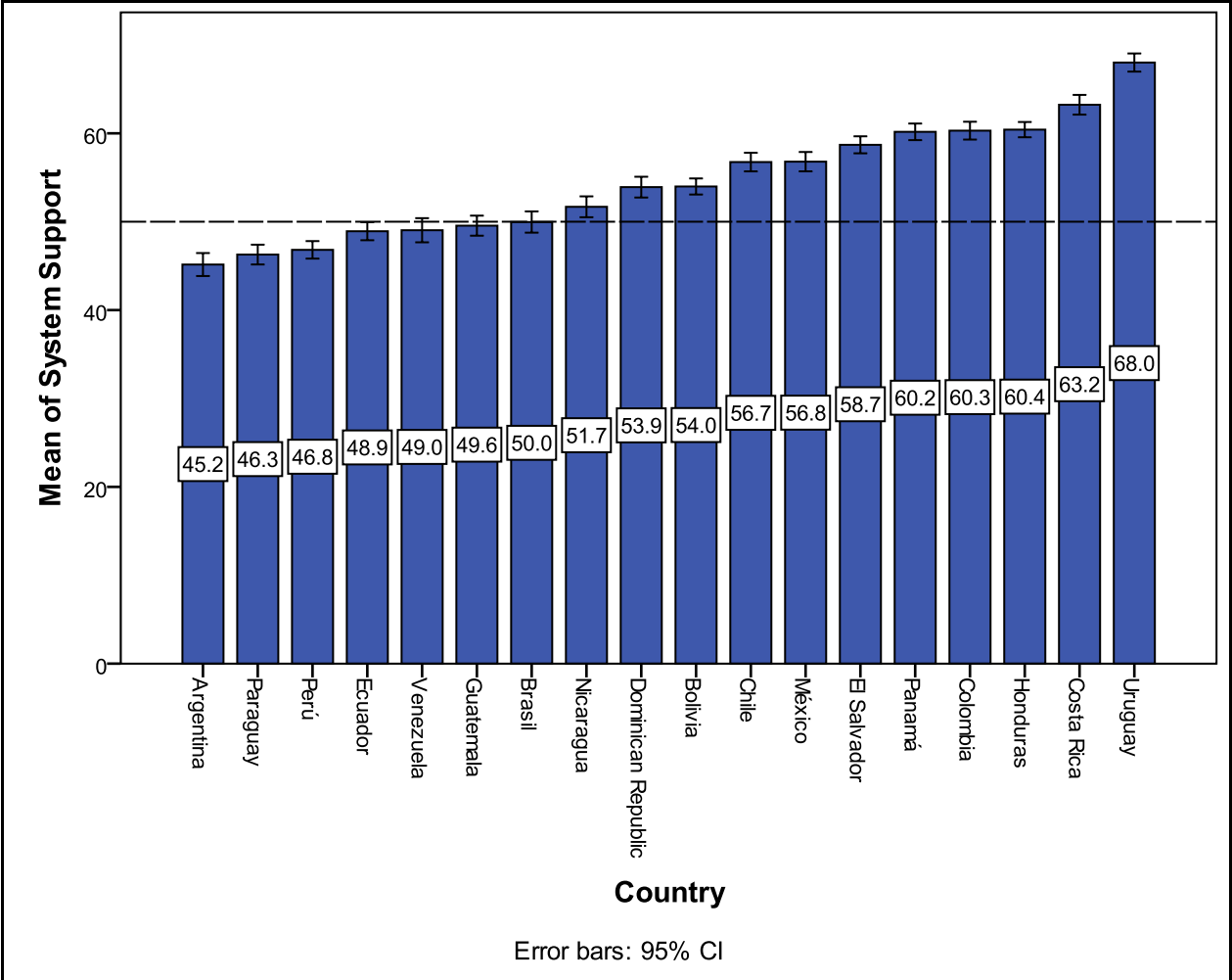


Figure Q. System support average, comparative perspective. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010

Legitimacy of political institutions (historical perspective)			
Honduras 2006:	43.59	Perú 2006:	33.9
Honduras 2008:	39.85	Perú 2008:	33.01
Honduras 2010:	55.73	Perú 2010:	34.47
		Argentina 2008:	37.9
		Argentina 2010:	34.7
		El Salvador 2006:	46.4
		El Salvador 2008:	42.9
		El Salvador 2010:	52.8

Figure R. Legitimacy of political institutions. Historical perspective. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010

<b>INDIVIDUAL / COUNTRY</b>	<b>Economic stratum HIGH</b>	<b>Economic stratum LOW</b>
<b>Economic stratum HIGH</b>	2006: <b>52.56</b> 2008: <b>52.07</b> 2010: <b>55.04</b>	2006: <b>47.82</b> 2008: <b>44.23</b> 2010: <b>52.95</b>
<b>Economic stratum LOW</b>	2006: <b>53.07</b> 2008: <b>53.32</b> 2010: <b>55.39</b>	2006: <b>50.29</b> 2008: <b>45.35</b> 2010: <b>51.89</b>

Figure S. System support: legitimacy averages by individual and country socio-economic stratum. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010

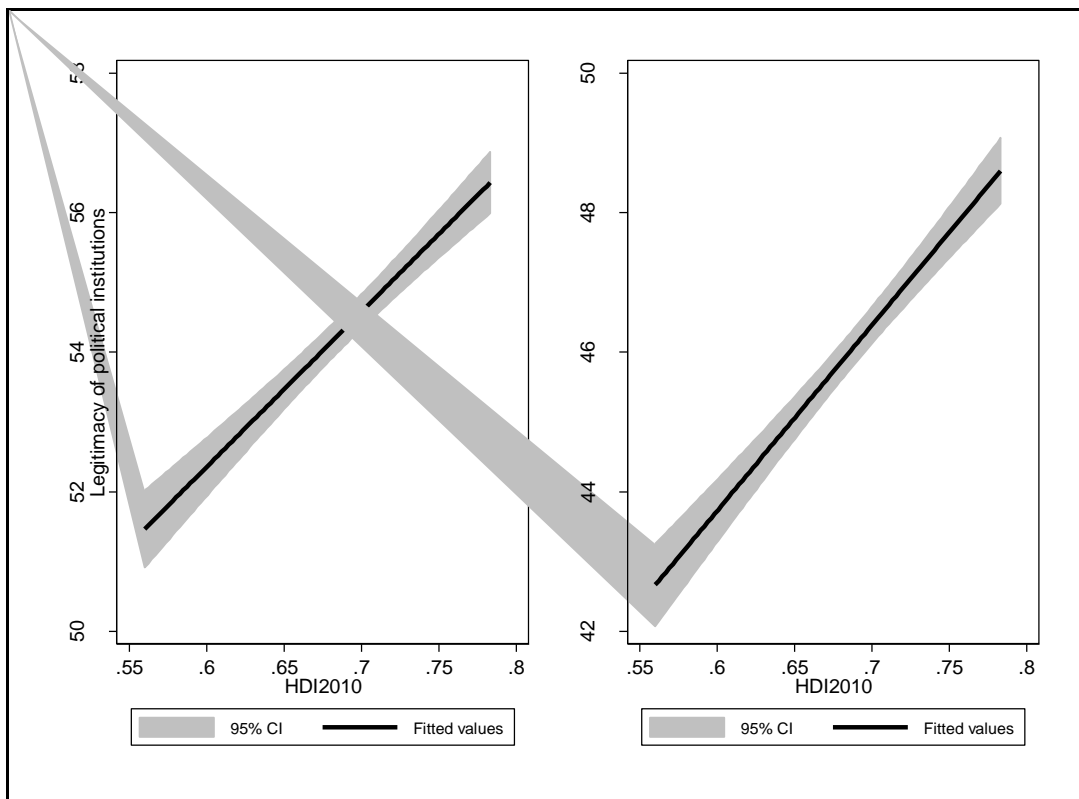
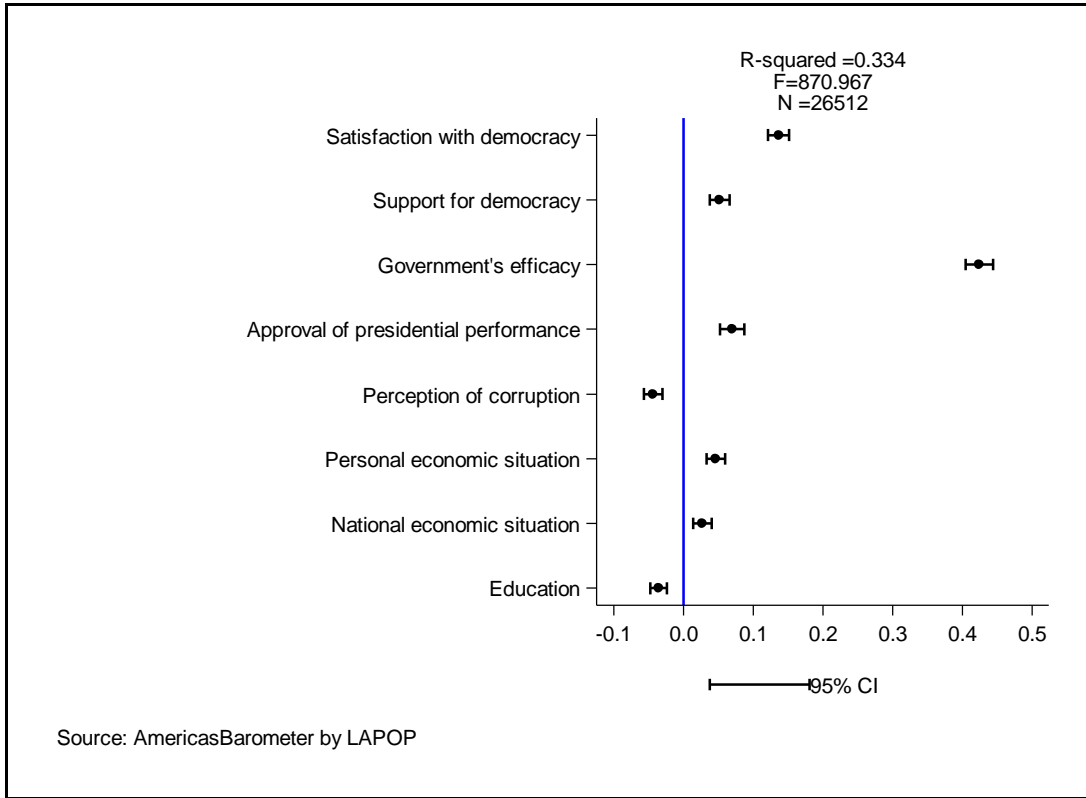


Figure T. Relation of system support and institutional legitimacy with HDI 2010 (fitted values – linear relation). Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010.

Independent Variables	Model: linear regression with fixed effects	
	System support	Institutional legitimacy
Education	-.7578*	-.9109*
Wealth (by quintiles)		
Approval of the President's performance	.0639*	.0906*
Perception of the national economy	.0483*	.4822*
Perception of the personal economy	.0506*	.0418*
Efficacy of governmental performance	.3600*	.4575*
Perception of corruption	-.0397*	-.0582*
Preference for democracy	.0382*	.0194*
Perception of degree of democracy	.1127*	.1118*
Country		
Mexico	4.966*	9.217*
Guatemala		1.937*
El Salvador		4.488*
Honduras	4.0505*	9.597*
Nicaragua		
Costa Rica	6.752*	4.513*
Panama		
Colombia	4.288*	5.700*
Ecuador	-6.388*	-4.764*
Bolivia		
Paraguay	-3.125*	
Chile	-6.069*	-4.577*
Uruguay	2.425*	6.233*
Brazil	-7.790*	
Venezuela		3.551*
Argentina		
Dominican Republic		4.349*
Rsquared	<b>0.3656</b>	<b>0.4686</b>
N	<b>26.444</b>	<b>26.577</b>

\* sig. <.005

Figure U. Predictors of system support and legitimacy of political institutions. Fixed effects for each country is included. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010.



**Figure V. Predictors of system support at the individual level. Average for all countries in the sample. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP, 2010.**

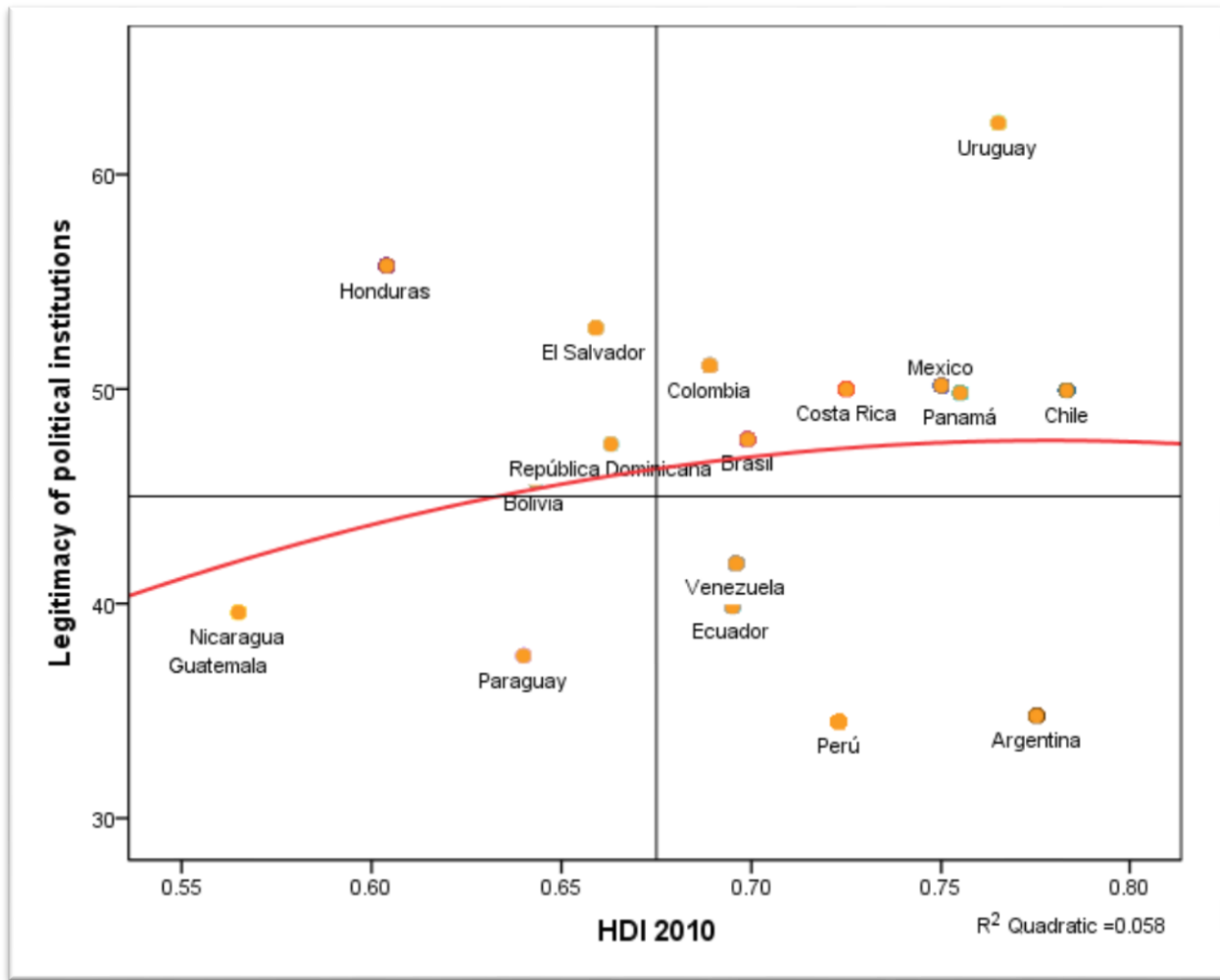


Figure W. Quadratic function of the effect of HDI on legitimacy of political institutions, aggregated by country. Source: AmericasBarometer by LAPOP