

PENDING ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES OF POLITICAL
DEMOCRATIZATION IN LATIN AMERICA.

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In the following pages, we will attempt to make a certain balance of the processes of political democratization that have been the core of politics in Latin America over the last two decades. For this purpose, we will try to discern their diverse meanings. Then, we will approach the pending problems inherited from authoritarianism, especially the issues of human rights and national reconciliation. Thirdly, we will examine the challenges "ahead" confronted by the new democratic regimes, what we have called their quality and relevance, that is to say, the reconstruction of the political community and system. Finally, we will make some observations regarding some issues that will define to a great extent the future of democracy, which are the State, the political parties and civil society, and their interrelations.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND SHORTFALLS OF POLITICAL DEMOCRATIZATION

When we speak of political democratization we are referring to those processes that try to establish a nucleus of democratic institutions, so that they constitute the predominant regime of a determined polis, after a historical situation characterized by the presence or dominance of a political regime in which democratic institutions are non-existent or minimal.

These processes of construction of democratic institutions that we call political democratization, have followed three main directions, and whose characteristics have made the differences between national cases.

The first form that political democratizations have assumed are the democratic foundations, of the type classically analyzed by Barrington Moore or Rustow, historical sociology and political science: societies, countries, that had not experienced democratic regimes and that install for the first time a democracy and that tend to approach the model of a global change of society, such as were the original democratic installations in European countries or the United States. In the last decades, this process of democratic foundation in Latin America has taken place above all in Central America. These are situations in which a democratic regime is constituted for the first time, or the political system is entirely re-founded, after processes of confrontation through civil wars, guerrillas or revolutions.

This type of political democratization presents three important characteristics, linked to this aspect of civil war, revolution or global change.

On the one hand, the construction of democratic institutions fuses with a process of pacification, reconciliation and national reconstruction.

On the other hand, that means we are in the presence of negotiations in the aftermath of war, witnessing the complicated conversion of the warring and combatant actors into political actors. The issue is how those who sought to eliminate their enemies turn into actors that have to engage in conflicting, representing and negotiating within a shared institutional frame, to govern and reconstruct a country. Thus, the warring forces have to suffer a complex metamorphosis into political party, confronted to tendencies towards the maintenance of para-military or insurrectional forms, according to the case.

Finally, the other characteristic of foundations is that, depending on the level of the confrontational situation, the weight of external actors and institutional mediations, not directly political, is fundamental. This has been visible in the Central American case, where the role of the churches, international institutions, North American policy, European social democracy, mediating Latin American countries, has been basic in the development and, above all, the outcome of these processes.

The generation of democratic institutions in the case of foundations has been extremely slow, and in it, governments oscillate between a conservative restoration of previous forms of domination under precariously democratic conditions, and an effective democratization.

The second type of political democratization, that at some moment tended to be identified as the only one, is what we will call transitions. Beyond a semantic discussion, we will refer here to the passage from a formally authoritarian or military regime to a basically democratic regime, although it may be incomplete or imperfect. That is the case of countries like Spain, from where the analytical criteria for Latin America were taken, and of South America, especially the Southern Cone in a broad sense.

In the case of transitions, there was no internal military defeat, even though there is a sort of political defeat for the military nucleus in power. All of them are characterized by complex processes of negotiation and by the definition of an institutional arena for ending the dictatorships, be it a Constitutional Assembly, a plebiscite or elections, or a combination of those elements. The maneuver capacity and the influence of the military institution at the first moment of democracy, will depend upon the seriousness of the political defeat of the military nucleus in power and of the existence or not of an institutional frame for the future democratic regime bred by the authoritarian regime. For the military institution, it is a question of maintaining their prerogatives in order to operate as a factor of power, at least vetoing, as well as of defending what they consider their "master piece" and cover up in the impunity for the crimes committed during the dictatorial period. In the case where some level of guerrilla or insurrectional activity was maintained, this gave the military a pretext to recover part of their influence and power, lost during the transition.

Even though in transitions there is no military defeat, not even properly a deposition of the power holders, as often happens with foundations, there is an attempt to displace or change those holders with the purpose of generating democratic institutions, and this differentiates them from the third type of political democratization, which are the democratic reforms.

Thus, the third road for political democratization was reform, sometimes called "opening", destined to the transformation, broadening or extension of democratic institutions from regimes that are not formally military or authoritarian, but operate instead with a dominance of autocratic or semi-authoritarian forms, or under the shape of restricted or exclusive democracies, as could be the Mexican case or Colombia at the beginning of the 90s., or from systems in decomposition as in the Venezuelan case. Even all these cases are very different from one another, they are cases in which there is not a passage from a formally authoritarian regime or a military dictatorship, but are instead processes in which protagonic actors, obviously not the only ones, are the government or the party or parties in government.

We are not referring to just any type of political or democratic reform or some extension or broadening of the democratic regime in place. For example, the extension of elections to certain spheres that operated before by designation or nomination, or of the vote to certain social categories excluded before from the political game (election of local or regional governments, right to vote for the illiterate or for women) could no doubt be part of the reforms we refer to. But, when we speak of reform as a type of political democratization we are referring to a deliberate and global process of transformation of political institutions to make them democratic. These processes of political reform imply an institutional transformation, either to incorporate sectors excluded from the democratic game, or to configure an effectively poly-archic and pluri-party system, or to eliminate obstacles for the exercise of popular will, or to control factual powers at the margins of the regime, or to combine all these dimensions.

Political reforms can, in the long run, be more profound or more radical than transitions, but they are not the same. They consist in an extremely complex progressive process of installation and creation, gradual, with advancements and relapses, of democratic institutions by the regime and, in general, by the established power holders, without their elimination or replacement being strictly necessary, as in the other two types of political democratization mentioned. Obviously, this democratization "from the top" is always activated by pressures and mobilizations from below, for what it is about is a struggle between the conservation of power and the incorporation of new sectors or actors, with what it implies, at the same time, of redistribution of power and maintenance of a certain political-institutional continuity.

We know when the transitions start and when they end, but concerning democratizing reforms we know only more or less when they begin and we have no clarity about when they end. They are extremely long processes, of advancements and relapses, where there are spaces opening up and where it is impossible to single out and celebrate "the" moment of democratic inauguration, as happens with foundations and transitions.

Now, it can be noted that these three processes, of a different nature even though all are oriented towards political democratization, do not occur historically pure, there being components of each one in the others, so that at determined moments they face common problematics. For example, in the case of Argentina, that a government has for the first time succeeded another in democratic

terms, is a foundational component within a typical process of transition. In the Colombian case, the reform process collapsed and what is about now is pacification and national reconstruction that approach it to foundations. In the Chilean case, the transition in a strict sense ended a long time ago, but there instead, there isn't a complete democratic regime, but a pending process of reform or extension to democratize institutions inherited from the military government. It is evident that this is not the same in the Mexican case, for in the Chilean case the power holders, the military, were replaced, but both cases have common aspects like, for instance, transformations of the political Constitution to eliminate authoritarian inheritances.

These processes of democratization today are ended or deeply advanced. or at least do not seem to be the central political processes any more. Said otherwise, the great crises of authoritarian regression or decomposition, with some exceptions like Paraguay, Perú or Ecuador seem to be controlled. An indicator of this, is that in all the cases where there have been very diverse situations of crisis or possible regressions, like the Alfonsín-Menem succession in Argentina, or phenomena like Collor de Mello in Brazil, Bucaram and his successor in Ecuador, Oviedo in Paraguay, Chávez in Venezuela, Fujimori in Perú at least the solutions haven't been the restoration of formally military or authoritarian regimes. A somewhat different situation is presented by the cases of reforms, where the democratizing tendencies permanently tangle with partial regressions, reason why the ensemble of the process is slow and not too coherent and it is dubious to consider them finished.

In any case, and with the reservations noted, the standing regimes, formally democratic, seem to be consolidated. It could be valid to affirm that we are beyond transitions and consolidations, in the measure that it is equivocal or confusing to continue to use the name transition for the task of completing democracies by overcoming the inherited authoritarian enclaves that coexist with the full functioning of other democratic institutions. To say that in Chile the transition has not ended, for instance, because the authoritarian enclaves persist or Pinochet's presence as Commander in Chief or, later, as senator for life, seems analytically and politically less adequate than accepting that what is called transition is already over, but its result was an incomplete democracy.

In other words, that political democratizations, in any of their forms and in the majority of the cases, as determined processes of establishment of a minimal nucleus of democratic institutions, have ended in the sense that they stop being the central dynamic that defines all the behaviors of the actors involved, does not mean that they have necessarily been successful. Their pending tasks will have to be fulfilled in the context of social and political processes that can not be meaningfully defined as transition.

Concerning the issue of consolidation, it is possible to make a distinction between a "backward" consolidation or regarding the past, this is to say, ensuring the inviability of an authoritarian regression, and a "forward" consolidation or regarding the future, that consists in ensuring the conditions of democratic quality that avert new causes for crisis or democratic downfalls.

About the "backward" consolidations, what can be said is that in the generality of cases, we are under situations of consolidated post-authoritarian regimes, except that what have been consolidated, or what would not seem liable of "returning to the prior situation", are, precisely, the incomplete democracies fostered by the democratizations, with their democratic and authoritarian elements.

Thus, the main question is double. First, what type of democracy emerges in the region and the continent, that is to say, what regimes are they. Second, what transformations must these democracies suffer in order to consolidate in regards to the challenges that will define Latin American society or its gestating socio-political matrix.

Concerning the first question, we are facing, with some exceptions, incomplete or weak democracies. In other words, in some cases they are regimes that, while being basically democratic, maintain a certain trace of the prior regime, what we will define as authoritarian enclaves. In other cases, the composition of the system of representation in the democratic regime is still under way. Finally, there is a group of countries that live with a certain decomposition of the ensemble of the political system or in which the "de facto" powers do not submit to the rules of the institutional game or citizenship isn't able to constitute itself as such, which makes their democracies relatively irrelevant for the fulfillment of the tasks inherent to every regime. The cases of Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Colombia and Venezuela one year ago, seem to illustrate this situation, which, pre- or post-transitional or product of a swamped or unfinished process without the grounds of the regime having been established, configures a fourth scenario in relation to political democratizations that can be defined as regressions or decompositions.

But, as we have noted, the presence of authoritarian enclaves is not the only product of transitions, foundations or incomplete reforms and weak democracies. There is also, above all in the case of reforms and democratic extensions, the existence of situations in which the institutionalization and legitimization of democratic power can't be achieved, and in which society is left to the mercy of "de facto" powers that may or may not have to do with the preceding regime or situation. These situations have provoked some partial regressions or unstable formulas in which a democratic regime is not consolidated, there being instead a combination of "situations", authoritarian as well as semi-democratic.

Regarding "de facto" powers, which play a crucial role in the cases of greater decomposition of the political system in the region, we are referring to entities or actors that process the decisions pertaining to a political regime -this is, political power, citizenship and demands and conflicts- at the margin of the rules of the democratic game. They can be extra-institutional, like local or transnational economic groups, corruption and drug-traffic, insurrectional and para-military groups, foreign powers, corporate organizations, communication media. But there are also actors that constitute "de jure" or institutional powers, who autonomize themselves and assume political powers beyond their legitimate attributions, transforming into "de facto" powers, as is the case of presidents (hyper-presidentialism), judicial powers, constitutional courts and the Armed Forces themselves in many cases.

The balance of political democratizations, then, can not avoid being contradictory.

On the one hand, and with a few significant exceptions, electoral participation in the region has not decreased in the last decade and reaches over two thirds, if one takes the total number of registered voters, and a few points over 50% if one takes the total of the population with the age to vote, which is relatively acceptable in terms of a comparison with other contexts. Likewise, according to public opinion polls, the acceptance of democracy as the best political regime to live under has not diminished and remains in relatively acceptable percentages. To this, we can add the regularity of elections to choose officials, and, with the noted exceptions, the greater stable political participation, the relative formalization and institutionalization of political processes, a certain potentiality of representation with the emergence in almost all the countries of a system of parties and coalitions that tends to ensure a certain governability.

On the other hand, the characteristics concerning processes where graduality and negotiation play a determinant role, as well as the democratic limitations coming from the authoritarian enclaves, the absence of institutionality and the dominance of “de facto” powers explain, in part, the frustration of vast sectors and the relatively massive disenchanting vision. Thus, there is the affirmation that although there is an advancement in freedoms, democracy "has not at all changed the lives of people and for them things remain the same". Although the institutions pertaining to democracy are valued, there is also a rather radical critique of the ones existing in each society and their functioning.

Summing up, beyond the permanence of some problems of political democratizations, and overlapping sometimes with them, the main challenges for democracy in the region can be better defined today in terms of deepening (extension of the ethical principles and the mechanisms of the democratic regime to other realms of social life), relevance (resolution of the issues pertaining to a political regime through same and not through “de facto” powers) and quality (participation, representation and satisfaction of the citizenry in the decision-making processes at the local, regional and centralized levels).

These are the phenomena that will define the stability of the regimes, their eventual decomposition and the possibilities of new waves of authoritarianism, in other words, what we have called "forwards" consolidation.

THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST: AUTHORITARIAN ENCLAVES, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND RECONCILIATION

Authoritarian enclaves

When we talk about authoritarian enclaves, we are not referring to just any problem inherited from the previous military or autocratic regimes, but to those elements that by definition belong to that

regime and that subsist in the democratic regime that succeeds it, preventing it from becoming a full political democracy. They are alterations of the democratic life or of the expression of popular sovereignty, inherited from the prior regime and that continue to exist in spite of having completed the thick of the political democratization. In other words, they are problems or pending tasks of the transitions and foundations, and constitute part of the very essence of the processes of reform, that have to be confronted under the post-authoritarian regime and that limit the fully democratic character of the latter.

There are four types of authoritarian enclaves in these countries, whose existence or relative force depends both on the nature of the previous military regime as on the type of transition. First, the institutional, this is to say the normative, constitutional and legislative elements that prevent or limit the exercise of popular will, the principle of representation and the effective government of the majorities, or that maintain the prerogatives of the Armed Forces above the political power, to name a few aspects. Second, the ethical-symbolical enclave, consisting in the effects upon society of the violations of human rights under military dictatorships or under situations of confrontation and civil war. Here there is also an institutional dimension, such as the laws of amnesty or the inability of the judicial institutions to make justice. Third, the actorial enclave, this is, the existence of persons and groups that constitute themselves as social actors who, more than defining themselves in terms of the democratic present and future, either seek to project and adequate the principles and orientations of the preceding dictatorship to the circumstances of the democratic regime, also impregnating the incipient democratic mechanisms being installed, or maintain the struggle for power through confrontations that can be military or simply extra-institutional. Fourth, in the case of foundations or reforms of democratic extension that follow long-standing authoritarian regimes or prolonged situations of extra-institutional confrontation or of a dominance of factual powers, we also find the cultural enclave, or ensemble of habits and styles among the elites, but also among middle and popular sectors, that conspire against the principles and rules of the democratic game. The rejection of electoral participation in some countries, could be due, precisely, to the manipulative use that the authoritarian regimes made of it.

The historical and also counter-factual analysis of all the experiences of political democratization, leaves two main lessons in relation to the first three authoritarian enclaves, for the cultural enclave, when it exists, can only be treated in the long term.

The first lesson, is that they must be confronted at the beginning of the democratic regime or at the moment of pacification, taking advantage of the moral strength and legitimacy enjoyed by the government that succeeds the dictatorship or confrontation, in order to reach a national agreement on the matter. To let what has been called the "state of grace" pass, and be late in posing these issues, makes them enter the game of immediate political interests, generally electoral, of all the actors involved.

The second, even more important, is that, because of their own nature, these enclaves are related between them and can't be treated in an entirely separate way, but must instead be the object of a global strategy to overcome them. This, because each one has an ethical or democratic minimum

and a political maximum possible, and the combination of both poles can only be resolved in their joint treatment. An optimal solution in each of them is impossible, and the best solution or the one that is both ethically acceptable and politically viable, is the one resulting from putting the three enclaves in the balance in order to overcome them. This is the only way possible to complete the pending tasks of the transition and of national reconstruction and reconciliation.

Human Rights violations under dictatorships

The great issue inherited from the military regimes that originated the transitions and from the confrontations and civil wars that originated democratic foundations, was the violation of human rights in both types of situation. Thus, the human rights issue constitutes, as we have said, one of the authoritarian enclaves present in the newborn democracies.

Considered in absolute terms in regards to its orienting principles, truth and justice, the solutions to this problematique couldn't be but partial and insufficient and in no country was the problem satisfactorily solved, not in the ethical perspective, nor in the one of social legitimacy nor of the purely political solution. Everywhere, two logics were confronted. On the one hand the ethical-symbolical logic that demanded the whole truth, the maximum of justice, which means nothing but punishment to all those guilty, and the greatest possible reparation. On the other hand, the political-State logic, that placed the problem of human rights, so understood, within the broader context of the process of democratization or pacification and, therefore, while accepting the ethical principle, combined it with the political criterion of avoiding de-stabilizations on the part of those guilty of the violations. It is in the space between both logics that the deliberate actions of military organizations, and often the judicial power, were introduced, seeking amnesty or impunity as an extortion on political stability.

If the subject of the violations of human rights under dictatorships or situations of civil war, has not been, and in our opinion can not be, fully resolved under the democratic regimes, the dilemma for these is either to let the issue of human rights die or close it off in the present state of affairs (laws of "final period"), or readdress it acknowledging the precariousness of the solutions implanted. It is no doubt possible, in many cases, to substantially improve the solutions that have existed until now. In this sense, one may think of the derogation of the amnesties self-granted by the military power, the explicit acknowledgment by the Armed Forces of their repressive action, etc. As examples of this, one can for instance, use the South African case, that learned from the Sábato Commission in Argentina and the Rettig Commission in Chile and overcame their defects. But this readdressment should find a culmination in the reform of the two institutions that made the violations of human rights possible under authoritarianisms or dictatorships: the military power and the judicial power, in other words, a drastic revision and reformulation of the State's coercive dimension.

Two central issues appear when wanting to make a balance of the human rights subject in the processes of political democratization in our countries. The first, regarding the past, points toward

the reconstruction of the national community after the processes that divided it very deeply: this is the issue of reconciliation. The second, looking to the future, refers to the ethical validity and expansion of the principles of human rights.

Reconciliation and the future of Human Rights

Regarding the first, it is necessary to find a meaning for the concept of reconciliation that avoids the confusions, ingenuousness and ideological uses with which it has been invested until now.

Beyond a religious or moral language, the issue of reconciliation in societies emerges when great national breaches have been produced. Historically, reconciliations are implicitly achieved with the passage of time or, explicitly, with an act or precise moment in which people decide it is better not to kill one another and coexist, recognizing each other as members of a same community, as is the case with pacifications or national re-unifications. Reconciliation is, thus, a process of recognition of the field of coexistence, understanding and cooperation, allowable conflict and struggle. In other words, it is something never finished that demands the existence of institutions and rules of the game valid for all.

Thus, on a national plane, after great breaches, reconciliation points towards the reconstitution of the basic national unity without eliminating struggles and conflicts. This national unity, in what refers exclusively to political democratizations, demands the overcoming of two great divisions of society, not mentioning here the socio-economic exclusions that correspond to a different problematique.

The first division has to do with the historical unity and continuity, with the history and ways of life of the country, so that reconciliation points towards the past. This implies coming to terms with history, acknowledging the value of every period in which there has been an attempt at collective creation and of the social sectors that incarnated them, and sanctioning negatively the periods of war and massive repression. Without collective memory there is no country nor common history.

The second division to overcome, is political exclusion, based on the perception of the other as enemy. This exclusion or fragmentation of society tends to be deeper than others, such as those of a socio-economic type, in the measure that here there are no degrees but a tendency to be total: the other is eliminated (war, executions, exile, imprisonment, torture, kidnapping and disappearance) or is denied. This exclusion or fragmentation springs from a process in which there were victors and vanquished.

The central issue at stake when speaking of reconciliation, is the creation of institutions where the different persons, sectors or actors recognize each other as part of the same society. This requires a basic recognition in the case of the Armed Forces -and other forces that have made use of violence, if there are any- of their responsibility in the brutal massive repression. Without such acknowledgment, society will remain severed from them. On the other hand, without a basic act of recognition, truth, justice and reparation, the problems of the past will always prevent the

adequate treatment of the great challenges of the future. So it is, for example, that all discussion of a defense policy or of a restriction of military spending or of a redefinition of the judicial power in the future, is contaminated with the role of the military institution in the past repression or "dirty war", and of the judiciary in the treatment of the human rights violations.

The second issue in matter of human rights refers to the role they play in democracy, beyond the treatment of the violations occurred in the preceding regimes or situations. Here there are three dimensions involved. For one part, the issue of the right to life and physical integrity is reformulated, in terms of pointing towards demanding from the State protection against the physical violence coming from urban, criminal, familial violence, etc. Second, the extension of human rights to all of the population, this is, its practical universalization to all the people who do not enjoy them in their real lives and the overcoming of the obstacles that prevent their access to them (here come in, especially, the problems of education, work, poverty, inequalities, access to justice). This involves, at the same time, a problem of transformation of the quality of that access. Finally, beyond their extension and the deepening of their quality, there is a problem of human rights that concerns people as part of determined social categories (age, gender, ethnicity), which constitutes a revolution in the classical concept of human rights, supposed universal and individually based.

Many of these issues have to do with problems pertaining to the "forwards" consolidation, that we will immediately analyze. In this sense, they point towards another dimension of reconciliation, towards the future, which is the formulation of new national consensus that may or may not have constitutional implications.

THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY: STATE, PARTIES AND SOCIETY

A new socio-political matrix?

The ensemble of ongoing processes and transformations that cross today Latina America (political and social democratization, reinsertion in the world economy and reformulation of its model of modernity) redefine the very concept of development, as different theories and institutions, like UNDP, have been proposing. They point towards a transformation of the matrix of constitution of society, or socio-political matrix, in Latin America, that is the interrelations between State, political representation and social actors institutionally mediated by the political regime.

This socio-political model existed in a historical-structural context characterized by the contradicting confluence of nationalist, developmental, modernizing processes, at the same time as an industrialization oriented towards the internal market with a central role of the State, its leading presence with oligarchic and middle class components, and intense processes of popular mobilization in which politics constituted the main axis.

In this context, Latin American societies privileged a socio-political matrix that defined, according to the case, a relationship of fusion, imbrication, subordination or elimination of some of the elements in this relation between State, system of representation and social actors. Thus, in some countries the fusion between these elements was effected through the figure of the populist leader, in others through the identification between State and political party or upon the articulation between social organization and political-party leadership. There was also the case where the party system fused all the social fractions or the corporate organizations hoarded the totality of collective action without leaving room for autonomous political life.

We have often called this a classical or politically centered matrix and it can be qualified as national-popular, having gone through diverse historical expressions, like populisms of different types and even certain forms of militarism or authoritarianism, surviving for long decades through very different kinds of political regime.

In this classical matrix, the State played a referential role for all collective actions, be it development, social mobility and mobilization, redistribution, the integration of popular sectors. But it was a State with a weak autonomy from society and upon which weighed all the pressures and demands, both internal and external. This interpenetration between State and society gave politics a central role; but, aside from exceptional cases, it was more a mobilizing than representational politics, and the institutions of representation were, in general, the weakest part of the matrix. The "statalist" principle present in the whole of society, was not always accompanied by an institutional autonomy and effective capacity for action of the State.

Directed against this matrix and this type of State are the revolutionary movements of the sixties, criticizing its mesocratic aspect and its inability to satisfy popular interests, as well as the military regimes that began in the sixties in Latin America. The moment of the democratic transitions of the eighties and nineties, in turn, coincides with the acknowledgment of the void left by the old matrix that the military authoritarianisms had disarticulated, without being able to replace it with another stable and coherent configuration of the relations between State and society. Different substitutes tend to install themselves in this void, making impossible the strengthening, autonomy and complementarity between the components of the matrix (State, regime and political actors, social actors and civil society), either eliminating one of them, or subordinating them, or sacralizing only one of them.

Two poles attempt replacing the dissolving matrix. On the one hand, an attempt to deny politics on the basis of a distorted vision of modernization, expressed in an instrumental politics that substitutes technocratic reason and the market logic for collective action, seems to crush any other dimension of society. The main expression of this tendency is the neo-liberal stream. Here, the State is seen only in its instrumental dimension, negative in relation to the past. For this reason, it becomes above all a question of reducing it, turning the decrease of public spending and privatizations into the synonym of State reform. Paradoxically though, no transformation made under the seal of this vision has been able to do without a very strong State intervention, increasing its coercive capacity.

On the other hand, there is a tendency towards the negation of politics that comes from a certain irrationalism, based on an exacerbation of the symbolic-expressive logic, that replaces collective action with identitarian refuge, moral or religious action, making the first lose its properly political character.

Populist, clientelist, corporatist or partyist nostalgias, and in cases of extreme decomposition neo-populist leaderships, may arise between these two extreme poles, but now without the power of convocation of great ideological projects or mobilizations with a strong integrative capability. These nostalgias appear rather as fragmentary forms, often in parallel with anomic, apathetic or atomizing elements, and, in some cases, criminal elements such as drug-traffic and corruption.

Thus, the fundamental issue is whether or not, beyond the democratic transitions or the passage to an economic model based on the forces of the transnationalized market, we are witnessing the emergence of a new societal type, this is, a new socio-political matrix. Synthesizing, what we call the classical socio-political matrix, characterized by the fusion of the elements that compose it and that went together with a certain type of State, development model and political culture, has suffered a profound disarticulation, giving rise to the question of the possibility of an emergence of a new socio-political crisis, which can't be accounted for by the technocratic-conservative efforts or the personalist mobilizations known to date.

Most probably, the countries will follow different roads in this matter. Some will suffer a long process of decomposition without the emergence of a new matrix. Others will attempt the recomposition of the classical matrix. Still in others, we may attend to a situation in which the main trait is the tendency towards a new matrix of an open type, characterized, that is, by the autonomy and complementary tension of its components, combined with subordinate elements of the classical matrix in decomposition and redefining classical politics and cultural orientations.

This last hypothesis defines both a possibility and a new normative orientation. Thus, it is possible to affirm that the future of democratic regimes depends on the consolidation of this new matrix, on this triple strengthening of its components and on the establishment of a relation between them, no longer of fusion, but of complementary tension.

In this matter, what we have is a contradictory ensemble of tendencies that include the decompositions, persistence of elements of the classical matrix and essays of new relations between State and society. It is not yet possible to predict the results of these combinations and driftings. Seemingly, as we have pointed out, the political frame will be formally democratic, but it is difficult to be sure of whether such democracies will be relevant and operative in performing their function of political regime, or whether they will be to a great extent replaced by diverse "de facto" powers lacking general legitimacy.

The transformation of the State

We have noted that a new socio-political model in Latin America that replaces the national-popular one and the neo-liberal or authoritarian formulas that have been tried, no longer concerns the formal installation of a political democracy, but its quality, deepening and relevance. And this is linked to the triple strengthening of the State, the system of representation and the social actors. Beyond foundations, transitions and democratic reforms, these are the pending tasks of political democratization.

Regarding the State, constitutive and referential element of collective action and of civil society itself, via politics, in Latin America, the processes of economic transformation, authoritarianisms and political polarizations, had de-structuring effects both upon it as upon its relation to society.

The anti-State visions fashionable in the eighties and nineties, ahistorical and empirically false, are set forth from two contradicting angles. One that affirms the market's universal panacea. This contradicts with social demands and the very tendencies of globalization, which, rejecting bureaucratic and inefficient States, demand of it an active role as agent of redistribution and as a principle of national unity. The other angle affirms a protagonism of civil society that confronts the State. This contradicts with the present weakness of social actors, upon which we will return.

What is at stake, then, is not the reduction of the State, but its transformation in the sense of its modernization, decentralization and participative reorganization, in order to perform its function as one of the agents of development.

While there have been processes tending to a minimal reconstitution of the State after the dismantlings and de-regulations of the so called "structural adjustments", an integral reform that accounts for the new socio-economic realities and redefines its role in society and development, has been, in general, postponed. This reform should be directed towards an increase in the State's capacity of affecting development, with the consequent increase of the societal counterweight that averts re-editions of the old statalism. Such a reform can not be limited, then, to a pure issue of size and extension or of modernization of public management, as important as it may be, in the measure that it is the functions of the State which change and that access of individuals and groups of action to the State is done not only in terms of coverage, but of the quality of such access.

It could seem historical nonsense to speak of strong States, and probably, besides, big ones. But if one examines the serious problems of public security or scientific-technological development, communications, reinsertion in the globalized economy, environment, education and health, to name a few of those mentioned as most urgent and delayed in their solution, there is no possibility of intervening in them without a strong investment by the State. This requires, aside from improving efficiency, an increase in human and economic resources, with which the State will have to decrease in some areas, like the military, but altogether will have to grow and strengthen. Likewise, it requires decentralization and strengthening of local and regional powers in what refers to resources, administration, management and participation of actors at the social basis.

There is doubtless a paradox in relation to the function of the State in a new socio-political model. If one can no longer think of a State that is the exclusive unifier of social life, neither can one do without an intervention of the State directed, precisely, to the constitution of the spaces and institutions that allow for the emergence of significant actors, autonomous from it, and the protection of individuals. If the State and, in some cases, the parties and the political class, do not fulfill this function of recreating the bases of constitution of social actors, the social void and the crisis of representation will be indefinitely maintained.

But a strong State -and the countries that have experienced it are proof of this- requires a political and social control of it, through the system of representation and the political parties and civil society or the social actors.

The political party system

The situation of parties and party systems in the national-popular period, has been very diverse in Latin America. Thus, in many cases the parties were practically non-existent or irrelevant and tended to be replaced by corporativisms, demagogic leaderships, base actions, etc. In others, they absorbed social life almost completely. There were situations of exclusion and mutual devoration. The ideologism of some situations, that led to polarization, contrasted with the pragmatic indifferentionation of the parties in others. All of this configured, with few exceptions, systems of weak and vulnerable parties, and implied an important crisis of representation.

Military authoritarianisms attempted to destroy all form of political action, and had as a central target the political parties and organizations. Although they didn't succeed and the latter became a key piece in the democratizations, the construction of strong party systems remained as another pending task for them. In some cases, where the party system was pulverized, there is an attempt to build parties; in others, party systems that break the monopoly of the hegemonic party or the traditional bi-partydism and, in others, the reconstruction of the relation between society, its actors and the party system. In sum, there will be countries that will have to cover all of these tasks or only some of them. Each country has a different problem, but all are in some way in the midst of a complex process attempting the strengthening of a party system able to control a strong State.

In general terms, there are at least three issues that will have to be revised regarding parties, to ensure them their tasks of mediation between the people and the State, and of political conduction.

The first one has to do with the fact that the diverse functions of the parties (representation, convocation and public debate, civic formation, conduction of government or opposition, recruitment for public office) demand a legislation that dignifies, finances them, at the same time it establishes the adequate public controls over them, as well as an internal reform of each one of them that ensures internal democracy and technical capability.

The second problem has to do with the representation of the new kinds of fragmentation and conflicts in society, that are not reduced to the ones that always were, well or badly, represented by the parties. In order for the party systems to effectively be a re-elaborated expression of social demand and its diversity, it is necessary to innovate in the constitution of institutional spaces where they can meet with other manifestations of social life -as can be illustrated by the Bolivian legislation on popular participation, for instance- without absorbing them nor making them irrelevant in relation to the participation of the citizenry.

A third question that will also define the future of the political parties will be the capability of forming majority government coalitions. In the measure that competitive multi-party systems are established, the most probable is that there won't be any party capable of constituting itself as majority on its own and ensure an efficacious and representative government. This already is the central issue of party politics in Latin America, and will remain so in the next decades. But the formation of coalitions between parties to govern doesn't have, in the presidentialist systems as those current in Latin America, institutional incentives, the incentives being, rather, for irresponsible oppositions and minority governments. Here, there is a basic issue in the reform of the present political institutional systems, but there is also the need of a change in political culture, not only in the leaders or elites, but also in militants and clientele, accustomed to see the other only as adversary to defeat or absorb, or a partner with whom to sign electoral agreements without programmatic transcendence.

Social actors and civil society

In turn, both a strong State and a system of strong parties have to be controlled by the citizenry and that supposes strong actors and social webs, autonomous from the other two instances. In this way, the third element of a new socio-political model or matrix to be strengthened and endowed with autonomy, that permits an effective control of the State and the parties, is what is called civil society, denomination that envelops diverse problematiques. So we prefer to speak of social actors.

This poses a very difficult problem in societies that live the disarticulation of their classical actors, an erosion of the State referent for collective action, new forms of massive exclusion and a weak structuring of the social basis for the new public issues and affairs.

The new waves of the liberal economy have seen in this field only the issue of the entrepreneurial actor face to the State, which, although necessary in some cases, is entirely insufficient and, in that measure, distorting. It is a matter of thinking the ensemble of society's actors, this is, the increase of its levels of participation which, involving a symbolic dimension, must be extended to the effective resolution of problems. Here again we touch upon the issue of decentralization of State power.

When we speak of actors and of civil society, we face today a rather complex reality, in the sense of seemingly being before a general weakening of collective action and social movements. So that we seem to be speaking of a reality we have invented out of a nostalgia for the past or an excess of idealism.

To a socio-political matrix of a classical or national-popular type corresponded, in general, a type of collective action centered on the State and politics, and a type of social movement that fused developmental, modernizing, integrative, popular and nationalist dimensions and orientations. Its epitome, at least symbolic, was the worker's movement, to which all other movements should be subordinated or "allied"; this, even when in fact it was the party or the political movement that took up the conduction of social action.

The political regimes and authoritarianisms, as well as the demands of the negotiated political democratizations, and the economic transformations in recent decades, ended up dismantling this type of action. Under the authoritarianisms, the constitutive issues of social actors centered upon the struggles against this form of domination and against the structural transformations it promoted. In the processes of democratization, there is a re-politicization of social life and the properly political actors like the parties acquire a new protagonism, leaving the other forms of political organization of collective action on a second plane. For its part, as we have indicated, the socio-economic transformations under the seal of the so-called structural adjustments, deeply weakened the material bases and the spaces of constitution of social actors.

The socio-economic transformations of the last decades and the political and cultural changes have, thus, profoundly modified the panorama of social actors. Classical actors have lost part of their social significance and tend to become corporate. Those emergent around the new post-authoritarian issues do not succeed in constituting themselves into stable actors or corpus of citizens, appearing, rather, as eventual publics. In situations like these, the social actors proper, tend to be replaced by sporadic mobilizations and fragmentary and defensive actions, sometimes in the shape of networks and social webs, significant but with a low political institutionalization and representation, or by individual reactions of a consumerist or withdrawal type. On the other hand, the scene is taken by the aggregation of individuals through the phenomenon of public opinion, measured through polls and mediatized, not by mobilizing or representative organizations, but by the mass media.

It is evident that in the described processes there are elements that harm the quality of democratic life, eroding the incentives for collective and political action, on the one hand, and subjecting the political game either to cupular pressures and negotiations by corporate actors, or to the blackmail of the great publics or the mass media, on the other.

The dismantling of the classical matrix and the end of democratic transitions, generate a situation in which a unifying principle of social action disappears and in which, on the contrary, the different principles diversify and even enter in contradiction in some cases (environment versus growth, to name just one example), each one of them expressing itself in different actors.

The conformation of actors can no longer be thought of in the styles of the past. One must recognize that it is almost impossible to find one single social or political subject or actor, around which a single field of tensions and contradictions is generated, that articulates the different principles and orientations of action springing from the processes of social modernization and democratization.

While it is true that it will no longer be possible to return to the traditional collective action, even though many of its elements can be rescued, there are potentials in the new situation, that allow for a redefinition of citizenship and a new way of conceiving collective action. What is pending is the relation of these manifestations with political life, reason why the institutionalization of spaces where classical forms express themselves together with emerging forms, seems indispensable. As we have said, the paradox lies in that this can only be effected from politics and its actors, however problematic that may be and in spite of seemingly navigating against the current.

CONCLUSION: THE PERSPECTIVE OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

What will the existence of democratic regimes in the future depend upon? This question can not give way, as in the past, to the determinism of the factors that will make democracy possible, because sometimes there can be democratic regimes simply because people want it, because they prefer it to killing one another or being oppressed by a dictatorship or enslaved by de facto powers that operate in the market, civil society, the State, the armed power or the transnational forces.

If one had to set forth a hypothesis that didn't make of democracy a purely dependent variable but an active factor in the construction of a society, and that didn't fall again in ideological or structural determinisms, one would affirm that the future of democracy in Latin America will fundamentally depend on the capability of constructing a legitimacy of politics that allows for States, parties and social actors, to be strong, autonomous from one another but complementary.

This hypothesis gives us a criterion to evaluate political action. Today, the concrete political projects, politics and policies, within a democratic frame, make sense not so much if they move in the direction of a society imagined by some ideology, or if they point towards the construction of a Heaven on Earth, as we thought before, or if they solve only one problem or conjunctural "demand", as we tend to think nowadays, but instead if they are capable of giving a meaning to personal and social life and improve their quality. And that, in present circumstances, depends less on a content, that can be very diverse for the different actors and visions, than on the capability of individual and collective action to intervene in one's own and national destinies. Which implies asking oneself, every time, if the projects or policies strengthen the State, the system of representation and the social actors. This, for global projects, for the programs of the parties or their coalitions, as well as for public policies. Beyond the technical or economic criteria, any public policy -public security and control of delinquency, health, education, housing, decentralization, the

overcoming of poverty, just to name a few examples- must be evaluated in terms of its contribution to this triple strengthening.

At the basis of this hypothesis is the central issue of the reconstruction of a polis-society where democracy can have roots and sustenance. Because the reconstruction of a polis-society means precisely the construction of a system of relations between State, system of representation and strong actors at very different levels: at the local and regional level of each country, at the national level and also at the supra-national, regional and global level.

At a moment when the transit from authoritarian, or semi-authoritarian regimes to regimes with a democratic tendency seems to be ensured, this appears to be the only way of answering the main problem that political democracy faces from now on in Latin America: making of it a relevant regime that is not left to the mercy of de facto powers of the past or of the future.