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## Honduran muddle: Elections and international mismanagement

John W. Graham

The country struggles to get back on track, but the crisis is still not over.

On June 28, 2009 the Honduran military illegally deposed the sitting president, Manuel Zelaya. Notwithstanding appeals concerning Zelaya's abuses of the Constitution and the fact that the interim presidency had been turned over to the next civilian in line, the Organization of American States (OAS) responded swiftly and unanimously. Honduras was suspended from the OAS and economic sanctions were imposed. A powerful message was sent to potential military conspirators: the penalty for coups is high. It was expected that this high price would quickly force the *de facto* government into conceding OAS demands and returning Zelaya to power. But the *de facto* administration, backed by the courts, Congress and the Church, and antagonized by what they believed was the absence of an even-handed approach to the crisis, refused to concede and the situation degenerated into an abrasive stalemate.

There was a route out of the quagmire: the elections long scheduled for Nov. 29, 2009. However, few were prepared to take it. The principal exceptions were Panama, latterly the United States, the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica, the quiet misgivings of Canada, Colombia and one or two others. However, the OAS and the majority of its members



Photo: Juan Manuel Herrera, Organization of American States

Special Meeting of the Permanent Council of the OAS regarding the situation in Honduras on Sept. 21, 2009.

were so resolutely committed to imposing their solution—the return of Zelaya—that they refused to take the election process seriously. More than that, the OAS pronounced an anathema on the process saying that legitimate elections could not take place while an illegitimate government was in power and that the results of such an election would not be recognized.

Nothing characterizes the path of the Honduran crisis so much as the rise and fall of expectations. Virtually every

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## FOCAL Views: The path to stability

### Honduras and the hemisphere inch toward constitutional reform.

The regularization of what have been universally seen as free and fair elections within Latin America and the Caribbean is an important achievement, but the elections alone cannot anchor democratic governance. One year after the Honduras military coup, we are reminded that it is not all smooth sailing.

Since the overthrow of Honduran President Manuel Zelaya on June 28, 2009, there has been extensive debate on the potentially undemocratic nature of some constitutional clauses—in Honduras and elsewhere in the region. Whereas some analysts assert that no form of coup is acceptable—and thus should be dealt with as such—others rationalize the occurrence of this particular ousting as a relief valve from a problematic situation and emphasize that the military ceded power to the leader who was constitutionally next in line: Roberto Micheletti. However, there is broad consensus in the fact that some constitutional provisions exacerbated the political divide before the Honduras coup and complicated subsequent interpretations of the events leading up to it; this confused the range of viable solutions.

Presidential systems have fewer mechanisms to release political tension than do parliamentary systems. Instability in the former is exacerbated by competing claims to legitimacy based on the separate election of the legislature and the executive. Whereas leaders in parliamentary systems require the confidence of the legislature to govern, in presidential

systems there is no such prerequisite; this makes it difficult to remove presidents. Thus, presidents do not need to make compromises with other political actors and can seek extra-institutional means of resolving political impasses. In the Honduras case, Zelaya's disregard for other political players in the months prior to his overthrow increased tensions and created a deadlock. Finally, his determination to hold a referendum—or non-binding public opinion consultation, as some have called it—regarding constitutional reform created a very real and understandable fear among his skeptics that he would use this to eliminate the one-term limit for presidents and seek re-election. Dialogue among Congress, the Supreme Court and the President quickly broke down.

When Zelaya was removed from power, the Organization of American States (OAS) responded with uncharacteristic clarity by unanimously condemning the coup and suspending Honduras' membership. Further, harmony on the issue ended with the country's suspension from the multilateral body. Fear of reverting to an age when the military had a strong role in politics amongst leaders who had survived the brutality of coups in their own countries continued to polarize the region and prevented it from moving forward to find solutions.

Later in November when elections were held and boycotted by international observers, many stakeholders consequently rejected the results. This demonstrated that elections cannot serve their intended purpose without an institutionalized political structure

to uphold their legitimacy.

At the 40th OAS General Assembly held in June 2010 in Lima, Peru, member states agreed to send a high-level commission to Honduras to evaluate the country's readmission. This is an important step toward cutting through political rhetoric in the hemisphere and ensuring that the Inter-American Democratic Charter is working to its full potential. The Charter is the paramount document designed to defend democratic principles in the region and assigns to the OAS the mandate to intervene to uphold democracy.

Many countries in the hemisphere including Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela have reformed or rewritten their constitutions in an attempt to make them more reflective of the will of the population and less susceptible to misinterpretation. In Honduras, constraining the power of the executive is an important issue. For constitutions to endure, they must embody long-term foresight and reflect the architecture of society rather than serve the political will of the day. 🌐

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## Honduran muddle: Elections and international mismanagement

(Continued from page 1)

phase in the five months of shuttle diplomacy, whether involving the United States, the OAS, or the international mediator and President of Costa Rica Oscar Arias, opened on a promising note and then crashed. However, one surprisingly solid achievement stands out, and that was the election process of Nov. 29.

The prospects, both in Honduras and abroad, that the elections would be largely unflawed and held in an atmosphere of relative calm were very low. The loose coalition of groups opposed to the coup —*la Resistencia*—, who were promoting an election boycott, were confidently forecasting an abstention rate of roughly 60 per cent. This prognosis for low voter turn-out was reinforced by an increase in threats and intimidation against opposition groups and individuals. The surge had been unleashed by the government-imposed “state of siege” which suspended constitutional guarantees for part of the campaign.

Much of this violence appears to have been committed by members of the security forces acting on the presumption that the special circumstances conferred immunity upon them. They encouraged the notion that the *Resistencia* was violent and irresponsible.

With the Honduran Supreme Electoral Tribunal (SET) firmly siding with interim President Roberto Micheletti on Zelaya’s expulsion, concern was expressed in some quarters that the election authorities might be prepared to manipulate the result or inflate the level of turn-out to suit their purposes. Pre-election questions about the reliability of the process were reinforced by knowledge that the voters list had

not been purged of dead or emigrated persons for several years, a number estimated at almost one quarter of the list.

It was against these low expectations that the election took place. Some misgivings were justified. Abuses and stubborn political division contaminated the long pre-electoral period. The campaign was marked by human rights abuses, the suspension of press freedom for selected opposition media, politically motivated dismissals and increasing economic decline.

Yet in the end, it was a remarkable day. Portfirio Lobo, the winner, was congratulated and Elvin Santos, the loser, capitulated. Given the setting, the constraints and the miseries of the campaign period, it was astonishing that the Honduran election authorities could bring off such a success. However, a good election is not much good in Central America if it is not recognized internationally. The major international organizations, including the OAS, refused to field an observer team. A host of countries —most of the hemisphere— announced that they would not recognize the elections. The SET made up this gap by inviting more than 100 observers who were well-disposed to Micheletti. However, this group did not follow the principles of objective election observation and their judgments were of little value.

Significantly the United States, in cautiously ambiguous language, did not join this group and therein lay the key to an unexpectedly credible observation. Increasingly concerned that the *de facto* government would hold out, the U.S. authorized the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to mobilize a small team. Their work and

most particularly the training that they provided for their Honduran civil society partner, a coalition of local NGOs called *Hagamos Democracia*, was invaluable in providing reliable coverage of the election process. With 1,500 members deployed across the country, it was able to provide a consolidated and objective assessment of the election process, its calculations on the voting for presidential candidates and its findings on voter turnout. *Hagamos Democracia*’s projections on the presidential vote were almost identical to those of the SET. Both the government, which had forecast a massive turnout, and the *Resistencia*, which had predicted a massive boycott, were proven wrong. With total numbers on the voters’ list lowered to accommodate death and migration, it is probable that the actual participation exceeded 50 per cent, which is not a bad turnout in the Honduran context.

But a year after, the crisis is still not over. Despite recognition by many governments, the gradual return of development assistance, Honduras remains a hemispheric pariah and is still suspended from the OAS and from other inter-American groups. Unrelenting pressures from the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) explain, in part, the lack of any movement at the OAS. However, the largest stone blocking the full return of Honduras to the international community is not Venezuela; it is South America’s most respected heavyweight: Brazil. With a fairly-elected president in power and the appointment of a promising Truth Commission under Eduardo Stein, which is getting technical support from the OAS, it is difficult to understand Brazil’s ongoing puni-

tive approach to Honduras. The principal victims are the people of Honduras, the third most impoverished state of the Americas. 🌐

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## Economy

### Latin America satisfied with G20 results

Brazil, Mexico and Argentina, the three Latin American countries that participated in the Group of 20 (G20) Summit in Toronto June 26-27, have conveyed their satisfaction with its outcome. The three countries affirmed they agree that policies to halve deficits without harming economic growth—a move supported by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper—are necessary for global economies to recover. This summit joins heads of state, finance ministers and central bank governors from 20 of the world's leading economies to enhance co-operation on the international financial system.

Brazilian Finance Minister Guido Mantega was pleased with the idea that countries must avoid damage to their economic recovery in order to reduce deficit. However, he was slightly skeptical, saying he believed some countries will experience difficulty in the recovery process. Mexican Treasury Secretary Ernesto Cordero Arroyo supported the short-term stimulus policy, but said we must watch the public deficit. Argentine President Cristina Kirchner was pleased that the views and voices of emerging countries were present in the final communiqué of the meeting.

Mexico is slated to chair the G20 Summit in 2012.

## L'Amérique centrale et l'Union européenne scellent un Accord d'Association

*Gabriel Coulombe*

*(English translation follows)*

### Cette coopération ouvre de nouvelles perspectives pour l'intégration centraméricaine.

L'Amérique centrale a conclu un Accord d'Association avec l'Union européenne (UE) le 19 mai 2010, accord qui ne pourra toutefois être véritablement fonctionnel que si la région centraméricaine parvient à approfondir le niveau de son intégration multidimensionnelle. Toutefois, lorsqu'on considère les nombreuses divergences qui existent dans cette région par rapport à la volonté d'intégration par-delà la sphère économique, ce défi en est un d'envergure. Une consolidation du processus d'intégration s'avère pourtant fondamentale afin d'assurer la prospérité ainsi que l'insertion de l'Amérique centrale (AC) dans l'économie internationale face à un continent dominé par l'ALÉNA et le Mercosur.

À l'occasion du Sommet UE-AC tenu à Madrid en mai dernier, les deux régions ont finalement conclu, après trois ans de négociations, un Accord d'Association stratégique bilatéral. Celui-ci comprend trois piliers : le commerce, le dialogue politique et la coopération.

En matière de commerce, il s'agira essentiellement d'instaurer une zone de libre-échange entre les deux régions. Tel que le rapporte Benita Ferrero-Waldner, commissaire européenne au commerce extérieur, des études indépendantes avançaient qu'un accord de libre-échange entre les deux régions apporterait des bénéfices

annuels pouvant aller jusqu'à 2,6 milliards d'euros pour l'Amérique centrale et jusqu'à 2,3 milliards d'euros pour l'Europe. Il est anticipé que le commerce entre les deux régions continuera de croître, conformément à la tendance qui a vu le volume des échanges pratiquement doubler en 10 ans. En 2009, le commerce entre l'AC et l'UE avoisinait les 6 milliards de dollars US, après avoir enregistré un recul provoqué par la crise économique mondiale. En ouvrant son marché aux 500 millions de consommateurs européens, l'AC a donc beaucoup à gagner sur le plan économique, alors que l'UE fera un pas de plus dans la diversification de ses partenaires commerciaux.

La composante politique, quant à elle, visera à établir un dialogue et à favoriser les échanges d'informations entre l'AC et l'UE par l'établissement de mécanismes institutionnalisés. Cela pourrait faciliter l'adoption de positions communes aux deux régions à propos de sujets d'intérêt international, tout en redorant le blason du multilatéralisme. En ce sens, tel que l'explique une étude de la Commission économique pour l'Amérique latine et les Caraïbes (CEPALC) d'octobre 2009, bien que cet accord avec l'AC soit d'une importance relativement faible pour l'Europe, il devrait tout de même permettre au vieux continent de renforcer ses alliances stratégiques au sein des forums multilatéraux. De son côté, l'AC disposera

d'un allié de taille qui lui donnera une autorité accrue dans la conduite de ses relations internationales.

Au niveau de la coopération, on entend notamment se pencher sur le développement de programmes de santé et d'éducation, la protection de l'environnement, l'amélioration de la sécurité, ainsi que la lutte contre le terrorisme, la corruption, le narcotrafic et le crime organisé. Ainsi, le volet coopératif a pour objectif de conduire à un développement social et économique soutenable et équitable pour les deux régions.

L'Accord doit maintenant être traduit dans les 23 langues officielles de l'UE et être soumis à diverses vérifications juridiques, ce qui fera en sorte qu'il n'entrera normalement en vigueur qu'en janvier 2011. Ultérieurement, la Commission européenne —qui a négocié le traité au nom des 27 pays de l'UE— demandera au Conseil des ministres de l'UE la permission de signer ledit texte, qui sera ensuite ratifié par le Parlement européen. Parallèlement, les congrès nationaux des pays centraméricains signataires ratifieront l'Accord d'Association.

### **Vers une intégration multidimensionnelle centraméricaine**

Selon Juan Daniel Aleman, Secrétaire général du Système d'intégration centraméricain (SICA), institution qui agit à titre d'organisation parapluie regroupant des organes aux vocations économiques, politiques et juridiques, cet accord constitue un « événement historique au niveau international, étant donné qu'il s'agit du premier accord de région à région signé par l'UE avec une autre région du monde ». Un tel traité, en plus de créer une nouvelle dynamique de coopération entre les deux régions, contribuera directement à renforcer le degré d'intégration des pays membres du SICA l'ayant signé

(Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama et Salvador).

C'est par le biais du Secrétariat de l'intégration économique centraméricaine (SIECA), organe économique du SICA, que les modalités de l'Accord d'Association ont été négociées. Il est toutefois important de noter que c'est directement avec les pays d'Amérique centrale, et non pas avec le SIECA en tant que tel, que l'UE a signé ce traité. Cela illustre bien le faible niveau d'intégration politique qui caractérise la situation centraméricaine.

En fait, loin d'avoir une vision strictement économique de son association avec l'AC, l'UE souhaite ainsi que l'entente contribue à une plus forte intégration multidimensionnelle de la région centraméricaine, ce qui faciliterait grandement les relations entre les deux régions. L'UE démontre d'ailleurs toute l'importance qu'elle y accorde en finançant une série de projets visant à renforcer l'intégration globale de l'AC.

### **Difficultés de l'intégration dans la région**

Si la volonté d'intégration économique jouit d'une relative unanimité parmi les pays membres du SICA, il n'en va pas de même pour ce qui est de l'intégration politique et juridique. En effet, certains pays de la région sont frileux à l'égard de toutes formes d'intégration autres qu'économiques.

Pour s'en convaincre, il suffit de penser au Panama, qui occupait jusqu'au 30 juin la présidence tournante du SICA. Bien que ce pays soit très enclin à travailler à l'approfondissement de l'intégration économique dans l'isthme, son attitude par rapport à l'intégration politique est tout autre. En ce sens, rappelons que le Panama a annoncé, en novembre dernier, qu'il abandonnerait unilatéralement le Parlement centra-

méricain (PARLACEN) —organe politique du SICA—, et ce, dès novembre 2010. Dans les jours qui ont précédé cette nouvelle, le président panaméen, Ricardo Martinelli, avait même été jusqu'à qualifier le PARLACEN de « tribune de perdants ». Le président Martinelli se défend de vouloir mettre à mal l'intégration régionale en invoquant l'exemple du Costa Rica qui est aussi membre du SICA, mais non du PARLACEN ou de la Cour centraméricaine de justice. Lors du Sommet UE-AC, le Panama a toutefois réitéré son intention de se joindre au SIECA, faute de quoi ce pays ne demeurera qu'un observateur dans les négociations avec l'UE.

Somme toute, les pays centraméricains devront apprendre à parler d'une seule voix, faute de quoi ils pourraient se voir contraints de renoncer à bon nombre de bénéfices que l'Accord d'Association pourrait apporter à la région. C'est une occasion en or pour l'Amérique centrale; il y a donc fort à parier que les pays de cette région sauront mettre de côté certains différends afin de permettre un approfondissement de leur intégration économique, politique et juridique. De plus, l'expertise européenne en matière d'intégration multidimensionnelle sera sans doute un élément déterminant qui contribuera au succès de ce processus. 🌐

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## Central America seals association deal with EU

*Gabriel Coulombe*

**The agreement heralds a new era for Central American integration.**

On May 19, 2010, Central America (CA) signed an Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), a deal that may only prove truly functional if the Central American region manages to deepen its level of multi-dimensional integration. When considering the many diverging opinions within the region regarding whether or not integration should extend beyond the economic sphere, this is clearly a monumental challenge. Nonetheless, consolidating the integration process is crucial to ensure economic prosperity, as well as Central America's insertion into the global economy when faced with a continent dominated by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR).

At the EU-CA Summit held in Madrid in May 2010, the two regions finally signed a bilateral strategic Association Agreement following three years of negotiations. The agreement comprises three chapters: trade, political dialogue and co-operation.

With respect to trade, a free-trade area will be established between the two regions. According to Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European commissioner for trade, independent studies have suggested that a free-trade agreement between the two regions would generate annual profits that could potentially reach 2.6 billion euros for Central America and up to 2.3 billion euros for Europe. It is expected that trade between the two regions will continue to

increase, not unlike the trend that saw the volume of trade practically double over the last 10 years. In 2009, trade between CA and the EU was in the range of US\$6 billion after having registered a decline brought about by the international economic crisis. By opening its market to 500 million European consumers, CA clearly has much to gain economically, while the EU will take another step toward diversifying its trade partners.

As for the political component, its aim is to initiate dialogue and to promote the exchange of information between CA and the EU by establishing institutionalized mechanisms. This could assist in the adoption of commonly held positions in both regions on matters of international concern, while maintaining the image of multilateralism. Continuing in the same vein, as outlined in a study by the Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) published in October 2009, the agreement with CA may seem of little importance to Europe, but it should, nonetheless, make it possible for the Old Continent to strengthen its strategic alliances within multilateral forums. As for CA, it will have access to a powerful ally that will give it a stronger voice in its international relations.

In terms of co-operation, the primary focus of the chapter is clearly on developing health and education programs, protecting the environment and improving security. Other areas include the war on terrorism, corruption, drug trafficking and organized crime. There-

fore, the co-operation aspect's objective is to promote social and economic development that is both sustainable and equitable for both regions.

The agreement must next be translated into the 23 official languages of the EU and undergo several juridical verifications, meaning that it will likely not come into force before January 2011. Subsequently, the European Commission—which negotiated the treaty on behalf of the 27 EU member countries—will ask the Council of the European Union permission to sign the document, which will then be ratified by the European Parliament. At the same time, the national congresses of the signatory Central American countries will ratify the Association Agreement.

### **Promoting Central American multilateral integration**

According to Juan Daniel Alemán, secretary general of the Central American Integration System (SICA), an institution acting as an umbrella organization bringing together bodies with economic, political and legal mandates, the agreement constitutes a "historic event of international significance, as it is the first agreement between regions to be signed by the EU conjointly with another region of the world." In addition to creating a new dynamic of co-operation between the two regions, such a trade deal will directly contribute to strengthening the degree of integration of the SICA member countries who signed it (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and

Panamá).

Although the Secretariat for the Central American Economic Integration (SIECA), the economic body of SICA, was the body through which the terms of the association agreement were negotiated, it is important to note that the EU signed the treaty with Central American countries directly, and not with SICA per se. This clearly illustrates the low level of political integration that characterizes Central America.

However, the EU's vision of its association with CA is not purely economic; it hopes that the agreement will contribute to a stronger multi-dimensional integration of the Central American region. If achieved, this would significantly improve relations between the two regions. The EU is demonstrating the extent of its commitment by funding a number of projects designed to strengthen the integration of CA in a broader sense.

### Road blocks to Central American integration

While there is relative consensus in terms of the desire for economic integration among SICA member countries, the same cannot be said for political or legal integration. In fact, some countries in the region are wary of all forms of non-economic integration.

For proof of this, one need look no further than Panamá, which occupied the rotating presidency of SICA until June 30. Although the country is very open to strengthening economic integration in the isthmus, its attitude toward political integration is very different. For instance, Panamá announced, last November, that it would unilaterally withdraw from the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) —the political body of SICA— in November

2010. In the days preceding the announcement, Panamá's President Ricardo Martinelli went so far as to call PARLACEN "a bunch of losers." President Martinelli defended his decision to embitter regional integration by giving the example of Costa Rica, which is also a member of SICA, but not of PARLACEN or the Central American Court of Justice. However, during the EU-CA Summit Panamá reiterated its intention to join SIECA, for not doing so would mean that the country would remain a mere observer in negotiations with the EU.

In conclusion, Central American countries must learn to speak with one voice, or they may be forced to give up many of the privileges that the Association Agreement could provide for the region. This is a golden opportunity for Central America, and it is, therefore, highly probable that the region's countries will learn to put some of their differences aside in order to allow for a strengthening of their economic, political and legal integration. Furthermore, Europe's experience in multi-dimensional integration will most certainly be a key factor that will contribute to the process' success. 🌐

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## Cuando los torturados gobiernan

Alberto Vergara

(English translation follows)

### Una nueva generación de líderes de izquierda está construyendo sociedades basadas en derechos en el Cono Sur.

En los últimos años más de un analista ha señalado el giro hacia la izquierda de los gobiernos de América Latina. Asimismo, se ha subrayado la existencia de dos izquierdas: una de tendencias populistas y otra social-demócrata. La experiencia de la represión brutal que sufrieron las izquierdas en el cono sur del continente generó un consenso común contra la arbitrariedad y sobre la necesidad de instituciones imparciales que protejan los derechos fundamentales. Esta convicción combinada con los valores socialistas tradicionales viene dando lugar a una serie de políticas públicas que en su objetivo por mayor justicia social no atropella el sistema político ni recorta libertades.

Durante doce años, José Pepe Mujica estuvo preso en cárceles uruguayas. Y durante dos de aquellos años, sobrevivió en el fondo de un foso apenas más grande que su ancho cuerpo. Enterrado en vida y torturado por los militares uruguayos, esperaba el día en que sería asesinado por sus carceleros. Pendía sobre él y algunos otros guerrilleros tupamaros la amenaza que sí se realizaba alguna acción tupamarista cada uno de ellos sería ejecutado. Más que un preso político, Mujica era un rehén político. Hoy es presidente del Uruguay. No guarda rencores y lidera junto a

su predecesor, Tabaré Vázquez, una social democracia ejemplar.

A Michelle Bachelet la sacaron de su casa junto a su madre una noche de 1975. Con los ojos vendados fue a dar a una pequeña celda que compartió con ocho presas políticas, en donde dos de ellas fueron violadas. Su padre, el general Bachelet, había sido torturado hasta la muerte unas semanas antes por el régimen de Pinochet. Michelle y su madre fueron liberadas un mes después de la detención y viajaron asiladas a Australia. Michelle Bachelet se convirtió en la primera mujer presidente en Chile, liderando su país desde 2006 hasta principios de 2010, Bachelet dejó el poder este año con una cuota de popularidad enorme, habiendo realizado uno de los gobiernos más exitosos del Chile contemporáneo.

Dilma Rousseff puede convertirse en la primera mujer en ocupar el cargo de la presidencia de la historia brasileña. En los sesenta perteneció a grupos de extrema izquierda y en 1970 fue capturada por la dictadura militar. Fue torturada en repetidas oportunidades con distintas modalidades incluyendo choques eléctricos, que en alguna ocasión le produjeron lesiones tan graves que debió ser enviada a hospitales para detener las hemorragias que sufría. En los últimos años ha sido una exitosa ministra del gobierno del Presidente Brasileño Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva y ahora cuenta con todo el apoyo del presidente brasileño y del Partido de los Trabajadores para las elecciones presidenciales en octubre de este año. Aunque algunos le enrostran su pasado comunista y guerrillero, ella lo recuerda, mas bien, como la lucha contra la dictadura de la época: “Quando o Brasil mudou,

eu mudei”.

Brasil, Chile y Uruguay vienen construyendo los proyectos socialdemócratas más serios en América Latina habiendo introducido valores socialistas a las instituciones de la democracia liberal. En cada uno de estos países se ponen en práctica políticas destinadas a reducir la pobreza: en Uruguay por primera vez se ha hecho pagar impuestos a las clases altas y medias, en Chile se ha empujado un seguro universal de salud y en Brasil el programa Fome Zero viene reduciendo la pobreza año a año. Del lado político, sus populares líderes no intentan reelegirse indefinidamente como presidente: ni Bachelet ni Lula ni Vázquez intentaron quedarse en el cargo más allá de donde la constitución se los permitía. Asimismo, en estos países la oposición no es hostigada, los medios de comunicación son libres y prima el estado de derecho.

Esta armonización de instituciones políticas liberales y políticas públicas redistributivas son una gran novedad en América Latina, continente donde suele aceptarse la existencia de una ineludible contraposición entre libertades e igualdad. Crecida a la sombra de la revolución cubana, la izquierda latinoamericana confió durante décadas que los cambios sociales nunca podrían venir desde las urnas. Se pensaba que el continente sólo cambiaría a punta de fusil.

Pero la experiencia de la represión en las izquierdas del cono sur latinoamericano parece haber jugado un papel importante para anular la desconfianza respecto de la democracia electoral. Tanto en Brasil como en Chile y Uruguay, la izquierda en el poder pertenece a una generación

que sufrió el exilio, el asesinato y la tortura. Quienes hoy han llegado al poder son, en muchos casos, sobrevivientes y esta experiencia ha dado forma e influenciado a los gobiernos de izquierda en estos países. De un lado, frente a la experiencia común de la arbitrariedad autoritaria, aparece la necesidad de construir instituciones y de proteger derechos fundamentales. Frente a la dictadura que no respeta cuerpo ni alma de sus enemigos, se encarna la necesidad de construir un Estado de derecho para todos: el aprendizaje brutal de la necesidad democrática. Y, por tanto, esta experiencia común descalifica inmediatamente cualquier tipo de régimen —de izquierda o derecha— que haga de la arbitrariedad su *modus operandi*. Frente a la arbitrariedad que impone la ley del más fuerte, los derechos humanos y la democracia aseguran la ley del más débil.

Y esta confianza en las leyes fundamentales y en las instituciones comienza a dar lugar a regímenes políticos donde no priman los personalismos. Al contrario del resto de países en América Latina donde cada gobierno suele estar identificado con un apellido, la evolución de estos países se dirige hacia las instituciones, se consolidan partidos políticos socialistas que, desde el poder o desde la oposición, juegan un papel central. Y todo esto colabora para que el sistema político en su conjunto gane estabilidad pues los partidos conservadores ya no pueden jugar la carta extremista o personalista.

Más allá de la justicia intrínseca que se percibe cuando un ex torturado toma las riendas de la nación sin construir gobiernos para la ven-

ganza, la experiencia de la dictadura y la represión parece haber ayudado a comprender los beneficios de la democracia y el respeto de los derechos fundamentales. En un continente donde la izquierda siempre vio a la democracia electoral como una traición, donde la justicia social y las garantías individuales se percibieron —y en muchos casos, se perciben— como un juego de suma cero, el ejemplo de los gobiernos de izquierda de estos tres países es crucial. Y es importante también porque la derecha percibe que no hace falta, como antaño, abrazar a los militares para impedir el triunfo de una izquierda que solía reclamarse leninista.

Finalmente, es muy posible que mientras las izquierdas de retórica inflamada y dependientes de los hidrocarburos entrarán en crisis cuando caigan los precios internacionales, las políticas públicas puestas en marcha por estas izquierdas socialistas permanecerán en el tiempo. Y acaso esa será la mejor lección para las izquierdas latinoamericanas: las urnas y las instituciones pueden garantizar la permanencia en el tiempo de las reformas, mientras que los personalismos plebiscitarios van y vienen. 🌐

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## When torture victims govern

*Alberto Vergara*

**A new generation of leftist leaders is building rights-based societies in the Southern Cone.**

In recent years, a number of analysts have signalled a leftward swing in Latin America's governments and the existence of two distinct tendencies: one populist and the other socio-democratic. In the Southern Cone, the experience of brutal repression endured by the left has created a general consensus against arbitrariness and on the necessity for impartial institutions to protect fundamental rights. This conviction, combined with traditional socialist values, is giving rise to a number of public policies that, in their quest for greater social justice, neither sweep aside the existing political system nor infringe upon freedoms.

For 12 years, José "Pepe" Mujica was held prisoner in Uruguayan military barracks and during two of those years was confined to the bottom of a pit barely larger than his body. Buried alive and tortured by soldiers, he expected that one day he would be assassinated by his captors. He and other Tupamaro guerrillas lived in constant fear of getting killed if a Tupamarist act was committed. More than a political prisoner, Mujica was a political hostage. Today, he is Uruguay's president. He bears no resentment and leads, as his predecessor Tabaré Vázquez, an exemplary social democracy.

Michelle Bachelet was forced out of her home, along with her mother, one night in 1975. She was blindfolded and taken to a cell oc-

cupied by eight other female political prisoners; two were raped. Her father, General Bachelet, had been tortured to death by Pinochet's regime weeks earlier. Michelle and her mother were released one month following their detention, and travelled to Australia as political refugees. Michelle Bachelet became the first female president of Chile, leading her country from 2006 until the beginning of 2010 when she stepped down with an overwhelming margin of popularity, having ended one of the most successful terms in Chile's recent history.

Dilma Rousseff could very well become the first woman to occupy Brazil's presidency. In the '60s, she belonged to radical leftist groups, and in 1970 was captured by officials of the military dictatorship. She was tortured on several occasions including electric shocks that, on one occasion, gave her such serious lesions that she had to be hospitalized to control the hemorrhages. In recent years, she has been a successful minister in President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government and now has his full backing and that of the Workers' Party for the presidential elections of October 2010. Although some reproach her for her communist and guerrilla past, she prefers to recall the period as the fight against the dictatorship of the time: "Quando o Brasil mudou, eu mudei."

Brazil, Chile and Uruguay are

building the most ambitious socio-democratic projects in Latin America, having incorporated socialist values into liberal-democratic institutions. In all three countries, policies aimed at reducing poverty are being implemented. In Uruguay, the upper and middle classes have been forced to pay taxes for the first time. Chile has introduced universal health insurance. Finally, the Brazilian Fome Zero program has been reducing hunger year after year. On the political front, the countries' popular leaders do not attempt to re-elect themselves as president for an indefinite term. Neither Bachelet, nor Lula, nor Vásquez have tried to stay in power any longer than the period authorized by their respective constitutions. The opposition is not harassed, there is freedom of press and the rule of law prevails.

This harmonization between liberal political institutions and redistributive public policies is something new in Latin America, a continent where a widely-held belief is that there is an inevitable trade off between freedoms and equality. For many decades, the Latin American left—having sprung from the shadows of the Cuban Revolution—believed that social change could never come from casting ballots, and that the continent could only change if forced to do so at gun point.

However, the repression experienced by the left in the Southern Cone seems to have played a significant role in building trust in electoral democracy. In Brazil, Chile and Uruguay alike, the left in power is the result of a generation that lived through exile, assassinations

and torture. Those who have come to power today are, in many cases, survivors themselves. Their experience has shaped and influenced the left-wing governments in the three countries. Having lived through authoritarian arbitrariness, these politicians clearly see the need to create institutions to protect fundamental rights. In the face of dictatorships that show complete disrespect for bodies and souls of enemies, the construction of a rights-based state for all becomes an imperative; this is the brutal realization of the need for democracy. Moreover, this generalized experience disqualifies outright any regime—leftist or rightist—whose *modus operandi* is arbitrariness. In resistance to the injustice imposed by the principle of might is right, human rights and democracy guarantee the principle of right is might.

This confidence in constitutional laws and institutions is giving rise to non-populist political regimes. Unlike other Latin American countries, where each successive government is usually associated with a last name, change in Southern Cone countries is occurring in institutions and there is a consolidation of socialist political parties that, whether in power or in the opposition, play a central role. Combined, all of these factors contribute to building a political system that may achieve overall stability, since the conservative parties can no longer play the extremist or populist card.

In addition to the intrinsic sense of justice that seems inherent when a torture victim takes the reins of a nation without a vengeful agenda, the experience of dictatorship and

repression seems to have helped in understanding the benefits of democracy and the respect of fundamental rights. In a continent where the left always viewed electoral democracy as a form of treason and where social justice and individual freedoms were—and often still are—perceived as a zero-sum game, the left-wing governments of all three countries serve as a crucial example. This is also important because the right no longer feels the need to collaborate with the military to prevent the victory of a left that tended to identify itself as Leninist.

In conclusion, some left-wing governments with rhetoric full of enthusiasm continue to depend on hydrocarbons; they could well experience a crisis should international prices fall. Yet, the public policies implemented by these socialist lefts could stand the test of time all the same. Perhaps this would be the best lesson for the Latin American left: votes and institutions can guarantee the permanence of reforms, while leader-centred plebiscites are but a passing phenomenon. 🌍

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**Officials****UNESCO selects Jean as Special Envoy for Haiti**

A United Nations agency designated Canadian Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean as Special Envoy for Haiti on June 22, 2010. Jean will begin her new duties for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) when her term as Governor General ends later this year.

She travelled to Jacmel, Haiti with UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova in March of this year, two months after the area was largely destroyed in an earthquake that killed an estimated 200,000 people. Bokova praised Jean's "unwavering commitment" to gender equality, press freedom, the role of education in economic development and democracy, and greater dialogue and solidarity among different communities.

Jean is a former journalist, human rights advocate and former child refugee from Haiti. Some of her main goals as Special Envoy include fighting poverty and the high illiteracy rate in Haiti.

The Governor General visited Haiti in March following the devastating earthquake. Born in Haiti, Jean said she wanted the Haitian people to know that they are not alone and that people in the world, particularly Canada, will continue to care about Haiti as it rebuilds.

**Biotechnology to combat climate change**

*Stephanie Batchelor*

**Biofuels and biobased products developed in the region are a solution to ease the climate crisis.**

In December 2009, hundreds of countries from around the globe converged in Copenhagen in an attempt to secure a global agreement on climate change adaptation and mitigation. While the Conference did not result in a binding global agreement, the message to the international community was clear: we must find and implement solutions to end the global climate crisis. To meet the drastic reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions needed to halt climate change, a suite of solutions is required. Industrial biotechnology is one such solution, currently being deployed across the globe.

Clearly defined, industrial biotechnology is the application of life sciences to traditional manufacturing and chemical synthesis. Industrial biotechnology is used in applications such as biofuels, biobased products and the improvement of manufacturing processes.

In the Americas, the most common biofuel currently in production is ethanol-derived from corn or sugarcane. The United States commercially produces corn-based ethanol, which is effectively capped at 56.8 billion litres per year under the United States Renewable Fuel Standard. Brazil produces 598 million metric tonnes of sugarcane to produce 25.5 billion litres of ethanol. According to 2009 figures from the Brazilian Sugarcane Industry Association (UNICA), the country is the number one sugarcane grower and sugar producer in the world, and the second largest ethanol producer on the planet, behind the United States. Moreover,

several next generation biofuels in production, largely in the U.S. and Canada, have the potential to make massive reductions in GHG emissions.

In 2007, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reported that in the United States, advanced biofuels, such as cellulosic ethanol from agricultural residues or dedicated energy crops, reduce lifecycle GHG emissions by over 100 per cent compared to fossil alternatives. In addition, dedicated energy crops such as switchgrass or miscanthus can increase long-term sequestration of atmospheric carbon dioxide in soils, and biotech crop varieties can substantially improve yields, leading to reduced deforestation.

Biofuels made from algae also provide sustainable solutions to fossil energy. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, some algal strains are capable of doubling their mass several times per day. In some cases, more than half of that mass consists of lipids or triacylglycerides —the same material found in vegetable oils. These bio-oils can be used to produce such advanced biofuels as biodiesel, green diesel, green gasoline and green jet fuel.

Algae, along with a range of other feedstocks, can be used to make biobased products as well. Biobased products, such as chemicals and plastics produced from renewable biomass, provide superior GHG and energy independence benefits as compared to traditional products made from petroleum feedstocks. In fact, many biobased products are carbon negative on a lifecycle basis because



# Vers des sommets nord-américains plus inclusifs?

Christine Fréchette

(English translation follows)

## Consulter la société civile dans le cadre du Sommet des Leaders favoriserait un dialogue nord-américain plus représentatif.

Le sixième Sommet des leaders nord-américains se tiendra au Canada cet été. Bien que récemment, ces réunions, qui rassemblent le premier ministre du Canada et les présidents des États-Unis et du Mexique, semblent tout droit sorties d'une autre époque, celle où seule l'élite économique était invitée à se prononcer sur les grands enjeux politiques et économiques. La présence d'une plus grande diversité d'acteurs à ces sommets permettrait un dialogue nord-américain plus ouvert et représentatif.

### Une structure déséquilibrée

Le haut fait annuel de la relation qu'entretiennent le Canada, les États-Unis et le Mexique réside, depuis 2005, dans la tenue de ces rencontres au sommet. Ceux-ci visent à permettre aux dirigeants des trois gouvernements fédéraux de faire le point et de discuter des vastes enjeux qui leur sont communs.

Afin de se faire épauler dans cette tâche et d'obtenir des conseils sur les mesures à adopter, ils ont établi un comité trilatéral composé de dirigeants d'entreprises, le Conseil nord-américain de la compétitivité. Ce regroupement, lequel rassemble 30 dirigeants d'entreprise, est le seul qui soit formellement invité à prendre part aux Sommets.

Bien qu'il soit légitime que les chefs de gouvernements sollicitent le point de vue des grandes entreprises sur la gouverne de l'Amérique du Nord, il est injustifiable qu'ils ne s'en

remettent qu'à eux. L'ampleur des enjeux associés à la région, la plus importante pour chacun des trois pays sur le plan commercial, énergétique, environnemental et frontalier, est trop vaste pour n'interpeller qu'une poignée d'intervenants, provenant tous, de surcroît, du même secteur. L'heure est venue de donner voix au chapitre à de nouveaux acteurs afin d'élargir le spectre des intérêts à prendre en considération et d'engager plus d'acteurs dans la dynamique trilatérale.

### Refléter la diversité des acteurs et des intérêts

Dans un premier temps, l'établissement d'un lien formel entre le forum des états fédérés, qui réunit les chefs de gouvernements des provinces canadiennes et états américains et mexicains, et le Sommet des leaders nord-américains serait de mise. En effet, les leaders des états fédérés se rencontrent déjà périodiquement afin de discuter d'enjeux qui, le plus souvent, sont identiques à ceux de leurs homologues fédéraux.

En juin 2009, par exemple, le forum des états fédérés amenait leurs leaders politiques à échanger notamment sur la crise financière et économique; le transport et les infrastructures, de même que l'énergie et les changements climatiques. Quelques jours plus tard, les dirigeants fédéraux se réunissaient afin de discuter de la promotion de la relance économique et de la compétitivité de l'Amérique du Nord, de

la coopération en matière d'énergie propre et de changements climatiques, tout comme des questions liées à la sécurité publique. La similitude des agendas est on ne peut plus évidente.

En conclusion du sommet des états fédérés dont il était l'hôte, le premier ministre du Québec Jean Charest, en appelait, au nom de ses homologues nord-américains, à l'adoption par le Canada, les États-Unis et le Mexique, d'une position commune en matière d'émissions de gaz à effet de serre. Il est pour le moins étonnant de constater que ceux-ci ont été tenus de faire parvenir par écrit leurs recommandations aux dirigeants des gouvernements fédéraux, alors même que les 30 chefs d'entreprises membres du Conseil nord-américain de la compétitivité sont appelés, eux, à échanger de vive voix avec eux.

Qu'il s'agisse de mesures dans le domaine commercial, dans le domaine du transport, de l'énergie ou encore de la gestion de l'eau transfrontalière, pour ne nommer que celles-là, l'apport des différents paliers de gouvernement est non seulement souhaitable, mais souvent requis. Aussi, la prise en compte de l'intérêt public ne serait-elle pas davantage assurée par la tenue d'une rencontre des chefs de gouvernements fédéraux et fédérés que par la tenue d'une rencontre avec une trentaine de chefs d'entreprises? Outre les bénéfices pouvant découler d'une meilleure coordination

entre les deux paliers de gouvernements nord-américains, soulignons que les coûts résultant de la gestion en vase clos pourraient probablement être réduits.

Nous avons vu, avec le *Buy American Act*, ce qu'il peut en coûter de ne pas inclure les gouvernements des états fédérés dans la dynamique nord-américaine. Les agences gouvernementales des états fédérés étant exemptées de l'application du chapitre 10 de l'Accord de libre-échange nord-américain (ALÉNA) portant sur les marchés publics, plusieurs états américains en ont profité, suite à l'adoption du plan de relance économique du Président Barack Obama, pour accorder un traitement préférentiel aux entreprises américaines.

### En plus des gens d'affaires

Dans un second temps, d'autres acteurs de la société civile pourraient être invités à élaborer des recommandations destinées aux chefs de gouvernements, en plus des représentants des grandes entreprises. La communauté universitaire pourrait par exemple être officiellement invitée à se mobiliser. Cela pourrait susciter la tenue d'une première rencontre des présidents ou recteurs d'universités d'Amérique du Nord, en vue de discuter de mesures de renforcement des liens professoraux et étudiants entre les trois pays. Le développement du plein potentiel nord-américain requiert l'apport d'une communauté universitaire pleinement engagée dans l'analyse des enjeux et des défis qui caractérisent la région.

Finalement, l'inclusion d'un comité regroupant des organisations non-gouvernementales environnementales ou sociales permettrait

de compléter le processus de diversification des forces en présence et d'élargir la gamme d'expertise et de point de vue représentés. Une initiative de la sorte amènerait probablement certains de ces groupes à sortir d'une logique de stricte confrontation pour s'engager dans une démarche davantage constructive.

L'adoption de tels changements engagerait les Sommets des leaders nord-américains dans une phase de consolidation du dialogue régional. Il serait heureux que les sommets nord-américains reflètent une approche plus ouverte et favorisant l'apport des différents acteurs concernés par les enjeux qui y sont discutés.

La structure de consultation actuelle des Sommets des leaders nord-américains laisse croire à un parti pris pour les intérêts des grandes entreprises. Que cela soit justifié ou non, il s'agit là d'un anachronisme qui porte préjudice à l'ensemble de la démarche. Il serait souhaitable que le prochain sommet qui se tiendra au Canada marque l'amorce d'un dialogue plus ouvert et plus représentatif de la diversité des intérêts que les gouvernements doivent prendre en considération dans la gouvernance de leurs relations nord-américaines. 

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### Reports

#### Peru leads world's coca production

Peru has surpassed Colombia as the world's leading producer of coca, says a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Bogotá. The report's findings reveal a significant decrease in Colombia's cultivation of coca, in contrast to a steep increase in Peru.

The report states that Peru produces 45 per cent of all coca — a plant used in the cultivation of cocaine— production in the Andean region with 119,000 tons of coca leaf, while Colombia decreased to 39 per cent with 103,000 tons. In Colombia, coca cultivation has decreased substantially: a 16 per cent decline was observed from 2008 to 2009 and a cumulative drop of roughly 60 per cent in a decade.

In Peru, on the other hand, coca cultivation has risen by 6.8 per cent from 2008 to 2009, adding to an approximate 55 per cent increase in cultivation in comparison to a decade ago.

Shortly after the report was released, the UNODC based in Lima questioned the report and denied the allegations that Peru had become the world's largest producer of coca, saying that different measurement methods were applied to both countries.

# Toward more inclusive North American summits?

*Christine Fréchette*

**Broader civil society consultations at Leaders Summit would foster a more representative North American dialogue.**

The sixth annual North American Leaders Summit will be held in Canada this summer. Although a recent phenomenon, these meetings between the prime minister of Canada and the presidents of the United States and Mexico seem straight out of another era, when none but the economic elite were asked their opinion on major political and economic issues. The presence of a greater diversity of actors at these summits would make a more open and representative North American dialogue possible.

## **An imbalanced structure**

Since 2005, the annual highlight of relations between Canada, the United States and Mexico has consisted in holding summit meetings. These meetings provide an opportunity for all three federal government leaders to take stock of their respective situations and discuss major shared issues.

For support in this task and to get advice regarding measures to adopt, they have created the North American Competitiveness Council, a trinational committee made up of corporate representatives. Comprising 30 corporate leaders, the Council is the only organization that has been formally invited to take part in the summits.

While it may be acceptable for government leaders to seek the point of view of large companies on North American governance, it is unjustifiable that they not seek advice from more than one source. The magnitude of issues associated with the region, which is of utmost importance to all three countries in relation to trade, energy, environment and border issues, is too great to be left to a

handful of actors, particularly if all from the same sector. The time has come to give new actors a voice on the subject in order to broaden the spectrum of interests for consideration and to involve more actors in the trilateral dynamic.

## **Diverse actors and interests**

A first crucial step would be to establish a formal link between the forum of federated states, which brings together government leaders from Canadian provinces and U.S. and Mexican states, and the North American Leaders Summit. After all, the federated states' leaders have already been meeting periodically to discuss issues that, more often than not, are the same as those of their federal counterparts.

For example, at the forum of federated states held in June 2009, leaders exchanged ideas primarily on the financial and economic crisis, transportation and infrastructure, as well as energy and climate change. A few days later, the federal officials met to discuss promoting economic stimulus and North America's competitiveness, co-operation regarding clean energy and climate change, as well as questions related to public security. The similarity between the two agendas is undeniable.

At the conclusion of the summit of federated states, its host, Quebec Premier Jean Charest, made an appeal on behalf of his North American counterparts for Canada, the United States and Mexico to adopt a unified position on greenhouse gas emissions. It is surprising to note that leaders of the federated states were asked to deliver their recommendations to federal leaders in writing, while the 30 corporate members of

the North American Competitiveness Council were allowed to communicate with federal leaders in person.

The input of various levels of government, be it on measures related to trade, transportation or even cross-border water management just to name a few, is not only desirable, but often necessary. In addition, it seems that the best interests of the public would be better guaranteed by the occurrence of a meeting between federal and federated government leaders than by a gathering with 30 corporate leaders. Aside from the benefits likely to result from better co-ordination between the two levels of North American government, it is worth mentioning that the costs resulting from self-contained management could probably be reduced.

With the Buy American Act, we have seen that there is a price to pay for not including the governments of federated states in the North American dynamic. As the government agencies of the federated states had been exempt from the application of Chapter 10 of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) concerning government contracts, several U.S. states took advantage of this situation. Following the adoption of President Barack Obama's economic stimulus package, these states gave preferential treatment to U.S. companies.

## **More than just business people**

A second consideration would be to involve other actors from civil society—in addition to representatives of large companies—in making recommendations to government leaders. For example, the academic community could

be officially asked to mobilize. Doing so could bring about a first meeting of North American university presidents or rectors, with an aim to discuss measures intended to strengthen inter-faculty relations and student ties among all three countries. Developing North America's full potential requires the contribution of an academic community that is fully committed to the analysis of the issues and challenges specific to the region.

Finally, the inclusion of a committee comprising environmental or social non-governmental organizations would make it possible to round out the process of diversifying the powers in attendance and broaden the range of expertise and points of view represented. An initiative of this kind could lead some of these groups to abandon a strictly confrontational approach in favour of a more constructive process.

Implementing such changes would engage North American Leaders Summits in a consolidation phase of regional dialogue. It is hoped that the North American summits will come to reflect a more open approach that gives preference to the contribution of various actors concerned with the issues under discussion.

The North American Leaders Summits' current consultative structure seems to indicate a bias in favour of the interests of large companies. Whether this is justified or not, it is an anachronism that prejudices the process as a whole. Ideally, the upcoming summit to be held in Canada will mark the beginning of a dialogue that is both more open and representative of the diversity of interests that governments must consider when handling their North American relations. 🌐

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## Citizen democracy for renewed multilateralism

*Gabriel Murillo*

**Public opinion polling can be an innovative tool to reinforce the democratic impact of the Summit of the Americas.**

Inadequate performance by governments across the Americas calls for formal political structures at the regional level to become more inclusive and responsive to popular demands for equity and human sustainable development to impel citizen democracy in the region. Public opinion polling can be an innovative mechanism of multilateral diplomacy to reinforce the democratic impact of the most important hemispheric forum: the Summit of the Americas (SOA).

The gap that separates governments from the governed must be reduced. Legitimate and trustful political leaders require constant exchange of information with their constituents without which there can be no democracy. Empowered participatory citizenship can only make states stronger; this is also valid for multilateral forums. Yet, democratic legitimacy is harder to claim in multilateral and intergovernmental contexts such as the SOA. But public opinion could be used as a tool to reflect public needs and expectations and to weigh peoples' approval of the multilateral agenda.

There is accumulated evidence of the weakening of democracy in the Americas. The growth of poverty and the fact that the region has the most unequal income distribution in the world, growing unemployment and corruption are

all problems that feed into a growing sense of unsatisfactory performance of ruling actors and institutions in many countries. Economic and political exclusion contribute importantly to this trend as many citizens do not see their needs and expectations met with the implementation of social policy agendas.

The regional agenda could innovate to reverse this situation and move toward citizen democracy. The SOA process would benefit from the use of public opinion polling as obtaining the most updated and comparable information will help preserve the necessary cohesion and credibility of the inter-American system.

Along these lines, a collaborative project with the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), the Inter-American Dialogue (IAD) and the Colombian Fundación para la Educación Superior y el Desarrollo (Fedesarrollo) is being implemented to enhance the hemispheric effort to ensure a successful Sixth Summit of the Americas to take place in 2012 in Cartagena, Colombia. This project, the Think-Tank Initiative, has already conducted two meetings to identify ways to increase the democratic relevance to the summits. The central purpose is to contribute to the achievement of higher standards of efficiency and legitimacy in this multilateral

diplomatic process. The initiative aims to provide suggestions for the improvement of the civil society consultation process by incorporating the technical capacities of public opinion polling firms working in the region.

Appraisal of democracy as much as decision-making for public policy implementation remains state-centered. In general terms, policies for citizen participation and civic education in countries of the region remain marginal and the legitimacy and accountability so crucial to democratic governance are low. Trusted political institutions can only be built through greater citizen involvement in public affairs. People need to be made true agents of social change. But the need to foster a civic culture to address legitimacy and accountability gaps is just starting to be recognized as a central element of national and supranational policies for sustainable human development. Beyond fostering social equity and democracy, involving citizens in decision-making is key to successful social policy implementation processes.

Nevertheless, the wide range of social and cultural realities and the economic limitations facing countries in the region call for a more rigorous and flexible approach to diagnose and propose solutions to the main shared problems in regional forums. There is a need to innovate in order to gather objective and updated information that can help implement sound regional policies and projects attending to the needs and expectations of the governed. This should also help demonstrate government-

tal responsiveness and social inclusion in deliberation for public problem-solving. Resorting to public opinion polling could also become an invaluable resource to reinforce solidarity and sense of belonging. This process can also increase political institutional credibility and bring back and expand democratic governance as a necessary condition to counteract the emerging threats to the democratic cohesiveness, legitimacy and validity of the inter-American system.

Given the volatile situation in the Americas, ensuring the future of political and socio-economic regional integration demands more co-ordination on information gathering and critical analysis to improve multilateral political decisions and policies for sustained human development.

The growing inequalities in the region pose a challenge to the existence and consolidation of democracy in the Americas. There is growing awareness of the urgent need to create and implement informed and innovative national and supranational approaches to engage citizens in public policy formulation and decision-making for social and economic problem-solving.

Governments and multilateral entities should accept that marginalized citizens must be recognized as important stakeholders and possessors of crucial information and knowledge to be used as key inputs for more equitable and efficient solutions to public problems. They should also move beyond the state-centered decision-making tradition to overcome mistrust

about their use of public resources for the formulation and implementation of social policies.

Public officials should give more recognition to the value of collecting region-wide information provided by different civil society stakeholders and implement new forms of public opinion polling to improve and rationalize this task.

The state sphere will remain the main source of initiatives to improve communication and encourage conscious and responsible citizenry to find solutions to transform and improve the social order and reinforce citizen democracy.

It is at the supranational level where the challenges, uncertainties and need for resources for policy design and problem-solving are more pressing; yet it is at this level where synergies are possible and where multilateral policies can bring value-added options for the region. 🌐

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# Report from Haiti: Urgent need for tangible signs of progress

*Johanna Mendelson Forman*

**Months after the devastating earthquake, Haiti's future is still uncertain.**

**F**ive months after the tragic January 2010 earthquake, street life in Port-au-Prince, Haiti seems normal save the downed buildings, almost impassable roads and proliferation of camps for internally displaced people. No section of the city is untouched. The conditions on the ground are still alarming, particularly for displaced people. But windows of opportunity for recovery exist, which could generate real progress if risks are mitigated.

## **Conditions on the ground**

The tragedy of displacement is enormous. There are camps in front of the airport, on traffic circles and seemingly in any available vacant space. The displaced have tents, but it is now the rainy season with downpours every afternoon, which make conditions unpleasant at best. While camps in Port-au-Prince appear to have latrines or portable toilets, it is not clear whether there are enough for the number of occupants. Thus, disease and pandemics remain a looming threat.

Yet street life in Haiti is vibrant: markets are open and food vendors abound. Children are dressed for school, attending classes again, although those in camps might not be as fortunate. The traffic patterns have changed, with fewer cars driving down some roads, but more congestion in others. There is a visible presence of a reportedly more respectful Haitian police force, a change that is needed to build confidence in the se-

curity operations.

The political discussion has shifted to the work of the Interim Haitian Reconstruction Commission (IHRC), an administrative institution with an 18-month mandate to oversee grants for projects that is headed by former U.S. President Bill Clinton and Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive. But it is not yet fully staffed and McKinsey and Company, a U.S. management consulting firm, is working to hire more people to support the new body, which could take an additional two months.

The United Nations (UN) Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) is also on the ground. The work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), with support from the Organization of American States, is now focused on preparing for the November 2010 elections. The UN's SRSG, Ambassador Edmond Mulet, is well-regarded by Haitian leaders and does an excellent job of facilitating the process. What has been lost is the opportunity to hold referendums on more vexing constitutional issues such as allowing dual-citizenship Haitians to run for national office or election calendar synchronization to avoid endless rounds of voting for Senate and Assembly seats.

The government suffered a tremendous loss of resources and civil servants since the earthquake; it is still quite fragile. It has neither the capacity nor monies to hire people. Direct budget support to the government, which lost an estimated 80 per cent

of its tax base, is urgently needed. Yet, so far only Brazil has sent a check to cover salaries.

The Government of Haiti's March 2010 Action Plan for Reconstruction and Development identified infrastructure as a top priority. Increasing capacity in ministries in the capital and cities around the country was also cited. As with any post-disaster environment, Haiti is filled with contractors, entrepreneurs and not-for-profit groups eager to make a buck in the wake of a crisis. But money is not yet flowing and they are waiting to see what the IHRC will do.

## **Opportunities and risks**

Many see Haiti as a platform for reconstruction. But investment risks will remain high as long as basic governance structures, legal institutions, commercial codes and support for financial needs are absent.

Haitian business leaders see this as an opportunity to serve as interlocutors for international companies and to contribute to their country's economic growth. Food importers, warehouse owners or those who control ports are in a clear position to gain from this tragedy. But they also recognize that they have some responsibility for the recovery of their nation, an important shift in attitude that underscores the changing dynamic of the private sector in Haiti over the last two decades. U.S. legislation such as HERO, HOPE and HELP granting special access for textiles from Haiti is poised to provide a much-needed post-earthquake

boost to the economy. But it is not enough to ensure greater sustainable development.

Relations with the Dominican Republic are good, but the window of opportunity to improve the overall relationship is waning. Immediately after the earthquake, the bilateral relationship was at a new high, with the Dominicans providing material support and President Leonel Fernandez hosting donor meetings. With time though, old business rivalries have resurfaced when Haitian business leaders tried to develop binational cross-border projects. Haiti-Dominican relations must become a priority, not only in response to the latest disaster, but also to face shared climate change and environmental challenges. Cooperation on the use of renewable energy could build trust. But timing is key so Haitians and Dominicans should take advantage of the good will and the largess of donors and the private sector now.

NGOs are currently the main source of liquid assets available. In the urban camps, it is evident that donor co-ordination is in place, but it is less so when it comes to providing support to those displaced and living outside of Port-au-Prince. Better co-ordination among the hundreds of NGOs working in Haiti is most urgently needed, particularly since the capacity of the government to manage relations with a poorly co-ordinated international community is limited.

While on the surface life has resumed to normal, Port-au-Prince residents are still frightened to be in their homes lest another tremor occur. Many displaced lived in rental units whose owners were killed or are now unwilling to repair the houses, making the prospect of returning

home more remote for these people. There is still inadequate informal sector employment and there are more job losses. Many children are not in school because the building or staff has disappeared.

There is an urgent need for more tangible signs of progress in Port-au-Prince. Progress must come in meeting basic needs such as adequate shelter and food, and in providing employment.

While security in the streets is improving, security in camps is deteriorating. The reasons are manifold: the presence of escaped prisoners, drug and human traffickers in the midst of tent cities and the return of gangs to the slums both increase the risk of instability. More must be done for people to re-enter the workforce and move back to their neighbourhoods.

There is an important lesson to be learned: Haitians need tangible signs of progress now. The government and the international community must demonstrate that this is not business as usual. At this point, progress is still uncertain. Pressure on the government, international donors and NGOs has to be unrelenting if Haitians are to benefit from the promises of a new beginning. Silence is not an option. And encouragement and dialogue must be met with action and tangible results now. 🌍

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## Treaties

### Central America: World's first landmine-free region

As of June 2010, Central America became the first landmine-free region in the world according to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). With the completion of Nicaragua's mine clearance activities, Central America is now free from the danger of landmines.

This outcome marks a great success in a region that, as a consequence of conflicts and civil wars in recent history, has been threatened and harmed by the remains of landmines. Since the late '80s, an estimated 5,000 casualties was the result of remnants mines, causing many communities and towns distress. Of the seven countries in Central America, five were once affected by mines: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. However, as of this year, all of the countries in the region have successfully met their obligations under the Mine Ban Treaty, which required the clearance of all known mined areas.

This accomplishment is the result of a decade of efforts toward the elimination of mines. The ICBL advocated for the Mine Ban Treaty, also known as the Ottawa Treaty, signed in 1997, which aims to ban all anti-personnel landmines.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### New policy brief: The next stage of democracy promotion Pablo Policzer

This FOCAL policy brief examines the next stage of democracy promotion in the Americas in light of the crisis triggered by the 2009 Honduras coup. It argues that Ottawa could play a leading role in fostering debate on how best to reformulate undemocratic provisions to make the region's constitutions reflect the democratic principles embodied in the Inter-American Democratic Charter. To access the policy brief in English, please visit [http://focal.ca/pdf/OAS\\_Policzer\\_Next-Stage-of-Democracy-Promotion\\_July-2010.pdf](http://focal.ca/pdf/OAS_Policzer_Next-Stage-of-Democracy-Promotion_July-2010.pdf). The Spanish and French versions will be available shortly.

### Call for submissions: Health and Education roundtable

FOCAL's Health and Education Program is organizing a roundtable discussion in September 2010. It will bring together academics, policy-makers and local development actors to generate discussion on the inclusion of health and education local development projects in the design and implementation of public policies in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. FOCAL invites actors carrying out such projects to present them at this discussion. Submissions are accepted until Aug.15, 2010. Please see the call for submissions available at <http://focal.ca/pdf/convocatoriaing.pdf> in English and <http://focal.ca/pdf/convocatoria.pdf> in Spanish for more information or to consult the guidelines.

### FOCAL co-authors Haitian diaspora paper for IDB

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) released a paper entitled "Haitian Diaspora Associations and Their Investments in Basic Social Services in Haiti." Patricia Weiss Fagen authored the piece along with Carlo Dade, executive director of FOCAL, and a notable group of others. It considers the actions of Haitian diaspora organizations and associations to address serious gaps in Haitian health-care delivery and education with the aim to inform future donor decisions related to their support for initiatives on these areas in Haiti. To access the paper, please visit [http://focal.ca/pdf/Haiti\\_Fagen-Dade\\_Haitian-Diaspora\\_January-2009.pdf](http://focal.ca/pdf/Haiti_Fagen-Dade_Haitian-Diaspora_January-2009.pdf).

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