Latin America

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It took some gentle prodding from professors Cynthia McClintock and John Harbeson, conveners of this session, to persuade me to participate. The reason for my reluctance may be obvious, considering the composition of this panel. My distinguished colleagues can speak about "them" when referring to the contributions of scholars from the regions on which they specialize. This, I gather, allows them some degree of objectivity when summarizing and assessing the works of their colleagues in the respective regions; instead, when I analyze the contributions of Latin Americans, I analyze "us."

There is no way I could try to summarize the contributions to comparative politics and theory of Latin Americans and Latin Americanists to the study of politics. I must leave this task to somebody with the necessary objectivity and time. Consequently, I limit myself to commenting upon contextual factors that influenced the work of some Latin Americans and Latin Americanists, and the main problems we tried to tackle. Because of limited space, my remarks focus on those of us who nowadays are senior scholars.

The first point is that the members of my generation were the first to be professionalized, in the late 1960s and the 1970s, as social scientists. However, among those whom I would qualify as the 15 most influential scholars writing on political matters, only two (myself one of them) have degrees in political science, and one in history. The rest are all sociologists, both in terms of their advanced degrees and of their self-identification. This consequence was inevitable, considering that in Latin America schools of sociology are older than ones of political science, and, even more influentially, that the founding fathers of contemporary Latin American social sciences were all sociologists (Gino Germani in Argentina, Florestán Fernandes in Brazil, José Medina Echavarría in Chile, and Pablo González Casanova in Mexico). This background led, until approximately the 1980s, to a marked preference for macro-structural studies with an important historical dimension. The neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian approaches adopted by these authors were very influential for this orientation. However, Weber's influence in Latin America has been much less recognized by commentators from the United States, perhaps because *Economy and Society* was translated into Spanish from the original German well before it was translated into English.

The second contextual factor to mention is that in Latin America the boundaries between politics and academia were much thinner than in the highly developed world. This was particularly true when my generation became young adults in the 1960s, in the midst of intense revolutionary hopes and fears, the Cuban revolution, the Alliance for Progress, and the particular characteristics the Cold War took in Latin America. This context provoked division, with some scholars taking a revolutionary stance, although many revised their views later on. Others advocated what, for the times, was a rather unusual option: democracy as the desirable, and perhaps possible, future for our countries. This opened sharp debates with intellectuals of the revolutionary left. On the other hand, the emergence in several of our countries, beginning with Brazil in 1964, of increasingly repressive bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes, posed quite dramatically the question of how to explain the emergence of these regimes, how to analyze their dynamics and societal impacts, and how to assess in what directions they would change. The advocates of these regimes trumpeted triumphal statements; against them and against, also, the revolutionary left's hopes of achieving an immediate jump into socialism after the collapse of these regimes, most members of my generation of scholars opted to advocate an active but peaceful way to oppose these bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes, and to envision—and push—their demise in a democratic direction.[1]

The advent of authoritarian rule had an important intellectual impact on my generation; it drastically changed our lives. All of us (with the exception of Mexicans, who were under a different kind of authoritarianism) were fired from our university positions, most of us had to go into exile at some time, and many, before or after exile, took refuge in our own countries in private research centers funded from abroad. The commonality of political repression, exile, and the joint meetings we organized abroad or in our own countries where repression was milder, made us truly Latin Americans; through these travails we discovered the region and an identity that referred to it.

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These times in the 1960s, 1970s, and part of the 1980s brought close collaboration among a generation of then-young comparativists from the highly developed world. It was authentic collaboration, nurtured with long discussions, joint projects and meetings, and a mutual respect that prohibited the ethnocentric view that the role of "the natives" was to furnish data for theories to be made in the North.[2]

The main theme, then, for those of us who were living under authoritarian rule and who viewed the democracies of Costa Rica, Venezuela, and Colombia as being almost as distant as those in the North, was a critique of authoritarian rule, and support for democracy. Although of course interest in other themes preceded the one just stated, these older themes were, in most cases, reviewed from the perspective of their correlates and consequences for the anti-authoritarian and pro-democratic option that seemed to us the overriding one. I refer to such topics as the study of revolutions, populism, clientelism, and, indeed, dependency.[3] These and other themes were important per se and, together with our democratically oriented critique of bureaucratic-authoritarianism, generated pointed polemics with the supporters of these regimes. These views also generated discussions with the revolutionary left. Were these regimes updated versions of old traditional, military, or populist ones, or, perhaps more importantly for these discussions, were they "colonial fascisms" adapted to the conditions of Latin American dependency? These apparently academic questions were important because, although not necessarily derived from the premises of their argument, those who thought that these regimes were "colonial fascisms" concluded that a revolutionary path toward some kind of ill-defined socialism was the only possible and desirable option. For those of us who disagreed with both the premises and the conclusion of these tracts, it became important to identify the characteristics and dynamics of this "new authoritarianism" that was neither traditional, nor populist, nor fascist.[4] Concepts such as bureaucratic-authoritarianism and cognates resulted from this search.

For our generation, these analyses, plus whatever empirical research could be done under the circumstances, were persuasive in the sense that these regimes were far less effective, imposing, and durable than their ideologists and supporters claimed they were. This perception—and hope—led to the first studies on the transitions from these regimes, well before they had actually happened. These studies also explicitly asserted the democratic orientation that we hoped—and recommended—that the demise of bureaucratic-authoritarianism would take.

The combination of our outlook and an assessment of the deleterious impact that authoritarian rule had in most of the countries in the region led to many diverse studies, which were performed simultaneously and often in convergence with the transition studies. One of the topics of study was the rediscovery of society as the place in which, outside a brutally repressive state, democratizing impulses could be found together with, we hoped then, successful demands for redressing new and old inequalities. We called this space "society," not "civil society," as our Central/Eastern European counterparts did. But the logic of the argument was the same: Given such a hostile state, society was the place to look for redeeming forces. Another topic, convergent with the previous ones, was the study of social movements, especially of people who were excluded or discriminated against by existing rulers. Other kinds of studies and activities, which also converged with the transition ones, were those that focused on the manifold human-rights violations that the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes perpetrated. All these studies, regardless of the differences among them, had a strong and usually explicit foundation: the moral and political condemnation of the characteristics, impacts, and consequences of authoritarian rule.

The preceding is the extremely brief and schematic story of a generation of Latin American social scientists. Irrespective of the judgment that our work may deserve, I feel that this story is worth telling because, after all, we were the first generation of Latin American professional scholars writing on political matters, and because we lived a good part of our lives under circumstances that were—by Northern standards—quite unusual.

Nowadays, although the boundaries between politics and academics are still thinner than in the North, political science in most of Latin America has become institutionalized in numerous departments, research institutes, and national associations. New approaches, most of which originated in the United States, are highly influential; in particular, research on some institutions that in many countries barely existed, if at all, before the demise of authoritarian rule (such as parliaments, political parties, and party systems) has been conducted vigorously. Still, reflecting the original orientation of our discipline in Latin America, strong interest on macro-societal and historical factors, now combined with institutional and individual levels of analysis, is detectable in some of these studies.

The new generations are renewing, revising and transcending what, under different circumstances, my generation did. But I believe all of us, older and younger, from inside and outside of Latin America, share a big challenge: to practice through our work a democratic critique of these democracies. We should never forget the horrors of authoritarian rule, and at the same time we should look with a critical eye at the flawed democracies we presently have.

Finally, I see the present panel and the broad overview it provides about the political science that is practiced on and by regions outside the United States, as an invitation to APSA to promote a respectful dialogue across various regions of the world. For the possibility of participating in this endeavor, which I hope will be actively pursued by APSA, I wish to thank the Area Studies Liaison Group and the conveners of this panel.

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Notes

1. At the risk of some omissions, I refer within this cohort, among others, to Torcuato Di Tella, José Nun, and Atilio Borón in Argentina; Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Francisco Weffort, Luciano Martins, and Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos in Brazil; Enzo Faletto, Manuel Antonio Garretón, and Norbert Lechner in Chile; Julio Cotler in Peru; and Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Luis Labastida, and José Luis Reyna in Mexico.

2. Again at the risk of committing some omissions, in this cohort I refer, among others, to Philippe Schmitter, Alfred Stepan, Abraham Lowenthal, Laurence Whitehead, Adam Przeworski, Alain Touraine, Alan Angell, David Collier, Kalman Silvert, Nita Manitzas, and, although of a preceding generation, Albert Hirschman. In addition, these colleagues earned our gratitude with the moving solidarity they showed when hard times came upon us.

3. For some reason, in the United States and in some parts of Europe the version of dependency that came to be identified as the only, or at least as the main one, was the very simplistic one articulated by authors such as André Gunder Frank and Theotonio dos Santos. Instead, the version presented in the great book by Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (1979), as indicated in the conjunction "and" in its title, offered a much more open view of the overall situation and, especially, of its possible evolution.

4. Of course, this was the title of the influential book edited by David Collier (1979).

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