Social and Political Dimensions of the Global Crisis: A Perspective from the Americas

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This paper posits that a significant contribution to the debate on the causes and effects of the current global crisis could be made by studying the international political economy of such crisis from a systemic Human Security, as well as Southern perspective. More specifically, this essay presents a Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) standpoint in the larger context of the Americas as a modality of North-South relations. Its main epistemological and operational contention is that crises are imbedded in historical and structural circumstances; and therefore, policy interventions, to be effective, must first address these contextual factors. Broadly speaking, our analysis intends to flesh out the main social and political variables underpinning the crisis by looking at the case of the LAC countries as part of a largely unipolar global and regional configuration.

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INTRODUCTION: INSECURITY IN THE AMERICAS

Statistically and with few exceptions, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean occupy the “upper layer” of the “other” World. Unlike the Middle East, Africa, and especially Asia, the balance and diversity of resources to population is quite favorable. In this sense, other than by virtue of its proximity to the US and Canada, the sub-region appears to have overcome critical poverty. Until the 2008 global meltdown, business confidence among Western elites and their local associates has been exuberantly high. This mood reflected a steady recovery (3.3 % average growth throughout the 1990s and nearly 6 percent in 2000 to 2007) which made investments profitable again, especially in contrast with the “lost decade” of the 1980s-1990s. However, underneath this façade of growth, distributional inequity—rooted in powerlessness and exclusion—persisted and became more pronounced than in other regions of the world (CEPAL 2005; ECOSOC 2005). Most of the Latin American population lives under very precarious and vulnerable circumstances. Even when economic recovery is factored in, overall income levels for the first decade of the 21st century are below those of 1980 (UN 1994). Slow economic improvement has failed to translate into effective employment and social well being.

Though revolutions look unlikely for the moment, the long and deep social antagonisms under the democratic veneer have not vanished. Rather, they have resurfaced in the familiar spiral of poverty and institutional, repressive, criminal, and insurgent violence. The weak civilian governments that replaced the military dictatorships, and the few elected regimes that survived the authoritarian 1970s remain paralyzed by ineffectiveness and low legitimacy. A deeper look renders a view that is far from optimistic. The proclaimed business and official confidence has little to do with social equity, political democracy, or even the state of real economic well being; nor with actual security for the region’s inhabitants. It rather rests on the ideological illusion of a felicitous convergence between market politics and market economics, preventing turbulent social change from below.

Mutual vulnerability

Two central propositions are advanced. The first is that the repressive military regimes of the 1970s and the limited, “low intensity” democracies that succeeded them exhibit a greater degree of continuity than the proponents of transition theory and the establishment media suggest. Despite the normalization supposedly taking place, persistent violence and political turmoil are omnipresent. The social, economic, and international forces which have enjoyed power and privilege still prevail. Contrary to myth, the Americas as a whole and with few and reversible exemptions have not undergone real social revolutions; its social and economic systems are mostly conservative and elitist. Regime stability has been maintained with significant levels of exclusion and systemic violence. The second proposition is that this kind of stability has hampered sustainable, equitable and democratic development. In fact, the current style of modernization hinders real democracy and increases, rather than decreases, poverty and insecurity for most people in the hemisphere. As the current style of unipolar/imperial globalization (Karl and Fagen, 1986) persists, so do de-democratization, widespread insecurity and mutual vulnerability.
THE ROOTS OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Since its “discovery” the region has been subordinated to one or another more highly
developed part of the world. The patterns of production, trade and finance have reflected an
enduring satellite-metropolis international division of labor. The insertion of Latin America
and the Caribbean into the global economy, with their boom-and-bust cycles, firmly
established by the latter part of the 19th century, was based on the export of raw materials,
the import of manufacture, and the super-exploitation of labor. The "modernization" of these
commodity (and rentier) states has been largely anti-developmental, as endogenous
development has been conditioned and distorted by external factors; and has been
undermined by flights of local capital. This has resulted in the marginalization and exclusion
of most the population. Two centuries after formal independence, structural
underdevelopment persists.

Social inequities have endured, creating conditions favorable to the perpetuation of
outward-looking and parasitic elites, and a system of labor relations rooted upon indenture,
paternalism and servitude. Class and racial barriers have been intertwined in highly
hierarchical, rigid and exploitative social structures. Privilege has been largely a function of
elites’ linkages with external constituencies (Chalmers 1972). Local oligarchies have
objectively benefited from social inequities and foreign domination, as with Argentina’s
cattle barons, and its sugar and mining counterparts throughout South and Central America.
These structural factors have been imbedded into the national states and the system of inter-
American relations, bringing about a vicious cycle: the key function of the regional and
local political systems has been by-and-large the maintenance of a hemispheric socio
economic order based on inequality and de-development (Frank 1992; Sunkel 1973).

After post-independence turmoil, the prosperity brought about by increased demand
for raw materials in industrial economies facilitated compromise and an end to intra-elite
conflict. Towards the end of the 19th century most countries had evolved into various forms
of stable oligarchic rule: "gentlemen politics". Generally, for as long as there was enough
surplus to distribute among the oligarchs, regional fracturing and civil wars remained
subdued. Meanwhile, repression by the newly professionalized military and police forces
had been effectively directed against the lower strata. The transformation of a peasantry into
a working-class was also a by-product of the modernization and internationalization of the
economy. While the military establishment acted as an insurance policy against popular
challenges to the status quo, intra-elite consensus was maintained by facilitating private
accumulation during export bonanzas. In a few instances (Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Costa
Rica, Mexico), the process of economic modernization gave rise to a greater degree of social
differentiation, above and beyond the "butler" strata of officers and patrimonial clients in the
public payroll. Instead, a middle class of sorts, constituted by professionals, employees,
schoolteachers, bureaucrats, small retailers and the like, emerged as a buffer between the
oligarchy and the mass of workers and peasants.

The 1930s Depression shattered the old oligarchic arrangement. With the collapse of
markets, the tenuous system of accommodation, which had sustained the republics,
crumbled. As intra-elite tensions increased, so did the challenges to the existing order
coming from labour, the peasantry and the dispossessed. In the aftermath of economic collapse, the "Dictator of the Thirties", became a dominant feature practically everywhere. Yet, depending upon the previous modality of socio-economic development and institutional consolidation, the long-term effects of the crisis varied from country to country. In the relatively more industrialized South American nations and in Mexico, where middle-class reformism had evolved in the previous decades and where republican practices had become institutionalized, import-substitution industrialization (ISI) with populism became the dominant response. Under the leadership of a middle-class controlled state, an uneasy alliance between national entrepreneurs and unionized labor was constructed. Their program was one of reactivation, employment-creation and national development. In the lesser developed countries of Central America and the Caribbean --where, with the exception of Costa Rica, neither a constitutional order had emerged, nor a professional and bureaucratic middle class played a meaningful role-- the populist alternative was unviable. The political pattern there was one of strict exclusion of the non-elite sectors. For the next decades dictatorial rule with US support became entrenched.

Both patterns of conflict-management began to unravel between the mid 1940s and early 1950s. Riots, revolts and generalized political turmoil exploded in South and Central America and the Caribbean. U.S. administrations, mesmerized by the Cold War, the Truman Doctrine, a newly-established Rio Treaty for the collective defense of the Americas (1947) and the hysteria of McCarthyism at home responded to these domestic events in their backyard as threats to U.S. national security. Local oligarchies, besieged by social unrest and unable to withstand popular mobilization and pressures for democratization took advantage of the new international environment by playing with the anti-communist fears of their extraterritorial allies. Entangling transnational alliances between Northern and Southern business, political and military elites were built. The East-West conflict created the conditions for both, a new North-South and elite-mass confrontation. It also marked the return of an active interventionism reminiscent of the "Big-Stick" and "gunboat diplomacy" that preceded the 1934 Good Neighbor Policy of President F.D. Roosevelt. Interventionism, and what John Pilger has called a "war on democracy" (Pilger 2007) were justified by a new and compelling ideological motif: the struggle between the "free world" and "communism".

The CIA-orchestrated overthrow of the elected government of Guatemala in 1954 was paradigmatic of the new mood. The long-term effects of interventionism were destructive for the region's social, institutional and political development. Rhetoric aside, Washington became the principal force for the preservation of oppressive regimes and an unabashed supporter of military dictatorships. Yet, even this support proved insufficient to prevent the popular uprisings that precipitated a crisis of domination in Venezuela and Cuba in the late 1950s. Cuba in the 1960s appeared as the vanguard of a wave of national revolutionary movements backed by a wide array of popular forces. Its revolution was one of the most significant developments in the region since Mexico of the 1910s. It set into motion a fateful chain of events involving a confrontational escalation and a growing internationalization of domestic conflicts. Attempts to destabilize and subsequently overthrow Castro and reverse the revolution culminated in both the calamitous Bay of Pigs and President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, launched in 1961. Washington's main purpose was to prevent another Cuba by encouraging mild social and economic reforms in
the region. Economic and social development was perceived as the antidote to insurgency (Stanley 1961). It was to be accomplished by propping up middle-class, progressive reformist and democratic governments. But the Alliance failed. Import substitution industrialization had already come to a dead end, populism had run its course, social tensions were mounting, and a profound fiscal crisis had set in. The inability of the reformist governments to deliver and quell social unrest rendered the initiative virtually useless.

Though ineffectual for the region's long-run development, the Alliance was more successful as a containment strategy (U.S. Senate 1969; Ferguson 1972). It involved the isolation of Cuba as well as a massive effort to give the collective defense of the Americas encoded in the Rio Treaty a new meaning: the introduction of counterinsurgency and civic action as the central preoccupation of the region's security forces (Lovell 1971). A radical re-organization and transnationalization of the Latin American military ensued. The change in military mission and doctrine from the defense of territorial security (external aggression) by conventional forces to fighting the "internal enemy" by Special Forces was a blow to the already precarious sovereignty of the Latin American countries. It transformed the U.S. security establishment into the head of a vertically integrated regional counter-revolutionary regime, giving the local military a new self-justifying and professional mission: fighting "subversion", however loosely defined (Corbett 1972; Barber & Ronning 1966; US Army 1964). In a relatively brief period and irrespective of declared intentions, the local military and police forces (the latter through Public Safety Programs) had become the dominant internal linkage groups, as “sentinels of empire” operating the lower rungs of the hemispheric security regime (Black 1986). With the reformist and preventive side of the Alliance marred by internal and external inconsistencies, counterinsurgency and containment took precedence over democratic concerns. This reorientation became manifest as early as 1964, with the Johnson administration’s encouragement and promotion of the Brazilian coup and counter-revolution of 1964 and the Dominican invasion of 1965.

In the more institutionalized regimes, the exhaustion of import substitution and populism lead to a breakdown of consensus and civic confidence. With national-populism, ISI failed to bring long-term, sustainable development and political stability. In the 1960s wage and price spirals had become a muted and protracted form of civil strife in many countries. Political deadlock eroded both the legitimacy and the effectiveness of these regimes. Labour practices inherited from the populist years reproduced and accelerated the "push-up" effect of institutionalized social conflict (Hirschman 1985). The rules of the pluralistic game decomposed in the midst of rapid mass mobilization. The existing socio economic order, both domestic and international, was maintained by naked, yet highly bureaucratized repression under a new political alliance: a reactionary coalition between the externally linked business elites, which gave content to a conservative economic package, and the security establishments, trans-nationalized by the ideological "professionalism" of the Cold War. The military, representing a unique externally trained, indoctrinated and financed fraction of the middle class, provided the force required for keeping the population at bay. Its ideological-professional software was—and continues to be—the National Security Doctrine (Weil et al. 1979; Rojas 2003).
A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESSIVE STATE

The abovementioned doctrine, also referred to as “Pentagonism” by Juan Bosch (Bosch 2000), was constructed on three notions: an internal and external enemy ("subversion"), an external "friend" (the U.S. dominated regional security regime), and ideological frontiers. It eroded the national character of the local military institutions and trans-nationalized the state, thus protecting the interests of a largely parasitic oligarchic constituency, both internal and external. The explicit articulation of this worldview was the Nixon Doctrine, outlined in the Rockefeller Report of 1969. The document clearly showed a shift in the normative ideal of political development, from democracy and participation to authoritarianism and order (O’Brian 1971-72). Between 1969 and 1973, with a few notable exceptions, the number of military dictatorships steadily climbed: from six in the early 60s to ten in 1969, twelve in 1970, fourteen in 1972, and fifteen in 1973.

The liberal-authoritarian projects that unfolded in the 1970s rejected the nationalist and protectionist premises of import substitution and other induced development policies. Instead, economic growth was seen as a function of a re-inserting countries' economies into the international division of labor as exporters of raw materials: a return to a widened export economy. With the exception of Brazil in the late 60s and the 70s, economic modernization, far from "deepening industrialization" meant increased reliance on both the natural resource sector and heavy borrowing (ECLA 1970-85; ECLA 2001). The strategy of hyper accumulation also involved the creation of favorable conditions, through deregulation, denationalization and the disarticulation of labor organizations, for domestic and transnational elites to increase their share of profits.

The era of National Security was not only extreme in its persistent abuses of human rights; the early neo-liberal design of its economic strategies implied the tearing down of the welfare state, previously mentioned import substitution industrialization policies, and social safety nets developed since the 1930s. Authoritarian capitalism rejected the demand-side implications of the early Cold War liberalism of the Alliance for Progress and was more concerned with direct containment and the protection of the status quo than with development (US Army 1964). Other than offering "economic miracles" financed by illusive foreign investment, and supported by force, the orthodox policies imposed monetarism (the precursor of the Neo-liberalism of the Chicago School) over the structuralist, Keynesian doctrine of the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA). These deflationary and de-regulatory measures were far more effective as a shock therapy —by atomizing labor, freezing wages, letting prices float to world levels, and privatizing the economies— than in raising living standards. They were much more effective in the short run as weapons in a social war, defining “friends” and “foes”, than as

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1 Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Costa Rica, and communist Cuba.

2 The aggregate foreign debt, which in 1960 amounted to about one-third of the regional annual exports, had grown by 1970 to 1.7 times the total value of exports. Just before the oil crisis in 1973, it had climbed to 1.9 times that value. By 1993 the gap had grown to over 2.7 times, and became stable at about 1.8 times in 2002 (ECLA 2001).
instruments of national development. Rather, the long-term socio economic consequences of these policies were, by-and-large, disastrous and persistent for the region. So were their social, environmental and financial implications. In fact, far from generating stability and bringing prosperity, the combination of dictatorial rule with unrestricted free-market policies created a long-term, structural governability problem and set the conditions for the subsequent debt crisis and recession of the 1980s.

The bureaucratic-authoritarian states that emerged in South America, patterned on the example of post-1964 Brazil, were attempts at modernizations from the top, with strong external inducement. The benefits of this new order accrued to a small alliance of domestic entrepreneurs and speculators supported by a technocratic-military middle class and their business, political and military associates in the imperial centre. Its narrow base generated a persistent crisis of legitimacy that was managed by three instruments. One was military force, through strengthening the alliance between officers and the domestic socio-economic elites. The other was the inclusion of external constituencies --military, business, political and diplomatic-- to compensate for lost internal support. The third was the demobilization and exclusion of the bulk of the population. Dictatorship became an intrinsic component of economic freedom (Letelier 1976). The social cost for the majorities was enormous, since overall living standards plummeted, and the gap between "haves" and "have-nots" widened, providing the underlying factors and outcomes of the current crisis. Nor did these regimes succeed in unleashing real counter-revolutions. At best the National Security regimes provided a repressive brake against social mobilization, economic nationalism, regional integration and a perceived threat from the left. The effective operation of such neoliberal policies required large amounts of external financing, which was facilitated in the 1970s and early 1980s by massive deposits of recycled petrodollars in Western private banks.

Foreign Debt and Regime Crisis

As both the governments and the private sector in the region increased their financial obligations, the failures of production and exports to keep pace with borrowing, and, most importantly with soaring interest rates, resulted in huge debt-burdens. Despite diverse ideological discourses, the hard-line military regimes in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Bolivia did not behave very differently from the more populist militocracies in Peru, Panama or Ecuador, or those in civilian-controlled oil-producing countries (Mexico and Venezuela), or in the microstates of the Caribbean. The policies may have had different declared intentions, yet their effects were similar: unmanageable indebtedness and hyper-concentration of wealth, and de-development throughout the region.

The crisis of the dictatorships in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile involved the erosion of the political alliances that had permitted the implementation of the repressive socio economic projects. Other more inclusive military regimes like those of Peru, Ecuador and Panama quietly faded away. The main political limitations of the National Security regimes were threefold. One was that government by force was ultimately untenable; the other was that the pretended security was based upon the insecurity of most of the population; and finally that National Security was not national, but essentially a U.S. artifact. The Nicaraguan uprising of 1979 and the protracted civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala signaled another form of transition: popular, radical and potentially anti-liberal.
From an imperial perspective, these endogenous developments posed a more serious threat to the maintenance of the hemispheric order than the erosion of the bureaucratic-authoritarianism in South America. The combined impact of economic crises, a growing inability to manage conflict among internal factions and a new "post-Watergate" political coalition in Washington concerned about the long-run effects of authoritarian solutions, created the conditions for military withdrawal. The Linowitz Report outlined a transitional strategy in 1975 (Linowitz 1975). This document was heavily influenced by the views of the Trilateral Commission (Sklar 1980) and was critical of the previous "Pentagonist" policy toward Latin America. It constituted the blueprint for President Carter's initiative on democratization, and its subsequent implementation under the Reagan administration.

**Intra-elite Alliances and"Democratic Transition"**

Democratic transition (Siat & Iriarte 1979) for most of Latin America was largely the result of intra-elite negotiations superintended by external actors. Rather than regime transition, this meant the consolidation of a non-democratic socioeconomic order under a formally democratic façade. The orderly retreat of the National Security regimes preserved many authoritarian traits, and basically the same neoliberal recipes of the recent past. In this, the re-emerging democracies shared some of the political characteristics of older "managed democracies" such as those in Colombia, Venezuela or Mexico, which did not experience direct military rule. Such closely watched transition to democracy had strict limits. Although authoritarian capitalism proved to be largely a developmental failure, the radical and sustained restructuring of the economies along free-market lines by means of political repression had been profound enough to prevent a return to economic nationalism. Likewise, the restructuring and transnationalization of the security establishment made the pursuit of nationalist and non-aligned foreign policies impossible. In this sense, the political arrangements that emerged in Latin America, as a result of re-democratization, while possessing the formal trappings of sovereignty and democracy were neither truly democratic nor sovereign. They produced precariously balanced civilian regimes, based on pacts of elites, with exclusionary political agendas, and narrow internal support. In these, the popular sectors were effectively maintained outside the political arena, while external actors, both economic and military, enjoyed de facto veto power over the state. In addition, the countries remained saddled with cumbersome, and in some cases unmanageable, foreign debts, not to mention the debt-management conditionalities of IMF-inspired structural adjustment policies (SAPs).

The ultimate effects of these policies, relentlessly pushed by international advisors and “money doctors” (Drake 1994) have been the hegemonic perpetuation of dependence and underdevelopment. These traits express themselves in a vicious cycle of built-in vulnerability to external economic and political influences, requiring ever increasing doses of external supports. This vulnerability can be dramatically illustrated by the inability of the countries to extricate themselves from chronic indebtedness: the "debt-trap" (Martinez 1992; World Bank 1987-1994). Debt-management became the number one political concern in the regional agenda in the early 1980s. The service, both principal and interest, grew from slightly over 40 percent of the total value of annual exports in 1979, to over 65 percent in 1983. The total indebtedness figure for 1988 was over $400 billion with the higher sums being those incurred by Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela and Peru. Despite the
fact that about one half of the countries reduced their liabilities by 1990-91, the over-all debt grew to 421 billion dollars: a 3.5 percent annual increase. By 2001 it reached 787 billion, expanding at an average annual rate of 8.7 percent. In fact, out of the seventeen most indebted countries in the world in the 1990s, twelve were in the Latin American region.

On an average the annual interest rate payments fell from 33 percent of all exports in 1987 to 22 percent in 1991 as the "lost decade" came to an end. Between 1992 and 1999, the burden was reduced even further: countries like Brazil and Mexico decelerated their rate of indebtedness respectively from staggering annual rates of 223 percent to 60 percent, and 206 to 156. These figures are mind-boggling and unsustainable by any stretch of imagination. In the thirty years between 1970 and 2000 Argentina accelerated its already huge rate of indebtedness from a 15-year average annual growth of 178 percent to a rate of 256 percent annually. Venezuela, in turn, went from a yearly increase of 320 percent between 1970 and 1985 to a whopping 465 percent in the 1970 to 2000 period. If the debt problem is measured as inability to pay, an analysis of the ratio between exports and debt service shows figures that are equally dramatic. For instance the ratio of debt service to exports for Argentina moved from al already high 34 percent in 1990 to over 71 percent in 2000. For Brazil, the jump was from 23 to near 91 percent. So far, and despite economic disasters in Mexico (1994), Ecuador (1999), Argentina (2001), Brazil (2002), and Bolivia (2003) most countries in the region did not default on their debt, nor resorted to a strategy of “debtors cartels”. This policy of fiscal responsibility has been extremely hard for the civil society, which had to absorb its full impact, especially after a number of governments “nationalized” corporate debts at taxpayers’ expense.

The end of the cycle of National Security in the 1980s was a direct consequence of the insoluble contradictions between and within the nature of the reactionary coalitions in power and the centrality of external supports for the authoritarian regime. Given limited resources, there was a long-run impossibility of reconciling the interests of the national security bureaucracies with those of domestic and foreign business. There was also the additional problem emerging from the extreme vulnerability of the countries to external factors (e.g. the unmanageable debt burden, deteriorating terms of trade) and constituencies. As power conflicts intensified in Washington in the post-Nixon era, opposition from liberal political sectors against authoritarian regimes grew. Furthermore, the shrinkage of crucial support from international business compounded the internal erosion of power suffered by the Latin American dictatorships. Democratic transition became the alternative to popular revolt. The conversion from dictatorship to limited democracy has to be seen in the context of the previous transition to National Security, both in the bureaucratic-authoritarian context of the Southern Cone and in the less institutionalized setting of Central America. Growing participation and dependent development could coexist only under conditions of economic expansion and for as long as such participation did not threaten the perceived interests of the local and regional elites.

THE NATURE OF THE RECEIVER STATE

The mounting debt crisis set the parameters for the emergence throughout the Americas in the mid-1980s of a new political formula: a "receiver state", blending limited
democracy and neo-liberal economics. The result was a highly trans-nationalized and weak state, acting in partnership with foreign creditors and international financial institutions as manager, executor and liquidator of national bankruptcy. The central function of this arrangement has been the administration of the debt combined with the implementation of structural adjustment policies geared to massive privatization and de-nationalization of the economy. This state reflects the nature of the trans-nationalized political alliances and the narrow spaces for political participation, where economic and fiscal policies have been affectively left out of the effective political debate. Yet these policies continue to define the rules of the game and set the limits for all other policies.

**Pacts of Elites and Exclusionary Socio-economic Agendas**

The various national incarnations of receivership exhibit important differences. These depend upon the nature of the transition processes, as well as on the particular coloration of the civilian management to appear in the post-authoritarian period as well as in the early adjustment phase. At close scrutiny, irrespective of the elected nature of the government in charge, the economic agenda has a striking resemblance with that imposed under authoritarian rule. These arrangements are not a mere transitional phase, from elite domination to genuine democracy: free and participatory politics, with effective popular control. Rather, the repressive state of the 1970s and the receiver state of the 1990s and 2000s are two different manifestations of a similar cluster of elite interests, both domestic and regional.

The receiver state expresses the consensus of a mostly transnational and conservative coalition, though at times managed by tamed center-left governments. Limited democracies, with narrow mobility opportunities and exclusionary agendas, have provided a thin cushion to confront the deep structural problems once controlled by repression. The current modality of conflict-management, while reducing the most blatant (and uglier) human rights abuses, has left the most pressing and fundamental socio-economic and political problems largely unresolved. The combination of the transnational integration of the domestic elites (economic, military, technocratic and bureaucratic) with the demobilization and marginalization of the popular sectors does not provide a formula for stable governance, let alone democracy. In the absence of tangible rewards to buy legitimacy, insurgent, repressive, institutionalized (as well as criminal), violence has become a common expression. State failure—as in 1999 Ecuador, or Argentina in 2001 and Colombia or Mexico in 2009—has also emerged as a distinct possibility.

Despite the phasing out of the “old” National Security regimes, and the emergence of a populist leadership in Venezuela, Bolivia, and in a few cases in Central America, contemporary Latin America is not undergoing substantial democratization. A similar observation could be made regarding North America, despite the election of President Obama in 2008 and its message of change. Formal demilitarization and return to limited democracy are not synonymous with an alteration of the status quo. Initiatives like Plan Colombia and Plan Merida, and expanding U.S. military presence in Latin America point towards greater praetorianism. Nor is democracy nowadays any more "real" in those countries in the hemisphere where civilian governments have remained in control. On the contrary, the prevailing discourse on democracy among the official intelligentsia throughout
the Americas involves a juxtaposition of a substantially domesticated democracy with neoliberal economics (Montecinos & Markoff 1993), even after the calamitous economic implosion of 2008. The above model amounts to a plutocracy with popular support, occasionally resorting to electoral rituals. While this "low-intensity democracy" may appeal to the consumption-intensive, high-income core groups in the Hemisphere, it is not really majority, let alone popular rule. It is basically the same elitist formula articulated by the Trilateral Commission in the mid 1970s, for which the root cause of the crisis of democracy was democracy itself. Under a legal façade, this mode of conflict-management entrenches a corporatist pact of elites representing basically the same economic, social and political alliances that sustained the antidemocratic regimes. Democratic development, with the qualified exception of Costa Rica, is weak and fragile at best throughout the hemisphere.

The regressive socio-economic policies implemented under authoritarian rule have been enshrined both in the pacts of transition and in ad-hoc constitutional mechanisms. The re-democratized regimes are constrained by other factors too. One is the weakness of the governing political alliances, since the transition arrangements effectively excluded most left-of-center and populist political forces from holding power. Another is the crucial, autonomous role played by the trans-nationalized security forces, as a parallel state to maintain the status quo and prevent exposure of past and present human rights abuses, and defend their own interests. Then, there are the odious massive debt obligations incurred mostly under the previous repressive regimes. They severely limit the rendering of services to those in need, while fiscal austerity inevitably leads to confrontation and increasingly repressive governmental responses. The impact of the debt service on already exiguous fiscal resources is compounded by the strict conditionalities imposed by the international financial institutions (the IMF, the World Bank, the IDB and private banks). Structural adjustments resulting from such conditionalities have gravitated against demands for reform, equity and social justice, already frozen by the previous dictatorships.

The Biophysical and Environmental Effects of Public Policies

Since the 1980s, the Latin American and Caribbean countries have experienced an expanding and converging set of problems, whose common denominator is a fiscal crisis of the state. These affect employment, purchasing power, housing, the safety of drinking water, the quality of sanitation, the growing incidence of old and new diseases of epidemic proportions, a deteriorating ecosystem, and a profound inability to meet new challenges. A regional health crisis is unfolding as life threatening ailments that were considered eradicated (such as malaria, Chagas, tuberculosis) are making a dramatic come back, and new morbidity and mortality factors (like HIV/AIDS, or swine-flu) are on the rise. This has happened at a time when social safety nets and health delivery mechanisms are collapsing as a consequence of structural adjustment policies. The 1990 cholera epidemic was paradigmatic of extreme mutual vulnerability. The combination of a poverty driven disease, multiplied by the dismantling of the institutional mechanisms for disease containment and treatment had the effect of multiplying generalized insecurity across class and national boundaries.

Environmental threats are another example of policy-driven dysfunctions. These include sewage, waste and air pollution, but also encompass a broader complexity of and
multiplicity of reciprocating issues. In an earlier study (Nef & Robles 1998) we sketched a calamitous situation in which retro-feeding and destructive processes create a vicious cycle of vulnerabilities. Current industrial, mining, logging, and agricultural practices, mixed with uncontrolled urbanization, create an interwoven pattern of biophysical and social stress upon the ecosystem and human populations, as well as severe climatic changes. For instance, deforestation, with its sequel of health-related effects, accounts annually for over 40 percent of the global loss of forests. On a per capita basis, this makes Latin America the number one contributor to green depletion and loss of biodiversity. Furthermore, in the midst of an expansion of agricultural production for export, food insecurity still remains a major threat to large segments of the population, even in the statistically “rich” countries. Once again, the pressure to manage the debt and its conditionalities put a premium upon cash crops and the merciless exploitation of natural and human resources.

**Structural Poverty and Inequality**

Since 1980, those living below the poverty line in Latin America and the Caribbean increased from above 136 million to over 200 million and from 41 to 46 percent of the population (Robinson 1994; Altimir 1994). A 2007 study reported that over 35 percent of the Latin American population was poor, and over 13 percent were indigent (CELADE 2007: 9). The most affected have been those already vulnerable: women, children, the elderly, ethnic minorities. Though poverty and indigence have gone down to 1996 levels in most countries, overall deprivation is still higher than two decades ago, and rural poverty has increased steadily. Central America has been the most seriously affected by the double impact of concentration of wealth and the spread of poverty: at the verge of the 21st Century, reportedly nearly 80 percent of its inhabitants were unable to access a basic food basket and half of these were destitute. According to the same report, between 1977 and 1994, Guatemala witnessed an accelerated concentration of wealth and resources (Notisur 1994) with fewer than 2 percent of the landowners owning now more than 65 percent of the total farmland. Between 1990 and 1993, after just two years of structural adjustment, the poverty rate in Honduras increased from 68 percent of the total population to 78 percent. In Nicaragua, as a result of the contra war and the implementation of the post-war austerity package, 71.3 percent of the economically active population was either effectively unemployed, or underemployed. Illiteracy, which had been affectively reduced there to 12 percent between 1979 and 1989, actually increased in 1993 in absolute and relative terms.

The same was the case with infant mortality, from 50 per 1,000 in the 1980s to 71 per 1,000 in 1991 and 83 per 1,000 in 1993. Although the acuteness of these figures has

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3 Urban population has expanded exponentially in the region, a nearly twice the average rate of population growth. While in 1950, only one city (Buenos Aires) was number 8 among the 10 most populated cities in the world (with 5 million), by 2000 there were 3 cities among the world’s largest, respectively ranking number 2, 4 and 10: Mexico City (18.5 million), São Paulo (17.8 million), and Buenos Aires (12.6 million). While this expansion of megalopolis has been dramatic, even more pronounced is the growth of large metropolitan (Santiago, Bogota, Caracas, Lima) and secondary cities (Medellín, Curitiba, Córdoba, Concepción, Guadalajara, etc.). This phenomenon is the tip of the iceberg of a looming urban crisis, resulting from migration rooted on rural poverty. It has been estimated that by 2050 Latin America will double the population of North America.
been less pronounced in recent years, the legacy of catastrophic decade of man-made and natural catastrophes has left a deep imprint. There is a close and persistent connection between social and health conditions on the one hand, with inequality, on the other. A 2005 study indicated in the 12-year period between 1990 and 2002 --including some improving trends in the cases of Brazil, Chile and Mexico (CELADE 2007)—the region as a whole experienced an over-all 5.2 percent increase in income inequality; from a Gini coefficient of 0.383 to 0.403 (PAHO 2005). The U.S. is no exception: a recent article, looking at the 1967-2007 period indicated a performance worse below the abovementioned regional average (0.463 versus 0.403). This is 16.6 percent decrease in equality; and the highest gap between rich and poor among the Western industrial nations (Spitzer 2009). A distributional skewness of this nature poses a significant restraint to effective decision making governance and democracy. In turn, lack of effective democracy entrenches reactionary policies.

Even, the much-hailed economic "miracles" have not produced lasting development. The combination of entrenched and parasitic (Andreski 1967) elite interests, extreme free-market agendas, and structural adjustment policies, have left a lasting burden of destitution and despair. The areas of health, education and community development have suffered continuously, impacting precisely those less who need most. Since the end of the boom of the 1970s, Brazil’s most enduring feature has been the most unequal income distribution in the Western hemisphere, and one of the worst in the world. Chile's "success story" does not fare any better under close scrutiny. Between 1970 and 1987, the proportion of Chileans defined as poor increased by an average yearly rate of 7.2 percent. Meanwhile, real income per capita grew at an annual average rate of 0.3 percent. Since 1990, with a democratic governing coalition and despite the fact that the speed of impoverishment has been arrested, widespread privation persists. Despite impressive GNP annual growth rates between 4.5 and 10 percent, Chile has a dismal pattern of income distribution.

Pauperization and expanding inequity are not limited to the cases mentioned above. They are present all over the hemisphere: throughout the Caribbean, in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and particularly Mexico. As mentioned, the most affected are the rural and urban poor; but also white-collar, middle-class sectors have seen their economic opportunities and social safety nets dramatically eroded. In fact, in Latin America, as in Canada and the U.S. today, the middle classes are disintegrating in the growing gap between the extremities of wealth and poverty (Robinson 1994; Wolff 2003).4 Once again, the most severely affected in the Americas by the current recession have been workers, both blue and white collar, and the union movement. Nor have they been the real and direct beneficiaries of reactivation packages.

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4 A US study by the Levy Institute, based on the 1998 Federal Reserve’s Survey of Consumer Finances indicated that while the top 1 percent of the population controlled 38% of the country’s net worth, the poorest 40% received 0.26% of it. In the period between 1983 and 1998, the net worth of that top 1% increased 42.3%, while the bottom 40% of the population was 76.5 percent worse off. All indications are that income concentration has worsened since 1998.
Civil-Military Relations

Beneath the civilian mantle, praetorianism has a lingering presence. Given the polarized and violent nature of political conflicts, militarization has been a long-standing feature of the Latin American state. It has also been a constant in the US. With few exceptions, the military establishment has played a disproportionately large role in most of the countries, whether under civilian executives or not. Even in the supposedly exceptional cases, a careful examination reveals that direct military rule or militarized repression have always been present. This is abundantly clear in the deepening conflict in Colombia. Although, with the withering away of the Cold War the military appeared less conspicuously present in politics than in the recent past, a closer scrutiny reveals a more complex picture. True, the ending of the civil conflicts in El Salvador and Nicaragua, declining insurgent threats in Peru, as well as the effects of structural adjustment packages upon defense budgets, suggest a trend towards demilitarization. Yet, in the period 1985-91, over-all budget reductions were not necessarily matched by personnel reductions. Rather, an overall increase in personnel has taken place. But average figures are deceiving: downturns in countries with large establishments, such as Argentina (-39.8%), Chile (-9.1%), Nicaragua (-76.6%) and Peru (-12.5%) mask the incidence of significant upturns in most other countries. Twelve out of twenty of the countries actually increased the size of their defense forces in the 6-year period. Colombia topped the list with 76.7 percent, followed by Venezuela (53.1%), Guatemala (40.7%) and Mexico (35.6%). The largest establishment, that of Brazil’s, with nearly 270 thousand, grew 7 percent between 1988 and 1993 (IISS 1087-1992). A recent SIPRI study for the 1988-2008 period indicated a growing trend of expenditures in both South and North America, after a brief dip in the 1990s (SIPRI 2009)

Though in comparison with the G-8 nations and the Middle East, the size of the Latin American forces is relatively modest, the impact, influence and transnationalization of the security establishment, especially of its officer corps, remain extensive. Not including some 800 thousand paramilitary, and an indeterminate number of reservists, Latin America has over 1.3 million individuals under arms and spends close to ten billion dollars in defense. Given its economic base, Latin America remains overly militarized; the externally controlled security sector is still a voracious competitor for the scarce resources needed for development. It constitutes a persistent obstacle to the sovereignty of, and the cooperation among, nations and continues to be the single most serious threat to political stability, integration, sustainable democracy and human rights.

With the end of the Cold War and with the threat of regional insurgency reduced, a fundamental security issue in the Americas is not so much how to protect society from external and internal "enemies" but still how to safeguard the population in most countries from their security forces. In this context, we must reconsider civil-military relations, and

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5 Between 1985 and 1991, the region's defense budgets declined on the average 24.6 percent, or 4.1 percent per year, and twelve out of twenty countries cut defense expenditures ranging between 59 percent (Chile) and 4.8 percent (Honduras). On the other hand, two rather large countries, Venezuela and Colombia dramatically increased such expenditures: respectively 23 percent and 275 percent. When the number of troops is examined, the over all trend is a seemingly modest increase of 4.2 percent for the region, or 0.7 percent per year.
the nature of the prevailing civil-military regimes in the emerging Inter-American order, especially in light of new strategic factors. One is the persistent conservative, interventionist and apocalyptic mood in American politics, and the extensive post September 11 resurgence of “Pentagonism” (including its privatized variety). This proclivity is something that the Obama administration will be hard pressed to maintain, as suggested by the Honduran coup of 2009 (COHA 2009). Another is the lingering of often-construed border tensions, exemplified by flare-ups like the 1995 Ecuadorian-Peruvian war. A third factor is the growing militarization of social conflicts, as in Mexico, or in the vertical and horizontal expansion of Colombia’s civil strife, narco-wars in the Andean region and recently in Mexico, the ongoing confrontation between Venezuela and Colombia and Colombia and Ecuador and the utilization of mercenaries from Latin America in the Middle East conflict. Underpinning this dysfunctional militarization is the close and dependent association between the Latin American and U.S. military establishments.

Limited Democracy and Elected Plutocracies

Current political developments in Latin America, while conveying a less repressive picture, especially by contrast with a somber record of the 1970s, present at best mixed signs. In the positive side, most of the region is ruled nowadays by governments generated through formally free and competitive elections: what former Guyana's President Cheddy Jagan sarcastically called "5-minute democracy" (Jagan 1996). In various instances, some sort of consolidation has taken place, as a second and even a third generation of elected governments have been inaugurated. There have been also sporadic, yet significant attempts to hold governments accountable to the electorate. Most important, as relations between Latin America and the US deteriorated during the George W. Bush administration, a whole array of left of centre governments have been elected throughout the Americas in the 2002-2009 period: Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, el Salvador, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, Paraguay, and even in the United States. Instances of torture, disappearances and blatant state terrorism, with notable exceptions, such as Colombia, have become less frequent. However, there are also disturbing signs. One is the persistence, and even revival, of authoritarian and oligarchic traditions. Power remains highly concentrated. Other less tangible but basic values, such as respect for human life, honest government and the reduction of discrimination and official abuse, are not widely adhered to. Corruption in both parts of the Hemisphere is widespread, deep, and fast growing. The U.S. and Canada have not been exempt of scandal, bribery and other forms of dishonest management in the councils of power.

Democracy in the region is fragile. Limited democracies, based upon pacts of elites are distinctively exclusionary. Until recently electoral processes, though a common sight throughout the Americas have been void of choice and even meaning. Fraud and manipulation have been a common feature. Voters can cast the ballot but the menus and policy options are roughly the same. The largely parasitic socio-economic and institutional pillars of the former National Security regimes (landowners, business, foreign investors and authoritarian preserves within the military and security apparatus, the judiciary and the technocracy) are also those of the new democratic orchestrations. The large majority of those who perpetrated crimes against humanity is still at large, and has gone unpunished. Thus, it is hardly surprising that public apathy and cynicism throughout the hemisphere are
high, while governmental legitimacy is quite low. Despite the unfolding of formally contested elections during the 1990s in all of the countries and apparently normal constitutional reforms in a good number of others, these processes failed to provide real alternatives. The above-mentioned alienation of the population from the political process has largely resulted in extremely high rates of electoral abstention (NotiSur 1994; IDEA 2003). For instance, eighty-four percent abstained in the Guatemalan referendum of 1994 and 50 percent in El Salvador's general election of March 1994. In the Colombian parliamentary elections of 1994, over 70 percent did not vote, while in the Ecuadorian congressional competition the same year, spoiled ballots received the second largest plurality. Colombia tops the list of electoral abstention, with roughly 40 percent of the voters casing their ballots in 2000 and until 2008 followed closely by the United States. In addition, many of these contests have been tainted with serious irregularities. Yet, the abovementioned tide of left-of-centre shift in presidential election over the last 3 to 6 years indicates a possible changing pattern, though not yet a definitive trend.

Beyond ceremonial transfers of offices by electoral means and the absence of direct military rule, democracy in the Americas was not consolidated in the 1990-2000 decade. Transition remains incomplete and in some cases de-democratization has been the predominant trend. Oligarchies throughout the continent, despite the historical watershed of the Obama election in 2008, have shown a remarkable continuity. The old practice of executive continuismo and dynastic-type succession (the elimination of which was central to the region's past democratic agenda) has resurfaced. There is also a remarkable continuity of policy. Neoliberal recipes –despite their being discredited-- have become entrenched in the conditionalities attached to debt-alleviation, regional trade agreements (such as NAFTA or MERCOSUR) and the so-called macroeconomic equilibrium policies, which effectively remove fiscal, monetary and credit matters from public debate. In addition, the “new” cold war (i.e. the “War on Terror”) in the context of unipolarism, with its pseudo moralistic and messianic discourse has objectively debilitated democracy, development and security.

The regional context is essential to affect necessary political, economic, and social change. So far, with the exception of a few small steps in the last years, the Inter-American system has remained largely unipolar and unilateral. Attempts at alternative models of regionalization, directly or indirectly have been opposed by Washington. Such initiatives have spanned for over nearly two decades, and with varying but limited degree of success. In 1991, under the leadership of Brazil and Argentina, a South American Common Market (MERCOSUR), molded on the European experience was created. In 2004, the contracting parties agreed to establish a MERCOSUR Parliament to implement political as well as economic integration. In 2008, a Venezuelan Initiative led to a Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) conceived as a Latin American alternative to the OAS. In recent years,

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6 For purposes of comparison, the rate in the US for 2002 was 46.6% and about 55% in Canada (2000). An examination of voting turnout in parliamentary elections held in both Latin and North America in the decade between 1988-91 and 1998-2001 shows a declining trend in half of the countries and also low voting turnout in nearly half of the nations.

7 It is significant to notice that until the 2005 election of José Miguel Insulza to the General Secretariat of the OAS, all Secretaries General have been supported by the U.S.; and those without Washington’s support have been defeated.
the more informal Rio Group (an offshoot of the 1980s peace process) began coordinating security and confidence building measures among South American states.

Most important, in 2004 the radical Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), sponsored jointly by Venezuela and Cuba, was established (Hattingh 2008). It rapidly moved from a bilateral agreement dealing with trade of oil for services, into an alternative Peoples’ Trade Agreement, encompassing cooperation and development, and eventually a common currency. By 2009, the Alliance had grown from the original two to nine members: Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela in South America; Nicaragua, and Honduras in Central America; and Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Dominica, and St Vincent and the Grenadines, in the Caribbean. These are all pieces of a complex and still unfolding reconfiguration, whose final outcome is difficult to predict. However, this process is having a decisive and undeniable regional impact.

CONCLUSIONS: THE FIRES WITHIN

A profound structural contradiction has emerged in the region’s governance. If elected governments stress democracy, equity, majority rule and the interests of the public (the civil society), they would face relentless opposition and sabotage from domestic and international elites, leading to eventual ineffectiveness, if not outright destabilization. Thus, the more common course is to stress liberalism and ignore the civil society and rule on behalf of the profit sector. This is what in the North American context Ralph Nader has labeled a plutocracy. The political cost of this option is very high in the long run: loss of legitimacy, sovereignty, and an erosion of the trust between elected officials and the electorate, a central tenet of both governance and pluralist institutionalization.

Given the level of political alienation, it is not surprising that there have been popular insurrections where angered communities confronted threats to their livelihood: Chiapas (1993), Quito (2000), Buenos Aires (2001), and La Paz (2003). The abovementioned mobilizations and insurrections have had broad domestic and international implications. They are a specific Latin American expression of the anti-globalization (and anti-neoliberal) movement, re-creating a civil society, where popular organizations had been crushed by the double squeeze of military rule in the 1970s and economic restructuring in the 1990s. These developments suggest that popular social movements and rebellions are present and relevant in the new globalized regional order (LAWR 1994). They have re-emerged as political options and it is likely that there may be more such manifestations in the near future. Instability, even under the illusions of the NAFTA, CAFTA, and FTAA free-trading umbrellas, is more than skin-deep. On the other hand, by challenging the legitimacy of the intra-elite and transnational arrangements, the new modes of resistance reveal the intrinsic weakness of the low-intensity democracies (Rocamora et. al. 1999).

Thus, from a long-range structural perspective, massive upheavals have not withered away altogether in the region, although their manifestations have changed. In a way, the social movements and broad coalitions that have opened prospects for democratic change in most of the Americas in recent years have built upon the early protest mobilizations of the 1990s and early 2000s. Our analysis strongly suggests that the politics of limited
democratization with neo-liberal economics, while an improvement over the human rights record of the military dictatorships, imposes built-in constraints upon the realization of a truly stable and sustainable democratic development project for and by the bulk of the population. Nor is the combination of limited democracy with neo-liberalism a guarantee against expanding corruption or popular alienation. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case. If economic recovery fails to produce a better standard of living for the majorities, or should the structural economic crisis deepen, it is likely that these weak and "pragmatic" civilian regimes could be overturned by equally weak, yet violently repressive civil-military regimes with external support. After all the National Security doctrine is still the ideological "software" (or culture) of the security establishments and a regular staple in the training of Special Forces in the hemisphere, such as the School of the Americas. The "communist" subversion of yore is being replaced by a new definition of the internal enemy: "terrorism", "anarchy" or "war on drugs", or more broadly anything that threatens the investment climate, or core elites’ interests. U.S. military involvement (as with Plan Colombia or Plan Merida, or the expansion of the role of the US Southern Command, a Southern Fleet, or military bases in Colombia and elsewhere) is expanding. Certainly, the post September 11 atmosphere may have a most destabilizing effect by reviving a hard “counter-terrorist” posture to justify elite rule.

As the entire region becomes more closely integrated, a potentially dysfunctional system of mutual vulnerability has taken shape. Its impact on the life of millions throughout the Americas can be catastrophic. The present course points toward scenarios where unemployment, poverty, violence, criminality, health hazards, addiction, forced migration, massive population displacements, repression and environmental decay feed upon each other. The drug-trading regime is a dramatic illustration of this interconnectedness. The ties that link the drug trade together begin with peasant producers in the depressed Andean region, and continue with crime syndicates in both producing and importing areas, corrupt officials (as well as rabid “patriots”), retailers, and users, ranging from the destitute to those in high social standing. Being an essentially consumer-driven market, and operating on pure market logic, its containment requires addressing its social-psychological end economic causes—including the roots of addiction—rather than exclusively its tactical symptoms.

The Americas is a region at the crossroads. It has been impacted by the global crises since at least the late 1800s. It was the most affected region of the globe in the 1929 crash and has experienced other forms homegrown turmoil in recent years. Assessing the possible impact of the current global recession on Latin America, a 2008 UN Economic Commission for Latin America noted:

…[S]light increases of poverty, that could even reach some intensity in a number of countries, could be controlled if the governments create policies designed to avoid the effects of the crisis falling on the lower income sectors, thus diluting the improvements made since 2002. The region will not be immune to the effects of the crisis, but finds itself in better position to confront it than in other times. (CEPAL 2008: 49).
Yet, the capacity to act rests upon the nature of the state and the quality of governance, both within countries and in the region as a whole. It also rests upon the ability to learn. The Achilles’ heel of recovery and human security is essentially political: a parasitic and anti-democratic model of accumulation and exclusion. Under these circumstances, the dysfunctional linkages of mutual vulnerability between North and South, and their multiple accelerators, create a spiraling lose-lose situation: a negative-score game. Without profound changes in both the South and the North of the Hemisphere, the possibility of arresting or reversing serious threats to human security will remain doubtful. Short of a radical reorganization of the pattern of governance throughout the Americas, including decision-making, accountability, and regional cooperation -- for instance, the largely dysfunctional Inter-American system—the possibilities of overcoming the crisis remain slim.

Regional security cannot be equated with short-term business confidence, an ethnocentric view of globalization, a messianic vision of "Manifest Destiny", or “wars” on terrorism or drugs, or more recently, fending off the “Hispanic threat” (Huntington 2004). A breakdown of democratic development, prosperity and equity, and the increase of tensions in the more volatile countries of the region would have a direct and most deleterious effect upon the well being and security of both Americas. The weakness of democratic institutions and their inability to traverse from democratic transition and elected plutocracies to consolidation of popular rule is a critical structural flaw in the security of the Hemisphere. It is becoming painfully obvious elsewhere that the end of the Cold War did not automatically translate into a Fukuyama-type scenario of the "end of History", with global prosperity, peace and democracy (Fukuyama 1989). The over two-decade old democratic transition in the region cannot be made synonymous with either the entrenchment of participatory practices, nor with responsible government, let alone the enhancement of human dignity. The "safe", "limited", "low-intensity" and meaningless democracy, peddled by transition theorists and the neo-authoritarians impedes more than facilitates the emergence of a sustainable security community in the Americas. So does the persistence of economic dogmatism and the rebirth of National Security doctrines designed to fight elusive and perpetual global conflicts. Regime change throughout the hemisphere, particularly in the Northern tier, is a necessary condition for hemispheric human security.
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